

## **APPROACHES TO DEFINING THE STRUCTURE OF THE CONCEPT IN LINGUISTICS**

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**APPROACHES TO DEFINING THE STRUCTURE  
OF THE CONCEPT IN LINGUISTICS**

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**Abstract:** This article is devoted to the study of theoretical views of linguists about the concept. It mainly focuses on the definitions given to the concept, its structure, core and secondary components. The structure of the concept has a systemic character. The structural features are complex and perceived as a whole mental structure in the language. It is important to note that the notion of concept is researched in the focus of several modern trends of linguistics, such as cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, psycholinguistics, linguistic conceptology and etc.. Accordingly, the approaches to defining the structural components of the concepts also differ. To some extent the viewpoints of the linguists on the problem to be discussed in this article are similar, but they differ in content and scope. These particular peculiarities and some special characteristics of concepts are discussed in this article.

**Key words:** concept, system of concepts, structure, components, imagery, value, scope of expression, psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, semantic structure, linguistic phenomena.

**INTRODUCTION**

Man's understanding of the universe develops from the moment he is born. The person begins to understand, evaluate and distinguish the realities and events

around. The formation of such processes is associated with the emergence of conceptual structures in the human mind. Therefore, the concept is considered as mental image represented by linguistic symbols. It is important to study the essence of the concept, the origin of which goes back to the science of cognition, in the light of modern trends in linguistics. Due to the fact that concept reflects the gained experience and culture of the people it is not only the focus of linguistic conceptology, but also such disciplines as cognitive linguistics and linguocultural studies. Much research has been done on the structure of the concept and its semantics. But so far there is no theory that fully defines its structure. This is because the concept has a dynamic, i.e. variable, nature in the process of thinking.

Among the definitions given to the concept in linguistics, the views of the American scholar George Lakoff are noteworthy. “Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” [1]. This idea of the metaphorical nature of the concept is supported by the author through the concept of “argument” and the conceptual metaphor “argument is war”. “Argument is war” is a concept inherent in American culture. The author asks to imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently. Therefore, it should be noted that the concepts are metaphorical in nature. The same concept is embodied in the minds of peoples in different ways.

Another attempt to define the concept from a linguistic point of view is that of the Russian linguist Yu. S. Stepanov's, which states that "from the outside, concepts are simple expressions, part of expressions, but they are such "subtle expressions" that they give rise to previously familiar content in our minds"[2].

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

As concepts are considered as mental unit of a mind it is highly important to define and clarify them appropriately. There are a number of writers who attempted to propose their approaches to defining the structure of the concept. Russian linguist I. A. Sternin writes that "a concept is always in motion, actualized in its various components and aspects, connected with some concepts and deviating from others"[3].

A. N. Prikhodko, who studied the essence of the system of concepts, clarifies the definition models according to the characteristics of the concept, saying that the concept is a "multidimensional mental structure". Among them are "concept = (psycho) mental structure", "concept = epistemic structure", "concept = (pragma) regulatory structure", "concept = axiological structure", "concept = (ethno) cultural structure". "Concept = (psycho) mental structure" is the understanding of a concept as a product of consciousness. This is the highest form of reflection of being in the human psyche [4]. According to the psycho (mental) approach, the following qualities of the concept can be listed:

1. It is the unity of social consciousness as a mental structure. He lives in the memory of the people, past and present.
2. It not only makes sense, but also expresses human emotions.
3. It is the product of a complex process of thinking in the human brain.

By the "concept = epistemic structure" we mean the knowledge and experience of the concept, its sources of information. All knowledge about the concept is the main feature of this structure. "Concept = (pragma) regulatory structure" - this model reflects the intentional nature of the use of mental structures in the discourse. It deals with the ability to direct communicative behavior, to identify

ethno-specific norms, strategies and stereotypes of communication. In the “concept = axiological structure” model, the concept rises to the level of spiritual value. The essence of this idea is that the concept should be based on human values that are important in a person’s life. Social perceptions such as goodness, evil, hatred, and love form the basis of this model. The concept (ethno) as a cultural structure must have its place in the culture of the nation. In terms of social significance, the concept is an important part of a nation’s culture. The ideas given once again confirm how comprehensive the concept is and how important it is in the society and human life.

Another linguist S. G. Vorkachev also emphasizes that the lingvoconcept is multidimensional and lists its features that distinguish it from the other concepts:

1. "Experience" - the author makes reference to Yu. A. Stepanov’s viewpoint that “concepts are not only thought, but experienced as emotions”.
2. Semiotic density. Such density represents the scale of expression of the concept. In more detail, it is the verbalization of a concept through words, phrases, proverbs, parables, folklore and literary plots, synonymous symbols (works of art, ceremonies, moral stereotypes).
3. Scope of expression - the name of the concept is included in the associative paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations - the presence of a special linguistic metaphor [5].

The concept has been analyzed in the context of many new areas of linguistics, including cognitive, cognitive discursive, logical, lingvoculturological linguistics, and psycholinguistics. In describing the concept, the representative of the cognitive direction A. P. Babushkin sees the concept as “a discrete unit of collective consciousness stored verbally in the national memory of language speakers”[6].

In cognitive linguistics, it is through which linguistic means that the concept in the human mind emerges. In this case, a person's social origin, religion, nationality are important. This is because he grows up on the basis of the laws and

views that are the norm for the society in which he lives, and on the basis of which his attitude to the world is formed. In this way, everyone understands the concept on their own, based on their worldview. This idea underlies linguistic research in the cognitive direction. At the same time, cognitive linguistics focuses on the study of concept types, their groups, and their composition. In the cognitive discursive approach, more work is done on the texts. Therefore, in this direction, the concept is studied in different discourses (texts). According to a logical approach to conceptual learning, a concept is a logical unit of language. N. D. Arutyunova defines the concept as a “concept of life philosophy”[7]. That is, the concept came into being together with the concept of life, which is valuable to a humankind, and lives at the heart of philosophical consciousness. As long as a person lives in a particular society, he is subject to philosophical views that are common to that society. At the same time, his philosophy of life becomes part of social philosophy. According to the linguoculturological approach, the concept is manifested as a basic unit of cultural studies and intercultural communication. Yu. S. Stepanov assumes that ‘the concept is part of the culture of the human mind’[8]. Traditions and culture of the people are instilled in the human mind from an early age. Therefore, both a person's attitude to a particular event and his perception of it are formed from this culture. Depending on how the concept is expressed by the person, it is possible to get an idea of its culture.

The psycholinguistic approach to the concept is somewhat different from the others. According to Zalevskaya, “the concept is specific to the individual, as an invariant it is used in culture when it takes a particular society or broader” [9]. Indeed, the concept is unique to man and is well understood and recognized by the society in which he lives, the culture in which he lives.

In terms of cognitive semantics, the concept is divided into universal and specific types. Universal concepts are distinguished by their commonality. They are of universal importance and are relevant to all societies. Such concepts include, for example, "god", "faith", "love" in religious discourse. Specific concepts, on the

other hand, are related to a particular culture, as opposed to universal concepts. For example, "hospitality" in the peoples of the East, "punctuality" inherent in the West. Z. D. Popova and I. A. Sternin called such concepts national concepts. In their view, "the national character of a concept is manifested in the fact that a single concept has different aspects in the cultures of different nations, as well as in unique concepts that are unique to one culture"[10].

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Indeed, some concepts represent universal values. Friendship, kindness, loyalty, love are among them. Units specific to a particular nation or ethnic group are only well understood by members of that nation. For example, the concept of time is interpreted differently in the culture of the Uzbek and English people. It is a well-known fact that the concept of time is valuable in the English culture i.e. time is important to the Englishman. For instance, arriving at a scheduled meeting on time or earlier than expected, and waiting for a specific time. In the Uzbek language there is a phrase used in everyday speech: "Shomdan keyin keling" (Come after sunset). It doesn't indicate exact time. So, the concept of time is a relatively abstract continuum here. As a matter of fact the concept that exists in one culture is found in another culture, but its content and scope are different.

While the expression of reality through linguistic means is a complex process, in this process special emphasis is placed on the perception of the concept in the human mind. Speaking about the process of linguistic materialization of the concept, Sh. Safarov states that the reflection of reality is not a direct function of language, first of all, it is the function of thinking. But the mental structures that occur in thinking are reflected in the language system... A word, like other linguistic units, is not a simple label for a particular object or event, but a means of knowing reality [11].

Concepts combine different phenomena observed and imagined under a single name and allow the storage of knowledge about the world. They become

elements of a conceptual system that contributes to the processing of an experience by generalizing data.

Jackendoff argues that the conceptual structure consists of a set of principles of the primitive, fundamental properties of the mind and the mental combination (the process of cognitive processing specific to the final subphase of the sensorimotor phase). Each of the units called “concept components” belongs to sub-conceptual categories such as thing (or object), event, state, motion, place, direction, property, and quantity. These conceptual components include the basic syntactic components that make up a sentence map and represent them using the following example:

John ran toward the house (John ran toward the house)

Here the concept consists of conceptual categories such as John and the house thing (object), side (direction), John ran towards the house (event) [12].

According to the structural semantic approach, concepts do not appear spontaneously, separately in the human mind. Perhaps there is a relationship between words and the concepts that correspond to them. Also, the interdependence of some concepts is related to human experience. For example, when we say "restaurant", we mean not only a simple service point, but also the concepts of customer, waiter, ordering, catering, bill. These concepts are connected to each other not through structural semantic relationships, but on the basis of human experience, and they cannot be imagined separately. Croft William and D. Alan Cruse's also discuss conceptual categories. One of the ideas put forward by the authors is to separate these concepts according to their general (generic) and individual (individual) characteristics [13]. For example, "man" and "criminal" are general concepts, while "Barchinoy" and "Alpomish" are individual concepts.

Russian scientists view the structure of the concept differently. The concept has different layers depending on the time of its emergence, origin, semantics. Yu. S. Stepanov points out that the concept consists of three layers. These are: the main active character, the additional passive (historical) character,

and the generally incomprehensible internal form. The author cites the concept of "March 8" as an example to make his point clear. The main active symbol of the concept is available as a means of communication for all users of the given language, that is, everyone knows that March 8 is a holiday. An additional passive sign of the concept (historical sign) is relevant in communication between people belonging to a particular social group, i.e., representatives of the feminist movement that led to the celebration of March 8 remember and communicate about the day knowing the date of the holiday. The internal form, i.e. the etymological sign of the concept, is studied only by researchers. For the public, however, this layer can serve as a basis for other layers [14].

One of the descriptions given about the structure of the concept belongs to V. A. Maslova. According to her viewpoint "the concept can be imagined in the form of a circle, at the center of which is the basic concept - the core of the concept, and at its edges are the experience of culture, tradition, people and personality" [15].

The concept has a complex structure from the inside. Therefore, in order to understand it clearly the linguists have identified layers, components, zones in its composition. The concept is closely related to the culture. That is why scholars who consider the concept as a unit of linguistic culture emphasize that the value is a key component of the concept. V. I. Karasik described the concept as a three-dimensional structure and identified the imagery, conceptuality and value as its components [16]. The imagery nature of a concept refers to practical features such as seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, or reflecting events in our minds. The conceptual side of the concept is its linguistic reflection, which means its sign, definition, definite structure, comparative characteristics in relation to other series of concepts. When we say the value component, we mean the importance of the concept as a mental structure for the individual and the community.

S. G. Vorkachev also distinguishes three components in the semantic structure of the linguocultural concept. These are conceptual, figurative, and

significant components [17]. Above we have considered the definition of the conceptual and imagery components of the concept. Therefore, we will not dwell on these parts of the concept again. The component of significance is about the place of the concept name in the lexical-grammatical system of a particular language, as well as its etymological associative feature.

On the other hand, G. G. Slishkin argues that the associative structure of the linguocultural concept consists of four elements. Intrazone is a combination of unwanted semantic associations; extrazone - a combination of emerging semantic associations; quasi-intrazone - a combination of unwanted formal associations; quasi-extrazone - a combination of emerging formal associations. The main zones are intrazone and extrazone, the additional zones are quasi-intrazone and quasi-extrazone [18]. These elements are defined as follows:

Intrazone-reflects the primary features of the concept (bear - loves honey, flat feet, strong). Extrazone - reflects the signs derived from the figurative meaning of the concept (paremia). Quasi-intrazone and quasi-extrazone - in other words, the name of the concept is associated with associations formed as a result of becoming synonymous.

According to M. V. Pimenova, “the structure of a concept is a set of generalized signs and symbols necessary and sufficient to identify an object or event as part of the worldview,” “the conceptual structure consists of primary and imagery (secondary) signs” [19]. Apparently, M. V. Pimenova sees imagery as a secondary character.

## **CONCLUSION**

As it can be seen, most of the authors' views are similar in defining the value and imagery as the core components of the concept in linguistics. After all, just as values have a special place in any culture and it is an integral part of the linguocultural concept. Language, on the other hand, is a part of culture, through which the multi-layered concepts that emerge in our minds are partially or fully represented.

In linguistics, the analysis of linguistic phenomena, the study of their internal structure, classification has become a tradition. The study of the structure of the concept, which is one of the basic concepts of such disciplines as cognitive linguistics, linguocultural studies, linguoconceptology, is also the focus of a number of researchers. As a holistic linguistic phenomenon, the concept consists of components.

A number of studies on the concept of the concept and its structure have been done and are being carried out, yet a complete, all-round, subtle definition of meaning has not been defined. Today, the purpose of research in the field of cognitive linguistics and linguoconceptology is to study the ways of expression of the concept in the national culture, as well as to determine its place in various areas of the language system.

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