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CONCEPT VS MEANING: COGNITIVE APPROACH

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Abstract: The paper considers the notion of the concept in its relation to the meaning of the word. Similarities and differences between these two constructs are identified. The dual nature of the concept is discussed.

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In present-day cognitive linguistics the notion of concept is one of the most widely used and controversial. Although it has become a "household name" for many researchers, its content varies in different scientific schools and has got a variety of interpretations by individual scholars. The point is that the concept is the category of thinking, it is an aspect of thought and it gives plenty of room for its interpretation. Today the category of concept appears in the studies of philosophers, logicians, psychologists, and it bears traces of all these extra linguistic explanations.

At the beginning the term "concept" was used as a generalized word-nominator, which in the process of thinking replaces an uncertain set of objects, actions, cognitive functions of the same kind. D.S. Likhachov used this term to refer to the generalized cognitive unit, which reflects and interprets the phenomena of reality, depending on education, personal experience, professional and social experience of a native speaker [1]. Yu.S. Stepanov believes that a concept is the "content of the notion", A.P. Babushkin considers the concept as a discrete mental unit which reflects the object of real or imaginative world and is kept in the national memory of native speakers in the verbalized form [2]. In the Brief Dictionary of Cognitive Terms the concepts is defined as "operational meaningful unit of memory, mental lexicon, conceptual system, brain language, and the whole picture of the world reflected in the human mind" [3, p. 90].

Despite the diversity of interpretations of the concept, linguistic researchers have agreed that the concept is a mental representation, "a unit of mental activity" [2]. In general usage the term mainly denotes "idea" or "notion". In a narrower sense it is an abstract idea or a mental symbol sometimes defined as a "unit of knowledge", built from other units which act as the concept's characteristics. The concept has a purely cognitive status and does not exist outside mind.

The complexity of the concept is a two-way connection between language and mind. Mental categories are represented through linguistic categories, and at the same time are determined by them; in other words, the culture determines the concept (i.e. the concept is a mental projection of the elements of the culture). The relationships between the phenomena of "language" and "culture" are quite complicated, as the language is both the part of the culture and an external factor to the culture; language and speech are

the areas where the concept is "objectified". Thus, the nature of concepts, and their relation to the things of which they are the concepts, and to the minds which use or contemplate them, are among the most hotly disputed subjects in present-day linguistics.

Being an idealized mental image, the concept has a high degree of abstraction, which is *a priori* predetermined by its dual nature. The concept is a unit of cognitive level; therefore, it absorbs everything that comes from "the world of mind" and is reflected in the meaning. However, the concept is also a phenomenon of culture; it accumulates its heritage: the original form (etymology), axiological evaluation, associations, abstractions, mental isoglosses, etc. This dual nature of the concept points to the difficulty in reaching the consensus on the number of semantic parameters that can be worked out for its examination.

Presumably the word-nominator is the means of verbalization of the concept. Acting as discrete units, concepts condense the human knowledge and experience, which is verbalized and stored in the national memory. They accumulate not only individual skills and experience but also knowledge that is shared by the linguistic community as a whole. Starting from Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity, apparently, there are universal concepts. Virtually all world languages have words marked with special semantic and emotional stress: God, father, mother, faith, life, death, love, etc. They represent the corresponding concepts that are universally valuable, the most meaningful and therefore are rather complicated.

The word-nominator receives the status of the name of the concept, and conveys the general content of the concept in the concentrated form more specifically and precisely. Thus, word-nominators are pure verbal representations. The problem is the relationship between the concept and the word-nominator, which can be extended to a broader opposition – "mind-language". The link between these two constructs has been of special interest for many decades.

It is especially important to reveal the relation between the concept and the meaning of the word as it affects both the determination of the subject of cognitive linguistics and the development of methods for analyzing the semantics of the language.

On the one hand, the concept and the meaning of the word share some similarities. Human mind, localized in the brain reflects the objective and subjective reality. Both the concept and the meaning are the reflection of reality (objective and subjective). They have cognitive nature and present the result of the reflection and cognition of reality by the human mind. In other words, the content of the concept reflects certain aspects of the phenomena of reality, and so does the meaning of the word, which has a cognitive nature.

On the other hand, they have certain differences. The meaning and the concept are the products of the different levels. We can oppose the concepts and the meanings as mental units, which belong to the cognitive and linguistic human consciousness respectively. The concept is a product of cognitive human consciousness, while the meaning is the product of linguistic consciousness.

The meaning in relation to the concept appears as a part of its content, which is relevant to this linguocultural community. Many cognitive linguists agree that components of lexical meaning reflect only significant conceptual features, but not all of them. The structure of the concept is much more complicated and more varied than the lexical meaning of the words.

The meaning conveys certain cognitive features and components that make up the concept, but it is always only part of the semantic content of the concept. For the explication of the content of the concept numerous lexical items as well as experimental studies to complement the results of linguistic analysis are required. Thus, the meaning and the concept are correlated as communicatively relevant part and a mental whole.

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Концепт VS значение: когнитивный подход

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Ключевые слова и фразы: значение; когниция; концепт; концептуализация; ментальная репрезентация; ментальные категории; семантика; язык;

Аннотация: Рассматривается соотношение концепта и значения слова. Выявляются сходства и различия между этими двумя понятиями. Обсуждается двойственная природа концепта.

Konzept VS Bedeutung: kognitives Herangehen

Zusammenfassung: In diesem Artikel wird das Verhältnis des Konzeptes und der Bedeutung des Wortes betrachtet. Es werden die Ähnlichkeiten und die Unterschiede zwischen diesen beiden Konzepten ausgezeigt. Es wird die duale Natur des Konzeptes besprochen.

Concept VS sens: aspect cognitif

Résumé: L'article discute la relation entre le concept et le sens du mot. Sont identifiées les similitudes et les différences entre ces deux notions. Est discutée la double nature du concept.

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