

PAPER

MODERN LINGUISTICS PARADIGMS AND THE ISSUE OF THE CONCEPT

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Abstract

This article discusses the theoretical essence, terminological status and interpretation of the concept of concept in various scientific schools within the framework of the anthropocentric paradigm in modern linguistics. It analyzes the concept as a complex mental unit formed at the intersection of language, thought and culture. The author reveals the substantive boundaries and scientific status of the concept based on cognitive linguistics, linguoconceptology, linguocultural studies and discursive-pragmatic approaches. Also, the definitions given to the concept in foreign, Russian and Uzbek linguistics are comparatively examined, and its different aspects from the categories of “concept” and “meaning” are explained. As a result of the research, it is established that the concept is an integrative expression not only of the cognitive process, but also of national-cultural experience, values, images and communicative needs. The article emphasizes the multilayered structure of the concept and its importance as an operational methodological unit for linguistic research.

Key words: concept, anthropocentric paradigm, cognitive linguistics, linguocultural studies, linguoconceptology, conceptualization, meaning, concept, mental structure, cultural scripts, conceptual metaphor, national-cultural experience.

The anthropocentric paradigm interprets language inextricably linked with the “human factor” (consciousness, experience, values, communicative need). Against this background, the concept is seen as a “bridging unity” between language and thought: it is not a speech unit, but a mental content verbalized through language units.

Within the framework of linguoconceptology, SG Vorkachev interprets linguocultural concepts primarily as “philosophy of life” concepts that stabilize the “spiritual experience” of the ethnos (linguoconcepts are defined as “ponyatija zhiznennoy filosofii”). He also emphasizes that the formation of linguoconceptology and

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intercultural communication is consistent with a general anthropocentric reorientation. Thus, in the clarification of the concept, the triad “language → consciousness → culture” comes to the center.

Cognitive linguistics explores concepts in the context of cognitive processes (categorization, conceptualization, framing, metaphor). G. Lakoff and M. Johnson argue that concepts are not simply “products of the intellect” but rather organize our everyday cognition and practice, arguing that “our ordinary conceptual system... is metaphorical in nature” and that “our concepts structure what we perceive, how we move through the world, and how we interact with others.” In this approach, concepts are often analyzed through conceptual metaphors and models of experience: for example, metaphors such as ARGUMENT IS WAR reflect the conceptual order in a particular culture.

R. Langacker’s cognitive grammar also brings the issue of concept to the center: he says that “meaning is equated with conceptualization” and that linguistic semantics aims to “structurally analyze abstract units such as ideas and concepts.” Here, a concept is not a “ready-made lexical meaning” outside the language system, but a content that is activated in the process of speech, “constructed in appearance” in different ways across domains (cognitive areas).

In the Uzbek cognitive school, the concept is also illuminated as a mental structure associated with knowledge and experience. Sh. Safarov emphasizing the stereotyping of the cognitive process, explains: “the repetition of phenomena and situations in reality... requires that they acquire a standard-sample... appearance, and knowledge itself takes on a stereotyped form in exactly the same way.” This idea indicates the formation of concepts as a cognitive template based on repeated experience; that is, a concept is a mental format at the intersection of individual perception and social experience.

Linguocultural studies, on the other hand, highlight the “culturally determined” layer of the concept: the concept is the nodal point of values, symbols, norms, national imaginations embodied in language units. For example, in the study of the concept, D. Khudoyberganova evaluates the concept as a “mental structure”, a “multi-layered

and multifaceted” phenomenon, emphasizing that it becomes an object of psychological, cognitive-semantic and linguocultural research. This approach suggests that the concept should not be equated only with a “concept”: the concept is a combined model of concept + image + value.

In Russian conceptualism, there is a strong tradition of revealing these three layers as a multi-component model. The methodological statement in the anthology states that a concept is “a representation of a part of the world”, which is enriched by the addition of individual experience and personal imagination to universal signs; the concept is even interpreted as a form of “national image (idea, symbol), complicated by signs of individual imagination”. This point of view requires that the “national” (collective) and “personal” (individual) layers of the concept be considered together in linguistic and cultural analysis.

In the foreign linguocultural (ethnopragmatic) direction, A. Wierzbicka clearly shows the connection between language and culture through the theory of “cultural scripts”: he says that the “way of speaking” of a particular society is not explained only by behavioral images, but is a manifestation of a system of hidden cultural rules (“cultural scripts”); in order to explain this without ethnocentric deviations, he justifies the need for a neutral metalanguage based on “universal human concepts lexicalized in all languages”. This idea is directly connected to the interpretation of the concept in linguocultural studies: a concept is a unit that explains how the “internal rules” and values of culture are encoded in language practice (discourse). Thus, the anthropocentric approach connects the concept with human cognitive experience and communicative needs; cognitive linguistics explains the concept through conceptualization and experience models (metaphor, domain, frame); Linguistic and cultural studies, on the other hand, separates the value, symbolic, and national-cultural layers of the concept, interpreting the concept as a central category at the intersection of “culture + consciousness + language.”

The terminological status of the “concept” (i.e., how stable it is as a scientific language, what it clearly defines, and its boundaries with other

terms) is an issue that is actively being formed due to modern anthropocentric and cognitive trends. On the one hand, it seems close to the general-philosophical “concept”; on the other hand, within linguistics, “concept” is used as an independent term, since it covers a wider layer (imagination–knowledge–evaluation–cultural experience). The introduction of the term into Uzbek linguistics also demonstrates this duality: I. Sayidrahimova connects “concept” with the Latin *conceptus* (“concept”), noting that it is often used synonymously with “concept”; at the same time, she also emphasizes that in linguistics the concept is considered “the main unit of culture in the mental world”. Thus, from the point of view of terminological status, the “concept” is becoming a “operational unit” for linguocognitive and linguocultural research, different from the simple “notion”.

The terminological situation in Russian linguistics is more specific: E. Koshkina shows that in the early 1990s the term “concept” was in “competition” with other “prototerms” (for example, *lingvokulturrema*, *mifologema*, *logoepistema*), but “concept” prevailed as the “most viable” term in terms of frequency of use and research practice. At the same time, she notes that the interpretations of “concept” differ significantly in different schools, which she attributes to the interdisciplinary nature of the term. This is an important sign of the terminological status: there is a term, but there is not a single “rigid” definition, but a spectrum of approaches. In defining the content boundary, the Russian school takes the “substitution” function of the concept as the main point. D. Likhachev interprets concepts as “algebraic ‘substitutes’ of complex meanings”. This definition distinguishes a “concept” from both a word meaning and a logical concept: a word meaning is a semantic unit in a language system; a logical “concept” is the result of rational generalization; and a concept is a mental structure that “compactly” holds complex content in communication and thought.

In the cognitive direction, the terminological status is further strengthened: Z. Popova and I. Sternin define the concept as a basic unit of “discrete mental formations” and “human thinking

code”. Here, the term “concept” is used not only as a “concept”, but also as an encyclopedic unit that carries the result of cognitive activity and social interpretations. As a result, terminologically, the “concept” becomes one of the central categories of cognitive linguistics.

In the foreign (Western) tradition, the position of “concept” as a term is often given by the formula “meaning = conceptualization”. R. Langacker openly states that “meaning is equated with conceptualization” in cognitive grammar. This approach clearly draws a terminological boundary: the semantics of linguistic units is explained by a conceptual structure, which means that “concept” has the status of a “basic term” operating in semantic theory. Lakoff and Johnson also generalize this point: they show that a “simple conceptual system” governs thought and action, and even “how we perceive what” is structured by concepts. This terminologizes the concept not only as a “logical definition”, but also as a conceptual mechanism associated with experience and culture. In linguistic and cultural studies, the terminological status of a concept is strengthened by “three layers” (descriptive–conceptual–valued).

V. Karasik defines concepts as “significant, perceived, typical fragments of experience” stored in memory, and emphasizes that they have image-perceptual, potential and value aspects. This feature distinguishes a “concept” from a simple “concept”: while a “concept” is more of a rational-symbolic set, an evaluative and cultural significance component is (often) active in a “concept”. Thus, the scientific conclusion about the terminological status of “concept” is as follows: today it is (1) an interdisciplinary and (2) a multi-approach “umbrella” term, simultaneously covering the needs of cognitive semantics (meaning–conceptualization), linguocognitive analysis (mental unity), and linguocultural research (value-cultural content). Therefore, for terminological clarity in your work, one “working definition” is usually chosen (for example, the Popova–Sternin or Karasik model), and then the difference between “concept”, “meaning”, and “lexematic semantics” is methodologically defined separately.

Foreign and domestic research, the interpretation of the concept of “concept” is

formed at the intersection of several scientific traditions: (1) the cognitive-psychological approach (concept is a unit of knowledge in the mind), (2) the linguocultural approach (concept is the manifestation of cultural experience and values "through language"), (3) the discursive-pragmatic approach (concept is a meaning-construction activated in communication).

In Russian conceptualism, a concept is often interpreted as a mental unit associated with memory and experience. For example, ZD Popova and IA Sternin explain the concept as a "discrete mental structure", defining it as a basic unit of a person's "thinking code", a relatively orderly internal structure and a carrier of complex information about an object-event (including social interpretation and attitude). In addition, VI Karasik sees concepts as typicalized "fragments of experience" stored in human memory; he emphasizes that their properties of "significance" (emotional experience), "typification" and "understandability" are transmitted in communication. In this approach, the "national-cultural" aspect of the concept also naturally arises: fragments of experience are "condensed" with stereotypes and values of society. One of the important metaphorical definitions that influenced the widespread use of the term concept in the Russian scientific tradition belongs to DS Likhachev : he defines the "concept" as an "algebraic substitute" that facilitates the work with complex meanings. This interpretation shows that the concept is a theoretical "convenience" model : it brings complex contents into the space of concise thinking and processing.

In the Western (Anglo-American) cognitive direction, the concept is more associated with a conceptual system and conceptualization (a way of perceiving/understanding the world). George Lakoff and Mark Johnson emphasize that the "simple conceptual system" that underlies everyday thinking and action is often metaphorical in nature, and see language as a source of evidence that "shows" this system. Thus, in this direction, a concept is not just a "unit of content", but a cognitive mechanism that governs "how we see" the world. In interpreting linguocultural content through language, Anna Wierzbicka puts forward

the idea of "cultural scripts" and shows that cultural norms and values hidden in language can be expressed through universal semantic units. This approach methodologically strengthens the triad of "language-consciousness-culture" in linking the concept with culture.

In Uzbek linguistics, the term "concept" began to be actively used mainly under the influence of the anthropocentric paradigm, at the intersection of cognitive linguistics and linguocultural studies. Durdon Khudoyberganova interprets "concept" as a multifaceted, multilayered mental structure, noting that it simultaneously reflects psychological, cognitive-semantic and linguocultural aspects. Also, in the local scientific discourse, the difference between "concept" and "concept" is more strongly emphasized: a concept is interpreted as a discrete mental unit that, in addition to simple logical generalization, also includes lexical information, social interpretation, subjective attitude and cultural connotations. The broader literature also shows that the concept has different "centers of orientation" in linguocognitive and linguocultural directions : for example, it is emphasized that "the concept is wider than the concept" and that it is enriched with cultural-religious connotations and images from a linguocultural perspective .

In general, in foreign (Western) research, the concept is more often illuminated within the framework of conceptualization and a conceptual system (a mechanism for knowing the world), while in Russian conceptology it is developed as a structured mental unit (fragments of experience, layers of image-concept-value); in Uzbek research, the results of these two directions are combined, and the issues of the cultural determination of the concept, its saturation with national experience, and its multiple realization in linguistic units are taking a leading place.

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