

THE NOTION OF “CONCEPT” IN MODERN LINGUISTICS

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I will make a brief introduction to a new approach in modern linguistics, the notion of “concept” in modern linguistics, its feature, characteristics, and its development, relationships with other sciences.

Key words: concept, modern linguistics, notion, approach, linguocognitive, psycholinguistics, linguocultural, interpret, phenomenon, discrete mental formation

INTRODUCTION

Today, the term “concept” is widely used in various fields of science, such as cultural studies, philology, philosophy, psychology, as well as in linguistics. In modern linguistics, the concept plays a special role. It is known, a concept as a mental formation of a higher degree of abstraction includes all communicatively important information, and it is also a generally accepted set of meanings or properties related to certain events, objects, conditions, situations, and behavior. For example, speakers of different languages can perceive the world differently, the concept helps to perform the main communicative function of the language.

Today in linguistics there is still a question of defining the notion “concept”, despite the large amount of research in this area, so one of the main tasks remains to give an accurate and clear definition that will include all aspects of the notion “concept”. The problem of defining a “concept” was raised by many linguists in their works: E.S.Kubryakova, R.M.Frumkina, Z.D.Popova, A.A.Zalevskaya, Yu.S.Stepanov, A.P.Babushkin, G.G.Slyshkin, N.N.Boldyrev, V.I.Karasik, V.V.Kolesov, I.A.Sternin, D.S.Likhachev, V.V.Vorobyov, V.A.Maslova and others. In modern linguistics There are several main approaches to the study of concepts: linguocognitive, psycholinguistic and linguocultural.

Scientists such as E.S.Kubryakova, Z.D.Popova, I.A.Sternin adhere to the linguocognitive approach in their research.

Representatives of cognitive linguistics believe that any language is a system of concepts. Using this system, native speakers can interpret and classify information received from the outside world. Thus, according to E.S.Kubryakova, a concept is a mental unit of consciousness and an information structure that expresses a person’s

knowledge and experience.¹ The scientist admits that concepts arise as a result of structuring information about objects and their properties in the objective and imaginary world.

Z.D.Popova and I.A.Sternin give the following definition of the concept, according to which a concept is “a discrete mental formation, which is the basic unit of a person’s mental code, has a relatively ordered internal structure, and is the result of cognitive activity of the individual and society and carrying complex, encyclopedic information about the reflected object or phenomenon, about the interpretation of this information by public consciousness and the attitude of public consciousness to this phenomenon or object”²

From the point of view of cognitive semantics, the term “concept” denotes one of the forms of representation of knowledge about the environment around us. However, Z.D.Popova and I.A.Sternin in their work “Semantic-cognitive analysis of language” emphasize that in modern linguistics there are different interpretations of this in the scientific work “The notion of “concept” in linguistic research” by Z.D.Popova and I.A.Sternin define the concept “as a global mental unit that represents a quantum of structured knowledge. Concepts are ideal entities that are formed in the human mind”³. According to Z.D.Popova and I.A.Sternin, it is language that forms concepts in the human mind. However, in order for concepts to be formed, a person needs to interact with a particular object or phenomenon, namely, sensitivity, visibility and objective activity with them are needed. “A concept is born as an image, but once it appears in a person’s mind, this image is able to advance through the stages of abstraction. With an increase in the level of abstraction, the concept gradually turns from a sensory image into a mental image itself”.

The most famous representatives of the psycholinguistic approach to the study of concepts are A.A.Zalevskaya and V.Ya.Myrkin.

A.A.Zalevskaya considers the concept as “a perceptual-affective formation of a dynamic nature, spontaneously functioning in the cognitive and communicative activity of an individual, subject to the laws of a person’s mental life and, as a result, in a number of parameters different from the concept and meanings as products of scientific description from the standpoint of linguistic theory”⁴.

A.A.Zalevskaya defines the concept as “the basic perceptual-cognitive-emotional formations of a dynamic nature, spontaneously functioning in human cognitive and

¹ Kubryakova 1997, p. 90

² Popova, Sternin 2000, p. 24

³ Popova, Sternin 2000, p. 33

⁴ Zalevskaya 2001, p. 36

communicative activity”¹. Thus, conceptualizations depend on changes in a person’s sociocultural experience and may differ from the results of scientific descriptions. In addition, the authors propose to use the term “concept” only when talking about the concept as personal property, given the ambiguity of the term. Otherwise, it is recommended to use such definitions as “lexical concept”, “cultural concept”, etc.

V.Ya.Myrkin, in turn, believes that a concept is the result of a person’s mental activity: “A concept is a block of knowledge, which is a set of concrete figurative (visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile, and olfactory), conceptual (including value), prototypical, gestalt, frame, scenario and other elements in the human psyche”².

Today in linguistics the linguocultural approach to the study of concepts plays an equally important role. Linguists who adhere to the linguocultural approach emphasize the relationship between language and culture. This approach is shared by such linguists as Yu.S.Stepanova, V.I.Karasika, V.A.Maslova, S.G.Vorkachev, O.E.Artemova, R.M.Frumkina, V.V.Kolesova.

V.I. Karasik defines the concept from the point of view of the linguocultural approach as follows: “A linguocultural concept is a conventional mental unit used in the complex study of language, consciousness and culture” From this definition we can conclude that each concept has its own specific mental nature.

Y.S.Stepanov characterizes the concept as “a clot of culture in the human mind; that in the form of which culture enters the mental world of man.” Thus, we can say that the concept also represents the basic unit of culture, and is also a tool through which an ordinary person, who has nothing to do with the creation of cultural artifacts, penetrates the culture himself, and in certain situations can even influence it.

The cultural concept has a number of characteristics, among the main ones V.I.Karasik identified the following: value, imagery and understandability. “The figurative side of the concept is the visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory characteristics of objects and events reflected in our memory. The conceptual side of a concept is the linguistic side of the concept, its designation, description, feature structure, definition, comparative characteristics of a given concept in relation to a particular series of concepts that never exist in isolation. The value side of the concept is decisive in order for the concept to be distinguished. The set of concepts considered in the aspect of values forms a value picture of the world.”³. Also V.I. Karasik draws attention to the fact that the cultural concept requires the presence of evaluative predicates that form value relations: “If the bearers of a culture can say about any

¹ Zalevskaya, 2001, p. 39

² Myrkin 2002, p. 46-47

³ Karasik 2004, p. 390

phenomenon, it is good (bad, interesting, tiring, etc.), this phenomenon forms a concept in a given culture”.

CONCLUSION

Through this article, we can come to the general conclusion that the development of new approach in modern linguistics, the notion of concept, is widely discussed by many scholars and scientists and is used by many people. The concept opens new way to learn the language and interact with people by it.

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