

Oana ȘULIC
Student Doctorand,
Universitatea de Stat din Moldova,
Chișinău, Republica Moldova

CONCEPT AND CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

În prezentul articol, încercăm să oferim o definiție a conceptului așa cum este el privit în lingvistica modernă. De asemenea prezentăm câteva detalii cu privire la „metafora conceptuală”, funcția, definiția și clasificarea acesteia, oferind o serie de exemple. În cea de a doua parte a articolului, prezentăm două metode principale de cercetare a conceptului în lingvistica cognitivă.

Cuvinte cheie: concept, metaforă conceptuală, mapare, metodă de cercetare.

The study of the concept in modern linguistics is of paramount importance and a term that covers several directions in both psychology and cognitive linguistics, as well as in cultural linguistics. The Russian researcher J. Stepanov says that “concepts are just phrases, fragments of conversation [...], but they are subtle phrases that force our minds create such content, as if it has been familiar for us for a long time” (Nemickienė, Apud).. The researcher V. Evans sees the concept as a link between words and extralinguistic reality. Only real phenomena that have special value for a particular culture can become concepts and they can be found in proverbs and sayings, poetry and prose. Starting from the idea that “language resides, not in dictionaries, but in the minds of the speakers of that language (Dirven, Verspoor, 2004: 13), it is necessary to analyze the conceptual universe that language can only cover partially. Thus, an accepted definition of the “concept” would be what a person thinks about a certain thing, a person’s view of the world, “a concentration of culture in the human consciousness; through it culture infiltrates the cognitive world of the human being” ((Lifari, 2020: 44) and it can be interpreted from both a cultural and a cognitive perspective.

The term “concept” was first used by Aristotle in his “Classical Theory of Concepts” and has been analyzed over time in the cognitive sciences, metaphysics, philosophy. Thus, the term “concept” in

linguistics can be considered both an old and a new one. The Latin word “conceptus” derives from the verb “concupere - concupere” which means “to conceive”. In classical Latin, “conceptus” meant “pond,” “inflammation,” “impregnation,” and “germs.” This term has entered all Romance and Germanic languages (French concept - concevoir, Italian concetto - concepire, Spanish concepto- concebir, Portuguese conceito - conceber, English concept- conceive). Over time and since its introduction in linguistics, the “concept” has received various definitions: “a multi-dimensional cluster of sense”, “a semantic slice of life”, “a gene of culture”, “a certain potency of meaning”, “a unit of memory”, “a quantum of knowledge”, “a germ of mental operations” and even “a misty something” (Nemickienė, Apud).

In establishing the role that language plays in polishing the concept and demonstrating the link between language and culture, there are two approaches:

1. The concept as a cultural phenomenon.

“Concepts are self-organizing, integrative, functional systematic, multidimensional, idealized formations based on the notional (pseudo- or pre-notional) basis and which are fixed to the meaning of a sign: the scientific term, or word (phrase) of everyday language, or more complex lexico- grammatical and semantic structures, or non-verbal subjective image, or action” (Nemickienė, Apud). Here the concept includes the whole experience of the individual and the society he is a part of, the native speaker’s own characteristics.

2. The concept as a cognitive linguistic phenomenon. Nezorniak affirms that “the concept is a remarkable image abstracted in a word and reflecting a fragment of the national picture of the world (Nemickienė). Language does not create concepts but it is a tool for the exchange between them during communication.

Overall, the concept can be visualized as having a circular shape inside which there is the basic notion, the core, and on the periphery there is everything related to the individual’s culture, traditions and personal experiences (Nemickienė).

The metaphorical approach to the concept is the object of cognitive linguistics which, in time, led to what we call cultural linguistics (Lifari, 2020: 43). The generally accepted definition of metaphor as one can find in Britannica is the following: “*metaphor*, figure of speech that

implies comparison between two unlike entities, as distinguished from simile, an explicit comparison signalled by the words *like* or *as*. The distinction is not simple. A metaphor makes a qualitative leap from a reasonable, perhaps prosaic, comparison to an identification or fusion of two objects, the intention being to create one new entity that partakes of the characteristics of both” (Encyclopædia Britannica).

However, cognitive linguistics states that “the metaphor is formed in the individual’s thoughts, when he tries to reproduce, in particular, abstract concepts, comparing them with concrete ones” (Lifari, 2020: 94). Thus, the metaphor is not just a figure of speech, it is a way of thinking. Lakoff argues that the discovery of a whole system of everyday conceptual metaphors has restructured our ordinary conceptual system, including the most abstract concepts behind our common language. Regarding the conceptual domains, one can mention the source domain which represents the conceptual domain from which we extract the metaphorical expressions necessary to understand another conceptual domain, namely the target domain. Lakoff speaks here of the so-called “mappings” which represent the understanding of a target conceptual domain with the help of the source, using a system of points (A and B, for example) to indicate the trajectory from A (source) to B (target). This “mapping” helps us better understand our “journey” to the “final destination” (target area) (Nordquist, Apud).

We will try to give a conclusive example by analyzing one of Martin Luther King’s quote about the concept of “dream”: “You don’t have to see the entire staircase, just take the first step” (wealthygorilla.com).

Dream- As- Journey Mapping:

- The dreamer stands for the traveler;
- The dream is the vehicle;
- The staircase represents the entire journey to our goal;
- The final step is the final destination of the journey;
- Each stair stands for the difficulties that appear on the way to our goal. As Lakoff says, the mapping is a set of correspondences that “characterize epistemic correspondences by mapping knowledge about journeys onto knowledge about” dreams, in our case (Lakoff). This way, these correspondences allow us to understand what it is to fulfill a dream by using what we know about journeys.

Lakoff and Johnson identify the following categories of conceptual

metaphors: - the orientational metaphor (involves spatial relationships: up / down, entry / exit, start / stop or front / back);

“I’m a dreamer. I have to dream and reach for the stars, and if I miss a star then I grab a handful of clouds” (Mike Tyson) (brainyquote.com).

- the ontological metaphor (something concrete is projected on something abstract); “Just get a bag and drop a dream in it, and you’ll be surprised what happens” (Charles Nelson Reilly) (brainyquote.com).

“You can plant a dream” (Anne Campbell) (brainyquote.com).

- the structural metaphor (a metaphorical system in which a complex, abstract concept is rendered by a concrete one).

“Dreams are illustrations... from the book your soul is writing about you” (Marsha Norman) (wisesayings.com).

Today, the main research method of the concept is the cognitive-prototypical scenario method implemented by A. Wierzbicka. It consists in the individual’s flow of ideas that appear in his mind, being impossible for him to separate the essential from the accidental (Lifari, 2020: 184). This scenario is described using the natural semantic metalanguage proposed by A. Wierzbicka (Wierzbicka).

In what follows, we will make the cognitive-prototypical scenario to illustrate the linguistic and cultural specificity of two given situations in English and French.

(1) *“Five years ago: I was working 60+ hours a week, spending more time chained at my desk than having fun. Too tired most weekends to do anything, working day after day, just waiting for a one-week holiday a year in the sun. I knew I couldn’t keep up with that life. That’s when I dared to dream. Dream of a different life. Dream of a future that looked really different from the life I was living.*

Today: I quit my job, I wake up every morning to do what I love. I have created a business that reaches over 600,000 people every month. I know that it’s possible to make your dreams come true” (Gathering Dreams).

In this first example, we’ve got the following cognitive-prototypical scenario:

X was working hard and was feeling bad. X thought of a different life than what he was experiencing.

X managed to obtain what he wanted and now he feels joy. H e r e we can conclude that an English-speaker sees fulfillment in life as a

destination at the end of a long and persevering journey, after establishing a dream, a goal.

(2) „Les rêves de jeunesse sont des rêves solitaires qui durent peu.” (Blondeau). In this second situation, the following cognitive-prototypical scenario can be built:

X is young.

X wants many things.

X doesn't know how to get what he wants.

We can interpret the above situation as follows: in a French native speaker's vision, a young man has many aspirations, but due to his lack of experience, he doesn't know how to select them, many of them being unfounded and thus he fails to reach them.

Another research method in cognitive linguistics is the method by definition. This method can provide us with an interpretation of the meanings of a given word offered by different types of dictionaries. This interpretation can give us the necessary information about the meaning of a word, but also about its use. Below, we will try to apply this method to the concept of “dream”, then analyze the definitions given by the Macmillan Dictionary and the French dictionary Larousse.

In English:

“*Dream* = something that you experience in your mind while you are sleeping. A dream in which frightening things happen is called a bad dream or a nightmare. Have a dream: *I had a strange dream last night*. In a dream: *The idea came to him in a dream*. Something good that you hope you will have or achieve in the future.

Dream of:

She watched her dreams of success fade away before her eyes.
Expressions: *a dream job/holiday/home*” (Macmillan Dictionary).

In French: “*Rêve*= 1. Le fait de rêver, l'activité onirique. (Dreaming, oniric activity)

2. Production psychique survenant pendant le sommeil, et pouvant être partiellement mémorisée. (Psychic production that takes place during sleep and can be partially memorized.) Synonyme: songe

3. Fait de laisser aller librement son imagination; idée chimérique : *Un rêve éveillé*. (Letting your imagination fly; chimerical idea: Dreaming with open eyes.)

Synonymes: chimère - rêverie - songerie

4. Représentation, plus ou moins idéale ou chimérique, de ce qu'on veut réaliser, de ce qu'on désire : *Accomplir un rêve de jeunesse*. (Representation, more or less ideal or chimerical, of what we want to achieve, of what we desire: To fulfill a dream of one's youth).

Expressions: *De mes rêves* (of my dreams) aussi proche que possible de mon idéal : *La voiture de mes rêves*.

De rêve dont les qualités font qu'on a peine à le croire réel: *Passer des vacances de rêve*. (Larousse).

As a conclusion in what concerns the importance of metaphor in thinking, the following principles emerge: conceptual metaphors structure thinking and knowledge. They are ideological and fundamental to abstract language, being based on our immediate experience (Nordquist, Apud). Each research method presented above, the cognitive- prototypical scenario method and the one by definition, has its own purpose and function in linguistics. Applying the method by definition, we make an interpretation of the meanings of a given word, starting from its definition in different types of dictionaries, as shown above, thus having access to necessary details related to the meaning and usage of a word. The cognitive-prototypical scenario method, the main research method of the concept, implemented by the scientist A. Wierzbicka, consists in an individual's thoughts which appear in his mind in a given situation, the individual not being able anymore to distinguish the accidental from the essential. This method is described using the natural semantic metalanguage. These two methods listed above are specific to cognitive linguistics and have as main objective the research of the concept. This way, we are provided with information related to a given concept, when and how to use it.

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