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THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONCEPT IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

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Abstract

This paper investigates the theoretical and methodological foundations of the concept as a central unit in cognitive linguistics, with particular emphasis on its cognitive, linguistic, and cultural dimensions. While existing research has extensively examined conceptual structures within Western theoretical frameworks, limited attention has been given to the integration of non-Western perspectives, especially in relation to culturally specific conceptual systems. Addressing this gap, the present study employs a qualitative research design that combines cognitive-semantic analysis, comparative cultural analysis, and theoretical synthesis.

The analysis focuses on the structural organization of concepts, including their core and peripheral components, as well as their dynamic and culturally embedded nature. Special attention is given to the role of concepts in mediating the relationship between language, thought, and cultural experience. Through the examination of culturally marked concepts such as *happiness* and *home*, the study demonstrates how conceptual meanings extend beyond lexical definitions and incorporate emotional, symbolic, and social dimensions.

The findings reveal that concepts function as multi-layered cognitive constructs shaped by linguistic, cultural, and experiential factors. Furthermore, conceptual systems differ significantly across linguistic communities, reflecting distinct worldviews and value systems. The study argues that concepts should be understood as integrative cognitive-cultural models rather than purely linguistic units.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in its integrative approach, which combines cognitive and cultural perspectives while highlighting the importance of non-Western conceptual frameworks. The results have practical implications for intercultural communication, translation studies, and language education, providing a deeper understanding of how meaning is constructed and interpreted across cultures.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, concept, conceptualization, culture, cognition, worldview, conceptosphere.

Introduction

Modern linguistics has increasingly shifted toward interdisciplinary approaches, particularly with the development of cognitive linguistics, which views language as a reflection of human cognition and cultural experience. Within this paradigm, the concept serves as a fundamental unit of knowledge representation and meaning construction.

Concepts allow individuals to categorize reality, structure experience, and express knowledge through language. However, despite extensive research, there is still no unified definition of the concept, and its structure remains a subject of debate [1], [2].

Most studies have focused on Western theoretical frameworks, while less attention has been given to culturally specific conceptual systems in non-Western contexts. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the theoretical foundations, structural characteristics, and cultural variability of concepts [3].

Literature Review

The concept has been widely studied in cognitive linguistics and related disciplines. Safarov defines it as a structured unit of knowledge reflecting cultural and cognitive experience [4]. Stepanov introduces the conceptosphere as a system of culturally significant concepts shaping collective consciousness [5].

Likhachyov considers concepts as carriers of cultural memory [6], while Arutyunova emphasizes their role in human perception and interpretation of reality [7]. Lakoff and Johnson argue that conceptual systems are largely metaphorical and grounded in human experience [8].

Further developments in cognitive linguistics highlight the importance of conceptual structures in meaning construction and communication [9], [10]. However, the integration of cultural and cognitive dimensions in conceptual studies remains insufficiently explored.

Methodology

This research adopts a **qualitative approach** based on theoretical and comparative analysis.

Methods used:

- Cognitive-semantic analysis
- Comparative cultural analysis
- Interpretative analysis

Data sources:

- Scientific literature
- Linguistic examples from English and Uzbek
- Cultural discourse materials

The study is grounded in conceptual metaphor theory and the conceptosphere framework [11], [12].

Results

1. Structural Features of Concepts

The analysis reveals that concepts possess a complex internal organization characterized by a multi-layered structure. At the center of each concept lies a **core (nucleus)**, which represents its most stable and universally recognized meaning. This core is relatively invariant across different linguistic and cultural contexts and serves as the foundation for conceptual understanding.

Surrounding the core is the **periphery**, which includes a wide range of culturally specific, emotional, and associative elements. These peripheral components are highly flexible and vary

depending on individual experience, social context, and cultural background. The interaction between the core and peripheral layers demonstrates that concepts are not static entities but dynamic systems of meaning that integrate both universal and culture-specific features.

2. Dynamic Nature of Concepts

The findings indicate that concepts are inherently dynamic and evolve over time in response to social, technological, and cultural transformations. Changes in societal values, scientific progress, and communication practices contribute to the continuous reconfiguration of conceptual structures.

For instance, technological advancement has significantly altered the conceptualization of terms such as “communication” and “knowledge,” expanding their meanings beyond traditional boundaries. This dynamic nature reflects the adaptability of human cognition and supports the view that conceptual systems are closely linked to historical and social development [13].

3. Cultural Specificity of Concepts

The study confirms that concepts are deeply embedded in cultural contexts and therefore exhibit significant variation across different linguistic communities. Cultural norms, values, and traditions play a crucial role in shaping how concepts are structured and interpreted.

A comparative analysis of the concept of *happiness* illustrates this phenomenon. In many Western cultures, happiness is primarily associated with personal achievement, independence, and self-realization. In contrast, in Uzbek culture, the concept is more closely related to collective well-being, family harmony, social relationships, and acceptance of social responsibilities.

This contrast demonstrates that conceptual meaning is not universal but is constructed within specific cultural frameworks, reflecting distinct worldviews and systems of values.

4. Concepts Beyond Lexical Meaning

The results further show that concepts cannot be reduced to simple dictionary definitions. While lexical meaning provides a basic semantic description, concepts encompass a broader range of cognitive and cultural elements, including symbolic interpretations, emotional associations, and experiential knowledge.

For example, the concept of *home* extends beyond its literal meaning as a physical place of residence. It includes emotional dimensions such as security, belonging, and identity, as well as cultural meanings related to family traditions and social practices. This supports the argument that conceptual meaning operates at a deeper cognitive level than lexical semantics and involves complex mental representations shaped by both individual and collective experience [14].

Discussion

The findings confirm that concepts function as **cognitive-cultural models** linking language, thought, and culture. They are shaped by both individual experience and collective knowledge.

The concept of *home*, for instance, illustrates how linguistic meaning expands into cultural symbolism, including identity, belonging, and emotional attachment. In Uzbek culture, this concept is closely associated with hospitality traditions and social values.

The study also supports the idea that metaphor is a key mechanism of conceptualization [15]. Cultural differences influence how abstract concepts are structured and understood, which highlights the importance of cross-cultural analysis.

Conclusion

Concepts are essential units in cognitive linguistics that reflect the interaction between language, cognition, and culture. They are:

- multi-dimensional,

- dynamic,
- culturally dependent.

The study contributes to cognitive linguistics by emphasizing cultural variability and integrating non-Western perspectives into conceptual analysis.

Scientific novelty:

- integrative cognitive-cultural approach;
- focus on Uzbek conceptual system;
- cross-cultural comparative insight.

Future research should incorporate empirical methods such as corpus analysis and experimental studies.

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