

---

# CONCEPTUAL FEATURES OF MENTAL STRUCTURE OF ASSESSMENT

Olga N. Prokhorova, Igor V. Chekulai, Jerome Baghana,  
Irina A. Kuprieva, Andrey P. Peresyarkin

Belgorod State University, 85 Pobedy St., Belgorod, 308015 (RUSSIA)  
kuprieva@yandex.ru

DOI: 10.7813/jll.2015/6-2/46

Received: 30 Jan, 2015

Accepted: 23 Mar, 2015

## ABSTRACT

This article describes the conceptual basis of the mental structure of assessment. The main goal of this article is the systemic description of the linguistic and extra linguistic scientific data, analysis of relevant dictionary articles, search for the proper unique mental structure which is capable of storing, transforming, and transmitting knowledge concerning assessment of any object of reality into the meaning of lexemes verbalizing it.

**Key words:** assessment, value, mental structure, concept, conceptual features, verbalization

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The attention of the contemporary scientists is focused on the study of the systemic and the functional meaning of lexemes profiled in the corresponding speech situation. This interest is sustained by the necessity of the analysis of linguistic evidence of lexical meaning modification which is based on certain conditions, yet clear and able to transmit the required information. Moreover, it is very important to study the fact why the communicants perceive the transmitted meaning without any effort. Thus, the linguistic problem of transmitting sense in the discursive space of the modern verbal communication has become one of the most important [1- 3].

This really means that a certain lexeme can serve as a material embodiment of the mental structure. It may actualize a particular feature of the conceptualized situation. And in addition to the ability of verbalizing the basic invariant concept identifiers, it is capable of transmitting some specific meaning (connotative, expressive, evaluative). But the main question is how this additional meaning is transmitted.

If we consider the postulates of modern linguistics saying that knowledge about every referent of nomination can be conceptualized and shown as a certain mental structure that stores some data about it, transmits it verbally, any thematic group of the vocabulary has the right to relate to the group of its verbalizers due to its ability of transferring any knowledge about it [1].

This explanation is quite logical, but it does not make clear the situation how connotations are added to semantics. If we follow the logic of cognitivist approach, we assume that each lexeme expressing additional semantics (in addition to its own), must meet the criteria of the conceptual identifier of the verbalized mental structures and the mental structure expressing assessment at the same time.

Or any mental structure should have a supply of optional features allowing to develop additional meaning of assessment. However, these optional features of mental structures must in this case be identical.

In this article we will try to search the mechanisms of adding of connotation and the way it is organized on the conceptual level by identifying the grounds of mental structure formation, which, in its turn, intersects with other mental structures of identical order.

## 2. METHODS

The ongoing research is mainly based on the cognitive methodology. The latter is seen as the most important method to reveal the true nature of the studied mental structure in the English lingvo culture. The main part of this linguistic method is aimed at the lexical level of the ongoing research.

## 3. MAIN PART

In order to achieve this goal taking into consideration the ideas of cognitive approach we turn to the description of this phenomenon in extra linguistics and specify the notions of *value* and *assessment*. In recent studies assessment is seen as a result of qualifying activity of consciousness that motivates cognition and formation of meaning of particular objects of reality by comparing the attitude to it with some mental sample. The latter is transmitted with the experience of the whole lingvo cultural community by lexemes, and refers to the appropriate mental structures of assessment [4].

In other words, the value appears to us as a stable frame of assessment categorization, and assessment – as a notion formed on the basis of the standard representation of a particular phenomenon. Accordingly, taking into consideration the extra linguistic information, based on the summary of the data taken from philosophy, psychology and physiology, we can speak about the formation of the mental structure of assessment which exists in the conscience of lingvo cultural community, and also about the mechanisms of its verbalization on the intersection with any other thematic mental structures.

The linguistic aspect of assessment and value and their categorization seen as the projection of such phenomena into the language was studied by N.D. Arutiunova, E.M. Wolf, M.V. Nikitin, A.A. Ivin, M.S. Retunskaya, I.V. Chekulaev et al. The works of these scholars made the basis and solid theoretical foundation of lingvo axiology, gave the basic definitions of value and assessment, explained the way they are reflected in the language, worked out the problem of evaluative vocabulary etc. However, the problems of meaning expansion and assessed connotation, adding these connotations on the

---

conceptual level, special features of their verbalization as a result of the mechanism explained from the point of view of synergistic doctrine are still not studied in the contemporary linguistic works [2].

To solve this problem in the ongoing study we turn directly to the modeling of the mental structure of assessment relevant for the subsequent linguistic analysis.

We try to model the mental structure of assessment because, as stated earlier, such structures being transmitted from generation to generation of a lingvo cultural community, are subject to modification as a result of certain historical changes and slightly depend on subjective factors. This turns to be some sort of a pattern that determines the uniqueness of the considered mentality. Nevertheless, we believe that, despite the variability, there are general principles of assessment, which are conceptually expressed in the corresponding identifier. To describe them, we turn to search and establish a unique mental structure of assessment, relevant for subsequent verification on the material of several languages in the comparative analysis in terms of its verbalization.

Analysis of linguistic works and primary work with authentic linguistic data show that the most appropriate mental structure that facilitate categorization of assessment in several language groups is a concept. The last is understood as a global unit of thought, representing a quantum of the structured knowledge [5]. This mental structure is rather amorphous. This factor allows to communicate freely with the outside world and receive information from the outside, and preserve a certain invariant structure which contributes to its identification and differentiation. The first and second properties are relevant due to the nuclear peripheral structure. The nuclear is invariant, the periphery is variable depending on certain optional features. The concept is embodied in the form of a language due to its own means of objectification [6].

At the same time, responding to the criteria of nuclear features of the concept at the systemic level, lexemes correspond to the prototypical or nuclear level of the system of verbalizers, and actualize, optional features of the concept at the functional level, so they get a place on the periphery. This distinction refers exclusively to a specific vocabulary which has a meaning of connotation on the systemic level [7].

Definitional analysis of such vocabulary allows to set the place of each lexical unit in the hierarchy of the system of concept verbalizers and work out the number of lexemes that constitute the active assessment lexical layer of the modern language.

To characterize the concept of assessment we appeal to conceptual analysis of nouns assessment and *оценка*. So Modern Dictionaries offer the following definitions:

*assessment – the act of judging or assessing a person or situation or event* [8];

*оценка – -и, ж. 1, смотрите оценить. 2. мнение о ценности, уровне или значении кого-, чего-нибудь* [9].

Cognitive interpretation and proper linguistic study reveal the following invariant conceptual components of the mental structure *modus, object, attitude, subjectivity/objectivity* (opinion of the value, level or value of someone, something).

Among the optional features, as seen from the analysis of linguistic facts, appear *options, intensity, gender etc.* List of the latter, as mentioned earlier, is not and can not be exhaustive [10] on the basis of openness and transparency of the boundaries of the concept as a mental structure of the dynamic nature.

The extracted features can be analyzed in more detail. It seems that the properties designated as *modus, object, attitude and subjectivity / objectivity* are directly interacting.

The studied interpretation of the definition implies that the estimation has a verbalization of the individual reflection of an object or phenomenon. It is clear that under the category of assessment fall the objects and phenomena that are not lacunas.

According to some scholars (M.V. Bohuslavsky et al.), the assessment is a reflection of the cognitive experience of a single society that [experience] is a source of objective information, that is a prerequisite for the formation of assessment as such.

However, as suggested by modern science, the human mind preserves an objective view of a particular object or phenomenon and it is usually accompanied by the presence of some subjective thoughts that provide emotional perception of the object. The presence of such a subjective basis of information is, in our opinion, the following prerequisite for the formation of the assessment. Here it should be noted that the assessment as a subjective phenomenon correlates with the pragmatic function of language, as expressed like a positive or negative attitude towards the project: that is, the individual shall know the pragmatic significance of the object to meet the different needs of a specific subject in its operations.

These processes (cognition or search of existing objective information, subjective data collection) are directly manifested in a verbalized form of assessment - judgment-modus. There is no doubt that a subjective attitude of a communicant manifests itself in judgments, which are constructed in accordance with the laws of formal logic.

The above features make it possible to build the next algorithm or the minimum conditions for the formation of assessment: it is possible, if there is an object of (initial pulse), the subject of assessment and assessment base marker representing the position of the subject in approving or disapproving the object of assessment.

When it comes to the study of the optional elements of the mental structure their close consideration leads to the assumption of a direct correlation with their different nuclear characteristics of assessment.

Thus, assessment parameters are closely related to the objective basis of its formation. The kind of objective knowledge about the object subjected to assessment, determine to some extent the options for a possible result of the formation of subjective attitude. However, it can not be argued that the identification of the parameters of the assessment is the obligatory part of the algorithm. This can occur unconsciously or intuitively, so this fact eliminates the parametrial factor out of logical and formal algorithm [10].

Such feature as a gender perspective, in a sense, is a kind of a subjective factor. Formation of the emotional component of reflection of the object in the mind of the individual depends among the other things, on the psychological characteristics of this object and the gender plays an important role in this case. It has already been established that women and men are different in relation to the way they perceive their environment, and it is which manifested as a rule, in the formation of peripheral views.

The conceptual feature *intensity*, according to our observations, is quite contradictory in its manifestations. It depends on the parametrial factors (for certain parameters assessment can not vary infinitely). This fact provides some stability of assessment. But it is socially conditioned (in a different environment assessment may change its intensity). It also depends on other extra linguistic factors (social status, mental characteristics, education, training etc.).

Modern scholars differentiate three conditional states of intensity of assessment: mild, moderate and intensive. In comparison with other aspects of classification of assessment (positive, neutral, negative), we note that the mild assessment often tends to be equal to neutral connotation seen in the contextual situation and is characterized by the existence of some

---

neutralizer of assessment in the lexical surrounding of a certain verbalizer. Intensive assessment, of course, can be both positive and negative. It implies, as a rule, the active emotive component associated with a general trend to verbalize some aggressive mode or that sort of a negative attitude.

All the conceptual optional features mentioned above, as stated previously, can be identified and completed in accordance with the consideration of them in authentic literature in the analysis of the concept verbalizers.

As seen from their description they profile a particular feature of the situation of assessment and impact on the semantics of certain lexemes in particular communication situations.

Accordingly, the cognitive interpretation of examples of actual material containing lexemes with connotation of assessment will not only verify the required conceptual features, enlarge to the set of optional conceptual features, but also to point out the path of the semantics modification of lexemes at the functional level.

Thus, the assessment is the main judgment under investigation in lingvo axiology in terms of verbalization ideas of value in society. It differs from the value and depends directly upon it.

Mental structure of assessment when viewed from the perspective of research from the point of view of the conceptual foundations of its formation, is characterized by a fairly structured, but not free form from the point of view of its variation.

Due to the description of obligatory and optional conceptual features of the mental structure of assessment it becomes possible to determine the features and semantics modification of lexemes in certain discursive conditions in terms of lingvo synergetic approach. This fact is seen as a perspective of the future study.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

As it is seen from the interpretation of the given data the process of assessment and its verbalization is connected with some extra linguistic factors which constitute the lingvo cultural background of the situation and is transmitted in the meaning of lexemes. These lexemes possess connotation of assessment and on this basis are united as verbalizers of a certain mental structure in a relevant thematic group. The mental structure coincides with a concept of dynamic nature and transparent boundaries. The named characteristics help the concept to interrelate with other identical mental structures and to show the way the meaning of some concept verbalizers change in different contexts.

#### 5. RESULTS

To summarize, the most relevant mental structure of assessment is a concept which possesses a number of obligatory and optional elements which are verbalized by lexical means.

#### REFERENCES

1. Cognition and categorization, 1978. Hillsdale. pp: 115.
2. Cognitive linguistics: Foundations, Scope and Methodology. 1999. Berlin, N.Y.: Mouton der Gruyter. pp: 270.
3. Baumgartner K., 1966. Die Structur des Bedeutungsfeldes. Satz und Wort im hentigen Deutsch. Dusseldorf. pp: 220.
4. Chekulaj I. V., 2014. Princip ocenochnoj aktualizacii v sovremennom anglijskom jazyke. M.: INFRA-M. pp: 159.
5. Popova, Z.D., Sternin, I.A., 1999. Ponjatje «koncept» v lingvisticheskikh issledovanijah. Voronezh: Izd-vo VGU. pp: 30
6. Evans, V., Green, M., 2006. Cognitive linguistics: an introduction. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ., pp: 830.
7. Karasik V. I., 2009. Jazykovye kljuchi: monografija / nauch.-issled. Laboratorija «Aksiologicheskaja lingvistika». M.: Gnozis. pp: 406.
8. Assessment, 2015. URL: <http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/assessment>
9. Tolkovyj slovar' russkogo jazyka, 2015. URL: <http://www.vedu.ru/expdic/21552/>
10. German, A.I., Pishhal'nikova, V.A., 1999. Vvedenie v lingvosinergetiku: monografija; Alt. gos. Un-t. Barnaul: Alt. gos. un-t, pp: 127