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### **MODERN CONCEPTS: FROM A STATIC TO DYNAMIC UNIT**

*The article reveals the concept interpretation shift from a static to dynamic mental structure. The description is done within East European schools of cognitive linguistics correlating with works of psychologists, biologists and philosophers.*

*The author analyses approaches that were widely used by researchers in treating the concept term – the psychological, logical-philosophical, culturological, integrative ones.*

*Summarizing the approaches, the author singles out the main concept features within the modern stage of cognitive linguistics. Finally, author's own concept definition is formed: a mental dynamic information unit whose verbal name represents a collective empirical unity of individual contacts with the material world, describes attitude to it and shows community development.*

**Key words:** *concept, dynamics, concept defining approaches, East European cognitive linguistics.*

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**Problem.** East European linguists have been always interested in researching concepts as mental units. In contrast to previous studies (Karasik and Slyshkin, 2001; Kubryakova, 1996; Popova and Sternin, 2007; Prikhodko, 2013), concepts are regarded now as dynamic rather than static structures (Kravchenko, 2005; Martynyuk, 2017; Shevchenko, 2006; Tatsenko, 2018; Zalevskaya, 2005). The prevalence of such a transition has to be explained properly for showing how the idea of the concept has evolved and what the concept itself means today from the dynamic perspective. This determines **the research relevance**.

**The research object** is concept. **The topic** is theoretical interpretation of concept evolution to a dynamic mind structure.

**The purpose** is establishing a modern definition of concept as a dynamic structure. That will be completed via the following **tasks**:

- 1) to represent existing approaches to concept definitions;
- 2) to explicate the essence of each approach;
- 3) to analyze approaches and produce a summary on concept dynamics with providing subsequently the final modern concept definition.

**Research.** Although cognitive linguistics was founded many years ago, the issue of concept definition is still open. The reason lies in the fact that the concept itself has a complex nature as an interdisciplinary object. Therefore, it is interpreted via different approaches.

The pioneer defining principle was *the psychological approach*, which introduced the term into linguistics. In 1928, there was S. Askoldov's paper "Concept and Word". It provided the first ever concept idea: a mind formation replacing a set of similar things (Askoldov, 1997, p. 269–270). Like a dyad "phoneme (invariant) – sound (variant)", concept is a mental invariant of the considered thing that may have many real analogues. In other words, the replacing function is concept relation to any similar referents.

Replacement is debatable in concept ontology. On the one hand, concept is ascribed to lexeme totally (Askoldov, 1997, p. 269–270). On the other hand, each shade of lexical meaning is replaced by corresponding concepts as to human occupation (Likhachev, 1999, p. 147–153). For example, the common seme of the word “mediator” has an interbranch difference. In diplomacy, the person for settling conflicts is implied. In biology, a chemical substance for transmitting nerve impulses is meant. In music, a tiny device for easy guitar play is implicated (Dictionary by Merriam-Webster, 2021).

S. Askoldov’s view on concept is regarded within rationality and irrationality: whether it has a purely logical or extra aesthetic aspect. Subsequently, two concept types are differentiated – the cognitive and artistic ones (Askoldov, 1997, p. 274–276). That gives two linguistic approaches to the concept definition. They are the linguocognitive and linguocultural ones.

**The linguocognitive approach** regards concept via world conscious cognition when its mental form correlates with real material analogues. Such a position produces the following definitions of concept:

a) Discrete mind structure with a thinking function. It reveals information about phenomena as a result of summarized cognition experience of a person or community in general (Popova and Sternin, 2007, p. 34);

b) Discrete unit of collective mind, which is stored in national memory of native speakers in the verbal form (Babushkin, 2001, p. 53);

c) Operative mental unit for accumulating human knowledge and experience as an information quantum about real or imaginary phenomena, which is called by a verbal sign (Kubryakova, 1996, p. 90–93);

d) Mind element whose verbal name transfers certain meaning as to some pragmatic needs (Boldyrev, 2001, p. 25–35).

**The linguocultural approach** covers not only the mental nature of concept but also its values for a certain nation. This provides corresponding definitions as well:

a) Conventional mental structure of individual or collective mind, which is determined by culture and objectified by linguistic resources. It concentrates on a value point whose associating potential is arranged by decreasing relevance as core and periphery (Karasik and Slyshkin, 2001, p. 75–79);

b) Culturally marked unit of social mind. It appeals to spiritual values named via a lexical-semantic paradigm of verbal signs – words, phraseological units, aphorisms (Vorkachev, 2001, p. 64–72);

c) Culturally specific semantic formation. As a knowledge quantum, it reflects nation’s outlook via emotional, expressive and value aspects (Maslova, 2004, p. 36).

Apart from the psychological principle, there is **the logical-philosophical approach**. As a means for imagining material things in terms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century logic and philosophy, concept is a mental unit interpreted within a semantic triangle “lexeme – idea – thing” and being equal to notion (Kolesov and Pimenova, 2012, p. 28–31). A material thing is named by a verbal sign, which activates in mind a mental idea about the thing (word meaning as notion content). The idea correlates with the described thing as an object meaning (notion volume). The thing itself is equated with linguistic reality, which is embodied by the verbal sign (notion sense). Therefore, concept or notion is a unity of sign, meaning and sense. It is the same as the triangle “sign – meaning – sense” proposed by G. Frege, the German philosopher (Frege, 1892, p. 25–50).

Meaning and sense of the logical-philosophical concept view attracts psychological studies. In particular, an issue is raised how they correlate with the perception of reality. A smart idea was stated by A. Leontev. He equates meaning with real and collectively objective

perception while sense is imaginary subjective world outlook (Leontev, 2004, p. 96–121, 178–184). The latter is motivated by speaker's surrounding circumstances. Thus, sense as concept reflection has a changing nature. That was proved by G. Stratton in tests of inversion glasses: if a human perceives things (meanings) upside down, his outlook (sense) is distorted (Stratton, 1897). So, it is sense that determines truth of conscious world reflection.

Surrounding circumstances can be treated not only as a purely physical shift in world perception. Human is a social creature. Therefore, his sense formation and subsequent concept reflection depend on communication environment. It is vividly shown by tests with white and black pyramids: if 9 of 10 persons intentionally say both pyramids are white (lie), then the last individual usually repeats the same because of possible shame feeling (Mukhina, 2011, p. 178). In other words, reality as meaning may be distorted in mind through biased sense, which influences human attitude to a concept.

A. Leontev's view on objective reality (meaning) and its subjective perception (sense) provides a reason to state that concept includes not only information perception and analysis but also its emotive after-consideration with further feedback to speech addressee. Thus, concept is interpreted as a perceptive-cognitive-affective-volitional structure of dynamic nature with a communicatively caused functioning. Such a position is taken by many scholars (Martynyuk, 2017, p. 45; Tatsenko, 2018, p. 137; Zalevskaya, 2005, p. 243).

The above-mentioned argument suggests that concept empirical evolution in mind is promoted by the nervous system. As a response to irritants, excitation of new varying neuron groups accumulates new information on a certain world phenomenon and determines a refreshed human attitude to it. Such an irritant may be verbal or any other surrounding stimulus. For example, the PAIN concept-information is activated and emotively considered in mind if a person sees or hears lexemes as its names ("pain", "migraine", "itch", "fracture", etc.), touches something (e.g. burns or cuts fingers), suffers from diseases. Each time the information is empirically supplemented and revalued, which changes human behavior in cases of future pain. So, any nervous signal can belong to concept signs while verbal means are used for concept distribution in community communication rather than for its existence. This statement is supported by both biologists (Damasio, 1989; Hardy, 1998; Sechenov, 1953) and linguists (Bickerton, 1990; Kravchenko, 2005; Shevchenko, 2006).

The impact of receptors' dynamics on individual attitude to concept argues it is only in mind revealed maximally (as a result of total perception experience). In contrast to that, receptors themselves are separate "bricks" to produce a general mental picture of covered information. Therefore, no verbal or non-verbal sign may be a single activator of the whole concept knowledge.

Among many concept references, it is linguistic resources that are the best tool for concept reconstruction. This is explained by the following fact: although not to the full extent, they can most widely embody the rising accumulated human experience. In other words, a verbal sign unfolds a mental text-concept whose new features from different speech situations fold reversely into the initial sign (Zhabotinskaya, 2013).

This induces scholars to reproduce concepts via complex research of their names – nominative field (Popova and Sternin, 2007, p. 78–79), lexical-semantic paradigm (Vorkachev, 2001, p. 68), intrazone (Prikhodko, 2013, p. 79). Concept signs can belong to multi-level units – from morphemes to texts (Boldyrev, 2001, p. 27; Karasik and Slyshkin, 2001, p. 78; Zhabotinskaya, 2013, p. 53). Spelling mistakes and paralinguistic phenomena may appeal to concepts too. For example, the Ukrainian misspelled lexeme "проффесор" activates the ILLITERACY concept; a blue nose or tapping on a neck refers to the ALCOHOLISM concept (Prikhodko, 2013, p. 79). Concepts may be studied via verbal and non-verbal means simultaneously. That is traced in using creolized texts as mix of words and visual images –

leaflets, memes, posts, etc. (Bondarenko, 2017; Stepanova, 2013; Zlokazov and Lipnitskiy, 2018).

Therefore, everything related to verbal and non-verbal spheres can be taken as a base for reconstructing concepts. It is called “concept polyappeal” (Slyshkin, 2004, p. 35–44).

Some linguists proceeded to further interpretation of concept signs. According to them (Kubryakova, 1996, p. 92), concept does not depend on the word naming it. Structural parts of speech do not possess lexical meanings although they appeal to concepts in any case. For example, “but” appeals to CONTRASTING, “after” refers to TIME. The same concerns interjections: “oh” is associated with TIREDNESS, “wow” stands for WONDER, etc.

Besides, new concept names may be created artificially when lexemes are used in a non-conventional sense as to pragmatic needs (Boldyrev, 2001, p. 26). In such a case, the word is bound with unique sense rather than objective meaning, which distorts the communicative effect in a group and keeps it in another one. It can be seen in producing passwords. For example, if that has been previously arranged, the lexeme “щuka” appeals to TRUST rather than FISH in communication.

Sentences are applied as artificial concept names as well. Responses to passwords are often arranged to secure the highest privacy of speech. Sometimes, intermediate check questions are asked: *New England clam chowder. – Red or white? – White* (Ace Venture: Pet Detective, 1993). On the other hand, the TRUST concept may be protected by an intentionally asked lie: *You are Charles Westmoreland, right? – Do I know you? – I knew your wife before she passed. – You knew Marla? – You mean Ann? – How did you meet? – We taught together in Boston. – East Farmington? – You mean West Wilmington? – No more tests* (Prison Break, 2005). The same pragmatism is traced within non-verbal signs: a specific gesture, knock, etc. Thus, any sign appeals to concepts and the main role in this case is performed by agreed sense rather than meaning.

The logical-philosophical view on concept and notion (along with the psychological and neurobiological aspects) adjoins *the culturological approach*. According to Yu. Stepanov, logic applies notions while concepts are involved into culture. Notions match concepts to a certain extent (Stepanov, 2004, p. 42–83): they comprise a set of features (content for the former, sense for the latter) that explicate a class of things (volume and meaning, respectively). However, concept features, in contrast to notion ones, are structurally stratified by relevance in social mind. In other words, it defines how significant this concept is for the corresponding group. Such an interpretation provides a layered model of the concept structure. For example, within the MARCH 8 and FEBRUARY 23 concepts, there are three layers:

- a) The active feature (relevant for all people – both are holidays);
- b) The passive feature (relevant for separate groups – the first is a women’s day, the second is a men’s day);
- c) The etymological feature (a subconsciously neutral base for concept existence – these occasions appeared thanks to different social circumstances that are usually not mentioned).

So, notion is a “partly-fledged” concept rather than concept itself. This is explained by the following fact: notions exist outside consciousness; thus, they are not valued affectively by human mind. It is only that concept fully-fledged which is consciously valued. As a result, concept belongs to ethnocultural heritage. Such an idea is supported by A. Prikhodko: he represents concept as a unity of three elements – the notion, perceptive image and valorizing component – in contrast to notion whose nature excludes valorization itself (Prikhodko, 2013, p. 20–30). The above-stated interpretation is similar to concept regarded as a perceptive-

cognitive-affective-volitional unit of dynamic nature where mind valuing is the main concept feature as well.

Importance of the valorization (established via context and quantity analysis) among notion (defined with component analysis) and image (determined through conceptual metaphors or associative experiment) is stressed by the fact that concepts are classified as to valorizing vectors. Opposite values distinguish between concepts (GOOD) and anti-concepts (EVIL) which are generalized to meso-concept (DEED) with a neutral assessment (Prihodko, 2013, p. 66–76). Reasonability of such a typology is explained by comparing a concept with another one: GOOD cannot be considered if not contrasted to EVIL within DEEDS. That may be used to understand how morally developed a nation's culture is.

Concept cultural motivation is traced not only from the culturological perspective. *The integrative approach* is significant as well. According to it, concept is treated within interbranch human activities when society is located on a certain development stage. Therefore, total information activated by concept tends to measuring in many fields of social communications; subsequently, it moves from one sphere into another (Lyapin, 1997, p. 11–35). In other words, the activated essence is analyzed via several branches simultaneously so that the whole concept structure widens by content, which results in a new evolution level of nation's culture. It is the way to produce new meanings for polysemantic words that enrich humanity cultural heritage (like the previously described D. Likhachev's idea that concept mentally replaces different meanings of the same lexeme).

The above-mentioned approaches provide a summary of features traced in the modern concept status:

1) Concept is a mental unit: it exists in human mind as empirically self-accumulating information and appeals to a material object or phenomenon;

2) Concept ontology is conditioned by neurons: varying receptor signals of inner and outer character rearrange the concept structure. That results in dynamic change of person's attitude to the concept itself;

3) Concept distribution is conditioned by social circumstances: depending on pragmatic needs, it is nominated by a paradigm of verbal and non-verbal means. They are used for concept communicative objectification;

4) Concepts may be reconstructed only in a supposed form: each human has its own neuron experience of interaction with them. Thus, concepts are reproduced only in a collective dimension, which is done best of all via a verbal sign as a carrier of group values. It opens access to the general heritage of mental social contacts with the concept;

5) Concept as information evolves in several human branches simultaneously, which reflects humanity progress.

**Conclusion.** Generalization of these five statements provides our own definition of modern concept as a dynamic entity. Subsequently, concept is regarded by us as *a mental dynamic information unit whose verbal name represents a collective empirical unity of individual contacts with the material world, describes attitude to it and shows community development.*

Dynamic nature of modern concepts induces to state that they tend to self-stabilization. In other words, concept may be treated as a self-regulating (synergetic) empirical system. That can be interpreted in our future studies as **the research prospect.**

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## **В. В. Степанов**

### **СУЧАСНІ КОНЦЕПТИ: ВІД СТАТИЧНОЇ ДО ДИНАМІЧНОЇ ОДИНИЦІ**

Стаття розкриває перехід трактувань терміну «концепт» від статичної до динамічно мінливої ментальної одиниці. Опис здійснюється в контексті східноєвропейських шкіл когнітивної лінгвістики: Харківської (А. Мартинюк, І. Шевченко), Черкаської (С. Жаботинська), Запорізької (А. Приходько), Сумської (Н. Таценко), Тамбовської (М. Болдирев), Воронежської (А. Бабушкін, З. Попова, Й. Стернін), Волгоградської (В. Карасик, Г. Слишкін), Кубанської (С. Воркачов), Московської (О. Кубрякова), Санкт-Петербурзької і Кемеровської (В. Колесов, Д. Ліхачов, М. Піменова), Іркутської (О. Кравченко), Тверської (О. Залевська), Вітебської (В. Маслова) тощо. Водночас праці східноєвропейських когнітивістів

*перекликаються з роботами фахівців у галузі психологічних, біологічних, філософських наук: С. Аскольдов, К. Гарді, А. Дамасіо, О. Леонт'єв, В. Мухіна, І. Сеченов, Г. Фреге.*

*Автор оглядає підходи, якими керувалися дослідники у розумінні терміну «концепт». Зокрема, експлікуються психологічний, логіко-філософський, культурологічний, інтегративний підходи.*

*Психологічний підхід розглядає концепт як ментальне утворення з функцією заміщення однорідних предметів. Залежно від раціонально-ірраціонального наповнення, концепти поділяються на пізнавальні і художні (з чисто логічними або додатково оцінними вкрапленнями – за лінгвокогнітивним та лінгвокультурним ракурсами відповідно).*

*Логіко-філософський підхід подає концепт як ментальну єдність у вимірі семантичного трикутника «слово – ідея – річ», що тотожно поняттю із двома елементами: значення та смисл. У сенсорному і соціально-комунікативному сенсі, концепт визнається динамічно мінливим ментальним утворенням, умотивованим нейронними варіаціями.*

*За культурологічним підходом, концепт виводиться як шарова модель трьох компонентів: поняття, образ, цінності. Найбільш важливим компонентом є цінності, оскільки саме валоризація (тобто, постійне переживання людиною) робить структуру повноцінним концептом.*

*В інтегративному підході акцентується увага на багатовимірності концепту у всіх галузях людської діяльності. Відтак, мультивекторна динамічна еволюція концепту демонструє прогрес цивілізації.*

*Резюмуючи, автор виокремлює головні риси сучасного концепту і формує власну дефініцію цього терміну: ментальне динамічне утворення-інформація, вербальне ім'я якого репрезентує колективну емпіричну єдність індивідуальних контактів із матеріальним світом, описує ставлення до нього та фіксує прогрес спільноти.*

**Ключові слова:** *концепт, динаміка, підходи до визначення концепту, східноєвропейська когнітивна лінгвістика.*