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The Mental Structure of Assessment as a Linguistic and Synergetic Phenomenon

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Abstract

The article deals with the problems of the term *mental structure* of assessment seen as the main epistemic model in the consciousness of every representative of society on the one hand, and on the other – as a synergetic tool for linguistic analysis of lexical meaning and its connotation as the means of social attitude verbalization. The mental structure of assessment is a concept, which due to its positive features resembles the non-linear open synergetic system. Special attention in this article is paid to the transmission of sense in the discourse as the basic means of understanding connotations and change of lexical semantics.

Keywords: Value, assessment, mental structure, verbalization, concept, synergetic approach, discourse.

Introduction

Linguistic research of the last decade of the XX century states the fact that language reflects human activity associated with reactions, processes, etc. Moreover, many scientists postulate that social experience is transmitted not only on the conceptual level but also by means of mental structures' verbalization. This idea motivates many of them to identify peculiarities of expression of the most important lingvocultural categories of assessment and their verbalization in the language (Arutjunova, 1990; Arutjunova, 1999; Croft, Cruse, 2004; Kotelnikov, 2000; Kuprieva, 2017). So, to say scholars do not only describe language data in terms of meaning and its connotations, but also have found a special field of science, lingvo-axiology, dealing with the aspect of assessment implicated or explicated on the language level common for synchronic and diachronic types of research.

It is believed that assessment is transmitted in the lingvocultural society from one generation to another by verbal and non-verbal means. The means of the expression of assessment due to certain connotation correlated with the dyad *good-bad* are hidden in the semantics of lexemes or can be revealed under certain contextual conditions. In the first case, it comes to choosing the lexeme with a certain systemic connotation (psychological, emotional, intellectual etc.) from the corresponding thesaurus (Barsalou, 1992; Gizdatov, 1998). The second case is described in linguistics as functional and is not specifically considered taking into account the mechanisms of assessment on the conceptual level and the specific features of its verbalization.

Method

This article is based on the systemic approach to the interdisciplinary analysis. Due to the cognitive cross-disciplinary approach, we take into consideration the anthropocentric factor, linguistic and non-linguistic information, especially dealing with the problem of mentality and language correlation.

Main Part

Taking into consideration the fact that value and assessment are interrelated, interdependent phenomena (Ivin, 1970; Naciscione, 2010; Nikitin, 1996; Nikitin,

2003; Retunskaja, 1998; Chekulay, 2013), dynamic and susceptible to change, they should be considered from the point of view of synergy as the science of self-developing systems. In order to use the synergetic approach in the linguistic study it is necessary to adapt synergistic tools (specialized in establishing the identities of phenomena of different nature (Bertalanfi, 1969; German, 1999; Kotelnikov, 2000; Krylov, Kurdjumov, Malineckij, 1990; Peresypkin, 2011) to the axiological and linguistic doctrine as well as interdisciplinary study. Moreover, it is universally acknowledged that mental structures may be isolated only for the sake of any linguistic analysis and due to the transparency of their borders they establish contact with other mental structures. In the ongoing research we take into consideration the mentioned specific feature of mental structures and also postulate that fact that the mental structure of assessment presents a set of interrelated elements, endowed with properties such as self-organization (the system's ability to self-development and self-regulation, taking into account information coming from outside (Kotelnikov, 2000)), transparency (information exchange capacity, energy or substance with the environment (Bertalanfi, 1969), the non-linearity (the tendency to metamorphosis under the influence of factors that are in the complex interactions (German, Pishhalnikova, 1999)), the fluctuations (fluctuation or random from the equilibrium state of the system (Kotelnikov, 2000)), dissipative state (a reflection of changes of the system or ability to *forget* the nature of external influence (Krylov, Kurdjumov, Malineckij, 1990).

These properties provide a synergetic evolution of systems and ability of their elements to be in correlation with the outside world through the exchange of information and remain relatively stable due to intra-order parameters - attractors. Violation of the relative equilibrium phase occurs in such a system each time when some new information coming from the outside disturbs a balance and as a result of the *competition* of elements chaos happens, the system begins its fluctuations, which lead the system to its climax – the bifurcation point. In this case, the direction of the system development is found by the system without the participation of the subjective factor. However, regardless of the direction of its development, the system acquires new properties and new quality increments, completing another round of evolutionary

development. Regarding the equilibrium state of the system, we should point out that it is not the last stage as the further development of the system is carried out according to an identical algorithm.

If to summarize the extra-linguistic information on the problem of value and assessment in order to find specific features for further implementation of synergetic tools, we should note the following features relevant for the present study:

- Assessment is the result of the qualifying action of consciousness that motivates cognition of the world and the formation of attitude towards this or that phenomenon through comparisons with a certain mental scale - value system;

- The value system passes on from generation to generation, and on the language level assessment is transmitted through connotation reflecting the experience of the whole lingvocultural community;

- Values appear to us as a stable framework for categorization formed on the basis of the idea of a particular phenomenon;

- Assessment as the cognitive phenomenon of order is based on the system of values and is a relatively autonomous mental structure, which regularly intersects with other mental structures.

From our point of view, the most relevant mental structure that is verbalized through connotations of assessment is the concept. General scientific approach to this term describes it a global unit of thought, the quantum of structured knowledge. This common understanding of the mental structure of assessment allows it to have an invariant structure in the form of its obligatory attributes, which contribute to its identification and differentiation, and attract additional (sometimes even non-associated with the concept) information in the periphery, thereby triggering evolutionary processes. All invariant prototypical information is stored in the core of the concept and contributes to its recognition. Periphery, on the contrary, contains a great variety of variant knowledge.

The concept includes countless means of objectification that are associated with it semantically due to the ability of its verbalizers to have systemic and/or functional

meaning which implies obligatory conceptual signs. Such objectification means determine the nuclear position of the meaning of assessment. The peripheral zone of verbalizers objectifies concept only at the functional level and is open to any information enrichment (Barsalou, 1992; Popova, Sternin, 1999).

If to carry out the definitional and conceptual analysis of the words *assessment* and *value* one should take into account the extra-linguistic facts that can speak of such invariant conceptual components of the mental structure as *modus*, *object*, *attitude*, *subjectivity/objectivity* (The opinion of value or value of someone, something). The analysis of linguistic facts also helps to work out optional components, which are called *parameters*, *intensity*, *gender* etc.

This marked definition and revealed structure make explicit the fact that assessment is verbalized as individual reflection of an object or phenomenon in consciousness. It is also clear that assessment of objects and phenomena depends on the scale of the system of values mixed with personal experience. In this case, we rely on the opinion of linguists that assessment serves as 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. We assume that despite the relative value of the objective background of the category, the assessment process is a subjective reflection, accompanied by emotional perception of the object.

Thus, the obvious one is the fact that being an objective-subjective category value is associated with pragmatism, which allows us to consider its representation at different levels of the language system, especially in terms of the positive/negative opinion in determining the pragmatic significance of the object for the satisfaction of certain specific needs of the subject to his or her operations. These processes (cognition, objective data, subjective data collection) are directly manifested in verbalization correlated with the assessment forms - *modus-judgment*. There is no doubt that the communicant forms a subjective attitude and expresses it due to specific judgments, which are constructed in accordance with the laws of formal logic and pragmatics. The above features make it possible to build the next algorithm of assessment: assessment of the minimum conditions of existence (it is possible, if there

is an object of assessment (initial), assessment of the subject and the assessment base marker representing the attitude of the subject to the phenomenon.

If we take into account the fact that the assessment, according to many scientists, has three intensity types (weak, medium and intensive, positive, neutral, negative), we can say that the weak assessment involves a neutral verbalization, intensive - positive/negative, while it tends to be more *aggressive* in its verbalization and has rather negative connotation. Thus, the mental structure is verbalized due to its invariant components and thanks to them become recognizable and divergent, possessing an opportunity to profile a particular facet of the process as well as its intensity. Identification and detailed description of the structure of the assessment will also allow verifying its verbalizers, and the very structure, point to the potential trajectory of synergetic changes in the context, conditions of changes mainly in the discourse.

So, presumably, the mental structure of assessment is related to the synergetic system, it is open and non-linear. Its constant interaction with other mental structures provides a constant flow of resources from the outer world, and this new incoming information needs to meet the requirements of the system in order to be identified in accordance with the parameters of order. The new flow of information adapts to the system parameters in the process of evolution when the system spends its own recourses and new recourses. This evolution occurs at the conceptual level, but according to cognitive linguistics the data stored in a mental structure is verbalized by lexemes. And this fact allows to speak of the existence of a whole lexical-semantic system of concept verbalizers. In this case it is possible to identify the principles of the latter in its natural state of representation, or so to say, identify the lexical parameters of the system. The order parameters, the equilibrium state of the system, in this case, is more objectively seen on the contextual level, i.e. while they are verbalized in the discourse (Radchenko, 2009; Schiffrin, 1994; Yule, 1996).

In other words, the equilibrium state of the bilateral system existing as a conceptual and as a lexical-semantic one is vividly seen in isolation, while it is not inverted in the communication process and its conceptual components, as well as

lexemes, are stored in the mind of the communicant. As soon as the process of communication starts, for example, there arises a necessity of the use of lexemes non-typical for their semantics, in occasional meaning so to say, the bilateral system starts its adjustment procedure on the conceptual level which changes the semantics of the lexemes within the acceptable minimum of the system adjustment. The latter is the result of intrasystemic (occurring within the concept) modification processes. They are often fixed in the dictionaries and other lexicographical sources and therefore they are no longer associated with neologisms by the communicants. The meaning spoken of before is the result of extra-systemic modifications when the whole system of concept verbalizers interacts with other conceptual systems and receives new information from the outer world. The results of such processes are idiomatic expressions, connotations.

Conclusion

Discourse is a general form of communication which is practically associated with life. It has direct links with language and speech as well as with sense and its transmission. It contains thematic information, enclosing voluminous amount of data concerning current problems of humanity on a global scale. It conveys a sense of mental structures through their deployment, and verbalization and starts the process of their evolution in achieving the goal of communicants. This fact allows us to consider the required mental structure, taking into account the discursive factors and the fact that the structure is functionally associated with a synergic one. It gives us an opportunity to study the peculiarities of its evolution at the conceptual level and view the change in the verbalizers' meaning.

Result

The ongoing study which is mostly theoretical and is aimed at the formation of hypothesis of the perspective study of lexical meaning with connotation of assessment. But at this stage it allows to conclude the following principles which will form a basis of the practical part: the mental structure of assessment is a concept which possesses its identical invariant features and is flexible to changes due to interaction with identical mental structures; transparent periphery of concept, its existence as a system of elements able to change shows its resemblance to the synergetic system; the

synergetic system of the concept is bilateral (conceptual and lexical-semantic at the same time) and starts its evolution in the discourse; discourse is the means for systemic (extra- and intra-) semantic modifications.

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