THE CONCEPT AS A KEY NOTION IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS: ITS ESSENCE AND STRUCTURE

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Annotation This article explores the fundamental notion of the *concept* within the framework of cognitive linguistics. It traces the historical development of the term from its philosophical origins to its modern linguistic interpretations, emphasizing its central role in the representation of human knowledge, culture, and mental structures. The article outlines the interdisciplinary nature of cognitive linguistics, linking it with cognitive psychology, philosophy, and linguistics. It provides an overview of scholarly views, including those of S. Askoldov, Y. Stepanov, and V. Maslova, highlighting the multifaceted and culturally embedded nature of concepts.

Keywords: concept, cognitive linguistics, notion, frame, scenario, script, cognitive grammar.

Cognitive linguistics, which began to take its first steps in the last quarter of the 20th century, had already become one of the leading branches of linguistics by the early 21st century. The emergence of modern cognitive linguistics is closely associated with the scientific works of American scholars such as J. Miller, J. Bruner, G. Lakoff, R. Langacker, R. Jackendoff, and others. Cognitive linguistics links language to the theory of knowledge in philosophy, and it is a field that studies the interrelation between psychological, biological, and physiological aspects of language formation and social, cultural, and linguistic phenomena.

The word *"cognitive"* derives from the English verb *"to cognize"* – meaning *to know, to perceive, to understand*. Cognitive linguistics is an interdisciplinary field formed at the intersection of various disciplines such as cognitive science, cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, and linguistics. The term "cognitive grammar" was first introduced in 1975 in a paper by G. Lakoff and S. Thompson, and cognitive linguistics began to take root in traditional European linguistics during the 1980s. In Russian linguistics, cognitive linguistics entered through the work of V. Gerasimov. Another prominent representative of Russian linguistics, E. Kubryakova, expressed the following idea: "Cognitology is a multi-faceted scientific domain. The linguistics formed within its scope aims to perform a complex task, namely, to analyze and interpret the relations and systematic correlations between linguistic and cognitive structures."

According to Uzbek linguist Sh. Safarov, “The task of cognitive linguistics is to study, through language, the processes of acquiring, storing, using, and transmitting knowledge, and to analyze the linguistic system and structure as a reflection of human cognition.” Professor A. Mamatov writes: “While cognitive science deals with cognition, cognitive linguistics studies the linguistic representation and verbalization of cognition. The cognitive approach to language considers linguistic form as a reflection of human consciousness, thought, and knowledge structures.” Professor D. Ashurova in her article outlines the aims and unresolved issues of cognitive linguistics, emphasizing the emergence of new subfields such as cognitive phonology, cognitive grammar, cognitive lexicology, and cognitive semantics.

Among the core concepts in cognitive linguistics are *concept*, *frame*, *scenario*, *script*, *categorization*, *conceptualization*, *cognitive structure*, and *cognitive metaphor*. Notably, growing attention is being paid to the study of intermediate language units such as concept, frame, script, and scenario in current linguistics, largely due to the increasing importance of cognitive linguistic issues in research.

In modern cognitive linguistics, the notion of the **“concept”** occupies a central place. This term was borrowed into linguistics from philosophy. In fact, the problem of the concept is not new to linguistics. A concept defines and groups almost all potential meanings of a word and their developments.

Questions about language universals were raised in the Middle Ages, and philosopher Anselm (1033–1109) was the first to introduce the term “concept.” Later, in 1928, the Russian linguist Askoldov used this term in his work and defined a concept as “a unit reflecting the process of thinking about one or another type of notion.” Nevertheless, the term still required thorough explanation even in the 1970s. The integration of the term “concept” into linguistics is associated with the works of English scholars such as E. Chafe, R. Jackendoff, and G. Lakoff in the 1980s, where terms like *conceptualization* and *conceptual essence* were also frequently mentioned.

Many scholars have offered varying interpretations of the word “concept.” It is sometimes regarded as a logical category, a term of practical philosophy, or the basic unit of national mentality. The word “concept” comes from the Latin *conceptus*, meaning “notion” or “idea.” According to the dictionary of cognitive terms, a concept is defined as “a mental representation serving as a reflection of intellectual and psychological resources in human knowledge and skills.” In modern linguistics, the term “concept” is used to refer to the mental image of a lexical unit. In everyday scientific usage, it is often synonymous with “notion.” Before the 1980s, the term was used interchangeably with “notion,” but today it has a broader meaning.

The concept has been extensively studied by many prominent linguists, each interpreting it from their own individual perspective. Scholars such as Y. Stepanov and

S. Askoldov define the concept as a "logical category." Askoldov argues that "a concept is a form in which an element of culture is shaped in a person's mind and through which that culture enters the mental world of an individual." Stepanov offers a culturally oriented definition: "A concept is a concentration of culture in human consciousness; it is the way culture enters the human mental realm. On the other hand, a concept is also a means by which an ordinary individual—who is not a creator of cultural values—enters and occasionally influences culture."

V. Maslova views the concept as a multi-layered structure encompassing not only intellectual reflections by language users but also emotional experience, value judgment, national imagery, and connotation. She emphasizes that each concept possesses a unique structure and is centered around *value*. Concepts serve as tools for exploring culture, and cultural understanding is fundamentally based on the principle of value. Moreover, every concept includes not only a complex mental and semantic structure but also a person's attitude toward the object it represents, incorporating universal, national-cultural, social, and individual-personal components.

Based on the views of scholars such as Y. Stepanov, S. Askoldov, and V. Maslova, it can be concluded that the **concept** is a mental construct defined by culture and manifested through language. It serves as a bridge connecting language, culture, and cognition

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