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Cognitive approach to revealing ethnocultural peculiarities of the linguistic world-image

Анотація. У статті йдеться про етнокультурні особливості мовної картини світу з точки зору когнітивної лінгвістики. В інтерпретативному процесі систему вербальних і граматичних значень співвідносять із етнокультурною компетенцією носіїв мови. Відображений у мові спосіб концептуалізації світу частково універсальний і частково специфічний. На основі зіставного аналізу розглянуто й описано деякі словосполучення, фразеологізми, граматичні поняття (на матеріалі української та англійської мов). Звертається увага на когнітивну оцінку описаних фрагментів даних мовних картин світу.

Ключові слова: етнокультурна компетенція, когнітивна здатність, семантична сумісність слова, дескриптивна ситуація, когнітивна модель, концептуальне наповнення.

Abstract. The article deals with revealing ethnocultural peculiarities of the Ukrainian and English linguistic world-images. The cognitive approach is applied. In order to achieve this target, we have made a cognitive-linguistic analysis of some word-combinations, phraseological units and grammar notions of English and Ukrainian in comparison. The correlation of the cognitive picture of the world with the linguistic world-image is considered. Their close connection is discovered by means of studying the sign expression of the concept in the language. The way of world conceptualization reflected in the language is partially universal and partly culture-specific. The language material under consideration is analyzed at lexical-semantic and grammatical levels. Structural method on the basis of direct component analysis, descriptive and comparative ones are used. We also pay attention to the cognitive evaluation of the revealed ethnocultural peculiarities. The study is carried out within the anthropocentric paradigm.

Introduction. Each linguistic school in the process of development of some knowledge domain puts forward a new language conception, some preferable aspects of its regarding and correspondingly it coins new terms or modifies contents of existing ones defining the methodology and new aims of the research. However, in linguistics as a science referring to the humanities, it all does not happen suddenly and in no time, but it presupposes an achieved result accumulation after effective to some extent functioning of previous schools taking into account their experience. That is vividly observable through the last century which is characterized by the presence of a great number of schools, fast running changes in viewpoints, methods and defining an object of their studying.

Cognitive science and cognitive linguistics proper have appeared recently (about in the 60-ies of the XX century). The contribution of researchers like G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, J. R. Taylor, T. Givon, S. A. Thompson, P. J. Hopper, R. W. Langacker, R. Jackendoff, A. Vezhbitskaia, E. S Kubriakova etc. is valuable in the context of different linguistic aspects – semantical, lexicological and grammatical. The core of the study is its orienting to gain knowledge about knowledge.

Under the present circumstances when international communication is assuming wider scope and in the period of human perception of the world through the prism of studying the language structure and language functioning, its forms and its contents, the translation issue of ethnocultural lexis in particular, into the target language is becoming more urgent. Foreign language unit rendering by means of the target language is sometimes complicated because of not only a necessity to reflect the peculiarities of linguistic realities of the source language but also provide to «a foreigner» the right understanding and comprehension of the concepts which are formed and fixed in certain people's consciousness at a point of their historical development and choose a language means for accurate conveying of the ethnocultural mentality of the native speaker in the target language.

The relevance of the research topic is based on the increased attention to the study of a cognitive-constructive role of the language in revealing ethnoculturally marked ways of perception and reflection of the real world.

The object of the study is ethnocultural peculiarities of the English and Ukrainian linguistic world-images and their cognitive evaluation.

The aim of the research is the cognitive-linguistic analysis of some word-combinations, phraseological units and grammar notions of English and Ukrainian in comparison.

Methods. Several research methods are used in the article: 1) comparative method (oriented towards revealing common and specific features of the two compared languages while analyzing meanings of phraseological units and also in

case of distribution – contextual surrounding of a word); 2) structural method on the basis of direct component analysis in terms of presenting a syntactical structure of a fixed phrase; 3) descriptive method (description of the obtained results while inductive analyzing lexical-semantic and grammatical concepts)

Results and Discussion. According to Yelena Kubriakova, the cognitive approach is based on «understanding the language as cognitive capacity» [9, p. 32]. Within the framework of the given approach to the language an interpretation change of linguistic axioms is inevitable. First of all, the language is regarded as an ontologically single object unifying a static system in our consciousness and speech functioning. Thus the object of studying is extending, excluding an undesirable possibility of taking into consideration language material while «cutting off» its constituent parts, which was observed in preceding linguistic conceptions. Besides, the rigid and logically relevant distinguishing of its categories and classes is becoming inappropriate in case of theoretical studying of the language.

Defining a constructive role of the language in general, and moreover, each language taken separately in shaping thinking, Wilhelm von Humboldt differentiates between universal-logical and idioethnic components within lingual thinking and language content. To our mind, the former enables in fact learning a foreign language basing on functional comparison with a native language while the latter reveals mental peculiarities of a certain ethnos in the process of its cognitive perception of the world.

Any natural language contains the whole history (in its convoluted shape) of a people, it represents the system of values of its native speakers and displays distinctive perception and conceptualization of the world.

World perception being a stable formation presents a form of social consciousness. At a more elaborated level world perception is transformed into world interpretation acquiring world picture characteristics. The latter is a cultural-practical way of comprehension of the world and a human. To be more accurate, the world picture is defined as a totality of concepts which are inset in the consciousness of the individual and society and correspondingly fixed in people's language and individual's speech. Concept- components of the world picture are realia and their cognitive evaluations in the national consciousness as well.

One of the main issues of cognitive linguoculturological studies is studying the functioning of concepts in the consciousness of native speakers of different languages and also revealing the information of cultural importance and concepts of the cultural value in a certain language. The historical experience of a society in terms of its common to all mankind characteristics as well as national ones is fixed in a language. On the one hand living conditions of people, the physical world surrounding them and their sensory-rational approach to proper acting in objective reality form their consciousness and behavior and these are certain to be reflected in a language. On the other hand, a person mostly sees the world through the prism

of active forms of a native language which determines and triggers structures of human thinking and behaving.

The concept exists in human mental reality as some repertoire of arranged knowledge and systematized information on actual and possible state of things in the physical world in the context of emotions, feelings, associations, experiences etc. Understanding it as a mental formation enables us to reproduce not only mental world of a native speaker, but also his/her ethnomental characterology.

In the course of the interpretative process the system of verbal meanings is brought into correlation with socio- and ethnocultural competence of native speakers. Its conceptual charging presents one of the most distinctive feature of national mentality of a people. Native speakers' outlook and world perception is represented in the language, particularly in the systems of its peculiar stereotypes, images and etalons through the prism of socio- and ethnocultural traditions.

Each concept is expressed by means of some language tools and has its own semantic form, which is determined by its semantic meanings and characterized by an ethnocultural conventionality since it presupposes modal, gender, emotional, expressive, pragmatic and other assessments.

The difference of verbal expressions and their correlation with actual situations is provided with the help of a certain human system of concepts about the world, that is human conceptual system. Conceptual system constructing reveals a definite concept or its definite structure being at an advantage within the given system as they reflect the character of judgement of a native speaker and correspondingly serve as an orienting basis of his/her attitude to actual reality.

Active transformation of the surrounding world is carried out in the consciousness connected with the language since the word is a result of generalizing process and pointing out a major quality on the basis of which the nomination occurs.

Actual lexeme functioning in the language triggers active segmenting of word semantics into separate semantic components. These microcomponents of knowledge (cooperative and in particular individual knowledge) are not always fixed by lexicographical literature. Every native speaker of a certain language has his/her own individual style displayed in his speech, in other words every native speaker is a distinct linguistic persona. According to Yevgeniy Borinshtein the linguistic persona is an integrated system formation which is determined by commonality of non-stop interacting signs and symbols, attitudes and actions of the individual. The researcher singles out the following characteristics of the linguistic persona: accessibility, communicativeness, an active starting point, a sense of reality, gnoceological motives, a thought shaping function, demonstrative factor, esthetic orientation and mentality [2, p. 52]. The linguistic world-image comprises the sign expression of concepts. Human language activity is originally active. In case of early stages of learning a language the linguistic persona of a child depends a lot on the way of living, intelligence level and educational development of grown-ups surrounding him/her. Later on the speech activity

becomes more active due to widening the scope of the world perception from the points of view of a subject, who is constantly in the process of individual cognitive development. As a result, some individual world picture is formed. Throughout human life new constructions are developed above basic concepts. They fix new knowledge about reality and present a consequence of constant human interaction with the surrounding, constant task solution connected with surviving and orienting within it. The system of representations undergoes changes in correspondence with a changing environment under pressure of subject's life experience to attain its major goal – providing a subject with valuable information about the surrounding to enable his/her adaptive behavior. There are different cognitive models of an environment that are available to a human at different stages of the ontogenesis, since reality representation is carried out through the prism of available cognitive mechanisms. Consequently, subject's representation system essentially changes in the process of the ontogenetic development of his/her cognitive mechanisms regardless of practically unchanged reality surrounding him/her throughout the individual life.

In a certain ontogenesis stage of a subject a social reality starts to influence strongly his/her cognitive development defining prioritized tendency of human cognitive mechanisms. Although a social reality is nothing more or less than a man's creation, it is often imagined as an objective one like the physical world. Therefore «game rules» laid down by a culture rigidly determine the cognitive development specifics and individual behavior as well as the physical world does.

The language being «a mirror of the culture» [11, p. 17] reflects not only actual world of a human, but also collective self-awareness of a people, the nature of their mentality, its way of life, traditions, value system and vision of the world in general. I.Holubovska claims that «the language in wealth of its forms and contents has a clue to the mystery of the mental universe of a certain culture, to the cognition of a way of thinking of a people and mental peculiarities of its native speakers» [5, p. 36]. It explains intercommunicative difficulties at attempts of contacts of different linguoethnical community representatives. In connection with the above-mentioned researchers use the notions «equivalent vocabulary» (words, lexical notions of which are interlinguistic) and «non-equivalent vocabulary» (cuture-specific words, voids which are not equatable with a foreign lexical unit; they are explained descriptively, sometimes they require a thorough narrative description).

The way of world conceptualization reflected in the language is partially universal (and this enables inter-cultural communication) and partly culture-specific. There are national languages specifics of which like their national consciousness specifics have been determined by specific contents and ways of activities, natural and social environments, material and intellectual culture and fixed on different linguistic levels. Therefore, national languages as «a tool» do not produce subjective world pictures for their native speakers, but only have an influence on their specifics in terms of the sign expression.

Human, national-cultural, social and individual expression stereotypes and actual attitudes to the surrounding are fixed in the language. The nomination system of a language is a result of cognitive and classifying activity of a people, since every language aims not only at people's world comprehension objectivization, but also at preserving their intellectual and practical activities reflected in semantic properties of lexical items.

One of these properties is semantic combinability of a word connected with logical categories and extralinguistic factors according to researchers. The property of a word to combine with a certain set of other words displayed specifically in different ways in each language is noticed by L.Shcherba, Sh.Balli, A.Greimas and other linguists marking this phenomenon with such terms as: semantic congruence, semantic concord, semantic selectivity, semantic compatibility etc. The core of the phenomenon consists in the following: the same extralinguistic situation is reflected in different ways in different languages not only in terms of word-combinations and what is more so-called «content-combination». The collocability divergence in different languages is caused by the divergence of conceptual structures reflected in them and a semantic combinability set is determined by a location of a lexical unit on paradigmatic chains of a certain language and reflection of this phenomenon in syntagmatics – in the field of collocability of lexical units [3, p. 161-162]. This may be exemplified by the following synonymic word-combinations in English: *to solve a dispute, to decide a dispute, to resolve a dispute,* and *to settle a dispute.* The noun lexical item *dispute* is semantically combinable with the verb lexemes *to solve, to decide, to resolve* and *to settle* to express the same lexical meaning. In accordance with the semantic combinability to form the antonymic word-combinations in the English language to the lexical units *good crop* and *a good speaker* the lexeme *poor* is used – *poor crop* and *a poor speaker,* although the antonym of *good* is *bad* and this is lexicographically recorded.

The world picture, which may be named as some knowledge about the world, is based on individual and collective consciousness. It is not a mere set of objects' «pictures», fixation of processes, properties etc., since it includes not only reflection of objects but also a subject's viewpoint, his/her attitude to the objects and at the same time a subject's point of view presents a reality like objects themselves. The system of socially common viewpoints, attitudes and assessments is embodied by means of the sign expression in the system of a national language and it takes part in constructing the linguistic world-image.

To characteristic features of verbal expression of the world we refer preserving and reproducing of gained knowledge about the surrounding reality taking into consideration specifics of historically established ethnoconsciousness. In the given tendency the studying of phraseological units is of great importance as they serve as a means of disclosing peculiarities of world perception by a people in accordance with their value system which is definitely based on the national culture. Phraseology of any people is profoundly supported by the cognitive

capacity of the human consciousness to draw analogies between objects of reality. Phraseological units are formed on the basis of permanent associations that have been thought over and then set into these unvarying language units. Within the framework of the cognitive paradigm a phraseological unit is regarded as a microtext which is structurized during interpreting its semantic information by a native speaker in the space of cultural knowledge [1, p. 302].

Considerable attention payed to cognitive linguistics, intercultural communication and linguoculturology has resulted in the necessity of applying the comparative analysis of concepts reflected in different languages with the help of available linguistic means. Discovering of characteristic features of concepts by means of language tools furnishes the clue to comprehension of peculiarities of national mentality and both moral and pragmatic bases of different linguocultures.

We shall illustrate our point of view by describing the Ukrainian phraseological unit *голодний як вовк* and its English equivalents (*hungry as a wolf, hungry as hawk, hungry as a hunter*) using comparative analysis. In case of comparison of the English set phrase *hungry as a wolf* and the Ukrainian language unit we deal with symmetrically reflected conceptualization and it is achieved by identity correspondence in terms of their structural-grammatical constructions, isomorphic lexical component compositions and identical tendencies of fundamental rethinking of the phrase prototype meanings as a whole. Without doubt the English units *hungry as hawk* and *hungry as a hunter* are equivalent with regard to the descriptive situation to the Ukrainian one given above, although there is an obvious divergence in their lexical-semantic component compositions. In addition to this the English phrase *hungry as a hunter* contains also a difference in rethinking of its prototype meaning of the lexical unit with regard to the object and subject of the action in the anthropocentric context.

The essence of phraseological meanings is closely connected with background knowledge of a native speaker of a language, the individual practical experience and culture-historical customs of a people speaking this language. Phraseological units ascribe to objects qualities associated with the world picture denoting the whole descriptive situation, assess the situation and reveal their relevance to it. For example, the Ukrainian phraseological unit *коли рак на горі свисне* is equivalent in terms of the deduced descriptive situation to the English one *when pigs fly* while lexical-semantic analysis of the single components does not provide achieving such a factual result. Besides, a syntactic divergence attracts our attention to itself – there is an adverbial modifier of place in the Ukrainian unit (*на горі*). In our opinion, the syntactic construction of the given Ukrainian fixed phrase is characterized by expressive completeness in comparison with laconic brevity and correspondingly rationality of its equivalent in English (the absence of the adverbial modifier of place does not change the situation content). In the given phraseological case two distinct languages (Ukrainian and English) appeal to the same fragment of the world picture and the vector of the cognitive evaluation is shifted to pragmatic irony: expressive one in Ukrainian and rational one in English.

Subject's interpretation of objects, phenomena, situations and events in the surrounding world is accompanied with definite evaluations since the language reflection of statics and dynamics of objective reality presupposes the process of selecting and determining values in accordance with human needs and interests.

We suppose that linguo-cognitive condition of comprehension and selection of optimal translation option consists in triggering search for the concord (complete or partial) of levels of conceptual systems representing different cultural worlds.

Conceptualization of a foreign phraseological unit is symmetrically reflected only in case of availability in the target language of the full equivalent of this unit, namely the phraseological unit with the identical structural-grammatical construction, isomorphic lexical component composition and the same tendency of overall rethinking of the meaning of the phrase porotype in general. Therefore, the English fixed phrase of a fiction or publicism text *to dig a pit for somebody* is identified by the Ukrainian reader as the phraseological unit *копати яму кому-небудь* in his/her native language without any difficulties. The following Ukrainian phraseological units *метати бісер перед свинями, перетнути рубікон* and *Ахіллесова п'ята* present examples of equal value rendering of the English ones *to cast pearls before swine, to cross the Rubicon* and *Achilles heel* correspondingly. Such an identical choice of the lexical material in Ukrainian and English while conceptualizing the same situation may be obviously explained by common plot sources: a Biblical parable in case of the first fixed phrase and the Greek myths in case of the two last ones.

It should be pointed out that the most frequent object of the cognitive study is lexical concepts, namely concepts represented by lexical units of different levels. Meanwhile, not all connotations of conceptual significance in the language are manifested through words, word-combinations and phrases. The grammar level of the language also plays an important role in conveying these connotative meanings. As Yelena Kubriakova claims, «the concepts, which are central ones for the human mentality, are reflected in grammar of the languages and … the very grammar categorization creates the conceptual network, the framework for distribution of all conceptual material lexically expressed» [3, p. 9]. It brings up a question of the interrelations between grammatical categories and grammar concepts.

We shall trace partially the process of the cognitive categorization and conceptualization at the very theoretically developed level of the language – grammatical one. Culture-specific categorization has resulted in the appearance of four tense groups (a set of 16 tense forms of the verb) in the English language and has ensured their clearly distinctive functioning in the communication process, meanwhile there are three tenses and two aspects within the frame of the verb paradigm in Ukrainian to provide an objective description of an action with regard to time of a speech act. Such an extension of the tense category of the verb reveals its greater cognitive significance in English in comparison with the noun, which

does not conjugate and is cognitively completed due to the determination of the article and preposition. Consequently, we assume that in the process of conceptualization of the world the vector of the cognitive evaluation of the given grammatical concept in English is oriented to dynamism, namely to the motion of a subject-speaker as its rationalizer.

Hierarchical arrangement of human knowledge ensures efficient activating the complex multilayer coordinative-cognitive structure while linguistic sign perception. The structure includes some iconic (but also dynamic by nature) reflection of an object or situation, the prototype of the object or scenario and a pragmatic component of their value which is based on the puzzling relationship between emotions and evaluations connected with the given object or situation in the consciousness of a native speaker of a language.

Conclusions. By means of the cognitive description of the word-combinations, phraseological units given above and the grammatical category of tense basing on the language material of Ukrainian and English we have proven that ethnocultural peculiarities of the world perception are traced both at lexical-semantic level of the languages and at grammatical one. So the world picture of a certain ethnos being a base of its all cultural stereotypes is represented in the very content aspect of a language. The content analysis helps understand in what ways national cultures differ from one another and in what ways they supplement each other on the global culture level.

Every language reflects a definite way of world perception and conceptualization, therefore it may serve as a striking illustration of the human cognitive activity painting the conceptual model of the world in vivid ethnocultural colours to meet the requirements of historical experience of a people. Within the framework of the cognitive approach a thorough comparative analysis of linguistic world-images as complex multilayer integrated structures enables us to disclose their universal and culture-specific peculiarities to a larger extent.

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