

LEXICAL AND SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF THE CONCEPT *MULTILINGUALISM* IN MODERN ENGLISH

The article deals with *multilingualism* – a phenomenon which is currently acquiring its importance in our modern world. *MULTILINGUALISM* is analysed as a concept, from the standpoint of cognitive linguistics. The aim of the article is to analyse the verbal representation of the concept *MULTILINGUALISM* on the basis of the English-language sources, which will allow us to define the complex of linguistic means verbalizing the concept and to single out the cognitive features which compile the concept under investigation. The objectives of the article consist in identifying the scope of dictionary definitions of the lexical unit *multilingualism* in the modern English language, analyzing the semantic structure of the definitions of *multilingualism* as a general notion, extracting the key lexical units from the definitions in order to form the lexical and semantic field of the concept *MULTILINGUALISM* in modern English. In our research we rely on the concept field model, which can be revealed by analyzing linguistic means of its representation. The lexical and semantic structure of the concept *MULTILINGUALISM* consists of a nucleus, close periphery and far periphery. We have singled out ten lexical units which represent the close periphery of the concept *MULTILINGUALISM* and are at the same time lexical and semantic groups unifying one hundred twenty-five lexical units which compose the far periphery of the concept under analysis in the modern English language.

Key words: cognitive linguistics, concept, lexical and semantic structure, concept field model, multilingualism.

Анісімова А. І., Дніпропетровський національний університет імені Олеся Гончара. **ЛЕКСИКО-СЕМАНТИЧНА СТРУКТУРА КОНЦЕПТУ «МУЛЬТИЛІНГВІЗМ» У СУЧАСНІЙ АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВІ**

Розглянуто семантичні особливості та ознаки лексичної одиниці *мультилінгвізм* у сучасній англійській мові, проаналізовано її основні когнітивні характеристики та виявлено лексико-семантичну структуру концепту *МУЛЬТИЛІНГВІЗМ* на прикладі польової моделі концепту.

Ключові слова: когнітивна лінгвістика, концепт, лексико-семантична структура, польова модель концепту, мультилінгвізм.

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Рассмотрены семантические особенности и черты лексической единицы *мультилингвизм* в современном английском языке, проанализированы её основные когнитивные характеристики и выявлена лексико-семантическая структура концепта *МУЛЬТИЛИНГВИЗМ* на примере полевой модели концепта.

Ключевые слова: когнитивная лингвистика, концепт, лексико-семантическая структура, полевая модель концепта, мультилингвизм.

In the last decades there has been an increasing awareness of the need to speak foreign languages. That is why the presence of more than two languages in one specific geographical area is commonplace in many countries of the world. It is also a peculiar feature of the modern educational system: hardly is there an educational establishment where learners do not study at least one foreign language. This phenomenon is traditionally called *multilingualism*. Although it has become quite a topical issue in the contemporary world, the number of research studies tackling the analysis of language use and language attitudes towards multilingualism is very limited.

It is worth mentioning that language and communication are an indispensable part of our everyday lives. We use language everywhere: for exchanging information, for establishing and maintaining relationships, for structuring and coordinating social actions and for shaping our individual and social identity.

However, a language is not only a means of communication. Any language possesses three interconnected dimensions which are expressed at different levels in the process of communication. Firstly, any language is a device for exchanging information and cooperating with other people. We influence others by means of the thoughts or feelings we express. Secondly, it is a device for developing and sharing skills, ideas and values. Finally, any language is a bearer and a creator of word meanings. It is closely connected with a person's mental activity and it represents the notions, ideas and mental structures that are stored in people's minds. This is a sphere of concern of *cognitive linguistics* – a branch of linguistic science which investigates cooperation of a language and a human brain, mentality and cognitive processes of world perception. The object of study of cognitive linguistics is a *concept* – a complicated mental entity, the smallest unit of the conceptual worldview.

The aim of the present paper is to analyse the verbal representation of the concept MULTILINGUALISM on the basis of the English-language sources, which will allow us to define the complex of linguistic means verbalizing the concept and to single out the cognitive features which compile the concept under investigation.

In order to gain the aim of the research, we need to achieve several **objectives**:

1) to identify the scope of dictionary definitions of the lexical unit *multilingualism* in modern English;

2) to analyse the semantic structure of the definitions of the notion *multilingualism* offered by scientists who investigate the problem;

3) to extract the lexical units from the definitions in order to form the field of lexical units representing close periphery and far periphery of the concept MULTILINGUALISM in the modern English language;

4) to show the lexical and semantic structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM in modern English.

As it has been mentioned above, cognitive linguistics deals with human mentality. One of the most topical problems that cognitive linguistics is concerned with is the process of conceptualization – a cognitive and semantic process of structuring knowledge and experience by means of apprehension of the received information and creation of concepts [2, p. 93].

The analysis of linguistic literature shows that there are currently four approaches to defining the notion *concept*. The linguists supporting the first approach – the *linguocultural* one (V. Karasik, G. Slyshkin) – consider the concept to be a result of clashing between a word meaning and a personal and ethnic cultural experience of a person; the researchers supporting the second approach – the *culturological* one (Yu. Stepanov, V. Teliia) – treat the concept as the main branch of culture in a person's mental world; the third, *linguistic*, approach (N. Arutiunova) is based on the thought that semantics of a linguistic sign is a means of forming the content of the concept; and the supporters of the fourth approach – the *linguocognitive* one (O. Kubriakova, I. Sternin, Z. Popova) – analyse the concept from semantic and semasiological standpoint, which causes the search of verbal representation of this mental formation.

A concept is a quantum of structured knowledge which consists of some particular components (conceptual, semantic features), i.e. those features of subjective or objective reality that are reflected in our consciousness [1, p. 24; 3, p. 53]. There are a great number of different methods which help to investigate the structure of the concept. In our research we rely on the concept field model, which can be revealed by analyzing

linguistic means of its representation. According to the papers of linguists who investigated the model [4], the lexical and semantic structure of the concept consists of a nucleus, close periphery and far periphery. The nucleus of the concept is composed by means of dictionary definitions of a lexical unit that verbalizes the concept. The close periphery consists of cognitive classificatory features of the concept; the far periphery includes the components of the lexical units referring to the close periphery [4].

The present research has been conducted in several stages. At the first stage we addressed six monolingual dictionaries of contemporary English [1–6] in order to see, how the lexical unit *multilingualism* is defined there. We have found out that the lexical unit *multilingualism* is a derived word of the adjective *multilingual*, which is defined in two ways according to the above mentioned dictionaries:

- 1) able to speak several different languages well;
- 2) written or spoken in several languages [4, p. 932].

On the basis of the presented definitions, we might state that there are two major integral semantic components that may be revealed in the lexical and semantic structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM: ‘ability of the speaker’ and ‘means of communication’, and they belong to the nucleus of the concept as well as direct naming of the concept – the lexical unit *multilingualism*. By integral semantic component we mean a semantic feature which unifies the whole meaning and is the key one in its structure.

Thus, the nucleus of the concept MULTILINGUALISM is formed by means of three lexical units: *multilingualism*, *ability of the speaker* and *means of communication*.

At the second stage we analysed more than thirty definitions of the notion *multilingualism* offered by British [8–101; 13], American [5; 7] and European [14–16] researchers. Then we extracted the words-identifiers (lexical units) from those definitions which have direct and indirect association with the lexical unit *multilingualism* in minds of the English-speaking people. After that we united the lexical units extracted from the definitions into groups according to their integral semantic component. The integral lexical units (which we call «groups» in our research) represent the close periphery of the concept MULTILINGUALISM, and the lexical units, composing each group, form the far periphery of the named concept in modern English.

So, there are ten groups which have been identified on the basis of the factual material and form the close periphery of the concept MULTILINGUALISM in modern English. They are as follows: ‘*Multilingual Education*’; ‘*Speaker’s Competence*’; ‘*Something Having a Specific Purpose*’; ‘*Means of (Inter)cultural Communication*’; ‘*Coexistence of Several Languages in One Specific Territory*’; ‘*Something Containing Specific Components*’; ‘*Means of Internationalization in Europe*’; ‘*Something Presupposing the Existence of Lingua Franca (English)*’; ‘*A Phenomenon Caused by Specific Factors*’; ‘*Something Attracting People’s Attention*’.

The far periphery of the concept MULTILINGUALISM is represented by one hundred twenty-five lexical units. We will show these lexical units in groups.

The analysis of the factual material makes it possible for us to state that the most numerous group of lexical units forming the far periphery of the lexical and semantic structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM in the modern English language is the one expressing the cognitive feature ‘education’. These lexical units compose the first group entitled as ‘*Multilingual Education*’. According to the papers of scholars [5; 6; 8; 9; 12; 15], who investigate the presence of a multilingual component in the curriculum of modern educational establishments, «...development of multilingual education programs aiming to promote language proficiency in more than two languages is becoming increasingly widespread...» [12, p. 87–88]. This group includes twenty-four lexical units, such as *the role of relative language status on the attitudes, motivation and multilingual competence of students; support language learning; to incorporate other lan-*

guages and other varieties of English into the classrooms and the curriculum; to create multilingual displays and signs; to compare how various languages express ideas; to produce dual-language versions of projects and assignments; to encourage students to consult adults; educational language planning; studies of grammatical aspects of bilingual speech; L2 language learning and use; L2 acquisition; adoption of L2 words and underlying concepts into the L1 and others.

The next group of lexical units forming the far periphery of the concept MULTILINGUALISM in the modern English language is the one united by the cognitive classificatory feature 'competence' [7; 15; 16] and form the group that we call 'Speaker's Competence' (twenty-three lexical units): *multilingual and bilingual usage; fluency, balance and switching; individually multilingual citizens; experiential world of one's native language; to inhabit two different worlds at once; bicultural bilinguals; distinct conceptual representations; ability to possess a repertoire of languages and language varieties; ability to use several languages to varying degrees and for distinct purposes etc.*

As any other socially important phenomenon, multilingualism has its own mission and purpose of its existence: «...multilingualism should help to promote tolerance and a better understanding amongst Europeans, to prepare people to live in a multicultural society, to equip citizens to participate in public life, to strengthen social cohesion and solidarity, while at the same time mitigating the spread of xenophobia and parochialism among current and future generations» [10, p. 234]. The analysis of factual material [7; 10; 15; 16] showed that there are quite a lot of lexical units (fifteen) verbalising the notion of the purpose of multilingualism. These lexical units belong to the far periphery of the lexical and semantic structure of the concept under analysis and are united by the integral component 'Something Having a Specific Purpose': *to serve as aids to cross-group understanding; to link up about common interests, needs and concerns across languages and communities; to prepare people to live in a multilingual society; to develop interculturality; to develop greater openness to new cultural experiences; to develop the complex but unique competence in social communication and others.*

The same number of lexical units (fifteen) composes the fourth group of the peripheral lexical units. These units are united by the integral component «intercultural communication» [7; 11; 15; 16] and form the group that we named 'Means of (Inter)cultural Communication': *connection across cultural assumptions and values; complex sociolinguistic features; essential condition for intercultural communication; cultural enrichment; a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures etc.*

One of the most common cognitive features [6–8; 11; 16] the lexical unit *multilingualism* contains is «the presence of various languages in a given geographical area» [13, p. 14]. This very semantic component is an integral one for the fifth group of lexical units, forming the far periphery of the lexical and semantic structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM, entitled as 'Coexistence of Several Languages in One Specific Area' (fifteen lexical units): *minority languages; majority languages; a situation in which different languages are in contact; bilingual region; linguistic diversity; multilingual societies and so on.*

The sixth group which we entitled as 'Something Containing Specific Components' represents essential semantic components contained within the lexical unit *multilingualism* and those phenomena which are closely connected to it [7; 9; 14]. This group contains thirteen peripheral lexical units, for example *codeswitching; codemixing; bilingualism; lingua franca etc.*

The next cognitive feature which unites lexical units of the seventh group is 'the importance of multilingualism for Europe' [10; 11; 14–16]. This group is called 'Means

of *Internationalization in Europe*' and is verbalized by means of eight lexical units, forming the far periphery of the lexical and semantic structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM, such as *expanding phenomenon in Europe; help to promote tolerance and a better understanding amongst Europeans; to touch the very substance of European identity; asset for Europe and a shared commitment* and so on.

Although the role of multilingualism has become essential for the contemporary world, «it is English that so often serves as a means of making connections across cultural assumptions and values which, in the absence of a common language of interaction, would otherwise be impossible» [16, p. 134–135]. This very thought lies in the semantic and cognitive core of the next group '*Something Presupposing the Existence of Lingua Franca (English)*' [10; 11; 15; 16] which is represented in modern English by six lexical units, for instance '*extraterritorial*' *lingua franca throughout Europe; a language of wider communication; common language for economic globalization; integral part of the professional lives; predominance of English as a language for learning; a medium of communication.*

There had been several factors that caused genesis of multilingualism. John Edwards, American researcher, states that it is «a powerful fact of life around the world, a circumstance arising, at the simplest level, from the need to communicate across speech communities» [7, p. 1]. The analysis of factual material [7; 11] allowed us to include three more lexical units to the far periphery of the lexical and semantic structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM which have been united into the group entitled as '*A Phenomenon Caused by Specific Factors*': *the need to communicate across speech communities; scholarly and diplomatic interaction and exchange; great awareness of the need to speak foreign languages.*

The last group of lexical units belonging to the far periphery of the lexical and semantic structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM is called '*Something Attracting People's Attention*' [6; 7; 11] and consists of three lexical units: *a marker of high status; establishment of attitudes towards the different languages, the speakers of these languages and the learning process itself; to communicate a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity.*

So, we have singled out ten lexical units which represent the close periphery of the concept MULTILINGUALISM and are at the same time lexical and semantic groups unifying one hundred twenty-five lexical units which compose the far periphery of the concept under analysis in the modern English language. In spite the fact that some groups are more numerous (the first group '*Multilingual Education*' contains twenty-four lexical units) and the other ones are less numerous (the last group '*Something Attracting People's Attention*' contains only three lexical units), they are all equally important for the lexical and semantic structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM, because they are semantically and cognitively interconnected and complete each other. The lexical units composing each group verbalise various aspects of the concept MULTILINGUALISM and reflect those notions and thoughts about this multi-sided phenomenon which are stored in the minds of the English-speaking people.

Thus, we may state that the concept MULTILINGUALISM is represented in the modern English language by quite an impressive number of lexical units and has a broad and developed lexical and semantic structure. In our opinion, this very phenomenon can be explained by the fact that scientist continue to analyse the phenomenon of multilingualism from different standpoints. That is why the verbal representation of the concept MULTILINGUALISM requires further consideration.

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