

Structural Components of the Concept Space: Figurative Component, Information Content and Interpretative Field

Nargis Karimova

Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics

Russian-Tajik Slavonic University

Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan

karimovani@gmail.com

Abstract—It is of interest to study one of the important fragments of the naive model of the world – space, to understand its concepts and knowledge recorded in the semantics of spatial words and reflected in the consciousness of native speakers as certain mental structures. The novelty of the study is the identification of structural components of a concept, the description of cognitive features defining the semantic volume of national significant elements of “space”. The paper considers the views of different linguists on the structure of a concept and its components. The structure of a concept “space” is described using the results of the association experiment among students of higher educational institutions of different regions of the Republic of Tajikistan. It defines structural components of a concept such as the figurative (sensory image) component containing figurative characteristics of the conceptualized subject; the information content defining the main, most important distinctive features of the conceptualized subject, and the interpretative field explaining the information content of a concept and including assessment, encyclopedic, utilitarian, sociocultural, paroemiological zones. The paroemiological zone of a concept “space” is presented by thematic classification of paroemia performed using the obtained data. The cognitive features of a concept formed in the consciousness of native Tajik people through the reflection of a social realm are analyzed.

Keywords—*concept; space; structural components; image; information content; interpretative field*

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important problems of humanities is the study of a spatial worldview. The formation and development of the understanding of space is defined by the development of the surrounding world and depends on the level of human consciousness. Space is one of the major categories reflecting the worldview of the nation. The ideas and knowledge on space is reflected in the consciousness of native speakers as certain mental structures and is recorded in the semantics of spatial words. The perception of space is critical in the worldview of each person since the space as a philosophical category defines the forms of things, phenomena or events, reflects ways of their coexistence [1].

The understanding of space as an “integrity”, which “accommodates a person, things he realizes around, what he

sees in front”, from the perspective of cognitive science is conceptually new in the study of space [2]. Objects in this integrity (planes, surfaces, receptacles) are perceived by the subject on the basis of visual, tactile, acoustic and other feelings. Out of two main properties of the moving matter – space and time – the space is easier perceived by a person: to understand it, it is enough to open the eyes, to turn the head, to put out hands, etc. It is organized around a person putting himself in the center of macro- and microcosm. It is one of the first realities of life perceived and differentiated by a person [3].

The concept “space” is traditionally considered a construction concept nonexistent in nature. It “represents the universal worldview, some basic coordinates of measurement or orientation of a person and thus is deprived of any evaluativity or expressivity” [4].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Popova Z.D. and Sternin I.A. define the concept as a discrete mental formation serving a basic unit of a human cogitative code, having relatively ordered internal structure, representing the result of cognitive activity of a person and society and bearing complex, encyclopedic information on the reflected subject or phenomenon, on interpretation of this information by public consciousness and the relation of public consciousness to this phenomenon or a subject [5, pp. 34, 106, 108, 110-113]. The relevance of the study of a concept is to define its national and specific content, which is caused by the worldview, national culture, customs, beliefs, and history of the ethnos. Thus, every culture has its concepts existing in linguistic consciousness and relating to the consciousness of a person [6].

The purpose of the study was to define the specific national and cultural content of a concept “space” within a linguistic worldview of the Tajiks, as well as the unique understanding of the world of the ethnos through the association experiment among students of higher educational institutions of the Republic of Tajikistan: Kulob State University, Kurgan-Tyube State University, Khujand

University named after B. Gafurov, University of Central Asia. The results of the association experiment are partially presented in the article “Monitoring of Tolerance Associative Field and Forecasting of Inter-Ethnic Interrelations Problems: Questionnaire Survey in the University Environment of Tajikistan” [7] and in the monograph “Study of Tolerance in the Youth Environment of Tajikistan (Linguistic Aspects)” [8].

III. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept has a multicomponent structure. The description of a concept's macrostructure implies the distribution of identified cognitive features according to structural macrocomponents of a concept – figurative, information component and interpretative field. This makes it possible to understand what types of information prevail within a concept and what is their correlation with each other.

The scholars of cognitive linguistics shared different points of view concerning the structure of a concept and its main components. According to scientists, the structure of a concept can include from 3 to 4 components: everyday, well-known meaning, meaning known to some native speakers and historical, etymological information [9]; conceptual component, figurative component and meaningful component [10]; figurative and perceptual component, conceptual component and valuable component [11]; main (intrazone, extrazone) and additional – quasizone and quasiextrazone [12]; image, concept, cognitive and pragmatic implication [13].

Thus, the majority of scientists of different scientific schools similarly define the structure of a concept by highlighting the following features within its structure: “image, certain information and conceptual center and some additional features”. Following Z.D. Popova and I.A. Sternin, we rely on such basic structural components as image, information content and interpretative field. The figurative component or the sensual image codes a concept thus forming a unit of a universal subject code. It is found in lexicographic meaning of many words, in psycholinguistic meaning during experiments, or in purely cognitive, non-verbal component of a concept.

The sensual image within the structure of a concept, representing a non-uniform formation, includes such features as: 1) perceptual cognitive features formed in the consciousness of a native speaker as a result of reflection of the surrounding reality by sense organs (perceptual image), 2) figurative features formed by metaphorical conceptualization of the corresponding subject or phenomenon.

The information content of a concept includes minimum cognitive features defining main and the most essential distinctive features of the conceptualized subject or phenomenon.

The information content of many concepts is close to the content of vocabulary definition of a keyword within a concept (if available), but it only includes features differentiating the concept denotation and excludes accidental, optional, assessment features.

The interpretative field of a concept includes cognitive features, which within a certain aspect, interpret the main information content of a concept, result from it representing some output knowledge, or assess it.

The interpretative field is non-uniform, it has several clear zones – such areas of the interpretative field having certain internal denotative unity and unite similar cognitive features.

There are such zones as assessment, encyclopedic, utilitarian, sociocultural, paroemiological zones.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Let us consider the structure of a concept “space” including its figurative component, information content and interpretative field using the results of the survey among students of the Republic of Tajikistan and their reaction to the following stimulus words: “space”, “place”, “home”, “motherland”/foreign land”, “friend/foe”, “way/road”, “travel”.

The results of the association experiment allowed revealing the figurative component within the structure of a concept “space” representing clear images created in consciousness of the native Tajiks and reflecting the surrounding reality. Let us illustrate some of the identified cognitive features:

- outer and terrestrial space: (clean 6, close 2, peaceful 2) sky 32, (hot 1, fresh 3) air 19, space 7, weather 6, (open 1) space 4, sun 2, huge field 2, (another 1, alien 1) world 2, heavenly 5, stars (star, sg. 1) 5, (fine 1) nature 4, air 2, moon 1, earth 1, cloudy 1, cloudless 1, ground waters 1, lighting 1, smoke 1, around 3, of this world 1, of the whole world 1, field of work 1, etc.;
- season: season 1, etc.;
- place: (convenient 1, free 1, open 1) place 3, house 2, home 1, place of residence 1, agency 1; particular place: Nasredinov and his markaz 1, etc.;
- toponyms: Dubai 1, England 1, Australia 1, Saudi Arabia 1, etc.;
- road, travel: road 1, travel 1, dust 1, etc.;
- transport: plane 2, car 1, etc.;
- besides, lexemes defining and characterizing the size and length of space, as well as personal space: long 1, extended 1, surrounding 1, personal 1, landscaped 1, any 1, etc.

The figurative component within the structure of a concept includes 2 elements:

1. sensual (perceptual) image: clean 27, big 26, open 23, free 20, light 12, huge 8, wide 6, silent 6, quiet 5, small 4, high 3, transparent 3, spacious 3, tranquility 2, close 2, closed 2,

confined 2, clear 2, living 2, extensive 2, great 2, cold 1, green 1, fresh 1, safe 1, tiresome 1, dirty 1, space-free 1, walled-up 1, to commune with nature 1;

2. cognitive (metaphorical) image: peace 9, the Tajik 2, safe 2, teacher 1, friends 1, clever – careful and tender teachers 1; difficulties 1; peaceful space of Tajikistan 1, far from friends 1, alone with you 1.

The second component of the structure of a concept is the information content, which only includes the main features of a concept defining a vocabulary definition of a keyword of a concept: place 4, territory 2, square 1, empty 1, is empty 1.

The interpretative field is the third component within the structure of a concept defined by the following zones:

- Assessment zone – general assessment: good 4, bad 1, negative 1, important 1; well 1, not important 1; esthetic assessment: beautiful 2, lovely 1; emotional assessment: pleasant 3, do not love 1, intellectual assessment: thinking 1; moral assessment: personal 3, own 2, mine 1;
- Encyclopedic zone: when a person has his personal place 4, time 3, unlimited 2, infinite 2, life 1, run 1, people 1, everything is part of space 1; the fact that we live in it 1, between the shores of the Volga 1;
- Utilitarian zone: convenient 6, cozy 4, inconvenient 1, comfortable 1, uncomfortable 1, it is convenient 1, (it is useful for everyone 2) person 1, home-like 1;
- Sociocultural zone: “White Sun of the Desert” (movie) 2.

It shall be noted that cognitive features with the opposed meaning expressed by antonymous adjectives and adverbs are typical for the interpretative field: a general assessment is given in the assessment zone – good/bad/negative/well, important/unimportant, in the utilitarian zone – convenient/inconvenient.

The paroemiological zone representing the set of cognitive features of a concept objectified by proverbs, sayings and aphorisms, i.e. a set of statements and ideas on a phenomenon, which are contained in national paremias, is also included into the interpretative field. The paroemiological zone is a special zone within the structure of a concept mainly reflecting historical ideas on the peoples’ attitude to a concept and their understanding of various aspects of this concept.

The paroemiological zone of a concept “space” in the consciousness of the Russian-speaking Tajik youth is mainly verbalized by Russian proverbs and sayings with the following components: home, place, way, road, travel, motherland, foreign land, friendly, alien.

1. Proverbs and sayings with “home”:

- a house is mainly perceived as something dear, the return to which after a long absence, causes positive emotions: There is no place like home 14; The best road is the road home 1; In a warm house everything is nice 1; At home even the walls help 1;

- there is always something to do at home: A house will find a matter 2;
- nothing can brave the elements: Wind destroys both a house and a tent 2;
- neighbors are important when choosing and buying a house: You do not buy a house, you buy a neighbor 1.

2. Proverbs and sayings with “place”:

- everything shall have its place, everything has its place, everything shall be in order: The Meeting Place Cannot Be Changed 4; Everything shall have its place 1; Vacation place 1;
- any place can be taken by someone/something 2: The holy place is never empty 2.

3. Proverbs and sayings “road/way”:

- wish of happiness, goodness: Let your road be easy 2; Have a good journey!! (Rokhat safedbod! - Tajik saying) 4; Have a safe trip! 1;
- there is no reward without diligence and work: A road without cannot be easy 1; Work and diligence – the road to success 1; Road to success 1; Experience is a road to happiness 1; The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach 1;
- communication with people will help to cope with any situation: The road will bring home 2;
- everything shall always be done through consideration and not in a hurry: The furthest way about is the nearest way home! 2.

4. Proverbs and sayings with “travel”:

- person gains experience in the way/road by overcoming difficulties, a person becomes smarter, or does not learn anything: A travel makes the clever more clever, and the silly – sillier 1;
- travel impressions depend on a partner: A travel will be unforgettable if you are with your dear person 1.

5. Proverbs and sayings with “motherland”:

- appeal to protect your native land: The motherland calls 8; Be able to protect your motherland 7; Be able to stand for your motherland 5;
- motherland is associated with a dear person, with mother, with positive emotions: The motherland is your mother, the foreign land – the stepmother 1; It is warm in the motherland, it is peaceful with the mother 1; The motherland is where you feel good 1; The home land is the mother, the foreign land is the stepmother 1; Motherland 1.

6. Proverbs and sayings with “foreign land”:

- foreign land is associated with something unfamiliar, foreign, with negative emotions: The motherland is your mother, the foreign land – the stepmother 1; The foreign land is the stepmother 1; Even sweets taste

like mustard in a foreign land 1; Sweet becomes bitter in a foreign land 1.

7. Proverbs and sayings with “friend/foe”:

- intention to take someone else’s belongings: Do not get into the others sledge 2; Don’t covet another man’s pie 1; Don’t get into a well with another man’s rope 1; Don’t give yours and don’t take someone else’s 1;
- coincidence or discrepancy of interests: Welcomed among strangers 2; Enemy within 1;
- native home is better than someone else’s, yours is better than someone else’s: Your home is not someone else’s, you will not leave it 1; Own bread is more satisfying 1;
- someone else’s will never become personal: The taste of someone else’s food is also different 1, etc.

Thematic classification of paremiias allowed defining that the greatest number of associates was given with the components of the “motherland” – 25, home – 22, road/way – 16, friend/foe – 11, place – 8, foreign land – 4; constituting far periphery; and the smallest number of paremiias – with a component “travel” – 2.

Unlike assessment, encyclopedic, utilitarian, sociocultural, the paroemiological zone constitutes the extreme periphery of the content of a concept.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the experiment allowed making the following conclusions.

The structure of a concept is multilayered, consists of such main components as sensual image, information content and interpretative field.

Unlike the content of a concept formed by cognitive features following the field principle – allocation of a core, close, far and extreme peripheries, the structure of a concept is ordered by cognitive features, which irrespective of structural components, may enter different field zones, except for the paroemiological zone making the extreme periphery of the content of a concept.

The sensual or figurative component is presented by such cognitive features as outer and terrestrial space, season, place, toponyms, road, travel, transport, as well as lexemes defining and characterizing size, space length, personal space. The figurative component within the structure of a concept includes 2 elements: 1) sensitive (perceptual) image containing such lexical units as, for example: clean, big, open, free, light, huge, wide, silent, quiet, small, high, etc.; 2) cognitive (metaphorical) image including such lexemes as: peaceful, the Tajik, safe, teacher, friends, clever – careful and tender teachers; difficulties; peaceful space of Tajikistan, etc.

The second component of the structure of a concept is the information content, which main features define a vocabulary definition of a keyword of a concept: place, territory, square.

The interpretative field is the third component within the structure of a concept defined by the following zones: assessment, encyclopedic, utilitarian, sociocultural.

- Assessment zone representing several assessments: general assessment – good, bad, negative, important; well, not important; esthetic assessment – beautiful, lovely; emotional assessment – pleasant, do not love, intellectual assessment: thinking; moral assessment – personal, own, mine;
- Encyclopedic zone: place, time, unlimited, infinite, life, run, people, etc.;
- Utilitarian zone: convenient, cozy, inconvenient, comfortable (useful for everyone 2) person 1, etc.;
- Sociocultural zone: “White Sun of the Desert” (movie) 2.

It shall be noted that cognitive features with the opposed meaning expressed by antonymous adjectives and adverbs are typical for the interpretative field: a general assessment is given in the assessment zone – good/bad/negative, in the utilitarian zone – convenient/inconvenient.

The paroemiological zone representing the set of cognitive features of a concept objectified by proverbs, sayings and aphorisms. The paroemiological zone of a concept “space” in the consciousness of the Russian-speaking Tajik youth is mainly verbalized by Russian proverbs and sayings with the following components: home, place, way, road, travel, motherland, foreign land, friendly, alien.

1. Proverbs and sayings with “home” include 4 semantic groups:

- a house is mainly perceived as something dear, the return to which after a long absence, causes positive emotions, which is reflected by the paremia: There is no place like home;
- there is always something to do at home;
- nothing can brave the elements;
- neighbors are important when choosing and buying a house.

2. Proverbs and sayings with “place” include 2 semantic groups:

- everything shall have its place, everything has its place, everything shall be in order;
- any place can be taken by someone/something.

3. Proverbs and sayings “road/way” include 4 semantic groups:

- wish of happiness, goodness;
- there is no reward without diligence and work;
- communication with people will help to cope with any situation;
- everything shall always be done through consideration and not in a hurry.

4. Proverbs and sayings with “travel” include 2 semantic groups:

- person gains experience in the way/road by overcoming difficulties, a person becomes smarter, or does not learn anything;
- travel impressions depend on a partner.

5. Proverbs and sayings with “motherland” include 2 semantic groups:
 - appeal to protect your native land;
 - motherland is associated with a dear person, with mother, with positive emotions.
6. Proverbs and sayings with “foreign land”:

 - foreign land is associated with something unfamiliar, foreign, with negative emotions.

7. Proverbs and sayings with “friend/foe” include 4 semantic groups:
 - intention to take someone else’s belongings;
 - coincidence or discrepancy of interests;
 - native home is better than someone else’s, yours is better than someone else’s;
 - someone else’s will never become personal.

Thus, the study of the structure of a concept “space” was conducted using the results of the association experiment among students of higher educational institutions of the Republic of Tajikistan, which revealed the structural components of a concept, including cognitive features formed in the consciousness of the native Tajik people through the reflection of a social realm, which define the semantic scope of nationally important elements of a concept “space”.

The structural components of a concept “space” represent the figurative component, information content, interpretative field that includes assessment, encyclopedic, utilitarian, sociocultural and paroemiological zones.

The information content formed by such cognitive features as “place”, “territory”, “square”, etc. plays a significant role in the structure of a concept “space”. The figurative content of a concept is diverse and is presented by such cognitive features as “outer and terrestrial space”, “toponyms”, “road”, “transport”, etc., which are presented by linguistic means describing visual, acoustic, tactile characteristics of a concept, epithets, prepositional structures and verbs with certain space semantics. The assessment zone of the interpretative field is presented by the contradictory assessment “well/bad”. The concept represents the paroemiological zone described as thematic classification of obtained data and containing

paremias with such components as home, place, way/road, travel, motherland/foreign land, friend/foe.

Acknowledgements

The author expresses her gratitude to the Russian-Tajik (Slavonic) University for financing the research under the University Development Program for 2018.

References

- [1] I.S. Borozdina, “Concept of “space” in English- and Russian-speaking cultures”, [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <http://tl-ic.kursksu.ru/pdf/008-01.pdf>
- [2] E.S. Kubryakova, “On the concepts of place, subject and space”, Logical linguistic analysis. Languages of space. Modcow, 1997. pp. 84-93.
- [3] V.G. Gak, “Language transformations”. Moscow, 1998. pp. 670.
- [4] E.N. Evtushenko, “Spatial orientation”, Anthology of concepts., I. Karasik, I.A. Sternin, eds. Moscow: Gnosis, 2007. pp. 413.
- [5] Z.D. Popova, I.A. Sternin, “Cognitive linguistics”, Moscow AST: East-West, 2007. (Linguistics and cross-cultural communication. Gold series). pp. 34.
- [6] N.Yu. Malchakitova, “National and specific content of such concepts as soul and destiny in linguistic worldimage of the Evenks”, [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/natsionalno-spetsificheskoe-soderzhanie-kontseptov-dusha-sudba-v-yazykovoy-kartine-mira-evenkov>
- [7] D.Iskandarova, Z.Gulova, M.Davlatmirova, N.Karimova, A.Fomin “Monitoring of Tolerance Associative Field and Forecasting of Inter-Ethnic Interrelations Problems: Questionnaire Survey in the University Environment of Tajikistan”, Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, vol. 6, No.5, S.4, Special Issue pp. 35-46, 2015.
- [8] D.M. Iskandarova, Z.A. Gulova, M.B. Davlatmirova, N.I. Karimova, Z.M. Mukhtorov, A.Yu. Fomin, “Study of Tolerance in the Youth Environment of Tajikistan (Linguistic Aspects)”, Moscow: Publishing house of the Academy of Natural Sciences, 2015. pp. 130.
- [9] Yu.S. Stepanov, “Constants. Dictionary of Russian culture”, Moscow, 1997. pp. 824.
- [10] S.M. Vorkachev, “Happiness as a linguocultural concept”, 2004. pp. 7.
- [11] V.I. Karasik, “Linguistic circle: personality, concepts, discourse”, Moscow, 2004. pp. 118.
- [12] G.G. Slyshkin, “Linguocultural concepts and metaconcepts”, Extended abstract of Cand. Sci. (Philology) Dissertation. Volgograd State Pedagogical University, Volgograd, 2004. pp. 6, 17-18.
- [13] M.V. Nikitin, “Extended abstracts on concepts”, Questions of cognitive linguistics. Tambov, No. 1. pp. 59-60, 2004.