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**EXPERIENCE WITH ORAL HISTORY AND NARRATIVES OF
“CHILDREN OF WAR”**

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Abstract

This article is devoted to the peculiarities of working with oral history on the example of the narratives of the “children of war”. “Children of War” is a special generation of elderly people who survived the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). When analyzing texts of this nature, it is necessary to operate with a terminological base, which does not seem to be structured, integral and unified. Thus, the study involves the construction of terminology. When presenting a concept as a volume mental unit, we propose to fix the classification with the following formula: concept frame is a scenario where the concept is the maximum mental unit at the head of the study, the frame is one of the plot blocks encountered in the texts under study, and the script is the implementation of the developed frame. The material of the study is the narratives of the “children of war” - mnemonic texts containing autobiographical information about the events of the past, united by a common theme, the events of the Great Patriotic War. In the context of the relevance of interdisciplinary research, the interest in memory is based on the example of the memories of the “children of war”. The material is demonstrated through the implementation of the “end of war” scenario, which includes consideration of the peculiarities of the structure, the content of the narrative, as well as a mechanism for the representation of memories in the text, reflection on verbalized memories and examples of their changing nature.

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1. Introduction

The interest of cognitive science lies in the field of human consciousness, the structuring of knowledge in the human brain. At present, in cognitive linguistics there are quite a number of terms describing the structures in which empirical knowledge about the world is stored in the human mind. The problem of modern cognitive research is at the same time a highly developed terminological apparatus, on the one hand, and an insufficient distinction between terms – on the other. The lack of uniformity (uniform interpretation) in terminology leads to clarification of the terminological apparatus, which may be useful when working with oral history and its implementation in writing – mnemonic texts.

Mnemonic texts are autobiographical texts. This paper provides an example of such texts – the narratives of the “children of war”.

2. Problem Statement

The problem of our research is that the analysis of the narratives of the “children of war” on the basis of the already tested and known methods is impossible. Narratives are thematically disparate, deeply personal texts based on the personal experience of the narrator. It should be noted that narrators are simple people, carriers of a naive picture of the world, and therefore their memories are often chaotic, non-hierarchical, isolated texts.

The method of semantic selection of information described in this paper implies the division of such texts into thematic blocks. Depending on the field of study, many terms may be suitable for such tasks: frame, diagram, gestalt, scenario, concept, and others.

In this paper, an attempt is made to narrow the boundaries of the terminological apparatus necessary for working with texts using the method of semantic selection of information.

3. Research Questions

The subject of this study is the linguistic manifestation of the concept of "war" in the minds of "children of war" who survived the wartime, who found the war and witnessed it as small children.

The term of "concept", despite the established character in modern cognitive science, differs significantly in the works of various scientists and scientific schools. Only in Russian linguistics there are three approaches to the study of the concept:

1. The linguistic approach, according to which the concept is understood as the meaning of the word-verbalizer of the concept (Likhachev, 1993).

2. The cognitive approach, according to which the concept is a mental unit of a mental nature (Popova & Sternin, 2007).

3. Cultural approach, in which the concept is a "clot of culture" in the picture of the world of an ordinary person. At the same time, concepts “are not only thought, but also experienced” (Stepanov, 2001).

We consider concepts as units of consciousness, thinking, complex mental formations containing information in a person’s mind about certain events. Our understanding of the concept coincides with the point of view of many large Russian linguists.

Famous Russian linguist Karasik (2004) in his fundamental work “Language Circle: Personality, Concepts, Discourse” comes to the conclusion that the concept is cultural mental formations that store his life experience, values, and experiences through the memory of a person.

Kubriakova (2004), calling the concept a unit of memory, as well as the whole picture of the human world, noting that not all concepts are linguistic, but only the most important for a particular culture. Thus, concepts are divided into verbalized (actively and regularly expressed by linguistic means) and non-verbalized (not expressed in language or expressed only in certain conditions).

Thus, the concept war is verbalized, one of the most significant for Russian culture, as evidenced by the large number of paremias, literary texts and mnemonic texts (Maslova, 2008). From the point of view of belonging to a particular group of carriers of this concept, the concept of "war" is a national concept that can be contrasted with universal concepts. This is due to the fact that the concept of “war” is limited to texts temporally and semantically related to the period of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945).

The structure of the concept is presented to us as follows. The concept includes, in addition to the basic meaning and meaning, all the additional cultural, cognitive, personal, national and other characteristics and shades that can be captured and found in a particular context.

In the framework of our study, such a context is in a broad sense the narratives of the “children of war”, and in a narrower sense, thematic blocks, or frames, unfolding as part of the narrative.

The term “frame” itself was introduced by the American scientist Minsky (1975), who was involved in the development of artificial intelligence. The theory of frames is based on the assumption that knowledge of the world is stored in our memory in structural cells (Russell & Norvig, 2010) and is a set of stereotypical situations with which people think (frames of visual images, semantic frames, frame scripts, etc.). Applying this hypothesis in relation to our research, we believe that the concept of "war" is represented by a number of stereotypical frames that can be derived from narratives using the method of semantic selection of information.

Thus, we can conclude that the concept is a unit of conceptualization of a fragment of the picture of the human world, and the frame is a unit of knowledge structuring within the concept, which is reflected in the works (Popova & Sternin, 2007; Babushkin, 1996; Boldyrev, 2001; Polatovskaya, 2014). It is important that the concept and frame have a different structure: the concept can be represented as the core and the periphery, and the frame – as a hierarchical structure with different implementation – scripts. You must understand that what the narrator says is not stored in the memory in the form of scripts. Therefore, the use of this method of analyzing narratives is a reconstruction, during which a script is built up as material is accumulated for its analysis and structuring (Schank, 1982; Kubriakova, Demiankov, Pankrats, & Luzina, 1997; Lukashevich, 2002).

4. Purpose of the Study

Our study involves the achievement of several goals.

1. Consideration of the theoretical apparatus and its structuring in the framework of our research (consideration of the concepts of "concept", "frame", "script").

2. Representation of the concept of “war” based on the narratives of the “children of war” and individual scripts unfolding in narratives (using the example of the “End of War” script).

3. Demonstration of working with texts of this nature: a variant of the textual representation of the material (with the fixation of features of oral speech), cognitive analysis of texts (allocation of mechanisms of memory, including the process of reflexing over memories).

5. Research Methods

The narratives we recorded were obtained by interviewing "children of war" within the framework of the proposed list of questions. Our methodology echoes the directional autobiography method known in psychology (Birren & Deutchman, 1991; Nurkova, 2000). The essence of the method is to help older people to remember the period of life we need for research, learn to interact with it and make sense of it.

Within the framework of the developed methodology, we set the theme (war) and proposed a list of guiding questions in stages. It should be noted that the initial list of questions was compiled intuitively as a possible analysis of those moments that could leave a trace in memory (dominant events).

We present the final list below:

1. Age at the beginning of the war
2. When and how did you find out about the war?
3. The brightest / hardest / most fun memory?
4. What has changed in your family, in your life? (maybe evacuation, hospital or other important events).
5. What composition did your family have during the war? Who was called to the front? Who and at what age did stay at home?
6. What were the housing and domestic problems of wartime?
7. How did you find out about the Victory?
8. When did the war end for you and your family?
9. Have you changed your attitude to war throughout your life? If so, how?
10. How do you feel about what they say about the war now (media, TV, newspapers)?
11. What is your attitude to the Germans then and now?
12. Maybe we didn't talk about something? Want to tell something else?

Communication with the narrator took place in the framework of the conversation. We consider it important to emphasize that the story did not take place within the framework of the interview, where the interviewer asks questions and the person answers them. We did not ask a rigid framework, the questions were asked at the beginning of the conversation in order to direct it in the right direction and in those moments when the narrator did not know what to say.

At first glance it may seem that in this way we control and limit the possible course of the story, but the following factors speak in defense of this method:

1. The list of questions proposed to the narrator is not restrictive, on the contrary, it is "alleviative";
2. With these questions, the interviewer guides the narrator;
3. This makes the narrative consistent and structured;
4. The structure of the narrative is not limited to the list of questions, it is given to them, but the observance of consistency is not a prerequisite. Very often, the narrator is the first to speak on the intended

topic, so the need to ask a question disappears. And the sequence laid down in the list of questions, which could potentially affect the narration, is broken.

5. Compliance with a certain narrative structure is dictated by the psychological characteristics of the “children of war”. It is necessary to understand that this is a “silent” generation, an interest in which has recently appeared, they are not accustomed to talking and remembering the war, they are nervous, crying, shy of the recorder. They always have a question: What should I tell, what can I tell and how? Example from the narrative:

N.: And then, well ... as if maybe not good, but now is such a time that I can tell everything. (N. - Narrator)

Some topics open up as already well-developed material, and some belong to the “dark”, non-negotiable aspects of life:

I.: Well, how do you feel about what is being said about the war now? Is the truth communicated or are the facts distorted?

N.: I do not know such details.

(I. - interviewer, N: - narrator).

Consequently, an approximate range of questions helps to get rid of interfering factors and facilitate the process (two-way, since the interviewer is also worried and can get confused).

7. The presence of questions helps to “extract” the narrator's emotional response to the question:

N.: So, there was a situation: either we live with my grandparents, and every day I go to school seven kilometers seven kilometres.

I.: On foot?

N.: Well, of course, of course! Well, what are you talking about! Of course, on foot, war! No transportation!

6. Findings

Using the methods of the directed biography and the method of semantic selection of information allowed us to collect unique material for the language manifestation of the concept of “war”.

The resulting material was allocated several frames, which were more or less elaborately affected in each conversation. We list these frames:

1. The beginning of the war.
2. The end of the war.
3. Attitude towards the enemy.
4. Domestic features of wartime.

As an example, we give below the implementation of the “End of War” frame in the framework of the selected scripts, taking into account the narrative features of narrators:

Signs of the transfer of speech and intonation features of narrators:

/ - rising intonation

☺ - laughter, smile

|| - ragged thought

Script 1

I.: Well, did you find out in the village of the ninth of May, forty-five, that the war was over? Or later did you find out? And how did you know about victory?

N.: Well, there, / Irish, we have this ... we still had / didn't have a radio, but they came from the city once and announced it all.

I.: Do you remember, yes? ☺

N.: Well ... I somehow ... I don't remember especially what it is ... I know that there was someone crying, who was happy, well, dad listed how many people from our village here / how many people died, from each family, this / rarely one person, or even two-three, two-three, father and two sons, there, - so much, he said, died, / the families were / big. pause? transition? Dad from a family, grandfather, he, father's father, he is on this, like her, some kind of war was before this ...

I.: First?

N.: First, probably?

Well grandfather || for some reason, the grandmother kept saying, his mother, he went to Finnish. Probably in Finnish here, father. And / two brothers.

I.: Did he die there?

N.: Yes, and two brothers.

I.: Two brothers in the Great Patriotic.

N.: In the Patriotic, yes. Here it is. We / all have no such here, we have neighbors ...

In this narrative, there is a confusion of time plans and loss of information; in the story, separate scattered memories and fragments appear. The narrator does not reflex, just says everything that comes to mind, he does not start the process of mnemonics (that is, the process of capturing memories from memory), due to the lack of information in the memory. In the above fragment, we see unreflected memories.

Script 2

I.: And on May 9, you say, you do not remember Victory Day?

N.: You / know ... / I do not remember it. / I don't remember how I learned / how I learned that I heard this cry / "Victory, victory!" (Someone heard that.) I don't remember / I remember that! / I remember the salute, here / the salute, I remember, / the salute, I remember. What date was it ...

I.: That is just a salute as such a vivid memory.

N.: Yes. Salute, I remember how we went out into the street and we went out onto the / embankment, because from / to the embankment, from the embankment, yes, (the embankment is the bank of the Moscow River), from the embankment there were such spaces that we, yes, well, yes, we saw, yes, this salute. This is me, yes, this I remember, this ...

In this script, we see the lack of information about the requested event. It is important to understand that the lack of information is also a type of information. This is demonstrated at the moment of correlating the victory with the salute, that is, the mere mention of this starts the process of the work of memory and reflection (I remember that).

Script 3

I.: So, about the last day, here, you started talking about the war, yes ...

N.: It was ...

I.: Joy, yes, did you have it?

N.: It was a joy, a mob, we / kissed, we screamed. But I, I have ... In general, my parents grabbed me at the last moment and did not let me go, but there, of course, we had to run not to Red Square, but to the square, which is now opposite the Moscow hotel, which is called Teatralnaya, no. Generally...

In a few minutes:

I.: Yes. You started talking now, I asked you what is the brightest ...

N.: Vivid / memory?

I.: Yes. You said that hunger. You starved.

N.: Yes, I did not have enough. And / victory. Victory - it was such a / holiday. This I remember that I lost my voice. Everything / went somewhere, / rejoiced, this is the most. In the center, I tried to be, but my mother did not let me go there, and everyone else / all night there / danced. A / we / danced here. Everything around the house / songs were sung, danced and rejoiced. It was such a / bright / event. It was / so / great that it was not even / believed that it was over. This is how it is. It was the end of the war. And so .. and so everything was / gray. / Well, though, *childhood, how can I tell you? Well / we played lapta anyway, we still played it.*

In the above script, the narrator reflects on his memories (It was such a vivid event. It was so great that it didn't even believe that it was over.) During the story, the mnemonic process takes place when the author takes from memory the details of what was happening at that time, giving them rating (victory = hunger = the most vivid memory of the war).

7. Conclusion

Thus, this article demonstrated the diversity of the terminological base of cognitive linguistics, and, as a result, the terminology was suggested that is necessary when working with the narratives of the “children of war” in the framework of concept research – voluminous mental entities that store information about human culture and life experience . Within the framework of the work, the following classification was proposed. The concept is the most voluminous unit that includes frames — repeating thematic blocks separated from narratives. In turn, frames are divided into scripts – the implementation of a specific frame (in this case, the “End of War” frame in the received narratives. On the example of the “End of War” frame, three different scripts were demonstrated, each of which was commented on from the point of view of the representation of memories and their character.

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