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LINGUO-COGNITIVE APPROACH IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

The authors of the article address the problems of learning a foreign language and teaching it. The solutions are encouraged to look through the prism of the main provisions of cognitive linguistics, particularly the theory of the conceptualization of the obtained knowledge, the layered structure of the concept of conditionality and its contents to the peculiarities of national perception, national consciousness, and the linguistic view of the world. Comprehending a foreign language, the student gets acquainted with a new linguistic picture of the world, which is a verbal reflection of the content of linguistic cognition and consists of fragments of knowledge, “units of storage”, “elementary units of knowledge”. The basis of the lingua-cognitive approach is the attention to the word as a key unit of teaching the lexical side of speech, demonstrating the connection of lexical units with concepts, notions. The lingua-cognitive approach determines all components of the language learning process: the selection, introduction, organization and learning of lexical material. Lingua-cognitive approach is associated with a large amount of complex information and its optimal learning, so the conceptual arrangement of the material helps to memorize vocabulary more firmly. In the logic of these provisions key positions and approaches in teaching a foreign language are built, according to them the basis of this process is not mechanical memorization of words based on the native language, but the explanatory method, revealing the features of all levels of language use based on the conceptual content and conceptual relationships within the target language.

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1. Introduction

Currently, it is a recognized fact that there is the need to strengthen the cultural aspects of language learning in the methodology of teaching a foreign language. Mastering a foreign culture in the process of learning a foreign language as part of mastering communication skills is a necessity. The study states the following: the development of a new language logically implies the development of a new national culture through the comprehension of language forms and categories of ways to reflect the socio-historical experience.

Words and their meanings are the things with what the study of any foreign language begins, and it is the knowledge of vocabulary that has traditionally been considered and is considered a measure of the mastery of a foreign language.

The results of comparative studies of linguistic semantics, as well as linguoculturology pointed to a very important circumstance, namely, the fact that the volume of the meaning of a word in one language and its equivalent in the other often does not coincide. There are also more categorical statements, according to which no word of one language is equivalent completely to any word of another language in its complete semantic structure (Komlev, 2007).

The study of cognitive linguistics confirmed that fact. According to the cognitive approach to the study of language and language processes, language is a means of expressing semantic concepts that are the result of a person's perception of the surrounding reality and the processing of obtained information. Natural language and cognition are phenomena that form a close relationship in which language reflects the cognitively known speaker's world. Consequently, the referent of the linguistic sign is not the real, extramental objects of the surrounding world, as claimed by the representatives of naive realism, but the cognitively constructed (mental) unit (concept), as a reflection of this object in our consciousness. The referential area of linguistic expressions does not belong to the real, but to the "projected world" (Jackendoff, 1983), and the reference is the ratio of linguistic expressions to the units of representation at the cognitive level and these units are either the results of perception of objects in the real world, or the results of our imagination (Schwarz, 1992).

Littlemore (2009) in "Applying Cognitive Linguistics to Second Language Learning and Teaching" states the fact that "unlike generative linguists, cognitive linguists argue that the cognitive processes governing language use and learning are essentially the same as those involved in all other types of knowledge processing" (p. 1). The cognitive abilities using in speaking and understanding language are not significantly different from other cognitive tasks, such as visual perception, motor activity, reasoning (Croft & Cruse, 2004).

The language that the speakers use every day can be served as an input from which people draw inferences about form-meaning relationships and typical patterns. There is no distinction between language competence and language performance as we modify the mental lexicon in response to the language we use. Thus, language knowledge and learning are usage-based in that our knowledge of language is "derived from and informed by language use" (Evans & Green, 2006).

The key elements of cognitive processes that are involved in language learning and use consist of comparison, categorization, pattern-finding and blending. The contributions that the cognitive linguistics has made to second language learning and teaching can be described as follows: it suggested ways to in

which the relationships between grammatical expressions and their original lexical meanings can be made apparent to enhance learning and memorization. The learning of grammatical usage involves grasping the semantic “spin” that the target language imposes, which is a “far more natural and enjoyable process than sheer memorization” (Langacker, 2008, p. 53). Comparison as one of the processes can be very vital as comparing the respective construal patterns of first language and second language learners it can get some way toward predicting the types of problems that second language learners are likely to face.

It is also necessary to note that there are two concepts that can be considered as the basis for human thought and communication. They are metaphor and metonymy. Basically, metaphor suggests the relations of substitution and similarity, and metonymy draws on relations of contiguity. In metaphor, one notion or thing is seen through another, and in metonymy, an entity is used to denote and understand something that it is related to. Jakobson (1971) argues the fact that metaphor and metonymy comprise two fundamental spheres of human thought. But, it should be stated that these two concepts are so embedded in the language people use that they are often unnoticed. However, languages differ in the extent to which they employ metaphor and metonymy and the ways they are employed, and this “can have important ramifications for those endeavouring to acquire a second language” (Littlemore, 2009, p. 94).

Learning a second language requires the students to overcome the cognitive habits. It helps them reorganize encyclopaedic knowledge and corresponding word association networks, thus deepening the knowledge of the second language. Speaking about learning new construals and constructions Grigorenko notes a “cognitive ability for novelty in acquisition of a foreign language” (Grigorenko, Ehrman, & Sternberg, 2002, p. 392). Basically, it means the ability to “spot new patterns in the language input and to use one’s existing knowledge selectively, along with analogical reasoning, to work out new form-meaning pairings” (Pütz, & Sicola, 2010, p. 307) and that is crucial condition for learning language through language use.

2. Problem Statement

The translation method of teaching or learning a foreign language is not optimal and cannot, at least overwhelmingly, be used in the learning process. As an example, the German adjective *müde* (tired) and its basic quasi – equivalent are *tired* with the help of which students are acquainted with the meaning of this German adjective. Remembering this word in the meaning given in the German – Russian dictionary composed by Moskalskaya (2001) or the dictionary of the textbook based on it, the learner masters, however, only a part of the meaning of this word and can correctly denote this adjective by the human condition / animal after a heavy, tiring physical or mental activity but cannot properly identify another state, also denoted in German by the adjective *müde*, namely, “*in einem Zustand, der nach Schlaf verlangt*” and, more importantly, will not be able to react properly in the relevant situation: in the early morning, the German can ask the question “*Müde?*”, which certainly will confuse the Russian – speaking interlocutor who does not know this adjective in this sense.

An explanation of this fact and many other similar examples is given today by cognitive linguistics that studies the interaction of language and thought. The entire language system is mediated by human mentality, that is, in the way that the given linguistic community realizes the surrounding reality.

Therefore, each language, in some way, represents the world in the meanings of its units (in vocabulary), in particular imagery (in phraseology), in the special construction of conceptual categories (in grammar) forming a linguistic picture of the world. In this interpretation of the mediating role of consciousness, the basic position of cognitive linguistics in the sense of Langacker (2008) that the consciousness as a mental content embodied in linguistic forms becomes a part of the language, its semantics, is understandable and extremely meaningful (Alefirenko, 2005).

Owing to the fact that our language reflects not the real world, but its mental representation, formed on the basis of human experience and personal perception of the world, there is no absolute semantic equivalence between the two words of different languages related to quasi-analogous referents. “No traditional vocabulary solves the problem of immersing the user in the conventional linguistic knowledge inherent in any native speaker, and thus does not represent the conceptual content of the units of the described language in any distinct and motivated manner” (Rivelis, 2009, p. 48). And if the language means, using the figurative expression of Babushkin (1996), are “a kind of window through which you can look at how the world is formed in the human mind” (p. 37), then translating these means into the native language, it seems as if we drape them.

Cognitive linguistics provides an answer to this question by introducing the notion of a concept, the main characteristics of which, in our view, are the perceptually-cognitive-affective nature, which determines the peculiarity of mental content, national and cultural determinism, linguistic “attachment”, layered structure (on the one hand, the isolation of the etymological and actual layer, (Stepanov, 1997), and the conceptual, value and figurative layer, on the other (Karasik, 2004).

The multilayer structure of the concept is predetermined by the fact that the optimal assimilation (= to make one's own) of the meaning of a word is possible only if all its layers are addressed. Etymological meaning, or etymon, represents the first step in the process of the generation of the word and its meaning. According to the metaphorical expression by Krasavsky (2008), etymological analysis can reveal the veil of the secrets of the first steps of the concept. The etymology of the word, its internal form, allows us to explain the meaning of the word through its underlying image or attribute and thereby make the assimilation of this meaning conscious and visible.

The address to the etymology or internal form of the word is quite well known, but, unfortunately, still an underestimated and often ignored today acceptance of an explanation of its meaning, the content of the concept conceptualized by the word, including the explanation of the word's valence dependent on the lexical meaning.

3. Research Questions

- Differences in the ways of perception of reality by different cultural communities cause differences in mental content as a result of this perception, and differences in mental (conceptual) content are necessarily reflected in the language, in this case in those lexical units that fix this content.

- An appeal to the study of the etymology of the word explains the meaning and content of the concept represented by the word.

- The use of the lingua-cognitive approach is the only correct one in solving the problems arising from the traditional approach to learning vocabulary of foreign languages.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the use of cognitive linguistics methods underlying the explanatory method in teaching a foreign language.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of this study is the following set of methodological principles that form the basis of foreign language education: communicative, cognitive, conceptual, linguocultural, socio-cultural principles.

6. Findings

The address to the etymology or internal form of the word is quite well known, but, unfortunately, still an underestimated and often ignored today acceptance of an explanation of its meaning, the content of the concept conceptualized by the word, including the explanation of the word's valence dependent on the lexical meaning.

This statement can be illustrated by the example of the verb pair *wissen – kennen*, where to understand the meaning of this pair the method of translation does not help, because both of these words in Russian are translated by the verb *znat'* (to know), that is, they are reduced to one concept, whereas in German these verbs represent two different concepts. The verb *wissen* goes back to gothic word *wait* and Old Friesian *wēt*, as well as the Indo-European **woida*, the ancient Indian *vēda* and the Old Church Slavonic *vědě* (Kluge, 2002) and denotes, therefore, the state of the subject as a result of a successful search or obtaining of some information.

According to etymological meaning, if you use the method of translation, then to properly explain the meaning of this verb, you should use the Russian verb *ведать*. The etymological meaning of the verb *kennen* allows to explain its conceptual essence as a result of acquaintance with something: *ich kenne es = es ist mir bekannt*. The conceptual content explains the difference in the grammatical usage of these verbs: *я ведаю это, я ведаю, что ... = (I know this, I know that) ... = ich weiß es, ich weiß, dass ... But: я знаю его, этот город (они мне знакомы) (I know it, this city (they are familiar to me) = ich kenne ihn, diese Stadt (sie sind mir bekannt).*

Since in the native language the process of conceptualization and categorization of reality is inextricably linked with the language, the lexical unit, then in the study of a foreign language (a process that is somewhat mirrored in relation to the first), this connection must be true, or approximate to that. In other words, the formed image of the word should recreate (of course, only in approximation) the mental content inherent in the linguoculture that is studied. The stage of conceptualization begins with acquaintance with the word. The lexical, semantic, associative, paradigmatic links between words will depend on this acquaintance. Memorization, as is known, is ensured by the allocation in the object of certain (significant) features. Consequently, in the memorized word, its semantics, it is necessary to distinguish significant features that are characteristics of a given linguistic culture. As a result, the correct “cognitive image of the word is formed - the aggregate of information (sensory and intellectual) that is contained in its internal and external structure” (Shamov, 2007, p. 21).

The reference to the inner form and then to the conceptual content of the word allows us to explain both the semantic ambiguity and the intolerance of its volume to another language, and the semantic community of derivatives whose equivalents in their native language do not form a group of related words (*einziehen, beziehen, erziehen, großziehen*). This approach provides moving to a higher level - the level of language forecasting, or the sense of language, when the knowledge of the semantics of the word and its analysis in different contexts form a stable skill of its use and understanding in contexts not equivalent to the reference value. Thus, one preserves such a characteristic of a word meaning as its openness which, in our view, is successfully demonstrated in a model of frame semantics that goes back to the ideas of (Fillmore, 2006).

The mechanical learning of the meaning of a lexical unit through its translation into the native language can do more harm than grammatically incorrect use. Sometimes this prevents proper understanding of culturally significant concepts or leads to stylistically incorrect use, which can, in the end, cause a communicative failure. As an example of the first case, we can add adjectives *selbstbewusst, selbstsicher* (self – confident), representing the concept that is significant today for the German mentality, namely, the quality of the individual. Based on the meaning given in the Russian – German dictionary by Moskalskaya (2001), students understand and translate these adjectives often as *самоуверенный, самонадеянный* (self-confident, arrogant), which in Russian culture are more likely associated with a negative assessment. German quasi – equivalents carry a positive evaluation, denoting the quality of a person who is confident in their decisions and actions: *selbstbewusst* means “*er weiß, was er im Leben machen und und muss*”.

The stylistic incorrect use of a foreign word leading to awkward situations or, moreover, to communicative conflicts is also often associated with ignorance of communicatively meaningful (associative, evaluative, emotive) semantic components that are not fixed by transferable equivalents. Dictionary markers such as “unceremoniously”, “rude”, etc. remain on the rational, and not on the emotional level of perception, the word is not experienced as it is experienced by the native speaker, unless a cognitively correct image of the word has developed. Thus, German learners are often perceived as equivalent synonyms for the verbs *schwätzen, quatschen, plaudern* (blab, chatter, talk), which is the cause of stylistic incorrectness.

A linguistic cognitive approach to explaining the semantics of a lexical unit can help in understanding the government of the verbs that creates a lot of difficulties for students of the German language. This is about concepts behind which there are such lexical and semantic categories as prepositions. Mechanical memorization hardly leads to the assimilation of what in Russian *думают о* (think of), but in German *man denkt an*, although *размышляют* (ponder) (*nachdenken*) *über*. The prepositions, in spite of their polysemy, are also thought of by linguistic consciousness and refer to certain mental constructs, or representations, the detection of which can explain their use in cases completely different for a foreign – speaking consciousness. Homonymy in language is very rarely an affair of the case, for the most part it goes back to the semantic production, hence, here we should talk about metaphorization of the meaning of the prepositions which allows us to find logic that is necessary in studying foreign languages.

And if we, who are learning and studying a foreign language, have this logic already at the beginning of the path, then the goal is likely to be achieved much more quickly if as a purpose we understand (what is called in linguodidactic today) “the formation of secondary linguistic consciousness” and in unscientific, everyday communication a sense of language, when a person speaking in a foreign language correlates the words of this language not with their equivalents in the native language, but with mental images, pictures, concepts of another language consciousness.

Returning to the above mentioned frame approach to the theory of meaning, one would like to point out the appropriateness of using its provisions in the development of methods for the formation of lexical skills. Without dwelling in detail on all the provisions and grounds of this approach, we shall only mention the most significant ones.

A frame of lexical meaning (Fillmore, 2006) is understood as a standardized (but dynamic in nature) formation of elements of knowledge, partially variable and changing, and partly permanent, or typical, which stay behind a word that activates the view. The meaning of a word that is understood here as knowledge associated with one or another lexical unit can be represented in the form of a structure (frame) consisting of slots, or vacant positions filled with knowledge units. On the one hand, these units are represented by specific (explicit) elements, and on the other hand - by typical (implicit), so-called default predicates, - by the knowledge that is updated in the memory of the addressee by associative links to the corresponding representation, the scene, the situation. Typical predictions perform an extremely important cognitive function, since there is the largest part of knowledge there that is valuable for understanding and their identification is of greatest interest to the linguist.

The frame, raised in the mind by a linguistic sign, contains the knowledge of entities which are related to the object of reference. So, in the case of the verb *писать* (write) (pointed out by Fillmore (2006) himself), this is knowledge of the writer, of the writing instrument, of the surface on which it is written, about the product that emerged as a result of the letter. Proceeding from this understanding of semantics, it is necessary to assimilate the meaning of the new word along with those words that fix all its typical predictions, and not in isolation, as it still (unfortunately very often) occurs in our school.

The result of the study is the suggestion that the only true way to learn a foreign language successfully is to do it through the comprehension of the language consciousness, that is, through the comprehension of the method of reflection of socio-historical experience assigned to language forms and categories, notwithstanding it may sound unreasonable or impossible.

7. Conclusion

Considering the significance of the discoveries made by cognitive linguistics, we want at the same time to point out that science, like life, is still moving in a spiral. Ideas of cognitivists, so relevant and new sounding today, can be found already in the works of the classics of hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969). So, according to Dilthey (2019), to make the word understandable to a speaker in another language, it is not enough to translate or interpret the text. This person must change his mentality, that is, his way of thinking, to bring his experience closer to that experience, which is fixed by the word of the original language. The postulates of hermeneutics positions which are relevant are relevant to the context of this article:

- the simplest act of interpretation is the translation of the word (exegetical method);
- an adequate act of interpretation is a “getting into” a different culture / time, the comprehension of an incomprehensible word in the context of a human culture (the hermeneutic way).

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