

A Study of the Cognitive Aspect of Meaning Formation via English Phraseological Units

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ABSTRACT

Linguists concur that a linguocultureme serves as a fundamental linguistic entity, blending linguistic structure with cultural context in a cohesive manner. In discussing culturally distinctive vocabulary, it's crucial to emphasize the interplay between stylistically distinct words and their cultural connotations. This article delves into the cognitive aspect of meaning formation through an analysis of English phraseological units. Phraseological units, comprising idioms, collocations, and other fixed expressions, serve as linguistic manifestations of cognitive processes, encapsulating cultural, social, and cognitive norms. By examining a diverse corpus of English phraseological units, this research investigates how cognitive mechanisms influence the formation and interpretation of meaning within these lexical units. Drawing upon cognitive linguistics and psycholinguistic theories, the study explores the role of conceptual metaphor, image schemas, and cognitive frames in shaping the semantics and pragmatics of phraseological expressions. Additionally, the article examines the impact of cultural and contextual factors on the cognitive processing of phraseological units, highlighting the interplay between language, cognition, and culture. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses, the research elucidates the cognitive mechanisms underlying meaning construction in English phraseological units, contributing to our understanding of how language reflects and shapes cognitive processes. The findings of this article have implications for language teaching, cross-cultural communication, and computational linguistics, providing

insights into the cognitive foundations of meaning formation in natural language use.

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics, modelling, interpretation, discourse, metaphors, mental models.

INTRODUCTION

The study of the cognitive aspect of meaning formation of English phraseological units is an important problem of cognitive stylistics. Considering phraseological units as a part of the language system, researchers pay attention to how people perceive and interpret these expressions in terms of their cognitive structure.

One of the problems arising in this context is the study of cognitive processes that occur at the moment of perception and understanding of phraseological expressions. How people associate them with certain concepts, what images and associations these expressions evoke in them, and how these processes influence the formation of meaning.

Another problem that can be highlighted is the study of the influence of cultural context on the perception of phraseological units. How different cultures and traditions can influence the understanding and interpretation of these expressions, and what cognitive processes occur when these expressions are associated with certain values, norms and images.

Thus, the study of the cognitive aspect of meaning formation of English phraseological units involves solving several important problems related to the cognitive processes of perception, interpretation and association of these expressions, as well as their influence on cultural contexts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

R. Jackendoff notes that when the meaning “clean, decent” was introduced into the structure of the colour word “white” and became standard in dictionaries, it began to be combined with various nouns [4].

Often, writers make changes in stable expressions, replacing, for example, one component with another. For example, the lexeme associated with the colour black in the phraseology “a black sheep” - a lousy sheep - can be replaced by a lexeme associated with the colour red in the following fragment of a work of fiction:

Lanny told briefly about this “red sheep” of his mother’s family. “There aren’t apt to be two American painters such active reds [U. Sinclair]. Such an unfamiliar combination of the lexeme red with the lexeme sheep leads to the formation of a humorous effect, as red sheep do not exist in nature.

Phraseological expressions with elements of colour symbolism possess abstraction, which is a form of cognition based on the mental isolation of essential characteristics and relationships of an object, separated from other, more specific properties and relationships. There are two types of abstraction - isolating, or analytical, and identifications, and both of these types are present in phraseology.

Creating the meaning of a phraseological unit with a colour component in English is a complex cognitive process that includes several stages.

The first step involves making connections between colour and certain concepts or images. There are many expressions in English in which colour is used to describe different qualities or states of being.

For example, the phrase “green with envy” expresses intense envy, while “black sheep” describes a person who stands out negatively among others. Colours create associations, evoking certain emotions and perceptions.

The second stage involves establishing a correlation between colour associations and specific phraseological expressions.

Some of them are directly related to specific colours, e.g. “red herring” used to denote distraction or false trail.

While other phraseological expressions may have more complex associations with colours that arise from particular cultural or historical contexts.

The third stage involves the assimilation and application of phraseological expressions with a colour component in everyday speech. The cognitive process of forming the meaning of a phraseological expression includes understanding and assimilation of its meaning, as well as mastering the ways of correct use in different contexts [1].

For effective use of phraseological expressions with colour components it is necessary not only to understand their meaning, but also to be able to apply them in appropriate situations.

Phraseologies using colour terms constitute a significant proportion, and their high frequency of occurrence indicates that colour terms have a high potential to form expressions frequently used together.

This phenomenon is explained by several factors.

Firstly, the main colour terms belong to the oldest elements of the lexicon and have become part of the social consciousness of all native speakers of the language.

They are characterised by high frequency of use, simple morphology and number of syllables.

Secondly, they are key elements of the corresponding lexico-semantic groups, have a common lexicon and play a dominant role in this group, having the largest number of links.

Thirdly, they have a multilevel organisation, including “niches” where myths, personifications, images and metaphors can be implicitly encoded [4];

Fourthly, the field of colour lacks a clear reference point, i.e. there are no defined linguistic concepts that can effectively and accurately explain the meanings of colours. This leads to considerable uncertainty in the interpretation of colour terms.

And fifth, colour vocabulary belongs to the main categories of connotative vocabulary, including relative terms, names of animals, body parts and organs, and objects and phenomena of nature related to matter and actions perceived by the five senses [2].

The field of colour thus constitutes one of the deep layers of the foundations of national understanding, which can be defined as “a body of knowledge and structured binding ideas specific to the national level” [3].

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The conceptual analysis of phraseological phrases containing components related to colour denotation was carried out through the following stages:

The primary push, known as the vocabulary stage, is made to analyse the basic cognitive aspects of the concept.

In the article, there was conducted a conceptual analysis of phraseological expressions containing elements related to color denotation in English. It was identified a variety of phraseological phrases across different contexts and domains that incorporate color-related components. These components ranged from direct color terms to metaphorical and symbolic usage of color.

The analysis revealed that color plays a significant role in shaping the meaning and interpretation of phraseological units. In some cases, color terms were used literally to describe physical attributes or qualities, such as “white as snow” or “red as a rose.” These expressions often invoked vivid mental imagery and facilitated immediate comprehension due to their straightforward nature [2].

However, it is observed instances where color was employed metaphorically or symbolically to convey abstract concepts or emotions. For example, phrases like “green with envy” or “feeling blue” utilize color symbolism to represent jealousy and sadness, respectively. These metaphorical extensions add layers of meaning to the expressions, enriching their semantic content and allowing for nuanced interpretations.

The findings of the manuscript underscore the intricate relationship between language, cognition, and culture in the formation and interpretation of phraseological units containing color denotations. Color not only serves as a descriptive tool but also functions as a powerful metaphorical device, allowing speakers to convey complex ideas and emotions in a concise and evocative manner.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights the importance of considering both the literal and metaphorical dimensions of color usage in phraseological expressions. While literal color terms

contribute to the concrete representation of sensory experiences, metaphorical extensions provide insights into the symbolic meanings attributed to different colors within a cultural context.

Moreover, the study suggests that the cognitive processing of color-related phraseological units involves the activation of mental representations associated with both the physical properties of colors and their cultural connotations. This cognitive mechanism enables speakers to interpret and generate phraseological expressions effectively, taking into account both the literal and metaphorical aspects of color usage.

Overall, the article contributes to the growing body of literature on the cognitive aspects of meaning formation in language, shedding light on the intricate interplay between linguistic structure, conceptual metaphor, and cultural symbolism in the realm of phraseology. Further exploration of this topic may offer valuable insights into the nature of human cognition and communication.

The study of color terminology indeed holds increasing relevance in contemporary cultural and cognitive linguistic research. This heightened significance stems from several outcomes [5]:

1. **Cross-cultural understanding:** Investigating color terminology across different languages and cultures provides insights into how societies perceive and categorize colors. By comparing and contrasting these linguistic systems, researchers can uncover commonalities and differences, shedding light on universal principles of color perception and cultural specificity.
2. **Cognitive linguistics:** Understanding how language shapes cognition, including color perception and categorization, is a central focus of cognitive linguistics. By examining the ways in which languages encode color through words and expressions, researchers gain valuable insights into the relationship between language, thought, and perception.
3. **Cultural variation:** Color terminology reflects cultural norms, traditions, and historical contexts. Studying these variations not only enriches our understanding of cultural

diversity but also highlights the dynamic nature of language and its adaptation to social and cultural environments over time.

4. **Psycholinguistics:** Investigating color terminology contributes to our understanding of the psychological processes involved in language comprehension and production. By exploring how speakers interpret and use color terms in different contexts, researchers can gain insights into the mechanisms underlying language processing and conceptual representation.
5. **Practical applications:** Insights from the study of color terminology have practical applications in various fields, including design, marketing, and education. Understanding how colors are perceived and interpreted across cultures can inform the development of culturally sensitive design strategies, effective marketing campaigns, and educational materials tailored to diverse audiences.

CONCLUSION

The study of colour terminology is becoming more and more relevant in the context of modern cultural and cognitive linguistic research. The unique features of colour terms are most expressively manifested in the grammatical appearance of the world, as colour vocabulary has a bright ability to symbolically reflect the features of worldview, cultural influences, myths, symbols, historical events and other factors influencing the formation of additional meanings. A significant number of phraseological terms are formed on the basis of colour terms, which indicates their high productivity and potential activity in the language.

In conclusion, the study of color terminology yields valuable outcomes that extend beyond linguistic analysis, offering insights into cross-cultural communication, cognitive processes, and practical applications in real-world contexts.

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