The Cognitive Content of the World of Symbols in a Language

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the meaning of symbols, the symbolic world in linguistics. Using the methods of observation, analysis, synthesis and interpretation, the author determines the category of symbols in linguistic-cognitive research. The study delineates connection between linguistic image of the universe and symbolic categories of empirical cognition and also describes the language symbols as an indicator of the ethno-cultural association potential of a single language in different countries. The study shows that symbolization in a language affects the role of the national-cultural-cognitive association in the formation of a unified concept and image of the world language. Thus, the practical value of the research is that the process of symbolization sheds light on the most characteristic features of a language symbol, namely the newness, communicativeness and cognitive activity.

Introduction

The current domination of technocracy necessitates the study of languages in the anthropocentric sphere of the theoretical and cognitive process. This linguistic phenomenon focuses on the characterization of the unity of the language and the individual, natural spirit and thinking, and on the characterization of linguistics as a result of human consciousness and a complex associative-verbal means (Abrams & Strogatz, 2003; Dickins & Dickins, 2001; Greenspan & Shanker, 2006; Zwaan, Stanfield & Yaxley, 2002).

Humans not only perceive through their sense organs, learn through their consciousness, evaluate from the cognitive perspective and probe into the related links, objects and phenomena in the real world, but also update existing information, process, summarize, evaluate, filter, and practically use, thus creating a space of language symbols (Schneider, 2009; Stewart, 1996).

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We can determine the symbol (character) as: 1) an object that is used instead of another object in a symbolic condition; 2) several embossed characters that are used to denote an embossed set of characters or any object; 3) a unit, a character of a certain alphabet. It is a symbol that consists of standard alphabetical and digital characters and special marks (Kerlot, 1994).

It is pertinent to point out that language symbols (characters) are an indicator of ethnic-cultural and ethnic-cognitive system of a language (Patterson, 2016). The content of symbols in a language supplement national characters and attributes (Mukerjee & Dabbeeru, 2012). The word "symbol" derives from the Greek "symbolon" meaning token or watchword (Linguistic dictionary, 2005). While linguistic, logic, and mathematics interpret this word as a character, arts and philosophy regard it as a universal esthetic category that denotes objects and phenomena by describing their qualities and nature (Cassirer, Krois & Orth, 1987).

The symbol mediates the artistic image and the concept of hidden meaning (Firth, 2011). However, the symbol is more full of hidden meaning that the concept. Unlike the artistic image, it has a factual meaning. The distinguishing feature of the symbol is its multifaceted nature with the preservation of the symbolic form, which is revealed by its comparative analysis (Stewart, 1996; Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Appiah & Nartey, 2016; Fedrigo, 2016).

One of the latest linguistic problems is the linguistic image of consciousness, cognition, and thinking in the creation of symbolic units in languages (Sevcik, Romski & Wilkinson, 1991; Sapir, 2014; Kim, 2015; Jin, 2002; MacKay, 2012). Research of linguistic symbols from the scientific perspective is a relevant linguistic problem. But there are apropos little work on how world's linguistic image related to symbolic categories of empirical cognition.

Literature review

In the history of philosophy, the symbol is mostly used to describe and learn the transcendent secret world (Firth, 2011; Cassirer, 2012). For instance, Socrates encouraged learning the "truth of being" through implicit images, so as to protect oneself from the blinding beams of truth. E. Kant examined the symbol as a spiritual means that helps understand the surrounding world from the spiritual perspective (Toscano, 2005). E. Cassirer (2012) also defines the symbol as a universal means of understanding the world.

Recent linguistic studies have covered the problem of "language and ethnos" (Cauthen, 2004). Many related studies are based on the learning and teaching of the national character, national understanding, and national spirit (Smith, 2005; Smith, 2009; Anthony, 2009).

Investigations on linguistics often feature such terms as symbolism and symbolic logic (Kalmar et al., 2013; Carnap, 2012). They should not be confused with the symbol. Symbolic logic is a branch of logic that studies logical conclusions through logical estimations as mathematical logic based on a strictly symbolic language (Wagner et al., 2015).

It is widely documented that the symbolic names of objects and phenomena in the real world depend on the human cognitive energy (Ellis, 2014). Animate or inanimate objects of the surrounding natural world acquire symbolic meaning due to their special influence on humankind; the linguistic image of the world also becomes symbolic (Dickins & Dickins, 2001).

According to Kazakh linguist R. Syzdyk (2004), prominent Kazakh linguist, in studies related to fiction, including the ones that transform the word patterns of poetic speech in Russian poetry, the term "symbol" means the conveyance of a certain concept or notion by the artist through an objective image (its name). In this case, the symbolic image of the world forms under the influence of the unification of linguistic units in a linguistic-cognitive model between the notion and the object (Mukerjee & Dabbeeru, 2012).

Many scholars have expressed their opinion regarding the symbol. For instance, A. Veselovsky (1989) regards the symbol as a special form of parallelism. According to him, the symbol is created by not pronouncing one of the members of parallelism, since the second member is the indicator of the first one. Moreover, language symbols affect the expansion of the human worldview by conveying allegorical thoughts (Embler, 1956; Wylie, 1928).

Modern linguistic studies are based on learning communicative, cognitive, ethnic, and symbolic characteristics of languages (Kim, 2015). The information and symbolic origin of national consciousness that are inherent in the nature of language should be investigated comprehensively. The related problem of the nature of symbols, which depict images of culture and learning in language (national symbols), may be solved through linguistic-cognitive analysis.

Aim of the study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the meaning of symbols, the symbolic world in linguistics.

Research questions

The research questions of this study were as follows: What is the specificity of symbolic world in linguistics? What is the cognitive content of symbolization? How we can determine the role of symbols in symbolic language units formation?

Method

The investigation was based on general scientific methods, namely observation, induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis, interpretation as well as on principles of anthropocentrism, multiple-level system and structural-functional integrity. One of the crucial methodological assumptions is that language reflects thought processes. This conditioned the use of the language-cognitive model in the study of meaning of symbols.

Data, Analysis, and Results

Firstly, the *symbol* falls within the same category of the linguistic-cognitive model as *consciousness, thinking, cognition, creativity, imagination, dream, concept, frame, gestalt,* etc. Since the abovementioned categories are connected with the language of concepts, the human consciousness determines the general regularities of the real world, information about their interrelation, and the meaning of conceptual information, which enables systematizing the fund of spatial formation, which constitute the meta-mental system of linguistic units. These problems reveal the ways of learning the functions and potential of the human consciousness and, therefore, the ways for humans to learn themselves and the nature of symbols.

Secondly, language symbols include *national symbols* and *multiple characters, marks, forms* (Atanasyan et al., 2002). The system of symbols in a language and the character language of the real universe may be learned by understanding the symbolic characteristics of the universe during the development of the human society (Kerlot, 1994).

Thirdly, humans use certain symbols through language when learning the mysteries of the real world. The symbols of the language interact with various motives of cognitive activity and prove the unlimited human cognitive potential. In addition to that, the language symbols are also an important element of language communication. The names of hidden objects and phenomena that have symbolic meaning produce symbolic crossing. Their linguistic-cognitive nature in language communication requires special investigation on the basis of special concepts and conceptual analysis. This enables learning the worldview of humankind in general and the national worldview of specific nations.

Thus, the units with symbolic meaning may be used to determine the symbolic character as a constituent of the perception result, the essence and state of the diachronic and synchronic cognitive potential of the human worldview. This reveals the worldview universe, life, and experience of humankind through symbols. Also the world of symbols that is preserved in the memory of humankind adds hidden meaning to certain thoughts and lays the foundation of symbolic studies and philosophical thinking.

Can note colloquial speech is an indicative symbol in the act of communication and cognition, which proves the artistic and hidden representation of colloquial speech. The language symbols have a comparative function, put equal to logic, and that of accurately and allegorically conveying human thoughts. At the same time, without oversetting the appeal of the human thinking, the language symbols demonstrate the high capacity of humans for figurative and allegorical thought conveyance.

In the aggregate, symbolic units determine the linguistic connection between objects under the cognitive analysis of human consciousness (symbolization). The symbolization of allegorical thoughts and levels of cognition is achieved through linguistic-cultural mechanisms.

Humans used symbolic units to comprehend the elementary or basic image of the real universe. People use symbols as a means of perceiving the elementary image of the world. The language is capable of constantly interpreting signs and qualities of objects and phenomena and the multiple connections between them. In the learning of the real world through language, symbols are an especially important cognitive mechanism. By providing symbolic information about the views of the language speaker, about the real ethnic world, the cultural space, and living conditions, symbols help update old elements of ethnic cognitive concepts, and help develop external unity of the linguistic and non-linguistic image of the world.

Language symbols as an indicator of the ethno-cultural association potential of a single language ethnos shows its life experience and exerts a linguistic function. Therefore, symbol units in a language are more known as a linguistic-cognitive model that shows the capacity of human cognition.

In general, the word in and of itself is also a symbol. The scientific definition of the word is difficult to convey with only a single formula. Therefore, the word can be defined through information from several dictionaries. The word is the main

structural-semantic unit of a language, which denotes objects and phenomena, their properties, and their real interaction. The word is characterized by a unity of characters that is specific to it, by the ability to exist and replicate freely, from the structural perspective, the word has phonetic (sound structure), morphological (complex of morphemes), and semantic (complex of meanings) properties. The word has a lexical and grammatical meaning. Through linguistic means, the complex of explicit grammatical meanings creates the grammatical form. Depending on the pronunciation, the word forms lexemes; depending on the content, the word forms semantemes. Through the grammatical form, the word creates a word form. Depending on sematic and grammatical features, the word is related to a word group. The meaning of the word determines the results of human cognitive activity. Concepts are formed with words. The word is the "building material" of sentences (Sevcik, Romski & Wilkinson, 1991; Syzdyk, 2004).

The word – 1. A set of certain figures used as a character; 2. A sequence of symbols in an abstract alphabet; 3. A sequence of symbols that form the grammar of the main alphabet; a lexeme that equates the natural word with its form; 4. A natural language; 5. A set of characters and symbols that are located in one memory cell and considered collective. The word is used to describe the command and alphabetic-digital information; its length is either constant or alternating (Dickins & Dickins, 2001; Ellis, 2014).

The peculiar feature of the word symbols is the equal brevity of the content of thought and meaning. From the perspective of the goal and content, language symbols are defined as complex characters. Having acquired conceptual meaning, the word carries a complex linguistic-philosophical content. The symbolic meaning of speech should be considered in its dynamic aspect. Language symbols can indicate an original or acquired meaning. In linguistics, the word and symbol-word are not two different characters; they are two forms of the word that perform different functions. For the language to acquire symbolic meaning, it is necessary to understand that a linguistic character is recognized as a symbol when it acquires a symbolic function.

Symbols supplement the content of symbolic language units. Symbols include coats of arms. In Kazakh, the coat of arms is called *елтаңба*, i.e. the sign of the people. Coats of arms are studied by a branch of history called heraldry, which, in turn, is closely related to such historical disciplines as genealogy, numismatics, paleography, and sigillography. The term derives from the Greek word "*heraldus*", which is translated as "herald". Medieval European kingdoms has specialists that registered coats of arms, determined their belonging, systematized them, and devised new coats of arms. Such people were called heralds. Since ancient times, the art of designing coats of arms developed in the cultural history of each ethnic group or nation that took the path of civilization.

The human cognition of the universe and the symbolization of knowledge is unlimited. Humans are inclined to name every phenomenon through symbols. For instance, humans compare beauty to the moon, the sun, the stars; youth – to a flower, a fire; sincerity – to the morning dawn; love – to a swan; bravery – to an eagle or a falcon; a dog – to honesty and friendship. Humans exist alongside symbols in their everyday life. It should also be noted that humans live in a world of symbols. The human outlook, knowledge, and ability to learn the world varies. This variety predetermines the varied conscientious understanding of the nature and meaning of symbols. Therefore, each individual, by learning a symbol in

accordance with his or her own level, encounters a meaning of the symbol that matches his or her abilities. The possibilities of each individual to learn the nature of symbols should not be restricted.

Humans perceive the image of the universe from the individual, group, and national perspective. This model of perception is a peculiarity of the cognition of language symbols. The world of symbols can be divided into individual, ethnic, and national groups. The group of individual symbols includes symbolic units that were created from the fiction of artists. The group of ethnic symbols include the worldview of certain ethnic groups. The group of national symbols have to specific definition and would apply any concrete restrictions. Therefore, national symbols are closely related to the human worldview in general. People can learn the real world through the units of language symbols. In general, it seems a world that is not depicted by symbols cannot exist in reality. If each language starts depicting the real world in its own unique method then each language symbol of the universe will inlay the essence of the world in its own unique way. Therefore, the combination of language and symbols enables humans to understand the image of the world. This creates a linguistic image of the universe.

Discussion and Conclusion

Studying the nature of language symbols only in the linguistic aspect is insufficient. It is possible to understand the nature of symbols if they are related to a certain branch of science; it is possible to find the essence of a symbol by investigating its interaction with this branch. Investigations confirm our thesis symbols are a universal category that is related to many scientific fields (Cassirer, 2012; Cauthen, 2004; Embler, 1956; Wylie, 1928). In linguistic cognitology, the cognitive character – a symbol-character – has a dual function between the word picture and the concept. Unlike the language symbol, it has more of a figurative meaning.

The symbol does not describe and object of phenomenon directly, but rather imbues it with hidden meaning or gives it a false image of a similar object or phenomenon; it does not express a thought explicitly, but rather conveys it through an allegory. It would be erroneous to claim that this in and of itself gives thoughts and images a hidden implicit meaning: first and foremost, the symbol in art gives truth a beautiful image, a tranquil philosophical background, and adds hidden character to the work. The idea of an allegorical work, which explains the foundation of the mood through the author's contemplations, is not hollow or bare. In general, the symbol performs a complex cognitive function not only in fiction, but also in other fields. For example, Russian scientist A. F. Uvarov (2013) argues symbolization in art is a semantically similar replacement, gathering, and representation of other real phenomena and processes, which can be achieved with a word picture.

To sum up, the linguistic image of the universe is directly related to the symbolic categories of empirical cognition. While the motivation of any word that is used in a language is directly related to the characteristics of the name, the origin of language symbols depends on the place of objects and phenomena in the human consciousness. Humans investigate certain properties or extrinsic characteristics of objects and phenomena in order to name them. The object that transforms into a symbolic object depends on the type of essence of the real world that the human

consciousness considers necessary. Therefore, language symbols have their own motivational signs and cognitive nature.

Language symbols do not exist in a symbolic space, since they are based on continuous movement and are related to any phenomenon in the environment. With the passage of time, symbolic units assimilate new symbolic characters that reveal the categories of the new cultural and cognitive life. Moreover, the language character of any symbol in language communication is formed by its communicative necessity in society. Language symbols are created by necessity. The linguistic image of the universe and the process of symbolization differs from the image of the scientific world. Units that became part of the symbolic image of human worldview should be regarded as a complex phenomenon. Therefore, units that are recognized as symbols may be analyzed from the conceptual perspective.

Thus, symbols in language are a form of linguistic-cognitive research. Furthermore, a symbol is a cognitive category. Since the description and symbolization is equated to language symbols, the informing, communicative, and cognitive function is also equated with language symbols. Such complex functions enhance the symbolic characters of symbols. Symbolization in a language affects the role of the national-cultural-cognitive association in the formation of a unified concept and image of the world language.

Symbols, which convey meanings indirectly, provide a deep insight into the human cognition of the world. Word and symbol word in linguistics are not two separate signs but two different forms of the word in two different kinds of activity. In view of this, a symbol in linguistics is an object of language-cognitive research.

Implications and Recommendations

Implications and recommendations for future studies are as follows: When revealing the nature and meaning of a symbol, it is necessary to understand the employed meaning. Since the symbol often has a figurative meaning, each person understands it according to his or her own level of understanding and finds a meaning that best suits his or her capabilities. Firstly, the interdependence between the language (word) and symbol paves the way to the cognition of the specifics of the world of human being. The linguistic form of the world is directly linked to the symbolic categories of empirical cognition. Secondly, the process of description and symbolization sheds light on the most characteristic features of a language symbol, namely the newness, communicativeness, cognitive activity. This points to a symbol being a cognitive category. The process of symbolization impacts not only the formation of language specificity in the world but also the role of national-cultural-cognitive associations in the formation of a specific concept.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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