PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

HOW TO PERCEIVE AND COMPREHEND THE WORLD AROUND US

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Abstract

This article is about the world of thinking: cognitive unity, cultural diversity. It represents an impressive and much needed effort in English at bringing together insights from psychology and socio-cultural anthropology about how we around the globe perceive, at the same time order the world and how we feel and reason about the world surrounding us. The article aims at illustrating the intricate relationship between cognition and culture, and opens up an opportunity for dialogue between the disciplines of psychology and anthropology.

Keywords: thinking, cognition, comprehend, the world, culture, psychology

Cognition of the surrounding world, as well as the exchange of the results of cognition in the processes of communication, are complex, multifactorial processes of interaction between verbal and non-verbal means, various cognitive systems and forms of cognition. At the same time, all information that comes to a person through different channels, in order to become the subject of communication, must receive a uniform of mental and linguistic representation in the conceptual system of a person, which is not a mirror image of objects, events and their characteristics. It conveys how a person perceives and comprehends the world around him at the conceptual and linguistic levels, interpreting it in different aspects. [7: 130]

Cognition is an inherently interpretive process, psychologists insist, and cognitive representations are interpretations of experience. Unlike sensory representations, they are able to represent objects and events that are not currently observed in the mind. This is a specificity of mental representations.

Cognitive evolution is a continuous, step-by-step process of development of cognitive abilities and human consciousness. Its progression implies not only the systematization of the acquired knowledge, but also their updating in the course of interpretative activity, since cognition and interpretation are side by side. This is due to the very specifics of human consciousness, which, according to D. Dennett, is a special kind of mental activity associated with the interpretation of information that enters the brain from the outside world and from the body itself. Each such interpretation, emphasizes D. Dennett, is hypothetical and can instantly change to another interpretation that is more in line with the real situation [3: 111].

Developing this idea, A.A.Abdullayev notes that the essence of these transformations lies in the fact that they are inherent in human cognitive activity. A person becomes a "reference point" in the analysis of the phenomena in which he is involved," defining their perspective and the ultimate goal" [1: 104].

As a consequence, what enters the human consciousness as a result of perception, in the formulation of W.L. Chafe, is not an exact copy of the stimulus (whatever it may be), but its interpretation, i.e. "perception is interpretive" [11: 36-37]. Accordingly, the human conceptual system is also interpretive, which connects the objects of perception with knowledge about certain fragments of experience in the human memory. This is manifested in their categorization, as well as in inference and propositionalization, in the creation of complex conceptual structures (see: [2]).

The active role of a person in cognitive processes carried out on the basis of and with the help of language is manifested not only in the ability to perceive objects in different ways, but also in the formation of different linguistic meanings and in the choice of various linguistic forms, which implies a significant influence of linguistic units and categories on the processes of conceptualization and categorization, as well as on the ways of their representation in language activity.

Moreover, this means that language acts as one of the most important factors of cognition and verbal communication, their interpretive factor, realizing the cognitive and communicative intentions of a person. It is the person who chooses the object of conceptualization and categorization and the means of its linguistic representation, each time re-builds the statement and forms its content based on his own knowledge of the world and language, and does not reproduce you.

In his article in the first issue of the international journal Cognitive Linguistics, J. Lakoff wrote about that modern Cognitive Linguistics is characterized by two types of obligations that every language researcher working in this field must follow. He should strive for theoretical conclusions and generalizations concerning the entire system of language as a whole (the Generalization Commitment), and to ensure that these conclusions do not contradict data from the field of cognitive science and general linguistics (the Cognitive Commitment) [5: 40]. What has been said above about the interpretive nature of language and cognitive processes makes it imperative the need to expand the named list and include a third obligation in it - taking into account the interpretive specifics of language semantics - the Interpretive Commitment of Cognitive Semantics. This aspect of the relationship between language and the

conceptual system of a person is manifested in different models, types and types of linguistic interpretation of speaking according to ready-made models.

Whatever we learn, we can hardly do without language. But language is not only a tool for transmitting information or a key to the processes of cognition: it partly forms the reality that we know. Cognitive linguistics deals with the interaction of language and cognition, about how we structure knowledge, what we talk about when we don't talk, and what is the practical meaning of all this. What remains to cognitive linguistics in this?

It would be more important to go through first what linguistics is in general. You will be surprised, but there are many misunderstandings associated with this term. This is sometimes called the teaching of foreign languages, for many linguistics it is associated with spelling rules - but in fact, these are all absolutely peripheral things.

Linguistics is one of the fundamental sciences that studies how people speak and use language. Extended articulate language is our most important feature, one of the very few distinct features by which we differ from closely related species. And linguistics deals with it in all aspects.

It so happened historically that it is easier and more convenient for people to study the universe by dividing it into pieces. Therefore, for example, different faculties at the university are engaged in different sciences, although in real life all this is inseparable. Sometimes the boundaries begin to become absolute, and there is a struggle for the purity of this or that discipline. Linguistics suffered greatly from this in the 20th century: scientists insisted that language is a thing in itself and for itself, and it must be studied separately from all other phenomena and processes.

But Cognitive linguistics is just the opposite. Cognitive linguistics is based on the belief that language is closely connected with all human thought and cognitive processes, with memorization, with the extraction of data from memory, with the transfer of information from one brain to another. And the language component in this complex is just one of many. Therefore, cognitive linguistics is open to contact with neighbouring sciences - psychology, neurophysiology, philosophy, artificial intelligence. [10:61]

This discipline began mainly with research in the field of lexical semantics, the meanings of words. The very phenomenon of the meaning of the word is based on the fact that it is natural for a person to split reality into categories: there is a cat, and there is a dog. And different words in the language mean different classes in reality.

And what about the main concepts of cognitive linguistics today? One of the classics of cognitive linguistics, who, in fact, announced this science in the late 70s, the American George Lakoff in his books “Metaphors We Live By” and “Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What the Categories of Language Tell Us About thinking”, in addition to concepts, considers such concepts as conceptual metaphor and metonymy, category and prototype. They are very important for understanding how knowledge is stored and structured in a language. The fact is that language has two main functions: storing knowledge about the world and sharing this knowledge between people. Following the classics Lakoff and Langaker, Western cognitive linguistics traditionally pays more attention to the first part - lexical semantics, knowledge structure, storage, memory. I call all this the offline aspect of the language, and the attitude to learning it remains to this day. And online phenomena - that is, everything related to the interactive function of language, speech interaction between people, or discourse - falls out of the program. [6]

George Lakoff formulated the so-called cognitive obligation: in order to engage in cognitive linguistics, you need to know what is known about language and the brain, including neighbouring sciences. [5:42]

We believe that this is absolutely inevitable: one cannot close oneself within the framework of one's own field and simply speculate what, for example, psychologists think about thinking, consciousness and memory - one must really study their works. (see: [8: 21]

Unfortunately, today we are seeing some skepticism in relation to cognitive linguistics, and, alas, it has objective reasons. The fact is that sometimes people who associate themselves with this discipline do not work at a high enough level and compromise the whole idea to some extent. A lot of studies and dissertations have appeared where this catchy word is used, but things do not go beyond general mentalism and a declaration that language is somehow connected with thinking.

At the same time, linguistics itself as a whole continues to resist the cognitive approach: the 20th century attitude that language is a special and unrelated thing in itself turned out to be insanely strong.

Recently, cognitive linguistics has begun to actively study multimodality - how people communicate with each other not only with words, but also with intonation, pace and volume of speech, hand gestures, head movements, facial expressions, and gaze direction.

If we speak with an interlocutor via video, our contact will be more complete than by telephone, because we actually transmit most of the information through non-verbal channels.

This direction is of particular interest to me now.

— Have there been studies on how multimodality affects the addressee of a speech?

Yes, of course - at one of the recent conferences, my colleagues and I talked about the results of our study, how listeners follow the gestures of the speaker.

During speech, people, on average, gesticulate about half the time. Where the listener is looking can tell what he is paying attention to. To track the oculomotor activity of the participants, we used eye-tracking glasses, and it turned out that almost constantly people looked at the face of the speaker - in the eyes and mouth, but some of the time also at the hands. Means, we are not indifferent to how our interlocutors gesticulate, we extract some information from this for ourselves.

At the same time, there is a rather serious individual variation: different people pay attention to gesturing

hands to varying degrees, but in general, a noticeable share of the time.

At the end of the last century, there was a lot of talk about the study of a group of American psychologists, on which public speaking coaches often rely today. They calculated that we get 55% of information from the visual channel of communication, 38% from intonation, and only 7% from words. In our opinion, this is a strong search: after all, the verbal component of a person remains the key, although there are others too. All this must be studied empirically, and here we have a long way to go. In cognitive research, there are examples of the analysis of political, every day, literary texts. Has anyone ever analyzed business discourse from the standpoint of cognitive linguistics? Of course, there are such works. I will give just one example. In lectures to students, I talk about the so-called genre schemes - these are the patterns by which the text of a certain genre is built, and I quote a study by the Hong Kong scholar Kenneth Kong on business letter schemes, which was carried out at the end of the last century.

The author compared the schemes of their letters and, with a certain similarity, found interesting cultural-specific differences. In particular, the British immediately take the bull by the horns, they already in the first line set the purpose of their letter. And Chinese businessmen bring to the topic gradually, trying first to drag the author into their tasks, win him over in a few moves, and then report on their proposal.

I have been telling our students about this for more than 20 years and asking them to imagine themselves as a businessman writing a business letter to partners. Who would you imagine yourself to be, Chinese or British? Twenty years ago, almost unanimously, students chose the Chinese way, but during this time there was a very strong Western influence, and now more than half are inclined towards the Anglo-Saxon version, when you need to say it right away, and the reader himself will decide whether to throw it in the trash or read on.

This mini-research of mine shows a trend that links the characteristics of business discourse to cultural stereotypes. So, for entrepreneurs, language is not only a means of communication, but also a means of selling and persuading. The fact is that cognitive linguistics is still more of a theoretical than an applied science, so you should not expect direct and unambiguous instructions from it. But at the same time, the same research in the field of multimodality can have a huge number of practical aspects, including for applied problems that are born in new areas - for robotics, forensics, and for business.

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