

A MENTAL CONSTRUCT OBJECTIFYING THE CONCEPT OF A “HUMAN” IN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PICTURE OF THE WORLD

МЕНТАЛЬНИЙ КОНСТРУКТ, ЩО ОБ'ЄКТИВУЄ ПОНЯТТЯ «ЛЮДИНА» В АНГЛОМОВНІЙ КАРТИНІ СВІТУ

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The proposed research was carried out in the field of idiomatics. The author touches the issue of the existence of a special phraseological picture of the world. Idioms are characterized as a peculiar reflection of the peculiarities of culture, natural conditions of life and the originality of the national character and as an integral part of the language. The importance of teaching idiomatics for the implementation of effective communication in a foreign language is emphasized. Idiomatics arose and is developing at the junction and on the basis of a number of major branches of linguistics, such as: lexicology and semasiology, syntax and morphology, stylistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. Over the past decades, it has become an independent linguistic discipline that has its own object and methods of research. Phraseologisms are a real decoration of the language, one of the inexhaustible sources of creating imagery. Phraseological units are carriers of the life experience of a nation, which vividly reflect observations of the surrounding world. This directly predetermines the features of the use of phraseological units in speech.

The analysis of English phraseological units related to 'human' conceptual sphere showed that the latter is represented by six domains, each of which demonstrates the ability to be further stratified into corresponding conceptual parcels. The domain matrix established within the framework of this research, is a universal mental construct representing the 'human' conceptual sphere in various languages. The national and cultural specificity of the English ethnic group is manifested in the lexical content of the corresponding domains and in "highlighting" of individual sections of the conceptual field. Within the conceptual domains, key cultural concepts are tracked, allowing us to form an idea of the characteristics of a person that are most significant for the English-speaking ethnic group. The conducted study is one of the stages of the analysis of conceptual metaphors presented in the phraseological fund of the English language.

Key words: phraseological unit, domain, conceptual sphere 'person', metaphor, thematic parcels.

Запропоноване дослідження було виконано в руслі ідіоматики. Ставиться питання наявності особливої фразеологічної картини світу. Ідіоми характеризуються як своєрідне відображення особливостей культури, природних умов життя та своєрідності національного характеру і як невід'ємна частина мови. Наголошується на важливості навчання ідіоматиці для реалізації ефективного спілкування іноземною мовою. Ідіоматика виникла та розвивається на стику та на базі цілого ряду великих галузей мовознавства, таких як: лексикологія та семасіологія, синтаксис та морфологія, стилістика, соціолінгвістика та психолінгвістика. За останні десятиліття вона перетворилася на самостійну лінгвістичну дисципліну, яка має свій об'єкт та методи дослідження. Фразеологізми є справжньою окрасою мови, одним із невичерпних джерел створення образності. ФЕ – це носії життєвого досвіду нації, які яскраво відбивають спостереження за світом. Це безпосередньо визначає особливості вживання фразем у мовленні. Аналіз фразеологічних одиниць англійської мови, пов'язаних із концептуальною сферою «людина», показав, що остання представлена шістьма доменами, кожен із яких демонструє здатність до подальшої стратифікації на відповідні концептуальні посилки. Матриця домену, створена в рамках цього проекту, є універсальним ментальним конструктом, що представляє концептуальну сферу «людини» різними мовами. Національно-культурна специфіка англійського етносу проявляється в лексичному наповненні відповідних доменів та в «виділеності» окремих ділянок концептуального поля, що відстежується на ступені їх представленості за допомогою фразеологізмів. У межах концептуальних доменів відстежуються ключові культурні концепти.

Проведене дослідження є одним із етапів аналізу концептуальних метафор, представлених у фразеологічному фонді англійської мови.

Ключові слова: фразеологічна одиниця, домен, концептуальна сфера 'людина', метафора, тематична парцела.

Introduction. A certain nation, as a rule, is associated with a certain language, and it is that this language serves as an identifier of the cultural and national uniqueness of the ethnic group [3]. Today, generally accepted thesis is that any language is the embodiment of a certain philosophy forged in the course of historical development of the nation. National picture of the world, being slowly formed in the minds of generations over the course of centuries, is reflected in the semantics of linguistic units of var-

ious levels. Semantic systems embodied in different languages are unique and culturally determined. As researches note, in natural language, the essence of meaning consists in the interpretation of the world by man. Meaning is subjective and anthropocentric; along with the objective features of the world as such, it reflects fundamental cultural concepts and culturally specific ways of social interaction. Even specific concepts such as “mouse” or “worm” are culturally specific and are determined to no lesser

extent by the attitude of the speakers and the degree of their interest than by the objective division of reality [10, p. 75]. The need to study “cultural semantics” predetermined the allocation of a separate area of linguistic research called “idiosemantics” [7]. Within the framework of this direction, language is considered as a specific structured network of elements that reveal their ethnic core through a system of lexicalized meanings. Accordingly, the subject of research is a culturally determined “image” assigned to a linguistic unit in the consciousness of a native speaker representing a particular ethnic group [18, p. 75].

Born at the intersection of cultural studies, psychology and cognitive linguistics, idiosemantics successfully applies their methodological apparatus to identify the national cultural specificity of the division of the world, that is, to identify elements, properties and phenomena that are essential for a given people and its ecological sphere, recorded in the system of linguistic meanings. This division is related to the objective plane of meanings and forms a picture of the world: like a map, it displays reality in one or another scale [4, p. 54–55]. The linguistic picture of the world is a linguistic ethnic model of the universe, reflecting the national-cultural specificity of the vision of linguistic and non-linguistic reality. Each natural language reflects a certain way of perceiving and organizing (conceptualizing) the world. The meanings expressed in it, are combined into a certain unified system of views, a kind of collective philosophy, which is imposed as obligatory on all native speakers [5, p. 226].

At the same time, language reflects not only the peculiarities of natural conditions or culture, but also the uniqueness of the national character of its speakers because the linguistic picture of the world is a fact of national-cultural heritage. Language is one of the forms of recording this heritage. It gives the conceptual model of the world a specifically human – anthropocentric interpretation, in which *anthropometricity* plays a significant role, i.e. the commensurability of the universe with images and symbols understandable for human perception [6, p. 177].

Anthropocentrism in the view of the world is manifested in the transposition of our egocentric orientation on a man (human) and leads to the universality of the very concept of human, which refers to the key fundamental essences of any culture. In the structure of the concept of man human, one can single out both universal and idioethnic components. Universal characteristics of man include his higher, in comparison with other living beings, ability to think, create tools and use them [7, p. 52].

The most important fact is that a man human is a physical, spiritual and social entity. A human differs from other living beings in his/her ability to influence objects – to move them in space, organize their

placement, destroy and create them. A human is the subject of intellectual and creative actions. The only one of all living beings, a human is able to express his/her joy with the help of special facial expressions and sounds – to laugh; he/she is endowed with the gift of speech, and accordingly, he/she can communicate information and distort it. A person can be a subject and an object of physical and social actions [8, p. 340]. Despite the very significant differences in the psychology of different ethnic groups, the concepts described in the literature about the ‘personality’, which ‘thinks’, ‘wants’, ‘feels’ and ‘knows’ (as well as this or that ‘speaks’ and ‘does’), turns out to be universal [8, p. 384–385]. These universal characteristics of the concept ‘human’ are realized in the semantics of linguistic units of various levels, in particular, in the semantics of stable phrases with a partially or completely rethought meaning.

Hypothesis. Being universal, the conceptual field ‘human’ is represented in the lexical fund of any language in the world. It has a complex structure and, accordingly, is subject to further stratification. Hypothetically, the structural scheme of the conceptual sphere ‘human’ is universal and is represented by a stable set of conceptual domains. Specific for a given ethnic group will be a) the lexical content of the structure and b) a greater or lesser degree of lexicalization of individual sections of the conceptual field in the national language, which reflects the specificity of the worldview of the ethnic group.

The aim and objectives. The aim of this study, carried out in line with idiosemantics, is to identify the idioethnic specificity of the conceptual field HUMAN, designated by phraseological units of the modern English language. The following tasks are solved in the course of the study: a) identification of the conceptual components of the conceptual field ‘human’; b) determination of the idioethnic specificity of these components.

Object, subject and material of the study. The object of the study is phraseological units that objectify the concept HUMAN. The subject of the study is the characteristics of a person recorded in English phraseology, considered in the aspect of their priority for native English speakers. The **material** of the study – 397 phraseological units (PU) of the modern English language – was obtained by the method of continuous sampling from the Oxford Phraseological Dictionary of Current English. The choice of the idiomatic fund of the English language as empirical material is due to the fact that phraseology is an area of linguistic phenomena where the very content of the culture of a given group in a given era is reflected more or less directly [20, p. 567]. Phraseological units of language reflect and linguisticize a set of stereotypes inherent in a given ethnic group.

Methodological apparatus of the research. The methodological apparatus of idiossemantics and cognitive linguistics is used in the course of the research, including such concepts as *concept*, *key concept of culture*, *domain*, *conceptual sphere*, *conceptual parcel*, *domain matrix*, *prototype* and *periphery of the conceptual category*. Within the framework of cognitive linguistics, a concept is defined as a mental structure, one of the types of concept. Being a basic theoretical construct of cognitive semantics, the concept is considered as the main unit of mental representation, possessing separate integral content [8, p. 79]. It is a cognitive mental structure, the organizational features of which provide the possibility of reflecting reality in the unity of different qualitative aspects [11, p. 195]. Other researches define the concept as an operational substantive unit of thought, which can be an image, concept, gestalt or action scheme [1; 2; 9].

The concept differs from other concepts by the result of a rational reflection of the main, essential features of an object. It is the result of a purposeful comprehension of an object or phenomenon, pursuing the goal of distinguishing the object from similar ones or calculating the essential features of an object [14, p. 323]. The concept of 'human', which we are considering now, also belongs to the concepts of the conceptual plane.

When designating the concept of 'human', a number of so-called *cultural key words* are used. This layer of vocabulary includes linguistic units whose semantics reflect the national and cultural specificity of an ethnic group. Cultural key words are characterized by increased frequency of use and are widely represented in proverbs and sayings, popular songs, titles of literary works and headlines of newspaper and magazine articles [12, p. 173]. The mental entities behind such linguistic units are *key concepts of culture*.

In thinking, a concept cannot be represented as an isolated atomic unit. Thematically related concepts are united into a single mental structure, designated by the term *domain (conceptual domain)*. A domain is a conceptual field understood as an area of knowledge, delimited from other areas. A domain is "any connected area of conceptualization, relative to which a semantic structure is characterized" [8, p. 547]. The nature of the "concept-domain" relationship suggests that a concept included in a particular domain as an integral component can, in turn, function as a domain for a number of other concepts [16].

Thus, a domain can represent both a conceptually indecomposable structure, reducible to a single concept (*basic domain*), and a complex mental formation, amenable to further conceptual stratification (*non-basic domain*) [19]. In this work, the complex structured domain 'human' will be called the concept sphere, the conceptual areas that make it up will

be called conceptual domains, and the elements of the conceptual structure of domains will be called conceptual parcels. The configuration of the concept sphere is determined by the domain matrix. The domain matrix is understood as a set of conceptual fields (domains) evoked and actualized by a linguistic unit [20, p. 161].

The 'human' conceptual sphere, structured by the matrix of corresponding domains, is a generalized entity of the categorical plan. Such an entity can be considered as a prototypical category. From the standpoint of prototype theory [20], a category as a well-equipped entity is represented in thinking by its "best representative" – the *prototypical*, central member, which first comes to mind, is most often used and is most easily explained [8, p. 85]. Other members of the category are located on the periphery, closer to or further from the prototype, depending on the number of features of "family resemblance" shared with it. Thus, one of the main features of the prototype is its frequency. The same feature is also decisive for the key concepts of culture. Such concepts, included in various domains of the HU conceptual sphere and determined on the basis of their representation in phraseological units, can be considered the main characteristics of a person in the Anglo-Saxon culture.

The procedure of the analysis and its results. The analysis of the empirical material showed that the generalized mental construct objectifying the concept of 'human' in the English-language picture of the world has a complex structure and can be represented as a concept sphere consisting of six interconnected domains filled with the corresponding phraseological material. These domains include: 1) professional activity; 2) social contacts; 3) position in society; 4) personal characteristics; 5) spiritual sphere and 6) human behavior.

In all likelihood, this matrix of domains is a universal mental construct representing the 'human' conceptual sphere in various languages. At the same time, the structure of the 'human' conceptual sphere, objectified in English phraseology, also demonstrates a certain idioethnic specificity. The culturally determined features of this mental structure include, first of all, greater or lesser *saliency* and, accordingly, lexical representativeness of a particular conceptual domain.

An analysis of the factual material allows us to assert that the most significant human traits in the context of English culture are the spiritual sphere (87 FU), activity-based, professional characteristics (85 FU), and social contacts (79 FU) (see Table 1). The data we obtained are consistent with the conclusions that the Anglo-Saxon culture pays special attention to cultivating in a person fortitude, professional qualities, and the ability to live in society without violating the boundaries of the "living space" of other people [13, p. 1395].

Table 1

**Conceptual domains of the “human”
conceptual sphere**

№	Conceptual domain	Quantity of FU	%
1	Spiritual sphere	87	22%
2	Professional activity	85	21.4%
3	Social contacts	79	20%
4	Position in society	63	16%
5	Behavior	52	13%
6	Personal characteristics	31	7.8%
	Total	397	100%

In turn, each of the above-mentioned domains of the ‘human’ concept sphere has its own semantic structure, subdivided into a number of thematic parcels, namely (table 2): domain ‘**spiritual sphere**’ (87 FU: spiritual qualities (41 FU: a bleeding heart ‘too soft-hearted person’), self-esteem (25 FU: the clock of the walk ‘a person who exaggerates his own importance’), mental abilities (16 FU: a bird brain ‘stupid’), beliefs (5 FU: a stick-in-the mud ‘conservative’); domain ‘**behaviour**’ (52 FU: individual habits / inclinations (25 FU: a lounge lizard ‘lover of social life’), passions/hobbies (17 FU: a coach potato ‘a person who spends all his free time in front of the TV screen’)) (see Table 2); the domain ‘**professional activity**’ (85 FU: professional hierarchy (22 FU: a big cheese ‘boss’), professional functions (23 FU: a pigeon ‘informant’), professional suitability (17 FU: a man of many parts ‘a man who can do any work’), professions (15 FU: a bean counter ‘accountant, cashier’), reward/punishment for work (5 FU: a lightning rod ‘the one who was punished for someone else’s mistake’), professional groupings (3 FU: the brains behind ‘analytical department’); domain ‘**social contacts**’ (79 FU: family (23 FU: a bundle of joy ‘child’), love/hatred (24 FU: the apple of somebody’s eye ‘beloved person’), friendship (18 FU: a fair-weather friend ‘fake friend’), language contacts (6 FU: a hell-raiser ‘noisy, talkative person’), mutual assistance (4 FU: a knight in shining armor ‘person who comes to the rescue in trouble’), social role (4 FU: a wild card ‘a person who is able to change the current state of affairs’); domain ‘**position in society**’ (63FU: social status (32 FU: a small fry ‘insignificant figure’), wealth/poverty (12 FU: a bag lady ‘a homeless woman’), fame/ordinariness (12 FU: the hot ticket ‘Celebrity’), community (7 FU: all shapes and sizes ‘a group of very different people’);

domain ‘**personal characteristics**’ (31 FU: appearance (14 FU: mutton dressed as lamb ‘an older woman who prefers a youthful style of clothing’), energy (9 FU: a spark plug ‘leader’), similarity/dissimilarity to someone (5 FU: birds of feather ‘similar people by character’), talent (3 FU: the bright light ‘a talented person’);

Table 2

Thematic parcels of the “human” concept sphere

№	Thematic parcel	Quantity	%
1	Spiritual sphere	87	22%
	1.1 Spiritual qualities	41	11%
	1.2 Self-esteem	25	6%
	1.3 Mental abilities	16	4%
	1.4 Beliefs	5	1%
2	Professional activity	85	21.4%
	2.1 Professional hierarchy	22	6%
	2.2 Professional functions	23	6%
	2.3 Professional suitability	17	4%
	2.4 Professions	15	4%
	2.5 Reward/Punishment for work	5	1,4%
	2.6 Professional groups	3	0,8%
3	Social contacts	79	20%
	3.1 Family	23	6%
	3.2 Love / Hatred	24	6%
	3.3 Friendship	18	5%
	3.4 Language contacts	6	2%
	3.5 Mutual assistance	4	1%
	3.6 Social role	4	1%
4	Position in society	63	16%
	4.1 Social status	32	8%
	4.2 Wealth / Poverty	12	3%
	4.3 Fame/Ordinariness	12	3%
	4.4 Community	7	2%
5	Behavior	52	12%
	5.1 Individual Habits/Tendencies	30	8%
	5.2 Passions/Hobbies	22	6%
6	Personal characteristics	31	9%
	6.1 Appearance	14	6%
	6.2 Energy	9	4%
	6.3 Similarity/Dissimilarity	5	2%
	6.4 Talent	3	0,5%
	Total	397	100%

The analysis of English phraseological units objectifying the concept sphere of human, allows us to identify a number of characteristics related to the key concepts of Anglo-Saxon culture. These are spiritual qualities (41% of the total number of examples), social status (32%), individual habits and inclinations (30%), professional functions (34%), position occupied in the professional community (22%), and, finally, self-esteem (25%). On the periphery of the concept sphere are the characteristics least objectified in the English phraseological units, namely: reward/punishment for work done (5%), similarity/dissimilarity to someone (5%), mutual assistance (4%), social role (4%), beliefs (5%), belonging to professional groups (3%), talent (3%).

The obtained results allow us to draw a portrait of a prototypical (stereotypical) person, being con-

sidered in the context of Anglo-Saxon culture. A person is, first of all, a personality, endowed with certain spiritual qualities and a certain social status. This is a unique individual with his inherent habits and inclinations. This is a family man, capable of strong feelings. This is a specialist, occupying a certain niche in the professional hierarchy. This is a person endowed with the ability for self-analysis and self-assessment.

Conclusions. The analysis of English phraseological units related to 'human' conceptual sphere showed that the latter is represented by six domains, each of which demonstrates the ability to be further stratified into corresponding conceptual parcels. Hypothetically, the domain matrix established within the framework of this research is a universal mental construct representing the 'human' conceptual sphere in various languages. The national and cultural specificity of the English ethnic group is manifested in the

lexical content of the corresponding domains and in a greater or lesser "highlighting" of individual sections of the conceptual field, which is reflected in the degree of their representation with the help of phraseological units. Within the conceptual domains, key cultural concepts are tracked, allowing us to form an idea of the characteristics of a person that are most significant for the English-speaking ethnic group. The conducted study is one of the stages of the analysis of conceptual metaphors presented in the phraseological fund of the English language. The concepts we have identified act as referents, that is, named entities. Conceptual correlates (auxiliary concepts used for comparison) are explicated in the internal form of phraseological units. This will be considered by us at the next stage of the study, which will allow us to establish the idioethnic specificity of the processes of metaphorization in the English language.

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