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EVALUATION IS A COGNITIVE CATEGORY

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Abstract

It is well known that evaluation is one of the fundamental cognitive categories of human thinking, as it allows assigning value to any object, event, or person. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, evaluation is a cognitive process carried out based on the knowledge, experience, moral norms, and cultural values formed in the subject's mind. For example, expressions such as "kind child," "heartless beauty," or "sweet-tongued" convey not only descriptive meanings but also evaluative connotations.

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics, evaluation, cognitive category, concept, evaluative concepts, non-evaluative concepts,

Introduction

Although above given evaluation types are expressed through language, they arise based on cognitive models formed in the mind. Langacker (1987), through the concept of "profiling," demonstrates how certain features are evaluated depending on their positive or negative context. Martin and White (2005), meanwhile, analyze evaluation through cognitive-syntactic systems such as attitude, engagement, and graduation. Thus, evaluation is not only a linguistic unit, but also a product of mental activity involving perception, analysis, and the adoption of a stance toward information. Evaluation is a spiritual and social approach based on cognition.

In cognitive linguistics, the concept is regarded as one of the fundamental units of human cognition. It is studied as an integrated form of knowledge, experience, emotions, and cultural values present in the human mind. Concepts manifest themselves in language as applications of knowledge modules formed in the mind [5, 1178; 6, 375].

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Notably, concepts are of interest to many scholars not only due to their semantic content, but also because of their close connection to cultural and social contexts. One such scholar, Y.S. Stepanov, defines the concept as: "the cream of culture, the core of cultural experience, which also encompasses extralinguistic knowledge – that is, information beyond the realm of language. It both creates culture and is a product of it." [18, 40]

Similarly, D.S. Likhachev defines the concept as a "condensed cultural model in the mind," while A. Wierzbicka describes it as the "intersection point between thought and language," and G. Lakoff refers to it as a "key element in the world of meanings" 8, 21; 21, 6; 9, XIV].

Although concepts are typically expressed through lexical units, their meaning is not limited to words alone – they are expanded through mental models, experience-based scenarios, and cognitive frames.

In our view, conceptual categorization refers to the process by which humans perceive the surrounding world in their minds, classify it into categories and groups, and express this classification through language. In cognitive linguistics, this process is regarded as a method by which the human mind organizes concepts or knowledge. It is well established that every nation or cultural group segments reality into networks of concepts based on its own socio-cultural experience.

Therefore, notions such as "home," "family environment," and "freedom" may possess different conceptual structures across different languages. For example, the English concept of "home" does not have a direct equivalent in Uzbek, illustrating how conceptual categorization is closely linked to national and cultural modes of thought.

On one hand, conceptual categorization is connected to the semantic system of a language; on the other, it is shaped by the cognitive maps within human thought. Thus, the division of real-world phenomena and ideas into concepts as cognitive categories is a process carried out not only through language but also via mental classification.

This act of classification, in turn, is an important cognitive tool that facilitates the process of cognition through grouping, allowing concepts in the human mind to be systematized. Within cognitive linguistics, concepts are grouped according to their semantic features, evaluative connotations, and cultural foundations.

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One of the founders of cognitive linguistics, George Lakoff, significantly advanced the study of conceptual classification in his 1987 work Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things. He critiques the classical Aristotelian model, which claims that categories have rigid boundaries, and instead proposes a prototype-based classification model. According to Lakoff, concepts are formed based on human experience, and the boundaries between them are often fuzzy and flexible. Lakoff illustrates this with the concept of "fruit": the apple is seen as the prototype, while the tomato, which is close to vegetables, is considered a peripheral member. This approach is also applied to concepts such as "emotion," "mother," and "freedom." Lakoff also deeply explores conceptual metaphor. For example, the metaphor "argument is war" is reflected in English expressions like "He shot down my argument," indicating that the concept of "argument" is cognitively structured around the concept of "war". According to Lakoff, concepts are not organized through grammatical structures, but rather through experience-based prototypes in the mind, and they form the very foundation of the cognitive system [9, 24-26].

One of the founders of American cognitive grammar theory, Ronald Langacker, in his seminal work Foundations of Cognitive Grammar (written between 1987 and 2008), closely links grammar and semantics to cognitive processes in the mind. According to him, language is not merely a tool for communication, but a structural representation of human thought.

Langacker introduces the concept of "profiling," which refers to the way linguistic units represent reality from a particular perspective in the mind. For example, the verb "to see" reflects the active perception of the subject, while "was seen" represents a passive conceptual profiling of the same experience.

Langacker does not limit concepts to words or grammatical forms alone; rather, he views them as situated within "cognitive domains". In his view, every linguistic unit is a fragment of a mental map. He attempts to explain grammatical categories – such as tense, possession, and ergativity – on a cognitive basis.

Through his theory of cognitive grammar, Langacker integrates semantics and syntax, thereby shaping a new paradigm in linguistics [11,12, 68, 205].

J.R. Taylor, a prominent British scholar in the field of cognitive linguistics, made significant contributions to the discipline with his 1995 work Linguistic

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Categorization, in which he challenges traditional approaches to conceptual classification. Like other cognitive linguists, Taylor critiques the strict boundaries of classical categorization and proposes that concepts possess a network-like, center-oriented structure.

Using the concept of "father" as an example, he demonstrates the following: the biological father serves as the central prototype, while figures such as a guardian or spiritual guide represent peripheral or adjacent elements. According to this approach, concepts are recognized based on prototypes, and then expand outward in a network, influenced by personal experience, social context, and culture.

Taylor interprets this model as a type of mental map, linking linguistic categories to individual perception, association, and contextual situations. His theory is especially useful in analyzing linguistic phenomena such as synonymy, antonymy, and polysemy.

Taylor regards conceptual categorization as a subconscious mental construct that operates through cognitive processes such as memory, experience, and prototypical models [19, 43].

Yuriy Stepanov is the founder of the Russian school of conceptology, and his work "Константы. Словарь концептов русской культуры" offers a vivid analysis of the interrelation between culture and language through concrete examples. Stepanov famously refers to a concept as "the cream of culture", and he analyzes concepts based on historical layers, contextual codes, and national mentality [18, 40].

According to Stepanov, each concept exists within a semantic space specific to culture, functioning as part of the cultural semiosphere. He views the concept as a cognitive unit that, while independent of language, is expressed through language. Through Stepanov's approach, a deep analysis of how Russian linguistic concepts are connected to cultural frameworks is achieved. His works exemplify the integration of language, thought, and historical consciousness in Russian conceptology.

The study of concepts was further advanced by Vladimir Karasik, one of the key figures in the Russian linguo-discursive and conceptological school. In his research, Karasik explores the complex interactions between language, personality, and culture. He interprets concepts as communicative units oriented

toward discourse, emphasizing that a concept is not merely a cognitive entity existing outside language, but a dynamic structural unit formed in speech activity and subject to transformation across social groups.

According to Karasik, each concept may vary depending on the experience, role, and personal characteristics of communication participants. He characterizes concepts as linguocultural units through which a society's values, stereotypes, and ideologies are expressed. Karasik also developed the theory of the linguistic personality (языковая личность), explaining how concepts function within an individual's language-constructed personal model. This approach links linguistics with psychology and social sciences, expanding the interdisciplinary scope of concept studies [7, 435-476].

In Russian linguistics, Zinaida Popova and Ivan Sternin, prominent representatives of the Russian school of cognitive linguistics, have conducted a more comprehensive investigation into concept theory in their work Cognitive Linguistics (Kognitivnaya lingvistika). According to them, a concept is a cognitive module – a multilayered cognitive unit that exists in the human mind and serves to comprehend a particular segment of reality.

They divide concepts into three main components:

1. Core meaning (semantic nucleus),
2. Extralinguistic connotations, and
3. Verbal means of expression.

For instance, the concept of "cold" encompasses more than just temperature –it also includes emotional coldness (in relationships) and social indifference (apathy), representing a wide spectrum of meaning.

Popova and Sternin classify concepts as mental models, analyzing how they are formed, transformed, and transmitted through discourse and culture. Unlike static categorization approaches, their framework proposes a dynamic and evolving theory of the conceptual field.

This perspective interprets the concept not merely as a linguistic unit, but as an integrated structure of knowledge in the mind [14, 9-27].

Anna Wierzbicka, a prominent Polish scholar in the field of cognitive and cultural semantics, developed the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory in her works, including Semantics, Culture, and Cognition and others [21, 6]. According

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to her, universal semantic units (*semantic primitives*) that exist across all languages allow concepts to be explained without relying on culture-specific configurations. Based on the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework, any complex concept can be paraphrased using simple, culturally neutral words. For example, the English concept of *"privacy"* has no direct equivalent in Polish or Uzbek, as each language and culture interprets the idea differently. Through NSM, *"privacy"* is explained as: *"people don't want others to see them or know what they are doing."*

Wierzbicka believes that every concept is shaped by cultural, social, and psychological codes, and that linguocultural differences enrich the field of linguistics. Her approach enables a clearer analysis of cross-linguistic conceptual differences, and the NSM method offers a tool for achieving conceptual neutrality and establishing universal semantic foundations in linguistic analysis.

Gilles Fauconnier, a renowned American scholar in cognitive linguistics, developed the theories of mental spaces and conceptual integration. In his works *Mental Spaces* and *The Way We Think* (co-authored with Mark Turner), he explores how meaning is constructed in human cognition. According to Fauconnier, understanding any sentence or thought involves the creation of specific mental spaces in the mind – these may be real, imaginary, hypothetical, or social.

For instance, in the sentence *"If Napoleon had used a modern phone…"*, real and imaginary spaces are merged – this process is called blending, and it results in the generation of new concepts. Fauconnier's theory has become a crucial tool in analyzing conceptual metaphor, polysemy, and imaginative structures. He argues that language is merely an external instrument in cognitive processes, while meaning construction occurs through modeled mental spaces in the mind. The conceptual blending model plays an important role in linguistics, particularly in rhetoric and creative thinking.

Dirk Geeraerts, a leading figure in European cognitive semantics, explores the historical and prototypical development of lexical meanings in his influential work *Theories of Lexical Semantic* [4, 256].

He views conceptual categorization as dynamic and subject to change within a socio-cultural context. Dirk Geeraerts argues that concepts evolve over time

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under the influence of culture, politics, technology, and social relations. For example, the concept of "freedom" in ancient Europe referred to a social status (a free person), whereas in modern Western societies, it primarily denotes political and personal rights.

Geeraerts analyzes concepts based on prototypes and the semantic shades surrounding them. His core approach involves performing semantic analysis based on corpus linguistics, focusing on how lexical units are used in authentic discourse. By combining prototype theory with historical change, he systematically investigates how concepts transform over time.

In his works, Geeraerts integrates cognitive semantics and historical linguistics, proposing a model of semantic evolution.

Among the leading linguists in Uzbekistan, N.M.Djusupov, Sh.S.Safarov, A.A.Abduazizov, O'.Q.Yusupov, D.Khudoyberganova, D.U.Ashurova, M.R.Galieva, T.Mardiev, M.M.Rakhmatova, and N.Z.Normurodova have contributed valuable insights on the study of concepts and various types of conceptual analysis [3, 29; 16, 185-188; 1, 21; 23, 49; 22, 65; 2, 160; 12, 36-44; 15, 33; 13, 164].

Based on the discussions above, our research implements a two-stage classification of concepts according to their evaluative function. In doing so, we primarily collected and thoroughly analyzed conceptual studies conducted in English, Russian, and Uzbek.

Importantly, while some concepts may appear non-evaluative when examined objectively, in certain contexts even neutral concepts can acquire positive or negative connotations.

First and foremost, we divide the existing concepts into two main groups:

Evaluative concepts – these concepts inherently carry positive or negative value judgments. Examples include: "bravery," "cruelty," "devotion," "carelessness."

Non-evaluative (neutral) concepts – these concepts have objectively descriptive meanings without any evaluative load. Examples include: "age," "life," "strength," "road."

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Evaluative concepts	Freedom, love, justice, honesty, success, happiness, courage, wisdom, friendship, peace, loyalty, hope, kindness, generosity, respect, patience, hard work, innovation, determination, optimism, bravery, tolerance, virtue, empathy, beauty, suicide, theft, glory, humility, shame, pride, joy, sadness, success, miracle, evil, sin, faith, hope, crisis, politeness, patience, conflict, anger, trust/distrust, crime and punishment, home-land, sorrow, wealth, poverty, victory, punishment, friendship, envy, health, sickness, loyalty, happiness, devil, friendship, mercy, justice, intelligence, demon, beauty, ugliness, patriotism, endurance, enemy, terrorism, ok, honor, refined, victim, praise, reward, health…
Mazmunida baho aks etmagan konseptlar	Power, money, ambition, science, technology, authority, fame, competition, discipline, time, change, conflict, secrecy, tradition, education, faith, adventure, independence, ambiguity, privacy, order, leadership, mother, father, forest, travel, prince, freedom, wartime, truth, woman, man, marriage, age, life, death, Moscow, Petersburg, Russia, smell, human, yellow, mind, name/pseudonym, study, water, water and fire, communication, rain, dream, management, comparison, work, construction, illness, honor, democracy, weather, gift, uncertainty, war, international terrorism, fate, emigration, monarchy, eternal life, London, game, service, bull, house, criticism, fashion, sun, language, state, student, tradition, month (moon), book, law, America, nature, football, memory, insurance, cake, horse, car, oath, light/darkness, road, curiosity, weather, entrepreneur, word, aspiration, person, computer, storm, province…

Classifying concepts into evaluative and non-evaluative (neutral) categories holds significant theoretical and practical value. Theoretically, this distinction enables a deeper analysis of the semantic structure of concepts within the framework of cognitive semantics and text linguistics. Evaluative concepts are closely tied to moral, emotional, and social values in human cognition and often reflect culturally embedded stereotypes and attitudes. For example, concepts like "bravery" or "cruelty" carry positive or negative connotations that contribute to evaluative meaning in discourse.

Practically, this classification serves as a valuable tool in areas such as discourse analysis, stylistics, translation studies, and linguoculturology. Identifying whether a concept carries subjective or objective meaning helps in revealing the author's stance, stylistic choices, and the socio-pragmatic orientation of the text. Neutral concepts are more typical in encyclopedic, scientific, or formal discourse, where the goal is primarily information transfer rather than evaluation.

Thus, this two-fold classification of concepts plays a crucial methodological role in understanding the cognitive and functional properties of language, offering

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insights into how meaning is constructed, interpreted, and communicated across languages and cultures.

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