

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2019.17.1.1>**КОНЦЕПТ – ТАИНСТВЕННЫЙ ДЕМИУРГ КОГНИТИВНОЙ ЛИНГВОПОЭТИКИ**

Научная статья

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**Аннотация**

В статье рассматриваются спорные вопросы корреляций понятия, концепта и категории в их взаимосвязи с представлениями, символами, смыслами и чувствами. Изложены результаты исследования, свидетельствующие о том, что концепт обычно имеет определенный этнокультурный смысл, который соответствует понятию. Обоснован анализ того, что как потенциальное понятие, концепт лишён, прежде всего, его базового компонента – десигната; концепт не может быть отождествлён и с образом – феноменом предметно-чувственной природы, так как он не обладает референцией, то есть не соотносится с конкретным предметом. Представлена модель описания концепта как такого мыслительного образования, которое существует в сознании человека наряду с предметно-чувственным образом, конкретным предметом мысли и понятием. Раскрыт потенциал описания концепта в сопоставлении с разными моделями концептуальной сферы языка, которые являются основой этнолингвистического сознания.

**Ключевые слова:** когнитивно-дискурсивная парадигма, ценностно-смысловой континуум культуры, лингвокогнитивная ситуация, этнокультура, языковое сознание.

**CONCEPT AS A MYSTERIOUS DEMIURGE OF COGNITIVE LINGUOPOETICS**

Research article

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**Abstract**

It is considered debatable questions of correlations of concept, notion and category in their interconnections with images, symbols, meanings and senses. It is proved that concept usually has ethnocultural specified sense content which conforms to notion. Correlation of concepts to any category models conceptsphere of language as the base of ethno linguistic consciousness.

**Keywords:** cognitive-discursive paradigm, value-semantic continuum of culture, linguocognitive situation, ethno-culture, language consciousness.

**Introduction**

In recent linguistic research, the term *concept* has become not only popular but also very terminologically uncertain. There has appeared a threat of its transformation from a fashionable term into pseudoscientific lexeme and, as a consequence, the risk of its losing the terminological meaning that, of course, is not resulting in strengthening the position of cognitive-discursive paradigm of modern linguopoetics. The term is unfortunately often applied to any object of conceptual nature, substituting such related nominations, as *notion*, *category* and *meaning*, representing, according to the authors, related, but, nevertheless, different formats of the conceptualization of the results of cognitive activity.

**Research methods and principles**

The essence and originality of the concept is revealed by applying the interdisciplinary principle as the basic methodological tenet of contemporary cognitive linguistics. However, in contrast to the growing popularity of such broad principle's understanding which often ignores the actual linguistic techniques, we rely on the linguistic properties of the concept's representatives and inductive-empirical method based on the verbal explication of the cognitive contextual implicit parameters. At the second stage, the data obtained are subjected to (a) deductive justification in the discursive manifestations of the concept's categorical properties, (b) systematization, (c) modeling elements, which together allows to present schematically the main vectors of the cognitive phenomena's interrelations such as conceptus, conceptum and categories.

**Discussion**

**Concept ~ notion.** There are objective prerequisites to confusing these phenomena described by Y.S. Stepanov. "Concept is a phenomenon of the same order as notion. According to its internal form of words in the Russian language, *concept* and *notion* are the same: the concept is the loan translation of the Latin *conceptus* – "the concept of" from the verb *concipere* 'conceive', which literally means 'conception'; the word *notion* – *ponyatie* - originates from Old Russian verb *poynati* – 'to seize, take possession, to marry a woman' [12, P. 42]. It turns out that the primary meanings of these words are the same. However, this does not mean that they are double terms in the academic discourse. The main difference is caused by the fact that they are terms of different branches of knowledge. The term *notion* is used mainly in logic and philosophy, while the term *concept* having emerged in mathematical logic, recently entrenched in cultural studies, especially in such a rapidly developing its subdivision as linguistic cultural studies. Moreover, once the basic concept of this science, it has as if deliberately got rid of its recent conceptual and categorical past, and come to refer to products of thinking-for-speaking not of a scholar, with his or her strictly structured ideas and generalizations, but "that by which a human - an ordinary, normal person [ ...] is included in the culture him/herself ... "[12, P. 42]. And after this (in essence, act of cultural socialization), the concept is included in the

value-semantic continuum of culture. This alters vector essence of his nature: the concept transforms into an object which represents culture in the mental world of human, and turns into a kind of "clot of culture in human consciousness" [12, 43]. However, in this case the concept does not lose its original purpose - the ability to generate sensuously objective sense as a certain image. That is why, in my understanding, concept begins the chain of the terms in question. The very etymology of the Latin word *conceptum*, which was used in the meaning of 'grain; embryo', leads to this conclusion. On the basis of this etymology, V.V. Kolesov compares the semantics of the word with 'prototype germ', qualifying it as some 'pervosmysl', i.e. "original sense". So due to its etymological meaning *concept* in no way can be equated with *notion*, the term which designates already drawn up and chosen by the logic object of thought, or understood and structured semantic content. Though concept is a powerful stimulator of knowledge, it still is a potential, yet unformed "pro-log", a kind of mental idea prior to thinking. It is a potential notion a proto-notion, an associative thinking "germ" capable of "growing as word, and thought and deed" [9]. As a potential notion, the concept is devoid of its fundamental component, namely, designatum. In order to acquire it, concept has to develop into notion, and if we continue with our metaphorical comparison of concept to embryo, it has to evolve so that the fully fertilized and structured thought ripens from it.

Niether can the concept be identified with image, this being the phenomenon of human sensuality, since it does not have the reference, that is, does not refer to a specific subject. Because of this, even in a poetic context "apple" is not a concept:

*How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow,  
If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show! //*  
[W. Shakespeare].

Designating a particular item, lexeme *apple* turns it into its referent, and a referred generic object into denotation [2, P. 154]. Besides, apple is not a concept here yet because this word in certain circumstances relate to the denotations, i.e. serial, generic, typical objects of thought. The situation is different in the quatrains

**Яблоко раздора, как же ты червиво!**  
*Искушение сладкое с горечью внутри.  
А в Эдеме раньше было всё красиво,  
и сгорали звёзды от большой любви.* (Лидия Фогель)  
**Apple of discord, how worm-eaten you are!**  
*Sweet temptation with bitterness inside.  
But before, in Eden, everything was beautiful,  
And the stars burned down because of big love.*  
*Lilia Fohgel (translation by authors)*

The same lexeme as a part of a phraseme represents a cultural concept, and therefore contains in its meaning cultural (value-oriented) content, pointing to "the cause of strife and enmity."

Consequently, the concept is such a thought-formation, which exists in the human mind along with sensual image, the specific object of thought and notion. Thus, prenotional structure can be represented as a "convoluted point of potential meanings" [9, P. 81], or, in our understanding, a point, potentially projecting some semantic field, which is organized similarly to any other field: condensation of meaning forms its core, while scattered and fragmented meanings build its periphery. This arrangement of concept keeps the peripheral meanings in the zone of attraction of its nucleus, forming a unity of opposite meanings, "something vague" [4, P. 267], "timeless content" (Frank). However, concept is not a mystical phenomenon. It is, rather, a hybrid unity of the name of the subject and its mental image. In this kind of unity an object (of knowledge) coexists with its subjective image and the fetus of the concept - a generalized representation of a number of similar objects in their most general features. This interpretation of the concept resembles «sense», but unlike the latter, it is devoid of formal structure. According to V. Kolesov, concept is meaning having not acquired material structure, and is therefore not yet the concept, but the formation that contains its essence [9, P. 44].

The first part of this judgment is considered to be the original thesis by us, but the second needs further reflection. First of all, the assertion that the concept is the essence of notion contradicts the theory of the concept developed by Y.S. Stepanov. According to his theory, just the opposite is true: notion is an essential component of concept. It, along with figurativeness and ability of evaluation, forms one of the structural layers of concept. It also seems doubtful that the essence of each concept should certainly be a particular concept. In this context, relevance and importance of pondering on the issue of creating various typologies of concepts, including recognition of the existence of cultural, artistic, preverbal, and other systems in particular, have dramatically increased. After all, the essence of cultural and artistic concepts focuses on their figurative and semantic component, rather than on notional one.

There is also a more serious reason for this kind of doubt. It is based on the categorical nature of the concept which is aptly and succinctly disclosed by V.V. Kolesov: concept is the 'prototype', 'some 'pervosmysl', i.e. "original meaning" of the object of thought reflected in the human consciousness. Association-thinking "sprout" or "embryo" of knowledge about the subject, meaning-generating sperm cannot be equated with notion which is the logically completed generalization of the most significant properties and signs of a knowable object, by definition. This is the main reason why the eponymous term (concept lexeme) contains, according to V.Z. Demyankova, in its semantic structure the seme of 'incomplete, rudimentary' [8, P. 35-47]. Only as a result of completion of fertilization of thought, its clearance through filters of social experience and ethno-cultural adaptation on the basis of the concept, notion is formed, which then acquires the status of its structural core. So, to some extent it justifies V. Kolesov's statement because, let us state it again, according to the scientist, "concept is not notion but the essence of concept" [9, P. 44].

Notion is a combination of the essential features of an object, distinguishing it from similar objects. For example, the notion "table" - "a piece of furniture, a wide board on legs" includes all the features that distinguish the table from other furniture: chairs, armchairs, stools and so on. Unlike notion, concept is always a *naive idea*, steeped in ethnic culture [1, P. 2]. In this sense, we would support those scholars who argue that concept is always ethnoculturally specific, even in cases when the words in which it is verbalized, are marked in translation dictionaries as equivalents. Logically, the prevailing notion is the

extreme limit of the truth. And it is consistent with the etymon of the term 'concept', which contains the idea of 'rudimentary truth'. This idea is also contained in the already mentioned physiological metaphors of germ and birth. The concept is "reduction" from the Latin phrase *conceptus mentis* «embryo of thought» i.e. something that is "conceived."

According to V.Z. Demyankova, use of the term concept in different linguistic cultures seeks to preserve the original metaphor, originally rooted in the image and motivating the idea of "rudimentary truth", thanks to which each concept retains the status of "embryo" of mental operations, or, according to Askoldov (1997), «burgeon of the most sophisticated inflorescences of mental specifics".

**2. Concept ~ category.** Category, as a basic academic unit of thinking nominating the most general concept, was introduced by Aristotle. According to the philosopher, there exist 10 basic categories: "substance" (ουσία), "quantity" (πόσον), "quality" (πρῶτον), "relation" (πρὸς τί), "place" (που), "time" (πότε), "position" (κεῖσθαι), "action" (ποιεῖν), "habit" (εχειν) and "passion" (πάσχειν). The Stoics, instead of ten Aristotelian categories, accepted only four: substance, quality, modality and attitude. Kant also distinguished four categories, calling them the categories of reason: the category of quantity, quality, relation and modality. Many of these categories are attributed to be general concepts by modern social linguistics. It is also considered reasonable to mention the concept "quantity", the concept "quality", the concepts "place" and "time". In our opinion, all these are classic categories. By the way, some approaches to the problem of differentiation of category and concept can be found in the reasoning of the ancient thinkers. Hegel argued that formation of categories stems from such difficult to determine and poor in content notion as **notion of Being**; it generates first the category of quality, then the category of quantity, and so on.

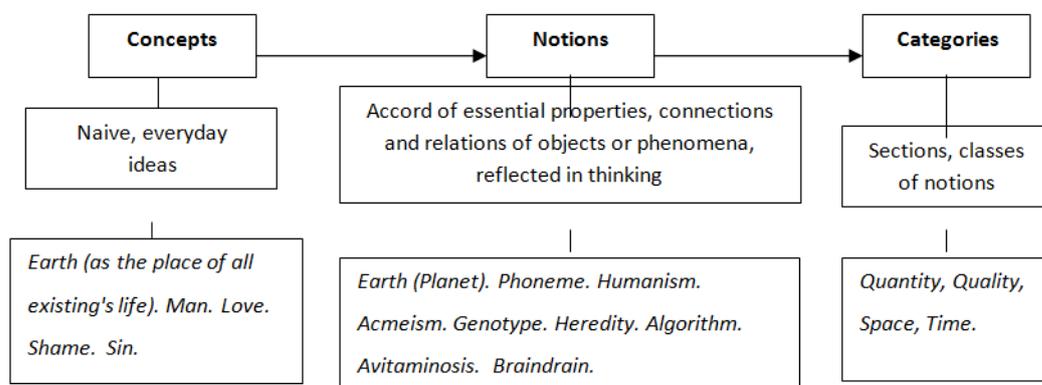


Fig. 1

It is quite reasonable to perceive the first understanding of the cognitive structures that were named concepts by modern scholars in these notions if being. As appears from the judgment given above, concepts are initial cognitive aggregations laying the foundation for the emergence of concepts, which, in turn, lay the foundation for generation of categories. Categories, unlike concepts, have greater capacity (volume). Because of this trait, categories provide the systematization of knowledge and cognitive process, summing up whole classes of concepts under certain headings. In addition, they are specific cognitive multidisciplinary units and therefore they fix stages and factors of the cognitive process. Finally, it should be noted that an evrisemantic (polysemantic) word may represent different cognitive structures. Thus, the Russian word 'zemla' - "land, Earth" - may serve both as a representant of the concept (if it means living environment of all things: people, animals and plants) and the notion (if it refers to the planet of the solar system. However, it should be taken into account that we are talking only about the eurisemantic words.

**3. Concept ~ sense.** Usually, sense might be understood as a number of interrelated ideas: (a) in ordinary consciousness it is something that is opposed to the absurd and has real content; (b) in language studies it is the issue that occurs in the act of nomination (signification) and is implemented in specific statements; (c) in communication theory it is the issue that is formed in interpersonal communication and exists in the soul-and-thinking space and depends on discursive situation.

In cognitive linguistics, sense is often identified with concept on the grounds that it can be likened to a kind of "mobile cloud of ideas" with a fleeing variety of meanings [14, P. 243]. This definition of sense is close to interpretation of concept by S.A. Askoldov and V.V. Kolesov, which is probably the basis for the identification of these two concepts. However, sense is also characterized by its "own" characters. It is (a) situationally and contextually meaningful; (b) is able to express a set of meanings, potentially related to cognition of a named object. In this respect, "meaning functions as modifier of meanings, precisely because it fixes in the minds those properties and attributes of the object which are relevant to a particular linguocognitive situation [2, P. 81]. In this regard, we should agree with A.G. Teslinov's opinion that the sense of "things" is expressed in concepts. As we put it, concept has semantic content. Moreover, semantic interpretation of the learnt object generates the ideas which actually give rise to concept. Therefore, the assertion that concept is the essence of notion, seems too categorical to us [14, P. 244]. Rather, on the contrary, notion is the core of the semantic content of concept. Thereby, the problem of interrelations of sense, meaning and concept arises from the fact that in live speech the concept and meaning of nominative units which represent it are not reproduced but interpreted in the process of the subjects of the speech intentions' realization. In other words, in the process of speaking, content of speech is formed by amalgamation of certain senses translated by separate elements of saying, but, by no means, by adding them mechanically up.

According to the previously described theory [2, P. 86], linguocognitive status of meaning is defined by historically and socially determined link of acoustic images and images of objects and situations. In other terms the meaning is referred to as designatum or sememe [11] The status of concepts is determined by the scope of substantive imagery and denotative situations and described in terms of denotation, meaning, and concept. Although linguocognitive status of meaning can be considered

generally accepted, we believe that proposed understanding of concept still requires further discussion. Can concept really, without any reservations, be equated to denotatum and meaning?

Unlike denotatum, concept possesses not only subject imagery but also conceptual and pragmatic components. Interrelations between concept, sense and meaning are very intricate as well. As such, concept is expressed only in such semantic formats as image, concept and symbol [11, P. 323]. Such an understanding of the essence of concept refers it to the phenomena reflecting the spiritual life of human. In this sense, it is considered as a certain archetype of culture which provides continuousness of spiritual life of an ethnos.

### The main results

The analysis suggests that the concept is a creative means of preserving and enriching the value-semantic space of any ethnic culture. This justifies the uniqueness of concept as a cognitive structure. The configuration of its multi-layered content is formed by: (a) the reflection of the corresponding fragment of the world landscape as a subjective image; (b) the symbolic meaning, which makes the concept available to the public ethno-linguistic consciousness and presents it as a heritage of a particular national culture; and (c) the notional component is a universal (logical) component of concept, which provides its representation in various world languages. Taking into consideration such a combination of its components, concept, though with reservations, can be certainly called a notion, but the specific notion:

a) **everyday** or **naive** (such a naive notion is formed by human experience; it is the basis of the meaning of a word, and the way of differentiating one object of thought from others): *earth, water, air*;

b) **individualizing**, because as a concept a specific and unique object (often individually signature) acquires ethno-cultural importance and becomes a symbol. For example, «Дворянское гнездо» - "Noble Nest" for a Russian speaker is the concept symbolically representing the symbol of comfortable life; «Обломовщина» - "Oblomovism" is the concept that represents apathy, stagnation, lack of development, and routine (the concept originates from the family name of Oblomov, the protagonist of the novel by I. Turgenev due to the article by A. Dobrolyubov titled "What is Oblomovism?");

c) **specified by discourse**, as it models a certain situation based not on objective and specific features, but on the basis of individual personal interpretation of the corresponding fragment of reality through its association with popular images. E.g.: *You're our Hercules!* is what people say about a strong man. Concepts of this kind contain, to varying degrees, image, notion and symbol. Thus, the semantic content of the latter concept is fueled by the synergy of an enormous Greek character of Hercules, as well as the notion of "masculinity" and a cultural symbol of this concept – *Hercules*.

Two other concepts listed above, "Noble Nest" and "Oblomovism", have the same characteristics. All of them are continual, unlimited in the ethno-linguistic world landscape because their verbalizers lack verbal specifics. The phrase *Noble Nest* and the lexeme *Oblomovism* representing these concepts are deprived of everything that is characteristic of language units which nominate conventional notions or ideas. They do not autonomously correlate (a) or with a specific referent ("Noble Nest" can nominate restaurants, housing complexes and other objects); (b) or with a designatum (logical content of a concept) because a conceptual component of the concept "is dissolved" in the sense synergy of conceptual content; (c) or with any denotation as the standard subject of naming (subject-figurative meaning). All this is explained by the fact that, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, denotations are units of language awareness (for they are formed by knowledge of the language). Senses are products of reflection at restoration of ties and relations between objects of thinking-for-speaking. Referents are specific items of nominating knowable. Designatum are the results of condensation and structuring of meaning, and the content of statements is received while reproducing predications under the relevant propositions [6, P. 3]. The semantics of language units that represent concepts, introducing sparse meanings in different configurations, is capable of causing all the components of intentionality in our minds. They are the reflection of experience accompanied by live emotions, as well as reference, denotation of designation in their synergetic unity. Agreeing with the idea of A.F. Losev, in this sense, the concept may be called "unity of opposites, or unity of thought with its object" [10, P. 62]. Therefore, the concept is not a notion, by definition, although it originally expresses the essence of notion, being its root meaning. Nor is it sense in the true understanding, as sense is clothed in some form, while concept is rather, "the sense having not gained any form", or "condensation of unformed and unstable vague associations" given "as a kind of integrity", though. [5, P. 47].

So that their quality of concept makes it similar to the inner shape of the linguistic sign: it, similarly to the inner form of the sign, is not the image, but the "rolled up point of potential senses" that can generate a certain range of semantic variants in the semantic structure of linguistic signs (LSV, FSV). If we continue to develop a metaphorical definition of the concept - "rolled up point of potential senses," we should also mention the judgment of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. The researchers wrote: "The concept is defined as the inseparability of a finite number of heterogeneous components, run by some point with infinite speed in a state of absolute soaring. ...»Soaring" is the state of a concept or the infinity characteristic of it, though infinite quantities can be larger or smaller depending on the cipher of the components, limits and bridges between them.

Sharing this view, O.A. Alimuradov believes, however, that "all of its basic properties cannot be explained by the simultaneous presence of the point of the concept in all its fields" [3]. Therefore, the underlying assumption by the scholar is that integrated understanding of concept is based on one of the fundamental properties of human intelligence, namely, the notion of intentionality. It is this feature of the concept that makes it fundamentally different from both category and concept. Due to possessing the property of intentionality, concept is judged to be the basic property of ethnolinguistic consciousness and as its initial activity, which forms its semantic structure. Thanks to its intentionality, concept is able to interpret mental experiences and express the fundamental attitude of human to the world. Intentionality exists in concept (a) as *noesis* (united structure of supposition act) and (b) as *noeta* understood as objective meaning, not dependent on the existence of an object or real fact. According to Husserl's theory, *noeta* is an *ideal* component of actual items of intentional mental experiences and *noesis* is a real one. Intentionality includes elements of both practical and discursive consciousness. Taken as this, it forms the sense structure of any concept in particular, and of consciousness in general. On the one hand, it gives rise to the idea of concept and units of the mentality convergence, but on the other hand, ironically for the same reason, concept should not be confused with episteme - a unit of the ethnic mentality - representing the external forms of ethnic consciousness.

Unlike episteme, concept is not devoid of archetypal properties, allowing them to be operated even at the level of our subconscious. As subcortical semantic element, concept presents a kind of mental genotype or an atom of genetic memory, under condition, of course, that mentality is judged as spirituality of the people, a vital backbone of its value-semantic space. While comparing the main structures of thought, we come to the conclusion that there are cognitive structures of varying degrees of generalization [Grunkin A.M.], as well as varying degrees of loss of object-shaped entity in the focus of our attention. Such cognitive structures as "quantity", "quality", "space", and "time" are called **categories** and belong to the highest level of generalization. Categories are devoid of subject-sensual imagery. **Notions**, like "youth", "parents", "life", "development" etc., form the average level of generalization. Notions are also unattached to subject specific and imaginative perception.

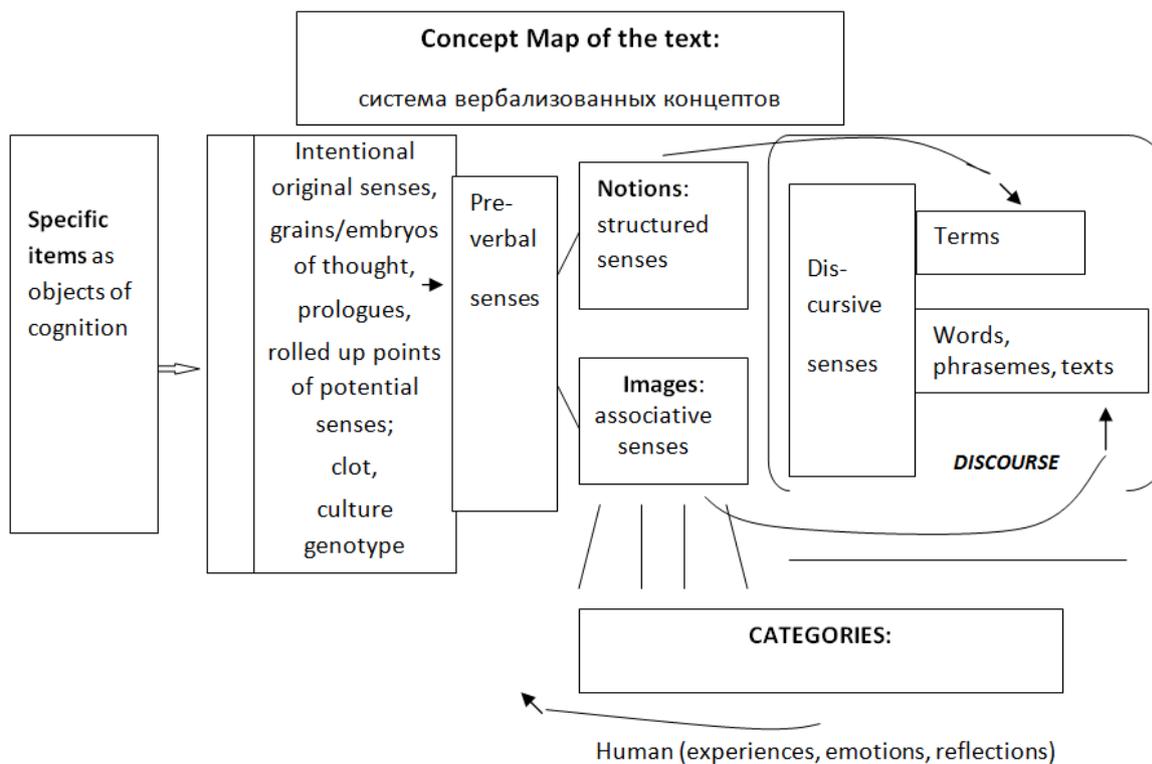


Fig. 2

**Concepts**, such as "Music", "Steppe", "Man", "Road" etc., are located on the lower level of generalization. Unlike categories and notions, they contain elements of all the cognitive structures mentioned above; they include conceptual essence, imaginative perception of an object of thought, and ethno-cultural aura. The list is completed with **specific items**, such as "table", "light", "cloth", or "blog".

### Conclusion

Summing up, concept in comparison with other linguocognitive formations is somewhat mystical by nature, being "the eye of eternity," and "radiation from the depths" (Berdyayev's term) of ethno-cultural consciousness, an archetype thought full of intentionality, still not issued the original multiplicity of meanings. Concepts with only one component do not exist. The concept that can be reduced to one component is transformed into sense, notion, image, or symbol. Semantic interpretation of the known is a source of ideas that give rise to the concept. Therefore, concept is ultimately turned to the subject of mental discourse: its socio-historical principle is projected onto each individual. It combines memory and imagination; as an act of memory it is oriented to the past, as an act of imagination - into the future, as an act of judgment - to the present (S.S. Neretina). The notion is the result of the long-term generalizations of the most important properties and characteristics of the knowable object. Category is a generalized unit of thought forming classes and sections of notions. Ultimately concept has a (usually due to ethno-cultural) semantic content, with a corresponding notion at the base and summarizing concepts within the limits of one or another category models the sphere of concepts of a language, that is the basis of ethno-linguistic consciousness. In the end, the concept meaning, being the focus of combining the main anthropological cultural factors such as ethnic, historical, psychological, and linguistic one's, makes it the demiurge of cognitive linguopoetics as a formation of new cognitive science's branch.

### Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

### Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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