

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2020.24.4.16>**ОБ ОДНОМ ИЗ ВАРИАНТОВ КОНЦЕПТА “ENEMY”, РЕПРЕЗЕНТИРОВАННОГО В БРИТАНСКИХ ГАЗЕТАХ**

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Цель статьи заключается в моделировании концепта противника Великобритании на основе анализа британских газетных текстов, посвященных созданию и продвижению российской антивирусной вакцины. В результате проведенного анализа устанавливается, что репрезентированный в газетных текстах ментальный конструкт может рассматриваться как один из вариантов концепта «Енему». В период информационной войны этот принадлежащий к архетипическим концепт приобретает особое значение. Ядерные когнитемы, формирующие концепт «Енему», подвергаются в газетном тексте конкретизации соответственно текущей ситуации в мире.

Ключевые слова: концепт, враг, информационная война, когнитема, газетный текст, моделирование.

ON A VARIETY OF THE CONCEPT “ENEMY” REPRESENTED IN BRITISH NEWSPAPERS

Research article

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to analyse British newspapers texts, discussing the development and promotion of the Russian antivirus vaccine, and to model the concept of a contender of Britain, based on this study. On carrying out the outlined aim it is possible to come to the conclusion that the represented mental construct could be regarded as one of the varieties of the concept “Enemy”. In the period of information warfare this concept, belonging to the archetypal ones, acquires special significance. The cognithemes forming the core of the concept “Enemy” undergo specification in newspaper texts in correspondence to the current situation in the world.

Keywords: concept, enemy, information warfare, newspaper text, cognitheme, modelling.

Introduction

The notion of the concept has undoubtedly become the key notion of modern Russian cognitive linguistics, resulting in the development of a vast area of research, comprising studies of the theoretical principles and approaches to modelling and describing the concept, as well as numerous papers aimed at the analysis of a particular concept represented in this or that language. The concepts under investigation vary within a wide range according to different parameters, such as the number of language representations, the structural outlay, the involvement of metaphor, etc., the parameter of age being not the least important. Some concepts have existed both in the conceptual picture of the world and in the language for a very long time. The concept “Enemy” is definitely one of them, being based on the archetypal opposition “your own — alien”, going back to tribal days. This opposition, highly important for the perception of the identity both of a person and a group, plays a significant role in ontogenesis and phylogenesis. It is closely connected with the category of assessment and involves the attribution of positive traits to “your own” and negative traits to the “alien”. The fact that this alien individual or group differs from you and your group is perceived as dangerous and posing threat to “your own”, transforming the “alien” into an enemy. The concept of the enemy is essential for international relations, apart from many other areas of contemporary life, constituting an integral part of the information warfare. It is absolutely obvious, that as long as there is warfare, there is an enemy. The metaphor of the term inevitably has an impact on the notion it names, as was shown by the authors of “Metaphors in the history of psychology” back in 1990 [8, P. 8-17]. The information warfare, defined as the information impact on the community views with the purpose to change the cognitive structure underlying the perception of events, which ultimately results in the change of the behaviour [3], permeates nowadays the relations between many countries. Thus, the concept of the enemy verbalised in mass media texts, in newspapers in particular, represents a significant scholarly value and allows the researchers to investigate the mental entity introduced to the mentality of people and characteristic of modern international confrontation.

Method and Discussion

The latest global events connected with the pandemic and the strife of many countries to develop an antivirus vaccine in the shortest time possible resulted in the buildout of confrontation among some of them. The aim of this research is to analyse the articles in British newspapers, discussing the development and promotion of the Russian antivirus vaccine, and to model the concept of a contender of Britain, based on this study. On carrying out the outlined aim it is necessary to come to the conclusion whether the represented concept could be regarded as one of the varieties of the much bigger and versatile concept “Enemy”, verbalised in contemporary British media. The apparently narrowed range of newspaper texts will permit us to model only one aspect of the above-mentioned concept, but nevertheless its reconstruction may prove illustrative enough to be extended later by encompassing texts considering other issues.

It is necessary to define some principles involved in modelling a concept represented in a text. According to P.N. Johnson-Laird, a person forms a highly diminished pattern of the discourse [1, P. 234]. This statement is important in two respects. First, a newspaper reader compresses the information offered to him, without realising he is doing this. In this process some units of information are stored in his memory, while others completely disappear. Second, a researcher acts in a similar way, but on purpose, extracting the units, which are relevant for the aim he is pursuing, and ignoring the others.

Journalists are well aware of how the reader consumes the information, so they make an emphasis on certain words to make certain units of information more memorisable, manipulating the reader in his understanding and assessment of the events. This turns out to be very helpful for those researchers, whose task consists in modelling a concept represented in a text. Conceptual features in the general contents of the text can be identified and described due to the frequent words, verbalising frequent units of information.

Conceptual features constitute a concept, so in a generalised way the modelling of a concept normally implies the extraction and description of a number of these conceptual features. These conceptual features can be called cognithemes, which are in general defined as propositional units of knowledge, functional as constituents for modelling any mental construct, verbalised in the language [2, P.57].

Another useful notion for modelling a concept represented in the text is the opposition “Figure – Ground”. In this case the conceptual space connected with the text is regarded as Ground, in which some features comprising a certain Figure could be discovered and assembled into a whole entity. R. Jackendoff compares the formation of the mental structure with the visual perception of a figure against its background [6, P.194]. R. Langacker writes that a figure is something outlined against the background, some pivot, around which a scene is built. A figure is more compact and better structured than its ground [7, P.120]. The theory of Figure and Ground has been widely developed in cognitive linguistics, but for the research done in this article the above statements are enough. They give us every reason to consider a concept as a Figure delineated against the Ground, represented in our case by the conceptual space formed by the contents of newspaper articles.

Results

Before embarking on the task of modelling the Figure against the Ground let us consider the definition of the word “enemy”, which is the key name for the corresponding concept, in several dictionaries [4], [5].

The meanings of the word “enemy” in the Cambridge English dictionary [4] are as follows:

1. a person who hates or opposes another person and tries to harm them or stop them from doing something.

He's made a few enemies in this company.

2. a country, or the armed forces of a country, that is at war with another country.

The enemy had succeeded in stopping our supplies from getting through.

3. something that harms something else.

Familiarity is the enemy of desire.

The Collins English dictionary offers more detailed definitions [5]:

1. a person hostile or opposed to a policy, cause, person, or group, esp. one who actively tries to do damage; opponent.

2. a. an armed adversary; opposing military force.

b. (as modifier)

enemy aircraft

3. a. a hostile nation or people.

b. (as modifier)

an enemy alien

4. something that harms or opposes; adversary.

Courage is the enemy of failure.

The analysis of the definitions shows, that an important feature of the enemy is that of a confrontation. The enemy, a person or a country, confronts its corresponding counterpart. For the enemy-person a feeling of hatred and the intention to harm those against him are essential, while for the enemy-country the confrontation and the intention to harm the contender are implied by the state of war. The important feature of harming others unites all the meanings. But the last meaning listed in both dictionaries basically belongs to the literary style, is not encountered in the analysed texts and so is not relevant to this analysis.

Thus, it is possible to outline the following cognithemes, which constitute the core of the concept “Enemy”: “the enemy confronts others”, “the enemy wants to harm others”, “the enemy hates others”, “the enemy is dangerous”.

Now let us turn to British newspapers and the articles about the situation of developing and then promoting the new Russian antivirus vaccine into the domestic and international market. It is essential to emphasize that undertaking this kind of analysis a linguist goes entirely by the language material available to him, fully complying with the approach outlined by A. Wierzbicka, who made it clear that the task of the linguist consists only in the description of the conceptualisation reflected in the language [14, P.395]. So this analysis does not turn a linguist into a journalist or a political commentator, who have absolutely different objectives set before them.

The analysis of the conceptual space reflected by these articles makes it possible to trace a repetitive conceptual feature or a cognitheme “Russia confronts other countries / Britain / the west”:

What is clear is that the vaccine race has become another front in the standoff between Russia and the west. [11]

Another frequent cognitheme is “Russia attacks Britain”, the hostile confrontation resulting in some menacing activities:

The general added: “Their goal is to win without going to war: to achieve their objectives by breaking our willpower, using attacks below the threshold that would prompt a war-fighting response.” [10]

In this fragment of the newspaper text a situation of menacing confrontation, bordering on war, is described in which Britain finds itself under an attack of its powerful opponent. This opponent has a clear-cut aim to win in the confrontation and

overpower Britain. The additional cognithemes “Russia wants to win in the confrontation”, “Russia wants to break the resistance of its opponent” are traced.

The alleged attacks can be specified in the newspapers as cyber or hacking attacks, resulting in the cognitheme “Russia launches / plans on launching cyber / hacking attacks”:

Intelligence services feared a possible hacking attempt in March ...[9]

In July, British spies were able to detect a Russian cyber attack on the Oxford coronavirus vaccine computers after installing a security shield around the facility. [9]

The specific aims pursued by Russia in the outlined confrontation are reflected in the following cognithemes:

“Russia tries to steal information”. The repetition of the verb “steal” is characteristic of the texts under investigation, making it possible to extract this cognitheme:

Britain is fighting off an alleged campaign by Moscow to steal information in a bid to develop a coronavirus vaccine. [13]

“Russia spreads disinformation”:

Russia spreads fake news claiming Oxford coronavirus vaccine will turn people into monkeys ...[9]

Russia is seeking to destabilise countries around the world by sowing disinformation about coronavirus vaccines. [10]

In the next extract Russia is actually called the adversary of Britain, adding the cognitheme “Russia is an enemy”:

... unveiled a military doctrine called the Integrated Operating Concept. It recognised the need “to compete below the threshold of war in order to deter war” to prevent “one’s adversaries from achieving their objectives in fait accompli strategies”. [10]

The interconnected cognitheme is “the actions of this enemy are dangerous”:

In this context we are in at the moment, any misinformation, where we are trying to think of an intervention that we can have in the future to help the pandemic, whether they are treatments or vaccine, anything that undermines that could be extremely dangerous. [9]

Misinformation is a clear risk to public health. [12]

Thus in the conceptual space formed by the contents of the articles, dealing with the development of the Russian antivirus vaccine and its launch into the market, allows us to discover the following cognithemes:

“Russia confronts other countries / Britain / the west”; “Russia wants to win in the confrontation”; “Russia wants to break the resistance of its opponent”; “Russia is an enemy”; “the actions of this enemy are dangerous”; “Russia attacks Britain”; “Russia launches / plans on launching cyber / hacking attacks”; “Russia tries to steal information”; “Russia spreads disinformation”.

These cognithemes allow us to model a Figure outlined against the Ground of the conceptual space, formed by the newspaper articles. The comparison of the constituents of the Figure with the core constituents of the concept “Enemy” makes it possible to conclude that the Figure corresponds to the concept of enemy, and actually represents a variety of this concept, verbalized in a limited number of texts devoted to the subject under investigation.

Conclusion

1. The undertaken analysis reveals that a fragment of the concept “Enemy” is represented in the articles of British newspapers devoted to the Russian antivirus vaccine. This fragment embraces general core features / cognithemes constituting the concept “Enemy”, such as those referring to confrontation, threat, harmful activity directed against the opponent, intention to attack and win. These cognithemes are specified in newspaper texts. The specific features include the concrete names of the country allegedly posing itself as an enemy, its specific kinds of attack and the pursued aim in the confrontation, as well as the kind of danger involved.

2. The analysis of different varieties of concepts, especially those concepts that can be classified as archetypal, enlarges the scholarly knowledge about the dynamics of the development of this or that concept, allowing the researcher to discover that those features that belong to the core of the concept undergo specification in connection with the changing social and cultural environment.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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