

Grammar (UDC 81`36)

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НА ПАЛЬЦАХ РУКИ (О КОНЦЕПТЕ ЧИСЛА В АНГЛИЙСКИХ ПОСЛОВИЦАХ)

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается репрезентация концептов первых десяти чисел, соответствующих количеству пальцев на руке, в пословицах английского языка. Описываются когнитивы, характеризующие данные концепты.

Ключевые слова: пословица, число, когнитива.

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ON THE FINGERS OF YOUR HAND (ON THE CONCEPT OF NUMBER IN ENGLISH PROVERBS)

Abstract

The paper examines the representation of the concepts of the first ten numbers, corresponding to the number of fingers on your hand, in English proverbs. Cognithemes characterizing these concepts are described.

Keywords: proverb, number, cognitheme.

The concept of number belongs to one of the basic concepts in the human conceptualization of the surrounding world, being relevant to any culture and society. A. Wierzbicka lists quantifiers among other universal conceptual primitives. From her point of view, these primitive quantifiers are expressed in English by the words *one*, *two*, *many* and *all* and have equivalents in all languages (Wierzbicka 1996:35). Like other primitives, they form a common conceptual basis underlying all human languages, cognition and culture (Ibid.: 207).

This opinion is shared, e.g., by L.L. Conant, who affirms that even primitive tribes distinguish *one* and *many* and it is not possible to find a language without words denoting number which belong to the earliest stratum of the lexicon (Conant 1931 // <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16449/16449-h/16449-h.htm>). The author observes that in some savage tribes found in the 19-th century the entire number system could consist of but two words, *one* and *many*; or of three words, *one*, *two*, *many*. This evidence strongly supports the idea of primitive quantifiers put forward by A. Wierzbicka.

If we look at the semantic primitives of A. Wierzbicka, we will see that there exists a certain gradation in their row: the first two represent very small and precise numbers while the second two denote an indefinite big quantity of things and an ultimate quantity of things respectively without specifying the exact number.

As L.L. Conant puts it, the first ten numbers are the most important for the human concept of number because they correspond to the number of fingers on both hands. It is well known that the count using one's fingers is essential for the formation of the concept of number both for primitive tribes and small children (Conant 1931 // <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16449/16449-h/16449-h.htm>). The finger method has been the universal method of counting in all times (Ibid). Thus we can summarise the above by saying that the count on one's fingers is important for both ontogenesis and phylogenesis.

For this reason let us limit the analysis in this paper to the proverbs representing only the first ten numbers of the English system of counting.

The proverbs containing the first ten numerals are not many. Numerals from *one* to *ten* are encountered 201 times which corresponds to a little bit less than 200 proverbs out of over 6000 contained in the Dictionary of English proverbs (Fergusson 1995), because in some proverbs there are two and more numerals. Out of these cases of usage the distribution of numerals is as follows: *one* – 112 times, *two* – 49, *three* – 11, *four* – 4, *five* – 4, *six* – 2, *seven* – 12, *eight* – 2, *nine* – 4, *ten* – 2.

As we see *one* is by far the most important number followed by *two*, which is encountered in approximately twice as few cases. They are followed by *three* and *seven* after a very big gap, while other numbers look quite insignificant.

Let us look at the proverbs with the prevailing word *one*.

In most of them *one* is opposed to other words expressing the definite or indefinite quantity. These words include numerals, nouns and pronouns, represented in the following oppositions: *one* – *two*, *one* – *seven*, *one* – *twenty*, *one* – *fifty*, *one* – *a hundred*, *one* – *a thousand*, *one* – *the other*, *one* – *another*, *one* – *all the rest*, *one* –

many.

One hour today is worth two tomorrow.

One eye of the master sees more than ten of the servants. One enemy is two many, and a hundred friends is too few.

A thousand cranes in the air are not worth one sparrow in the fist.

Opposition is a very important factor of the human conceptualization of the world. There are basic oppositions that form the foundation for the language picture of the world, in particular, for the proverbial picture of the world, including “Old - Young”, “Big - Small”, “Good - Bad” etc. The opposition of the words expressing small and big numbers can be incorporated into the above-mentioned opposition “Big - Small”.

Analysing the concept of *one*, similarly to analysing other concepts, allows defining cognithemes in the cognitive structures of the proverbs, representing this concept. Cognithemes are units of knowledge extracted from the conceptual domain formed by the semantics of language signs and can overlap, contradict or be in generic-specific relations with each other. (Иванова 2012:73-75) The most frequent cognithemes relevant for modelling the proverbial concept of *one* are “one is better than many”, “one is worse than many”, “one brings about another of the kind”, “one brings about many of the kind”, “one is enough”, and “one is not enough”. The essential peculiarity of the concepts of numbers consists in the fact that their characteristic features are very much dependent on the kinds of objects that are counted, hence the formation of contradicting cognithemes.

Proverbs with the word *one*, but without the opposition to other numbers are few.

One swallow does not make a summer.

In some cases the meaning of number is combined with the meaning “the only one”:

Every dog is allowed one bite.

In some cases *one* takes on the meaning “the same”:

Pride and grace dwelt never in one place.

Unlike proverbs containing *one*, proverbs with *two* are rarely built on the opposition of numbers. We find the following oppositions in some proverbs: *two* – *one*, *two* – *three*/*third*, *two* – *neither*.

Two attorneys can live in a town when one cannot. Two is company, three is none.

In many cases *two* defines different, incompatible or opposite objects.

Seeing and doing are two things.

Two suns cannot shine in one sphere.

Two things a man should never be angry at: what he can help, and what he cannot help.

In the second proverb listed above the incompatibility of the identical objects is determined by their double number in the same space, while in the other two the objects themselves are different by their nature. (In this context an object is understood as a material thing, living being, process, situation, in a word, as anything denoted by a language sign or signs). Apart from the meaning of number, *two* may take on an additional meaning. In the proverb about seeing and believing the meaning “different” is added to the meaning of number and forces it into the background.

It is necessary to state that *two* is a very important number for the perception, description and interpretation of the world. As L.L. Conant writes the ideas of *one* and *two* were the first to be formed (Conant 1931 // <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16449/16449-h/16449-h.htm>). A person has two eyes, two ears, two hands, two legs and learns the idea of this number very early both in ontogenesis and phylogenesis. L.L. Conant supplies the evidence that the knowledge of numbers revealed by some primitive tribes did not extend beyond *one* and *two*. The importance of *two* is also confirmed by the existence of so-called dual nouns in the grammatical structure of English and other languages, like *trousers*, *scissors*, *scales*.

The most frequent cognithemes relevant for the concept of *two* are “two of the same kind cannot be in the same space”, “two is required for some things to happen” “two of the same kind cannot make one of a different kind”, “two is/is not good”, “two is better than other numbers (one, three, many)”.

Two sparrows on one ear of corn make an ill agreement. It takes two to make a quarrel

The next numbers – *three* and *seven* – are represented in much fewer proverbs than the first two numbers. A. Dundes states the existence of the law of three in American English – one of fundamental laws governing the composition of folk narration (Dundes :134). Trichotomy could be found in jokes, folk songs, superstitions, traditional games and Christian texts (Ibid : 137-149). This law of three could be also discovered in British English as well as other languages, e.g. Russian. In proverbs, however, the concept of three is not that important.

In 5 proverbs out of 11 we can see the correlation of trichotomy with folk tales, where there are three magic objects, three competing characters, three paths to choose from, three difficult situations on the way to success, etc. The cognitheme “three matters” can be traced.

Three things are insatiable, priests, monks and the sea.

Three women, three geese, and three frogs make a market.

Three is opposed to *two* and *six*.

Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead. Three helping one another, bear the burden of six.

Seven found in 12 proverbs is mostly used to denote a long period of time (the cognitheme “seven is a big number”).

Keep a thing seven years and you will find a use for it. He that lives not well one year sorrows seven after.

It is opposed to *one*, on one hand, and *five*, *six*, *eight* and *eleven*, on the other, the latter opposition occurring in the

proverbs about sleep.

Six hours sleep for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool.

As far as other numbers are concerned, their representation in proverbs is very scarce.

Four eyes see more than two.

A man at five may be a fool at fifteen. A stitch in time saves nine.

One enemy can do more hurt than ten friends can do good.

Nine and *ten* are mostly associated with a long period of time or a big number of objects. (Rhyme also plays its role in the above proverb with nine) *Four* has the latter meaning only in the proverb above, *five* and *six* do not take on any other meaning apart from the precise number they denote.

It is necessary to say some words about the associations with a long period of time or a large number of objects, characteristic of *seven*, *nine* and *ten*. In the proverbs they have the same function as the words “hundred”, “thousand” or “many”. They denote a large quantity, as a rule in an opposition to a small quantity, but not necessarily.

As L.L. Conant writes, experiments and observations prove that people have a very vague idea about big numbers, like 10000, e.g. (Conant 1931// <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16449/16449-h/16449-h.htm>). Going by this judgement it is possible to suggest that the idea of the last numbers in the first ten may also become vague, especially when they are contrasted with small numbers like *one* or *two*. In many cases the exact number, say, *ten* or *seven* could be not so important, the main thing being that it is bigger than the other small number.

Summing up the conducted analysis it is possible to say the following. Numbers in proverbs are often opposed to one another, with bigger numbers taking on the additional meaning of a large quantity. *One* and *two* are by far more widely represented in proverbs than other numbers, which coincides with the statements of scholars concerning the importance of these numbers in the conceptualization and perception of the world. Cognithemes constituting different concepts of numbers are varied and very much dependent on the nature of objects being counted.

This paper did not trace the possible connection between the proverbial usage of numbers and their symbolic meanings in culture. This could be the subject of a separate investigation. Another interesting direction of research is seen in the comparison of the concepts of number in English and Russian proverbs.

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Psycholinguistics. Psychology of language (UDC 81`23)

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ЭМОЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ КОМПОНЕНТ В МАНИФЕСТАЦИИ СМЫСЛА СЛОВ ДЕТСКИХ АССОЦИАЦИЙ

Аннотация

Статья посвящена возрастным изменениям способа идентификации слова с опорой на чувственно-эмоциональные и оценочные переживания. Ассоциативные эксперименты проводились на русском, татарском и башкирском языках в 4 разных возрастных группах от 4 до 17 лет. В ходе анализа выявились как количественные, так и качественные изменения в способе идентификации слова. Распознавание слова и доступ к его значению проходит по эмоциональному и сенсорному каналам не зависимо от языка исследования.

Ключевые слова: ассоциативный эксперимент, значение слова, эмоционально-оценочный компонент слова.

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EMOTIONAL COMPONENT OF THE WORD MEANING MANIFESTATION IN CHILDREN ASSOCIATIONS

Abstract

The article is devoted to age change of word identifying way on the base of feelings, emotions and evaluation. Association experiments were held in Russian, Tatar and Bashkir languages in 4 different age groups from 4 to 17. The materials' analysis showed growth of this word identifying way with the increase of years. Qualitative and quantitative changes of the word identifying way are observed. Word recognition and access to its meaning go through emotional and sensory canals and do not depend on language.

Keywords: emotional and evaluative component of the word, the word meaning, association experiment.