CONCEPT OF «DISEASE» IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Yuliia Sharapanovska
Post-graduate student
*International Humanitarian University*

**SCIENTIFIC ADVISER:**
Nataliia Shkvorchenko
PhD, Associate Professor
*International Humanitarian University*

The priority direction in the framework of cognitive linguistics is the study of social culturally demanded conceptual entities that replenish the open list of anthropologically significant concepts.

The problem of the unity of language, thinking and linguistic consciousness is considered with an emphasis on its semantic aspects. The relationship between the form and content of language units of different levels, language meaning and extra-linguistic (encyclopaedic) knowledge is based on the material of sensory images, memory and imagination.

The meaning of content-reproducing language units is much broader than a simple concept and can contain information of extra-linguistic, culturological, mythopoetic nature and at the same time reflect the author's position. Therefore, the information of this unit of the picture of the world can include both information about the objective state of things in the world and information about imaginary worlds. The latter involves an appeal to the meanings that are born in the poetic, imaginary world, to the information that the individual knows, thinks, imagines the objects of the world [1]. The role of the linguistic picture of the world in this regard is primarily to participate in the categorization of conceptualization of the world and the objectification of new structures of knowledge. This raises the question of the need to identify generalized abstract universals that distinguish common properties in systems that have independence, but normally function in unity and provide meaning and communication.

The concept as a mental formation of a high degree of abstractness is associated mainly with the word. It follows from this that it includes, in addition to subject reference, all communicatively significant information. First of all, these are indications of the place occupied by this sign in the lexical system of the language: its paradigmatic, syntagmatic and derivational connections.

Concepts, as well as notions, do not necessarily have a verbalized form, although, as a rule, they materially exist, i.e. significantly formed. It is known that concepts are included in the area correlated with mentality as a set of cognitive, emotive and behavioral stereotypes of a nation. The border separating mentality and mentality – concepts in a broad sense and concepts in a narrow sense – is rather vague [2]. The only criterion here can be the degree of mass character and invariance of cognitive and psychological stereotypes reflected in the lexical semantics of the language.

This research is devoted to one of the vital concepts of humanity: the concept of disease which is a meaningful unit of the mental lexicon. One of the most effective
methods for studying an abstract concept is to study the explication of linguistic consciousness.

The research consists of two stages: the first one states the lexical meaning of the word “disease” in different dictionaries, the second stage analyzes the frequency of using this word in current mass media texts (January, 2020 – November, 2020).

Dictionary definitions serve as the material for analysing the lexeme of “disease”, nominating this concept, contained in four modern dictionaries of the English language on the first stage of the research.

The analysis of the structure of the concept was carried out on the basis of paremias representing the concept of “disease”.

The concept of “disease” is considered to be socially important. It is the key element included in the linguistic picture of the world of any natural language. Such concepts compose the enormous and most important mental formation in the naive and national language pictures of the world.

The naive language picture serves as the foundation for building a national picture of the world and the main mechanism of national thinking. The naive language picture of the world is a primary, static perception and understanding of the world based on the mentality of a particular ethnic group, its traditions and cultural priorities.

National culture and everyday life of English speaking people are reflected in the English naive language picture of the world, the structural representation is found out in everyday discourse.

The concept of "disease" is a multidimensional phenomenon that reflects the idea of the dual (physical and mental) state of the organism, which is assessed from the point of view of an external observer, as well as the internal self-awareness of the subject, the carrier of the state in the everyday consciousness. The patient (non-agentive) nature of the concept, which has a gradual character, determines the presence of cognitive features related to a group of external factors that affect health and lead to illness (social, physical, economic, etc.) in its structure.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a disease as: 1) "(an) illness of people, animals, plants, etc., caused by infection or a failure of health rather than by an accident; 2) something that is considered very bad in people or society" (Cambridge Dictionary) [3].

Webster’s dictionary defines a disease as: 1) "a condition of the living animal or plant body or of one of its parts that impairs normal functioning and is typically manifested by distinguishing signs and symptoms; 2) "a harmful development (as in a social institution)"; “trouble” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) [4].

The Collins Dictionary gives the following definition of a disease: 1) "an illness which affects people, animals, or plants, for example one which is caused by bacteria or infection"; 2) "a bad attitude or habit, usually one that a group of people have a bad attitude or habit, usually one that a group of people have" (Collins Dictionary) [5].

In the Oxford Dictionary, a disease is interpreted as: 1) “an illness affecting humans, animals or plants, often caused by infection”; 2) “something that is very wrong with people’s attitudes, way of life or with society” (Oxford Dictionary) [6].

It is obvious that the word “disease” is used in at least two meanings, one of which can be clearly stated as a physical one (illness, malady, sickness etc.) while the second one is purely social (trouble, misbehavior, bad attitude etc.). So, the content of constant cognitive features organizing the concept of "disease" structure is variable in nature and changes under the influence of certain socio-cultural processes.
Comparison of scientific encyclopedic definitions of the concept of "disease" with its philological definitions leads to the following conclusion: violation of the integrity and instability of the functioning of the human body, which are the main signs of the disease both in the naive and in the scientific picture of the world, in the latter acquire additional concretization through referential-denotative clarifications arising due to the systematizing nature of scientific knowledge. Diseases, defined in philological dictionaries in general terms as "disorders with specific signs, or symptoms, or a certain localization", become nosological units, for each of which there is a set of signs or symptoms.

Semantic modification, first of all, undergoes cognitive signs: the subject of the state; social component; economic component; mental / spiritual and physical condition.

The core semantics of the conceptual unit includes a cognitive characteristic of the norm: how normal and correct the functioning of a healthy organism is assessed. The axiological nature of the anthropocentric norm determines the close connection of the concept with the socio-cultural prescriptions of its era.

The cognitive features that clarify the generic features of the concept of "disease" are the following: 1) the subject of the state of a person or animal as a living organism; 2) physical and mental condition; 3) health status as a value; 4) graduation of the state: disease / health. The feeling of disease as a person's subjective awareness of his body leads to the problem of the graduality of health, the opposite points of the scale of which are illness and health.

The development of the conceptual structure of the concept of “disease” is due to radical economic, political and social transformations in the world. The modification of the concept of “disease” is currently socially oriented.

The second stage of the research was dedicated to studying the frequency of usage of the word "disease" in contemporary media discourse. The material covered media articles taken from e-versions of the top popular British newspapers: The Guardian, The Observer and The Times [7, 8, 9], the whole number of 140 A4 pages. While analyzing it was observed that nowadays the concept of “disease” has incorporated a number of new components related to the current situation of pandemic. In most mass media sources as well as in general public discourse, the word of “disease” is now associated with “COVID-19” while the names of other diseases are given as they are called from a medical point of view.

According to the statistic analysis that was carried out, the following results were obtained:

1. The word “disease” in the meaning of “illness” occurred in the studied material 1044 times.
2. The word “disease” was used in the meaning of:
   a) COVID-19 – 638 times;
   b) flu – 204 times;
   c) cancer – 73 times;
   d) diabetes – 67 times;
   e) others – 62 times.
3. The word “disease” in the meaning of “wrong attitude, bad behaviour” was used 122 times.

In conclusion, apart from stereotypical norms of speech behaviour in language consciousness of any ethnic group we may find a lexical formula reflecting the interpretative field of universal concept of “disease” in English. Social situation is strongly connected with the concept of “disease” in the modern English language.
The concept has widened, on the one hand, covering a great number of words that did not use to be associated with the topic (isolation, face masks, social distancing, lockdown and others), whereas, on the other hand, the word “disease” itself has narrowed to the meaning of one particular illness: COVID-19.

In the communication process the contemporary collective value system of the language, traditions and all kinds of changes taking place in society are taken into account and reflected in the English language.

The concept of “disease” in the naive English language picture of the world forms a conceptual space. The core of this conceptual space is a state of physical or mental disorder, behaviour and attitude to health. To obtain a more complete representation of the structure of the conceptual part of the concept of “disease” the data on more detailed analysis of the language elements of contemporary mass media sources in all their diversity should be considered and studied.

References:
[7] https://www.theguardian.com/international
[9] https://www.thetimes.co.uk/