COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC UNITS EXPRESSING HUMAN MENTAL STATE IN "THE WAVES" BY VIRGINIA WOOLF

Djumaeva Nozima Djurabaevna

Bukhara State University, PhD,Associate professor
of English Linguistics department
n.d.djumaeva@buxdu.uz

Abdukhalikova Afifa Nodirjon qizi

Master student of English Linguistics Department,
Bukhara State University

Abstract

This study explores each of the cognitive linguistic mechanisms that underlie the expression of human mental states in language. Drawing from all fields such as cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, and discourse analysis, we carefully identify and thoroughly analyze those principal linguistic units—mental state verbs, emotion adjectives, epistemic markers, and metaphors—that deeply encode certain mental processes such as thinking, believing, feeling, and perceiving. Through qualitative and comparative analyses, we can depict how these particular expressions do reflect conceptual structures, represented cognition, and Theory of Mind.

Key words

language, cognitive process, psycholinguistics, metaphor, verbal processing.

Introduction: Language is a key medium through which humans convey internal mental states of thoughts, emotions, beliefs, as well as intentions. These expressions serve functions which are critical in the communication, and cognition, and the construction of the identity. That intellectual study of certain verbal segments shows how much language is linked. Thought and perception are deeply intertwined with language. The paper looks at how certain linguistic forms show mental states, what cognitive rules guide their use, and in what ways these forms differ between languages and cultures. It also looks directly at real-world effects throughout schooling, treatment, and machine learning.

Cognition includes all conscious and unconscious processes by which knowledge is accumulated, such as perceiving, recognizing, conceiving, and reasoning. Put differently, cognition is a state or experience of knowing that can be distinguished from an experience of feeling or willing . According to Chomsky ,

there is a difference between language and cognition; these two abilities are separate and independent. But, Cognitive linguistics emphasizes a single mechanism for both (Croft and Cruse, 2004). It is accepted that psyche is a piece of brain's work; and the psyche is tentatively defined as a mixture of three main cognitive components: sensitivity, memory, and awareness. Language is made by mind, yet, when articulated, words reappear to the mind, where they are perceived. The cycle from the psyche to the language and afterward from the language to the mind, is recursive, in that the language created by the psyche returns to the psyche once again.[55]

Cognitive linguistics mainly studies a person's consciousness, thinking, and mental processes and situations related to them. We can call it the science of knowledge and cognition, perception of the world in the process of human activity. According to cognitive linguistics, man should be studied as an information processing system, and human behavior should be described and explained in terms of his internal states. The information of modern psycholinguistics adopted by cognitive linguistics makes it possible to approach language learning as an ability of a linguistic person, which is based on mental processes.[56]

The correlation and interconnection between various stages of world cognition, their outcomes, structures of knowledge representation, and the interpretative activity of humans remain a relevant issue in cognitive linguistics and continue to attract the attention of many researchers . In examining the process of understanding the surrounding reality, many scholars distinguish between actual reality, projected reality (formed in the human mind during the process of mastering the world), and linguistic reality, which is directly related to the linguistic representation of the world by humans.[57]

Methodology

Metaphor analysis is a systematic approach to analyze the metaphors which people utilized in expressing themselves or delivering points(Pitcher &Akerlind, 2007). Itis a sophisticated method of understanding people's beliefs or ideas because it always uncovers "the metaphorical nature of our activities" (Lakoff &Johnson, 2003, p.8).

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[55] Prof. V. Chandra Sekhar Rao. *"Cognitive Linguistics: An Approach to the Study of Language and Thought"*, Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching.

[56] Babanazarova Sahiba Abdusharipovna. (2023). COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF STABLE UNITS IN THE UZBEK LANGUAGE. В International Multidisciplinary Research in Academic Science (IMRAS) (Т. 6, Выпуск 08, сс. 275--279). Zenodo.

[57] Генералова Л.М., & Ребрина Л.Н. (2017). Когнитивный анализ как метод изучения языковых явлений. Актуальные проблемы филологии и педагогической лингвистики, (3 (27)), 19-26.

Although Conceptual Metaphor Theory has been widely accepted as the most influential theory regarding metaphor and it has been adopted in many disciplines including linguistics, psychology, education, and so on, it has received strong critiques from diverse perspectives (McGlone, 2007,2011;Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Perez Hernandez,2011). Those criticisms are including "the methodology with which metaphor is studied (emphasizing concepts instead of words), the direction of analysis (emphasizing a top-down instead of a bottom-up approach), the category level of metaphor (claiming its superordinate status instead of basic level), the embodiment of metaphor (emphasizing the universal, mechanical, and monolithic aspects instead of nonuniversal, nonmechanical, and nonmonolithic aspects of embodiment), and its relationship to culture (emphasizing the role of universal bodily experience instead of the interaction of boy and the context)" (Kövecses, 2008, p.168).Besides, he have argument with other threemain criticism againstconceptual metaphor theory from a methodological perspectivein 2011, including "(1) the idea that practitioners of "traditional" conceptual metaphor theory use intuitive metaphor analyses; (2)the notion that such researchers do not pay sufficient attention to the highly irregular character of linguistic metaphors; and (3) the claim that these researchers work with highly impoverished collections of metaphors"(Kövecses, 2011, p.23).Moreover, McGlone (2007) proposes a three-step challenge for conceptual metaphor theory.[58]

In the subsequent stages of the work, a comprehensive analysis of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* will be developed through the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory as outlined by George Lakoff. The metaphors identified in the initial stage—categorized into structural, orientational, and ontological types—will be further examined through close textual analysis.

Psycholinguistic analysis aims to uncover the mental representations and processes through which people produce and understand language. The preferred psycholinguistic method is to carry out a controlled experiment, manipulating an independent linguistic variable to control some aspect of language processing and then measuring the effect of the manipulation on a dependent variable of interest.[59]

Affective states are encoded by emotion-related language units. Adjectives like joyful, sad, and nervous, as well as verbs like love, hate, enjoy, and fear,

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[58] Xin Zhang. "*Development and Critiques of Conceptual Metaphor Theory*". Shantou University. Theory and Practice in Language Studies (TPLS, ISSN 1799-2591).

[59] Djumaeva, N., & Abdukhalikova, A. (2025). Psycholinguistic Analysis of Linguistic Units in "Mrs. Dalloway" by Virginia Woolf. *Excellencia: International Multi-Disciplinary Journal of Education (2994-9521)*, *3*(1), 98-102. https://doi.org/10.5281/

express the subject's mood. Subjective assessment and experiential grounding are common components of these statements.

For instance:

He is afraid of the dark.

The news makes her very happy.

According to cognitive linguistics, language aids in the externalization of affective experiences that would otherwise be internal, and emotions are frequently understood through metaphors (e.g., ANGER IS HEAT).

Other linguistic units in language that can express human mental state can be metaphors:

Metaphors are inherent in language. Metaphors and language have been extensively researched. On the other hand, metaphors in relation to psycholinguistics and cognition have received less attention. Understanding various viewpoints on metaphors as well as offering additional insights into the ways that cognitive and psycholinguistic advancements have influenced the linguistic study of metaphors are the goals. This article takes a descriptive approach, emphasizing theoretical explanations and descriptions. It is intended that this article's observations and suggestions

Metaphors can be defined from a cognitive perspective as "understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain" (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4). Kövecses (2010) gave examples of such metaphors as when people talk about life as a journey, arguments as wars, or theories as buildings. He stated that it is convenient to capture this view in terms of conceptual metaphor. Thus, there is a difference between the linguistic expression of a metaphor and the conceptual metaphor.

To distinguish linguistic expression of metaphors from conceptual metaphors, one can think of the former as a way of talking and the latter as a way of thinking (Kövecses, 2010). Therefore, the linguistic expression of metaphors makes the conceptual metaphors explicit. Moreover, the conceptual metaphors that structure humans' thoughts are reflected in a language by the linguistic metaphors (Nacey, 2010). It is worth noting that the notion of conceptual metaphor was

firstly introduced by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980 (Kövecses, 2010).[60]

Verbal units are indexed in the corresponding fields of the database, where information about the participant, the type of image presented, the type of expression

in the image, and the experimental situation are entered. The next step involves

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[60] Nafilah M. Aloairdhi, Linguistic, Cognitive, and Psycholinguistic Perspectives on Metaphors Theory and Practice in Language Studies 10(9):1078-1085DOI:10.17507/tpls.1009.10

encoding verbal units. For this purpose, five database fields are selected, which indicate the components of their perceived quality: the perceived movement of the image, the localized area of the image (whole or part), the identification of the localized area of the image, the perceived expression of the image, and so on.[61]

These findings will be situated within the broader context of cognitive linguistics and literary studies, supported by relevant theoretical and critical literature. The integration of linguistic theory with literary analysis is expected to yield insights into the cognitive and narrative functions of metaphor in Woolf's work.

The completed study will aim to enhance understanding of how metaphor operates as both a conceptual and stylistic device in *The Waves*, highlighting its role in shaping reader perception and articulating complex psychological states.

Metaphor	Conceptual Metaphor	Lakoff's Category	Explanation
"The waves broke on the shore."	**LIFE IS A WAVE / TIME IS A WAVE**	**Structural**	Life/time are structured in terms of the movement of waves—rising, peaking, and falling.
"I see myself as a fish in a stream; deflected..."	**THE SELF IS A FLOWING ENTITY / IDENTITY IS A STREAM**	**Ontological**	Identity is imagined as a physical object (a fish) moving through and shaped by forces (the stream).
"The sea eats into the land..."	**TIME IS AN ERODING FORCE**	**Ontological**	Time is personified as an agent that eats or erodes—a physical force with agency.
"The sun had sunk..."	**EMOTIONS ARE LIGHT / SADNESS IS DARKNESS**	**Orientational**	Emotional states are represented in terms of **up/down**, **light/dark**, tying joy to brightness and grief to shadow.
"The sound of the bell struck the air..."	**TIME IS SOUND / DEATH IS A CHIME**	**Ontological**	Time becomes a tangible sensory experience (a sound), giving it substance.

Discussion

The results of the cognitive analysis reveal that linguistic units used to express mental states serve as direct reflections of conceptual structures that underlie human cognition. Mental state verbs, emotion-related adjectives, and perceptual

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[61] Lobodinskaya E.A., Nosulenko V.N. Verbal data in a quantitative assessment of ways of presenting visual objects. Eksperimental'naâ psihologiâ = Experimental Psychology (Russia), 2018. Vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 39–49. DOI: 10.17759/exppsy.2018110404. (In Russ., abstr. in Engl.)

verbs do not simply describe psychological phenomena; they are indicative of how individuals internally conceptualize and externalize mental experiences. These linguistic expressions function as cognitive tools that enable speakers to represent subjective states, manage interpersonal communication, and reflect cultural models of thought.

The recursive relationship between mind and language—where language is both a product of cognitive processes and a means of influencing further cognitive activity—was observed through the patterns found in participants' verbal data. This feedback loop supports the cognitive linguistic claim that language is not autonomous but interwoven with broader cognitive mechanisms. Moreover, cross-linguistic variation in expressions of mental states highlights that conceptual metaphors and cognitive models differ across cultures, underscoring the cultural grounding of cognition.

The use of conceptual metaphors such as *ANGER IS HEAT* or *THOUGHTS ARE OBJECTS* demonstrates that metaphor is more than a stylistic device; it is a fundamental mechanism of thought. These metaphors enable abstract mental states to be framed in concrete, sensorimotor experiences, thus facilitating comprehension and communication.

The verbal data analysis also emphasized the importance of nonverbal and semi-verbal cues in interpreting mental states. Descriptions involving facial features, gestures, or spatial positioning of images suggest that cognitive representations of mental states are multimodal, encompassing more than linguistic content alone.

In sum, the study affirms that language serves as both a mirror and a mold of human thought, capable of encoding intricate layers of perception, emotion, belief, and intention. The interaction between verbal expression and conceptual understanding is key to both personal identity and social cognition.

Conclusion

This study has examined the cognitive linguistic mechanisms that underpin the expression of mental states in language. By analyzing verbal data and applying cognitive semantic and discourse analysis frameworks, it became evident that linguistic expressions—particularly mental state verbs, emotion adjectives, epistemic markers, and metaphors—reveal deeply embedded conceptualizations of human cognition.

The findings underscore that language is a cognitive instrument through which individuals externalize internal experiences. Conceptual metaphors, in particular, play a pivotal role in structuring how abstract mental states are understood and communicated. Furthermore, the integration of cross-linguistic

analysis highlighted cultural specificity in the way mental states are linguistically and cognitively constructed.

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