

Semantic Features of the Concept “Sky” in Different Cultures

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Abstract

This article is investigating and analyzing semantic features of the concept “sky” in Russian, English, Turkish and Kyrgyz languages. Comparative description of different languages was traditionally concerned only with systemic relations at vocabulary, phraseology, and grammar levels. It is possible to implement a comparative-typological approach at the level of the world’s linguistic picture. The concept of a world’s linguistic picture is associated with another important concept of linguoculturology and cognitive linguistics is the concept as part of the national conceptsphere. The study of cultural concepts in a comparative typological aspect will allow developing linguistic and cultural competence of native speakers, fostering a tolerant linguistic personality, and successful communication.

Keywords

Concept, Linguistic Picture, Verbalization, World, Semantic Features, Heaven, Sky, Comparative Linguistic Study

1. Introduction

Description of the world’s linguistic picture mediated by linguistic signs provides significant information about the cognitive picture of the world. Analysis

of semantic features in Russian, Kyrgyz, and Turkish languages allows developing linguistic and cultural competence of native speakers, fostering a tolerant linguistic personality, and successful communication. Comparative description of different languages was traditionally concerned only in systemic relations at vocabulary, phraseology, and grammar levels. Researcher needs to extract this information from the language by using special techniques, which is a feature of secondary mediated picture of the world: it does not affect a person directly in an act of behavioral mental activity. To convey in another language the dialectical interconnection of the form and content of a work of art, it is necessary to learn how to find “texts” that correspond to each other, since translation is not the only contact between cultures of different nations, and sometimes, different civilizations. A word in any language represents the dialectical unity of a material in the form of sound complexes, signs, and assigned to the system of the signs or ideal meanings (Ellis, 2019).

The word “space” conceptualization by man and in language has already attracted attention of scientists. It should be taken into account that concept “space” is more or less similar to number and time, and it is not absolute in the range of crosslinguistic variation in spatial semantic structure (Imre, 2012). Relation of “space” with human mentality was determined as the sets of activated neuronal assembly connections between elements corresponding to coactivation bindings (Fauconnier, 2012). However, the study of understanding the space as the macrocosm connected with understanding the microcosm is still far from complete.

The cognitive features of the concept are shown in **Figure 1**, here “sky” in disclosure of understanding among the specific natural concepts, representing an

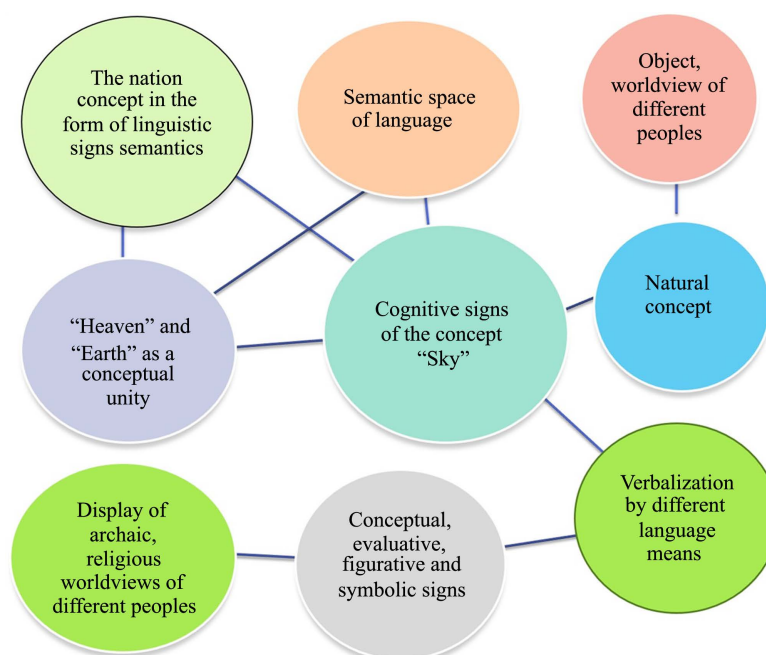


Figure 1. Cognitive features of the concept “sky”.

object which is existing in the physical world, determining the specifics of its structure, the particular importance of motivating, conceptual, evaluative, figurative and symbolic signs in which archaic religious worldviews are displayed different nations. Analysis and examination of the concepts “heaven” and “celestial bodies” based on Russian and German languages revealed their national specificity (Podvigina, 2007). A comprehensive comparative study of the concepts of “heaven” and “earth” is conducted in Russian and German language pictures of the world, attracting language material heterogeneous in structural and semantic terms (Krivaleva, 2008). The constitutive features of concepts “sky” and “heaven”, are objectified by different linguistic means in Russian and English language pictures of the world (Demidova, 2010).

Research aim was to recognize the role of universal conceptual unity sky in Russian, English, Turkish and Kyrgyz languages, which is reflecting national mental state. Significance of this study was to determine perspectives of the linguoculturology development and necessity in the research of various relationships between language, thinking and communications.

2. Verbalization in Kyrgyz, English, Russian and Turkish Languages

In languages studied, the concept “sky” is verbalized by different means (Figure 2). For example, in English “heaven/sky”, in Russian “sky/nebo”, in Kyrgyz “kok/kogultur asman”: Oshol guldor almanin nary zhagy, aiyl dyn ustu, alysky toonun ustu chegi jok, tubu jok meltildegan, taptaza kogultur asman eken (Ch. Aitmatov). In Russian, “clear sky”. Behind that blossoming apple tree, behind

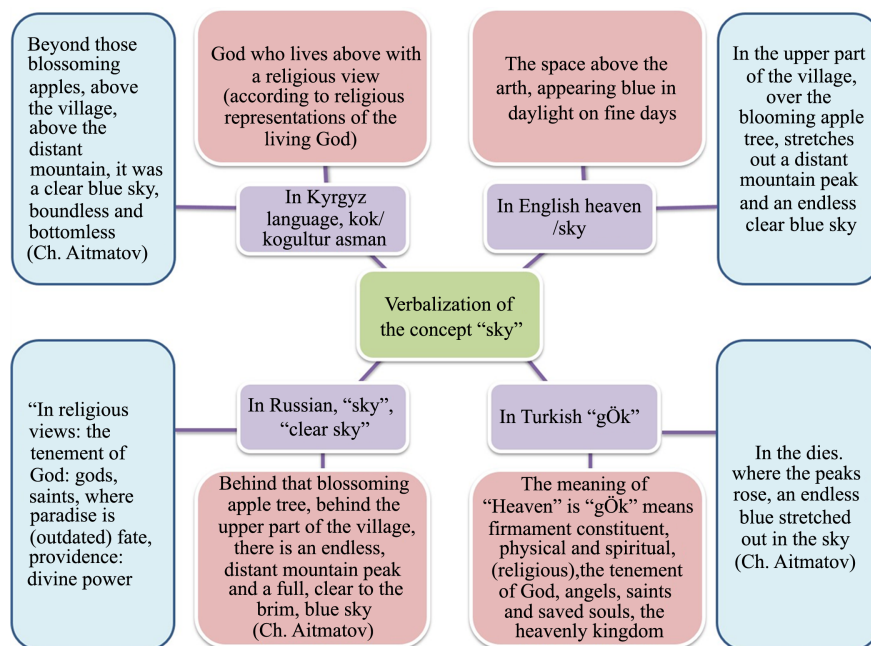


Figure 2. The concept “sky” verbalized by Kyrgyz, English, Russian and Turkish language means.

the upper part of the village, an endless, distant mountain peak and a full, clear blue sky stretches (Ch. Aitmatov). In English “clear, blue sky”: In the upper part of the village, over the blooming apple tree, stretches out a distant mountain peak and an endless clear blue sky (Ch. Aitmatov). In Turkish “gök”: Oilerde, dorukların yükseldiği yerde, sonsuz bir mavilik uzanıyordu gökyüzüne (Ch. Aitmatov).

In the Oxford English Dictionary, edited by J. M. Hawkins, the lexeme “sky” defined as follows: “sky” is the space above the earth, appearing blue in daylight on fine days (“space above the earth that appears on holy days”) (Hokins, 2002). According to the explanatory, encyclopedic dictionaries of the Russian language D. N. Ushakova, K.S. Efremova, V. I. The Dahl token “heaven” has the following meanings: “in religious terms: the abode of God; gods, saints, where is paradise (obsolete)”; “Fate, rock, providence, divine powers” (Ushakova, 1935-1940).

3. Ancient Religions Influence

Throughout more than a thousand years history, the Kyrgyz people have been influenced by almost all world religions: shamanism, zoroastrianism, manichaeism, nestorianism, buddhism, and islam. Stone made millstone symbolized a manual mill on the background of the mirror surface of the river. Hand of a stone idol twirls the mill “zhargylchak” (hand mill). A stone idol sways slowly to the beat of a hand mill. With a heavy screech, the millstones of history revolve, grinding Time. The ancient Kyrgyz worshiped four natural elements: Heaven, Earth, Fire, and Water. The sky was considered as the male beginning and personified in the image of the Bull, and the Earth is feminine. The cult of heaven arose from the cult of the sun. The ancient Sumerians of the sun god called Dinger, Mongols Tengri, blue Turks, and Kyrgyz Tengir (Shabdanaliev, 2018). The cult of Heaven was common throughout Central and East Asia. Heaven considered as the main deity among the ancient Huns, Usuns, Syanbians, etc. The interaction of these two principles Heaven and Earth gave birth to all Things and Phenomena, Life, and Death. Father Heaven, Mother Earth, Rain the seed of Heaven, Heaven Earth Man made three world potencies of the triad. Everything earthly is born from the earth, fertilized by Rain. Kok Tenir (Tengri) meant the blue, eternal sky. He combined all astral representations in himself and was adequate to the concept of “Universe”. For example, in the Tolgonay monologue from Ch. Aitmatov’s novel “The Mother Field”, the mother refers to Mother Earth, she refers to it as a holy place for prayer. Mother Earth, today is the day of remembrance, says Tolgonay. In Kyrgyz, “menin suynuu kunum” means the day of worship of the Earth, in Russian and English means “the day of remembrance” and “the day of commemoration”. Amansynby, kuttuu talaam?

4. Semantic Features

The color “Kok” blue, blue, green meant the color of Heaven, greenery, life. In the symbolic hierarchy of colors, blue was of the highest value, as was white. Se-

mantic features of the concept “sky” characterized by meanings and sounds are shown in **Table 1**. The blue color of Heaven emerged from the white color of Sun. White color carried a sacred symbol, meaning color of the sun and milk, equivalent to the concepts of Purity, Chastity, Holiness, Innocence, Moral rightness, and Truth. In the explanatory dictionary of the Kyrgyz language edited by E. Abduldaev and D. Isaev, “sky” means “kok” which is indicated by three meanings: 1) bulutsuz achyk asman, cloudless open space, tilekke karshy, achyk kok asmandan bashka tatyktuu ech nerse korunboit ailanada, tealysta gana bir neche zholbun buluttar samsaalap jurot; Unfortunately, nothing worthy was seen, the sky was clear, only a few stray clouds roamed far below (Aitmatov, 1996); 2) dinyi koz karash menen: ustudo jashagan Allah, perishteler (according to religious beliefs: Allah lives in heaven); Oh heaven, does this happen in the world ?! And the high sky was silent. And he descended from longing Zhaabars ... (Aitmatov, 2008); 3) Asman aldynda, Kudai aldynda jashagan el (people living under the sky) (Abduldaev & Isaev, 1969). Where else can you see such a happy life under the sun, such magnificent memorials? Kudai bergen baktyluu zhashoonu, Kokotaidyn ashynday uzatuunu dagy kaisyl zherden koro alasyn? dep yrdait tokmo akyn; Where else you could have lived so happily and died with such a luxury, if not for God?—sings a poet (Aitmatov, 1970). In the “Big Turkish-Russian dictionary” “sky” means “gök” is given in the meaning of “sky, firmament” and represented by twelve phraseological units (Bogochanskaya & Zubkova, 2008). Consequently, the data from the explanatory dictionaries suggest that in the linguistic pictures of the world under consideration the image of the sky consists of two components—physical and spiritual (religious). In the first case, “sky” appears to be an air space located high above the earth in the form of a vault on which the heavenly bodies are. In the second meaning,

Table 1. Semantic features of the concept “sky”.

Looks like	Sounds like
(in Kyrgyz) “Kok” cloudless clear sky (open cloudless space)	(in Russian) Blue, light blue, green means color of the sky, greenery, life
Symbolism blue sky is equivalent to the blue color (in Kyrgyz language) “high value”, purity	The highest value, like white (in Russian language), the color of sun, milk, is equivalent to the concepts of purity, chastity, holiness, innocence, moral rightness, truth.
Kok tenir (in ancient Kyrgyz language) means endless sky	The endless blue sky
Deliver to the blue sky/excessive praise	Lift up to heaven
My tears are not reach blue sky, my voice is not reach the God	No matter how you bridge, you cannot climb to heaven/to God
He took a trip to heaven	The sky is high, the king is far away
Everything is equal in heaven	All are equal under the sky
Head reaches the sky from joy	To be in seventh heaven from happiness
Descending from heaven to earth, going to work	Descend from heaven to earth and do business

“heaven” is the abode of God, angels, saints, and saved souls; heaven, the kingdom of heaven. Among these values, it is necessary to note the widespread use of the plural from “heaven” in the singular meaning. By analyzing the data of lexicographic sources (dictionary definitions of explanatory and phraseological dictionaries), it was found that the phraseological units of this concept can contain a phrase-semantic field “space” with micro fields “remoteness”, which includes phraseological units with a value of a distant distance, far away in space and time. In English, the following phraseological units are presented: As far removed as heaven from the earth—“to be like before heaven/before heaven”; Our voices/crying out in the wilderness—“God is high, far from the king”; ... involuntarily turning to Heaven every time with the same questions: what will happen? Why? And what should I do?... But Heaven does not hear either a whisper or screams ... (Aitmatov, 1996). “Is it my fault that God deprived me of conception. How many women in the world give birth like sheep, and the sky cursed me. For what? Why do I need such a life?” (Aitmatov, 1970).

In Kyrgyz language: “көз жашым Көктөмгө, үнүм Кудайга жетпейт”; in Russian: No matter how you bridge yourself, you cannot climb into heaven/towards God; High to heaven, far to king; tour. Ağaç ne kadar uzasa göğe ermez/ulaşmaz in the meaning “No matter how the tree stretches, it will not reach the sky”, Göğe direk, denize kapak olmaz in the meaning “No matter how you bridge, you will not climb into the sky.” The microfield “heaven is paradise, the abode of God.” Heaven means sky and the tennement of God which is often found in various contexts: praise/extol someone/something to the skies—“rise to heaven”; Russian Heaven is the throne of God, earth is the foot; The sky is the tower of God, the stars are the windows from where the angels look; In Kyrgyz kokolotup kokko zhetkiruu/asykcha maktoo—Kokolonup kokko jettin. In Russian “exalt to heaven” do not walk in the sky, otherwise it will hurt to fall. Reflecting historically established views, paremias affirm the authority of tsarist authority on earth, sometimes attributing to it a divine character: God in heaven, king on earth; Without God, light does not stand; without a king, the earth cannot be ruled.

In a religious view, “paradise” defined as part of the other world in which God abides and often identified with heaven. Based on the studied values, the thematic group “biological state” (death) is distinguished: to rattle to God in heaven in Russian; in Kyrgyz: asmanga sapar aldy. In the direct sense, generalizing. Kudai aldynda baary ten, asman aldynda baary ten; all are equal before God, and we are all equal under heaven. In Russian, “a state of happiness” in the seventh heaven from happiness; in Kyrgyz: tobosy kokko jet (kubanychtan); kok—heaven—to be in paradise, in Russian: to fall from heaven to earth; in Kyrgyz: kuru kyialdy tashtap asmandan zherge tushuu, ishke otuu. The bulk of the analyzed phraseological units interprets spatial lexico-semantic variants of their keywords. The studied phraseological units reflect the naive ideas of man about space. The analysis of meanings and their interpretation showed that phraseological units that include lexemes with the spatial meaning “sky” more

often characterize not the external world, but the internal world of a person, i.e. the world of his sensations, experiences, and conditions. “The task of linguoculturology is to express the cultural significance of a linguistic unit (‘cultural knowledge’) based on the correlation of the prototype situation of phraseological units or another linguistic unit with the ‘codes’ of the culture known to the native speaker or established using special analysis” (Maslova, 2001). An important aspect that deserves mention is that phraseological units, having a phraseological meaning, the direct component of which is connotative, directly correlates with cultural concepts. In cultural concepts, at least three aspects stand out: image, concept, and value (Karasik, 2002).

Consequently, the analysis of phraseological units reflecting the ideas and views of native speakers allows us to interpret them as a reflection of popular moral and ethical norms formed based on religious ideas. How the Kyrgyz people relate to the mazars (Sulayman-Too, Abshyr-Sai, Pasha-Ata, Manas-Ordo, Umai Ene, etc.). Different peoples form their own conceptual sphere, since different aspects of reality; different geographical, climatic, historical, cultural, etc. features reflected in the minds of people.

5. Conclusion

The conceptospheres of different nations differ in the composition of concepts and the way they are structured. The national specificity of the conceptosphere is reflected in the specifics of the semantic spaces of languages. Lexical and phraseological (lexical and phraseological) concepts are located in the semantic space of the language, but words and phraseological units represent them. National paremias are also a way of objectifying concepts—proverbs and sayings, aphorisms. Their form allows concise and clearly express some cognitive stereotypes in the national conceptual sphere of the people. Z.D. Popova and I.A. Sternin suggest distinguishing the semantic space of language “lexical, phraseological and syntactic concepts, that are concepts objectified according to words, phrase combinations or syntactic structures” (Popova & Sternin, 2007). The semantic spaces of different languages differ in the composition and organization of verbalized concepts. Development of semantic spaces in different languages is productive due to the active processes of two-way translation from one language to another, difficulties in the process of teaching a foreign language (due to differences in the semantics of linguistic signs), which led to the development of contrasting language learning. The comprehension of semantic spaces in the different languages made it possible to compare them with the subsequent identification of universal universals, the national specifics of the conceptosphere, and the specifics of the group and individual concepts. The conceptual sphere and the semantic space of a language have a common nature, as they are mental entities. They connected as part and whole: the semantic space of language is such a part of the conceptosphere, which received expression with the help of linguistic signs (Popova & Sternin, 2007).

Social implications increase the teaching effectiveness in teaching foreign

languages by considering the nation's psychology and traditions. The practical implications of this study are research results and methodic, which can be served as a base for further analysis of universal concepts in various languages.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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