



ARTÍCULOS

UTOPIA Y PRAXIS LATINOAMERICANA. AÑO: 25, n° EXTRA 12, 2020, pp. 294-301
REVISTA INTERNACIONAL DE FILOSOFÍA Y TEORÍA SOCIAL
CESA-FCES-UNIVERSIDAD DEL ZULIA. MARACAIBO-VENEZUELA
ISSN 1316-5216 / ISSN-e: 2477-9555

General Trends of Comparative Linguistic Cognitive Science

Tendencias generales de la ciencia cognitiva lingüística comparativa

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Este trabajo está depositado en Zenodo:
DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4280151>

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the main trends in the development of comparative linguistic, cognitive science; it analyzes the preconditions for the formation of this direction, and highlights the prospects and challenges for its further development. The authors emphasize that comparative linguo-cognitive studies open up new horizons for bilingual lexicography, in particular, to create a model of a new type dictionary. Active development of theoretical and methodological foundations of general and comparative linguistics, linguistic-cultural studies, pragmatic linguistics and linguistic didactics have formed a basis for the theoretical understanding of many provisions of cognitive linguistics.

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics, cognitive science, comparative linguistic, concept, ethnic-cognitive semantics.

RESUMEN

El artículo examina las principales tendencias en el desarrollo de la ciencia cognitiva lingüística comparada; analiza las condiciones previas para la formación de esta dirección y destaca las perspectivas y desafíos para su desarrollo posterior. Los autores enfatizan que los estudios comparativos lingüístico-cognitivos abren nuevos horizontes para la lexicografía bilingüe, en particular, para crear un modelo de un nuevo tipo de diccionario. El desarrollo activo de los fundamentos teóricos y metodológicos de la lingüística general y comparada, los estudios culturales lingüísticos, la lingüística pragmática y la didáctica lingüística han formado una base para la comprensión teórica de muchas disposiciones de la lingüística cognitiva.

Palabras clave: Ciencia cognitiva, concepto, lingüística cognitiva, lingüística comparada, semántica étnico-cognitiva.

Recibido: 15-09-2020 Aceptado: 05-11-2020



INTRODUCTION

Comparative linguistic, a cognitive science, owes its formation to the two scientific disciplines: cognitive linguistics and contrastive comparative linguistics. The first one, though it does have century-old mental-linguistic prehistory, is on the stage of rapid scientific research now in terms of a new categorical-conceptual context; the other, having been for many years in a state of stable dynamics, has also entered a phase of intensive development. This is due to the fact that global humanitarian science, in general, is experiencing an anthropocentric attraction that cannot do without such fundamental categories for linguistic, cognitive science as linguistic consciousness, the mentality of the people and culture. Identification of these categories, in its turn, requires the proper linguistic way of explication, description and linguocultural interpretation. Thus, comparison of the speech material in order to identify general and specific semantics of the compared languages is viewed through the prism of the spiritual values, mentality and ethnic culture represented in it (Malykhina et al.: 2017).

Comparative semantics of the post-Soviet period of the science of language has proved to be especially popular for several reasons: a) there is an increasing interest in the ethnolinguistic identification of self-determined peoples; b) the formation of a new Eurasian space stimulates the development of inter-ethnic relations, cultural and economic contacts between peoples, and provokes an increasing interest for a cultural and cognitive understanding of a linguistic picture of the world, which is "an image, produced by the centuries-old experience of the people and carried out by means of linguistic nominations, of all that exists as an integral and multi-part world..." (Shvedova: 2005). The problem is also complicated by the lack of fruitful methodology for the linguo-cognitive description of the essence of semantic universals and semantic municipalities for the purpose of their structural adaptation to the tasks of comparative linguistic, cognitive science. The question is that traditionally in the epicentre of comparative linguistics, there were external means of linguistic content. The internal and informative side of linguistic units, especially their cognitive-semantic essence, has, in fact, remained unexplored (Vasiljev: 1999; Gilquin: 2018, pp.47-71). For cognitive linguistics of particular importance is the comparative study of an ethnocultural component of language and speech semantics. Such studies are able to reveal the previously unknown facts about the organization of conceptual sphere of the compared languages and mentality of both peoples. Finally, comparative linguo-cognitive studies open up new horizons for bilingual lexicography, to create a model of a new type dictionary – one of a cognitive and pragmatic nature (Sergienko:2018; Amanbaeva&Jumadildinova: 2019).

METHODOLOGY

The theoretical basis for the creation of comparative linguo-cognitive studies is represented in the works of scientists that deal with issues of language category, reflecting ethnolinguistic pictures of the world (Denisova et al.: 2017, pp.29-37; Mordvinova: 2017, pp.1157-1164; Mazhitayeva&Bakhtikireeva: 2018). Focusing on the modelling and interpretation of a naive view of the world in the process of human cognitive activities, scientists have created a theoretical background for the emergence of comparative linguistic, cognitive science. The novelty of the proposed cognitive-linguistic problems has identified prospects for further research in the field of contrastive linguistics. According to E. D. Suleimenova, "...cognitive interpretation of language knowledge shows a new approach to the problem of comparing languages and interpreting meanings as a cognitive-invariant rationale for comparing languages, clarifying the concept "linguistic view of the world" of a bilingual, analyzing the forms of objectivity of language knowledge" (Suleimenova: 1992).

Since any cognitive-typological research is designed at identifying topics of axiological content of ethnolinguistic conscience in the language semantics (Alefirenko: 2012), the grounds for comparison shall include cognitive categories in their axiological projection of comparative languages rather than semantic and conceptual categories within the linguistic typology.

Mechanisms for verbalization of ethnocultural concepts, particularly metaphorical and metonymical modelling of ethnocultural concepts that determine the axiological nature of ethnolinguistic worldview, is a subject of comparative linguistic, cognitive science. It is important for comparative linguistic, cognitive science because concepts such as operating units of ethnocultural memory, images of mental lexicon focused on fragments of personal life experience, promote the interpretation and generalization of knowledge significant for this ethnic group acquired during the personal emotional upheaval, impressions, observations and practical steps.

As we see, words, idioms, phrases, paremias and texts representing certain elements of the linguistic view of the world (concepts, frames, scripts, etc.) in compared ethnolinguistic systems, are units of comparative linguistic, cognitive science.

The goal of comparative linguistic, cognitive research is (a) to identify and describe the complete composition of linguistic units objectifying linguistic view of the world or its fragments, and (b) to identify by means of comparative analysis the notorious ethno-cultural component in the semantics of these units. To achieve the goals, it is necessary to have:

- a) Modelling of the semantic content of the cognitive structures studied and, above all, ethnocultural concepts of both global mental and axiological units in their ethnocultural singularity;
- b) Explication of the semantic content of an ethnocultural concept as a unit of the conceptual sphere of each compared linguistic culture;
- c) Systematic understanding of the fragments of linguistic culture (thematic, semantic, lexical and phraseological, and syntactic fields) that are used in each of the compared languages to verbalize, first of all, basic ethnocultural concepts – the main design tools in modelling ethnolinguistic pictures of the world.

Important methods of the comparative study of languages include methods for establishing the basis for comparison and comparative interpretation. The basis for comparison is identified by means of linguistic and feature comparison. One of the compared languages serves as the basis for linguistic comparison. Objectives of the study or the level of the study of compared languages determine the choice of a language as a basis for comparative study. Attributes and properties of the object or phenomenon, projecting components of relevant units of one or another language serve as the basis for feature comparison.

It is known that the comparative-typological study of the content aspect of linguistic subsystems typically includes two approaches: formal-semantic and functional-semantic. In formal-semantic comparison, facts and phenomena of the material aspect of linguistic units such as morphemes and their categories, serve as a basis for comparison. In the functional-semantic comparative study, facts and phenomena of the ideal side of linguistic units serve as a basis for comparison. The study goes from the meaning to means of its expression.

The second approach helps develop cognitive and comparative research methods of semantic universals and semantic municipalities. The first case identifies ways of specific verbalization of human values. In the second case, such methods as (a) verbalization of value and meaning of objects of the specific habitat of people and (b) their discursive-cognitive processing are subjected to cognitive-cultural understanding. In the latter case, the research is aimed at identifying semantic universals and specifics of the substantive aspect of units of compared languages.

So, the cognitive-comparative method is a system of research techniques and methods of comparative-typological analysis designed to identify characteristics of the semantic space of each of the compared languages determined by the presence of general and ethnocultural cognitive structures. It also identifies representative words of the particular configuration of the sphere of concepts of one or another language that reflects the mentality of the original ethnic group.

The cognitive-comparative method includes:

- a) Distribution of denotative units of primary, secondary and indirect-derivative nomination; comparative analysis of their semantic structure with elements of component analysis;
- b) Modelling a semantic concept of a word based on elementary meanings identified by component analysis;

- c) Linguistic combinatorics to determine the ratio of semantic elements among the intentional and the implicational of compared linguistic signs;
- d) Modelling a value-semantic content of the concept, verbalized by units of compared languages;
- e) Cognitive-cultural interpretation.

Thus, the study of the sphere of concepts of the ethnic group in its relation to contacting linguistic culture is a task that would help overcome many problems. The main problems are as follows: a) determining the mental area of the nation; b) identifying value priorities of the people, the carrier of the language; c) searching and exploring ways of the conjugation of different people for political, economic and cultural purposes. Since these concepts bear characteristics of relevant linguistic cultures, they reflect the continuous dynamics and ruggedness of the national worldview, differences in social practices and spiritual activity of the society. The history of the development of linguistic, philosophical thought reflects the stages of linguistic categorization of the world in the minds of all people regardless of their nationality and mental belonging. This once again confirms the thesis of the need to go beyond the strictly comparative-linguistic research towards related subjects: linguistic philosophy, the psychology of nations, cognitive, cultural studies and religious studies that help identify ideological aspects of verbalization of the worldview since ancient times, by determining the distinctive flavour of the sphere of concepts of each of the compared languages.

The opportunity to present the semantics of language units based on its basic category, the concept, has led to an increasing interest of linguists for the comparative study of linguistic objectification of concepts. With this approach, comparative-linguistic research moves to a qualitatively new level, as the focus is on the study of basic conceptual ideas that are a synergistic product of the linguistic-cultural activity of people. The theme range of the Russian and Kazakh studies demonstrates a broad typological coverage of concepts described. The focus is on the following categories of concepts:

- Basic concepts: time, space, colour, man, number, language, word, heart, woman, mother, man, nature etc.;
- Specific or "real" concepts: mountain, house, land, bread, money, housing, water, flower, tea, food etc.;
- Abstract concepts: beauty, heaven, hell, freedom, dignity, truth, knowledge etc.;
- Conceptions: Russia, Kazakhstan, Eurasia, China, Germany, Southerners, Russian, etc.;
- Concepts of social phenomena: life, death, good, evil, poverty, wealth, stupidity, sin, friendship, family, work, happiness, hospitality, courtesy, courage, cowardice, honour, conscience, fate, tolerance, duty, love, people mind, mentality, success, communication, homeland, own, someone else's etc.;
- Unique and nationally specific concepts: the will, the Russian idea, Tengri (Heaven/God), asar (mutual assistance, help), dastarkhan (tablecloth/table), Kun (sun/day), dala (steppe), tulpar (horse), tary (millet), atameken (land of the fathers, homeland, native land) etc.;
- Metaphysical concepts: soul, love, heart, sadness, fear, happiness, sadness, joy, sorrow, shame, envy and many other typologically significant level concepts.

There is no doubt that the study of cultural concepts is not possible without comparative analysis, because otherwise it is impossible to (a) identify distinctive features of a concept as a unit of linguistic culture, (b) determine its ethnic and cultural identity. E.g.: the internal form of a name is a feature that forms the key basis of a nomination and can be considered as an ethnically specific one. The ethnical singularity can be observed in stereotyped patterns of the world perception and behavioural responses reflected in the concept semantics. According to S. G. Vorkachev, the ethnical singularity of a concept in the context of cross-language comparison allows considering it as a unit of national mentality, which is different from the mentality as a common set of national character features (Vorkachev: 2003, pp.5-12).

The comparative analysis of the different cultures' sphere of concepts already allows to clearly see all the peculiarities of development of a person's specific national consciousness; in particular – to fix special aspects reflected on the verbal level, differences and similarities of a nation's mental activity, specifics of its mental

world and national character. This is evidenced by recent linguistic research works. For example, a lot of studies today are dedicated to studying differences between the Eastern and Western cultures, highlighting the "Western" and "Eastern" concepts of life, time, emotions, etc. (Shahovski: 1996; Leontovich: 2000, pp.72-78; Snitko: 1999). Thus, O. A. Leontovich defines the Western culture pattern as the anthropogenic one, with an accelerated pace of automation and technology development and a prevailing scientific and rationalistic worldview, while the Eastern model demonstrates the traditional cultural characteristics with slow development rates and a dominating canonized and mythologized type of mentality (Leontovich: 2000, pp.72-78).

The review of recent publications devoted to the problems under consideration allows talking about different (a) study aspects, (b) approaches to the selection and processing of the factual material, (c) trends in their cognitive and cultural comparisons. Thus, T. N. Snitko in her monograph "The Limit Concepts in the Western and Eastern Linguistic Cultures" compares certain limit concepts (abstract vocabulary) of the Western (English) and Eastern (Japanese) linguistic cultures resulted from different "thinking" types (Snitko: 1999). The task specified in this study – to analyze the semantics from the point of view of the language-thought building – means that a way of the thinking organization leading to the occurrence of the abstract vocabulary is a necessary element of its description. The author considers that "the culture type itself can be determined by identifying and matching the "processes" within these cultures, rather than by a simple comparison of cultural "products" (Snitko: 1999).

V. M. Toporova's work is dedicated to the comparison of cognitive models of geometric objects identified on the basis of Russian and German languages (Toporova: 2000). The author has built several cognitive models for such concepts as "point", "line", "corner" and "circle" contributing to the different "form" representations in the human mind, in order to demonstrate the significance of the geometric conceptualization as an important cognitive mechanism involved in the world linguistic categorization processes. Due to the universal significance of geometric concepts and the proximity of the Russian and German cultures, there is certainly a great similarity in the mental data representation of geometric objects in structural and conceptual terms. As it was found out, the Russian and German geometric nominations show a considerable similarity of the semantic development trends at both the semantic pattern level and the level of a sememe speech implementation. However, the author has found some differences at both levels. The largest differences are observed in the specificity of a sememe representation of the patterns common for two languages, which were formed in the semantic space with equivalent geometric nominations (Toporova: 2000).

RESULTS

Tendencies in the development of typological studies in Russia and Kazakhstan demonstrate a still unemployed potential of comparative linguocognitive studies. It goes without saying that the scientific-theoretical and methodological work done in this framework is significant. The use of the available achievements in science as well as theoretical and practical results and their integration into cognitive linguistics will help formulate the prospects for further research in this area.

However, we cannot accept the fact that some (ambiguous, causing some criticism on the part of scientists and researchers in this field) trends, characteristic of the condition and development of cognitive linguistics in general, are reflected in the formation and development of the area under consideration.

In the works written within the framework of comparative linguo-cognitive studies, there are differences in the interpretation of the concept, in the criteria for distinguishing it from other conceptual categories; there is uncertainty in defining objects of analysis and diversity in choosing methods of analysis. All this, of course, leads to a certain unsystematic character of comparative studies, to the impossibility of a productive use of their results in applied studies – in teaching comparable languages both native and foreign, in lexicography, translation, etc.

DISCUSSION

Similar problems have repeatedly been noted in review articles and reviews of individual collections and monographs. For example, A. E. Levitsky, in the preface to the book "Linguo-Concept Studies: Promising Areas" (Levitsky: 2013) observes that:

Pursuit of analysis of individual concepts within clearly defined patterns leads to dominance in conceptology studios of an inventory approach that outshines the backbone links, which are important not only for understanding mechanisms of interaction of concepts, but also for understanding the dynamics of conceptual picture of the world as a whole and its separate areas, sections or in its different dimensions, including the imagery. Undoubtedly we still throw over the world a conceptual net, but the surface of this world increasingly resembles a rolling sea rather than a steppe plain (Levitsky:2013).

In linguo-cognitive studies as in a relatively young science, which aims at creating its own meta-language, studies and descriptions of the interaction of language, culture, mentality, and many of the concepts are still not fully defined. For example, differences in the definition of the concept are related to the fact that the concept is the subject of analysis of the two rapidly developing areas of today – linguocognitive studies and linguo-cultural linguistics. Such "logical paradoxes" and "sore spots", often conditioned by "growing pains" are noted by S. G. Vorkachev (Vorkachev:2011, pp.64-74), I. A. Sternin (Sternin&Karasik:2007, pp.26-35), V. B. Goldberg (Goldberg:2007, pp.4-17), and other well-known researchers.

CONCLUSION

All of the above makes us consider a number of important issues, among which the most important are:

- The development of methodological foundations of comparative linguistic cognitive studies;
- The search for effective linguistic-cognitive methods (and / or approaches) of ethno-cultural study of concepts in language systems and texts compared;
- The work on the definition of the concept applicable to comparative studies and the development of a typology of concepts that takes into account their ontological and functional-pragmatic variety. We mean creating such an approach to the understanding of concepts, which gives an equal consideration to all phenomena and their interrelation, which becomes one of the central problems of comparative linguo-cognitive studies and linguo-cultural studies.

As a prospect of typological linguo-cognitive studies we see the problem of ethno-linguo-cultural structuring of concept spheres of the languages compared.

Acknowledgements

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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