

COGNITIVE STUDY OF APHORISMS

Oksana Anastasieva

Ph.D., Assistant Professor, State Biotechnological University, Ukraine
e-mail: anastasievaxenia@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0003-3856-3741

Summary

This paper deals with the cognitive study of the conceptual field of the English language aphorism. The methodology of the cognitive analysis of the textual concepts has been proposed and applied for the study of the means of verbalization of concept WISDOM in English aphorisms. Based on the application of the proposed methodology of the cognitive study of English-language aphorisms, it can be stated that the concept WISDOM has the following constituents: 1) conceptual, the scope of which is much wider than reflected in dictionaries: «wisdom is the possession of knowledge», «wisdom is common sense», «wisdom is the ability to make spiritual sense of life», «wisdom as freedom from feelings», wisdom is sophistication», «wisdom is the heritage of the age», «wisdom is an aphorism»; 2) figurative, which is represented by figurative metaphors: «wisdom is power», «wisdom is knowledge of the truth», «wisdom is self-demanding», «wisdom is moral impeccability», «wisdom is modesty», «wisdom is freedom»; 3) valuable, represented mainly by a positive and exalted assessment.

Key words: cognitive-communicative approach, concept, megaconcept, conceptosphere, constituents, means of verbalization.

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1. Introduction

An aphorism is a concise, communicatively oriented, conceptually conditioned expression that belongs to a certain author, asserts a deep, universally significant truth, has a significant pragmatic potential and an artistically refined, complete form, which is distinguished by the sophistication and stylistic expressiveness of the wording. At the same time, the aphorism is characterized by a two-part structure, two concepts are always juxtaposed in it, namely, the peripheral, subordinate attribute of the first concept is juxtaposed with the main attribute of the second concept. Due to this, the persuasiveness and expressiveness of the aphorism in general is strengthened (*Anastasieva, 2017: 15*).

The analysis of the state of study of the English-language aphorism and the degree of development of certain aspects of it gives reason to conclude on the need to conduct a comprehensive study in pragmatic and cognitive aspects with the involvement of linguistic synergistic tools. In particular, the application of elements of cognitive analysis is necessary to understand how concepts form the conceptosphere of texts of a certain genre.

2. Methodology of research cognitive aspect

The analysis of the cognitive aspect of the aphorism is believed to be an important vector of its comprehensive study. We consider such an analysis appropriate, based on an understanding of the special nature of the aphorism phenomenon. At this stage, we apply the method of

conceptual analysis, within which we examine the structure of the conceptual sphere of the English-language aphorism and the speech implementation of its key concepts.

In our research, we understand the concept as a multidimensional mental formation in which the image-perceptual, conceptual and value components are distinguished (*Vorkachev, 2005: 7; Karasyk, 2005: 73; Krasavsky, 2001: 110; Prykhodko, 2008: 55*), therefore, the analysis of the key concepts that form the conceptsphere of the English-language aphorism necessarily involves the description of these components.

According to V. A. Maslova, the method of conceptual analysis is determined by the structural features of the concept. In particular, the core of the concept is formed by the dictionary meanings of a certain lexeme, and the periphery consists of subjective experience, pragmatic components of the lexeme and connotations (*Maslova, 2001*).

The object of research, namely an English-language aphorism, presupposes the use of the so-called 'detextual approach', which involves the analysis of a concept in an artistic text (*Bolotnova, 2003; Turaeva, 1986*). Within this approach, the analysis of the verbalization of the key concepts of the English-language aphorism must begin with the semantic analysis of the word as the name of the concept. Various lexical-semantic, lexical-thematic, associative groups, as well as key words, paradigmatics and syntagmatics are defined to identify the concept and study its specifics. Therefore, in order to identify the specifics of the concepts that make up the conceptual sphere of the English-language aphorism, we consider it expedient to conduct a multi-aspect conceptual analysis in such a scope: • analysis of the etymology of the name of the concept; • analysis of the synonymous and antonymous series of the name of the concept;

- semantic analysis of meanings given in dictionaries; • semantic analysis of meanings that are not represented in dictionaries, but actualized in English-language aphorisms;
- analysis of associative, connotative and axiological components of the concept, which are verbalized in English-language aphorisms.

In addition, to analyze the conceptsphere of English-language aphorism in our research, we use functional analysis and the interpretive method, and also rely on the concept of precedent texts (*Karaulov, 1986; Slyshkin, 2000 (1)*). We consider an English-language aphorism as an example of a precedent text that forms a concept characterized by multidimensionality and value significance. We consider it expedient to also use O. M. Kaganovska's idea, according to which concepts are subordinated to 'the peak concept', namely the mega-concept (*Kaganovska 2002: 46*).

3. The structure of conceptsphere of the aphorism

Conceptosphere is an organized set of concepts existing in the form of generalized representations, mental images, schemes, concepts, frames, scenarios, gestalt, generalizing a variety of signs of the outside world (*Likhachov, 1993: 64*). According another explanation conceptsphere is a certain set of psychological representations of any ethnic group, surrounded by its invisible halo (*Likhachov, 1993: 108*).

Herewith, the conceptsphere of the English-language aphorism is organized predominantly by the fields of concepts: WISDOM, MAN / WOMAN, LIFE / DEATH, WEALTH / POVERTY, HAPPINESS / POVERTY, MARRIAGE, VIRTUE / VICE, LOVE / HATE, WAR / PEACE, SUCCESS / FAILURE, LAW, POLITICS, HEALTH / DISEASE, SCIENCE / FAITH.

Aphorisms are a prime example of a precedent text. As a result of consideration of the speech objectification of concepts, the fields of which form the conceptsphere of the

English-language aphorism, it was proved that they are subordinate to the mega-concept WISDOM. (*Anastasieva, 2017: 16*).

Thus, the concept WISDOM corresponds to an abstract concept, therefore this concept acquires the status of a mega-concept in the conceptual sphere of English-language aphorism. The following examples demonstrate how concepts are subordinated to the mega-concept WISDOM:

LIFE: May you live every day of your life (Jonathan Swift)
= WISDOM is living each day of your life with full dedication.

LOVE: *A baby is born with a need to be loved – and never outgrows it* (Frank Howard Clark)
= WISDOM is in the fact that every person is born and lives with a need for love.

4. Analysis of the concept WISDOM

Based on the idea of the concept as a multidimensional mental formation, in which the image-perceptual, conceptual and value components are distinguished (*Vorkachev, 2005: 7; Karasyk, 2005: 73; Krasavsky, 2001: 110; Prykhodko, 2008: 55*), as well as on the idea of a concept as an entity that has a core (the meaning of a certain lexeme given in the dictionary) and a periphery (subjective experience) (*Frumkina, 1992*), let's consider how these components of the WISDOM concept are verbalized in English-language aphorisms.

The name of the WISDOM concept is the lexeme 'wisdom'. Etymologically, the word 'wisdom' comes from the Old English 'wīsdōm', which consists of the root 'wīs' – 'wise', which belongs to the Germanic vocabulary, and the suffix 'dōm', where 'wīs' has the semantic meaning: 1) having sound judgment; 2) learned.

The analysis of the explanatory articles of the English-language sources of the lexeme 'wisdom' shows that these meanings of the etymon of the lexeme are reflected in modern dictionaries, and allows us to single out the following basic meanings (*Webster's School Dictionary, 1986: 1074*):

- 1 a: accumulated learning; knowledge;
- b: ability to discern inner qualities and relationships; insight;
- c: good sense; judgement;
- 2: a wise attitude or course of action;
- 3: the teachings of the ancient sages;
- 4: Bible (Book of the Old Testament).

But the name of the concept is not the only means of activating the concept. Any concept is characterized by the ability to be implemented in various iconic forms. «The more diverse the potential of the symbolic expression of a concept, the more ancient this concept is and the higher its value significance within a certain linguistic community» (*Slyshkin, 2000 (2): 1*).

An important stage of the conceptual analysis of the concept is the analysis of its synonymous series, since «synonymous alternatives of the name of the concept, no less than its direct nominations, are able to vividly reflect the uniqueness of the national worldview» (*Prykhodko, 2008: 115*).

The synonym series of the lexeme 'wisdom' contains such units as: *sagacity, sagemess, judgment, discernment, reason, prudence, judiciousness, common sense, insight, penetration, sapience, understanding, rationality, clear-sightedness, clear-headedness, perspicacity, perceptiveness, perception, perceptiveness, intelligence, acuteness, acumen, astuteness, sharpness,*

shrewdness, long-headedness, knowledge, learning, erudition, lore, scholarship, enlightenment (Urdang, Laurence, 1994: 2040).

According to the semantic meaning, these lexemes can be divided into the following groups:

1) wisdom as possessing knowledge (*erudition, knowledge, learning, enlightenment, lore, scholarship*):

This meaning is reflected, for example, in this aphorism:

There is no great concurrence between learning and wisdom (Francis Bacon)

However, the first group is not fully reflected in aphoristic expressions, because the authors of aphoristic expressions note the inequality of book knowledge as a collection of information and life wisdom, and even the opposite of the notions of *wisdom* and *knowledge*, which can be explained by the paradox of the aphorism.

An example shows how this opposition is realized through *to confuse wisdom with knowledge and knowledge with information*:

In our age... men seem more than ever prone to confuse wisdom with knowledge, and knowledge with information, and to try to solve problems of life in terms of engineering (T. S. Eliot)

Among the corpus of English-language aphorisms, there are also those in which wisdom is contrasted with the results of schooling:

Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the life-long attempt to acquire it (Albert Einstein);

2) wisdom as common sense (judgment, reason, common sense, clear-headedness):

Common sense in an uncommon degree is what the world calls wisdom (Samuel Taylor Coleridge);

3) wisdom as ability to spiritual understanding of life (shrewdness, insight, astuteness, acumen, discernment, perspicacity, penetration):

The invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common. (Ralph Waldo Emerson).

In the following statement, this meaning is objectified through opposition *a wisdom of the head – a wisdom of the heart*:

There is a wisdom of the head, and a wisdom of the heart (Charles Dickens);

4) wisdom as sophistication (sapience, sageness):

The wise through excess of wisdom is made a fool (Ralph Waldo Emerson);

Antonym series of lexeme 'wisdom' includes the lexemes: *absurdity, bêtise, foolishness, idiocy, injudiciousness, nonsense, senselessness, silliness, stupidity* (Oxford Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms (2007)).

In this aphorism, wisdom is defined as the opposite of stupidity by means of the antithesis 'fool' – 'wisdom'. Thus, the inability to hide one's wisdom is claimed to be a sign of stupidity:

He's a fool who cannot conceal his wisdom (Benjamin Franklin).

Certain aphorisms contain meanings of the concept WISDOM that are outside the range of synonyms of its name. For example, English-language aphoristic sayings depict wisdom as an asset of the age:

Common sense is the collection of prejudices acquired by the age eighteen (Albert Einstein);

The author notes of this paradoxical aphorism emphasizes the self-confidence of youth and their belief in omniscience.

But some aphorisms contain the opposite statement indicating that there is no direct relationship between age and wisdom:

The older I grow the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom (H. L. Mencken).

In addition, aphoristic statements contain examples of contrasts between wisdom and feelings, that is, wisdom is considered as freedom from feelings, in particular, romantic love:

It is impossible to love and to be wise (Francis Bacon).

The idea 'aphorism is wisdom' is also common in aphoristic sayings:

Exclusively of the abstract sciences, the largest and the worthiest portion of knowledge consists of aphorisms: and the greatest and best of men is but an aphorism (Samuel Taylor Coleridge).

The figurative component, that is, knowledge, images and associations which are evoked in the mind in connection with one or another denotation of the WISDOM concept, can be represented by aphoristic statements containing figurative metaphors:

«wisdom is power»:

Wisdom is the strength of the weak (Joseph Joubert)

The valuable component or «the most important hypostasis of the concept, which is determined by the attitude towards it» (Prykhodko, 2008: 61), is widely represented in aphorisms. Predominately, wisdom is assessed positively and exaltedly in English-language aphorisms. In fact, wisdom equals all the best human traits:

«wisdom is knowledge of truth»:

Wisdom, properly so called, is nothing else but this: the perfect knowledge of the truth in all matters whatsoever (Thomas Hobbes);

«wisdom is self-demanding»:

What is it to be wise?

This but to know how little can be known,

To see all other's faults, and feel our own (Alexander Pope);

«wisdom is moral impeccability»:

A wise man will desire no more than what he may get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly (Benjamin Franklin);

«wisdom is modesty»:

Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much; Wisdom is humble that he knows no more (William Cowper).

In addition, the analysis of its presentations in separate types of discourse is important for understanding the features of the verbalization of the concept WISDOM. «One of the fundamental features of the existence of a concept, which is the result of the objectification of knowledge, is its correlation with a certain discursive sphere or set of discourses, within which (which) it functions, revealing one or another of its facets» (Radziewicz, 2006: 163).

In particular, the reflection of the concept in philosophical and religious discourse is utterly specific. For example, in philosophy, WISDOM is a concept that denotes the highest, holistic, spiritual and practical knowledge, which is aimed at understanding the absolute meaning of being and is acquired through the spiritual and vital search for truth by the subject of knowledge. Most of the definitions of Wisdom that can be found in the classical ethical and philosophical tradition emphasize precisely the moment of the highest knowledge in its value expression (FES, 2002). It is this thought that is stated in aphorisms:

Philosophy is harmonized knowledge making a harmonious life; it is the self-discipline which lifts us to serenity and freedom. Knowledge is power, but only wisdom is liberty (Will Durant).

In religious discourse, the following two types of wisdom are clearly distinguished: human and divine ones. The biblical concept of wisdom is fundamentally different from the classical idea of human wisdom, which consists in searching for the meaning of being and the universe with the help of philosophical reflections and conclusions. Human wisdom is wisdom given to man by God. The most important principle of biblical wisdom is a person's obedience to God and unwavering obedience to the commandments. This idea can be traced in all the biblical books of wisdom:

For knowledge to become wisdom, and for the soul to grow, the soul must be rooted in God: and it is through prayer that there comes to us that which is the strength of our strength, and the virtue of our virtue, the Holy Spirit (William Mountford).

5. Conclusions

Based on the application of the proposed methodology of the cognitive study of English-language aphorisms, it can be stated that the concept WISDOM has the following components:

1) conceptual, the scope of which is much wider than reflected in dictionaries: «wisdom is the possession of knowledge», «wisdom is common sense», «wisdom is the ability to make spiritual sense of life», «wisdom as freedom from feelings», wisdom is sophistication», «wisdom is the heritage of the age», «wisdom is an aphorism»;

2) figurative, which is represented by figurative metaphors: «wisdom is power», «wisdom is knowledge of the truth», «wisdom is self-demanding», «wisdom is moral impeccability», «wisdom is modesty», «wisdom is freedom»;

3) valuable, represented mainly by a positive and exalted assessment.

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