

SOCIOCULTURAL BACKGROUND AND THE SEMANTIC CHANGE OF THE CONCEPT CHOICE (a case study poetic texts by John Keats)

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Summary

The aim of the paper is to prove the hypothesis: the conceptual schema *Choice* verbally embodied into the text is formed on the basis of interpretation of conceptual structures represented by socio-cultural experience. The article deals with the concept of *Choice* in terms of its history, etymology and change. The author tries to analyse the concept of *Choice* and to compare it with original meaning and different opinions in order to clarify it. The relevance of the paper is due to the need to identify the common and specific features in poetry of John Keats. And also the interrelation of language and context, which will promote the better understanding of the rational worldview reflected in the linguistic pictorial version of the universe. The relevance of my topic is also confirmed by the fact that raised understanding as a cognitive choice that is hard for everyone to make, which carries with it many consequences, which disposes of the concepts of imposition of good and evil, dark and light, freedom and slavery, life and death. The concept *Choice* is a central category of philosophy. It expresses ideas about human existence. It is the level of all that is positive and all that is negative in human life. Through the prism of this concept, human actions are evaluated.

Key words: mentality, reference, semantic change, concept, categorization, cognition social setting, national character, communicative behavior.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.23856/6306>

1. Introduction

Conceptual learning, originally described as a form of higher order learning and considered the cornerstone of human cognition, is an ability that can be attributed to the written literature based on a rich data set covering various forms of conceptual problem-solving. Several forms of conceptual learning have been demonstrated in literature to date, and further ones may also add new forms to the list of concepts a reader can master.

The fact that exploring the concept of choice enables the acquisition of the ability to handle comprehension problems that lead to answers makes understanding cognitive exceptions. Other concepts that also have salient features, such as navigating a mental place in a structured environment, associated learning and memory skills, and frequent poetic activity, may be capable of comparable results.

Human beings think in terms of concepts. Concepts enter into different relationships and form a system of interconnected mental images. The totality of concepts organizes the concept sphere, by which one can judge the mental model of reality reflected in the linguistic cognition and in the language of specific native speakers (*Barsalou, 2005: 310*). The concept, like many complex scientific phenomena, is not unambiguously interpreted in language science at the present stage of its development. Many issues related to the theory of concepts remain debatable (*Lakoff, Johnson, 1980: 35; Pinker, 1999: 12*).

The choice paradigm is to approximate the problem of human world perception and world understanding and understand the algorithms of reality categorization, stereotyping and conceptualization by means of natural languages and comprehend ways and methods of knowledge representation.

The semantic background and applicability of the key word is quite broad. This fact is reflected in the proverbs, phrases and poems we have examined, which are the most reflexive in the consciousness and cultural space of the people. The analysis revealed the predominance of abstract, mostly abstract meanings in the proverbs and poems of the authors presenting the concept, which allows us to conclude about the powerful, thousands of years of formation in the national consciousness (*Baldinger, Wright, 1980: 18–21*).

The period of approval of the term concept in science is associated with a certain arbitrariness of its use, blurring of boundaries, mixing with terms close in meaning or in linguistic form. In this regard, it is necessary to clarify the definition of the term. The Lexicon UK Dictionary gives the following definition: *concept* (from Latin *conceptus* – thought, concept) is the semantic meaning of a name (sign), i.e. the content of a concept, the object of which is the object of this name. At the first sight, the lexical meaning of a word may be called a concept. However, it is now considered already proven that the meaning of a word in a dictionary entry is presented as “insufficient, narrow, far from cognitive reality and even inadequate” (*Baldinger, Wright, 1980: 18–21*). Through the prism of this concept, human actions are evaluated.

The issue of *Choice* has been studied by Schwartz, Barry, Rosenthal, Edward, Todd P. M., Iyengar S.S., Eger E.A., Fodor J. A. A recent analysis of the literature on *Choice* congestion puts these kinds of studies into doubt. On many occasions, the studies have found no effect of *Choice* sets on people’s convictions, sentiments and attitudes. That the predominant reporting points of human activity, in general the impact of too many *Choices* is minimised in different peoples’ activities (*Halliday, Hasan, 1976: 49–51; Grice, 1975: 45; Fodor, 1998: 25*).

The word *Choice* was Romanized by Gothic word (which means – to taste) which as a result became Franconian “*kausijan*”. The Merriam Webster Dictionary tells us that the *Choice* is “the act or power of choosing”. Middle English *chois*, from Anglo-French, from “*choisir*” (“to differentiate, see distinctly”), to choose, of Germanic origin; akin to Old High German *kiosan* to choose (*Wierzbicka, 2003: 16–19*). Also in terms of coordinates – *cyre* which is derived from the Proto-West Germanic “*kure*” (to test, choose) which can mean *Choice; free will; election* (*Keller, 1994: 41–43; McMahan, 2000: 17*).

There’s a quote in the Art of Choosing: *What is freedom? Freedom is the right to CHOOSE: the right to create for oneself the alternatives of Choice. Without the possibility of Choice a man is not a man but a member, an instrument, a thing* (*Deik, Kintsch, 1983: 56–61; Beaugrande, 1981: 56*). *Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.* Each moment is a *Choice*. No matter how frustrating or boring or constraining or painful or oppressive our experience, we can always *choose* how we respond. And I finally begin to understand that I, too, have a *Choice*. This realization will change my life (*Wierzbicka, 2003: 26–29*).

In this paper, we will look at the concept of choice from a cultural perspective. The interest in this concept has a rather distant origin from linguistics, as it arose in connection with the gaining momentum. Every person, who has seen the consequences of choice, knows that “one cannot build happiness on another’s choice”, moreover, many people are also aware of the fact that choice is one of the sources of meaning of one’s own life. However, there are too many facts in real life that suggest otherwise.

Remembering that a huge proportion of information comes to us through words thinking is not just dependent on language in general but is determined by language. The use of proverbs, proverbs and poems provides a more complete picture of the concept, as these units contain a huge layer of cultural information; they enshrine traditional ideas, valuation norms and stereotypes, and behaviour patterns.

Human beings think in terms of concepts. Concepts enter into different relationships and form a system of interconnected mental images. Each language has its own system of concepts through which speakers perceive structure, classify and interpret the flow of information coming from the outside world. The totality of concepts organizes the concept sphere, by which one can judge the mental model of reality reflected in the linguistic cognition and in the language of specific native speakers.

Every person who lives their life and has their own worldview has their own view of what is a right *Choice* and what is a wrong *Choice*. According to Deik and Kintsch in most cases the process of making the right *Choice* will involve the following steps:

1. The certainty of one's goal.
2. An assessment of the importance of each objective. Preconceiving all the options in mind.
3. Assess whether each option is likely to lead to a goal.
4. Choosing the winning option. Later, use the results of the *Choice* to adjust the goals, the importance you attach to them and the way you assess future opportunities (*Deik, Kintsch, 1983: 48–51; Edwards, 1997: 34*).

The simplicity of John Keats's narrative is a strong asset with which he demonstrates both reality and unreality. The language of his works is elementary. John Keats infrequently uses elaborate allegories. His manner captures not only the imagination, but also the hearts of his audience. His epistle is timeless: man is in a constant search for himself. In this search man meets Good and Evil, which always go hand in hand.

2. Explanation of the concept and its functionality

The term *concept* has been used for quite a long time by scientists working in the field of cognitive linguistics (Brown and Levinson, Ray Jackendoff, Ronald Langacker, Steven Pinker, etc.). In linguistics, the term *concept* was borrowed from English-language literature (mid-1970s), when the problem of adequate translation of the term in the works of R. Schenck, W.L. Chafe, B. Russell, Putnam was raised (*Brown, Levinson, 1987: 74–76*).

Cognition is the process of acquiring, storing and retrieving information.

Concepts are mental representations of a class of category or just a group of objects, people or events or other things, it seems the purpose of having concepts is to help us organize our thinking so that we can classify different important things in our lives, it certainly helps us in our ability to effectively and efficiently communicate information about effectiveness, in short the definition of a concept term can simply be an idea representing a group of objects or events. Such linguists as T.A. van Dijk, W. Kintsch, R. de Beaugrande, A. K. Halliday, and R. Hasan have contributed in this area (*Deik, Kintsch, 1983: 56–61; Beaugrande, 1981: 56; Halliday, Hasan, 1976: 49–51*).

This is what it would look like now, how we get these concepts through two basic methods, so there are two types of concepts that we can develop in a more formal way, so these are concepts that are clearly defined by a set of rules or some type. And also there is a more common way that people develop their concepts naturally, so natural concepts are only learned through our everyday experience. That's how we build our concept, but we also have a higher level of conceptual organization, and we have categorical concepts (*Keller, 1994: 45–47*).

Now, it's more taxonomic choice, because purpose and choice clearly fall into the same taxonomic category, and just by doing experiments like this, we were able to find out that you know through things like education, people tend to lean more towards taxonomic now each individual concept also has two different types of meaning, they have denotative meaning or connotative meaning.

In the 1970s, Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness was introduced. Politeness is more than just please and thank you, it's actually a deep concept in communication theory and in how communication works and reveals a tremendous amount about, the relationship between people. Now, politeness looks a little different depending upon where you go, but we all want to be treated politely. And so when we're talking about difficult topics, if we use politeness it'll be that much easier. So that's why we have to talk about this notion of face (*Brown, Levinson, 1987: 79–83*).

Positive face is where we want to be esteemed and admired and looked up to and respected by the people around us. That's how we want to be seen in a positive light. There's also a negative face and, a negative sense we want to be free from people imposing on our freedom, on our ability to make choices and on our decisions, because if someone is able to impose on us and take our choices away that diminishes us. That lowers our position in the group socially. So we need both positive and negative face to be in place for us to feel like our face needs are met. So having these concepts of politeness and face and using these in our difficult conversations will make it much easier to talk about hard things (*Brown, Levinson, 1987: 89–93*).

Here's how Keller puts it in the forward to Brown and Levinson: "A major reason for (interest in politeness), as the authors define it, is basic to the production of social order, and a precondition of human cooperation, so that any theory which provides an understanding of this phenomenon at the same time goes to the foundations of human social life" (*Keller, 1994: 56–63; Copeland, 1984: 32*).

Concepts, as interpreters of meanings, lend themselves to further refinement and modification all the time. They are realizable entities only at the beginning of their emergence, but then, being part of the system, they are influenced by other concepts and change themselves. Take, for example, such a sign as 'red', which, on the one hand, is interpreted as a sign of colour, but on the other hand, is split up by indicating its intensity (scarlet, purple, dark, red...) and enriched by other characteristics. Indeed, the very possibility of interpreting different concepts in different ways shows that both the number of concepts and the amount of content of many concepts are unceasingly subject to change.

In cognitive linguistics which deals with the ways of acquiring, processing, storing and using information that has been verbalized the data obtained from the other fields of research (cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, semiotics, ethnography, etc.) are widely used in case these data help to explain language phenomena. And, vice versa, the results obtained by cognitive linguistics can become helpful for some other domains of science. In general, all the branches of cognitive science are to be contributed by joint effort to solving the most urgent problem: to verify the principles underlying the structures of human thought, especially the core of it manifested through language (*Deik, Kintsch, 1983: 66–71; Beaugrande, 1981: 76; Halliday, Hasan, 1976: 59–61*).

As we know language is an integral part of cognition which reflects the interaction of cultural, psychological, communicative, and functional considerations, and which can only be understood in the context of a realistic view of conceptualization and mental processing. The cognitive analysis of my paper includes the structural characteristics of natural language categorization and the relationship between language and thought. And our analysis also coincides with an analysis of discourse (*Deik, Kintsch, 1983: 68–71; Edwards, 1997: 87*).

There are such main principles that delineate the idealized traditional conception of concepts as: 1) concepts are sub-components of thought contents. Such contents type propositional mental events and abilities that may be common to different thinkers or constant in one thinker over time; 2) in being components of thought contents, and ways of thinking, concepts are representational or intentional; 3) definitions associated with concepts fix necessary and sufficient conditions for falling under the concept. They give the essence, or if not essence at least the most fundamental individuating conditions, of the entities that the concept applies to; 4) concepts are commonly expressed in language. They constitute meanings of the speaker's words (*Wierzbicka, 2003: 96–99*).

John Keats's narrative simplicity is the powerful instrument with the help of which he shows reality and non-reality. The language of his works is simple. John Keats seldom uses complex allegories. His style captures not only the imagination but also the hearts of his readers. His message is an eternal one: human being is in a constant searching of oneself. During this search a person meets the Good and the Evil, which are always going hand in hand. We cannot determine what the Good is in its universal sense and how could it be that the Good can cause more the Evil than the Evil itself. So how does it work? If we ask anyone to determine these two everlasting notions as the Good and the Evil, we will see that it is not easy to combine all the aspects of them into one full concept. Many men many minds, with time the cognition of these notions may be changed as human minds are changing constantly.

3. The concept as the backbone of the worldview

A worldview, that one might call the concept of awareness of the world, is the backbone of both personal and public consciousness. The language, moreover, fulfills a cognitive requirement. The worldview can vary from person to person, e.g. from one era to another, from one social or age group to another, from one area of scientific knowledge to another, etc. People speaking different languages may have close worldviews under certain conditions; meanwhile persons speaking the same language may have different worldviews (*Copeland, 1984: 48; McMahon, 2000: 49–51*).

Consequently, the universal, the ethnic and the personal interact in a conceptual picture of the world. Language, tradition, nature and landscape, nutrition, learning and other social factors influence its formation. A worldview can be coherent, such as a mythological, religious, philosophical or physical worldview, and it may also represent a piece of the environment, i.e. it may be situated locally (*McMahon, 2000: 85*).

The image concepts of the universe are the identical for many people, as the individual way of thinking is the one. Country-specific language images of the universe are merely their various 'colours'. The world view mirrors the national worldview and can be expressed in units of language at various levels.

The system of "To Autumn", which forcibly enters the poetry with a cycle of poems in "John Keats: Selections" (1820), constitutes a new understanding of the image, which subsumes Keat's early symbolism poetics and its imagistic tempering; and the system draws so heavily on artworks for its explanations of historical and supernatural processes that one may suppose that aesthetic reflection has generated a spiritualist pseudo-poetics (*John Keats: Selections, 2010; Collected Poems and Two Plays of John Keats, 1966*).

Since human perception of the universe is not free from mistakes and delusions, its worldview is constantly changing, being redrawn, and the worldview of language still retains

traces of its mistakes and delusions for a long time to come. The worldview encoded by linguistic semantics may in time prove to be to some extent a relic, a relic, obsolete: the sun goes down, it rains.

Or another example: quite often someone uses the phrase ‘spirit soars’ to indicate and express a state of emotional elation, not realizing that this means of expression is connected with archaic ideas about the availability of a life-giving substance – a soul, which was thought in the mythological worldview in the form of steam and could leave the body, rising to the sky.

When dealing with the issue of the relationship between the perceptual and linguistic worldviews, linguists try to establish how certain conceptions are shaped. Linguists have identified a set of basic cognitive categories that are global because they reflect a cognitive experience shared by all. These universal concepts include space, time, number, friendship, etc. (Wierzbicka, 2003: 87).

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4. The sociocultural background of the cognitive aspects of semantic change

The historical images are subordinate to the author’s conception. For the author John Keats, the events of the civil movement and the outbreak of war are a repetition of another troubled time, the realization of a metaphysical confrontation between good and evil, where historical images, as well as fictional ones, are meaningful.

The confrontation between good and evil is fierce and has many deaths, personal dramas and tragic consequences for the people and the country. These events served as the beginning of the lurking in the past, summoning the element of evil to the will. The struggle between good and evil is again sharpened to the point where the line between justice and injustice, victory and defeat is blurred.

An irresolvable socio-historical conflict ensues, accompanied by social suffering and the collapse of the values necessary for life. So the conflict between good and evil expresses the tragedy inherent in the whole people, where the green and the red are parts of the same whole. So much of the vitality of the early conception and preparation of the play was lost in the ‘tap-estry’ (Keats’s word) that resulted.

John Keats narrative simplicity is the powerful instrument with the help of which he shows reality and non-reality. The language of his works is simple. John Keats seldom uses complex allegories. His style captures not only the imagination but also the hearts of his readers. His message is an eternal one: human being is in a constant searching of oneself. During this search a person meets the Good and the Evil, which are always going hand in hand. We cannot determine what the Good is in its universal sense and how could it be that the Good can cause more the Evil than the Evil itself. So how does it work? If we ask anyone to determine these two everlasting notions as the Good and the Evil, we will see that it is not easy to combine all the aspects of them into one full concept. Many men many minds, with time the cognition of these notions may be changed as human minds are changing constantly. One of the most important and absolutely necessary parts of human’s creative process is acquiring knowledge: “*At best, only a limited value, In the knowledge derived from experience. The knowledge imposes*

a pattern, and falsifies. The only wisdom we can hope to acquire. Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless?" (John Keats: Selections, 2010: 131).

Choice, according to the above-mentioned classification is characterized by a feature of restriction. *Choice* is the whole that serves for the part of this world, for the person. So, the person and especially his heart is that container for the content *Choice* that produces the struggle against the whole world. *Choice* is the impulse for the human to continue the eternal search for the Good. Undoubtedly *Choice* is not separated from the world, it exists in this world and the place for its search is the world itself. And the exact place for it we find in the human's heart. The results of this invisible fighting can be controlled by the human's heart. The results of this invisible fighting can be controlled by the human's heart only, whether it fails or wins. The author expresses his own attitude to the concept *Choice* in the following lines: "*Grant us thy peace. I have walked many Years in this city. Kept faith and fast*" (John Keats: Selections, 2010: 171).

The author doesn't use the word *Choice* any more, but in one of his works, "*To Autumn*", we can find many expressions. They emphasize the author's religious belief, for example: "... *And pray to God to have mercy upon us. Lord, I am not worthy*" (John Keats: Selections, 2010: 185). So, we may conclude that *Choice* causes the effect of never ending struggle and keeps the hope in person's power alive. *Choice* comprises the features of pejoration, exaggeration and expressiveness being concentrated in this notion. Linguistic world is a mode of reflection of reality in the consciousness of human beings: it means perception of this reality through the prism of linguistic, cultural and notional peculiarities; peculiar to a certain linguistic group of people; and interpretation of that world while following the national conceptual and structural canons.

Thus, the concepts that govern our thoughts are not just matters of the intellect. The concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to the others. Our conceptual system thus plays the central role in defining our reality. Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what that system is like.

5. Conclusions

The work of John Keats is a remarkable page in the history of the English-language poetry. He dreamed of freedom for a person in his own way, without being radical: as a symbol of a return to origins, of spirituality. The more choices people have, the more freedom they have, and the more they feel free, the more prosperity they have.

The duality of human nature, in the presence of human free will, is the only factor in the generation of both good and evil. There is neither good nor evil as such in the universe, but there are laws of nature and principles of the development of life. All that is given to human life is neither good nor bad, but becomes one or the other depending on how each of us applies the given abilities and needs. Incarnating from life to life in all sorts of conditions, positions and states, man eventually reveals his true face, revealing either the divine or demonic aspect of his dual nature. The whole point of evolution is precisely that each one must show whether he represents a future god or a future devil by exposing one side of his dual nature, namely, the one which corresponded to his aspirations either towards good or towards evil.

The poet showed us that everyone makes their own destiny, and it is up to them to decide whether it will be good or evil. If we do well, evil will leave our souls forever, and the world will become a better and kinder place. Yeats in his work was able to encompass many issues

that concern us all. About man's responsibility for the good and evil that is done on earth, for his own choice of life's paths leading to truth and freedom or to slavery, betrayal and inhumanity, about all-conquering love and creativity that lifts the soul to the heights of true humanity.

Thus, to the core of the concept *Choice* we include the meanings 'symbol of infinity', 'source of dispute', and 'manifestation of man', because they are the most frequent in foreign proverbs and poems of the authors.

Developed within the framework of the concept in semantic topic, the concept in the semantic theme sheds light on their complex character, contribute to understanding of their structure, content, destination, and as a whole help to understand the originality of the conceptual meaning of culture. It is safe to say that development of the most complete typology, taking into account substantive, structural, functional features of concepts, their dynamic character, discursive and stylistic affiliation, is one of the most actual research tasks of modern linguistics.

Thus, the paper is devoted to the conceptual peculiarities of the social English-speaking communication culture representatives. Attention is focused on the concepts of *choice*, *good* and *faith*, which constitute the background of the basic value of English guidelines. The author examines linguistic means that are constantly being used for realization of mentioned concepts in practice. All the verbally embodied components of the concepts *choice* and *faith* are analyzed on the basis of interpretation of conceptual structures represented by socio-cultural experience.

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