# DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL CONCEPTOSPHERE IN GREAT BRITAIN

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**Summary**

The article analyzes the peculiarities of the process of the national conceptosphere development in Great Britain. It was found that the national conceptosphere is a set of categorized, standardized, processed concepts in the consciousness of the ethnic group. The conceptosphere expands with the enrichment of historical experience, culture of the nation, its art, science and literature.

As a result of the analysis of modern linguistic sources it is determined that the main concepts of the British linguistic picture of the world are correlated with the features of the national character of the British. English people usually talk about themselves as quiet, reserved people who are dominated by common sense and who are not inclined to make rash decisions. At the same time, the Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish present themselves as the complete opposite, namely as romantic, impulsive and energetic people.

In Victorian era such concept as "Englishness", or English national identity, arose. In that period new traditions, new educational system, and new standards of the English language were emerging.

Thus, the political, economic, cultural events and shifts in the history of the British nation at the turn of the XIX and XX centuries led to the formation of the modern conceptosphere of the people. This period in the life of Great Britain gave new meanings to many culturally marked signs embodying the material and immaterial culture.

**Keywords:** linguistic picture of the world, concept, conceptosphere, national conceptosphere, national character, Englishness.

## 1. Introduction

The study of the conceptual sphere, as well as the culture of any people, requires a comprehensive approach that explores not only linguistic and social factors, but also ethnically determined stereotypes of linguistic behavior, national peculiarities of the linguistic picture of the world, etc. The formation of a national picture of the world takes place under the influence of numerous factors, namely the place of the people residence, the social arrangement, historical events, religion, and others. Among such factors that influence the development of the national picture of the world, there is a place for the historical development of the nation. It is in the process of such development that nationally specific moral views and norms change, since in each era there are separate customs, social psychology and values are formed, which, accordingly, is reflected in the linguistic consciousness of the people. During the research of the culture of one or another nation, which finds expression in traditions in various folklore genres, one should analyze the linguistic aspect of these cultural phenomena, trying to get to the origins through language. For this, both sociolinguistic and linguistic methods can be used,

because it is necessary to work not only with informants who are bearers of ethno-cultural traditions, which reflect various social strata of the studied ethnic group, but also with the texts of national literature, which is the expression and carrier of historical events, as well as the views, values, character of the people and social status of people of different historical periods *(Serhiienko, 2015)*.

## 2. Factors of national conceptosphere development

One of the most important factors in the development of the national conceptosphere is geographical one. The perception of the world, life experience, ideology, religion, traditions, customs, views of the people largely depends on the place where a certain ethnic community is located, which, in turn, influences the national consciousness and the vocabulary of the language *(Serhiienko, 2015)*.

American linguist B. Whorf emphasizes that "speakers of different languages perceive facts and phenomena differently, because they are expressed and formulated differently in their languages" *(Whorf, 1944:34)*. In this regard, concepts contain "a wide set of mental formations that encode culturally significant meanings in a wide variety of combinations – from sensory and visual structures to a rational reflection of the surrounding world" *(Alefirenko, 2002:7)*.

Conceptual values can be considered the inner primary basis of existence, namely the collective subconscious that regulates human life and activity constantly *(Prykhodko, 2008:150)*.

According to L. Humilov's theory of ethnogenesis, the specificity of the categorization of the ethnic experience of English speakers caused a structural and typological restructuring of all language systems. Ethnic experience includes processes related to the formation of ethnocultural tradition, which regulate the relationship of ethnosystems with the environment. As the main form of categorization of cultural experience in each epoch of ethnogenesis, the conceptosphere of the ethno-cultural dominant is distinguised *(Yesypenko, 2010:40)*.

Language and worldview are closely connected with each other and can be considered a mentality in its entirety. The path of formation of mentality mostly corresponds to the path of formation of national language. The inseparability of mentality and language lies in the fact that mentality is a set of ideas and explanatory models (that is, the method of constructing cause-and-effect relationships between phenomena, which exists in the culture), and also in the fact that the conceptual system of ethnos develops together with the conceptual system of language, which this ethnic group speaks and writes with *(Golovanivskaya, 2009:55)*.

The national conceptosphere is a set of categorized, standardized, processed concepts in the consciousness of the ethnic group. Concepts are presented in the form of lexemes, but lexemes give only a partial representation of concepts, that is, the sum of linguistic means is not a complete picture of concepts. Therefore, lexical synonymy is needed, as well as texts that enable the full disclosure of the content of the concept and, ultimately, their representation in the linguistic picture of the world *(Serhiienko, 2015)*.

The conceptosphere of the people is much wider than the semantic sphere, which is reflected in the form of the meanings of the language words. The conceptosphere expands with the enrichment of historical experience, culture of the nation, its art, science, literature, etc. There is an opinion that, just as in culture, in the language of each nation there is something which is generally accepted (universal) and nationally specific. At the same time, any culture has such cultural values that are inherent only to it and are fixed in language, moral principles, patterns of behavior *(Lihachev, 1993)*.

In general, the national conceptosphere contains a set of individual, group, class, national and universal concepts. Universal concepts include such concepts as FAMILY, MOTHER, FRIENDSHIP, FREEDOM, LOVE, BELIEF, etc., on the basis of which national and cultural values are formed. Thanks to the existence of common concepts, mutual understanding between peoples is possible. At the same time, each nation has a separate worldview and its own cultural values, and each culture forms its own stereotypes of behavior and consciousness, which are based on its own worldview *(Levishchenko, 2009)*.

The national conceptosphere is related to the level of sociologization of the personality. It is about the position and social status of a person in society. Using the example of the English nation, V. Karasyk emphasized that representatives of different social groups (bankers or workers) use the same vocabulary, their conceptospheres overlap, but there are also individual notions that are expressed verbally and are inherent only to the individual conceptosphere of a separate representative of a social microgroup and are not inherent to another one *(Karasik, 2002:118)*.

## 3. Concepts and national character

If we consider the British national conceptosphere, we can conclude that it has been formed over many centuries. The main concepts of the British linguistic picture of the world are correlated with the features of the national character of the British. This phenomenon is regular, since language behavior, as a rule, depends on the frequency of concepts that are articulated by representatives of different population groups and are gradually included into the vocabulary of each native speaker. Scientist E. Nekliudova names rationality, restraint, pragmatism and individualism among the typical features of the British linguistic picture of the world. Reproducing the British national character, the author emphasizes the devotion to traditions, law-abidingness, religiosity, common sense, a sense of personal freedom, generosity and a tendency to puritanism *(Neklyudova, 2016)*.

Scientist R. Bohachov substantiates a different approach and distinguishishes the following concepts that form the English language picture of the world: HOME, FREEDOM, PRIVACY, COMMON SENSE. Another choice of concepts by the author can be explained by another interpretation of them, namely as universal symbolic mental images, which reflect the ideas of the carriers of a separate ethnoculture in a generalized form *(Bogachev, 2007)*.

One of the sources that provide objective information about the national character, worldview or specifics of speech of a particular nation is the set of stereotypes associated with this nation. B. Shapar defines the ethnic stereotype as relatively stable ideas about the moral, mental and physical qualities, which are typical for representatives of different ethnic communities. Their content usually contains evaluative opinions about these qualities, but there may also be instructions for action in relation to people of a certain nationality *(Shapar, 2007:506)*.

S. Ter-Minasova defines the most widespread sources of stereotypes: 1) international anecdotes and various jokes; 2) national literature (classical and fiction); 3) folklore and oral folk art; 4) the national language *(Ter-Minasova, 2000)*. It is worth noting that the peoples who constitute the population of the United Kingdom demonstrate in behavior and character all those qualities, that are mentioned in similar sources, quite clearly.

One of the earliest and most thorough investigations of the national character of the English, which was based on the materials of the "People" tabloid, was carried out by J. Gorer in 1955. Despite the fact that it is more than six decades old, it is still relevant today, because the national character is quite stable and does not lend itself to rapid changes *(Gorer, 1955)*.

Thus, J. Gorer came to the conclusion that the English national character is based on the following features: freedom-loving, rejection of external control, restraint and delicacy, appreciation of education, recognition of the important role of marriage and family *(Gorer, 1955:287)*. The English show qualities that correspond to a strong character, as they are usually hardened, strong-willed, sometimes belligerent people with a sense of self-worth and little desire to let strangers into their lives. This restraint of the English nation can be explained by such historical and economic circumstances as the legal foundations of individual freedom, the absence of slavery, and the increase in the level of well-being of the population that existed in the XIX century. These points were accordingly reflected in speech *(Gorer, 1955)*.

In addition, it was during this period (XVIII–XIX centuries) that modern lexical composition related to the description of emotions and cognitive states, as well as social terms, was formed in many European countries. In this context, A. Doza emphasizes that "classical language enriched its vocabulary for better feelings expression of and did it quite successfully – refined society, salons, academies, a taste for analysis, a desire for order in society and the state of mind. The XIX century continued the enrichment of the language basing on a more rational and scientific orientation" *(Doza, 1956:207)*.

English people usually talk about themselves as quiet, reserved people who are dominated by common sense and who are not inclined to make rash decisions. At the same time, the Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish, as descendants of the Celts, present themselves as the complete opposite, namely as romantic, impulsive and energetic. At the same time, the English, in their opinion, are cold and arrogant. All British people believe that they are endowed with a special subtle sense of humor, which consists of an ironic tone, wordplay, etc. In addition, they immerse themselves in work quickly, although they are sometimes lazy and even able to rely on circumstances. However, it is obvious that all these and other stereotypes cannot describe the British as a single nation or its individual components completely truthful due to the subjectivity of separate views *(Dresser, 1989)*.

Since the beginning of the formation of Great Britain as a country (1070), "typically British" behavior became characteristic for the entire population of the territory. Since then, the notion of "typically British" has been the basis of social stability and regulation of national customs and traditions. However, until the XVIII century, the national character of the British was not unified and homogeneous, as the peoples of the four countries of the island fought among themselves, which led to the fragmentation of the later united state *(Dresser, 1989)*.

## 4. English conceptosphere development during the Victorian era

A significant time for Great Britain was the Victorian era, which is of interest because of the significant changes and improvements that took place in the country during this period. Reorganization of the political system, discoveries in science, acceleration of the pace of life affected the language in general and the emergence of new dominants in particular *(Levishchenko, 2009)*.

The British have strong associations with this time. So it was during the Victorian era that the boundaries of the empire expanded substantially, which had a significant impact on the national self-esteem of the English. They showed superiority and sometimes even contempt for other peoples and were not disposed to accept their cultures and customs. The British national consciousness was full of superiority over everything foreign *(Levishchenko, 2009)*.

Along with the technological progress, the growth of the national economy, an increase in territory and a rise in the level of national consciousness, new concepts were formed that set the Victorian era apart from others. Researchers emphasize such qualities of the Victorian mentality as: religiosity; faith in progress, which bordered with the awareness of the "great imperfections of one's own society", which was typical for people of that period; the conviction that "they are caught up in the flow of social changes", that the whole world is like a fast train moving forward *(Harrison, 1974:13).* Such concepts as FAMILY, HOME, EMPIRE were leading for the conceposphere of the Victorian era *(Hibbert, 2001:160).*

In general, the Victorian conceptosphere is concentrated in two dimensions, which are the values of living and the values of being, i.e. material and spiritual concepts that find expression in the national mentality, lifestyle and in the entire era. Mass urbanization, which began precisely in the Victorian period, significantly affected the character of behavior, outlook, speech and lifestyle of the British in general. Qualitative changes also took place in the society itself: it became the first industrial and urbanized society on the territory of that time. The main role was assigned to a new social group, the middle class, "real Victorians". Thanks to them, new traditions and customs arose *(Levishchenko, 2009).*

The urban lifestyle prevailed in the Victorian era. Urban space reformatted the specifics of human communication, the world of its values, comparing to rural culture. While in rural culture a person inherited a lifestyle, repeated stereotypes of behavior, in order to live in the city, he or she needed to form a new strategy of behavior in order to achieve success. In this regard the city in the Victorian era was associated with new life and new opportunities, and therefore was a distant goal for people, albeit an achievable one. In London, jobs were created for representatives of new mass professions, such as engineers, lawyers, accountants and others *(Markov, 1997:104).*

Great Britain received many social advantages in the "golden age" (end of the XIX century), when almost any agricultural land increased profits quickly, because the active use of the railway reduced the transportation costs, and foreign competition in this area was insignificant. It was then that the "great Victorian boom" took place, when every British citizen earned and spent a lot, and the country was in a state of economic boom like never before *(Parker, Reid, 1972:262).* Further, in the first decade of the XX century, significant changes occurred, social stratification was more pronounced, and the influence of the old aristocracy of landowners increased noticeably *(Parker, Reid, 1972:270).*

Around this time, such a concept as "Englishness", or English national identity, arose. It appeared precisely in the period when new traditions, a new educational system, and new standards of the English language were emerging. Rejection of everything foreign and alien, elevation of one's own, national became the basis of the English spirit. The English considered their own culture as the only correct one, and any approach to foreign cultures was considered an irreparable deviation from the norm.

Features of the phenomenon of "Englishness" are manifested in the image of both Queen Victoria herself, who became an example of a true Lady, and in the image of a Gentleman, who is present in almost any work of art. During this period, the prerequisites for the formation of the behavioral morality and speech ethos of the representatives of the Victorian era were formed. They were based on leading cultural values in world perception, thinking, language and behavior *(Levishchenko, 2009).*

The dominance of England among the state-forming parts of the island in the political and economic sphere at the end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX centuries, the significant influence of the royal family, especially Queen Victoria, on the social sphere of other nations

of Great Britain – all this laid the foundation for understanding of the English national self-consciousness of those times as all-British. As a result, the identification of English and British mentality, as well as English and British national self-consciousness, arose.

Today, even the concept of "Englishness" has regional and social differentiation. The division of England into the southern and northern regions, which are the main ones, raises the issue of dividing people into the working, middle and upper classes, that is, into the rich and the poor, since the southern region is an economically dynamic area in which both the national government of Great Britain and its financial center are concentrated, and the northern region is mainly a highly industrial area. Populations in other parts of Britain often express dissatisfaction with the fact that the core of the country's economic, political, and banking systems are located in England *(Langlands, 1999)*.

However, despite the certain "fragmentation" of Great Britain, there are often calls for the unity of Britain and all its parts, in particular, when it comes to the characterization of the British as some "island race", proud and freedom-loving *(McCrone, 1997)*. English pride, according to the British themselves, sometimes has a very fine line with self-conceit and arrogance. And they, in their own opinion, have the full right to it. The British speak about themselves as follows: "Perhaps it is because of our English pride, but we are inclined to think that we have produced more great and famous men than any other nation. Maybe it is, maybe not. However, how many famous Dutch people can you name? What about Belgians, Portuguese or Hungarians?" *(Paxman, 2013)*.

The fighting spirit of this nation is something the British are very proud of. It has been inherent to them all the time during which they are aware of themselves as a single people, that is, about the last 1500 years *(Paxman, 2013)*. Serious conquests and colonies made it possible for the British to realize their own nobility and superiority. All this crystallized over the centuries the English character, an individual conceptual picture of the world in their minds.

## 5. Conclusion

Therefore, the picture of the world of any nation is unique and is reflected in the objects of its spiritual heritage, in particular, in fiction. Political, economic, cultural events and shifts in the history of the British nation at the turn of the XIX and XX centuries led to the formation of the modern conceptosphere of the people. The Victorian era, like no other period in the life of Great Britain, gave new meanings to many culturally marked signs embodying the material and immaterial culture of the Victorians. Each concept represents the cultural ethnosystem within which it was formed.

Linguistic representation of concepts is manifested in works of fiction, which is the main material for studying the specifics of the embodiment of the concept in the word. It follows that the British linguistic picture of the world not only fully reflects any social or cultural changes in society, but also successfully generates them.

**The prospects for further research** on this issue consist in a detailed analysis of the individual concepts in modern English conceptual picture of the world, in particular, the concept "lifestyle".

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