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Explicative Specificity of the Concept of “Coronavirus” for Children in the Framework of Medical Discourse

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Introduction. In the spring of 2020, the pandemic of coronavirus was announced in the world – the disease caused by the new type of coronavirus SARS-COV-2. In connection with the progressive psychoemotional stress in society in the literature and the media, attempts are made in a simple and affordable form to explain the causes of this disease and prevention methods. Despite the fact that the children's contingent was the least susceptible to the disease, this topic was widely covered in children's books, posters and brochures. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to analyze and study various methods of verbalizing the renewal of knowledge about coronavirus infection through lexical units. The article describes the results of the analysis of the concept of “coronavirus”, reflecting the “childish” vision of the disease.

Methodology and sources. To create an idea of the concept of “Coronavirus”, it is required to conduct a framework analysis and build concepts of concepts that dominate generally in the discourse. For this, it is necessary to conduct a case analysis of children's texts, conceptual analysis and method of modeling using the theory of cognitive metaphor. Also, the compilation of frames will need to conduct definition, etymological, component and contextual analyzes.

Results and discussion. Within the framework of this article, the role of metaphor as the main mechanism for representing information about the disease and its prevention is presented. As a result of the study, strategies for the verbalization of knowledge about coronavirus infection were revealed, contributing to training and socialization

Conclusion. The significance of the presented work is determined by the possibility of using the results of the study in theoretical and practical courses in cognitive linguistics, discourse theory, text linguistics and metaphorology. In addition, the results of the study can be used in theoretical and practical medical activity to optimize the connection in the field of pediatrics.

Keywords: medical discourse, coronavirus, concept, frame, slot, metaphor.

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Оригинальная статья

Специфика экспликации понятия «коронавирус» для детей в рамках медицинского дискурса

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Введение. Весной 2020 г. в мире была объявлена пандемия коронавируса – заболевания, вызываемого новым типом коронавируса SARS-CoV-2. В связи с прогрессирующим психоэмоциональным напряжением в обществе в литературе и средствах массовой информации предпринимаются попытки в простой и доступной форме разъяснить населению причины этого заболевания и методы профилактики. Несмотря на то, что детский контингент был наименее подвержен заболеванию, эта тема широко освещалась в детских книгах, плакатах и брошюрах. Целью данной статьи является анализ и изучение различных способов вербализации знаний о коронавирусной инфекции посредством лексических единиц. В статье описаны результаты анализа понятия «коронавирус», отражающего «детское» видение заболевания.

Методология и источники. Для того чтобы создать представление о понятии «коронавирус», требуется проведение фрейм-анализа и построение концептов понятий, вообще доминирующих в дискурсе. Для этого необходимо провести корпусный анализ детских текстов, концептуальный анализ и метод моделирования с использованием теории когнитивной метафоры. Также для составления фреймов потребуется проведение дефиниционного, этимологического, компонентного и контекстологического анализа.

Результаты и обсуждение. В рамках данной статьи представлена роль метафоры как основного механизма репрезентации информации о заболевании и его профилактике. В результате проведенного исследования выявлены стратегии вербализации знаний о коронавирусной инфекции, способствующие обучению и социализации.

Заключение. Значимость представляемой работы определяется возможностью использования результатов исследования в теоретических и практических курсах по когнитивной лингвистике, теории дискурса, текстовой лингвистике и метафорологии. Кроме того, результаты исследования могут применяться в теоретической и практической медицинской деятельности, для того чтобы оптимизировать связь в области педиатрии.

Ключевые слова: медицинский дискурс, коронавирус, концепт, фрейм, слот, метафора

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Introduction. In the modern information society, much attention is paid to the study of not only the procedures for obtaining and processing, but also technologies for the adequate transfer of this knowledge. Special attention should be paid to discourses that provide communication between a parent and a child, as well as a teacher and a child, since a child and his successful socialization are considered by scientists as the highest value of society [1, 2]. The contradiction between the need for the expedient transfer of medical knowledge to children and the weak knowledge of the children's medical discourse determines the relevance of the issues covered in the article.

Within the framework of this research, we are studying ways to represent the concept of "Coronavirus" in the children's medical discourse. The pandemic has caused the need for research, including as a linguistic phenomenon [3]. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the very research material: we analyzed the texts published over the past two years (2020–2022) in Russian and English-language books on the topic of coronavirus and aimed at children.

The concept, as the fundamental category of modern cognitive linguistics, is formed in the discourse in an integrative object that allows us to study linguistic phenomena in relation to a person, his activities, processes of cognition and thinking through the principle of anthropocentrism [4]. In this article, we turn to medical discourse, by which we mean verbally mediated activity integrating the scientific and practical processes of the study of normal and pathological conditions, as well as the prevention and treatment of various human diseases [5].

The concept "Coronavirus" is formed in medical discourse and represents a body of knowledge and ideas about a respiratory viral disease, which in the English-speaking environment is nominated as COronaVirusDisease (COVID-19), and in Russia as coronavirus disease. The etymology of the medical term goes back to the Latin *Coronaviridae*, which means '*corona – crown, wreath and viridae'* – viruses. The name of the disease is thus derived from the characteristic appearance of the viral particle under electron microscopy, where protein spikes frame the viral particle like the teeth of a crown.

Clinically, coronavirus is a respiratory tract infection that causes severe complications, such as pneumonia, for example, with possible subsequent death. The main signs of the disease are fever, weakness, dry cough and uneven breathing. Treatment of coronavirus infection involves the use of antiviral drugs, but it is worth noting that disease prevention plays an important role in this situation, in other words, a set of measures aimed at preventing and subsequent development of the disease [6].

Methodology and sources. A concept as a multidimensional phenomenon can be represented in various ways, since our knowledge is organized through cognitive models, that is, certain cognitive structures that are a consequence of the organization of our knowledge [7]. This position is presented in the theory of frame semantics by C. Fillmore, as well as in the theory of metaphor and metonymy by R. Langacker and M. Jones. The concept, as is known, is associated with associative space, the organization of connections of which leads us to cognitive models of knowledge storage, which is seen "as a certain form of semantic networks existing in the mind" [8, p. 267]. That is why the considered unit of "knowledge storage" represents interconnected fragments of the mental-lingual complex, which form "so-called configurations, which, according to A. Vezhbitskaya, manifest themselves in the verbal-associative network" [9, p. 48].

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It is impossible to study the nature of a concept without appealing to a very significant cognitive unit in modern linguistics as frame, which is a cognitive structure based "on probabilistic knowledge about typical situations" [8, p. 288]. Moreover, this cognitive structure contains essential, typical and potentially possible information that is associated with the concept under study [8, p. 289]. It is for this reason that a frame, according to M. Minsky, can be represented as a network consisting of nodes, or slots, as well as subslots that organize the frame and specify certain aspects of the analyzed situation [10]. Frames in language, therefore, represent lexical series that correlate with a certain amount of knowledge and experience.

Let us turn directly to the research data.

Results and discussion. The frame of the concept "Coronavirus" in naive medical discourse represents a complex and multifaceted entity and represents a body of knowledge from naive to scientific. The presented knowledge can be structured in the form of a set of slots that reflect the natural course of the disease – "epidemiology", "etiology", "pathogenesis", "clinical picture", "treatment" and "prevention". A naive vision, that is, the perception of a child's coronavirus, also presupposes an understanding of the disease as a natural process that includes all stages of development and progression of the disease.

Now let us consider the specificity of the verbal representation of each slot that makes up the frame of the "Coronavirus" concept.

The **"Epidemiology"** slot, which reflects knowledge about the patterns of occurrence and spread of diseases of various origins, is verbally represented by the following lexical units: "*an alien organism, a human body, an organism, "say "Hello!", adults "news about me", "see me on TV*" [11, 12], *inside another creature, their host, bats. Another type of animal, humans, mystery animal, pangolin, a scaly animal that eats ants, the Coronavirus does not affect children too much, but they can transmit the virus to the people, outside of human cells, make it hard for the virus to jump from one person to the next, the virus can't spread, fewer people get sick, to pass the germ to other people* [13], *jumped to Italy, in our country the virus quickly became a star, television, radio, newspapers only they say it, the passport of a coronavirus traveler, the place of residence is all over the world, gets along well with everyone, the virus did not jump from person to person, which he taught; conquered the whole world"* [14].

The **"Etiology"** slot, which represents knowledge about the causes and conditions for the onset of a disease, is represented in our study by two basic positions, that is, two subslots, respectively: **the pathogen** and **the conditions**, which, in turn, make up the structure of the **"Etiology"** slot. So, the **"Pathogen"** subslot is verbally represented by the following lexical units: "*small parasites, parasite, viruses, coronaviruses, the structure of the virus, a relative of the flu and the common cold* [15], *a teensy, tiny germ, because "corona" means "crown"* (*in Latin), the virus looks like it's wearing a spiky crown, the virus, germs, bacteria, viruses, COronaVirus, SARS-CoV-2, Coronaviridae, corona, special spike*" [16], *crown, wreath, crown-like spikes; medium-sized virus, with characteristic fringed hairs on the surface, the culprit, so small, it is not only small, but also sticky and athletic; His Majesty the Coronavirus, the king of the virus"* [17].

The **"Conditions"** subslot, in turn, is verbally represented by the following lexical units: "*likes to travel from person to person in the smallest drops, when sneezing or talking, while*

traveling he makes stops on phones and door handles, I will come to visit you, penetrate into our body [13], *get into our cells*" [17].

The **"Pathogenesis"** slot, representing knowledge about the mechanism and development of the disease, is verbally represented by the following lexical units: *"cells-bricks, small factories for the production of their copies; are divided into families, just as we are divided into families* [18]; *conquered the whole world; the virus takes offense and runs away; bring with me breathing problems, fever and cough* [17]; *can make us sick; a special "door"; needs a "key"; uses a key to open the door; makes lots of copies of itself; we get sick; make people sick; killing human cells or making them (note: cells) not work properly; uses a special door to get in to cells; special doorways are on cells in the nose and lungs; has an army to fight germs; the immune system attacks the virus; fighting the virus; some peoples' immune systems may not fight hard enough; other peoples' immune systems may fight too hard; hurting their own cells;' hide' in the body; they replicate differently* [19]; *arrange their own houses there; wants to defeat the coronavirus of children; cries, whines, stamps his feet; just does not give up, cunning, hiding; coronavirus has a cunning plan"* [15].

The **"Clinical picture"** slot, which reflects knowledge about the totality of manifestations of the disease and the characteristics of its course, as well as the "Etiology" slot, is structured through two sub-slots, namely: **"Localization"** and **"Symptoms"**.

The **"Localization"** subslot representing knowledge about the place of the pathological process, is verbally represented by the following lexical units: "stomach, nose, mouth".

The **"Symptoms"** subslot, which, in turn, translates knowledge about the signs of the manifestation of the disease, is verbally represented by the following lexical units: *"fever, headache, runny nose, cough, common cold and the flu, have a cold, feel bunged up, a sore throat, a temperature, experience coughing, and sneezing"* [20], *"sneezing, coughing"* [21].

The **"Treatment"** slot, which demonstrates knowledge about the process of eliminating a disease or injury, a pathological condition or other impairment of life, normalizing disturbed life processes, restoring and improving health, is divided in medical practice into conservative, that is, therapeutic treatment and surgical treatment. Thus, the **"Treatment"** slot is structured as two sub-slots "Therapeutic" and "Surgical", respectively. Coronavirus as an infectious disease characterized by a syndrome of general infectious intoxication and a syndrome of damage to the respiratory tract, its upper and middle sections – the nose, pharynx, larynx, trachea and bronchi, involves therapeutic treatment. For this reason, in our study, the **"Treatment"** slot is represented only by the **"Therapeutic Treatment"** subslot. The subslot **"Therapeutic Treatment"** is verbally represented by the following lexical units: *"to give medicines, newly updated COVID-19 booster shots"* [20].

Since the time of Hippocrates, it has been known that disease is easier to prevent than to cure. The most famous Russian surgeon and anatomist N.I. Pirogov wrote in his writings that "*The main purpose of a doctor is to teach people to be healthy…"* [22, p. 23]. According to our study, the slot, which represents knowledge about the complex of medical, sanitary, hygienic, pedagogical and socio-economic measures aimed at preventing diseases and eliminating risk factors, is verbally represented by a combination of the following lexical units: *"with it [the virus, approx. auth.] need to fight; he (the virus) is not very fond of; If you do all this (follow the recommendations), I will not come to visit you; to avoid encountering the virus; protect your family and loved ones; those*

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who now stay at home because of the risk of getting sick are not just protecting themselves: they are also protecting everyone around them so as not to transmit the virus to someone else [15]; *may close schools to stop the virus from spreading; trying to make a coronavirus vaccine-kind of like the shots you get at the doctor's office; stay at home; to wash your hands lots; try to keep at least three feet away from your siblings and other members of the family; try to make a type of vaccine against COVID-19; to fight against Coronavirus; to wear one mask in public or indoors; are usable face masks the best option; to wash your hands with lots of soap; make loads of bubbles; keep washing for twenty seconds; try to sneeze and cough into your elbow rather than your hand; scientists and doctors are looking for ways to defeat it"* [13].

While being analyzed, the acute study has revealed a large number of metaphors. We believe that the reason is the fact that metaphor is a universal cognitive mechanism that ensures the interaction of different types of knowledge, different conceptual areas [8], the dialogue of science and society, "the penetration of science into the very heart of everyday life" (*S. Hawking*) [23].

Metaphor is considered by us as a cognitive mechanism, which is based on the intersection of a number of conceptual areas in the conceptual sphere ("a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual sphere") [7]. The result is the transfer of knowledge from one conceptual area to another, that is, the schematic figurative structure of the source area is projected onto the target area, which is structured according to the pattern of the source area, while the second conceptual area (target area) is understood through the prism of the first (target area). source) [7, 24]. A new categorization is "guided" to reality or its individual fragments, and an important role is played by non-rigid (prototypical) categorization (that is, naive) [25]. Thus, the conceptualization of abstract (and any other) entities is often carried out on the basis of the sensorimotor experience of human interaction with the outside world, and on the basis of "a special kind of schemes" according to which it is customary to think and act in a particular culture [10].

It is generally admitted that metaphor performs important functions in discourse: explanation (eng., to explain), clarification (eng., to elucidate), illustration (eng., to exemplify), clarification (eng., to clarify) and persuasion (eng., to persuade) [21, 23]. The functions of explanation, clarification, illustration and clarification, one way or another, are connected with the explanation of new knowledge (including abstract and complex concepts) through the known, i.e. by comparison with more specific and simple concepts. For this reason, the explanatory function of metaphor is also called pedagogical [23], the function of popularizing knowledge [26] or cognitive function, since it contributes to the acquisition and mediation of knowledge.

We believe that metaphors in the studied naive medical discourse are designed to facilitate the child's perception of complex knowledge. The function of persuasion is also seen as important when a metaphor is studied as a means of influencing the addressee of speech in an emotional and evaluative aspect [24, 7]. According to scientists, a metaphor is able to influence the emotional-volitional sphere of the addressee and create an appropriate attitude towards a certain reality. "In the metaphor as a unit of activity, along with the results of human cognitive activity, the attitude of the cognizing subject to the cognized reality is reflected and consolidated" [26, p. 13]. In the discourse under study, the metaphor is designed to calm the child, give him a sense of security in the face of general uncertainty and anxiety.

Being mentioned earlier, the metaphor is based on the interaction of two conceptual areas: the target area and the source area. The target area in our case is the coronavirus, the entire set of ideas about it described above. Now let us consider the source area, that is, we shall identify what images are used to comprehend and represent the concept of "Coronavirus" In Russian metaphorology, the conceptual area of the source is described as a metaphorical model [7, 25]. All discovered metaphors were divided into five main conceptual areas [8, 24]: Natureomorphic, Anthropomorphic, Sociomorphic, Artifact and Ideomorphic metaphorical models.

Naturemorphism includes metaphors that identify the coronavirus with the natural world. Examples include the following contexts: *"small parasites; the virus has spikes, tiny germs; the coronavirus has a special "spike" on its surface. An anthropomorphic metaphor describes the coronavirus as human in terms of biology, physiology, and psychology: a relative of the flu and the common cold; are divided into families, just as we are divided into families; the virus is jumping from one nose to another"*. Sociomorphic metaphor includes metaphors related to human social activity: *"small factories for the production of their copies; Coronavirus's cunning plan insidious virus; the virus has conquered the whole world; in our country, the virus quickly became a star; coronavirus traveler; killing human cells; the immune system attacks the virus; your body is fighting the virus; your body has an army. Artifact metaphor identifies coronavirus with objects: crown, crown; brick cells; uses a special door to get into cells; coronavirus also needs a "key"*. The ideomorphic includes metaphors associated with the world of ideas and fantasies: *"His Majesty the Coronavirus, the Tsar Virus; children have a shield just like the heroes, immunity is called"*.

It is interesting to investigate how the metaphor is explicated in the texts. According to the method of derivational analysis [26], the metaphor is verbalized by three ways which are the following: predicative, attributive and nominative structures. Predicative metaphors include simile (*a virus is like a crown*), a nominal predicate with a zero connective in Russian (coronavirus is a parasite), a nominal predicate with a verb connective in English (*Corona is a tiny germ*), and a verbal metaphor (the virus is walking around the planet). Attribute structures are presented as an application in Russian (*travel virus*) and attributes (*sticky virus, athletic virus*) to nominative structures, transposition or secondary nomination (*"crown", "home" for the virus, "door", "key"*). This may be explained, in our opinion, by the intention of the addresser to reduce information density, to provide detailed information.

The concept of "Coronavirus" in naive medical discourse is often verbalized as an allegory. We are talking about the participation in the "plotting" of all components of the context of the metaphor, including contexts of considerable length. As an example, let us consider a fairy tale written by children's writer E. Ul'eva and children's doctor Alexei Korovkin, presenting an allegorical description of the problem of coronavirus prevention: *"Once upon a time was the king of Coronavirus. Only he was not visible. And why? Yes, because he was very, very small. And he really didn't like it. Why am I so small and small?! he shouted. – I want to be big! The very best! "And you get inside the children," the chief court sage advised him. They will grow and you will grow with them. Or rather, they won't grow. Because you will take all the power from them"* [15]. All context components are semantically related and participate in the representation of the *Coronavirus Tsar* as the metaphor. So, metaphors optimize the processing of scientific knowledge,

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with their help the author programs the processes of perception and understanding of medical information by the young recipient.

Conclusion. Within the framework of this article, the ways of verbalizing of the concept of "Coronavirus" in the naive layer of medical discourse, which actualizes a very dangerous disease all over the world today – coronavirus infection COVID-19, were considered. In the course of the study, we compiled a concept frame consisting of a set of slots representing all stages of the infectious process, namely: etiology, epidemiology, pathogenesis, clinical manifestations, treatment and prevention of coronavirus infection.

Thus, in the structure of the concept, that is, in the frame, the following slots dominate: the **"Pathogenesis"** slot, which actualizes the need to explain to the child the mechanism of the development of the disease in order to form an understanding of the essence of the infectious process. The **"Pathogenesis"** slot represents information about the causes of the disease and, finally, the **"Prevention"** slot demonstrates the possibilities of preventing and combating coronavirus infection, which, in turn, allows not only to explain to the child ways to protect against the disease, but also to level the fear of the disease. The concept of "Coronavirus" in the discourse under study is verbalized mainly as a metaphor, which is explained by the peculiarities of child psychology. Children, as a rule, perceive the disease through the prism of images familiar to them, that is, through comparison with objects familiar to them. It is for this reason that metaphor contributes to the explanation, clarification, illustration and clarification of new information, by comparing complex concepts with more specific and simple ones. Metaphor, therefore, as a linguo-cognitive tool for forming the image of the disease – coronavirus infection – plays a crucial role in the representation of knowledge in the naive layer of medical discourse.

The significance of this work is determined by the possibility of using the results of the study in theoretical and practical courses in cognitive linguistics, discourse theory, text linguistics, and metaphorology. In addition, the results of the study can be used in theoretical and practical medical activities, to optimize communication in the field of pediatrics.

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