Main Issues of Cognitive Linguistics as a Science

Mamanazarova Gulhayo Ilhamjanovna
Teacher, Uzbekistan state world Languages University

Annotation: This article explores the primary concerns within cognitive linguistics, a field that examines the interplay between language and human cognition. Key issues include the nature of meaning, the embodiment of language, the role of metaphor, and the interaction between language and thought. By analyzing these topics with examples, the article sheds light on the fundamental questions and debates shaping cognitive linguistics today.

Key words: cognitive linguistics, meaning, embodiment, metaphor, language and thought, polysemy, conceptual metaphor theory.

Cognitive linguistics is an interdisciplinary branch of linguistics that studies the relationship between language and the cognitive processes underlying it. Unlike traditional linguistic theories, which often view language as an isolated system of arbitrary symbols, cognitive linguistics posits that language is intimately connected to general cognitive mechanisms and human experience. This perspective raises several critical issues and debates within the field, including the nature of meaning, the embodiment of language, the pervasive role of metaphor, and the intricate interaction between language and thought. This article delves into these primary issues, providing examples and analysis to highlight their importance and implications for our understanding of language.

The methodology of this article involves a comprehensive review of existing literature on cognitive linguistics, focusing on seminal works and recent research. By synthesizing theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, the article aims to provide a coherent overview of the main issues in cognitive linguistics. Key examples from various languages and contexts are used to illustrate the concepts discussed. Additionally, the article employs a comparative approach to highlight the differences between cognitive linguistics and traditional linguistic theories.

In the mid-twentieth century structuralism as a linguistic trend seemed to be exhausted and scientists returned back to the study of language on the principles of anthropocentrism. The exploration of human thoughts, experience, cognition and their verbalization became a key issue of modern language science. Language functioning is investigated as a special cognitive ability of men and not as a sign system [7]. The term "Cognitive Linguistics" refers to a research approach to language study that originated in the 1970s and has gained considerable momentum and productivity since the 1980s [1]. While the majority of research within this paradigm has concentrated on semantics, significant attention has also been directed towards morphology, syntax, and other linguistic domains such as language acquisition, phonology, and historical linguistics. According to W. Croft and D. Cruse, along with researchers from Wellesley College, there are three primary hypotheses that underpin the cognitive linguistic approach to language [2]:

➢ language is not an autonomous cognitive faculty but is embedded in and dependent upon our general cognitive faculties;

➢ grammar is conceptualization, meaning that linguistic structures are closely connected to our non-linguistic concepts of the world. For instance, syntactic functions like subject and object reflect the participants in an event we observe;

➢ knowledge of language emerges from language use. This suggests that we are not born with an abstract and universal grammar that only requires input from the language we are exposed to as children. Instead, the language acquisition process is intimately linked to the pairing of non-linguistic situations with linguistic expressions encountered at an early age.

One of the central concerns in cognitive linguistics is the nature of meaning. Cognitive linguists argue that meaning is not just a feature of language but is constructed through human experience and cognition. This view contrasts with formalist approaches, which often regard meaning as a fixed component of linguistic signs.

Polysemy, the phenomenon where a single word has multiple related meanings, exemplifies the cognitive approach to meaning. For instance, the word «head» can refer to the part of the body, the leader of an organization, or the top of a table. Cognitive linguists explain polysemy by suggesting that different meanings arise from common underlying cognitive structures, known as image schemas, which are activated in different contexts.

Cognitive linguistics posits that language is grounded in sensory and motor experiences, a concept known as embodiment. This perspective suggests that abstract concepts are understood through metaphorical extensions of physical experiences.

Cognitive linguistics as being part of cognitive science deals with techniques considering the work of mental processes. Mental mechanisms of human mind are studied by cognitive science. Taking into account all mental processes, principles of information processing, and the connection to other psychic and neurological spheres cognitive scientists believe that they are closely interconnected and have a profound effect on each other. However, looking at cognitivism from a more precise prospect the core interaction of mental processes can reveal more subtle aspects of mind work such as culture and mentality [10].

Spatial metaphors, such as «up» and «down,» illustrate embodiment in language. We often use these spatial terms to describe abstract concepts, such as emotions or social status (e.g., feeling «down» or climbing the «social ladder»). These metaphors reflect how our physical experiences shape our understanding of abstract ideas.

Metaphor is a pervasive and fundamental aspect of human thought and language, according to cognitive linguistics. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, posits that we understand many abstract concepts through metaphorical mappings from more concrete domains.

Example: the «Time is Money» – Metaphor

The «Time is Money» metaphor illustrates how we conceptualize time in terms of money, a more concrete and familiar domain. Phrases like «spending time,» «saving time,» and «wasting time» reflect this metaphorical mapping, highlighting how deeply metaphors influence our conceptual framework.

For cognitive scientists it is necessary to understand what mental representation of language knowledge should be and how this knowledge is cognitively processed. Adequacy and relevancy of linguistic statements are determined according to this concept and explain the following notions [9, 86]:

1. Understanding is considered to be a type of mental representation that should be accessible for learning. (The issue is what is accessible for learning and what is not accessible).

2. Processing is an act of process between a presenter and presentee that can be processed by means of the program of a quite proper analyzer (in computer). The check of grammar models with methods of computer linguistics is an example for processing.

Cognitive linguistics provides a rich framework for understanding the complex interplay between language and cognition. By examining the nature of meaning, the embodiment of language, the role of metaphor, and the interaction between language and thought, cognitive linguistics offers insights

into how language reflects and shapes our mental processes. This perspective challenges traditional linguistic theories and opens new avenues for exploring the cognitive underpinnings of language.

REFERENCES

1. Cognitive Linguistics. – Access mode: http://www.iaawiki.tu-dortmund.de/index.php?title=Cognitive_Linguistics

2. Croft W. Cognitive Linguistics // William Croft, D. Alan Cruse. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. – 356 p.

3. Evans V., Green M. Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction. – Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006. – 830 p.

4. Lakoff G. Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind. – Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. – 632 p.

5. Lakoff G., Johnson M. Metaphors We Live By. – Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. – 256 p.

6. Lee P. The Whorf Theory Complex: A Critical Reconstruction. – Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1996. – 251 p.

7. Makovskaya O. Vakhotskyi M. Main issues of cognitive linguistics as a science. November 2014. Current issues of social sciences and history of medicine. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338179740_Main_issues_of_cognitive_linguistics_as_a_science

8. Rosch E. Principles of categorization. – Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1978. – P. 27-48.

9. Wilensky R.1990. Meaning and knowledge representation // W. Bahner, J. V. D. Schildt eds. Proceedings of the Fourteenth International Congress of Linguists: Berlin (GDR), August 10 – August 15, 1987. – B.: Akademie, 1990. – P. 77-104.

10. https://www.kafu-academic-journal.info/journal/4/104/