“Криза» як субконцепт концепту «війна» в британському воєнному медіадискурсі

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Досліджено один з основних субконцептів концепту «війна» в сучасному британському воєнному медіадискурсі – «криза». Проаналізовано тенденції досліджень концептів у когнітивній науці та обґрунтовано можливість застосування їхніх результатів у медіадослідженнях. Доведено, що задля всебічного дослідження воєнного медіадискурсу необхідним є вивчення його основних концептів і їх ролі у декодуванні воєнного повідомлення.

Ключові слова: когнітивна наука; воєнний медіадискурс; концепт; субконцепт; криза.

1. Introduction

Stating the problem. The end of the XXth – the beginning of the XXIst century appeared to be full of political contradictions which very often turned into warfare, in its direct and figurative meaning. This has led to the fact that “war” and its constituents have become quite common both in media discourse and in people’s lives. It is obvious that in the modern world traditional forms of war have transformed. Together with warfare in hot spots, psychological and informational wars coexist. In media discourse war is frequently represented mediatelly by actualization of meta-communication factors. Such meta-communication factors gain primary importance in encoding as well as decoding the “war” message. Thus, it seems reasonable to research the constituents (subconcepts) of the concept “war” in media discourse.

Analysing the recent researches. The cognitive trend in linguistic in 1970s–1980s stipulates the researches of “concept” (G. Lakoff, Ch. J. Fillmore, R.W. Langacker, A. Wierzbicka, R. Pavillonis, D. Likhachev, Yu. Stepanov, Yu. Prokhorov, Ye. Kubryakova, M. Boldyrev, V. Maslova, Ya. Prykhoda, M. Yatsymirska, O. Yasinovska, L. Vasylyk, etc.). Nevertheless, despite the variety of cognitive, linguistic, culturological and other researches, the nature of concept, its structure, definition and peculiarities of its functioning in media discourse (in particular, in war media discourse) have not yet been worked out properly. It is conditioned not only by the different approaches to the study of “concept”, but also by text-focused nature of most researches, while “concept” is directly included into discourse sphere. Hence, it should be studied on the basis of discourse analysis together with cognitive and linguistic approaches, especially when dealing with media discourse.

The purpose of the research. The article aims at versatile analysis of cognitive nature of the concept “crisis”, its functioning in British
war media discourse and its role in decoding the war message. The study is based on the publications of The Guardian (G) [1] and The Telegraph (T) [2]. The methods applied were as follows: discourse analysis, content-analysis and conceptual analysis.

The research results. In modern science, there are various definitions of “concept” depending on the sphere of the research (linguistic, philosophy, philology, cognitive science, etc.). It is likely that to investigate media discourse, it is necessary to appeal to cognitive science and its interpretation of “concept”. Ye. Kubryakova states that “concept” is a unit of cognitive activity which is in constant motion [3]. Analysing the field structure of “concept”, Z. Popova and I. Sternin assert that “concept” is a combination of cognitive signs and cognitive classifiers, and is the unity of image, information contents and interpretative field [4]. Differentiating the terms “notion” (conceptus) and “concept” (conceptum), N. Aleirenko defines “concept” as a cogitative image which possesses a rather wide structural range: “from general visual images to logical notions; from superficial to deep layers of sense encoding (with various degree of its explication)” [5, p.60]. Thus, as a unit of cognitive scope, “concept” represents the result of person’s cognitive activity and defines the attitude of the person’s consciousness to the particular object, phenomenon or event.

Another understanding of “concept” is given by Yu. Stepanov who also differentiates the terms “notion” and “concept”, but adds to it emotional component. The scholar states that “unlike notions, concepts are not only thought but also they are experienced. They are the subject of emotions, sympathies and antipathies, sometimes of controversies, as well” [6, p. 43]. Yu. Stepanov singles out three components of “concept”: “1) the main, current indication; 2) additional, “passive” indication which is already irrelevant; 3) the internal form which is usually not realised but remains in the external verbal form” [6, p. 43]. According to the scholar, “concept” is the thing by which an ordinary person can sometimes “influence the culture” [6, p. 43]. Definitely, such understanding of “concept”, together with differentiating the terms “notion” (conceptus) and “concept” (conceptum), is vital for media discourse, especially for war media discourse in which emotional component should be taken into account while encoding the message.

In his work R. Harris states that “a person does not code and then reproduces the information, he adopts it according to his own knowledge and ideas as well as the context in which this message was received” [7, p. 54]. Here, the context takes on special significance. Undoubtedly, in mass communication it would be proper to use the following definition of context: “conditions, frame or process in which the events happen and the meaning for the content is provided” [8]. Obviously, such definition seems more suitable while investigating war media discourse than that used in philology and linguistics.

A famous scientist T. van Dijk, researching context models and their roles in discourse processing, emphasizes that “contextes do not directly influence discourse or language use at all. Rather, it is the subjective interpretation of the context by discourse participants that constrains discourse production, structuration, and understanding” [9, p. 124]. According to Van Dijk, a certain communicative even is represented in any social situation and its particip- ants actively and continuously construct the mental representation only of those peculiarities of this situation which appear relevant for them at this particular moment [9, p. 124].

Such understanding of context amends understanding of traditional model of communication by R. Jacobson. Although the scholar considered context to be very important, he did not take into account background addresser’s knowledge and the context in which the addressee gets certain information. Thus, addressee’s and addressee’s contexts may differ. Communicative mechanisms of their maximal convergence need to be studied.

As it was stated above, the forms and means of war have been changed nowadays. Consequently, the bounds of the concept “war” have been broadened. The analysis of British war media discourse has proved that the concept “war” involves various subconcepts in its structure [10, p. 96]. One of these main subconcepts is “crisis”. In dictionaries, “crisis” is defined as: “1) a time of great disagreement,
confusion, or suffering; 2) an extremely difficult or dangerous point in a situation” [11]; “a situation in which there are a lot of problems that must be dealt with quickly so that the situation does not get worse or more dangerous” [12]; “1) a time of intense difficulty or danger; 2) a time when a difficult or important decision must be made” [13].

The conceptual analysis of British war media discourse shows that concept “crisis” is used here in all its meanings, depending on the escalation of the situation. In Ukrainian events in December 2013-January 2014 concept “crisis” appears in a week since the beginning of the protest. It is contextually connected with Ukrainian police failure to clear Kyiv protestors (T). Then the US Secretary of State John Kerry and EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton arrived in Kyiv to talk “with all parties to find a way out of the crisis” (T, Dec 11, 2013). Thus, the situation was officially recognised as crisis. Since that time, concept “crisis” actively functions in British war media discourse devoted to these Ukrainian events. The semantic-associative structure of the concept “crisis” is revealed by the following word combinations: “Ukraine crisis”, “the crisis that followed last March’s annexation of Crimea”, “to resolve crisis”, “deepening crisis”, “immediate causes of the crisis”, “at the core of the crisis”. It is connected with other main concepts of war media discourse, such as: “protest”, “crackdown”, “tension”, and “conflict”. All of them are used to represent and estimate the political situation which is in the center of the discourse.

Two years later concept “crisis” also became one of the key subconcepts of the concept “war”. This time it is already actualised in the feature headline “Ukraine crisis” (G, Aug 31, 2015). It represents and somehow explains the situation of Kyiv parliament clashes in August 31, 2015. But in this case concept “crisis” becomes the reason for protests: “Several hundred activists had been protesting close to the Ukrainian parliament building from early in the morning”, “A few protesters threw plastic bottles at the police, but finally the explosion of violence was over” (G, Aug 31, 2015). Later it is actualised in the headline “Ukraine crisis: What’s going on in Crimea?” (G, Aug 12, 2016) and estimates the situation after Russia’s annexation of the Crimea: “Tensions between Ukraine and Russia have escalated again, more than two years after Russia’s annexation of Crimea” (G, Aug 12, 2016). “Crisis” is associated with Russia’s accusation of Ukraine of trying to stage armed incursions in the southern peninsula and Ukrainian denial and the statement that Russia “has massed tens of thousands of soldiers there” (G, Aug 12, 2016). Thus, concept “crisis” gets a wider meaning in British war media discourse describing Ukrainian situation.

In Syrian events in the spring-autumn 2011, concept “crisis” appeared in British war media discourse only in October 2011 and at once in the meaning of “an extremely difficult or dangerous point in a situation” [11]: “the crisis is already showing worrying signs of descending into an armed struggle” (G, Oct 14, 2011). It is contextually connected with the disagreement of people with Bashar’s regime. In November 2011 concept “crisis” is associated with some uncertainty: “The Syrian crisis has put new energy into old allegiances in what had been shifting diplomatic territory in the region. Syria and Russia are old allies, but Syria, already close to Iran, had been moving closer to turkey too until earlier this year. ...It remains unclear what effect this will have in military terms…” (T, Nov 29, 2011). Concept “crisis” was the consequence of the concepts “uprising”, “protest”, “unrest”, and “tension”. Hence, it can be concluded that unlike the Ukrainian events, where concept “crisis” functioned in a bit milder meaning, here, as a result of more savage events, it gets more aggressive meaning.

3. Conclusion

Concept “crisis”, as any concept of any discourse, influences the formation of addressee’s context models. This concept is contextually connected in addressee’s consciousness with some difficult situation which has to be solved in the nearest future. The context models, as the representations of the certain situation or events, change with the change of the semantic-associative structure of the concept “crisis”. Further studies of concepts and subconcepts of war media discourse will help find out the mechanisms of modeling the semantic-associative structure of the concept “war” as well as
the mechanisms of the correct decoding of a war message.

References

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To research and characterize the nature of the subconcept “crisis” and its correlation with other main concepts of British war media discourse the following methods were applied: discourse analysis, content-analysis and conceptual analysis. The semantic-associative structure of the subconcept “crisis” as well as the contexts of its functioning were under study.

The study of war media discourse as a systematic phenomenon is impossible without the profound research of its main concepts. Concept “crisis”, as a subconcept of the concept “war”, influences the formation of addressee’s context models. Usually it is contextually connected in addressee’s consciousness with some difficult situation which has to be solved in the nearest future. The context models, as the representations of the certain situation or events, change with the change of the semantic-associative structure of the concept “crisis”. Further studies of concepts and subconcepts of war media discourse will help find out the mechanisms of modeling the semantic-associative structure of the concept “war” as well as the mechanisms of the correct decoding of a war message.

Concept “crisis” as a subconcept of the concept “war” is first under consideration. For the first time the author makes an attempt of grounding the connection between the semantic-associative structure of the concept “crisis” with addressee’s context models.

The obtained results can be used in further deep study of the main concepts of war media discourse and the mechanisms of decoding a war message.

*Keywords*: cognitive science; war media discourse; concept; subconcept, crisis.