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MECHANISMS OF ACQUIRING COGNITIVE METAPHORS AND PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN TEACHING GERMAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This article is dedicated to the cognitive methodology for enhancing the efficiency of acquiring phraseological units in the process of teaching German as a foreign language (Deutsch als Fremdsprache – DaF). The main objective of the study is to develop scientific and methodological foundations of a linguocognitive approach for teaching conceptual and orientational metaphors of the German language to Uzbek-speaking learners. Drawing upon the conceptual metaphor theory by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, the paper analyzes the mechanisms of memorizing and utilizing idioms in speech through the activation of students' cognitive base. The results of experimental teaching demonstrated that the cognitive approach, based on explaining the origin and conceptual roots of idioms, significantly improves acquisition rates compared to the traditional rote memorization method.
Keywords: cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, phraseology, methodology of teaching German, interlingual transfer, linguoculturology.

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqola nemis tilini chet tili (Deutsch als Fremdsprache – DaF) sifatida o‘qitish jarayonida fraseologik birliklarni o‘zlashtirish samaradorligini oshirishning kognitiv metodologiyasiga bag‘ishlangan. Tadqiqotning asosiy maqsadi — nemis tilidagi konseptual va orientatsion metaforalarni o‘zbek tilida so‘zlashuvchi auditoriyaga o‘rgatishda lingvokognitiv yondashuvning o‘rnini ilmiy asoslashdir. Maqolada Lakoff va Jonsonning konseptual metafora nazariyasiga tayangan holda, o‘quvchilarning kognitiv bazasini faollashtirish orqali idiomilarni xotirada saqlash mexanizmlari tahlil qilingan. Eksperimental ta’lim natijalari shuni ko‘rsatdiki, iboralarning kelib chiqish asosi va konseptual ildizlarini tushuntirishga asoslangan kognitiv yondashuv o‘zlashtirish ko‘rsatkichlarini an’anaviy yodlash usuliga nisbatan sezilarli darajada oshiradi.
Kalit so‘zlar: Kognitiv lingvistika, konseptual metafora, fraseologiya, nemis tilini o‘qitish metodikasi, interlingval transfer, lingvokulturologiya.

Аннотация: Статья посвящена когнитивной методологии повышения эффективности усвоения фразеологических единиц в процессе обучения немецкому языку как иностранному (Deutsch als Fremdsprache – DaF). Основной целью исследования является разработка научно-методических основ лингвокогнитивного подхода при обучении концептуальным и ориентационным метафорам немецкого языка узбекоязычной аудитории. В работе на основе концептуальной теории метафоры Д. Лакоффа и М. Джонсона проанализированы механизмы запоминания и использования идиом в речи путем активации когнитивной базы учащихся. Результаты экспериментального обучения показали, что когнитивный подход, основанный на объяснении происхождения и концептуальных истоков фразеологизмов, значительно повышает показатели усвоения материала по сравнению с традиционным методом механического заучивания.

Ключевые слова: когнитивная лингвистика, концептуальная метафора, фразеология, методика преподавания немецкого языка, интерлингвальный перенос, лингвокультурология.

Introduction

In the contemporary context of globalization and expanding international relations, fundamentally improving the methodology of teaching German as a foreign language (Deutsch als Fremdsprache – DaF) is one of the most pressing tasks. The process of language acquisition is not limited to memorizing grammatical rules and lexical units; it also requires mastering the national-cultural characteristics, worldview, and conceptual framework of the target language. Phraseological units, which constitute the rich lexical layer of the German language, reflect the mentality, history, and philosophy of the people. Therefore, learning and teaching idioms remains one of the most complex stages of mastering a foreign language.

In traditional pedagogical practice, idioms in German classes are mostly presented in a ready-made format, requiring translation and rote memorization. However, this approach leads students to rely on mechanical memory and prevents them from using idioms consciously in speech. In recent years, the growing priority of the cognitive approach in linguistics and methodology has opened new scientific and practical ways to solve this problem. In particular, the conceptual metaphor theory developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson proved that human thought has a metaphorical nature. The primary purpose of this article is to develop a methodological model for applying cognitive mechanisms in teaching German phraseology and to scientifically substantiate its effectiveness.

Teaching German to Uzbek-speaking learners requires a scientific study of the similarities and differences between the conceptual systems of the two languages. Within the framework of large-scale reforms implemented to improve the foreign language teaching system in the Republic of Uzbekistan, there is a strong demand to create innovative technologies that simultaneously develop students' linguistic and cognitive potential. The relevance of this study lies precisely in filling this scientific gap—namely, developing an effective methodological model based on the cognitive metaphor theory for teaching German phraseology.

The purpose of the study is to develop the scientific and methodological foundations of a linguocognitive approach for teaching conceptual and orientational metaphors of the German language to Uzbek-speaking students, and to experimentally prove its practical effectiveness.

Literature Review

Cognitive linguistics emerged as a branch of science in the late 20th century, exploring the close relationship between language and thought. Internationally, theorists of teaching German as a foreign language (e.g., K. Büchler, G. Henne, U. Engel, and others) have emphasized the crucial role of phraseology in forming intercultural competence. According to their research, idioms are not merely fixed combinations, but rather manifestations of specific conceptual models.

According to the conceptual metaphor theory, metaphor is not only a device of artistic expression, but also a fundamental way for humans to understand the world, conceptualize reality, and categorize experience. In the phraseological system of the German language, concepts related to spatial directions (auf, unter, vor, hinter), body parts (Kopf, Hand, Auge), and natural phenomena (Wasser, Feuer, Weg) occupy a central position. For example, German expressions such as „auf dem Schlauch stehen“ (standing on a hose — to misunderstand or fail to grasp) or „jemandem das Wasser reichen können“ (being able to hand water to someone — to be able to match or surpass someone) express abstract concepts derived from physical actions and spatial experiences.

For foreign language learners, such expressions often possess an opaque meaning. If the physical or cultural experience underlying the metaphor (such as the ancient custom of offering water to a victor in competitions or the operational principles of technical devices) is explained during instruction, the information is retained robustly in long-term memory.

Research Methodology

During the research, comparative-contrastive analysis, component analysis, experimental observation, and statistical analysis methods were utilized. The study involved 60 students studying in the German language department at higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. They were divided into two groups:

1. **Control Group (30 students):** Taught through traditional methods — learning idioms via dictionaries, identifying them in texts, and translating them.
2. **Experimental Group (30 students):** Taught based on methodology involving cognitive approaches — explaining the etymological origin of each phraseological unit, its underlying conceptual metaphor, and the similarities or differences with its Uzbek equivalent.

Over the course of the experiment, 40 of the most frequently used German idioms were selected, and their acquisition level was assessed in three stages (pre-test, intermediate control, and final test).

Analysis and Results

The results obtained during the experiment showed that students in the control group, taught through traditional methods, attempted to memorize idioms mechanically. However, they faced difficulties when applying these expressions within text contexts or altered communicative situations. Specifically, they tended to translate spatial metaphors in German literally using their native language framework, leading to interlingual interference (the negative transfer of the native language). For instance, understanding the expression „jemandem das Wasser reichen“ through literal translation in Uzbek is impossible. In contrast, in the experimental group, the instructor explained the motivational background of the idiom—how in ancient times a apprentice could only hand water to a master once his skill level matched that of the master—as a cognitive schema. Consequently, students accepted this expression not merely as isolated data, but as a logical chain.

Statistical analysis demonstrated that:

The correct application coefficient of idioms among control group students averaged **58%**.

In the experimental group, this indicator reached **89%**.

This implies that the cognitive approach activates students' linguistic thinking, creating stable associative connections in memory. For Uzbek-speaking students, comparing similar conceptual models plays an essential role in acquiring conceptual metaphors in German. For example, the fact that concepts like "anger" or "extreme excitement" in both languages are frequently expressed through heat and liquid metaphors („jemandem kocht das Blut“ — one's blood is boiling) serves as a bridging mechanism that facilitates acquisition.

Conclusion and Prospects

Optimizing the process of acquiring phraseological units in teaching German as a foreign language is one of the priority directions of modern linguodidactics. The conducted research confirmed that applying a methodological approach based on cognitive metaphor theory, instead of traditional rote memorization methods, yields high efficiency in consolidating students' knowledge of idioms.

By uncovering conceptual foundations, students not only understand the meanings of words but also gain a deeper appreciation of the national-cultural worldview embedded in the German

language. The obtained scientific findings and developed methodological recommendations can serve to enrich the content of German language textbooks, teaching manuals, and practical classes.

The practical significance and prospects of the study include:

1. Enabling the creation of special electronic dictionaries and applications for teaching German phraseology in educational settings based on general cognitive models (e.g., spatial orientation, body parts, energy, and action) rather than rigid thematic groups.

2. Comparative examination of conceptual similarities and differences between Uzbek and German conceptual metaphors minimizes interference phenomena (the negative transfer of the native language) among students and elevates translation skills to a qualitatively new level.

3. Expanding this methodological approach in a comparative-contrastive aspect not only for the German language but also for teaching the phraseology of other Germanic languages.

In conclusion, integrating the achievements of cognitive linguistics into the language learning and teaching process guarantees the development of students' not only linguistic, but also intercultural competence. Language is not merely a collection of forms and rules; rather, it represents a specific nation's way of perceiving the world, its mentality, and its conceptual map. The cognitive approach enables learners to compare foreign idioms with similar or contrasting cognitive models in their native language, thereby cultivating conscious and critical thinking.

In the future, enriching this methodology with digital educational technologies, including corpus linguistics tools and specialized multimedia applications, will further enhance the efficiency of teaching German. Consequently, this broadens the opportunities for training highly qualified specialists who meet modern educational standards and possess fluent communication skills combined with intercultural thinking.

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