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Stative Format of Linguistic Knowledge: Cognitive Linguistics Perspective

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Abstract. The article discusses issues revealing cognitive bases of stative formatting of knowledge about the world. In line with Cognitive Linguistics commitments and basic assumptions the paper highlights the problems pertaining to 1) a universal ability of human cognition to construe the world in language statively, 2) the principles and results of stative interpretation of knowledge about the world. Conveying the necessity of investigating a set of stative forms in language within the cognitive linguistics perspective, the article introduces a conception of stative formatting of knowledge about the world. Combining cognitive-matrix analysis of the stative concept with conceptual-configurative analysis of the category of linguistic stativity the study deciphers the structure and contents of stative concept in contemporary English. The elaborated conception contributes to the problem of ascribing possible ways of construing the world in language.

Keywords: state, stativity, format of knowledge, conceptualization, categorization, interpretation.

Research area: linguistics.

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Introduction

In the current context of rapidly increasing cognitive linguistics studies with the focus on the relationship between human language, the mind and socio-physical experience, stative forms research is gaining great importance. A large number of investigations pertaining to representation of knowledge about the world statively is concerned with theoretical and empirical studies of 1) separate stative concepts as in Aburto et al. (2017), Boichuk (2014), Lavrova (2015), Ströbel (2015) and whole stative domains as in Oatley et al. (2006), Goddard (2010), Chen (2016); 2) vocabulary-based and corpus-based data as in Oster (2018), Rice & Newman (2018), Semino et al. (2018), Jugnet & Lhôte (2019); 3) specificity of stative interpretation of knowledge about the world in various types of discourse as in Solan et al. (2012), Chen (2016), Englebretson (2017), Robinson (2017). Much evidence unravels the dominant role of metaphor in forming different stative senses as in Kövecses (1990), Lakoff & Johnson (2003), Evans (2013), Semino et al. (2016).

This brief overview, on the one hand, proves the stative concept to be the crux of present-day linguistic research, and on the other – highlights uncertainty in its understanding, fragmentary nature of studies and lack of theoretical explanation and description of a system of linguistic interpretation of knowledge about the world in the stative format. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to provide a theoretical account of how the knowledge about the world is organized in the stative form of linguistic cognition revealing the problematic issues concerning the nature of the stative concept, principles of stative interpretation, dominant conceptual state-forming and state-structuring characteristics, methods of STATE and stativity research. Generally speaking, the paper introduces the key aspects of the conception of stative formatting of knowledge about the world.

In doing so, we, firstly, ascertain what theoretical grounding essential for our study has been developed lately; secondly, outline the most influential ideas; and, finally, elaborate on crucial issues of stative interpretation providing examples from the contemporary English language.

The starting point of our research is a four-part situation-type classification presented by a precursor of Cognitive Linguistics, Z. Vendler (Vendler, 1957). His crucial contribution to understanding the way the knowledge about the world is construed in language brought about a number of investigations delving into how theoretically ascribe and experimentally prove the specificity of each situation type (see critical historical overview in *Tenny & Pustejovsky, 2000*). Though Vendler's classification occupies dominant position in contemporary studies of different situation types, we tend to consider Bach's eventuality type classification (1986) as the grounding for developing the conception of stative formatting of knowledge about the world. There are several reasons for such a choice. To begin with, Bach was the first to argue for the state to have a wider linguistic representation and chose the static characteristic as one of basic (see Fig. 1).

What is more important, stativity and dynamicity criteria as the classification basics gave rise to differentiating between "pure" or static states ('be in New York', 'own a house', 'have an idea', 'feel like', 'want', 'understand', etc.) and dynamic states ('sit', 'stand', 'lie', etc.), being instantiated mainly in position verbs. Their potential ability to be used in progressive creates a transmission area between state and non-state eventuality types. All in all, this Philosophy of Language approach was groundbreaking and gave a start for linguistic studies of fundamental problems in construing the world in language.

After pointing out the philosophic background it is essential to address another influential approach – Cognitive Psychology. According to Barsalou (1992), as our cognitive system is in the continuous process of cognizing the constantly changing world, our conceptual system should have a form which is quickly adapted to different changes. More detailed observation of this comprehensive idea results in conveying the conceptual basis for elucidating the significant role of stative form of linguistic cognition for human successful activity. To function effectively, adequately select, classify and evaluate the information and provide a necessary reaction to it, human cog-

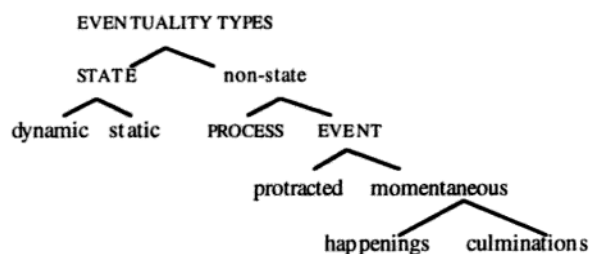


Fig. 1. Bach's eventuality types classification

nitive system with the help of language learnt to “stop the moving world” and linguistically interpret it in the form of a state (see more details in Pavlova, 2016). To provide a theoretical account for this form of linguistic cognition let's highlight the main issues of construing the world knowledge in the stative format.

Discussion

One of the main issues of the problem under discussion is the structure of the conceptual space of the stative format of linguistic knowledge. As the data of the study is the contemporary English language, it is obviously necessary to point out some aspects of English cognitive grammar studies. According to Radden & Dirven (2007), the language represents any situation as instantiated in factual, projected or potential reality or as unreal. We will concentrate only on the real situations and states grounded in them. States in factual reality are viewed as known (past states) and immediate (present states). Projected reality states are represented by future forms and potential states – by modal forms (Radden, 2007). These introductory remarks are helpful for revealing the conceptual structure of the stative format.

The analysis of different stative forms gives the opportunity to ascribe the cognitive matrix structure of the stative format of linguistic knowledge. The dominant elements of the state cognitive matrix are the conceptual and thematic domains of stative interpretation of knowledge about the world: MAN, NATURE and ARTIFACTS. So, a state cognitive matrix is viewed as a system of interrelated cognitive contexts which represent the world knowledge in the stative form of linguistic cognition. The integral state-forming characteristic – “ab-

sence of change” – finds its realization in the following state-structuring concepts:

EXISTENTIAL STATE interprets absence of change in relation to various aspects of being and existing. The term “existence” in this case covers all possible stative interpretations of objects and events of the world. Being related to one of the dominant conceptual and thematic domains of stative interpretation, the existential stative characteristic finds the corresponding realization. For instance, within the conceptual and thematic domain MAN existential conceptual characteristic is realized in such stative senses, as, for instance, ‘be sane’, ‘be alive’, ‘be ill’, ‘be aware’, ‘exist’, ‘want’, ‘understand’, ‘be a millionaire’, ‘think that’, etc. The potential of stative conceptualization of knowledge about the world reveals the structure of EXISTENTIAL STATE concept referring to different human states: emotional, mental, physical, financial, etc. Within the conceptual and thematic domain NATURE the existential conceptual characteristic finds realization in such stative senses, as, for instance, ‘be warm’, ‘be sunny’, ‘be cloudy’, ‘be frosty’, etc. Generalizing and regular character of stative interpretation of natural phenomena lead to outlining specific stative concept of CLIMATE, e.g. *It is usually foggy in winter in this area*. Within the conceptual and thematic domain ARTIFACT existential conceptual characteristic finds realization in such stative senses as, for instance, ‘be slow’ (about a clock), ‘be funny’ (about a story), ‘be a fake’ (about works of art), etc.;

POSSESSIVE STATE interprets absence of change in relation to physical (‘have a book’) or abstract (‘have an idea’) possession. Depending on the object, physical possession may

refer to human financial state ('own a helicopter') and abstract possession – to mental state ('possess the talent of doing smth') or physical state ('have a temperature', 'have a flu'). The formation of the corresponding stative sense is dependent on the conceptual and thematic domain the possessive stative characteristic is related to. For instance, within the domain of NATURE the possessive characteristic finds realization in such stative senses, as, for instance, 'have leaves' (about a tree), 'have two wings' (about a bird), etc. It helps to further typological division, giving a chance to point out inalienable possession ('have blue eyes') and alienable possession ('have blue jeans on'). Within the domain of ARTIFACT the possessive characteristic can be realized in inanimate inalienable possession ('have three windows' (about a room)), etc.;

SPATIAL STATE interprets absence of change in relation to some spatial location of a human being, natural objects or phenomena, artifacts, etc., for instance, 'be/live in Saint-Petersburg', 'be in bed', 'be in prison', 'be in church', 'be in class'. It also interprets some position states which have a dynamic nature, for instance, 'sit', 'stand', 'lie', etc. Moreover, SPATIAL STATE provides the basic characteristics ('up', 'down', 'at', 'in', 'on') for secondary stative senses, for instance, 'be down' – 'be unhappy', 'be down with' – 'be ill', 'be up for' – 'be enthusiastic about an upcoming event', etc.;

QUALITATIVE STATE interprets absence of change in relation to some qualities of human beings, objects of nature and artifacts. Within the domain of MAN the qualitative stative characteristic finds realization in such senses, as, for instance, 'be strong', 'be smart', 'be kind-hearted', 'be tall', 'be good company', 'be overweight', 'be a scholar', etc. interpreting physical strength, mental abilities, personal traits of character, profession, etc. Within the domain of ARTIFACT this characteristic refers to functional specificity of artifacts and realizes in such senses, as, for instance, 'be comfortable', 'be fresh', 'be delicious', 'be light', 'be spacious', etc. Within the domain of NATURE the qualitative stative characteristic refers to the corresponding parameters of natural objects quality and finds realization in such sens-

es, as, for instance, 'be ripe' (about fruit and vegetables), 'be polluted' (about water, air, soil, etc.), 'be fertile' (about the land), etc.;

QUANTITATIVE STATE interprets absence of change in relation to some quantity. Within the conceptual and thematic domain of MAN the quantitative conceptual characteristic refers to intellectual, physical, financial states and finds realization in such senses, as, for instance, 'can read 200 words a minute', 'be 2 meters high', 'weigh 100 kilos', 'earn a million dollars a year', etc. Within the domain of NATURE this characteristic can refer to weather conditions, for instance, 'it is 30° below zero', 'wind speed is 15 meters per second', 'humidity is 90%', etc. Within the domain of ARTIFACTS this stative characteristic refers to qualitative features of objects created by man, for instance, 'a hundred-year-old house', 'a million-euro mansion', etc.;

So, the suggested typology as an attempt of structuring the conceptual space of the stative format is not supposed to be a comprehensive one, but tends to show its pivotal role of STATE in human conceptual system and the possible direction of pointing out the state types in the contemporary English language. As the logic development of prof. Boldyrev's Theory of Linguistic Interpretation (2019) the conception of stative formatting of knowledge about the world describes the stative format as a multidimensional research area. In line with Cognitive Linguistics commitments and basic assumptions proposed by Lakoff (1990) the conception of stative formatting of knowledge about the world points out the anthropocentric principle as the leading one of the stative interpretation of world knowledge. On the conceptual level it is manifested in the number and detailed character of concepts of different human states. The linguistic representation of states of nature and artifacts also refers to human states, for example, *It is piercing cold outside, put on your coat*. 'Piercing cold' in this utterance shows how a human being perceives the temperature of the air outside. In another example, *The book reads well*, through the evaluative characteristic of the book a human mental state is outlined (see more details in Pavlova, 2017).

Conclusion

The presented key ideas of the conception of stative formatting of knowledge in Cognitive Linguistics perspective tend to unravel the problems of construing knowledge about the world in language. Among the most novel findings is the matrix structure of the stative format, its complicated conceptual space, its integral conceptual state-forming characteris-

tic – absence of change. The suggested typology of state-structuring existential, possessive, spatial, quantitative and qualitative characteristics reveals the structural specificity of stative concept in the contemporary English language. The anthropocentric nature of the stative format defines the dominant principle of the stative interpretation of world knowledge with the main focus on human states.

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Статальный формат языкового знания: когнитивный подход

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена описанию когнитивных основ статального форматирования знаний о мире. С опорой на основные постулаты когнитивной лингвистики в ней раскрываются нерешенные проблемы, касающиеся одной из универсальных способностей человеческого сознания конструировать мир в языке в статике и представлять эти результаты в статальном формате согласно определенным принципам. Обосновывая необходимость изучения набора статальных языковых форм в рамках когнитивного подхода, автор представляет ключевые аспекты концепции статального форматирования знаний о мире. С помощью когнитивно-матричного анализа статального концепта и концептуально-конфигуративного анализа языковой категории статальности выявляется структура и содержание статального концепта в современном английском языке. Разработанная концепция вносит вклад в решение проблемы конструирования мира в языке в разных форматах.

Ключевые слова: состояние, статальность, формат знания, концептуализация, категоризация, интерпретация.

Научная специальность: 10.02.00 – языкознание.