

Concepts “LIFE” and “DEATH” in the modern novels about vampires

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Abstract: The article is dedicated to the peculiarities of the concepts “LIFE” and “DEATH” in the modern conceptual and language picture of the world. According to the distinctive features of understanding of these concepts we study the place and peculiar properties in the modern novels about vampires.

Keywords: *concept, conceptual picture of the world, language picture of the world, conceptual feature*

Today the mental processes, which are connected with the mechanism of thinking, evoke bigger and bigger interest of all the sciences in general, and of the linguistics in particular. The cognitive linguistics demonstrates us the peculiarities of understanding the world by human and that fact, how this world finds the reflection in the consciousness, perception of each person. At the same time, concepts, which create our picture of the world, are specific, as each of them is characterized with particular number of qualities and features, which are important predominantly for this concept.

In the process of interrelation with the outer world the human experienced it, created his own picture of the world, which was structures as a bipolar multitude in different spheres of understanding: from simple vision of the world to its cosmogonical model [3, p. 5]. Because of this the space was divided into binary opposition “own” and “alien” (own / alien territory; this real / beyond the grave non-real world). The time was also divided into the opposition – day / night, life / death.

The forming of the studying concept and its belonging to the general conceptual picture of the world is not denoted by the fact of objective, real existence of the depicted phenomenon. The fact that the phenomenon is not real is not the barrier to the existence of the concept of this phenomenon.

The culture of the people is shown in the language, the language, in particular, creates and accumulates the main concepts of the culture, showing them in the light of the signs – words. The language is the fact of the culture, it is the part of the culture which we usually inherit and at the same time its weapon.

Today the language is perceived not only as a process, which helps to understand the modern mentality, and as a method to comprehend the thinking of the ancient people, their opinion about the world, society and themselves [5, p. 81].

The language picture of the world is very important part of the general model of the world. It is connected into general notion and helps into the following understanding and perception of the world. The language picture of the world includes some understanding of the world, which depends on the national and cultural peculiarities of the speaker. The picture of the world is the representation of the world in the human’s imagination, phenomenon, which is more complex when the language picture of the world, as it included into the picture of the world, is the part of the conceptual world and has the strong connection with the language.

The conceptual picture of the world is more diverse and more rich than the language one. The language pic-

ture of the world is organized due to the rules of the language, and conceptual, because of its logic structure is build according to the rules of the real world [1, p. 239]. The peculiar element of the language picture of the world is the semantic field, and the units of the conceptual picture of the world are the constants of the consciousness. The conceptual picture of the world has an information, which is represented in the notions, and in the basis of the language picture of the world is the knowledge which is fixed in the semantical categories and semantical fields.

The concepts “LIFE” and “DEATH” accompany the world since its very beginning. During the whole history of the world, new and new treatments and understanding about life and death appeared, as they are one of the main concepts in the picture of the human’s world and human’s understanding of this world.

According to the different particular features (nature, culture, the degree of knowledge, gender and the degree of development) each person added his own understanding of the concepts to the existing one. So, today, we have the modern understanding of the concepts LIFE and DEATH.

Life is regarded as a period of activity of a person, while death is the ending of this period. But, today, because of the other understanding of the main constants of the existence, death is also considered as the special reality, which gives opportunities for development.

Due to this fact, modern gothic novels, which are very popular today, became more and more interesting. These novels are characterized with the distinct and exact pragmatic orientation. The novels about vampires is the genre of mass literature. The distinctive features of these novels are their direction to the wide, non-selective auditory and direction to the entertainment of the reader.

Also these novels show the connection between life and death in such a way, that death is the continuation of life, the opportunity to make some new deeds, new acts and create some new things. At the same time, the notion of the gothic novel has also changed. It also led to the different understanding of the antonymic concepts “LIFE” and “DEATH”. Today the shift from one state to the other is not seen as something horrible as earlier, today it is the shift to the new, more active stage of existence.

The English gothic novels became the material of our study, as they became very popular today, and they are the best and the brightest representation of the change of the attitude of people to the notions of “LIFE” and “DEATH”.

In modern linguistic studies the notion “concept” is widely investigated in different spheres of humanitarian

sciences. It is the phenomenon with great number of levels, which, at the same time, is the part of logical and intuitive, conscious and unconscious.

As the main unit of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology, the concept is distinguished by its ambiguous and contradictory meaning. Some scientists understand concept as the multitude of the fixed features, which are used to depict some part of the world or some particular fragment of this part. The concept is some idea about the fragment of the world or its part, which has complex structure, which is shown with the help of different language means [4].

The concepts can be classified according different features, the number of which is endless, as the process of cognition is also endless, both in scientific-theoretical and scientific-practical aspects.

Concepts are distinguished according the: level of concreteness – abstractness of the content; expressiveness – non-expressiveness in the language; the level of stability; the frequency and regularity of actualization; structure; the way of the language expression; the nominative density; standardization and the level of abstraction [10, p. 536].

From the point of view of discourse as the place of language existence of concepts, there exist everyday, scientific and artistic concepts [6, p. 7].

According to the belonging to some particular groups of the language speaker. there exist universal, ethnical, civilizational. group (micro- and macro-) and individual concepts.

From linguocultural point of view V.A. Maslova [2, p. 75] distinguishes all concepts into some groups: 1) the world; 2) elements and nature; 3) ideas about humanity; 4) moral concepts; 5) social notions and attitude; 6) emotional concepts; 7) the world of artifacts; 8) sphere of scientific concepts; 9) sphere of art concepts.

In the novels about vampires the concepts “LIFE” and “DEATH” are treated both as separate and antonymous concepts:

“**natural** life” (‘functioning or occurring in a normal way’) – “**mysterious** death” (‘beyond ordinary understanding’);

● “**unpleasant** death” (‘offensive, causing discomfort or unhappiness’) – “**luxurious** life” (‘rich, comfortable and very pleasant’);

● “**imminent** death” (‘close in time, about to occur’) – “**eternal** life” (‘continuing forever’).

The most frequent representation, which are used with the concept LIFE are those, which show the characteristics of duration of time. In their meaning there is the same ‘every’, ‘each’, ‘all’, ‘lifetime’, ‘span’ – “**every** night of your life”, “**every** minute of human life”, “**every** night of our lives” – “showing how often something happens”; “... **all** life” “the whole, entire”; “**will always** stay alive” – “at all times”; “...**day-to-day** life” – “*occurring every day*”.

So, those, which exist during each night, each minute, during the whole period of existence and have no ending.

At the same time, for the concept DEATH characteristic is something short, limited last:

“at last ... death itself” – ‘as the result, so, those things, which are the final result, the final fact.

So, life is depicted as a long process, which does not have the end, and death is something short, one-time action, which has the beginning and ending.

Also, these concepts are used not only separately, but also together:

“... **filling her with death** even as he filled her with **life**”. [7, p. 98]

Here we see the usage of the antithesis for the bigger pointing of the reader’s attention at that fact, that both concepts “ЖИЗНЬ” / “LIFE” and “СМЕРТЬ” / “DEATH” are the antonyms, but at the same time, they supplement with each other.

At the same time at the novels about vampires the usage of the adjectives, which show the duration of life and death is very frequent:

‘*eternal*’ – ‘continuing forever, without end’; ‘*continued*’ – ‘without stop or interruption; ‘*long*’ – ‘of great duration’, that makes them at some sense similar:

Every one of them owed his or her eternal life to Raphael... [7, p. 16];

... to be worthy your continued existence. [7, p. 20];

... called for a long dead... [7, p. 99].

These adjectives not only show the duration of the life and death, but also show the fact, that they are the unit, as life is impossible without death and vice versa.

Let’s look at the example, which shows the transfer from one concept to the other:

Even at the moment of destruction, I would be alive as I have never been. [8, p. 12].

According to the dictionary of synonyms [2] one of the synonym of the lexeme ‘destruction’ is ‘death’ – ‘an event (or the result of an event) that completely destroys something’; and lexeme ‘alive’ is characterized as – ‘full of life and spirit’. So, we can make a conclusion, that the usage of antonymous concepts “ЖИЗНЬ” / “LIFE” and “СМЕРТЬ” / “DEATH” shows the change of the attitude to these concepts, as here they are used as the opposition to each other.

Here is one more example:

What does it mean to die when you can live until the end of the world? [9, p. 79]

Here we can also see the usage of the antonymous concepts “ЖИЗНЬ” / “LIFE” and “СМЕРТЬ” / “DEATH”. The word combination ‘live until the end of the world’ demonstrates the duration of the life to the end of the world, which is not normal for the simple person, but is quite average to the vampire. The amplification of the duration of life shows the fact, that the life can be everlasting, if it includes the death.

At the next example we can see the usage of the noun ‘beauty’ – ‘the qualities that give pleasure to the sense’, which is characterized as something pleasant, beautiful, together with the noun ‘death’ – ‘the event of departure from life or the state of being dead’, which is not usually associated with some beauty and good emotions.

At the same time for the characteristic of the lexeme ‘life’ the word combination ‘point of death’ – ‘instant time of death’, is used, and describes it:

“And with that same sensibility that you cherish you will see death in its beauty, life as it is only known on the very point of death.” [9, p. 46].

At the next example the connection between the process of life and death is also seen very clearly, between

the fact, that one creature lives, exists and is not changing during the long period of time:

“...bodies will stay *always* as they are, *fresh* and *alive*” – ‘always’ – throughout the long period of the past and present; ‘fresh’ – ‘full of energy’; ‘alive’ – ‘living, not dead’.

And the other should die, as it is the way of life of the vampire – to bring death without any doubts:

“never *hesitate* to *bring death*...*how* we *live*” – ‘hesitate’ – ‘be reluctant to do something’; ‘bring death’ – ‘cause the end of life’.

“Our bodies will stay as they are, fresh and alive; but we must not hesitate to bring death, because it is how we live” [9, p. 54].

So, the concepts “ЖИЗНЬ” / “LIFE” and “СМЕРТЬ” / “DEATH”, while using in the novels about vampires, change their initial functions. Today the authors of these novels show us the interrelation between these concepts, showing the indissoluble chain of actions, which threatened people earlier. But today death does not mean the “end of existence”, and means only the “continuation”, “new stage” of life.

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