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Utopian Phenomenon of the *American Dream* as the Core Concept of the American Culture

Abstract. Within the anthropocentric paradigm a number of various branches are evolving in modern linguistics. Cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics along with the universals and variations within its categorical apparatus, in particular the functioning features of the term 'concept', are the ones of the outstanding directions within the cognitive science.

In cognitive linguistics, the concept is localized in consciousness, therefore concepts are considered to be complex discrete units of consciousness by means of which the human thinking process is fulfilled. Concepts appear to be the storage units of human knowledge and as the consequence contain information about the world, though some of which are considered to be 'binding' not only to the particular objects but also to be represented in psyche as the images, pictures, circuits.

Key words: cognitive linguistics, concept, dictionary, idea.

Introduction

Since the end of the last century on the place of the dominant system-structural and static paradigm come anthropocentric, functional, cognitive and dynamic ones. Anthropocentric paradigm is a switching of researchers' interests from the objects of knowledge to the subject, i.e. the person is analyzed in the language and vice versa.

Within the anthropocentric paradigm, a number of various branches are evolving in modern linguistics. Cognitive linguistic and cultural linguistics along with the universals and variations within its categorical apparatus, in particular the functioning features of the term 'concept', are the ones of the outstanding directions within the cognitive science.

In cognitive linguistics, the concept is localized in consciousness; therefore, concepts are considered complex discrete units of consciousness by means of which the human thinking process is fulfilled. Concepts appear to be the storage units of human knowledge and as the consequence contain information about the world, though some of which are considered to be 'binding' not only to the particular

objects but also to be represented in psyche as the images, pictures, circuits, etc.

In cultural linguistics, on the other hand, the concept is conceived as a clot of culture in the human mind, i.e. how culture becomes a part of the mental world, hence the bundle of ideas, associations, which accompanies the word. Thus, the cultural values of the cultural concept are believed to be the most fundamental distinction from the cognitive concept. Therefore, the linguacultural approach is believed to be much more relevant to the topic as the concept of *the American Dream* mostly deals with the cultural characteristics and national values throughout history.

Methods

The concept of the *American Dream* takes the core position in the conceptual sphere of national discourse, reflecting the importance of self-identification of the nation in the last decade, i.e. its belonging to the key concepts of culture. The significance of the *American Dream* as the national concept is considered the fact that the name of the concept that exists in one language, has no direct equivalent in another language system.

Main body

The origin and development of the *American Dream* is paradoxical: the variety of social mythology has not arisen in America, but in Europe, where it was «transplanted» by immigrants to the New World. Primary North American civilization had other geographic, racial, ethnic and national origins. America had existed long before its discovery. From the earliest days of Western civilization, people have dreamed of a lost paradise and the Golden Age. This tradition has become part of American culture. Naturally, it had been redesigned and the conditions had been applied to American reality, but in fact, it is based on the ideas and ideals of the European origin.

Since the concept of the *American dream* is verbalized in collocation, then it is essential to start the analysis with identifying the meaning of the word «*dream*».

According to the *Longman Dictionary of contemporary English*: «*Dream* is a series of thoughts, images, or emotions occurring during sleep. It's a daydream, a reverie, a strongly desired goal, a wish to do, be, or have something...»[1]. The concept of *dream* in the English language consciousness represents feelings, images or fantasies that come to us in a dream; the process itself, when it occurs; a vision, a dream, an image that we see or feel, consciously or unconsciously, when you do not sleep; something that we really want and are striving for; an object that we see in vision. So, the dream has two meanings: 1) the thoughts and feelings that are inherent in man during sleep; 2) greatest wish.

In the American version of modern English this concept takes new meaning, not being presented in other regional variants. It was crucial to determine the modern concept of *Americanism*, which was regarded by immigrants as an obvious contrast between the characteristic of the human way of life in the old country and the fact that it was possible to achieve in America. Therefore, the concept of the *American Dream* has valuable features predefined by history and traditions of the American nation, its spiritual and psychological orientation. It embodies the idea of the possibility of a person to succeed in a new country, regardless of their social status and financial condition.

Deploying in the socio-cultural environment, the American utopia includes certain life orientation, social behaviors: installation on self-realization, a focus on individual success and entrepreneurial initiative. The ideal model of human behavior in America is a «self-made man», a man who has made himself. He was brought up in accordance with the

ideology of liberal values, speaking the language of this ideology; he receives the symbols of the state and aspires to righteous and free world of the future. If one does not adapt to a given socio-cultural system, it is difficult for him to conform to the standards of society.

Idealistic utopian consciousness is generated by the critical attitude towards reality and an overwhelming desire to reform. A utopian is concerned about the incarnation of his own ideal of a perfect society, and strives for the salvation of all humankind. Utopia is a denial of the present and the rebellion against the reality in which the individual is dissolved. A characteristic feature of utopian consciousness is the transcendence, understood as going beyond not only the real and actual, but also potential forms. From the marriage of imagination with the desire appears something more than the real life customarily allows.

The source of idealization is the constant need to overcome real contradictions. There are social contradictions, especially the contradiction between the (spiritual) essence and the (material) conditions of existence, which injure people and encourage them to transform the «controversial» object to be at least mentally free from the controversy. Despite the real hardships *American Dream* still exists, hence the immortality of the idea is provided by its fundamental unattainability.

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*: «American dream is an American ideal of social equality and esp. material success»[2] and *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*: «American dream is the idea that the US is a place where everyone has the chance of becoming rich and successful. Many immigrants to the US in the early 20th century believed in the American dream» [3], there are three main value-semantic attributes (i.e. «equal opportunities for everyone», «wealth» and «success»).

The development and redefining of the concept was apparent especially in the rhetoric of Martin Luther King: «I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: «We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal»[4].

The American Dream for ML King is an unattainable dream of racial equality in the United States at a time when the civil libertarians of blacks were killed in the southern states of the country. Two years later, King once again turns to the definition of the American dream, complementing the idea of equality of citizens triad of values recorded in the

Declaration: «It wouldn't take us long to discover the substance of that dream. It is found in those majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, words lifted to cosmic proportions: «We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by God, Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness». This is a dream. It's a great dream» (4.07.1965).

Since the moment of social instability when the American society chose the liberal system of values more than two hundred years have passed, and the impact of the utopian features keeps affecting the socio-cultural forms. The phenomenon of the American dream, reflecting the idea of the human equality, the opportunities provides them with, freedom and personal initiative, occupies a central place in the American culture. The American dream was born as the dream of a better future life, as utopia. The text of the Declaration of Independence allows us to speak about the utopian ideas existed in that era: «We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by God, Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that

among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness» [5].

Conclusion

Analyzing several meanings of the *American Dream*, one can undoubtedly discern that they are characterized by such semantic features as aspiration, individual, people, ideal, prosperity, wealth, value, success and successful life. It is seen as not a plain goal to list all of the components that are included in the concept of the American dream.

All of these interpretations were an attempt to analyze it through the economic (the concept of success), political (American individuality and equality), religious (America was chosen by God) and socio-psychological mainstream (pursuit of happiness).

The analysis of dictionary definitions as well as political speeches and historical data allowed us to trace the evolution of the American Dream and compile the basic components of this concept, however none of them can claim to be the only or the main one, as all these components had been introduced at different times, bringing new features to this concept.

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