

THE CONCEPT “WELFARE” IN BRITISH SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE

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Abstract. This article is devoted to the study of the evaluative components of the concept “WELFARE” in British social media discourse. In the process of discursive realization of any concept, both stability and changes in its structural component are observed, since concepts are subject to alteration, modification and saturation in terms of content, enrichment and overgrowth with new meanings. Accordingly, in the process of saturation of this concept with new meanings due to the emergence of new associations, there is a gradual loss of its original meaning. All these factors associated with functioning of the concept to some extent depend on the consequences of socio-political and socio-cultural development.

The aim of the article is to determine the evaluative and cognitive features of the concept of “WELFARE” in the British social media discourse, as well as to reveal the linguistic means involved in the representation of this concept in the British linguoculture. The methodology of the study is based on linguo-conceptual analysis.

The results of the study indicate the dominance of the concept “WELFARE” in modern British social media discourse. The results of the concept-definition analysis confirm the stability in the content of the concept “WELFARE” throughout its historical development, while the concept-contextual analysis indicates the presence of a negative evaluative connotation in the content of the concept “WELFARE”, expressed using phraseological units, metaphors, idioms and other stylistic devices.

The scientific value and practical significance of the study are determined by the fact that the research results can make a certain contribution to further in-depth analysis of the evaluation theory. The research materials can serve as a methodological guide for developing special courses in the field of media discourse and conceptology.

Keywords: concept, welfare, evaluation, concept-definition analysis, concept-contextual analysis, cognitive features, stylistic devices, social media discourse

Basic provisions

The article is based on the study of cognitive structures and mechanisms that contribute to the formation of appraisal values and evaluative meanings in social media discourse. It should be noted that the cognitive-semantic analysis of the evaluative structures in social media discourse primarily involves the study of the conceptual sphere inherent in this discourse. Therefore, we consider the concept “*welfare*” as one of the specialized concepts forming the subject of this discursive environment and the conceptual space of social media discourse.

Introduction

It is well known that the concept is a fundamental category in cognitive linguistics. In this regard, the main issues of cognitive science, recently considered

in many scientific papers related to the complex of issues defining the notion of a concept. Despite the fact, that concept is widely studied by both foreign and domestic scientists such as R. Jakendoff, M. Johnson, J. Lakoff, A. Vezhbitskaya, R.I. Pavlenis, D.S. Likhachev, Y.D. Apresyan, Y.S. Stepanov, E.S. Kubryakova, M.V. Nikitin, I.M. Kobozeva, I.A. Sternin, Z.D. Popova, N.N. Boldyrev, V.I. Karasik, E.D. Suleimenova, N.J. Shaimerdenova, G.G. Gizdatov, J.A. Mankeeva, A. Islam, V.S. Li., and others, it is still being investigated. Therefore, regardless of the scope and complexity of the study, there is no single and generally accepted opinion concerning the definition of the concept, its structure, essence, linguistic nature, classification and differentiation.

The concept “*welfare*” belongs to a group of social concepts created to characterize state security in the form of monetary payments to citizens in need of material assistance due to various social factors. The concept “*welfare*” is considered as a valuable component of society. Consequently, the origin and formation of the concept “*welfare*” in British society are directly related to extralinguistic factors: socio-political, historical, economic transformations that occurred at the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore, the issues of welfare and new reforms involving the massive reduction of state benefits are topical concerns in modern British society.

Over the past decades, the UK's welfare system has undergone many changes. This has led to a reduction in state benefits for citizens paid in the form of housing allowances, child tax benefits, school meal allowances, student grants, disability benefits, pension programs, income support benefits, employment benefits, unemployment and other government programs aimed at supporting the population. Thus, the changes made within the framework of the social protection system have led to a sharp increase in the use of food banks resulting in a rise of the poverty level of the average population. The consequences of this problem are widely covered in the media today.

In this article, we present the results of a linguo-conceptual analysis of the concept “*welfare*”.

Materials and methods

We have studied 5200 discursive segments containing lexical units related to the concept “*welfare*”. The total number of media texts analyzed is 600. These data were collected over the past six years from online publications such as “The BBC”, “The Independent”, “The Guardian” and “The Sky News”.

As previously mentioned, social media discourse, like any other form of discourse, possesses its own conceptual space that forms a specialized topic of this discursive environment. The conceptual framework created by these concepts contributes to the ability to describe key components, including actions, temporal aspects, individuals, objects, and so forth. In general, for further analysis of the concept “*welfare*” in the social media discourse, we used the following steps:

1) Etymological and Historical Analysis.

Etymological analysis serves as a tool for discerning the word's origin, its original form, basic structure, primary meanings, so on. Historical development

involves identifying the fundamental stages of changes and the emergence of new semantic nuances in the word's semantics.

2) Dictionary-Based Explanations.

Concept-definition analysis of a word is used to ascertain the substantive aspect of the concept. This entails a semantic analysis of dictionary definitions and the determination of all possible meanings, even those with subtle distinctions.

3) Role and Usage of the Concept in Daily Life.

The concept's role and usage in everyday life are reflected in its relevance, topicality, and representativeness, which are established through conceptual analysis.

4) Description of Cognitive Characteristics and Figurative Structures.

Cognitive and figurative structures of the concept represent a complete characteristic of the integral structure, which are revealed through contextual analysis.

Thus, through the lens of discourse analysis, delving into the concept of “welfare” enables us to identify detailed and extensive facets of its structure, as well as the actualization of implicit properties and general potential.

Results and discussion

The concept “*welfare*” in English dates back to the 13th century. The etymological basis of this word is from Old English “*wel faran*” the state of *well-being*, *well – being + faran – getting along*. Related formations can be traced back to the Old Norse (“*wolware*”), the old Norwegian (“*velferð*”), the German (“*wohlfahrt*”), etc. [1, 2].

Initially, the concept “*welfare*” was linked to notions of happiness, prosperity, travel and visitation. However, it later came to be understood as a food supply [3, p. 332].

The historical development of the concept “*welfare*” in British society is associated with the Poor Laws of 1536. Following various reforms, these laws were eventually replaced by the National Aid Act of 1948 [4].

The primary lexical meanings of the concept “*welfare*” have been elucidated through a concept-definition analysis, drawing upon definitions from a range of lexicographic and explanatory dictionaries. These include reputable sources such as Online Merriam Webster's Dictionary, Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English, Online Oxford Dictionary, Collins English Dictionary, Collins Cobuild Online, Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, Cambridge Dictionary Online, Cambridge Learners Dictionary, Explanatory English dictionary, and others. It is worth noting that the representation of this concept is largely consistent across these dictionaries, with recurring patterns. Consequently, this stage of analysis has also facilitated the identification of the core semantic features, or *semas*, associated with this concept.

As a result, the analysis has led to the identification of three distinct lexical meanings for the concept of “*welfare*”:

1) state of well - being, health, happiness, prosperity:

Welfare – health, happiness, prosperity, and well-being in general [5];

Welfare – the state of doing well especially in respect to good fortune, happiness, well-being, or prosperity [6];

Welfare – the health and happiness of people [7].

2) money for the sick, poor, unemployed or payment system of the state:

Welfare – a system of payments by the government to people who are ill, poor, or have no jobs [8];

Welfare – is money that is paid by the government to people who are unemployed, poor or sick [5].

3) financial or other state assistance to persons in need:

Welfare – help given, by the state or an organization, to people who need it, especially because they do not have enough money [9];

Welfare – financial and other assistance given to people in need [10];

Welfare – help given, especially by the state or another organization, to people who need it, especially because they are poor [11];

Welfare – aid in the form of money or necessities for those in need [6];

Welfare – care provided by the state or another organization for people in need [7].

As we see, the concept “*welfare*” can be construed in a more specific sense as *the overall well-being of an individual*. In a broader understanding, it encompasses *social assistance provided by the state in the form of financial support to those facing need, unemployment, health issues, and similar circumstances*.

The historical development of the concept “*welfare*” indicates its dynamic nature, which has changed over time in terms of measuring happiness as an indicator of personal well-being, depending on certain factors as job, money, health, and so on.

Later in the twentieth century, broader concepts were established when “*welfare*” began to express the role of the state in providing financial assistance to the population in ensuring a better life. However, the evaluation content of the concept, particularly, its positive or negative connotations emerged through the process of cognitive-semantic analysis.

The results of the concept-contextual analysis of the concept “*welfare*” reveal the following peculiarities.

The analysis of the British mass media texts indicates that the concept “*welfare*” “*lost its original meaning and become a way to attack those in need of help*” (The Guardian, 2013). Consequently, in contemporary discourse the concept “*welfare*” tends to be associated with a negative evaluative stance rather than a positive one.

The following passage highlights a significant shift in the essence of the concept “*welfare*” since its inception: “*Rather than talk about “the welfare state” or “social security”, politicians now mainly talk about “welfare” – and so do the general public. And in this discourse, the meaning of the word has more or less been turned on its head. It has precious little these days to do with faring well; rather, “welfare” has become almost a term of abuse. To be “on welfare” is to be on Benefits Street or part of the Great British Benefits Handout: somewhere no one in their right mind wants to be*” (The Guardian, 2013). Here, the author tries to express

as vividly as possible the society's negative-evaluative position towards the present welfare system through a macro-context, which uses not only negative vocabulary (*term of abuse, precious little*), adverbs (*more or less, almost, rather than*), but also irony, which reveals the essence of what it means to be for people on social security.

The following context is a figurative illustration of the negative representation of the concept "welfare" reflecting the contemporary government's perspective. "*Tory ministers turned the word "welfare" into an abusive term, misleadingly branding the entire social security budget as "welfare" when the most is pensions, not the dole, let alone scroungers*" (The Guardian, 2017). This observation underscores how the content of the concept "welfare" reflects all the existing social issues in British society ranging from pension payments to the unemployment rate.

Cognitive features of the concept "welfare" vary between indicators of subjective and objective well-being. The first is based on self-esteem, i.e. how a person is satisfied with his life. The objective facet, on the other hand, is grounded in tangible or societal circumstances, which encompass external factors like earnings, income levels, wealth, and housing conditions, and others. Accordingly, based on the above factors, the concept "welfare" has sub-concepts that make it possible to reveal in more detail its specific essence and cognitive features. These sub-concepts encompass social benefits designed to address society's fundamental needs. These include provisions such as housing benefits, child tax benefits, school meal benefits, student grants, disability benefits, pension programs, income support benefits, unemployment benefits, and more.

Thus, cognitive features of the concept "welfare", reflecting the subconcept of social benefits, are implemented in the social British media discourse through lexical units that express the needs of society in the form of benefits, support, social security, social aid, health, education, housing, income, etc. For example, "*Labour split the concept of the welfare state apart. It talked on the one hand about "welfare", by which it meant the social security budget; and on the other, "public services", by which it chiefly meant health and education*" (The Guardian, 2013).

Indeed, another cognitive feature associated with the negative connotation of the concept "welfare" pertains to costs or expenses that are perceived as lacking value. An illustrative example is how *the government sees the whole benefits system only as a cost without value* (The Guardian, 2020). This perspective underscores the prevailing negative evaluation of welfare programs in certain contexts.

In the course of our analysis, we also identified that the concept "welfare" is a consequence of the emotions expressed, which reflect the psycho-emotional state of a person, and the level of satisfaction. Consequently, the antonymic series of the concept under study includes words of the opposite meaning that are directly related to a negative state, for instance, *mental disorders, torment, hunger, poor health, fear, sadness, unhappiness, dissatisfaction, suffering, poverty, lack, debt*, and so forth.

Based on the analyzed material, the synonymous series of the concept "welfare" consists of equivalents that show its frequent usage: *benefit system, social security, income, safety, support, poverty program, health service, social aid, profit, protection, well-being*, and others.

Cognitive evaluative features of the concept “welfare” are more realized in examples that express a negative evaluation and indicate a sign of a person's mental state. They are represented by such language units as: *mental distress, mental health, mental state, feat, shame, an aching worry, anguish*, etc. For example: “*Britain’s benefit system causes mental distress. That is not a partisan claim. It is just a fact. A study by a Newcastle and Teesside universities last year found that universal credit had so profoundly affected claimants’ mental health that some had considered suicide. Tougher “fit for work” tests have been linked by the University of Liverpool to 590 additional suicides and hundreds of thousands of additional antidepressant prescriptions among disabled people. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has itself internally reviewed at least 69 suicides that could have been linked to problems with benefit claims*” (The Guardian, 2020).

In the following example, we can observe a person's mental condition as a result of the loss of social benefits: “*Just as poverty does not simply mean not having enough money, losing social security does not only mean being poor. It fosters a mental state: a fear in the pit of your stomach, a sense of shame that you have found yourself in this position and an aching worry you won’t get out of it. The fact that it is the government causing this anguish instead of providing a safety net for your time of need, keeps you awake at night*” (The Guardian, 2020).

“*Meanwhile, our research confirms that the experiences of people with mental health problems using the UK welfare system are largely negative and the pressure arising from conditions and sanctions exacerbate mental and health problems*” (The Independent, 2020). The use of evaluative and expressive connotations clearly illustrates the negative subjective attitude of the author to this issue. In connection with the reforms of large-scale cuts in state benefits, there is a sharp deterioration in the social situation of the average population, which eventually leads to such consequences as: *mental disorders, suicide, hunger*, etc.

The following fragment describes the feelings of *fear, hope, struggle and love* that only people experience, unlike technology, when they find themselves in a difficult situation and need the state’s assistance. “*After all, human beings are not machines that need to be fed twice a day and stored in a dry box. We are all people with fears, hopes, struggles and loves – and this does not cease the moment we need the state’s help*” (The Independent, 2020).

Another most frequent cognitive feature that represents the concept “welfare” is *hunger*, which is represented by the following lexical units: *hunger, hungry, starvation, to starve*. For example, “*Poor and often seriously ill people with legitimate claims to state support have been left to starve by the government, in order to save money that has been recycled into tax cuts for rich people and big business. This happened under “compassionate Conservative” David Cameron and continues under Theresa May, who promised to “always act in the interest of ordinary, working-class people*” (The Guardian, 2018).

In the next excerpt, the author uses subtle sarcasm to underscore a negative evaluation towards the authorities: “*It was the true story that moved a Tory to tears: Heidi Allen, Conservative MP for South Cambridgeshire, wept after Frank Field, the veteran Labour MP for Birkenhead in Wirral, told parliament of the hungry*”

constituent who had “a lucky week” because his family had been invited to a funeral and so could eat the food left over the wake” (The Guardian, 2019).

In the following passage, the author clearly expresses its subjective negative-evaluative stance towards Brexit, which is directly related not only to the reduction of benefits systems, but also to the fact that the current welfare system is not able to protect children from hunger. “For those children going hungry this summer, and beyond, the memory will linger and it will alter their perceptions of themselves and the nation. In our bold Brexit future, Britain looks like to be seen not as a country that nurtures its young, but one that starves them” (The Guardian, 2019).

The next cognitive feature of the concept “welfare” commonly expressed through the lexical units like: *poverty, poor, beggar*. This feature is mainly the result of the consequences of cuts, restrictions or cancellation of preferential funds for families in need. For example, “Cuts and freezes have taken family budgets to the bone as costs rise and there is more pain to come as the two-child limit for tax credits and universal credit, the bedroom tax, the benefit cap and the rollout of universal credit push families deeper into poverty” (The Guardian, 2018).

The cognitive feature of the concept “welfare”, which also represents the manifestation of poverty, is implemented by the idiom *to make ends meet*. For example, “Flagship welfare reforms will trigger a big increase in families unable to make ends meet, new analysis reveals” (The Guardian, 2019).

“CPAG’s annual *Cost of a Child* report, by Prof Donald Hirsch of Loughborough University’s Centre for Research in Social Policy, suggests a series of benefits cuts and freezes, together with the recent rise in inflation, is making it increasingly difficult for low-income families to make ends meet” (The Guardian, 2017).

Based on the research findings, it can be summarized that the concept “welfare” has demonstrated a dynamic evolution, with shifts in both content and conceptual structure over time.

In the modern discourse, the figurative-evaluative structure of the concept “welfare” is more of a negative evaluative nature rather than a positive one. It is frequently represented in British social media discourse through the use of negative evaluative vocabulary, metaphorical expressions, idiomatic phrases, and comparisons (such as “*to make ends meet*”, “*take to the bone*”, “*stay above water*” and so on). Furthermore, the analysis revealed the most productive syntagmatic connections in terms of lexical compatibility for the concept “welfare.” These connections predominantly express negative semantic features within its conceptual content, including terms like “*benefit cuts*”, “*welfare cuts and freezes*”, “*benefit spending*” and “*benefit claims.*” This highlights the prevalent discourse surrounding the challenges and concerns related to welfare in contemporary society.

Positive cognitive features are reflected in positively assessed vocabulary, as well as in the compatibility of words, particularly in prevalent attributive combinations like *the welfare state, social security, benefit system, social security, welfare support, welfare safety, social aid, profit, welfare protection*, etc.

The antonymic series of the concept “welfare” are expressed in combinations of the following pairs: *high-income – low-income, negative – positive impacts of*

welfare system, benefits – threads, welfare is a bad – a good thing, controlled – uncontrolled welfare and so on.

The analysis of modern British media also allowed us to determine that the cognitive properties of the concept “*welfare*” vary between the parameters of subjective and objective well-being. As a result, the prevalence of negative-evaluative connotation in the content of the concept “*welfare*” is caused by its modern perception not only within the media, but also the entire British society.

Conclusion

The socio-economic, as well as socio-political situation has elevated the concept “*welfare*” to a dominant position in the modern British social media discourse. Therefore, being one of the most productive concepts of the British social media discourse, the concept “*welfare*” is in constant development, as it generates various meanings and forms new cognitive-evaluative semantic shades.

The results of the concept-definition analysis made it possible to determine the stability inherent in the content of the concept “*welfare*” in its key understanding during its historical development, as well as reveal the content-conceptual features that change over time, thereby testify its dynamism.

Concept-contextual analysis of the factual material confirms the prevalence of negative evaluative connotation in the content of the concept “*welfare*”. The essence of this concept is most often reflected in additional negative cognitive features expressed through the use of negative evaluative vocabulary, metaphors, idioms, phraseological units, comparisons and other stylistic means.

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БРИТАНДЫҚ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК МЕДИА ДИСКУРСАҒЫ “ӘЛ-АУҚАТ” КОНЦЕПТІ

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Аңдатпа. Бұл мақала Британдық әлеуметтік медиадискурсындағы «ӘЛ-АУҚАТ» концептісінің бағалау белгілерін зерттеуге арналған. Кез-келген концепт дискурсивті қолданылу процессінде оның құрылымындағы тұрақтылықты немесе өзгерсті байқауға болады, өйткені концептілерге даму, модификация, мазмұнының қанығуы, байытылуы және жаңа мағыналардың пайда болуы тән. Тиісінше, үздіксіз даму барысында жаңа концептілердің пайда болуына немесе қоғамдағы өзектіліктің жоғалуына себепті концептілердің бастапқы мәні біртіндеп жойылуы мүмкін. Концептілерді қолдану процессінде осы факторлардың барлығы, белгілі бір дәрежеде әлеуметтік-саяси және әлеуметтік-мәдени дамудың салдарына байланысты.

Мақаланың мақсаты - Британдық әлеуметтік медиадискурста «ӘЛ-АУҚАТ» концептісінің бағалау және когнитивтік белгілерін анықтау, сондай-ақ Британдық лингвомәдениетте осы концептіні ұсынуға қатысатын тілдік құралдарды ашу. Зерттеу әдістемесі лингвоконцептуалдық талдауға негізделген.

Зерттеу нәтижелері қазіргі британдық әлеуметтік медиадискурсында «ӘЛ-АУҚАТ» концептісінің үстемдігін көрсетеді. Концептуалды-дефинициялық талдаудың нәтижелері «ӘЛ-АУҚАТ» концептісінің мазмұнындағы тарихи даму барысында тұрақтылықты растайды, ал концептуалды-контекстік талдауы «ӘЛ-АУҚАТ» концептісінің мазмұнында теріс бағалау коннотациясының бар екендігін, фразеологиялық бірліктер, метафоралар, идиомалар және басқа да стильдік құралдар арқылы көрсетеді.

Зерттеудің ғылыми құндылығы мен практикалық маңыздылығы зерттеу нәтижелерінің бағалау теориясын одан әрі тереңдетілген талдауға белгілі бір үлес қоса алатындығымен айқындалады. Зерттеу материалдары медиадискурс және концептология саласындағы арнайы курстарды әзірлеу кезінде әдістемелік нұсқаулық бола алады.

Тірек сөздер: концепт, әл-ауқат, бағалау, концептуалды-дефинициялық талдау, концептуалды-контекстік талдау, когнитивтік ерекшеліктер, стилистикалық құралдар, әлеуметтік медиадискурс

КОНЦЕПТ «БЛАГОСОСТОЯНИЕ» В БРИТАНСКОМ СОЦИАЛЬНОМ МЕДИА ДИСКУРСЕ

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Аннотация. Данная статья посвящена исследованию оценочных признаков концепта «БЛАГОСОСТОЯНИЕ» в британском социальном медиадискурсе. В процессе дискурсивной реализации любого концепта наблюдается как стабильность, так и изменения его структурного компонента, поскольку концепты подвергаются изменению, модификации и насыщению в содержательном плане, обогащению и обрастанию новыми смыслами. Соответственно, в процессе насыщения данного концепта новыми понятиями вследствие

появления новых ассоциаций, происходит постепенная утрата его исходного значения. Все эти факторы, связанные с функционированием концепта, в той или иной степени зависят от последствий общественно-политического и социокультурного развития.

Целью статьи является определение оценочных и когнитивных признаков концепта «БЛАГОСОСТОЯНИЯ» в британском социальном медиа дискурсе, а также раскрытие языковых средств, участвующих в репрезентации данного концепта в британской лингвокультуре. Методика исследования основана на лингвоконцептуальном анализе.

Полученные результаты исследования свидетельствуют о доминировании концепта «благосостояния» в современном британском социальном медиадискурсе. Результаты концептуально-дефиниционного анализа подтверждают устойчивость в содержании концепта «благосостояние» на протяжении его исторического развития, в то время как концептуально-контекстуальный анализ исследуемого концепта свидетельствует о наличии негативной оценочной коннотации в содержании концепта «благосостояние», выражаемой с помощью фразеологизмов, метафор, идиом и других стилистических средств.

Научная ценность и практическая значимость исследования определяются тем, что результаты исследования могут внести определенный вклад в теорию оценки. Материалы исследования могут выступать в качестве методического руководства при разработке специальных курсов в области медиадискурса и концептологии.

Ключевые слова: концепт, благосостояние, оценка, концептуально-дефиниционный анализ, концептуально-контекстуальный анализ, когнитивные признаки, стилистические средства, социальный медиадискурс

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