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IMAGE SCHEMAS AND THEIR ROLE IN COGNITIVE SEMANTICS

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Annotation: This article examines the role of image schemas in cognitive semantics and their contribution to meaning construction. It explores the theoretical foundations of image schema theory and explains how recurring bodily experiences shape conceptualization and semantic interpretation. Particular attention is given to basic image schemas such as CONTAINER, PATH, SOURCE–PATH–GOAL, LINK, BALANCE, and FORCE, which serve as fundamental cognitive structures underlying linguistic meaning. The findings demonstrate that image schemas provide a conceptual basis for understanding both concrete and abstract concepts through embodied experience. The study highlights the significance of image schemas in cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, translation studies, and language education.
Keywords: image schemas, cognitive semantics, cognitive linguistics, conceptualization, embodied cognition, meaning construction, conceptual metaphor, semantic representation.

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada obraz sxemalarining kognitiv semantikadagi o‘rni hamda ma’no hosil bo‘lishidagi ahamiyati tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda obraz sxemalari nazariyasining asosiy tamoyillari hamda takrorlanuvchi jismoniy tajribalar insonning konseptualizatsiyasi va semantik talqiniga qanday ta’sir ko‘rsatishi yoritiladi. CONTAINER, PATH, SOURCE–PATH–GOAL, LINK, BALANCE va FORCE kabi asosiy obraz sxemalarining til birliklari ma’nosini shakllantirishdagi roli tahlil qilinadi. Natijalar obraz sxemalari mavhum va konkret tushunchalarni anglashning muhim kognitiv asosi ekanligini ko‘rsatadi.
Kalit so‘zlar: obraz sxemalari, kognitiv semantika, kognitiv tilshunoslik, konseptualizatsiya, gavdalangan tafakkur, ma’no hosil bo‘lishi, konseptual metafora, semantik reprezentatsiya.

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается роль образных схем в когнитивной семантике и их значение в формировании языкового значения. Анализируются теоретические основы теории образных схем и влияние повторяющегося телесного опыта на процессы концептуализации и семантической интерпретации. Особое внимание уделяется схемам CONTAINER, PATH, SOURCE–PATH–GOAL, LINK, BALANCE и FORCE как базовым когнитивным структурам, лежащим в основе языкового значения. Результаты исследования показывают, что образные схемы являются важным когнитивным механизмом понимания как конкретных, так и абстрактных понятий.
Ключевые слова: образные схемы, когнитивная семантика, когнитивная лингвистика, концептуализация, воплощённое познание, формирование значения, концептуальная метафора, семантическая репрезентация.

Introduction

Image schemas constitute one of the fundamental concepts in cognitive semantics, explaining how recurring bodily experiences shape human conceptualization and linguistic meaning. Unlike traditional semantic theories that regard meaning as an abstract property of language, cognitive linguistics argues that semantic structures are grounded in embodied

experience and cognitive processes (Johnson, 1987; Evans & Green, 2006). Image schemas are dynamic conceptual patterns that emerge from everyday interactions with the physical environment. Schemas such as CONTAINER, PATH, SOURCE–PATH–GOAL, BALANCE, and FORCE organize perception and provide the cognitive foundation for understanding both concrete and abstract concepts. These structures also play a significant role in the formation of conceptual metaphors and semantic extensions (Lakoff, 1987). Recent research demonstrates that image schemas have broad applications in discourse analysis, psycholinguistics, translation studies, language acquisition, and artificial intelligence. Their ability to explain conceptual organization makes them an essential component of modern cognitive semantic theory (Hampe, 2005). This study aims to investigate the role of image schemas in cognitive semantics and to analyze how embodied cognitive structures contribute to conceptualization and meaning construction in language.

Literature Review

The theory of image schemas was first systematically developed by Johnson (1987), who argued that recurring bodily experiences create basic conceptual structures underlying human cognition. According to this theory, schemas such as CONTAINER, PATH, BALANCE, and FORCE originate from sensorimotor experience and become the foundation of abstract reasoning. Lakoff (1987) further expanded this perspective by demonstrating that image schemas support conceptual categorization and metaphorical thinking. His work showed that abstract concepts are frequently understood through bodily experiences organized by image schemas. Evans and Green (2006) emphasize that image schemas play a central role in cognitive semantics because they connect perception, conceptualization, and linguistic meaning. Hampe (2005) also highlights that image schemas explain semantic extension, inferencing, and discourse interpretation by providing stable conceptual patterns across different communicative contexts. Recent studies have confirmed that image schema theory has become an important interdisciplinary framework, contributing to psycholinguistics, translation studies, language teaching, cognitive psychology, and Natural Language Processing.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on descriptive, analytical, and comparative methods. Relevant books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and theoretical studies on cognitive semantics and image schema theory were reviewed to examine the cognitive role of image schemas in meaning construction (Evans & Green, 2006). The analysis focuses on Johnson's (1987) theory of image schemas, Lakoff's (1987) conceptual categorization, and subsequent developments in cognitive semantic research (Hampe, 2005). The collected data were analyzed thematically to identify how recurring embodied experiences contribute to semantic interpretation and conceptual organization.

Results and Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that image schemas constitute one of the fundamental cognitive mechanisms underlying semantic organization and meaning construction. The findings indicate that recurring bodily experiences create stable conceptual structures that enable individuals to interpret linguistic expressions efficiently (Johnson, 1987). Rather than functioning as isolated semantic units, image schemas provide a coherent conceptual framework through which people understand both physical and abstract experiences. The study reveals that schemas such as CONTAINER, PATH, SOURCE–PATH–GOAL, FORCE, and BALANCE are consistently reflected in everyday language. These schemas organize conceptual knowledge and support the interpretation of metaphorical and abstract meanings. For instance, the CONTAINER schema is frequently used to conceptualize emotional and mental states, while the PATH schema structures concepts related to life, learning, and personal development (Lakoff, 1987). The findings also show that image schemas are closely connected with conceptual metaphor and embodied

cognition. Conceptual metaphors often rely on image schemas as their cognitive foundation, enabling speakers to understand abstract domains through concrete bodily experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Consequently, image schemas contribute significantly to semantic extension, inference, and discourse comprehension. Furthermore, the research highlights the interdisciplinary importance of image schemas. Their application extends beyond cognitive linguistics to psycholinguistics, translation studies, language education, and Natural Language Processing. These findings confirm that image schemas provide a comprehensive cognitive model for explaining how meaning is represented, interpreted, and communicated across different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of image schemas in cognitive semantics and their contribution to meaning construction. The analysis confirms that image schemas are fundamental cognitive structures originating from embodied human experience and serving as the conceptual basis of linguistic meaning. The findings demonstrate that image schemas organize conceptual knowledge, support semantic interpretation, and facilitate the understanding of abstract concepts through metaphorical mapping. Their interaction with conceptual metaphor, categorization, and embodied cognition illustrates the close relationship between language, thought, and experience. Future research should investigate image schemas in multilingual communication, corpus linguistics, psycholinguistics, translation studies, and artificial intelligence. Such interdisciplinary research will contribute to a deeper understanding of cognitive semantic processes and further strengthen the theoretical foundations of cognitive linguistics.

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