

EMOTION "REGRET" WITHIN THE COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK

Never regret. If it's good, it's wonderful. If it's bad, it's experience.
Anonymous

Emotions as a distinct group of human psychological states reflect the evaluative attitude towards existing situations, states of affairs or behaviour. They are an inextricable part of human's mental life. Emotions differ in content reflecting various aspects of meanings. They also differ in intensity. The more intense the emotion is the stronger are its physiological reactions. Emotions can be positive as well as negative.

Within the framework of cognitive linguistics emotions constitute an integrated conceptosphere which is represented in language and speech. Separate concepts – emotions are considered to be the components of the whole emotional conceptosphere. At present, it has been indisputably proved that the concept as a basic unit of cognitive linguistics is of multidimensional character. Y. Stepanov states that it has a "layered" structure which additionally predicates the assumption that for the identification of the concept it is necessary to apply a set of methods (as quoted in: Maslova, 2008: 65). In these terms, the combination of traditional and recently developed methods and theories will give an opportunity to organize the overall conceptual model of a certain concept. R. Frumkina distinguishes between two major components of the concept: the core and the periphery of the concept. The core involves dictionary definitions and meanings of a certain lexical unit whereas the periphery reflects subjective experience, various pragmatic components, connotations and associations (as quoted in: Maslova, 2008: 65). N. Panchenko assumes that the concept correlates with more than one linguistic unit and the outer form of the concept includes the set of various synonymic, lexical, phraseological and paremiological units that describe the given concept in the language (Panchenko, 1999:6). One can deduce that the concept possesses verbal expression in the form of lexical units, word combinations, idioms and even texts. Hence, for the complete representation of the concept it is necessary to establish all the lexical, phraseological and paremiological units that in some form convey a certain concept, as well as to identify all the connotations and associations that correlate with it.

The goal of the present paper is to give the cognitive model of the emotion "regret" in English. The concept of "regret" can be qualified as rather a negative than a positive emotion. It is a negative conscious and emotional

reaction to personal past acts and behaviour. It is often felt when someone feels sadness, shame, embarrassment, depression, annoyance or guilt after committing an action that the person later wishes that he/she had not done. The feeling of regret is distinct from guilt, which is a deeply emotional form of regret (or even the result of regretting) - one which may be difficult to comprehend in an objective or conceptual way. A. Wierzbicka defines "regret" as a state "when X regrets when one thinks that what one desires not to have happen has happened" (Wierzbicka, 1972:64). In philosophical literature mainly this type of regret is differentiated (Spinoza, 1957:130, Aristotle, 1984:20). Regret can describe not only the dislike for an action that has been committed, but also, importantly, regret of inaction. Many people find themselves wishing that they had done something in a past situation. Still there are also cases when regret is accompanied by quite another feeling of sadness. It is the pleasure of the past experience and the days in the past that are gone (Zaliznyak, 1988:191). This type of regret can be conveyed, for example, by the word "nostalgia".

Taking into consideration all the types of "regret" that a person can experience, we can conduct the cognitive analysis and establish the basic cognitive models of this concept which can be outlined in the following way:

1. Model 1 – The subject undergoes an emotional sensation or is in a particular state of mind (usually of a negative character) because something has been done the way he/she did not want.
2. Model 2 – The subject undergoes an emotional sensation or is in a particular state of mind (usually of a negative character) because something has *not* been done the way he/she wanted it.
3. Model 3 – The subject undergoes an emotional sensation or is in a particular state of mind (usually of a positive character) because he/she remembers with pleasure some past experience.

As can be seen, the basic components of the cognitive model of the concept "regret" are the subject, the specific emotional state and the cause of "regretting".

In psychological literature it is stated that until now there have been no available standardized "regret" measuring methods, and most researches use just one-item measures like "how much regret would you feel?" (Dijk, Zeelenberg, 2005). W. Parrot gives his classification of emotions in a three-structured list, grouping emotions into primary, secondary and tertiary ones, viewing the emotion of "regret" as a component of sadness, specifically some source of it (Parrot, 2001).

The study of various contextual uses of the determinants of the concept "regret" has shown that it has a specific nature and can be accompanied by and, moreover, result in other feelings. Thus, when someone dislikes an action that has been committed, his first step is the feeling of regret; the second one is conditioned by the further perception of the given situation by the subject. If the

feeling of regret is rather intensive it can result in blame and criticism, whereas in case of admitting one's fault it is likely to turn to apology. Still, there are cases when the subject regrets, and being aware that nobody is to blame of the given situation, ends up with resigning with reality. Thus, the outcomes of regret are apology, blame/criticism and resignation.

Apology is the most effective and emotional way to show one's feelings of regret. The essence of an apology in its simplest form is to acknowledge responsibility for a grievance followed by an expression of regret. The same cannot be said about blame. Blame and criticism are the acts of censuring, making negative statements about an individual or a group that their action or actions are socially or morally irresponsible. The feeling of resignation means accepting real facts related to the given situation as they come, with all the handicaps of suffering, of psychological complexes and injustice.

The level of intensity of one's regret may vary and can be expressed by means of various adjectives and intensifiers that collocate with the given concept. Hence, in an English speaking community one can have *a big, bitter, deep, genuine, great, profound, real, sincere regret* (Her biggest regret was that she had never had children. She expressed deep regret at the incident.) or one can be *awfully, deeply, desperately, dreadfully, extremely, frightfully, genuinely, really, terribly, truly, very sorry* (I'm really sorry Jane can't come with us. I'm terribly sorry. I didn't catch your name.). One can also *suffer, be filled with, be full of, be overcome with, be stricken with remorse* (She knew that the next day she would be guilty and full of remorse. I suffered no remorse. Finally, one can *display, express, show remorse* etc. (Oxford Collocations Dictionary Online).

It is also worth mentioning interjections as one of the most significant verbal means of expressing the concept of "regret". 'Alas' is used to express grief, pity, regret. There are also interjections used in colloquial speech, as 'cripes!', 'for crying and loud!', 'dear me!'. The interjections as 'What's a pity!', 'What a bad luck!', 'Oh!' express a very slight state of regret and pity. Whereas such expressions as 'I'm sorry; I deeply regret; Please forgive me; I'm so shame-faced' etc. are common verbal means of sharing regret.

There are also non-verbal means of expressing the concept of regret. For example, *bowing means that one regrets deeply about something, putting one's hand to one's heart, having a long face, closing of one's eyes, knitting one's eyebrows, stiffening one's lips, wrinkling one's face* can also mean the feeling of regret. Involuntary gestures with hands, *"hands to face" gesture, clasping one's hands, or taking one's wrist* may also accompany the feeling of regret. All these mimics and gestures express one's disappointment in expectations and an attempt of self-control. This emotion may be so intensive that it can lead a person to crying and weeping.

Applying the definitional analysis we have identified the verbs belonging to the semantic field of "regret". It is worth mentioning that all dictionaries

interpret these lexical means rather vaguely and the majority of the words are explained by means of each other. Such kind of instability and vagueness is characteristic of all abstract nouns which nominate multicomponential mental objects (Babushkin, 1996:63-67). I. Sternin states that these types of concepts possess flexible and nonrigid structure; as a result it is practically impossible to establish their structural models (Sternin, 2000:15).

Applying the criterion of the presence of such markers or identifiers as the words *regret*, *to be sorry*, *sadness*, *sorrow*, *disappointment* in the definitions of words, we have established the following group of words expressing the concept of "regret":

- 1) to regret – to feel *sorry*, disappointed or distressed about something; to remember with a feeling of loss or *sorrow*
- 2) to rue – to *regret* something because it has bad results
- 3) to bemoan – to express one's *sorrow* or disappointment about something, to mourn
- 4) to bewail – to express great *sorrow* about something, to *regret* strongly, to grieve
- 5) to lament – to feel or express great *sadness* or *disappointment* about somebody or something, to cry of *sorrow* and grief
- 6) to repent – to feel and show that you are *sorry* for something bad or wrong that you have done, to feel remorse or to be contrite for past conduct or sin
- 7) to mourn – to express deep *regret*, *sadness* for the death or loss of somebody
- 8) to grieve – to feel or cause to feel great *sorrow* and distress, especially at the death of someone
- 9) to deplore – to express or feel *regret*, *sorrow*, lament
- 10) to sorrow – to feel grief and *sorrow*

Studying the definitions of the above mentioned items, we can see that even within the common semantic field of the synonymous words, they create small lexical sets with the slightest differences in their meanings. Thus, we can observe that the verbs *to regret*, *to rue*, *to repent* can be grouped in one lexical set, as they all express the feeling of sorrow for something bad that has happened. The verbs *to bemoan*, *to bewail*, *to lament*, *to mourn*, *to grieve* mainly contain in their meanings the feeling of sorrow and grief when somebody dies.

To reveal the semantic peculiarities of the lexical units expressing the concept of "regret", we have applied the componential analysis. As is known, the componential analysis implies that the meaning of words can be broken down into a number of components or semes. Hence, all the lexical units conveying the concept of 'regret' possess the central seme "regret", which shows that a word belongs to a certain conceptsphere, and the peripheral semes or so-called 'differentiators' which comprise the additional and peculiar characteristics of the word. They are as follows:

1. Neutral – this marker identifies the neutral state of regret when the feeling of regret is not so strong and vivid.
2. Intensive – the opposite of the neutral seme showing great, deep regret.
3. Completeness – this marker shows that one has the feeling of regret about something that has been done and he or she cannot change the situation and correct one's mistakes. This seme is opposed to the seme 'incompleteness', which shows that one thinks whether something is a good thing to do or not.
4. Grief – the feeling of acute, deep sorrow, irreplaceable loss, when somebody dies.
5. Crying – the seme showing one's mourning and weeping, expressing one's regret by tears.
6. Pain and suffering – this differentiator shows the state of physical and emotional pain, when somebody regrets about something.

Let us sum up the results of the componential analysis of the concept "regret" in the following table:

Verbs	Peripheral semes/Differentiators					
	neutral	intensive	completeness	grief	crying	pain and suffering
to regret	+		+/-	-	-	+/-
to rue	+		+/-	-	-	+/-
to bemoan	-	+	+	+	+	+
to bewail	-	+	+	+	+	+
to lament	-	+	+	-	+	+
to repent	-	+	+	-	-	+
to mourn	-	+	+	+	+	+
to grieve	-	+	+	+	+	+
to sorrow	-	+	+	+	+	+
to deplore	-	+	+	-	+	+

Observing the above-mentioned lexical units from the point of view of their semic organizations, we can establish that the words 'to regret' and 'to rue' have a weak nature of sorrow and are defined as neutral, even though they may contain the seme of pain and suffering. The rest of the words are characterized by intensive level of 'regret' where the lexical units 'bemoan', 'to bewail', 'to mourn', 'to grieve', 'to sorrow' refer mainly to the feeling of great sorrow, emotional pain when somebody dies. The linguistic unit 'to repent' outstands in the group as, besides having an intensive character, it means not only the strong feeling of regret but also the feeling of contrition for past conduct or sin. The verbs 'to lament' and 'to deplore' containing the element of completeness show the prolonged and stable feeling that a person has when the situation cannot be changed and when there is no way out.

As has been mentioned above, the components of concept can be quite diverse and can involve not only lexical units but also phraseological and paremiological elements. Thus, probing into the concept "regret" we have established the phraseological units that figuratively convey the concept of "regret". Among them we can mention *to feel remorse, to be contrite about, to be sorry for, to be a pity, to kick oneself, to eat one's words, to pay the piper, to bite one's tongue, to draw one's sorrows, to hang down one's head, to look back, to leave an aching void, to have compunctions, to face the music, to curse the day, down in the dumps, to eat one's heart out, a heavy heart, death in life, to get the blues, to feel flat* etc.

The concept of 'regret' is also found in paremiology, or the study of proverbs. The study of proverbs that contain the elements of "regret" has revealed that the component of being sorry for something done or undone, completeness or incompleteness of that feeling are preserved in all proverbs. We can state that many of them aim at preventing a person from regretting later, as is the case in the following proverbs:

- 1) *Better to be safe than sorry.*
- 2) *Better not remove at all than do so and then regret it.*
- 3) *Careless hurry may cause endless regret.*
- 4) *The obvious choice is usually a quick regret.*
- 5) *Hasty love is soon hot and soon cold.*
- 6) *Marry in haste and repent at leisure.*

The target of some proverbs is to comfort people, they show compassion, the feeling of sadness and pity for what has happened or has been done wrongly. Having an optimistic view to the mistakes that cannot be corrected, the time that cannot be reverted and the circumstances that are no longer the same, these proverbs find another solution, that is not to regret about anything and not to look back. For example,

- 7) *It is no use crying over spilt milk.*
- 8) *Let bygones be bygones.*
- 9) *Let the dead bury their dead.*
- 10) *If you sell her cow, you sell her milk.*
- 11) *What cannot be cured must be endured.*
- 12) *Let all things past pass.*
- 13) *When a thing is done, advice comes too late.*
- 14) *What you lose on the swings, you gain on the roundabouts.*
- 15) *It is too late to lock the stable – door when the horse is stolen.*
- 16) *What is done cannot be undone.*
- 17) *After supper, mustard.*
- 18) *After death the doctor.*
- 19) *Time and tide wait for no man.*
- 20) *Youth is a blunder, manhood a struggle, old age regret.*

It also can be concluded that the causes of regret in an English speaking community can be quite various, for example, *haste*, as in 3, 5, 6, or *old age* as in 20 and *loss* as in 14, 15 etc.

The study has shown that the concept of "regret" can be expressed via specific grammatical structures, namely, Conditional 3 without necessarily involving certain verbal expressions conveying the given concept. As is known, Conditional 3 is used in speech to show some hypothetical conditions in the past and their results in the past. For example:

- 1) If I had been luckier, I wouldn't lose my wallet.
- 2) If he had known that she would come, he would have stayed there longer.
- 3) If Jane had studied well, she would have got an excellent mark.

As can be seen, all the above mentioned examples express some kind of regret, though in the sentences there are no lexical units verbally meaning the given concept. Some elements of "regret", mainly the type described in Cognitive Model 3 when a person is in a positive state of mind because he/she remembers with pleasure some past experience, can be expressed by such grammatical structures as *used to* or *would*, as in the following sentences:

- 1) When I was young I used to/would go fishing with my father every summer.
- 2) I used to/would do football every weekend but I don't have time now.

Summing up the findings of the present study, we can conclude that the concept of "regret" is of a unique character, it has a wide range of polarity from positive to intensively negative. Within the framework of cognitive linguistics it possesses three models of performance and includes multidimensional aspects, such as verbal (lexical, phraseological, paremiological units, interjections etc.), nonverbal means of communication, subjective experience, various connotations and associations, as well as specific grammatical structures. This is true for any concept, as a basic unit of cognitive linguistics, which encapsulates the belief that one and the same situation, states of affairs can be expressed and encoded in language in many different ways.

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«Ձղջում» հասկացությունը ճանաչողական լեզվաբանության շրջանակներում

Հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում են անգլերենում "զղջում" արտահայտող լեզվական միջոցների ճանաչողական և իմաստաբանական առանձնահատկությունները: Ձղջումը բացասական զգայական արձագանք է անձի կողմից անցյալում իրականացված կամ չիրականացված գործողությունների և վարքագծի նկատմամբ: Իմացաբանական լեզվաբանության շրջանակներում ընդունված է այն կարծիքը, որ անհրաժեշտ է ուսումնասիրել թե՛ լեզվական, թե՛ արտալեզվական միջոցներ՝ հասկացությունը որպես ճանաչողական լեզվաբանության հիմնական տարր բացահայտելու համար: Ուսումնասիրությունը բույլ է տալիս առանձնացնել "զղջում" հասկացության երեք կադապարներ, որոնց դրսևորումը համալրվում է համապատասխան լեզվական (բառային միավորներ, դարձվածքներ, ասացվածքներ, ինչպես նաև քերականական կառույցներ) և արտալեզվական (հոգեկան ճնշվածություն, տարբեր հուզաարտահայտչական դրսևորումներ, հոգե, լաց և այլն) միջոցներով: Բառային միավորների իմաստաբանական վերլուծության արդյունքում պարզ դարձավ, որ "զղջում" արտահայտող հոմանիշների շարքում բառերը արտահայտում են զղջման ուժեղության տարբեր մակարդակներ՝ ըստ անձի կողմից ցուցաբերած դրսևորումների, զղջման պատճառների և հետևանքների: