THE CONCEPT AMERICAN DREAM: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Summary. The concept AMERICAN DREAM is a mental unit, a compound set of ideas marked by national and cultural specificity. The meaning of this concept for each individual changes depending on the interpretations of the ethical and moral values of the representative of the linguaculture, the context it is used in and historical period when it is mentioned. The concept AMERICAN DREAM can have both positive and negative aspects of understanding at the same time. Complex coloring and features of the subtext may vary completely in different contexts. AMERICAN DREAM is considered to be as something unattainable. This concept is interpreted the example of an ideal life in which all luxuries are present, such as a house, family, children and pets. The concept AMERICAN DREAM is quite popular at all times. So it is often used in all cultures. Features of exact interpretation of ideal type of life differ according to the overview of the culture. If we speak about Ukrainian young respondents, they imagine AMERICAN DREAM as the way of cool life. But here we can also trace the variability of moral values and achievements of each person that will definitely influence on the thoughts about idealism. Taking into account the fact of the presence of various opportunities to built your dreams in the way you want, it is possible to notice certain common aspects in different questions in terms of discussion the meaning of importance of AMERICAN DREAM. This can be reflected and tracked with the help of definitions taken from various explanatory dictionaries, as well as in the minds of citizens themselves, that can be analyzed in the form of an anonymous questionnaire of respondents. The need to research the concept AMERICAN DREAM is that this phenomenon satisfies the most important human needs and is desired by many people of different nationalities.

Keywords: dream, concept, life, ideal, culture, values.

Problem statement. In modern studies of a language an interdisciplinary approach prevails. According to it linguistic units reflect the bound between language, culture, cognition and society. Such units are called linguacultural concepts and they function as an integral part of consciousness and the language worldview [9, p. 41]. The concept comprises linguistic meaning and social sense. For this reason it is regularly called a unit of information, an unique thought or a mental image [2; 3; 8; 9; 11]. The concept has properties of the linguistic sign, it has verbal frame, but its meaning is characterized by extra semantics, which clarify the ethno-mental peculiarities of the nation and society [7, p. 51–71]. A.M. Prykhodko admits: "The conceptual substrate of a concept is the minimum of its semantic volume that is usually fixed lexicographic sources". The conceptual substrate of the concept is factual information – propositional knowledge based on linguistic fixation (description, definition, description). It can be described using a definitional component analysis of the nominees of the concept [3, p. 68]. Moreover, analyzing a concept from the cultural point of view, it is important to pay attention that...
The analysis of dictionary definitions is an important and necessary stage of conceptual study component of the concept structure [2; 8; 9].

A linguacultural concept is centered around nation's values. It is a unit of consciousness, which is determined by culture and communicated by language units. A critical component within the structure of the linguacultural concept is axiological [2; 11].

Having analyzed many definitions provided by native and foreign scholars such as S. Askoldov, O. Beshlei, I. Garbera, O. Ladyka and O. Yaremza, Z. Nemickiene, V. Shaklein, O. Zubrov, that are dedicated to the investigations of concepts in different cultures.

The objective of our investigation is to determine the essence and role of the term “AMERICAN DREAM”. To do this, we must perform the following tasks:

1. Give the definitions of the term “American Dream”
2. Do a survey.
3. Define respondents’ answers according to the differences in understanding and associating of this term.
4. Determine the general picture of the auditory.

Materials and discussions. The concept AMERICAN DREAM has already been popular for more than three centuries. Definitively, it has evolved, changed and become different from its original meaning and form. Moreover, the phrase “American dream” is often used not only in American culture but in others also. There are different approaches to this term [8, p. 94]. It can have many meanings, which may be explained by the features of culture, by the epoch it is used in or the context it appears.

The term “American Dream” is a national ethos of the United States, the set of ideals (democracy, rights, liberty, opportunity and equality) in which freedom includes the opportunity for prosperity and success, as well as an upward social mobility for the family and children, achieved through hard work in a society with few barriers [5].

The American Dream has even been questioned by researchers and political spokespeople, arguing that it is a misplaced belief that contradicts reality in the present-day United States.

The meaning of the "American Dream" has changed over the course of history [8]. It includes both personal components and a global vision. Historically the Dream originated in the mystique regarding frontier life. As John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, the colonial Governor of Virginia, noted in 1774, the Americans "for ever imagine the Lands further off are still better than those upon which they are already settled". He added that, "if they attained Paradise, they would move on if they heard of a better place farther west" [5].

Some of the ideas about “American Dream” take the beginning in the 19th century. Many well-educated Germans fled the failed 1848 revolution and welcomed the political freedoms in the New World and the lack of a hierarchical or aristocratic society that determined the ceiling for individual aspirations. It was explained in the following way: “The German emigrant comes into a country free from the despotism, privileged orders and monopolies, intolerable taxes, and constraints in matters of belief and conscience. Everyone can travel and settle wherever he pleases. No passport is demanded, no police mingle in his affairs or hinder his movements... Fidelity and merit are the only sources of honor here. The rich stand on the same footing as the poor; the scholar is not a mug above the most humble mechanics; no German ought to be ashamed to pursue any occupation...” [In America] wealth and possession of real estate

These words show the picture of ideal world. There are no borders or constraints. Is not it an amazing thing? The talents and persistence take the higher place than material privileges.

There was the fact of the discovery of gold in California in 1849. Then a huge amount of men looked for their fortune overnight, some of them even succeeded. In the background of these events, the CALIFORNIA DREAM was born. The essence of this DREAM was of instant success in something. Historian H. W. Brands noted that in the years after the Gold Rush, the CALIFORNIA DREAM spread across the nation:

"The old American Dream... was the dream of the Puritans, of Benjamin Franklin’s "Poor Richard"... of men and women content to accumulate their modest fortunes a little at a time, year by year by year. The new dream was the dream of instant wealth, won in a twinkling by audacity and good luck. [This] golden dream... became a prominent part of the American psyche only after Sutter's Mill" [5].

James Truslow Adams represented the phrase “AMERICAN DREAM” in 1931. It happened during a period of severe economic depression. He introduced this phrase to encourage his compatriots, recalling the historical purpose of America, its achievements, and national ideals. The following lines in the Epilogue of 'The Epic of America' prove the above mentioned fact: “The American dream, that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with the opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement" [4, p. 415].

According to J.T. Adams, the incarnation of this idea is not only the achieving of material wealth but at the same time conglomeration of spiritual values. These traits of life must be as full as possible, which they are naturally capable of, and recognized by others as they are, regardless of accidental circumstances of birth or position. The aspect of material values can serve only as of the foundation for the realization of the American dream. The scientist considers the common man, who himself must strive and find the difference between a good and rich life. An ordinal person who himself must strive and find the difference and recognized by others as they are, regardless of "right of birth." In such a country the talents, energy, and perseverance of a person... have far greater opportunity to display than in monarchies" [5].

The first component expands and summarizes the nomination of people awareness of the erosion of the American Dream and its features. Nowadays, a similar explanation of the concept AMERICAN DREAM can be often found as a general characteristic of this idea. The second component deals more with the semantic structure of the concept of the AMERICAN DREAM, as it is connected with the success and richness of everyone in the USA, as in one integral country. One not less interesting definition of the term “AMERICAN DREAM” is also given in “Urban Dictionary”: “American Dream - the ideal American life as fed by the media; 2.3 children, white picket fences surrounding a split-level house with a dog and a cat, and a station wagon or a minivan to take the kids to sports practice; impossible by its’ nature” [13].

According to “Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English” the term “AMERICAN DREAM” is treated as “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 really believed in the American Dream [10].

“Collins Dictionary” provides the meaning of “AMERICAN DREAM” in terms of equality of opportunities: “the U.S. ideal according to which equality of opportunity permits any American to aspire to high attainment and material success” [6].

The analyzed sources show that the concept AMERICAN DREAM is mostly interpreted as something special and unique, or even as an equal opportunity to achieve success in something. The next stage of our research was a survey with 37 respondents who are students of Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. The age of the respondents is from 19 to 21. The main focus of our survey was on the features of a receptive holistic experiment and of free association. During our associative experiment, we were able to clarify many distinctive features of the concept AMERICAN DREAM and define the relevance of these features in the linguistic consciousness of the respondents. The aim of the receptive experiment was to identify the specifics of understanding and perception of the concept and its subjective definition. We have got much information about understanding specific units directly in the verbalization of the concept, as respondents answered a lot of questions about their understanding of the term “AMERICAN DREAM”.

The main purpose of the survey was to specify the thematic fields in the semantic representation of the concept. The analysis of experimental data allows specifying the meanings associated with the concept in the minds of young Ukrainian speakers. At the same time, it gives an analysis of semantic modifications caused by certain socio-political events both in American and Ukrainian culture at all.
The analysis of the free association of words identifies the real connections between the concept of AMERICAN DREAM in the consciousness of young Ukrainian students and the semantic zones of the phrase itself. Qualitative analysis of the results of our survey dealing with free associations helped to build respondents' ideas about the way how the concept AMERICAN DREAM is interpreted in modern society. Mostly the interpretation is connected with wealth, successful life, hope and hard work.

Some of the above mentioned examples of modern interpretation of the concept AMERICAN DREAM show that our respondents associate this concept with something connected with money. The students have answered the question about the first associated word with “Money”. There are the following leading terms:

- Dollar (11%);
- Opportunities (11%);
- Wealth (8.3%).

If we consider AMERICAN DREAM from the side of happiness, we may conduct the next conclusions:

- 30% of the respondents see happiness in “family”;
- 8.4% – “love” and “smile”;
- 5.6% – “success” and “peace”.

As the name of the concept consists of the phrase “AMERICAN DREAM”, we decided to ask our respondents to answer the question: “What the first word do you associate with “the USA”? And we have received the following words or phrases that were “the leaders”:

- 8.4% of the asked students answered “Dream”;
- 8% – “Flag” and “Liberty”;
- 5.6% – “Freedom”, “New York” and “Opportunities”.

It is considered that to have something people have to work. The respondents mostly associate “work” with money, office and efforts. 8.3% of people consider work as duty.

The functioning of the linguacultural concept AMERICAN DREAM in the modern Ukrainian worldview is definitely unequal, although for most (89%) it is a positive thing:

Nevertheless the difference in the attitude to this concept, for most respondents (91.9%), the achievement of the AMERICAN DREAM is still important:

- 67.6% of the respondents believe that their family has not achieved the AMERICAN DREAM yet. The following diagram proves the above mentioned fact:
- There are people, who associate AMERICAN DREAM not only with the pleasant thing but with something quite unpleasant too. If the term is understood in the most positive meaning, there will be always some negative aspects that may become the obstacles in understanding or achieving the goal in terms of the analyzed concept.

Conclusions. Summing up the received results we state that the concept AMERICAN DREAM
is not stable and has variable components. Everyone determines his or her own level of perfection and interpretation of this concept. According to the answers of the respondents, most believe that by their own standards they and their families have not achieved “AMERICAN DREAM” yet. The following diagram proves that fact:

In the case of the experiment with students’ personal understanding of the concept AMERICAN DREAM in modern conditions, there is a natural reason for their positive connotation. This dream for them is seen as something that will bring happiness, success and profit. Though, this research approved that the concept AMERICAN DREAM in the national cognitive sphere of young Ukrainians is not of utmost importance. But it definitely attracts attention, interest, pondering and cogitation of young generation.

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