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## Asymmetry of conceptual perception in Russian and American cultures

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### Abstract

The present paper is testing the three conceptospheres theoretically and methodologically. The goal of the research is to study the following: conceptual perception, categorization, conceptualization and conceptual asymmetry in Russian and American cultures. Due to mental cognitive concepts, that may be objectivized by language (words and word combinations; proverbs; idioms; collocations; etc.) perception may be realized through any channel representing special forms of worldview's knowledge. Human beings categorize his/her experience into conceptual categories. I juxtaposed the two cultures with distinctive worldviews to determine specific conceptual perception. For this purpose, I researched three spheres of concepts: Temporal, Stereotypical, and Axiological.

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### 1. Introduction

The paper explores fundamental theories of conceptual perception, asymmetry perception, categorization, prototype categories, conceptualization, and cognitive linguistics in Russian and American cultures. When we speak about asymmetry perception, we find an avalanche of various definitions, but the first one belongs to Aristotle (born in 384 – died in 322 BC); his numerous works include not only asymmetry perception, but also the categories. I follow these classical approaches of the categories in Aristotle's research, which are the following: 1) "...categories are defined in terms of a conjunction of necessary and sufficient features". 2) "Features are binary". 3) "Categories have clear boundaries." (Taylor, 1995, pp. 22-23. Referring to Aristotle (1933, *Metaphysics*).

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When Wilhelm von Humboldt worked on empirical studies, he came to believe that “...all peoples’ concepts and all of their knowledge were ultimately based on perception” (Humboldt, 1985). Much later, his ideas spread and the key notion of viewpoint turned to a great variety of worldviews depending on the ethnos (Humboldt, 1985). The revived worldview of Humboldt is a fundamental mental concept, the result of human activity, experience and perception. Worldview is understood here in cognitive terms based on Humboldt’s theory and present-day cognitive theory. Any mental representation of a culture is inexhaustible and cannot be complete, but all the members of a given society know the prototype, where worldview is inseparable from cognitive processes. Therefore, Humboldt’s worldview is recently inseparable from cognitive processes. Later, I. Kant (1760) suggested an idea that our knowledge of the world relies upon our modes of perception, which includes all five senses. Since that, time there is a plethora of various understandings of the perception. It is important to note that perceivers belonging to different cultures have different perceptual experiences. Various schools study the perception, for example, social psychology examines the ethnocentric perception and unique perceptual experience. Psycholinguistics concentrates on speech perception; the mental faculties are also involved in the perception. We can observe the basic cognitive mechanism that is the perception; it may be regarded as a specific form of knowledge about the world that is performed through all the human channels as Pinker (2003) thinks. Cognitive linguistics turned its interest to the relationship between the cognition, the human mind, the cognitive abilities (Geeraerts, 2006). The Perception as part of a cognitive activity is the basis of behavior. According to Neisser (1998), the perception uncovers what ecological environment is for people and how they adjust to it. There are several important cognitive processes: *perception*, *conceptualization*, *categorization* that cause *asymmetry* in mental categories.

When people categorize, they “perceive some traits of a new object, place it in a mental category, and infer that it is likely to have the other traits typical of that category, ones perceive” (Pinker, 2003, p. 203). This citation is of methodological value in this research: Visual perception is selective and as such, it is accompanied by many factors, including anticipation categories. It creates unique perceptual experience and helps to understand social and other types of perception better. The theory of conceptual perception is a central problem in cognitive linguistics. In particular, the processes of categorization and conceptualization of human experience attracted great attention to the way a human being knows how to perceive the outside world, and how his/her experience of cognition is realized in the language. Implications brings a lot for the students’ when they understand, and start thinking about the cognitive processes, maximum information, and various categories.

## 2. Categorization

Categorization, conceptualization, perception and asymmetry play a significant role; they are basic cognitive processes involved in storing knowledge. Categorization, as Pinker (2003) says, is the process in which ideas and objects are recognized, differentiated, and understood, but at the same time, some mental categories are considered to correspond something in real life, which can bring considerable damage. It refers, first, to racial, ethnic and gender stereotypes. There exists the tendency to economize a cognitive effort, and raise the defense mechanism especially in intercultural communication, which explicates positive factors. Speaking about the formation of categories, E. Rosch (1978) highlighted the process of categorization where the distinct entities are considered equivalent, the author is also concerned with the function of category systems:

“...we [are] primarily concerned and have to do with explaining the categories found in a culture and coded by the language of that culture at a particular point of time. When we speak of the formation to provide maximum of information with the least effort ... we speak of the formation of categories, we mean their formation in the culture”. ... “The task of category systems is to provide maximum information with the least cognitive effort; the second has to do with the structure of the information so provided. ... Thus, maximum information with least cognitive effort is achieved if categories map the perceived world structure as closely as possible” (pp. 28-29).

There are several important cognitive processes: perception, conceptualization, categorization, cognition, etc., which create unique perceptual experience.

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