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CONCEPTUALIZATION OF *HAPPINESS* BY YOUNG NATIVE SPEAKERS OF KAZAKH

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S.A. Abdramanova. Conceptualization of HAPPINESS by young native speakers of Kazakh. The present study analyses the way HAPPINESS is contextualized by young native speakers of the Kazakh language who were asked to write an essay on "What is happiness?" The object of the research is definitions given to 'happiness' by participants of the experiment in their essays. The analysis showed that the basic criteria of HAPPINESS are related to participants' families and their close environment. The analysis also revealed that conceptualization of HAPPINESS by respondents is constructed on the basis of conceptual metaphors, conceptual metonymies, and related concepts. As a result, prototypical cognitive models have been derived as "happiness is being glad" and "happiness is making glad".

Key words: concept, happiness, metaphor, metonymy, perception, speakers of the Kazakh language

С.А. Абдраманова. Концептуалізація ЩАСТЯ у сприйнятті молодих носіїв казахської мови. Стаття аналізує концепт ЩАСТЯ в сприйнятті молодих носіїв казахської мови. Об'єктом дослідження є визначення щастя, дані учасниками експерименту в написаних ними творах на тему «Що таке щастя?» Аналіз показав, що основними критеріями ЩАСТЯ є сім'я і близькі їм люди. Аналіз також показав, що концептуалізація ЩАСТЯ учасниками експерименту грунтується на використанні метафор, метонімії та інших схожих поняттях. В результаті були виявлені прототипи когнітивних моделей концепту ЩАСТЯ, такі як «ЩАСТЯ – ЦЕ РАДІСТЬ» і «ЩАСТЯ – ЦЕ РАДУВАТИ ІНШИХ ЛЮДЕЙ».

Ключові слова: концепт, метафора, метонімія, носії казахської мови, сприйняття, щастя.

С.А. Абдраманова. Концептуализация СЧАСТЬЯ в восприятии молодых носителей казахского языка. Данная статья анализирует концепт СЧАСТЬЕ в восприятии молодых носителей казахского языка. Объектом исследования являются определения счастья, данные участниками эксперимента в написанных ими сочинениях на тему «Что такое счастье?» Анализ показал, что основными критериями СЧАСТЬЯ являются семья и близкие им люди. Анализ также показал, что концептуализация СЧАСТЬЕ участниками эксперимента основывается на использовании метафор, метонимии и других схожих понятиях. В результате были выявлены прототипы когнитивных моделей концепта СЧАСТЬЕ, такие как «СЧАСТЬЕ – ЭТО РАДОСТЬ» и «СЧАСТЬЕ – ЭТО РАДОВАТЬ ДРУГИХ ЛЮДЕЙ».

Ключевые слова: восприятие, концепт, метафора, метонимия, счастье, носители казахского языка.

1. Introduction

The notion of happiness is extremely subjective, i.e., its perception varies from one individual to another one. Moreover, it could be culturally motivated, i.e., the notion of happiness can depend on the socio-cultural conditions of people's existence. Though, there are some universal features of 'happiness' due to global economic changes, such as globalization and integration, and technological developments, such as the Internet. The latest studies show that there is a link between happiness and success: positive and successful people tend to be happier [Lyubomirsky,

King, & Diener, 2005]. At the same time, scholars argue that happiness may result in negative consequences, mostly because of the ways people pursue and experience it [Gruber, Mauss, & Tamir, 2011].

In the Kazakh language, the notion of happiness is represented by two words – *бақ* [baḳ] and *бақыт* [baḳït] – which mean 'a state of a person being satisfied and pleased with his/her life'; in other words, they denote a person's satisfaction of having reached and realized the goals, having succeeded in some action and, consequently, experiencing joy and bliss [Kajdar, 2009]. Both of them have a positive connotation: they denote 'luck, big joy, fortune, a feeling or expression of pleasure, satisfaction, and content'. The basic difference between those two words is that *бақыт* [baḳït] is a short-term faculty related to a certain event, while *бақ* [baḳ] is a long-term, sustainable, and regular luck that could follow a person even during his/her whole life. It was believed that only God could award happiness as a gift to a selected human being. Happiness itself was associated with a symbol of a fantastic bird which delivered happiness to a person if it landed on him/her head. In Kazakh, the concept of happiness is mostly constituted by conceptual metaphors, e.g., the following expressions have the same meaning as *fig.* 'he/ she became happy', but the concepts behind them are different: in *бағы /бақыты жану* [bağï /baḳïtï janu] *lit.* 'his/ her happiness caught fire' the concept is HAPPINESS IS FIRE*;* in *бақ қону* [baḳ ḳonu] lit. 'the happiness landed on his/ her head – HAPPINESS IS A FABULOUS BIRD; in *бақыты ашылу* [baḳïtï aşïlu] lit. 'his/ her happiness is opened/ revealed' and *бағы асты lit.* 'his/ her happiness overflew the banks'– HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER; in *бағы артты lit.* 'his/ her happiness increased' – HAPPINESS IS A PHYSICAL FORCE; in *бағы өрледі lit.* 'his/ her happiness went up/ rose' the concept is A FORCE DISLOCATING THE SELF.

The present study aims to find out how young Kazakh people perceive *Бақыт/ Бақ* [baḳït/ baḳ] 'happiness' and whether this notion evokes positive or negative feelings. For this purpose young people from the age of 19 to 22 were asked to write an essay on the way they understand 'happiness'. Their written works were analyzed and the key parameters of HAPPINESS in young Kazaks' worldview have been elaborated.

2. Literature review

It is commonly accepted that individual's experiences are formed on the basis of the content; thought is developed through the content. In its turn, thought generates concepts which are numerous in their variety, for example, there are concepts that reflect spatial, causal, temporal, and quantitative relations [Zurif & Blumstein, 1978]. Concepts are not the same as thoughts; thoughts subsume concept. Kecskes [2007] gives a definition of a concept as "a construct that blends knowledge gained from actual situational contexts in an individual-centered way" (p. 36). Concepts are subjective by nature; they vary from one individual to another – an identification of an object, a phenomenon or a situation is conducted by individuals and evaluated by them on the basis of their personal experience [Schnelle, 2010]. The experience obtained by people also determines the way they process words in the language. According to Libben [2008], words themselves do not have meanings; meanings are psychological properties of people. At the same time, in the community people can have the similar meaning because they share the same experience with others.

A study of individual perception of the surrounding world is one of the main research directions of contemporary linguistics. A linguistic personality («языковая личность») has become one of the sources of data collection because linguistic personalities are able to understand, reproduce, and create narratives/ texts which could be analyzed to learn the ways they perceive and categorize the world [Pimenova, 2012]. The word 'happiness' is an abstract one; it is not an object that can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched. People tend to believe in the existence of objects and subjects, if they can perceive them by their sense organs. The meaning of happiness cannot be clearly defined; it is subjectively motivated. Also, cultural background of respondents could impact the perception of the word. Then, definitions given to abstract words people of

different ages, genders, and culture can be determined by the ways they perceive, conceptualize, and categorize the surrounding world. Another issue which should be taken into consideration in such kind of research is whether respondents speak two or more languages because "in a person who is bicultural, certain concepts may be more relevant or more accessible in one cultural context than in the another" [Francis, 2005, p. 251]. Thus, subjective worldview, cultural background of an individual, and his/ her mastership of more than one language should be taken into consideration when analyzing the concept of HAPPINESS. At the same time, it should be noted that there is some general base that underlines its conceptualization. McMahon [2006] observed definitions of 'happiness' through history and came to the conclusion that the notion of happiness is basically constituted by good luck and fortune. She also noted that if previously people considered themselves dependent on external circumstances, now they perceive happiness as something they can pursue and catch.

There are few studies related to the conceptualization of happiness done on the basis of different languages or with respondents of different nationalities. Oishi, Graham, Kesebir, and Galinha [2013] investigated definitions of 'happiness' in 30 languages and confirmed MacMahon's [2006] provision that most cultures define 'happiness' as 'luck and fortune'. It was noted by them that nations which reside far from the equator are more inclined to rely on luck and fortune because of unfavorable climatic conditions. They also found out that speakers of American variant of English mostly define 'happiness' in reference to internal beneficial conditions while other nations rely on favorable external circumstances. A research by Chen [2010] explores metaphors of happiness in English and Chinese idioms. The article reveals the basic similarities and differences of the 'happiness' metaphors in two languages and concludes that "compared with English people, the Chinese people are relatively reserved and tend suppress their feelings" [Chen, 2010, p. 174], i.e., a feeling of happiness at the Chinese is inwardly directed, it is related to internal organs of the body, while the English people express their happiness outwardly, through their external body parts. Another research done by Uchida and Ogihara [2012] gives an extended review of works related to the issue of happiness and investigates cross-cultural differences in the meaning of happiness between European-American and East-Asian cultures. They found out that representatives of Western countries evaluate independence; that is why their meaning of happiness is related to human rights and freedom. Furthermore, their perception of happiness has a positive connotation, and it is connected with a sense of self-realization and personal achievement. In contrast, Asian people are interdependent because social relations play a big role in their life; that is why, their meaning of happiness is revealed through a harmony with the world and social balance. Their perception of happiness has both positive and negative meaning because Eastern people highly appreciate equality of status in the society: they prefer harmonious relations rather than a situation where some people are happier than others. The conclusion done by Uchida and Ogihara confirms Hofstede's [1984] provision on collective nature of Asian communities where parents care and support their children if they need their help.

On the basis of the Russian language, Vorkachev [2001; 2004] defines 'happiness' as a multidimensional mental category of bliss, joy, and satisfaction that consists of intellectual axiological evaluation and emotional assessment. To be more exact, he investigates the functions of the word "happiness" in poetic and religious context and describes linguistic and socio-linguistic characteristics of the concept it appeals to. Kövecses [1991; 2008] conducted a thorough analysis of the English word 'happiness' as a name for the concept of emotion which is constructed on the basis of conceptual metaphors, conceptual metonymies, and related concepts. Those three categories, in their turn, form prototypical cognitive models of HAPPINESS. Kövecses identifies three basic prototypes that constitute the notion of happiness, and they are the following: "happiness as an immediate response", "happiness as a value', and "happiness as being glad" [Kövecses, 2008, p. 21]. He acknowledges that there are many non-prototypical cognitive models, but the above mentioned prototypes mainly contribute to the meaning of 'happiness'.

3. Methodology

I conducted an experiment was to find out how young native speakers of Kazakh understand HAPPINESS. Eighteen respondents – 13 females and 5 males – of Kazakh nationality were asked to write an essay on "What is happiness?" The written essays were rather extended; their structure was mostly coherently and cohesively built up. By content, they were argumentative ones: the main ideas were provided with provision of support and lengthy explanation. The mean age of participants is 19.6. All of them are bilinguals: they know three languages at different levels – Kazakh, Russian, and English. To define the concept of HAPPINESS, a qualitative method of analysis was applied: the essays were re/read, the key words were identified, categorized, and codified. This article does not aim to analyze the differences in perception of happiness in relation to gender of participants and the language(s) they master.

4. Results

The experimental data show that three participants agreed that happiness is an individual phenomenon: "*Happiness is different thing for everyone*" (personal correspondence, April 2, 2015). Three respondents emphasized that happiness consists of some "*little, simple, and easy*" things: "*Sometimes simple things can make us happy. For example, flowers, sun shine, music, freedom, dance, etc.*" (personal correspondence, April 2, 2015). A number of these different things that make people happy varies from one participant to another, but, generally, seven respondents named one thing; two young people – two things, and the remaining nine participants named three things.

I am going to analyze the answers, first, of each group separately, and then all participants as a whole.

a) The first group comprises the respondents who named one thing:
   - FAMILY (support and appreciation) (one participant – 1P);
   - OTHER PEOPLE (relatives, close people, to make them happy) (2Ps)
   - LIFE (care of parents) (1P);
   - PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS/ DEVELOPMENT (realization of dreams) (2Ps);
   - HOBBY (watching movies, reading, singing, listening to music, and □raveling) (3Ps).

b) The second group comprises the respondents who named two things:
   - HOBBY (in connection with a family – going to the cinema/ elsewhere together) (1P);
   - HEALTH (ability to see) (1P).

c) The third group comprises the respondents who named three things:
   - FAMILY (5Ps);
   - HOBBY (6Ps);
   - PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS (study at the best university, learning new things) (2Ps);
   - FRIENDS (including pets) (4Ps)
   - FUN (holidays, vacation, joys such as sun, chocolate, ice-cream, sea, beach, new clothes, presents, etc.) (3Ps)
   - HEALTH (1P)
   - PEACE (clean sky) (1P)
   - IDLENESS/IRRESPONSIBILITY/FREEDOM (1P).

Generally, the following domains of HAPPINESS could be elaborated from the essays of participants of the experiment:

FAMILY (10Ps)

Four people placed a family on the first place: "*My family – this is what makes me happy person*" (personal correspondence, April 2, 2015). The participants love their family because it gives them

help/ support/ appreciation/ care/ positive feelings, understanding, and love. Also, one person considers that whatever they achieved in their life, she owes to her parents. One male thinks that life is happiness, and he relates the fact of his living to his parents: "*The fact that we live, from our first moment, from moment that we born, it is happiness for our parents*" (personal correspondence, April 2, 2015). Another female, along with other things, names a smile of her Mom and Dad to be happiness. Three respondents emphasize that they are happy when they spend time with their families. Two people include their family into the list of other or close people who make them happy or whom they want to make happy. Two girls reveal absolutely altruistic features by stating that "*making people happy makes me happy*" (personal correspondence, April 2, 2015). They like to see the reaction of people to the good things they do for them.

HOBBY (8 Ps)

Five respondents placed hobby on the first place, three – on the second, and one – on the third. There were mentioned different hobbies, but it is more important to learn the justification behind the participants' interests. They become happy when they engage with their hobbies because they 1) love doing it (2Ps); 2) learn new things and obtain new experience (4Ps); and 3) become relaxed, confident, and free (2Ps).

FRIENDS (5Ps)

Two people placed friends on the first place: one respondent emphasizes the importance of friends because he is not alone with them; another one mentions friends in connection with the family. Two people placed friends on the third place: one receives support from them; another one includes friends into his hobby of □raveling. Finally, one female writes about pets as her friends: "*Pets are our little friends, which sometimes do some funny things*" (personal correspondence, April 2, 2015).

PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT/ PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT (3Ps)

The achievement that all three respondents named was their study in the university: "*Today, I study at one of the best universities in my country, and it was my dream*" (personal correspondence, April 2, 2015). Two participants are happy that they realized their dreams. All three respondents mentioned that they develop themselves by engaging in students' organizations, managing their time, obtaining new experience, meeting interesting and smart people. One of them also wrote that she appreciates the possibility to choose subjects and teachers and take independent decisions.

FUN/ HAVING FUN (4Ps)

Two people mentioned vacation/ holiday because on holiday they have freedom, idleness, and fun. One person named several things under the title 'Joys', one female wrote about being happy in spring, her favorite season.

HEALTH (2Ps)

Two females named health: "*Be healthy is real happiness, and I wish it to everyone*" (personal correspondence, April 2, 2015). One of respondents has a bad vision: "*Being able to see everyone and everything – it may be regular for somebody, but for me it is happiness*" (personal correspondence, April 2, 2015). She links the ability to see well with the possibility of maintaining peace in the world: "*If people would be able to notice happiness in details as it is, there were less wars in the world and much more happy people*" (personal correspondence, April 2, 2015).

5. Discussion

The analysis showed that young native speakers of Kazakh mostly relate happiness to their families and spending time with them. There may be three reasons to that perception: 1) some of respondents are originally from other parts of the country; they stay in dormitories, and, consequently, miss their families; 2) most of respondents depend financially on their parents, even if they work, they cannot cover all other expenses because the study fee is comparatively high; 3) traditionally, there are close relations within the families and between relatives in the society. This confirms Hofstede's [1984] provision on collective nature of Asian society.

Another big group of participants is young people who try to seek their vocation by engaging in different hobbies and who enjoy exercising their creative abilities and talents. Though there were only three people who related happiness to their personal success, achievements, and development, this tendency may increase on the account of those who enjoy dealing with their hobbies. Such understanding of happiness is more relevant to representatives of Western culture [Uchuda & Ogihara, 2012], but due to globalization and contemporary means of communication young people of Kazakhstan may generate the idea of associating happiness with own success and achievements. On the whole, the analysis showed that in the perception of young native speakers of the Kazakh language happiness has a positive connotation. It did not reveal any negative feeling in relation to happiness which refutes Uchida and Ogihara's [2012] conclusions that Asian people have both positive and negative meaning of happiness due to their appreciation of equality in the society. This could be explained by the age of the sampled participants in the present research: the younger people are, the more positive outlook and perception they have.

The analysis also revealed that the conceptualization of HAPPINESS by young native speakers of Kazakh is mostly based on the frame of conceptual metaphors, such as:

HAPPINESS IS WARMTH *So, why spring makes me happy? Maybe, because it is a very warm time, fresh air, beautiful nature.*

HAPPINESS IS A VITALITY *First of all, life is happiness. The fact that we live, from our first moment, from moment we're born, it is happiness for our parents.*

HAPPINESS IS CONNECTION *For me happiness is being around my family, travelling, and hanging out with my friends.*

HAPPINESS IS SUPPORT a) *Family takes the first place in my life. If you have parents, it already means happiness.* b) *Also, of course, it's my friends. They also your support and people who know you well.*

HAPPINESS IS SECURITY *They never leave me in a difficult situation and, of course, they love me the way I am.*

HAPPINESS IS ACHIEVEMENT *Today I study at one of the best universities in my country, and it was my dream.*

There are four concepts that are constructed on the basis of conceptual metonymy:

SMILING FOR HAPPINESS *Happiness is the feeling that makes people smile. The smile of my Mom and Dad makes me unbelievably happy.*

DANCING FOR HAPPINESS *Second happiness for me is my ballroom dance sport training.*

LISTENING TO MUSIC FOR HAPPINESS *The thing that makes me happy, and, I think, generally most of people, is to listen to my favorite music. In my case, this band is "Coldplay".*

DOING SOMETHING PLEASANT FOR HAPPINESS *Making people happy makes me happy. I love seeing happy faces, and the thing I like the most is seeing the reactions of people.*

There are also structures based on related concepts:

HAPPINESS IS SATISFACTION *Studying at X University makes me happy. I always dreamed to study in university which I saw in the movies with big libraries, interesting lessons and enjoyable student life. Actually, I thought a lot about my future university, and X is a choice I will never regret about.*

HAPPINESS IS PLEASURE *Recently, I began to notice one interesting thing. That is – that I feel satisfied and I have a great pleasure to watch how people smile and laugh.*

HAPPINESS IS JOY/ ENJOYMENT a) *The third happiness for me is some joys of life, like a sun, chocolate, ice-cream, sea, beach, new clothes, presents, and something like this.* b) *To sum up, the one can realize what real happiness is, when he or she do or see what makes them enjoyed.*

HAPPINESS IS PEACE *Clean sky is happiness for me. I am very proud that in my country, we have the most important – piece!*

HAPPINESS IS INNOVATION *Things that make me happy are different, but they have common characteristics, this is learning new, in practice.*

HAPPINESS IS HEALTH *Being healthy is real happiness, and I wish it to everyone.*
HAPPINESS IS FREEDOM *Next one is being free from any responsibility.*
HAPPINESS IS EXPERIENCE *Watching movies makes me happy because with the help of it, I get new experience, widen my knowledge horizons, and fix my mistakes.*

Some of the above mentioned concepts replicate the ones elaborated by Kövecses [1991; 2008], but there are also different ones that serve as a characterization of the specific perception of happiness by young native speakers of Kazakh. As for prototypical cognitive models, the concept of happiness can be described as "HAPPINESS IS BEING GLAD" and "HAPPINESS IS MAKING GLAD". As for the other prototypes – "HAPPINESS AS AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE" and "HAPPINESS AS A VALUE" [Kövecses, 1991; Kövecses, 2008], they can be indirectly inferred from the frames contextualized by the participants of the study.

It was mentioned above that the Kazakhs believed that happiness is awarded by Providence; the God decides whom to grant with luck and fortune [Kajdar, 2009]. Young native speakers of Kazakh, reversely, think that they are masters of their life and can build up a happy life the way they understand it; as one of participants wrote – "*In 21st century people should be happy because your happiness depends on yourself, and all new technologies can't help you. But each person should use the given opportunity to help for yourself and be happy!*" (personal correspondence, April 2, 2015). This statement confirms McMahon's [2006] observation that contemporary people perceive happiness as something that can be controlled, regardless of external conditions.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have investigated the conceptual base of HAPPINESS in the perception of native speakers of the Kazakh language. Eighteen young people wrote essays on the topic of happiness and shared their ways of perceiving this notion. An analysis of participants' papers shows that young people perceive the notion of happiness in different ways, and mostly relate it to being a part of a bigger community, like family, close friends, and university peers. They receive support and understanding from their nearest environment, and they exert the similar feelings in return; this reciprocal respect, encouragement, and love make them happy. The participants are also proud of their achievements; they are engaged in various activities, and like doing many things that bring them satisfaction, pleasure, and happiness. The respondents are also concerned with serious issues, like health problems and global situation; they express their appreciation of the peaceful life they live in, and possibility to live the life they experience at present.

On the whole, the analysis of experimental data have revealed the ways young Kazakh people conceptualize HAPPINESS; it showed that conceptualization is mostly based on conceptual metaphors and related notions; though, there were examples of conceptual metonymies constituting the frame of happiness. The analysis has also showed that young native speakers of Kazakh have a positive perception of the notion of HAPPINESS.

To sum up, the method used and the results received in my study open up perspectives for further analysis of linguistic data from various languages which will reveal the key properties of the concepts most valuable for different cultures and correspondingly stimulate a deeper insight into national worldviews.

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