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## COGNITIVE APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF DISTRESS IN ENGLISH MEDIA DISCOURSE

The article deals with the systematization of cognitive approaches to the study of emotions and ways of their application to the study of distress in English media discourse. The prototypical and situational nature of emotional state of distress is grounded in the frames of the theory of prototypes and the theory of conceptual metaphor. The processual / phasal rather than static character of the distress is discovered by having analyzed the partial set of categories through the definitions in lexicographic sources and distribution of the lexeme *distress* in word combinations taken from a corpus of American English COCA. Methodology to the study of the conceptual structure of distress is developed basing on the terminology of cognitive-psychological approach. It presupposes the reconstruction of the Prototypical Situation Model of Distress and Context Models of Distress. In the paper the connection between the forwarded proposal and the experience of application of the theory of field to the study of emotion concepts is drawn. Beside lexical items, conventional figurative linguistic evidence as well as non-conventional conceptual metaphors take part in the process of restoring the conceptual structure of distress.

**Key words:** distress, prototype, situation model, context model, metaphor.

**Formulation of a research problem and its significance.** State-of-the-art development of the theory of emotions needs to be studied through the prism of natural language which allows a wide range of linguistic means to verbalize emotions. Here cognitive factors should be taken into account as they predetermine the appearance of emotions in a causal-consequential chain.

**Analysis of the research into this problem.** Theories and methods of cognitive linguistic paradigm were successfully applied to the study of emotion concepts such as JOY (Yu. Yu. Shamaeva), SADNESS (L. O. Trushkova), FEAR (O. O. Borysov), ANGER (Z. Kövecses) and others. The linguistic analysis to the study of distress was partly committed by means of a scripts technique (A. Wierzbicka) and a conceptual metaphor approach (Ph. King). Consequently, we assume that the effectiveness of the theory of prototypes (E. Rosh, J. Lakoff) and theory of conceptual metaphor (J. Lakoff, M. Johnson, Z. Kövecses) needs to be implemented into our research too. Insights of cognitivists into the problem of categorization of emotions included identification of the role distress fulfils in the system of emotion lexicon (J. R. Hobbs, A. Gordon, M. Belinda, et al.). These achievements prove that experience of distress, its image schemas and influence should be further studied from the cognitive as well as communicative perspectives.

**The goal and the specific tasks of the article.** The goal of the article is to confirm the application of the theory of prototypes and theory of conceptual metaphor into the research of emotional state of distress in English media discourse. The goal presupposes fulfilling the task to distinguish particular methods in the frames of cognitive approach we tend to apply to the study of distress.

**Statement regarding the basic material of the research and the justification of the results obtained.** The object of our research is distress which refers to a basic emotion – an inborn neural programme and, thus, empowers the person with energy and influences the cognitive and behavioral sphere [6]. Distress is also regarded by pathologist H. Selye as psychological state of emotional tension characterized by high degree of expressiveness, intensity, and duration [14]. Distress is defined as a mental ‘pain’ in contrast to physical pain by M. Minsky [11, 73]. Scientists claim that emotion is strongly connected with the human cognition and is triggered by the situations and their evaluation. Concerning this statement, we advance a hypothesis that distress is a hybrid emotion, rendered into

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Ukrainian as *gore-strazhdannya* [grief-suffering]; it is represented in the consciousness of English by a certain cognitive scenario; it modifies the communicative behavior; it is verbally realized in media discourse and; it acts in a process of contemporary communicative manipulation by the mass media. Cognitive representation of distress is supposed to be held in terms of the prototype theory started with the philosophy of Wittgenstein, who stated that situations and mostly evident semantic concepts which come from these situations are expressed and controlled by language (Wittgenstein, 1953). The theory was further advanced by E. Rosh who has discovered ‘prototype effects’ and the ‘basic level’ of categorization (Rosh, 1978).

According to the cognitive theory by Ch. Brochman, “emotions are compound cognitive states comprising a representation of the body and a representation of the emotion-inspiring situation” [4, 24].



Representation of the body, namely facial expressions of emotions have universal foundation across cultures (Ch. Darwin, P. Ekman, J. Russel), though, other facets of experiencing emotions can be culturally varied [8, 242]. People judge facial expression of sadness which is regarded as a part of a compound emotional state of distress in different cultures in a similar way – corners of the mouth are down. Prototypical expression of distress is cry (Kagan *et al.*, 1974). Experience of distress is categorized and conceptualized and the knowledge of the emotion is represented as the emotion concept DISTRESS. Having modeled the cognitive scenarios for the number of emotion concepts, A. Wierzbicka differentiated distress from the other emotions by its present orientation «something bad is happening NOW», which presupposes a current situation of distress [15, 64–65]. One of internationally recognized symbols of emotion-eliciting situation (e. g. dangerous emergency situation of a wrecked ship) is *distress call* or *Morse code distress signal*– *SOS*.

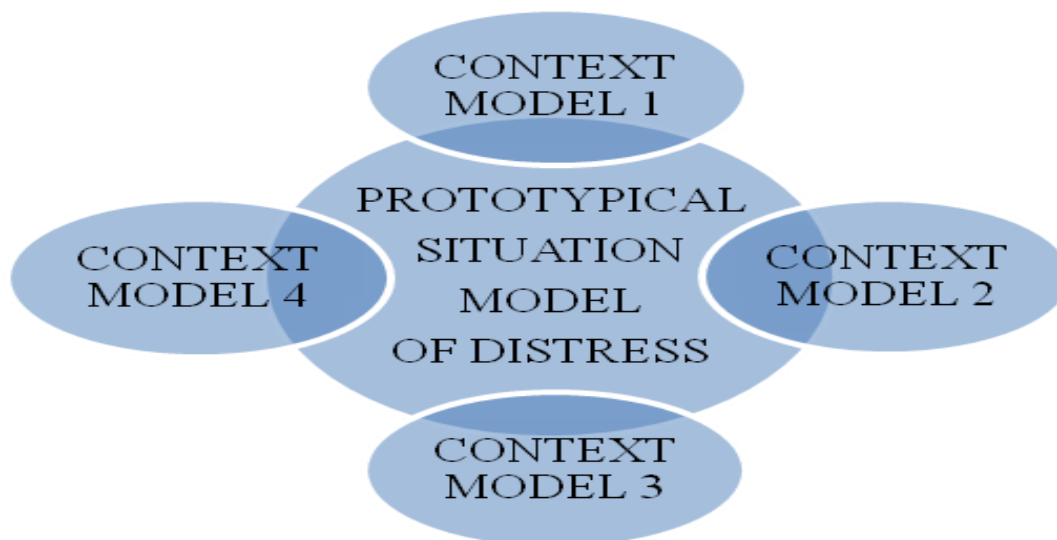
Considering the cognitive theory, worked out by Andrew Ortony, Gerald Clore, and Allan Collins, distress is viewed as an emotion type which represents the group of emotions – valenced reactions to the consequences of the event focusing on consequences for self. Distress is in binary opposition to joy and possesses the categorical / type specification ‘displeased about some undesirable event’ [12, 87]. We have discovered that distress verbal expression is predetermined by certain events or situations which form its basic psychological grounds. According to the evolutionary theory of emotions by R. Plutchik, the prototypical undesirable event to the inner state of distress / sadness is loss of mother which disturbs the state of infant’s equilibrium and is perceived as abandonment [13, 347].

So, loss is the basic psychological factor of inner experience of the distress. Amongst the different types of losses that define the types of distress, like loss of health, stable physical condition denotes physical distress, respiratory distress; loss of mental equilibrium-psychological distress, depressive distress, mental distress; loss of religious, intellectual, cultural comfort – spiritual distress. *Emotional distress* is distinguished referring to the loss of emotional equilibrium. Different kinds of losses are evoked by numerous events which appear to become a reason in the emergence of distress. The events

experiencing of which causes physical, emotional, psychological distress, or harm are called traumatic. *Traumatic events* threaten a person's physical and emotional stability by the following situations involved: death of a friend, family member, or pet, divorce, fear, hospitalization, loss of trust, pain, physical injury or illness, separation from parents (perceived abandonment), terrorism or mass disaster, violence or war, etc [7].

Individual experience of distress is conceptualized into quanta of structured knowledge which is of two types according to Putnam (1975): "stereotypical knowledge" and "experts' knowledge" [5, 2658]. We assume that stereotypical knowledge represents a minimum set of data about the skeletal emotion scenario *cause-emotion-response* [9], where the *cause* comprises the typical traumatic events or situations which evoke emotional state of distress. Experts' knowledge defines in its turn the extension or contraction of this scenario in sociolinguistic context and its usage in media discourse. These two types of knowledge about emotional distress can be reconstructed with situation model and context model in the frameworks of T. A. van Dijk's cognitive-psychological approach. Situation model / cognitive model is a type of knowledge representation which accumulates personal experience, intentions, feelings and emotions of people about certain events and situations [15, 63]. Situation models are integrated structures of individual experiences in a form of matrices which get activated in an appropriate situation. The categorical structural setup of a situation model includes the categories involving setting (time, location, environment, conditions), participants in various roles, and events or actions. Each category presupposes a modifier category to specify a subjective evaluation [15, 65]. Taking into consideration the structural organization of a situation model, we put forward the task to restore a Prototypical Situation Model of Distress (PSMD) by which we tend to research the typical script stored in sender's memory about the situation, bodily movements, expressions, and physiological reactions typical of this emotion with the focus on the events, their setting and experiencer of distress. Integrity of situation model into the communicative process is fulfilled with the help of context models containing information retrieved from a situation model partly or in full [15, 66]. By the term context model we understand in a broad sense the application of stereotypical knowledge about distress and its scenario into the sphere of a real life communication with the help of media.

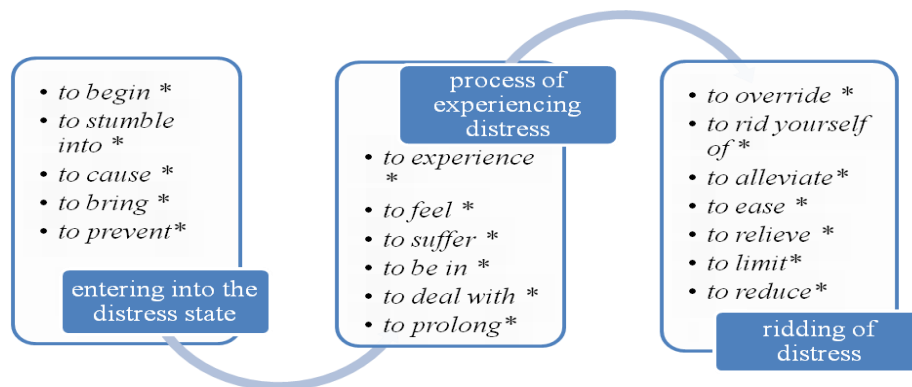
Thus, context model owns except the possible typical set of information about cause-emotion-result additional social parameters of interaction: goals of the participants, type of situation involved into the communication focusing on reaction. For this reason, we suggest that PSMD is transformed into multiple contextual models in media discourse by the set of communicative strategies and tactics applied in accordance with a certain communicative purpose:



From cognitive-semantic perspective the conceptual structure is of a hierarchic character and consists of nucleus and periphery making up the nominative field of the concept [3]. The nominative field is constituted of lexical items that nominate and describe the concept. Pursuing the model of conceptual structure of fear developed by O. O. Borysov, nucleus includes distinctive features of emotion, its perceptual image, and universal evaluation correspondingly to the conceptual, figurative and significant components of a concept distinguished by V. I. Karasyk (2002); periphery of conceptual structure consists of additional features, associative image, and indistinctive evaluation of emotion [1]. Adopting the mentioned methods of scientists to our research objective, we offer the idea that the typical / categorical / nuclear characteristics of distress compose a PSMD, and the non-typical / indistinctive or peripheral characteristics make up its contextual variations.

Significant component of the emotion concept DISTRESS contains a universally established negative evaluation of the emotion in the consciousness of English. But the indistinctive/non-trivial evaluation of distress can be studied from the communicative process.

Lexicographic sources allow us to gather the linguistic evidence about some of the categorical features of distress. We disclosed the general definition which determines distress as a feeling of extreme unhappiness, great physical or mental pain, a state of desperate need, danger for ships and aircrafts or suffering caused by poverty (LDOCE, Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary, The Free Dictionary by Farlex, etc.). Distress features are revealed by having analyzed the distributive relations of attributive, predicative/verbal, adverbial, prepositional word combinations fixed in dictionaries and COCA (newspapers and magazines). Category of quantity describes the measure and intensity of the emotion in attributive distribution: 1) high level: *acute, severe, deep, intense distress, extreme, great, serious, major, desperate, sore, distress*; 2) lower level: *mild, subtle, less distress*; duration and frequency: *sustained, prolonged, short-term, everyday distress*. Category of quality specifies the nature of the emotion: *explainable, evident, obvious distress* – reference to intellectual sphere, *unbearable* – reference to physical sphere, *awful, isolated, inconsolable distress*. Verbal distribution represents the category of phase and shows the volitional influence of the person who experiences distress:



Thus, we conclude that distress possesses some of the categorical features as intensity, duration, frequency. Nature of emotion extends to the intellectual as far as physical sphere. The category of phase depicts the processual rather than static character of emotion.

In the frames of the theory of conceptual metaphor, various aspects of emotion concepts such as intensity, cause, control, and other are denoted by the figurative words and expressions that belong to the subgroup of the descriptive terms, the latter appear to construct far wealthier category of emotion terms than that of expressive terms [9]. The distressing experience may be realized in language with the conceptual metaphors – an understanding of one domain (here, the domain of feelings) by the use of another domain (the physical domain). For example, the word combination *isolated distress* actualizes the conceptual metaphor DISTRESS IS LONELINESS. Word combination, in which distress fulfills the function of an adjective, reveal the conceptual metaphor as DISTRESS IS LIVING BEING: *a crow distress call*. The following metaphorical expressions are manifestations of conceptual metaphors: DISTRESS IS PLAY (*to rehearse the distress*), DISTRESS IS ACTION (*distress is running high about the country's future direction*), DISTRESS IS HINDRANCE (*I really felt like I was up against a wall – in difficult situation, in a crucial or critical position, especially one in which defeat or failure seems imminent*), DISTRESS IS MADNESS (*wild, frantic sadness*), DISTRESS IS LONELINESS (*isolated distress*).

Conventional figurative language reveals the mental mappings which produce prototype effects, typical examples and social stereotypes [10]. One of the like social stereotypes is an archetype *damsel in distress* which is also referred to as a TV trope. Damsel in distress is usually a beautiful woman captured by a monster or villain, desperately ill, or suffering any number of terrible fates where she requires a hero to be rescued. This archetype reveals the initial situation of danger and suffering of a person who is in distress and therefore is regarded as a prototype. Conventional figurative linguistic evidence beside the lexical items which set up the emotion lexicon of distress participates in restoring the PSMD in our research paper.

By analyzing conceptual metaphors, Z. Kövecses modeled a prototypical scenario for anger constituted by the following components: offending event→anger→attempted control→loss of control→act of retribution [9, 23–24]. According to the type of discourse this scenario may vary and new conceptual metaphors may appear. This script technique can have its variations, though, depending on the type of discourse and emotion analyzed. It was employed to build a prototypical scenario for anger in the cinema discourse singling out the required phases: cause of anger–anger–detente, and optional ones: attempted control of anger–retribution–argumentation [2, 48–50]. There are prominent non-prototypical cases, though, e.g.in the scenario of anger: successful control, or insatiable anger. Thus, we presume that figurative linguistic expressions of distress could become a wealthy source to discover both categorical and associative features of the emotion.

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** The processual and prototypic character of the emotional state of distress confirms the significance of the theory of prototypes and theory of conceptual metaphor to be applied to the study of distress. Thus, we suggest that the latter should be held in terms of situation. Accordingly, we propose that the conceptual structure of distress based on stereotypical knowledge is reproduced as a Prototypical Situation Model of Distress and its peripheral part based on experts' knowledge is shaped into contextual models. Conventional figurative language reveals the cultural stereotypes of English and adds to the prototypical part of the conceptual structure while the non-conventional conceptual metaphors disclose associative features about the experience of distress.

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**Вербицька Анна. Когнітивні підходи дослідження дистресу у англomовному медіа дискурсі.** Проаналізовано й обґрунтовано когнітивні підходи до дослідження емоцій, а також верифіковано застосування теорії прототипів та теорії концептуальної метафори для дослідження дистресу в англomовному медіадискурсі. Виявлено прототипну та ситуаційну природу емоційного стану дистресу. Встановлено фазовий / процесуальний характер переживання дистресу шляхом часткового встановлення набору категорій дистресу на основі лексикографічних джерел та дистрибуції лексеми *distress* у словосполученнях з корпусу контекстуальних ужитків американського варіанта англійської мови СОСА. Розроблено методологію дослідження концептуальної структури дистресу із застосуванням категорійного апарату когнітивно-психологічного підходу з пропозицією подальшої побудови прототипної моделі ситуації дистресу та контекстуальних моделей дистресу на основі лінгвістичних свідчень в англomовному медіадискурсі. Проведено зв'язок між запропонованими моделями та досвідом застосування польової методики у дослідження емоційних концептів. Визначено роль конвенційних та неконвенційних концептуальних метафор у реконструкції концептуальної структури дистресу.

**Ключові слова:** дистрес, прототип, ситуаційна модель, контекстуальна модель, метафора.

**Вербицкая Анна. Когнитивные подходы к исследованию дистресса в англоязычном медиадискурсе.** Проанализированы и обоснованы когнитивные подходы к исследованию эмоций, а также верифицировано применение теории прототипов и теории концептуальной метафоры для исследования дистресса в англоязычном медиадискурсе. Выявлена прототипная и ситуационная природа эмоционального состояния дистресса. Установлен фазовый / процессуальный характер переживания дистресса путем частичного установления набора категорий дистресса на основе лексикографических источников и дистрибуции лексемы *distress* в словосочетаниях с корпуса контекстуальных употреблений американского варианта английского языка СОСА. Разработана методология исследования концептуальной структуры дистресса с применением категорийного аппарата когнитивно-психологического подхода с предложением дальнейшего построения прототипной модели ситуации дистресса и контекстуальных моделей дистресса на основе лингвистического материала в англоязычном медиадискурсе. Проведена связь между предлагаемыми моделями и опытом применения полевой методики в исследованиях эмоциональных концептов. Определена роль конвенционных и неконвенционных концептуальных метафор в реконструкции концептуальной структуры дистресса.

**Ключевые слова:** дистресс, прототип, ситуационная модель, контекстуальная модель, метафора.