

## THE MEANS OF EXPRESSION OF THE CONCEPTUAL-COGNITIVE FRAME “WOMAN”

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**Abstract.** This article presents a study of the means of expression of the conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman”. It contains a logical-semantic classification of the attributive-nominative constructions with the nuclear lexeme “woman”, as well as the analysis of the quantitative data. The article is a case study of the examples taken from the British National Corpus of the English language that uses concordance methods in the framework of cognitive linguistics, compositionality theory and gender linguistics.

**Keywords:** conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman”; attributive-nominative constructions; means of expression of the frame “Woman”.

### Introduction

In this article, we set an aim to investigate the conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman”. In the process of study the following tasks have been set: to classify the attributive-nominative constructions with the nuclear lexeme “woman” in accordance with the logical-semantic principle and to analyze the quantitative data received in the process of classification.

The conceptual-cognitive frame is the most important unit of conceptualization. The frame theory of organization of conceptual knowledge began to take shape in the second half of the twentieth century thanks to the works of American linguist Charles Fillmore. Frame theory of knowledge organization has been studied by such scholars as Charles Fillmore [1-4], B. Atkins [5], T.A. Van Dijk [6], M. Minsky [7], as well as by such domestic scholars as E.S. Kubryakova, V.Z. Demyankov et al. [8], Z.D. Popova and I.A. Sternin [9], A.P. Babushkin, Yu.V. Suvzhanskaya [10] and others.

Frame as the structure of knowledge has been analyzed from different perspectives: structural organization, logical-semantic content, principles of functioning and others. In this paper for the first time we set an aim to analyze the means of expression of the conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman” from the logical-semantic perspective on the material of the examples of attributive-nominative phrases with the nuclear lexeme “woman” taken from the British National Corpus of the English language.

Originally, the term “frame” was used in the description of language structures. In his early works Charles Fillmore explored transformational syntax, syntactic frames and, in particular, the distributional properties of

verbs [1]. Then the term “frame” was used for the description of semantic valence of verbs and case frames [2]. Later, the scientist came to the understanding of frame as a cognitive structure fixed in language.

Charles Fillmore himself, the founder of the frame theory in linguistics, interprets the concept of a frame differently at different times: as a system of selection of linguistic resources - lexical units, grammar and linguistic categories [3]; as a case frame in the structure of consciousness [2]; and later (cognitive interpretation) as a special unified structure of presentation of knowledge or experience schematization [4]. In his later work the scientist interprets frames as cognitive structures, knowledge of which is “presupposed for the concepts encoded by the words” [5].

T.A. Van Dijk and M. Minsky [6, 7] think that frame is a structure containing generalized information about the stereotypical situation. According to T.A. Van Dijk frames are elements of social memory that contain potentially possible and typical information associated with the concept within a particular culture.

To our point of view the most complete definition of frame in the Russian linguistics is given in the “Concise Dictionary of cognitive terms” by E.S. Kubryakova and V.Z. Demyankov “the frame is a set of assumptions about the structure of a formal language for expressing knowledge as an alternative for semantic networks, or for the predicate calculus; a set of entities, that according to the supposition of the researcher exist in the described world (metaphysical interpretation of the concept)” [8: 187]. Besides frame is an “organization of ideas, stored in the memory (of a human and / or a computer), as well as the organization of processing and inference operating over this storage (heuristic or implementational interpretation)” [Ibid], and also the result of such organization: a multi-component concept that is conceived in the integrity of its components as volumetric representation [9], which is stored in memory, or is created in it if needed from the components that the memory contains [10].

It is obvious that the frame perception is typical to the complex phenomena of reality, reflected in the language, for which hierarchy in the structure is possible. So the phenomenon of a “woman” in the English language consciousness is fixed through the complex multi-level conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman”.

### **Methods and procedures**

The conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman” is a typical cognitive category, information about which is known because the represented situation is typical and due to the arising associative relations as well as the presence of certain experience of the individual in the perception of women. Conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman” is a structured high-order category, within which we can see a hierarchy of its constituent smaller components.

First, it should be noted that the conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman” has a dual plane of expression: primary and secondary, i.e. it can be objectified through the means of primary and secondary nomination. The primary plane of expression of the conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman” is represented by a set of attribute-nominative constructions with the nuclear lexeme “woman”. The study of these structures allows to shed light on the qualitative characteristics of the slots of the upper, middle and lower level of the conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman”. The top slots will be filled with the most important information in the perception of the image of a women in the English language. As the described components become less important, the slots will become less marked out in the mind, gradually descending to the lower level.

Attributive-nominative phrases with the lexeme “woman” are represented by the following structures: Adj. + N., N. + N., Part. I + N. and Part. II + N.

More than 6 200 examples of attributive-nominative phrases with the lexeme “woman” have been provided from the British National Corpus of English using the method of continuous sampling. These examples have been classified according to the logical and semantic parameters. The classification contains the information about the number of examples in each category and the ratio of examples of each semantic category to the total number of examples.

The means of expression of conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman” are distributed according to the following qualifiers: physical characteristics, mental characteristics, sociocultural parameters and other characteristics.

### **1. Physical characteristics:**

#### **1.1. Age.**

Adj. + N.: [young 971; old 785; older 163; elderly 126; younger 35; 26-year-old 15; mature 13; adult 8; 21-year-old 8; 44-year-old 7; 73-year-old 7; 87-year-old 6 etc.] woman.

Part. II + N.: [middle-aged 76; grown 24 etc.] woman.

#### **1.2. Appearance.**

##### **1.2.1. General appearance, appearance evaluation.**

Adj. + N.: beautiful 134; pretty 48; attractive 36; lovely 23; handsome 16; rag 7; plain 7; sexy 7; ugly 6; elegant 4; Part. I + N.: naked 28 good-looking 11; well-dressed 4; fine-looking 2; exhausted-looking 2 etc.] woman.

##### **1.2.2. Height, size, peculiarities of body type etc.**

Adj. + N.: [little 66; fat 52; tall 32; big 28; large 23; small 14; thin 11; gaunt 11; dumpy 10; plump 10; tiny 9; stout 8; enormous 6 etc.] woman.

##### **1.2.3. Presence or absence of hair, hair colour, shape of the face.**

Adj. + N.: [pale 5; grey 5; bald 3; Part. II + N.: dark-haired 21; grey-haired 13; white-haired 8; red-haired 6; blonde-haired 4; red-headed 3; round-faced 3].

#### **1.3. Physical states, physical abilities.**

Adj. + N.: [pregnant 71; dead 57; strong 20; blind 17; sick 14; deaf 13; healthy 8; frail 7; unconscious 6; sickly 5 etc.] woman.

Part. I + N.: [dying 13; menstruating 10; weeping 8; thinking 7; smiling 6; searching 5 etc.] woman.

Part. II + N.: [disabled 17; murdered 13; liberated 8; injured 6; infected 5; raped 5 etc.] woman.

## **2. Mental characteristics.**

### **2.1. Character, behavior.**

Adj. + N.: [strange 24; honest 11; independent 10; kind 9; hard 8; hysterical 8; fancy 8; passionate 8; tough 7; brave 7; motherly 7; dangerous 6 etc.] woman.

Part. II + N.: [scarlet 19; fallen 14; determined 11; wicked 9; strong-minded 6; devoted 3; reserved 2 etc.] woman.

### **2.2. Mental abilities, knowledge.**

Adj. + N.: [wise 29; mad 27; stupid 18; silly 17; clever 13; sensible 11; crazy 6; resourceful 6; capable 6; foolish 4; reasonable 4 etc.] woman.

### **2.3. Emotional states and feelings.**

Adj. + N.: [unhappy 9; happy 7; sad 5; distraught 5; cheerful 4; anxious 4 etc.] woman.

Part. II + N.: [wretched 8; terrified 7; frightened 2 etc.] woman.

## **3. Sociocultural parameters.**

### **3.1. Nationality and geographical origin, race, religion.**

#### **3.1.1. Nationality and geographical origin.**

Adj. + N.: [American 47; British 34; Asian 20; French 20; Indian 16; English 16; local 13; Gypsy 10; German 9; Gipsy 9; Jewish 8; etc.] woman.

#### **3.1.2. Race.**

Adj. + N.: [black 65; white 52; dark 10 etc.] woman.

#### **3.1.3. Religion.**

Adj. + N.: [Catholic 15; Christian 8; Muslim 6; Protestant 3 etc.] woman.

### **3.2. Social position, status, public attitudes.**

#### **3.2.1. Marital status, presence / absence of a partner, children.**

Adj. + N.: [single 50; lone 12; childless 5; free 4 etc.] woman.

Part. II + N.: [married 175; divorced 11; unmarried 10; widowed 6 etc.] woman.

#### **3.2.2. Financial condition.**

Adj. + N.: [poor 87; rich 11; wealthy 9; richest 8; wealthiest 2 etc.] woman.

#### **3.2.3. Class affiliation, the presence / absence of work, the attitude of society.**

Adj. + N.: [respectable 10; successful 5; famous 5; celibate 5 etc.] woman.

N. + N.: [middle-class 6; working-class 6; slave 3 etc.] woman.

Part. II + N.: [employed 2; marked 2; unemployed 2 etc.] woman.

### **3.3. Occupation, scope of activity.**

Adj. + N.: [scarlet 19; busy 10; professional 10; fancy 8; daily 6; political 3 etc.] woman.

N. + N.: [career 31; peasant 24; business 10; police 7 etc.] woman.

Part. I + N.: [working 22; cleaning 14; hard-working 4 etc.] woman.

### **3.4. Belonging to the certain period of time, epoch.**

Adj. + N.: [modern 19; Victorian 3 etc.] woman.

## **4. Other characteristics.**

### **4.1. General subjective evaluation.**

Adj. + N.: [good 56; real 31; nice 24; bad 20; ideal 20; remarkable 20; wonderful 19; fine 17; right 13; desirable 12; extraordinary 12; unfortunate 11; ordinary 10; perfect 9; wrong 9; typical 6 etc.] woman.

### **4.2. Other characteristics.**

Adj. + N.: [new 33; different 17; individual 11; individual 11; particular 8; mere 5; etc.] woman.

The generalized information about the number of examples of each category in relation to the total number of examples is given in the following table:

**Analysis of the quantitative data from the logical-semantic classification**

Parameter	Number of examples	Ratio to the total number of examples, %
<b>1. Physical characteristics</b>		
1.1. Age	2 382	38,25
1.2. Appearance	723	11,63
1.2.1. General appearance, appearance evaluation	359	5,77
1.2.2. Height, size, peculiarities of body type etc.	302	4,86
1.2.3. Presence or absence of hair, hair colour, shape of the face	108	1,74
1.3. Physical states, physical abilities	408	6,56
<b>2. Mental characteristics</b>		
2.1. Character, behaviour	391	6,29
2.2. Mental abilities, knowledge	192	3,09
2.3. Emotional states and feelings	68	1,09
<b>3. Sociocultural parameters</b>		
3.1. Nationality and geographical origin, race, religion	612	9,84
3.1.1. Nationality and geographical origin	452	7,27
3.1.2. Race	127	2,04
3.1.3. Religion	33	0,53
3.2. Social position, status, public attitudes	472	7,59
3.2.1. Marital status, presence / absence of a partner, children	274	4,41
3.2.2. Financial condition	119	1,91
3.2.3. Class affiliation, the presence / absence of work, the attitude of society	79	1,27
3.3. Occupation, scope of activity	206	3,31
3.4. Belonging to the certain period of time, epoch	24	0,39
<b>4. Other characteristics</b>		
4.1. General subjective evaluation	456	7,33
4.2. Other characteristics	169	2,72

## **Results**

The semantic analysis of the adjuncts, describing woman, showed that the most important characteristics of a woman in the English language consciousness are age: 2 382 examples, which is 38.25% of the total number of examples and appearance 723 (11.63%). Age is obviously a domineering physical characteristic. Evaluation and height, size, peculiarities of body type etc. are domineering in the description of appearance with 359 (5.77%) and 302 (4.86%) examples respectively. The second largest group after the physical characteristics is the semantic group called “socially significant characteristics”. The most numerous subcategories in this category are: nationality and geographical origin, race, religion - 612 examples (9.84%) and social position, status, public attitudes 472 examples (7.59%), of which the subgroup “matrimonial status»” contains more than half of the examples. Psychological characteristics, such as character and behaviour with 391 example (6.29%), mental abilities, knowledge - 192 (3.09%) and emotional states and feelings - 68 (1.09%) are the least numerous among the examples of the primary means of nomination. The subcategory “General subjective evaluation” contains a large number of examples too with 456 examples that account for 7.33% of the total number.

## **Conclusion**

The conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman” is a complex element of culture, fixed in the language. it is commonly recognized that cultural concepts are formed in the history of the nation, fixated in the people’s experience and are stored in the language itself [11]. The logical-semantic analysis of the attributive-nominative phrases with nuclear lexeme “woman” that has been carried out in this article allowed to show the complexity and multi-level structure of the conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman”. The analysis of the means of expression of conceptual-cognitive frame “Woman” leads to the conclusion that the most important parameters in its structure from the point of view of the English language consciousness are age and appearance, as well as socially significant characteristics and general subjective evaluation.

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