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**РАЗГРАНИЧЕНИЕ ПАРОНИМИЧНЫХ ЛЕКСЕМ
КАК ДЕЙСТВИЕ КОГНИТИВНОГО МЕХАНИЗМА
ПРОФИЛИРОВАНИЯ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ ПАРОНИМОВ
CONTINUAL // CONTINUOUS)**

Аннотация. Статья посвящена проблеме разграничения лексем, составляющих паронимическую оппозицию. Предлагается когнитивный подход к данному вопросу – через анализ механизма профилирования определенных характеристик на фоне общего концептуального содержания.

Ключевые слова: пароним, когнитивный подход, профиль, база, концептуальное содержание.

**THE DIFFERENTIATION OF PARONYMIC LEXEMES AS
AN ACTION OF THE COGNITIVE MECHANISM OF
PROFILING (ILLUSTRATED BY THE PARONYMS
CONTINUAL // CONTINUOUS)**

Abstract. The article is devoted to the problem of differentiating lexemes that make up a paronymic opposition. A cognitive approach to the issue is proposed – by means of analyzing the mechanism of profiling of certain characteristics within similar conceptual content.

Key words: paronym, cognitive approach, profile, base, conceptual meaning.

In everyday life when we communicate we are obliged to use words plentifully, even prolifically. It is hardly surprising that when we communicate we have our words mixed occasionally. We say one word when we mean another, half-comprehend or misunderstand words, and encounter unfamiliar and ‘hard’ words daily. We confuse words. The differentiation of confusable words, or paro-

nyms, which are phonetically similar and semantically related, remains a topical issue in present day linguistic research [3, p. 76].

In this article we propose a cognitive approach to the problem of paronymy, which, in our opinion, allows us to distinguish frequently confused words that sound alike.

R. Langacker, one of the founders of cognitive linguistics movement, proposed the terms profile, base, domain to specify the figure-ground relations in the semantics of language units. Semantics of a linguistic expression is compared with a sketch of an object depicting some of its typical aspects. The image of a referent construed in the semantics of a language unit is uncertain and becomes determinate only in a broader context. R. Langacker calls this broader context, or immediate conceptual content, evoked by a verbal expression, the base. The elements or features of the base that are advanced to the forefront by the expression are defined as the profile [5; 7]. Drawing distinction between the base and the domain the linguists point out that the domain usually presupposes a wider and more abstract sphere of background knowledge denoted by the conceptual content while the base is the content of a concept, regularly referred to and activated by a language unit [7, p.62; 10, p.195].

This idea is also traced in the works of J. Taylor. In his opinion, the linguistic item acquires meaning through profiling or highlighting certain part or structure in the corresponding conceptual domain [11, p.84].

The object of the investigation is adjectival paronymic pair *continual* // *continuous*. These paronyms not only conform to the basic sight-sound-sense criterion but also meet all six criteria of defining words as confusables described in detail by A. Room in the introduction to his Dictionary of Confusibles [9, p.3-4]. The units look alike (1), sound alike (2), have the same number of syllables (3), are identically stressed (4), are both adjectives (5) and have no stylistic labels (6).

It should be noted that cognitive perspective to comprehending paronyms presupposes not individual conception about this or that linguistic unit but the experience of all language speakers registered in the language and revealed primarily in the syntagmatic characteristics of the unit [2, p.95].

The analysis of cognitive context of the given paronymic units enables us to conclude that both of these lexemes can be combined with similar nouns, for example, *continual/continuous rain*, *continual/continuous arguments*, *continual/continuous battles*, *continual/continuous noise*. Though in these collocations the given confusables may seem interchangeable, the word combinations are not synonymous and can be clearly differentiated by means of the profiling cognitive mechanism.

There are also nouns that are preferably and frequently used only with one of the paronyms:

- *continuous process, flight, wire, employment, flow, line, speech, supply.*
- *continual change, problems, updating, questions, pain, cough, fear.*

Thus, the conceptual bases of nouns that go with the paronyms *continual* // *continuous* do not always coincide. The analysis of syntagmatic properties of the given confusable words indicates the necessity of thorough study of their conceptual characteristics aimed at the differentiation of paronyms.

In cognitive research, it is claimed that the phenomenon of focusing attention on certain elements is prevailing when perceiving information. It has received several designations, namely, profiling, focusing, perspectivization in the works of G. Lakoff, J.R. Taylor, Ch. Fillmore, R. Langacker and other linguists. Following R. Langacker, profiling is considered as one of the types of emphasis allowing to accomplish specific language purposes [6, p.138]. Linguistic expression evokes in mind a certain part of the conceptual content, i.e. the base (the immediate conceptual setting), and within this base the expression highlights a single element which is called profile. The profile of a linguistic expression is what it relates to or what it denotes within its conceptual base [1, p.19].

Let us consider how the cognitive mechanism of profiling works in relation to the paronymic units and the conceptual base denoted by them.

The paronyms *continual* // *continuous* correlate with the same conceptual content, that is 'without stopping'. However, the units profile attention on different elements of the base.

The paronym *continual* suggests frequent recurrences. Its dictionary definitions run “continuing without stopping, happening again and again” [8, p.301], “of regular or frequent recurrence; often repeated; very frequent” [4]. Following A. Room, *continual* implies that the recurrences are very close together, with small breaks or even none at all. The author illustrates the meaning of the unit with the example: “Someone who is ‘continually’ cleaning his car thus does it very frequently, seemingly always” [9, p.40]. Obviously, the usage of the paronym *continual* in various contexts profiles the characteristic of frequency. For example, ‘continual problems’ are those that happen again and again, frequently; ‘continual updating’ presupposes frequently repeated action of updating; ‘continual pain’ is chronic persistent frequently occurring pain that is ongoing and remains active for weeks, months or years.

The paronym *continuous* suggests unbroken succession. Dictionary defines it as “1. continuing without stopping or being interrupted; 2. a continuous line, curve etc continues without a break or space” [8, p.301], “1. uninterrupted in time; without cessation; 2. being in immediate connection or spatial relationship” [4]. Denoting the conceptual content ‘happening without stopping’, the lexeme *continuous* profiles another element of the structure, that is, ‘without a break/pause’. ‘A continuous flow of water’ is the one that flows without stopping; ‘continuous speech’ is without pauses.

Profiling presumes highlighting of an element and making it more prominent for cognitive consciousness. It is important to note that focusing on certain aspects inevitably leads to partially or completely decreased attention to other characteristics which are not important in the given context [1, p.20].

The study of profiling characteristics of the adjectival paronyms and the conceptual bases of nouns that can be combined with them contributes to the understanding of semantics of such confusable units and their differentiation in speech.

Let us compare similar, at first sight, combinations ‘continual rain’ and ‘continuous rain’. The first idea that comes to our mind is that the rain is nonstop. Thus, we actualize the conceptual base of both paronyms. However, if we take into account the studied above profiles of these paronyms, it becomes apparent that the word combinations are not like twins and shouldn’t be confused. Using the

phrase ‘continual rain’ we focus attention on its frequency. With *continual* rain, you can enjoy some sunny breaks, though rainy periods are rather often. ‘Continuous’ profiles the characteristic ‘unbroken succession’ and if it rained *continuously* last night it never stopped raining. The given example shows how the mechanism of profiling within the same conceptual content of language units allows to catch and emphasize the semantic difference between paronymic words.

Cognitive approach to the phenomenon of paronymy leads us to the conclusion that lexemes of a paronymic opposition denote not different structures of knowledge, but different profiles of certain elements of these structures. The proposed approach to semantic differentiation of paronyms can be perspective when analyzing other groups of confusable words.

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