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Models for Implementing the Concept of "Absence"

Abstract

The article examines typical verbalization models of the concept of "Absence" in the Ukrainian, Russian and English languages for their further comparison with the verbal implementation of this concept. There are several tasks which the article aims to achieve: 1) to identify common structures of conveying the concept of "Absence" in a text corpus of each selected language; 2) to build typical models based on the means of representation of the considered concept in the three languages; 3) to determine universal and original models in the three languages. There are a number of methods which are used to analyse the material under investigation: the continuous sampling method, the comparative method, etymologization in terms of the comparative-historical method, modelling within the structural method etc. We concluded that the languages under consideration have both universal and original typical models for implementing the concept of "Absence". Their features depend on the structure of each specific language and the corresponding means of verbalization of different concepts. According to these models, the verbal implementation of the concept experiences its modification without violation of the identity of its meaning / sense. These models are a starting point for studying the implementation of the "Absence" concept in speech. Deviation from the models represents a violation of the norms within each language.
Keywords: "Absence" concept; universal and original typical models; verbal implementation of the concept; genetic language knowledge; lingual experience; models for implementing; verbal competencies; etymologization

1 Introduction

An individual starts realizing the presence-absence correlation at an early age – when he or she is about seven months old. That is the period when a person starts trying to implement this content through his/her sight, gestures, and linguistic means. These trials are reflective or conscious, which is proved by the validity of N. Chomsky and B. Skinner's theories. Both scientists have their own approach to understanding the reasons and mechanisms of the verbal and nonverbal implementation of certain concepts.

B. Skinner interprets human speech activity as behavioural. In his eponymously-named study, he called such activity a verbal behaviour (Skinner, 1957). The essence of his idea is that some language is mastered in all its aspects according to the general laws of the formation of operant conditioned reflexes. When an organism produces some speech sounds, another organism fixes them (positively or negatively), controlling a process of acquiring certain stable meanings by those sounds. According to B. Skinner, the latter can indicate either a subject, which a speaking individual needs, or an object, which the individual faces. Moreover, while pondering the formation of speech as a behaviour, Skinner placed a considerable emphasis on the surroundings of an individual when speaking skills are being formed.

N. Chomsky holds a different view. He demonstrated that attempts to explain speech origin in terms of the operant responses of a rat pressing a lever are not only compatible with the linguistic interpretation of a language as a special system, but also make the key concepts of behaviourism – stimulus, response, and reinforcement – senseless. Chomsky stressed the genetic capability of human beings to use speech as a communicative resource and saw speech as a result of thought.

We are of the opinion that both theories can help study the transformation of thought structures into speech structures, as well as prove the mechanisms of idea formation concerning certain concepts of the language a person uses for communication.

In the work "Syntactic Structures" (Chomsky, 1957) N. Chomsky, within the ideas of generative linguistics, focused on the principles of constructing a general theory which is an abstraction of the grammars of specific languages. He interprets the grammar of a certain language as a mechanism which generates all the grammatical sentences of that language and does not generate any non-grammatical sentences. The criterion for the grammar of a sentence is its acceptability to a native speaker of the language, which allows the linguist to use self-observation and his own intuition. Therefore, according to N. Chomsky, the task of grammar is to model the activity of the native speaker, and not to search for regular units in speech, as previously suggested by supporters of descriptivism.

N. Chomsky's thesis "The Minimalist Program" (Chomsky, 1995) also contains the principles of universal grammar. According to Chomsky, the grammatical principles on which languages are based are innate and unchangeable, and the difference between languages is explained by the concept of parametric settings of the brain, which in this theory are compared to switches. So, for example, for a child in the process of mastering the language it is enough to learn vocabulary and morphemes in order to determine the necessary values of parameters, which is possible in the presence of several starting examples.

This universal approach, according to N. Chomsky, explains the speed with which children learn languages, the similar stages of childhood language learning regardless of language, as well as the types of characteristic mistakes made by children when learning their native language, while other more logical errors do not occur. According to Chomsky, the absence or appearance of such errors indicates the method used: general (innate) or one that depends on the specific language.

Uli Sauerland and Artemis Alexiadou write:

> *We have presented three arguments for the Meaning First approach to grammar. This approach proposes that language structure derives from the structure of logical thought as sketched in Figure 1.* (Sauerland & Alexiadou, 2020, p. 10)

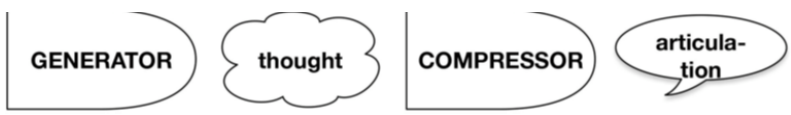


Figure 1. The structure of logical thought → language structure.

The Meaning First approach to language assumes that structural representations are generated outside of language and then realized by a compressor for communication. But not all pieces of a thought structure need to be realized in language: Many pieces may be predictable from the presence of some key fragments with enough reliability to allow communication to be successful. Therefore, realization in the Meaning First approach consists primarily of compression (Sauerland & Alexiadou, 2020).

In our opinion, the successful study of verbal incarnations of a concept in the speech of native speakers of a particular language may be the most beneficial for the use of all approaches, because one does not exclude the reality of the other. In addition, the history of Indo-European studies demonstrates the significant abstraction of grammatical systems from live speech, as well as the

question of creating artificial languages (particularly classical ones) against the background of existing living languages.

It is also important to remember that the notion of concept is quite closely related to the notion of cognitive structure. Earlier we wrote that cognitive structures are usually understood as psychological constructs capable of explaining different forms of human knowledge. These are thought processes used by people to process and understand information. Schemes and mental models are examples of cognitive structures. Each of them ensures meaning and organization of the experience and control of both processing new information and searching for stored information…. Cognitive structures systematize information for perception and memorizing. They are an integral part of understanding and memory (Diachok & Popkova, 2023, p. 37).

1.1 The Purpose

The purpose of the research is to generalize typical verbalization models of the concept of "Absence" in the Ukrainian, Russian, and English languages for their further comparison with the verbal implementation of this concept, e.g. in speech. The tasks are as follows: 1) to identify common structures of conveying the concept of "Absence" in a text corpus of each selected language; 2) to build typical models based on the means of representation of the considered concept in the three languages; 3) to determine universal and original models in the three languages.

1.2 Methods and Techniques of the Research

The continuous sampling method was applied in order to single out the required material from the text corpus. The comparative method made it possible to define common and different features in the structures of the developed typical models. Etymologization in terms of the comparative-historical method helped prove the availability of common features in the thought of native speakers of the languages under analysis. Modelling within the structural method allowed the development of the models, being adequate to the real speech structures.

1.3 Results and Their Discussion

The concept of "Absence" is universal; it is verbalized by a series of interlingual and individual means according to the type and structure of a certain language. "It has been determined that these characteristics allow the concepts to be updated on different levels, as well as to be perceived by carriers of different cultures in different ways" (Mykhalchuk et al. 2023). For instance, common features in the semantics and historical structure of its verbalizers-nouns (Ukr. ***відсутність***, Rus. ***отсутствие***, Eng. ***absence***) are proved by an etymological analysis: primary meaning – "being far from the essence, sense; without any essence, sense", supported by the primary roots of these words before the simplification of the stems ***-сутьс-***, ***-sence-***. This is also recorded in etymological dictionaries.

> The etymological entry concerning the Ukrainian noun ***відсутність*** is as follows:
>
> absent, absence; – Rus. ***отсутствующий***, Bel. ***адсутны***; – loan translation from Latin; Lat. *absens* is an active present tense participle from the verb *abesse* "to be absent" (literally, "be out"); hence, there are loan translations Rus. ***отсутствовать*** and Ger. *abwesend* "absent"… See also ***від***, ***сутьс***. Compare with "present". (Mel′nychuk, 1982, p. 394)

The Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language by M. Vasmer (Fasmer, 1987) contains an entry for the antonym verbalizer of the "Absence" concept: "Presence. Formed from the present tense active voice participle ***сы***, ***сущи*** 'existing', Bulg. ***присъствие*** 'presence'" (Fasmer, 1987, p. 367).

If we accept this etymology, then the antonym *отсутствие* correlates with the mentioned noun as made by the secondary formation by replacing the prefix *при-* meaning "belonging, availability" with *от-* / *від-*, which have the opposite meaning.

Nevertheless, we believe that the nouns-verbalizers of the "Absence" concept were formed in both Slavic languages in some other way. We need to remember the fact that each successive derivative word in a word-forming chain is structurally and semantically complex compared with words formed by one element (a morpheme with its own word-forming meaning). Thus, in the etymological and word-formation context, a sequence and place of the formation of the verbalizers under consideration can be represented as follows:

Ukr. *суть*
сутність
**сутити* (here and henceforth hypothetical forms are marked with an asterix (*), without the reproduction of which the etymological word-formation chain would be impossible)
присутити
присутній
присутність
**відсутити*
відсутній
відсутність.

A model of the abstract name formation in Ukrainian is characterized by a long history.

Rus. *суть*
**сутити*
**присутити*
присущий
**присутство*
присутствие
**отсутити*
**отсущий*
**отсутство*
отсутствие.

Here we can observe a specific word-forming model with the semantic reduplication of the suffixes *-ство* and *-ие*, being highly productive within a long period of time (from the 12th to the 18th centuries). The addition of the second suffix with an abstract meaning strengthens the semantic separation of a noun from a verb, making the noun-categorial meaning of the objectivity of the derivative word more specific. Such reduplication "marks one of the most peculiar processes for the category of *nomina abstracta* processes – the specification of the meanings of abstract nomination" (Nikolaev, 1967, p. 79).

In this context, as we can see, the antonymic nouns *присутствие* and *отсутствие* were capable of being formed in parallel within the available word-forming types.

In the case of English, the etymology of the conceptual verbalizer is represented as follows:

> **absence** (**n.**) "state of not being present", late 14c., from Old French *absence* (14 c.), from Latin *absentia*, abstract noun from *absentem* (nominative *absens*), present participle of *abesse* "be away from, be absent", from *ab* "off, away from" (see *ab-*) + *esse* "to be" (from PIE root **es-* "to be"). "Absence makes the heart grow fonder" is a line from the song 'Isle of Beauty' by English poet and composer Thomas Haynes Bayly (1797–1839). ("absence | Etymology of absence by etymonline", n.d.)

In terms of the etymological and word-formation approach, the development of the verbal implementation of the concept is as follows, see Figure 2.



Figure 2. The etymological and word-formation approach.

In other words:

Ab (Latin) “off, away from” + *esse* (Latin) “to be”
abesse (Latin) “be away from, be absent”
absentia (Latin)
absence (Old French) “absence”
absence (late 14 c.) “state of not being present”
absence (n.)
https://www.etymonline.com/word/absence#etymonline_v_78
(“absence | Etymology of absence by etymonline”, n.d.)

The concept of “Absence” is implemented by the means peculiar to each language. In Ukrainian, that is usually 1) noun ***відсутність***, 2) adjective ***відсутній***, 3) particle ***нема / немає***, and 4) preposition ***без***. In Russian, there are 1) noun ***отсутствие***, 2) verb ***отсутствовать***, 3) verbal adjective or participle (depending on its position in a sentence) ***отсутствующий***, 4) particle ***не / нет***, and 5) preposition ***без***. In English, we have such examples as 1) noun *absence*, 2) adjective *absent*, 3) participle *missing*, 4) preposition *without*, and 5) pronominal construction *there is* (*are*) *no*.

The corpora of Ukrainian, Russian, and English texts demonstrate the belonging of these methods to the context, producing typical models of the verbal implementation of the concept under study.

Ukr. «Відсутність (NOUN) офіційної державницької ідеології (NOUN (Genitive case, singular)) (як ідеології держави) спонукає не до консолідації суспільства» (Mykhal′chenko & Samchuk, 1998).

«*Надолужували* ***відсутність*** (NOUN) *потрібних* ***формул*** (NOUN (Genitive case, plural)) *і мовних* ***форм*** (Genitive case, plural)*, із яких складається мозаїка літературного або пісенного твору, за посередництва сленгу, галицького діалекту (досить згадати «Братів Гадюкіних»), а також різноманітних жаргонів; із настанням 1990-х – кримінального й наркоманського жаргону насамперед*» (*Mova.info: Linhvistychnyĭ portal*, n.d.).

«*В сільському господарстві є* (LINK VERB *БУТИ*) ***відсутній*** (ADJECTIVE) *спекулятивний* ***елемент***» (Ford, 2009).

«***Немає*** *вже корисної* ***кореляції*** *поміж потенціялом знищення та його метою, і безглуздо на неї розраховувати*» (Bodriiar, 2012).

«***Нема*** (PARTICLE (preposition)) ***терпіння*** (NOUN (Genitive case, singular)). *Але терпіння виховується в муках*» (Berdnyk, 1968).

«*Треба наздогнати джентльмена у вельветовій куртці й* ***без*** (PREPOSITION) ***капелюха*** (NOUN (Genitive case, singular))*! – У вельветовій куртці й* ***без*** (PREPOSITION) ***капелюха*** (NOUN (Genitive case, singular))*, мем?*» (Vells, 2009).

These contexts demonstrate a number of structural models of verbalization of the "Absence" concept in Ukrainian, which can be represented as follows:

1. NOUN *ВІДСУТНІСТЬ* + NOUN / PRONOUN (Genitive case, singular / plural).
2. LINK VERB *БУТИ* + ADJECTIVE / PARTICIPLE *ВІДСУТНІЙ*.
3. PARTICLE *НЕМА* / *НЕМАЄ* (pre-/postposition) + NOUN / PRONOUN (Genitive case, singular / plural).
4. PREPOSITION *БЕЗ* + NOUN / PRONOUN (Genitive case, singular / plural).

Onomasiological models of verbalization are as follows:

1. OBJECT + DELIBERATIVE (object of the description).
2. PREDICATE + OBJECT
3. PREDICATE + ATTRIBUTE-QUALIFICATIVE + OBJECT.
4. OBJECT + COMITATIVE (object as an accompanier).

Rus. «*Когда́* ***нет*** (PARTICLE (preposition)) ***информации*** (NOUN)*, то её* (PRONOUN (Genitive case, singular)) *отсу́тствие* (NOUN) *рожда́ет разли́чного ро́да слу́хи*» (Material of Internet news feeds 2002-2003, collection 37; *Natsional′nyĭ korpus russkogo iazyka*, n.d.).

«*При этом* ***отсутствует*** (FINITE FORM OF A VERB (preposition)) *обычная в таких случаях* ***ссылка*** (NOUN (Nom. sg)) *на сайты тех организаций, где эту информацию можно получить*» (The House and the Island, or the Instrument of Language (collection); *Natsional′nyĭ korpus russkogo iazyka*, n.d.).

«*В слу́чае отли́ва чёткой* ***грани́цы*** (NOUN (Genitive case, singular)) ***нет*** (PARTICLE (postposition))» (Entertaining aesthetics; *Natsional′nyĭ korpus russkogo iazyka*, n.d.).

«*И в како́й-то моме́нт понима́ем, что остаёмся без них, как* ***без*** (PREPOSITION) ***рук*** (NOUN (Genitive case, plural))» (Outdated technologies; *Natsional′nyĭ korpus russkogo iazyka*, n.d.).

These examples show models of the implementation of the concept of "Absence" in Russian. They are as follows:

1. NOUN *ОТСУТСТВИЕ* + NOUN / PRONOUN (Genitive case, singular / plural).
2. FINITE FORM OF A VERB *ОТСУТСТВОВАТЬ* (pre-/postposition) + NOUN (Nominative case, singular / plural) – predicative centre.
3. ADJECTIVE / PARTICIPLE *ОТСУТСТВУЮЩИЙ* (pre-/postposition) + NOUN / PRONOUN.
4. PARTICLE *НЕТ* (pre-/postposition) + NOUN / PRONOUN (Genitive case, singular / plural).
5. PREPOSITION *БЕЗ* + NOUN / PRONOUN (Genitive case, singular / plural).

Eng. "*Staff and students should continue to report* ***absences*** (NOUN) ***to*** *their* ***line*** (NOUN (Genitive case, singular)) *manager, supervisor or tutor as they usually would if unable to work or study*" (https://www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus/health; *British National Corpus* (*BNC*), n.d.).

"*This is a new website. Speaking in* ***Absence*** (NOUN)*: Letters in the Digital Age*" (https://digital.humanities.ox.ac.uk/speaking-absence-letters-digital-age; *British National Corpus* (*BNC*), n.d.).

"*Departments are responsible for recording, monitoring and managing all sickness* (NOUN (Genitive case, singular)) ***absence*** (NOUN) *and ill-health issues amongst their employees.* [...] *creating awareness of sickness* ***absence consequences****. promoting the health and safety, and welfare of employees*" (https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/sickness-absence; *British National Corpus* (*BNC*), n.d.).

"*Letter, Charles Sumner (Visitor) of Farnham Castle to President Bulley replying to his enquiry about how long he is permitted* ***to be*** (LINK VERB) ***absent*** (ADJECTIVE) *from college*" (https://archive-cat.magd.ox.ac.uk/records/PR31/1/C6/2; *British National Corpus* (*BNC*), n.d.).

"*Search. You are here: ADEPT trial – early versus delayed enteral feeding for babies born with* ***absent*** (ADJECTIVE) *or reversed end-diastolic flow and growth* ***restriction*** (NOUN)" (https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/research/projects/3-adept; *British National Corpus* (*BNC*), n.d.).

"*Information such as personal details of the* ***missing*** (PARTICIPLE / ADJECTIVE) ***migrant*** (NOUN (Accusative, singular)), *physical characteristics and circumstances of disappearance*" (https://www.fmreview.org/issue66/vanlammeren-vonkoenig; *British National Corpus* (*BNC*), n.d.).

"*Most people can't tell their toes apart* ***without*** (PREPOSITION) ***looking*** (NOUN (Genitive case, singular))" (https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2015-09-22-confusion-afoot; *British National Corpus* (*BNC*), n.d.).

"***Without*** (PREPOSITION) ***signing*** (NOUN / GERUND (Genitive case, singular)) *the declaration form the loan is not fully approved and any tuition fee loan funding will not be paid to the University on your behalf*" (https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding/fees/liability/payments/suspension; *British National Corpus* (*BNC*), n.d.).

"***There is no*** (PRONOMINAL CONSTRUCTION) *central* ***funding*** (NOUN (Genitive case, singular)) *available for any associated costs (salaries, equipment, consumables, etc) which remain the responsibilities of the department/division concerned*" (https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/career-and-bridging-support; *British National Corpus* (*BNC*), n.d.).

"*Zooms require a lot of energy and* ***there is no*** (PRONOMINAL CONSTRUCTION) *natural* ***flow*** (NOUN (Genitive case, singular)) *of conversation*" (https://www.some.ox.ac.uk/; *British National Corpus* (*BNC*), n.d.).

These contexts demonstrate a number structural models of verbal implementation of the "Absence" concept in English, which can be represented as follows:

1. NOUN *ABSENCE* + NOUN / PRONOUN (Genitive case, singular / plural).
2. LINK VERB *TO BE* + ADJECTIVE *ABSENT*.
3. ADJECTIVE *ABSENT* + NOUN / PRONOUN (Genitive case, singular / plural).
4. PARTICIPLE / ADJECTIVE *MISSING* + NOUN (Accusative, singular / plural).
5. PREPOSITION *WITHOUT* + NOUN / PRONOUN / GERUND (Genitive case, singular / plural).
6. PRONOMINAL CONSTRUCTION *THERE IS* (*ARE*) *NO* + NOUN (Genitive case, singular / plural).

Onomasiological models of the concept implementation are as follows, according to examples presented above:

1. OBJECT + DELIBERATIVE (object of the description).
2. PREDICATE + ATTRIBUTE-QUALIFICATIVE (belonging of the object to a certain class)
3. ATTRIBUTE-QUALIFICATIVE + OBJECT.
4. OBJECT + COMITATIVE (object as an accompanier).
5. PREDICATE + OBJECT.

Thus, the universal and original normative models of verbal implementation of the concept in the selected languages have been specified in terms of verbal material.

2 Conclusions

The languages under consideration have both universal and original typical models for implementing the concept of "Absence". Their features depend on the structure of each specific language and the corresponding means of verbalization of different concepts. According to these models, verbal implementation of the concept experiences its modification without violation of the identity of its meaning / sense.

Universal models are represented by the following:

1. Noun *ВІДСУТНІСТЬ / ОТСУТСТВИЕ / ABSENCE* + noun / pronoun (Genitive case, singular / plural); object + delibarative (object of the description) is universal for the three languages.
2. Link verb *ТО ВЕ / БУТИ* + adjective *ABSENT / ВІДСУТНІЙ*; predicate + attribute-qualificative + object is universal for English and Ukrainian.
3. Particle *НЕМА / НЕМАЄ / НЕТ* (pre-/postposition) + noun / pronoun (Genitive case, singular / plural); predicate + delibarative (object of the description) is universal for Ukrainian and Russian.
4. Preposition *БЕЗ / WITHOUT* + noun / pronoun (Genitive case, singular / plural); object + comitative (object as an accompanier) is universal for the three languages.

The following models are original for Russian and English, but not for Ukrainian:

In Russian, there is the unique model finite form of a verb *ОТСУТСТВОВАТЬ* (pre-/postposition) + noun (Nominative case, singular / plural); predicate + object – predicative centre.

In English, there are the unique models participle / adjective missing + noun (Accusative, singular / plural) and pronominal construction *THERE IS* (*ARE*) *NO* + noun (Genitive case, singular / plural); attribute-qualificative + object.

The normalization process for any model takes place in each specific language in a conventional way, beginning from the reflective verbalization of a concrete meaning, idea, and concept by the native speakers, i.e. the transformation of cognitive units into speech units.

Deviation from the models represents a violation of the norms within each language. We believe that people of different ages will verbalize the indicated concept differently. The manners of verbalization are based on genetic language knowledge (according to N. Chomsky) and on the lingual experience of individuals, which depends on the environment of their upbringing, the verbal competencies of their families etc. (according to B. Skinner). Further studies into how these models are adhered to or violated in Ukrainian native speakers' speech are promising, as they should demonstrate real transformations of people's thought into verbal forms.

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