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LEGE ARTIS

Language yesterday, today, tomorrow
Vol. III. No 1 2018

FRAME ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF DEATH ACROSS CULTURES

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Bibliographic description:

Uberman, A. (2018). Frame analysis of the concept of death across cultures. In *Lege artis. Language yesterday, today, tomorrow. The journal of University of SS Cyril and Methodius in Trnava*. Warsaw: De Gruyter Open, 2018, vol. III (1), June 2018, p. 417-447. DOI: [10.2478/lart-2018-0011](https://doi.org/10.2478/lart-2018-0011) ISSN 2453-8035

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Résumé

The discussion focuses primarily on description of cognitive models such as frames and scripts employed in organising lexical knowledge exemplified here by lexicon related to death. Symbolism and traditions of death, which are present in various cultures are briefly outlined. The concept of death is closely linked to that of life and this interrelation is also reflected in language. Semantic primes LIVE and DIE clearly show that as primary concepts universally present in human languages they constitute basic level concepts and cannot be reduced to more atomic meanings. Interpretation of the reality a given society lives in is conditioned by its adopted worldview, which is also reflected in language used by a specific language community employed for the expression of perceptions and conceptualisations of the reality. In further discussion, attention is focused on cognitive models, such as frames

and scripts, which enable language users to account for knowledge structures and conceptual relations of underlying lexical meanings. The objective of the present analysis is to establish elements of the semantic frame of DEATH, hence its various components are noted and discussed. Elements constituting this frame are depicted from the European tradition point of view. Selected elements from other cultural backgrounds are presented in order to show how these parameters affect the scope of the analysed cognitive construct. A related script is also mentioned together with diverse funeral rituals; however, owing to a considerable discrepancy within the cross-cultural perspective, it is not fully designed. It is stressed that the cultural background influences the worldview a particular community adopts in order to interpret the reality in which they live. It also affects linguistic means a language user has at his / her disposal and employs in daily communication or interpretation of world phenomena.

Key words: cognitive model, linguistic worldview, frame, death, funeral rituals.

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Article was received by the editorial board 03.03.18;

Reviewed 23.03.18. and 03.04.18.

Similarity Index 15%