

COGNITIVE SCRIPTS IN LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT

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Annotation: This paper explores cognitive scripts as mental frameworks that help humans understand events, anticipate outcomes, and interpret social interactions, focusing on examples such as the pneumonia script and the early retirement script to illustrate the role of sequences, actions, time, place, descriptions, and euphemisms in both language and thought.

Keywords: cognitive scripts, mental frameworks, event comprehension, sequences, actions, social interaction, language, thought, euphemisms, memory

In the process of understanding the world, humanity receives external information, processes it, and interprets attitudes toward it; analyzing this process itself constitutes one of the relevant research topics. One of the cognitive models aimed at explaining this phenomenon is the scenario model. The term script (derived from English, meaning “manuscript”) refers to a type of cognitive model in which the sequence and coherence of real-life events are of primary importance. The authors of *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics* define the script model as “knowledge structures specifically designed for sequences of frequently recurring events”¹. D. Ashurova defines script together with scenario as follows: “A scenario or script is a dynamic frame represented as a sequence of episodes or stages (such as visiting a theatre or attending a football match)”². Sh. Safarov expresses the following views regarding this cognitive model: “A script is regarded as a type of prototypical conceptual structure and represents a model of the normative sequence of events in reality as reflected in human cognition”³. In other words, a script is a structure that depicts how a person is likely to act in a given situation or what sequence of events is expected to occur. Based on the views of scholars Shank and Abelson, the normative sequence of events within a script and their stereotypical repetition are considered its main defining characteristics. The Russian scholar V.A. Maslova defines the cognitive structure under analysis as follows: “A script is a set of expectations about what should happen next in a perceived situation... it allows for understanding not only the actual or imagined situation but also the detailed plan”⁴.

¹ Ungerer F., Schmid Hans-Jörg. *An Introduction of Cognitive Linguistics*. Pearson-Longman. Second Edition. 2006. – P. 214.

² Ashurova Ashurova D.U., Galiyeva M.R. *Cognitive Linguistics*. Teaching Textbook -Toshkent 2018; p.44, 107.

³ Safarov, Sh. (2006). *Cognitive Linguistics*. Jizzakh: Sangzor. pp. 20, 91

⁴ Maslova, V. A. (2005). *Cognitive Linguistics*. Minsk: [Publisher]. pp. 47, 254.

Props	Roles	Entry conditions
tables	customer (S)	S is hungry
menu	waiter (W)	S has money
food (F)	cook (C)	
bill	cashier (M)	
money	owner (O)	

3.3-rasm. Elements of the “Restaurant” script according to Abelson

In 1977, the “Restaurant” script proposed by artificial intelligence specialists R. Schank and R. Abelson became a primary model for analyses of scripts in cognitive linguistics. It is evident that the main conditions for applying the “Restaurant” script relate to the people and objects that constitute the situation. Starting from these roles and props, one can assume the possibility of an entry scene: a customer enters the restaurant, looks for a table, decides where to sit, approaches the table, and sits down on a chair. Each of these actions is a necessary prerequisite for the subsequent actions, and together they form a complete scene that is necessary for the next stage, such as ordering food.

Scripts are formed in human consciousness over many years and occupy a stable place in memory. For this reason, this cognitive model is regarded in psychology as a key knowledge tool for understanding and interpreting an event using pre-existing knowledge in memory.

Scripts can be divided into two types based on their components and structure: simple scripts and complex scripts. A complex script is also referred to as a macro-script, which consists of several simple scripts, i.e., combinations representing sequences of events. In his monograph *Cognitive Linguistics*, Sh. Safarov provides the example of the “Wedding” macro-script, which includes smaller scripts such as “the groom’s visit,” “wedding council,” “preparations for the wedding,” “reading of the marriage vows,” “setting the wedding table,” “arrival of guests,” and “submission of the marriage certificate.”

Scripts, by relying on pre-existing information in human memory, help individuals understand events and prepare their emotional state by anticipating their course. The following analysis illustrates this through the script “the old man’s friend” – pneumonia:

Set 1: Onset of Symptoms

Place: Home, workplace, or school

Time: Early stages of the illness, usually within the first few days

Description: The patient begins to experience persistent cough, fever, chills, and shortness of breath

Actions:

The patient experiences initial symptoms and may attempt self-care through rest or home remedies

Family members or colleagues notice the patient’s deteriorating condition and become concerned

Set 2: Medical Consultation and Diagnosis

Place: Doctor’s office or hospital

Time: After a few days to a week, or following worsening symptoms

Description: The patient seeks medical attention due to worsening symptoms. The doctor conducts an initial examination and may order diagnostic tests such as chest X-rays or blood tests

Actions:

The doctor examines the patient, evaluates the symptoms, and orders diagnostic tests

Tests are conducted, confirming pneumonia

The doctor prescribes medication and provides care instructions

Set 3: Treatment and Recovery

Place: Home or hospital room

Time: Recovery period, which may last from one week to several weeks depending on severity

Description: The patient follows the prescribed treatment plan. This stage focuses on adherence to medication, rest, and monitoring of symptoms

Actions:

The patient takes medication as prescribed and rests

Family members or caregivers assist with daily activities and monitor the patient's progress

The patient gradually begins to feel better and regain strength

Set 4: Follow-up and Resolution

Place: Hospital or home

Time: After completing the treatment course, typically a few weeks post-diagnosis

Description: The patient undergoes a follow-up visit to confirm that pneumonia has resolved.

The doctor evaluates recovery and provides final recommendations for full recovery

Actions:

The doctor conducts the follow-up examination and confirms improvement

The patient receives advice on preventing future respiratory infections and maintaining overall health

The analysis of this script consists of four sets: onset of symptoms, medical consultation and diagnosis, treatment and recovery, and follow-up. Each scene provides detailed information on place and time, description of events, and key actions, offering a comprehensive representation of the typical development and treatment of pneumonia.

Another script, "taking early retirement" (i.e., leaving work early due to old age or being forced to retire), can be analyzed more concisely. This script functions as a conventional template for dismissal, allowing the compulsory nature of leaving to be softened. It illustrates the expected sequence of actions in euphemistic terms: reaching retirement age → employer's suggestion → leaving the job. This sequence helps reduce awkwardness between the employer and employee. A similar case can be observed in Uzbek with the expression "dam olishga chiqdi" ("went on leave"), where leaving the job is replaced by the euphemism "going on leave," reflecting the sequence of actions: fatigue → employer's suggestion → leaving the job.

In summary, the analysis of cognitive scripts demonstrates how humans organize, interpret, and predict events based on prior knowledge stored in memory. Scripts, whether representing typical medical scenarios like pneumonia or social situations such as early retirement, provide structured frameworks that guide understanding, decision-making, and emotional preparation. The pneumonia script illustrates how sequential stages of symptoms, consultation, treatment, and follow-up are mentally represented to facilitate comprehension of disease progression. Similarly, the "taking early retirement" script highlights the role of conventionalized sequences in social

interactions, especially in softening potentially uncomfortable realities through euphemistic expressions.

Overall, cognitive scripts function as essential mental tools, enabling individuals to anticipate events, navigate social and practical situations, and interpret both real and hypothetical experiences. Their study in cognitive linguistics not only illuminates human thought processes but also provides a valuable framework for analyzing language, behavior, and cultural conventions.

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