

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONCEPT OF FEAR

*Homidjonova Sadoqatxon**Master's Student, Fergana State University*

Annotation: This article discusses the theoretical foundations of the concept of fear, its psycholinguistic analysis, and its role in the human inner world. In particular, based on the psychoanalytic approaches and behaviorist views of Western and Eastern scholars, the origins of fear, its developmental factors, and its influence on behavior and speech are examined. The article also theoretically generalizes the relationship between fear and biological as well as social factors, highlighting its significance in personal development.

Keywords: Speech activity, fear, fundamental emotion, motive, external speech, internal speech, danger, reflex, physiology, phobia.

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматриваются теоретические основы понятия страха, его психолингвистический анализ и роль в духовном мире человека. В частности, на основе психоаналитического подхода и бихевиористских взглядов западных и восточных учёных освещаются происхождение страха, факторы его развития, а также его влияние на поведение и речь. Кроме того, в статье теоретически обобщается взаимосвязь страха с биологическими и социальными факторами и раскрывается его значение в формировании личности.

Ключевые слова: Речевая деятельность, страх, фундаментальная эмоция, мотив, внешняя речь, внутренняя речь, опасность, рефлекс, физиология, фобия.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada qo'rquv tushunchasining nazariy asoslari, uning psixolingvistik tahlili hamda inson ruhiy olamidagi o'rni muhokama qilinadi. Xususan, G'arb va Sharq olimlarining psixoanalitik yondashuvi, bixevioristik qarashlari asosida qo'rquvning kelib chiqishi, rivojlanish omillari va xulq-atvorga, nutqqa ta'siri yoritiladi. Shuningdek, maqolada qo'rquvning biologik va ijtimoiy omillar bilan bog'liqligi, uning shaxs kamolotidagi ahamiyati nazariy jihatdan umumlashtiriladi.

Kalit so'zlar: Nutqiy faoliyat, qo'rquv, fundamental emotsiya, motiv, tashqi nutq, ichki nutq, xavf-xatar, reflex, fiziologiya, fobiya.

The concept of fear is a phenomenon common to several disciplines within the scientific world: fields such as psychology, philosophy, medicine, psycholinguistics, and sociology attempt to comprehensively explain the essence of fear. In psychology, the study of the concept of fear has been undertaken by the following scholars: V.M. Astapov, V.R. Kislovskaya, E.V. Novikova, and others. All these scholars emphasized that fear, as a rule, is not a permanent characteristic.

It is well known that the great Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC), who lived and worked in antiquity, also gave a special definition to the concept of fear in his work "Rhetoric."¹ In order to experience fear, a person must try to remember what worries them; that this fear makes people think is proven by the fact that no one thinks about despair. Therefore, Aristotle

¹ Аристотель, Риторика, © ООО «Издательство АСТ», 2017



emphasizes that the speaker must be able to convey to the listener that the feeling of fear exists, that no person is without this feeling, and that fear can even arise in an unexpected situation, at an unexpected time.

The Greek playwright, poet, and political and military figure Sophocles, who lived in the 5th century BC, explained fear in many places in his works. In particular, in the work "Oedipus Rex," Oedipus, despite fearing what was foretold, relentlessly searches for the truth of life until his fate ensnares him. The feeling of fear, however, compels Oedipus and Jocasta to deny the obvious fact.² In "Antigone," the guards are paralyzed by fear due to the severity of King Creon's punishment, but Antigone prioritizes loyalty to the laws of the gods over obeying the king's orders.

In conclusion, we can say that Sophocles proves that fear is a natural yet dangerous emotion, emphasizing that fear distorts perception and, in most cases, brings heroes more suffering than what they originally feared.

When examining fear from the perspective of religious studies, according to materialists, fear is one of the emotional states that was an important factor in the emergence of religions.³ For instance, the English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) noted that the emergence of religion during the era of primitive tribes was caused by the worship of the dead, which stemmed from fear. While researching the rules of social life, the scholar specifically studied the role of the fear of life in religions and proved that this feeling formed the basis for ancestor worship.

Psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), in his study of the emergence of religion, also connects this phenomenon to the feeling of fear. According to the psychologist's research, during the matriarchal period, young men who had become patricides, over time, grew terrified of their fathers' spirits and began to worship them.

Another scholar, Max Müller (1823-1900), while studying fear, put forward the idea that religions arose as a result of the terrifying fear that natural phenomena instilled in humanity.

Eastern encyclopedic scholars such as Abu Rayhan Beruni and Abu Ali ibn Sina considered the emotion of fear to be an important factor in the formation of a person's moral qualities. In his extensive psychoneurological practice, Ibn Sina, in particular, focused on the method of objective observation. According to his observations, he proved that various emotions cause a range of changes in the human body - in the heart, blood vessels, and respiratory organs - and that distress and fear lead to a person's debilitation. In other words, Ibn Sina succeeded in demonstrating the existence of a strong connection between physiological phenomena and mental states. Throughout his life's work, the great physician highlighted the leading role of the central nervous system in the body, showing that fear leads to the weakening of the entire organism.⁴

² Софокл Царь Эдип, dmytro.strelb.@gmail.com

³ Очилдиев А., Рахимжонов Д. ва б., Диншунослик асослари, ўқув қўлланма. Тошкент – 2013.

⁴ З.Т.Нишанова., Ш.Т.Туляганова Ўсмирлик даврида қўрқув ҳолатларининг намоён бўлиши. Услубий қўлланма. Т. – 2009.



Fear is considered a fundamental human emotion.⁵ According to scientists, the feeling of fear manifests as a response to a threatening stimulus. This perception of danger is formed through experience and human interaction.

In addition to fears based on life experience, there is also a type of fear that arises involuntarily, accompanied by feelings of intense excitement, anxiety, and terror. In other words, this type of fear is a product of the individual's feelings and their reaction to a perceived threat.

The scientist I.P. Pavlov, while conducting his scientific research, also states that fear is a form of natural reflex. As we understand it, these are reactions such as the inhibition of the cerebral cortex and a sense of defenselessness. Therefore, fear is based on the instinct for self-preservation and occurs simultaneously with certain physiological changes in nervous activity.

There is also a type of baseless fear, which is found mainly in children. In this regard, K. N. Kornilov expressed the following opinion: "The feeling of fear is a sensation characteristic not only of children but also of adults. This state manifests itself in the course of their activities as they familiarize themselves with the environment, unfamiliar objects, and situations, and it consciously urges people to avoid them." Thus, fear is a matter of somehow escaping a difficulty, which occurs even before a clear awareness of the danger. Almost everyone considers the feeling of fear to be a negative phenomenon, but it is a performer of several functions in our psyche:

- Fear is a reaction to danger;
- It is a protective mechanism in mental regulation;
- It helps people adapt.

We have previously provided a brief overview of the essence and study of the concept of fear within the fields of oratory, literary studies, medicine, and psychology. So, has linguistic research also been conducted?

Let's examine the linguistic research on the concept of fear, starting with the scholarly works of Russian linguists. Specifically, S.V. Zaikina's Ph.D. dissertation on "The Emotional Concept of Fear in Russian and English Linguoculturology" can be cited as an example of research in this area.⁶ The object of this comparative study are simple linguistic units that reflect our understanding of the concept of fear in English and Russian. The subject of the research is the similarities and differences in the linguistic means of naming and describing fear in English and Russian. The study considers the high social significance of fear, its ability to influence human activity, and compares it in English and Russian.

One of the most important developing areas of modern linguistics is the study of concepts. The basis of the concept of fear is an important component of human life, which is also reflected in our language. The concept of fear has such semantic features as emotional feeling/state, attitude to danger, negative or positive, the meanings of which are activated in contextual units. The semantics of the concept of fear have different aspects, such as duration, speed, control of people, and influence on them. Concepts represent the fundamental building blocks of an individual's mental world, thought processes, and worldview, and the emotion of fear has the ability to control these very building blocks. A person's general cognitive characteristics are also founded on the emotion of fear.

⁵ Гельгорн, Дж. Луфборроу Эмоции и эмоциональные расстройства. Нейрофизиологическое исследование. (1966)

⁶ Зайкина С.В., Эмоциональный концепт «страх» в английской и русской лингвокультурах. Автореферат. Волгоград – 2004.



Based on the ideas above, in determining the role of fear within the system of human emotions, we understand feelings as mental processes that manifest as facial, psychosomatic, and behavioral changes, reflecting an individual's attitude towards themselves and their surroundings, which are in turn expressed in our language. Fear does not always have a negative significance in human life; among its functions, its adaptive role stands out as one of the most important. Through this adaptive function, fear motivates a person toward social activity and helps prevent potential mistakes. Fear is a powerful stimulus for seeking a safe environment; therefore, this emotion protects us from becoming victims of circumstance. It gives us the ability to control our actions.

The concept of fear is also explored in the article "Stress and Fear in Extreme Situations" by Russian linguists M. Rozenova, V.I. Ekimova, et al. The article examines the functional effects of fear and stress. In the process of studying fear reactions, the authors took a psycholinguistic approach, distinguishing between its exogenous and endogenous types. Specifically, exogenous fear is a conditioned fear caused by external factors (from the Greek *exo* - "outside" and *gen* - "I create"). Endogenous fear, conversely, is a fear that arises from internal causes (from the Greek *endo* - "inside" and *gen* - "I create").⁷

When approaching human emotions and states from a linguistic perspective, we can see that they perform an important function in all spheres of our lives (communication, relationships, work, and social life). In particular, the state of fear is a key component of our personal and social activities. The sources of personal fears and urgent problems of modern people are creating emergency situations. Furthermore, the consumption of antidepressants and psychoactive substances, along with an increase in emotional disorders among people, is characterized by the strengthening of aggressive forms of defense and a growing need for psychotherapeutic assistance. For example, the problem associated with the spread of the COVID-19 infection once again proved the great relevance of studying and managing fears. To study fear, we must first determine how it arises. When it comes to the concept of fear, some sources classify it as an innate feeling; however, fear is not an innate emotion. Fear is a feeling that arises for various reasons from the moment we are born. This has been substantiated by the opinions of scholars; William James calls fear an early human instinct, while John B. Watson considers fear to be one of the emotions, like love and anger. Fear arises throughout life, based on conditioned stimuli. When we speak of the primary human emotions, we include fear among them, as the scientist Plutchik also defined fear and anger as primary emotions and believed that in this process, the language of behavior is escape, and the language of function is protection. One of the American psychologists, Magda Arnold, divided emotions into negative and positive, those caused by internal impulse, and combative types. She included fear in the category of a combative emotion that struggles against dangerous and uncertain objects.

Regarding the psycholinguistic study of the concept of fear, all scholars had come to understand the necessity of studying it in connection with psychology as early as the 1950s and 1960s, a time when linguistics was part of structuralism. Discussions began about how the characteristics of perceiving reality influence an individual's behavioral norms. Actions instigated by certain stimuli, in turn, exert their influence on the consciousness.⁸

⁷ <https://kartaslov.ru/02.01.2026-yil>

⁸ О.С.Ахманова О психолингвистике: материалы к курсам языкознания.Изд-во Московского университета, 1957



Among the psycholinguistic studies on the concept of fear, we believe it is also necessary to highlight the 2004 article by O.I. Oparin, "Fear as a Linguistic and Psychological Component of the Linguistic World."⁹ The article analyzes fear as the force that compels people to think about this state, to overcome it, and to create the conditions to be free of it. Furthermore, it posits that the feeling of fear itself is what has prompted individuals to reflect on their "Self" and to comprehend their potential within existence.

The feeling of fear is, generally speaking, considered an integral part of the human psyche. It has a constant function: this emotion continually protects us from external influences. In our psyche, this protection is not always beneficial; in most cases, instead of protecting people, fear begins to hinder our progress. Unnecessary thoughts overwhelm our consciousness and never let go, because their foundation is the feeling of fear.

When a person begins to feel afraid, they try not to think about it and decide not to think. However, the feeling of fear becomes so powerful that it can override any decision made by the conscious mind, relaunching its assault on the consciousness. Two opposing sets of thoughts emerge in our subconscious. In the process of choosing a thought appropriate to the situation, a person loses control as a result of the struggle between them. Consequently, fear begins to control the person, rather than the person controlling the fear. Our consciousness ceases to make any decisions, losing the ability to accomplish anything and forfeiting its cognitive balance. Under the influence of fear, a person's speech also becomes disordered; they may begin to stutter or speak incoherently, resulting in nonsensical expression. Correctly understanding that fear is merely a feeling - our reaction to danger - is in itself a psycholinguistic process. All the theoretical perspectives we have considered above are, in fact, aimed at the correct psycholinguistic interpretation of fear.

Based on all the above, we can conclude that psycholinguistics studies how the emotion of fear, as a psycholinguistic process, affects speech, language, consciousness, and communication, as well as how the state of fear is formed and expressed in our language. In this process, I can include analyses of the concept of fear in our consciousness, its verbalization (that is, its explanation through words), its level of influence on cognitive processes such as attention and memory, its impact on the communication process within our speech activity, and our reaction to danger through speech.

As a psycholinguistic process, the concept of fear is considered a complex phenomenon because in a state of fear, the ability to prepare for danger becomes closely intertwined with biological reactions and cognitive and speech mechanisms, ranging from physiological preparation (fight or flight) to its reflection in language. Just as in associative experiments, psycholinguistic research often reveals the hidden connections between emotions and the language system, such as which words language speakers use in response to the concept of fear. Psycholinguistics studies how the social and existential (i.e., related to existence and accompanied by feelings of fear and anxiety) types of fear, as well as the fear of death, are reflected in our language.¹⁰ We have thoroughly discussed the essence of the concept of fear and its interpretation across other scientific fields. The theoretical foundations reviewed reveal that fear is a complex, multifunctional phenomenon within the human psyche, manifesting in close connection with biological, physiological, psychological, social, cultural, and linguistic aspects.

⁹ Опарин О.И. Страх как лингво-психологическая составляющая языковой картины мира. Язык, сознание, коммуникация: Сб. статей. М.: МАКС Пресс, 2004.

¹⁰ <https://qomus.info/oz/encyclopedia/.03.01.2026-yil>



The feeling of fear initially emerged as a defense mechanism in living organisms; however, with the development of human consciousness, the phenomenon of fear evolved into a complex emotion and a distinct experience unique to each individual.

The theoretical perspectives reviewed and analyzed above demonstrate that although views on the concept of fear in psychology differ sharply, they all affirm that this emotion is a factor that significantly influences human personality, activity, and behavior. While one group of theoretical perspectives explains that fear arises from internal conflicts and cognitive processes, the behaviorist approach (which posits that human behavior is changed by external stimuli) interprets fear as a reaction formed as a result of external influences.¹¹ Furthermore, cognitive theories propose that fear is studied in relation to the processes of comprehension, evaluation, and interpretation. It has been scientifically substantiated that the world around us, the social relationships within it, the exchange of information, national-cultural values, and upbringing play a fundamental role in the formation and manifestation of fear. The phenomenon of fear was analyzed with the understanding that it is not a purely psychological-individual phenomenon, but rather a product of social life.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that based on the theoretical perspectives presented on the concept of fear, we can say that this phenomenon has a complex and multifaceted nature.

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¹¹ Psixoanalitik va behavioristik yondashuvlarda qoʻrquv talqini boʻyicha qarang: Freyd (1926), Watson (1924), Skinner (1953).

