

# Concept “Time” in Novel “Inferno” by Dan Brown

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**Abstract.** The paper studies the concept “Time” in modern English as a basic unit in the conceptual system and as one of the most fundamental concepts in a person’s conceptual system. The article deals with the analysis of the linguistic ways of concept “Time” representation. The research focuses on cognitive and linguistic mechanisms of time conceptualization and representation in the novel “Inferno” by D. Brown. The authors consider various approaches to concept analysis. Under special analysis, there are semantic models of time conceptualization developed by the authors. It is also aimed at determining some basic linguistic mechanisms forming the concept “Time

## 1 Introduction

We always experience and realize the passage of time, regardless of what is happening or what is not happening in the world around us, regardless of whether we can correlate an event with time [1]. Concept “time” is an integral part of a person’s life; therefore the concept time acquires a fundamental status for representatives of any culture, for speakers of any language, and, therefore, is reflected in the language system both at the lexical and grammatical level [2].

Linguistics studied “time” primarily as a grammatical category, based on the morphological category of time and the type of the verb and the correlation of the event with the moment of speech or another point of reference. A new turning point in the study of time in the linguistic aspect was its conceptual interpretation, its study at the interface of language and consciousness, which is of interest at the present stage of the scientific knowledge development. The cognitive approach jointing the efforts of scientists in different science fields is gaining increasing popularity. However, a special role is undoubtedly given to the study of language, because it is language that opens access to human intellectual activity, to cognitive mechanisms of thinking, involved in the processes of conceptualization and categorization of reality [2].

As for the concept “time”, it is non-discrete, continual, and only human consciousness can distinguish some parts in it, relying on certain regularities in time phases change: part of the year (spring, summer, autumn, winter), part of the day (morning, afternoon, evening, night), the beginning, the middle, the end of long-time processes, etc. [3]

There are different time concepts in different branches of science: time as a physical entity in the

natural science concept, time as a form of matter existence in philosophy and ontology, historical and social time, psychological time, geological and biological time, language time [4]. The generalized concept of time includes: real time as a form of being of material time, conceptual time as a form of its representation in human consciousness in the form of temporal concepts and language time as a form of representation of these concepts in language [4].

Nowadays studies of concept are still of immediate interest in different linguistic branches: cultural linguistics, philosophy, logics, mathematical logics, etc., so there are different approaches to its definition [5].

According to N.U. Shvedova, a concept is a content side of the verbal sign (meaning or a set of related meanings), which represents its concept (the idea that captures the essential “intelligible” properties of the realities and events, and the relationships between them), it is related to mental, spiritual, or material spheres of human existence [6]. Attempt to comprehend the nature of the concept is associated with several diverse definitions.

On the one hand, such variety of views on the definition of the term “concept” is caused by the complexity and multidimensional nature of the phenomenon, as well as by different approaches to its study, which depend on the goals and objectives of the study. On the other hand, various definitions of this term suggest that this term is viewed as either “the content side of the verbal sign” [6], or as a “construct, which represents associations of the notion, but not equal to it” [7], or as a “cognitive unit” [8]. The research focuses on two categories of concepts: 1) concept as a cognitive unit, and 2) concept as a verbal representation of the notion. The first type reflects the scientific picture of the world; the second – the language picture of the world; accordingly, they may be called a scientific concept and a discourse concept [9].

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Following E.S. Kubryakova, we understand the concept, which represents a linguistic consciousness unit, as a term, "serving to explain the units of mental or psychological resources of our consciousness, the information structure that reflects the knowledge and experience of a person; information content of memory, mental lexicon, a conceptual system and brain language (lingua mentalis), the whole picture of the world reflected in the human psyche" [10]. The concept has levels that are the result, "sediment" of cultural life of different eras.

It consists of historically different layers, different both in terms of formation time, and in origin, and in semantics. The special structure of the concept includes:

- the main (actual) sign;
- an additional (passive, historical) attribute;
- an internal form (usually not realized) [10].

Our study is based on an analysis of the concept of "time" in the novel "Inferno" by D. Brown (2013) which has a fascinating plot, combines history, architecture and art and contains many references to one of the most mysterious literary masterpieces "The Divine Comedy" by A. Dante. In the novel, the professor of religious symbology of Harvard University Robert Langdon tries to decipher the riddle that drags him into the world of classical art, into the world of the past, the present and the future. Based on the lines of Dante's epic poem, Langdon must be able to find answers and decide who to trust before the world changes irrevocably. He is in a hurry to find a capsule with a deadly virus, and this is a matter of life and death. He is pressed for time to find the solution to all problems. From this perspective, the concept "time" in this novel acquires special significance. It will suffice to mention that throughout the novel the "time" lexeme is used 265 times, forming various conceptual models, considering which one can use a semantic approach.

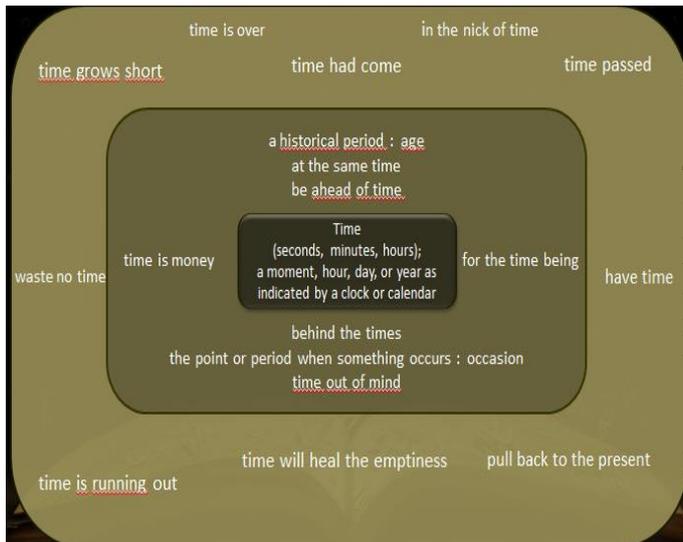
The core of the lexical-semantic field of the concept "time" in the novel is the "time" lexeme, and the periphery includes combinations of the concept "time": "time" with the verbs of motion, idiomatic, metaphorical and phraseological expressions. The core of the concept "time" can be represented by the following vocabulary definitions: "time as seconds, minutes, hours", "the point or period when something happens: "occasion", "lifetime", "a moment, hour, day, or year as indicated by a clock or a calendar, "a historical period: age".

The periphery of this concept in this research is composed of expressions taken from the novel "Inferno" by D. Brown. In total, we analyzed about 200 different expressions, found the frequency of expression use, the most frequently used words and expressions are given in Table 1. It graphically shows the percentage of expressions that represent the concept of "time", the frequency of their use in the novel.

The schematic structure of the lexical-semantic field of the "time" concept is presented in Fig. 1. It reflects the core of the concept and its periphery: the close periphery, consisting of widely used idioms, and the far periphery, which includes expressions taken from the novel.

**Table 1.** Statistics of words and expressions that represent the concept

The word/expression	The number of times used
now	816
era	288
then	270
time	265
day	209
moment	188
late	142
night	138
immediately	45
date	41
future	36
tomorrow	33
century	26
at the moment	20
forever	19
for a moment	19
too late	18
this time	18
for the first time	13
for a long	12
before it	11
for an instant	10
by the time	10



**Fig. 1.** The lexico-semantic field of the concept «time».

## 2 Semantic models and linguistic mechanisms of time conceptualization

The method of conceptual analysis depends on understanding and possibility of concept structuring. Among researchers there are opposite views on the issue of concept structuring. Z. D. Popova and I. A. Sternin believe that a concept has no clear structure [11]. Others are sure that concept modelling is rather essential nowadays both lexical units and grammar units [12]. Following on from the models developed by T. K. Elizova and E.V. Paducheva we offer 8 semantic models of time conceptualization [9, 13].

1. This model is a semantic field, united by the meaning of "time movement". In the novel, it is represented by word combinations that emphasize the general tension of events, their transience and dynamism [9]: "time grows short"; "time is running out"; "time had come"; "time passed"; "final seconds"; "the time bomb is no longer ticking"; "time is over"; "within seconds".

Examples:

1. "Our time grows short, she whispered, touching her amulet necklace [14].
2. "The time bomb is no longer ticking" [14].
3. "The time for talking is over" [14].
4. "Within seconds, Maurizio had pulled away from the congestion at Santa Lucia Station and was skimming eastward along the Grand Canal" [14].
5. "Langdon had little sense of how much time had passed, but the world was now starting to come back into focus for him" [14].

Our first semantic model is ego-directed; it conveys the meaning of "the movement of time towards the subject (object, event)". The "time" lexeme acquires the signs of concreteness when it relates to the temporal moment and is determined either by an article or a pronoun or loses these attributes when it delivers the meaning "duration of motion". The tension of the situation is vividly conveyed by metaphorical and idiomatic combinations: "Time grows short"; "Time is running out"; "Your days are numbered"; "Split

second"; "Time is short"; "Spend time", which emphasize the intensity and speed of time its disappearance.

Model 2. The second semantic model of the concept "time" is an expression united by the idea of "value". This model is of great importance in the context of the work. Time has value, it can be lost, found or saved, it can be needed [9]; "find time", "waste time", "give time", "take time", "save time", "need a moment", "have time", "time is short". In the novel "the value of time" largely determines the course of events; here delay is tantamount to death.

Examples:

1. "How I long for more time... but time is the one commodity even my vast fortunes cannot afford" [14].
2. "I don't have much time, Robert," she said. The authorities will eventually figure out where I went. But before they do, I need you to hear the truth ... all of it" [14].
3. "So Zobrist wanted to thin the herd ... in order to buy more time?" [14].
4. "Far more tragic, though, was her knowledge that his captors would waste no time revealing to Langdon the true nature of the situation" [14].
5. "Professor, obviously our time is very short" [14].

Model 3. The third semantic model conveys the value of the subject that can perform various actions [9]: "time heals"; "time will show"; "time permits"; "time works wonders". Such vivid metaphorical combinations in the novel cause various associative connections: as a good magician "time" "heals, cures, changes, transforms"; as an evil creature it dominates – "devours", makes older – "be in her early thirties".

Examples:

1. "Time will heal the emptiness, her doctor assured, but the sadness and the anger only grew inside her" [14].
2. "A few moments later, he emerged with a woman who looked to be in her early thirties" [14].

Model 4. The fourth semantic model, united by the notion of "time as a unit of measure", is represented by attributive phrases devoid of imagery [9] "winter time"; "local time"; "Greenwich time"; "springtime"; "in a few minutes"; "take a week".

Examples:

1. "My team flew to Florence and it took a week to locate his safe house, which was empty, but inside we found evidence that he had created some kind of highly contagious pathogen and hidden it somewhere else" [14].
2. "The clock in the Swiss Consulate's lobby had long since chimed 1 A.M." [14].
3. "Five P. M. Closing time" [14].

Model 5. The fifth model is characterized by the meaning "a certain moment of action, an event, a process", when duration is not emphasized, but only the fact of the action is stated [9]: This model is represented by the prepositional phrase: "on time"; "in time"; "for the first time"; "by the time"; "from time to time"; "at the moment".

Examples:

1. "From time to time she could hear him shaking the projector and scribbling on his notepad" [14].

2. “At the moment, however, we all need to remain focused on locating that container before it dissolves, and the contagion is released” [14].

Model 6. This particular time model represents time as a special kind of metaphysical process that transcends the three-dimensional space. The subject of the process, denoted by the word time, is the world with all the objects, states, events, processes that are in it; the world evolves through a sequence of moments (hours, days, years, etc.) by which we determine the simultaneity and the sequence of all events and processes. This development process is represented as a movement, because it has a direction: when they say time flies, time runs fast, time glides on, it means that it moves in a forward direction. Together with the world moves forward the Observer. This model can include such expressions as “years ahead of its time”, “Time had come” [13].

Examples:

1. “An airborne viral vector is a quantum leap – years ahead of its time” [14].

2. “The distant buzz of the surveillance drone was getting louder again, and Langdon knew the time had come for a decision” [14].

Model 7 (oncoming traffic), the movement of the world (with on looking Observer), according to this time model, generates a counter-movement of tick marks on the Timeline. When a man is going by boat on the river, it seems to him that trees, houses and everything that stands motionless on the shore is moving towards him. There is a pseudo-movement of tick marks on the scale in the opposite direction, generated by the moving Observer.

Examples:

1. “As the future hurls herself toward us, fueled by the unyielding mathematics of Malthus, we teeter above the first ring of hell ... preparing to plummet faster than we ever fathomed” [14].

The time scale has its own structure - the beginning, the front part, and the end or the back part. For the Observer moving in accordance with this structure the rear end of the scale is in front, and the front part of it is behind. Conceptualization of reality is not predicted unequivocally; the same situation can be conceptualized in different models of time. Some restrictions as to which time periods and events may come are not completely clear.” [13].

Model 8 (scalar). Movement in the direct physical sense is a movement in space, which in the prototypical case is motionless. This means that along the route of the object moving according to Model 6, that is the world, there must be a “roadside” and on it are some points marking the moments of time and dividing the time into the segments measuring it. This is a time scale, a kind of endless calendar – a clock. The process of the development of the world is a movement for two reasons: firstly, this process has direction and, secondly, a route [13].

In the same model, we come across such words and expressions as: “for the coming week”, “before”, “then”, “after that”.

Examples:

1. “This time, the interior glass shimmered faintly, glowing again for an instant before it faded away” [14].

2. “After a moment the canister pinged and then clicked loudly” [14].

3. “After that, it took a mere fifty years for the population to double again to four billion in the 1970s” [14].

4. “All he found was the usual stream of mail from colleagues, students, and friends, much of it referencing appointments for the coming week” [14].

Unlike Model 6, the scalar model is static: the next and previous words express the relationship between points and segments on a fixed scale: the previous week (behind) today is the next week (ahead). A scalar model does not require an Observer, in contrast to Model 6. The points and intervals-the marks on the scale-can even be indicated deictically (today, now); but to express a temporary relationship between them, the Observer is not necessary.

### 3 Conclusion

Summing up, it can be noted that even an integral concept of an abstract nature that does not have a structure in a strict way, can be represented in the form of cognitive semantic schemes reflecting certain characteristics of the concept. Cognitive schemes of structuring the concept “time” are the basis of lexical means of time conceptualization.

So, there are eight models of conceptualization of time that do not contradict each other. Among them are: Model 6 deictic, with the present tense; Model 1 can also be attributed to the model with the present time; Model 8 and Model 5 are objective, they are best suited for describing time relationships between events that have already occurred, that is, for past, or non-actual time. As Lakoff rightly pointed out, words like “to precede” and “to follow” orient the time intervals relative to each other rather than to the Observer in the world [16]. Model 7 - with the Observer, who looks to the future, is a model, first of all, of the future tense. The rest time models contain expressions that are united by this or that notion or meaning, considering the concept of “time” from different points of view.

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