

Idealized Cognitive Models of GIRL in American English

Words

Culture

1 Introduction

Categorization is an activity that involves putting entities into categories. Human beings possess an ability to categorize different entities, and therefore linguists and psychologists have been concerned with this ability for a long time. The framework of Idealized Cognitive Models is one of theories to deal with categorization. Idealized Cognitive Models are structures by which human beings organize their own knowledge. Category structures arise from ICMs. However, one problem here is that previous studies using ICMs are solely based on researchers' introspection and have no other evidence. It is clear that the methodology of proposing concrete ICMs still have room for improvement.

The main purpose of this thesis is to propose ICMs of GIRL1 category in American English. At the same time, this paper also focuses on proposing a new way of providing ICMs that makes it possible to support or correct introspection of researchers. For these purposes, this paper conducts a corpus study based on linguistic data in Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The research method is based on three hypotheses.

- Girls in real world have different kinds of inherent attributes.
- The more frequently those attributes are observed by speakers, the more likely they are attested in linguistic expressions.
- The [attributive adj.] + girl pattern is one of linguistic expressions that can be employed to describe inherent attributes of girl in real world.

In this paper, categories and ICMs are described with capital letters (e.g. GIRL category/ CHILD models). Entities in real world are described with small letters (e.g. a girl/boys). If speakers of

American English observe specific types of inherent attributes of girls more frequently than other attributes, they are likely to acquire GIRL category and ICMs of GIRL based on those frequent attributes.

Based on the third hypothesis, corpus study of this paper focuses on expressions like the following examples. (1) It reminds me of being a little girl in the summers. (COCA, 2019, FIC: underline mine) (2) She was a young girl from Vancouver, British Columbia. (COCA, 2019, SPOK: underline mine) The remainder of this paper is divided into four sections. Chapter 2 surveys previous studies of ICMs and different features of attributive adjectives that are going to be discussed in the corpus research. Chapter 3 conducts corpus research and reveals prototypical attributes of GIRL based on the result of [attributive adjective + girl] expressions. In Chapter 4, ICMs of GIRL are proposed based on the previous study of ICMs of CHILD, and compared with those of BOY. Chapter 5 makes a summary and conclusion of this paper.