

**THE SOCIAL COMPONENTS  
OF THE CONCEPT “SYSADMIN” (“СИСАДМИН”)  
IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN INTERNET PRECEDENT TEXTS**

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**Key words and phrases:** cognition; concept; language; mental representation; precedent texts.

**Abstract:** The paper considers a concept to be a multilayered structure and deals with the social components of the concept “sysadmin” (“сисадмин”) represented in English and Russian Internet precedent texts.

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Development of computer technologies and the Internet became the reason for forming the Internet subculture that has its own norms of behavior, experience, way of thinking and the language (jargon).

In this article we attempt to have a look at a concept structure as a multilayered construction having both social and national components.

The term “concept” has a variety of interpretations in the spheres of psychology, philosophy, linguistics. Though all the researches have agreed that the concept is a mental structure, each sphere of science has its own field for research. Cognitive linguists investigate connection between mental structures and language and believe that a concept is “an object from the “Ideal world” having its name and reflecting culturally determined perception of the “Real world” [3, p. 3].

Taking as an example representation of the concept “sysadmin” in humorous precedent texts of the Internet subculture both in Russian and in English gives us the opportunity to reveal the most significant components of the concept. According to G.G. Slyshkin any text should be considered precedent if it has “a great cultural value to a certain group of people” [2, p. 28]. However humorous precedent texts have greater status, because if some idea is not exaggerated and laughed at it becomes less popular for the society. Laughing at some idea is the most natural form of checking if that idea is true to life [2].

Consequently, the Internet precedent texts of humorous genres, being a part of the Internet subculture, provide us with the opportunity to find out what social components of the concept “sysadmin” (“сисадмин”) are verbalized in English and Russian Internet precedent texts.

First consider the content of the concept “sysadmin”, presented in the English precedent texts. It is important to note that the concept “sysadmin” has many components that reveal perception of his work. For example, the abstract from the joke “The life of a sysadmin”.

The life of a sysadmin goes approximately as follows.

9:45: You finally convince your boss to let you go and make your way to your office, assaulted all along the way by people demanding that you must help them fix things right now.

11:30 am-4: 30pm: You work your ass off on whatever projects have the most urgency to the company. [5].

This joke demonstrates such components of the concept “sysadmin” as *providing the necessary assistance to users* (people demanding that you must help them fix things right now), *importance of a system administrator for a company* (you work your ass off on whatever projects have the most urgency to the company).

The theme of “users and system administrators” is the most popular in the English jokes. Thus, next humorous texts reveal the emotional aspect of communication between users and system administrator.

Signs You Might Be ASysadmin

You see a bumper sticker that says "Users are Losers" and you have no idea it is referring to drugs. [4].

The example illustrates such component of the concept «sysadmin» as *negative attitude to the users* (Users are Losers). The duties of a system administrator are wide-ranging, and vary widely from one organization to another. Though in smaller companies sysadmins are usually charged with installing, maintaining servers or other computer systems as well as providing the user with technical support. So many employers require the system administrators to have strong inter-personal and communication skills and to be capable of explaining simple procedures in writing or verbally. Users’ ignorance in technical aspects arises irritation that is demonstrated in a great number of jokes and “sysadmin horror stories”.

Another abstract from the joke demonstrates users’ perception of system administrators.

I was musing on similarities between Santa Claus and system administrators. Consider:

1. When you ask Santa where he gets all the stuff he's got, he says, “Elves make it for me”.

2. Santa thinks nothing of breaking into your \$ HOME. [6].

The abstract illustrates *possession of sensitive information* (when you ask where he gets all the stuff he's got, he says, «Elves make it for me, Santa thinks nothing of breaking into your \$ HOME) belonging to the concept “sysadmin”».

The concept of “сисадмин” in the Russian Internet world view has some similar components with the concept «sysadmin» represented in the English one. Thus, *the importance of a system administrator for the company* and *possession of sensitive information* are shown in the following example:

Увольняют сисадмина. Директор говорит ему, мол, сдай системный пароль, и подает бумажку, админ записывает следующее \*\*\*\*\*, немного подумав, “а нет, еще одна снежинка” [7].

These concept components correlate with reality. All business documents, such as accounting reports, tax documents, etc. are stored in computer memory. Except people responsible for confidential documents, it is a system administrator who has access to it. So, access to all the company secrets makes the system administrator very important. In the example we see the system administrator did not disclose the system password (админ записывает следующее \*\*\*\*\*, немного подумав, “а нет, еще одна снежинка”), so the employee will not be able to use the computer network.

Possession of confidential information represented in both English and Russian Internet world views has ground in reality. According to Eugene Roganov, the Head of “Information Systems and Technology” Department of Moscow State Industrial University, a system administrator in the company has tremendous power, a system administrator is a person who can not be fired or offended. However, there is a

peculiarity: a system administrator is not a boss in the full sense of the word. That is why it is very important, what kind of relations a real boss has with a system administrator. In large companies, a system administrator is a Chief Information Officer. In smaller companies there is no more competent in computer technologies person than a sysadmin. Usually, the head of the company has neither desire nor time to get an idea what's what in computer technologies. Therefore, he or she should either mistrust their system administrator, or blindly trust him [1].

One should notice that Russian world view reflected in the Internet precedent texts has the theme of relations between users and system administrators. For example,

Любой системный администратор знает: самый страшный вирус всегда сидит перед монитором [7].

Религия Сисадмина: – Когда Бог хочет меня наказать, он лишает кого-нибудь разума [7].

The component *negative attitude to the users* is reflected in these examples. So in the first joke a user is called the most terrible virus (самый страшный вирус всегда сидит перед монитором). In the second one an ignorant user is compared with God's punishment (когда Бог хочет меня наказать, он лишает кого-нибудь разума).

Summarizing the components of the concept «sysadmin» («сисадмин») revealed in the Internet precedent texts of both English and Russian language we can state the existence of a number of common components (*negative attitude to users, the importance of a system administrator for the company and possession of sensitive information*) that refer to the social layer of the concept.

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### Социальный компонент концепта «sysadmin» («сисадмин») в прецедентных текстах юмористических жанров англоязычной и русскоязычной интернет-культуры

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**Ключевые слова и фразы:** когниция; концепт; ментальная репрезентация; прецедентный текст; язык.

**Аннотация:** На примере репрезентации концепта «sysadmin» («сисадмин») в прецедентных текстах юмористических жанров англоязычной и русскоязычной интернет-культуры рассматривается концепт как ментальное образование, имеющее сложную многоуровневую структуру. Особое внимание уделяется выявлению социальных компонентов концепта.

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### **Sozialkomponent des Konzeptes “sysadmin” in den Präzedenztexten der humoristischen Genres der englisch- und russischsprachigen Internet-Kultur**

**Zusammenfassung:** Am Beispiel der Representation des Konzeptes “sysadmin” in den Präzedenztexten der humoristischen Genres der englisch- und russischsprachigen Internet-Kultur wird im Artikel das Konzept als Mentalbildung, die die komplizierte mehrstufige Struktur hat, betrachtet. Die besondere Aufmerksamkeit wird der Entdeckung der Sozialkomponenten des Konzeptes geschenkt.

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### **Composant social du concept «sysadmin» dans les textes précédents des genres humoristiques de la culture de l’Internet russe et anglophone**

**Résumé:** A l’exemple de la représentation du concept «sysadmin» dans les textes précédents des genres humoristiques de la culture de l’Internet russe et anglophone est examiné le concept comme une formation mentale ayant une structure complexe à plusieurs niveaux. Une attention particulière est attribuée à la révélation des composants sociaux du concept.

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