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# VALUE COMPONENT OF LINGUOCULTURAL CONCEPT GOD IN THE OLD ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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## **Abstract**

The article highlights the notion of linguocultural concept that includes cultural views, objects, phenomena or characteristics of the particular culture. The author investigates the conceptual component of linguocultural concept God, analyses the content of the concept, its qualitative characteristics and basic features. Attention is focused on the identification of the value element of the concept God, which lies in the basis of the British linguistic community world outlook.

*Keywords:* cultural linguistics, linguocultural concept, value element

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## **1. Introduction**

In Linguistics, concept is considered as a unit, which includes cultural views of linguistic communities about the world, objects, phenomena or characteristics of the culture.

The effectiveness of social interactions and appropriate communicative practice depends largely on the focus concept/conceptual cluster that turns out to be 'interpretative prism'.

In the centre of linguistics research priorities there are such concepts as *GOD* [1; 2; C. Bluemel, *The Origin of the English Word for God*, bibleanswerstand.org; Ž. Nemickienė, *Concept in Modern Linguistics: the Component of the Concept "Good"*, <http://dspace.kauko.lt/handle/1/817>], *FATE* [3-5], *LOVE*, *HAPPINESS* [6-8], *TRUTH* [9, 10], and others.

What is more, concepts like *GOD*, *WEALTH*, *DESTINY*, *DEATH* appear to be historically stable. They undergo certain modifications within the historical development of linguistic community, however they continue to function as the 'configurators' of ethno-national image of the world, as outputs of axiomatic constructs that define the specific national outlook [11]. These concepts are basic for outlook of each individual linguistic community and reflect its moral and spiritual values.

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The specificity of the concept *GOD* in Old English consists in a combination of pagan and Christian worldviews. This concept is the key one in mythological and religious image of the world. In mythological worldview it is seen in pagan traditions, in religious ones – in the Christian culture.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the lexical-semantic features of the concept *GOD* in English and to reveal its value element which forms the basis of the British culture.

## 2. Origin of the word God

In order to reveal the essence of the concept *GOD* we must first clarify the etymological meaning of the word. The name of god in the Germanic languages *guda* is not entirely clear. This word is compared with Proto-Indo-European (PIE.) *hūtá* – ‘called’, *hávātē* – ‘call’ (therefore, *ghuto* – ‘who is caused by magic’) or PIE. *juhóti* – ‘add fuel to the fire, sacrifice’ (hence, *guda* – ‘one, who is worshiped, who is honoured’) [12]. In the focus of my attention there is also the origin of PIE. *ghut* – ‘which is invoked, called’, from the root *gheu* (*e*) – ‘to call, invoke’. Possibly, the original meaning meant the supreme power, which was caused, invoked by man.

As the etymological dictionary points, *god* does not correlate with *good*. Initially this noun was of neuter gender, but after the adoption of Christianity it became masculine. Old English word *god* is probably closer in meaning to the Latin *numen* (divine spirit, supreme deity).

Based on the existence of analogical words in other Germanic languages (Gothic, German, Norman – which have the same root base), logically, we find that the concept *GOD* is universal, it is significant in the history and culture of different nations [1]. For the purpose of more detailed verbalization of the concept *GOD* in Old English, let us analyze the value component of the concept.

## 3. Value component of concept God

It should be noted that one of the properties of linguocultural concept, that distinguishes it from other mental units, is the value element, as the concept reflects the cultural characteristics of a particular linguistic community. O.L. Byssonova defines value as positive or negative significance of the objects for person, group, society in general, which is not determined by their properties, but by drawing them in the sphere of human activity, interests, needs, social relations [13]. Valuable element or value meaning reflects a certain attitude of linguistic community to objects of reality and, in general, it reflects the cultural peculiarities of a definite nation. Addressing the axiological scale by J. Tishner, we see that in the multi-hierarchy of values God takes the highest level [13, p. 36], so among all concepts, that reflect human values, this concept expresses its highest manifestation.

I suggest using component analysis to consider the verbalization of the concept *GOD* by lexical units, identify the main features and peripheral components among lexeme 'god' in the English language and thus reveal value component. First let us analyze the lexeme 'god' on the material of seven English dictionaries (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** The definition of the word 'God' in the English dictionaries.

<b>Dictionaries</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary	1. the supreme or ultimate reality: a) the Being perfect in power, wisdom, and goodness who is worshipped as 2. creator and ruler of the Universe b) Christian Science: the incorporeal divine Principle ruling over all as eternal Spirit: infinite Mind
Douglas Harper's Etymology Dictionary	supreme being, deity; the Christian God; image of a god; godlike person
Merriam-Webster Dictionary	1. the supreme or ultimate reality: as a) the Being perfect in power, wisdom, and goodness b) Christian Science: the incorporeal divine Principle ruling over all as eternal Spirit: infinite Mind 2. a being or object believed to have more than natural attributes and powers and to require human worship; specifically: one controlling a particular aspect or part of reality 3. a person or thing of supreme value.
Random House Unabridged Dictionary	1. the one Supreme Being, the creator and ruler of the Universe. 2. Christian Science: the Supreme Being, understood as Life, Truth, Love, Mind, Soul, Spirit, Principle.
Collins English Dictionary	a supernatural being, who is worshipped as the controller of some part of the Universe or some aspect of life in the world or is the personification of some force related adjective divine
Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary	the being which made the Universe, the Earth and its people and is believed to have an effect on all things
Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English	the spirit or being who created the Universe

Consulting seven dictionary interpretations, I identified key components and peripherals of lexeme 'god'. The core of the lexical-semantic field of the concept in English is shown by two components:

GOD – THE HIGHEST BEING;

GOD – THE RULER of THE UNIVERSE.

Peripheral components are:

GOD – SPIRIT;

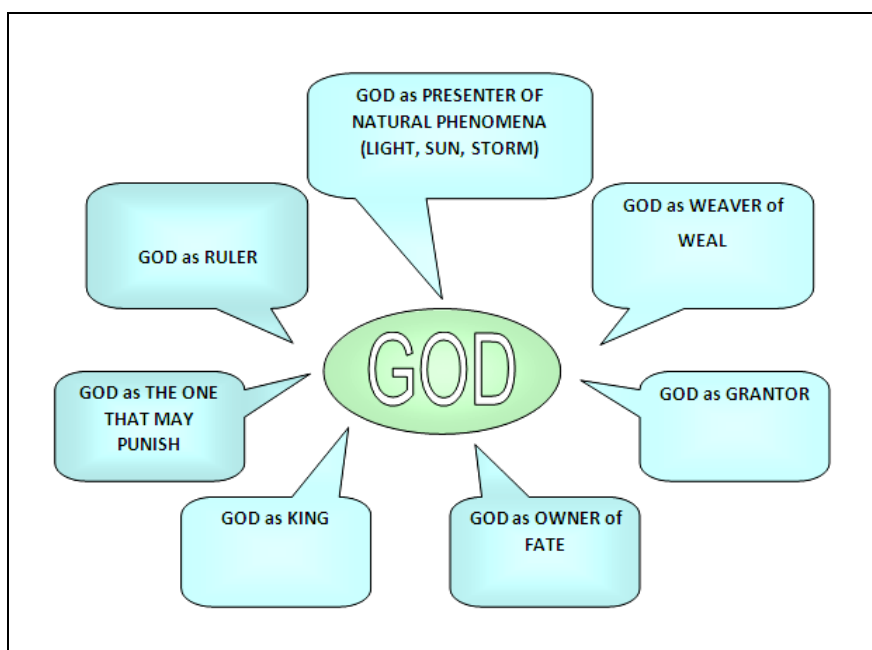
GOD – CREATOR;

GOD – PERSONIFICATION of ETERNAL MORAL VALUES (LOVE, KINDNESS, WISDOM, TRUTH);

GOD – INFINITE MIND;  
GOD – FORCE.

#### 4. Verbalization of the concept God in the Old English literature

I want to concentrate my attention on the oldest monuments of the Anglo-Saxons ‘Beowulf’ (VII-XI century), ‘The Battle of Maldon’ (X-XI century), ‘The Husband’s Message’ (X century), ‘The Seafarer’ (VI-VII century), ‘The Wanderer’ (X century), ‘Deor’ (X century), ‘Waldere’ (VIII century). It gives us an opportunity to compare the current value meaning with the original. The verbalization of concept *GOD* can be introduced in the following form (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Verbalization of concept *GOD* in the Old English literature.

These naming units indicate God as almighty being, connected with the light, directly involved in the creation and establishment of the world order, who is largely sympathetic to the man. It should be noted that in Christian worldview there is no notion of destiny, it is a pagan term. The ancient Germans did not give events a logical, rational vision, instead they executed blindly verdict of fate, explaining and describing everything that happened to them as its verdict [5, p. 69]. With the introduction of Christianity the fate continued to determine people’s actions, but by God’s will.

The relationship between God and human beings in the Anglo-Saxon culture are similar to the relationship between the lord and his subordinates, which indicates a low spiritual development of people in the pagan time and worshipping before the king's power.

## **5. Conclusions**

Comparing the naming units to describe the concept *GOD* in modern English dictionary and in Old English, we see that the value element coincides, the core is the components which denote God as almighty extraordinary being, who created the world and rules it. Peripheral meanings of the old concept *GOD* are somewhat different from components to describe *GOD* in the dictionaries. In the etymological analysis of the word God, we noticed that its additional meaning – ‘good’ – appeared after the introduction of Christianity. Analyzing the context of the concept usage, we noticed that the concept *GOD* in the mythological worldview is not associated with notions of kindness and love. Anglo-Saxons did not have a distinct division between good and evil, among the gods there were not the only ones who offered grace, but also misery, though they were worshiped as the highest powers that ruled the world.

All naming units of the concept *GOD* are linked and create a complete picture of this concept, reflecting the cultural characteristics, habits, beliefs, worldview of linguistic community and specific national consciousness. This linguocultural concept contains conceptual, value, figurative and symbolic components and has its own way of evolution in the British language image of the world .

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