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A Comparative Study on Thematic Field Landscape in Russian and English

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Abstract

Due to the shift to the cognitive and functional perspective of linguistic knowledge in the 1970s, the linguistic science became closer to the human thinking and goals of communication. In investigating lexemes of various thematic fields, it is essential to combine the knowledge of structural and cognitive linguistics involving the componential analysis, logic-linguistic analysis, and the associative experiment. The present paper aimed to indicate the combination of these methods as examples of units belonging to the thematic field "landscape". The sphere of lexical-semantic system, which was associated with thematic scope "landscape", was represented in all world languages. The research on the specificity of formation and structure of the thematic field "landscape" in Russian and English discovered common models of the formation process of lexical units' meanings. This contributed to the successful resolution of an urgent problem of modern linguistics. The problem existed in relationships of a lexical unit and a concept that was defined by this lexical unit.

Keywords: Thematic field; Concept; Semantic model; Componential analysis; Associative experiment.

1. Introduction

At the present stage of linguistics development, the semantic theory is complemented by the theory of associative fields. This is an area where studies are extra relevant for contrastive linguistics since they extend and complement the perception of a linguistic view of the world of a specific nation. It is accepted to consider the linguistic or naïve worldview as the reflection of everyday and common conceptions about the world (Abisheva *et al.*, 2018). Cognitive linguistics introduced a new approach to the understanding of different notions. The concept is a very complicated phenomenon of human consciousness. It is a knowledge entity which is represented by a number of semantic features that potentially exist in the human mind (Antúnez, 2001). A linguistic meaning and concept are considered to be central issues in language sciences. Besides, a concept is an unstable entity which is enriched by various extra-linguistic, pragmatic and individual factors in the discourse (Evans, 2009). One of central assumptions, which underlie research in cognitive linguistics, is the language use reflection of conceptual structure. The language study can inform us about mental structures of languages. Therefore, the present paper aimed to properly determine sorts of mental representations that are constructed by various sorts of linguistic utterances (Fauconnier, 1998).

Society and personality always carry cultures and languages and thus, they cannot exist outside of the society (Gachev, 1998) hence, languages may be properly described as a self-generating and self-sustaining continuum (environmental system) that serves as an interface between the human as a living organism and the occupied environmental niche (Gumilev, 1999).

Since the earliest times, the environmental reality has been examined by humans in a full and thorough manner. The sphere of a lexical-semantic system associated with thematic field "landscape" is represented in all of world's languages. This sphere consists of a huge number of elements which can be found in any language – and they carry multi-purpose concepts (Guryanov *et al.*, 2017). The unity of lexical elements according to the theme-based principle is able to determine the genetic relationships of the studied group based upon some real subjects and phenomena entity and find a reflection in the language. Such quantities of elements integrate together according to the logical-subjective and communicative entity and comprise the specific domain. Here, "a part of earth's surface with a typical terrain and flora combination" should be considered as a thematic field "landscape"

The present paper aimed to indicate the combination of various methods in examples of units belonging to a thematic field "landscape". The selection of a particular thematic field gives the opportunity to elicit the specification of extra-linguistic and linguistic expression of some factors in the process of forming a connotative macro-component of meaning, and also defines the border of an associative field of constituent units. According to L.N. Gumilev, natural landscape's conditions, in which some members of an ethnic group have to live and operate, can also determine a type of business activity (Karasik and Sternin, 2007). Consequently, the ethno-landscape environment identifies a unique appearance of every ethnic group.

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2. Methods

Each landscape makes people accommodated to its peculiarities. Therefore, the well-defined community arises. (Karasik and Sternin, 2007). Points out that all nations develop a good rapport to be unified in the way of life and thinking throughout the course of world history especially in the XX century. However, all nations still preserve their core mentality as long as they have their own climate, scenery, national cuisine, ethnic type and language (Kireeva-Karimova and Dubchak, 2017). It seems that exactly these attributes serve to maintain and reproduce the national substance, the specific habit of thought and living and also create a distinctive perception of world.

The study was conducted on the thematic macrofield "landscape" both in Russian and English using a field approach. The seme "water" with variants of *has/does not have water surface* classifies all studied units as two opposite lexico-thematic fields: "*water area*" and "*land*".

An equal number of microfields (44) were obtained in both languages. The large number of units, which make up a microfield data (66 "*water space*" and 132 "*land*" in Russian, 92 "*water space*" and 97 "*dry land*" in English), and their semantic diversity were explained by functional and practical importance of concepts and expressed by these lexical units.

The same number of microfields is determined by an extra-linguistic factor according to which the Russian landscape is mainly similar to the English. For the same microfields, there are various quantities of units that form these macrofields. First, it can be explained by the linguistic factor that is the semantic valency of lexemes with the ability to transform, as lexemes, which are related to the "landscape" in Russian and English, have large potential for semantic and associative connections. Moreover, these lexemes can be combined with different parts of speech that form various word combinations. Second, there is an extralinguistic factor as some matching landscapes have some differences. For instance, some English speakers live on islands and have the closer contact with the sea (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

With the use of componential (CA) and logico-linguistic (LL) analyses, it was possible to identify a set of semes and componential specifies constituting the denotative macrocomponent of meaning of studied units (for "*water surface*" and "*land*" fields). The studied lexical units, entering into the lexico-thematic fields as "*water surface*" and "*land*", were classified by taking into account the combinability of semes by the use of designed schemes.

An arcseme LTF "water surface" was primarily marked by analyzing all semes and componential specifies. Primary division of some lexemes, which denote a body of water, identifies two groups: The whole water bodies and its parts. The seme "origin" divides these lexemes into two macrofields: natural and artificial water bodies. To depend upon the composition of water, we are able to distinguish the fresh and saline water that also fall into elongate and non-elongate shaped lands. The last foregoing body waters can be identified as movable and non-movable. Movable waters are subdivided into horizontal and vertical flows; the latter is in turn divided into the high and low speed water motion. Each of these groups of water bodies varies in size: There are waters with long and short lengths, widths and depths. Furthermore, every water body has the seme "function".

The "land" can be subdivided into the terrain (hills and deepings, sea-level areas) and vegetation community. Consequently, these semes are archsemes of studied LTF and a new division will be made on this basis. The entire land can be divided into whole objects and their parts. Land areas of natural and artificial origin represent a new division of land, and also in turn, fall into areas of land with the gross, thin vegetation and bald land. Gross-vegetational areas of a land are characterized by its nature and degree of coverage. Furthermore, there are elongate and non-elongate shaped lands in each group. The group of hills and deepings has a distinction according to the hillside's form; and it is in accordance with peak's form in the group of hills. The next filling classification serves to distinguish rocky and earthy hills and water deepings. Afterwards, there is a distinction between objects on the ground of boundary. In addition, each group can be characterized by sizes, functions, characters of surface and existence of water on the surface of objects.

Therefore, we have an equal number of micro-fields in Russian and English: 15 fields in the water, and 29 in the land. This fact reflects the landscape's similarity of England and Russia.

The componential analysis (CA), logic-linguistic analysis (LL) and some experiments were utilized to analyze certain lexemes of received micro-fields. The logic of analyses can be seen in examples of reka (river in Russian) and river lexemes.

3. Results and Discussion

Reka and river are the most ancient lexemes of the lexical level in accordance with the etymologic analysis.

Dictionaries define reka as a large natural stream of water flowing from the source to mouth (Langacker, 1987); and river as a natural copious stream of water flow in a channel towards the sea, lake, or another stream.

New seme models of the denotative macrocomponent were discovered according to categorical analysis of two lexemes river and reka. *Natural origin +oblong form + permanent flow + water motion + large size* is the model for the lexeme reka. *Natural origin +oblong form +water motion + large size* is the model for the lexeme river.

In the experiment 1A on the Russian and the English speakers with characteristics of studied units and their marks of necessary items, we discovered semes of the denotative macrocomponent of meaning such as *the entire of water body, natural origin, fresh water (in Russian language) and water salinity (seme specifiers like fresh and saline waters in English), oblong form, constant water flow, horizontal course of the river and speed of water motion (participants explained the lack of semes specifiers by low and high speed motion of water in a river*), *size: length, width and depth (without any seme specifiers), cool water, the lack of streamflow separation and purpose(fishing, swimming, navigation, etc.)*

Identical semes model of the denotative macro-component is gradually used in the lexemes reka and river producing an equal number of semes in both languages. The difference of semes model is in such seme specifiers as the *fresh water* in Russian and *fresh/saline water* in English. It can be explained by an extra-linguistic fact that some England rivers (for instance, the river Fleet) can be more salty than Russian rivers getting salt only temporally and down the river. Participants consider such semes as *sizes, temperatures of water, the lack of streamflow separation and purpose* as conceivable ones.

The connotative macro-component of meaning was mentioned nor during the experiment 1B, neither in vocabularies, works of literature, and publicist writings. This fact helps us to conclude that the lexemes, river and reka, are stylistically uncoloured. In this regard, the definition of word, reka, may be as follows: *The large natural and constant stream of water with developed course flowing from the source to mouth into another body of water, for navigation, fishing, swimming and other purposes*. The lexeme river can be defined as follows: *A stream of fresh or sometimes salty water generally of considerable size, flowing between banks into a lake, sea, or another stream for navigation, fishing, swimming and other purposes.*

Obviously, differences between lexemes, reka and river, are inconsiderable in seme structures. These elements are mostly considered as the full equivalents. However, the research on of existing stable units with lexemes, reka and river, indicates a great environmental difference. The KA method and psycholinguistic experiments are limited to define the national unique features of studied units. As a result, a new experiment 2 (associative one) was conducted.

During the experiment 2, native speakers of both languages had to give first reactions connected with river and reka lexemes.

In the Russian language and culture, reka concept is the most concise and widely-used symbol in the poetry, while river concept is rarely used in the poetry, myths, etc. Reka concept is first connected to ideas of destiny, death, fear, mystery, obstacle, physical feelings of cold and darkness as well as emotional sufferings from the separation or waiting.

The analysis of proverbs and phraseological units reveals the set phrases in both languages.

According to the comparative analysis, bases of reka and river concepts can be characterized by almost a consistent set of associations: *cold, cool, dangerous, flows, deep*, etc. Basic differences were fixed in such reactions as *thirst, lukewarm, froze over, swelled, full-flowing, Volga, lake, ocean, depth, seasonal flood, ford, row, drown, a person drowned, a ship went down*; *pleasant, narrow, not very large, slow, dark, stones, rapids, waterfall, people walking , picnics on the bank, valley.*

Basic differences were noticed in the analysis of interpretative fields of these units as proverbs, phraseological units, metaphors, quotes from well-known fairytales, myths and legends because an idiomatic layer of each language represents the cultural background and history of language (Maturana and Varela, 1980): *mother, sullen, of life, of love, of hope, of time, sink into the river of oblivion, it is better to sink in the river, you cannot step twice in one river* – in Russian; : *of years, sell down the river, arguments, as the stream flows, so flows the river, he leaps into a deep river to avoid a shallow brook* - in English. Depending upon the context, the word reka can have positive and negative reactions. English speakers have positive, negative and neutral reactions to river concept. However, it is sufficient to argue that neutral and positive reactions are prevalent, for instance, *walking along the river, picnics on the banks, pleasant, so lucky that if he fell into the river he'd only get dusty, to flow in rivers; milk rivers* (Ozhegov and Shwedova, 2000),(Sadykova and Kayumova, 2014),(Stepanov, 2007), (The Oxford English Dictionary, 1989).

4. Summary

Consequently, the analysis of concepts discovers some dictionary-unrecorded reactions by English and Russian speakers, but crucial for the study of foreign languages.

National specific metaphorical models reveal the cultural specificity, which is very important for clarifying the semantic structure" of English and Russian discourses.

Contrastive semasiological analysis indicated that the structure of thematic fields of Russian and English languages was demonstrated by interlinguistic equivalents (142 units), close and approximate equivalents (193), and lacunes (52 units). In most cases with semantical identity at the denotative level, we can notice the unlimited variation at the connotative level and some great differences in associative fields of concepts.

The structure of concept and especially its interpretative field provide means for revealing some specific features of connotation of units that are compared in the present study. It can be claimed that some equivalents of experiment are not full. Only 9 out of 142 units agree on the basic level in the interpretative field. These units, for example, massif and geyser are only 6 percent of the total number of units; and they can be also represented theoretically as terms of different sciences (geography, geology). The remaining 133 units, constituting 94 percent of the total number, are relatively the full equivalents as they match at the denotative level, but differ at the basic level and the interpretative field of concepts (Tulusina *et al.*, 2017a), (Tulusina *et al.*, 2017b).

In the present paper, the analysis structure can be used for the future research of different thematic and semantic fields as well as the study of various lexemes and concepts.

5. Conclusion

The national specific features in Russian and English were revealed in the following cases:

- Semantic differences between units of two languages at the denotative level;
- The lack of meaning or word in a language – lacunes;

- Emotional and attitudinal differences in indifferent cultural conditions of a concept.

The research on the specificity of formation and structure of a thematic field “landscape” in Russian and English discovered common models of the formation process of lexical units’ meanings.

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