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**INTELLECT AND ITS OPPOSITES IN THE RUSSIAN  
LINGUISTIC WORLDVIEW**

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*Abstract*

Any linguistic worldview necessarily includes conceptions of intelligence, which means that the study and lexicographic description of the corresponding lexical units remains a pertinent task for linguists. We believe that a productive approach to the analysis of the lexical field 'intellect' and the words constituting this field is to consider the semantic relationships of identity and difference. Therefore, in our research, we focus on the semantic characteristics, denotative reference, synonymic and antonymic relationships of words with the semantic component 'intellect' in the Russian language. The study relies on the dictionary data, in particular the data from the dictionaries compiled by the Ural semantic school led by Prof. L.G. Babenko. Lexical units with the semantic component 'intellect' in the Russian linguistic worldview mostly refer to intellectual abilities, that is, belong to the denotative-ideographic domain 'Intellect'. These units, however, may acquire additional meanings if this domain overlaps with others, for example, 'Evaluation' or 'Science'. In these cases, such lexical units may also refer to behavioural manifestations of intelligence, cognitive performance and aptitude for certain intellectual pursuits. Our analysis of synonymic sets and antonymic oppositions, including derivatives and semantically related words, has revealed the following meanings acquired by the concept 'intellect' in the Russian linguistic consciousness: while 'intellect' is largely understood as a normal state of human consciousness, it may also be seen as a cognitive ability; as a developed intellectual ability; as an ability to critically evaluate, analyze and synthesize information; and, finally, as an ability to demonstrate logical behaviour.

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**Keywords:** Lexical field 'Intellect', identity, contrast, linguistic worldview.



## 1. Introduction

Any linguistic and conceptual worldview necessarily includes conceptions of intelligence, which means that the study and lexicographic description of the corresponding lexical units remains a pertinent task for linguists. A vast body of contemporary research focuses on the structure of the mental space and aims to provide a semantic, cognitive and lexicographic description of the lexical field 'Intellect' (see, for example, Shatunovsky, 2016; Vorkachev, 2017). It should be noted that 'the cognitive paradigm of linguistic knowledge <...> offers its own approach to linguistic phenomena, sets new research tasks and, therefore, requires new research methods' (Kraeva, 2017, p. 13). Cognitive linguistics 'studies human ways of seeing the world as reflected in lexical semantics rather than objective characteristics of linguistic units and categories. In other words, in cognitive linguistics, language is considered in the light of the key cognitive processes – conceptualization and categorization. Therefore, one of the main methodological principles underlying this approach is that language is not a reflection of the real world but, instead, is an instrument for constructing the world in the human consciousness' (Boldyrev, 2016, p. 10).

In this paper, we are going to analyze lexical units denoting different aspects of intellectual activity in the Russian language since 'the linguistic worldview captures the self-reflection of mental activity as well as the observations and evaluations of mental activity made by other members of society' (Chalykova, 2016, p. 29).

## 2. Problem Statement

We believe that a productive approach to the analysis of the lexical field 'intellect' and the words constituting this field is to focus on the semantic relationships of identity and difference. These relationships are significant for the semantic and conceptual spaces of language in general, or, as

Babenko (2007) rightfully observed: "For the semantic space of language, relationships of opposition, closely linked to world categorization (or the horizontal plane of the space), are as important as relationships of differentiation and identity, linked to the depth of the semantic space (or its vertical plane). The search for identical and opposite entities is at the core of cognition, which is reflected on different levels of the language system" (p. 22).

Synonymic and antonymic lexical units may perform various cognitive functions: synonymic sets are usually used for specification and concretization of conceptual characteristics, while antonymic pairs and groups, for revealing more general but still clearly distinguishable oppositions.

Opposites "deserve a closer examination <...> since they bring to light the characteristics and potential of the cogitological approach to semantic analysis <...> When it comes to opposites, cognitive semantics deals with the question of how, why and when people become aware that some words denote the opposite, that is, it studies the models and mechanisms of semantic contradistinction" (Nikitin, 2007, p. 397).

These theoretical perspectives are reflected in contemporary linguistic studies, which demonstrate that a more productive approach to abstract categories (social, intellectual, evaluative, and so on) and their representations is to focus on opposites. Quite illustrative in this respect is the analysis of conceptualization of the norm in the use of adjectives '*vmenyaemy/nevmenyaemy*' in the Russian language (Kolmogorova, 2019). Other examples include the study of the paradoxical aspects of the complex semantics of the term '*le vide*' in French and other languages based on the analysis of antonyms (Szulmajster-Celnikier, 2019) and investigation of the concept '*power*', which brings together the two opposite and sometime incompatible principles – domination and subjugation (Melikyan, Melikyan, & Kasatkina, 2019).

Despite the large number of studies discussing such categories as 'Intellect', 'Reason' and 'Mind' and their representations in different languages, we believe that there is a need for further research of the relationships of identity and contrast between lexical units with the semantic component 'intellect'. Investigation of this problem will enable us to gain a better understanding of this concept and its constituting elements in the Russian language.

### **3. Research Questions**

This study focuses on the semantic characteristics, denotative reference, synonymic and antonymic relationships of words with the semantic component 'intellect' in the Russian language. The main questions this study seeks to address is whether intellect is understood merely as an intellectual ability or this lexical field overlaps with other fields and, as a result, this concept acquires additional meanings conveyed through synonymic sets and antonymic opposites.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationships of identity and contrast between lexical units with the semantic component 'intellect' and reveal the constitutive elements of the concept 'intellect' in the Russian linguistic consciousness.

### **5. Research Methods**

The methodological framework includes methods of componential analysis of lexical meanings and methods of description of synonymic and antonymic complexes found within ideographic groups developed by Prof. L.G. Babenko. These groups have sophisticated integrative semantics and peculiar structural organization: the structure of such groups includes basic antonymic oppositions, forming the whole complex, and regular variations, organizing its subgroups. Subgroups, in their turn, comprise individual synonymic and antonymic oppositions (for more on this see Babenko, 2016; Babenko, 2019a; Babenko, 2019b).

### **6. Findings**

Our analysis has shown that in the Russian linguistic consciousness, the concept 'intellect' can acquire the following meanings.

▪ The meaning 'developed intellectual ability' is conveyed by the lexeme 'razum' within the synonymic set 'um – intellekt – mudrost' – razum – razumnost' – tolkovost' – intellectualnost' (bookish)<sup>1</sup> (intelligence – intellect – wisdom – reason – sense – acumen – highbrowism) and antonymic oppositions corresponding to the gradation of intellectual abilities, from a high degree of intelligence to poor mental capacity. The antonymic oppositions include 'um – glupost'' (intelligence – stupidity), 'um – tupost'' (intelligence – dumbness), and their derivatives or semantically related words, for example, 'umny – glupy' (intelligent – stupid), 'umny – tupoy' (intelligent – dumb), 'umny – durak' (intellectual – fool), 'umny – tupitsa' (intellectual – idiot), 'umno – glupo' (cleverly – stupidly), 'umno – tupo' (cleverly – foolishly), etc. It should be noted that explanatory dictionaries do not identify this meaning as a distinctive semantic component of the lexeme 'razum'. The difference in meaning between the words 'um' and 'razum' is often emphasized: for example, the New Explanatory Dictionary of Synonyms specifies that 'the word "um" accentuates obtaining knowledge, the process of thinking as such, while "razum" focuses on the results of this process, that is, on knowledge and comprehension' (NOSS, 2004). The above-described difference between 'um' and 'razum' can be neutralized in certain contexts, for instance, where 'razum' is contrasted with stupidity: *God has given you reason for serious matters while in small matters you can do with foolishness [K. Fedin. First Joys (1943-1945); RNC]* (Examples in Russian are taken from the Russian National Corpus [RNC, (2003–2020)], available online at <http://www.ruscorpora.ru/>; their translation into English is ours. – T. V.). It should be noted that the evaluative components in the semantics of lexical units also play an important role: having an intellectual capacity is labelled as a positive characteristic while lacking it, as negative. A lack of norm compliance can be further highlighted by a large number of words with negative connotations, including informal, low-register words such as expressive-stylistic synonyms to the adjective 'tupoy' ('showing an extreme lack of intelligence'), for example, colloquial 'bezgolovy' (brainless), low colloquial 'bezmozgly' (brain-dead) and low colloquial 'tupogolovy' (thick-headed).

▪ The meaning 'natural, normal state of human consciousness that enables an individual to have an adequate perception of objective reality' conveyed by the lexeme 'razum' within the synonymic set 'razum – um' (mind – reason) opposed by the lexeme 'bezumie' (insanity) meaning 'inability to construct an adequate perception of reality': *What can be more precious to a philosopher than reason but this is not what Nietzsche prays about: 'God, send me insanity!' <...> [Y. Dombrovsky. Antiquarian, part 2 (1964); RNC, (2003–2020)]* It should be noted, however, that the word 'razum' (reason) in this sentence is not opposed in meaning to insanity, since the latter is interpreted as an illness rather than as a changed state of consciousness.

▪ The meaning 'capacity of making sense of things, capacity for logical thought and analysis' conveyed by the lexeme 'razum' within the synonymic set 'razum – rassudok – um' (mind – sense – reason) and the corresponding antonymic oppositions 'chuvstvo – chuvstva – strasti – emotsii – serdtse' (figurative) (feeling – feelings – passion – passions – emotions – heart), conveying the meaning 'capacity to feel, to experience things emotionally': *This is how it happened that people can more or less control their minds but are really bad at controlling their feelings. [L. Vasilieva. Decision to Unlove // Komsomolskaya*

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<sup>1</sup> As with any translation, our intention is to provide the reader with sufficient information for understanding the argument and we would like to attract the reader's attention to the fact that the proposed English translations of the given Russian words may not be their full equivalents.

*Pravda*, 2005.10.0; RNC, (2003–2020)]; *Ekaterina was the child of the time. Her heart was not unkind but it was cooled by her cold mind* [I. Andreev. *The Way to the Throne // Znanie – sila*, 2012; RNC, (2003–2020)]. Other similar oppositions include '*ratsionalny, razumny, rassudochny – emotsionalny*'; '*ratsionalnost', razumnost', rassudochnost'* (bookish), '*ratsionalizm – emotsionalnost*'; '*ratsionalno, razumno, rassudochno – emotsionalno*' (rationally, reasonably, sensibly – emotionally; rationality, reasonableness; rationalism – emotionality; rationally, reasonably, prudently – emotionally). Krylova (2017, p. 34) makes an interesting comment about these oppositions: 'Many scholars, including A.D. Shmelev, observe that in European culture (and in the worldview characteristic of many European languages), there is an opposition “mind vs. heart (soul, emotions)”, in which preference is given to the heart'. Our data have shown, however, that these oppositions are symmetrically organized regarding the semantic components and do not contain any explicit evaluation, although such connotations may be conveyed through the context, for example: *When reason is trying to replace the heart, it needs all its power, all its erudition, where just one sigh would be enough for the heart* [F. Krivin. *Peacock's Tale (1981-1987)*; RNC, (2003–2020)]. In this case, the choice to follow one's emotions rather than one's mind is deemed more preferable. Let us consider another example: *The more keenly one feels, the stronger should be one's mind in order to rule the feelings* [V. Kozhevnikov. *Shield and Sword. Second Book (1968)*; RNC, (2003–2020)]. In this case, it is the more rational approach that is evaluated positively.

▪ The meaning 'ability to perceive objective reality through logical thinking' conveyed by the lexeme '*razum*' within the synonymic set '*soznanie – razum – rassudok – um*' (consciousness – mind – sense – reason) and its antonymic opposition '*intuitsiya – chutye*' (figurative) (intuition – gut feeling) denoting 'ability to understand something immediately, without the need for conscious reasoning, without a logical rationale'. This can be illustrated by the following example: *In some cases, however, the inner life of a person remains unseen and only intuition can help us comprehend it* [K. Staniskavsky. *An Actor's Work on Himself (1938)*; RNC, (2003–2020)]. Similar oppositions include '*osoznanny, osmyslenny, osoznavaemy, razumny, rassudochny, soznatelny – neosoznanny, bezotchetny, bessoznatelny, instinktivny, intuitivny, irratsionalny, nevolny, neosoznavaemy, podsoznatelny, slepoy*' (figurative) (conscious, intelligent, meaningful, rational, deliberate – unconscious, uncontrolled, instinctive, intuitive, irrational, involuntary, subconscious, blind) and the oppositions of derivatives and words related semantically: '*osoznannost' – neosoznannost', osoznanno – neosoznanno* (awareness – unawareness, consciously – unconsciously). These oppositions highlight the ways to perceive external reality rather than intellectual abilities of a person.

▪ The meaning 'cognitive ability and source of cognition' related to meanings 3 and 4 described above occurs due to the overlapping of lexical fields 'Intellect' and 'Science'. Thus, intellect is linked to scientific cognition and the oppositions of different methodological and scientific approaches are formed: '*ratsionalizm*' (rationalism), or 'a belief that reason and thought are the sources of cognition', as opposed to '*irratsionalizm*' (irrationalism) or 'teachings that deny or limit the role of reason in the process of cognition, emphasizing instead the role of instinct, feeling, faith and so on'. This opposition can be illustrated by the following example: *By the New Middle Ages I understand a rhythmical change of epochs, a transition from rationalism of new history to irrationalism and supranationalism of the medieval type* [N. Berdyaev. *The New Middle Ages (1924)*; RNC, (2003–2020)]. Another opposition of this type is '*ratsionalizm*' (rationalism), or 'a belief that reason and not the sensory experience is the main source of cognition', as

opposed to '*empirizm*' (empiricism) or 'a belief that sensory experience is the main source of cognition and not thought and scientific reasoning'. For example: *The old, primary enemy of rationalism is empiricism, reliance on experience* [G. Lyubarsky. *Obscurantism, or Hey, Rube!* // *Expert*, 2013; RNC, (2003–2020)].

▪ The meaning 'ability to demonstrate logical behaviour and commonsense reasoning' in the set '*razumny - blagorazumny - zdravomyslyaschy - zdravyy - rassuditelny - ratsionalny - trezvy* (figurative) – *trezvomyslyaschy* (bookish) – *ratsionalistichesky* (bookish) – *ratsionalistichny*' (reasonable – sensible – prudent – down-to-earth – clear-headed – rational – sound – sober-minded), that is, 'guided in one's behaviour by logic, reason and common sense' as opposed to '*nerazumny - bezrassudny - bezumny* (figurative) – *neblagorazumny - nerassuditelny - neratsionalny - sumasshedshy* (figurative) – *irratsionalny* (bookish) – *besshabashny* (colloquial) – *vzbalomoshny* (colloquial) – *sumasbrodny* (colloquial) – *shaly* (colloquial) – *shalnoy* (colloquial) – *bezbashenny* (low colloquial)' (unreasonable – reckless – mad – foolhardy – non-rational – irrational – careless – barmy – bonkers – freaky – wild – crazy), that is, 'not guided by or based on good sense, logic, reason, acting against them'. For example: *Adults enjoy Bernard Shaw's paradoxes: "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself"* [S. Ryabtseva. *Children of the Eighties* (1989); RNC, (2003–2020)]. This meaning occurs when the lexical field 'Intellect' overlaps with others, such as 'Behaviour' and 'Evaluation'. Thus, intellect is understood not only as an intellectual ability to control one's behaviour but also as an ability to behave in accordance with the existing social, legal and moral norms. Therefore, it can be concluded that this meaning is interpretative rather than descriptive and has a strong evaluative component.

## 7. Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that 'intellect' in the Russian linguistic worldview is primarily associated with intellectual abilities of a person, that is, corresponds to the denotative-ideographic domain 'Intellect', although such lexical units may also refer to certain ways of thinking. Moreover, the concept 'intellect' may acquire additional meanings when this lexical field overlaps with other fields such as 'Science'. In this case, these lexical units may denote not only intellectual abilities but also behavioural manifestations of intelligence, cognitive performance and propensity for intellectual professions and pursuits.

Our analysis of the relationships of identity and contrast between lexical units with the semantic component 'intellect' has revealed the following meanings this concept may acquire in the Russian linguistic consciousness: 1) the meaning 'developed intellectual ability' (as opposed to stupidity); 2) the meaning 'natural, normal state of human consciousness, adequate perception of objective reality' (as opposed to madness, insanity); 3) the meaning 'capacity of consciously making sense of things, capacity for logical thought and analysis' (as opposed to emotional irrationality); 4) the meaning 'ability to perceive objective reality through logical thinking' (as opposed to intuition); 5) the meaning 'cognitive ability and source of cognition' (as opposed to irrationalism, empiricism); 6) the meaning 'ability to demonstrate logical behaviour and commonsense reasoning' (as opposed to unreasonable and irrational behaviour).

The results of this research can be used in lexicographic practices.

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