

TILTM 2022**Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication****SYSTEMIC PARADIGMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN
BULGARIAN AND RUSSIAN LEXIS**

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Abstract

Placing the research in historical perspective, the article's main goal is to explicate systemic paradigmatic relations between words in Russian and Bulgarian. The typological and etymological affinity of Bulgarian and Russian is rooted in the shared linguistic and historical past and hence is the legitimate subject-matter of the research. The main hypothesis of the research is that despite the common ancestry, Russian and Bulgarian have developed along their own, unique ways, determined by both linguistic and extra-linguistic causes. In the course of the languages' protracted and chequered history, centrifugal forces have dominated over the centripetal ones, as a result of which Bulgarian and Russian have emerged as typologically different languages. The common denominator, however, is that apart from having an extremely complex system of grammatical endings, Russian and Bulgarian also share a substantial number of formally and/or semantically overlapping words. The main research methods are systemic and stratified sampling, and contrastive-typological analysis. The results of the research have revealed a paradigm of crosslinguistic lexical relations, among which metonymy, synonymy, hyponymy, contrast, and cross-linguistic homonymy play a crucial role. The findings of the research are of interest to historical and synchronic linguistics and have linguodidactic value in that they make foreign language teaching and learning more explicit, conscious, and motivated.

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1. Introduction

Bulgarian and Russian are two closely related languages that belong to the southern Slavonic and the eastern Slavonic subgroups of Slavonic languages of the Indo-European family of languages respectively. Both languages derive from Church Slavonic or South Bulgarian variety of Slavonic languages (Brown & Ogilvie, 2009). As a result of close etymological kinship, the languages share a number of overlapping grammatical, lexical, phonological, and phraseological features. In the Xth century, soon after the adoption of Cyrillic script by both languages, Bulgarian and Russian were related not only genetically, but also typologically, since they sprang from the same protolanguage (Saenko, 2017). However, since the 14th century Bulgarian and Russian have mostly pursued their own developmental courses shaped and determined by both linguistic and extralinguistic factors (Stepanov, 2016). Among the extralinguistic are changes brought about by different military campaigns and incursions into the territories of Russia and Bulgaria (Solano & Kolarova, 2015). Greeks and Turks dominated in Bulgaria from early Middle Ages onwards: first Greeks (XIth-XIIth centuries), then Turks until the end of the XIXth century, when Bulgarians finally became independent of the Turkish yoke. The nature of the Greek and Turkish influence on Russia is somewhat different. After the Christianization of Rus, Greek missionaries were regularly invited to teach, trade, and further spread Orthodoxy. During the Mongol-Tatar yoke, however, contacts with Greece became more tenuous and sporadic. However, Greek influence continued up to the XVIIth century. After the demise of Patriarch Nikon and with the ascension of Peter the Great, Greek influence in Russia petered out since new monarchs were mostly looking up to the west (Floria, 2017).

Both Greek and Turkish left their legacy in the form of numerous borrowings into Bulgarian, some of which even supplanted native words or shunted them into stylistically marked layers of lexis, thus partly changing the nature of intralexical paradigmatic relations (Alexander, 2000). To give just one example, the indispensable Greek word хора “people” shunted the obsolescent word души into a more limited sphere of usage: it is primarily used in quantifying expressions, such as колко души? “How many people?”, and with numerals. The Turkish borrowing ерген “bachelor” is the default name for an unmarried man, a bachelor. The Turkish loan акъл “mind, brain” has a pejorative connotation, is primarily used in the rhetorical question имаш ли акъл? “Are you mad, crazy?” and is contrasted with the native word ум, a neutral counterpart of акъл. Although Russian also has a number of Greek and Turkish borrowings, these are typically different from Bulgarian ones (Keipert, 2017). This can be explained by the nature of Greek and Turkish influence on Bulgaria and Russia. Some of the borrowings from Turkish into Bulgarian are баджанак “the husbands of both sisters”, бояджия “painter”, тютюнджия “seller of tobacco”, махала “block of flats”, чорап “sock”, “stocking” (Antipova & Matveeva, 2014). Some of the borrowings from Turkic languages into Russian are карандаш, кабан, изюм. These and other Turkic borrowings into Russian have dissimilar roots in Bulgarian: молив “pencil”, свиня/прасе “pig”, стафиди “currants”. Apart from augmenting the basic Bulgarian vocabulary (хора, маса), Greek has also had an impact on Bulgarian grammar in that some of its verbal suffixes, namely -аса, -оса, -иса, -диса were borrowed to form the perfective aspect in Bulgarian: cf. брадясам “to grow a beard”, здрависам “to congratulate” (Waugh, 2019). Greek borrowings into Russian that are shared with Bulgarian and frequently with many other languages are primarily terms or

international words: география, физика, театър. However, some of the Greek borrowings are unique to Bulgarian: магданоз “parsley”, ливада “meadow” (Zholobov, 2016). Cognates of these words may be found among proper names in Russian: the name of the residential palace of the last Russian Emperor Ливадия. During the so-called Revival period, after Bulgaria became independent from Turks, Russian had a substantial influence on Bulgarian in that numerous Russian borrowings occurred (Ivanova, 2019). These are primarily verbs ending in -вам, nouns with the suffix -тел, and abstract deverbal nouns in -ние: уважавам, наблюдавам, завоевател, учител, вълнение, въображение (Kotova & Janakiev, 2001).

Over the centuries, both centripetal and centrifugal forces have been at play, which have pulled Bulgarian and Russian in different directions. Sometimes their paths have crossed, so that a mutual crosspollination could take place. Other times, however, their paths diverged, so that stylistic, grammatical, typological, and other differences started to gradually emerge (Vinogradov & Dobychnina, 2018). Today Bulgarian and Russian are regarded as two separate languages, although the varieties of Church Slavonic used in the religious practice in Russia and Bulgaria are much closer to each other (though not identical) and mutually comprehensible. The crucial period when things came to a head is the year 1393 and the besiege of Tărnovo, when the Ottoman Turks invaded Bulgaria and put an end not only to most of the indigenous religious practices, but partly changed the linguistic legacy, inherited from proto-Bulgarian (Vashcheva & Koryakov, 2018).

At least partial receptivity to Turkic words can probably be explained by the ancestry of modern Bulgarians: Bulgarian people are descended from the so-called proto-Bulgarians and a group of people headed by Khan Asparuh, whose name has been immortalized as the designation of the renowned Varna Bridge. Some of the Turkic words in modern Bulgarian are likely to be inherited from that period. After the fall of Bulgaria to the Ottoman Turks in the XIVth century, Patriarch Euthymius, who was the authority not only on religious matters but also on language, went into exile: he fled to the Rhodopes, while his disciples escaped to Romania and southern Russia, where they continued their religious and linguistic endeavours (Urmanchieva & Plungian, 2017). While Bulgaria fell deeper and deeper under the purview of Turks, in cultural as well as in linguistic matters, Russia was receptive to the vestiges of Bulgarian language and culture due to Euthymius and his disciples (Polyvyannyu, 2016).

2. Literature Review

Although originally both languages were mostly analytic, today from the point of view of linguistic typology Bulgarian is considered to be analytic and at least partly isolating, with the notable exception of the ramified verbal paradigm: according to the most conservative estimates (Urmanchieva & Plungian, 2017), Bulgarian verbs can build up to several thousand forms, taking into account both regular and irregular formations as well as the potential presence of a thematic vowel which forms a bound stem of aorist and imperfect tenses (Mitkovska et al., 2017). Apart from the complicated system of verbal inflections, Bulgarian retains the distinction between simplex and complex tenses, which also held true for Old Russian, but was to all intents and purposes lost (Mokienko, 2017): as many as nine tenses in Bulgarian, among which are минало свършено време, минало несвършено време, минало неопределено време, бъдеще време, бъдеще в миналото, бъдеще свършено в миналото, бъдеще предварително време etc., are contrasted with only 3 tenses in Russian: past, present and future.

In their paper “Slavic Corpus and Computational Linguistics” Divjak et al. (2017) survey the types of research requiring corpora that Slavic linguists are involved in worldwide, and the resources they have at their disposal. According to the authors, corpora are a helpful tool in investigating crosslinguistic paradigmatic relations among words. Placing genetically related Slavic lexis in context, the authors illustrate how the common and divergent semantic planes of two or more genetically related words are manifest in combinations with other words. However, the authors warn that this method is used as an additional methodological tool to a purely definitional analysis, frequently engaged in by researchers who trawl through numerous dictionaries to establish the difference in usage between genetically related words. The authors are thus very cautious about using exclusively corpus-based or corpus-driven methodology, since corpora as repositories of authentic data may contain erroneous structures, both grammatical and lexical, and therefore a good dictionary which typically contains the so-called sanitized versions of usage and meaning is frequently no less effective a tool to investigate the crosslinguistic paradigmatic lexical relations. Without mentioning the term “false friends”, the authors adduce a number of examples to illustrate the spurious crosslinguistic equivalents of Bulgarian and Russian lexis: cf. B.3 училище “school” versus R.4 “an educational establishment after school where further secondary education is provided”, B. закуска “breakfast” versus R. “a slight meal before the main course”, B. живот “life” versus R. “stomach”, B. гроб “grave” versus R. “casket”, B. пресен “fresh” versus R. “not salty or not spicy enough”.

The paper by Fried (2017) explores the connection between Slavic languages and the theoretical tenets of construction grammar, a cognitively and functionally oriented approach to linguistic analysis. The strengths of traditional Slavic linguistics consist particularly in its focus on diachronic concerns, lexical semantics, and on issues of morphology. Traditional Slavic linguistics analyzes semantic paradigmatic relations between lexis from a diachronic perspective, shedding light onto the nature of the semantic links between two or more words in Slavic languages as well as traces the causes of the divergence in the words’ semantic structure down the centuries. Russian and Bulgarian started to diverge after the Cyrillic script spread over a vast territory stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Much of the lexis retained in the discourse of Church Service in Russian as well as in the vernacular is the default, neutral lexis used by modern Bulgarians. According to the author, this results in a number of words in the two languages that mainly differ in their stylistic connotations: cf. B. тъкмо “just” versus R. токмо (dial.), B. един и същ “the same” versus R. единосущный (lit.), B. риза “shirt” versus R. риза (lit.), B. нейна “her” versus R. нейна (vernacular). Apart from that, words with the same or similar exponent may be used in different constructions, while constructional analysis provides a firm theoretical grounding for these traditional areas and also draws attention to phenomena and issues that have been less prominently pursued by Slavic linguists. This concerns various kinds of syntactic and lexical patterning as well as the domain of discourse organization. Of interest is also the origin and evolution of such devices. This area has been generally left just about untouched in Slavic linguistics, yet it represents an enormous pool of interesting data and relates directly to theoretical questions that are presently at the forefront of general linguistic research. As an example, the Bulgarian phrase цял свят “the whole world” and its Russian counterpart весь мир could be considered. While a similar exponent exists in Russian – целый свет – it sounds non-idiomatic as the word целый poorly combines with the word свет, and apart from

that the word *свет* as a synonym of the word *мир* in Russian is stylistically marked: it is used either in colloquial or poetic speech.

The paper by Sekerina (2017) provides an update on research in Slavic psycholinguistics since 2000. The focus remains on formal experimental research. The author reviews five dimensional characteristics of Slavic psycholinguistics – populations, methods, domains, theoretical approaches, and specific languages – and summarizes the experimental data from Slavic languages published in general non-Slavic psycholinguistic journals and proceedings from the two leading conferences on Slavic linguistics, FASL and FDSL, since 2000. The author argues that the current research trends in Slavic psycholinguistics are a focus on Slavic-specific phenomena that contribute to the ongoing debates in general psycholinguistics. The current infrastructural trends are (1) development of psycholinguistic databases and resources for Slavic languages and (2) a rise of psycholinguistic research conducted in Eastern European countries and disseminated in Slavic languages. Although the author is mostly interested in psycholinguistic research, she also stresses the idea that this type of research should be enhanced by dictionary analysis, since dictionaries are a result of meticulous semantic analysis of a great many words by experienced scholars and researchers, therefore their data and findings should be taken into account when drawing conclusions about the usage and meanings of words in genetically related languages. Drawing on the previous research into Slavonic linguistics, the author points out that crosslinguistic relations between words from genetically related languages have been off the radar of scientific research, partly because the partial mutual comprehensibility of some Slavic languages is sometimes taken as evidence for lack of interesting semantic differences between lexis. However, given the relatively big number of false friends – a phenomenon that is notoriously widespread in related languages – it makes sense to rev up research in the direction of a closer and more detailed investigation of cross-linguistic relations with a view to enhancing and informing the current FLT practice. Some of the paradigmatic relations discussed by the author that obtain between Bulgarian and Russian lexis are those of metonymic contiguity (B. *грея* “shine” vs R. *греть* “to make warm”) and co-hyponymy (B. *едър* “big” vs R. *ядреный* “strong, spicy”). However, no classification of the complex system of paradigmatic relations is suggested, which leaves the reader somewhat in the dark.

Sabeva and Zagorova (2015, p. 57) investigate the semantic relations between Russian and Bulgarian idioms and proverbs and analyze different referential situations with respect to which seemingly crosslinguistically equivalent set expressions are used. Comparing the Bulgarian idiom *от друго тесто съм* “a different sort of thing” with its isomorphic Russian counterpart *из другого теста*, the authors give the following English gloss for the Bulgarian idiom: “a horse of a different colour”. This gloss is suggestive of both the meaning and usage of the Bulgarian idiom. The Russian idiom has negative connotations in that it expresses a negative evaluation of another person’s bearing, which seems to be somewhat haughty and condescending. The Bulgarian idiom underlines the speaker’s differing stance or caliber, compared to other people.

Sometimes all the three (predicative) idioms have the same source (the Bible, fables, etc.) (Szczesunowicz, 2015; Sosnowski et al., 2018) and yet develop slightly different meanings due to the different paths they follow through the centuries (Dobrikova, 2008). This pertains to the well-known saying traced back to Aesop’s fable about the profligate youth who sells out everything down to his last

coat when he spots a swallow and thinks that it is going to be warm soon, and so he does not need a coat (Holandi, 2009). Observing that the Bulgarian and English sayings can be regarded as false friends, Sabeva and Zagorova differentiate between the meanings of the two thus:

In English the proverb one swallow doesn't make a summer/spring is used only in reference to situations, and not to people. The saying means that because one good thing has happened, one cannot assume that more good things will happen in the future or that the whole situation will improve...The Bulgarian phrase една лястовица пролет не прави applies mostly to people and means that no matter how hard someone tries to change a situation, it will take the concerted effort of many people to effect any real or meaningful changes (Sabeva & Zagorova, 2015, p. 65).

Although the authors do not explicitly compare the Bulgarian and Russian proverbs with a similar meaning, judging by their commentary on the semantics of the English proverb, the same distinction holds true for Russian, i.e. the Russian proverb is closer to its meaning and usage to English rather than to its Bulgarian equivalent: just like in English, in Russian it is rarely used of people, the word ласточка is not a zoomorphic metaphor for a precocious individual who is ahead of his peers, but rather refers to a warning said of a situation which seems to augur well for the future because of some positive signs. Much effort and headway are required, however, to ensure the desired outcome.

3. Research Hypothesis

The pilot study conducted for the purposes of the present research investigated some of the paradigmatic relations that obtain between Russian and Bulgarian set expressions (see Lavrova, 2021). The conclusion the present author came to is that when the structure of idioms from both languages is the same or similar, the idioms tend to have a very close or identical meaning: В. морете ми е до колене, R. море по колено; В. да си оближеш пръстите, R. пальчици оближеш; В. мечешка услуга, R. медвежья услуга; В. приличат си като две капки вода, R. похожи как две капли воды. However, our research hypothesis is that it may not hold true for single-word lexemes, because of the well-known law in psycholinguistics according to which the shorter a lexeme tends to be, the more likely it is to exhibit well-ramified polysemy or be ambiguous.

4. Problem Statement

Given the close genetic links between Russian and Bulgarian, both languages are bound to have a lot of overlapping lexis, most of which, however, reveals complementary relations, which means that a host of paradigmatic relations is to be observed between Russian and Bulgarian words, with many words referred to as “false friends” – crosslinguistic homonyms that despite the completely or partially similar exponents (the form of the words) have different meanings, although there is typically a common semantic component that indicates the shared linguistic past. The problem of the research is thus that despite structural and morphemic similarity between the majority of Russian and Bulgarian words, most contain semantic features that do not make them truly crosslinguistically equivalent. However, this spurious similarity is frequently taken by learners of Bulgarian and Russian at face value, with the sad consequence that learners make numerous mistakes in translation.

5. Research Questions

The main research questions are as follows:

- i. What are the prevailing relations between Russian and Bulgarian lexis?
- ii. What is the number of different types of systemic relations and what type is statistically dispensable?
- iii. What are some of the reasons for the divergence in crosslinguistic relations?
- iv. In what way can the practice of foreign language teaching be enhanced, given the findings of the research?

6. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to explicate the ramified system of paradigmatic relations between Russian and Bulgarian lexis with a view to raising learners' awareness of the spurious crosslinguistic equivalence and thus facilitating foreign language acquisition.

7. Research Methods

As the main source of the material the following dictionaries were used: "A comprehensive explanatory dictionary of Russian" (2008), "An explanatory dictionary of Bulgarian" (n.d.) and "A Bulgarian-Russian dictionary" (n.d.). These outlets can arguably be regarded as reliable and definitive sources of semantic information about Bulgarian and Russian. The final sample comprises 1000 Bulgarian and Russian glosses selected through the method of systematic and stratified sampling. The contrastive and complementary meanings were classified into a number of paradigmatic relations, following the definition of paradigmatic relations suggested by F. de Saussure. These are semantically contrasted though connected relations that obtain between words within one and the same or different languages which can be classified into synonymic, antonymic, hierarchical, metaphorical, metonymic, part-whole, and other subtypes. The contrastive-typological and semantic analyses were used to explicate the systemic differences in lexemic relations. The quantitative method was used to count the relative number of various lexemic paradigmatic relations.

8. Findings

The most numerous group (32 %) comprises words with partly overlapping exponents and close or identical meanings: В. смисъл versus R. смысл, В. мляко versus R. молоко, В. захар versus R. сахар.

Just as predicted, many of the analyzed words stand in complementary relations to one another, i.e., manifest features of the so-called "false friends" – crosslinguistic pairs of words with partly or completely overlapping exponents but different meanings in synchrony, despite the common semantic component that reveals the words' common ancestry. This pertains to the next relatively numerous group of lexis, which accounts for approximately 14 % and is constituted by words with the same or similar exponents, but different stylistic registers. Thus, the Bulgarian words очи, рамо, чело have the Russian counterparts очи, рамо, чело. The crucial difference between the two groups, however, is that while in

Bulgarian these and other similar words are neutral, frequently used words, their Russian counterparts belong to the literary style, are mostly used in poetry and are old-fashioned. However, a reverse situation also obtains, when neutral Bulgarian words have vernacular Russian counterparts, i.e., lexis primarily used in the countryside or in some remote regions of Russia, for example, the Ryazan region: космы “hair”. This can be explained by the common ancestry of both languages: Bulgarian retained more Church Slavonic lexis than Russian, in which former church Slavonic words are retained as dialectal words. Words that belong to a different style in Bulgarian and Russian while retaining a common denotative component can also be described as crosslinguistic stylistic synonyms. Indeed, this feature of Russian and Bulgarian words can be exploited when learning Bulgarian by Russian speakers: associations can be built with Bulgarian words that have stylistically higher or lower Russian words. This can be considered as a special kind of mnemonics that helps to retain more Bulgarian words in the long-term memory.

Words with completely different forms and meanings and crosslinguistic equivalents account for 15 % and 14 % respectively. The first group comprises borrowings, which, for historical reasons, are different in Russian and Bulgarian, although the sources tend to be the same: Turkish, Greek, French, Italian, German, and English. Regarding the Turkish borrowings, it can be observed that very rarely do we have the same words borrowed both into Bulgarian and Russian. Much more typical is the situation when a native Bulgarian word corresponds to a Russian borrowing from Turkish (молив – карандаш), a word borrowed from Turkish into Bulgarian corresponds to a European borrowing in Russian (килим – ковер), or a Turkish borrowing into Bulgarian corresponds to a Spanish borrowing in Russian (тютюн – табак). Borrowings from French into Bulgarian rarely correspond to borrowings from French in Russian: парвеню – занавеска, ваканция – каникулы. Compared to Russian, Bulgarian has more borrowings among basic lexis from English: скиор “skier”, бира “beer”. Less numerous are Bulgarian borrowings from German, which also rarely correspond to a German borrowing in Russian, with the exception of barbarisms: келнър “waiter”. Full crosslinguistic equivalents are words with identical meaning and form: чайник, аптека, вторник, билет, etc.

The next group (9 %) is lexis with metonymical relations, based on logical, extralinguistic contiguity: гора, жена, дума, слаб, лют, след, искам, etc. To explicate the nature of contiguous relations between Bulgarian and Russian lexis, let us consider a couple of examples. Because language and thought develop in parallel in ontogeny, this inherent link explains why the Bulgarian word дума corresponds to the Russian word слово and why the Russian word дума means “deep thought”, although this latter word is stylistically marked in Russian, being a literary, poetic word. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual metonymic relations between the Russian verb искать and the Bulgarian verb искам. It also shows etymological links between some Russian, Bulgarian, and English verbs as well as conceptual links between seeking and wanting

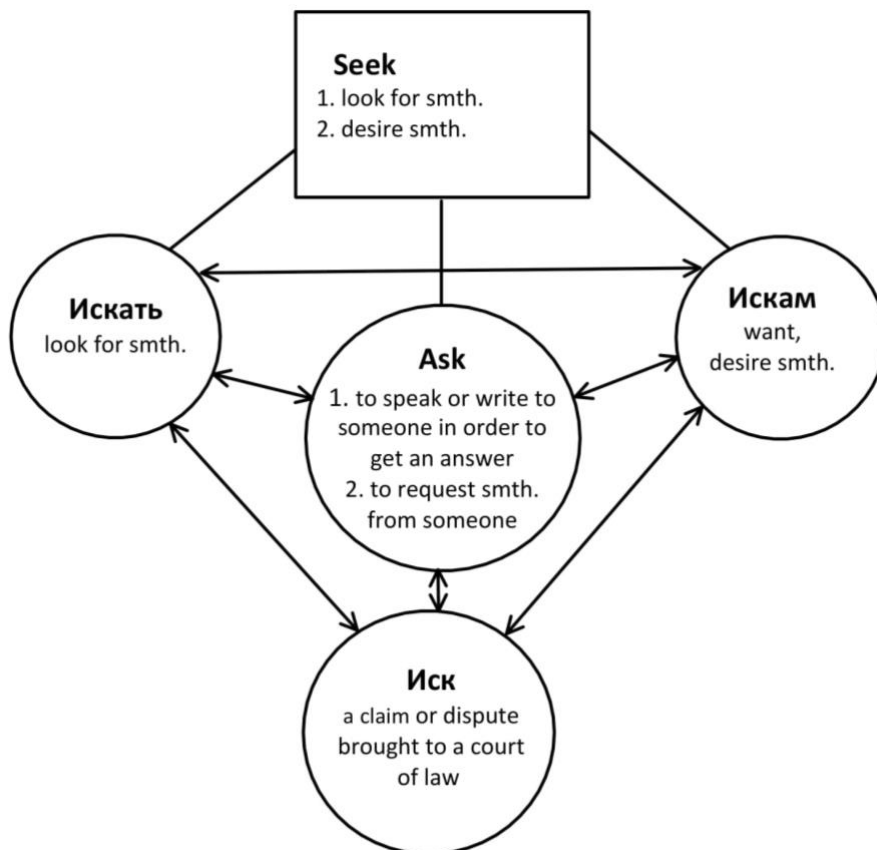


Figure 1. WISHING IS SEEKING: conceptual and etymological links between some Bulgarian, Russian, and English verbs with semantic elements “looking for smth.” and “wishing for/wanting smth”

The next group of words stand in hierarchical relations, either co-hyponymic or hypernymic (6 %). These words cause much difficulty for Bulgarian learners of Russian and for Russian learners of Bulgarian, since learners are easily misled by the common exponents of these words: направо, стол, щука, ягода. While all these words obtain both in Russian and Bulgarian, they mean different things: направо in Bulgarian corresponds to прямо in Russian, the word ягода in Bulgarian corresponds to клубника in Russian. Words that manifest metaphorical relations account for 4% of lexis. The Bulgarian word царевича corresponds to Russian кукуруза. During the reign of N. S. Khrushchev, this plant was ubiquitous in Russia and was invariably metaphorically referred to as царюца. This metaphorical designation was borrowed into Bulgarian and became the default name for corn. Since anger as a negative emotion is believed to affect the health of an individual on a par with a poisonous substance (it may cause ulcers, high blood-pressure, heart failure, and so forth), the metaphoric designation яд, which corresponds to the Russian word with the meaning “poison”, was chosen as the name of anger in Bulgarian.

Words that stand in opposing, contrastive, antonymic relations account for about 4 %. One of the well-known Bulgarian verbs that stands in constative relations to its Russian counterpart is the verb реванширам (се), borrowed from French with opposed meanings in Russian and Bulgarian: “to take revenge on smb.”, “to get one’s own back” (R.) and “to do smn. a favour in return for an earlier favour” (B.). It can thus be seen that the two related loans are opposed in their connotative meanings, while the general abstract meaning of doing something in return for something else remains. Another example of

enantiosemic relations is the Bulgarian-Russian pair *завличам – завлекать*. While the Russian verb presupposes movement towards the deictic speaker, the Bulgarian verb means “to drag off, to wash away”, i.e., the repulsive kind of movement inheres in its semantic structure. These pairs can be compared to the English conversive antonyms to push – to pull.

The least numerous group of words (2%) represents partitive relations: a name for a whole in one language corresponds to a word that denotes its part in the other. This is the case with the Bulgarian word *грозде* “grapes”. In Russian, a similar-sounding word *гроздь/и* denotes a bunch of grapes, while the Russian counterpart for *грозде* is *виноград*. Table 1 contains numerical value of different types of paradigmatic relations between Russian and Bulgarian lexis.

Table 1. Types of Paradigmatic Relations between Russian and Bulgarian Lexis (Relative Numbers)

Types of Paradigmatic Relations	Percentage
words with partly overlapping exponents and close or identical meanings	32
words with completely different forms and meanings	15
words with the same or similar exponent, but different stylistic registers	14
crosslinguistic equivalents	14
metonymical relations	9
hierarchical relations	6
metaphorical relations	4
enantiosemic relations	4
partitive relations	2

Figure 2 illustrates all the types of crosslinguistic paradigmatic relations that obtain between Bulgarian and Russian lexis. For convenience’ sake, only Bulgarian words are plotted on the chart, since most of their Russian counterparts are discussed and explained in the paper.

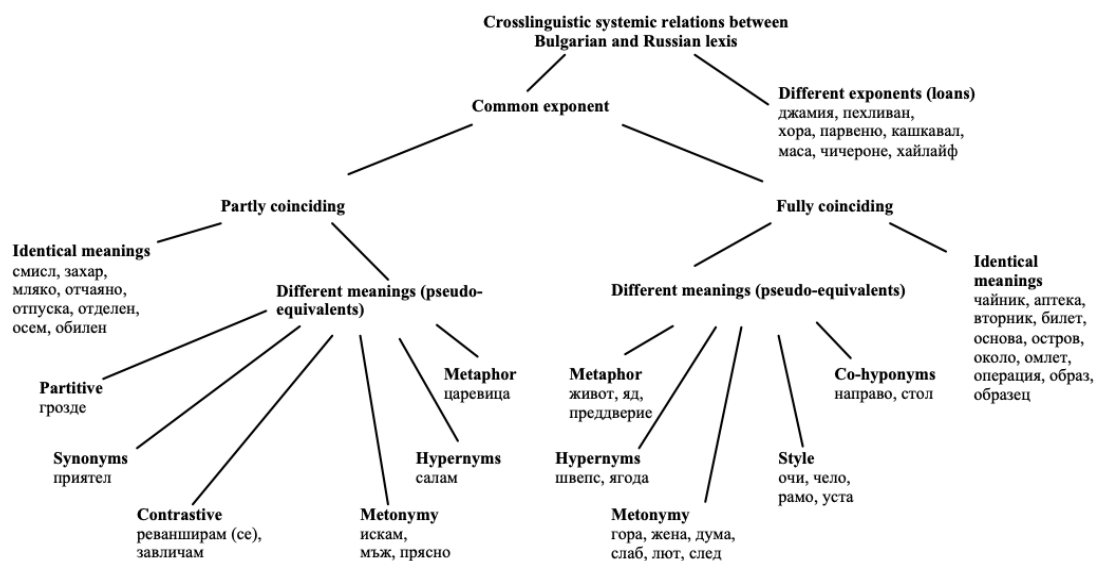


Figure 2. The main types of crosslinguistic paradigmatic relations between Russian and Bulgarian lexis

9. Conclusion

The implications of the research are manifold, with the most important one pertaining to the current FLT practice. Apparently, both from the typological and genealogical point of view, the main paradigmatic relations between Bulgarian and Russian lexis should be taken into account when teaching or studying either Bulgarian or Russian. Learners should be alerted to the rather numerous group of false friends in order to avoid communicative breakdowns and to speed up and facilitate the process of second/foreign language acquisition. Speakers of languages other than Bulgarian or Russian should be alerted to the borrowings from their languages, although these are not numerous enough to facilitate language learning and are typically crosslinguistic equivalents rather than stand in systemic paradigmatic relations. If learners are aware of the semantic logic behind the seemingly odd Bulgarian-Russian equivalents and counterparts, then their linguistic flair will be enhanced and language learning will acquire a more conscious, deliberate and speedy upward learning curve compared to learners who memorize crosslinguistic equivalents somewhat mechanically or simply by rote.

One of the fascinating areas and desiderata for further research is the systemic investigation of the relations between Russian and Bulgarian idioms, including paremiological units, i.e., proverbs and sayings. Preliminary findings, obtained by the present authors in a recently conducted pilot study, suggest that in approximately 15 % of cases idioms and proverbs which are descended from one and the same source, such as the Bible or fables, have acquired slightly different connotations in Russian and Bulgarian. This definitely proves that language does not remain static or develops in isolation: the people, the nation and the culture, either willingly or unwittingly, slightly modify the meanings of linguistic items to suit their communicate needs.

Of interest is the crosslinguistic typological comparison of the symbolic meaning of numbers in Russian and Bulgarian. While preliminary findings have shown that number 3 plays an important symbolic role both in Russian and Bulgarian due to the Orthodox Christianity (B. *всяко чудо за три дни. R. Бог троицу любит*), in Russian other numbers, such as 7 and 40, play a more prominent role (R. *Семь раз отмерь, один раз отрежь*).

Last but not least, raising learners' awareness of semantic relations between several Slavonic languages will enhance their motivation in mastering other Slavonic languages, an implication which may significantly enrich learners' linguistic background as well as awaken their interest in the history of different Slavonic people.

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