PhR 2019
Philological Readings

COMPARATIVE MODELLING OF LEXICO-SEMANTIC FIELDS OF FEAR IN RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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Abstract

The article deals with the algorithm for modelling the lexico-semantic field FEAR in English and Russian languages. The data of numerous on-line synonym dictionaries of both languages frames material for the process. At the first stage, the corpus of lexemes of the LSF was selected. The principle of field analysis of vocabulary allows us to say that any field is arranged on a gradual basis. Thus, both models have three hierarchically organized levels of synonymy. The first level consists of lexemes listed in all the used dictionaries. In English, the list of the first level components is represented by eight lexemes (in alphabetical order): ALARM, AWE, DISMAY, DREAD, FRIGHT, HORROR, PANIC, TERROR. In Russian, the analogous list is presented as follows: BOYAZLIVOST'/FEARFULNESS, ISPUG/FRIGHT, OPASENIYE/MISGIVING, ROBOST'/TIMIDITY, TRUSOST'/COWARDICE. At the next stage of work, synonyms to all the first level lexemes were identified. They formed the lexical content of the second synonymic level. Using the above-mentioned dictionaries, lexemes of the third synonymic level were defined. Further development of the LSF structure seems to be ineffective, since the chain of synonyms of the lower level is duplicated by the synonyms of the higher level. Graphically these processes are presented in Figures 1 and 2. For a more accurate formation of the corpus of the LSF components, the capabilities of component analysis of vocabulary are used. The research conducted by the author underlines the significance of the received data in terms of contrastive linguistics.

Keywords: Dictionary, lexico-semantic field, modelling, seme, synonymy.

1. Introduction

In modern linguistics the field approach to the description of language phenomena is widely used. At this stage of science development quite active studies of language fields are conducted. In addition, there are many researches having as their object the field character of the language as a whole. According to the results of conducted studies (paradigmatic fields, syntactic fields, grammatical fields, grammatical-lexical fields, functional-semantic fields), it can be stated that the field language model represents the language system as an infinite community of fields, the main characteristics of which are multi-level character and perpetual linkage of fields at the level of peripheral zones.

2. Problem Statement

Lexemes with capacious semantics form the centre of a lexical-semantic field; groups of words with similar semantics constitute the periphery around it. The degree of semantic connection of a separate lexeme with the core (centre) of a field can be established by applying the method of component analysis. This method is distinguished in the framework of the semasiological approach and is used to describe the structure of the meaning of the lexical-semantic field components and to identify both integral and differential components in their semantics. The field principle is applied not only as a general method of analysing linguistic phenomena and categories, but also when considering the lexical meaning of a word, which is of interest for the present study. The field model of the language system seems to be quite effective in this case. Modelling at the lexical-semantic level has its own characteristics due to the openness of the language lexical system, as well as the fragility of the systemic connections between the lexical systems of different languages.

3. Research Questions

Contrastive linguistics operates synchronous contents of languages. The purpose of contrastive linguistics is the comparative study of two languages to identify their similarities and differences at all levels of the linguistic structure. In quantitative terms, most researches have been conducted in contrastive grammar (including word-formation), less - in contrastive phonology, and even less in contrastive comparison of lexical systems. Using the method of sequential comparison, the author attempts to get microsystems (lexico-semantic fields) in both languages, which are combined by the source word.

4. Purpose of the Study

The article deals with practical experience in modelling lexico-semantic fields FEAR in English and Russian, the aim of which is in linguistic comparative analysis of synonymic word-groups in two different languages.

5. Research Methods

The research was held with appliance of theoretical, descriptive, empirical methods, component analysis and method of analysing linguistic phenomena and categories.

6. Findings

In the present study, models of the semantic field STRAH / FEAR were developed in Russian and English languages.

At the first stage, to recreate the most complete set of the corpus of lexical units constituting the lexico-semantic field STRAH / FEAR, the following on-line Russian language dictionaries of synonyms were used:

1) Abramov's (1999) Dictionary of Russian synonyms and similar expressions;

2) Aleksandrova's (2011) Dictionary of Synonyms of the Russian Language;

3) Babenko's (2010) Dictionary-thesaurus of synonyms of the Russian language;

4) Evgenieva's (2001) Dictionary of Russian Synonyms in 2 volumes and others.

It is worth noting the fact that the authors of the above-mentioned Russian-language dictionaries of synonyms provide an almost identical set of synonyms to the same lexeme, for example, the dictionary by Aleksandrova (2011) includes the following synonyms for the word STRAH / FEAR:

1) UZHAS / HORROR, TREPET / AWE;

2) ZHUT' / CREEPINESS (col.);

3) STRAST' / RAGE (col.);

4) VNEZAPNIY ISPUG / SUDDEN FRIGHT; PANIKA / PANIC; PEREPUG / FRIGHT (col.);

5) CHTO-LIBO, CHTO UGROZHAYET V BUDUSHHEM / SOMETHING THREATENING IN THE FUTURE: BOYAZN' / DREAD, OPASENIYE / MISGIVING; OPASKA (RAZG.) / DREAD (col.)

The dictionary by Babenko (2010) presents similar synonyms as:

1) BOYAZN' / DREAD;

2) ISPUG / FRIGHT;

3) OPASENIYE / MISGIVING

4) PANIKA / PANIC;

5) UZHAS / HORROR;

6) STRAST' / PASSION, etc.

According to these examples, it is obvious that, mostly, all the synonymic lexemes provided by different dictionaries coincide. The lexemes synonymous to the word STRAH /FEAR constituted the first level of the LSF under the consideration. At the next stage of work, synonyms to all the first level lexemes were identified. They formed the lexical content of the second synonymic level. Using the above mentioned dictionaries, lexemes of the third synonymic level were defined. Further development of the LSF structure seems to be ineffective, since the chain of synonyms of the lower level is duplicated by the synonyms of the higher level. Graphically this process is presented in Figure 01.

The first level of the defined synonymous lexemes in Figure 01 is marked with red arrows. The first level lexemes are OPASENIYE / MISGIVING, BOYAZLIVOST' / FEARFULNESS, ROBOST' / TIMIDITY, TRUSOST' / COWARDICE, ISPUG /FRIGHT. These synonyms are highlighted in Figure 01 in yellow and inserted in rhombus.
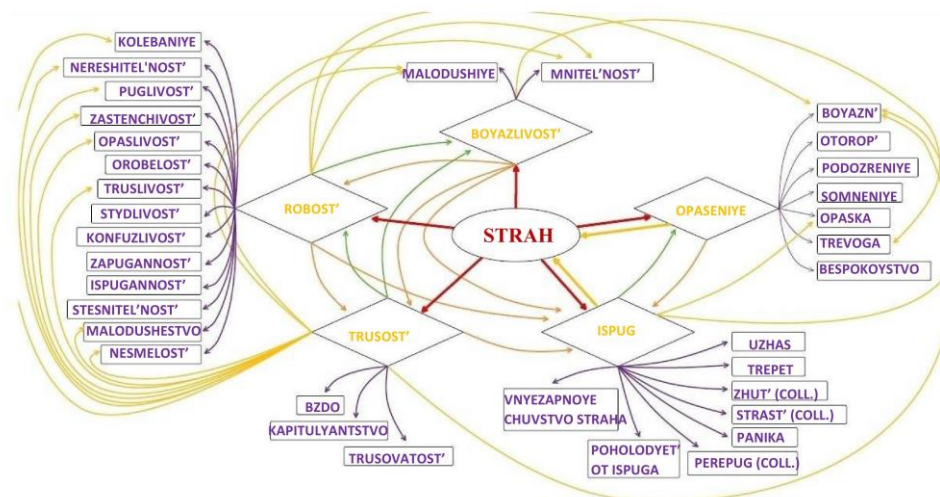

Figure 01. Model of the lexico-semantic field STRAH /FEAR in Russian language

The word STRAH / FEAR is the nucleus of the lexical-semantic field. To extend the periphery, the second level of synonyms was considered. Third-level synonyms (respectively, words synonymous to the second-level lexemes) are marked with green arrows in the diagram. We can conclude that the further level progression is not efficient, since all the presented words are synonymic to the previous levels lexemes as it is visually presented in Figure 01. For example, there are the following word-chains:

1) STRAH / FEAR → BOYAZLIVOST' / FEARFULNESS → ISPUG / FRIGHT → STRAH / FEAR;

2) STRAH / FEAR → TRUSOST' / COWARDICE → ISPUG / FRIGHT → STRAH / FEAR;

3) STRAH / FEAR → OPASENIYE / MISGIVING → ISPUG / FRIGHT → OPASENIYE / MISGIVING → STRAH / FEAR;

4) STRAH / FEAR → ISPUG / FRIGHT → STRAH / FEAR;

5) STRAH / FEAR → ROBOST' / TIMIDITY → TRUSOST' / COWARDICE → ISPUG / FRIGHT → STRAH / FEAR.

Thus, it does not seem appropriate and relevant to continue the process. It should be noted that some of the second level lexemes have several meanings. For example, the word TREVOGA / ALARM has the following meanings:

1) ANXIETY, which has a seme of emotions, fright, which is directly connected to the nucleus of the lexico-semantic field STRAH / FEAR;

2) military signal for collection (recovery) (this meaning is not included in the field under consideration, since it has no relation to it).

578

Thus, some lexemes are included in the field only in one meaning, but this fact does not mean that these words do not have other meanings. Within the framework of the study, however, such words were considered only in their correspondence and connection with the STRAH / FEAR field.

Since the purpose of this study is comparison of the lexico-semantic fields STRAH / FEAR in two languages, the English language one has been analyzed. The algorithm for considering the latter coincides with that for considering the field in Russian language.

While modelling the semantic field FEAR in English, data from the following online dictionaries of English synonyms were used:

1) Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (n.d.);

2) Concise Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.);

3) Webster's online dictionary (n.d.) and others.

In English, on the first level of synonymy, there are the following lexemes: DREAD, HORROR, PANIC, TERROR, DISMAY, AWE, FRIGHT, ALARM. The scheme for the modelling the semantic field FEAR is presented in Figure 02. For better visualization, this level is indicated on the diagram with red arrows.
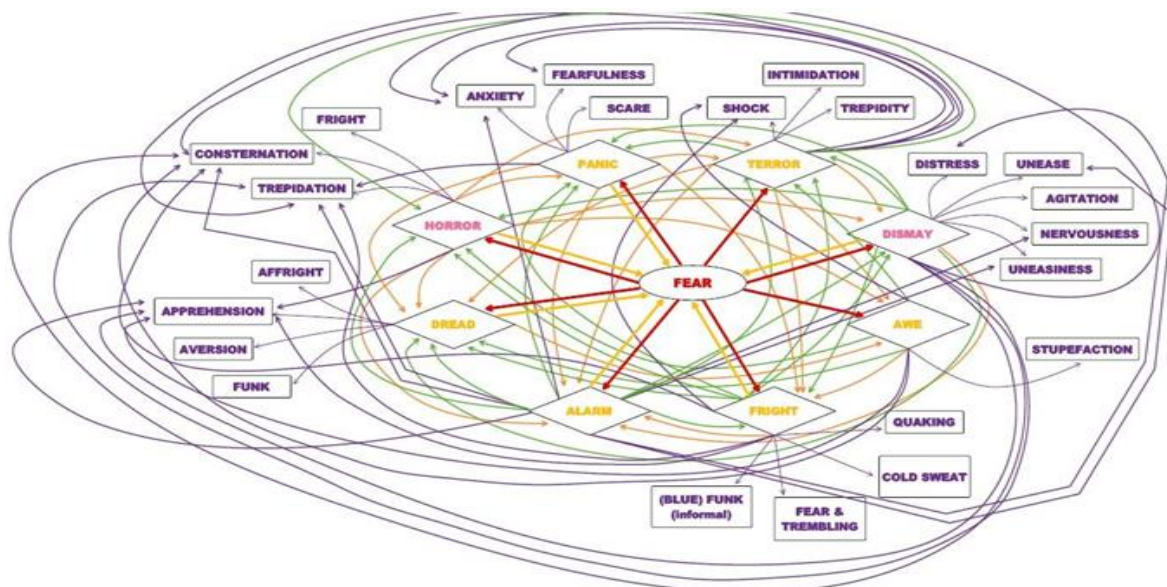

Figure 02. Model of the lexico-semantic field FEAR in English language

It is noteworthy that, unlike Russian dictionaries, English ones offer a more numerous set of corresponding synonyms to the word FEAR. For example, in Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (n.d.), the word FEAR has the following synonyms:

1) ALARM;

2) APPREHENSIVENESS;

3) AWE;

4) BLUE FUNK (AS INFORMAL);

5) CONSTERNATION;

6) CRAVENNESS;

7) DISMAY;

8) DREAD;

9) FRIGHT;

10) HORROR;

11) PANIC;

12) TERROR;

13) TIMIDITY;

14) ANXIETY;

15) UNEASINESS;

16) WORRY, etc.

Webster's online dictionary (n.d.) contains such synonyms as:

1) ALARM (ALSO ALARUM);

2) ANXIETY;

3) DREAD;

4) FEARFULNESS;

5) HORROR;

6) PANIC;

7) SCARE;

8) TERROR;

9) FRIGHT;

10) TREPIDATION.

In such a way, synonyms in different dictionaries are not only different, but their number can vary from dictionary to dictionary. In this paper, for the first level of synonymy, only synonyms presented in all the dictionaries are introduced: ALARM, DREAD, HORROR, PANIC, TERROR, DISMAY, AWE, FRIGHT.

In Figure 02, the second level synonyms are highlighted in purple and enclosed in rectangular frames. The first level of synonymity is linked to the second one with the arrows of lilac and yellow colour. Moreover, one should pay attention to the fact that, starting from the first and up to the second level of synonymity, one can observe the same lexemes. The recurrence of synonyms in this study means the transition of a particular lexeme from one level to another. In other words, the situation in which the presence of a particular lexeme is observed simultaneously on several levels of synonymy represents a synonym recurrence. For example, a chain of synonymous lexemes FEAR → PANIC → FEAR indicates the presence of the lexeme "PANIC" simultaneously on the first and the second levels of synonymy, that is, it indicates the return of this lexeme from the first level to the second. This process is explained by the fact that most of the words synonymous to the word "FEAR" are synonymous to each other, as shown in Figure 2:

1) FEAR → HORROR → FEAR;

2) FEAR → DISMAY → FEAR;

3) FEAR → AWE → FRIGHT → FEAR;

4) FEAR → DISMAY → ALARM → FEAR;

5) FEAR → PANIC → TERROR → DISMAY → FEAR, etc.

Using the mentioned above dictionaries, the third level of synonymy was also identified, green arrows indicate it.

Examples of the repeated synonyms of the third level is presented with the following synonymous lexemes chains:

1) FEAR → DISMAY → TERROR → PANIC → FEAR;

2) FEAR → ALARM → FRIGHT → TERROR → PANIC → FEAR;

3) FEAR → TERROR → HORROR → FEAR, etc.

Like the analysis of synonyms in Russian, only some meanings of the word, having the "FEAR" component in the semantics, were used. In English, the word "AWE" is of particular interest.

To begin with, while modelling the semantic field in Russian language, this synonym was not detected. This means that in the linguistic frame of a Russian speaker "REVERENT, DIVINE FEAR" does not coincide with physical and mental fear, while in English "AWE" means not only "DEEP RESPECT", "WORSHIP", but also "FEAR", "DREAD OF SOMETHING SUPERNATURAL". Also, it is noteworthy that "AWE", which is included in the first level of synonymy, has numerous synonyms that could not be attributed to the third level since they do not have the above mentioned semes, i.e. do not correspond to the meaning. In the study, these synonymous words were not analysed. These are examples of such synonymous words:

1) ADMIRATION (delight, amazement, admiration);

2) ASTONISHMENT (amazement, surprise);

3) ESTEEM (piety, respect);

4) REGARD (1. attention, care; 2. location, respect);

5) RESPECT (respect, recognition, honour; admiration, reverence);

6) VENERATION (awe, cult, worship);

7) WORSHIP (worship, reverence), etc.

Thus, from the whole set of the synonyms to the lexeme AWE, only those that meet the task were involved.

As noted above, similar to the process identified at the second level, the lexical units from the third level of synonymy appear on the first level.

It should be mentioned that in Russian for the lexemes identified at the last level there is an opportunity to continue synonymous chains without repeating, for example, "SUSPICION", "DOUBT", "ANXIETY". Since the seme of negative emotion "FEAR" in these words is too insignificant, it does not seem quite reasonable to continue the modelling of the lexical-semantic field to the next levels.

As for the phrases with the lexeme "FEAR" and its direct synonyms is concerned, it becomes obvious that meanings of "A SUDDEN FEELING OF FEAR" and "CHILL WITH FEAR" characterize the unexpectedness of this emotion, while the others ("HORROR", "PASSION", "FRIGHT") refer either to the colloquial style or to common language, that is, they are stylistically marked words. Accordingly, "CAPITULATION", which is synonymic to "cowardice", is also a stylistically marked word. The word "CAPITULATION", borrowed from the English language, has completely assimilated both phonetically and grammatically. It is stylistically marked with "of military use". Thereby, it is possible to explain the

reason for these words not to be synonymic to the ones of the previous levels. Further development of word-chains with stylistically marked lexemes does not correspond to the study purpose.

In English, the similar process is observed with such words and phrases as "QUAKING", "COLD SWEAT", "AGITATION", "UNEASINESS", "AVERSION", "STUPEFACTION", "TREMBLING", representing physical conditions, not emotions.

7.   Conclusion

Summing up, it is important to emphasize that in English, almost all components of the lexico-semantic field "FEAR" appear on the previous level of synonymy, some of which do from the third level to the first one. In Russian, the similar transition of synonyms takes place as well. In English, due to numerous synonyms to "AWE" (the first level), much greater number of components was presented compared to their number in Russian. The meanings of "HORROR" and "DISMAY" in English completely coincide with the meanings of the words "STRAH" / "FEAR" and "OPASENIYE"/ "MISGIVING" in Russian. The sets of synonyms to the lexemes coincide as well.

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