

The subject-matter of the contrastive lexicology of english and ukrainian essay



Chapter 1. The subject-matter of the contrastive lexicology of English and Ukrainian 1. Fundamentals 1. 1. Object of lexicology. 1. 2. Subdivisions of lexicology. 2. Tasks of contrastive lexicology. Its theoretical and practical value. The gift of language is the single human trait that marks us all genetically from the rest of life . Lewis Thomas. The Lives of a Cell.

Language is many things - a system of communication, a medium for thought, a vehicle for literary expression, a social institution, a catalyst for nation building. All human beings normally speak at least one language and it is hard to imagine significant social, intellectual or artistic activity taking place in its absence. The scope and diversity of human thought and experience place great demand on language. One of the most fundamental claims of modern linguistic analysis is that all languages have some common features.

This can be verified by considering a few simple facts. Since all the languages are spoken, they must have phonetic and phonological systems; since they all have words and sentences, they must have a lexical and a grammatical system; and since these words and sentences have systematic meanings, there obviously must be semantic principles as well. All languages have means that enable their speakers to express any proposition that the human mind can produce.

In terms of this criterion all languages are absolutely equal as instruments of communication and thought. The principal task of this book is limited to the study of similarities and differences in the lexical systems of English and Ukrainian. Lexical units are considered to be main structural elements of

utterances possessing specific structure of their own. This task belongs to the field of contrastive linguistics or more precisely contrastive lexicology. Lexicology (??????? - ?????????, ?????????, ????? - ?????). s a separate branch of linguistics is concerned with the sign nature, meaning and use of words and word combinations, raises some important questions about the interpretation and evaluation of the vocabulary of a language. Deep treatment of theory and methods in lexicology can be found in books by O. S. Akhmanova [???????? 1957], V. N. Yartseva [?????? 1967], A. A. Ufimtseva [???????? 1962, 1968, 1980, 1986], I. V. Arnold [Arnold 1973], N. N. Amosova [???????? 1956], G. A. Zhluktenko, R. S. Ginzburg et al [Ginzburg 1956], K. T. Barantsev, F. S. Batsevich [???????? 1993, 1997], A. I. Smirnitky [???????? 1956], M. A. Zhovtobriuh et al. [???????? ????. ????. ??? 1973] that are considered classical. Western European or American linguists though acknowledge lexicological studies commonly include them in books on grammar: p[ppp “ The study of words is the business of lexicology, but the regularities in their formation are similar in kind to the regularities of grammar and are closely connected to them” [Comprehensive Grammar 1985, p. 1]. We share the opinion of most Ukrainian linguists that lexicology is a separate subdivision of the language studies with lexical system as the object of its investigation. In Ukrainian linguistic tradition lexicology can be specified as historical lexicology studying regularities of the formation, development and enrichment of language vocabulary from ancient times and descriptive lexicology studying the lexical composition of modern languages [???? 1994, ?. 115; ?????????, ?. 19; ????????? ????. ????. ??? 1973, ?. 5]. It is a well-established fact that the vocabularies of all languages are constantly

changing. Some of these changes are relatively minor and occur very quickly (for example, the addition of new words such as spin doctor, yuppie, chunnel, internet, yobbocracy, able-bodism, grunge, nukemare in English or ??????????, ?????, ?????????, ?????, ????? in Ukrainian. Other changes have a more dramatic effect on the overall form of the language and typically take place over a long period of time.

The evolution of any vocabulary, as well as of its single elements, forms the object of historical lexicology. This branch of linguistics discusses the origin of various words, their change and development, and investigates the linguistic and extra-linguistic factors modifying their form, meaning and usage. Thus historical lexicology is closely connected with etymology (???????? - primary meaning of the word, the root word from which others are derived) which deals with the origin of a word by pointing out the root or primitive upon which it is based.

I. K. Bilodid considers etymology a part of historical lexicology [????, ????. ? i?. ????, ????, 1973]. In a wider sense lexicology is intimately related to culture the latter defined as the socially inherited customs of a society that are shared and accepted by people. Speech experience of the people is simultaneously their cultural experience, i. e. “ those structures, spheres and means of activity into which speakers are included. It is the whole range of things that influences the understanding and the use of words” [?????, ?. 32].

Only initial investigation of evolutionary driving forces and formative evolutionary regularities for a typical word (which are predominantly cognitive) may provide a clue to studying evolutionary regularities of the

entire lexical system of language. Moreover, cognition of the developmental regularities of lexical system is a key point for the system understanding of language evolution mechanism. Descriptive lexicology deals with the vocabulary of a given language at a given stage of its development. It studies morphological and semantic structures of words investigating the interdependence between these two aspects.

It is also concerned with stylistic differentiation of the lexical units of modern languages, their active and passive layers at the present state of functioning. Being a collective art of expression each language possesses “ aesthetic factors – phonetic, rhythmic, symbolic, morphological – which it does not completely share with any other language” [Sapir, p. 222]. Our task is to discover how “ the colour and texture of its matrix” can be “ carried over without loss of modification” as without that “ a work of literary art can never be translated” [Sapir, 222].

Speaking about lexicology as a branch of linguistics, I. Arnold [Arnold 1973, p. 9] and N. Rayevska [p. 10] mention that the general study of words and vocabulary, irrespective of the specific features of any particular language is known as general lexicology and the description of the characteristic peculiarities in the vocabulary of a given language – as special lexicology. This course constitutes an introduction to the study of the present-day English word and vocabulary as compared with the present-day Ukrainian word and vocabulary.

Therefore, we shall deal with special lexicologies. It goes without saying that every special lexicology is based on the principles of general lexicology, and

the latter forms a part of general linguistics. There are many differences among English and Ukrainian as even a superficial examination of their sound patterns, vocabularies, and word order reveals. But this does not mean that there are no limits on the type of lexical systems that human beings can acquire and use.

Quite to the contrary, current research suggests that there are important lexical principles and tendencies shared by all human languages. Studying these principles contributes to the development of the general linguistic theory and is the main concern of contrastive linguistics. Contrastive linguistics as a systematic branch of linguistic science is of fairly recent date, though it is not the idea that is new, but rather the systematization and the underlying principles. It is common knowledge that comparison is the basic principle in comparative philology.

The principles of comparative linguistics have played an important role in the development of a scientific approach to historical word study. They have brought an enormous increase in ordered and classified information about the vocabulary of different languages. The methods applied consisted in observation of speech, mostly written, collection and classification of data, hypotheses, and systematic statements. Particular stress was put on the refinement of methods for collecting and classifying facts. The study of the vocabulary became scientific [????? 1880]. 9-th century scientific language study having recognized variety and change in language, comparative philology insisted on regarding the descriptive statements as subordinate, not worth making for their own sake. Its aim was to reconstruct the

fundamental forms and meanings which have not come down to us. With the <https://assignbuster.com/the-subject-matter-of-the-contrastive-lexicology-of-english-and-ukrainian-essay/>

use of sets of phonetic correspondence philologists explored and proved genetic relationships between words in different languages. It became clear from intensive work on the great historical dictionaries that multiple meaning for words is normal, not an exception.

Comparative studies showed that, save for specific technical terms, there are no two words in two languages that cover precisely the same area. At the beginning of the present century vocabulary study was still mainly concentrated on historical problems. Only after Saussure an entirely new approach to language had been evolved: it had come to be understood as a system of synchronous symbols deriving their meaning and significance from differences and oppositions within this system. The centre of interest has shifted to the synchronic level, the spoken utterance and structure.

Lexicologists are now describing what the vocabulary of the language is like, rather than how it came to be that way. Contrastive linguistics attempts to discover similarities and differences in internal structures of both philogenically related and non-related languages. Some procedures developed by structuralism and much of their terminology have been assimilated by contrastive linguistics. It is now universally recognized that this branch of linguistic studies is a field of particular interest to interpreters and teachers of foreign languages.

Linguistic scholars working in the field of Applied Linguistics assume that the most effective materials for training interpreters are those that are based upon a scientific description of the target language carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner. We will proceed

from the assumption that categories, elements, etc. of different levels of speech analysis are valid for both English and Ukrainian languages, i. e. are adopted from a universal inventory. For example, agent nouns made of verbs can be found in both languages.

But English suffix -er having the meaning “ doer of the action” is differently represented: English – reader, lover, dreamer Ukrainian

– ?????, ?????????, ???????? Compare as well: English – grow thin, get angry, fall ill , turn traitor, run dry, wax eloquent, where underlined words mean ???????? and Ukrainian – ?????????, ?????????????, ???????

i??, ???????, ?????????, ????????????? The contrastive analysis can be carried out at three linguistic levels: phonology, grammar and vocabulary.

We will try to give a brief survey of the contrastive analysis on the level of lexis. It is commonly assumed that all languages have vocabulary systems in which words differ in sound-form but refer to reality in the same way. It follows from this assumption that for every word in the mother tongue there is an equivalent in a foreign language. But it should be borne in mind that, though the objective reality exists outside human beings, every language classifies this reality in its own way by means of vocabulary units. Cognitive linguists believe that our shared experience of the world is stored in our everyday language and thus can be gleaned from the way we express our ideas. What the words of a given language mean and how they can be used in combination depends on the perception and categorization of the real world around us. Language is elaborated in specific communicative situations. This kind of life situations is opposed to practical ones. Thus

vocabulary of any language presents some auxiliary classification built upon some basic, practical classification system, specifically reflecting it.

Basic level categories make up the core of the nominal and verbal vocabulary of a language and provide the conceptual basis and the raw material for other types of categories. Unlike basic level categories, these other types involve additional cognitive processes. When a more general or more specific meaning is required, words representing superordinate or subordinate categories are used. On the level of words, these processes are reflected in complex morphological structures like derivatives and compounds, while basic level categories are usually named by simple words.

Basic level categories also contribute to the conceptualization of abstract categories. Because we are used to the way in which our own language structures experience, we are often inclined to think of this as the only natural way of handling things, whereas, in fact, it is highly arbitrary. One example is provided by the words watch and clock. It is natural for Ukrainian speakers to have a single word to refer to all devices that tell us what time it is; yet in English they are divided into two classes depending on whether or not they are customarily portable.

We also find it natural that kinship terms should reflect the difference between male and female: brother or sister, uncle or aunt etc. Yet in English we fail to make this distinction in the case of cousin (Uk: ????? i???? ??? - ????? i??? ?????). The contrastive analysis brings to light what can be labeled as problem pairs, i. e. words that correspond to two different words in another language: ????????? - artist, painter. Each language contains words

which cannot be translated directly from this language into another.

Traditional examples of untranslatable English words are sophisticated and efficient.

This is not to say that the lack of word-to-word equivalents implies the lack of what is denoted by these words. If we abandon the notion of word-for-word equivalence, we can assume that 1) anything which can be said in one language can be translated more or less accurately into another; 2) correlated polysemous words of different languages are not, as a rule, co-extensive. Polysemous words in all languages may denote very different types of objects and, yet, all the meanings are considered by the native speaker to be obviously logical extensions of the basic meaning.

E. g. : head English Ukrainian of a person????? of a body???? i?? of a coin????? ("????") of a cane??? i??? of a match????? of a table????? ????? of a family????? of a pin??? i??? of a nail??? i??? of a hammer (an axe)???? of cabbage ?????? 3) the meaning of any word depends, to a great extent, on the place it occupies in the set of semantically related words: its synonyms, constituents of the lexical field the word belongs to, other members of the word-family which the word enters etc. Thus, e. g. n the English synonymic set brave courageous, bold, fearless, audacious, valiant, valorous, doughty, undaunted, intrepid each word differs in certain components of meaning from the others: brave usually implies resolution and self-control in meeting, without flinching, a situation that inspires fear, courageous stresses stout-heartedness and firmness of temper, bold implies either a temperamental liking for danger or a willingness to court danger or to dare the unknown etc. Comparing the corresponding <https://assignbuster.com/the-subject-matter-of-the-contrastive-lexicology-of-english-and-ukrainian-essay/>

Ukrainian synonymic set ?????????, ?????????????, ?? i?????, ???? i?, ? i???????? etc. e see that the Ukrainian word ?? i????? may be considered as a correlated word to either brave, valiant or valorous and also that no member of the Ukrainian synonymic set can be viewed as an exact equivalent of any single member of the English synonymic set in isolation, although all of them denote “ having or showing fearlessness in meeting that which is dangerous, difficult or unknown”. Different aspects of this quality are differently distributed among the words making up the synonymic set.

This absence of one-to-one correspondence can be also observed if we compare the constituents of the same lexico-semantic group in different languages. Thus, e. g. let us assume that an Englishman has in his vocabulary the following words for evaluating mental aptitude: apt, bright, brilliant, clever, cunning, intelligent, shrewd, sly, dull, stupid, slow, foolish, silly. Each of these words has a definite meaning for him. As the Englishman sees a display of mental aptitude, he attaches one of these words to the situation and, in so doing, he attaches a value judgement.

The corresponding Ukrainian semantic field is different: ?? i????, ??????, ?????????, ??????, ?????? , the meaning of each word is slightly different too. What Ukrainian speakers would describe as ?????? might be described by English speakers as either cunning or sly depending on how they evaluate the given situation. The problem under discussion may be also illustrated by the analysis of the members of correlated word-families, e. g. ??????, ??????? with head, heady, which have different denotational and connotational components of meaning.

This can be easily observed in words containing diminutive and endearing suffixes, e. g. ??????, ??? i???, ??? i?????? etc. Thus, on the level of lexical meaning the contrastive analysis reveals that correlated polysemantic words are not co-extensive. Difference in the lexical meaning of correlated words also accounts for difference in their collocability in different languages .

Thus, the English adjective new and the Ukrainian adjective ?????, when taken in isolation, are felt as correlated words in a number of cases: new hat - ????? ???????? New Year - ????? ? i?

In collocation with some nouns, however, The Ukrainian adjective cannot be used in the same meaning in which the English word new is currently used.

new potatoes - ?????? ???????? new bread - ?? i??? ?? i? Compare also:

ENGLISH UKRAINIAN to fill a lamp - ?????????? ?????? to fill a truck

- ?????????????? ?????? to fill a pipe - ?????????? ?????? to fill a gap

- ?????????????? ????????

UKRAINIAN ENGLISH ?????? ?????????? - a thin book ?????? i??? i? - subtle

irony ??????? ????? - a slim waist The contrastive analysis brings to light the

essence of what is usually described as idiomatic English, idiomatic Ukrainian

etc. i. e. the peculiar way in which every language combines and structures

in lexical units various concepts to denote extralinguistic reality.

Different verbal organization of concepts in different languages may be observed not only in the difference of the semantic structure of correlated words, but also in the structural difference of word-combinations commonly used to denote identical entities. E. g. a typical Ukrainian word-combination used to describe the way somebody performs an action, has the structure:

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an adverb + a verb or a verb + an adverb(? i? ? a???? ??????. ? i? ???????? ??? i???? etc.) We can use similar structures in English: He smokes a lot. He learns slowly.

But there exists an idiomatic English structure: an adjective + a deverbal noun (He is a heavy smoker. He is a poor learner). Another English structure used in similar cases is: the verb to be + an adjective + an infinitive (He is quick to realize. He is slow to cool down). Commonly used English compounds an early-riser, a music-lover have no counterparts in Ukrainian and correspond to structures: ? i? ???? ??????. ? i? ?????? ?????? Thus the theoretical value of contrastive lexicology becomes obvious if we realize that it forms the study of one of the three main aspects of language, i. . its vocabulary, the other two being its grammar and sound system. Just as the small set of Arabic numerals can be combined to express in writing any natural numbers we like, however vast, so the small set of sounds and letters can be combined to express in speech and writing respectively an indefinitely large number of words. These linguistic units enable people to refer to every object, action and quality that members of a society wish to distinguish. These units have a meaning and a structure which relate them not only to the world outside language but to other words within the language.

Besides this, contrastive lexicology came into being to meet the needs of many different branches of applied linguistics, namely of translation, lexicography, standardization of terminology, information processing, foreign language teaching, literary criticism and others. Its practical value cannot be overestimated as it stimulates a systematic approach to the facts of the <https://assignbuster.com/the-subject-matter-of-the-contrastive-lexicology-of-english-and-ukrainian-essay/>

vocabulary and plays a prominent part in the general training of every linguist. The treatment of words in lexicology cannot be divorced from the study of all the other elements in the language system to which words belong.

It should be always borne in mind that in reality, in the actual process of communication, all these elements are interdependent and stand in definite relations to one another. We separate them for convenience of study but afterwards we should put them back together to achieve a synthesis. Still the lexical level of language system provides the most evident information on regularities of the evolutionary processes in contrasted languages, and therefore should be examined first of all and may be regarded as a clear model for contrastive investigation of other language levels.