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Foreign Language Teaching Based on Semantic-Field Theory

Статья посвящена проблемам межкультурного общения. Основное внимание уделяется изучению семантических полей, как механизма, обеспечивающего не только более глубокого понимания языка, но и более эффективного общения. Для анализа были использованы группы слов корейского, русского и английского языков. Данный выбор обусловлен тем, что каждый из этих языков принадлежит отдельной языковой семье.

Ключевые слова: семантика, семантические поля, межкультурное общение, значение, общество

This article discusses the problems of intercultural communication and focuses on semantic fields' studies as a tool for better language understanding and therefore better communication. We take into consideration Russian, English and Korean languages since each of it represents different language family and society.

Keywords: semantics, semantic field, intercultural communication, meaning, society

We live in an age of rapid globalization when people tend to change the idea that knowing one foreign language is absolutely necessary. Instead, more and more people spend their spare time studying two and more foreign languages. While some fully support this idea, others might argue with it saying that this method is wrong due to its complexity. We believe that there is no right answer and everyone should make a choice according to their own abilities, but what we want to point out in this article is having a good understanding of language structure and most of all, semantic field.

Before moving to the definition of semantic field, we would like to discuss meaning. Firstly, what is meaning? Why does it differ when we want to express the same idea in different languages? Even after a thorough dictionary check?

Meaning of a word may differ due to certain perception which include one's mental image, concept, value and intention. In other words, people from different countries tend to think differently depending of the situation they are in.

According to the Swiss philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, language has a tight connection with consciousness [2]. Any word has to carry certain meaning and only in case of listener paying their full attention to it, this communication episode can be effective. Listener should not only carefully listen to the speaker, but also be aware of some specific conditions if there are any. For instance, what is the native language of the speaker? What language is still more comfortable for a speaker to use? What country is speaker residing these days?

This may sound like a lot to worry about, but actually this is the type of information listener can get almost with no effort and all it takes from him is showing necessary amount of interest during their conversation.

In spite of the obvious simplicity of process we described people tend to have troubles talking with foreigners. And here we already talk about thinking process is a certain individual that represents their society.

When we travel to a foreign country, we always try to get a hold of their culture, the way their society works, the "air" people breath there. Unconsciously we do it not only out of curiosity, but out of respect to new traditions and we also feel the need to know these details because it will later help us in communication.

According to the above-mentioned ideas, semantic field also differs from language to language. In this article we concentrate on three languages: Russian, English and Korean. We find it interesting that each language belongs to different languages

so Russian belongs to the large family of Indo-European Languages, English belongs to West Germanic and in case of Korean language some scientists refers it to Altaic family, other classify Korean as an isolate since Korean Language did not descend from any other language [1].

Comparing these three languages that seem to be having no similarities, we paid much attention to word usage and tried to find out what part of speech is the most used one on every language.

English language has proved to have a great number of nouns thus logical thinking that is characteristic for English. Korean language has many adjectives while Russian language also has a wide range of adjectives and adverbs which explains well-developed and used cursed vocabulary in both groups. Mostly bag language in both languages consists of words related to sex or parents. That is why Russian and Korean languages are more “emotional” compared to English.

Any language is a social object and any human is a social being. According to the book “Mind, Self and Society” by George Herbert Mead: “Society made me who I am” [4, p.125]. In other words, it’s not one’s eye or hair color, but one’s language, literature and most of all society that creates a person of certain country and society.

This fact let us claim that semantics must to be treated as worldview of each language. To put in other words, it will allow to compare different ways of thinking as well as defining characteristics of the people.

In this article we use definition of a semantic field by Adrienne Lehrer, Professor of Linguistics in University of Arizona. “A semantic field is a set of lexemes which cover a certain conceptual domain and which bear certain specifiable relations to one another” [3]. In other words, a semantics field refers to a group of closely related words which are dependent on one parent word. Linguists tend to study semantic fields from different perspective, but for us cultural aspect attract most attention. First of all, this method proves how deep is connection between speech of a certain person and culture they live in. According to L.M. Bosova, thorough studying of semantic fields let one to shed light on relationship between nonverbal reality and language itself [5, p. 47].

During communication we share concepts that is a reflection of our own worldview. Logically, our worldview in its turn is shaped by the language we are speaking and society we are leaving in. Depending on the vocabulary we use these differences are less or more obvious. As we mentioned before, we use three languages from three different language family and what makes it even more unique is how different societies where these languages are used as state ones.

In order to prove how much efforts people of certain languages do everyday to express themselves or to understand each other, we compare some of the daily vocabulary in all three languages:

English	Russian	Korean
sister	сестра	누나, 언니, 여동생
brother	брат	형, 오빠, 남동생
blue, green	синий, зеленый, голубой	푸르다
fresh	свежий	신선하다, 생생하다, 시원하다, 서늘하다
hot	горячий	뜨겁다, 덥다
cold	холодный	찬, 차가운, 추운
sweet	сладкий	단, 달콤한
beautiful	красивая (female)	아름다운, 고운, 예쁜
handsome	красивый (male)	잘생긴
very	очень	매우, 몹시, 아주, 무척, 대단히, 굉장히, 너무
sometimes	иногда	때때로, 이따금, 때로는, 가끔, 종종
well, skillfully, carefully, closely, attentively, properly, fully, thoroughly, often, frequently, easily	правильно, добро, хорошо, точно, умело, подходяще, часто, легко, внимательно, достаточно, довольно	잘

Comparing these words, we can clearly see that we make certain efforts in order to understand and to be understood when it comes to speaking with people from different countries.

In conclusion, we emphasized the importance of semantic field and its thorough study not just to explain some misunderstandings that might occur during communication but also, we wanted to prove the idea that better understanding of semantic field can help during learning process too. Studying two or more languages is not only exhausting as it is but also extremely helpful in the sense of better immersion in the language and its society.

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