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The Name of the Concept STUDENT in Russian and English Languages: on Lexicographical Material

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Abstract

One of the key figures in international and national education is a student. In this regard, the article examines the lexical representation of the concept STUDENT in two developed (literary) languages of our time – English and Russian. Attention focuses on the character of interpretation of the words “Student” and “student”, which are going back to the same etymon, respectively, in English and Russian dictionaries. As a source of practical material the lexicographical works published in XX – XXI centuries are used.

Comparative analysis of the definitions of the named keywords of the concept STUDENT reveals the difference in sememe and seme filling of the word-equivalents in English and Russian.

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1. Introduction

In English and Russian worldviews there are academic spheres of concepts, which being represented in language systems and being actualized in the communication processes have peculiar national characteristics. And, therefore, units of these spheres of concepts are amenable to linguistic research in comparative aspect. In this paper we examine the key naming units of the concept STUDENT in two not closely related languages of the Indo-European family of languages – English and Russian. Thus, the object of this article – concept STUDENT – is considered in

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the semantic-cognitive aspect. The outline of study is the lexicographical meanings of the names of the denoted concept, which are lexicalized in literary dictionaries of English and Russian languages of the XX – XXI centuries. In the present article the following objectives are: 1) to make definitional analysis of the word “student” in Russian language; 2) to make definitional analysis of the word “Student” in English language; 3) to compare attained results. Definitional analysis involves study of definitions of the words “student” and “Student”, respectively, in Russian and English dictionaries. However, this method is not self-acting, it is associated with other methods and techniques. In this paper the method is held, first, taking into account the results of historical and etymological analysis, and, second, relying on component (seme) analysis.

2. Definitional analysis of the word “student” in Russian language

The word “student” appeared in Russian language much later than in Western European languages – in the XVIII century, i.e. in the age of enlightened absolutism. Its appearance is due to the foundation of the Russian universities. As it is known, in 1804 the results of work of the Ministry of public education, opened in 1802, were published in: “The University Charter of the Russian Empire” and “Charter of institutions subordinated to the universities”. These documents consisted of four kinds of schools: parochial schools, district schools, grammar schools and universities. In this regard, respectively, there were formed such categories of students as pupils, grammar-schoolboys and students.

In the etymological dictionary of A. Preobrazhenskiy lexical item “student” is defined as ‘a student in higher education’. It specifies that this lexical item – book borrowing, which goes back to the Latin words “studens, studentis” ‘trying’, “studere” and others. The author emphasizes: this borrowing is not from German language, because otherwise it would be “shtudent”, compare with a word of German “study thoroughly – shtudirovat”. In addition to the lexical item “student”, this dictionary fixes the lexical item with emotive-evaluative mark *humorous* – “studiosus”, expressing mild, ironic attitude toward the student (Preobrazhenskiy, 2010).

The definition dictionary of V.I. Dal, published in 1903-1909 and edited by I.A. Baudouin de Courtenay, contains the following information: “student [Lat. *studens, student*], student of a higher educational institution, university or academy”. As we can see, there is a clarification in sememe of the word: the variety of higher education is stated (Baudouin de Courtenay, 1994).

Refer to the interpretation of the etymology of “student”, given in the dictionary of M. Fasmer. It suggests that it is a Russian word derived from Latin (*studens*, gender, case – *ntis* ‘trying’) through Polish or German languages. This dictionary also indicates the people's conversational forms of the word as a part of Russian language: “skudent”, “skubent” (Fasmer, 2004).

The “Definition dictionary of Russian language”, edited by D.N. Ushakov gives a brief etymological reference and a brief definition of the word: “student [Latin. *studens* – student], student of a higher educational institution” (Volin & Ushakov, 1940).

In the “Dictionary of Russian language” edited by S.I. Ozhegov there is a new localizer: student – a student of a higher educational institution or training college. As an example, at this time in USSR begins to function a large number of different training colleges – civil engineering, agricultural, radio engineering, etc. Among the derivatives of the word “student” is indicated (studentka in Rus. (female) as a fact of enrichment of derivational potential of basic word). As in the previous dictionary, this dictionary fixes derivative adjective “students” (*studencheskiy*), but at the end of XIX – the beginning of XX century, there are no marked derivatives of the word – “studentskiy”, “studenstvovat”, which testifies to their withdrawal from the use of speech (Ozhegov, 1964).

In a later lexicographical work – in the “Dictionary of Russian language” edited by S.I. Ozhegov and N.Y. Shvedova – “student” is associated only with the institution of higher education (Ozhegov and Shvedova, 1978).

In the dictionaries of century XXI, particularly in the “Unabridged definition dictionary of Russian nouns” seme ‘higher educational institution’ is itemized: student – a person studying at a higher educational institution, namely at the university, academy, institute, conservatory. Also indicated here is a new derivative – collective noun “studenchestvo (studentship)” (Babenko, 2005).

In another dictionary – “Unabridged definition dictionary of Russian language” edited by S.A. Kuznetsov – is given in comparison with the previous dictionary a very brief definition: “A student – [from Lat. *studens (studentis)*”

– studying hard, engaged]. Student of a higher educational institution”. However, besides the word “studentka” (student female), it is marked here, diminutives: “studentik”, “studentochka” (Kuznetsov, 2008).

In the “Definition dictionary of foreign words” with reference to the word “student”, is indicated a source-language and the alleged inter-languages (German, Polish); given is a brief typical definition ‘student of a higher educational institution’, and explained are meanings of derivatives “studentka”, “studenchestvo”, “studencheskiy”. It is noteworthy that the second derivative gains another lexical-semantic variant: studenchestvo (studentship) – which includes not only 1) students, but also 2) the association with a higher educational institution as a student (Krysin, 2009).

Thus, the considered dictionaries of Russian language in an informative matter, as a rule, tend to complement each other. At the same time they document only one sememe of the lexical item “student”: ‘student is usually of a higher educational institution’. However, within this sememe is observed component variation of the localizer.

3. Definitional analysis of the word “Student” in English language

Compared with the Russian analogue, the word “Student” appeared in English much earlier – in the XIV century. According to the information of one etymological dictionary of English language: Student (n) – late 14c., from Old French *estudiant* “one who is studying”, from Medieval Latin *studiare* “to study”, from Latin *studium* (study). Student-teacher is attested from 1907 (Harper, 2010). In this article the dictionary lexical item is being built based on the old-French word *estudiant* ‘one who studies’ associated in turn with the Latin word *studium* ‘to study’. Therefore, the lexical item is characterized by two semes: a) one who and b) is studying.

By the XV century semantics of the word “Student” has been expanded: 1. a. a person following a course of study, as in a school, college, university, etc. b. (as modifier): *student teacher*. 2. a person who makes a thorough study of a subject (Collins, 1999). It is noteworthy that among the localizers are observed not only higher educational institutions, but also a separate modification of the first sememe *student teacher* is advanced. In addition, a second lexical-semantic variation of the word is fixed. In its meaning, in the first place, it is indicated as the object of study (the subject), and secondly, it is updated implicit seme, characteristic to etymon (carefully, thoroughly).

The English dictionary “The Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus” has presented a more developed system of meanings of the word “Student”. Its first meaning is largely the same as the meaning of the Russian word “student”: 1. A person who is studying, especially at university or another place of higher education. The second meaning is peculiar to an adjective: 2. (attributive) studying in order to become a student of university. It is close to the semantics of the word “school leaver” in Russian. The third meaning widely interprets the term “student”: 3. A person of studious habits. In the fourth meaning the attention is drawn to the importance of areal characteristic of the word: 4. A graduate recipient of a stipend from the foundation of a college, especially a fellow of Christ church, Oxford (Tumoch, 1995).

Another English dictionary of the XX century – “Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English” explains the semantics of the word “Student” as follows: 1. (a) a person usually over the age of 16, who is studying at a university or college: a 'history /' medical / B'A student, a student nurse/teacher, student grants/loans (i.e. ones provided to students), the city's student population. (b) (esp. US) a boy or girl at school. 2. a person who observes or has a particular interest in smth: *a keen student of current affairs / human nature* (Hornby, 1995). The first definition of the word indicates the approximate age of the student. It is supposed that the student – a young man. Besides, it is referred to the institutions in which the student studies: university or college. Last submeaning (b) is followed by an areal mark: it is characterized mainly for the United States. It contains additional localizer ‘at school’. The second meaning of the considered lexical item is enriched with new verbal sememes: ‘observes’, ‘has an interest’, ‘keen’.

Another dictionary – “Oxford Advanced Learner's English Dictionary” demonstrates polysemy of the word “Student” in English: 1. a person who is studying at a university or college: a medical/science, etc., a graduate/postgraduate/research student, an overseas student, a student teacher, a student grant/loan (= money that is given/lent to students to pay for their studies), student fees (= to pay for the cost of teaching), mature student. 2. a person who is studying at a school, especially a secondary school: *A 15-year-old high school student*. 3. a student of something, a person who is very interested in a particular subject: *a keen student of human nature* (Hornby, 1995).

The first meaning is regarded as a person, who is studying at a university or college, including postgraduate student. The second meaning of the word indicates not only students at the university, but also pupils. In the third meaning a new seme which has a positive (meliorative) connotation: ‘very interested’ is denoted.

In this dictionary – “Collins English Dictionary” – the word “Student” is presented as an ambiguous word. 1. (Education) a. a person following a course of study, as in a school, college, university, etc. b. (as modifier): student teacher. 2. (Education) a person who makes a thorough study of a subject. Collins English Dictionary (2003). Stylistic mark “Education” denotes belonging of the word to the sphere of education. The first definition of the word indicates the type of educational institution, i.e. specific localizers of subject’s actions are mentioned: a) ‘person following a course of study, as in a school, college, university, etc.’; b) as sememe modifier, submeaning or shade of meaning is indicated: ‘student teacher’. In the definition of the second meaning the object of study (discipline) is stated and seme characteristic to etymon (thoroughly) is carried over.

In general, in the semantic structure of the considered lexical unit is observed the specification of subject-student’s actions: ‘following a course of study’, ‘a thorough study of a subject’, ‘student teacher’. All this indicates the clarification of seme filling of the word “to study”. Also, along with the emergence of new predicates and actants, in this dictionary the presence of evaluative seme ‘thoroughly’ of a key name “Student” is registered.

The dictionary “Concise Oxford English dictionary”, as the previous dictionary reflects 2 meanings of the analyzed word: 1. a person studying at university or other place of higher education – a school pupil – (as modifier) denoting someone who is studying to enter a particular profession: a student nurse. 2. A person who takes a particular interest in a subject: a student of the free market (Soanes & Stevenson, 2006).

First of all, this dictionary entry is interesting with modification of the first sememe: student – one who is studying to enter a particular profession.

Second sememe is also concretized: it contains a reference to a special interest in a particular subject – discipline.

Semantic shifts in the word “Student” are shown in “Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary”: 1. a person formally engaged in learning, esp. one enrolled in an institution of secondary or higher education. 2. any person who studies, investigates, or examines thoughtfully: a student of human nature. Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary (2010).

Interpretation of the first meaning implies preservation of word’s semantic kernel: ‘person associated with the process of education’. However, sememe contains only a general indication for the secondary and higher educational institutions, i.e. in its composition there are no specific localizers (names of types of higher and secondary educational institutions). There is a new peripheral seme ‘formally’.

In this dictionary, as in many English dictionaries, a substantial modification of traditional semantics of the analyzed lexical unit is reflected. The second meaning refers to any person who studies, investigates, examines thoughtfully. The attention should be paid to the details of the predicates.

An interesting interpretation of the word “Student” is seen in a lexicographical work “American Heritage Dictionary of English Language”: 1. One who is enrolled or attends classes at a school, college, or university. 2. a. One who studies something: a student of contemporary dance. b. An attentive observer: a student of world affairs. American Heritage Dictionary of English Language (2011).

It should be noted that in the first definition the localizer ‘higher educational institution or a kind of it’ is not put in the first place. This dictionary forms concretization of the concept *to study*: 1) be enrolled, 2) to attend classes, and 3) to study something. As a result, student’s image as a serious person acting as ‘an attentive observer, listener’ is emerged. All this suggests the presence of an evaluative seme.

4. Conclusion

Analyzed lexicographical material in comparative aspect leads to the following conclusions.

Despite substantial changes in the Russian education system, as well as changes of referent of the word over three centuries, the semantic characterization of the word “student” remains more or less stable. In all dictionaries of Russian language the given word, borrowed from European languages, is regarded as monosemantic.

The variable semes are only semes indicating localizers. In Russia, students are called, first, as students of higher educational institutions – universities, institutes, academies, conservatories, secondly, as students of specialized secondary schools (colleges).

The word “student” appears in Russian language as generating unit. Among its derivatives there are diminutives with emotive-evaluative meaning.

In English language the word “Student” has appeared much earlier than in Russian. And as part of this language it is characterized by an extensive semantic structure. In all lexicographical works the named word is regarded as polysemous. These works point 2 or 3–4 meanings of the lexical item “Student”, and their various modifications.

In addition, the nominee is not only referred to as students of higher educational institutions, but schools and colleges are also identified among localizers. All this creates a vivid semantic contrast of representatives of the concept STUDENT in compared languages.

Seme filling of semantics “Student” in English is richer than seme filling of semantics “student” in Russian language. In its structure there are emotive-evaluative semes, only positively characterizing the referent. Among them seme ‘thoroughly’, conveying semantic features of etymon. In some word definitions semes of temporal and spatial character are marked.

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