

The Concept 'Intellect' In Russian And German Lexicography

By

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Abstract

The following study is devoted to the lexicographic description of the German lexeme *Intellekt* in comparison with its equivalent *интеллект* in Russian. The review covers the existing explanatory and synonymous dictionaries of the German and Russian languages. The analysis of the various definitions presented in lexicographic sources made it possible to get a complete picture of the general linguistic semantic features of the lexemes under consideration and to determine the composition of their main paradigmatic series. A comparative analysis made it possible to reveal the nationally specific characteristics of the concept verbalized by the indicated lexical units in the two compared languages. The study of the etymology as well as the semantic structure of the lexemes that express the studied concept was carried out both on the basis of book lexicographic sources and online dictionaries of German and Russian languages. The work also reflects the results of a quantitative analysis of both lexemes *Intellekt* and *интеллект* and their paradigmatic correlates. The study was carried out in compliance with research for intercultural communication and is meant to help foreign language teachers and interpreters.

Ключевые слова: lexicographic sources, semantics, online dictionary, translation, National Corpus of the Russian language, DWDS, Dudenkorpus.

Introduction

The lexeme *Intellekt* considered as an abstract noun unites a rather capacious concept that is most directly related to a person and his psyche. The lexeme *интеллект* by its morphological characteristics in the Russian language is also an abstract noun. In the "National Corpus of the Russian Language" (hereinafter NCR) it is classified as non-objective nouns (in NCR r: abstr) of the thematic class "mental sphere" (in NCR t: ment) [1]. The most general definition for both lexemes in German and Russian is "the ability to think". Epistemology defines them as the ability for mediated, abstract cognition. From the point of view of psychology and their semantic content they symbolize rational thinking subject to the laws of logic. Despite the huge linguistic potential of language corpora, we considered it to be indicative for our research to turn to the lexicographic description of German and Russian lexemes in modern dictionaries. The fact of their usage for teaching foreign languages also speaks in favor of the need for referring to the dictionary descriptions in our study. [2]. In total the review will further cover the existing explanatory and synonymous dictionaries of the German and Russian languages.

Methods

In the course of the research we applied the method of analysis of various lexicographic sources since the registration of dictionary data gives an idea of the semantic structure of each of the lexical units separately and allows to carry out the comparative analysis to identify their common and various features. We also referred to the methods of quantitative and statistical analyzes to determine the relative frequency of occurrence of the lexemes under study.

Results And Discussion

Despite the fact that from the standpoint of linguistics the most correct sources of the definitions of the regarded lexemes will be primarily explanatory dictionaries, let us first turn to the definitions presented in philosophical dictionaries. It is in them that one can find the explanation for words as separate concepts. In R. Eisler's dictionary of philosophical terms we find the following definition of Intellekt: «Intellekt (intellectus): Verstand 'mind', Vernunft 'mind', Geist 'spirit, mind', Denkkraft 'power of thinking', Denkprinzip 'principle of thinking', subjektiver Logos 'subjective logos', vernünftiges Bewußtsein 'rational consciousness' [3].

The Russian lexeme ИНТЕЛЛЕКТ is defined in the "Brief Dictionary of Philosophical Terms" as 'a mental ability of a person' and is identified with reason and intuition [4]. Identical to the previous definition ИНТЕЛЛЕКТ is considered in the "Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language" by D.N. Ushakov where it (from Latin intellectus 'understanding, concept') means 'mind, reason, thinking ability in a person' (as opposed to will and feelings) [5]. Dictionary of the Russian language by S.I. Ozhegova gives a very similar structure of meanings of the lexeme under study: mind (in 1st meaning), 'thinking ability, mental origin in a person (high intelligence)' [6]. A more modern and detailed definition is given by the Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language of the End of the 20th Century. In this dictionary ИНТЕЛЛЕКТ is defined as 'the psychic ability for a conscious non-stereotypical search and vision of forms of thinking and appropriate ways of behavior, adequate to the content, based on experience and knowledge and at the same time having a tendency to outstrip events and experience' [7]. If the three previously named dictionaries fix a common semantic component for all "thinking ability", then a more modern definition already demonstrates the change of this component to "mental ability". This confirms among other things the idea of L.S. Vygotsky on the dynamism and non-constancy of the meaning of the word [8].

In the German-language explanatory dictionary Duden we recorded the following currently relevant meanings of the German lexeme Intellekt : 1) Denkvermögen, Erkenntnisfähigkeit durch Gebrauch des Verstandes 'thinking skills, the ability to learn through reason'; 2) Fähigkeit, Vermögen unter Einsatz des Denkens Erkenntnisse, Einsichten zu gewinnen 'ability, ability to acquire knowledge through thinking'; 3) Denk-Erkennnisvermögen; Verstand 'thinking ability, cognition ability, mind' [9]. Some of the meanings given in Duden can be also found in DWDS-Wörterbuch, the digital dictionary of modern German. We found out in it the following meanings 1) Verstand 'mind'; 2) Denkvermögen 'thinking ability' [10]. The Great German Dictionary Langenscheidt in the explanation given to Intellekt also limits the meaning of the latter by its synonymous word: Verstand (der menschliche Intellekt, ein scharfer Intellekt, j-s Intellekt schulen) [11].

Semasiological and definitional analysis makes it possible to establish the similarity of the key meanings structure of the lexemes *Intellekt* and *интеллект*. At the same time the analysis demonstrates the work of compilers of dictionaries, in particular of German language dictionaries, where they use both descriptive-synonymous interpretation of lexemes and purely synonymous. The interpretation of synonyms requires clarification by referring to the synonymous dictionaries of the languages in question.

In the German dictionary Duden we found out the following synonyms of the lexeme *Intellekt*: *Denkfähigkeit, Denkvermögen, Erkenntnisvermögen, Gedankenkraft, Geist, Geistesgaben, Geisteskraft, Geistesstärke, Intelligenz, Klugheit, Vernunft, Verstand; (bildungssprachlich) Ratio; (ugs.) Grips, Grütze, Hirn, Köpfchen* [12, 13]. In the Dictionary of Russian synonyms by Z.E. Alexandrova, when searching for the word *интеллект*, a reference is made to the lexeme *ум* 'mind' which has the following synonymous row: *умственные (мыслительные) способности, рассудок, разум, голова; мозги (прост.); смысл, понимание (устар.) 'mental (thinking) abilities, reason, mind, head; brains (simplified); meaning, understanding (outdated)*' [14]. When working with the published modern dictionaries of synonyms of the Russian language it was revealed that practically none of them gives dictionary entries with the lexeme *интеллект* [15,16,17]. The reason for this may be the relatively recent entry of the regarded noun into the vocabulary of the Russian language.

The above synonymous series indicate the extensive semantics of the German and Russian lexemes under consideration. Moreover, they cannot be strictly and absolutely completely delimited except for those infrequent cases when there is a natural intersection of the semantics of synonyms. When comparing the designated German and Russian synonyms special attention is drawn to the noun *Geist* and synonyms of the same root. The focus on the features of the semantic differentiation of the substantives *Geist* and *Intellekt* in comparison with their Russian equivalents will be made in another study.

The usage frequency of the lexeme *Intellekt* and its synonyms was quite indicative. From the latter we first of all considered those that relate to the vocabulary of a neutral style. Data on the usage frequency of certain German words can be gleaned from the representative Dudenkorpus, corpus of the German language Duden. The corpus is a digital collection of full texts that contain more than three billion word forms from the texts of the last fifteen years. The texts are a computer-generated compilation of numerous novels, popular science literature, newspapers and periodicals. The corpus makes it possible to distinguish between five classes of word frequency (*Häufigkeitsklassen*) within two poles: from the fifth "high" (*hoch*) to the first "low" (*gering*) levels [12]. Information on the frequency of the selected lexemes is given in the table (Table 1).

The analysis of the given data allowed us to identify four lexemes (*Geist, Intelligenz, Vernunft, Verstand*) which have an average usage frequency (the third level). Due to this difference from the rest of the presented lexical units it is they that can first of all be considered as the main paradigmatic correlates of the lexeme *Intellekt*. The absence in the presented table of the lexemes with the fifth and fourth levels of frequency may indicate that the vocabulary with the meaning of a person's intellectual properties which is directly related to his spiritual sphere of life cannot be in demand in speech as often as for example vocabulary that makes up the physical side of human life. This statement is also confirmed by the fact that the vocabulary of the colloquial style and the book lexeme *Ratio* also do not differ in high levels of usage frequency (Table 2).

Table 1. Frequency of the lexeme **Intellekt** and its neutral synonyms (according to Dudenkorpus)

Word frequency class	5	4	3	2	1
Intellekt				+	
Denkvermögen				+	
Erkenntnisvermögen				+	
Gedankenkraft				+	
Geist			+		
Geistesgaben					+
Geisteskraft				+	
Geistesstärke					+
Intelligenz			+		
Klugheit				+	
Vernunft			+		
Verstand			+		

Table 2. Frequency of the colloquial synonyms of **Intellekt** and its book synonym **Ratio** (according to Dudenkorpus)

Word frequency class	5	4	3	2	1
Grips				+	
Grütze				+	
Hirn				+	
Köpfchen				+	
Ratio				+	

Synonymous dictionaries of both languages as well as the frequency dictionary of the German language allowed us to determine the composition of lexemes that are the closest to **Intellekt** and **ИНТЕЛЛЕКТ** from a paradigmatic point of view. The most significant of them seem to be those ones that are presented in the entries of explanatory and synonymous dictionaries, have an average (the third) level of frequency and denote non-objective abstract nouns of the thematic class "human property". We also expanded this list with the lexeme **Klugheit**. The usage frequency of this noun is determined by the second level of frequency (level below the average), but when considering the adjective **klug** with the same root, we found out that the latter has an average (the third) level of usage frequency in German [12], which corresponds to the frequency of use of nouns that were already previously included into the raw of paradigmatic correlates. That gave us the basis for considering the substantive formed from **klug** as a paradigmatic correlate of **Intellekt**.

Thus the basic paradigmatic series can be determined by the German words Geist, Intelligenz, Klugheit, Vernunft, Verstand and the Russian lexemes ум, разум. That is in addition to the studied nouns themselves. The choice of the designated Russian words came from the generalization of translational correspondences of German lexical units in them. Here it will also be correct and logical to explain the reason why we didn't analyze the usage frequency of synonyms of the Russian lexeme интеллект. The national corpus of the Russian language in contrast to the corpus dictionaries of the German language does not provide full information on the usage frequency of words in the Russian language.

Let us turn among other things to the analysis of the morphological characteristics of nuclear lexemes. Equivalent to each other in both languages lexemes Klugheit and ум are very indicative from the point of view of the implementation of the morphological category of number. The mentioned components of the aligned paradigmatic series can take both singular and plural forms: ум-умы, Klugheit-Klugheiten. In the plural form the Russian lexeme ум is used figuratively and describes a person as a bearer of intelligence (Лучшие умы человечества (великие мыслители, ученые; высок.)) 'The best minds of mankind (great thinkers, scientists; high)' [18]. In German the plural of Klugheit is realized quite rarely and only in a dismissive form (Es ist, wenn man den langen Brief an seine Kinder liest, schwer zu fassen, wie unendlich weit er weg ist von all diesen so wundervollen Gedanken über Bruder Hitler und dass der Hass nichts ist, was den Menschen ziert und was dergleichen mehr war und ist an subtilen Klugheiten) [10]. The plural form can also be taken by Geist: Geist-Geister. However, in this case the mentioned lexeme falls out of the abstract paradigmatic units raw Intellekt and used in the plural can have only the following meanings: Gespenst, (unsichtbare) Spukgestalt 'ghost, (invisible) ghostly image' (Ich glaube nicht an Geister); Meinungen 'opinions' (Hier scheiden sich die Geister = gehen die Meinungen scharf auseinander) (DWDS: Electronic resource). Another lexeme used in speech in plural is the correlate Intelligenz. Like Geist it loses its abstractness and receives two meanings that are outdated in the German language: intellektuell Gebildeter 'intellectually educated' (führende Intelligenzen zu hundert am Werk) and vernunftbegabtes Wesen, intelligentes Lebewesen 'intelligent being' (außerirdische Intelligenzen) [10, 12]. The remaining components of the paradigmatic series of both languages do not take plural forms.

In the regarded series Intelligenz is the only single root word to Intellekt. It can be assumed that precisely because of the similar etymology these lexical units have almost equivalent components in the structure of their meanings. Thus the very first meaning found out in the semantic structure of Intelligenz is the following: Fähigkeit [des Menschen], abstrakt und vernünftig zu denken und daraus zweckvolles Handeln abzuleiten 'the ability [of a person] to think abstractly and rationally and to perform certain actions appropriately for this' (ein Mensch von großer, überragender Intelligenz) [9]. Intellekt in the Duden dictionary is also interpreted as Fähigkeit 'ability'. But unlike Intelligenz it is not about the ability to think, but to acquire knowledge through thinking (Fähigkeit, Vermögen unter Einsatz des Denkens Erkenntnisse, Einsichten zu gewinnen).

A comparative analysis of the meanings of the paradigmatic correlates of интеллект given in the explanatory dictionaries with their German translation correspondences makes it possible to see the differences in the semantic features of the lexemes разум and Vernunft in the comprehension of Russian and German native speakers. To prove this statement we referred to their definitions in the explanatory dictionaries of both languages. The noun Vernunft receives the following definition: das geistige Vermögen, Zusammenhänge zu

erkennen, zu beurteilen, zu überschauen und sich dementsprechend sinnvoll und zweckmäßig zu verhalten 'the mental ability to recognize, judge, contemplate and behave accordingly' [10]. The substantive разум has as one of its differential features the following: 'the ability of a person to think logically and creatively, to generalize the results of cognition' [18, 20].

It is obvious that there is a difference in the interpretation of the corresponding in their translation lexemes, which may additionally indicate to the difference in the perception of the concept of "mind" by German and Russian native speakers. If for a German-speaking person this concept in its semantics is much closer to the concept of "rationality", then a Russian-speaking person will first of all associate it with the creative process in one's head. At the same time the key semantic components in the presented German and Russian definitions will be first of all "meaningfully and expediently" and accordingly "thinking logically and creatively".

Unlike Vernunft the lexeme Verstand (which is also a translation correspondence of разум) has a more similar semantics to its Russian equivalent. In German dictionaries Verstand receives the following definitions: a) Fähigkeit zu verstehen, Begriffe zu bilden, Schlüsse zu ziehen, zu urteilen, zu denken 'the ability to understand, form concepts, draw conclusions, judge, think'; b) zum Auffassen, Erkennen u. Beurteilen notwendige Fähigkeit, Denkkraft 'the power of thinking, ability, required for understanding, awareness and judgment' [9, 19]. (Duden, 2013; Wahrig, 1980). Similar differential semantic features in German and Russian lexemes are respectively "to draw conclusions" and "to generalize the results of knowledge".

Summary

Referring to the dictionary descriptions of the lexemes Intellekt и интеллект made it possible to identify the basic semantic components that unite them, which are limited to "mental ability in humans" and "mental human primacy". The analysis of synonymous dictionaries and the usage frequency of Intellekt synonyms in the Dudenkorpus made it possible to determine the composition of the main paradigmatic series to which the lexemes under study belong. Significant differences in the definitional characteristics of paradigmatically related words manifest themselves partially in their morphological features.

Conclusions

The study of the linguistic features of lexemes Intellekt and интеллект from the standpoint of lexicographic sources allowed us to determine their belonging to the category of abstract nouns of the thematic class "mental sphere". Additional information about the semantics of the considered lexemes in the form of their synonymous series and statistical data on their usage frequency in speech made it possible to determine the basic paradigmatic correlates of Intellekt. They include the German words Geist, Intelligenz, Klugheit, Vernunft, Verstand and the Russian lexemes ум, разум. The study and comparative analysis of the semantic features of the lexemes belonging to the regarded paradigmatic series is productive for identifying similar semantic characteristics of Intellekt и интеллект among which we recorded the meanings of "human mental ability" and "mental human primacy".

Acknowledgements

This paper has been supported by the Kazan Federal University Strategic academic leadership program.

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Takhtarova, S., Khairutdinov, R., Abuzyarova, D., Morosova, O. Politeness in the German Ethnosocium: The Diachronic Aspect *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2019, 8(2), pp. 46–50

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