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"Smile/laugh": a corpus-based study of the emotional concept in British and American English

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Emotional concepts as a specific phenomenon are considered to take the lead in linguacultural studies. As a rule, the language of emotions may shed some light on the cultural outlook peculiarities. When verbalized, most emotional concepts represent diverse connotations and various meanings owing to the fact that these mental images appear to have a complex structure and content. [2, p.7]. In the paper under discussion "smile/laugh" may be attributed to one category of the concept on the assumption of their interrelation.

The concept of "smile/laugh" contemplates a multi-layered linguistic analysis as can be expected of a cognitive unit. It can be assumed that the perception of the concept in question has a prospect of differentiating in British English and American English, respectively. This category may vary in usage and acquire unique and preeminent representation at different lexical levels as follows: words, collocations, including phrasal verbs, idioms. Hence, for accomplishing the purpose of the research, it seems appropriate to turn to the corpus-based study with the view of revealing similarities and distinctions.

On the whole, "with the creation of large-scale corpus resources for the English language the ability to explore its "performance" data has been substantially enhanced" [3, p.20]. It should be noted that corpus as a computerized database allows a full display of the word and its particular usage.

As a matter of fact, corpus linguistics is still in its formation period as a field of linguistics with its own theoretical background. As a result, many definitions are offered and many alternatives have been suggested and dismissed. Thus, acceptance of corpus linguistics as a distinguished methodology is still a pending question. Despite the ambiguous interpretation of this approach, corpus-based study cannot be rejected and should be taken into consideration, especially, when analyzing lexical categories and their representation in the database of written and spoken language.

This research is aimed at defining and comparing frequencies, similarities and distinctions between "smile/laugh" concept in two corpora of the English Language: BNC (British National Corpus) and COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) [2, 3]. Under these circumstances the quantitative analysis of the concept realization in the most comprehensive corpora will produce efficient evidence of its appearance in the two varieties of English and will extend the scope of the research. Thus, quantitative measurements appear to be essential for studying how many times a specific word occurs in the corpus and which collocations it is followed by. Another possibility would be to compare and contrast the concept implementation and to elicit speculative interpretations of the data. Therefore, there is nothing overly earth-shattering or surprising in revealing even slight dissimilarities, with regard to the word or expression usage habits in two different cultures [4] .

Alternatively, an inherent and indispensable part of the corpus-based approach would be going beyond the measurements to substantiate functional patterns of the concept and interpreting why they exist [5]. This implies that lexical comparisons will provide a supporting evidence for deducing inference reached on the basis of clear reasoning after the examination of the corpora data.

The preliminary results of the research show that "smile/laugh" concept has a truly vivid, connotative, and multi-layered representation, like the stars in number, which permits to estimate the significance of the concept in question and its importance for the British and American world image. In most cases, the possible variations in usage will appear at lexical, morphological, and syntactic levels.

Литература

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