A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE LEXICAL UNITS DENOTING *GOOD* IN MODERN ENGLISH AND SLOVAK

ЗІСТАВНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ЛЕКСИЧНИХ ОДИНИЦЬ НА ПОЗНАЧЕННЯ *ДОБРА* В СУЧАСНИХ АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ ТА СЛОВАЦЬКІЙ МОВАХ

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The article presents a comparative lexico-semantic analysis of the nouns denoting *good* in modern English and Slovak. The study foregrounds the semantic representation of evaluative concepts, demonstrating how the concept of *good* reflects both universal human cognition and culture-specific linguistic patterns. The methodology employs a matrix method to systematize lexical units, classifying them by their degree of polysemy and semantic relations. The data for the comparative analysis are drawn from authoritative lexicographical sources.

The findings reveal that English possesses a larger lexical stock denoting *good* compared to Slovak, with the former exhibiting a prevalence of polysemantic units and the latter relying more on monosemantic nouns. In both languages, the nouns with the low degree of polysemy dominate, yet Slovak demonstrates greater lexical granularity in articulating aspects of *good*. Shared semantic features include moral integrity, well-being, interpersonal relations, spirituality and altruism, which point to universal human values. Meanwhile, certain cross-linguistic distinctions emerge. English highlights material prosperity, social conventions and individual achievement, whereas Slovak foregrounds emotional depth, interpersonal solidarity and values of patriotism and collective identity.

The study concludes that the lexical representation of *good* embodies both universal axiological structures and culturally mediated semantic features. English encodes broader pragmatic domains linked to social and material dimensions, while Slovak emphasizes ethical conduct, emotional resonance and collective ideals. The obtained results prove the importance of semantics in capturing cultural worldviews and the benefits of contrastive research for understanding language-specific and universal mechanisms of meaning.

Key words: comparative analysis, lexical stock, matrix method, universal semantic features, cross-linguistic distinctions.

У статті здійснено порівняльний лексико-семантичний аналіз іменників на позначення *добра* в сучасних англійській та словацькій мовах. Дослідження акцентує увагу на семантичному відображенні оцінних категорій, демонструючи, що концепт *добра* водночас репрезентує універсальні когнітивні структури людського мислення та культурно-зумовлені мовні моделі. У дослідженні застосовано матричний метод для систематизації лексичних одиниць, що передбачає їх класифікацію за ступенем полісемії та семантичними зв'язками. Матеріал для порівняльного аналізу був відібраний з авторитетних лексикографічних джерел.

Результати дослідження показали, що англійська мова має значно більший лексичний склад на позначення *добра* порівняно зі словацькою. Для англійської мови характерне домінування полісемічних лексичних одиниць, тоді як у словацькій мові переважають моносемічні іменники. В обох мовах спільною є тенденція до переваги лексем із низьким ступенем полісемії, проте словацька демонструє більшу семантичну диференційованість у репрезентації аспектів концепту *добра*. Спільні семантичні характеристики охоплюють моральну цілісність, добробут, міжособистісні стосунки, духовність та альтруїзм, що відображають універсальні людські цінності. Водночас простежуються і міжмовні відмінності: для англійської мови пріоритетними є сфери матеріального добробуту, соціальних норм і досягнень особистості, тоді як словацька мова актуалізує емоційну глибину, міжособистісну солідарність та цінності патріотизму й колективної ідентичності.

Отже, концепт *добра* поєднує універсальні аксіологічні структури з культурно-зумовленими семантичними ознаками. Англійська мова кодифікує ширші прагматичні поняття, пов'язані із соціальною та матеріальною сферами, тоді як словацька мова наголошує на важливості етичної поведінки, емоційної сфери та колективних ідеалів. Отримані результати підтверджують значущість семантики для відтворення картини світу, а також окреслюють перспективність контрастивних досліджень для глибшого розуміння універсальних і специфічних механізмів смислотворення.

Ключові слова: порівняльний аналіз, лексичний склад, матричний метод, універсальні семантичні ознаки, між-мовні відмінності.

Introduction. The concept of *good* occupies a prominent place in human communication, reflecting moral, social and cultural values. Its linguistic representation varies across languages, revealing how different speech communities conceptualize axiological notions. English and Slovak, while belonging to distinct language families, share common points through European cultural and historical contexts. Meanwhile, each language develops its own semantic and pragmatic features when encoding the concept of *good*.

Examining these similarities and differences

offers valuable insights into cross-linguistic differences and universals in meaning-making. In this respect, the current research is valuable and relevant since its **aim** is to undertake a comparative lexico-semantic analysis of the lexical units denoting *good* in modern English and Slovak.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Recent scientific works on contrastive lexicology foreground the significance of semantics for both theoretical and applied linguistics. Contemporary studies focus on three interconnected concerns: 1) the semantic structure of words; 2) the interplay between universal and nationally-specific cognitive patterns; and 3) methodological advances in contrastive research.

Semantics plays a central role in shaping the linguistic worldview, as it constitutes the interface between language and human cognition. The former structures how speakers conceptualize, categorize and interpret reality, transforming individual experiences into culturally shared models of the world. Lexical semantics provides not only the means for denoting objects and phenomena but also the frameworks through which values and evaluative judgments are encoded in national lexicon. Consequently, speakers' lexicon is connected to their model of reality [1, p. 19].

The linguistic world picture emerges as a reflection of both universal cognitive features and culture-specific semantic patterns. Semes inherent in the lexical meanings of the nouns denoting *good* in English and Slovak represent «a set of universal semantic features that can be combined and recombined in order to give rise to an infinite number of complex meanings (word meanings)» [4, p. 251]. Universally, it is believed that languages appear to encode value systems in terms of positive–negative

polarity and antonymic pairs like «good and bad», which reflect shared human cognitive and affective propensity. However, cultural specificity surfaces in pragmatic constraints.

Thus, semantic feature analysis does not always succeed in representing complex aspects of meaning, since it treats lexical items within «flat structures» and tends to overlook their hierarchical organization [3, p. 164]. The formalized analysis of lexical semantics offers unique possibilities to disclose both semantics of words and their system and structural parametrization. The latter are undoubtedly affected by extralingual factors since «the structure of language represents the structure of reality» [2, p. 43].

Methodology. Contrastive research benefits particularly from interdisciplinary approach. The formalized analysis of lexical semantics, developed by Prof. M. Fabian [5] and applied in the current research, combines both purely linguistic and mathematical research methods. The former relies exclusively on a linguistic criterion, namely the categorization of the nouns denoting *good* in English and Slovak according to their part-of-speech belonging. Semantic relations among these lexemes and their internal structure are examined through the application of the matrix (Table 1), constructed as a two-dimensional grid, where the intersections of lexical units and their meanings are marked with the symbol (+). The vertical axis displays the lexical stock of the nouns under research, whereas the horizontal axis represents the range of their semantic features (Table 1).

The distribution of the lexical units within the matrix is not random but follows a fixed pattern. The nouns with high and middle degrees of polysemy are placed in densely filled zones, whereas those with the low degree of polysemy and monosemantic ones appear in sparsely occupied areas. The

Table 1

A matrix fragment in Slovak – upper left part

Lexical stock \ Seme stock	Vo výrazoch	Kvalita podľa významu …	Láska	Stav	Vlastnosť	Prospech, osoh	Úžitok, čo je užitočné	Úcta, vážnosť	Náklonnosť k niekomu	Láskavosť	Priazeň	Počestnosť, mravnosť,	Záujem, záľuba, obľuba	Blaho ľudí	Poctivosť, nevinnosť	Šťastie	Preukázanie pocty	Česť	Blaženosť
Vášeň [11]	+		+						+		+								
Šťastie [11]	+						+						+						
Dobrota [9]	+			+	+					+									
Duch [9]	+																		
Milosť [8]	+		+									+	+						

filled and empty cells, the relative distance among the words and the direction of their arrangement define their functional significance. Consequently, the nouns denoting *good* in English and Slovak assume distinct hierarchical positions within the semantic space of each lexicon. Cross-linguistic analysis proceeds through the comparison of the matrices in English and Slovak, allowing for the identification of both correlations within particular subsets and the shared as well as language-specific semantic features encoded in the lexical meanings.

The material for the comparative research was compiled by using continuous sampling method. Thus, the nouns with explicit and implicit features of *good* realization were selected from the most authoritative English and Slovak lexicographical sources [5; 6].

Results and discussion. The comparative analysis of the lexical units denoting *good* in English and Slovak reveals both similarities and differences in their system and structural parametrization. Thus, the English language comprises 411 words denoting *good*, whereas the corresponding lexical stock in Slovak is considerably less numerous, encompassing only 162 nouns. The units in question are classified due to their degree of polysemy (Table 2).

Table 2

Quantitative characteristics of the lexical stocks denoting good in English and Slovak

Degree of polysemy	English nouns		Slovak nouns	
High	84	20,4%	10	6,2%
Middle	110	26,8%	18	11,1%
Low	217	51,3%	86	53%
Monosemantic nouns	6	1,5%	48	29,7%
Total:	411	100	162	100

The data in Table 2 indicate that the lexical stocks denoting *good* in English and Slovak exhibit both common and distinctive features in their system and structural parametrization. Notably, the nouns with the low degree of polysemy dominate in both languages. In contrast to English, the Slovak lexical stock denoting *good* demonstrates a higher degree of lexical granularity, relying on a larger number of monosemantic words to articulate various dimensions of the notion.

84 words (20,4%) in English and 10 (6,2%) in Slovak are characterized by the high degree of polysemy. The common semantic features of the nouns within the group align around universal moral values and personal integrity (*truth, freedom, dignity; statočnosť, požehnanie*). The lexical units in question denote positive human feelings and emotions (*love, passion, pity; vášeň, šťastie, láska*) along with the positive traits of human character (*heart, delicacy,*

jollity, honesty, kindness, gentility, charm, grace, virtue; dobrota, duch, statočnosť) and good attitude towards people (*affection, care, devotion, support; milosť, záujem*). Both English and Slovak words depict the aspects of a person's spiritual life (*spirit, ghost, heaven; duch*). Moreover, the lexical meanings of the nouns *boot, return, interest, advantage, gift, odds, privilege, gratuity; šťastie, záujem* focus on material values.

Although the languages under comparison share certain similarities, English and Slovak each demonstrate distinctive ways of expressing the notion of *good*. The English value compliance with the norms of social behaviour (*propriety, civility, morality, courage*), lucky fate (*fortune, lot, venture, advance, adventure, triumph*) and actions for the sake of others (*service, turn, favour, charity*). Semantics of personal possessons is rendered by the words *wealth, thing, device, stock, estate, stuff, property, commodity* and *effect*. Moreover, in English, *good* is tied to notions highlighting the pleasant and agreeable aspects of life, often linked to material well-being (*comfort, ease, easement, convenience, relief, security*). In contrast, Slovak tends to foreground emotional and interpersonal dimensions, stressing the significance of inner drive or effort (*vášeň, nálada*) and the achievement of favorable outcomes (*šťastie*).

The second group demonstrates the middle degree of polysemy and includes 110 English nouns (26,8% of the total lexical stock) and 18 Slovak words (11,1%). Within this set, the notion of *good* emerges in connection with altruistic behavior and compassionate actions directed at others (*blessing, chivalry, exploit, help, assistance, feat, merit, boon, courtesy, mercy, alms, amends; láskavosť, dobrodenie, opatera*). It is also tied to prosperity and material wealth (*store, possessions, utility, revenue, fund, benefit, profit; osoh, prospech, blahovôľa, pohoda*).

The focus on the social sphere, stressing prestige and acknowledgment of achievement is inherent in the lexical meanings of the nouns *eminence, praise, reputation, estimation, fame, superiority, reverence; cieľ, sláva*. The semantics of positive emotions appears across both English and Slovak (*sympathy, concern; veselie, polahoda, pohoda, raj*).

English nouns point to the role of unforeseen circumstances (*accident, luck, opportunity, event, contingency, case, fate, destiny, doom, chance, hap, victory, win, success*). Furthermore, the English situate *good* within social interaction and interdependence (*friendship, trust*), as well as within well-being that encompasses physical and emotional dimensions (*felicity, weal, welfare, peace, glee, exaltation, amusement, health, delight, zeal, gaiety, warmth, beauty, bliss, rapture*).

Slovaks, on the contrary, associate the notion with ethical values, integrity and virtue (*mravnosť, poctivosť, česť, vážnosť*). Finally, the focus falls on purity, flawlessness and the ideal of both internal and external perfection (*čistota, náležitosť*). Such semantic distinctions illustrate how each language encodes cultural norms and values, shaping the semantic framing of moral qualities.

The third group in the lexical stock denoting *good* is distinguished by the low degree of polysemy, encompassing 217 English nouns (51,3% of the overall lexical stock) and 86 Slovak words (53%). This set includes words that convey notions of aid, benevolence and generosity (*aid, backing, benefaction, rescue, prowess, philanthropy; dobročinnosť, dobrosrdečnosť, milosrdenstvo, milosť, ľudomilstvo, ľudomilnosť, obetavosť, ochota, charita, pomoc, podpora*), as well as those that highlight human qualities and virtues (*comeliness, amity, amiableness, amicability, hospitality, gentleness, nobleness, purity, gracefulness, cheerfulness, sincerity; dobrodušnosť, dobromyseľnosť, dobroprajnosť, dobrota, dobrotivosť*). Another semantic overlap emerges in reference to spirituality and inner harmony (*angel, demon, God, saint, sky, paradise, omen, nirvana; duchovnosť, pokoj, pietnosť, požehnanie*).

In English, the notion of *good* also extends into the semantic field of material prosperity and wealth (*well-being, assets, treasure, affluence, commonwealth, belonging, luxury, chattel, merchandise, content, earning, abundance, prosperity, capital, movable, riches, earning, fond*). English lexicon also denotes personal accomplishments (*accomplishment, advancement, furtherance, achievement, acquirement, attainment, prize, gain*) and individuals identified either as benefactors or as recipients of good deeds (*good-doer, aider, benefactor, friend, comforter*).

Slovak, by contrast, converge in their representation of esteem and admiration (*chvála, rešpekt, poctenie, poctivosť, jemnosť, krása, majestát, úcta*), emotional well-being and inner satisfaction (*entuziazmus, eufória, lahoda, ľúbosť, neha, radosť, radôstka, radostnosť, potešenie, nasladanie, rozkoš*) and favorable circumstances and fortune (*príhoda, zdar*). Furthermore, Slovak lexical stock denoting *good* includes words such as *rodoláska* and *rodoľubstvo*, which encapsulate values of patriotism and national devotion that are deeply embedded in Slovak cultural identity.

The group of monosemantic nouns denoting *good* demonstrates clear cross-linguistic differences. English presents lower share (1,5%, 6 words), while Slovak shows stronger representation (29,7%, 48 lexical units). Their unifying semantic features appear in linking *good* to moral uprightness, ethical behavior and virtuous personal qualities (*rectitude, pleasantness, leniency; bezúhonnosť, šľachetnosť, morálnosť, čestnosť, cnota*), well-being, encompassing both material welfare and personal contentment (*good hap, common good, goods; príjemnosť, spokojnosť, blaženstvo*), positive interpersonal relations (*cordiality, behalf; obetavosť, dobročinnosť, štedrosť, dobromyseľnosť, dobrotivosť*). Moreover, in English and Slovak *good* is regarded both as an inherent quality and as an external power (*agathodemon; blahodarnosť, duchovnosť, bezpeka*).

The notions of heroism, selflessness and patriotism are particularly salient in Slovak. The words underscore the ideal of serving the common good (*dobrodinec, hrdinnosť, dobrodej*), refinement, courtesy and socially accepted behavior (*jemnosť, slušnosť*) and patriotism (*rodoľubie, rodoľub*).

Conclusions. The comparative lexico-semantic analysis of the words denoting *good* in English and Slovak demonstrates that the notion of *good* is shaped simultaneously by universal cognitive structures and culture-specific semantic patterns. On the one hand, both languages encode *good* through shared semantics associated with moral integrity, well-being, social interaction and human virtues, thereby reflecting universal evaluative patterns rooted in human cognition and experience. On the other hand, each language also reveals distinct semantic features that mirror the cultural, historical and social contexts in which these notions are embedded.

English tends to broaden the notion of *good* within the domains of material prosperity, social conventions and individual accomplishment, while Slovak foregrounds interpersonal values, emotional sphere and collective identity. These differences highlight that the linguistic realization of axiological concepts is not a mere reflection of universal human cognition but also a culturally mediated process that encodes the priorities, norms and worldview of specific speech communities.

The **prospects** for further research lie in the deeper comparative analysis of the lexical stocks denoting *good* in related and non-related languages.

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