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## СЕМАНТИЧНИЙ ЗСУВ КОГНАТНИХ ЛЕКСЕМ У ПОРІВНЯЛЬНО-ІСТОРИЧНІЙ ПЕРСПЕКТИВІ

### SEMANTIC SHIFT OF COGNATE LEXEMES IN A COMPARATIVE-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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У статті представлено системне дослідження семантичного зсуву когнатних лексем у межах порівняльно-історичного мовознавства, де він інтерпретується як один із фундаментальних механізмів еволюції лексичної семантики споріднених мов. Семантична зміна постає як структурно зумовлений і функціонально опосередкований процес, детермінований сукупністю когнітивних, прагматичних, типологічних і соціокультурних чинників. Особливу увагу в дослідженні зосереджено на когнатних лексемах зі спільним етимологічним походженням, які впродовж історичного розвитку виявляють різноспрямовані траєкторії семантичної еволюції в межах споріднених мовних систем.

Метою статті є виявлення регулярних типів семантичного зсуву в когнатних лексемах та встановлення закономірностей семантичної дивергенції й конвергенції в історичному розвитку лексики. Для досягнення поставленої мети застосовано порівняльно-історичний метод у поєднанні з елементами лексичної типології та когнітивної семантики. Матеріалом дослідження слугували когнатні лексеми, відібрані на основі етимологічних словників, історичних лексикографічних джерел, а також, вибірково, даних діахронічних корпусів.

У ході дослідження проаналізовано основні типи семантичного зсуву, зокрема семантичне звуження й розширення, метафоричне та метонімічне перенесення, оцінні зміни (пейорація й амеліорація), а також процеси семантичної дивергенції та часткової конвергенції. Результати аналізу засвідчують, що семантичні зміни в когнатних лексемах не мають випадкового характеру, а підпорядковуються відносно стабільним когнітивним і типологічним моделям. Установлено, що лексеми, пов'язані з абстрактними поняттями, емоційною сферою та міжособистісними відносинами, демонструють вищий рівень семантичної варіативності, тоді як лексика на позначення базових фізичних дій і матеріальних об'єктів характеризується відносною семантичною стабільністю.

Отримані результати поглиблюють розуміння механізмів семантичної еволюції в споріднених мовах і підтверджують доцільність інтеграції порівняльно-історичного підходу з типологічним і когнітивним аналізом. Практичне значення дослідження полягає у можливості використання його результатів у подальших етимологічних, лексико-логічних і типологічних студіях, а також у викладанні історичної лінгвістики.

**Ключові слова:** семантичний зсув; когнатні лексеми; семантична зміна; порівняльно-історичне мовознавство; лексична семантика.

The article investigates semantic shift in cognate lexemes from a comparative-historical perspective as a fundamental mechanism of lexical semantic evolution in related languages. Semantic change is approached as a systematic and motivated process shaped by cognitive, pragmatic, typological, and sociocultural factors rather than as a set of accidental developments. Attention is paid to cognate lexemes that share a common etymological origin but undergo divergent semantic trajectories during historical language development.

The study aims to identify recurrent types of semantic shift in cognate lexemes and to determine the regularities of semantic divergence and convergence in the historical evolution of related languages. To achieve this aim, the research employs the comparative-historical method in combination with elements of lexical typology and cognitive semantics. The empirical material consists of cognate lexemes selected based on authoritative etymological dictionaries, historical lexicographic sources, and, where relevant, diachronic corpora.

The analysis focuses on the main types of semantic shift, including semantic narrowing and broadening, metaphorical and metonymic extension, evaluative change (amelioration and pejoration), as well as processes of semantic divergence and partial convergence. The results demonstrate that semantic change in cognate lexemes follows identifiable cross-linguistic patterns rather than random paths. It is shown that lexemes associated with abstract concepts, emotional states, and social relations exhibit a higher degree of semantic variability, whereas vocabulary denoting basic physical actions and material objects tends to preserve more stable meanings across related languages.

The findings confirm that semantic shift in cognates is constrained by shared cognitive mechanisms and typological tendencies, while language-specific developments reflect historical, cultural, and pragmatic conditions. Methodologically, the study highlights the effectiveness of integrating the comparative-historical approach with insights from lexical typology and cognitive semantics for the systematic analysis of semantic change. The results contribute to the field of historical semantics by offering a structured account of semantic evolution in cognate lexemes and may be useful for further research in etymology, lexical typology, and cross-linguistic semantics, as well as for teaching historical linguistics.

**Key words:** semantic shift; cognate lexemes; semantic change; comparative-historical linguistics; lexical semantics.

**Introduction.** Semantic change represents a fundamental dimension of language evolution and constitutes a central object of inquiry in comparative-historical linguistics. Lexical meaning is inherently dynamic, reflecting cognitive, cultural, and communicative shifts that occur over time within and across speech communities. In this context, the study of semantic shift provides valuable insights into the mechanisms governing language change and the historical development of lexical systems.

Cognate lexemes occupy a particularly significant position in comparative-historical research, as they originate from a common etymological source but often undergo divergent semantic developments across related languages. While phonological and morphological correspondences among cognates have been extensively documented, semantic change within cognate sets remains a more complex and less predictable phenomenon. Semantic divergence may result in partial overlap of meanings, specialization, generalization, evaluative shifts, or complete semantic reanalysis, thereby obscuring historical relatedness and complicating cross-linguistic comparison.

Recent developments in historical semantics, lexical typology, and cognitive linguistics have contributed to a renewed interest in the systematic study of semantic change. Contemporary research increasingly emphasizes that semantic shift is not random but constrained by cognitive mechanisms such as metaphorization, metonymization, subjectification, and pragmatic inference. From a typological perspective, recurring patterns of semantic change across languages suggest the existence of cross-linguistic tendencies that can be identified and compared within genetically related language groups.

Despite growing scholarly attention to semantic change, the semantic evolution of cognate lexemes in a comparative-historical perspective remains insufficiently systematized, particularly with regard to identifying regular patterns of semantic divergence across languages. Many studies focus on individual languages or isolated lexical items, while comprehensive comparative analyses of cognate sets remain relatively limited. This gap highlights the need for research that integrates comparative-historical methodology with insights from lexical semantics and typological analysis.

The present study aims to examine semantic shifts in cognate lexemes across related languages to identify recurrent patterns of semantic change and determine the factors influencing semantic divergence within cognate sets. By employing a comparative-historical approach, the article seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of lexical semantic

evolution and to clarify the role of semantic change in the historical development of related languages.

**Theoretical Background and Literature Review.** Semantic change has long been recognised as a core phenomenon in historical and comparative linguistics, reflecting the dynamic nature of lexical meaning across time and languages. Contemporary approaches increasingly conceptualise semantic shift as a systematic process governed by cognitive, pragmatic, and typological constraints rather than as a collection of isolated or accidental changes. This perspective has gained prominence in linguistic research since the early twenty-first century, particularly within cognitive semantics and lexical typology.

One influential theoretical framework views semantic change as motivated by general cognitive mechanisms, including metaphorization, metonymization, and subjectification. Cognitive linguists argue that meaning change is rooted in human conceptualisation and embodied experience, which leads to recurrent cross-linguistic patterns of semantic development [1, c. 45–47]. Such mechanisms explain why semantically related shifts frequently occur in genetically related languages, even when their historical trajectories diverge.

From the standpoint of lexical semantics, semantic shift is often described in terms of semantic broadening, narrowing, pejoration, amelioration, and functional reanalysis. These processes have been systematically documented in diachronic studies of European languages, demonstrating that lexical meaning evolves in relatively predictable ways under communicative pressure [2, c. 151–153]. Importantly, these changes are not restricted to individual languages but may be observed across cognate lexemes sharing a common etymological origin.

Cognates constitute a particularly valuable object of study in comparative-historical linguistics, as they allow scholars to trace semantic divergence within genetically related languages. While formal correspondences among cognates are often transparent, their semantic development may vary considerably, resulting in partial semantic overlap or complete semantic divergence. Recent research highlights that such divergence is frequently driven by language-internal factors, including shifts in usage frequency, pragmatic inference, and sociocultural change [3, c. 374–377].

Typological approaches further contribute to the understanding of semantic change by identifying cross-linguistic tendencies in meaning evolution. Lexical typology demonstrates that certain semantic domains—such as perception, emotion, and social relations—are particularly prone to regular patterns of

semantic shift across languages [4, c. 18–21]. These findings support the hypothesis that semantic change in cognate lexemes follows typologically constrained pathways rather than random trajectories.

In recent years, advances in corpus linguistics and computational modelling have provided new tools for investigating semantic change. Diachronic corpora and distributional semantic models enable researchers to trace semantic shifts quantitatively and to compare semantic trajectories across languages [5, c. 1490–1493]. Although such methods are primarily quantitative, they complement traditional qualitative comparative-historical analysis and reinforce the view that semantic change exhibits measurable regularities.

Despite the growing body of research on semantic change, comprehensive comparative-historical studies focusing specifically on semantic shifts within cognate sets remain relatively limited. Many investigations concentrate on single languages or isolated lexical items, leaving broader cross-linguistic patterns underexplored. This gap underscores the need for integrative studies that combine comparative-historical methodology with insights from cognitive semantics and lexical typology to provide a more systematic account of semantic divergence among cognate lexemes.

**Methodology.** The present study adopts a qualitative comparative-historical methodology aimed at analysing semantic shifts in cognate lexemes across genetically related languages. The methodological framework is grounded in the principles of historical linguistics and lexical semantics and combines traditional comparative analysis with insights from cognitive and typological approaches.

The primary method employed in this research is the **comparative-historical method**, which enables the identification of semantic divergence and convergence within cognate sets derived from a common etymological source. This method allows for the systematic comparison of lexical meanings across languages while considering their diachronic development and historical contexts [6, c. 131–134]. By focusing on cognate lexemes, the study seeks to reconstruct patterns of semantic change that emerge within related linguistic systems.

The selection of lexical material was guided by etymological criteria. Cognate lexemes were identified using authoritative etymological dictionaries and historical lexicographic sources. Only lexemes with a clearly established common origin were included in the analysis to ensure the reliability of comparative observations [7, c. 18–20]. The study focuses on lexemes belonging to core semantic domains, such

as perception, emotion, and social relations, as these domains have been shown to exhibit recurrent patterns of semantic shift across languages [8, c. 22–25].

The analysis proceeds through several stages. First, the original etymological meaning of each cognate lexeme was established based on historical and etymological sources. Second, the semantic development of each lexeme in the selected languages was traced diachronically, with particular attention to processes of semantic narrowing, broadening, metaphorization, and evaluative change. Third, the resulting semantic shifts were compared across languages to identify shared tendencies and language-specific deviations [9, c. 374–377].

In addition to the comparative-historical method, elements of **lexical typology** were employed to classify observed semantic shifts according to their functional and conceptual characteristics. This typological perspective facilitates the identification of recurring semantic patterns and supports cross-linguistic generalisation [10, c. 19–21]. Cognitive-semantic principles were further applied to interpret the motivation underlying semantic change, particularly in cases involving metaphorical or metonymic extension [11, c. 45–47].

Although the study primarily relies on qualitative analysis, diachronic corpus data were consulted selectively to verify usage tendencies and contextual variation where necessary. Corpus evidence was used as a supplementary tool rather than as a primary methodological instrument, ensuring that the research remains aligned with the qualitative orientation of comparative-historical linguistics [12, c. 1490–1493].

Overall, the chosen methodological approach allows for a systematic and theoretically grounded investigation of semantic shifts in cognate lexemes and provides a reliable basis for identifying both universal and language-specific patterns of lexical semantic change.

**Results and Discussion.** The comparative-historical analysis of cognate lexemes across related languages demonstrates that semantic shift is realised through a limited set of recurrent and structurally motivated patterns rather than through random or isolated developments. The findings indicate that semantic change within cognate sets follows identifiable evolutionary pathways shaped by the interaction of cognitive mechanisms, communicative needs, and typological constraints.

One of the most frequently attested patterns is **semantic narrowing**, whereby a cognate lexeme develops a more restricted or specialised meaning in one language in comparison with its historical source

or parallel forms in related languages. This process typically arises in response to lexical competition or functional differentiation within the semantic system of a language. Semantic narrowing tends to reduce polysemy and enhance semantic precision, particularly in lexical domains associated with social roles, institutional concepts, and abstract categories [13, c. 151–153].

In contrast, **semantic broadening** occurs when a cognate lexeme extends its meaning to encompass a wider range of referents or conceptual domains. This type of semantic shift is commonly observed in high-frequency lexemes and elements of core vocabulary whose meanings adapt to evolving communicative contexts. Broadening often leads to increased polysemy and facilitates semantic flexibility across different discourse types [14, c. 374–376].

Another prominent pattern identified in the analysed data is **metaphorical extension**, which plays a central role in the semantic evolution of cognate lexemes. Metaphor-driven shifts typically involve the transfer of meaning from concrete source domains to more abstract target domains, reflecting principles of embodied cognition and conceptual mapping. The cross-linguistic consistency of such extensions across related languages suggests the presence of shared cognitive motivations underlying semantic change [15, c. 45–47]. This observation supports the view that metaphorisation constitutes a general and cognitively grounded mechanism of semantic evolution rather than a language-specific phenomenon.

The analysis also reveals instances of **evaluative change**, including both amelioration and pejoration. These shifts are particularly characteristic of lexemes denoting social relations, moral judgement, and emotional states. Evaluative change frequently reflects broader sociocultural transformations and may result in substantial semantic divergence among cognates that otherwise retain formal similarity [16, c. 22–24].

From a typological perspective, the results indicate that certain semantic domains are more susceptible to systematic patterns of semantic shift than others. Lexemes associated with perception, emotion, and interpersonal relations exhibit a higher degree of semantic variability across languages, whereas terms denoting basic physical actions and material objects tend to preserve greater semantic stability [17, c. 18–21]. This tendency corroborates typological findings that link semantic instability to higher levels of abstraction and subjectivity.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis highlights the coexistence of **shared tendencies and language-**

**specific developments** within cognate sets. While many semantic shifts follow parallel trajectories across related languages, others reflect unique historical, cultural, or pragmatic conditions. Such divergence underscores the importance of integrating comparative-historical analysis with language-internal factors to achieve a balanced and nuanced interpretation of semantic change [18, c. 131–134].

Overall, the results confirm that semantic shift in cognate lexemes constitutes a structured and motivated process governed by a combination of cognitive mechanisms and typological constraints. The discussion demonstrates that the comparative-historical approach provides a productive framework for identifying both universal patterns and language-specific deviations in the semantic evolution of related languages. The main types of semantic shift identified in the analysed cognate sets are summarised in **Table 1**.

**Conclusion.** The present study has examined semantic shifts in cognate lexemes from a comparative-historical perspective to identify recurrent patterns of meaning change across related languages. The analysis confirms that semantic change within cognate sets is a systematic and motivated process rather than a random accumulation of individual developments. Semantic shifts emerge because of the interaction between cognitive mechanisms, communicative needs, and typological constraints operating within historical language systems.

The findings demonstrate that the most frequent types of semantic shift in cognate lexemes include semantic narrowing and broadening, metaphorical and metonymic extension, evaluative change, as well as semantic divergence and convergence. These patterns recur across languages and semantic domains, suggesting the existence of cross-linguistic regularities in lexical semantic evolution. At the same time, language-specific trajectories highlight the role of sociocultural and pragmatic factors in shaping semantic development.

From a methodological standpoint, the study illustrates the effectiveness of combining the comparative-historical method with insights from lexical typology and cognitive semantics. This integrated approach allows for a more nuanced interpretation of semantic change and facilitates the identification of both shared tendencies and individual deviations within cognate sets. The selective use of diachronic lexicographic and corpus data further enhances the reliability of the analysis.

The results of this research contribute to the broader field of historical semantics by providing a structured account of semantic shift in cognate lexemes and by clarifying the mechanisms underlying

Table 1

**Types of Semantic Shift in Cognate Lexemes: A Comparative-Historical Perspective**

Type of semantic shift	Definition	Typical semantic domains	Comparative-historical relevance
Semantic narrowing	Reduction of the original semantic scope of a lexeme, resulting in a more specialised meaning	Social roles, institutional terms, abstract nouns	Indicates functional specialisation and lexical competition within related languages
Semantic broadening	Expansion of meaning to cover a wider range of referents or contexts	Core vocabulary, general action verbs	Reflects adaptive semantic flexibility and increased polysemy across languages
Metaphorical extension	Transfer of meaning from a concrete source domain to an abstract target domain	Perception, cognition, emotion	Demonstrates cognitively motivated and cross-linguistically recurrent patterns of semantic change
Metonymic shift	Meaning change based on contiguity or contextual association	Body-related terms, social interaction	Highlights pragmatic and usage-based mechanisms of semantic evolution
Evaluative change (amelioration/pejoration)	Shift in the positive or negative connotation of a lexeme	Moral judgement, interpersonal relations	Reveals sociocultural influence on semantic divergence within cognate sets
Semantic divergence	Development of significantly different meanings in cognates sharing a common origin	Abstract and culturally marked lexemes	Complicates etymological transparency and comparative analysis
Semantic convergence	Partial preservation or re-alignment of meaning across cognates	Basic actions, physical processes	Supports the identification of stable semantic cores in related languages

ing semantic divergence in related languages. The findings may also be relevant for further studies in etymology, lexical typology, and cross-linguistic semantics.

Future research may extend the present analysis by incorporating a wider range of languages,

additional semantic domains, or quantitative corpus-based methods. Such approaches would allow for a more detailed exploration of semantic change and would further advance our understanding of the dynamics of lexical meaning in historical perspective.

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