

Lexical Gaps

Abstract in English

The general assumption among most language users is that every single concept in our world can be labeled by a proper lexical item, i.e. there is a name for all of the physical or abstract entities we live with and situations we experience. It has been suggested by several studies, and we will concentrate on these, that there are usually several conceptual structures in the studied languages which are in fact not lexicalized. This linguistic phenomenon is called a lexical gap, and there is more than one type of lexical gap observable in languages. Recent studies of the occurrence of a lexical gap show various approaches to the subject with various results. The study of lexical gaps can be approached from the point of view of lexical fields, as suggested by Alan Cruse and Adrienne Lehrer among others. In this approach different fields: taxonomies, hierarchies, clusters, grids, linear structures and matrixes help to organize the lexicon into conceptual structures where the missing structural part is then best observable and studied with relation to the other units in the field. Other approaches, Bentivogli and Pianta for example, favour contrastive lexicological studies where a lexical gap is identified as a missing translational equivalent in a target language to a lexical item in a source language. The study of lexical gaps has received increased attention recently, because of the present-day demand for the translation of all kinds of documents, statutes, provisions, regulations, licences, contracts and others. Therefore a major part of our analysis will focus on the comparison of the Czech and the English lexicons. The study may be used as a future reference for all bilingual users in both languages, as we believe that both

writers and translators should pay close attention to the peculiarities of their languages and their highly specific lexicological features. In order to produce an accurate copy of a document, translators should be aware of the fact that there is the possibility of misinterpretation of their words and this can be due to the lack of lexical material which they have at their disposal. We established above that we can call this lack of lexicalized expression a lexical gap.