

## WORDS AS LEXICAL UNITS IN ACQUIRING A VOCABULARY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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### ANNOTATION

This article contains various explorations in lexicology and lexical revolution in linguistics, studies word as it is a main lexical unit of lexicology, its function and etymology.

**Key words:** *word, morphology, lexeme, unit, phraseology, concept, lexicalism.*

### INTRODUCTION

The vocabulary is attracting more and more attention of linguists and is the subject of numerous research papers [4, 5, 6]. It is paradoxical that the modern "lexical revolution" in linguistics - both theoretical and applied - coincided with the foundation of lexicology itself. The growing interest in vocabulary has given rise to a lively debate about the nature and structure of the semantic unit. German linguist W. Teubert considers words as a special kind of unity [8]. The above paradox can be resolved to the extent that we recognize that there is a clear boundary between "lexical" and "phraseological" principles. In the latter, there is no contradiction between the idea of lexicalism and the traditional modular approaches to the structure of the language. Thus, the concept of lexicalism allows for the functioning of words as independent lexical units, and, in turn, supports the naive concept of language as a construct with elements that act as "building blocks" of the linguistic system. Such a system consists of individual elements that combine with each other to construct sentences and generate discourse. Within a given perspective, the word acquires a high degree of autonomy and tends to be considered a unit that can be easily manipulated and that can become an element of research and analysis. Thus, this is not a lexical, but a more specific, phraseological bias, which is diametrically opposite to the grammatical one.

Proponents of a phraseological (idiomatic) approach to language argue that the concept of a word as a lexical unit is associated, rather, with spelling than with semantics. The fact that words are represented as separate units in written speech united the idea of their functioning in discourse as independent units. However, spelling has a very complex relationship with linguistic structure. It should be noted that letter spacing is not necessarily a semantic unit demarcation. The spelling definition of a lexical unit is not free from difficulties when trying to explain complex words, formally represented as various units, written with or without a hyphen (the White House; lower-case letter).

The structure of the (lexical) meaning of a unit is heteromorphic not only in relation to spelling, but also to morphology. Morphological units are not always simple constructions (shopkeeper), and quite often a group of morphological units, for example, a phrase, is used to define a single concept (as a matter of fact). Also, the boundaries of phraseological models do not necessarily coincide with the boundaries of syntactic units. According to D. Bieber (USA), "lexical bundles" can overlap with elementary sentences or phrases (for example, If you look at ...), not necessarily forming grammatically (syntactically) complete units [3].

It should be admitted that the independent use of words in a communicative episode is more than doubtful, since the full power of their meaning is manifested only in discourse. For example, for a single word strong, we cannot say whether it describes a physical or psychological quality (compare: strong coffee and strong personality).

But on the other hand, there are also strong arguments in the literature for the basic structure of dictionary meaning. There are plenty of such arguments and they come from supporters of minimalism and maximalism in

lexical semantics. Some of them have been analyzed by the Spanish linguist M. Almela [2; With. 28-29]. First, many authors have argued for the existence of default meanings of a word, that is, those that can be activated in the absence of a certain phraseological model or lexical-grammatical unit. Telegraph speech, where words with a stable lexical meaning are combined without the formation of any upper-level structural (linguistic) unit, provides beginners in learning a foreign language with an effective communicative strategy and is one of the initial steps in the development of linguistic competence. Individual words are capable of fixing the referent in actual contexts, which is especially true for nouns, for example, a sign "hospital" on a building or a sign with an arrow on the door next to the word "exit".

Secondly, the word has semantic features that remain invariable when the context changes. So, the predicative intensifying feature remains unchanged in the adjective strong. The above property is not covariate depending on the various linguistic environments in which strong is used, for example, with the nouns personality, man, coffee, tea, argument. So, apparently, "intensification" is part of the independent dictionary meaning of this adjective.

Proponents of the minimalist program in linguistics argued that semantic variation is a matter of pragmatics, not semantics [7]. In structural lexicology, this remark justified the difference between the concept of "meaning" on the one hand, and "meaning" or actual understanding on the other [1; p 28]. Thus, the meaning "intensification" is realized in the plural senses of the adjective strong. Different interpretations of this word in such phrases as strong argument, strong personality, strong coffee, etc., can be explained by the actualization of a single feature in diverse contexts. Variations are localized at the level of actual usage, not lexical structure.

Thirdly, analogies exist at the level of actual meanings themselves. For example, it is known that the "computerized" meaning of mouse comes from visual comparison with the referents of the "animal" meaning of the mouse. Research in polysemy has shown the existence of regular and therefore predictable mechanisms for expanding meaning or conceptual shifts, which have defined the concept of systematic polysemy, which has been mainly developed in cognitive linguistics.

Fourth, certain words are capable of initiating more or less coherent and structured representations or categories. The word bird can be used in different ways depending on the situation. An animal may or may not have feathers, and may or may not be able to fly (for example, penguin denotatum). However, despite this variability, there is no doubt that virtually the entire language community will agree that sparrow is an example of a category defined by the noun bird. Thus, the semantic potential of a word contains relative stability.

However, on the above arguments in favor of the dictionary meaning M. Almela makes the following remarks [2; p. 29-31]. First, the validity of basic vocabulary values is very limited. Some words do not lend themselves easily to the hierarchy of semantic activation. For example, there are no objective signs to determine the initial meaning of the word basin. Without recourse to etymology, it is difficult to establish which meanings of a given word conceptually derive from other meanings. In addition, in the case of words in which the basic meaning can be determined, it should be noted that the default meaning is effective only in specific situations and at any time can be canceled by a model that activates the non-basic meaning. So, the meaning of "door" in the noun exit can be regarded as a default meaning, in which no lexico-grammatical environment is required to activate it. However, this independence of the word exit (= "door") from any syntagmatic context is balanced by a strong dependence on the extralinguistic context or situation. The meaning of "door" in the noun exit does not require any special lexico-phraseological environment for its activation, but an additional textual environment is required for comparison.

Secondly, the presence of unchanging semantic (lexeme) features in a word is recognized as a model of a lexical unit with an extended meaning. The distinction between meaning or meaning, on the one hand, and a meaning-component or seme, on the other, is decisive for an adequate description of the lexical meaning. The intensifying feature is practically unchanged in the adjective strong, but the expressed meaning always has more levels of meaning than just the lexical one.

Thirdly, various meanings of the word have conceptual analogies, but their significance in relation to linguistic function is in question. It should be recognized that each expansion of the dictionary meaning historically and, so to speak, "phylogenetically" depends on the primary meaning of the word, but the role of such relations in the implementation of effective communication is questionable. Perhaps knowledge of conceptual analogies between the meanings of a word is more important for imitating the original encyclopedic knowledge than for effectively using the target language.

Fourthly, it is true that many words are capable of conveying more or less stable semantic categories, but it is no less true that the actual meaning of a phrase is subject to fewer changes than the interpretation of each combination, i.e. compound words. For example, the repetition of the word difference does not in itself tell us whether its denotation is a qualitative or quantitative difference between two objects, or a conflict between two people or institutions, etc. So, the actual interpretation of collocation is subject to significantly less changes than the actual meanings of each of the compound words taken separately.

Thus, it is obvious that understanding a word as a lexical unit requires a very complex argumentation. The question of what constitutes a semantic unit is still far from being solved, most often there is a simplified understanding of this problem. Most commonly, words are viewed as lexical units "as a matter of fact". This assumption is based on a long tradition of linguistic beliefs.

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