
SEMANTIC FIELD AS A SUBJECT OF LEXICOLOGICAL RESEARCH

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Abstract: This article is dedicated to study semantic fields of the word and to identify underlying notion in sections of vocabulary.

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As we know, semantic field is a set of words related in meaning. The phrase is also known as a word field, lexical field, field of meaning, and semantic system. Linguists have defined semantic field more specifically as "a set of lexemes which cover a certain conceptual domain and which bear certain specifiable relations to one another" The theory of semantic field was proposed by a number of German and Swiss scholars in the 1920s and 1930s. The vocabulary of a language is an integrated system of lexemes interrelated in sense; still, the system is changing. Any extending of lexemes concerns a corresponding narrowing of one or more neighbors of them. The fact that it intends to catalogue the changes which took place in the meanings of individual lexemes as a whole or separately, instead of examining changes in the whole structure of the vocabulary through time, is one of the most important drawbacks of traditional diachronic semantics. They compared the structure of one lexical field at one time with the structure of a lexical field at another time. In spite of the fact that they constitute different lexical fields, as they belong to different synchronic language-systems, they concern the same conceptual field and that is why they are comparable. They claim that the part-whole relationship between particular lexemes which are interpreted within the lexical field, is identical or similar to the part-whole relationship between the lexical fields and the whole vocabulary. "Fields are living realities intermediate between individual words and the totality of the vocabulary; as parts of a whole they share with words the property of being integrated in a larger structure and with the vocabulary the property of being structured in terms of smaller units." For instance, the lexical field of color terms involves the lexemes: black, white, red, green, yellow, blue, orange etc. and similarly, the lexical field of color terms, as well as those of kinship terms, military ranks, vehicles, among others are only parts of the whole English vocabulary². A semantic field is a large group of words of different parts of speech in which the underlying notion is broad enough to include almost all-embracing sections of vocabulary. For example, the words cosmonaut (n), spacious (adj), to orbit (v) belong to the semantic field of "space". These broadest semantic groups are sometimes referred to as conceptual fields which might be in many cases misleading. The members of the semantic field are joined together by some common semantic components, i.e. the component common to all members of the semantic field, which is sometimes described as the common denominator of meaning.³ Semasiology is a branch of linguistics concerned with the meaning of words and word equivalents. The main objects of semasiological study are as follows: types of lexical meaning, polysemy and semantic structure of words, semantic development of words, the main tendencies of the change of word-meanings, semantic grouping in the vocabulary system. One way of enriching the vocabulary is semantic changes. Problems of meaning and its changes are studied by semasiology. Other names that

have been used include semantics, semiology, semiotics, sememics and semics, though scholars have often used some of these terms to suit their own interests and orientation, and in both wider and narrower senses than our semasiology will have here.⁴ The term 'word meaning' is used in this entry as a practical cover term for different-sized form - meaning couplings. Meaning is a certain reflection in our mind of objects, phenomena or relations that makes part of the linguistic sign-its so-called inner facet, whereas the sound-form functions as its outer facet. Meaning is the information or concepts that a sender intends to convey, or does convey, in communication with a receiver.⁵ The more general definition is well revealed in R. Jakobson's pun. He said: "Linguistics without meaning is meaningless."⁶ Semantics is a term which is used in linguistics, which studies the relation between linguistic sign and signified thing. In other words, semantics is a branch of linguistics which studies about the meaning. Halliday states that the term "semantics" does not simply refers to the meaning of words; it is the entire system of meanings of a language, expressed by grammar as well as by vocabulary⁷. Semantics brings in symbol using and symbol system outside language, but the central place of language in human symbol systems makes language its primary concern. In semantics, one is trying to make explicit, the ways in which words, and sentences of various grammatical construction are used and understood by native or fluent speakers of a language.⁸ The term semantics was first used to refer to the development and change of meaning. Certainly the study of the change of meaning can be fascinating. "Semantic field" is a term that can be understood in both a wide and narrow sense. In the narrow meaning, the term can be used in relation to a class of words, to a group of words or sometimes to a single word. Even in the narrow sense, the "semantic field" of one language is not equal to the "semantic field" of another language. The tremendous work on the Oxford dictionary carried out by a group of English researchers made semasiology a part of English lexicography. They confirmed that the complete meaning of a word is always contextual, and no study of meaning apart from a context can be taken seriously. Since that time on, the change of meaning was always found by comparing different contexts, beginning with the oldest written records modern contexts.⁹ There are two basic principles of grouping words together according to the properties of their meaning. They are:1) To classify words proceeding from the basic types of semantic relations.2) To group words together starting off with associations connecting the given words with other vocabulary units.

According to these principles of classifying linguistic units the following semantic classes (or categories) can be singled out: synonyms; lexical and terminological sets; lexico-semantic groups; semantic fields; antonyms. As we know Modern English has a very extensive vocabulary. A question naturally arises whether this enormous word-stock is composed of separate independent lexical units, or it should perhaps be regarded as a certain structure system made up of numerous interdependent and interrelated sub-systems or groups of words. The English word-stock may be analyzed into numerous sub-systems the members of which have some features in common, thus distinguishing them from the members of other lexical sub-systems. Words can be classified in various ways. In modern linguistics the problems of semantics take one of the leading places which is caused by the necessity to prove the functioning rules of language units in the process of communication. Lexical meaning is one of the most important tools to fix the results of human cognitive activity in language. Thereupon lexical-semantic fields are constant object of investigation in linguistics. Based on the distinction between the meanings of words and the meanings of sentences, we can recognize two main divisions in the study of semantics: lexical semantics and phrasal semantics. Lexical semantics is the study of word meaning, whereas phrasal semantics is the study of the principles which

govern the construction of the meaning of phrases and of sentence meaning out of compositional combinations of individual lexemes.¹⁰“Lexical semantics” is that area of semantics which deals with the meanings of words. This is usually opposed to “compositional semantics”, which deals with how the meanings of given words in particular syntactic constructions are composed to derive the meanings of larger syntactic constituents. There may be comparatively small lexical groups of words belonging to the same part of speech and linked by a common concept. The words bread, cheese, milk, meat, etc. make up a group with the concept of “food” as the common denominator of meaning. Such smaller lexical groups consisting of words of the same parts of speech are usually termed lexical-semantic groups.¹¹ It is observed that the criterion for joining words together into semantic fields and lexical-semantic groups is the identity of one of the components of their meaning found in all the lexical units making up these lexical groups. Lexical semantics is part of the semantics, which deals with the meanings: denotate and connotate, of the individual lexical elements of words, morphemes and lexemes, thus differing from the semantics of sentences. The basis of lexical semantics are: classification and analysis of words; a description of the differences and common features in lexical semantic structures between different languages; the way in which the meaning of individual lexical elements refers, by means of syntax, to the meaning of the whole sentence. The central concepts in lexical semantics are lexical connections and the extent to which the meaning of an individual word is determined by the meaning of the sentence as a whole, which is called in this case the semantic network. Also pay attention to the relationship of the meanings of different words. Central are the concepts of synonymy, antonymy, hyperonymy, hyponymy, as well as significant and service words. An important role is also played by homonyms and paronyms, but they are associated both with the external form (writing) of words, and with their meaning.¹² Lexical semantics is an academic discipline concerned with the meaning of words. Lexical semanticists are interested in what words mean, why they mean, what they mean, how they are represented in speakers’ minds and how they are used in text and discourse. Outside linguistics proper, lexical semantics overlaps with disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, anthropology, computer science and pedagogy. Within linguistics, it crucially overlaps with what is traditionally referred to as lexicology, which is the overall study of the vocabularies of languages, encompassing topics such as morphology and etymology and social, regional and dialectal aspects of the vocabulary.¹³ Lexical semantics is the study of word meaning. The focus lies on the lexicological study of word meaning as a phenomenon in its own right, rather than on the interaction with neighboring disciplines. This implies that morphological semantics, that is the study of the meaning of morphemes and the way in which they combine into words, is not covered, as it is usually considered a separate field from lexical semantics proper. Lexical semantics also provides the foundation for various fields of applied research, such as research in language acquisition and learning, i.e. how we as native speakers and learners of foreign languages acquire lexical knowledge.¹⁴

The aim of the lexical semantic theory is to describe “a core set of word sense”. Lexical semantics is an academic discipline concerned with the meaning of words. Lexical semanticists are interested in what words mean, how they are represented in speakers’ minds and how they are used in text and discourse.¹⁵ The method of componential analysis integrated with the field theory has been further refined and tested in numerous semantic studies conducted by the linguists from the Tübingen School of Structural Semantics. The framework, as originally developed by Coseriu (1962, 1967) under the name of lexematics, is basically paradigmatic and employs decomposition into the meaning-differentiating features. A lexical field consists of

lexemes analyzable by means of semes: minimal distinctive features organized in oppositions along a dimension characteristic for a single field and classes: units functioning across linguistic fields, determining syntagmatic relations, often grammaticalised. The content of the whole lexical field is expressed by means of an archi lexeme, a general label determining the scope of the field, which may but need not be lexicalized in a particular language. The contribution componential analysis can make to the understanding of the dynamic nature of language. The difference between general and salient components. Non-universal components of meaning may be more salient for the meaning of a given word and it is these that determine the metaphoric extensions of words. "If there is no way of matching these features with anything in the new field of discourse, there does not seem to be any point in using the words. Moreover, much of the rhetorical force of using these terms in slightly non-standard contexts is achieved by associating the normal component with a new referent".¹⁶ The ability of these components to influence and extend the meaning of words modified by their carriers, without themselves belonging to the specification of these words, aligns them with transfer features. The basic tenets of componential analysis treated in a less orthodox manner than in the approaches presented above are also present in the contextual theory of lexical meaning. Within this framework word meaning is analyzed in terms of semantic traits, which are derived from the actual and potential contexts. Actual context is here understood as the data-derived context, whereas potential context is the one available to native Speakers (including linguists), through introspection. The meaning of a word can be derived from an investigation of both its syntagmatic and paradigmatic amities and is understood as the entire pattern of a word's contextual relations. Componential analysis in combination with semantic field theory has been utilized in several anthropological and linguistic studies of, for example, possession verbs, cooking verbs, belief predicates, Container words, sound words, judging verbs, semantic oppositions, and the domain of humans. The definition of the meaning of semantic field is especially difficult due to the complexity of the process by which language and human consciousness serve to reflect the reality and adopt it to human needs. Nowadays, there is no universally accepted definition of the meaning, or rather a definition all the basic features of meaning and being simultaneously time operational.

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