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О ПРОБЛЕМЕ ДИФФЕРЕНЦИАЦИИ ЗНАЧЕНИЙ СИНОНИМОВ НА ПРИМЕРЕ АНГЛИЙСКИХ ГЛАГОЛОВ ПОЛОЖИТЕЛЬНОЙ ОЦЕНКИ

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Цель данной работы заключается в анализе проблемы дифференциации значений синонимов, влияния когнитивной конструкции на формирование или модификацию значения слова, представления лексического значения в лексикографических источниках. В качестве примера рассматриваются английские глаголы положительной оценки, в частности предикативная единица “admire”. Результаты приведенного экспериментального исследования могут быть применены при формулировании словарных дефиниций глаголов положительной оценки в словарях различного рода; в процессе преподавания практической грамматики английского языка; в качестве модели исследования фактического материала при написании курсовых, выпускных квалификационных работ, магистерских и кандидатских диссертаций.

Ключевые слова: глаголы положительной оценки, лексическое значение, грамматика конструкций, глагол “admire”.

ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF DIFFERENTIATION OF MEANINGS OF THE SYNONYMS BY THE EXAMPLE OF THE ENGLISH VERBS OF POSITIVE ASSESSMENT

Research article

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Abstract

The purpose of this work is to analyze the problem of differentiating the meanings of synonyms, the influence of cognitive construction on the formation or modification of the meaning of a word, the representation of lexical meaning in lexicographic sources. The English verbs of positive assessment are examined as an example. The predicative unit “admire” is considered particularly. The results of the experimental study can be used in the formulation of dictionary definitions of the English verbs of positive assessment; in the process of teaching the English language; as a model for the study of factual material while writing different scientific papers.

Keywords: the verbs of positive assessment, lexical meaning, the construction grammar, the verb “admire”.

In this article the problem of differentiation of the meanings of synonyms, the influence of cognitive construction on the formation or modification of the meaning of a word is highlighted by the example of individual verbal units.

The study is based on the material taken from the original texts of fiction of the English and the American authors of the XIX, XX, XXI centuries, the periodicals, the Internet. The corpus of examples is approximately 2000 units, collected from the electronic and printed texts. The dictionary definitions of the analyzed verbs were also used in the study. In the course of the experimental research we analyzed the information from the informants, they have given their assessment of certain usage of the verbs and comments on them, and have proposed their own sentences to explain the meanings of the words. All the 15 informants were native speakers of both British and American versions of English. Most of them were people with higher education, engaged in the field of teaching. The tests offered to the informants were evaluated according to a five-point system, which made it possible to identify and compare differences in the assessment of the submitted materials. The presence of the checked characteristic in the semantic structure of the predicate was considered proven if it was confirmed in at least 80% of the total number of submitted sentences in which it was checked.

We use the methods of semantic interpretation, distributional analysis, inductive analysis, and component analysis based on the experimental method, and the hypothetical-deductive method as the leading one.

The study of dictionary definitions of the English verbs of positive assessment in various synonymic and explanatory dictionaries has allowed us to distinguish such verbs as “respect”, “regard”, “admire”, “esteem”, “value”, “appreciate”. The survey of the collected factual material, carrying out and analysis of the search tests that “a model of the occurrence of a positive assessment at the result of sensory perception and comprehension of the subject of the qualities of the object of these is presented in the meaning of these verbal units; they are frequent lexemes, which reflect the systematic semantic relations of the stative types of verbs and their inherent characteristics, but they have their own peculiarities”.

We draw attention to the problem of the representation of lexical meaning in different lexicographic sources, when synonyms receive almost similar definitions or are explained through each other. For example, in the English-Russian dictionaries, the verbs in question are translated almost identically: *respect* – «1. уважать, почитать; 2. щадить, беречь»; *esteem* – «1. уважать, чтить, почитать; 2. давать оценку»; *regard* – «уважать» [5].

In the English-English dictionaries, we observe a similar phenomenon: *respect* – “to admire someone because they have high standards and good qualities such as fairness and honesty → admire, respect somebody for (doing) something. *She respected him for his honesty. I respect his views, although I do not agree with them*”; *esteem* – “to respect and admire someone or something. *Peden was greatly esteemed by the people of Ayrshire*”; *admire* – “to respect and like someone

because they have done something that you think is good, or to respect their qualities or skills. *I really admire the way she brings up those kids all on her own*" [11].

The same is true in the Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary, where the meaning of a word is given by describing a denotative situation: *respect* – “If you respect someone, you have a good opinion of their character or of their ideas, judgments, etc.: *He was particularly respected for his integrity*”; *esteem* – “If you esteem someone, you admire and respect them very much. *He esteemed his colleague*”; *admire* – “If you admire someone or something, you like and respect them very much. *He admired the way she had coped with life. Those who knew him will admire him for his work*”; *appreciate* – “If you appreciate something, for example a piece of music or good food, you recognize and understand the good qualities or features that it has and like or admire it. *In time you'll appreciate the beauty and subtlety of this language*”; *value* – “If you value something, you think that it is important and appreciate it. *I've done business with Mr. Weston before. I value the work he gives me*” [6].

Thus, we can conclude that the above dictionary definitions do not allow us to differentiate the meanings of the verbs and, consequently, to determine the conditions for their use, since the signs that contribute to the differentiation of the area of their denotation are not explicated. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the area of nomination of each lexical unit of this group. Many researchers came to this conclusion when analyzing other groups of words in their works, for example, the works devoted to the analysis of the internal structure of the English verbs of the verbs of experiential semantics [3], motivation [4], objection [1]; the verbs as part of phraseological units [2].

In our research, we rely on the theory of the semantic types of predicates, the theory of the Construction Grammar that are able to describe and explain the mechanisms of changing the meaning of a verb. The main thesis of the Construction Grammar states that “the meaning of a language unit is formed under the influence of context, and the leading semantic factor is the cognitive construction that determines the true meaning of the predicate” [2, P. 37]. The presence of certain features in the semantic structure of the left-sided and right-sided actants determines the semantic type of the predicate. The change in the semantic structure of the actant may lead to a change in the lexical meaning of the word. This change affects the grammatical form of the verb.

The analysis of the actual material allowed us to formulate and verify the hypothesis that “the verbs of positive assessment “respect”, “regard”, “admire”, “esteem”, “appreciate”, “value” differ from each other in the “system of value orientations” that underlies the subject's assessment of the object”.

Below we will analyze the verb “admire”. As our experimental research has shown, “admire” can be attributed to various lexical and semantic groups: “1) to the group of verbs with the meaning of a positive assessment, 2) to the group of verbs of vision like “look” with the meaning of the orientation of the subject's gaze on the object”.

During the search tests, we have asked the informants to comment on the sentences: 1. *I admire her because she's well-organized and creative*. 2. *I respect her because she's well-organized and creative*.

According to their estimates, the use of the verb “admire” in this context implies a very high emotionally colored assessment by subject *I* of the qualities “well-organized and creative” of the object *her*, implying that the subject would necessarily like to possess these qualities himself. The use of the verb “respect” implies a more rational assessment of the qualities of the object, implying that these qualities are worthy of a positive assessment in society.

We can conclude that the assessment expressed by the verb “admire” is purely subjective, since it is not determined by any given norms. This subjective perception of the object serves as a reference point for the assessment. Therefore, the sentence: *I admire your brazenness* received high marks. And the sentences with other analyzed verbs in this context were rated low. On this basis, we have referred the verb “admire” to a subgroup of verbs, in the meaning of which the leading information is the subject's assessment of the object on the basis of a “personal value system”. Studies have shown that the assessing quality of the object can be called directly in the text: “*I admire all that quaint, old-fashioned politeness; it is much more to my taste than modern ease; modern ease often disgusts me*” [7]; and the quality of the object can be identified through his “displays”: “*Americans admire those who create jobs, pay bills and deliver honest value*” [14]; the “displays” of the object may be updated as the most specific one-time action: “*I admire you all frightfully, you know, for giving up everything to come and do this*” [8], the “displays” of the qualities of the object may be the “class” action: “*I admire him because he cares about his team*” [15].

So, the first meaning of the verb “admire” can be formulated as: the highest degree of positive subjective assessment of the object's qualities which can be called or revealed through the “displays” of the object. It should be noted that, the information about the subject's pleasure of the sensory perception of the object can be emphasized in the meaning of the verb “admire”. On this basis, we distinguish the lexical-semantic variant of the first meaning of this verb: 1) “*And now, my little honest girl,*” said the gentleman who had admired her brother's scotch, turning to Anne, “and now tell me who you are, and what you and your brother want or wish for most in the world” [9], “*I admire your skin because it is so velvet and gentle, and it's a pleasure to touch it*” (a search test), 3) “*I admire the tones of concertina*” [10], 4) “*That beautiful young lady at Miss Havingsham's, is more beautiful than anybody ever was, I admire her dreadfully*” [13].

We should say that that the verb “admire” can have a second meaning, and in this case, it transfers to the lexical and semantic group of verbs of vision like “look” with the meaning of directing of the subject's gaze at the object. Thus, in the sentence “*She admired herself in the glass*” [14], the verb “admire” is used to denote a high degree of positive subjective assessment of the subject *She* of the object *herself*. At the same time, the verb “admire” also denotes the process of directing the subject's gaze at the object, because in this sentence this verb can be replaced by the verb “look”: “*She looked at herself in the glass with admiration*”(a search test). “In this case, the sign “application of a biological force”(expressed in the process of directing the subject's gaze to the object, caused by the certain parameters of the object) is a differential one for separating the meanings of this verb”.

Thus, the experimental study of the semantic structure of the synonyms, in particular, the English verbs of positive assessment, allows us to clarify the cognitive constructions that affect the meaning of language units, and helps to formulate their dictionary definitions in dictionaries of various kinds.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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