

SEMANTICS OF THE NOUNS WITH THE MIDDLE DEGREE OF POLYSEMY IN MODERN ENGLISH

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Statement of the problem. The lexicon of any language represents a system with the hierarchy of elements, whose function is to reflect the entire range of things and phenomena in the ambient world. The growing interest to the study of a word in the semantically united group can be explained by the fact that only thoroughly collected and systematized language material represented conceptually gives an opportunity to solve a range of the most significant theoretical issues as well as to develop and apply concrete methodologies of linguistic analysis to the description of specific lexico-semantic fields. The **relevance** of the present research is determined by the necessity of all-round study of the nouns denoting *evil* in modern English taking into account both its system-structural and semantic characteristics.

The **purpose** of the article is to reveal the semantic peculiarities of the nouns with the middle degree of polysemy in English.

Material and methods. The material of our research is represented by 763 nouns denoting *evil* in English, selected from Oxford English Dictionary in 12 volumes, which possess 1173 meanings.

For the study of the system-structural and semantic characteristics of the lexical units in question, the procedure of formalized lexical semantics' analysis has been used, further developed by prof. M. P. Fabian while investigating the etiquette lexis in Ukrainian, English and Hungarian [2–7]. This method allows to disclose the semantics of the nouns denoting *evil* in English by revealing the correlations between the words and their meanings, and singling out the peculiarities of their seme stocks. The suggested approach is based on formal, exclusively language criterion – belonging to one part of speech. The matrix method of semantic interconnections' representation between the words in the language is regarded as a metalanguage for the description of *evil*, and the matrix itself – as a model of interconnections' system between the words, on the one hand, and the semantic structure of the lexis, on the other. This model fixes the semantic correlations (♦) between the words by means of columns and lines, where horizontal axe indicates the seme stock, and the vertical one – the lexical units. The words and their meaning components are arranged in the descending order – from the most polysemantic to monosemantic ones.

Main body. The system approach to the language description presumes that its description is not adequate without considering the content involved in the system as well as the extralinguistic factors influencing it. Any complex system comprises the elements with peculiar properties that are not characteristic of the system as a whole,

but their totality and interaction determine the unique character of the language. Thus, the lexeme is the external formal reflection of the word whereas the lexical meaning represents its internal content. Many terms have been used in linguistics to indicate the lexical meaning components: “semantic feature”, “semantic multiplier/component”, “differential semantic element”, “semantic prime”, “semantic atom”, “content figure”, “noema” etc. These units are considered very important in the process of lexico-semantic system description as its holistic analysis undergoes two stages: from the form to the content and, vice versa, from the content to the form.

The lexis denoting *evil* in English is represented by 763 words, possessing 1173 lexical meanings. They are divided into four major groups according to the degree of polysemy and semantic characteristics: the words with the highest, middle, low degree of polysemy and monosemantic ones. The nouns with the middle degree of polysemy comprise 203 nouns characterized by 19-11 meanings and make up 26,6 % of the whole lexical stock of the words under study. They depict the views on the objective world that are characteristic of both a person and the society he/she lives in. The present article deals with the lexico-semantic analysis of the nouns denoting *evil* which possess 19-17 meanings.

The lexical units **grievance, reproach, cure, malice, slander, disease, sufferance, falsehood, hole, noise, cause, foulness, accident, disgrace** are characterized by 19 meanings. The ability to form phrases and word-combinations unites the nouns **grievance, reproach, cure, malice, slander, disease, sufferance, falsehood, hole, noise**. The study of combinability potential of a word is not only important, but an objective means of its evolution, paradigmatic characteristics and paradigmatic relation with the other lexical units within the investigated group [1, p. 138]. The common feature of the nouns **grievance, reproach, cure, malice, slander, cause** is the depiction of an *action, deed, act*, whereas the words **grievance, disease, cause, foulness** mean a *condition, state*. The quality of a person or thing as a bearer of *evil* is revealed by the lexical meanings of the nouns **reproach** (*a quality bringing disgrace or discredit upon one*), **malice** (*bad quality*) and **accident** (*any accidental or non-essential quality*).

The noun **reproach**, denoting *an object of scorn or contempt*, has the semantic relations with the words **grievance, falsehood, cause, foulness, accident, disgrace**. The latter one is semantically close to **disease, sufferance, cause**, indicating *an occasion of shame or dishonor; an individual instance of the condition of being out of health; an instance of indulgence; the case as it concerns any one*. Semantics of a person is characteristic of the lexical units **reproach, slander, cause, disgrace**, however each of them reveals its essential specific features: *a person forming a source of disgrace or discredit* (**reproach**), *a person who is a discredit, disgrace, or scandal to somebody or set of persons* (**slander**), *a person who brings about or occasions something, with or without intention, often in bad sense: one who occasions, or is to blame for mischief, misfortune etc.* (**cause**), *of person: ill-favouredness* (**disgrace**).

Our lexico-semantic analysis of the words allows to interpret *evil* as a poly-aspectual phenomenon, whereas the object of evaluation presents the objective reality in

the variety of its realization forms. For instance, the nouns **grievance** and **sufferance** reflect *pain, suffering, distress; injury and damage, hurt*. The lexemes **reproach** and **disgrace** denote *insult, affront and an expression of disapproval, censure, reproof, or upbraiding (reproach), dishonour or reprobation (disgrace)*. Both of them in combination with the noun **slander** render the semantics of *shame, dishonor, disgrace, ignominy*. The word **grievance** has the semantic connection with **disease** and **cause**, depicting *ailment*, and together with **malice**, they characterize *disease*.

The common feature of the nouns **grievance** and **disgrace** is the expression of *displeasure, disfavor*. The latter is semantically related to the word **noise** as far as it denotes *commotion, clamour, outcry*. The lexical unit **noise** has three connections with the lexeme **slander**, depicting *an utterance; scandal, slander and a rumour*. The nouns **slander**, **noise** and **disease** explicitly and implicitly denote *evil*. The latter two possess the semantics of *disturbance*. The words **grievance** and **slander** indicate the *wrong, offence*, whereas **grievance**, **cure** and **disease** are united by the lexical meaning *trouble*.

Meanings *adverse fortune, misfortune, disaster* are common to the nouns **accident** and **disgrace**. The former is semantically close to the lexeme **reproach**, characterizing *an irregular feature in a landscape*. Rendering of *wickedness* characterizes the lexical units **malice** and **foulness**. Lexical meanings of the nouns **reproach**, **cause**, **foulness** (*matter*) and **cure**, **hole**, **cause** (*business, organization, office*) denote everyday life of a person.

Regardless of the close interconnections between the nouns having 19 meanings, the words in question reveal their specific, individual semantics: 1) the attitude to a person and the *evil* itself (**grievance**: *indignation*; **reproach**: *blame or censure directed against a person, sometimes implying abusive or opprobrious language*; **cure**: *care, anxiety*; **disease**: *uneasiness, discomfort; inconvenience, annoyance; disquiet; a grievance*; **sufferance**: *undergoing of pain, trouble, wrong, etc.*); 2) offensive, cunning, mean behaviour (**grievance**: *the infliction of wrong or hardship on a person; oppression*; **malice**: *the desire to injure another person; active ill-will or hatred; malicious conduct; a malicious device*; **slander**: *the dissemination of false statements or reports concerning a person, or malicious misrepresentation of his actions, in order to defame or injure him*; **falsehood**: *deception, falsification, imposture; a forgery, counterfeit; the intentional making of false statements; lying; an uttered untruth; a lie*); 3) an unpleasant, unforeseen event, an obstacle, impediment (**accident**: *an incident, event; a casualty, a contingency, an unfortunate event, a mishap*; **slander**: *a stumbling-block*); 4) human's traits of character (**foulness**: *ugliness, hideousness, repulsiveness; unfairness, dishonesty; roughness, violence*); 5) harmfulness, harm or mischief (**malice**: *badness; power to harm, harmfulness; harmful effect*); 6) the evaluation of human activity (**slander**: *fame, report; evil name, ill repute*; **disgrace**: *reproach, disparagement; marring of the grace of anything; disfigurement*) etc.

The nouns **trial**, **scrape**, **folly**, **need**, **danger**, **lowness**, **contingency**, **vice**, **reproof**, **iniquity**, **meanness** have 18 meanings and are characterized by both common and distinctive features. The lexical units **scrape**, **folly**, **need**, **danger**, **lowness**, **contingency**, **vice** form phrases and word-combinations with different parts of speech,

due to which receive additional shades of meanings. The ability to be used *in plural* unites the words **folly**, **need**, **danger**, **reproof**, **iniquity**, **meanness**. The nouns **trial**, **scrape**, **reproof**, **iniquity** denote *an action, deed, act, fact*, whereas **trial**, **folly**, **need**, **danger**, **lowness**, **contingency**, **vice**, **reproof**, **meanness** – *state, condition*. Lexical units **folly**, **lowness**, **contingency**, **iniquity** indicate the qualities of a human being as an *evil* bearer: *the quality of being foolish or deficient in understanding; the quality of being low; the quality of being contingent; the quality of being subject to chance and change, or of being at the mercy of accidents; the quality of being unrighteous*. The nouns **folly**, **lowness**, **iniquity**, denoting *the want of good sense, elevation in character and equity*, are semantically interconnected with **need** and **meanness**, whose lexical meanings reveal *the lack of the means of subsistence or of necessary articles and want of mental or moral elevation or dignity*.

The semantics of *damage, harm; anger; mischief* is typical of the nouns **folly** and **danger**, which in combination with **iniquity** characterize *an unwise, ungracious, uncompliant, fractious, unrighteous conduct*, i.e. one of the forms of *evil* realization. The common characteristics of the nouns **folly** and **iniquity** are as follows: 1) *wickedness*, 2) *a popular name for any costly structure considered to have shown folly in the builder*, 3) *the name of a comic character or buffoon in the old morality plays, also called the vice, representing some particular vice, or vice in general and the devil*. Two semantic interconnections can be found between the lexemes **folly** and **vice** as they tend to personification and depict *evil*. The noun **meanness** is semantically bound with the latter, characterizing *weakness*.

The words **meanness** and **lowness** are idiographic synonyms as they interpret each other (*meanness, lowness*) and have four semantic interconnections: 1) *human's traits of character*; 2) *baseness*; 3) *humility, humbleness*; 4) *lowliness*. The former also renders the subjective semantics (*a thing*) together with **trial** and **contingence**. The lexical meaning *poverty* unites the words **meanness** and **need**. The *result* of an action is expressed by the nouns **trial** and **scrape**. Being a part of scientific terminological system, they form a unity with the words **vice** and **iniquity**. The lexeme **scrape**, in its turn, appears to be semantically close to **reproof**, indicating *a person*, whereas **trial**, **need**, **reproof** characterize *an object or subject*. The meaning *fault, sin* is common to the nouns **vice**, **reproof**, **iniquity**.

The units' meanings under study which are not intertwined, reveal the essential characteristics of *evil* as well as the peculiarities of its realization: 1) bad events and occurrences (**trial**: *affliction, trouble, misfortune*; **scrape**: *an embarrassing or awkward predicament or situation, usually one into which a person is brought by his own imprudence and thoughtlessness*; **need**: *a time of difficulty, straits, or trouble; exigency, emergency; indigence*; **contingency**: *uncertainty of occurrence or incidence; the befalling or occurrence of anything without preordination; chance; an event the occurrence of which could not have been, or was not, foreseen; an accident, a casualty*; **danger**: *difficulty (made or raised)*); 2) characteristics of people and things (**danger**: *reluctance, chariness, stint, grudging; coyness; untowardness*; **vice**: *depravity or corruption of morals; indulgence in degrading pleasures or practices; a moral defect; a*

*flaw in character or conduct; a defect, blemish or imperfection, in action or procedure or in the constitution of a thing; a physical defect or blemish; a deformity; a taint, imperfection; viciousness, harmfulness; **folly**: an absurdity; lewdness, wantonness; madness, insanity, mania; iniquity: unfavourableness, unfavourable or adverse influence or operation; **meanness**: insignificance; deficiency, inferiority; slightness, scantness; littleness of character or mind; sordid illiberality; niggardliness, stinginess); 3) the ability to cause harm (**danger**: power to dispose of, or to hurt or harm; power (of a person, weapon, or missile) to inflict physical injury; liability (to loss, punishment, etc.); liability or exposure to harm or injury); 5) human's emotions and feelings (**reproof**: shame, disgrace, ignominy or reproach, adhering or resulting to a person in consequence or by reason of some fact, event, conduct, etc.; insult, contumely, scorn; censure, rebuke, reprimand, reprehension; **folly**: rage) etc.*

In the process of our lexico-semantic analysis we may conclude that the values of the individual and society do not totally coincide as far as the speaker in his/her everyday communication is influenced by two major factors: the objective norm, functioning in the society, and the subjective one, reflecting his/her views on the ambient world's things and phenomena.

Fourteen nouns (**scarcity, strife, necessity, case, injury, rigour, feat, poverty, envy, nerve, confidence, success, brunt, severity**) possess 17 meanings. The ability to form phrases and word combinations is the characteristic feature of the words **scarcity, strife, necessity, case, injury, rigour, feat, poverty, envy, nerve, confidence, success, brunt**, whereas plurality is common to **injury, poverty, envy, nerve, severity**. The semantics of *an action, deed, act, fact* can be traced in the lexical meanings of the units **scarcity, strife, necessity, case, injury, rigour, feat, severity**. The nouns **case, feat, nerve, confidence** are used as terms of different fields of sciences. The semantics of *an instance of insufficiency of supply, contention or antagonism, the occurrence or existence of a thing (fact, circumstance etc.), extreme strictness or harshness, the prosperous achievement of something attempted, severity* is expressed by the words **scarcity, strife, case, rigour, success, severity**. The lexical unit **success** has semantic interconnections with **case** and **feat**, indicating *a person*, and the former also denotes positive evaluation, characterizing *one who succeeds or is successful*. The nouns **success, injury** and **confidence** express *human's traits of character*.

The lexical units **necessity** and **poverty** are synonyms explained one through the other and united by one more meaning (*want, lack*). The semantics of *a situation or case* can be found in the lexical meanings of the words **necessity** and **case**, but they contrast each other: *a situation of hardship or difficulty* and *a situation in which two people fall in love*. Synonymous nouns **scarcity** and **poverty** characterize *the quality of being scarce; the quality of being poor; scantiness; deficiency; meanness; dearth*. Thus, *evil* is a many-faceted phenomenon, represented as a lack of financial backing, an unrealized desire to gain some position or rank in the society and the discrepancy in what a person gets and longs to obtain.

Feelings and emotions find their reflection in the lexical meanings of the words **envy** and **confidence**: *a malignant or hostile feeling; the feeling sure or certain of fact*

or issue. The meaning *the feeling of mortification and ill-will occasioned by the contemplation of the superior advantages possessed by another* is common to the noun **envy**, that emphasizes its social character. By explicit expression of *evil (active evil)*, the latter has a connection with **feat** denoting *an evil deed*. The words **envy** and **injury** denote *a mischief and harm*, whereas **strife**, **injury** and **rigour** – *pain, distress*. The meaning *difficulty, hardship* is common to the lexical units **strife**, **scarcity**, **rigour**.

The noun **confidence**, possessing negative connotations, denotes *assurance based on insufficient or improper grounds; excess of assurance, overboldness, hardihood, presumption, impudence*, has the semantic ties with the word **rigour**. The polysemy of the words in question enhances the compactness of lexical units' relations. Thus, **brunt** unites with **severity**, pointing out *the violence of an attack, illness* etc. The semantics of the nouns **severity** and **rigour** is the following: *severity, harshness, strictness or sternness in dealing with others*. The lexical unit **case** forms the relation with the word **success**, denoting an *event*. One more semantic connection can be traced between the words **case** and **feat**, indicating *hazard, a surprising trick*. The latter is characterized by positive evaluative semantics, rendering the meaning of *achievement* and having a close relation with the lexical unit **success**.

The nouns possessing 17 meanings express different phenomena and realms of objective reality that can be regarded as *evil*: 1) personal characteristics (**scarcity**: *frugality, parsimony; niggardliness, stinginess*; **rigour**: *hardness of heart; obduracy*); 2) social processes and events (**strife**: *contention, dispute, a contest or conflict, a quarrel or dispute; trouble, toil*; **necessity**: *constraint or compulsion*; **poverty**: *destitution*); 3) unforeseen events (**case**: *hap or chance*); 4) attitudes toward the others (**injury**: *wrongful treatment; violation or infringement of another's rights, reviling, insult, calumny; a taunt, an affront*; **envy**: *ill-will, malice, enmity, odium, unpopularity, opprobrium, jealousies; rivalries*) etc.

Conclusions. Lexico-semantic analysis of the nouns with the middle degree of polysemy denoting *evil* in English has shown that the semantic structure of each word is strictly organized into a system of interconnected meanings. The words under study contain the meanings common to several units within the analyzed group as well as individual ones, expressing unique notions and phenomena of objective reality. Thus, the relations between the objects and things find their reflection in the semantics of lexical units denoting *evil*.

In **perspective** further study of related groups of words denoting *evil* in modern English in their interaction with the corresponding ones in other languages seems relevant and of theoretical as well as practical value.

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Резюме

Стаття присвячена дослідженню лексичної семантики іменників із середнім ступенем полісемії на позначення *зла* в сучасній англійській мові. Проведений аналіз показав, що досліджувані слова, виступаючи самостійними елементами групи, водночас вступають в різноманітні семантичні зв'язки як з одиницями своєї, так і інших груп, додаючи специфічних характеристик до відображення форм та засобів прояву *зла*.