

SEMANTIC FEATURES AS A BASIS FOR THE CLASSIFICATION OF
MODERN ENGLISH LEXEMES.

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The article examines the role of semantic features as a fundamental basis of classification of modern English lexemes. Semantic features are regarded as basic components of lexical meaning that allows to determine common and distinctive features of words. The paper is concerned with the use of componential analysis for the classification of English lexical units according to their semantic properties. The research shows that the semantic feature analysis offers a systematic framework for the identification of semantic similarities, differences, oppositions and lexical-semantic groups in the lexicon of the modern English. The classification of lexemes according to the features they share and the features that oppose them, also gives a better understanding of semantic fields and the internal organization of the English lexical system. The study also acknowledges that semantic features are insufficient to explain all the dimensions of lexical meaning, notably the contextual, cultural, pragmatic and prototypical ones. Therefore, semantic feature analysis should be considered an effective analytical instrument that can be complemented by other approaches to lexical semantics. The findings may be useful for researchers in lexical semantics and lexicology, as well as for lexicographers, translators, and teachers of English..

INTRODUCTION

The vocabulary of modern English represents a complex and highly organized system in which lexical units are connected through different semantic relationships. Words do not exist independently; they form semantic groups, fields, and networks based on common and

contrasting features. One of the important approaches to describing these relationships is the analysis of semantic features. Semantic features can be understood as individual components of lexical meaning that distinguish one lexeme from another while also revealing the properties shared by members of the same semantic group. Componential analysis uses these features to describe lexical meaning systematically and to identify semantic similarities and contrasts among related words. The classification of lexemes according to their semantic features is of particular importance when dealing with lexical semantics, because words of similar meanings can be different in respect of particular semantic dimensions. These differences show that we can look at the meaning of words as a combination of common and distinctive semantic features. The aim of the present study is to investigate semantic features as a basis for classification of modern English lexemes. Particular attention is paid to the identification of common and differentiating features in the selected lexical groups. The study also examines the relationship between semantic features and lexical fields, and the usefulness and limitations of componential analysis. The research is relevant to the problems of lexical semantics, lexicology, lexicography, translation and teaching the English language. Systematic semantic classification can contribute to deeper comprehension of the internal organization of the English vocabulary [5]

METHODS

The study is grounded on a qualitative semantic analysis. It is mainly based on the principles of componential analysis. This method is based on the reduction of the meanings of related lexemes to smaller semantic units and the comparison of the presence or absence of certain features. Componential analysis is especially useful when several lexical items belong to the same semantic domain but differ according to clearly identifiable dimensions. In this approach, semantic features can be represented by binary notation, such as [+] for the presence of a feature and [-] for its absence. The research procedure consists of several stages. First, lexical items are selected according to their membership in a common semantic field. The semantic fields examined may include kinship, human beings, animals, movement, perception, emotions, and objects. Second, the principal semantic features relevant to each lexical group are identified. Depending on the lexical field, these may include features such as [+human], [+animate], [+male], [+female], [+adult], [+concrete], [+abstract], [+professional], [+emotional], or [+intentional]. Third, the selected lexemes are compared in terms of their shared and contrasting features. For example, the lexical group *man*, *woman*, *boy*, and *girl* can be classified according to the dimensions of humanity, age, and gender. The analysis therefore makes it possible to demonstrate that *man* is [+human], [+adult], and [+male], whereas *girl* is [+human], [-adult], and [+female]. Fourth, the results are interpreted in relation to semantic fields and lexical relations such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and semantic opposition. The study also considers the limitations of strict binary classification. Some lexical meanings are influenced by context, cultural factors, polysemy, connotation, and prototype effects. Therefore, semantic features are treated as an analytical

instrument rather than as a complete representation of lexical meaning. This approach is in accordance with research that shows componential analysis is useful for identifying shared and differentiating features but also has methodological limitations [1]

RESULTS

The analysis demonstrates that semantic features provide an effective basis for classifying related English lexemes according to their common and distinctive properties. The results indicate that lexical groups can be organized through a limited number of semantic dimensions, particularly when the analyzed words belong to a clearly identifiable semantic field. One of the clearest examples is the semantic field of human beings. The lexemes *man*, *woman*, *boy*, and *girl* share the general feature [+human]. However, they can be differentiated according to age and gender. *Man* can be represented as [+human], [+adult], [+male], while *woman* can be represented as [+human], [+adult], [-male]. Similarly, *boy* is characterized by [+human], [-adult], [+male], whereas *girl* has [+human], [-adult], [-male]. This analysis demonstrates how a small number of contrasting features can explain the semantic relationships among closely related lexical units. A similar pattern can be observed in other semantic fields. In the field of visual perception, for instance, lexemes such as *look*, *watch*, *stare*, *gaze*, *glance*, and *peer* share a general connection with the activity of seeing but differ according to duration, intensity, manner, intentionality, and emotional involvement. Research applying componential analysis to English perception verbs demonstrates that such semantic features can be used to identify differences among a relatively large set of related lexemes. The results further show that semantic-feature classification helps reveal hierarchical and oppositional relationships between lexical units. General lexemes may contain broader semantic properties, while more specific lexemes add additional restrictions. For example, the term *animal* is more general than *dog* and the term *dog* is more general than specific breeds. Therefore, semantic features give a system of classification of lexemes, finding semantic oppositions and explaining the inner structure of lexical fields. However, the results also indicate that not all lexical meanings can be completely represented through binary features because contextual and pragmatic factors may modify interpretation [6]

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that semantic features constitute an important analytical basis for the classification of modern English lexemes. Their principal advantage is that they allow researchers to move beyond general statements such as “these words are related” and identify precisely how lexical units are similar and different. Within a semantic field, shared features establish the basis for group membership, whereas distinctive features explain lexical contrasts. This corresponds to the structural understanding of lexical fields, in which the meaning of a word is partly determined by its relationship to other semantically related words. Componential analysis is particularly effective for relatively structured lexical domains such as kinship, biological classification, human characteristics, and certain groups of concrete objects. It can also serve the lexicographic description by helping to identify the

characteristics that distinguish closely related lexical units. In teaching languages, semantic-feature analysis can help learners understand why words that seem like synonyms cannot always be used interchangeably. For example, differences among *look*, *stare*, *gaze*, and *glance* can be explained through features related to duration, intensity, manner, and purpose. At the same time, the findings confirm that semantic-feature analysis should not be regarded as a universal model of lexical meaning. Some meanings are difficult to divide into simple binary components. Polysemy, metaphor, cultural associations, connotation, and contextual interpretation may create meanings that cannot be adequately represented by a fixed set of [+]/[-] features. Research on lexical semantics has therefore pointed to the importance of approaches such as prototype theory, frames, and contextual analysis as complementary perspectives. Thus semantic features are best understood as a convenient descriptive tool rather than as a full theory of meaning. Their greatest value is in showing systematic relations in the lexical fields and in clarifying semantic contrasts. A more complete description of modern English vocabulary can be provided by componential analysis supplemented with contextual, cognitive and pragmatic approaches. The classification of lexemes with the help of semantic features is still topical for today's lexical-semantic studies, lexicography, translation and foreign-language teaching [3]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, semantic features provide an effective basis for classifying modern English lexemes according to their meaning. By identifying common and distinctive semantic components, it is possible to group lexemes into meaningful categories and establish relationships between closely related words. Componential analysis demonstrates how features such as [+human], [+adult], and [+male] can be used to distinguish lexical units such as *man*, *woman*, *boy*, and *girl*. This approach helps reveal the systematic organization of the English vocabulary and contributes to a deeper understanding of lexical meaning and semantic relations. Although semantic features cannot explain every contextual or pragmatic aspect of meaning, they remain an important analytical tool in modern lexical semantics [2].

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