

Semantic Field Learning in Modern English

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the newly-created lexical units that represent semantic field LEARNING. The general principles of this semantic field modeling are determined and examined.

Keywords: semantic field, semantic group, integral characteristic feature, differential characteristic feature.

Introduction

The modern stage in society's development and its gradual transformation into the "knowledge society" (society where the main value is knowledge) proves that a concept "learning", which reflects mental and cognitive human activity and cumulative experience, has become its axiological dominant. This social tendency is represented on the lingual level, by great number of innovative lexical units connected with learning process directly or indirectly. The crucial interest of this article is determined by the necessity of in-depth analysis of this lexical layer and its structuring. The main goal of the article is to distinguish general modeling principles of semantic field LEARNING using the method of field structuring. The system approach to studying of lingual phenomena became a dominant one in the linguistics of the 20th century and it caused the emergence of the concept "field". This concept was defined as a word complex which had a general meaning. According to U. Vlasova and A. Zagoruyko, the vocabulary content of a language represents a system of interdependent lexical units and semantic fields are interpreted as designation of general meaning where lexical units interact and define each other.

The lexical units of semantic field learning in modern English are not isolated as they have a great impact on meaning formation and changing. The general semantic learning in the lexical meanings of the selected lexical units causes its systematicity. Therefore, these lexical units are organized in a system formation that is a semantic field (hereafter SF) LEARNING. The constituents of SF, which are under examination, are defined by adjacency of meanings and connected by a characteristic feature that defines the core element which is a lexeme learning. Semantic field LEARNING in modern English includes lexical units connected with each other by their systems of meanings. The component analysis allows representing these connections as "interlacements" of semantic features, which form the semantic meaning of each field constituent. While

including newly-created lexical units in this field, the following principles have been taken into consideration: – the meaning of lexical units should not exceed the meanings of the lexical unit learning; – their direct or indirect adjacency in meanings.

Within the field these units are connected in different ways, but their connections are not chaotic and are discernible from units with similar meanings, tracing the accumulation of interdependent units, e. g., a noun *tenure* is connected with such nouns as *master*, *professor*, *lecturer*, *faculty*, *instructor* etc., creating a semantic group “learning process participant”. The analysis of the SF LEARNING constituents in modern English has revealed that they have common (or integral) semantic characteristic feature — learning, it means the transmission of knowledge, skills and experience from one individual to another, or gaining personal knowledge life-long. The integral characteristic simultaneously combines the whole lexical groups and differentiates them. Thus lexical unit learning can be regarded as an integral characteristic as its definitions in English thesauruses guarantee its great semantic content and abstract nature, for example, in Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary lexeme “learning” is defined as 1) the acquiring of knowledge or skill; 2) acquired knowledge or skill; esp., much knowledge in a special field.

The well-known American English thesaurus of the Merriam-Webster gives the following definition of learning

- 1) the activity or process of gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practicing, being taught, or experiencing something; the activity of some- one who learns, a computer program that makes learn- ing fun, different methods of foreign language learning;
- 2) knowledge or skill gained from learning. As well as an integral characteristic of meaning of the lexical units which represent SF LEARNING in modern English, a range of differential characteristic feature is considered.

The differential characteristic features are related to: 1) education: formal education or informal education; 2) life-long self-education/learning; 3) learning process; 4) learning process participants; 5) methods; 6) establishments for learning; 7) learning period; 8) learning surrounding. These characteristic features are distinguished due to the component analysis of dictionary definitions:

- 1) college-level examination program (CLEP) — a program that permits traditional and nontraditional students to earn college credit by examination;
- 2) provost — traditionally the chief academic officer in an institution of higher education;
- 3) college directories — publications that list, describe, categorize and evaluate American colleges;
- 4) college transfer — a student who has taken definite leave of one college institution to pursue the remainder of his or her studies for a degree from a second college;
- 5) athletic scholarships — financial grants awarded by public and private colleges and universities and by some private high schools to outstanding athletes;
- 6) minor — an academic subject area in which a student may take the second- greatest concentration of courses;

7) teleresponse — a special device developed by IHETS for the satellite network to allow off-site, distant students to interact with the instructor and classmates via return audio communication.

The analysis of the dictionary definitions reveals that all the lexical units of SF LEARNING has different semes: program, chief academic officer, certification, teaching staff, method of instruction, unit for measuring, institution of higher education, tests. These semes point out that learning is presented by those who teach and those who learn, curriculum documents, establishments for learning, learning surrounding and methods, principles and forms of teaching. According to the identified differential characteristic features of SF LEARNING, 8 semantic groups are defined: 1) formal/informal education; 2) life-long self-education/learning; 3) learning process); 4) learn- ing process participants; 5) methods; 6) establishments for learning; 7) learning period; 8) learning surround- ing or factors that influence learning process. A special consideration should also be given to general principles of structure modeling of SF LEARNING in modern English. Within the context of the given research modeling should be regarded as any subject-matter features clarifying by means of constructing its pattern or model. The model in linguistics is presented as an artificial, real or imaginative construction. Reflecting essential original features and distracting from unessential ones, the model is considered as an abstract idealized object. In linguistics these models are used in structural linguistics describing language and its particular levels (phonological, grammatical, lexical and other systems). The structure modeling of the field reflects the potential of lingual means which are related to a definite semantic zone.

The main modeling principals of different level fields are systematicity, variability and hierarchy. Basing on these principles, SF LEARNING model has been built. For this reason, systematic character of the field is elicited due to the fact that the field consists of 8 semantic groups. Each one is represented as a subsystem, which has its own structure and is characterized by definite types of system relations (synonymous, antonymous, hyper-hyponymous). Thus, the semantic group can be considered as a system of subsystems. Simultaneously, each semantic group and semantic field have the relation of “a part and the whole”. The variability principle characterizes functioning of lexical units and lexical systems in general. It is relevant to the semantic group location in the semantic field structure. The semantic groups, which constitute SF LEARNING in modern English, have different position in the field structure and therefore they form its center, near and far periphery.

According to the research conducted, the following SF learning structure has been modeled. Two semantic groups refer to the center, their constituents transfer semantic meaning of learning explicitly, that is education/learning: formal education or informal education and life-long self-education/learning. The near periphery is represented by such semantic groups as learning process, learning process participants, methods, establishments for learning, learning period. The far periphery is represented by a number of semantic groups, which can be united by a general name learn- ing surrounding. This

zone includes all the notions that can be indirectly related to a learning process. In particular, the latter group can be connected with brain process as an essential mechanism for remembering. For example, neurobics — "gymnastics for brain", "exercises that stimulate brain activity": But you can give your brain a good workout with just a few modifications in your daily life. Some of the niftiest are "neurobics" (The Wall Street Journal, June 2, 2008). The same learning is represented implicitly and its belonging to this field is defined due to general context. As a conclusion, it should be emphasized that semantic field learning has a specific structure, which is characterized with constituents' hierarchy and it is prone to a further division of semantic groups between center and periphery. Their examination and structure modelling in modern English can be a subject for further research.

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