



Research Article

Systematization of the Semantics of English Polysemic Units and Its Methodological Value

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Abstract

When learning foreign languages, as well as when creating and improving the linguistic base for automatic translation, the processing of polysemic lexemes is of great importance, since knowledge of several meanings of one word is equal to knowledge of the meanings of several words. It is known that a polysemous word has no general meaning, however, in order to perceive all (or part of) its meanings, a certain semantic code is needed. It will allow to either understand all these meanings or move from one meaning to another. Transitions cannot be unidirectional, since they depend on the sphere of functioning of the word sign. With further study of the problem, transitions, it seems, can also be systematized. This work is the first attempt to develop such a code (using the example of several English words). At the same time, several methods for determining semantics were used. The definition of the general code is carried out by a separate method, which, unfortunately, does not yet allow us to obtain an absolute result, but it already indicates the relevance of the problem and the possibility of its solution. The code is presented for use in teaching methods and does not contradict established scientific dogmas at all.

Keywords

Polysemy, Lexeme, General Semantic Code, Teaching Methodology, Function

1. Introduction

When learning foreign languages, it is very difficult not only to memorize the forms of lexical units, but also to memorize their meanings. Knowing several meanings of a single lexical unit is equivalent to knowing several independent units. In addition, when working through the text, different meanings of lexemes are recorded, including those that have not been studied, which creates a feeling of discomfort. This state of affairs requires the systematization of the meanings of words, which plays an essential role in creating the founda-

tions of automatic translation, in describing vocabulary in dictionaries, including educational ones, and in teaching foreign languages. Facilitating assimilation inspires further learning, which is a kind of motivation. «One of the teacher's main aims should be to help students to sustain their motivation. We can do this in a number of ways» [3].

Attempts to "subordinate" the semantics of words to logic in the traditional sense of the latter have so far failed, already because in our science there are different methods for determining lexical semantics, but there are no methods for their

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systematization. The introduction to long-term memory ends with memorization only when the material is systematized. Failures to represent the meanings of a word in a systematic way are due to the fact that they try to implement it using the same methods as defining semantics. This article is written in connection with the practical tasks of teaching a foreign language based on English lexemes. We are not interpreting the meanings, but determining the relationship between them.

2. Material, Methods and Analyses

When describing the lexical meaning (identifying all the meanings of the lexeme) along with component and integral analysis, we used the semantic connection of combining words in context, compared their meanings, and identified the semes that allow words to combine [7]. In this article, using this experience, we have tried by various methods to establish something in common in the meanings (in part of meanings) of a polysemic word, to clarify it through the general philosophical categories of semantics, such as *time*, *space*, *quality*, *quantity*, *process (transformation)*, *purpose*, *cause*, *effect*: they serve as indicators in the present analysis. For the purpose set in the work, their number should be limited. The description should have a scientific basis and not be too abstract. Otherwise, we will be dealing with a subjective assessment that is absolutely not significant in scientific terms. In our approach, we proceed from the fact that "language is an "organic", clearly expressed structure in which everything is interdependent and the meaning of each element of which is determined by its relationship with other elements and its position within the system" [15].

It has long been determined in semantics that there is no common meaning of a word. This condition does not require proof. The systematization of meanings is an attempt to find a code that can help move from one meaning of a polysemic word to another. The systematization code should be sought in the common seme present in all meanings of the given word. The specific realization of the meaning of a word is determined by the context – through its function in the sentence. The most active part of the vocabulary is verbs. Consider the verb *add*. It has the following meanings:

- 1) affix, annex, append, attach: to add a new member to a committee; Add the grated cheese to the sauce. They added him in.
- 2) say as a further remark: "You can tell that he is extremely embarrassed," Mr. Brigden added. Everything is clear, there's nothing to add.
- 3) a) put together (two or more numbers or amounts) to calculate their total value: to add three to six; to add in mind; He added the two Figures together; 6) club together (with), pool (with): The facts add together to give a hopeless picture of the firm's future.
- 4) (add to) increase, strengthen (everything): to add to

smb.'s experience; This adds to the expense. Recent discoveries added to our knowledge of the Universe [1].

The common seme for all meanings of the verb in question, as can be seen from the interpretations, is "increase (augment)". The verb in question is transitive. The sentence assumes that it has an object (i.e. we use a function). You can add elements of quantity or quality. *Add* seems to make it possible to state "increase by addition", but there is no such value. Let's try to use the above categories using the inclusion method. Indeed, if "add + quantity", then we get the first three meanings of this word. By add + quality, we get the fourth value. This means that the first three values indicate an addition, an increase in quantity, and the fourth – an increase in terms of quality: *Once the vegetables start to cook add in a couple of table spoons of water. – The bad weather added to the helplessness of the ship wrecked sailors*¹.

Naturally, with this approach, some "concessions" will have to be made to the accuracy of the conclusions, since even the existing descriptions do not cover the full range of meanings that this word may have in different contexts. In this case, the rule will look like this: *add* means adding to what is available in quantity or quality. In another way, it can be stated that *add* indicates an increase in the number of similar objects or an increase in the same quality of the object. In the first case, we mean concrete objects, in the second – abstract ones. Our rule can be written like this: add + quant. (concrete)/quality (abstract) = *add*, *augment*.

The word *state* has multiple meanings. Let's define its general seme. To do this, consider the components of all values. This also makes it possible to determine which of the meanings will create the full range of semantics of the word. Then we will consider all the synonyms by which the selected value is determined. We have called these words synonyms conditionally, since they are all *productides* – words that differ from the original meaning in some semes [8]. So, *the state*:

- 1) situation; condition; standing, status: poor state, state of mind; What state are you in?
- 2) structure, shape: gaseous state of water, liquid state, solid state;
- 3) rank, class: in a style befitting his state; persons in every state of life;
- 4) brilliance, glory, grandeur, lordliness, magnificence, pomp, radiance, shine, splendor: *to dine in state*;
- 5) country: secular state, sovereign state [ABBY].

The values differ significantly from each other (unlike the *add* values). The first value contains the most common semes, so let's call it the *nuclear* one (it is quite possible that it was the original one, but this is not important in this analysis), cf.: a conceptual approach to the processing of the term *program* [4]. Let's find the general seme of synonyms by which it is defined:

situation:

- 1) setting, position, situation, state
- 2) place, location (buildings, cities, etc.)

¹ Here and further examples are taken from the Internet dictionary used.

condition:

- 1) condition, position in the situation
- 2) (conditions) circumstances, conditions
- 3) state of health: *The hospital described his condition as satisfactory.*
- 4) disorder, disturbance, painful condition;

Standing:

- 1) reputation; rank, position in society;
- 2) duration, length;
- 3) experience;

Status:

- 1) social status, position in society; to achieve status: *occupy a position, social status;*
- 2) civil status (position), legal status [1].

The common seme of these words (meanings) is the "position" present in the interpretations of all these lexemes. The first synonym indicates that *state* can record a physical and mental state. (*What a state are you in?*). The physical state includes the physical form of a substance, i.e. its gaseous, liquid and solid state. The presence of a *poor state* indicates that the state can have different levels, not only bad, but also average, high, which in turn makes it possible to understand the state as a "rank", synonymous with the a priori meaning of which are *reputation, authority*, i.e. *position in society*, as evidenced by *standing* and *status*. This is a social status. The rank, of course, can be high and low. It doesn't matter which variant is used in speech, because the initial task is to understand the text. A high level of manifestation of something is *brilliance, glory, grandeur, lordliness, magnificence, pomp, radiance, shine, splendor* in various uses. Transformation steps: position – state (form) – level: physical, spiritual, social, i.e. state + quality = condition, state + form = structure, shape, state + quantity = rank, class. This means that *state* can function as a designation of position, state (form) and level of physical, spiritual (mental), social.

The *state – country* value is removed from this list. Let's consider the meaning of the word *state* as a country: "a political form of organization of society headed by the government and its organs, which governs society and protects its economic and social structure" [1]. From this definition, it is difficult to say whether *state* in the first meanings is not a homonym of *state* in the last meaning, however, for our analysis it is important that this word denotes, along with a physical, spiritual, social state (form) and a political form of existence (state), i.e. state is the name of a position, state (form) and the level of physical, spiritual (mental), social and political. See: *The France's a state*. The meaning of the word *state* can be represented as follows: 1. geographical location (state, form), 2. physical condition (position, form) 3. spiritual condition (position, form) 4. social condition (position, form) 5. political condition (position, form).

Now consider *state* as a verb:

- 1) say, certify, verify;
- 2) determine, formulate: A problem must be stated in order to be solved;

- 3) a) set out: The contents of the deed were falsely stated. - state a case, state charge;
b) to formulate, to word, to put (in words),
- 4) place in, install in: To state him in the right of disposing of the forces [1].

If we analyze *state* as a verb in a similar way, we get a common seme "to word", the semantics of synonyms allows us to add "in the form of a phrase or formula", from where to *state* = also "define", "formulate". The fourth meaning of the verb *state* "place in", "install in" does not fit into our conclusion. It is portable: it should be remembered separately.

The word *help* is interpreted in dictionaries as follows:

- as a verb:

- 1) aid, assist: We helped the min / with their work;
- 2) improve, relieve: Bright curtains will help the room;
- 3) promote, further: The troubles of the time helped her easel sew here the progress of the town;
- 4) a) to curb, to restrain, b) avoid: She can't help thinking of it. I could not help laughing. I couldn't help but laugh;
c) prevent: They couldn't help the accident;
- 5) entertain (to; at); treat (to); stand a treat, pass: Help yourself; Tell the guests to help themselves;

- as a subject: 1) aid, assistance, service, support, succor: *big / great help*; 2) remedy, relief: *Books are no doubt very useful helps to knowledge*; 3) a) assistant, helper, mate: b) employee; *help wanted, the hired help*; 4) portion, helping: *He asked her for a second help of apple-pie at lunch on* [1].

The semantics of this verb can be described in another way: to *help* (general sema) = "to do for someone so that it is better than it is," i.e. action + quality. In another interpretation, *help* also means "to make so, that the situation will be better, or to make things don't worse," as well as the middle version: "to make things neither better nor worse." See: *We helped them in / with their work; Bright curtains will help the room; The troubles of the time helped here as elsewhere the progress of the town; They couldn't help the accident*. "Scientists who adhered to structuralist traditions, according to which the main emphasis was on identifying the common meaning for any given language form, apparently considered the explanation of the unity of the linguistic form preserved over time to be the main motive of their activity" [14]. Here we achieve our goal completely out of connection with structuralism, since all the meanings of this verb can be explained through one of them (cf. sentiment analysis [10]).

If we consider the meaning of the word in the generative version, it follows that the action may or may not have a positive effect. Therefore, from "to help" are formed "to promote", "not to commit", from them - the rest of the meanings. This is a logical structure of transitions, which can be called the *logical transformation of semantics*, or the *logic of transformation of semantics*. Such a transformation is also based on the principles of systematization.

If you add "food" to the components of the word *help*, that is, roughly speaking, "help with food", which is not quite cor-

rect, then you get the following meaning of *help*: "treat, distribute food": *Tell the guests to help themselves*. The semantics of a word is explained in a component-by-component way so that students can perceive it in different ways, as well as provide the necessary additions. As a result, the entire semantics of *help* turns out to be conscious.

A similar picture is shown when describing the semantics of the noun *help* = "performing an action in favor of someone": *Books are no doubt very useful helps to knowledge*, *help* = "a means to make things better", *assistant*, *helper*, *mate* = "a person who allows you to do better (easier)"; an *employee* does the same thing, only "for hire". Cp.: *big / great help*; *Books are no doubt very useful helps to knowledge*; *She was a big / great help to us*; *help wanted*.

The meaning of *portion* (*He asked her for a second help of apple pie at lunch on*) falls out of this system, which is related to the meaning of the verb *help*, which is formed, as shown above, using the additional seme *food (meal)*. But even if the latter is excluded from the system of meanings of the word in question, the coefficient of usefulness of the system description is 6:1.

Let's consider the semantics of the polysemous word *class*. The dictionary [1] describes its semantics, as it is traditionally done in descriptive linguistics. It would seem that the conflict of values is so strong that there is hardly a seme. which could be used to combine them. See:

- class = classroom (1)
- = students of the same class, group: *the class came a live* (2)
- = the social stratum: *working class* (3)
- = lesson, course: When is the class? We have a nine o'clock class to day; (4)
- = graduation (of students): *the class of 1975*; (5)
- = high quality: Real class your sister is; The athlete is top-class; (6)
- = kind, sort: Pine trees belong to the evergreen class; I came by the second class,
- and so saved the nine shillings. (7).

The best method for memorizing meanings is to use universal connections, i.e. to determine whether the English word analog has the same ramifications in semantics as the word *class* in the students' native language. So, in Russian, the word *class* is borrowed, so it has the meanings 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 of English *class*. In the Armenian language, *class* has its own equivalents, although here the word *dasara'n* has the meanings 1, 2 and partly 7 of the English noun.

The component analysis reveals that *class*

- a room for the studying in the school, (1)
- the learning process, (2)
- a group (*a lot of people*) of students from the same school year
- taking *studies* in the same room, (3)
- graduation of students who completed *studies at the same year*, (4)
- *a lot of people* of a certain social stratum, (5)
- a high level, a vivid manifestation of something (6)

- kind, sort, type of something (7)
- conscripts of the same year. (8)

Common seme is a "study", "(educational) activity" around which the first four values are combined. They can be remembered by defining the word *class* as meaning "the room where a group of students take classes and graduate". Values 3 and 5 have a common "a lot of people", which seems to connect the first four values with the fifth. The values 6 and 7 can be combined according to the seme "special", "distinctive", however, with a large assumption. In the Armenian language, the first three meanings are indicated by one word *dasaran*, the rest have other analogues, which indicates that we are dealing with homonyms here. So, *class* as a social stratum (value 5) is called in Armenian *dasakarq*, then in the following order: *makardak*, *vorak* (6), *tesak* (7), *zorakochik* (8).

The component representation makes memorization much easier, but it is not enough.

Let's describe semantics using the transformational method in order to obtain some consistency by changing the components of interpretation or changing the combined lexemes – without changing the content. When changing the components of interpretation, the semantics of the word in question will look like this:

- class– the study room,
- *educational activity*, the learning process,
- a one-year study group,
- graduates of the same *academic year*.

In other words, *class* can be called "a group of students taking classes in the same room in the same academic year," i.e. all values except 3, 6, 7 are combined in one sentence. The second part of the class values associated with the markers "type, sort" and "high level" should be considered separately. We will try to define the same meanings through the defining characteristics of this word in speech (definitions that a noun can have as a member of a sentence). The initial, general value of *class* is again assumed to be "educational".

- class + place = educational place = classroom (1)
- + quantity, = people, people group = *working class*, *the class came alive* (2)
- + process = lesson, course: When is the class? We have a nine o'clock class to day; (3)
- + time = graduation (of students): *the class of 2025*; (4)
- + quality = high level: Real class your sister is; The sportsman is best class; (5)
- + sort = kind, type: Pine trees belong to the evergreen class; I came by the second

class, and so saved the nine shillings. (6) [1].

With this approach, the prospect of developing semantics becomes clearer, with the help of which students can develop the ability to predict meanings. The components "number" and "multitude" allow you to combine the values of "a group of students of the same class" and "social stratum", because, for example, *the working class = a multitude of workers*. However, *the senior class isn't the class of the senior students*. *First class = the first class, and the first lesson in the schedule*,

and the first lesson in the subject. It can also name the first class room in the hallway. This means that we are dealing with three homonyms with different common senses: "(educational) occupation", "set", "grade, type", which do not belong to the same semantic field.

With all attempts at systematization, the value "class + army = conscript" falls out of the list, which is not essential for memorizing the semantics of the word in question. "The biggest drawback of the traditional approach is that it detaches meaning from form and thus deviates from real facts and enters the realm of unprovable statements," wrote D. S. Worth [13]. As we can see, neither the definition of semantics nor its systematization is possible without comparison with real facts and is impossible only on the basis of theoretical constructions. We have presented the meanings of the noun in question in the plane of its use. If the context indicates that class denotes a place of action, then it is a "classroom". If it is indicated by the time, then it is "graduation of students of a certain academic year." In other words, if we analyze and systematize the considered material, then the connection between the semantics of *class* and the conditions of functioning, on the one hand, and the final semantics turns out to be obvious. Naturally, the word has not only the basic meanings described in dictionaries, but also occasional and rather vague figurative ones, not only in colloquial speech, but especially in fiction. The essence of the systematization approach, as indicated, is how to link the dictionary meanings of a word by any feature, how to show the conditions of their functioning in speech, because "a satisfactory semantic theory should answer the question of how the meanings of sentences depend on the meanings of words. Until an answer to this question has been found for a certain language, it is impossible to explain the possibility of learning this language, that is, the possibility of constructing and understanding, in principle, an infinite set of sentences as a result of mastering a finite vocabulary and a finite set of rules." [2].

More than one linguist has written that a word in different uses has different meanings. While not entirely agreeing with this, it should still be recognized that the meaning of a phrase is shaped by the semantics of the word and the context, however, the word is used in the meaning required by the context, and the context is selected in accordance with the meaning of the lexeme. Cf.: *The class of these chicks, waving small wings, consisted of a large nest, where the main teacher. There was a grumpy mother.* The text is clear, since *nest* and *class* in this usage refer to the real concept of "place", which overcomes the conflict of meanings. The semantics of the adjective *class* repeats the substantive meanings of this word as features, so we do not specifically consider them. Cf.: *"It was a class neighborhood," thought Foxy, surveying the elegant, freshly-painted houses.* (N. Blake, *Whisper in Gloom*, 1954); *class-work* etc.

The meaning of the verb *class* in dictionaries is described as follows:

- 1) to classify: Since they can and do successfully interbreed they cannot be classed as different species; I class

myself as an ordinary working person;

- 2) to certify, to distribute (students or schoolchildren) according to degrees of excellence (as a result of examinations): *He obtained a degree, but was not classed; At a second year's examination Tom was not classed at all;*
- 3) to put alongside, to enroll in the same class (with something): *I would class Tom's latest book with the best crime stories ever written* [1].

All the meanings are related to the category of quality, and the semantics of this word can be described component by component: "class + quality". In this case, all three meanings come down to one thing: "classify". The first is related to the sorting of subjects, the second is related to the division into categories of students or schoolchildren. The difference in general is not fundamental. The third value is also related to classify, but it has a great evaluative characteristic, since classification in the third value is carried out for the purpose of identification, which can be represented by the *class + identification* scheme. The techniques used to construct lexico-semantic fields of various types could be very useful in this regard, but they do not give the desired result. For example, according to the theory of J. Trier [12], classify would have to be split into several values, since it is included in several semantic or ideographic fields (networks). It would be possible to use the rule of six steps by Y. N. Karaulov [5], however, in this case it has no methodological significance.

3. Results and Conclusions

Thus, the semantics of words is nevertheless subject to systematization. "The scientific method is the path to truth, but it cannot provide a single definition of truth. Any so-called pragmatic definition of truth is equally doomed to failure." [6]. As you can see, not all words obey a single system, not all meanings are clearly systematized, which requires the identification of several semantic systems and the systematization of those meanings that are related to each other according to a single scheme. Some values are combined based on a common cause or a common effect. For verbs of movement, it is important to indicate the goal; for verbs of state, it is important to indicate the conditions. The logical connection of values makes them easy to understand. If you describe the ways of systematization using symbols, the classification of semantic consistency can be done very quickly and accurately through AI. This indicates that the systematization under consideration has scientific significance, since it opens up a new field of semantic research. "It is important to remember that we are modelling lexical semantics in terms of the kinds of relations between words in the minds of individuals, and as such these types of hierarchies are not always reflective of scientific taxonomy" [11].

Systems that remain out of this description can be reduced to others by analogy, using modern methods of lexicosemantic research [9].

As noted in the article, our findings are primarily aimed at

improving the effectiveness of teaching a foreign language and do not contradict scientific conclusions at all.

We go first, we go by touch, so please be lenient with us.

Abbreviations

smb.	Samebody
i.e.	Id Est (latin)
etc.	Et Cetera (latin)
cf.	Confer (latin)

Author Contributions

Vagharshak Madoyan: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration

Anna Mkhitarian: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the outcome of this research work has been reported in this manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Biography



Vagharshak Madoyan is a doctor of philological sciences, professor, rector of An. Shirakatsi-University of International Relations (Yerevan, Armenia). In 1976, he graduated with honors from the Faculty of Philology of the M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, then from the Faculty of Law of the Moscow Pedagogical State University. Since 1980 – PhD (M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University), since 1990 - Doctor of Science (Philology) (Belarusian State University, Minsk), Professor (Higher Attestation Commission of the USSR), since 2004 – Associate Professor of Law (Higher Attestation Commission of the Republic of Armenia). He is the author of Russian and German language textbooks for Armenian students, author of bilingual dictionaries of English-, Russian-, German-, Czech-, Polish-, Ukrainian-Armenian and other languages, several monographs on linguistics and law, works on history, literary studies and philosophy. He is the author of several collections of fiction. He has been awarded state awards and prizes.



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Research Field

Vagharshak Madoyan: Comparative Linguistics, Historical Linguistics, Typological Linguistics, Literary Criticism, Law

Anna Mkhitarian: Comparative Linguistics, Methods of Teaching Languages