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STRUCTURAL AND SEMANTIC ORGANIZATION OF ENGLISH PEJORATIVE LEXIS DENOTING MALE REFERENTS IN LITERARY TEXTS

Summary. The study aims to investigate the relationship between lexical-semantic group (LSG) affiliation and types of semantic motivation (metaphor, metonymy, and direct nomination) in English absolute pejoratives denoting male referents. Using a sample of 49 lexical units extracted from the novels “Ministry of Time”, “Run on Red”, and “Tell Me Lies”, a mixed qualitative-quantitative design is employed. First, the collected units are classified into lexical-semantic groups based on dominant semantic features derived from dictionary definitions. Next, each lexical item is assigned a type of semantic motivation according to clearly defined interpretative criteria. The research utilizes lexical-semantic field theory, componential analysis of dictionary definitions, and Pearson’s chi-square test of independence. Statistical methods are employed to determine statistical significance and connection between the type of lexical-semantic groups and types of motivation. The statistical analysis yielded a chi-square value of 4.84, which fell below the critical threshold, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant association between LSG affiliation and semantic motivation. In addition to that, Cramér’s V (0.22) indicated a weak association between the variables. Qualitative observations revealed that the «General Negative Evaluation» group relies heavily on metaphor (e.g., asshole, dick), while “Psychological/Behavioral Characteristics” are predominantly expressed through direct nomination (e.g., traitor, psychopath). Although a strict statistical dependency was not confirmed, the data suggest distinct preferences for motivational strategies across different semantic groups, reflecting underlying cognitive patterns in the expression of evaluative negativity.

Key words: pejorative lexis, lexical-semantic field, male referents, semantic motivation, metaphor, direct nomination, chi-square test.

Problem statement. The sociocultural and contextual determinants of negative evaluation have become a central focus of contemporary linguistic and literary studies, which explore the relationship between language and society. In this regard, the analysis of linguistic means expressing negative evaluation in literary discourse remains a relevant research problem, particularly in terms of their semantic and structural organization.

Considering pejorative lexical units as carriers of axiological meaning and emotive-expressive potential, this study focuses on English absolute pejoratives denoting male referents. The investigation is grounded in the principles of the lexical-semantic field theory, originally developed by J. Trier [1] and further elaborated in the works of V. D. Bialyk [2], N. Heshko [3], Yu. S. Holovashchenko [4], V. O. Honhalo [5], and others.

In addition to establishing lexical-semantic groupings based on dominant semantic features, the study also examines the correlation between these groups and types of semantic motivation, which enables a quantitative assessment of their interrelation.

Literature review. J. Trier interprets the lexical-semantic field (LSF) as a system of semantically related lexical units forming a structured semantic domain [1]. Subsequent linguistic studies have further refined this concept. According to V. O. Honhalo, the ontology of LSF theory is grounded in the assumption of systematically organized lexical-semantic groupings that share a common semantic core within language [5, p. 113]. According to V. D. Bialyk, LSF can be interpreted as the presence of a unifying element in the lexical meaning (linguistic usage) and the sense of the word (speech usage) [2, p. 108]. N. Heshko similarly defines the LSF as a set of lexemes organized into semantically integrated segments [3, p. 73], while Y. S. Holovashchenko characterizes it as a structured grouping of lexical units linked by paradigmatic relations and unified by a common integral semantic component [4, p. 26]. In this study, Holovashchenko’s interpretation is adopted as the operational basis for classification, as it explicitly emphasizes semantic integration and hierarchical structuring.

The internal organization of LSFs is determined not by morphological properties of lexical units but by shared semantic components (semes) that constitute their invariant meaning. As noted by V. O. Honhalo, the structuring of lexical-semantic fields relies on semantic regularities rather than part-of-speech affiliation [5, p. 144]. N. Heshko further emphasizes that the presence of a common integral seme is a defining criterion for inclusion within a particular field [3, p. 75]. Accordingly, LSFs are treated in this study as semantically motivated systems organized around a shared evaluative core, rather than as purely formal lexical groupings.

A standard approach to the internal structure of LSFs distinguishes between core, central, peripheral zones, and marginal fragments [5, p. 114]. Within this macrostructure, lexical-semantic groups (LSGs) are considered the lowest level of organization. They are defined as clusters of lexical units united by a categorical-semantic seme functioning as a shared identifier of meaning [4, p. 27]. Thus, the hierarchy LSF → lexical-semantic microfield → semantic subclass → LSG is adopted as an operational framework for classification.

In this study, attention is focused on the LSF of evaluative negativity, and more specifically on its pejorative manifestation in English lexical semantics. The pejorative field is understood as a system of multi-level linguistic means united by a common

negative evaluative function, where pejorativity represents the invariant semantic component [6, p. 80]. Accordingly, negativity is interpreted as a modal-evaluative feature underlying lexical meaning within this field.

Importantly, the LSF of negativity is treated here as a heuristic construct rather than a rigid ontological model, serving as an analytical framework for the classification of lexical units. This allows for the identification of lexical-semantic groups of absolute pejoratives denoting male referents, which in turn enables the quantitative analysis of the relationship between LSG membership and types of semantic motivation through statistical procedures.

Therefore, the study **aims** to investigate whether there is a statistically significant relationship between lexical-semantic group affiliation and types of semantic motivation in English absolute pejoratives denoting male referents. Accordingly, the study is guided by the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant association between lexical-semantic group affiliation and the type of semantic motivation. To test this hypothesis, a set of interrelated research tasks is performed:

1. A selection of absolute pejorative lexical units referring to male individuals is compiled;
2. The collected units are classified into lexical-semantic groups on the basis of dominant semantic features derived from dictionary definitions;
3. Each lexical item is assigned a type of semantic motivation according to clearly defined interpretative criteria;
4. A contingency table is constructed to map the distribution of semantic motivation types across lexical-semantic groups;
5. The statistical significance of the relationship between the two categorical variables is tested using the χ^2 test of independence;
6. The strength of the observed association is measured using Cramér's V . The hypothesis is considered supported if the χ^2 test reveals a statistically significant dependence between lexical-semantic group membership and semantic motivation type.

Research methods. This study adopts a mixed qualitative-quantitative design combining *corpus-based lexical classification* with the elements *statistical analysis* in order to examine the relationship between lexical-semantic group (LSG) affiliation and types of semantic motivation in English absolute pejoratives denoting male referents.

The empirical **material** consists of 49 absolute pejorative lexical units extracted from the novels "Ministry of Time" by Kalliane Bradley [7], "Run on Red" by Noelle W. Ihli [8], and "Tell Me Lies" by Carola Lovering [9]. The selection is restricted to lexical items that explicitly encode negative evaluative meaning and directly refer to male individuals. Contextual pejoratives are excluded in order to ensure semantic stability and classificatory

consistency. The resulting dataset forms a closed corpus enabling controlled comparative analysis.

The analysis proceeds in two parallel classification stages.

First, lexical items are assigned to lexical-semantic groups based on dominant semantic features identified through *the elements of componential analysis of dictionary definitions* [10]. The classification criteria rely on the extraction of core semantic components (semes) that determine the evaluative focus of each lexical unit.

Second, each lexical item is annotated according to its type of semantic motivation. The typology of semantic motivation is established within a cognitive-semantic framework and includes the following categories: metaphorical extension, metonymic transfer and direct (non-figurative) nomination [11]. Classification is guided by explicit interpretative rules to ensure internal consistency of categorization.

To examine the interdependence between lexical-semantic grouping and semantic motivation, a contingency table is constructed in which LSGs are treated as one categorical variable and types of semantic motivation as another.

The statistical significance of the association between variables is tested using *Pearson's chi-square test of independence*. In addition to significance testing, the strength of association is measured using *Cramér's V*, which provides a normalized coefficient ranging from 0 (no association) to 1 (perfect association). This allows for the interpretation of not only the existence but also the intensity of the relationship between the studied variables.

To ensure methodological reliability, classification is based on clearly defined semantic criteria and supported by dictionary-based verification. Ambiguous cases are resolved through contextual disambiguation and cross-checking with established lexical-semantic descriptions by means of the *analysis of dictionary definition*.

Results and discussion. To examine the relationship between lexical-semantic group (LSG) affiliation and types of semantic motivation, the data were organized into a contingency table (Table 1), reflecting the distribution of pejorative lexical units across four LSGs and three types of semantic motivation (metaphor, metonymy, and direct nomination).

The statistical significance of the association between the variables was tested using the Pearson's chi-square test. The chi-square value was calculated according to the following formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

where O_{ij} represents observed frequencies and E_{ij} denotes expected frequencies computed as:

Table 1

Distribution of Lexical-Semantic Groups and Types of Semantic Motivation (Contingency Table)

LSG \ Type of Semantic Motivation	Metaphor Observed	Metonymy	Direct nomination	Total
General Negative Evaluation	6	0	4	10
Psychological/Behavioral Characteristics	5	1	13	19
Physical Characteristics	2	0	2	4
Intelligence	8	0	8	16
Total	21	1	27	49

$$E_{ij} = \text{column total} \times \frac{\text{row total}}{\text{grand total}}$$

As an illustrative example, the calculation procedure can be demonstrated for the General Negative Evaluation LSG. The observed frequencies for this group are 6 (metaphor), 0 (metonymy), and 4 (direct nomination), while the expected frequencies, calculated based on the marginal totals, are 4.29, 0.20, and 5.51 respectively. Substituting these values into the formula yields the following partial contribution:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{(6 - 4.29)^2}{4.29} + \frac{(0 - 0.20)^2}{0.20} + \frac{(4 - 5.51)^2}{5.51} = 1.304$$

The overall chi-square value for the contingency table is:

$$\chi^2 = 4.84 \text{ (df} = 6\text{)}$$

Since this value does not exceed the critical threshold ($\chi^2 = 12.59$ at $p=0.05$), the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, no statistically significant association between lexical-semantic group affiliation and type of semantic motivation has been established.

To assess the strength of the relationship, Cramér's V was calculated using the formula:

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{n(k-1)}}$$

where $n = 49$ is the total number of observations and $k = 3$ is the number of columns.

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{4.84}{49(3-1)}}$$

The resulting value $V = 0.22$ indicates a weak association between the variables.

It should be noted that the application of the chi-square test is constrained by low expected frequencies in certain cells, particularly within the metonymy category. Therefore, the statistical results should be interpreted with caution.

Despite the absence of statistical significance, the distributional patterns reveal several notable tendencies. In the **General Negative Evaluation LSG**, metaphorical motivation is more frequent than expected, suggesting that generalized pejorative meaning is often constructed through figurative extension rather than purely denotative mechanisms. This observation supports the assumption that metaphor plays a crucial role in intensifying evaluative force.

I'd missed that asshole more than any of the other guys I'd hung around with in college [9, p. 280].

"Well, guys like Stephen. Dicks like Stephen." [9, p. 146].

"Don't be a pussy," Deep Voice muttered [8, p. 128].

In contrast, the **Psychological/Behavioral Characteristics LSG** demonstrates a strong predominance of direct nomination, indicating a tendency toward explicit and lexically fixed expressions of negative evaluation. This suggests that behavioral and psychological traits are more commonly encoded through conventionalized lexical units rather than figurative reinterpretation.

You have been working with a traitor and aiding a saboteur [7, p. 159].

And Wrigley is a psychopath. He doesn't know what he's saying half the time [9, p. 101].

The **Physical Characteristics LSG** exhibits a limited but balanced distribution between metaphor and direct nomination, which may point to a more restricted set of expressive strategies within this domain.

"Topher is midgetish" [9, p. 146].

'Heron-faced fool!' [7, p. 82].

Finally, the **Intelligence LSG** shows an equal distribution between metaphorical and direct nomination patterns, indicating a dual mechanism of representation. On the one hand, intellectual deficiency is expressed through established lexical items; on the other, metaphor contributes to expressive variation and stylistic nuance.

It was true – football-house parties were dominated by slutty girls lusting after loud, meathead football players. I'd never enjoyed them much [9, p. 66].

Margaret, who had responded far better than Graham to the magic of cinema, amazed us by putting together an actual PowerPoint presentation about why Charlie Chaplin 'appears a fool but is verily a philosopher' [7, p. 111].

Overall, although the statistical analysis does not confirm a significant association between LSGs and types of semantic motivation, the observed tendencies suggest that the semantic organization of pejorative vocabulary is not entirely random. Instead, different lexical-semantic groups appear to exhibit preferences for particular motivational strategies, reflecting underlying cognitive and communicative patterns in the structuring of evaluative meaning.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the semantic organization of English pejorative vocabulary denoting men is a complex system driven by both conventionalized meanings and figurative extensions. While the null hypothesis was not rejected – meaning a predictable, statistically significant link between a word's category (e.g., intelligence vs. physical traits) and its linguistic origin (e.g., metaphor vs. direct naming) could not be proven – the study successfully highlights specific distributional tendencies.

Notably, the frequent use of metaphor in general negative labels suggests its vital role in intensifying emotional impact and evaluative force. Conversely, the reliance on direct nomination for behavioral traits indicates that English has a well-established, fixed vocabulary for moral and psychological condemnation. Ultimately, the study provides a robust methodological framework for future linguistic research into the axiological (value-based) layering of modern English.

The prospects for further research are observed in the need to expand the study to include other types of pejorative lexis, such as those denoting female referents or contextual pejoratives. By moving from a "closed corpus" of stable terms to a more dynamic dataset, future studies can build upon this foundation of using statistical procedures to map the internal organization of evaluative negativity.

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Томашук М. В. Структурно-семантична організація англійської пейоративної лексики на позначення чоловіка у художньому тексті

Анотація. Мета дослідження – дослідити взаємозв'язок між належністю до лексико-семантичної групи (ЛСГ) та типами семантичної мотивації (метафора, метонімія та пряма номінація) серед англійських абсолютних пейоративів, що позначають референтів чоловічої статі. На основі матеріальної вибірки з 49 лексичних одиниць, виявлених у сучасних англійських романах «Ministry of Time», «Run on Red» та «Tell Me Lies», застосовується

змішаний якісно-кількісний підхід. Спочатку зібрані одиниці класифікуються за лексико-семантичними групами на основі домінуючих семантичних ознак, виведених із словникових визначень. Далі кожній лексичній одиниці присвоюється тип семантичної мотивації відповідно до чітко визначених інтерпретаційних критеріїв. У дослідженні використовуються теорія лексико-семантичного поля, компонентний аналіз словникових дефініцій та тест незалежності Пірсона (хі-квадрат). Статистичні методи застосовуються для визначення статистичної значущості та зв'язку між типом лексико-семантичних груп та типами мотивації. Статистичний аналіз дав значення хі-квадрат 4,84, що було нижче критичного порогу, що призвело до прийняття нульової гіпотези про відсутність статистично значущого зв'язку між належністю до ЛСГ та семантичною мотивацією. Крім того, коефіцієнт взаємної спряженості (0,22) вказав на слабкий зв'язок між змінними. Якісні спостереження показали, що група «Загальна негативна оцінка» значною мірою спирається на метафору (наприклад, asshole, dick), тоді як «Психологічні/поведінкові характеристики» переважно виражаються через пряму номінацію (наприклад, traitor, psychopath). Хоча сувора статистична залежність не була підтверджена, дані вказують на чіткі переваги щодо мотиваційних стратегій у різних семантичних групах, що відображає глибинні когнітивні патерни у вираженні оціночної негативності.

Ключові слова: негативна лексика, лексико-семантичне поле, референти-чоловіки, семантична мотивація, метафора, пряма номінація, критерій хі-квадрат.

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