

EMOTIVE ADJECTIVAL UNITS IN MODERN ENGLISH: SEMANTIC APPROACH

Natalia Melnychuk

Candidate of Science in Philology, Assistant Professor,
Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Ukraine
e-mail: n.melnichuk@chnu.edu.ua, orcid.org/0000-0002-8742-1670

Anna Symaka

Master of Arts in Philology, Assistant Professor,
Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Ukraine
e-mail: a.symaka@chnu.edu.ua, orcid.org/0009-0002-1564-5963

Summary

The article is devoted to the study of the functioning of the English adjectival emotive units denoting positive semantics as direct linguistic means of representing human emotional states that combine semantic and pragmatic components of meaning. The aim of this paper is to determine the semantic features of the adjectival emotive units with positive meaning in modern English. The defined approach to the aim of this investigation led to the use of those research methods that correspond best to its goals: in particular, definitional, componential, quantitative analyses, thanks to which the main characteristics of the English adjectival units denoting positive semantics were clarified and the emotive component in the structure of their meaning was revealed. The basis for the analysis of the emotive adjectives with positive semantics in the English lingual worldview is the principle of sustainability which brings to the fore the link of the language with reality, its correlation with extra-linguistic actuality.

Key words: lingual worldview, emotiveness, emoseme, meaning, connotation, expressiveness, evaluation.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.23856/5626>

1. Introduction

In current linguistic researches the notion of lexico-semantic field is widespread while studying lexico-semantic structure of a language as a complex of interrelated elements. Semantic field of emotiveness in the English lingual worldview is a complex structure that encompasses elements of different parts of a language. Its main function is to verbalize a person's emotions within a lingual worldview that presumes a plurality of objects' continuity links along with a possibility to describe these emotive units in their totality without separating into expressive lexis and lexis of emotive descriptions, unlike functionally-semantic subfields of emotive words that requires this separation.

The relevance of the paper is determined by the anthropocentric direction of the study of adjectival emotive units and the general orientation of modern linguistic studies to study of the content aspect of a language and the necessity of intra-linguistic analysis of this vocabulary. The anthropocentric nature of the modern linguistic paradigm determines a significant scientific interest in a problem of representation of emotions in a language and speech which is investigated in psycholinguistic (Lewis, 2012), (Prykhodko, 2001), cognitive (Kosmeda, 2000),

(Power, 2008) and linguocultural (Boiko, 2005), (Pavlenko, 2006), (Weigand, 2006) directions. A contrastive study of emotional adjectives in the English lingual worldview contributes to the identification of such properties of lexical semantics that reflect the specificity of the worldview of this linguistic society. The aim of this research is to establish the peculiarities of the English emotive adjectival units with positive meaning. Achieving the aim of this paper involves solving the following tasks: to establish a theoretical and methodological basis for the study of adjectival emotive units in the English lingual worldview; to analyze the peculiarities of their functioning; to distinguish the groups of adjectives expressing positive emotional states based on their lexical meanings. The study determined the use of the selection and descriptive method for analysis and description of the given vocabulary; definitional, componential and quantitative analysis to study the lexical meaning of emotive adjectives which is reflected in their dictionary interpretations and to distinguish the main groups within the lexico-semantic field of English emotive adjectives. A systematic approach to the study of the vocabulary in modern English requires the identification of the functioning regularities of its individual components, among which adjectival emotive units are of particular interest for linguists.

2. Semantics of Emotive Adjectives in English

Analysis of semantic structure of the words belonging to the lexico-semantic field of emotive adjectives that denote a person's emotions was accomplished on the data of the adjectival units, taken from the modern English dictionaries and characterized by "obscure meaning field and vastness of semantic structure" (Ufyntseva, 2011: 153). They express not only the external, but also the internal world of a person, his or her attitude to the surrounding reality which has evaluative character.

For building a multilayer structure of adjectives with emotive seme in the English lingual worldview definitional and componential analysis were used in this paper. A matter of priority was defining the nucleus, near-nuclear zone and the field's periphery. A mandatory criterion for the division of adjectival emotive lexis into such zones was a presence in them necessary for these zones characteristics, such as width or definiteness of their component's meanings.

According to such principle there were singled out lexemes-representatives of nucleus groups, afterwards their semantic characteristics and combination peculiarities were determined. The next stage of our investigation was the analysis of the lexemes that form a near-nuclear zone and periphery of the field under research. The division of the field into parts has a quite conditional character, as between its structural elements a definite line is absent and there are diffusive places which depict a gradual transition from one zone into another. It is necessary to underline that in this paper the procedures of splitting lexical units into components and integration them into lexico-semantic groups was fulfilled simultaneously. On the basis of definitional and componential analyses of dictionary interpretation of the words, there were singled out integral emosemes of the field which contain in themselves the elements of its nucleus. To them belong such semes as, "Anger" (fury, rage, indignation), "Fear" (fearfulness, trepidation), "Joy" (amusement, cheer, delight), "Love" (affection, fondness, devotion), "Sadness" (gloom, sorrow, dejection), "Surprise" (amazement, astonishment). These emotive semes are integral and dominant for nuclear groups of adjectival units, because their comprising elements have necessary for nuclear component criteria, as they are not terms, are not marked according to stylistic feature and if necessary, in their structure one can easily single out a common meaning. As a proof of objectivity of this division is a theory (Izard, 2007) about universality and basis of emotions, according to which they have the same expressions and characteristics in

different societies, namely joy-pleasure, amazement-astonishment, sadness-sorrow-depression, fear-anxiety are basic emotional experience of any person in any society.

On the basis of the presence of these semes in the definitions of adjectival emotive units they are united into basic lexico-semantic groups. To the emotive adjectives, that act in corresponding groups as the main lexeme-identifiers, belong such units as **joyful** (cheerful), **loving** (affectionate), **surprising** (astonishing), **angry** (furious, irritated), **fearful** (dreadful, scary), **sad** (gloomy, regretful). With their help there were singled out near-nuclear zones of emotive adjectives to which belong main subgroups that are formed on the principle of the general components of meaning, common for the words of these lexical formations and organized on the basis of the following dominant adjectives: **Joyful**: *cheerful, contented, enthralling, optimistic, proud, relieved, zestful*; **Loving**: *affectionate, longing, lustful*; **Surprising**: *amazing, astonishing*; **Angry**: *exasperated, irritated, outrageous, envious, disgusted*; **Fearful**: *horror-stricken, nervous*; **Sad**: *disappointed, neglected, shameful, hurtful, sorrowful, sympathetic*.

Adjectival units, having these semes in their interpretations, form subgroups of emotive adjectives within corresponding groups. With the help of definitions, one can single out the differential (prototypical) semantic features of the given field (the reason for the emotion, time of experiencing the emotion, intensity of the emotion, evaluation of the emotion, subject of the emotion, revealing of the emotion, control of the emotion). With their help it is possible to reconstruct the models of the main emotional states, expressed by English adjectives which belong to this field. Its constituents were singled out on the basis of the qualitative emotive sign of the adjectives, common for all lexical units that are parts of it. This field is a mosaic, the nucleus of which consists of the language means that specialize in expressing certain categorical emotive meanings which widely illustrate them.

Thus, a general and main condition for the enrolment of the adjectives to emotive ones was the presence of any indication of the emotion in their dictionary definition. Hence, a place in the systematically-structural organization of the field of adjectival emotive units was defined by the role of emosemes “Anger”, “Fear”, “Joy”, “Love”, “Sadness” and “Surprise” in their meanings, which proved itself as a dominant (determined the belonging to the field’s nucleus) or dependent (determined the belonging to field’s periphery).

3. Adjectival Units Denoting “Joy”

One of the dominant emotions of a person is joy, because it has all its main characteristics, such as language realization, recognisability, and universality. The motivational nature of joy, according to some psychologists, is ambiguous, as having the optional character of manifestation, “to a greater extent joy can manifest itself on the background of more important for the subject events of non-hedonistic character ... joy is what is happening after any creative or socially important activities, that is fulfilling for reaching a goal or getting benefit” (Izard, 2007: 98). Joy is a deep and pleasant emotion, which changes our perception system and optimizes all psychological processes, bringing a feeling of certainty, contentment, enthusiasm, admiration, lightness, and cheerful world perception.

Since native speakers regard joy as a positive emotional state, its language realization always presumes the fulfilment of a wish, reaching a goal or satisfaction of a need, so it is a vital experience for people that allows them to enjoy the world and sharpens their perception. Joy, as any other fundamental emotion has its unique characteristics, and that is why for an adequate research of the language means of its presentation it is necessary to determine semantic peculiarities of its representation in the structure of English emotive adjectives.

Adjectival units with the emotive seme “Joy” are represented in modern English with the help of such adjectives as *beatific* (showing great joy and peace (OALD)), *exalted* (filled with a great feeling of joy (LDCE)), *enraptured* (filled with great pleasure or joy), *joyous* (full of joy; very happy (CALD)), *triumphant* (showing great satisfaction or joy about a victory or success (OALD)), *fulfilled* (feeling happy because you are getting everything that you want from life (LDCE)), *devil-may-care* (cheerful and not worrying about the future (OALD)), *blissful* (extremely or completely happy (OALD)), *bantering* (amusing and friendly (OALD)), *sparky* (full of life; interesting and amusing (OALD)), *banging* (very good or enjoyable (CALD)), *cock-a-hoop* (extremely happy and excited about something (CALD)), *elated* (extremely happy and excited, often because something has happened or been achieved (CALD)) and others.

A dominant nuclear seme, denoting the emotion of joy in English acts out emoseme with the same name *joy* (it is the one to be used more often in the semantics of emotive adjectives). Accordingly, the main identifying word that will present the examined group in the structure of the field of emotive adjectives in English is an adjective *joyful*, as it relates to the common semantic component of this group. This adjective is a central element of the group, that’s why it is necessary to study its semantic structure in order to define its general meaning:

1) very happy; causing people to be happy (OALD); 2) something that is joyful causes happiness and pleasure; someone who is joyful is extremely happy (CCADE); 3) very happy, or likely to make people very happy (LDCE); 4) very happy (CALD); 5) very happy, expressing great happiness, causing happy feelings (MED).

Therefore, with the help of definitions from different dictionaries we can determine common meaning: causing, expressing or showing happiness and pleasure. This definition shows the peculiarities of the central element of the group: *joyful* connected with the feeling of happiness and contentment. In the examined group elements unite according to a semantic principle around the central unit as a direct component of their semantics, which after all, are connected indirectly – through its synonyms, and hence they are more distant from the meaningful centre of the group.

The group under investigation numbers 805 adjectival emotive lexemes, which nominate the emotion of joy in English and is noted for the complexity of semantic links, as within its limits one can single out seven basic subgroups, that are united on the basis of the next dominant adjectives: *cheerful*, *contented*, *enthraling*, *optimistic*, *proud*, *relieved*, *zestful*. In their turn, these subgroups are divided into corresponding synonymic chains, members of which are more distant from the centre of the group, however, they demonstrate a total lexical correlation with it: *cheerful*: amusing, blissful, delightful, ecstatic, elated, euphoric, gay, glad, gleeful, happy, jolly, jovial, jubilant; *contented*: pleasing, enjoyable, satisfying; *enthraling*: rapturous; *optimistic*: eager, hopeful; *proud*: triumphal; *zestful*: enthusiastic, excited, exhilarating, exhilarated, thrilling, zealous.

Therefore, the group of emotive adjectives with emoseme “Joy” reflects the main systemic links of English adjectival emotive units and is characterized by a specific lexico-semantic unity of its members, the semantics of which serves as a direct expression of the emotive state of joy, realizing it within the English lingual worldview.

4. Adjectival Units Denoting “Love”

Love as one of the basic emotive categories is fundamental for all people’s nature, as thanks to it in a language gender peculiarities of individual are fixed and expressed. Love itself is a basis for such emotional states as jealousy, hate, interest, joy, suffering, and contentment, and thus this emotion is a very complicated and extensive notion that covers all these processes

and expresses a wide range of relations between people. Love as a deep, irrational feeling that a subject feels and addressed onto another subject or object, is extremely complicated and polyhedral. This is why all uniqueness of this psychological phenomenon should be equally reflected in the language, which requires a lot of means to express this feeling.

Lexico-semantic group of adjectival emosemes with a general emotive seme “Love” is an integral part of the lexico-semantic field of emotive adjectives in modern English and consists of 147 units. To this formation belong such adjectives as *adoring* (showing very strong love for someone (CALD)), *besotted* (completely in love with someone and always thinking of them (CALD)), *endearing* (making someone love or like you (LDCE)), *goeey* (showing your love for someone in a way that other people think is silly (LDCE)), *torrid* (that involves very strong emotions connected with love and sex (CCADE)), *smitten* (in love with someone (MED)), *doting* (showing that you love someone very much (CALD)), *infatuated* (having a very strong but not usually lasting feeling of love or attraction for someone or something (OALD)), *patriotic* (showing love for your country and being proud of it (CALD)) and others.

A notional centre of this group is emoseme “Love”, as it itself acts as a dominant, nuclear seme. Accordingly, as the main identifying word that presents the examined group was chosen an adjective *loving* (it corresponds to the common component of the group). This adjective is a central element of the group and is described as: 1) showing a lot of love towards someone (CALD); 2) feeling or showing love and affection for sb/sth (OALD); 3) someone who is loving feels or shows love to other people; loving actions are done with great enjoyment and care (CCADE); 4) feeling or showing love (MED); 5) behaving in a way that shows you love someone; done with a lot of care and attention (LDCE).

With the help of these dictionary definitions, we can determine a general meaning that is common for the group of emotive adjectives with common emotive seme “Love”: feeling or showing love or affection for someone or something. Integral semes “positiveness” and “anthroponimity” that are present in the name of the group show the correspondence of this feeling to the main emotive categories, directly related to the person’s inner world, as love plays an important role in our life and expresses interaction with reality, resulting in positive perception of some phenomenon by an individual.

Similar to other groups, belonging to the field under research, in the structure of the group of the adjectives with emoseme “Love” all the elements are united according to semantic principles around the central word, reflecting the main system links of emotive units within it. This group is characterized by a specific lexico-semantic commonality of its elements, which are divided into three main subgroups that are formed on the basis of the dominant adjectives *affectionate*, *longing*, and *lustful*. They denote different ways of love expressed in the form of features or property. These lexico-semantic subgroups, in their turn, are divided into quantitatively smaller formations – synonymic chains (except subgroups based on the dominant adjectival emotive unit *longing* that does not have any synonymic chains), in semantics of which an integral seme is conveyed indirectly or through the semantics of other group members: *affectionate*: admiring, adoring, attractive, caring, compassionate, fond, liking, sentimental, tender; *lustful*: desirous, infatuated, passionate.

Therefore, adjectives with emoseme “Love” in modern English is a relatively heterogeneous formation, as its centre is an abstract emotive notion, that presumes not only an influence on the subject, resulting in the emergence in him or her certain feelings or concerns, but also a wish of the subject to express his or her emotions with the help of certain deeds. Since this group is a part of the lexico-semantic field of emotive adjectives, it unites adjectival emotive units with the meaning of *love* and embraces the whole variety of feelings of liking to subjects and phenomena of objective reality.

5. Adjectival Units Denoting “Surprise”

According to the majority of psychologists, a surprise is a reaction to an abrupt change of stimulus that can be an unexpected and sudden event. The peculiarity of this emotion is its short duration since surprise is a reaction to something unexpected, during which it is underlined impossibility to concentrate or pay attention to anything else, it is fleeting. While feeling surprised, a person cannot detect at once where the situation is heading, that is why surprise at first has a neutral character. This sensually-neutral character may preserve henceforth and gradually subside if the change of the situation doesn't interfere with the person's interests. In the situation of surprise people, as a rule, feel approximately the same pleasure, as in the situation that has arisen a great interest: a feeling that accompanies the emotion of surprise has a positive character, and a consequence of this pleasant surprise, in most cases, is an interest. Despite the fact that emotion of surprise is quite fleeting, it has an important function to prepare a person for interaction with a new, sudden event and its consequences, and also for a new activity, different from the previous one (Izard, 2007: 193–195). A semantic basis of surprise is a breach of foreseen prognosis of the current action, and that is why a study of language objectification of this emotion is quite perspective.

In modern English adjectives with emoseme “Surprise” are characterized by a combination of lexical units, that express the semantics of a subject's strong impression of uniqueness or unexpectedness of the phenomenon that influences him or her. This group is the smallest and consists of 54 adjectival emotive units with the meaning of surprise, such as *non-plussed* (surprised, confused, and not certain how to react (CALD)), *agape* (with the mouth open, especially showing surprise or shock (CALD)), *prodigious* (very large or powerful and causing surprise or admiration (OALD)), *goggle-eyed* (with your eyes wide open and looking directly at something, especially in surprise or shock (LDCE)), *thunderstruck* (very surprised (CALD)), *dumbfounded* (unable to speak because of surprise (OALD)), *amazed* (extremely surprised (CALD)), *astonishing* (very surprising; difficult to believe (OALD)), *staggering* (so great, shocking or surprising that it is difficult to believe (OALD)), *astounded* (very surprised or shocked (OALD)) and others.

The main semantic centre of the group is emoseme “Surprise”, which is general and dominant for the whole formation. Accordingly the identifying word that presents the studied group is an adjective *surprising* (*causing surprise*), which is the reflection of the common semantic component of the group – surprise. This adjective is a central element of the group and is characterized by the following meanings: 1) unusual and unexpected (LDCE); 2) causing surprise (OALD); 3) something that is surprising is unexpected or unusual and makes you feel surprised (CCADE); 4) unusual or unexpected (MED); 5) unexpected, causing surprise (CALD). With the help of the definitions, taken from different dictionaries a general meaning can be defined: causing surprise, unusual and unexpected. This semantics reflects peculiarities of the central element of the group, according to which adjectives combine into groupings. As this group is the smallest in the structure of the lexico-semantic field of English emotive adjectives, it is divided only into small subgroups that do not have synonymic chains. The basis for separating these subgroups is such dominant adjectives as *amazing* and *astonishing*. In English lingual worldview these adjectival emotive units reflect differences in intensity forms of experiencing the emotion of surprise as an inseparable component of the spiritual culture of every nation since it owns uniqueness and specifics of verbalization, the basis of which is the subjectivity of interpretation of the surrounding reality by a person.

Thus, the lexico-semantic group of adjectives with emoseme “Surprise” represents a systematically organized lexical paradigm, in which semantic space is characterized by inner organization with the existence of lexico-semantic links between its members based on the presence in them a common feature – meaning of surprise.

6. Conclusions

The nature of an adjective implies the possibility of its investigation from the point of view of the subject who chooses one sign from many; especially it concerns emotive adjectives that have an independent emotive meaning, expressing emotions, feelings and the speaker's evaluation of the surrounding reality at the same time. Emotive adjectives in the English lingual worldview form a complex structure that consists of lexical units that are direct verbal expressions of human emotions, and therefore assumes the continuity of the connections of the objects along with the possibility of describing adjectival emotive units as a whole without dividing this vocabulary on vocabulary of expression and vocabulary of description of emotions. Adjectival emotive units in modern English form a complex lexically-semantic formation, consisting of six groups, the elements of which are systematized basing on their constituent elements. The differentiation of emotional adjectives into groups of words with positive and negative meaning reflects the peculiarities of their functioning in the English lingual worldview: emotive adjectives with positive semantics make up a significant part of the general vocabulary, but they are less numerous than units of negative semantics. Emotiveness as a component of semantic content of a word causes significant linguistic interest, and therefore requires further scientific research aimed at identifying stylistic features of emotive vocabulary and in-depth analysis of their semantic structure on the material of different languages.

References

1. Boiko, N. (2005). *Ukrainska ekspresywna leksyka: semantychnyi, leksykohrafichnyi i funktsionalnyi aspekty: monohrafiia [Ukrainian expressive vocabulary: semantic, lexicographic and functional aspects: a monograph]*. Nizhyn: Aspekt-Polihrad. [in Ukrainian]
2. Izard, K. E. (2007). *Psykhohohyia emotsyi [Psychology of emotions]*. Saint Petersburg: Pyter. [in Russian]
3. Kosmeda, T. (2000). *Aksiolohichni aspekty prahmalinhvistyky: formuvannia i rozvytok katehorii otsinky [Axiological aspects of pragmalinguistics: formation and development of the category of evaluation]*. Lviv: LNU im. Ivana Franka. [in Ukrainian]
4. Lewis, M., Haviland-Jones, J., Barrett, L. (Eds.). (2012). *Handbook of Emotions*. The Guilford Press.
5. Pavlenko, A. (2006). *Emotions and Multilingualism (Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction)*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Power, M. J., Dalgleish, T. (2008). *Cognition and Emotion: From Order to Disorder*. Second edition. Hove and New York: Psychology Press.
7. Prykhodko, H.I. (2001). *Sposoby vyrazhennia otsinky v suchasni anhliskii movi: monohrafiia [Ways of expressing evaluation in modern English: a monograph]*. Zaporizhzhia: ZDU. [in Ukrainian]
8. Ufymtseva, A. A. (2011). *Typy slovesnykh znakov [Types of word signs]*. Moskow: Lybrom. [in Russian]
9. Weigand, E. (2006). *Emotion in Dialogic Interaction: Advances in the Complex*. Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science. John Benjamin Publishing Company.