

Section 2. Linguistics

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LEXICO-SEMANTIC GROUP “TO CONFLICT” IN MODERN ENGLISH: TYPOLOGY AND SEMANTICS

Abstract: The present article deals with the lexico-semantic group (LSG) “*to conflict*” in modern English. It is presented by 130 lexical units which explicitly denote the *conflict actions*. The peculiarities of the lexico-semantic group under study are described, its structure is defined, and the main stock of LSG “*to conflict*” in the English language is analysed. Much attention is paid to the methodology of the *conflict action* words’ study, combining formalized analysis of lexical semantics with pure linguistic methods. Semantics of the verbs denoting *conflict actions* is analyzed.

Keywords: explicit conflict actions, lexico-semantic group, lexical units, lexical semantics, formalized analysis, common and distinctive features.

Introduction. Language is an integral component of consciousness, its instrument, and it acts as an intermediary between man and the surrounding world, which is reflected in linguistic forms. At the same time, each lexeme is individually unique, it has lexico-semantic features, broad and free reproducibility in oral and written speech. Today, the problem of conflict study has become of particular importance, and conflicts are actively studied at the theoretical (universal laws of manifestation) and empirical (methods and technologies used to prevent, predict and solve the conflict) levels.

Recent researches and publications. Many scholars studied the notion of “lexico-semantic group” (N. F. Alefirenko, M. M. Pokrovsky, A. A. Ufimtseva, V. I. Kodukhov, F. P. Filin, A. I. Kuznetsova, F. S. Batsevych, and many others). The founder of the LSG theory was M. M. Pokrovsky who noticed that it is possible to identify certain lexico-semantic groups in each language. According to the scholar’s observation, their selection is based on the paradigmatic relations between words: “Words and their meanings do not live apart from each other; they are combined into different groups,

regardless of our consciousness and the basis for grouping is their similarities or entirely opposite meanings”¹.

Lexico-semantic groups are considered as combinations of words due to their lexical meanings, which are characterized by “homogeneity and comparison” (V.I. Kodukhov²; F. P. Filin; A. A. Ufimtseva). A. I. Kuznetsova believes that one LSG includes words belonging to one part of speech that allows them to cooperate and act upon each other more deeply³. A. A. Ufimtseva states that lexico-semantic groups are investigated when “the task arises to identify the inner connections of the words within the semantic system of the language, to determine the structure and specific semantic connections of the latter”⁴.

In his turn, F. S. Batsveych studies changes in the individual groups of words, especially semantic fields, lexico-semantic and thematic groups. The main purpose of his research is to find out the basic regularities of such changes as well as the ways of replenishing lexico-semantic groups and semantic fields⁵.

The fundamental research on lexico-semantic groups was carried out by F. P. Filin. His article “On lexico-semantic groups of words” is based upon the idea that the entire word-stock of the language can be divided into lexico-semantic groups of words which form its lexico-semantic system. F. P. Filin emphasizes that “classification of lexis into lexico-semantic groups should be made for any purpose, in this respect the groups may have the structures composed by the researcher”⁶.

N. F. Alefirenko differentiates between lexico-semantic and thematic groups: the former may be a part of a thematic group, i.e. related to a common theme whereas the latter is based on lexico-semantic links and the classification of objects and phenomena. At the same time LSG is a product of the laws and the regularities of the lexical semantics development: it is structurally organized, combining the words of one part of speech on the basis of a common semantic component in the meanings of these words⁷.

The goal and the specific tasks of the article. The purpose of the article is to study the lexico-semantic group “*to conflict*” in modern English. According to the aim

¹ Pokrovsky M.M. Selected Works on Linguistics. – M.: USSR Academy of Sciences Publisher, 1959. – C. 82.

² Kodukhov V.I. Lexico-semantic groups of words. – L., 1955.

³ Kuznetsova A.I. The concept of the semantic system of language and methods of its study. – M.: Moscow University, 1963. – C. 59.

⁴ Ufimtseva A.A. The word in the lexico-semantic system of language. – M.: Nauka, 1968.

⁵ Batsveych F.S, Kosmeda T.A. Essays on functional lexicology. – L.: Svit, 1997. – C. 54-80.

⁶ Filin F.P. On lexico-semantic groups of words. In Linguistic studies in honor of Academician Stefan Mladenov. – Sofia, 1957. – C. 530.

⁷ Alefirenko N.F. Theory of language. Introductory course. Manual for students of philological universities. – M.: «Akademia», 2004. – P. 87.

of the present research, the following tasks have been put forward: 1) to select and analyze the verbs which *explicitly* denote the *conflict actions* from lexicographical sources; 2) to reveal their typological and semantic peculiarities.

The relevancy of the topic is caused by the fact that the lexico-semantic group under analysis has not been the subject of a separate linguistic research in terms of its system and structure characteristics.

Material and methods. Lexico-semantic group “*to conflict*” in modern English is represented by 130 verbs which explicitly denote *conflict actions* selected from the Oxford English Dictionary in 20 volumes.

The collection, analysis and classification of the language material have been made on the basis of the method of formalized lexical semantics analysis introduced by M. Peshchak and others, and further developed by professor M. P. Fabian. This method allows to study the semantics of lexical units denoting *conflict actions* in English by revealing the correlations between the words and their meanings as well as singling out their some stock peculiarities. Investigation of the verbs denoting *conflict actions* in modern English is carried out to find out their main characteristics as well as to reveal their both common and distinctive features. For the collection of the research material, a formal criterion is used – belonging of the words to a definite part of speech – the verb. The matrix method for representing the semantic relations between verbs denoting *conflict actions* in the English language is considered as a metalanguage for the description of the objects under investigation. The matrix in the form of a table is considered, on the one hand, as a model of the semantic connections’ system, and, on the other hand, as the semantic structure of the *conflict actions* vocabulary. This model reveals the semantic relations between the words and their meanings in the form of columns and rows, where the sign “♦” signals that the words possess certain meanings in common¹.

Main body. Our research is aimed at analyzing the lexico-semantic group “*to conflict*”, focusing on its typology and semantics in modern English. According to the etymological dictionary, the verb “*to conflict*” appeared in the early XVth century in the English language, and it comes from Latin *conflictus*, past participle of *confligere* “to strike together, contend, fight, be in conflict,” from assimilated form of *com-/ con-* “with, together” + *fligere* “to strike”².

In English 338 verbs are used to denote various types and aspects of conflict actions: *to affront, to alter, to combat, to conflict, to debate, to deviate, to disagree, to discrimi-*

¹ Fabian M.P. Semantics of speech etiquette: new approach to its study // Recent studies of Foreign Languages: Coll. Science. papers. – Uzhhorod: PP “Autdor-Shark”, 2014. – Is. 12. – P. 7–13.

² A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language / Ed. by Ernest Klein. – Amsterdam, London, New York: Elsevier publishing company. – 1966. – Vol. I. – 332 p.

nate, to encounter, to oppose, to refuse, to resist, to shock, to strive, to swallow, to tonk, to vanquish, to withstand etc.

The whole language material chosen from the lexicographical source is divided into two groups: 1) the verbs which *explicitly* denote the *conflict actions*; 2) the verbs which *implicitly* denote the *conflict actions*. Here only the part of the first group will be in the scope of our analysis.

Lexeme *to conflict* is taken as the semantic dominant as it bears the main meaning common to the whole lexico-semantic group. In modern English it possesses 5 meanings: 1) to fight, contend, do battle (of the strife of natural forces); 2) to contend, strive, struggle with; 3) to come into collision, to clash; to be at variance, be incompatible (of interests, opinions, statements, feelings, etc.); 4) to engage in battle, to assault; 5) to buffet with adversity¹. Its semantics reveals the indications of a high degree of disagreement and disorder. Each meaning of the word *to conflict* as the implementation of the conceptual sign of this phenomenon, can also be found in other verbs which explicitly denote the conflict actions.

The verbs *to clash, to collide, to concur, to contend, to contravene, to deal, to fight, to jar, to meddle, to militate, to mix, to oppugn, to smite, to strive, to tangle, to thwart, to wrestle* etc. have the common meanings '*to conflict*' and '*to come into conflict*' which describe individuals or groups of different interests, ideas, statements, feelings '*to come into or engage in conflict (with, against)*', '*to be in conflict*', '*to conflict, be inconsistent with*', '*to come together (or samem) in conflict*', '*to carry on a conflict of any kind*', '*to disagree (with)*', '*to come into violent and noisy collision*' etc.

Lexical units *to clash, to differ, to disagree, to discord, to dissent, to divide, to fratch, to jar, to threap, to vary* and others possess the meanings of '*to disagree (with)*' and '*to be at variance*' which express '*to hold different opinions concerning any matter*', '*to have a difference, to quarrel (with)*', '*to cause disagreement between*', '*to disagree (with)*', '*to set or fall at variance*', '*not to agree*', '*to refuse to accord or agree (to any proposal)*', '*to dissent*', '*to disagree with or object to an action*', '*to think differently, differ from, in (an opinion), from (a person)*', '*to differ from the doctrine or worship of a particular church*' etc. The verbs in question denote the *conflict actions* in which two people or groups express disagreement or difference of opinion which may result in the breakup, divorce, disturbance of normal work or even dismissal from office or job. Misunderstanding can also be caused by differences in religious opinion, in sense, meaning or purport, in nature, form or other respect.

To argue, to brawl, to cample, to contest, to debate, to dissent, to scrap, to strive, to threap and others mean '*to quarrel*', '*to wrangle*' which disclose the meaning '*to enter*

¹ Oxford English Dictionary: in – 20 vol. / Ed. by John Simpson and Edmund Weiner.– Canada: Oxford University Press,– 1989.

on a wordy conflict', 'to quarrel, bicker, wrangle, scold', 'to dispute or debate keenly, wrangle', 'to engage in heated argument or angry dispute', 'to contend in words', 'to wrangle about terms, haggle' etc. The analyzed verbs are used to indicate *conflict actions* in which two or more people wrangle, squabble or argue often angrily, noisily and indecently which result in the following: people discord and begin to dislike and distrust each other.

Such lexical units as *to antagonize, to avert, to beard, to bespeak, to breast, to brow-beat, to confront, to contradict, to controvert, to counter, to counteract, to countercharge, to counterwork, to cross, to defend, to obstruct, to oppose, to oppugn, to outstand* and others reveal the meanings of 'to oppose' and 'be in opposition' expressing 'actions when people oppose openly and resolutely, with daring or with effrontery or oppose with a contrary charge or injunction', 'when you stand up against a person or oppose, with stern, arrogant, or insolent looks or words', 'when you oppose a statement, argument, or the like to another'. On the other hand, the verb 'to breast' has the meaning 'of the natural phenomena', which is not characteristic of others: 'to apply or oppose the breast to waves or wind'. The same is with 'to defend': it has the meaning associated with 'the defendant': 'to deny, repel, oppose the plaintiff's plea, the action raised against him'.

The group of 'sport activities' (*Archery, Cricket, Baseball, Boxing, Billiards, Bridge, Card-playing, Chess, Croquet, Dice-play, Football, Golf, Hurling, Ice Hockey and Lacrosse, Mountaineering, Pugilism, Racing, Wrestling etc.*) contains the verbs *to bandy, to beat, to clear, to conquer, to counter, to cross, to deal, to divide, to face, to match, to mix, to obstruct, to push, to reverse, to smite, to split, to stand, to throw, to top, to turn* and others. Semantics of these lexical units reveals different *conflict actions* in sport competitions or sport matches between two teams or players which require strength, strong spirit and a huge desire to win. Such meanings as 'to try to force (an opponent) into a higher and more doubtful contract by overcalling him', 'to give a return blow while receiving or parrying the blow of an antagonist; to strike with a counter-blow', 'to impede (a player) in a manner which constitutes an offence', 'to hit with great force; to defeat by hard hitting', 'to lose (a wicket) through careless play', etc. can be singled out here.

The lexico-semantic group under study includes the verbs *to antagonize, to beat, to cross, to determine, to differentiate, to diverge, to divide, to interfere, to match, to push, to repress* etc. which denote *conflict actions* or differences in various branches of science. In such meanings as 'to counteract the action of (the opposite muscle)', 'to inhibit or interfere with the action or effect of (a biologically active substance)', 'to limit by adding differences; to limit in scope', 'to come into collision or opposition, so as to affect the course of', etc. they are used in *Biology, Chemistry, Geometry, Logic, Mathematics, Physics, Physiology, Psychology* forming the semantic field of "sciences".

Our lexico-semantic analysis has shown that the verbs within lexico-semantic group "to conflict" in modern English have both common and distinctive features. Their

resemblance lies in being treated as the system of elements of hierarchical constituent organization which helps them link with different other groups of lexis. The common semantic meanings of the verbs under analysis are: *to oppose*, *to stand against*, *to be in opposition*, *to quarrel*, *to disagree (with)*, *to come into hostile contact or collision* etc. Besides, these lexical units contain an indication of an interpersonal, intrapersonal, intragroup or intergroup *conflict actions* taking place within individuals, within a team or different groups within organization.

Their distinctive features are revealed in their different system and structural organization, unequal number of their components, various role and place of each element in the semantic space of the language as well as different types and relations between them. Lexical semantics of the verbs in question reveals distinctive features of *natural agencies* (to engage in conflict or strife of wind, water, insects etc.), *of the food* (to cause (the stomach) to reject or revolt against the food), *of colours* (to go badly together, to kill each other), the meaning indicating *unsuitability* (to be unsuitable for a marriage, job, place, situation, societies etc.).

Conclusions. The investigation of the LSG “*to conflict*” has proved that words are hierarchically placed, they have their specific system and structural characteristics, and occupy definite positions in the lexis due to their role and function in the process of human communication.

Conflict actions can be revealed by means of: 1) ‘*to conflict*’ and ‘*to come into conflict*’ to express a serious misunderstanding between two or more persons, their opinions, principles, wishes or beliefs which may even lead to war; 2) ‘*to disagree (with)*’ and ‘*to be at variance*’ to convey the disagreement with individuals, groups of people, countries etc. about their interests, traditions, political views, establishment of some innovations which can cause a serious consequences; 3) ‘*to quarrel*’, ‘*to wrangle*’, ‘*to bicker*’ to argue, complain or scold with family members, friends, colleagues and others to prove your rightness, truth or innocence; 4) ‘*to oppose*’ and ‘*be in opposition*’ to actively resist a person, system or even despair; to say “no” to the suggestions to do something illegal or that you don’t want in order to protect your rights, health and the near of kin; 5) *conflict actions* in ‘*sport activities*’ to arrange for a person to compete with another or to set somebody to fight for a prize or a money award; to beat or defeat the competitor; to interchange blows wildly and rapidly in Box or Pugilism; to strike with force especially a ball in Baseball, Billiards, Cricket, Croquet, Football, Golf, Hurling, Lacrosse; 6) *conflict actions* in ‘*science*’ to come into collision, come forcibly into contact, strike or dash together the particles, waves of light, heat, sound, etc., used chiefly in Physics and Chemistry.

Typological and semantic study of the verbs denoting *conflict actions* in English allowed to highlight conflict deeds as phenomena of persons’ everyday lives as well as find out all possible ways and means of their expressions in the system of the language.

The prospects of further research lie in the study of lexico-semantic peculiarities of the verbs which *implicitly* denote *conflict actions* in modern English in their close relationship with other groups of lexis.

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