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SEMANTICS OF ENGLISH ADJECTIVE *UNHAPPY* IN LANGUAGE AND SPEECH

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The article clarifies both semantic characteristics and semantic specificity of the adjective “unhappy” in contemporary English language and speech. Much attention is paid to theoretical aspect of close relationship between language and culture study, which gives possibilities to deeper research and reveal the mentality, traditions, ways of life and everyday activities of the language bearers. The study focuses on interdependence between language means of expressing the quality of being unhappy and their usage in speech. The importance of semantic analysis of the lexis in question, which occupies a significant place in the vocabulary of contemporary English, is highlighted. The very complex approach to the language phenomenon study and its culturological description made it possible not only to characterize lexical semantic properties of the group of adjectives meaning “unhappy” and its synonyms, but also to depict their system and structural organization, as well as usage peculiarities in everyday speech of the British. Reference to the context and its specificity in the process of semantic analysis of adjectives have been summarized, giving possibility for treating the word group under study as a fragment of the lexical system of contemporary English, which possesses pure linguistic as well as national specific properties. The use of adjectives in the speech of the British reveals their socially significant role in the society, where the notions of good and evil, happiness and unhappiness, love and hate acquire various shades of meaning, and rather often may lead to both motivated and unmotivated consequences of different types. Contextual usage of the language units in question describes their semantic variety, capability of combining with other words, establishing separate groups of lexis in their close relationship, entering other lexical semantic groups on the basis of connections of various types within the open system of a definite structure represented as a vocabulary of contemporary English.

Key words: contemporary English, culture, semantics, lexical semantic group, vocabulary, adjective, context.

Фабіан Мирослава. Семантика англійського прикметника НЕЩАСЛИВИЙ(А) в мові та мовленні

У статті з'ясовано семантичні характеристики й особливості семантики прикметника нещасливий/нещаслива у сучасних англійській мові та мовленні. Значна увага відводиться теоретичному аспекту дослідження тісного взаємозв'язку між мовою та культурою, завдяки чому з'являється можливість глибшого вивчення й розкриття менталітету, традицій, способу життя й повсякденної діяльності мовних носіїв. Виділено взаємозалежність мовних засобів вираження поняття «нещасливий/нещаслива» та їхнього мовленнєвого прояву. Розглянуто важливість застосування семантичного аналізу досліджуваної лексики, яка посідає чільне місце у системі вокабуляра сучасної англійської мови. Саме комплексний підхід до вивчення мовних явищ та їхнього культурологічного відображення дозволив не лише охарактеризувати лексико-семантичні властивості групи прикметника на позначення поняття «нещасливий/нещаслива» та його синонімів, але й описати їхню системно-структурну організацію та особливості застосування у повсякденному мовленні англійців. Узагальнено необхідність звернення до контексту та його специфіки в процесі аналізу семантики прикметників, що дало можливість тлумачити досліджувану групу слів як фрагмент лексичної системи сучасної англійської мови, якому притаманні власне мовні та національно-специфічні властивості. Вживання прикметників у мовленні англійців розкриває і їхню соціально вагому роль у суспільстві, де поняття добра і зла, щастя і нещастя, кохання й ненависті набувають різноманітних відтінків значень і часто можуть призводити до різного роду вмотивованих та невмотивованих наслідків. Контекстуальне використання досліджуваних мовних одиниць розкриває їхню різноманітну семантику, здатність уживатися

з іншими словами, утворювати окремі групи лексики в їхньому тісному взаємозв'язку, поєднуватися різними типами відношень з іншими лексико-семантичними групами в межах відкритої системи з чіткою структурою, якою постає вокабуляр сучасної англійської мови.

Ключові слова: сучасна англійська мова, культура, семантика, лексико-семантична група, вокабуляр, прикметник, контекст.

Introduction. Language is much more than the external expression and communication of internal thoughts formulated independently of their verbalization. Together with culture, they constitute a special unity, a complex multidimensional system whose segments constantly interact with each other. Both the meanings of the words and culture unite collective, nationally-biased beliefs and individual experience gained in socio-cultural environment. The common features of language and culture lie in the fact that culture as well as language is a form of consciousness that reflects a person's worldview, the real world surrounding a human being, his/her living conditions, and also people's national character, lifestyle, traditions, customs, system of values preserved in certain images and knowledge verbalized by language.

Contemporary English is considered as a universal form of the primary conceptualization of the world and the rationalization of human experience, the expresser and keeper of the unconscious spontaneous knowledge of the world, the historical memory of socially significant events in human life; it is a mirror of culture, which reflects the aspects of past cultures, intuitions and categories of worldviews.

The notion of *unhappiness* occupies a significant place in the system of national-cultural values of native speakers of English. Addressing the means of designation of "unhappiness", namely, the adjective *unhappy* in English, which has not yet been the subject of linguocultural scientific research, reflects the relationship between language and culture, contributes to a deeper understanding of the cultural specificity of lexical units and their functioning in language and speech.

Materials and methods. From the standpoint of linguocultural approach, the adjective *unhappy* is considered as a language unit denoting personal interpretation of social and cultural felicitic assessment, i.e., a special kind of negative emotional-rational teleological evaluation, which in the case of coincidence of subject and object is actualized as the subject's experience of a negative emotional

state. Semantics of the adjective *unhappy* and its synonyms in modern English has a clearly anthropocentric character, i.e. regarding human existence as the most important and central fact in the world. Their specific semantic features are best represented in their functioning both in the English language and speech. The data of explanatory English dictionaries and thesauri serve as the material for the research. Semantic peculiarities of the lexical units are studied on the material of the novels by contemporary English writers.

The study of any language notion is impossible without the reference to the etymology of the lexeme representing it. The etymological reconstruction allows revealing the original figurative world model. The data of etymological and historical dictionaries help discover the history of the development of the meaning in words representing the notion, allow outlining the possible directions for its further semantic variation. The etymology uncovers numerous associative connections fixed in the minds of people. It is associated with mythology, because it reflects people's ideas, customs, and beliefs.

Comparison of the data of etymological and lexicographical analysis allows to consider and trace the dynamics of the lexeme *unhappy* development, which is the key to understanding its current status.

Discussion. The etymological analysis has shown that the adjective *unhappy* appeared in the thirteenth century in the meaning "causing misfortune or trouble (to oneself or others)" derived from the prefix *un-* "not" and the adjective *happy*. The meaning "unfortunate, unlucky" is recorded from late 14th century, the sense of "miserable, wretched" is recorded from late 14th century (originally via misfortune or mishap). Since the adjective *unhappy* originates from the lexeme *happy* we consider it reasonable to consider the origins of this adjective [4]. The mythological thinking of people of that time, their belief in the fact that everything is well-granted to man by higher forces, makes determination of their own happiness as a good destiny, and misfortune as a blow to destiny. This

meaning was reflected in the content plane of the lexeme *happiness*, when in 1520 it was fixed with the meaning “good fortune”. Initially, this meaning was the only one that fully reflected the attitudes of people of that time, focused on the faith in the fate. The second meaning of “pleasant and contented mental state” appeared only in 1590. The meaning of the lexeme *unhappiness* – “mental misery” dates back to 1722.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines *unhappy* as a polysemantic word with the following four meanings:

- 1) not happy or joyful; sad or sorrowful;
- 2) not satisfied; displeased or discontented;
- 3) not attended by or bringing good fortune; unlucky;
- 4) not suitable; inappropriate [1].

The Collins English Dictionary offers the following definition of it:

- 1) not joyful; sad or depressed;
- 2) unfortunate or wretched;
- 3) tactless or inappropriate;
- 4) *archaic* unfavourable [2].

The word *unhappy* is defined in the Random House Kernerman Webster’s College Dictionary as:

- 1) sad; miserable; wretched;
- 2) unfortunate; unlucky;
- 3) unfavourable; inauspicious;
- 4) infelicitous; unsuitable [5].

The contextual analysis of the adjective *unhappy* presented in the abovementioned dictionaries has revealed that the word *unhappy* is characterized by the presence of three lexical semantic variants, the components of which reveal the following features: unhappiness as a negative emotional state of a person, unhappiness as displeasure and dissatisfaction, for example:

*She’d had a very **unhappy** childhood [5].*

*They were **unhappy** about their hotel room [5].*

*We found ourselves in the **unhappy** situation of having had our bags, passports, and money stolen [5].*

Having analyzed the adjective *unhappy* in the context, we have singled out its additional semantic features: the feeling of unhappiness has a certain extent or scope (deeply unhappy); unhappiness is characterized by duration (long-term unhappiness); unhappiness is a human feeling (personally unhappy), marriage may be the reason for unhappiness (marital unhappiness), unhappiness is an overwhelming emotion (filled

with unhappiness), unhappiness is a feeling that may be shared, unhappiness may be manifested on somebody’s appearance (eyes gloomy with unhappiness), unhappiness is a feeling that affects a person physically, unhappiness is a feeling that a person may experience for oneself or for another person, unhappiness has a source or reason.

According to Longman Collocations Dictionary and Thesaurus [3, p. 1353–1354], the adjective *unhappy* is actualized in the following word combinations:

unhappy + nouns: childhood, marriage, memories, time.

unhappy + verbs: be, feel, look, make sb.

*e.g. The data showed that chasing happiness can **make** people **unhappy** [10, p. 184].*

unhappy + adverbs: deeply, desperately, dreadfully, extremely, terribly, increasingly, clearly, obviously

*e.g. We made the ocean **unhappy**; we made people **very unhappy**, and we made them **unhealthy** [10, p. 82].*

unhappy + prepositions: about; at; with

*e.g. I’ve had the experience of **complimenting** her on her hair only to find that she’s **unhappy with** the way it looks, mad at her hairdresser, and by extension mad at anyone who notices it [9, p. 43].*

The research proves that the adjective *unhappy* is mostly used in collocations with:

– nouns (*unhappy* + n)

*e.g. And you might form the intuition that the **unhappy people** occupy a different structural location within the network [7, p. 120].*

*So, to invoke another metaphor, if you imagine social networks as a kind of vast fabric of humanity – I’m connected to you and you to her, on out endlessly into the distance – this fabric is actually like an old-fashioned American quilt, and it has patches on it: happy and **unhappy patches** [9, p. 38].*

*If you’re a woman writer from the Muslim world, like me, then you are expected to write the stories of Muslim women and, preferably, the **unhappy stories of unhappy Muslim women** [8, p. 129].*

– adverbs (*adv.* + *unhappy*)

*e.g. As far as writing about a boy who goes missing and his family, well, I’d been an **extremely unhappy** teen, and very much remember wishing I was outside my body, wanting to disappear [9, p. 62].*

– verbs (*v* + *unhappy*)

e.g. *I feel guilty and unhappy with myself, rather than thinking there's something wrong with the painting, I think there's something wrong with me* [8, p. 89].

These combinatory properties of the adjective *unhappy* allowed to define its semantic components, including a negative emotional state, occurring from adverse events or conditions caused by a failure, trouble, misfortune, etc.

Results. The meaning of the adjective *unhappy* can be described by means of meaningful (differential) semantic features and presented as a set of distinguishing, integral and potential semes. The componential analysis of lexical semantics allows to model the paradigm of meanings of a polysemantic word, as well as various but semantically close ones – synonyms, since the notion relates to more than one lexical unit. Synonyms of the adjective *unhappy* are represented by the following units which may be classified into four groups:

1) adjectives including the seme “sad”, united by the lexeme *sad* – affected by unhappiness or grief; sorrowful or mournful; expressive of or characterized by sorrow; causing sorrow; somber or dull; drab; deplorably bad; sorry; firm or steadfast [1].

Other lexemes belonging to this group include *cheerless* – dreary, gloomy, or pessimistic [1]; *disconsolate* – without consolation or solace; hopelessly unhappy; inconsolable; characterized by or causing dejection; cheerless; gloomy [1]; *sorrowful* – feeling sorrow; grieved; sad; expressing sorrow; mournful; causing sorrow; distressing [1]; *crestfallen* – dejected; discouraged; having a drooping crest or head [1]; *depressed* – sad and gloomy; downcast; suffering from depression; pressed down, or situated lower than the general surface; lowered in force, amount, etc.; undergoing economic hardship, esp. poverty and unemployment; flattened down; greater in width than in height [1]; *despondent* – feeling or showing profound hopelessness, dejection, discouragement, or gloom [1]; *miserable* – wretchedly unhappy or uncomfortable; contemptible; attended with or causing misery; manifesting misery; worthy of pity [1]; *sorry* – feeling regret, compunction, sympathy, pity, etc.; regrettable or deplorable; unfortunate; sorrowful; grieved; suggestive of grief; melancholy; wretched, poor, or useless [1]; *troubled* – characterized by or indicative of distress or affliction or danger or need [1];

e.g. *That was never the question. It's just that we couldn't figure out how to stop making each other desperately, shriekingly, soul-punishingly miserable* [8, p. 95].

You meet lots of apathetic people in this world, of course, but you also meet some people who seem to be able to gracefully accept the terms upon which the universe operates and who genuinely don't seem troubled by its paradoxes and injustices [8, p. 164].

Anyhow, it's hard to be depressed with Linda babbling beside me, trying to get me to buy a giant purple fur hat, and asking of the lousy dinner we ate one night, "Are these called Mrs. Paul's Veal Sticks?" [8, p. 113].

2) adjectives including the seme “unlucky”, united by the lexeme *unlucky* – (of a person) not lucky; lacking good fortune; ill-fated; (of an event or circumstance) inauspicious or characterized by misfortune; ominous [1].

Other lexemes belonging to this group include *unfortunate* – suffering from bad luck; hapless; unfavourable or inauspicious; regrettable or deplorable; lamentable; sad [1]; *doomed* – determined by tragic fate; marked by or promising bad fortune [1]; *cursed* – under a curse; damned; deserving a curse; hateful; abominable [1]; *wretched* – very unfortunate in condition or circumstances; pitiable; characterized by or attended with misery and sorrow; miserable; despicable, contemptible, or mean; pitiful or worthless; inferior [1]; *ill-omened* – doomed to be unlucky; ill-fated [1]; *ill-fated* – destined to an unhappy fate; bringing bad fortune [1]; *luckless* – unfortunate; hapless or ill-fated [1]; *afflicted* – grievously affected especially by disease [1]; *hapless* – unlucky; luckless; unfortunate [1]; *tragic* – dreadful, calamitous, disastrous, or fatal; extremely mournful, melancholy, or pathetic; pertaining to or characteristic of tragedy [1].

I can choose how I'm going to regard unfortunate circumstances in my life –whether I will see them as curses or opportunities (and on the occasions when I can't rise to the most optimistic viewpoint, because I'm feeling too damn sorry for myself, I can choose to keep trying to change my outlook) [8, p. 191].

"The world is afflicted with death and decay, therefore the wise do not grieve, knowing the terms of the world," says an old Buddhist teaching [7, p. 186].

*Why should they make so much of a **doomed** difference?* [9, p. 67].

3) adjectives including the seme “displeased”, united by the lexeme *displeased* – not pleased; experiencing or manifesting displeasure [1].

Other lexemes belonging to this group are: *disgruntled* – feeling or expressing discontent or anger [1]; *dissatisfied* – discontented; showing dissatisfaction [1]; *disappointed* – discouraged by the failure of one’s hopes; inadequately appointed; ill-equipped [1]; *annoyed* – irritated or displeased [1]; *vexed* – irritated; annoyed; much discussed or disputed [1]; *angry* – feeling anger or strong resentment; expressing, caused by, or characterized by anger; wrathful; inflamed, as a sore; exhibiting characteristics associated with anger or danger [1]; *discontented* – dissatisfied; restlessly unhappy [1].

e.g. *I feel guilty taking up so much of his day, but he always seems **disappointed** when I leave at the end of the afternoon* [10, p. 261].

*I tried to thank her but she looked **annoyed** at my thanks, kind of swatted me away the way she swats away the rooster who always tries to stand on her outdoor kitchen table when she’s preparing lunch* [9, p. 264].

*Giulio and Maria have a beautiful apartment, the most impressive feature of which is, to my mind, the wall that Maria once covered with **angry** curses against Giulio (scrawled in thick black magic marker) because they were having an argument and “he yells louder than me” and she wanted to get a word in edgewise* [8, p. 171].

4) adjectives including the seme “inappropriate”, united by the lexeme *inappropriate* – not appropriate; not proper or suitable [1].

To this group belong: *untactful* – lacking or showing a lack of what is fitting and considerate in dealing with others [1]; *malapropos* – of an inappropriate or misapplied nature or kind [1]; *infelicitous* – not felicitous; unfortunate; inappropriate or unsuitable [1]; *injudicious* – lacking or showing a lack of judgment or discretion; unwise [1].

*He didn’t know if it was **inappropriate** to ask the question, but he took a chance* [8, p. 97].

*Perhaps that meant that the Faqzers, not the government, owned everything, but he surmised that it would be **untactful** to ask too many questions of this nature all at once* [9, p. 48].

The singled out synonymic sets made it possible to discover the distinctive features of being *unhappy* because of: 1) a difficult,

often unexpected event, disaster; 2) a mental experience, suffering, discomfort; 3) a variety of adverse events or lack of desirable things.

To consider the linguocultural specificity of using the adjective *unhappy*, its contextual analysis in the speech of the British has been carried out, paying attention at the same time to its co-occurrence with the lexemes naming other basic notions of culture. Thus, *unhappy* is most often used together with the words denoting:

1) people and their description: *people, person, man, woman, children, customer, fan*, for example:

*The shop wasn’t the only thing I inherited from that secretive, obsessive and **unhappy man*** [7, p. 119].

*Onnen took all three of them, because wet **unhappy children** had a tendency to quarrel when unminded* [10, p. 128].

2) human appearance and mental state: *face, eyes, frown, looks, thoughts, idea, consciousness*, for example:

*Snow watched several **unhappy thoughts** bouncing around her mother’s face, and she wished she could disappear* [9, p. 38].

*Telling her failures, to the mirror of that **unhappy face**, was miserable* [7, p. 123].

3) concrete and abstract notions: *house, letter, marriage, childhood, life, fate, ending, years, days, fact*, for example:

*His wife was keening, wringing her hands, and cursing her **unhappy fate*** [10, p. 90].

*I suppose I was the living reminder of the bad blood that existed between my parents and the **unhappy life** they had previously shared* [8, p. 56].

The connection of unhappiness with negative emotions and feelings is manifested in the use of *unhappy* with the lexical units verbalizing the notions of horror, loneliness, anger, despair, etc., for example:

– HORROR: *And some people need to be **unhappy** and regard with **horror** the idea that their dream might come true* [9, p. 56].

– LONELY: *Who could be either **lonely** or **unhappy** with the crime of society jostling for his attention, for one word from those sculpted lips?* [9, p. 54].

– ANGER: *Being **angry** made him **unhappy**. And that made me **unhappy** too. **Anger** was like smoke with a bad smell in his head* [10, p. 23].

– FRUSTRATION: *Today’s school fell under the category **safety**, but you could never be safe*

enough for her mother, who'd been the first in her family to graduate from college and, as a result, considered herself *unhappy* and *frustrated* at a higher level than her relatives [7, p. 43].

– DESPERATE: *How dare they take advantage of desperate, unhappy people like* [7, p. 45].

Semantic definitions of the adjective *unhappy* and its synonyms enable determining their specific features, consisting of the following constituent elements: 1) a negative emotional state; 2) the state of being unhappy arises from adverse events or conditions; 3) the state of being unhappy is caused by a failure, grief, misfortune, ill luck; 4) the state of being unhappy results in displeasure, dissatisfaction, discomfort, despair and gloom; 5) the invariant of the synonymic series to the lexeme *unhappy* is an event: it emphasizes its unexpectedness, tragedy; 6) the general invariant of the meaning of the synonymic series to the lexeme *unhappy* is the embodiment of the absolute force of fate – the source of unhappy events in human life. The lexeme *unhappy* bears a semantic load – emotional experience.

The property of being *unhappy* is characterized by the lack of harmony, prosperity, determined by relative constancy, an unpleasant emotional state which in intensity may range from restrained manifestation of feelings to grief. The sequence of unpleasant states can vary: from displeasure to unhappiness as the most intense and extensive state.

Thus, the linguocultural peculiarity of actualizing the notion *unhappy* in speech is that the lexemes verbalizing it are in close connection with such notions as grief, sadness, disappointment which are key notions for modern society. The lexeme *unhappy* is contextually

located in close proximity to lexemes denoting a range of negative emotions: horror, anger, despair, loneliness, and so on, actualizing this notion in the English language and culture.

Lexical semantic variants of *unhappy* denote the differences in understanding of happiness – unhappiness by the English linguistic personality. Happiness can be understood as easy, undeserved. Happiness is a bliss that brings this feeling closer to the sphere of “high”, and therefore hardly achievable. The presence of two opposing points of view on happiness does not exclude the value and the exceptional importance of it for a person. Unhappiness is perceived as something bitter, serious, difficult; it is more than just a failure. The definition analysis of the adjective *unhappy* allows to determine the semantic component of the linguocultural notion “unhappiness” in English.

The synonymic set enables revealing the distinct features of the property of being *unhappy*: unhappiness is a difficult, often unexpected event, disaster; synonyms define unhappiness as an emotional experience, suffering, discomfort; the cause of misfortune is a variety of adverse events or lack of the desirable things.

The contextual analysis of the adjective *unhappy* shows that it is used in the same contexts together with lexical units denoting a range of negative emotions: horror, anger, despair, loneliness, etc., actualizing its conceptualization in English speech consciousness.

The prospects of the further research may aim at the analysis of the noun *unhappiness* in different types of English national discourses, primarily American and British, as well as the study of gender specific associative links of the notion under study and its cross-cultural studies implementation.

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