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Файфер Н.В.
(Київ, Україна)

SEMANTIC POTENTIAL OF STYLISTICALLY NEUTRAL WORDS

Стаття присвячена розгляду семантичних і функціональних характеристик стилістично нейтральних слів (СНС). Мета роботи полягає у дослідженні лексико-семантичних властивостей стилістично немаркованих одиниць у романах У. С. Моема. Головними завданнями статті є проаналізувати контекстуальну реалізацію досліджуваних лексичних одиниць у зазначених творах і представити полісемантичний потенціал нейтрального шару лексики англійської мови.

Ключові слова: семантичні характеристики, функціональні характеристики, стилістично нейтральне слово (СНС), лексико-семантичні властивості, контекстуальна реалізація, полісемантичний потенціал.

Статья посвящена рассмотрению семантических и функциональных особенностей стилистически нейтральных слов (СНС). Цель исследования состоит в изучении лексико-семантических свойств стилистически нейтральных единиц в романах У. С. Моэма. Главные задачи статьи – проанализировать контекстуальную реализацию исследуемых лексических единиц в указанных произведениях и представить полисемантический потенциал нейтрального слоя лексики английского языка.

Ключевые слова: семантические особенности, функциональные особенности, стилистически нейтральное слово (СНС), лексико-семантические свойства, контекстуальная реализация, полисемантический потенциал.

The article focuses on the study of semantic and functional peculiarities of stylistically neutral words (SNWs). The aim of the research is to investigate lexico-semantic properties of stylistically unmarked units in the novels by W. S. Maugham. The main tasks of the article are to analyze the contextual realization of the lexical units under study in the mentioned novels and to highlight the polysemantic potential of the neutral layer of English vocabulary.

Key words: semantic peculiarities, functional peculiarities, a stylistically neutral word (SNW), lexico-semantic properties, contextual realization, polysemantic potential.

The problem of meaning has always been in the centre of linguists' attention in our country and abroad [1: 3; 2: 161; 3: 53; 4: 89; 5: 61; 6: 43; 7: 7; 8: 215; 9: 18; 10: 8; 11: 9–10; 12: 73; 13: 4; 14: 12]. Moreover, it has been one of the most disputable aspects of investigating lexical units. That is why this article will focus on the neutral words of the English language and the variety of meanings they may possess.

The ***object*** of the investigation is stylistically neutral words in the novels written by William Somerset Maugham.

The ***subject*** of the article is the semantic and functional aspect of stylistically neutral vocabulary in the novels by W. S. Maugham.

The investigation is fulfilled on the ***material*** of W. S. Maugham's novels: '*Cakes and Ale*' [15], '*Rain and Other Short Stories*' [16], '*Theatre*' [17], '*The Moon and Sixpence*' [18], '*The Painted Veil*' [19].

The ***purpose*** of the investigation is to highlight some semantic peculiarity of stylistically neutral words and certain peculiarity of their functioning.

The main ***tasks*** of the research are:

1) to investigate lexico-semantic properties of the neutral vocabulary in the novels written by W. S. Maugham;

2) to highlight polysemantic properties of stylistically neutral words and their contextual representation in the mentioned above novels;

3) to analyse the semantico-functional peculiarities of stylistically unmarked vocabulary in the novels by W. S. Maugham.

The article is marked by the ***novelty*** of its approaches to the analysis of stylistically neutral words which undergo changes in the process of semantico-stylistic transposition.

The ***methods*** of linguistic investigation used in the article are:

1) the semantico-functional method;

2) the semantico-stylistic method;

3) the comparative method;

4) the method of contextual analysis.

The given above methods enable us to get into the semantic structure of stylistically unmarked words and to investigate the processes which determine the stylistic actuality of neutral vocabulary in the novels by W. S. Maugham.

According to stylistic classification, the word-stock of the English language can be roughly divided into three uneven groups: literary words, neutral words and colloquial words. The neutral layer of the vocabulary is of universal character. It means that it is unrestricted in its use, as neutral words possess no stylistic connotations and, as a result, they are suitable for any communicative situation without restrictions [20: 25]. Besides, neutral words can be employed in all the styles of any language and in all the spheres of human activity because they form a bulk of the English vocabulary. Moreover, it is the neutral stock of words that is so prolific in producing new meanings.

The wealth of neutral words is often overlooked. This is due to their inconspicuous character. But it must be mentioned that their faculty for assuming new meanings and generating new stylistic variants is quite amazing. This generative power of the neutral stratum in the English language is multiplied by the very nature of the language itself. It has been estimated that most neutral English words are of monosyllabic character, as, in the process of development from Old English to Modern English, most of the parts of speech lost their distinguishing suffixes [21: 73].

Unlike all the other groups, the neutral group of words cannot be considered as having a special stylistic colouring, whereas both literary and colloquial words have a definite stylistic colouring. Thus, the emotionally coloured words are contrasted to the emotionally neutral ones [22: 209].

The following synonyms illustrate the relations that exist between the neutral, literary and colloquial words in the English language (see *Table 1*):

Here are several examples taken from the novels by W. S. Maugham by way of illustration:

"*You know, I'm not the sort of **chap** to talk about his wife to other people. I always think that's such a frightfully bad form*" [17: 172].

"*Well, young **fellow**, home for the holidays? My word, what a big **chap** you're growing*" [15: 89].

"*We'll be back for tea. Is the court marked out, **daddy**? We're going to play tennis after tea*" [17: 138].

"*His **father**, having retired, lived in an unpretentious, but not mean, house <…>*" [15: 31].

"*There were photographs in the drawing-room of her son and daughter. The son – his name was Robert – was a **boy** of sixteen at Rugby; and you saw him in flannels and a cricket cap, and again in a tail-coat and a stand-up collar*" [18: 35].

"*There entered a **youth** in a very well-cut dinner jacket*" [16: 324].

"*Now then, you **kids**, you go to bed. You can go on talking tomorrow*" [17: 142].

"*It is quite evident. Did the possibility of such a thing never occur to you? You are with **child**, my dear*" [19: 170].

Table 1

Colloquial Words	Neutral Words	Literary Words
chap	*fellow*	*associate*
daddy	*father*	*parent*
flapper	*young girl*	*maiden*
kid	*child*	*infant*
teenager	*boy/girl*	*youth/maiden*

It goes without saying that there is a definite semantic difference between the synonyms given above. There are very few absolute synonyms in English just as there in any other language. The main distinction between synonyms remains stylistic: It may lie in the emotional tension connoted in a word, or in the sphere of application, or in the degree of the quality denoted. As we can notice, colloquial words are always more emotionally coloured than literary ones; neutral words have no degree of emotiveness, nor have they any distinction in the sphere of usage [21: 74]. Thus, the neutral vocabulary may be viewed as an invariant of the standard English vocabulary.

The principal characteristic features of neutral words are polysemy, synonymy and homonymy of various kinds. The historical development of the English language greatly influenced the formal and semantic features of its words: the abundant influx of borrowed words led to the appearance of a great number of synonyms and antonyms; the rise of conversion as a typically English word-building process, the tendency for multiple changes of meaning in existing words led to the development of many grammatical and lexical homonyms, and polysemantic words [23: 17].

It has been noticed that common colloquial words are gradually losing their non-standard character and becoming widely recognized. Thus, colloquial words may pass into the neutral vocabulary. However, they have not lost their colloquial association. Here there is an extract from the novel *Theatre* by W. S. Maugham to support the idea:

"*She got a little private amusement by seeing how much he could **swallow*** (= *could <u>believe</u>*)" [17: 75].

At first sight the understanding of the term *'meaning'* seems to present no difficulty at all. The scientific definition, however, has been the issue of interminable discussions. Every

notional word of a natural language carries some definite information. This information may be basic, or denotative, and additional, or connotative [9: 5]. The majority of words in the English language possess just denotative information and are stylistically neutral. This does not mean that they cannot be used with a certain stylistic purpose. A word in fiction acquires new qualities depending on its position, distribution, etc. Practically any word, depending on its context, may acquire certain connotations [24: 16–17; 25: 16]. Thus, lexical meaning of a neutral word may be analyzed as including a denotational component (which presents a generalized reflection of the object) and a connotational component (which reflects some additional, secondary characteristics of the denotatum) [1: 3–4].

It must be added that stylistic reference and emotive charge are closely connected and, to a certain degree, interdependent [26: 167]. As a rule stylistically coloured words are observed to possess a considerable emotive charge. It can be proved by comparing stylistically labelled words with their neutral synonyms. The colloquial word *mummy* is more emotional than the neutral *mother*; the slang word *mum* is undoubtedly more expressive than its neutral counterpart. The following examples illustrate the point:

"*It was impossible not to see that Mrs Strickland was an excellent housekeeper. And you felt sure that she was an admirable **mother***" [18: 35].

"*Can I come in, **mummy**?*" [17: 186].

"*I say, **mum**, there's a whole crowd going on to Maidenhead to dine and dance, and they want Tom and me to go too. You don't mind, do you?*" [17: 151].

It has been mentioned that neutral words are the main source of polysemy. Polysemy is the ability of a language unit to possess several meanings [27: 4]. It is the neutral stock of words that is so prolific in producing new meanings. Every meaning in the English language and every difference in meaning is signalled either by the form of the word itself or by context, i.e. its syntagmatic relations depending on the position in the spoken chain. The unity of the two facets of a linguistic sign – its form and its content – is kept in its lexico-grammatical variant [28: 51]. All the lexico-grammatical variants of a neutral word taken together form its semantic structure, or its semantic paradigm. In other words, the semantic structure of a word is an organized whole comprised by recurrent meanings and shades of meaning that a particular sound complex can assume in different contexts, together with emotional, stylistic and other connotations.

Every meaning interacts not only with other meanings within its semantic structure, but also outside it [29: 48]. Linguistic literature abounds in various terms concerning the meaning, e.g.: the meaning is *direct* when it nominates the referent without any help of context, in isolation; the meaning is *figurative* when the object is named and at the same time characterized through its similarity with another object [28: 52]. Other oppositions are: *concrete* :: *abstract*, *main*/*primary* :: *secondary*, *central* :: *peripheric*, *narrow* :: *extended*, *general* :: *special*/*particular*, etc.

Taking into account the fact that the resources of English are strictly limited, it (the language) cannot express each separate idea with the help of a separate word and, as a result, has to add new meanings to already existing words [30: 40; 4: 48]. Thus, the frequency of polysemy depends on linguistic factors. Languages where derivation and composition are sparingly used will tend to fill gaps in vocabulary by adding new meanings to existing in terms.

An objective criterion of the comparative value of individual meanings is the frequency of their occurrence in speech. There is a tendency in modern linguistics to interpret the concept

of the central meaning of a neutral word in terms of the frequency of its occurrence. Intuitively we feel that the meaning that is actually representative of a word, the meaning that first occurs to us whenever we hear or see it, is the basic, or the direct/neutral, meaning and all the other meanings are minor in comparison. Some examples will help to support the idea:

BOY

"*There was one photograph of the three of them, Michael very manly and incredibly handsome, herself all tenderness looking down at Roger with maternal feeling, and Roger a little* **boy** (the word *boy* is used in its direct/neutral meaning) *with a curly head, which had been an enormous success*" [17: 16].

"*The fact was, Kitty supposed, that she* (Dorothy Townsend) *cared for nothing but her children: there were two* **boys** (= two *sons*) *at school in England <…>*" [19: 11].

"*She rang the bell and when the* **boy** (= the *servant*) *came asked him who had brought the book and when*" [19: 14].

"*If she wanted to marry just to be married there were a dozen* **boys** (= *admirers*) *who would jump at the chance*" [19: 22].

"*That season the only person who had proposed to her was a* **boy** (= a *young man*) *of twenty who was still at Oxford: she couldn't marry a* **boy** (= a *young man*) *five years younger than herself*" [19: 28].

"*She got out of her rickshaw in the Victoria Road and walked up the steep, narrow lane till she came to the shop. She lingered outside a moment as though her attention was attracted by the bric-à-brac which was displayed. But a* **boy** (= a *porter*) *who was standing there on the watch for customers, recognizing her at once, gave her a broad smile of connivance*" [19: 53–54].

"*They had their soup and their fish and then with the chicken a fresh green salad was handed to Kitty by the* **boy** (= the *waiter*/the *servant*)" [19: 112].

GIRL

"*Yes; she has a boy and a* **girl** (the word *girl* is used in its direct/neutral meaning). *They're both at school*" [18: 34].

"*His beauty created a sensation in Middlepool and the* **girls** (= the *admirers*) *used to hang about the stage door to see him go out*" [17: 20].

"*He seemed to like her society, but never by a pressure of the hand, by a glance or by a word, did he give the smallest indication that he looked upon her as anything but a* **girl** (= a *young woman*) *whom you met and danced with*" [19: 26].

"*Why all the* **girls** (= *schoolgirls*/*friends*) *who had come out with her were married long ago and most of them had children; she was tired of going to see them and gushing over their babies*" [19: 32].

"*Your first thought when you looked at the Mother Superior was that as a* **girl** (= a *youngster*) *she must have been beautiful, but in a moment you realized that this was a woman whose beauty, depending on character, had grown with advancing years*" [19: 126].

"*They went first into a large, bare room where a number of Chinese* **girls** (= *women-workers*) *were working at elaborate embroideries*" [19: 128].

"*Oh, when will this terrible epidemic cease? Two of our* **girls** (= *nuns*) *have been attacked this morning and nothing but a miracle can save them*" [19: 146].

"*The check had been put on the table when the **girl*** (= *the* <u>*waitress*</u>) *brought their tea, and when they got up Julia took a shilling out of her bag*" [17: 255].

SISTER

"*Do you know why I married you*?"

"*Because you wanted to be married before your **sister** Doris* (the word <u>*sister*</u> is used in its direct/neutral meaning)" [19: 69].

"*The **Sisters*** (= *the* <u>*nuns*</u>) *tell me that she belongs to one of the greatest families in France, but they won't tell me which; the Mother Superior, they say, doesn't wish it to be talked of*" [19: 119].

"*I am afraid something has happened,*" she faltered.

"*Would you like me to go away? I can come another time.*"

"*No, no. Tell me what I can do for you. It is only – only that one of our **Sisters*** (= <u>*nurses*</u>) *died last night*" [19: 145].

MOTHER

"*For the first time Kitty thought of her **mother*** (the word <u>*mother*</u> is used in its direct/neutral meaning)" [19: 81].

"*But I like to come, **Mother*** (= *the* <u>*Lady-Superior*</u>). *I find that it rests me*" [19: 153].

The given examples demonstrate that neutral words are highly polysemantic. It means that they are quite ambiguous, but certain speech conditions (i.e. the context in which they are represented) work to eliminate the polysemy of neutral vocabulary. In polysemantic words we are faced not with the problem of analyzing their individual meanings (the meaning of a polysemantic word is born in context [31: 23]), but primarily with the problem of interrelation and interdependence of various meanings in the semantic structure of one and the same word.

So, we can conclude that stylistically neutral words constitute the common core, or the bulk, of the vocabulary. They are characterized by high frequency, as neutral words are independent of the sphere of communication, i.e. neutral words possess no stylistic connotations and are suitable for any communicative situation. It means that neutral words have no restrictions in the sphere of usage. Moreover, the ability of the neutral vocabulary for assuming new meanings and generating new stylistic variants is often quite amazing.

Neutral words can also be analyzed from the point of view of their synonymic, antonymic and homonymic potential. Our ***future investigation*** will highlight the enumerated aspects of the English neutral word-stock. Besides, frequency of neutral words, frequency and occurrence of their grammatical combinability patterns can be analyzed as their functional features as well.

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Химинець М.Д.
(Ужгород, Україна)

МЕТАФОРИЧНЕ ВТІЛЕННЯ КОНЦЕПТУ *АМЕРИКА*

Стаття присвячена опису концептуальної метафори. Проаналізовано метафоричне втілення концепту АМЕРИКА, джерелом якого найчастіше виступає антропоморфний код. Розглянуто інші метафори газетного дискурсу із досліджуваним концептом.

Ключові слова: *метафора, когнітивна лінгвістика, політична метафорологія, метафоризація, аналогія.*

Статья посвящена описанию концептуальной метафоры. Проанализировано метафорическое воплощение концепта АМЕРИКА, источником для которого чаще всего выступает антропоморфный код. Рассмотрены другие метафоры газетного дискурса с изучаемым концептом.

Ключевые слова: *метафора, когнитивная лингвистика, политическая метафорология, метафоризация, аналогия.*

The article is devoted to the study of conceptual metaphor. The concept "America" has been researched with the anthropomorphic code as its source. Other newspaper discourse metaphors have been investigated together with the concept under analysis.

Key words: *metaphor, cognitive linguistics, political metaphor science, metaphorization, analogy.*

Учення про метафору бере свій початок ще з праць Аристотеля, який першим вказав на її пізнавальний потенціал. Уже майже два тисячоліття метафора постійно перебуває в центрі уваги мовознавців. Останнім часом науковий інтерес до неї тільки зростає і