

## SCRUTINIZING SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF THE VERB “CHOOSE”

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**Abstract:** The problem of word-building is associated with prevailing morphological word-structures and with processes of making new words. Semantics is the study of meaning. Modern approaches to this problem are characterised by two different levels of study: syntagmatic and paradigmatic.

**Keywords:** syntagmatic, paradigmatic, semantic, polysemy, verb.

On the syntagmatic level, the semantic structure of the word is analysed in its linear relationships with neighbouring words in connected speech. In other words, the semantic characteristics of the word are observed, described and studied on the basis of its typical contexts.

On the paradigmatic level, the word is studied in its relationships with other words in the vocabulary system. So, a word may be studied in comparison with other words of similar meaning (e. g. work, n. — labour, n.; to refuse, v. — to reject v. — to decline, v.), of opposite meaning (e. g. busy, adj. — idle, adj.; to accept, v, — to reject, v.), of different stylistic characteristics (e. g. man, n. — chap, n. — bloke, n. — guy, n.). Consequently, the main problems of paradigmatic studies are synonymy, antonymy, functional styles.

Yet, despite a certain readjustment in the semantic structure of the word, the meanings of the constituents of the compounds of this second group are still transparent: you can see through them the meaning of the whole complex. Knowing the meanings of the constituents a student of English can get a fairly clear idea of what the whole word means even if he comes across it for the first time. At least, it is clear that a blackbird is some kind of bird and that a good-for-nothing is not meant as a compliment.

The modern approach to semantics is based on the assumption that the inner form of the word (i. e. its meaning) presents a structure which is called the semantic structure of the word.

Yet, before going deeper into this problem, it is necessary to make a brief survey of another semantic phenomenon which is closely connected with it.

The semantic structure of the word does not present an indissoluble unity (that is, actually, why it is referred to as “structure”), nor does it necessarily stand for one concept. It is generally known that most words convey several concepts and thus possess the corresponding number of meanings. A word having several meanings is

called polysemantic, and the ability of words to have more than one meaning is described by the term polysemy.

Two somewhat naive but frequently asked questions may arise in connection with polysemy:

Is polysemy an anomaly or a general rule in English vocabulary? Is polysemy an advantage or a disadvantage so far as the process of communication is concerned? Let us deal with both these questions together.

Polysemy is certainly not an anomaly. Most English words are polysemantic. It should be noted that the wealth of expressive resources of a language largely depends on the degree to which polysemy has developed in the language. Sometimes people who are not very well informed in linguistic matters claim that a language is lacking in words if the need arises for the same word to be applied to several different phenomena. In actual fact, it is exactly the opposite: if each word is found to be capable of conveying, let us say, at least two concepts instead of one, the expressive potential of the whole vocabulary increases twofold. Hence, a well-developed polysemy is not a drawback but a great advantage in a language.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the number of sound combinations that human speech organs can produce is limited. Therefore at a certain stage of language development the production of new words by morphological means becomes limited, and polysemy becomes increasingly important in providing the means for enriching the vocabulary. From this, it should be clear that the process of enriching the vocabulary does not consist merely in adding new words to it, but, also, in the constant development of polysemy.

The system of meanings of any polysemantic word develops gradually, mostly over the centuries, as more and more new meanings are either added to old ones, or oust some of them. So the complicated processes of polysemy development involve both the appearance of new meanings and the loss of old ones. Yet, the general tendency with English vocabulary at the modern stage of its history is to increase the total number of its meanings and in this way to provide for a quantitative and qualitative growth of the language's expressive resources.

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