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SOME FEATURES OF MODELING THE LEXICO-SEMANTIC FIELD «COVID-19»

Abstract. *The article presents the lexical units that appeared in the English vocabulary during the first wave of coronavirus in the form of a lexico-semantic field (LSF). LSF has a specific field structure: the core, nuclear zone, near and far periphery. The construction of the LSF allows us to expand our understanding of the content of the modern COVID-19 lexeme in the English language consciousness. The study was conducted on the material of the American newspaper «The New York Times». The research material obtained by selecting lexical units was classified into five main thematic groups: Medicine during a pandemic; Public behavior during a pandemic; Education during a pandemic; World tourism during a pandemic and Sales during a pandemic. Such division helped in modelling the core, nuclear zone, near and far periphery of the LSF. The study of “COVID” vocabulary has broad prospects, since the epidemiological situation in the world is changing dramatically with the advent of COVID-19 and, therefore, the language creates neologisms to denote new realities and new experiences in the era of the pandemic.*

Keywords: *newspaper discourse, lexico-semantic field, COVID vocabulary, COVID-19.*

Introduction

The study of the vocabulary appeared during the COVID-19 pandemic is important from many points of views.

Thus, the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary have documented many *coronavirus-related linguistic shifts*, some of their observations are surprising. They claim, for example, that the pandemic has produced only one truly new word: the acronym COVID-19. Most of the *coronavirus-related changes* that the editors have noted have to do with older, more obscure words and phrases being catapulted into common usage, such as *reproduction number* and *social distancing*. They've also documented the creation of *new word blends* based on previously existing vocabulary (Kreuz, 2020). Moreover, the special, *coronavirus-related updates* give us a glimpse into how language can quickly change in the face of unprecedented social and economic disruption. For example, one of the effects of the pandemic is that it's brought previously obscure medical terms to the forefront of everyday speech (Kreuz, 2020).

All of the above facts led to the need to study the newspaper vocabulary of the English language (the American variant), which arose in the course of comprehending the new reality associated with the spread of coronavirus. The research was carried out within the framework of the lexico-semantic field (LSF).

Materials and methods

LSF is a complex lexical microsystem that combines words according to the semantic principle and has a specific field structure (the core, nuclear zone, near and far periphery) (Karaulov, 1972).

LSF has the most important structural properties: interconnectedness of elements, their orderliness and hierarchy. LSP has a number of properties that distinguish it from various linguistic systems: lack of clear boundaries, continuity, openness, interaction with other fields, attraction, the presence of gaps, asymmetric construction, autonomy, independence of the lexico-semantic system, specificity of different languages (Kurenkova, 2008).

Taking account of the characteristics of the lexico-semantic field listed below, we have developed LSF “COVID-19”, having analyzed fifty-five articles covering the problem of the 2020 pandemic from the popular American newspaper «The New York Times».

Results and discussion

Many researchers have turned to the study of «pandemic» vocabulary. Thus, on the material of the Russian language, the specifics of semiosis are studied, as a result of which signs appear for the nomination of new realities in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. The authors identify three main ways in which new words appear: *expanding the meanings of verbal signs already in the language*, *producing words according to typical word-formation models*, and *borrowing*, which occupies a less significant place in the creation of the “newspeak” of the pandemic era (Temirgazina, Luczyk, 2020). American researchers also believe that social changes can bring sort of a boom of new words that are *used more commonly or old words that sort of get resurrected*. As the whole world has changed as a result of the pandemic, that has opened up some opportunities for *new words* to spread (Stamm, 2021). They assume that *new words or phrases* can appear to *describe what we are experiencing*, but it’s also common that we *extend the meaning of words* that we already have to fit a new concept or situation. As can be observed, American, British and Kazakh researchers note the same trends in the emergence of new words related to the pandemic.

Moreover, Kazakh researchers note such connotative meanings typical of the “pandemic” discourse as *negative appraisal* and *emotionality*, *globalization of perception*, *uncontrollability*, *unpredictability*. They determine the choice of a person to connect linguistic signs and new objects in the course of semiosis (Temirgazina, Luczyk, 2020). Like Kazakh scientists, American researchers note the fatigue over the word and its negative connotation which has led people on TikTok and other video apps to replace pandemic with other P-words. It’s called Voldemorting from the «Harry Potter» books, in which characters would not say the villain’s name (Stamm, 2021).

The researchers of the English language note *the speed* with which the new “pandemic” vocabulary came into active use. The words and phrases we are using a year into the coronavirus pandemic might have not been part of normal vocabulary just one year ago (Stamm, 2021).

Thus, the interest in the study of pandemic vocabulary led us to analyze NYT newspaper articles covering the problem of the 2020 pandemic. Based on this material, about one hundred lexemes were identified, fifty of which were included in the LSF “COVID-19”. Modeling the LSF allows us to expand our understanding of the content of the modern COVID-19 lexeme in the English language consciousness. The first challenge in modelling the LSF was the choice of the spelling of the key lexeme of the LSF core. Should it be written as COVID-19 or as COVID-19? The Oxford English Dictionary’s editors report *regional differences* for this term. “COVID” is dominant in the U.S., Canada

and Australia, while “COVID” is more common in the U.K., Ireland, New Zealand and South Africa (Kreuz, 2020). In our article we prefer to use the variant COVID-19.

For the field analysis, LSF lexemes were divided into five thematic groups:

1. Medicine during a pandemic
2. Public behavior during a pandemic
3. Education during a pandemic
4. World tourism during a pandemic
5. Sales during a pandemic

The thematic division of lexemes that we have chosen from the NYT newspaper allowed us to identify those areas of human life that were affected by the pandemic.

As mentioned above the *COVID-19* lexeme forms the core of the LSF and groups around itself generic semes – hypersemes: *coronavirus*, *coronavirus pandemic*, *corona*. Despite the fact that there are four lexemes in the core of the field, in total they occurred more than four hundred times. The hyperseme of the field is characterized as a semantic element of a higher order, organizing the semantic formation of the field (Набирухина, 1990). The frequency of use of the proposed words, as well as the similarity in meaning, served as a criterion for introducing these lexemes into the core of the LSF.

The lexeme COVID-19 has the meaning of the disease name caused by the coronavirus. COVID-19 is an abbreviation for COronaVirus Disease 2019. The lexemes «coronavirus» and «pandemic» are found in almost every news article, more often than all other units of the LSF under consideration (157 and 91 times, respectively). The lexeme «corona», a derivative of «coronavirus», was used only in oral speech at the beginning of the pandemic, and served as an abbreviation for a polysyllabic term. At the moment, the word «corona» is firmly entrenched in newspaper discourse and is quite common in the articles studied (in 13 out of 50).

Next comes the *nuclear zone*. The *nuclear zone* is made up of units united by the “COVID-19” archiseme, but with a small number of differential features. These lexemes can be characterized by a high frequency of use, and they are also directly related to the pandemic. These include words such as: *COVID-19 vaccine*, *adenovirus* (NYT, #58.806), *antibodies to the virus* (NYT, #58.803). The location of lexemes in the nuclear zone can be characterized not only by the frequency of use, but also by the importance they have for each person in the current situation. Health is the main guarantee of a life, and reflects the quality of human life.

The *peripheral zone* of the LSF “COVID-19” concept consists of the *near* and *far periphery*. The *near periphery* is represented by the following language units: *Mask mandate* (NYT, no. 58804), *homestuck* (NYT, no. 58809), *antibacterial gel* (NYT, no. 58808). These lexical units are characterized by a more extensive use, they are used not only in the sense of a pandemic, but can also be included in other semantic associations.

To the *far periphery* of the LSF «COVID-19» we attributed the following lexemes: *safe public health guidelines* (NYT, No. 58803), *checking temperature* (NYT, No. 58720), *debilitating symptoms* (NYT, No. 58801), *to be on ventilators* (NYT, No. 58650), *dead passengers* (NYT, No. 58756).

Conclusion

Newspaper discourse quickly shows changes in the lexico-semantic system of the language, so the study of vocabulary during the COVID-19 pandemic plays an important role in learning English.

Having considered the features of the functioning of the lexeme “COVID-19” within the framework of the LSF, we have identified a certain layer of vocabulary related to the topic of coronavirus. It affects many areas of human life, including medicine, social behavior, education, tourism, sales in a pandemic time. The study of this type of vocabulary expands our understanding of the content of the modern COVID-19 lexeme in the English language consciousness as well as understanding of the pandemic as a global phenomenon. It also shows all the possibilities of the language system when creating new words in various ways.

The study of “COVID” vocabulary has broad prospects, since the epidemiological situation in the world is changing dramatically with the advent of COVID-19 and, therefore, the language creates neologisms to denote new realities and new experiences in the era of the pandemic.

Despite the fact that some of these words will disappear due to their irrelevance (the pandemic will come to an end), any attempts to slow down or stop language changes by prescriptive means typically does not win out over the collective decision of the people who speak that language (Stamm, 2021).

Our study confirmed that the spread of the coronavirus caused the emergence of new phrases (*Travel Bubbles; Social-distancing*), as well as a large layer of medical vocabulary became commonly used under the influence of the COVID-19 virus (*critical care ventilators, adenovirus*). Moreover, it was revealed that the changed social behavior also affected people’s everyday speech (*mask mandate, self-quarantine, etc.*).

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«COVID-19» Лексикалық-семантикалық өрісін моделдерудің кейбір ерекшеліктері

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Аңдатпа. Мақалада коронавирустың бірінші толқыны кезінде ағылшын тілінде лексика-семантикалық өріс (ЛСӨ) форматында пайда болған лексикалық бірліктер қарастырылады. ЛСӨ белгілі бір құрылымға ие: өзегі, жақын және алыс шеткісі. «Covid-19» ЛСӨ модельдеу ағылшын тілінде ойлаудағы «Covid-19» лексемасының мазмұны туралы түсінігімізді кеңейтуге мүмкіндік береді. Зерттеу америкалық «The New York Times» газетінен алынған мақалалардың материалы бойынша жүргізілді. Талдау нәтижесінде анықталған лексикалық бірліктер бес тақырыптық топқа жіктелген: пандемия кезіндегі медицина; пандемия кезіндегі қоғамдық мінез-құлық; пандемия кезіндегі білім беру; пандемия кезіндегі жаһандық туризм және пандемия кезіндегі сату. Мұндай бөлу ЛСӨ моделін жасауға ықпалын тигізді. Ковидтік лексиканы зерттеудің болашағы зор, өйткені әлемдегі эпидемиологиялық жағдай Ковид-19-дың пайда болуына байланысты үнемі өзгеріп отырады, сондықтан да тілде пандемия дәуіріндегі жаңа шындықтар мен жаңа тәжірибені білдіретін жаңа сөздер мен сөз тіркестері пайда болады.

Түйінді сөздер: газет дискурсы, лексика-семантикалық өріс, ковидтік лексика, Ковид-19.

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Некоторые особенности моделирования лексико-семантического поля «КОВИД-19»

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Аннотация. Статья рассматривает лексические единицы, возникшие в английском языке во время первой волны коронавируса в формате лексико-семантического поля (ЛСП). ЛСП имеет определенную структуру: ядро, ближнюю и дальнюю периферию. Моделирование ЛСП «Ковид-19» позволяет расширить наше представление о содержании лексемы «Ковид-19» в английском языковом мышлении. Исследование было проведено на материале статей американской газеты «The New York Times». Выявленные в результате анализа лексические единицы были сгруппированы в пять тематических групп: медицина во время пандемии; общественное поведение во время пандемии; образование во время пандемии; мировой туризм во время пандемии и продажи во время пандемии. Такое деление помогло в моделировании ЛСП. Изучение ковидной лексики имеет большие перспективы, так как эпидемиологическая ситуация в мире постоянно меняется с появлением Ковид-19, язык создает новые слова и словосочетания для обозначения новых реалий и нового опыта в эпоху пандемии.

Ключевые слова: газетный дискурс, лексико-семантическое поле, ковидная лексика, ковид-19.