

THE ADJECTIVES OF PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A PERSON IN A CURRENT ENGLISH

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Abstract. The paper deals with the adjectives of the English language which denote physical characteristics of a person. The subject of the research is functional and semantic specific features of the systematic relations of the group of adjectives within the microfield “portrait of a person”. The topicality is specified by the fact that there is a need to outline the speech peculiarities of the adjectives of this system and the role of extralinguistic factors in their pragmatic potential.

Keywords: lexico-semantic group, seme, constituent, field.

Introduction. The characteristic feature of current scientific paradigms is anthropocentrism when scientists research a person as a complex phenomenon. These concepts are fixed in a language by various lexical items. The adjectives are united into lexico-semantic fields in which we distinguish different groups.

The object of the research is the adjectives of the person portraying in the current English language. The subject of the research is semantic peculiarities of the English adjectives which denote physical characteristics of a person as constituents of the lexico-semantic field. These adjectives have been studied by K. Baldinger [1] and some others scientists.

Methodology. According to the theory of component structure of the lexical meaning it contains macrocomponents which unite blocks of semes: denotative-significant, connotative, grammar and sociolinguistic. The semes of these macrocomponents ensure the usage of the adjectives that are under research. As these adjectives are considered as members of a definite semantic field, the correlation of semes affects the membership of the constituents of this semantic field in a certain microfield and the nucleus or the periphery of the field. The constituents should be united by one or some common integral semes that is distinguished in the result of the analysis of vocabulary definitions of these adjectives.

Findings. The block with the dominant *fat* includes such members: *fat, full, flat, plump, corpulent, stout, obese, gross, buxom, chubby, tubby, bulbous* and *stocky*. The integral semes of the block are “width of a body” and “stoutness which is more than a norm”: “He was a tallish man, but stockily built, and he seemed ill at

ease in his khaki uniform” [3, p.183]. The suffix *-ish-* points at an insufficient intensity of a feature. The word *fat* also has an additional connotative sense of an attitude which is not positive. The context gives a vivid opposition in the pair of adjectives describing a person who is now fat but *was* good-looking: “He’s *fat* and forty now, he does himself too well, but he was very good-looking when he first came to the Colony [3, p.100]. The meaning of the word *plump* is interpreted as a very positive one; this word is related to a person who is fat in a pleasant-looking way. The author uses it describing the woman who he sympathizes greatly with, one of the friends of the Mother Superior:” In a moment a nun came in, short and *plump*, with a homely face, red cheek and merry eyes “[3, p.113]. The words *full* and *fat* are also used to describe the parts of a body: “She liked the little trim curly moustache which did not conceal his *full* red lips “[3, p.43]; “...and the master, a little, *fat-faced* man in a black gown, came out and greeted her “[7, p.54]. We have included the word *bulbous* into this block by the analogy with “bulb “: “1) almost round, thick, underground part of a plant sending roots downwards and leaves upwards” [2]: “He was white-haired, though the eyebrows were still faintly grey; the *bulbous* nose, the misleadingly fastidious mouth, the pouched grey-blue eyes in a hale face “[4, p.47]. The shade of the absence of any positive quality is present in the word *bulbous* implicitly; the narrator depicts Henry Breasley as an unpleasant personage.

The lexical and semantic variant *thin* manifests in the context the meaning of small width and is used to describe a person and parts of a body: “They had swum slowly back together, toward the *thin* figure drying herself” [4, p.94]; “...David looked back and saw the *thin* brown figure in her black singlet pick up her book again” [4, p.51]. In some cases, the lexical and semantic variant *thin* acquires a dramatic negative shade when used with a word with a distinct negative background meaning (*flat-chested*): “She was a woman of fifty, *thin* and *flat-chested*, with prominent cheek-bones and a large, well-shaped nose” [3, p.22]. In these contexts the word *thin* denotes not only the absence of excessive flesh but even an extreme exhaustion: “She noticed how *thin* his hand was, it was a fine hand, *slender*, with long fingers, but now it was nothing but skin and bone...” [3, p.158];”Looking at

him now, for he was staring with abstracted gaze out of the window, she was surprised that she had not noticed before how terribly *thin* he had grown during the last weeks” [3, p.158]. The context proves the idea that *stout* and *thin* form the antonymic nucleus groups: “She was a *tallish* woman, *taller* than Kitty, neither stout nor *thin*, with a good deal of pale brown hair “[3, p.17].

The words *slight* and *slim* are nearly always associated with the youth: “The *slight* figure of the girl cast as dragon turned, a small smile on her face” [3, p.117]; “She waved toward them, the pool of light they sat in, then came down the room; *slim* and cool and composed, belying what had been said” [3, p.103]. The word *slim* names a person who is not only thin but also slender: “He watched the Mouse wading into the water; Diana, *slim-backed* and small-rumped; something underfoot, she stepped sideways before going deeper” [4, p.93]; “She was *slim* in her long embroidered gown and somewhat *taller* than Kitty, used to the Southern people, had expected” [3, p.165]. The adjective *slender* renders not only the meaning of slimness but also a shade of gracefulness. Through the hands the author characterizes a woman with pleasant manners and the ways of speaking and behaving that attract people. The narrator highlights this shade of meaning in describing a Chinese woman by using the word *ivory*, a gorgeous, magnificent, exquisite and exotic substance: “Kitty noticed her hands; they were preternaturally long, very *slender*, of the color of ivory; and the exquisite nails were painted” [3, p. 165].

The context proves that the words *fat*, *slight* and *thin* are definitely divided into opposite semantic groups : “ He was short ,but not *thick-set*, *slight* rather and *thin*; dark and clean-shaven, with very regular, clear-cut features “ [3, p.31].

Conclusions. Findings of the research are : 1) we have divided the microfields of adjectives with the general meaning “ width of a body “ in two microblocks; 2) we have singled out the same content 17 adjectives and defined their denotative, significant, connotative and sociolinguistic semes; 3) Such integral semes have been defined: “width of a body” and “stoutness which is more than a norm”, differential semes are: “excessive amount of flesh and fat”, “firm stature“, “roundness like a tub“, “fatness as a result of swelling”, “healthy look“ (of women)

and “little depth (this last one concerns the word *flat-chested*; 4) we have come to the conclusion that in the English language there are the suffixes which state the insufficiency of a feature intensity.

References

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