

THE THEORY BEHIND THE PRACTICES OF TREATING SYNONYMS IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DICTIONARIES: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

This paper analyzes the representation of synonymy in English dictionaries of synonyms and thesauri with the aim of revealing and comparing their theoretical views of this phenomenon as well as a critical assessment of their practices as reflections of these views. The theoretical foundation of the analyzed reference works is determined according to two aspects: the scope of the notion of synonymy and the relation between synonymy and polysemy. The results have shown that the selected lexicographic resources are based on near-synonymy exhibiting two types – the one with a narrower and the one with a broader scope. However, the narrower understanding of near-synonymy leads to more systematic and consistent compilation of synonym sets with a clear structure. Moreover, synonymy and polysemy are viewed in two ways: as independent lexical phenomena or as interrelated phenomena, inseparable from each other. It has been concluded that the recognition of synonymy-polysemy interplay results in the proper treatment in the case of a polysemous word since its entry contains several synonym sets, each corresponding to its different sense.

Key words: synonymy, synonym set, polysemy, English, lexicography, dictionary of synonyms, thesaurus.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper analyzes the representation of synonymy in English-language dictionaries as the reflection of a specific theoretical approach to this lexical phenomenon. As Dragičević (2007: 261) points out, each dictionary of synonyms or thesaurus, as a specialized dictionary, is a lexicographic reflection of a particular theoretical view of synonymy. The analyzed theoretical approaches will be accounted for in terms of two aspects: the scope of the notion of synonymy and the relation between synonymy and polysemy.

The aim of the analysis is to identify and compare theoretical views of synonymy that the aforementioned lexicographic resources are based on as well as

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to compare and critically assess their practices in terms of their user-friendliness. Finally, the identified advantages and disadvantages of these practices will lead to the conclusion about the most adequate model for the treatment of synonymy.

This qualitative analysis involves the following printed dictionary of synonyms and three thesauri: *Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms* (1984) (WNDS), *The New Oxford Thesaurus of English* (2000) (NOTE), *The Collins Thesaurus: the Ultimate Wordfinder* (2004, 2nd edition) (CTUW) and *Oxford Learner's Thesaurus* (2008) (OLT). These reference works have been selected as widely used and renowned representatives of different approaches to the concept of synonymy as well as different lexicographic practices concerning its treatment.

WNDS lists a smaller number of synonyms for its headwords in comparison to the other three selected reference works. However, all synonyms listed within an entry are defined and mutually discriminated in terms of their meaning and use.

On the other hand, NOTE and CTUW provide a longer list of synonyms for the given headword including several synonym sets each corresponding to a different sense, but none of these synonyms is defined or exemplified.

Finally, OLT is a unique pedagogically-oriented English thesaurus whose headwords have been selected from a limited vocabulary set perceived by the compilers as the core one for learners. For each headword, there has been formed a group of synonyms selected according to their frequency in the contemporary use of English. Although, in the case of highly polysemous headwords, several synonym sets are included within an entry, each for a different sense, every synonym is treated separately being defined and exemplified.

Only word-based¹ thesauri are taken into consideration so that, in this paper, a thesaurus and a dictionary of synonyms² are treated as lexicographic resources of the same type, i.e. as specialized resources with the purpose of presenting inventories of synonyms organized under alphabetically arranged headwords. Although many general-purpose dictionaries³ combine the semasiological and onomasiological approach to the presentation of the lexicon so

¹ There are not analyzed concept-based lexicographic resources whose entries present words and expressions related to particular key concepts.

² On the understanding of terms *thesaurus* and a *dictionary of synonyms* in Lea (2008: 543) and Murphy (2013: 280).

³ On the comparison between a general-purpose dictionary and a dictionary of synonyms in Dziemianko (2010).

that sense definitions within an entry are followed by a list of words related to the given headword, they are not taken here as primary synonymy-related lexicographic resources and, consequently, they are not analyzed.

The sample analyzed across all the selected lexicographic resources is the entry for the verb *cut*, a highly polysemous verb with a significant number of synonyms in its different senses. It is assumed here that an entry representing such a rich inventory of synonyms provides a deep and detailed insight into various aspects of the underlying theoretical view of synonymy and the practice based on it.

2. SYNONYMY

2.1. A definition of the concept

As Dolezal (2013: 256) notices, ‘the sameness of meaning’ is the phrase that expresses an ordinary and intuitive definition of synonymy given by a speaker of a language. Murphy (2010: 109) defines synonymy as a paradigmatic relation existing among words that have the same or nearly the same meaning, such as *couch* and *sofa* in English. However, an in-depth account of synonymy reveals that it exhibits a range of variations including different types established according to the intensity of semantic equivalence between lexemes.

Relying on the observation that synonymy is a matter of degree, Cruse (1991: 268) introduces the scale of synonymity ranging from absolute synonymy, over cognitive synonymy to near-synonymy.⁴

According to Lyons (1977: 148), absolute synonymy can be identified only in the case in which lexemes are fully synonymous in all their senses and fully interchangeable in any given context. However, it is extremely difficult to find such cases in a language. In order to illustrate this claim, Rasulić (2016: 126) provides a set of examples including, among others, the synonyms *start* and *begin*, which are, as she explains, commonly taken as a representative synonym pair. Still, they do not meet the severe requirement of absolute synonymy. They are interchangeable in some but not all contexts as can be seen in the following examples:

When does the meeting start/begin?

*Start/*begin the engines!*

⁴ Adamska-Sałaciak (2013: 331) advocates the view according to which synonymy should be represented as a declining scale of semantic similarity ranging from semantic sameness to heteronymy.

*'Ladies and gentlemen', he *started/began.*

Relative synonymy is typically found in a language. It is characterized by the incompleteness of semantic equivalence, while the degree of its intensity can vary on the aforementioned scale of synonymy.

On the given scale, the point of absolute synonymy is followed by the region of cognitive synonymy. Cruse's (2004: 155) definition of cognitive synonymy overlaps with the general definition of synonymy provided by Lyons (1977: 202), which is based on a substitutability test as the main indicator of semantic equivalence. According to the aforementioned test relying on truth-conditional semantics, two expressions are synonymous if they are substitutable in a given proposition so that its truth-value is preserved. Hence, two propositions in which a synonym substitution is made should be mutually entailing as can be seen in the following examples given by Cruse (2004: 155):

John bought a violin entails and is entailed by John bought a fiddle.

I heard him tuning his fiddle entails and is entailed by I heard him tuning his violin.

She is going to play a violin concerto entails and is entailed by She is going to play a fiddle concerto.

In the context illustrated by the last example, *fiddle* is not typically used. However, the truth-value of the proposition is preserved so that *fiddle* and *violin* can be regarded as cognitive synonyms. It should be noticed that, in the given example, *fiddle* can be marked as more informal in comparison to *violin*. Therefore, Cruse (2004: 155) underlines that cognitive synonyms can differ in various aspects including their expressive meaning, connotative meaning, stylistic level etc. so that one of them is, for instance, more formal in comparison to the other (e.g. *think* : *cogitate*) or one has a positive while the other has a negative connotation (e.g. *firm* : *obstinate*).

Cognitive synonyms can also differ with respect of their collocational restrictions, which means that their permissible collocates are different. This becomes obvious in the example given by Cruse (1991: 280):

My grandfather passed away yesterday.

My grandfather died yesterday.

In this example, *pass away* and *die* are interchangeable so that the truth-value of the proposition remains unchanged, which proves that these verbs are

cognitive synonyms. It is also noticeable that the two synonyms differ in their collocational restrictions since *pass away* typically requires a human subject, while *die* has a wider range of permissible collocates.

However, a difference in collocational restrictions can, in some cases, yield synonymy which is not of the cognitive type. Thus, a possible difference in collocational restrictions cannot be taken as an exclusive characteristic of cognitive synonymy.

Taking into account the synonyms *good looking* : *handsome* : *pretty*, we can observe that *handsome* is typically related to men (e.g. *a handsome actor*), *pretty* to women (e.g. *a pretty actress*), while *good-looking* can be related to both men and women (e.g. *a good-looking actor/actress*) (Prčić 2016: 128). Therefore, it can be claimed that these synonyms differ in their typical collocates. Yet, they cannot be regarded as an example of cognitive synonymy since the following two utterances, given as illustrations in Rasulić (2016: 136), are not mutually entailing:

She is pretty.

She is handsome.

As Rasulić explains (2016: 136), since the two propositions do not entail each other, it is possible to assert the proposition containing one of the two synonyms and simultaneously deny the proposition containing the other synonym without contradiction, as it is shown in the following example: *She is not pretty, but in her own way she is handsome*. Such examples illustrate the region that the synonymy scale further extends into, beyond the region of cognitive synonymy, which is, according to Cruse (1991: 285), termed near-synonymy. Thus, near-synonyms can be defined as lexemes whose meaning is relatively close or more or less similar (Stanojević 2009: 194), but whose substitution in a proposition causes the change of its truth-value.

2.2. *Synonymy in relation to polysemy*

An important fact about synonymy existing between two lexemes is that it typically holds between some of their senses, but not all of them. For example, taking into consideration various senses of the nouns *pig* and *swine* (*pig* ‘animal’, ‘greedy person’, ‘policeman’ and *swine* ‘animal’, ‘extremely unpleasant person’), Lipka (2002: 160–161) reaches the conclusion that these two lexemes are synonymous only when they are used in their primary sense (‘animal’). However, there are examples in which two lexemes are synonymous in more than one of their

senses, such as the verbs *cut* and *chop*. Namely, these verbs are synonymous in their primary sense ‘divide something into pieces using a sharp tool’ (e.g. *Firstly, you have to cut/chop the carrots into pieces.*), but also in one of their secondary senses ‘reduce something in quantity, amount, etc.’ (e.g. *The price was cut/chopped from \$100 to \$50*). Such examples clearly show that a comprehensive account of synonymy between two lexemes has to take into account their polysemy.⁵

The best example of putting the cooperation between synonymy and polysemy into practice is certainly WordNet⁶ (Miller–Beckwith–Fellbaum–Gross & Miller, 2008), an electronic lexical semantic database, which is based on the interplay of polysemy and synonymy in the sense that, as Fontenelle (2012: 438) explains, different senses of a word are presented by different sets of synonyms (synsets), as can be seen in the following example showing different interpretations of the noun *chair* through four synonym sets (as cited in Geeraerts 2010: 158):

1. *chair* – a seat for one person, with a support for the back: *he put his coat over the back of the chair and sat down*
2. *professorship, chair* – the position of professor: *he was awarded an endowed chair in economics*
3. *president, chairman, chairwoman, chair, chairperson* – the officer who presides at the meetings of an organization: *address your remarks to the chairperson*
4. *electric chair, chair, death chair, hot seat* – an instrument of execution by electrocution; resembles an ordinary seat for one person: *the murderer was sentenced to die in the chair*

Therefore, WordNet clearly shows that, in its different senses, a polysemous word has different synonyms, which is a fact that needs to be taken into account by lexicographers intending to provide a comprehensive and precise inventory of a word’s synonyms within an entry in a thesaurus or a dictionary of synonyms.

In conclusion, synonymy should be viewed as a phenomenon inseparable from polysemy and defined as relative semantic equivalence of higher or lower

⁵ On polysemy in general and various theoretical approaches to it in Ravin & Leacock (2006).

⁶ On WordNet and the view of polysemy-synonymy interplay within relational semantics in Halas Popović (2017: 55–59).

intensity typically holding between some (and not all) senses of two different lexemes.

3. THE THEORETICAL PERCEPTION OF SYNONYMY UNDERLYING ENGLISH LEXICOGRAPHIC PRACTICE

As it has already been underlined, in this analysis, the focus is on the following two aspects of a theoretical view of synonymy: the scope of the notion of synonymy and the relation between synonymy and polysemy.

The basic unit of representing synonymy within entries in the analyzed reference works is a synonym set or a group of synonyms that includes, typically, several words or expressions showing a certain degree of semantic equivalence with the given headword. Hence, the analysis will be focused on synonym sets included into the selected entry in the given reference works as well as the principles of their compilation.

3.1. The scope of the notion of synonymy

The view of synonymy represented by the four selected lexicographic resources will be accounted for on the basis of a two-fold analysis involving the application of the substitutability test as well as the examination of principles according to which synonym sets in the given entries have been compiled.

3.1.1. The analysis based on the substitutability test

The answer to the question how broadly synonymy is understood in a particular instance boils down to the determination of the exhibited type of synonymy. In this analysis, the type of synonymy that the selected reference works are based on is determined according to the aforementioned scale of synonymity provided by Cruse (1991) and through the application of the substitutability test relying on the mutual entailment of propositions in which the given synonyms are substituted for each other. In each case, there is determined the type of synonymy existing between the headword and its synonyms included in a particular set.

The analysis has shown that the examined reference works are all based on near-synonymy. For the purpose of illustrating this observation, one synonym set from every analyzed entry is tested below:

WNDS: *X hews/chops/carves/slits/slashes* entails *X cuts*, but *X cuts* does not necessarily entail *X hews/chops/carves/slits/slashes*.

The trunk was huge. He didn't cut it in a light blow with a small hatchet, but he hewed it.

She doesn't want to crunch through large pieces of onion in her dish. That is why she doesn't cut onions in halves, but she chops them.

It looks like a real piece of art. This is a piece of wood that definitely wasn't just carelessly cut from a tree trunk, but it was carved.

When preparing this sandwich, he doesn't cut a roll sloppily making a big hole in it, but he slits it.

When you see the damage, it'll be clear to you why I say that the neighbours did not slightly cut the tyres on my car, but they slashed them.

NOTE: *X carves/engraves/incises/etches/scores/chisels/whittles entails X cuts but X cuts does not necessarily entail X carves/engraves/incises/etches/scores/chisels/whittles.*

It looks like a real piece of art. This is a piece of wood that definitely wasn't just carelessly cut from a tree trunk, but it was carved/chiselled/whittled.

When I had a closer look at the wooden plate, I noticed that those shapes hadn't been cut accidentally, but they had been engraved/incised/etched/scored on it.

CTUW: *X clips/mows/trims/docks/prunes/snips/pares/lops entails X cuts, but X cuts does not necessarily entail X clips/mows/trims/docks/prunes/snips/pares/lops.*

She wants to keep the hedge neat, so she doesn't cut it with our old sickle, but she clips it.

He definitely doesn't cut this big lawn manually, but he mows it.

He doesn't cut his fingernails untidily, but he trims/pares them.

In that country, these animals' tails are not cut completely, but they are docked.

In this park, they don't cut old trees to their stumps, but they prune/lop them.

When she notices some loose threads, she doesn't cut them in long strokes with a knife, but she snips at them.

OLT: *X slashes/slits/splits/nicks/gashes entails X cuts, but X cuts does not necessarily entail X slashes/slits/splits/nicks/gashes.*

When you see the damage, it'll be clear to you why I say that the neighbours did not slightly cut the tyres on my car, but they slashed them.

When preparing this sandwich, he doesn't cut a roll sloppily making a big hole in it, but he slits it.

The axe didn't just cut his head, but it split it open.

As I can see, you didn't cut it seriously, but you only nicked it.

I was staring at his wound. He didn't cut his hand slightly, but he gashed it.

Clearly, synonym sets in WNDS, NOTE, CTUW and OLT do not meet the requirement of cognitive synonymy. In all the listed examples, the proposition in

which a synonym is used entails the one in which the headword is used, but the reverse is not necessarily the case. This is further proved by example sentences in which the proposition with the headword *cut* is denied, but, simultaneously, the proposition with one of its synonyms is asserted without contradiction. Since the condition of mutual entailment of propositions containing synonyms is not fulfilled, the given examples do not illustrate cognitive synonymy but they represent the cases of near-synonymy.

However, in NOTE and CTUW, there are sets that, in addition to members illustrative of the described case, also include synonyms that, when substituted for the given headword, yield the opposite case: the proposition in which the headword is used entails the one in which its synonym is used, but the reverse is not necessarily the case.

NOTE: *X cuts* entails *X penetrates/wounds/injures* (synonyms included into the set 1 in NOTE given in its entirety in illustration 3, section 3.2 of the paper), but *X penetrates/wounds/injures* does not necessarily entail *X cuts*.

He didn't penetrate it with his hand, but he cut through it.

He wasn't wounded/injured by a gunshot, but he was cut.

CTUW: *X cuts* entails *X splits/divides/parts* (synonyms included into the set 2 in CTUW given in its entirety in illustration 7, section 3.2 of the paper), but *X splits/divides/segments/parts* does not necessarily entail *X cuts*.

She wanted to do it precisely, so she didn't split/divide every cookie in half with her hand, but she cut it.

He wanted to do it neatly, so he didn't part the two halves with his hand, but he cut them apart.

The examples shown above also illustrate the case of near-synonymy since the synonym substitution does not result in the mutual entailment of the given propositions.

Finally, it should be underlined that the type of synonymy on which a dictionary of synonyms or a thesaurus is based on directly affects the range of its synonym sets. Representing a broader understanding of the given lexical phenomenon according to which synonyms in a set can be relatively close in their meaning to the headword, near-synonymy allows the compilation of more extensive synonym sets including a greater number of synonyms. Thus, the observed practice applied by the analyzed reference works can be justified since it enables them to provide their users with a rich variety of ways for expressing a particular concept precisely and accurately.

3.1.2. *The analysis of principles for synonym set compilation*

However, the analysis of principles applied by the selected reference works in their synonym set compilation shows that the two previously identified cases actually represent two ways of understanding near-synonymy.

One of these ways underpins the compilation of synonym sets in WNDS and OLT. The only synonym set provided in the entry for *cut* in WNDS is the following one:

Illustration 1: *The synonym set in the entry for the verb cut in WNDS*

cut vb Cut, hew, chop, carve, slit, slash

All its members are mutually related on the basis of the same common general meaning ('penetrate and divide something with a sharp tool') denoted by the head or the initial member, which is actually the headword *cut* itself. All the other members of the set express a specification of this basic, general meaning due to an additional implication they carry, such as the use of a specific type of a sharp tool, a specific manner in which the action is performed, a specific object which undergoes the action, etc.

The same practice of synonym set compilation is used in OLT as can be seen on the example of the following set:

Illustration 2: *One of synonym sets in the entry for the verb cut in OLT*

2 cut • chop • slice • carve • dice

It is clear that the head has the most general meaning ('divide something into pieces using a sharp tool'), while the other members carry some additional implication, in this case, mostly reflected in the manner in which the action is performed.

Therefore, the principle according to which synonym sets in WNDS and OLT are compiled states that a synonym set is headed by the headword itself as the carrier of the most general, neutral meaning that includes more specific meanings of all the other members of the set. Actually, this perception of a head overlaps with the definition offered by Pisárčiková and Benko (1996: 690) according to which a head expresses, in a most general way, the meaning common to all members of a set. In Russian and other Slavic linguistic literature, such a head is referred to as a semantic dominant.

Thus, in WNDS and OLT, a synonym set is compiled as a structure that can develop in a single direction – from general to specific, which means that it can be

extended only by members with a more specific meaning in comparison to the given head. Such a principle for synonym set compilation is a consequence of a narrower, more specific understanding of near-synonymy based on a single type of semantic relatedness between a word and its synonyms. This type of near-synonymy can also be described as a hybrid relation termed by Prčić (2018: 118) as hyposynonymy, in which a head acts as the superordinate member or the hypernym of a set, while the other synonyms are its subordinates, also regarded as cohyponyms.

The practice based on this understanding of near-synonymy ensures the compilation of synonym sets with a clear, logical and solid structure, which enables users to readily understand the relation between the headword and its synonyms.

The other identified way of understanding near-synonymy is represented by NOTE and CTUW. It is interesting that, in these thesauri, a headword is not included into any of its sets, which are, thus, headed by one of its synonyms. Moreover, as it has already been shown, a set does not include only synonyms with a more specific meaning in comparison to the given headword, but also those having a more general meaning. For example, the set 1 in the analyzed entry in NOTE (given in its entirety in illustration 3, section 3.2 of the paper) includes synonyms such as *gash*, *slash*, *lacerate*, *slit*, *pierce*, which have a more specific meaning in comparison to the headword due to an additional implication they carry including a specific manner in which the act of cutting is performed (e.g. by making a long, deep cut or a long, narrow cut, by making a small hole, violently, etc.) or a specific object which undergoes the action (e.g. skin or flash, etc.). In addition to these, there are also synonyms with a more general meaning, such as *penetrate*, *wound*, *injure*. While, in the given use, *cut* denotes the act of inflicting a wound or damage in a specific manner including a specific instrument (using a sharp tool), *injure* and *penetrate* do not specify the manner in which the action is performed (they do not necessarily imply the use of a sharp tool) and *wound* does not specify equally precisely the type of the instrument (it is a weapon, but not necessarily the cutting or stabbing one). The same practice used in CTUW will be shown on the example of the set 2 in the entry for the verb *cut* (shown in its entirety in illustration 7, section 3.2 of the paper). This set includes the synonyms *chop*, *slice*, *dissect*, *cleave* that express a more specific meaning in comparison to the headword in the given use ('divide something into parts using a sharp tool') due to their additional implication including a specific manner of performing the given action (e.g. by cutting something into small pieces or slices, by cutting something in two, etc.) or an object undergoing the action of cutting (e.g. a dead body of a person, animal). Still, there are also synonyms like *split*, *divide*, *part* having a more general meaning that does not specify the manner in which the action is performed (it does not necessarily imply the use of a sharp tool).

In conclusion, in NOTE and CTUW, a synonym set is perceived as a structure that can develop in two directions – from general to specific and from specific to general. This principle for synonym set compilation is the result of a broader understanding of near-synonymy based on a two-type semantic relatedness between a word and its synonyms.

However, the observed practice results in the compilation of synonym sets without a coherent structure and systematic organization according to a clearly established principle, which does not contribute either to easy understanding of the relation between a headword and its synonyms or to clear discrimination between synonyms.

3.2. Synonymy-polysemy interplay

The analyzed lexicographic resources of synonyms can be divided into two types according to their understanding of the relation between synonymy and polysemy, i.e. according to the extent to which their entries reflect the fact that a word can have different synonyms in its different senses.

WNDS is representative of the first type. Its entries, even the ones for polysemous headwords, contain a single synonym set. Thus, although *cut* is a highly polysemous verb with a significant number of synonym sets corresponding to its different senses, this entry in WNDS contains only one synonym set corresponding to the sense ‘penetrate or divide something using a sharp tool’, which has already been shown in illustration 1, section 3.1.2 of the paper. This clearly shows that WNDS takes into consideration only one sense of a headword while forming an inventory of its synonyms. Therefore, this type of dictionaries or thesauri does not reflect the interrelatedness of synonymy and polysemy.

On the other hand, when gathering synonyms of a headword, NOTE, CTUW and OLT take into account its entire polysemous structure. Hence, if a headword has different synonyms in its different senses, its entry contains several synonym sets each corresponding to a different sense. For instance, the entry for the verb *cut* in NOTE and CTUW includes fifteen synonym sets each corresponding to a different sense of this verb, some of which are the following:

Illustration 3: *The synonym set 1 in the entry for the verb cut in NOTE*

cut ▶ verb ① the knife slipped and cut his finger GASH, slash, lacerate, slit, pierce, penetrate, wound, injure; scratch, graze, nick, snick, notch, incise, score; lance.

Illustration 4: *The synonym set 2 in the entry for the verb cut in NOTE*

② cut the red pepper into small pieces **CHOP**, cut up, slice, dice, cube, mince; carve; divide; N. Amer. hash.

Illustration 5: *The synonym set 7 in the entry for the verb cut in NOTE*

⑦ the government is likely to cut public expenditure | prices were cut by up to 15 per cent **REDUCE**, cut back/down on, decrease, lessen, retrench, diminish, trim, prune, slim down, ease up on; rationalize, downsize, slenderize, economize on; mark down, discount, lower; informal slash, axe.

Illustration 6: *The synonym set 1 in the entry for the verb cut in CTUW*

cut **VERB** 1 = **slit**, saw, score, nick, slice, slash, pierce, hack, penetrate, notch

Illustration 7: *The synonym set 2 in the entry for the verb cut in CTUW*

2 = **chop**, split, divide, slice, segment, dissect, cleave, part

Illustration 8: *The synonym set 9 in the entry for the verb cut in CTUW*

9 = **reduce**, lower, slim (down), diminish, slash, decrease, cut back, rationalize, ease up on, downsize

The illustrations 3 and 6 show the sets that include synonyms of *cut* corresponding to its sense ‘make an opening or a wound in something using a sharp tool’, and the synonym sets shown in illustrations 4 and 7 correspond to the sense ‘divide something into pieces using a sharp tool’. The synonym sets in illustrations 5 and 8 are related to the metaphorical meaning ‘reduce the amount/quantity of something’. It is clear that, in the two thesauri, the compilation of a headword’s inventory of synonyms is based on the analysis of its polysemous structure and the selection of senses in which the given word has various synonyms. Thus, there is formed a different synonym set for every selected sense.

Due to the purpose, size and scope of OLT, the number of synonym sets provided for its polysemous headwords is smaller in comparison to NOTE and CTUW. In addition to the set shown in illustration 2, section 3.1.2 of the paper, for the verb *cut*, OLT provides three other synonym sets:

Illustration 9: *The synonym set 1 in the entry for the verb cut in OLT*

1 See also the entries for **ABOLISH**, **REDUCE** and **SAVE** 2
cut • slash • cut sth back • cut sth down • scale sth back • rationalize • downsize • scale sth down

Illustration 10: *The synonym set 3 in the entry for the verb cut in OLT*

3 cut • trim • shave • mow • lop • shear • snip • crop •

Illustration 11: *The synonym set 4 in the entry for the verb cut in OLT*

4 See the Topic Map for HEALTH on p.890

cut • slash • slit • split • nick • gash

It can be concluded that NOTE, CTUW and OLT are representative of lexicographic resources that have adopted a different approach to synonymy-polysemy interplay. According to their perception, synonymy is a lexical phenomenon that is inseparable from polysemy, which is reflected in the fact that a polysemous word has different synonyms in its different senses so that the examination of its inventory of synonyms has to take into account its entire polysemous structure.

The use of this approach to synonymy-polysemy interplay results in the compilation of entries that provide users with a comprehensive insight into a word's synonymy.

4. CONCLUSION

The theoretical foundation of the analyzed reference works exhibits uniformity in only a single aspect – the scope of the notion of synonymy. They are all based on near-synonymy. However, a closer analysis of principles applied in synonym set compilation has shown that this statement can be taken only as a broad generalization. Actually, the understanding of near-synonymy that the analyzed resources are based on exhibits two types: a narrower (represented by WNDS and OLT) and a broader one (represented by NOTE and CTUW).

The narrower understanding of near-synonymy is based on one-way semantic relatedness between a word and its synonyms that can be regarded as semantic inclusion or hyposynonymy. Thus, synonyms included in a set express a specification of the general, common meaning denoted by the given word as their head.

The broader understanding of near-synonymy is based on two-way semantic relatedness between a word and its synonyms. Synonyms of a particular word included in a set can express not only a specification of its meaning, but also its generalization.

The theoretical foundation of the analyzed reference works also includes two ways of perceiving the relation between synonymy and polysemy. The first one views synonymy and polysemy as independent lexical phenomena, while according to the

second one, they should be treated as interrelated phenomena, inseparable from each other.

Thus, the theoretical foundation of the analyzed dictionary and thesauri can be regarded as twofold taking into consideration both examined aspects.

The critical assessment of practices identified in the analyzed reference works as the reflection of the adopted theoretical view of synonymy has led to the conclusion about the user-friendliest strategies for the lexicographic treatment of this lexical phenomenon.

Understanding synonymy in broader terms enables the compilation of more extensive synonym sets that provide users with a wider choice of words for their precise expressing of a particular concept.

However, the narrower understanding of near-synonymy leads to the systematic and consistent compilation of synonym sets with a clear structure. Furthermore, the order of synonyms within a set following the declining scale of their similarity with the head could contribute to even greater user-friendliness in terms of easy understanding of mutual relations among synonyms and their similarities and differences.

The recognition of synonymy-polysemy interplay results in the proper treatment of synonymy of a polysemous word, which means that its entry contains several synonym sets, each corresponding to its different sense. Such an entry represents a detailed and comprehensive inventory of synonyms. It can be concluded that the compilation of such an inventory needs to be preceded by the analysis of the given polysemous structure and the selection of senses for which it is possible to form a synonym set with the aforementioned structure. Of course, the number of synonym sets within an entry is also dictated by the size of the given dictionary or thesaurus.

Ana Halas Popović

TEORIJA U OSNOVI PRAKSE OBRADJE SINONIMA U REČNICIMA ENGLESKOG
JEZIKA: KRITIČKA ANALIZA

Rezime

U ovom radu predstavljena je analiza prikaza sinonimije u člancima jednog rečnika sinonima engleskog jezika i tri tezaurusa datog jezika kao odraza određenog teorijskog pristupa ovom leksičkom fenomenu definisanog u kontekstu dva aspekta: širine shvatanja pojma sinonimije i odnosa između sinonimije i polisemije.

Cilj ove analize bio je utvrđivanje i poređenje teorijskih pristupa sinonimiji na kojima su pomenuti rečnik i tezaursi zasnovani, kao i određivanje stepena u kome je njihova

leksikografska praksa, kao posledica primene navedenih pristupa, predusretljiva prema korisničkim potrebama. Konačno, na osnovu utvrđenih prednosti i nedostataka prakse analiziranih rečnika, izveden je zaključak o najpodesnijem modelu leksikografske obrade sinonimije.

Rezultati analize pokazali su da teorijska osnova prakse analiziranog rečnika i tri tezaurusa uključuje dva načina shvatanja približne sinonimije: už i širi. Uže shvatanje se zasniva na jedinstvenom tipu semantičke povezanosti reči sa njenim sinonimima, koja se svodi na hiposinonimiju. Dakle, data reč je u okviru svakog svog sinonimskog skupa nadređeni član sa najopštijim, neutralnim značenjem, dok su njeni sinonimi zapravo, podređeni članovi niza, kohiponimi, čija značenja predstavljaju određeni vid specifikacije pomenutog nadređenog i zajedničkog, opšteg značenja. S druge strane, šire shvatanje približne sinonimije zasniva se na dvostranoj semantičkoj povezanosti između reči i njenih sinonima, pa tako sinonimi koji čine jedan skup mogu predstavljati bilo specifikaciju, bilo generalizaciju osnovnog zajedničkog značenja čiji je nosilac data reč.

Teorijska osnova posmatrane leksikografske prakse dvostrana je i u pogledu percepcije odnosa između sinonimije i polisemije. Prema prvom shvatanju, ova dva fenomena su nezavisna, dok prema drugom, oni su međusobno povezani i neodvojivi, što se ogleda u činjenici da reč ima različite sinonime u svojim različitim značenjima.

Šire shvatanje sinonimije uopšte, u smislu njenog definisanja kao približne sinonimije, dozvoljava formiranje skupova sinonima šireg opsega, koji, kao takvi, pružaju korisnicima bogatiji izbor reči kojima mogu precizno iskazati određeno značenje.

S druge strane, pak, uže shvatanje približne sinonimije za rezultat ima sistematično i konzistentno formiranje skupova sinonima strukturiranih prema jasno prepoznatljivom principu, što omogućava lako razumevanje međusobnog odnosa sinonima u jednom skupu, kao i sličnosti i razlika u njihovom značenju.

Prepoznavanje međusobne povezanosti sinonimije i polisemije omogućava prikupljanje znatno sveobuhvatnijeg inventara sinonima polisemičnih reči u čijem slučaju rečnički članak sadrži nekoliko skupova sinonima od kojih svaki odgovara različitom značenju date reči.

Ključne reči: sinonimija, sinonimski skup, polisemija, engleski, leksikografija, rečnik sinonima, tezaursus.

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