

LEXICALIZATION OF ENGLISH NOUNS IN PLURAL

Abstract. The lexicalization process of nouns in the plural form shows the difference of lexical meaning between the singular and the plural. In this way the plural form of a word acquires a separate lexical meaning. This paper focuses on the cases of different lexical meanings of the English nouns in their singular and the plural forms.

Key words: number; singular; plural; lexicalization.

There are a number of cases in modern English when the difference between the singular and the plural of nouns show not only different forms of the same word. The inflection process in this case results in a new lexical meaning. The lexicalized plural nouns are formed according to the principal of syntactico-morphological word-building where both morphological and syntactical features of the word are changed [1: 96].

The aim of this paper is at determining the cases of different lexical meanings of the English nouns in their singular and the plural forms.

World-famous linguists such as: R. Beard, M.Y. Blokh, W. Frawley, D.E. Rosental, etc. emphasize the lexical aspect of the category of number. And in this case number is a lexical-grammatical category rather than just a grammatical one [2: 5].

The process of lexicalization is bidirectional and is shown up on the side of the meaning as well as on the side of the form. Hereby, it's possible to assert that there exists semantic and grammatical lexicalization. A grammatical component of the lexical meaning can be considered as a cross point of lexical and grammatical features in a word [3: 182]. A grammatical meaning isn't something additional or accompanying as to a lexical one. The one and the other exist inseparably in a dialectical unity of the language competence.

So, in modern English there are some nouns where the plural form is lexicalized and in this case they acquire a special meaning. The lexicalized plurals of such nouns are semantically related to the meaning or meanings in the singular even though this link can be minor or indirect, e.g.: *pile* (the side of a coin bearing a secondary design) / *piles* (a large amount of money), *dozen* (a group or set of twelve) / *dozens* – (a lot), *pain* (highly unpleasant physical sensation caused by illness or injury) / *pains* (great care or trouble, careful effort). The process of making new lexical units by means of plural form is semantically motivated. This can be explained by the following: the relations between the source word and its derivative are presented as “phenomenon > an individual case”: e.g.: *domestics* – (the product, not made abroad) > (household linens), *doings* – (deeds, actions or events) > (spices, flavors of herbs of unusual dishes). These examples can be characterized by a process of semantic derivation.

However, sometimes there is no semantic relation between the singular and the plural meanings of the same noun in English. The lexicalized plural meanings do not show any direct, unequivocal semantic relation to the meaning of the nouns as countable, e.g.: *auspice* (a forecast) / *auspices* (patronage), *fatigue* (extreme tiredness) / *fatigues* (clothing of various types worn by military personnel), *ground* (the surface of the earth) / *grounds* (solid particles, esp. of coffee, forming a residue), *hostility* (being hostile, enmity) / *hostilities* (acts of warfare), *link* (one loop or ring of a chain) / *links* (a golf course), *security* (a secure condition or feeling) / *securities* (a certificate attesting credit or the ownership of stock, bonds, etc.), etc.

It is essential to state that translation of the lexicalized plural nouns is even more intricate as it is impossible to render the intended meaning and retain the same number form of a noun at the same time.

References:

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