

THE LEXEME "HARMONY" IN ENGLISH: DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS'
ANALYSIS

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Abstract. *The article is devoted to the semantic structure of the concept of "harmony" in English by analysing dictionary definitions based on 12 monolingual dictionaries, aiming to define the nominative lexeme "harmony". The research resulted in distinguishing the core seme, median part and periphery of the concept, their dominance or peripherality of the semes being analysed according to the frequency of their appearance in the dictionaries. The etymology of the concept of "harmony" is also outlined in the article starting with the Greek word "harmonia" (where it is believed to be a derivative from an Indo-European verb root -ar-), the first appearance of the concept in the Middle English and to its usage in the modern language. Consequently, the development of this concept as an open dynamic system is demonstrated according to the process of its evolution from the core seme having totally physical meaning to the peripheral ones, the meanings of which are rather metaphorical. Besides, the impact of outside circumstances is considered one of the reasons for the fact that not all the features of this concept are fully verbalised in the language. As follows, the conclusion is made about the permanent development of the concept as a system. This corresponds to the general theory of a concept's development which extends from the sensory-visual image that constitutes the core of the concept, through the gradual layering of "basic layers, where the features are arranged in progressively more abstract ways.*

Keywords: *concept, nominal field of the concept, seme, analysis of dictionary definitions, polysemy, etymology.*

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ЛЕКСЕМА "ГАРМОНІЯ" В АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВІ: АНАЛІЗ СЛОВНИКОВИХ
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Анотація. Стаття присвячена дослідженню семантичної структури концепту "гармонія" в англійській мові шляхом аналізу словникових дефініцій на основі 12 одномовних словників з метою визначення номінативної лексеми "гармонія". Результатом дослідження стало виокремлення ядра, медіальної частини та периферії концепту, домінування або периферійність досліджуваних сем були проаналізовані відповідно до частоти їхньої появи у вказаних словниках. У статті також окреслено етимологію концепту "гармонія", починаючи з грецького слова "harmonia" (де воно, як вважають, є похідним від індоєвропейського дієслівного кореня -ar-), першої появи концепту в середньоанглійській мові та до його використання в сучасній англійській мові. Відповідно, розвиток цього концепту як відкритої динамічної системи продемонстровано за допомогою процесу його еволюції від ядерної семі, що має цілком фізичне значення, до периферійних сем, значення яких є скоріше метафоричними. Крім того, вплив зовнішніх обставин розглядається як одна з причин того, що не всі ознаки цього концепту є повністю вербалізованими в мові. Як наслідок, робиться висновок про безперервний розвиток концепту як системи. Це відповідає загальній теорії розвитку концепту, згідно з якою концепт еволюціонує від чуттєво-наочного образу, що становить ядро концепту, через поступове нашірвання базових шарів, тобто крок за кроком до ядра додаються все більш абстрактні ознаки об'єкта або явища.

Ключові слова: концепт, номінативне поле концепту, сема, аналіз словникових дефініцій, полісемія, verbalisation.

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Introduction

A great number of references to "harmony" in linguistics and philosophy testify that the idea of searching for harmony, as well as the attempts to understand it, has been relevant at all stages of the history of humanity and remains such for modern researchers. The concept of "harmony" appears to be crucial in various aspects of human life. It may be observed as a central issue in a great variety of discourses, from everyday communication to academic writing, e.g. music, social relationships, environment protection, etc., and as such, has been a subject of interest for linguistic research.

Besides that, the very term "concept", as a basic component of the way we interpret the world around us, is one of the most debated subjects in contemporary linguistic studies. The term "concept" is interpreted as a global unit of mental activity, a quantum of structured knowledge in the modern research space (Tatsenko, 2008). For instance, N.J. Enfield mentions the fact that "cognitive sciences to be psychological tools for reducing complexity in individuals' knowledge of, and reasoning about, their environment. Concepts help us categorize, remember, generalize and reason" (Enfield, 2022).

The article aims to determine the semantic structure of the nominal lexeme "harmony" in English on the evidence of dictionary definitions and English-language literature.

A brief overview of this concept's etymology is also presented in the article as long as the changes in its semes demonstrate the stages of its development from purely physical meanings to more abstract ones.

Research materials and methods

To detect the semantic structure of the nominative lexeme "harmony", the definitions in 12 monolingual dictionaries were used: Cambridge dictionary, Dictionary.com,

Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Collins Concise English Dictionary, Vocabulary.com, The Free Dictionary, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online, Oxford Learner's Dictionary, The Britannica Dictionary, WordReference Random House Learner's Dictionary of American English, APA Dictionary of Psychology and Oxford Academic.

In order to demonstrate the frequency of use, the Google Ngram Viewer was used, being the platform that analyses the texts "from the vast number of books in the public domain that Google scanned to populate its Google Books search engine" (Karch, 2021).

Modern linguistic studies describe several ways in which a concept can be analysed, depending on a research direction, such as linguacultural, cognitive-discursive, and cognitive-semantic.

S. Holik emphasises the need to establish the nominal field of a concept as an integral part of its analysis, proceeding from the fact that the nominal field of a concept, i.e. the set of linguistic means that represent this concept at a certain stage of society's development, consists of a core, a medial part and a periphery (Holyk, 2019). Definitional analysis, or the component (semic) analysis of dictionary definitions, is used to explore the components of the concept, making it possible to determine the semantic structure of a word's meaning, that is the totality of its lexical and semantic variants, by dividing the meaning into semes, i.e. the smallest units of the word's meaning (Holyk, 2020). It should be noted that the definitions offered by explanatory dictionaries are generalised and provide only the main features of an object or phenomenon.

Discussion. In logic and philosophy, the terms "concept" and "notion" are considered identical, but modern linguists emphasise the significant difference between "notion", "meaning" and "concept", pointing out that "notion", while having common features with "meaning" and "concept", is narrower than they are. The concept can act as the core, i.e. the basis of the concept (Frasyniuk, 2021). Researchers note that the concept indicates a certain fragment of knowledge, while the notion is a more holistic formation that indicates various features of knowledge, in particular, the scope of its use (Tatsenko, 2008).

M. Polyuzhin points out that a notion is the result of an agreement between native speakers in order to achieve a certain mutual understanding, in contrast to a concept, which, from the point of view of cognitive linguistics, demonstrates an individual understanding of knowledge, reflecting a person's experience and the picture of the world formed by him or her (Polyuzhin, 2015). N. J. Enfield, in turn, calls the concept "an individual's private hypothesis as to what a public linguistic item most likely encodes", and the main function of the concept is to establish a connection between ideas and the world (Enfield, 2022). This statement resonates with M. Polyuzhin's opinion about the concept as "a culturally determined expression of consciousness fixed in language" (Polyuzhin, 2015).

A. Martyniuk in the "Dictionary of Basic Terms of Cognitive and Discourse Linguistics" defines a concept as "the basic unit of structured knowledge in the human mind", which possesses a certain cultural load. The author also speaks about the possibility of studying the content and structure of the concept by analysing the linguistic units that represent it, i.e. individual words, phrases, phraseological units or entire texts, emphasising that a concept may also contain non-verbalised content and that not all concepts are objectified in language, and therefore the analysis of linguistic means is not entirely comprehensive (Martyniuk, 2012).

Results of the study

As a result of comparing the dictionary definitions of the lexeme "harmony" (Table 1), the following semes were identified:

- *a pleasant musical sound made by different notes being played or sung at the same time*
- *notes that are played or sung with the main tune and that make the piece more complicated and interesting*
- *any simultaneous combination of tones*

- chordal structure, as distinguished from melody and rhythm
- the science of the structure, relations, and practical combination of chords
- agreeable sound; music
- agreement of ideas, feelings, or actions
- a relationship characterized by a lack of conflict or by agreement
- internal calm: tranquillity
- a pleasing combination of different parts
- a collation of parallel passages, especially from the Gospels, with a commentary demonstrating their consonance and explaining their discrepancies

Dictionary	Discourse						Social relationship, psychology, business communication			Perception (art, design, psychology)	Narration (religious texts in particular)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Seme	pleasant musical sound made by different notes being played or sung at the same time	notes that are played or sung with the main tune and that make the piece more complicated and interesting	any simultaneous combination of tones	chordal structure, as distinguished from melody and rhythm	the science of the structure, relations, and practical combination of chords	agreeable sound; music	agreement of ideas, feelings, or actions	relationship characterized by a lack of conflict or by agreement	internal calm : tranquillity	pleasing combination of different parts	collation of parallel passages, especially from the Gospels, with a commentary demonstrating their consonance and explaining their discrepancies

Кількість згадувань	7	2	5	6	5	4	5	6	1	1 2	5
Оxford Academic								✓		✓	
APA Dictionary of Psychology								✓		✓	
House Learner's	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
The Britannica Dictionary	✓							✓		✓	
Oxford Learner's Dictionary	✓							✓		✓	

Table 1

As can be seen from Table 1, the above-mentioned semes have a different number of repetitions, from which it may be concluded that they are of a dominant or peripheral nature (see Table 2 below), namely:

- the seme “*a pleasing combination of different parts*”, which is present in 12 dictionaries can be considered the core seme of the concept "harmony",
- semes “*a pleasant musical sound made by different notes being played or sung at the same time*” (present in 7 dictionaries), “*chordal structure, as distinguished from melody and rhythm, a relationship characterised by a lack of conflict or by agreement*” (found in 6 dictionaries each), “*any simultaneous combination of tones*”, “*the science of the structure, relations, and practical combination of chords*”, “*agreement of ideas, feelings, or actions*”, “*a collation of parallel passages, especially from the Gospels, with a commentary demonstrating their consonance and explaining their discrepancies*” (available in 5 dictionaries each), should be attributed to the medial part,
- semes “*agreeable sound*”; “*music*” (available in 4 dictionaries, one of them is marked as archaic), “*notes that are played or sung with the main tune and that make the piece more complicated and interesting*” (present in 2 dictionaries),

"internal calm: tranquility" (present in 1 dictionary) belongs to the periphery of the concept of "harmony".

The concept HARMONY

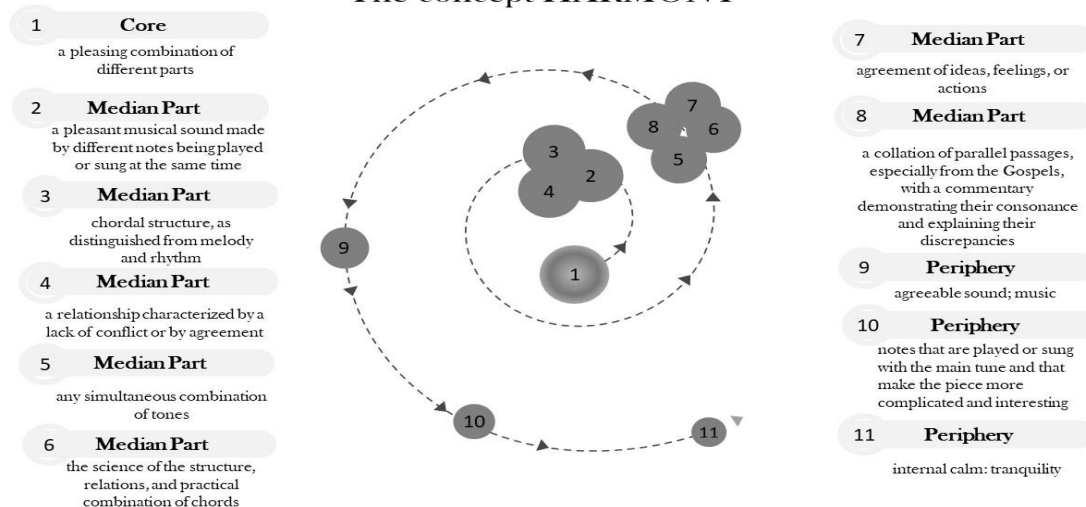


Table 2

As we can see, the seme "a pleasing combination of different parts", which is the core seme of the concept "harmony", attributed by the compilers of dictionaries to discourses inherent in art, design, psychology, etc., constitutes the most generalised meaning, which refers to human perception of an object or phenomenon. In turn, semes, which belong to both the medial part of the concept and its periphery, can be relatively divided into 3 subgroups, according to the sphere of use and, and, accordingly, the discourse:

- music ("a pleasant musical sound made by different notes being played or sung at the same time", "chordal structure, as distinguished from melody and rhythm", "any simultaneous combination of tones", "the science of the structure, relations, and practical combination of chords", "notes that are played or sung with the main tune and that make the piece more complicated and interesting"),
- social relationships ("a relationship characterized by a lack of conflict or by agreement", "agreement of ideas, feelings, or actions", "internal calm: tranquility"),
- narration ("a collation of parallel passages, especially from the Gospels, with a commentary demonstrating their consonance and explaining their discrepancies").

The polysemy of the verbalised form of the concept "harmony" can be traced back to its etymology. The lexeme "harmony" is derived from the Greek *harmonia*, and originally meant "a joint between the planks of a ship or the joining of these planks" (according to P. Ilievski, the lexeme has a more ancient origin and is derived from the Indo-European verb root "-ar-" (which means "to connect") (Ilievski, 1993). It is noteworthy that in ancient Greek literature, the word "harmony" was used not only as "the study of the formation of melody", but also in its metaphorical meaning, "a combination of parts or related things to form a consistent whole or an agreement", which coincides with the dominant seme of the modern lexeme "harmony" in English (Encyclopedia.com, 2018). In fact, the lexeme "harmony" came into English as a borrowing from Latin (*harmonia*, or Old French (*harmonie*, *armonie*). The first occurrence of the word "harmony" in the English language dates back to approximately 1150-1500, i.e. the Middle English period of language development. The Oxford English Dictionary Oxford English Dictionary, 2023) names Geoffrey Chaucer as the first known author to use the word "harmony" in his writings "The Canterbury Tales":

*«Our Host went off into a roar of laughter
And said, 'Well, now I see how necessary*

*It is to bring one's drink to keep us merry,
For it can turn all rancour and dissension
To love and **harmony** and stop contention» (Chaucer, 1977).*

Modern researchers consider the concept to be the formation of a dynamic character that functions within human cognitive activity. The dynamic nature of the concept of "harmony" can be proved by the polysemy of its verbalised form, and the diversity of its meanings in the modern English language, starting from purely musical terms to philosophical concepts. This statement may be demonstrated by the use of the lexeme "harmony" and its antonym "discord" in a review of one of the novels by the popular Canadian author Louise Penny: "...*There they discover disquiet beneath the silence, discord in the apparent harmony...*" (Penny, 2012).

The wordplay (and, accordingly, the dynamism of the concept) consists in the fact that the detective story unfolds around the mystery of ancient melodies and traditions of religious singing against the background of the seemingly calm and harmonious life of the monastery. The word "harmony" is used in the sense of "a pleasant musical sound made by different notes being played or sung at the same time", but meanwhile ("discord in the apparent harmony") around the broken relationships within the community, i.e. the same "a relationship characterised by a lack of conflict or by agreement" is also used. It should be noted that the dynamism of the concept of "harmony" can also be observed in the novel itself.

In addition, the concept's relevance can be observed in the statistics provided by Google Ngram Viewer (see Table 3), which represents the frequency of its use through the period from 1800 till 2019 (the "English 2019" corpus was chosen as far as it covers both British and American English written documents).

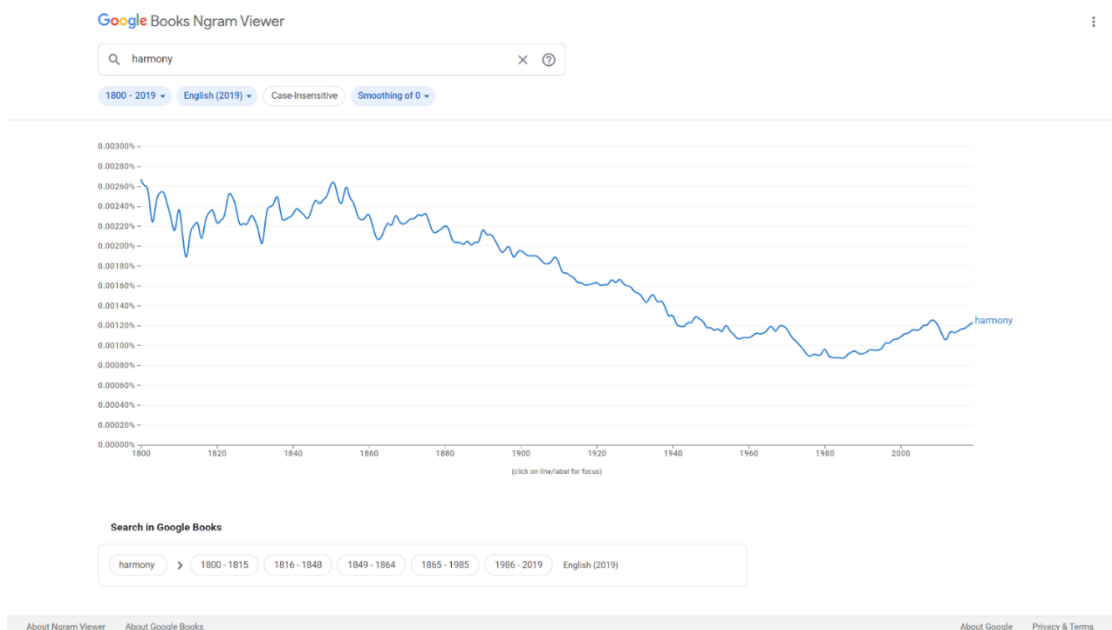


Table 3

The graph shows that, though the frequency of using the lexeme "harmony" in written texts varies during the above-mentioned period, it has stayed at a significant level.

Conclusions and prospects. Since, as mentioned above, the concept is a dynamic system, its development can be demonstrated in the form of a spiral (Table 2), because:

- firstly, the development of the concept takes place from the sensory-visual image that constitutes the core of the concept, through the gradual layering of "basic layers in which the features are arranged in the direction from less to more abstract" (Polyuzhin, 2015), i.e. from the nuclear seven to the formation of the medial part of the concept due to human activity, and to the formation of "the

interpretive field of the concept, which covers the assessment and interpretation of various features of the concept by native speakers of the same language" (Polyuzhin, 2015), i.e. its periphery;

- secondly, the layering of meanings, regardless of the degree of their abstraction, in one way or another related to the original image (an example of which can be the accumulation of semes from the purely physical meaning of "connection" to the metaphorical one "a relationship characterized by a lack of conflict or by agreement");

- thirdly, not all features of an object or phenomenon are finally verbalised in language, and, therefore, the concept being a system that is influenced by the mental activity of both the linguistic community and an individual, is in a state of constant development.

A detailed exploration of the factors of formation and development of the concept of "harmony", the range of its synonyms, as well as its philosophical interpretations, constitutes the potential prospect of further research.

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