

UNDERSTANDING POLYSEMY IN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with “Leksikologiya” the Uzbek folklore in teaching young learners and using interactive ways of conducting sessions. Key words: functional literacy, reading literacy, pedagogical technologies, text technology, methodical.

Key words: polysemy is a fundamental linguistic phenomenon where a single word possesses multiple related meanings. Unlike homonyms, which are unrelated words that sound the same, polysemous words evolve from a single conceptual root

Introduction

In linguistics, the phenomenon where a single word or phrase has multiple related meanings is known as Polysemy. Derived from the Greek words poly (many) and sema (sign), it highlights the incredible flexibility of human language. Unlike homonyms (words that sound the same but have unrelated origins), polysemous words share a common conceptual root. The Mechanics of Multiple Meanings .How does one word end up doing the work of five? It usually happens through three primary channels: Metaphor: Applying a word to a new context based on similarity (e.g., the eye of a needle). Metonymy: Using a part to represent a whole (e.g., using crown to mean a monarch). Specialization: A general word becoming specific to a certain field (e.g., operation in medicine vs. military). Case Studies: Words with "Many Lives" To illustrate the concept, let's look at some common English examples: The Role of Context. The most fascinating aspect of polysemy is that the human brain rarely gets confused. We use contextual cues to filter out irrelevant meanings

instantly."I need to deposit this check at the bank."vs."We sat on the muddy bank to fish."The surrounding words act as a "GPS," guiding the listener to the intended definition without effort.

Why Polysemy Matters Polysemy is not an error; it is an efficiency.

Cognitive Load: If every single concept in the universe had a unique, unrelated name, our vocabularies would be impossibly large to memorize.

Creativity: Polysemy allows for puns, poetry, and double entendres, giving literature its richness and wit.

Polysemy is the capacity for a single word to have multiple, related meanings (e.g., "head" as body part, leader, or top of something). It is essential for language teaching because it reflects the flexibility and richness of language, requiring learners to use context, collocation, and metaphorical understanding to identify the correct sense.

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Key Aspects of Polysemy in Teaching:

Core vs. Peripheral Meaning: Learners typically acquire the "core" (literal) meaning first, while "peripheral" (metaphorical/extended) meanings are learned later.

Context Dependency: Meaning is determined by syntax, collocation, and discourse context rather than the word in isolation.

Efficiency and Flexibility: Polysemy allows for language economy, where existing vocabulary is reused for new concepts, enhancing learner vocabulary acquisition.

Difference from Homonymy: Unlike homonyms (unrelated words that sound the same, like "bank" - money vs. river), polysemous words share a common origin or root.

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Pedagogical Implications and Strategies:

Contextualization: Teach words within rich, contextual environments (sentences, stories) to highlight meaning distinctions.

Metaphor Awareness: Encourage learners to see how metaphorical extensions create new, related meanings.

Semantic Mapping: Use visual aids or [semantic maps] to show how senses radiate from a core concept.

Contrastive Analysis: Explicitly teach the difference between polysemy and homonymy to avoid confusion, using resources like those from the [British Council] on [working vocabulary].

Usage-Based Approach: Focus on teaching the most frequent meanings first, then introducing less common usages.

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Understanding polysemy helps learners move from word-for-word translation to interpreting the nuanced, dynamic nature of language.

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If you are looking to apply this in your classroom, I can help you with:

Developing examples for specific words (e.g., "get," "run," "bank")

Creating

contextual activities for intermediate learners Designing metaphor-based exercises for advanced learners

Conclusion

Polysemy proves that language is a living, breathing organism. It allows us to stretch old words to fit new ideas, ensuring that our communication evolves alongside our technology and culture. Understanding these layers of meaning is the first step toward mastering any language. Would you like me to focus on specific examples from a particular field, such as legal, medical, or technical English. A word which has several related meanings is thus a polyseme. These can be compared to homonyms, which are words that have several completely different meanings. Example. The word 'head' is a polyseme because it has several related meanings: 'My head hurts' 'He heads the news section' 'We'll head them off at the turning' In the classroom. Polysemy is a very useful aspect of language as it enables learners to make informed guesses about the meaning of new words if they recognise them as polysemes.

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