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LEXICAL-SEMANTIC FIELD "MIGRATION" IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH NEWS DISCOURSE: SEMANTIC AND QUANTITATIVE DIMENSIONS THROUGH CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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The study addresses the issue of how Middle East migration is linguistically represented and conceptualised in contemporary British news discourse by means of lexical-semantic fields. The main aim of the study is to model the lexical-semantic field "Migration" in order to identify how its internal hierarchical structure reflects and reinforces ideological attitudes and discursive patterns related to Middle East migrants. The academic importance of the study is defined by its contribution to the integration of lexical semantics and critical discourse analysis. The study is practically important since it contributes to uncover mechanisms through which mass media shapes the public perception of migrants and migration. The study applies corpus-assisted modelling of lexical-semantic field and critical discourse analysis, which involved corpus compilation, the search of 37 contextual synonyms to the core noun of the field, the lexical-semantic field frequency-based modelling, and the interpretation of the data. The findings reveal that the nucleus of the field is represented by lexical items directly denoting migration, its core participants, and notions of temporary residence. The perinuclear zone is represented by lexical items denoting legal and administrative frameworks, statistical markers and transportation, while the periphery is represented by notions of movement, crossing the border, statistical markers, and common abstract nouns. The analysis demonstrates that migration is often framed as a regulated, quantifiable, negative and problem-oriented phenomenon, whereas migrants are often depersonalised by the regular use of statistical markers and metonymic substitutions resulting in the reduction of migrants' agency. The study demonstrates that the hierarchical structure of the studied lexical-semantic field reflects the discursive model in which migration is associated with crisis, regulation, illegality. The current study contributes to the field by addressing the linguistic means by which Middle East migrants are represented in the discourse and by providing a framework for further studies.

Key words: *lexical-semantic field, lexical semantics, critical discourse analysis, Middle East migration, news discourse.*

Гурґіш А. В. Лексико-семантичне поле «Міґрація» у сучасному британському новинному дискурсі: семантичні та кількісні аспекти на основі критичного аналізу дискурсу. У дослідженні розглядаються англомовні дискурсивні репрезентації феномену міґрації з Близького Сходу. Лінгвальні та лінгвоконцептуальні властивості

вербалізації міграції у сучасному британському дискурсі новин проаналізовані з використанням постулатів теорії лексико-семантичних полів. Головною метою дослідження є моделювання лексико-семантичного поля «Migration» з метою виявлення того, як його внутрішня ієрархічна структура відображає та підсилює ідеологічні установки та дискурсивні патерни, пов'язані з мігрантами з Близького Сходу. Наукова цінність дослідження визначається його внеском у поєднання лексичної семантики та критичного дискурс-аналізу. Дослідження має практичне значення, оскільки сприяє виявленню механізмів, за допомогою яких засоби масової інформації формують суспільне сприйняття мігрантів та міграції. У дослідженні застосовується моделювання лексико-семантичного поля з використанням корпусу та критичний дискурс-аналіз, що включали у себе складання корпусу, пошук 37 контекстуальних синонімів до центрального іменника поля, моделювання лексико-семантичного поля на основі частоти вживання контекстуальних синонімів та інтерпретацію даних. Результати дослідження показують, що ядро лексико-семантичного поля складають лексичні одиниці, які безпосередньо позначають міграцію, її основних учасників та поняття тимчасового проживання. Перинуклеарну зону представляють лексичні одиниці, що позначають правові та адміністративні рамки, статистичні показники та транспорт, тоді як периферію – поняття руху, перетину кордону, статистичні показники та загальні абстрактні іменники. Аналіз демонструє, що міграція часто подається як регульоване, кількісно вимірюване, негативне та проблемно-орієнтоване явище, тоді як мігрантів часто знеособлюють через регулярне використання статистичних маркерів та метонімічних замінів, що призводить до зменшення суб'єктної активності мігрантів. Дослідження демонструє, що ієрархічна структура досліджуваного лексико-семантичного поля відображає дискурсивну модель, в якій міграція асоціюється з кризою, регулюванням та незаконністю. Дане дослідження робить внесок у цю галузь, розглядаючи лінгвістичні засоби, за допомогою яких мігранти з Близького Сходу представлені в дискурсі, та надаючи основу для подальших досліджень.

Key words: *лексико-семантичне поле, лексична семантика, критичний дискурс-аналіз, міграція з Близького Сходу, новинний дискурс.*

Introduction

Historically, lexical semantics faced a transition from studying words from an atomistic standpoint towards a systemic and relational understanding of vocabulary. The origin of the lexical-semantic field theory is often considered to root back to Wilhelm von Humboldt and his doctrine of "inner-speech form" that suggests that language is not solely a tool for communication but also a system, a "framework" that shapes the speaker's way of perceiving and comprehending reality. Consequently, Humboldt's ideas imply that the language categorises the world into conceptual domains (Kleparski, 2007, p. 188).

Apart from Humboldt's doctrine of inner speech form, Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism has built the foundation to perceive linguistic signs not individually, but as a part of a system, i.e., in their opposition to other signs within the system. This marked the shift from the 19th-century diachronic etymological focus to the

synchronic way of viewing the lexicon as an organised totality of elements (Kleparski, 2007, p. 188).

Saussurean influence on viewing the lexicon as a system was later formalised by Jost Trier (1931) into "world-field theory", whose studies introduced the idea that linguistic signs in a field define and delimit each other, which motivated understanding it like a "mosaic" (Diodato, 2019, p. 260). Scholars such as Leo Weisgerber and Stephen Ullmann later expanded Trier's world-field theory to include more associative groupings into lexical fields. Furthermore, the emergence of developments in cognitive studies of the language and frame semantics redefined the common perception of fields, which became not only lexical clusters, but also mental models that structure human experiences, including different levels of human cognition. (Diodato, 2024, pp. 166-172).

Thus, we interpret the lexical-semantic field as a systemic grouping of relationally organised linguistic signs within the vocabulary of the language, which functions as a conceptual lexical framework that manifests human experiences in the language and shapes perception and comprehension of reality. This way, lexical-semantic fields integrate associative and semantic connections between words and evolve into mental models that categorise the reality across different levels of human cognition.

Evidently, the lexical-semantic fields are unfolded in a hierarchical structure. To be more specific, the lexical-semantic fields are constructed with a **nucleus** (or sometimes referred to as "core"), which consists of dominant lexical items, containing the most direct, frequently used words that define the field (for instance, if the lexical-semantic field "Color" is considered, the core of the field is represented by dominant adjectives such as "red", "green", "yellow" etc.). The next zone in the hierarchical structure of lexical-semantic fields is often called **perinuclear** (central), which is commonly represented by units that share a core semantic marker with the nucleus often containing synonyms, hyponyms, or antonyms, and results of metonymical/metaphorical transformations. The **periphery** is the outer edge of the lexical-semantic field containing units that are more specialised, marginal or less associated with the nucleus of the field (Nedashkivska, 2017, p.47).

This transition from the nucleus to the periphery can be understood in terms of semantic distance of the lexical unit from the dominant (nuclear) lexemes in the field. In other words, more the unit moves away from the core, the more differential semantic features it obtains. Thus, semantic features of peripheral lexical items are often derived from other conceptual domains.

As an open system, the lexical-semantic field possesses the following properties (Nedashkivska, 2017, p.47):

1) A significant number of lexical units with at least one common semantic component/feature construct lexical-semantic fields. The lexeme of the generalised value, which is often called a "hyperlexeme" is typically used to define this generalised semantic component.

(2) A collection of correlations connecting the semantic units constitutes the field's internal structure.

(3) The field is characterised by the definiteness of constituents, which occasionally manifests as component interchangeability.

(4) There is no separation between lexical-semantic fields. Due to their various meanings, most words belong to more than one lexical-semantic category.

(5) A lexical-semantic field may be a part of a higher-level field structure.

The lexical-semantic fields are organised not only by hierarchy, but also by semantic relations between its constituents within the vocabulary of the language. To specify, semantic relations in the field are constructed by the phenomena of hyponymy ("*animal*" – "*cat*"), synonymy ("*migrant*" – "*immigrant*"), antonymy ("*long*" – "*short*"), meronymy ("*cat*" – "*tail*"), polysemy ("*run*", "*take*" etc.).

The lexical-semantic fields are considered context-dependent structures, whose constituents vary depending on the type of context they manifest in. Bearing in mind that lexical-semantic fields in the theoretical framework of our study manifest cognitive domains of human experiences in the discourse and reinforce certain ways of categorising the world, the understanding of how discourse "molds reality" is essential.

In the study we heavily rely on Foucault's (1972) way of perceiving discourse as a "*representation of reality constructed by text; a vast semantic structure with a thematic core, representations of internal relationships and ideological attitudes that define a specific course of action*" (Foucault, 1972, pp. 21-31). Although there are many different ways to view discourse, this study accommodates the semiotic method, which is widely applied in CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) and has three main branches: **sociocognitive, sociocultural, and sociosemiotic**. Considering this, it is viewed as the linguistic representation of "social reality" within the context of the semiotic perspective of discourse (Martyniuk, 2012, p. 12). In order to further support our point on the discourse, we rely on a discourse study conducted by Sytnyk (2020), who utilised T.A. von Dijk's approach to view context as "*a complex communicative phenomenon that includes a text (spoken or written) and extra-linguistic factors*

(addressee's goals, thoughts, attitudes, and knowledge about the world) that are necessary for understanding the text."(Sytnyk, 2020, p. 124).

To summarise, the theoretical framework of our study views lexical-semantic fields as systemic, semantically motivated, hierarchical groupings of lexical items (linguistic signs) that are constituted by 3 hierarchically organised zones: 1) nucleus/core represented by the items that define the dominant semantic feature of the lexical-semantic field; 2) perinuclear zone that consists of semantically proximate to the nucleus lexical items that exist in paradigmatic relationships within the field (synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, metonymies, metaphors etc.); 3) periphery with the most numbers of items possessing differential semantic features and that often exist within other fields. We consider lexical-semantic fields to manifest and shape human experience and knowledge, and categorise the objects of reality across cognitive levels. In the study, discourse is a form of social practice, wherein the representation of lexical-semantic fields not only reflects human experiences but also reinforces common knowledge within specific domains through thematic cores, relationships between constituents, and ideological attitudes that construct social life and guide communicative actions.

Methodological notes

The current study aims to model the lexical-semantic field "Migration" in order to identify trends in the internal organisation of the field. This will allow us, through careful analysis and synthesis, to discover how lexical-semantic distribution within the topic of Middle East migrants manifests communicative guidelines, culturally-based biases towards migrants, and ideological attitudes concerning the matter.

The procedure of the study involved: 1) the collection of source material, which included 202 news articles from the BBC, 13 news articles from the Guardian, and 12 news articles from the Telegraph. These news articles were chosen in terms of their thematic tendencies – all of them are connected to the issue of Middle East migration; 2) The linguistic corpus sized at 377,181 words was compiled with the help of SketchEngine. 3) In order to model the lexical-semantic field "Migration", we collected 37 tokens by searching contextual synonyms to the dominant (nuclear) noun "migration" and stratified them using the frequency-based model. The top 20% most frequent tokens are in the nucleus, the other 30% of tokens are in the perinuclear zone, and the last 50% of tokens are in the periphery. 4) Then critical discourse analysis was utilised to qualitatively express collected statistical data in order to find out ideological and culturally-based attitudes towards Middle East migrants;

Results and Discussion

The collection and processing of 37 tokens within the lexical-semantic field "Migration" is categorised into the zones of the lexical-semantic field by the principle of contextual frequency. The data is presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Zonal distribution of collected tokens that constitute the lexical-semantic field "Migration"

Nucleus. & Absolute frequency		Perinuclear zone & Absolute frequency		Periphery & Absolute frequency	
<i>asylum</i>	2530	<i>boat</i>	958	<i>life</i>	318
<i>people</i>	2517	<i>number</i>	879	<i>report</i>	308
<i>migration</i>	1423	<i>participant</i>	640	<i>arrival</i>	300
<i>government</i>	1365	<i>figure</i>	479	<i>crossing</i>	288
<i>(asylum) seeker</i>	1170	<i>immigrant</i>	392	<i>use</i>	265
<i>hotel</i>	1152	<i>policy</i>	353	<i>visa</i>	259
<i>immigration</i>	1027	<i>issue</i>	342	<i>application</i>	205
<i>migrant</i>	971	<i>(asylum) claim</i>	342	<i>cost</i>	204
		<i>population</i>	342	<i>border</i>	203
		<i>case</i>	322	<i>return</i>	200
				<i>worker</i>	199
				<i>route</i>	191
				<i>topic</i>	189
				<i>impact</i>	168
				<i>bill</i>	162
				<i>backlog</i>	140
				<i>national</i>	100
				<i>shortage</i>	71
				<i>entry</i>	49

Considering the collected data, some of the main trends in the hierarchical structure of the field can be observed:

1) The tokens that constitute the nucleus of the field possess the highest level of frequency – these units denote migration as a phenomenon and its core participants. Overall, these are direct lexical verbalisers of the cognitive domain "Migration" and its participants; they are irreducible to other concepts (*with token "people" (2517) being an exception as it is a hyponym that refers to core participants of the phenomena, and token*

"hotel"(1152) which is in hyponymic relationship with token "asylum"(2530)); refer to the notion of settling down in the community ("asylum"(2530), "seeker"(1170));

2) Perinuclear zone is constituted by a range of tokens that belong to different lexical-thematic groups that include the domain of "means of transport" ("boat" (958)) – denotes metonymic relationship between migrants and means of crossing; statistical discourse markers ("figure"(479) "number"(879)) – which quantify or evaluate migration; the domain of "legal-administrative framework" ("case"(322), "asylum claim"(342), "policy"(353)) – identifies migration as a regulated legal process;

3) Periphery is constituted by tokens with indirect or weak semantic connection with low contextual frequency. There is a tendency for them to be semantically motivated by other lexical-thematic fields. For instance, this zone is rich in statistical discourse markers ("report"(308); "cost"(204)) – which quantify or evaluate migration; general abstract nouns ("life"(318), "topic"(189)) – that are only contextually linked to the field; The domain of "movement" ("arrival" (300), "route" (191), "border"(203), "return"(200)) – contains the semantic feature of moving through space and/or going to another country/location; The "socio-economic dimension" ("worker" (199)) – perceives migration as labour mobility; the domain of "system dynamics" ("backlog" (140)) – expresses institutional pressure caused by the flow of migration;

The lexical-thematic field "Migration" mimodelled the following way (Figure 1):

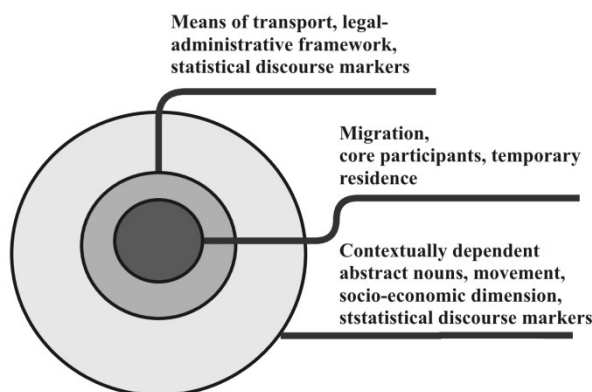


Figure 1. The hierarchical inner organisation of the lexical-semantic field "Migration"

For a deeper analysis, let us consider the tokens in the nuclear zone of the field, the perinuclear zone and periphery tokens. In this section of this study, by the means of CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) we aim to qualitatively express how the

lexical-semantic structure of the field represents culturally-predisposed biases towards migrants, and reinforces political and ideological attitudes towards Middle East migration.

Firstly, let us address all the tokens in the nuclear zone, as they are the most representative verbalisers of the concept of migration. Out of 37 tokens, 8 lexical components comprise the nuclear zone of the studied lexical-semantic field that establish the conceptual boundaries of this domain. For example, "*asylum*" (2530) stands as the iconic destination, primary representative of the essential goal of the participants of the phenomenon; "*people*" (2517) functions as the ultimate hyponymic referent between the general word for representing a class of entities and the specific core participants which model the social aspect of the field; "*migration*" (1423) is the nucleus of lexical-semantic field that organises the conceptual borders of the domain; "*government*" (1365) represents the entity with a high level of agency, in opposition to whom "migrants", "immigrants", "seekers" are rather objects, recipients. It is the administrative force responsible for the structural and policy-driven management of the field. "*(asylum) seeker*" (1170) is a direct lexical representation of the core participants who find themselves in the state of transition to another community; "*(asylum) hotel*" (1152) functions as a situational that provides the notion of environment as the result/consequences of migration; "*immigration*" (1027) in the lexical-semantic field serves as a qualifying framework for the transition to a new national and/or cultural space; "*migrant*" (971) is a direct nominalisation for the agents within the field whose movement defines the existence of the lexical-semantic field.

Concerning the perinuclear tokens, it can be said that "*boat*" (958) is rather significant instrumental signal, reflecting a dangerous and often a dramatic way of illegal transition between countries; "*participant*" (640) denotes class of entities involved in structured programs or legal procedures; "*case*"(322), "*policy*" (353), "*claim*" (342), represent the legal and administrative regulations that shape the experience of core participants of the phenomena.

The peripheral zone contains statistical and descriptive elements. "*report*" (308), "*figure*" (479), and "*cost*" (204) function as statistical markers that frame migration in terms of quantification and estimation; "*impact*" (168) contributes to the evaluative dimension of the field; "*topic*" (189) reflects the discursive framing of migration as an object of social and political debate; "*entry*" (49), "*return*" (200), "*arrival*" (300), "*route*" (191), "*border*"(203) reflect the semantic feature of migration as the process

of entering and leaving the country; "shortage" (71) and "backlog" (140) reflect secondary consequences of migration as a phenomena.

The data presented and discussed here can be viewed from the vantage point of Critical Discourse Analysis. In general, the data reflects the discourse that is heavily centered on administrative and legal control of human movement. In our modest opinion, the nuclear zone is insightful, in particular owing to the high contextual frequency of token "*government*" (1365) as the subject with high level of agency which is represented in the opposition to the objects of its legal regulations and control: "migrants", "immigrants", "(asylum) seekers". Consequently, the core participants of the domain of migration start losing their agency, which is further enhanced by the presence of tokens in both perinuclear zone and periphery of the field that are statistical discourse markers like "*number*" (879), "*figure*" (479), and "*cost*" (204)" as from the point of CDA, the quantification of human movement turns personalised stories into depersonalised dynamic economic burden. Thus, the core participants are stripped of their personal "*life*" (318).

Furthermore, the tokens "*boat*" (958), "*border*" (203), and "*crossing*" (288) that possess a contextual relation to the tokens "*government*" (1365) and "*migration*" (1423) frame the phenomena of migration as a range of jurisdictional breaches that require legal and administrative management and control.

Thus, the inner structure of the lexical-semantic field "Migration" reinforces an array of biases towards Middle East migration as a social phenomenon, which frames it in a rather negative way, constructing a specific sentiment towards asylum seekers, and denotes it as an issue requiring proper legal regulation and control, which makes Middle East migrants feel more isolated in a society and makes further social integration more complicated.

Conclusions and perspectives

The theoretical framework of our study perceived the way of viewing lexical-semantic fields as groupings that are organised with structural hierarchy, semantic relations between the constituents of the field, and mental models that manifest knowledge and attitudes towards social phenomena within the studied domain and categorise the real-world entities across different levels of cognition. The hierarchical structure of the lexical-semantic groups consists of the nucleus (core) of the field which is represented by dominant nuclear (core) verbalisers that define the semantic and conceptual boundaries of the domain; the perinuclear zone that is constituted by lexical items that share some common semantic features and are further organised

into smaller lexical-thematic groups that deeper explain the domain; and the periphery that consists of lexical items that are the farthest from the nucleus and have the lowest level of semantic proximity.

The study considered lexical-semantic fields context-dependent, i.e., varying depending on the type of context they unfold within. Thus, to apply critical discourse analysis, the study accommodated the sociosemiotic view of the discourse in order to perceive it as a special social practice that shapes ideological and cultural attitudes and provides communicative guidelines.

Hence, the mentioned theoretical framework motivated the choice of a mixed-methods approach, where content-analysis was viewed as an "umbrella term" encompassing both lexical-semantic field modeling for unfolding the quantitative dimension of the study subject and critical discourse analysis to quantitatively express how the lexical-semantic field of "Migration" in the contemporary British news discourse shapes sentiment towards the studied phenomenon. The collected linguistic materials, which were referred to as tokens, were stratified into their corresponding zone inside the field by applying a frequency-based model.

The lexical-semantic field "Migration" modeling gave insights into the hierarchical structure. Overall, the nucleus is represented by the cluster of words denoting migration, temporary residence, and core participants of the event. The perinuclear zone is mostly represented by lexical items that denote means of transport, statistical discourse markers, and legal-administrative framework. The periphery is represented by statistical discourse markers, movement, socio-economic dimension, and contextually dependent nouns that usually share no common semantic features with the nucleus, but contextually might have metonymic relations with items in the nucleus and/or in the perinuclear zone.

By means of critical discourse analysis, it was discovered that the structure of the studied lexical-semantic field plays a part in constructing a certain sentiment towards migration, in particular perceiving it as an issue that requires precise legal and administrative regulation/control. Apart from that, the high frequency of statistical discourse markers depersonalise migrants, stripping them of their agency and creating an image of this class of participants as objects that are regulated by governmental administrative force.

Future studies should focus on a similar analysis of the material from a larger linguistic corpus. Owing to compiling a corpus from articles in terms of their topic, we couldn't tackle the issue of a narrow selection of data.

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