

Parametric adjectives in definitions of species vocabulary and the concept of species norm

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Abstract

Parametric adjectives of general size (velykyi – malyi (Ukrainian), big – small (English), large – small, duży, wielki – mały (Polish), etc.) are used by speakers as markers of the size of certain objects. The meaning of such adjectives can be determined only in combinations with some specific nouns: in the combinations big fence / big nose / big dog, the same adjective denotes significantly different dimensions of reality. When using adjectives of general size in speech, speakers rely on their perceptual experience and, based on it, form an idea of what the dimensions of a standard fence, cup, spoon or teapot are. The dimensions of such standard objects in a certain class of things constitute the so-called “species norm”. On the imaginary scale of sizes, the value of the norm is in the center, in the middle between the two poles. In order to use the adjectives big and small, speakers must perform a comparison procedure: 'big' is one that exceeds the norm of size for its class of phenomena.

In dictionary definitions, adjectives of size are used differently as compared to how they are used in speech, since it is about the general characteristic of not a single object, but a whole class of objects of the same type named by a certain word. For example, oak and sequoia are described in dictionaries as large trees, amphorae and barrels as large vessels, and pugs and bichons as small dogs. In dictionary definitions, the standard of size is not the size of a typical oak tree, amphora, or shepherd dog, but the average size of an object in the class TREES, UTENSILS, or DOGS. This standard is determined by the compilers of dictionaries intuitively, which causes differences in various dictionaries when constructing definitions of the name of the same phenomenon.

Key words: cognitive category, categorization, parametric adjectives, explanatory dictionary, dictionary definition.

Legend

BTP – Andreychyn L., Georgiev L., Ilchev S. and others. Bulgarian interpretive dictionary. 4th ed. Sofia: Science and Art, 1996 (In Bulg.).

CAP – Dictionary of the Russian Academy. In 6 parts. St. Petersburg, 1789 – 1794 (In Rus.).

CYM – Dictionary of the Ukrainian language: in the 11th volume. Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1970 – 1980 (In Ukr.).

CamD – The Cambridge English Dictionary. URL:

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary>

COBUILD – Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary. URL:

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com>

Duden – Deutsches Universalwörterbuch A-Z, Duden, 1989. 1816 s.

USJP – Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego. Red. Stanisław Dubisz. CD.

WSJP – Wielki słownik języka polskiego. Red. Piotr Żmigrodzki. URL:

<https://wsjp.pl/>

MWLD – Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary. URL:

<http://www.learnersdictionary.com>

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