SEMANTIC COMPREHENSION OF LEXICAL CONTENT OF THE ENGLISH BOOK JACKETS

Anna Smoliana, P. G.
Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University,Ukraine

Abstract

The article deals 'with the peculiarities of organizing the information on the English book dust jackets, lexico-semantic properties of the language units and relations between the lexical items. The main semantic dimensions and semantic fields were identified considering the vocabulary of English book jackets. Application of the semantic analysis gave us proofs that language on the English book dust jackets is organized in a mental lexicon with particular semantic features that were demonstrated via semantic dimensions and semantic fields.

English book dust jacket is presented as an informational-advertising type comprising texts with their specific features. The mini-texts are organized in the informational blocks that reveal diverse functions. That's why it seems to be crucial to consider language units from different perspectives - lexical, semantic and cognitive and take a view at different kinds and types of meanings to show how they fit into the total composite effect of a book jacket lexicon.

The paper presents a first look at the semantic structure of the information associated with the vocabulary of the English book jackets and aims at analyzing the lexemes and attempt to organize them in the semantic fields. We conducted a semantic analysis and defined semantic fields created for getting general overview of a particular domain of content.

Keywords: Word meaning, semantic dimension, semantic field, lexeme, dust jacket

Introduction:

The research concerns the information organized in a text on the English book dust jackets that bears specific semantic features and demands meaningful interpretation. Such texts can be defined as informational-advertising type possessing features of presentation and affect on the reader's mind with the aim of inducing to the action. They exist in a limited space with their own fixed composition and its functionality. The structural components are headline (title), blurbs, reviews, caption, author's biography,

publisher's logo. The essential components for our scrutinizing are reviews and blurbs that contain meaningful information. The corpus for research is based on about 200 samples of random chosen English book dust jackets.

Motivation of the work is determined by several perspectives. The linguistic studies are concentrated on the human's understanding of the surrounded world, cognitive processes in conceptualizing and interpretation the text, nature of the mental lexicon in human's minds.

The purpose of the paper lies in examining vocabulary of English book dust jackets and various types of meanings, defining semantic fields and analyzing the structural features of semantic fields.

Main text:

It is worth to mention briefly about the background of our research. We resorted to the traditions of de Saussure (1916), Leech (1974), Fillmore (1982), Jackendoff (1983), Cruse (1986, 2010), Geeraerts (2010), Saeed (1997), who investigated and developed the theories of concept, meaning, sign, cognition, lexical semantics, semantic structure and nature of the vocabulary of a particular language.

Dirk Geeraerts (2010) studied lexical fields, various types of their relations and methods of the analysis. He distinguished lexical, semantic and conceptual fields of the words. Along with him, Geoffrey Leech (1978) and John Lyons (1995) studied meanings of the words, phrases and sentences and their diverse types differentiating conceptual, connotative, emotive and other meanings. Sebastian Lobner (2002) emphasizes the mental act of classifying things in the world into sets with common properties. The inquiry in the theories of conceptual and lexical semantics leads one to the works of W. Croft and A. Cruse (2004), V. Evans (2006) and J. Ray (2002). Due to their contribution to the study of semantics we will give our insight of the words' meanings within the context of the texts on English book jackets.

Humans don't use words without any intentions, either explicit or implicit. The meaning of the words can be lexical or cognitive, have logical or denotative content sense, be based on associations or conceptual structures.

So, dealing with meaning of the words, we are talking about semantics that is the study of meaning system of a language, so it concerns the meaning of words. The word 'semantic' was introduced by Michel Breal during the 19th century. According to John I. Saeed (2003), semantics is a study of meaning communicated through language.

It has been observed a great interest in semantic theory among linguists in the last few years. The main reason is the development of generative grammar that emphasizes on the distinction between 'deep structure' and 'surface structure'. On the one hand, semantics deals with the

way words and sentences are related to objects and processes in the world. On the other hand, it deals with way words are related to each other in terms of synonymy, entailment and contradiction.

Pursuing our research in terms of the semantic features of lexicon on the English book dust jackets, we are to clarify detailed the term of Lexical semantics that is of crucial importance for our analysis.

Lexical semantics concerned with the identification and representation of the semantics of lexical items. Lexemes are linguistic items with their own meanings that cannot be predicted based on the meaning of the parts and can be considered from different perspectives. The meaning of content words is concepts that correspond to concrete objects with definite properties. Unitary meaning can be realized in various lexemes of the semantic fields. Jackendoff (2002) explicitly takes into account the contextual flexibility of meaning, i.e. the item receives a range of contextual interpretations through the interaction with specific conceptual factors. Lexicon can be organized mentally in human's mind referring to "human wordstore" (Aitchison 2003: 10), which speaker carries around "inside his/her head" (Singleton 2000: 161). This organization implies certain principles, such as creating lexical set in terms of one lexico-semantic group at the surface level.

Language can be described as a conceptually structured inventory of linguistic units and cognitive routines. Word meanings are shaped by the context and the situations where they occur, and multiple meanings of words are formed as a natural consequence of dynamic, usage-based view of language (Paradis 2013).

There have been many discussions about the approaches to 'meaning', its theories and kinds (Leech 1974, Lyons 1977, 1995, Palmer 1981, Crystal 1995). Comprehending meaning and developing the issue of the paper, we regard, firstly, such types as lexical and grammatical meaning and, secondly, types of meaning that were introduced by Geoffrey Leech (1974) in order to show how they all fit into the total composite effect of a linguistic communication.

The theory of meaning is based on the describing messages that speakers intend for their utterances to convey. The word meaning is explored in two different modes: in relation to other words (lexical relations) and in relation to the world (denotation).

The kind of meaning that relates words to each other within the language is distinguished by Gottlob Frege as sense, or cognitive content. The most familiar relations among words are synonymy, antinomy, hyponymy, meronymy. Thus, the words are defined in terms of other words or concepts. Considering the synonymy via semantics it is implied by Cruse (1986) that synonyms share "common traits" or attributional overlap,

walking the fine line between "necessary resemblances" and "permissible differences". Some examples from the text on the dust jackets are: **verbs:** *the book: shows, presents, introduces, performs, provides, discloses, uncovers, unveils, offers, illustrates*; **adjectives:** *wonderful, amazing, fascinating, enthralling, exhilarating, admirable, enjoyable, magnificent, gorgeous, exciting, impressive, marvelous, superb, brilliant.*

Uncovering the meaning in relation to the world, we denote words as truth conditions that comprise entailment, presuppositions, implicature and connotation. So, in order to know what words are like it is necessary to know something about world. This kind of meaning is determined as reference relating words to entities in the world.

In terms of denotation connotation is relevant for our research as it is the part of the meaning of a word that adds a rhetorical spin to what is said. That means that connotation signals the attitude of the speaker towards the object or event described. We deal with the information on the dust jackets that bears connotative meaning of the words. The word combinations describing the object (book) in the blurbs of dust jackets, such as *superbly qualified, frightfully witty, a marvelous fusion, a must-read, extraordinary gift for hope* are not only true-conditional meanings, but they inform addressee about addresser's attitude regarding the object and events.

It is meaningful to clarify such types of meaning as lexical, grammatical and compositional that is considered to be the 'surface level' of meaning.

Lexical meaning reveals the word meanings that are stored in our mental lexicon. The words from the book jackets have lexical meanings: **masterpiece -** *a work done with extraordinary skill; especially: a supreme intellectual or artistic achievement; bestseller - an article (as a book) whose sales are among the highest of its class* (Merriam-Webster Online-Dictionary). Lexical meaning can embrace conceptual and connotative meaning.

According to Lyons (1995: 52) a lexeme may have different word-forms and these word-forms will generally differ in meaning: their grammatical meaning - the meaning in terms of grammar.

Language can convey dictionary meaning, connotations beyond the dictionary meaning, information about the social context of language use, speaker's feelings and attitudes. Pursuing our purpose it is meaningful for us to distinguish different types of meanings at the 'deep level' and decide on which types are appropriate to provide the semantic analysis. According to G. Leech (1978), there are such types as associative meaning and conceptual meaning.

Firstly, conceptual meaning (logical or cognitive) is stylistically neutral and objective; it is basic propositional meaning which corresponds to

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the primary dictionary definition. Geoffrey Leech has defined conceptual meaning as "The widely assumed to be the central factor in linguistic communication ..." (Leech 1978: 10). Conceptual meaning deals with the core meaning of the expression and has the aim of providing an appropriate representation to a word or sentence. Thus, we can elicit and demonstrate the conceptual meanings of the lexemes and expressions from blurb texts on the book jackets: ***book is a self-discovery:*** *the act or process of gaining knowledge or understanding of your abilities, character, andfeelings.*

Associative meaning is subjective and stylistically marked. In terms of it five types of meaning can be distinguished.

Connotative meaning manifests itself in associating an expression or word with one's experience or viewpoint adopted by individual, group or society. This would have an effect on the meaning of the concept (Leech 1978: 15). Relating to lexical items on the book jackets we can state according to the analysis of a bulk of texts that most verbs, adjectives and adverbs in the blurbs and reviews bear positive connotation while in the author's biography reference they have rather neutral connotation. The nouns in the texts have predominantly denotative meaning.

Stylistic meaning is conveyed about the social context and stylistic features of the piece of language used by the speaker/writer. Mainly stylistically marked lexical items and expressions can be encountered in the texts of the book jackets, especially in the book reviews that bear features of publicistic and colloquial (non-formal) styles (*kick-butt, drop-dead, poignant, heart-stopping, captivating)* and in the blurbs that have features of publicistic and belles-lettres styles (*the plot thickens, the voyage of a lifetime, sheds light on this enduring mystery, the greatest epic fantasy, award-winning).*

Affective or emotive meaning reflects the speaker's attitudes, feelings or emotions toward the addressee or the subject matter of the discourse. It often overlaps with style, connotation and conceptual content. In terms of our research the distinct feature is that affective meanings are always positive and are conveyed either by the reviewers in the book reviews (*the story was quite simply enthralling, a short tale of much power and beauty, an engaging writer)* or by the publisher in the blurbs *(fun, thoughtful, and insightful companion volume).*

Reflected meaning arises when word has more than one conceptual meaning or multiple conceptual meaning. In this case one meaning pushes the other meaning and the dominant suggestive meaning prevails. So this dominant meaning is called reflected meaning.

Collocative meaning is a meaning which the word acquires in the company of certain words. For example, in the blurbs of the book jacket we

read: *timeless themes* (but not *topics) of love, loss, pride, humility, ambition and revenge*; *a truly unique contribution* (but no *deposit or dotation).*

So, conceptual meaning is a base meaning (concept) while different types of associative meaning are subcategories of the concept.

Words (lexemes) whose meanings are sufficiently similar in some respect constitute a semantic field. Adrienne Lehrer (1985) defined a semantic field as a set of lexemes which cover a certain conceptual domain and which bear certain specifiable relations to one another.

The advantage of a semantic field is that it gives you an overview of a conceptual area and allows you to see how different linguistically coded concepts in a language determine each other.

This paper presents a first look at the semantic structure of the information associated with the vocabulary of the English book jackets and aims at analyzing the lexemes and attempt to organize them in the semantic fields.

In order to structure a semantic field we give an overview of the semantic dimensions that will facilitate an understanding of the analysis of the vocabulary on the English book jackets and help to differentiate English book advertising related words. For this purpose we examine such structural components of the book jackets as blurbs and book's reviews that carry the most meaningful information. The defined semantic dimensions can be seen in figure 1.

BLURBS

GENRE IDENTIFICATION mentioned in text	EVALUATION	CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE of a book advertised
Memoir, autobiography, romance, cookbook, narrative, epic, fable	0 1%	An international bestseller, "how-to" book, a fable of self-discovery, research, voyage, irony, a philosophical novel

Value of a book	Connection with the author	Effect on the reader
Masterpiece, alarming book, challenging, motivational, timeless, informative, valuable source	A brilliant artist, award-winning author, a gifted researcher and storyteller, the master of her genre, internationally respected writer	Develop self-awareness, turn powerful thinking, fresh insights, resonates long

REVIEWS

EVALUATION

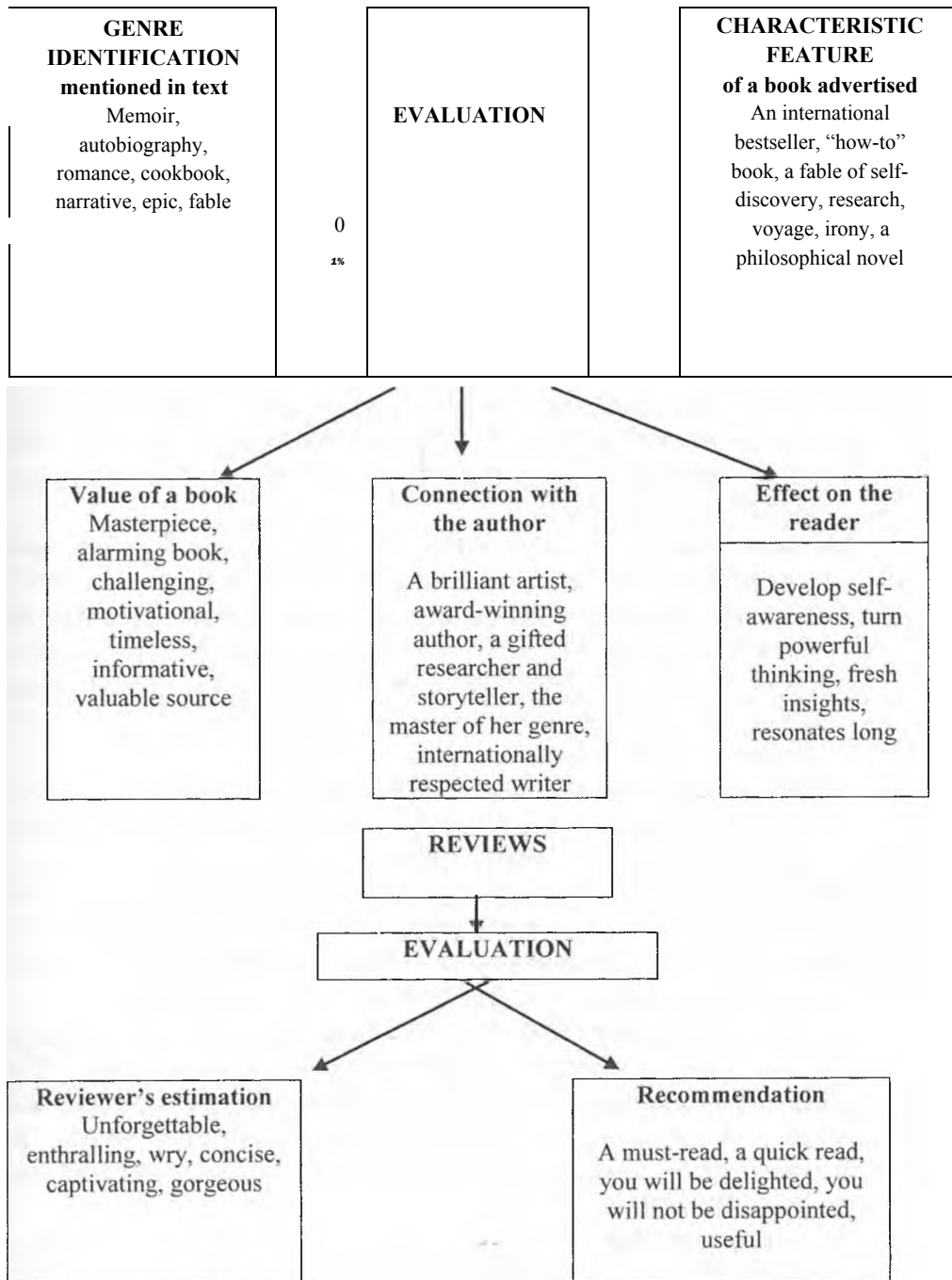| Reviewer's estimation	Recommendation
Unforgettable, enthralling, wry, concise, captivating, gorgeous	A must-read, a quick read, you will be delighted, you will not be disappointed, useful

Figure 1. Semantic dimensions of advertising book related vocabulary

Below, we will summarize the highlighted semantic dimensions that are relevant in differentiating English advertising book related words.

1. **Blurbs: Genre identification:** the information in the blurbs can contain terms denoting genre of a described book and, thus, can identify its character and predict the general subject matter. For instance, *"romance"* is a prose narrative treating imaginary characters involved in events remote in time or place and usually heroic, adventurous, or mysterious (Merriam Webster Dictionary Online). The genres are diverse, but the book jackets have semantic feature of a particular category of literature. So, English book jackets are characterized by the common semantic relations regarding genre.

2. **Evaluation: a) value of a book:** reveals distinction of a particular book from the others emphasizing its exclusive significance for readers. This semantic dimension may contain subjective judgment and have mainly affective meaning. For example, *"challenging"* is arousing competitive interest, thought, or action, provocative. The addresser expresses his own mind toward a particular book and, thus, aims at affecting the reader.

   b) connection with the author: you can find lexemes and expressions on the book jackets related to the author of the book. They can characterize his capacity, talent and genius. For example, mentioning about the author as *"master"* means highly skilled or proficient in one's field that gives proofs about the quality of the book. The related words unite the information in blurbs by common semantic features.

   c) effect on the reader: shows in what way a particular book can be useful for readers and what contribution it has. We can find such words as *"develop ", "help ", "give ", "turn "* etc.

3. **Characteristic feature:** discloses features of the book that show its character, recognition, general "mood" or style. It can be *"how-to' book* that gives instructions in various specific fields or *an international bestseller* that characterizes it as a worth book.

1. **Reviews: Evaluation: a) reviewer's estimation:** comprises minds of the authoritative people or organizations towards the book. The lexemes are dominantly adjectives with connotative component and emotive meaning. For example, such evaluating words as *"enthralling", "captivating", "awesome"* express excitement and positive appraisal.

   b) recommendation: includes words with component of advice, suggestions of the authoritative people or organizations regarding a particular book, and reasons for reading it. For instance, *"a must- read"* means essential to read and the book you cannot miss.

Using the semantic dimensions described above, now we will present a more complete analysis of the vocabulary of English book jackets. The words are classified according to prominent semantic features in their meaning, contextual relations and associative properties. Below, the semantic fields and the containing lexemes that actualize these semantic fields are presented in the table. The meanings of the items are taken from the Merriam-Webster Online-Dictionary.

M ANTIC FIELD	LEXEMES
I. Informative component	
:o:k presentation	Provide ("to make available"), show ("to give information that proves something"), address jQ'to direct the efforts or attention"), present ("to formally talk about to a group of people"), introduce ("to make known to someone else by name"), describe ("to represent or give an account of in words"), perform ("to give a rendition of"), explain ("to make known"), discover ("to make known or visible"), point out ("to draw attention"), uncover ("bring to light"), reveal ("to make known"), demonstrate ("to show clearly to other people"), explore ("to investigate, study, or analyze"), contain ("to have or include"), emphasize ("to give special attention"), represent ("to bring clearly before the mind"), include ("to take in or comprise"), instruct ("to provide with authoritative information or advice"), focus ("a subject that is being discussed or studied"), tell ("to give information"), examine("to look at something closely and carefully"), disclose ("to expose to view"), answer ("a solution of a problem"), unveil ("to make public"), interpret ("to understand in a specified way"), offer ("to present for acceptance or rejection"), illustrate ("to make clear")
2. Genre	Novel ("a long written story usually about imaginary characters and events"), fable ("a narration intended to enforce a useful truth"), narrative = novelette = novella ("a story with a compact and pointed plot"), saga ("a long and complicated story with many details"), handbook ("a small book that gives useful information about a particular subject"), memoir ("a narrative composed from personal experience"), autobiography ("the biography of a person narrated by himself or herself"), romance ("a love story especially in the form of a novel"), cookbook ("a book of cooking directions and recipes")
3. Style	Mystery ("a piece of fiction dealing usually with the solution of a mysterious crime"), irony ("humorous or sardonic literary style or form characterized by irony"), "how-to" book ("gives instructions on a particular subject"), satire ("a literary work holding up human vices and follies to ridicule or scorn"), guide ("something that provides a person with guiding information"), research ("studious inquiry or examination")
II. Emotive component	
1. Book : rracterization	The adjectives with denotative component "excitement", "high esteem": glamorous, brilliant, wonderful, compassionate, gorgeous, magical, enjoyable, enthralling, sophisticated, challenging, magnificent, entertaining, exhilarating, unforgettable, exciting, admirable, thought-provoking, thoughtful, informative, classic, sparkling, concrete, practical, authoritative, easy-to-follow, easy-to-read, revolutionary, eye-opening, engaging, credible, remarkable, unique, helpful, spectacular, all-encompassing
2. Judgment	Lexical items with denotative component of "estimation", "high opinion": useful, must-read, quick-read, drop-dead, swoon-worthy, kick-butt, breathtaking, heart-breaking, courageous, dazzling, sublime, eloquent, edge-of-your seat
III. Advertising component	

1. Quality	Valuable source ("very useful or helpful"), masterpiece ("a work done with extraordinary skill"), bestseller ("a popular product (such as a book) that many people have bought"), world-renowned ("acknowledged by the world"), multiple-award winning ("won a lot of awards")
2. Exclusiveness	Never-before-published, the most comprehensive ("having or exhibiting wide mental grasp"), one of the most all inclusive documents ("complete and exhaustive"), one of the most popular and influential figures, one-of-a-kind ("exclusive")
3. Embodied virtues	Leadership ("the power or ability to lead other people"), grace ("disposition to or an act or instance of kindness, courtesy, or clemency"), development ("the act or process of growing or causing something to grow"), motivation ("a motivating force, stimulus, or influence"), success ("the correct or desired result of an attempt"), energy ("natural enthusiasm and effort"), creativity ("the ability to make new things or think of new ideas"), good ("morally good forces or influences"), courage ("mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty"), self-discovery ("the act or process of achieving self-knowledge"), inspiration ("the action or power of moving the intellect or emotions"), wisdom ("accumulated philosophic or scientific learning"), kindness ("a kind deed")
4. Effectiveness	Develop (self-awareness), give (fresh insights), help (to think deeply), (turn (powerful thinking), brings (the new scientific picture of life), offer (unique insights), bring (to life), resonate long, refreshing (to read this book)

Table 1. Semantic fields and containing lexemes of the English book dust jackets

For our purpose, we constructed the semantic fields on the basis of three components: (1) Informative component covers the lexemes and expressions of informational character; it represents the book, genres and particular styles are mentioned; the lexemes are elicited from the blurbs have specific related meanings and created the semantic fields of BOOK PRESENATION (includes all lexemes that present book essence, plot, events and that are characterized by common denotative component of "present"), GENRE (bears all lexemes denoting genre identification) and STYLE (represents lexemes of stylistic features of the book);

(2) Emotive component discloses the attitude of the collected addresser (publisher, editor, reviewers) towards the book; the semantic fields were built up on the basis of lexemes elicited from blurbs and reviews: BOOK CHARACTERIZATION - includes all lexemes with a common denotative component of "excitement" and "high esteem"; JUDGEMENT - comprises the lexemes of reviewers' opinions and book perception;

(3) Advertising component contains lexemes and expressions related to the advertising character, i.e. convincing, affect, inducement to the action; the semantic fields of QUALITY (contains lexemes denoting highly qualitative features of a book), EXCLUSIVENESS (includes lexemes and expressions denoting the priority of a book), EMBODIED VIRTUES (performs lexemes with a denotative component of "good and moral quality" that possesses a book) and EFFECTIVENESS (includes the lexemes that cover a conceptual domain of "usefulness" for the readers) were defined.

Conclusion

On the basis of the material presented and the discussion conducted above. I would like to formulate some concluding words.

Firstly, we scrutinized the theory of meaning and examined different types of meanings having applied them to the lexicon on the English book dust jackets. On the basis of vocabulary we stated that advertising related words might have connotative, affective, stylistic and collocative meanings. Conceptual structure of the vocabulary manifests itself in stylistically neutral, objective meanings of the words on the book jackets. The distinctive feature of the vocabulary organized on the book jackets is that the words characterizing a particular book bear positive connotation with subjective content.

We gave an overview of the semantic dimensions that facilitated an understanding of the analysis of the vocabulary on the English book jackets and differentiated English book advertising related words. Our further step was to conduct a semantic analysis and define semantic fields created for getting general overview of a particular domain of content. The semantic fields were built up according to the informative, emotive and advertising components. So, in general we distinguished nine semantic fields that contain lexemes related in meaning and based on associative and contextual properties.

Thus, the analysis gave us proofs that language on the English book dust jackets is organized in a mental lexicon with particular semantic features that were demonstrated via semantic dimensions and semantic fields.

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