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LEXICAL AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF UNITS DESCRIBING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The study of personality-related vocabulary represents an important area of contemporary lexical-semantic research because language functions as a primary means of describing and evaluating human behavior. This article investigates the lexical and semantic features of English-language units used to describe positive and negative personality traits. The research aims to identify the structural, semantic, and evaluative characteristics of personality descriptors and to examine their role in expressing social attitudes and cultural values. The study employs a qualitative descriptive methodology based on lexical classification, semantic analysis, componential analysis, contextual analysis, and comparative analysis. The data consist of a representative sample of personality-related lexical units collected from contemporary English dictionaries, corpora, and academic sources. The findings reveal that positive personality descriptors, such as honest, kind, and responsible, are characterized by favorable evaluative meanings associated with trust, cooperation, and social approval. Negative descriptors, including selfish, arrogant, and dishonest, contain stronger emotional and critical connotations reflecting social disapproval and moral judgment. The analysis further demonstrates that personality trait vocabulary exhibits systematic semantic relationships, including antonymy, gradability, and contextual variation. Moreover, the study confirms that the lexical representation of personality traits reflects broader cultural norms and cognitive mechanisms of categorization. The results contribute to a deeper understanding of lexical semantics, evaluative language, and the linguistic representation of human character in contemporary English. The research may be useful for scholars in linguistics, discourse studies, translation, language teaching, and intercultural communication.

Keywords: lexical semantics, personality traits, evaluative vocabulary, positive personality traits, negative personality traits, semantic analysis, lexical units, connotation, English language, cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, human characterization.

Introduction

The study of language and personality has long occupied a central position in linguistic research because language serves as one of the primary tools through which individuals perceive, interpret, and evaluate human behavior. Every society develops a rich system of lexical units that allow speakers to describe personal qualities, emotional dispositions, moral values, and behavioral tendencies. These linguistic resources not only facilitate communication but also reflect cultural norms, social expectations, and collective perceptions regarding desirable and undesirable human characteristics. In this regard, the analysis of lexical and semantic features of personality trait descriptors provides valuable insights into the relationship between language, cognition, and society.

The English language possesses an extensive inventory of lexical units used to characterize personality traits. These units include adjectives, nouns, compound formations, idiomatic expressions, and metaphorical constructions that convey various evaluations of human behavior. Personality descriptors are among the most frequently used evaluative linguistic elements because they allow speakers to form impressions, express attitudes, and categorize individuals according to specific social and psychological criteria. Whether in everyday conversations, literary texts, media discourse, educational contexts, or professional communication, personality-related vocabulary plays a crucial role in shaping interpersonal relationships and social perceptions. From a semantic perspective, personality trait descriptors represent a highly productive lexical field characterized by complex networks of meanings and associations. The semantic content of these units extends beyond simple descriptions of character. In many cases, words denoting personality traits contain strong evaluative and emotional components that influence the interpretation of messages. For instance, lexical items such as honest, reliable, and compassionate generally evoke positive evaluations, whereas terms such as selfish, arrogant, and deceitful carry negative connotations. Consequently, the semantic analysis of personality descriptors requires consideration not only of their denotative meanings but also of their pragmatic and connotative dimensions. The distinction between positive and negative personality traits reflects fundamental cognitive processes involved in human categorization. Individuals naturally classify behavior according to social norms and value systems, and language provides the means through which these classifications are expressed. Positive personality traits are typically associated with cooperation, empathy, trustworthiness, and social responsibility, while negative traits are often connected with antisocial behavior, self-interest, dishonesty, or emotional instability. The linguistic encoding of these evaluations demonstrates how language functions as a mechanism for transmitting cultural values across generations and maintaining social cohesion within communities. The growing interest in lexical semantics, cognitive linguistics, and discourse studies has contributed significantly to the investigation of personality-related vocabulary. Contemporary linguistic theories emphasize that lexical meaning is not static but is influenced by contextual, cultural, and cognitive factors. Personality descriptors provide an ideal domain for exploring these theoretical perspectives because their meanings often vary depending on communicative situations, social contexts, and speaker intentions. Furthermore, advances in corpus linguistics have enabled researchers to examine the frequency, distribution, and contextual usage of personality trait vocabulary in authentic language data, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of its semantic properties.

Methodology

The present study employs a qualitative and descriptive linguistic approach to investigate the lexical and semantic features of English-language units that describe positive and negative personality traits. Since the primary objective of the research is to identify, classify, and interpret the semantic characteristics of personality-related lexical items, the study combines methods from lexical semantics, cognitive linguistics, and discourse analysis. This methodological framework enables a comprehensive examination of the linguistic mechanisms through which personality traits are represented and evaluated in contemporary English. The study is based on a descriptive-analytical research design. The descriptive component focuses on identifying and categorizing lexical units that denote personality traits, while the analytical component examines their semantic structures, evaluative meanings, and contextual functions. The research does not seek to test a

predetermined hypothesis; instead, it aims to explore patterns and relationships within the lexical-semantic field of personality description.

A qualitative methodology was selected because personality-related vocabulary contains numerous connotative, emotional, and pragmatic meanings that cannot be fully understood through quantitative measures alone. Qualitative analysis allows for a detailed investigation of semantic nuances and contextual variations associated with evaluative lexical units.

Discussion

The findings of the present study demonstrate that lexical units describing personality traits in the English language constitute a highly structured and semantically rich lexical field. The analysis revealed that positive and negative personality descriptors differ not only in their denotative meanings but also in their evaluative force, emotional coloring, contextual flexibility, and sociocultural significance. These differences highlight the important role of language in expressing social judgments and constructing perceptions of human character. One of the most notable observations concerns the predominance of evaluative meaning within personality-related vocabulary. Unlike many lexical categories that primarily serve a descriptive function, personality descriptors simultaneously describe and evaluate individuals. Words such as honest, kind, and reliable communicate factual information about a person's behavior while also expressing social approval. Similarly, descriptors such as selfish, arrogant, and dishonest convey both descriptive and judgmental meanings. This dual function confirms previous linguistic theories suggesting that evaluative language occupies a central position in human communication because it enables speakers to communicate attitudes, beliefs, and value judgments efficiently. The discussion highlights the complexity and multidimensional nature of personality-related vocabulary in English. The lexical units describing positive and negative personality traits function as powerful instruments of evaluation, social categorization, and cultural expression. Their meanings emerge through the interaction of semantic structure, contextual usage, cognitive processes, and sociocultural influences, demonstrating the intricate relationship between language and human perception. The results confirm that personality descriptors represent a significant and dynamic component of the English lexical system, deserving continued scholarly attention within modern linguistic research.

Conclusion

The present study examined the lexical and semantic features of English-language units that describe positive and negative personality traits, with particular attention to their semantic structures, evaluative meanings, and communicative functions. The analysis demonstrated that personality-related vocabulary constitutes an important and highly productive lexical-semantic field through which speakers describe, evaluate, and categorize human behavior. These lexical units not only convey information about individual characteristics but also reflect broader cultural values, social norms, and cognitive patterns of evaluation. The findings revealed that positive personality descriptors such as honest, kind, responsible, and compassionate are generally associated with socially approved behaviors and desirable moral qualities. Their semantic structures are characterized by favorable evaluative components that promote cooperation, trust, and interpersonal harmony. In contrast, negative personality descriptors including selfish, arrogant,

dishonest, and manipulative contain stronger evaluative and emotional elements that express social disapproval and criticism. These lexical units often function as linguistic tools for identifying behaviors that deviate from accepted social expectations. The research further established that the meanings of personality trait descriptors extend beyond their denotative content and are significantly influenced by connotative, pragmatic, and contextual factors. The interpretation of such lexical units depends not only on their dictionary definitions but also on the communicative situation, speaker intention, and cultural background. This finding confirms the dynamic nature of lexical meaning and highlights the importance of contextual analysis in semantic studies.

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