

AN ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MONOSEMANTIC WORDS IN THE EXPLANATORY DICTIONARY OF THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: Data on monosemism in language are less evident and analyzed compared to polysemy. Although studies in the field of semantics and lexicology are numerous, they are inclined towards the study of polysemy. We will try to make a modest contribution to the study of linguistic aspects related to the phenomenon of monosemy. This paper tries to reflect statistical, analytical and comparative data on monosemantic words in the Albanian language, arguing which of the parts of speech shows more monosemanticism and why the phenomenon of monosemism is more highly developed and is more frequent in the lexical categories.

The corpus of words from the "Dictionary of the Albanian language" 2006 (AAS/ILL)¹ was taken into consideration to collect the material used for the identification of monosemantic words. Finally, the identified words are classified according to the word classes they belong to, in order to process the statistical data. The collection of material has been careful and exhaustive, in order to argue about the quantity of unambiguous words in the explanatory dictionary of the Albanian language.

The distribution and frequency of monosemantic words in the explanatory dictionary of the Albanian language, according to their respective word classes, as well as a comparative analysis of the quantitative values of monosemantic words, will provide a clear perspective on the significance of monosemy in the dictionary and the impact this phenomenon has on the language.

Keywords: monosemy, dictionary, monosemantic words, quantitative value, word classes

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1. Introduction

There have been numerous perspectives on the monosemantic aspect of words. Ruhl (1989) acknowledges the presence of monosemy in many polysemantic words, thereby adopting a viewpoint that challenges the notion of polysemy. Nunberg (1979) aligns with the monosemic perspective, observing the role of pragmatic principles in identifying the meanings of a word, as he argues that the semantic separation of a word's meanings should not be universally applied to every case under examination. Monosemantic words can be considered those words that have only one meaning or one definition in the dictionary (Bejoint 1988, p. 14). Casadei (2023) supports the idea that there is a connection between a word's frequency of use and its polysemy. In her study of high-frequency Italian vocabulary (Casadei 2014), she confirmed that such vocabulary is predominantly polysemous, both in terms of the number of polysemous words and the number of meanings these words develop. In fact, polysemous words account for 89% of the total vocabulary. However, the practical difficulties in distinguishing the different meanings of a word or presenting it with a single meaning remain a matter of considerable debate. In explanatory dictionaries we are acquainted in advance with the principles or criteria that have been used for the classification and division of meanings, the organization of the content structure of words, the explanation or definition of meanings and each word separately, stylistic features and grammatical features, etc. These elements help us to study and analyze internally the semantic aspect of each lexical unit.

Theoretical treatments in the field of monosemy are generally related to the aspect of semantic analysis of meanings within the content structure of speech. Thus, hypotheses and question marks are raised if the meanings of a word are semantically related to form a polysemy, or are simply mergers within a structure, when in fact, the word should be considered monosemantic. A more in-depth treatment in this direction was developed by Ruhl, who analyzes the monosemic nature of words by focusing on the concept of the monosemic doubt. He examined various types of words, such as verbs, nouns, and multi-word expressions and argued that the meaning of a word in a given context corresponds to its inherent meaning (De Chicchis 1992, p. 170). However, statistical data on the value of monosemy in explanatory dictionaries remains an unexplored path, which this article aims to address.

This study aims to provide a statistical overview of the lexicographic check over monosemantic words represented in the explanatory dictionary of Albanian language and to examine which lexical and

semantic elements influence development of either polysemy or monosemy. Thus far, research offering statistical data on monosemantic words has been relatively limited. Consequently, the comparative analysis was performed only within the data of this paper, without having the opportunity to compare them with data from other studies. What is worth considering is the theoretical interpretation of the presence of monosemism in the language and the effect that monosemantic words have. Although few linguists have attempted to assess the importance of the quantitative value of monosemy in language, due to the challenges encountered in identifying monosemantic words as a result of the indeterminacy in the definition of monosemy (Bejoint 1988, p. 1), we will present real data on the number of monosemantic words found in the explanatory dictionary of the Albanian language. The difficulty in determining whether words are polysemous or monosemantic may seem theoretically impossible, given that there is no criterion that allows us to definitively determine whether a word has multiple meanings or not (Casadei 2023, p. 3).

Polysemantic words are in a higher number than monosemantic words. In each language, their number is comparatively higher, in response to linguistic economics, so that the memory of speakers is not burdened with the addition of different words, but with different meanings of a word. For this reason, the language entrusts the addition of words to its lexicon, mainly enriching the semantic structure of the word with new meanings, as opposed to borrowings or word formation, so newly formed words. The appearance of new meanings of a word and the development of polysemantic meaning structures are also realized by other causes. The speaker's intuition plays an important role regarding the meaning that appears as the first association when the linguistic unit is mentioned, which is evaluated as a prototype (basic meaning) and it is understood that that meaning is even more prominent from the cognitive side (Negrievska 2019). In this case, the semantic network of the linguistic unit is a consequence of its use in time, that is, this criterion takes into account the fact that language is a developing organism, and "polysemy is a synchronic reflection of diachronic" (Negrievska 2019).

Discussions of how widespread monosemia is from a quantitative point of view, have been the subject of various scientific researches and analyzes. If we want to know how many monosemantic words there are, we can find the answer in the statistical analysis of the words of the explanatory dictionary of the Albanian language. But, if we are interested in what effect monosemia has on a language, then it would be appropriate to analyze the phenomenon of monosemia. In

every explanatory dictionary we have unambiguous and ambiguous words. Given the increasing number of monosemantic words in the dictionary, the question that arises is whether we should consider monosemism as a linguistic phenomenon as well as polysemy? Next we will note with statistical data what is the value of the classification of unambiguous words and we will try to analyze and compare the lexical categories that show the most monosemy.

The main reference for this work is "Dictionary of the Albanian language", which was published in 2006, with a time difference of 26 years from the previous explanatory dictionary published in 1980. It is a lexicographical work, which preserves the main values of previous dictionaries and contains about 48,000 words, 43,000 units as basic words and 45,000 units as words constructed according to the abbreviations used. We will carry out the study on monosemantic words, taking into account their quantity in relation to the total of words that this dictionary presents in its fund. It is thought that the number of polysemantic words in the Albanian language in the "Dictionary of contemporary Albanian language" 1980 reaches the value of 80%, while the number of monosemantic words in the value of 20% (Thomai 2009, p. 77). Through the data collected from the "Dictionary of the Albanian language" 2006, we notice that the value of monosemy is increasing, marking not only a quantitative increase of the lexicon, but of lexical units as well which have met the needs of the Albanian language.

The development of the lexicon, which is conditioned by a number of extralinguistic factors, has made possible the entrance of a considerable number of words from the field of terminology, as Albanian language has faced a momentum of borrowing, after the social changes in this country. Although they occupy a sufficient place in the number of monosemantic words, the aim is not to consider words from specific areas of use of terminology, but to study the frequency of monosemy in the explanatory dictionary and to analyze the effect that the phenomenon has of monosemia in language.

2. Methods

The methods used in this paper are related to the collection of quantitative and qualitative data on the number of monosemantic words and their semantic analysis. The lexical fund of Albanian language was taken into consideration and as a source for the collection of dictionary served "Dictionary of the Albanian language" 2006. The material was collected manually (because the dictionary is not digitized, therefore it could not be worked on the basis of a computer program), to have a greater accuracy in quantitative data. The purpose of this

working methodology is related not only to extract the accurate statistical data, but also to create a general idea about the distribution of monosemy in the language, the parts of speech that are presented as monosemic and the value of monosemy in the explanatory dictionary. Explanatory dictionaries in every language are a reflection of linguistic reality, which is constantly evolving and is unstoppable. As dictionaries are a source of material for numerous studies in the field of lexicology and semantics they often fall prey to various criticisms and rebukes. But we must emphasize that, in this paper the explanatory dictionary is not taken as an object of study to place it at the center of a critical study, on the contrary, it has served as a source material for collecting monosemantic words, in order to observe the value and distribution of monosemia, as valuable data for the study.

In the dictionary are identified all the words that are monosemantic and further continued with the classification of words according to the word classes to which they belong. The collection of material has been exhaustive and meticulous, working with every letter of the dictionary to identify unambiguous words and to classify them according to classes. The collected statistical data have served to realize the theoretical interpretation, focusing on the analytical and comparative aspect of monosemantic words.

3. Results

Determining the extent of polysemy or monosemy in explanatory dictionaries presents certain challenges due to the division and categorization of lexical units based on the meanings they carry within their lexical structure. Casadei (2014) argues that the difficulty lies in a practical issue namely, the fact that for no language do we possess a complete lexical repertoire that definitively indicates how many of the existing lexemes are monosemous and how many are polysemous, as well as how many meanings each lexeme has. In light of this difficulty, it would be relevant to investigate how many words in the explanatory dictionary are represented as polysemous and how many as monosemous. Words are grouped according to word classes, which are of particular interest for the study of their lexical, grammatical, and semantic features. In this paper, we will examine the representational value of each word class in the explanatory dictionary as monosemous, which will help us understand which of them are most productive in terms of monosemy.

In a dictionary, nouns constitute the largest class of words within the lexical fund that is reflected (Howard 2002, p. 14). From the research of monosemantic words in the Albanian language dictionary it results

that the largest number of words that represent unambiguity are nouns. They make up 15.3 % of all monosemantic words in the explanatory dictionary of Albanian (7314 nouns in total), in relation to the 48,000 words that are reflected. Although most of the monosemantic nouns belong to the lexicon of the field of terminology, this category shows interest to interpret the reason why names display more monosemanticism than any other lexical category. Bejoint (1988, p. 19) supports such an opinion by emphasizing that: "Most of the words that "pass" all the direct tests for non-ambiguity (i.e. that show no antagonism of interpretations) are technical or scientific words with minimal extension and maximal intension". These nouns, which also have the relevant stylistic notes from the field of terminology used, are distinguished for their strict and concise character (Haxhillazi 1972, p. 561-570). Such a rigid and strict nature of the word does not allow the lexical unit to expand its content structure, to develop new meanings and to serve as a new productive theme, because it is not allowed by the semantic nature of the word. Consequently, monosemy is natural in this category of words: (for example: *agrochemistry, angina, autocephaly, bronchi, censorship, bug, divorce, equinox, fauna, gasoline, gypsum, premiere, index, boiler, identity card, parsley, marketing, negotiation, obligation, adduction, circuit, radar, saga, charlatanism, theoretical, fragility, water polo, puberty, ume* (japanese apricot, etc.)). It has been argued that in most cases of user space, the noun cannot be used in isolation, but needs explanatory support in the linguistic or situational context (Moon 1985, p. 180).

In these cases, the lexical meaning of the word must be related to the real content in order to enable the generation of new meanings. This structural development may also have nouns from the field of terminology, which in the future become a source of polysemantism, crossing the boundaries of their use on a larger scale. In this group, borrowed nouns make up the bulk, which require enough time to be assimilated into the language semantically. So, Albanian language has borrowed more words from the field of terminology, as a requirement to meet its needs. This may be the argument why nouns have so much access to monosemanticism. The abstract-concrete ratio of borrowed words remains to be seen. If the words are mostly of an abstract character, it means that they will be units in support of the addition of polysemy, because they tend to develop derived meanings, since their meaning marks a departure of the notion from reality. If words are mostly of a concrete character, then they tend to develop monosemanticism, since meaning signifies only one reality.

Another group within monosemantic nouns are those belonging to obsolete words, which include archaisms, barbarisms, and provincialisms. It is also normal and understandable that outdated words do not have the ability to generate new meanings, due to little use by speakers. Being used as words in small regions, as well as due to their replacement with the responsible in the mother tongue due to the age of the word, they can not be developed in the content structure, so they tend to maintain or gain understanding, for example: *anësujië* (bank-island), *bakërpunues* (coppersmith), *duhanxhi* (smoker), *dovlet* (wealth, prosperity), *dhogë* (plank), *erz* (honor), *kërnicka* (small cylinder meatballs), *komit* (rebel fighter), *kumbara* (money box), *mason* (mason), *masoneri* (masonry), *matriarkat* (matriarchy), etc. Generally, it turns out that this category of nouns is derived as monosemantic due to the loss of semantic variants. So words which have been polysemantic, with rich content structure and with the loss of semantic variants over time, are presented as unambiguous. The reason for the elimination of semantic variants is argued by Palmer (1976, p. 48), who states that: "Society decides for itself whether each element of the word will stay or not".

As one of the categories that also shows a considerable monosemanticism is the adjective. It constitutes about 4.3 % of the totality of monosemantic words in the explanatory dictionary, marking 2100 of them, for example: *ballkanas* (balkans), *bojëvjollcë* (purple), *bojëportokall* (orange), *decentralizues* (decentralized), *demoralizues* (depressing), *i nënshkruar* (signed), *i florinjhtë* (golden), *grimcor* (particle), *gjethevogël* (small-leaved), *i hidhët* (bitter), *i kërkueshëm* (searchable), *kokëzbrazët* (empty-headed), *i kritikueshëm* (critical), *matematikor* (mathematical), *mbinatyror* (supernatural), *i pafytyrë* (impudent), *i pazakontë* (unusual), etc. There are opinions that the adjective is one of the categories that shows more difficulty in dividing meanings in terms of lexicography, as they are dependent on the context in which they are used, so they take as many meanings as they have space in terms of semantics (Moon 1985, p. 179). We think that this can be an argument to prove the high number of adjectives as monosemantic words. Since the adjective indicates the qualities of the noun, then we must have monosemantic adjectives in high numbers, just as we have nouns. The highest number of unambiguous adjectives is that group, which is found in the lexical nursery structure of the word. Thus, the verb appears unambiguously, consequently the noun and the adjective that constitutes this lexical sound regain its monosemic character.

The verb is the third class that shows more monosemy, reaching 2.4 % of the words or 1160 of them, for example: *asfaltoj* (to asphalt), *balsamos* (to embalme), *debatoj* (to debate), *dedikoj* (to dedicate),

ekzagjeroj (to exaggerate), faktorizoj (to factorize), fashoj (to bandage), godas (to hit), katërfishoj (to quadruplicate), kokrrizoj (to granulate), leckos (to tater), lubrifikoj (to lubricate), mbikaloj (to overpass), mëngjesoj (to have breakfast), neutralizoj (to neutralize), parafytyroj (to imagine), parandiej (to forebond), përafroj (to approximate), përgenjështroj (to retort), përkufizoj (to define), recensoj (to review), etc. Since it names an action as a process, then the action refers to a single referent. Consequently, verbs, as actions of a process are monoreferential, so they do not have a substantive structure developed with different meanings. The strong semantic connection between the meaning and the referent it marks, leaves no room for further semantic developments. As long as each particular referent creates a separate fragment of the semantic potential of the word (Wielgosz 2017, p. 5), we will have the verbs reflected as monosemantic in the dictionary, until they develop themselves into new contexts. Meanwhile, the largest group of monosemantic verbs primarily belongs to the field of terminology, based on their specific uses. Adverbs, on the other hand, occupy a limited space within the corpus of monosemantic words. It turns out to be in 1.2% of the words taken into consideration. Since the adverb names a feature of action or state, it conveys something from reality, but with an underdeveloped content structure. The group of pronouns is one of the lexical categories that reflects a low monosemism, about 0.12%.

Other classes of words, such as: particles, conjunctions, numerals, prepositions and exclamations are reflected at very low levels as monosemantic, marking an average of 0.03%. Such an outcome is to be expected, as numerous studies on immutable parts of the discourse support the idea that they appear to be mostly polysemantic. Among them we can single out the preposition, which shows ambiguity due to their conditional nature, which is related to the subordinating function and not to the denominator. Prepositions are used with different meanings depending on the context, and the semantics of the underlying meaning are also responsible for the type of relationships they create in use (Cungu & Toska 2023). Generally for the immutable parts of the discourse, since they do not name, do not indicate objects, features, circumstances or actions, then they tend to be ambiguous, due to the dependency relations and the numerical, indicative (unnamed), connector and exclamative (expressive) function they have.

The reflection of monosemantic words in the dictionary confronts us with the fact that the highest number of unambiguity have the denominator words (nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs), while the lowest number have other classes of words, which are included in the

numerical, indicative and exclamatory words (pronouns, prepositions, participles, exclamations and numerals). Their denominator character displays the possibility of marking a certain referent. It is important to say that the Albanian language is showing a slight tendency to add unambiguous words. So monosemantic words have found more space in the corpus of words of explanatory dictionary.

Table. 1 *Statistical analysis of monosemic words in the dictionary of the Albanian language (2006)*

| Parts of speech | Monosemyc | Total of words |
|---|---|----------------|
| Nouns | 7314 words or $\cong 15.3\%$ | 48,000 |
| Adjectives | 2100 words or $\cong 4.3\%$ | |
| Verbs | 1160 words or $\cong 2.4\%$ | |
| Adverbs | 597 words or $\cong 1.2\%$ | |
| Pronouns | 61 words or $\cong 0.12\%$ | |
| Particles, conjunctions, numerals, prepositions, exclamations | 67 words or $\cong 0.03\%$ | |
| Total | 11299 words or $\cong 23.3\%$ | |

4. Discussion

The criteria used in the field of lexicography to determine whether a word in the dictionary will be reflected as polysemantic or as monosemous still remain controversial in the field of lexical semantics. Howard (2003, p. 88) emphasizes that meanings are ordered according to a system which aims both to show the main historical development of the word and to give a coherent overview of the relationship between its meanings. Casadei (2014) thinks that the lack of a unique criterion to determine polysemy and monosemy, combined with the divergence between the criteria proposed by theorists for lexicographic needs, has the consequence that dictionaries differ greatly between them, sometimes even within them, in the treatment of polysemy and monosemy. This may be the reason why polysemy and monosemy still remain controversial in the amount they reflect in explanatory dictionaries.

Words are naturally inclined to take on some meanings, depending on the realities they name (Pustejovsky 1991, p. 17/4). They are presented as ambiguous words, so, referring to some realities and

unambiguous, referring to only one reality. This argument leads us to think that words to be considered monosemic must be monoreferential, that is, to respond to a referent. The use of words in different contexts has made them appear in the dictionary with some meanings, or with several strings of meanings. In this way they depart from their basic meaning, simply because they are placed in different contextual situations. If context were not taken into account when classifying the meanings of words reflected in the dictionary, then we would have more monosemic words, referring to Saussure's view that "a word (sign) signifies a reality" (Cungu 2023).

Ambiguity is the subject of discussion in polysemy, being one of the most studied aspect of the type of semantic changes the word undergoes. While unambiguity is the object of study in monosemy, which is thought to have yet to be researched in semantic terms. Monosemantism is a phenomenon that responds to language in two aspects. First, the increase in the number of monosemic words in a language gives a quantitative increase in the lexical fund of that language, bringing about a numerical enrichment. Second, if unambiguous words do not have the ability to generate and develop other meanings, then the addition of this phenomenon runs counter to linguistic economics (Ullman 1957, p. 118). Adding such words would bring difficulties in the process of memorizing words, while using the same word in different contexts could create more memorization facilities for speakers of one language.

Monosemantic words are present in the lexicon of the Albanian language as well as in many other languages. Their content structure is organized towards a certain meaning, making it possible to reflect in the dictionary as words with a single meaning. Why unambiguous words have expanded their use in the dictionary of the Albanian language, we must also refer to the reasons for their acquisition. There are several ways we can get them in one language:

-borrowing words from other languages (*for example: computer, brutal, definitive, dedicate, independence, influence, incubator, outline, pretense etc.*). Given that our society was faced with significant political, cultural, social and technological changes, Albanian language gave the right to accept a wide range of words from foreign languages, which had to meet language needs. Consequently, a considerable number of them belonged to unambiguous words, which brought about a quantitative increase in the lexicon of the Albanian language.

-shrinkage of polysemy due to narrowing of the content structure of the word. The fading of polysemy is a well-known phenomenon, which significantly favors the monosemanticism of words.

-the union of the semantic variants of the structure of a word is realized due to the close semantic proximity that the meanings of a word have. Such a process is in favor of the phenomenon of monosemy, which significantly increases the number of unambiguous words.

The data presented above indicate that the quantitative value of monosemy is increasing. The frequencies of words that show monosemy are higher, considering the introduction of foreign words in the field of technology, for which the language was not found ready to use and put into operation its responsibilities. Polysemy and monosemy seem to be difficult phenomena to determine their value and quantity, since dictionaries vary greatly in the number of meanings they record and it is understood that none of them is able to record all existing meanings in linguistic use (Casadei, 2014). This is related not only to the rules that are defined for the drafting of different dictionaries, but also to the discussion that is still being done on the definition of monosemy as a concept. It is important to emphasize that, when examining words in the dictionary as plosemic or monosemic, we refer to their reflection in the dictionary. All lexical elements must be "monoreferential" in discourse, even if they are "multireferential" in the language; otherwise communication would be impossible (Bejoint, 1988).

5. Conclusions

In conclusion we can say that monosemia should be treated as a linguistic phenomenon and should be considered in the semantic system in the same way as polysemy, homonymy, antonymy, synonymy, etc. The problems involved in monosemy are numerous. The approach to studying words according to the paradigmatic axis, will give us more opportunities for research on monosemy.

Among the classes of words that express monosemanticism in the explanatory dictionary, turns out to be the denominators, such as: nouns, adjectives, verbs and to some extent, adverbs. Other classes of words seem to display more polysemantism than monosemanticism. Nouns are the units which display the most monosemanticism in the explanatory dictionary. The largest group consists of words from certain fields of terminology, where many of them are borrowed in the Albanian language. Adding the corpus of words with monosemantic lexical units is an opportunity to see in the future the development of the content structure of these words with new meanings.

The immutable parts of speech have very little access to monosemy, due to the open structure they display syntactically. They exhibit several uses simultaneously in different syntactic functions and

as different parts of speech. This fact allows the immutable parts of the speech to appear more polysemantic than monosemantic.

The adjectives also display monosemanticism and constitute an interesting fact, as most of them are found inside the lexical nursery. The types of adjectives by formation, which are in the group of those with a single meaning, are also worth studying. Even the verb is approached as monosemantic in a part of it. Their monoreferential character, which is the process of acting that refers only to one referent, does not give the possibility of developing the content structure in new meanings.

The data on unambiguous words in the dictionary are of a quantitative nature, but are worth interpreting further in terms of quality. An analysis of the structure of monosemantic words in the Albanian language reveals that the terminological and administrative-legal registers dominate in terms of the quantitative presence of monosemy. This is due to the fact that these registers tend to include words with narrow, clearly defined, and specialized meanings, which rarely develop polysemy, as precision and minimal ambiguity are essential in their usage. It is important to accept that the value of monosemy has an increase in the words reflected in the explanatory dictionary of the Albanian language, accounting for about 23 % of the corpus of words as a whole.

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UNA PROSPETTIVA ANALITICA SULLE PAROLE MONOSEMANTICHE NEL DIZIONARIO ESPLICATIVO DELLA LINGUA ALBANESE

Questo articolo scientifico riflette i dati analitici sulle parole monosemantiche nel dizionario esplicativo della lingua Albanese. Lo studio degli aspetti linguistici legati alla monosemia è oggetto di questo lavoro scientifico. Attraverso i dati raccolti dalla revisione e dal confronto del corpus di parole monosemantiche presenti nel dizionario esplicativo dell'albanese, sosterremo l'aumento del valore delle parole monosemantiche nella lingua, rispetto alle parole polisemantiche. L'occorrenza più densa di monosemia si riferisce a parole denominative, come: sostantivi, aggettivi, verbi e in una certa misura avverbi. Ciò si spiega con il fatto che il carattere nominativo di queste parole mostra la possibilità di contrassegnare un referente specifico. Il numero di parole monosemantiche si traduce in un aumento della lingua, segnando il maggior numero di parole provenienti da determinati campi terminologici. In conclusione, riteniamo che la monosemia debba essere trattata come un fenomeno linguistico, così come la polisemia.

Keywords: monosemia, dizionario, parole monosemiche, valori quantitativi, parti del discorso.