

MOTIVATION AND VALENCY AS FUNDAMENTAL MECHANISMS IN THE EXPANSION OF THE SEMANTIC FIELD OF BEHAVIOUR

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Annotation: *In the context of modern linguistic theory, this article explores motivation and valency as important mechanisms in the growth of the semantic field of behaviour. According to the study, semantic relationships, contextual usage, and combinatory potential all contribute to the dynamic development of behavioural vocabulary. The study uses contextual examples and qualitative semantic analysis to show how lexical units broaden their meanings. Syntagmatic variety, metaphorical extension, and derivational motivation are given particular consideration. The results show that the semantic field of conduct experiences enhanced polysemy, structural complexity, and semantic enrichment as a result of the relationship between motivation and valency.*

Key words: *motivation, valency, semantic field, behaviour, lexical semantics, polysemy, syntagmatic relations, paradigmatic relations, semantic expansion*

Introduction

The idea of the semantic field in modern linguistics offers a theoretical framework for comprehending language as a networked system of meanings. The semantic field of behaviour represents one of the most dynamic and complex domains, as it reflects human actions, emotional states, social norms, and communicative intentions.

Behavioural vocabulary is extremely context-sensitive and constantly reinterpreted, in contrast to more tangible semantic areas. Because of this, it is very useful for examining semantic expansion mechanisms. It is commonly acknowledged that vocabulary is the most dynamic part of the language system, continuously changing to meet communicative demands.

The expansion of the semantic field of behaviour is governed by internal linguistic mechanisms that regulate the development of lexical meaning. Among these mechanisms, motivation and valency play a fundamental role. Motivation ensures the semantic transparency and internal organization of lexical units, while valency determines their combinatory potential and syntagmatic relations. Furthermore, lexical meaning is not an isolated phenomenon but emerges through relationships within a system of lexical units.

This study aims to explore how motivation and valency contribute to the expansion and diversification of the semantic field of behaviour, focusing on their interaction and functional significance in linguistic processes.

Method

The current study uses a qualitative, descriptive methodology based on functional linguistics and lexical semantics. Since behavioural verbs are the main way that human actions and interactions are expressed, the analysis concentrates on these verbs and related lexical elements.

The following are included in the methodological framework:

- examination of semantic and derivational motivation
- analysis of syntagmatic structures and valency patterns
- Recognising metonymic and metaphorical extensions
- examination of contextual variation, polysemy, and paradigmatic linkages in the semantic realm

To show how lexical units work in actual communicative contexts and how their meanings change over time, examples are taken from modern English usage.

Results and Discussion

Internal Semantic Structure and Motivation

In order to preserve semantic transparency inside the lexical system, motivation is essential. By establishing a logical connection between a word's form and meaning, it enables speakers to decipher and anticipate lexical meanings.

Motivation is often realised through derivational processes in the semantic area of behaviour:

- behave → misbehave → well-behaved
- act → react → overact → interact
- conduct → misconduct

Based on a common conceptual core, these examples show how lexical units create structured semantic networks. Prefixes and suffixes enhance the semantic field by introducing evaluative or functional distinctions.

Metaphorical extensions, which apply behavioural principles to abstract or non-human environments, are another way that motivation appears:

"The system exhibits erratic behaviour."

"The market responded violently."

These instances show how behavioural vocabulary contributes to semantic extension by extending beyond human acts into more expansive conceptual areas.

Valency and Combinatorial Potential

Valency refers to the ability of a lexical unit to combine with other elements in a sentence. It plays a crucial role in determining how meanings are constructed and interpreted in context.

Behavioural verbs exhibit high valency variability:

- behave politely / rudely / irrationally
- behave inappropriately / responsibly
- behave like a child / like a professional

Similarly, the verb *act* demonstrates diverse combinatory patterns:

act wisely / foolishly
act under pressure
act out of fear / anger
act on impulse

These patterns show that meaning is not fixed but emerges through syntagmatic relations. As Lyons emphasizes, lexical meaning is shaped by relationships between words rather than existing independently¹.

Valency thus enables lexical units to participate in multiple contexts, generating new meanings and expanding the semantic field.

Polysemy and Semantic Flexibility

The interaction between motivation and valency leads to the development of polysemy. A single lexical unit may acquire multiple meanings depending on context.

For example, the verb *act* can function in several ways:

- “He acted in a film” → theatrical meaning
- “He acted strangely” → behavioural meaning
- “The medicine acts quickly” → functional meaning

This semantic flexibility emphasises the significance of contextual interpretation and reflects the changing nature of the semantic field of behaviour.

Paradigmatic Relations and Lexical Networks

The semantic field of behaviour is structured through paradigmatic relations such as synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy.

Examples include:

Synonyms: behave, act, conduct, perform

Antonyms: behave – misbehave

Each lexical unit occupies a specific position within the semantic network, contributing to the overall organization of the field. Differences in stylistic and pragmatic usage further enrich this structure:

- conduct → formal
- act → neutral
- behave → evaluative

¹ Lyons J. *Linguistics and Semantics*. Cambridge University Press, 1975.

These distinctions demonstrate the complexity and internal organization of the semantic field.

Behavioural Vocabulary in Discourse and Pragmatics

In discourse, behavioural vocabulary is closely linked to pragmatic meaning and social evaluation.

Examples:

“Behave yourself!” → directive with authority

“He behaved badly” → moral judgement

“She acted professionally” → positive evaluation

These expressions reflect not only linguistic meaning but also social norms and communicative intentions. Behavioural verbs often function as tools for evaluating actions and regulating social interaction.

The Role of Context and Cognitive Interpretation

The interpretation of behavioural expressions is significantly shaped by context. Depending on situational, cultural, and cognitive circumstances, a single lexical unit may transmit many meanings.

For example:

"He's acting chilly" → emotional detachment

“The device is acting up” → malfunction

These differences show how closely cognitive interpretation and contextual usage are related to semantic extension.

Moving Toward Digital and Corpus-Based Analysis

To examine semantic patterns, corpus data and digital technologies are becoming more and more important in modern language study. The productivity and dynamic nature of behavioural verbs are confirmed by their high frequency and diversity in corpora.

Common collocations consist of:

Act appropriately, naturally, differently, and responsibly

Researchers can see actual usage patterns and spot trends in semantic evolution with corpus-based methods.

Conclusion

The current study shows that valency and incentive serve as essential factors in the development of the semantic field of behaviour. While valency permits combinatorial flexibility and contextual variation, motivation guarantees semantic transparency and structural consistency.

Semantic enrichment, polysemy, and lexical network extension are the outcomes of their interplay. Therefore, both internal language mechanisms and external communication elements shape the semantic field of behaviour, which is a dynamic and changing system.

Corpus-based and computational techniques should be used in future studies to investigate linguistic dynamics and semantic change.

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