

NOMINATION AND SEMANTICS OF CLOTHING: DENOTATIVE AND CONNOTATIVE COMPONENTS, EVALUATIVENESS, AND EXPRESSIVENESS

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Abstract. *The article examines the nomination and semantics of clothing vocabulary in English. Particular attention is given to the interaction of denotative and connotative components of meaning, as well as to evaluativeness and expressiveness in clothing-related lexical units. The study is based on semantic and contextual analysis and demonstrates that clothing vocabulary reflects not only the physical characteristics of garments but also social, cultural, and emotional meanings.*

Keywords: *clothing nomination, lexical semantics, denotation, connotation, evaluativeness, expressiveness.*

Аннотация. *В статье рассматриваются номинация и семантика лексики, обозначающей одежду, в английском языке. Особое внимание уделяется взаимодействию денотативных и коннотативных компонентов значения, а также категориям оценочности и экспрессивности. Исследование показывает, что лексика одежды отражает не только физические характеристики предметов одежды, но и социальные и культурные значения.*

Ключевые слова: *номинация одежды, лексическая семантика, денотация, коннотация, оценочность, экспрессивность.*

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilidagi kiyim nomlari semantikasi va nominatsiyasi tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda denotativ va konnotativ ma'no komponentlari, shuningdek baholovchanlik va ekspressivlik masalalariga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi. Natijalar kiyim leksikasi nafaqat kiyimning jismoniy xususiyatlarini, balki ijtimoiy va madaniy ma'nolarni ham aks ettirishini ko'rsatadi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *kiyim nominatsiyasi, leksik semantika, denotatsiya, konnotatsiya, baholovchanlik, ekspressivlik.*

Introduction. Language serves not only as a means of naming the world but also as a way of interpreting it. In this respect, the lexical field of clothing provides rich material for semantic research because clothing is closely connected with the human body, social behavior, cultural traditions, and symbolic representation.

The process of naming objects and phenomena in language is known as nomination. According to S. Ullmann, nomination establishes a link between linguistic signs and the objects or concepts they denote. However, nomination is not purely mechanical; it reflects the cognitive experience and cultural values of a speech community [8, 30].

In lexical semantics, scholars distinguish between denotative and connotative components of meaning. As J. Lyons explains, denotation refers to the direct reference of a word, while connotation includes additional emotional, stylistic, and cultural associations [6]. Similarly, G. Leech notes that lexical meaning often contains evaluative and expressive elements that influence how speakers perceive and interpret words [5].

Clothing vocabulary clearly illustrates this interaction of meanings. Words such as dress, coat, or uniform denote concrete garments, yet they may also evoke ideas of elegance, profession, authority, poverty, or social identity. As A. Wierzbicka argues, lexical

meanings often reflect culturally shared concepts, which explains why clothing terms frequently carry symbolic and social connotations [9].

Therefore, clothing vocabulary represents a semantically complex field where denotation interacts with connotation, evaluation, and expressiveness. Accordingly, the purpose of this article is to analyze the nomination and semantics of clothing vocabulary with particular attention to these components of meaning.

Methodology. The present research is based on an integrated linguistic approach combining semantic, contextual, and interpretive methods. Since the object of study is the lexical field of clothing, the analysis focuses on the meanings and functions of clothing-related words in English. First, the semantic analysis method was used in order to identify the denotative core and the connotative layers of selected lexical units. This made it possible to distinguish between the direct referential meaning of clothing names and their secondary emotional, stylistic, or cultural associations. Second, the componential analysis method was applied. In other words, the meanings of lexical units were broken down into minimal semantic features. For example, the word coat can be described through such denotative semes as “outer garment,” “worn on upper body,” and “used for warmth,” whereas its connotative potential depends on context, such as luxury, formality, or old-fashioned style. Third, the contextual analysis method was employed because clothing vocabulary often reveals its evaluative and expressive meanings only in discourse. Thus, special attention was paid to adjective-noun combinations, metaphorical uses, and stylistically marked expressions, such as threadbare coat, flashy outfit, modest dress, power suit, and rags to riches. Fourth, the descriptive method was used to systematize the lexical material and classify the observed semantic features into separate groups: denotative, connotative, evaluative, and expressive. Finally, the interpretive-cultural method was used to explain how clothing names function as signs of social identity, ideology, and collective values. Since clothing is culturally meaningful, this method helps reveal why certain clothing terms acquire strong symbolic resonance.

The material of the study includes common English lexical items designating clothes, accessories, and clothing-related descriptions, together with idiomatic and figurative expressions in which clothing terms undergo semantic expansion.

Results. The analysis shows that the nomination of clothing is not restricted to naming a physical object. Rather, it is a complex linguistic process through which society categorizes garments according to function, form, material, occasion, gender, and symbolic role. For example, words such as shirt, skirt, jacket, scarf, and gloves primarily refer to distinct objects of clothing. Nevertheless, their nominative function is shaped by human perception and social use. Moreover, clothing names are often motivated by one or several features. Some are based on form, such as high heels; others on function, such as a raincoat or swimsuit; still others on material, such as a leather jacket or silk scarf. In addition, certain lexical units reflect institutional or ritual roles, for instance, uniform,

robe, or gown. Therefore, clothing nomination demonstrates how language selects the most salient feature of an object and turns it into a lexical identifier. At the same time, naming practices are influenced by historical and cultural development. For instance, some garments become linguistically marked because they are associated with specific epochs, professions, or communities. Thus, the lexical field of clothing evolves together with changes in society, fashion, and ideology.

The denotative component forms the basis of clothing semantics. It refers to the stable core meaning that allows speakers to identify a particular item of dress. For example:

dress — a one-piece garment usually worn by women or girls;

coat — an outer garment worn for warmth or protection;

hat — a covering worn on the head;

uniform — a standard set of clothes worn by members of a particular group.

These denotative meanings ensure communicative precision. Without them, lexical units could not fulfill their basic nominative function. Therefore, denotation serves as the semantic foundation upon which additional meanings are built. However, even within denotation, clothing terms may reflect classificatory distinctions. For example, robe, gown, dress, and frock may overlap in general reference to clothing, but each possesses a more specific denotative profile. Thus, denotative meaning is not monolithic; rather, it involves a system of differential semantic features that distinguish one clothing item from another. Furthermore, the denotative component often interacts with taxonomic relations. For instance, clothing is a hyperonym, while shirt, jeans, blouse, and jacket function as hyponyms. Consequently, the semantic field of clothing displays internal hierarchy and lexical organization.

Although denotation identifies the object, connotation interprets it. The study reveals that clothing vocabulary is especially rich in connotative meanings because clothes are social signs. Accordingly, the connotative component includes emotional, stylistic, cultural, ideological, and symbolic associations. For example, the word robe may suggest dignity, ceremony, or spirituality. The word uniform, besides its denotative meaning, may evoke discipline, institutional belonging, or lack of individuality. Similarly, rags denotes worn-out clothes, but its connotation strongly implies poverty, neglect, or misery. By contrast, couture suggests exclusiveness, prestige, and high fashion.

In addition, connotations may arise from collective stereotypes. A white coat can symbolize medicine or scientific authority. A black dress may suggest elegance, mourning, or sophistication depending on context. A veil may evoke modesty, ritual, secrecy, or femininity. Therefore, the same clothing item may generate different connotative meanings in different communicative and cultural settings. Another important finding is that clothing vocabulary often carries identity-related connotations. Terms such as business suit, school uniform, bridal gown, or military jacket not only denote specific garments but also index

social roles. Consequently, clothing semantics intersects with the categories of profession, gender, class, and ritual status. One of the central results of the study is that evaluativeness constitutes a highly productive semantic dimension in clothing vocabulary. In fact, clothing is frequently judged according to beauty, appropriateness, modesty, quality, prestige, or moral acceptability. Positive evaluation is commonly expressed through lexical items such as elegant, stylish, neat, refined, graceful, and luxurious. For example, the phrase an elegant dress conveys not only objective description but also approval. Similarly, tailored suit may suggest sophistication and good taste.

Negative evaluation, by contrast, is represented by words and expressions such as shabby, gaudy, tasteless, ragged, sloppy, and threadbare. For instance, a shabby coat implies poor condition and often low social status. Likewise, a gaudy outfit expresses criticism of excessive ornament or lack of aesthetic restraint. Importantly, evaluative meanings may be either explicit or implicit. Explicit evaluation appears in adjectives directly expressing judgment. Implicit evaluation, however, emerges through nouns themselves. For example, rags is already negatively charged, whereas attire may sound formal or dignified. Thus, evaluativeness can be embedded in the lexical meaning of clothing terms or generated contextually.

Furthermore, evaluativeness in clothing semantics often reflects wider social norms. What counts as decent, provocative, fashionable, or outdated depends on cultural and historical standards. Therefore, the evaluative semantics of clothing is socially conditioned rather than universal.

The research also demonstrates that expressiveness significantly enriches clothing nomination. Expressiveness is manifested when a lexical unit not only names or evaluates an object but also intensifies the emotional and stylistic impact of speech.

For example, compare the following:

old clothes — neutral description;

worn-out clothes — descriptive with mild negativity;

filthy rags — strongly expressive and emotionally charged.

The third phrase is clearly more powerful because it combines lexical choice with intensified negative connotation. Therefore, expressiveness amplifies semantic effect and shapes the recipient's perception.

Expressiveness in clothing vocabulary is frequently achieved through:

stylistically marked words (rags, glam, frumpy);

metaphorical transfer (cloak of secrecy, armor of pride);

hyperbole (dressed to kill);

idiomatic expressions (roll up one's sleeves, wolf in sheep's clothing);

emotionally loaded modifiers (absolutely stunning dress, horribly outdated suit).

Moreover, some clothing terms become expressive precisely because they undergo metaphorization. For example, cloak may metaphorically signify concealment, while

uniform may symbolize conformity. In such cases, the original clothing meaning remains in the background, but the expressive force becomes dominant.

Thus, expressiveness transforms clothing vocabulary into a stylistically active resource in both everyday language and literary discourse.

Discussion. The results of the study confirm that the lexical field of clothing is semantically multidimensional. Although the denotative component provides the nominative basis, it is the connotative, evaluative, and expressive layers that make clothing vocabulary linguistically and culturally significant. First, the findings support the view that nomination is not a neutral labeling process. On the contrary, naming clothes involves selection, categorization, and interpretation. When speakers choose between garment, outfit, robe, costume, rags, or attire, they are not merely naming an object but also positioning it within a social and stylistic frame. Therefore, the act of nomination itself contains a semantic perspective.

Second, the interaction of denotation and connotation appears especially strong in clothing vocabulary because clothing is a visible social code. Unlike many concrete nouns, clothing terms almost automatically evoke judgments about the wearer. Consequently, lexical units in this field are highly susceptible to evaluative and expressive enrichment. This explains why even relatively neutral words may become socially loaded in particular contexts. Third, the study reveals that evaluativeness in clothing semantics is closely connected with ideology and cultural expectations. For example, clothing can be evaluated according to norms of modesty, professionalism, femininity, masculinity, elegance, or class respectability. Hence, the semantics of clothing often reflects not only individual taste but also collective systems of value. In this sense, clothing vocabulary becomes a linguistic mirror of social hierarchy and symbolic order. Furthermore, expressiveness allows clothing terms to function beyond literal description. In literary texts, journalistic discourse, and everyday speech, clothing words often convey irony, admiration, contempt, intimacy, or social criticism. For instance, calling someone well-dressed may indicate approval, but calling them overdressed introduces subtle negative evaluation. Likewise, rags to riches is not about clothes alone; rather, it represents a broader narrative of social mobility. Thus, expressive uses of clothing vocabulary contribute to conceptual and metaphorical thinking.

Another important point concerns the anthropocentric nature of clothing semantics. Since clothes are worn on the body, they mediate the relationship between the individual and society. Therefore, clothing words often function at the intersection of materiality and identity. A garment is simultaneously an object, a sign, and a social statement. Accordingly, its linguistic representation cannot be reduced to pure denotation.

In addition, the data suggest that the semantic field of clothing is highly dynamic. Fashion changes, social norms shift, and cultural symbols are reinterpreted. As a result, the connotations of clothing terms may expand, weaken, or transform over time. Words once

associated with prestige may later become archaic or ironic; conversely, formerly neutral items may acquire ideological or expressive significance. Hence, the semantics of clothing remains open to diachronic and intercultural investigation.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that clothing nomination reflects a complex fusion of language, culture, and value. Therefore, the study of clothing vocabulary can contribute not only to lexical semantics but also to sociolinguistics, cultural linguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the nomination and semantics of clothing represent a multilayered linguistic phenomenon in which direct reference and secondary meaning interact closely. The study has shown that clothing vocabulary possesses a stable denotative core enabling the identification of garments according to form, function, material, and use. However, this denotative level alone does not exhaust the semantic richness of the field. On the contrary, the connotative component plays a decisive role in shaping the cultural and communicative value of clothing terms. As the analysis has demonstrated, clothing names frequently carry associations related to social status, gender roles, aesthetics, morality, ritual function, and symbolic identity. Therefore, the lexical field of clothing serves as an important repository of collective cultural meanings.

Moreover, evaluativeness has been identified as one of the central semantic features of clothing vocabulary. Through positive and negative judgments, speakers use clothing terms to express approval, criticism, irony, or social positioning. In the same way, expressiveness strengthens the emotional and stylistic force of clothing-related expressions, making them especially productive in figurative and discourse contexts.

Thus, clothing vocabulary should be understood not merely as a set of names for garments, but rather as a semantically complex system reflecting human perception, cultural norms, and social interaction. In this regard, the study of clothing semantics opens broader perspectives for investigating how language encodes material culture and transforms everyday objects into carriers of symbolic meaning.

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