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SEMANTIC SHIFT AS A SOURCE OF LEGAL TERMINOLOGY DEVELOPMENT (BASED ON ENGLISH)

Abstract

The article considers the issues of semantic derivation, its role and place in English legal terms forming at different stages of legal vocabulary development. Semantic derivation (in various sources also referred to as semantic shift and semantic transfer), along with word-building, is one of the internal sources of a language word-stock development and enlargement. A short insight into the theory of terminology at the beginning of the paper enables to determine the status of a term, its relative features, semantic requirements for a term, and to review the most common ways of term formation. Further, the place and role of legal vocabulary are viewed in relation to general literary language, and the issue of English legal terms variance is brought up.

Dynamics in the semantic structure of a word is well traced in diachronic and synchronic studies of semantically reinterpreted items from the point of view of their connection with extra linguistic realities. In the experiment, the focus has been made upon the linguistic material of the Old English, Middle English and Early Modern English periods in relation to the periods of Anglo-Saxon law. The results obtained from the material of Legal English indicate that under certain historical and social conditions, semantic shifts (metaphor, metonymy, semantic narrowing and widening) can become a source of legal terminology forming. Metaphor and metonymy in Legal English are the tools to express a certain legal situation by the use of the corresponding images or euphemisms. The common active vocabulary belonging to fundamental lexis is the source of such term formation.

Keywords: semantic shift, semantic derivation, legal terminology, metaphor, metonymy.

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