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Etymology of words *environment* and *experience* in English and German (Holistic approach)

Abstract

The paper considers the meaning development of abstract words in the diachronic aspect. Based on modern concepts of ecological linguistics, we study the categories “environment” and “experience” in their interrelationship. A holistic approach to the analysis of the “human-language-environment” system is adopted. We analyze the origin of the words *environment*, *experience* and *Umwelt*, *Erfahrung*, *Erlebnis* in comparison in English and German to identify the conceptual components that explicate causal relationships between humans, as Observers and their environment. The original meanings of the words are studied using component analysis and methods of semantic interpretation of the dictionary entries presented in etymological and explanatory dictionaries. The results showed that understanding the environment evolved from an objective surrounding world to the world where the Observer is in continuous interactions that are verbalized as experience due to language ability. Using the related category “experience”, we found that the Observer perceives the surrounding environment through controlled actions and involvements caused by real or potential harm, risk, as well as through perceptual-cognitive-affective states: emotions, feelings, empirical knowledge and their modifications described in terms of learning, studying, recognizing. Thus, the holistic approach to the analysis revealed the semantic components of the abstract lexemes *experience*, *Erfahrung*, *Erlebnis* that are necessary for understanding the environment of the Observer’s interactions.

Keywords: “human-language-environment” system, holistic approach, eurysemic lexeme, abstract words formation

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