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ASSOCIATIVE FIELD OF TERMS IN COMPUTER AND INTERNET DISCOURSE

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Abstract. This article explores the associative field of terms in computer and internet discourse from the perspective of Linguistics. The study focuses on how lexical units are interconnected through semantic and cognitive relations in digital communication. The research highlights the dynamic nature of internet vocabulary, the role of technological development in shaping associative fields, and the implications for translation and discourse analysis. The findings demonstrate that computer and internet discourse forms a complex and evolving semantic network reflecting modern communication practices.

Keywords: associative field, computer discourse, internet discourse, lexical semantics, digital communication

The development of digital communication has significantly reshaped language use. According to David Crystal in Language and the Internet, online communication introduces new forms of vocabulary, structure, and interaction. These changes can be effectively analyzed through the concept of associative fields.

The associative field refers to a network of words connected by meaning and usage, a concept rooted in Lexical Semantics. As noted by Ferdinand de Saussure, linguistic units are interrelated through associative links, forming structured systems of meaning.

The theory of lexical and associative fields was further developed by Jost Trier, who emphasized that vocabulary is organized into semantic fields. This idea is supported by Stephen Ullmann in Semantics, where he explains that meaning is formed through relationships between words rather than isolated units.

The study of associative and lexical fields has a long-standing tradition in Lexical Semantics. The concept focuses on how words are semantically connected and how these connections shape the structure of vocabulary.

1. Jost Trier (1894–1970) and Lexical Fields

Jost Trier, a German linguist, is considered the founder of the lexical field theory. In his seminal work Der deutsche Wortschatz im Sinnbezirk des Verstandes (1931), Trier argued that vocabulary is not a collection of isolated words, but a system of semantic relationships. Words are linked by shared aspects of meaning and collectively form fields, which he called Sinnbezirk (semantic domains).

For example, in the lexical field of movement, words such as walk, run, jump, slide, crawl are related. Each word conveys a distinct nuance, but all belong to the broader semantic domain of locomotion. According to Trier, understanding a word requires knowledge of its relationship with other words in the same field.

2. Stephen Ullmann and Semantic Relationships

Stephen Ullmann expanded on Trier's ideas in his book Semantics (1962). He emphasized that meaning arises from relationships between words rather than from isolated lexemes. Words are understood in a network of synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, and hypernyms, which together create semantic coherence.

For instance, the words house, apartment, mansion, hut form a semantic network related to human dwellings. Each word is distinct but can only be fully understood in the context of the other words in the field.

Ullmann also introduced the concept of associative meaning, where words are linked by common usage, cultural connotations, or cognitive associations rather than purely logical or definitional connections. This notion is particularly relevant to modern discourse, where metaphorical and social factors influence lexical relationships.

3. Ferdinand de Saussure and Associative Relations

Although Trier and Ullmann focused on lexical fields, the foundation of associative relations comes from Ferdinand de Saussure. In Course in General Linguistics (1916), Saussure proposed that words gain meaning not in isolation but in contrast and association with other words. This principle underpins the notion of lexical fields: each word is defined by what it is and what it is not in relation to other lexemes.

For example, the word hot is understood in relation to warm, cold, and cool. Without the associative and contrastive framework, lexical meaning is incomplete.

4. Cognitive and Contemporary Extensions

Modern cognitive linguistics, represented by George Lakoff, extends lexical and associative field theories by linking meaning to conceptual categories. According to Lakoff, lexical items are organized around conceptual domains, which are grounded in human experience.

For example, digital terms like cloud, virus, or download belong to conceptual fields that are shaped by technology and user cognition. These fields evolve rapidly, especially in internet discourse, showing that lexical and associative relationships are not static but dynamic and culturally influenced.

Associative Fields in Internet Discourse

Internet discourse demonstrates a highly dynamic associative structure. According to Susan Herring, computer-mediated communication (CMC) creates new linguistic patterns influenced by interaction and technology.

For example, the term internet is associated with:

- ✓ website
- ✓ browser
- ✓ hyperlink
- ✓ search engine
- ✓ cloud
- ✓ data

Additionally, social media platforms such as Instagram and Telegram contribute to expanding associative fields by introducing terms like post, like, share, and hashtag.

The associative field approach allows researchers to understand how users conceptualize digital reality. Words are not used in isolation but as part of interconnected semantic networks. These networks reflect both technological structures and social interaction.

Moreover, associative fields play a crucial role in translation. Translators must understand not only the direct meaning of a word but also its connections within the field to ensure accurate interpretation.

In conclusion, the associative field of terms in computer and internet discourse represents a complex, evolving, and socially-influenced semantic network. From Trier's semantic fields to Ullmann's relational meaning, Saussure's associative principles, and Lakoff's cognitive frameworks, the theoretical foundation explains how digital vocabulary is structured and understood.

Computer discourse demonstrates hierarchical and logical associations, whereas internet discourse exhibits dynamic, socially-driven, and culturally-mediated connections. Translators and discourse analysts must consider these networks to achieve accurate interpretation and meaningful analysis.

As digital technologies continue to evolve, associative fields will expand further, reflecting the interplay between technology, cognition, and society. Future research should explore emerging lexical networks and their impact on communication, translation, and semantic analysis in the digital age.

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