Секция «Иностранные языки и регионоведение»

Использование языкового компьютерного корпуса в исследовании лексики
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Our research belongs to the field of corpus linguistics, which derives its name from the use of corpus – "a collection of written and spoken language stored on computer and used for language research and writing dictionaries" [OMED].

The present study is aimed at investigating linguistic peculiarities of semantically-related words **little/small** in the British National Corpus, applying the technique of concordance lines, frequency and KWIC (Key Word in Context) options [http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/].

As for theoretical basis, we proceed from the works written by such prominent scholars as Leech G., Granger S., Scott M., Sinclair J. We have used at large Prof. Gvishiani's Tutorial in Corpus Linguistics "English on Computer", where she describes in detail the defining features of corpora-based studies and gives illustrations of possible uses of English computer corpora [Гвишиани, 2008:20].

In brief, the results of our research can be summarized in the following way:

1. The British National Corpus shows that there are more cases of using the word 'little' (51928) than the word 'small' (43118), i.e. the difference amounts to about 0,09 %.

This result is quite predictable because *'little'* can be used as a determiner, a 'pronoun, an adverb and adjective. For instance, as a determiner it is often used in the meaning 'small amount or degree'; 'not much': little choice; little progress; 'hardly any of something': there's little point in discussing it any further; there's little or no hope. Besides 'little' is often used with the article 'a', meaning 'some, but not a lot': a little time left. In spoken English it's more usual to say 'a bit of', 'a little bit': We knew a little bit more; a bit of money. As an adverb little/a little can be used in the meaning 'slightly': She trembled a little; a little irritated.

2. From the analysis of a random sample of instances we can observe that the adjective **'small'**, more frequently than the adjective 'little', applies to things whose magnitude is determined by number, size, value or significance: a small group; a small house; a small income. 'Small' is also used with the words 'quantity', 'amount', 'size', 'quite', 'very', e.g.: a small quantity of sugar; a very small car (not a very little car).'Small' is used' speaking of children (young): She has three small children.

3. As for **'little'**, it is usually more absolute in its application than 'small', and it is preferred to 'small' when there is the intent to convey a hint of narrowness, pettiness, unimportance: silly little jokes; little mind. 'Little' is also used about young children, but in comparison to 'small', it is used mainly by children or when spoken to children.

A characteristic feature of 'little', as we think, lies in the fact that it can express either positive or negative connotations, depending on the context. 'Little' is appropriate when the context carries connotations of sympathy, tenderness, affection as in the following examples: a little old lady, poor little thing; a pretty little house. And it is used in a negative way for referring to somebody or something you dislike: You little scoundrel! a boring little man.

Arriving at the conclusion we can state that the results we have got are interesting, as the adjectives 'small' and 'little' carry different denotations and connotations despite being defined as synonyms by many dictionaries. As can be seen, the corpus-based approach to semantically-related adjectives little/small proved to be helpful in language learning and provided the findings that would have been difficult to obtain otherwise.

Литература

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