PROFESORES DE ENSEÑANZA SECUNDARIA · INGLÉS · JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

TEMA

11

The Word as a Linguistic Sign. Homonymy. Synonymy. Antonymy. False Friends. Lexical Creativity

La palabra como signo lingüístico. Homonimia. Sinonimia. Antonimia. "False friends". Creatividad léxica.

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Material de elaboración propia a partir de las fuentes oficiales que se citan al final del tema. No es un temario oficial ni sustituye a la normativa publicada.

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Fuentes

1. INTRODUCTION

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all." In this exchange from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, a children's book contains the central problem of lexical semantics: who controls the meaning of a word, the individual speaker or the community? Humpty Dumpty is wrong, because a word is a social convention that no one can change alone, and yet he is also right, because speakers coin, stretch and combine words every day. This tension between convention and creativity is the thread of this topic.

The topic asks us to study the word as a linguistic sign and four phenomena that arise from the way words relate to one another and to other languages: homonymy, synonymy, antonymy and false friends. It closes with lexical creativity, the capacity of English to create new words.

I will proceed in the following order. First, I will define the word and examine the linguistic sign according to Saussure and to Ogden and Richards. Second, I will analyse homonymy and its neighbour, polysemy. Third and fourth, I will deal with synonymy and antonymy as sense relations. Fifth, I will study false friends, with special attention to the English–Spanish pair. Sixth, I will describe the processes of lexical creativity. Seventh, I will turn to the pedagogical and didactic implications for the secondary classroom, and I will end with a conclusion that returns to Humpty Dumpty.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the sources consulted. Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, published in 1916 after his death, is the foundation of the sign theory. C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards wrote *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923). For sense relations I have used John Lyons's two-volume *Semantics* (Cambridge University Press, 1977) and Alan Cruse's *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics* (Oxford University Press). For word formation I have consulted Ingo Plag's *Word-Formation in English* (Cambridge University Press). As for the legal framework, I will refer to the Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December (LOMLOE), which amends the Organic Law 2/2006 on Education, to Royal Decrees 217/2022 and 243/2022, and to the Extremaduran Decrees 110/2022 and 109/2022.