

Statistical Particulars of the Lexical-Thematic Group Evil in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter

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Abstract

In the article a framework of lexical-thematic group Evil is represented in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter, broadly along the lexical semantics, and text linguistics approach in English. Within the proposed model of scientific description, all aspects of characterization of the lexical-thematic group Evil has been explained in terms of textual properties and statistical particulars, viz. properties of consciousness, intention, and perception which are cognitive operations imposed on the textual structures on the occasion of use. Lexical meanings described in the research are dynamic and sensitive to contextual demands, rather than fixed and stable. The study of the lexical-thematic structure of the fantasy text is related to the word and its functioning in the text of the sequel. A lexical-thematic group is understood as a group of words united on the basis of the presence of a common thematic component in the semantic structure of these words. Evil is not easy to portray in a fantasy text. This notion covers a variety of feelings, actions and thoughts, which are reflected on three narrative levels: anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and floromorphic in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter. Using modern statistical approaches, lexical-thematic units rendering a palette of negative emotions have been found to be reinterpreted figuratively through the prism of images. The effectiveness of the statistical particulars was proved.

Keywords

lexical-thematic group, evil, structure, fantasy fiction, function.

1. Introduction

Among the literary movements, trends and schools of the twentieth century a prominent place belongs to fantasy and its code. The fantasy code has semantic, syntactic and pragmatic components regulating the creation of a fantasy text. It is a technique of hybrid writing, which has created a dual structure on the background of myth and author's tale, filled with semantic choices and fiction forms of explication of various worlds, created by the author-writer – the primary world and the secondary world [1].

The problem of interpreting lexical-semantic space of the English fantasy text (EFT) fundamentally correlates with the word meaning. Studies of the word meanings, their components and organization are still relevant in linguistics [2], [3], [4], J. Lyons 2003, 3. D. Popova 1984, V. N. Telia 1986,]. The prospect of the lexicon as a system is firmly established in modern linguistics. The problem of the semantic organization of the lexical system of language is complex in linguistics in the presence of a sliver of works on this problem. Despite the lack of different approaches to the description of semantic categories in the linguistic works of the early XXI century, there is a clear desire to reveal the connection and interdependence of their members: lexical-semantic groups (LSG), thematic groups (TG), semantic and other types of fields.

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The purpose of this article – to create a framework of the lexical-semantic group Evil, that is done for the first time on the material of modern English: the textual complex of novels by J.K. Rowling; to describe a versatile and multidimensional verbalization and actualization of lexical units of the lexical-semantic group Evil on three narrative levels: "anthropomorphic WORLD", "floromorphic WORLD" and "zoomorphic WORLD".

The lexical-semantic structure of the hybrid fantasy world is a simultaneous realization of the concepts of good and evil. The unifying archiseme for both good and evil fields is the archiseme WORLD. Thus, there are two LTGs, which are contrasted according to the semantic feature "positive / negative" – LTG "Good" and LTG "Evil". Consequently, the dynamics of the magic world in J.K. Rowling's fantasy narrative is fixed at all levels of the narrative: architectonical-compositional, lexical-semantic and pragmatic. It is characterised by a change in the descriptions of key motifs through contrasting lexical structures (reflecting the confrontation between good and evil), fixed in the actant → anthropomorphs, floromorphs, Zoomorphs (typical narrative functions) in the LTG "anthropomorphic WORLD", "floromorphic WORLD" and "zoomorphic WORLD", which convey the salience of positive and negative emotional states, behaviour, speech in the semantic landscape of the fantasy text and form the actant model of the fantasy narrative [5].

2. Literature review and theoretical background

The word in EFT, along with other textual units, has the most structural, semantic function. The analysis of the lexical-semantic level of EFT is of the greatest interest for this work, as this level plays the leading role in the creation of meanings of this type of text as a result of speech → / textual → / cultural activity. In short, the units of the lexical level of EFT are the means: a) to create text; b) to create meaning; c) to interpret meaning, please, check Figure 1:

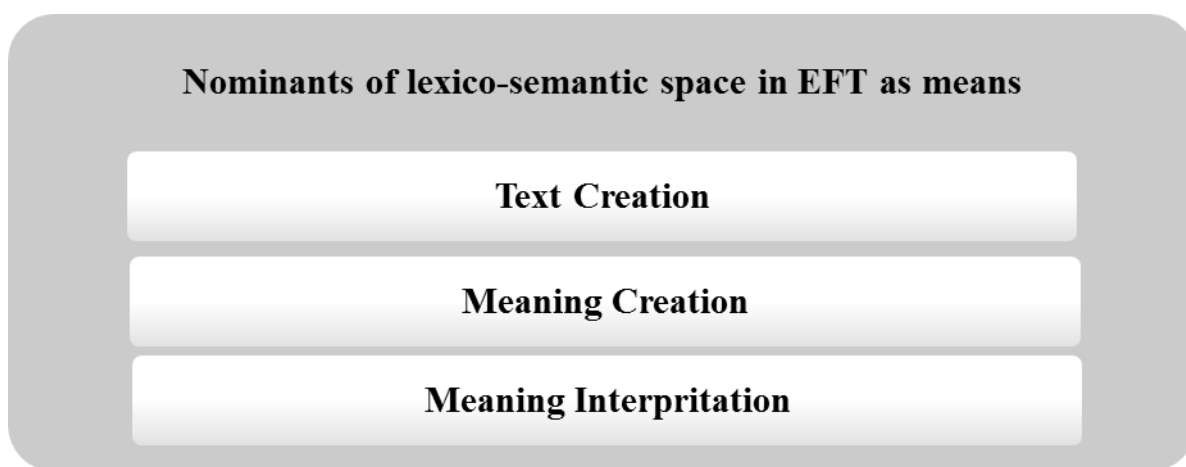


Figure 1: The Lexical-Semantic Space of the Fiction Text

Fiction text (FT) contains a semantic charge, a force of influence, unlimited, chronotope, because its content is not closed and relatively infinite. The space of FT is considered in two aspects: the text as a set of linearly arranged signs and the text as a set of meanings. A. Sorokin expresses figuratively about the representation of text space: "The space of any text is closed: it is self-valuable for itself. The text bears a bipolarity: the field of signs (iconic background) and the field of semantics of the text. The modes of perception of these two fields exist as a potential or virtual reality" [6, p. 38]. Using the principle of inversion (misinterpretation), the author's model of the world, represented in the fiction text (artistic space [7]), as a medium of conceptualization and thinking (mental space [8]), as part of the conceptsphere expressed by linguistic signs (lexical-semantic space [9]). The concept of the semantic field was introduced in the works of German linguists J. Trier and H. Ipsen in the first half of the 20th century [10, p.30-45], [11, p.100-397], [12]. Regardless of the presence of different approaches to the description of these semantic categories in the linguistic works of recent decades,

there is a clear tendency to reveal the interrelation and interdependence of their elements: lexical-semantic groups (LSG), lexical-thematic groups (LTG), semantic and other kinds of fields.

By fantasy – with reference to English lexicographic sources, we understand a literary genre whose main narrative and/or thematic part is magic, intervention or influence of forces that cannot be rationally explained → ‘a fiction involving the supernatural or impossible’ [1, p. 337–339], [13, p. 1–4], [14, p. 39–44], [15, p.10].

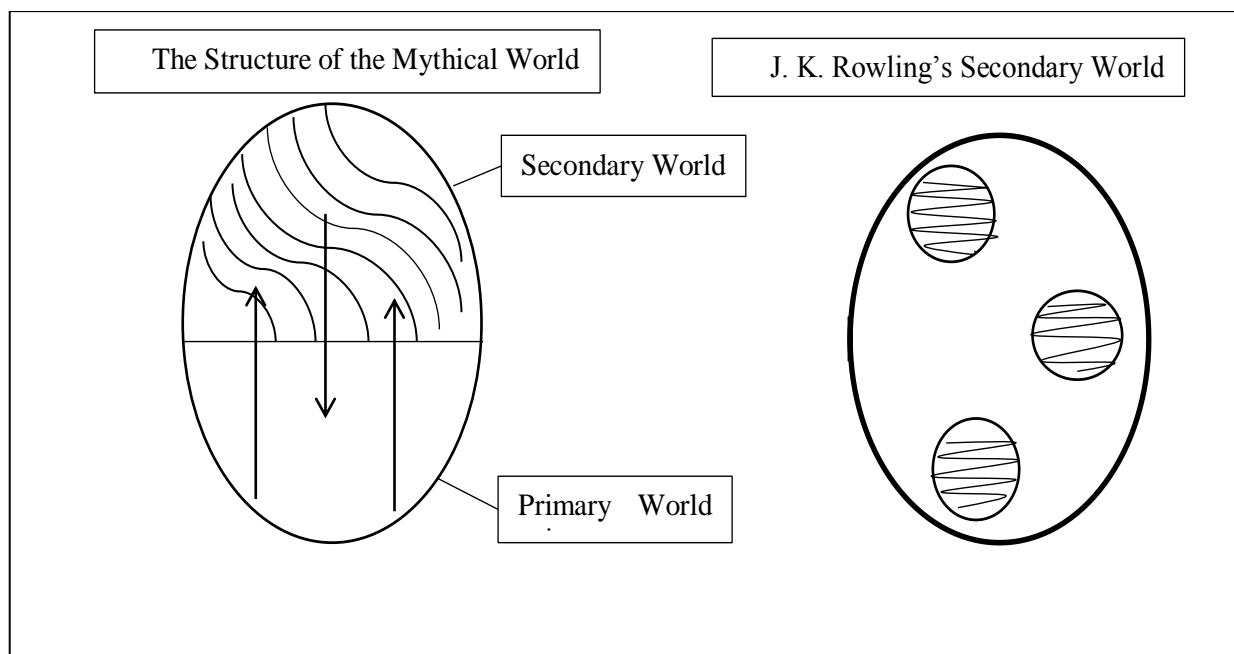


Figure 2: The structure of the Mythical World vs the Structure of the J.K. Rowling’s Secondary World

The key to every EFT narrative story is the conflict that J.K. Rowling portrays in different ways perfectly:

- the internal conflict that the characters experience in the sequel;
- the small conflict that unfolds between the characters in the sequel;
- the great conflict in which the characters are confronted by an outside force.

All of these conflicts are certainly important, but the most significant is the central conflict within EFT: the struggle between good → boy wizard Harry and evil → Lord Voldemort (good vs. evil). The Harry Potter sequel is an excellent example of conflict in fantasy literature. Although each book has its own internal conflicts, in general all the books deal with one central conflict: between the boy wizard Harry and the evil Lord Voldemort. This conflict ties all seven volumes of the series together and always keeps the story intriguing. J.K. Rowling has created a magical world woven harmoniously into the real world. The author actively used the contradictions between good and evil to show the problem of moral and cultural values, which influence the formation of the reader's outlook.

In the article, the following words-identifiers have been chosen, which most objectively and emotionally express the layer of lexical units accepted in EFT, and which broadly reveal the lexical-semantic space of the genre under study - they are good and evil. The peculiarity of such concepts is their duality, which is manifested in the presence of two opposing fields, which exist in inseparable unity. For the antonymous semes "Good"/"Evil" such words-identifiers have been chosen which cover a set of definite features of the corresponding concepts "Good"/"Evil", provide the mythological principle of the idea of being as a system of binary oppositions. As A. N. Meletinski notes, "the tendency to mark one pole of the opposition positively and the other negatively" [16, p. 25].

3. Methodology

The presence of evil in the Harry Potter sequel is undeniable. Therefore, the next task to be solved is to perform lexical-semantic classification of lexical-semantic group "Evil" in EFT "Harry Potter". By lexical-semantic group we mean a group of words united on the basis of the presence of a common semantic component in the semantic structure of these words. The semantic components extracted as a result of the analysis are the content basis of the model created [30, p. 82]. The purpose of componential analysis is to identify a common semantic component corresponding to one of the distinctive features in the list of different language units. The procedure for conducting componential analysis may be as follows:

1) analysis of the dictionary definition of the lexeme and the context in order to realise the lexical-semantic variant, please check table 1;

2) combining lexemes whose semantic structure has an invariant corresponding to the subject property into one lexical-semantic group.

Evil is a difficult term to define. The word encompasses a multitude of feelings, actions and thoughts. The set of primary nominations of evil is defined with the help of data from ideographic (thesaurus) and explanatory dictionaries of the English language. The key word correspondence of LTG "Evil" in the English language is the unit, which characterises human existence and deeds, in fact, is connected with the moral canons, the lexeme 'evil', which is used as the most common and is the core of the concept in question, responding to its ontological subtext.

Table 1 Semantic structure of lexical units of lexical-semantic group "Evil"

Evil	Cambridge dict.	Longman	Merriam-webster	Macmillan	Oxford dict.	Collins	Dictionary.com	American heritage	Thesaurus
Morally bad/wrong	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Do very cruel things	+	+		+		+			
Very unpleasant	+	+		+	+	+			
Something that is very bad	+					+			+
Harmful	+		+		+	+	+	+	
Connected with the Devil and forces that make bad things happen		+		+	+	+	+	+	
Arising from actual or imputed bad character or conduct			+	+	+		+		
Archaic			+					+	
Causing discomfort or repulsion			+				+		
Disagreeable			+						
Marked by misfortune			+				+	+	
Influenced by the devil.		+				+			
Unpleasant smell					+	+			
Marked by anger, irritability, irascibility,							+	+	
The wicked or immoral part of someone or something							+		
Disease							+		

Figure 3: Negative Emotions in Harry Potter

Each of the emotions is expressed by a number of synonymous ranges of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs and participles. Most of the verbs of speech found in the selected contextualised fragments are related to shouting. Most often the verbs are combined with nouns, adjectives and participles, reinforcing their emotional colouring: *a horrible squealing yell, was yelling so loudly*. The main characters in Potteriana's magical world are screaming with *fear* and *rage*. The use of adjectives and adverbs, especially in the comparative and superlative degrees of comparison in combination with the different emotional states of the characters, provide a context for the expressiveness of the author's intentions: *the most feared, worst fears*. J.K. Rowling also actively uses words of intensifiers that make the context expressively explicit (*only, too, quite, such, very, never*). *The second man turned at the sound of their footsteps. He, too, broke off in mid-conversation, his cold grey eyes narrowed and fixed upon Harry's face. — Well, well, well... Patronus Potter, said Lucius Malfoy coolly* [26, p. 198]. In this passage, the adjective *cold* expresses *a distasteful attitude* towards the hero. *Percy threw Fred an extremely nasty look and stoked the fire vigorously to bring the kettle back to the boil* [24, p.100]. The growth of emotional tension is ensured by an increase in the number of words with negative connotations (68%) throughout the Harry Potter sequel, as well as a sharp decrease in the number of words with positive connotations (32%).

J.K. Rowling for the realistic manner of narrative depicts the Secondary world as violent rather than romantic.

Obviously, the greater variety and quantitative dominance of negative emotions and feelings is, firstly, due to the tendency of fantasy writers to describe unpleasant feelings and states in more detailed manner and, secondly, due to the ideological tendencies of the genre in which the fiction under analysis is written [19].

4. Results and discussion

Componential analysis of the semantics of lexical units to denote evil in EFT Harry Potter showed that this concept is realized on three narrative levels: anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and floromorphic.

Therefore, the concept of evil is examined in the functional lexical-thematic triad of the textual pattern of the fantasy text:

- anthropomorphic world → evil done by humans;
- zoomorphic world → evil done by animals;
- floromorphic world → evil done by plants.

Human imagination (her / her world) - forms the underlying basis of her / her value system, allows a kind of classification of human experience that reveals systemic significance.

Plant world: represented by plants, which have analogues in the real world; plants taken from mythology; plants endowed with magical powers; magical plants, half-human plants. There are 124 lexical units in the selected LTG, which nominate different animals in the text space of the novel "Harry Potter".

The animal world: represented by animals that have analogues in the real world, animals taken from mythology, animals endowed with magical powers, charming animals, half-human-half-animals. Regarding plant life in the "Potterian" texts, we identified 237 lexical units, which nominate different animals.

In total, 351 lexical constituents containing negative evaluation in their semantics were enrolled in the LTG – Evil. By the number of constituents the most numerous is LTG is ANTHROPOMORPHIC WORLD (173 / 49,3 %), this phenomenon is explained by the fact that the main activators of negative atmosphere and emotions are HUMANS. The archiseme of this LTG is –person / human being, there are hyper-hyponymic links between the members of the group. The next in the number of lexical units is LTG – ZOOMORPHIC WORLD - which includes (112 / 31,9 %) units, the archiseme of which is – ANIMAL. The least numerous is LTG – FLOROMORPHIC WORLD, which includes (66 / 18,8 %) units, where the archiseme is – PLANT.

After identifying the final set of denotatives that nominate evil, their characteristics were analyzed. According to the names of each denotation, reflective language segments were identified, which resulted in the creation of lexical-semantic groups - characteristics of the denotations. According to the chosen criteria, the hierarchical structure of the LTG "Evil" in the TAF "Harry Potter" is as follows:

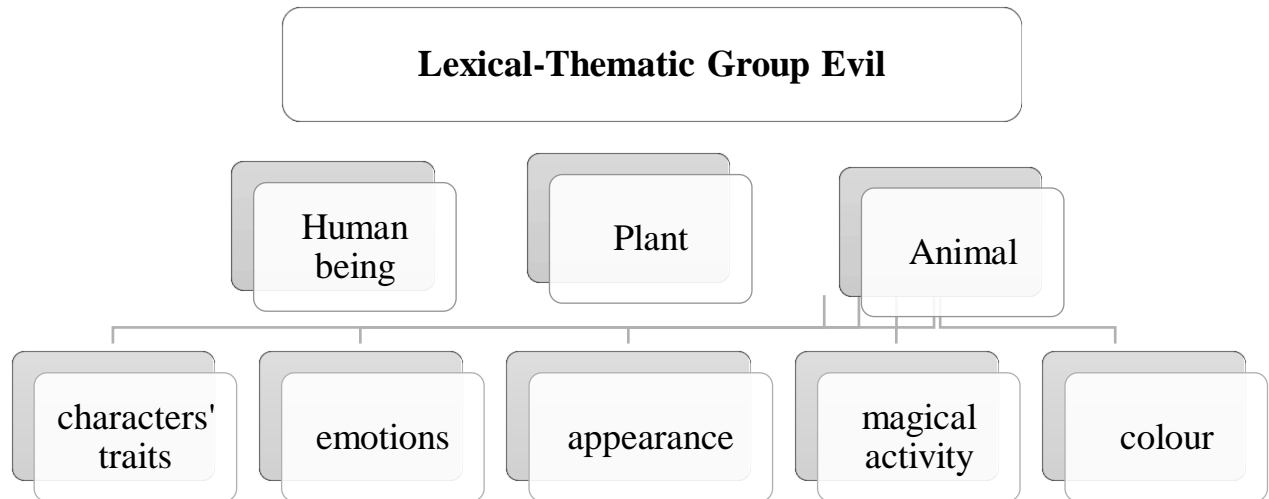


Figure 4: The structure of LTG "EVIL" ("Anthropomorphic world", "Zoomorphic world", "Floromorphic world")

The structure of the LTG "Evil" in the EFT "Harry Potter" is represented by such lexical-semantic groups: "character traits", "appearance", "relationships", "magical activities" and "colour". A human being occupies the most important and central place in the fantasy world picture, in the presented TG Human being accumulates negative characteristics, dictated by her / his emotional assessment, the feelings he / she feels about himself / herself and the world around him / her.

The structure of each of the presented LSG has its own peculiarities in linguistic verbalization.

The lexical-semantic group "character traits" is formed by such lexical units: *foolish, absurd, fool, absurdity, indifference, torpor, listlessness, aggressive, presumption, insolence, rudeness, disrespect, coward, cowardice, timid, abuse, derision, mock, jeer, eager* and other, for example: "Imagine how angry I was when the next time my diary was opened, it was Ginny who was writing to me, not you. She saw you with the diary, you see, and panicked. What if you found out how to work it, and I repeated all her secrets to you? What if, even worse, I told you who'd been strangling roosters? So the foolish little brat waited until your dormitory was deserted and stole it back [22, p. 313].

The lexical units that form the lexical range "acts" in EFT Harry Potter are the result or motivation for knowingly causing serious (physical) harm – and a serious crime, taking someone's life: *to kill, to murder, to slaughter, grave, death, fatal, cadaver, mortality, afterlife, cemetery, immorality, serve, detention* and other, such as: *No one knows why, or how, but they're saying that when he couldn't kill Harry Potter, Voldemort's power somehow broke – and that's why he's gone.* "Dumbledore nodded glumly. "It's – it's true?" faltered Professor McGonagall. "After all he's done... all the people he's killed... he couldn't kill a little boy? It's just astounding... of all the things to stop him... but how in the name of heaven did Harry survive?" [27, p. 9]. Murder is a horrible crime, these signs are traced in the actions and deeds of Lord Voldemort, which cause great terror and destruction, taking the lives of innocent people.

The lexical range "behavior" characterizes the negative qualities of character and intentions of the characters: *to force, to demand, to rush, to hit, to smuggle, to behead, to blackmail, to threaten, to violate, to hurt, to attack, to fight, to duel* and other, for example: "We told you to get rid of the lot! Empty your pockets, go on, both of you!" It was an unpleasant scene; the twins had evidently been trying to smuggle as many toffees out of the house as possible, and it was only by using her Summoning Charm that Mrs. Weasley managed to find them all [24, p. 77].

Lexical-semantic group "appearance" (a character's physical appearance) is formed by adjectives and adverbs, which in the semantic structure contain a negative assessment and describe the appearance of the characters: *bizarre, ugly, strange, lopsided, eccentric, feeble, peculiar, shrunken, blemish, carelessness* and other, for example: "*Are you all right?*" said Ron. "*You look odd.*" What Harry feared most was that he might not be able to find the mirror room again. With Ron covered in the cloak, too, they had to walk much more slowly the next night [27, p. 167].

Lexical-semantic group "color" is formed by lexical units that nominate different shades of dark colors and, accordingly, characterize evil: *black, gray, blackness, dark, night, pale, grayish* and other. Human evil is inextricably linked with the category of fear, which is expressed by the lexeme black: *Hours and hours later, Harry woke quite suddenly in the pitch blackness and gave a small yelp of pain: His arm now felt full of large splinters. For a second, he thought that was what had woken him. Then, with a thrill of horror, he realized that someone was sponging his forehead in the dark* [22, p. 148]. Fear is associated with destruction and death, causing feelings of grief, this understanding of color is characteristic of the English fantasy text.

For the writer, black is also the original darkness, representing "savagery" (underdevelopment, backwardness from civilisation and progress). Darkness and death are closely linked in the text of a fantasy work: *Harry had dived for his wand; Snape shot a hex at it and it flew feet away into the darkness and out of sight. "Kill me then," panted Harry, who felt no fear at all, but only rage and contempt. "Kill me like you killed him, you coward –"* [25, p. 680]. *There was a collective intake of breath from the class, for none of them, apart from Ron and Hermione, had ever heard Harry talk about what had happened on the night Cedric had died. They stared avidly from Harry to Professor Umbridge, who had raised her eyes and was staring at him without a trace of a fake smile on her face* [26, p. 314].

Descriptions of the characters' appearances, especially their faces, are presented with the negative semantics of verbs as well as adjectives and adverbs: *Mrs. Weasley's lower lip was trembling. Sirius sank slowly back into his chair, his face white* [26, p. 118]. "*For your health," repeated Professor Umbridge. Her eyes travelled over Hagrid's discoloured and swollen face; dragon blood dripped gently and silently on to his waistcoat. "I see"* [26, p. 561]. *Zacharias Smith's aggressive face, and was determined not to look at Cho. "I don't want to talk about Cedric Diggory, all right? So if that's what you're here for, you might as well clear out"* [26, p. 437].

Lexical-semantic group "magical activity". The Harry Potter sequel is filled with real magical material, the magical system deals with things, matters that happen or exist that have no rational explanation in the real world. Therefore, this lexical-semantic group has the following areas of specification: magical artifacts: *the Horcrux* (the most evil magical inventions in which a person has concealed part of their soul), *the Dark Mark* (an aspect of Voldemort's reign of terror), *Inferi* (Dead bodies that have been bewitched to do a Dark wizard's bidding), *the Resurrection Stone, the Elder Wand* та інші, наприклад: "*Where is he? Have you got him? Is he locked up?*" "*Karkaroff?*" said Moody with an odd laugh. "*Karkaroff fled tonight, when he felt the Dark Mark burn upon his arm. He betrayed too many faithful supporters of the Dark Lord to wish to meet them... but I doubt he will get far. The Dark Lord has ways of tracking his enemies*" [24, p. 745]. A lexical range depicting dark magic: *Dark Arts/Dark Magic, curse, venom, locket, goblin made objects* and other, for example: *He could feel the locket quivering in the grip and was scared of what was coming. Ron raised the sword still higher, and as he did so, Riddle's eyes gleamed scarlet. Out of the locket's two windows, out of the eyes, there bloomed like two grotesque bubbles, the heads of Harry and Hermione, weirdly distorted. Ron yelled in shock and backed away as the figures blossomed out of the locket, first chests, then waists, then legs, until they stood in the locket, side by side like trees with a common root, swaying over Ron and the real Harry, who had snatched his fingers away from the locket as it burned, suddenly, white-hot* [23, p. 306].

The sources of information regarding the lexical-semantic units were the authoritative dictionaries Oxford Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary, Webster Dictionary. Thus, we conclude that one lexical-semantic unit can be assigned to several selected lexical-semantic groups at once. We fix phenomena Evil in numerous manifestations of J.K. Rowling lexical-semantic interpretation of a fantasy text, lexical-semantic organisation of which we understand as a three-level hierarchy of theoretical spaces - concept, meaning and sense.

5. Conclusions

Results and findings support the idea that J.K. Rowling created the magical world of the Harry Potter sequel where the LTG "Evil" is an important element. In the Harry Potter EFT, the LTG "Evil" is represented by such lexical-semantic groups as: "character traits", "appearance", "relationships", "magical activity" and "colour", which in turn are complemented by synonymous range of nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives, depicting twilight and darkness, the sinister and dangerous, danger and death, death and oblivion; objects that harm and inspire fear, negative feelings; power, fury and cruelty, pallor and morbidity, ugliness and abomination.

The study analysis proves that LTG - Evil takes an important place in the formation of the fantasy picture of the work, so the semantic space of the sequel – Harry Potter contains a large number of connotative lexical constituents, which reveal and depict the concept of evil. At the emotional level, the lexical constituents of LTG – Evil nominate a number of emotions with negative meaning, such as: sadness (activators are separation, death, disappointment, failure), anger, disgust (disdain), contempt (the coldest emotion), fear (anxiety), shame (embarrassment, guilt) guilt.

The text of the English fantasy as a coherent linguocultural fact is a sign, the denotative of which is a fragment of reality, the content of the text, and the signifier is the intention of the author - narrator, the meaning of the text. The systematic approach to the analysis of lexical units of J.K. Rowling's texts, their ordering in the form of taxonomization of lexical and semantic space of the main element – Evil in the actantive EFT narrative model, extrapolated to LTG – ANTHROPOMORPHIC WORLD, – FLOROMORPHIC WORLD, – ZOOMORPHIC WORLD. This allowed identifying universal and unique features of the writer's style, studying the linguistic mentality reflected in the texts of modern English fantasy.

The perspective is recognized in proceeding with the comparison of verbalization and actualization of lexical structures, taking into account gender traits, in particular in comparative studies of lexical structures in the English fantasy texts of different authors.

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