

Научная статья

УДК 811

<https://doi.org/10.23859/1994-0637-2022-4-109-1>

**Lexical means of expressing the concept of “Indeterminate large amount”
in the English and Greek languages**

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Abstract. The article examines the semantics of nouns that are sources (called “donor zones”) for English and Greek quantifiers. This term is taken from the article by E. V. Rakhilina, Lee Su Hyoun “Semantics of lexical plurality in Russian”. In the analysis, several groups are identified that may partially overlap each other. When considering this layer of vocabulary, a structural approach is put into practice, based on the comparative and typological method, as well as the analysis of dictionary definitions. The article focuses on the nouns that characterize indeterminate large amount in the English and Greek languages. All lexemes under consideration are analysed in a comparative manner.

Keywords: quantity, quantification, quantifiers, “donor zones”

For citation: Aksenova K. A. Lexical means of expressing the concept of “Indeterminate large amount” in the English and Greek languages. *Cherepovets State University Bulletin*, 2022, no. 4 (109), pp. 7–16. <https://doi.org/10.23859/1994-0637-2022-4-109-1>.

**Лексические средства выражения концепта «Неопределенно большое
количество» в английском и греческом языках**

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается семантика имен существительных, являющихся источниками (так называемыми «донорскими зонами») для английских и греческих квантификаторов. Данный термин взят из статьи Е. В. Рахилиной и Ли Су Хен «Семантика лексической множественности в русском языке». В процессе анализа выделено несколько групп, которые могут частично перекрывать друг друга. При рассмотрении данного пласта лексики применяется структурный подход, основанный на совокупности сопоставительно-типологического метода изучения материала, а также метода исследования словарных дефиниций. Основное внимание уделяется выявлению имен существительных, характеризующих неопределенно

большое количество в английском и греческом языках. Все обнаруженные лексические единицы анализируются в сопоставительном ключе.

Ключевые слова: количество, квантификация, квантификаторы, «донорские зоны»

Для цитирования: *Аксенова К. А.* Лексические средства выражения концепта «Неопределенно большое количество» в английском и греческом языках // Вестник Череповецкого государственного университета. 2022. № 4 (109). С. 7–16. <https://doi.org/10.23859/1994-0637-2022-4-109-1>.

Introduction

The **relevance** of the study is mainly defined by the fact that the concept of QUANTITY is one of the most essential concepts in any language. Philological representation of quantitative relations has been methodically scrutinized in various linguistic studies. However, the embodiment of this category by the Latin-based languages, in particular, the Greek and English languages, has not been satisfactorily examined; the question of lexical peculiarities of quantifiable lexemes is of substantial notice for cognitive philologists. The choice of languages is determined primarily by the lack of study of this problem on the comparative material of such diverse languages as Russian, English and modern Greek. Our choice is also related to the general interest that is currently caused by the theoretical and practical problems of the category of uncertainty in the implementation of its set of tools in the compared plan.

The aim of the research is to outline the main “donor zones” of Greek and English quantifiers of an indefinitely large amount. The main focus is on recognizing several semantic groups that are characterized by certain nominal qualities of the quantifiers under study. **Scientific novelty of the study** lies in the fact that the Greek and English quantifiable lexemes are for the first time studied from the perspective of their lexical representation of INDEFINITE AMOUNT. **As a result**, the most substantial lexical groups have been scrutinized, and a comparative analysis of the Greek and English quantifiers has been carried out.

According to the goal the subsequent research **tasks** were put forward:

- to compile a list of quantifiers of an indefinitely large amount based on the material of modern Greek and English languages;
- to highlight the main “donor zones” of the lexemes under study;
- to conduct a comparative analysis of the outlined “donor zones” through the lens of their semantics.

To achieve the stated goal and solve the specified tasks, a structural approach was used based on the following **methods**: the comparative typological method, the method of analyzing dictionary definitions, and comparative analysis.

The main part

The theoretical basis of the research consists of the publications of A. P. Babushkin¹, Z. D. Popova and I. A. Sternin¹, T. A. Fesenko², A. A. Chelnokova³, focused on semiotics

¹ Babushkin A. P. *Типы конспектов в лексико-фразеологической семантике языка* [Types of concepts in the lexical-phraseological semantics of the language]. Voronezh: Izdatel'stvo Voronezhskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 1996. 104 p.

and linguistics, types of concepts in the lexico-phraseological semantics of the language, as well as the representation of different sorts of “indefinite amount” in any modern language. Besides, the works of E. N. Bobrovskaya⁴, and L. D. Chesnokova⁵, were taken into consideration, as the notion of INDEFINITE AMOUNT is observed through its semantic peculiarities. A vital characteristic of the research is the lexical analyses of “donor zones”. The mention classification became imaginable thanks to the works of E. V. Rakhilina and Li Su Khon⁶, E. V. Fedyaeva⁷, Eleanor Rosch⁸ providing us with a description of cognitive representations of semantic categories that have direct relevance to lexical areas of the category of “number”.

The practical value of the study is that the results obtained can be used at theoretical and practical courses in comparative semantics of the Greek and English languages and extracurricular seminars on cognitive linguistics. The obtained data can be put into practice in the process of educational and methodological pursuits when writing textbooks, term papers and a paper due for linguistic master’s programs.

¹ Popova Z. D. i dr. *Vvedenie v kognitivnuiu lingvistiku* [Introduction to cognitive linguistics]. Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 2005. 219 p.

² Fesenko T. A. Kognitivnaia sistema: struktura i mental'nyi status [Cognitive system: structure and mental status]. *Filologiya i kul'tura: materialy III Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii: v 3 ch. (Tambov, 16–18 maia 2001 g.)* [Philology and culture: Proceedings of the III International research conference (Tambov, May 16–18, 2001): in 3 parts; ed. by N. N. Boldyrev]. Tambov: TGU im. G. R. Derzhavina, 2001, part 1, pp. 94–98.

³ Chelnokova A. A. Vyrashenie razlichnykh vidov kolichestva v iazyke (na materiale nemetskogo iazyka) [The expression of different types of quantity in the language (by the German language)]. *Vestnik SamGU* [Vestnik of Samara State University], 2007, no. 5/2, pp. 229–234.

⁴ Bobrovskaya E. N. Kvantifikatory neopredelenno-bol'shogo kolichestva v sovremennom angliiskom iazyke [Quantifiers of an indefinitely large number in modern English]. *Vnedrenie idei nepreryvnogo professional'nogo obrazovaniia v praktiku raboty uchebnogo zavedeniia: materialy XI regional'noi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* [Proceedings of the XI regional scientific and practical conference; ed. by M. A. Veit]. Lipetsk: LGPU, 2006, pp. 5–6.

⁵ Chesnokova L. D. Kategoriia kolichestva i sintaksicheskie struktury [Quantity category and syntactic structures]. *Voprosy iazykoznaniiia* [Topics in the study of language], 1981, no. 2, pp. 44–52.

⁶ Rakhilina E. V., Li Su-Khon. Semantika leksicheskoi mnozhestvennosti v russkom iazyke [Semantics of lexical plurality in Russian]. *Voprosy iazykoznaniiia* [Topics in the study of language], 2009, no. 4, pp. 13–40.

⁷ Fedyaeva E. V. Kategoriia “kolichestvo” – universal'naia bazovaia kategoriia chelovecheskogo soznania [Category “quantity” – a universal basic category of human consciousness]. *Aktual'nye problemy filologii i metodiki prepodavaniia inostrannykh iazykov: materialy Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi internet-konferentsii (oktiabr' – noiabr' 2007 g.)* [Topical problems of Philology and Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages: Proceedings of the International research and practice Internet conference (October – November 2007); ed. by A. M. Leont'yeva]. Novosibirsk: Bystro!, 2007, pp. 111–118.

⁸ Rosch E. Prototype Classification and Logical Classification: The Two Systems. *New Trends in Conceptual Representation: Challenges to Piaget's Theory?*; ed. by E. K. Scholnick. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1983, pp. 73–86.

The concept “QUANTITY”, considered in logic and philosophy as conceptual category, the essential characteristics of which were presented by Aristotle, is one of the basic concepts of human consciousness. The idea of universality of fundamental human concepts, including the concept “QUANTITY”, is closely related with the idea of the innateness of these concepts. The image of the number is one of the initial images, one of the basic symbols that a man operates. Archetypes of the collective unconsciousness refer to a number of cognitive patterns, fundamental concepts that are inherent in all mankind, because they reflect the most essential relations of reality. Within the framework of the cognitive direction, it is considered that all concepts that are significant for the human psyche are reflected in grammar of languages. The grammatical category of number, characteristic of many languages, allows us to attribute QUANTITY to our universal basic concepts.

The concept of INDETERMINATE AMOUNT representing some layer or component of the base macroconcept “QUANTITY”, has a stable centre – grammatical category of number and a more amorphous periphery – quantitative designations in other parts of speech, phraseological combinations, syntactic constructions, etc. Thus, the means of objectification of this concept is the whole set of multi-level resources of the language, interacting on the basis of quantitative functions.

The quantifiable notions essential for objective reality are articulated undeniably, roughly and indeterminately or indefinitely. The idea of an indeterminate amount appears at the perceptive level, but oriented and directed towards objective reality. Thus, the indeterminate amount includes both the characteristics of a definite and the features of an indefinite quantity or indeterminate amount.

This work analyzes the quantifiable lexemes of the Greek and English languages. By quantifiable lexemes, we imply language units (quantifiers) that, in particular, specify a certain number. Any quantifier answers the question <How much or How many or To what degree so and so?>.¹

Quantifiers convey ideas of measurement, intensification, and quantification. With the help of a quantifier, the speaker reflects the quantitative component of the surrounding reality.²

She kissed him on both cheeks.

He has got a lot of money.

*He looked down at the sea of smiling faces before him.*³

The object of our study is subject names, which in their original meaning name definite objects, but as part of the genitive construction “N of N” with another subject lexeme, usually representing a set of objects, they undertake a semantic shift and develop into

¹ Sepir E. *Izbrannye trudy po iazykoznaniiu i kul'turologii* [Selected works in linguistics and cultural studies]. Moscow: Progress, 1993. 656 p.

² Rakhilina E. V. *Lingvistika konstruktivii* [Construction linguistics]. Moscow: Azbukovnik, 2010. 584 p.

³ Avalanche. *WoordHunt*. Available at: <https://woordhunt.ru/word/avalanche> (accessed: 25.04.2022).

quantifiers with the meaning of an indeterminately large quantity or an indeterminately small quantity, something like “very much or very little”.

For instance, the words like “ocean” or “forest” are vivid examples of English quantifiers. In their original meaning, both of them represent objects of nature, however, as part of the nominal genitive construction “N of N” these words mean “an indefinitely large amount” (cf.: “a mighty tropical ocean of foliage”, “a forest of hands shot up”).

In Greek one of the most demonstrative instances of quantifiers are “κατακλυσμός” (flood) and “ένα σωρό” (pile). Initially these words have a dual nature, denoting a specific object of the external world, which is a set of objects of a certain kind, therefore they are able to act in a genitive construction even in their original meaning. In this case, the marker of their transition to the class of quantifiers is a significant expansion of compatibility (cf.: ένα ~ό κουβέντες – piles of talks; ξόδεψα ένα ~ό λεφτά – I spent a pile of money; έχω ένα ~ό φίλους – I have got lots of friends), which, as in the case of initially non-relational names, is accompanied by the acquisition of a purely quantitative semantics with an evaluative component.

According to our data¹, there are 22 Greek quantifiers of an indeterminately large amount:

δέσμη, κατακλυσμός, πλημμύρα, ένα, λίμνη, βουνό, στοίβα, αβυσσός, σμήνος, στίφος, χαλάζι, στήλη, βροχή, χιονοστιβάδα, καταγίδα, πέλαγο, ωκεανός, σύννεφο, σιντριβάνι, μάζα, στρατός, έκρηξη.

As for English quantifiers² there are 37 lexemes of this sort:

avalanche, bag, barrage, battery, bucket, bunch, cloud, deluge, epidemic, flood, forest, fusillade, inundation, nail, heap, lake, load, mountain, ocean, pile, raft, rain, rainbow, rash, reservoir, river, sea, shower, spate, stack, store, stream, swathe, torrent, volley, wave, world.

Taking into account the semantics of names that are sources for quantifiers, i. e. so-called “donor zones” we see that their analysis allows us to distinguish several groups that may partially overlap one another.

First of all, these are lexemes, denoting vertical objects (*mountain, heap, pile, stack; δέσμη, σωρός, βουνό, στοίβα*) in accordance with the canonical metaphorical shift formula proposed in the work of John Lakoff, HIGHER → BIGGER. For example,

mountain – 1. a natural elevation of the earth’s surface having considerable mass, generally steep sides, and a height greater than the level of land around it;

¹ Δημητρίου Α. Λεξικό νεοελληνισμών. Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Γρηγόρη, 1995. 470 σ.

[Demetrius A. *Slovar' novogrecheskogo iazyka* [Dictionary of Modern Greek]. Afiny: Izdatel'stvo Grigorisa, 1995. 470 p.]

² Bordyugova K. A. Osobennosti grammatikalizatsii predmetnykh imen-kvantifikatorov neopredelenno-malogo kolichestva (na materiale frantsuzskogo i russkogo iazykov) [Grammaticalization features of quantifiers of indefinitely small number (by the material of the French and Russian languages)]. *Vestnik Cherepovetskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* [Cherepovets State University Bulletin], 2015, no. 8 (69), pp. 41–44.

2. a large amount of something: Her wife broke up with him facing a mountain of obligations.

Stack – 1. a large, typically conical pile of fodder set for outdoor storage;

2. a large quantity: I've got a stack of toil to finish.

Δέσμη – 1. δέσμη, δεσμίδα ουσ. θηλ;

2. (καθομιλουμένη) δεμάτι, μάτσο ουσ.

Σωρός – 1. δέσμη; πλήθος; ~ άμμου – σωρός άμμου;

2. μια μεγάλη ποσότητα; ένα ~ό κουβέντες; ξόδεψα ένα ~ό λεφτά; έχω ένα ~ό φίλους; ένα ~ό.

The second subgroup denotes vast / endless surfaces and includes *ocean, sea, lake, forest, world, river, swathe, reservoir*; λίμνη, αβυσσός, πέλαγο, ωκεανός, σύννεφο).

Sea – 1. the large surface of salt water that covers most of the surface of the Earth;

2. a large amount: She looked at the sea of laughing people in front of her.

Swathe – 1. a large surface of land;

2. a large amount: The bomb had left a swathe of ruins.

Λίμνη – 1. Λείπει κάτι σημαντικό;

2. μια μεγάλη ποσότητα: Ο Τομ βρέθηκε ξαπλωμένος κάτω από μια λίμνη αίματος.

This metaphor is based on a picture of endless or vast surfaces that cannot be captured by the eye. The shift occurs according to the formula WIDER = BIGGER, proposed in the article by E. V. Rakhilina and Lee Su Hyoun.

Another group comprises names that denote objects consisting of many objects of a certain kind: *battery, raft, bunch*; δέσμη, στρατός, σμήνος.

Battery – 1. several large guns or other weapons, used together;

2. a large number of things or people of similar sort: They faced a battery of requests.¹

Raft – 1. a flat structure made of pieces of wood tied together;

2. a large number of things: The company has launched a whole raft of new software products.²

Δέσμη – 1. δέσμη, δεσμίδα ουσ θηλ;

2. μια μεγάλη ποσότητα: Υπάρχει μια νευρική δέσμη η οποία συνδέει το ασυνήθιστο όργανο με τον θάλαμο.

Στρατός – 1. ζηράς φρ. ως ουσ αρσ;

2. μια μεγάλη ποσότητα: Μάρτυρες λένε ότι αρνήθηκες να φύγεις από δίπλα του ακόμα κι όταν πλησίασε ο στρατός τού Στάννις.

The final group represents names with the initial meaning of moving masses (substances). It includes names such as *shower, flood, deluge, spate, torrent, avalanche, river, stream, wave, hail, rain, volley, barrage, epidemic, cloud, rash*; κατακλυσμός, πλήμμυρα, χαλάζι, βροχή, χιονοστιβάδα, καταγίδα, σιντριβάνι, έκρηξη.

Avalanche – 1. a large amount of snow and ice that suddenly falls down a mountain;

2. a large number of things: An avalanche of books fell off the shelf.

¹ Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. Available at: <https://slovar-vocab.com/english/longman-vocab.html> (accessed: 25.04.2022).

² Ibidem.

Wave – 1. a raised line of water that moves across the surface of an area of water, especially the sea;

2. a number of events of a particular type that happen again or are repeated after a pause: There are fears that easing the lockdown rules will trigger a second wave of the disease.¹

Πλήμμυρα – 1. κατακλυσμός ουσ αρσ;

2. μια μεγάλη ποσότητα: Ο Γκρίνσπαν ξεπέρασε μια πλημμύρα φτηνών χρημάτων στην οικονομία, και στο παρελθόν αυτό είχε πάντα ως αποτέλεσμα τον πληθωρισμό και την επικίνδυνη αστάθεια.

Έκρηξη – 1. είναι η απότομη μεταβολή του όγκου που καταλαμβάνει η ύλη στον χώρο;

2. μια μεγάλη ποσότητα: Στις αρχές του 2010, η Αλγερία γνώρισε τεράστια έκρηξη στις πωλήσεις αυτοκινήτων.

It is curious that only in Russian and Greek there is a formula opposite to the formula proposed by J. Lakoff and M. Johnson’s work: ‘LOWER’ → ‘BIGGER’, it is in accordance with this scheme that a quantitative meaning is formed for such a lexeme as *αβυσσός*.

Αβυσσός – 1. απότομος, βαθύς γκρεμός, πολύ βαθιά σχισμή;

2. ένας πολύ μεγάλος αριθμός, ένα πλήθος από κάποιον ή κάτι: Όμως, κατά κάποιο τρόπο, από το Νότιο Πόλο και μετά δεν υπήρχε περαιτέρω επέκταση δυνατό, και η αυτοκρατορία άρχισε να ξεθωριάζει στην άβυσσο της ιστορίας.

Thus, the following “donor zones” can be pointed out in the studied quantifiers of an indefinitely large quantity:

Table

“Donor zones” of quantitative quantifiers

GREEK QUANTIFIERS	ENGLISH QUANTIFIERS
<p>Vast / endless surfaces: <i>λίμνη, αβυσσός, πέλαγο, ωκεανός, σύννεφο;</i></p> <p>Vertical objects: <i>δέσμη, σωρός, βουνό, στοίβα;</i></p> <p>Objects consisting of many objects of a certain kind: <i>δέσμη, στρατός, σμήνος;</i></p> <p>Moving masses (substances): <i>κατακλυσμός, πλήμμυρα, χαλάζι, βροχή, χιονοστιβάδα, καταγίδα, σιντριβάνι, έκρηξη;</i></p> <p>Infinite spaces (directed downwards): <i>αβυσσός</i></p>	<p>Vast / endless surfaces: <i>ocean, sea, lake, forest, world, river, swathe, reservoir;</i></p> <p>Vertical objects: <i>mountain, heap, pile, stack;</i></p> <p>Objects consisting of many objects of a certain kind: <i>battery, raft, bunch;</i></p> <p>Moving masses (substances): <i>shower, flood, deluge, spate, torrent, avalanche, river, stream, wave, hail, rain, volley, barrage, epidemic, cloud, rash;</i></p>

¹ *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. Available at: <https://slovar-vocab.com/english/longman-vocab.html> (accessed: 25.04.2022).

Conclusion

In the course of the comparative analysis, we have found that by the material of the two analyzed languages, the similarity is detected in such “donor zones” as **“vast, endless surfaces”, “vertical objects”, “objects consisting of many objects of a certain kind”, “moving masses (substances)”**.

It is necessary to mention such a parameter as **“infinite spaces (directed downwards)”**. As we may see in English Lakoff’s canonical rule enjoys an indisputable advantage – the Greek “*ἀβυσσος απόγνωσης*” which is “abyss of despair” is translated into English as “heaps of troubles”. Meanwhile, in English there are such combinations as: abyss of hopelessness – “the abyss of despair”. However, in English the given quantifier forms set-phrases and can’t be taken into account as a quantifier in its original meaning.

The prospect of further research lies in the possibility of studying the lexical-semantic explication of the concept indefinite set by the material of other languages, in the possibility of clarifying the reflection of this concept in the phraseological picture of the world of different languages.

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Статья поступила в редакцию 06.05.2022; одобрена после рецензирования 03.06.2022; принята к публикации 10.06.2022.

The article was submitted 06.05.2022; Approved after reviewing 03.06.2022; Accepted for publication 10.06.2022.