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## NATIONALLY SPECIFIC MEANINGS OF THE BODY-PART TERMS

### *FINGER AND NAIL*

(Based on the Data from Explanatory Dictionaries of English)

На примере лексики, номинирующей части верхних конечностей, показаны возможности 5 репрезентативных толковых словарей английского языка в отражении значений, специфичных для национальных разновидностей этого языка. С использованием сопоставительных таблиц показаны основные отличия между спектрами значений лексем *finger* ‘палец’ и *nail* ‘ноготь’, характерные для британской и североамериканской разновидностей английского языка. Таким образом, доказано, что при исследовании лексической неоднозначности следует обращать внимание не только на омонимию и полисемию в рамках одной разновидности языка, но и учитывать спектр национально специфических значений, в том числе идиоматически связанных. Поскольку в толковых словарях английского языка приводятся данные, относящиеся только к британской и североамериканской разновидностям английского языка, то необходимо обращение к корпусам, включающим аутентичные тексты других разновидностей.

Research on lexical ambiguity is considered more than important from the point of view of effective communication. In numerous publications (see, for instance [1–6] et al) lexical ambiguity is considered connected to homonymy and/or polysemy. However, the problem of processing homonymous and polysemous words in context have never been studied in connection with different language varieties and, consequently, with nationally specific meanings. The aim of this paper presupposes (1) the contrastive study of the possibilities of the 5 main explanatory dictionaries of English [7–11] in reflecting meanings, which are specific to national varieties (for this purpose 26 items nominating the parts of the upper limbs have been used); (2) to compare the meanings of the target terms, which possess dictionary marks of belonging to a certain English variety. The choice of the body-part terms as the target object of the research is in line with a new approach in teaching English as a foreign language – the approach, which accommodates “nonverbal resources, such as objects and bodies, in the making of meaning” [12, p. 5]. The upper limbs, which in general English are usually nominated as *hands*, are used by people to write, play, cook, sweep, clean, work, wash, carry, arrange, paint, etc. in everyday life. Blind people can use their hands in reading, learning, and writing, at the time when dumb and deaf ones use the hand to communicate with other people and the surrounding. For those reasons we can anticipate the high level of polysemy in the lexis nominating the upper limbs parts including the meanings, which can be considered as nationally specific ones. It is also important to reveal the capacity of the most comprehensive explanatory dictionaries of English to reflect nationally specific meanings.

From the 5 chosen dictionaries only 3 (Cambridge Dictionary, Collins Dictionary, and Oxford Dictionary) provide the marks of a certain meaning belonging to varieties of English, namely the marks *British* and *American* (in Cambridge and Collins dictionaries), and the mark *North American* (in Oxford Dictionary). So we can come to the conclusion that other varieties of English are not taken into consideration by the compilers of the most comprehensive explanatory dictionaries of English.

In order to illustrate the difference between the capacities of the three dictionaries to provide the nationally specific to British and North American English varieties meanings we made a table, which includes the data about the quantity of specific meanings of the 26 items nominating the upper limbs parts given in every of the 3 dictionaries (see the Table 1).

Table 1

The quantity of meanings, which possess the marks *American* and/or *British* in Cambridge and Collins dictionaries or *North American* in Oxford Dictionary, of the lexis nominating the upper limbs parts and the homonyms proper

Lexeme	Cambridge Dictionary marks		Collins Dictionary marks		Oxford Dictionary mark
	<i>American</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>American</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>North American</i>
arm	3	-	11	7	-
armpit	1	-	1	2	1
ball	3	-	15	21	1
digit	2	-	2	1	-
elbow	1	-	5	8	-
finger	2	-	6	15	-
finger nail	1	-	1	1	-
finger tip	1	-	2	3	-
fore arm	1	-	2	1	-
fore finger	1	-	1	1	-
hand	6	-	6	7	-
heel	5	-	-	7	-
index finger	1	-	1	-	-
knuckle	1	-	6	5	-
limb	2	-	4	11	-
little finger	1	-	1	1	-
middle finger	1	-	-	-	-
mitt	1	-	6	5	-
nail	2	-	10	11	-
palm	1	-	11	13	-
paw	1	-	2	2	-
pinkie	1	-	2	1	-
ring finger	-	-	1	1	-
thumb	1	-	4	6	-
thumb nail	3	-	1	3	-
wrist	1	-	-	5	-

The comparison of the dictionary data allows to conclude that namely Collins Dictionary provides specific meanings both for British and North American varieties of English as well as gives the most comprehensive spectrum of explanations of the nationally specific meanings for the lexis nominating the upper limbs parts as well as of the homonyms proper. 4 lexemes with the most representative quantity

of the nationally specific meanings are *ball*, *palm*, *finger*, and *nail*. The first two units have the direct meanings, which are not connected with the upper limbs parts, therefore further we will deal with the nationally specific meanings of the lexemes *finger* and *nail* given by Collins Dictionary (see the tables 2 and 3). If the core of a pair of meanings marked as nationally specific coincides, the explanations are given in the same rows of the tables.

Table 2

Nationally specific meanings of the lexeme *finger* in Collins Dictionary

Meanings marked as British	Meanings marked as American
Any of the digits of the hand, often excluding the thumb.	Any of the five jointed parts projecting from the palm of the hand; esp., any of these other than the thumb.
The part of a glove made to cover a finger.	The part of a glove that covers one of these parts.
Something that resembles a finger in shape or function.	
<i>Digit</i> : the length or width of a finger used as a unit of measurement.	a) Rough unit of measure based on. b) <i>Rare</i> the length of a man's middle finger (about 4 1/2 inches).
A quantity of liquid in a glass, etc., as deep as a finger is wide; tot.	The breadth of a finger (3/4 inch to 1 inch), as in measuring whiskey in a glass.
A projecting machine part, esp. one serving as an indicator, guide, or guard.	<i>Mechanics</i> : a projecting part coming into contact with another part and controlling its motion.
Burn one's fingers.	
Get one's finger out.	
Lay a finger on.	
To touch or manipulate with the fingers; handle.	
To identify as a criminal or suspect.	
To extend like a finger.	
To use one's fingers in playing (an instrument, such as a piano or clarinet).	
To indicate on (a composition or part) the fingering required by a pianist, harpsichordist, etc.	
To arrange the keys of (a clarinet, flute, etc) for playing in a certain way.	

Nationally specific meanings of the lexeme *nail* in Collins Dictionary

Meanings marked as British	Meanings marked as American
A thin, horny covering that grows out over the upper tip of a finger or toe.	The horny plate covering part of the dorsal surface of the fingers or toes.
A similar growth on a toe of a bird, reptile, etc.; claw.	The claw of a mammal, bird, or reptile.
A tapered piece of metal, commonly pointed and having a flattened head, driven with a hammer, and used to hold pieces or parts together, to hang things on, etc.	a) A fastening device usually made from round or oval wire, having a point at one end and a head at the other. b) Anything resembling such a fastening device, esp. in function or shape.
An old cloth measure, equal to 2 1/4 inches.	A unit of length, formerly used for measuring cloth, equal to two and a quarter inches.
To attach or fasten together or onto something else with or as with nails.	
To secure, hold, or fasten shut with nails.	
To fix (the eyes, attention, etc.) steadily on an object.	
To discover or expose (a lie, etc.).	
<i>Informal</i> to catch, capture, seize, or intercept.	
<i>Informal</i> to hit squarely.	
	<i>Slang</i> a hypodermic needle, used for injecting drugs.
	A nail in one's coffin.
	Bite one's nails.
	Hard as nails.
	Hit the nail on the head.
	On the nail.

The differentiation of meanings marked as specific for British or North American varieties can be seen in three main aspects: 1) different characteristics in the cases when the core meanings coincide; 2) informal/slang differences; 3) idiomatically unique meanings (for *finger* they prevail in British English variety and for *nail* – in North American English).

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While studying the lexical ambiguity one should pay attention not only to homonymy and polysemy in the frames of a single English variety but should also consider the spectrum of the nationally specific meanings including idiomatically bound ones. As the explanatory dictionaries of English provide the data relevant only for British and North American varieties, the corpora, which includes authentic texts of other varieties, should be taken into consideration.