

The Concepts of Weight and Capacity and Their Reflection in the Language

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ABSTRACT

The scientific article explores the concepts of mass and volume in the English language. The study highlights above-mentioned concepts' reflection in the language. Moreover, the article not only provides theoretical information about the topic, but also it gives some examples taken from various sources. This works includes data about forming derivative form of noun + ful.

The concepts of length, volume, weight, mass, which are the most important in life practice, are universal in nature. They originated in people in ancient times and have come a long way of development and improvement before they became scientific terms. According to I.P. Zemsikova, "some scientific, including mathematical, concepts have a cultural background" [Zemsikova 1999: 328].

This work does not aim to describe the concepts of weight, volume, mass in scientific terms, as well as the generally accepted units of their measurement. We are faced with the task of a different plan, namely: to give an interpretation of these concepts from the point of view of a person who is far from science, whose ideas about mass, weight and volume do not go beyond his vital needs. The New Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language gives the following definitions: 'Volume - the amount of space measured in cubic units, that an object or substance occupies; the measured amount that a container or other object can hold. 'Weight -the amount or quantity of heaviness or mass; amount a thing weights'. 'Mass - a quantity of matter as determined from its weight or from the Newton's second law of motion' [New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language]. Based on the foregoing, we can conclude that the semantic content of the scientific terms "weight" and "volume" corresponds to everyday ideas. As for the mass of the body, it is rather doubtful that in the naive picture of the world this concept is present as a measure of inertia. This term is not easy to understand. The scientific concept of mass was formed for a very long time. "Galileo groped for the idea of the amount of matter, but it was clearly formulated only by Newton" [Rogers 1969: 35]. However, to describe the linguistic methods representing the measures of volume, weight, mass in English, one of the two signs of a

material body taken into account in mechanics is more important for us, namely: materiality. Reality is understood as the mass of the body and its distribution in a given geometric volume.

In English, one can single out a number of words formed according to the 'N + -ful (*bucketful, handful, armful, etc.*) model, which, representing a measure of mass and volume, allow, although not quite accurately, to estimate the quantity without resorting to generally accepted systems of measures. These measuring words show the mass of a substance or objects that can be contained in a certain volume. In the dictionary definitions describing such measurements, there is no clear distinction between the concepts of mass and volume: 1) *enough to a room (a sack)*; 2) *an amount that a bucket can hold*; 4) *as much as a hat can hold*; 5) *a quantity sufficient to fill a pan, etc.* It must be emphasized right away that the first component of the model is a word denoting capacity or thought of as capacity. In Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary, the meaning of such nouns is explained as follows: -ful 'as much as will fill'.

First of all, I would like to clarify the status of the derivational element -ful. In textbooks on the lexicology of the English language, it is not considered either as a noun suffix or as a root morpheme of compound words [Antrushina et al. 1985; Arnold 1973]. We believe that this element should be attributed to semi-suffixes, since, on the one hand, it has all the features of the root morpheme and retains a semantic relationship with a single word, on the other hand, its meaning, due to repeated use, has become so grammaticalized that it definitely approaches to the meaning of the suffix [Antrushina 1985: 87; Sheveleva 2004: 65].

In general, the entire range of words formed according to the 'N+ful' model can be divided into two unequal groups. The first group includes words that include a noun denoting some part of the human body (*handful, armful, stomachful, eyeful, etc.*). This group of words brings us back to the idea of anthropocentric measurements, which are primary in the system of measures. "The peculiarity of prehistory is that the main material that supplies tools for influencing nature is the body itself, a part of nature. Nature and culture, which have come together so closely, are difficult to distinguish and separate". "Parts of the human body were probably the most convenient basis for early linear measures, the early units of weight perhaps having developed as a result of the use of some containers or the calculation of what a person or animal could lift or drag" [Britannica, v. 23:693]. Based on the above definition, the second group should include words containing nouns in their composition, denoting various containers used in everyday life: 1) *dishes, buckets, barrels, etc.*; 2) *tools of labor*; 3) *garments used as containers or containers*; 4) *premises*; 5) *territorial formations of natural or artificial origin*. One of the most common nouns of the first group is *mouthful*. The meaning of a word is represented by the innermost structure of the word. Usually, it refers to the amount or portion of food that can be taken into the mouth, 'as much as can be put into the mouth comfortably at one time'.

However, this word can refer to something that is in the mouth, but is not a food item. This often happens during work, when you need to use both hands to perform a particular operation, and keep some improvised means ready in your mouth. For example:

- "I believe you two were in hot water last night, said Mrs. Mullet, speaking awkwardly through a mouthful of hairpins (Lingard. *The Twelfth Day of July*, 265).
- "What do you want?" Tom mumbled around his mouthful of nails (Steinbeck. *The Grapes of Wrath*, 98).

In some cases, a thing or substance is put into the mouth unintentionally, for example, as a result of a fight, as in the following example:

- Rudi had some of the man's blood on his face and Heidi a mouthful of beard (Rendell. *The Crocodile Bird*, 45).

It is interesting to note that this word can also "measure" the sound. In this case, it is legitimate

to talk about the figurative, metaphorical meaning of the word 'mouthful':

- Tom <...> looked with wonder at the town where not a single bird's mouthful stirred (Bradbury. *Dandelion Wine*, 222).
- She leaned over to Zack and said, "Now, Zacharias." "You can call me Zack if it's too much of your mouthful (Magorian. *Good-night Mister Tom*, 182).

In the last example, the word 'mouthful' means something difficult to pronounce. This use of the word is more often recorded by dictionaries in American English: (informal) a word or a phrase that is very long or difficult to pronounce.

Directly related to the measurement of sounding speech is the figurative meaning of the word "in one gulp, in one breath", for example:

- She said it all in one mouthful and walked away (Connell. *The Golden Sleep*, 51).

So the word 'mouthful' is used with different meanings, but invariably represents the meaning of a vessel, reservoir or container.

No less interesting in its use and realized values is another member of this series - handful. This word refers to the amount of a substance that fits in the palm of your hand. It is often used in oral and written speech and is fixed by many dictionaries. Webster's dictionary gives the following interpretation of this word: 'as much or as many as can be held in one hand'. It is interesting to note that the word denotes not only the amount of a substance that fits in the palm of your hand at the moment, but the amount (mass) of a substance or small objects that, in principle, can fit in this volume, for example:

- Ferdinand suddenly threw a handful of walnuts at the dancer's head (Huxley. *Crome Yellow*, 121).
- When a pile of shelled acorns made a handful Swanson put them into the pestle and began to grind them (Eison. *St. Agnes' Stand*, p. 176).
- She grasped a handful of her hair and pulled it to the back of her head (Rendell. *Crocodile Bird*, 375).

The figurative meaning of this word, "a small amount", a handful of something or someone, can also be found in the dictionary. The above dictionary defines this meaning of the word: "small number". In this meaning, the word can be used with both animate and inanimate nouns.

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