

Abstract

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Title: "*E con agonía de lo saber apresuravan su camino*" La evolución semántica de la palabra *agonía*

English title: "*E con agonía de lo saber apresuravan su camino*" The semantic evolution of the word *agonía*

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The study deals with the semantic evolution of the Spanish word *agonía* 'agony'. This polysemous word is normally used to refer to a person's physical, mental or emotional state. The definitions of the word *agonía* in Spanish monolingual dictionaries from different times as well as the analysis of the meaning of the word in 300 examples taken from the large diachronic corpus CORDE indicate that *agonía* has five basic semantic values: 'physical suffering', 'pre-mortal state', 'negative emotion', 'strong desire' and 'process of termination'.

The aim of the present dissertation is to describe the semantic evolution of *agonía*, and to investigate how the semantic changes have developed. The intention is to answer to the following questions:

1) Does any of the basic semantic values disappear or come to have so little use that it could be considered archaic? 2) Does any new basic semantic value of the word appear? 3) Does any of the basic semantic values undergo semantic change? 4) To what extent is the word used with contextual meanings that fall outside the basic semantic values, and, if so, what characterizes such a usage? 5) How does the use of the plural form differ from the use of the singular form semantically and diachronically?

The semantic and diachronic analysis is delimited to the Spanish spoken in Spain. The diachronic part (CORDE) of the large Spanish corpus *Banco de Datos del Español* has been used to study the use of the word *agonía* in context. All the occurrences of *agonía* in texts written in prose have been analysed in order to trace the semantic evolution of the word. The examples are from the period 1400-1974.

The analysis demonstrates that the word *agonía* has undergone considerable semantic changes during this period. One of the basic semantic values frequently used during the 16th century is at present used so little that it should be regarded as archaic. A new basic semantic value of the word appears in the 19th century. Another basic semantic value undergoes considerable semantic change. The word is occasionally used with contextual meanings that fall outside the basic semantic values.

Keywords: *agonía*, semantic change, diachrony, archaism, lexicology, emotion, polysemy, diachronic corpus