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THE USE OF THE POLYSEMOUS WORD *RUN* BY POLISH STUDENTS OF ENGLISH PHILOLOGY

According to Falkum (2011: 9), it is apparent that a single word form can be associated with several different meanings. We may take the selected word for our elaboration, which is *run*. Its meaning in the verb phrase *run a half marathon* is apparently different from the one it has in *run some water*, or, for that matter, in *run on gasoline*, *run on empty*, *run a shop*, *run late*, *run away from responsibilities*, *run in the family*, *run for President*, etc. This phenomenon, described as *polysemy*, proliferates in natural languages, including English as well. This is confirmed by a range of different senses (and/or uses) that any available source, e.g. any dictionary will have listed under a polysemous term a considerable number of its entries.

The objective of this article will be the theoretical analysis related to the notion of polysemy. The subsequent sections of the article will comprise the practical demonstration of the results of the corpus study. Its subjects were Polish students of English Philology. The students' use of a selected polysemous word *run* was investigated based on the available corpus PELCRA¹. The corpus was selected as it is a very reliable source to investigate the use of L2 from the perspective of non-native Polish users of English. To demonstrate how the students comprehend the selected polysemous word *run*, the extracts from students' compositions, essays and short stories were analysed in accordance with the occurrence of the word *run* and supplemented with their performance during the spoken mode. The extracts were subsequently analysed in light of their use and assumed awareness of the investigated word.

1. Definition of polysemy

Before demonstrating the results of the corpus study, it is advisable to refer briefly to the notion of polysemy, as it evidently will intertwine with the very senses and functions of the selected word *run*. Polysemy is miscellaneously de-

¹ The abbreviation stands for Polish and English Language Corpora for Research and Applications, a website and simultaneously an application which comprises the PELCRA Learner's English Corpus, which is abbreviated as PLEC.

fined in diverse sources. Let us present some of the most popular definitions and the functions of polysemy, expressed by distinguished scholars and linguists.

It is assumed that in everyday life a successful act of communication imposes upon us the correct attribution of a speaker's intended meaning to words that convey a wide selection of potential interpretations – that is lexical ambiguity. In accordance with what theoretical linguists approve of at present, lexical ambiguity is basically divided into homonymy and polysemy. This is the latter term and simultaneously, a kind of ambiguity that we are going to focus on in our article, namely polysemy. According to Weinreich (1964), polysemy involves lexical senses, which relate to the same basic meaning as it occurs in different contexts.

According to Taylor's definition, 'polysemy is the association of two or more related senses with a single linguistic form' (1989/2003: 144). Polysemy reflects the possibility of language change as well as 'the coexistence of more general and more specific, more literal and more figurative, more ancient and more innovated meanings' (Gragg 1984: 140). In most cases, there is one sense of the word which appears to be dominant and the other senses appear to be originated from this sense. The fact that so many words are polysemous – 'shows that semantic changes often add meanings to the language without subtracting any' (Murphy 2010: 84). According to cognitive linguistics, the polysemous senses of words do not arise at random, but due to specific cognitive needs and are systematically linked (Lakoff 1987: 316).

2. Research group

Polish subjects using English as their L2 representing B1, B2, C1, C2 levels² were analysed. As for their age variable, it ranged from 19 to 28. The number of students using the word *run* in their spoken mode amounted to 24. The group was represented by both males and females. Evidently, due to the predominance of language interests, the group abounded in female students (15), as opposed to male students, whose representation amounted only to 9. As for the written mode, unfortunately we are unable to provide the age or the gender variable, as the PELCRA application does not display such information. We may only provide the level a given student represents.

In our study, we concentrated on the use of the polysemous word *run*. What we focused on as well was the occurrence and the frequency of this word in terms of miscellaneous contexts, which will be demonstrated in detail in the upcoming sections.

² The symbols correspond approximately to the level of English Philology, as well as the relevant categorization derived from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching Assessment, abbreviated as CEFR (see more: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp)

3. Research objectives

The objectives of the research were in the first place to observe the use of the selected challenging English word *run*. Subsequently, we aimed at noting down its uses in both modes: spoken and written as expressed by the subjects in question. Eventually, our intention was to draw conclusions from the observed uses.

The idea of conducting such research originated from the long-term researcher's observations during the course of linguistics, where the overall comprehension of certain polysemous structures and expressions turned out to be a hindrance for the students. It is assumed that the students' problem results from their insufficient exposure to this intriguing linguistic phenomenon.

4. Research tools

The PELCRA corpus, coined by a research group at the Department of English Language at the University of Łódź, was selected as a research tool to conduct the corpus analysis on the word *run*.

Since 1997 the corpus resources and tools for both English and Polish corpus data have found applications in academic and technological research. Thus, it was considered one of the best sources to rely on and draw relevant conclusions from the conducted research analysis.

5. Research procedure

2000 instances displaying 164,848 sentences were analyzed for each selected polysemous word *run*. The observations concerned the frequency and the manner in which it was used by Polish students of English philology. The instances of this use were noted down. We selected the quantitative study as it is the nature of corpora studies. Only the most frequent instances were selected to demonstrate how common or challenging the use of the word *run* is with reference to different contexts which tend to appear, as well as following several of the basics functions it fulfils. The instances are juxtaposed and demonstrated in section 7 and its relevant subsections.

6. The analysis of the selected polysemous word *run*

The analysis of the selected polysemous word is demonstrated below. It is divided into relevant sections, as we were interested in finding the instances of its use in the function of a noun, followed by the function of a transitive or intransitive verb, as a phrasal verb and eventually we attempted at observing the

frequency of the use of the word *run* occurring in expressions and idioms. Our analysis will commence with the discussion of the spoken mode, followed by the written one. The results of the analysis are presented in a tabular form. Only the instances noticed in accordance with the proficiency level are illustrated in the tables 1-6.

6.1. The use of RUN as a noun

It is undoubtedly evident that RUN is mostly considered in the function of a verb. However, we would like to initiate our analysis with the juxtaposition of the analysed word in the function of a noun, which to our minds, is not so widely common among L2 users, no matter which proficiency level they represent. These were our expectations before conducting this analysis. Let us list now the most frequent uses, which illustrate whether the students' awareness of this function is common or still needs to be clarified to them. Unfortunately, no instance of the use of *run* as a noun was observed in the spoken mode. This obstacle is due to the fact that only 19 contexts were available in this corpus, hence – we were able to study only a minority of the relevant contexts, which are predominantly outnumbered by the written mode. Hence we are, however, obliged to rely mostly on the written mode. The use of the word *run* was highlighted in bold. Table 1 illustrates the instances originating from the written mode.

Table 1. The instances of the use of RUN as a noun (written mode)

Level	Example
A2	1. Like I said I am really disappointed of unprofessional run of business and I am afraid that I must ask you to refund my money for the ticket.
C2	2. Baseball its history, meaning and rules important terms: the bat, the mitt, the batter, the pitcher, the catcher, the infield, the outfield, the diamond, home plate, base, a run , putting out, innings, outs, homerun...
	3. First base is the first of four bases that must be touched while running by a player on the batting team in order to score a run .
	4. A run is scored whenever a player circles all the bases and reaches home without being put out.

Table 1 contains only 4 instances of the word *run* as a noun. The first instance (1) refers to the description of the noun *run* denoting management. However, the instances (2-4) refer to the sports category and reflect the meaning of the word *run* with reference to the stage of sports, e.g. baseball or cricket, when some field is run by a sports player and a point is scored. Some other instances reflecting the use of the word *run* as a noun were observed; however they were

of a repetitive nature and were not quoted, as they referred to the sports category again. The expectations of the researcher concerning the rarity of the use of the word *run* in this function were met, although their number compared to the availability of the corpus was very insignificant. Although, the awareness of the existence of *run* as a noun is highly observable at the top level of proficiency, it only reflects a specialised context, not an ordinary one, which may be considered surprising.

6.2. The use of RUN as an intransitive verb

Taking into consideration the fact that the occurrence of the studied word as a verb is very frequent, we have decided to describe it in two separate sections in its transitive and intransitive function. Let us commence with the description of the contexts in which the L2 subjects use the word *run* intransitively. We are interested in collecting the frequency of such contexts. As opposed to the study material collected in section 7.1, we were able to rely on the availability of the spoken mode here. Hence we commence with it. The instances are the following ones.

Table 2. The instances of the use of RUN as an intransitive verb (spoken mode)

Level	Example
A1	1. I prefer to run .
	2. And do you run ?
	3. So how often do you run ?
A2	4. And I run every day.
	5. I run for myself.
C1	6. So I progressed and after a few weeks I could run for like thirty or forty minutes.
	7. I think that you know you can be interested in running and just you know read about it and collect things I don't know I just prefer doing this you know.
	8. Because you just see them run to work and you know they...
	9. They really look great when they just run in the street and don't care about anyone in Poland.
	10. When you run people just stare at you.
	11. Do you run yourself?
C2	12. Stamina it's about stamina and it's really hard pass if you don't run .

Table 2 demonstrates a number of the 12 uses of the word *run* as an intransitive verb across the proficiency levels. The instance (1) demonstrates the use of the verb *run* in its infinitival function, as opposed to the instances below, which reflect the meaning of *run* in the conjugated form, which correspond to the relevant personal pronouns used.

The instances (1-12) demonstrate the use of *run* in its standard function, following basic auxiliary verbs (examples 2, 3, 4, 12), modal auxiliary verbs (example 6), and a preposition *in* (example 7). The examples (5, 11) demonstrate the use of the word *run* followed by reflexive pronouns.

As for the written mode, the instances were not equipped with hesitations or hedges or with unfinished utterances, which was characteristic for the spoken mode. Here we can observe the following examples:

Table 3. The instances of the use of RUN as an intransitive verb (written mode)

Level	Example
B2	1. They have to learn how to ride, swim, run and shoot.
	2. It will have to perform various types of actions: it will run , swim, and help the blinded to cross the road and a few others that require strength, speed and concentration.
	3. Both the darkness and sinister noises of crows made such an atmosphere, that I started to run .
C1	4. The robber was faster than we were, he ran between the trees and flower beds trying to mislead us.
	5. The babysitter manages to get the children out of home and they run to a nearby house and bang on the door for help.
	6. They enable us to contact others with speed and ease, create work for those who will supervise or program them as no machine can run without a human operating it and they are introduced into industry giving engineers more possibilities for improving already existing technology in order to make it safer and more efficient.
	7. They run to and from school every day and they have riding lessons three times a week.
C2	8. I ran to the front door just in time to save it.
	9. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary capitalism is described as an economic system in which a country's businesses and industry are controlled and run for profit by private owners rather than by the government.
	10. My father would run , making a lot of noise, shouting at people, instead of calming down and phoning the police.

As far as the demonstrated written mode containing the uses of *run* as an intransitive verb is concerned, we may state that in case of examples (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9) the verb *run* is either preceded or followed by prepositions. In the examples (1, 2 and 10) the verb *run* is listed next to other lexical verbs, just denoting the sequence of actions. The peculiar function exemplified by *run* is depicted in the example (9), where it is used in the passive voice. Finally, the example (10) depicts the use of *run* in its infinitival function.

6.3. The use of RUN as a transitive verb

Having depicted the use of the word *run* in its function as an intransitive verb, let us now focus on the demonstration of the corpus analysis of the transitivity of the given verb used by L2 subjects. It is expected that such a function is not commonly used by non-native users of English; hence providing quite a number of instances may seem to be a challenge here. Similarly to section 7.1, the provision of such instances in the spoken mode turned out to be impossible. That is why we need to rely solely on the written mode. The instances are as follows:

Table 4. The instances of the use of RUN as transitive verb (written mode)

Level	Example
A2	1. Moreover, my parents run a small pub in Łódź and I often help them as a barman.
B1	2. Barbara is a house-wife, she likes cooking, looking after children and she also runs the whole house.
	3. I will also meet people who run the summer school, and I will find out everything about teaching in primary schools.
B2	4. The stories of the people, who are in power, rich or run the country, always get more coverage.
C1	5. Here, women run the brewery because men could not resist the temptation to drink the beer.
	6. The commercial does not diminish female organisational skills or their ability to run a company successfully or being successful in male jobs.
	7. Apart from methodological classes which are compulsory, we run courses concerning both the British and American literature, creative writing classes and reading comprehension courses.
C2	8. Therefore, those who get married are regarded as the healthy majority, as opposed to those independent ones who run a risk of being considered cranks in the eyes of our rather intolerant, public opinion.

As previously assumed by the researcher, the number of uses of the analysed word *run* as a transitive verb were not so numerous (only 8 instances depicted in the table 4 above). We were able to notice just a few more examples in the corpus. However, as earlier, they were rather of a repetitive nature, therefore their quoting here would not prove to be useful. As for the examples (1-8) above, we may state that no matter what proficiency level the L2 recipients represent, they are aware of the existence of the transitivity in case of the verb *run*. In all cases listed here, the meaning of the verb *run* is to manage some place or institution.

6.4. The use of RUN as a phrasal verb

We may presently focus on the juxtaposition of the use of the word *run* as a phrasal verb. As previously assumed, a number of the relevant contexts may not be very numerous. The spoken mode did not turn out to be of much assistance either, similarly to the former sections.

On the contrary, the written mode which is always easier to be created, will be more relevant, as it will be deprived of the afore-mentioned hedges, hesitations or unfinished utterances, but it will, rather, be abundant in ready-made, complete chunks of information. Here are the most relevant selected instances:

Table 5. The instances of the use of RUN a phrasal verb (written mode)

Level	Example
B2	1. She wanted to run out of the room but he was faster and grabbed her on the shoulder.
	2. Second of all, I am firmly convinced that most inhabitants would find it pleasant to be able to take a stroll through peaceful and clean streets of their town without the fear of being run down by a manic driver.
C1	3. She decided not to marry Rory's father, dropped school, ran away from her home in Hartford and moved to a small town, Stars Hollow, where she found a job as a hotel maid.
	4. However, when a blue van tried to run over her, she changed her mind and went to the police station.
C2	5. While first colonists aimed at natural resources of the Promised Land and took advantage of them so that they might survive in new conditions, their descendants carelessly used everything that remained, thinking the natural sources would never run out .
	6. Much has been argued in favour, as well as against mobile phones and it would be futile to run through the list yet again.

With reference to the above-mentioned examples (1-6), we may state that they all exemplify the use of the studied word *run* as a phrasal verb. Although the written mode is usually more sophisticated and intriguing to read due to the

opportunity to prepare it, however, we could not observe more relevant examples, only several, specifically six. Even the most proficient L2 subjects (C1, C2 levels) were rather repetitive in their use of the same phrasal verb, which was *run away*. We find this result rather surprising, as we expected more diverse and intriguing contexts, which would abound in the use of miscellaneous phrasal verbs, not constrained to *run away*, *run out*, *run out of* or *run over*.

6.5. The use of RUN in expressions and idioms

Finally, our analysis will be terminated with an elaboration on the uses of the word *run* in the so-called fixed expressions. As previously described and reported, the spoken mode did not provide us with the relevant instances either. Nevertheless, we may rely on the written mode instead. The observed instances are as follows:

Table 6. The instances of the use of RUN in expressions and idioms (written mode)

Level	Example
B2	1. I think that in the long run they would divorce some time later coming to conclusion that it was a bad idea and they did not know the other ego of their partner.
C1	2. Besides, anti-globalization does not let people fall into the rat race or to run amok .
	3. Being always on the run , they find no time to deeply ponder their life, just as they fail to think over their eating habits.
	4. Nowadays, when the world is developing very quickly, people have easy access to high technology and run into it at every step.
C2	5. Their misconduct has run the gamut of vices from adultery and brazen lying to devious financial dealings and embezzlement.
	6. Her own helplessness and powerlessness make her conscious to run counter to .
	7. Indeed, people do not find it difficult to generate transformations from one communication mode to another or even to make them run parallel .
	8. It could be said that Wojciechowska and Batko compensate for this loss by translating original as and respectively since the Polish verb <i>padać</i> in contrast to the English expression be run off one's feet incorporates the sense of dying.
	9. In the first paragraph of the story, Lily has to run to and fro in order to let new guests in.

The last set of instances, amounting to 9 (table 6 above), demonstrates the use of the word *run* in fixed expressions and idioms. As it was observed here, the uses were constrained only to the highest proficiency levels (C1-C2), as the awareness of the expressions and idioms listed above, e.g. *run amok*, *run the gamut of* or *be run off one's feet* indicates an awareness of some of the complex and practical uses of *run*. The less proficient L2 subjects were not able to use such expressions or idioms due to their lack of awareness of the existence of such expressions or idioms. It perfectly meets the prior assumptions of the researcher.

7. The analysis

The quantitative results of our study are juxtaposed in the final table (7) below, which illustrates the quantity and frequency, as well as the tendency of the subjects to use *run* in miscellaneous contexts.

Table 7. The quantitative results of the use of the word RUN (a number of uses in accordance with the function of the word RUN and across proficiency levels)

	Proficiency level and number of uses
1. Noun (written mode)	A2, C2 (4)
2. Intransitive verb (spoken mode)	A1, A2, C1, C2 (12)
3. Intransitive verb (written mode)	B2, C1, C2 (10)
4. Transitive verb (written mode)	A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 (8)
5. Phrasal verb (written mode)	B2, C1, C2 (6)
6. In expressions and idioms (written mode)	B2, C1, C2 (9)

Table 7 demonstrates the most observable and frequent uses of the word *run* by L2 Polish recipients across miscellaneous proficiency level. Points 1-6 correspond to the word categories and functions fulfilled by the investigated word. The numbers presented in brackets reflect the frequency of the use of the word *run*.

8. Conclusions

Concluding the above considerations, we may state that the polysemy of the selected word *run* is entirely confirmed. The functions of this word, which are a noun, a verb (both transitive and intransitive) as well as a phrasal verb including its incidence in fixed expressions and idioms indicate that it is a very chal-

lenging word to be used, with particular reference to non-native speakers. Their native language is different with respect to this feature compared to English, hence this problematicity.

We were able to meet all our objectives outlined in section 4. We succeeded in conducting a thorough observation of the use of the word *run* in many contexts produced by L2 subjects, where we could notice its use in diverse functions. We followed the categorization of the CEFR and listed each proficiency level juxtaposing it with a given context presented. Our final objective was to draw relevant conclusions from the conducted corpus study.

Thanks to the availability of the corpus, collected by PELCRA, we may conclude that the most challenging function observed by us was as a noun, where the level of awareness is not very common and is applicable to mostly proficient L2 users (correspondingly C1 and C2 level of the students). The context in which such a function occurred was also highly specialized.

The subsequent function analysed by us was the use of the word *run* as an intransitive verb. In our opinion, it was the easiest function to be used by the L2 recipients, which is proved by the enumerated context and the involvement of less proficient and more proficient groups of subjects in the construction of the relevant contexts.

The use of the word *run* as a transitive verb proved to be more challenging compared to its intransitive equivalent. The subjects found it more difficult to construct relevant contexts, numerous examples which are indicated above. Even the most proficient groups of subjects constructed the context, which were expected to be more complex and sophisticated.

The next function, namely the use of the word *run* as a phrasal verb proved to be challenging as well, as both the number of contexts and the diversity of phrasal verbs were not very impressive, even at the highest level of proficiency.

The final analysed function of the word *run* was the one related to its incidence in fixed expressions and idioms. As previously assumed, this function was not profoundly acquired by the majority of L2 subjects, as only the performance of the highest proficiency recipients was impressive and noteworthy.

9. Limitations of the study and subsequent research implications

Apparently, the study related to the word *run* turned out to be a very important and desirable one. It enabled us to demonstrate the awareness of the existence of the multi-faceted functions of the word *run*, which in many cases did not seem to be relevant. It supports all the objectives set up before the conduct of this study. In addition, we were able to meet them while concluding the conducted analysis.

As many studies of this kind, this one was not deprived of its limitations. Our objective was to indicate how complex a given word may be for non-native speakers, which seemingly is a basic one, because the majority consider it

a lexical verb and not much beyond that. The other constraint may be the study of only one word. In the future it would be preferable to focus on a higher number of similar words, which may be polysemous and hence likely to fulfil many diverse functions in miscellaneous contexts.

A more complex study would allow the researcher to observe more intriguing and relevant instances of the use of polysemous word classes in English and how they are used and subsequently reflected in the contexts coined by L2 subjects at different proficiency levels.

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