

**NEAR-SYNONYMY ANALYSIS OF THE DESCRIPTIVE  
ADJECTIVES *BEAUTIFUL* IN ENGLISH AND *LEP,-A,-O*  
IN SERBIAN IN CONTRAST**

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**Abstract.** *This paper focuses on the specific method of near-synonymy analysis in English and Serbian. Currently, this issue has been extensively researched in English through lexical choice analysis while using various mathematical equations to distinguish the proximity of meaning among the selected synonymous expressions.<sup>1</sup> In this research paper, near synonyms are analysed through the most frequent collocational framework of the node word and the matching co-occurrences of its suggested near synonyms in Serbian as well as in English. Furthermore, this method is proposed as a useful means of selecting near synonyms within the forthcoming thesauri of the English and Serbian languages.*

**Key words:** *specific method, near synonyms, collocational framework, grammatical gender, descriptive adjectives*

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to provide a specific method of near-synonymy analysis of the selected descriptive adjectives through their use, analysed within the most frequent collocational framework. The suggested approach rests on the *lexical approach*<sup>2</sup> (Lewis 1993) in terms of acquiring language, especially learning new words within a collocational framework (*lexical chunks*<sup>3</sup> (Schmitt 2000)). Nation (2001) supports this approach, stating

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<sup>1</sup> DiMarco, Hirst (1993); DiMarco, Hirst and Stede (1993); Edmonds, Hirst (1998); Edmonds (2000); Sun, Huang, and Liu (2011); Agirre and Martínez (2000).

<sup>2</sup> *Lexical approach* is a term devised by Lewis (1993) who claims that: "language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar" (Lewis 1993: 95).

<sup>3</sup> The **lexical approach** is a method of teaching foreign languages described by M. Lewis in the 1990s. The basic concept of this approach is the idea that an important part of learning a language consists of being able to understand and produce lexical phrases as chunks. Students are expected to be able to perceive patterns of language (grammar) as well as have meaningful set uses of words at their disposal when they are taught in this way. In the

that collocations have great importance in acquiring a foreign language, and a learner's knowledge of them plays a key role in producing language fluently (Nation, 2001: 323).

While carrying out this research into lexical semantics, we noticed that in most of the thesauri in English and Serbian<sup>4</sup> the suggested near synonyms are listed either in alphabetical order or randomly without reference to how their proximity affects their meaning. Therefore, we attempted to devise a specific method of distinguishing slight differences in meaning while bearing in mind the semantic proximity of the synonymous words analysed.

The corpus of the analysis consists of the descriptive adjective *lep,-a,-o* in Serbian and the descriptive adjective *beautiful* in English. The paper's starting hypothesis claims that a collocational framework defines the meaning of a word more precisely than its denotation. Furthermore, it is expected that the collocational framework of the adjective *lep,-a,-o* in Serbian will change according to the grammatical gender implied (masculine, feminine, neutral), as well as the sequence of its near synonyms. Consequently, we claim that there are inflectional selectional differences among synonyms in a morphologically rich language such as Serbian. On the other hand, results will show that the same changes do not occur within the analysis applied to the English language, due to its lack of grammatical gender. Therefore, this newly proposed procedure of near-synonymy analysis has advantages over the previously proposed procedures (DiMarco, Hirst (1993); DiMarco, Hirst and Stede (1993); Edmonds, Hirst (1998); Edmonds (2000)) due to its reference to the grammatical gender implied (masculine, feminine, neutral). However, we must admit that the future application of the mathematical equations could enhance the quality of our approach as it could have a contribution in computational linguistics (making an algorithm for retrieval or translation sensitive to gender in its assessment of the quantitative data, as a way of improving the precision of the analysis).

## 2. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the opinion of philosophers such as Quine (1951) and Goodman (1952) absolute synonymy is impossible, though it may be limited to mostly technical terms (*distichous, two-ranked; groundhog, woodchuck*) (Hirst 1995: 51). Cruse (1986: 270) claims that "natural languages abhor absolute synonyms just as nature abhors vacuum," as the meanings of words are constantly changing. Clark (1992: 12) displays her principle of contrast, stating that "every two forms contrast in meaning", supporting the previous contention of natural elimination of absolute synonymy in languages.

Therefore, words are rather close in meaning, similar but not identical, not fully intersubstitutable, varying in their nuances of denotation, connotation, implicature, emphasis or register (DiMarco, Hirst and Stede 1993). These words are called near-synonyms (or plesionyms).<sup>5</sup>

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lexical approach, instruction focuses on fixed expressions that occur frequently in dialogues, which Lewis claims make up a larger part of discourse than unique phrases and sentences (Lewis, 1993: 95). The teaching of chunks and set phrases has become common in English as a second or foreign language, though this is not necessarily primarily due to the Lexical Approach. These claims were supported by a variety of researchers (Bahns and Eldaw 1993; Howarth 1998; Nesselhauf 2003; McCarthy and O'Dell 2005). Furthermore, it has been stated that having a better insight into collocations enhances better accuracy and fluency (Wray 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Čosić (2008) and Lalević (1974).

<sup>5</sup> Cruse 1986.

Cruse (1986) differentiates between cognitive synonyms and plesionyms; cognitive synonyms are words that, when intersubstituted in a sentence, preserve its truth conditions but may change the expressive meaning, style or register of the sentence (e.g. *violin : fiddle; misty : foggy*) (Edmonds and Hirst 2002: 115-116).

However, Edmonds and Hirst (2002) oppose such coarse-grained definitions of plesionyms and cognitive synonyms, claiming that any definition of near-synonymy that does not take granularity into account is insufficient.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, Murphy states that synonymy and similarity are firstly described from the author's meta-lexical perspective, thus being considered as the "relation between our conceptualizations of words, rather than between their lexical entries [in the mental lexicon]" (Murphy 2004:134). It follows that a synonym ensemble "includes only word-concepts that have all the same contextually relevant properties, but differ in form" (Murphy 2004: 134).

Though collocations can often be dramatic and unexpected, they are of the utmost importance regarding the lexical structure of the language and therefore they tend to be recurrent. With these kinds of collocations in mind, Sinclair (1991: 170) defined collocations as "the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text" and suggested a span of four to five words on either side of the node word (Sinclair 1968: 105-106).<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, a great number of synonymy analyses are focused on collecting data on contextual factors that substantially differentiate semantic nuances among words sharing a similar denotation, as well as on objective factors that determine which word within a group is selected for a certain context. This course of scientific research represents a complete reversal when compared to the traditional introspective approach and synonymy span of use (Zgusta 1971).

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The methodological diversity of this approach implies the use of the collocational method (Hlebec 2008; Hlebec 2012), then componential analysis of the collocates of the extracted descriptive adjectives, and as a final step of the research, applying contrastive analysis. The very process of contrasting (or analysing) presupposes the comparison of nominal collocates of descriptive adjectives, not the comparison of descriptive adjectives in isolation.

This approach is in accordance with the collocational method originally applied by Hlebec (2011).<sup>8</sup> Hlebec (2011: 122) elaborates the specificity of the collocational approach through the descriptive adjective *wild* analysis (Hlebec 2008; Hlebec 2012).

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<sup>6</sup> By taking granularity into account, we can create a much more useful definition of near-synonymy, because we can now characterize the difference between the **essential** and **peripheral** aspects of meaning (Edmonds and Hirst 2002: 117).

<sup>7</sup> Sinclair advocated the *statistically oriented approach* in the mid-1960s as he was the first to regard computer-based corpora as a very useful tool for analysing collocations (Sinclair 1966: 428), as he considered that the "patterns perceived by a trained linguist examining a text are unreliable and usually extremely tentative" (Sinclair 1966: 413).

<sup>8</sup> We have to emphasize that there are certain differences regarding the collocational method we have devised for the purposes of this paper compared to the collocational method originally presented by Hlebec. Namely, in

As one of the precursors of the collocational approach to semantic word analysis, Palmer (1976: 76) quotes Firth, who claims: “you shall know the word by the company it keeps”<sup>9</sup>, thus emphasizing the importance of a collocational framework in word analysis.

#### 4. ANALYSIS WITH DISCUSSION

##### 4.1. Analysis of descriptive adjectives and their near synonyms in Serbian

###### 4.1.1. Descriptive adjective *lep*, -a, -o

The following four synonyms can be considered to be the near synonyms of descriptive adjective *lep*: *fin*, *zgodan*, *privlačan*, *sladak*, after having analysed the first ten synonyms (extracted from the dictionary of synonyms: *Rečnik sinonima*, Pavle Ćosić i saradnici (2008: 293), through their co-occurrences within the most frequent nominal collocations of the node word *lep*, *skladan*, *prikladan* (*proportional*, *appropriate*) (*dan*, *način*, *primer*, *izgled*)<sup>10</sup> (Table 1).

**Table 1**

The most frequent four collocates of the descriptive adjective <i>lep</i> analysed on the corpus data of the Contemporary Serbian language of the Faculty of Mathematics in Belgrade					
	<i>Dan</i>	<i>Način</i>	<i>Primer</i>	<i>Izgled</i>	
<b>Descriptive adjective</b>	Concordance number of the collocates analysed on the corpus data of Google Search, (pages from Serbia)				Total number of concordances for the given examples
<b><i>Lep</i></b>	<b>225,000</b>	<b>87,700</b>	<b>161,000</b>	<b>78,600</b>	<b>552,300</b>
Near-synonymy samples of the adjective <i>lep</i>					
<b><i>Zgodan</i></b>	<b>69,300</b>	<b>30,800</b>	<b>1,850</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>924,950</b>
<b><i>Fin</i></b>	<b>11,100</b>	<b>33,400</b>	<b>37,800</b>	<b>2,020</b>	<b>84,320</b>
<b><i>Sladak</i></b>	<b>2,670</b>	<b>4,460</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>7,599</b>
<b><i>Privlačan</i></b>	<b>78</b>	<b>10,300</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>9,780</b>	<b>20,212</b>

his collocational method, Hlebec insists on the full polysemantic account of the lexeme analysed whereas we have focused only on the most frequent collocational framework of the lexeme which, to a certain extent, restricts the number of possible meanings of the lexeme analysed. However, the range of this analysis was bound to be confined to certain limits as such.

<sup>9</sup> Firth (1957: 11)

<sup>10</sup> Eng. *day*, *way*, *example*, *appearance*.

At the second stage of the research, a frequency analysis of the four<sup>11</sup> most recurrent collocates of the adjective *lep* (*dan, način, primer, izgled*)<sup>12</sup> was carried out within the collocational framework of the suggested near synonyms (*fin, zgodan, privlačan, sladak*) (table 1). Upon examining the results, we can conclude that the near synonyms of the adjective *lep* are: *zgodan* (924,950), *privlačan* (20,212), *fin* (84,320), *sladak* (7,599) (Google Search, *pages from Google Serbia, taken on December 02, 2013*)<sup>13</sup>. The mutual semantic content of the seme *lep* would be *skladan, prikladan* (*proportional, appropriate*) (*dan, način, primer, izgled*)<sup>14</sup> (Table 1).

**Table 2**

The most frequent four collocates of the descriptive adjective <i>lepa</i> analysed on the corpus data of the Contemporary Serbian language of the Faculty of Mathematics in Belgrade					
	<i>Žena</i>	<i>Vest</i>	<i>Devojka</i>	<i>Reč</i>	
<b>Descriptive adjective</b>	Concordance number of the collocates analysed on the corpus data of Google Search, ( <i>pages from Serbia</i> )				Total number of concordances for the given examples
<b><i>Lepa</i></b>	<b>121,000</b>	<b>198,000</b>	<b>104,000</b>	<b>76,900</b>	<b>499,900</b>
Near-synonymy samples of the adjective <i>lepa</i>					
<b><i>Zgodna</i></b>	<b>51,100</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>35,500</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>87,329</b>
<b><i>Fina</i></b>	<b>10,300</b>	<b>21,140</b>	<b>18,000</b>	<b>1,860</b>	<b>32,300</b>
<b><i>Slatka</i></b>	<b>2,090</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>22,300</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>24,773</b>
<b><i>Privlačna</i></b>	<b>7,020</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3,370</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>10,478</b>

<sup>11</sup> Sun, Huang & Liu (2011) in their near synonymy analysis point out that it is enough to extract four collocations in order to avoid the analysis of all existent collocations altogether. Consequently, we have decided to restrict ourselves to the four most frequent collocations, thus trying to get as valid results as possible.

<sup>12</sup> Piits (2010) confirms the hypothesis that mutual collocations of the selected node words imply the following semantic relations: synonymy, antonymy, hyperonymy. Using an Estonian language corpus analysis they collected the 30 most frequent words left and right from the node word by applying the WordSmith Tools programme. Hence, we have analysed collocations right from the node word as we focused on the descriptive adjective analysis.

<sup>13</sup> A great number of researchers have used the internet as a corpus of analysis. Inkpen (2004) used it when devising a statistical model for near synonymy choice. Grefenstette (1999) used the web for machine translation analysis; Kilgarriff (2001) analysed different noises by using web data; Mihalcea and Moldovan (1999) as well as Agirre and Martinez (2000) used the web as an additional source for analysing nuances in meaning between different words; Resnik (1999) used the web for bilingual text analysis. Keller and Lapata (2003) showed that web data are in accordance with other relevant corpus data. For our research we needed to use a web corpus in order to compare the results from the web with the results from the corpus of contemporary Serbian from the Faculty of Mathematics, University of Belgrade.

<sup>14</sup> Eng. *day, way, example, appearance*.

The third stage of the research, includes frequency analysis of the four most recurrent collocates of the adjective *lepa* (*žena, vest, devojka, reč*) within the collocational framework of the suggested near synonyms (*zgodna, fina, slatka, privlačna*) (table 2). The results of the analysis suggest that the near synonyms of the adjective *lepa* are: *zgodna* (87,329), *fina* (32,300), *slatka* (24,773), *privlačna* (10,478) (Google Search, *pages from Serbia, taken on December 02, 2013*). The mutual semantic content of the same *lepa* would be *skladna, prikladna* (*proportional, appropriate*) (*žena, vest, devojka, reč*)<sup>15</sup> (Table 2).

**Table 3**

The most frequent four collocates of the descriptive adjective <i>lepo</i> analysed on the corpus data of the Contemporary Serbian language of the Faculty of Mathematics in Belgrade					
	<i>Vreme</i>	<i>Lice</i>	<i>Nebo</i>	<i>Leto</i>	
<b>Descriptive adjective</b>	Concordance number of the collocates analysed on the corpus data of Google Search, ( <i>pages from Serbia</i> )				Total number of concordances for the given examples
<b><i>Lepo</i></b>	<b>333,000</b>	<b>90,000</b>	<b>18,700</b>	<b>7,090</b>	<b>431,960</b>
Near-synonymy samples of the adjective <i>lepa</i>					
<b><i>Zgodno</i></b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>4,210</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8,363</b>
<b><i>Fino</i></b>	<b>20,800</b>	<b>2,660</b>	<b>3,840</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>2,786</b>
<b><i>Slatko</i></b>	<b>1,870</b>	<b>8,710</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>810</b>	<b>11,575</b>
<b><i>Privlačno</i></b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3,540</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3,557</b>

The final stage of the research involves frequency analysis of the four most recurrent collocates of the adjective *lepo* (*vreme, lice, nebo, leto*)<sup>16</sup> within the collocational framework of the suggested near synonyms (*zgodno, fino, slatko, privlačno*) (Table 3). The results of the analysis suggest that the near synonyms of the adjective *lepo* are: *slatko* (11,575), *zgodno* (8,363), *privlačno* (3,557), *fino* (2,786) (Google Search, *pages from Serbia, taken on December 02, 2013*). The overall semantic content of the same *lepo* would be *skladno, prikladno* (*proportional, appropriate*) (*vreme, lice, nebo, leto*) (Table 3).

<sup>15</sup>Eng. *woman, news, girl, word*.

<sup>16</sup>Eng. *weather face, sky, summer*.

#### 4.2. Analysis of the descriptive adjective *beautiful* in English

**Table 4**

The most frequent four collocates of the descriptive adjective <i>beautiful</i> analysed on the corpus data of the following website: www.just the word.com					
	<i>Woman</i>	<i>Thing</i>	<i>Girl</i>	<i>Garden</i>	
<b>Descriptive adjective</b>	Concordance number of the adjective collocates analysed on the corpus data of Word BanksOnline: English				Total number of concordances for the given examples
<b><i>Beautiful</i></b>	<b>1287</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>2382</b>
Near-synonymy samples of the adjective <i>beautiful</i>					
<b><i>Pretty</i></b>	<b>445</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1224</b>
<b><i>Lovely</i></b>	<b>123</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>636</b>
<b><i>Handsome</i></b>	<b>83</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>101</b>

A frequency analysis of the four most recurrent collocates of the adjective *beautiful* (*woman, thing, girl, garden*) was carried out within the collocational framework of the suggested near synonyms (*pretty, lovely, handsome, comely*) (Table 3). The results of the analysis suggest that the near synonyms of the adjective *beautiful* are: *pretty* (1224), *lovely* (636), *handsome* (101), *comely* (10) (Word Banks Search, *carried out on December 02, 2013*). The implied semantic content of the same *beautiful* would be *pleasant, attractive (woman, thing, girl, garden)* (Table 4).

#### 4.2. Componential analysis

Further research is comprised of a componential analysis applied to the descriptive adjective *lep,a, -o* and its near synonyms *zgodan,-a,-o, fin,-a, -o, sladak,-a, -o, privlačan,-a, -o*. Throughout this analysis, we have tended to distinguish the semantic features of the abovementioned adjective and its near synonyms, which is why we have researched the frequency of their use within the selected collocational framework (the most frequent collocates of the adjective *lep,-a,-o* are as follows: *dan, način, primer, izgled, žena, vest, devojka, reč, vreme, lice, nebo, leto*).

Componential analysis includes the descriptive adjective *beautiful*, as well as its near synonyms: *pretty, lovely, handsome, comely*. A specific analysis of the use of the descriptive adjective *beautiful* and its near synonyms within the collocational framework of the adjective *beautiful (woman, thing, girl, garden)* was carried out.

### 4.3. Contrastive analysis

In the process of applying contrastive analysis, we have undertaken a comparison of the semantic features of the adjective *lep, -a, -o* and its near synonyms (*zgodan, -a, -o, fina, -a, -o, sladak, -a, -o privlačan, -a, -o*) according to the frequency with their most recurrent collocates (*dan, način, primer, izgled, žena, vest, devojka, reč, vreme, lice, nebo, leto*).

The most frequent semantic features of the adjective *lep, -a, -o* in Serbian and the adjective *beautiful* in English, as well as their near synonyms analysed in the range of their most frequent collocates are:

- a) the most frequent semantic components of the adjective *lep* and its near synonyms (*zgodan, fin, sladak, privlačan*) analysed in the following collocational framework (*dan, način, primer, izgled*):  
 [+MALE±ANIMATE±ADULT]  
 [+APPROPRIATE] 7  
 [+PROPORTIONAL] 5
- b) the most frequent semantic components of the adjective *lepa* and its near synonyms (*zgodna, fina, slatka, privlačna*) analysed within the given collocational framework (*žena, vest, devojka, reč*):  
 [-MALE±ANIMATE±ADULT]  
 [+PROPORTIONAL] 6  
 [+PLEASANT] 6
- c) the most frequent semantic components of the adjective *lepo* and its near synonyms (*zgodno, fino, slatko, privlačno*) analysed in the range of the following collocates (*vreme, lice, nebo, leto*):  
 [±MALE±ANIMATE±ADULT]  
 [+PROPORTIONAL] 4  
 [+APPROPRIATE] 4
- d) the most frequent semantic components of the adjective *beautiful* and its near synonyms (*pretty, lovely, handsome, comely*) analysed in the following collocational framework: *woman, thing, girl, garden*.  
 [-MALE±ANIMATE±ADULT]  
 1) [+PROPORTIONAL] 4  
 2) [+PLEASANT] 4

The final results of the componential analysis of the descriptive adjective *beautiful* in English show a prevailing number of female semantic features (16).

Whereas, the most frequent semantic components of the adjective *lep, -a, -o* in Serbian and adjective *beautiful* in English are as follows:

- [-MALE±ANIMATE±ADULT]
- 1) [+PROPORTIONAL]
- 2) [+PLEASANT]

Further analysis includes the most frequent collocates of the near synonyms of the descriptive adjective *beautiful* collected from the British National Corpus (112,181,015) (Table 5). Their common collocates have been written in bold letters:



**Table 5**

<b>PRETTY</b>	<b>girl (148)</b>	<b>face (77)</b>	village (71)	<b>woman (35)</b>
<b>LOVELY</b>	<b>girl (75)</b>	lady (42)	evening (39)	boy (34)
<b>HANDSOME</b>	man (137)	<b>face (87)</b>	feature (18)	profit (14)
<b>COMELY</b>	countenance (3)	<b>face (2)</b>	maid (1)	pair (1)
<b>BEAUTIFUL</b>	<b>woman (255)</b>	<b>girl (123)</b>	garden (104)	countryside (70)

The common collocates of the descriptive adjective *beautiful* near synonyms (Table 5):

*pretty/lovely/beautiful girl*

*pretty/handsome/comely face*

*pretty/beautiful woman*

Out of the most frequent collocates of the descriptive adjective *beautiful* and its near synonyms, the following ones have transferred meaning (Table 5):

*pretty village*

*lovely evening*

*handsome feature/profit*

*beautiful garden/countryside*

Similar analysis has been carried out regarding the most frequent collocates of the near synonym *lep,-a,-o* (*zgodan,-a,-o*, *fin,-a,-o*, *sladak,-a,-o*, *privlačan,-a,-o*) endorsing the corpus data of the Contemporary Serbian language, Faculty of Mathematics, University of Belgrade (113,000,000) (Table 6).

**Table 6**

<b>ZGODAN</b>	<b>način (17)</b>	trenutak (15)	izgovor (13)	čas (11)
<b>FIN</b>	momak (9)	<b>način (8)</b>	<b>čovjek (7)</b>	svet (4)
<b>SLADAK</b>	ukus (11)	život (10)	miris (8)	poljubac (5)
<b>PRIVLAČAN</b>	izgled (6)	izbor (5)	<b>čovjek (3)</b>	posao (2)
<b>LEP</b>	dan (91)	<b>način (58)</b>	primer (39)	izgled (37)
<b>ZGODNA</b>	prilika (56)	<b>žena (21)</b>	tema (6)	<b>devojka (6)</b>
<b>FINA</b>	struktura (8)	<b>devojka (9)</b>	<b>žena (7)</b>	unca (5)
<b>SLATKA</b>	paprika (13)	voda (6)	osveta (4)	smrt (4)
<b>PRIVLAČNA</b>	snaga (23)	sila (16)	ponuda (6)	zemlja (4)
<b>LEPA</b>	<b>žena (100)</b>	vest (58)	<b>devojka (66)</b>	reč (49)
<b>ZGODNO</b>	<b>mesto (52)</b>	<b>vreme (12)</b>	sredstvo (3)	društvo (2)
<b>FINO</b>	podešavanje (9)	rublje (5)	<b>lice (4)</b>	rumenilo (2)
<b>SLATKO</b>	mleko (8)	<b>vreme (4)</b>	vino (3)	iščekivanje (1)
<b>PRIVLAČNO</b>	<b>mesto (5)</b>	tržište (2)	<b>lice (2)</b>	postignuće (1)
<b>LEPO</b>	vreme (250)	<b>lice (89)</b>	leto (5)	nebo (3)

The common collocates of the descriptive adjective *lep,-a,-o* near synonyms are (Table 6):

*zgodan/fin/lepnačin*<sup>17</sup>  
*fin/privlačančovek*<sup>18</sup>  
*zgodna/fina/lepažena*<sup>19</sup>  
*zgodna/fina/lepadevojka*<sup>20</sup>  
*zgodno/privlačnomesto*<sup>21</sup>  
*zgodno/slatkovreme*<sup>22</sup>  
*fino/privlačno/lepo lice*<sup>23</sup>

Among the most frequent collocates, the following ones have transferred meaning: (30) (Table 6):

*zgodan način/trenutak/izgovor/čas*<sup>24</sup>  
*sladak život/poljubac*<sup>25</sup>  
*privlačan izbor/posao*<sup>26</sup>  
*finnačin*<sup>27</sup>  
*lep način/primer/izgled*<sup>28</sup>  
*fina struktura*<sup>29</sup>  
*slatka osveta/smrt*<sup>30</sup>  
*privlačna snaga/sila/ponuda*<sup>31</sup>  
*zgodna prilika/tema*<sup>32</sup>  
*lepa vest/reč*<sup>33</sup>  
*zgodno mesto/vreme/sredstvo/društvo*<sup>34</sup>  
*fino podešavanje*<sup>35</sup>  
*slatko vreme/iščekivanje*<sup>36</sup>  
*privlačno postignuće*<sup>37</sup>  
*lepo vreme*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Eng. *appropriate/nice/beautiful way*

<sup>18</sup> Eng. *nice/attractive man*

<sup>19</sup> Eng. *handsome/nice/beautiful woman*

<sup>20</sup> Eng. *handsome/nice/beautiful girl*

<sup>21</sup> Eng. *appealing/attractive place*

<sup>22</sup> Eng. *appropriate/sweet time*

<sup>23</sup> Eng. *fine/attractive/beautiful face*

<sup>24</sup> Eng. *appropriate way/moment/excuse/time*

<sup>25</sup> Eng. *sweet life/kiss*

<sup>26</sup> Eng. *attractive/choice/job*

<sup>27</sup> Eng. *nice way*

<sup>28</sup> Eng. *beautiful way/example/appearance*

<sup>29</sup> Eng. *nice structure*

<sup>30</sup> Eng. *sweet revenge/death*

<sup>31</sup> Eng. *attractive power/force/offer*

<sup>32</sup> Eng. *appropriate chance/subject*

<sup>33</sup> Eng. *beautiful news/word*

<sup>34</sup> Eng. *nice place/weather/company/convenient appliance*

<sup>35</sup> Eng. *nice alignment*

<sup>36</sup> Eng. *sweet time/expectance*

<sup>37</sup> Eng. *attractive achievement*

<sup>38</sup> Eng. *beautiful weather*

The stated samples of collocates indicate a metaphorical and metonymic meaning extension<sup>39</sup> of the adjective *lep,-a,-o* and its near synonyms while being analysed in the most frequent collocational framework. We can conclude that besides physical proportion as a basic denotation of meaning, this adjective and its near synonyms imply other nuances of meaning, such as appropriateness and attraction related to a great number of abstract words (achievement, expectation ...) as well as to a great number of concrete words (news, word, offer ...).<sup>40</sup>

The same conclusion can be drawn for the descriptive adjective *beautiful* and its near synonyms in the most frequent collocational framework: *pretty village; lovely evening; handsome feature/profit; beautiful garden/countryside*. These research results indicate that certain traits featuring human beings are characteristic for certain concrete and abstract words in English as well as in Serbian, respectively.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The interdisciplinary approach to the research we have carried out in this paper involves the collocational method (Hlebec 2008; Hlebec 2012), then the componential analysis of the adjective's extracted collocates and the semantic content of their near synonyms in the English and Serbian languages.

The first significant result of the method concerns the specific method of selecting near synonyms. The following valid result of the analysis highlights the influence of the grammatical gender (male, female, neutral) on the various most frequent collocates of the analysed descriptive adjective when seen from the perspective of each gender.

For example:

*lep: dan* (225,000); *način* (78,60); *primer* (161,000); *izgled* (87,700); (table 1)

*lepa: žena* (121,000); *vest* (198,000); *devojka* (104,000); *reč* (76,900) (table2)

*lepo: vreme* (333,000); *lice* (90,000); *nebo* (187,000); *leto* (7,090) (table3)

Besides the influence of the most frequent collocational framework of the adjective on the choice of its near synonyms, we have found out that this interrelation depends on the adjective's grammatical gender and the near synonymy choice as well, especially regarding the near synonyms' proximity-of-meaning order.

Namely, we have discovered that this proximity-of-meaning order of near synonyms varies upon the gender implied (masculine, feminine, and neutral):

<sup>39</sup> Metaphorical extensions of meaning have been researched by Persson (1989) in the analysis of differences in meaning between the near synonyms *deep* and *profound*. He concluded that these adjectives have different meaning when analysed in a different collocational framework. *Deep* collocates with the words expressing affection, conviction, feelings, sorrow, satisfaction, regrets ... whereas *profound* collocates with the words expressing distaste, failure, influence ... Bearing in mind their metaphorical meaning they may imply either position on one hand or depth on the other. Only *deep* contains the metaphor of position, while depth can be expressed by both terms.

<sup>40</sup> According to Apresian (1995) one of the productive ways of creating synonyms comes out of *secondary meanings of lexemes*, i.e. their metaphorical and metonymic meanings. The secondary meaning of a lexeme can be synonymous with a primary or a secondary meaning of another lexeme (the lexemes *zlato*(gold) and *anđeo* (angel) can be contextual synonyms if in their secondary meanings they denote and refer to *dete* (a child) (Dragičević 2010).

For example:

Near synonyms of the adjective *lep*: *zgodan* (924,950), *fin* (84,320), *privlačan* (20,212), *sladak* (7,599)

Near synonyms of the adjective *lepa*: *zgodna* (87,329), *fina* (32,300), *slatka* (24,773), *privlačna* (10,478)

Near synonyms of the adjective *lepo*: *slatko* (11,575), *zgodno* (8,363), *privlačno* (3,557), *fino* (2,786)

The results of the research are in accordance with the starting hypothesis that a collocational framework defines the meaning of a word more precisely than the very denotation of the same word. Consequently, the findings of the research imply that the semantic (and grammatical) aspects of a word are reflected in their collocational framework, which confirms and constitutes the basis of the cognitive approach to the study of meaning. Therefore, we shed light on the similarities and idiosyncrasies of these two contrasted languages, bearing in mind the presence of the grammatical gender in Serbian and its lack in English.

Boroditsky, Schmidt and Phillips (2002) carried out research analyzing and proving the influence of gender on people's description of objects, and their ability to remember proper names for objects. Another set of studies showed that the arbitrary designation of a noun as a masculine or feminine can have an effect on how people think about things in the world. Taking into account the many ways in which languages differ, our findings suggest that the private mental lives of people who speak different languages may differ much more than previously thought (Boroditsky, Schmidt and Phillips 2002: 80).

In this respect, we emphasize the importance of our research which shows the disparity between the English and Serbian languages for issues of grammatical gender. These differences can have substantial consequences in the process of translating and using English and Serbian as a second language. Raising awareness of these differences can enhance the quality of translating and speaking English or Serbian as a second language.

Moreover, we deem that the application of this method within the forthcoming thesauri of English and Serbian would substantially improve their quality, taking into account the obvious lack of nuances in meaning among the given synonyms of the selected node word. Currently, synonyms in the English and Serbian thesauri are listed either in alphabetical order or randomly without paying attention to their proximity in meaning.

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## **UPOREDNA ANALIZA PRIMERA PribližNE SINONIMIJE OPISNOG PRIDEVA *BEAUTIFUL* U ENGLESKOM I *LEP,-A,-O* U SRPSKOM JEZIKU**

*Ovim radom se ukazuje pažnja na specifičan metod analize primera približne sinonimije u engleskom i srpskom jeziku. Naime, ova oblast leksičke semantike bila je predmetom velikog interesovanja brojnih istraživanja u engleskom jeziku u oblasti analize odabira odgovarajuće lekseme (lexical choice). U okviru ovih istraživanja osmišljavane su razne matematičke jednačine kojim je određivan promer razlika u značenju među odabranim sinonimičnim izrazima. Međutim, u našem radu približni sinonimi se analiziraju na drugačiji način kojim se data reč analizira u najučestalijem kolokacijskom okruženju, a potom se odabrani približni sinonimi date reči analiziraju u istom tom kolokacijskom okruženju, na osnovu čega se utvrđuje mera približnosti značenja među predloženim približnim sinonimima. Nadalje, ovaj metod se predlaže kao veoma koristan u primeni prilikom kodifikacije načina navođenja približnih sinonima u budućim rečnicima sinonima u engleskom i srpskom jeziku.*

Ključne reči: *specifičan metod, približni sinonimi, opisni pridevi, gramatički rod, kolokacijsko okruženje.*