

THE GREEK-SPANISH DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (DGENT).

METHOD, APPROACH AND PURPOSES

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The enterprise undertaken by the GASCO (Semantic Analysis Group of the University of Córdoba) will fill several gaps in modern New Testament Philology [**SCHEME 1**]. In the first place, the *Greek-Spanish Dictionary of the New Testament* (DGENT) intends to provide the Spanish-speaking world with a valuable tool both for exegesis and for the understanding of the New Testament. At present there is no major New Testament Greek-Spanish Dictionary, as a result of which Spanish-speaking readers and scholars always have to work through other languages, such as German (Bauer), English (BDAG, Louw-Nida) or Latin (Zorell).

More importantly, the DGENT incorporates the latest developments in linguistics and semantics. In fact, the appearance of the first volume of the *Diccionario griego-español del Nuevo Testamento. Análisis semántico de los vocablos* was preceded by extensive practical and theoretical research, which a priori established both the method and the methodology behind the dictionary. Therefore, although the DGENT is perhaps not the first to include the principles of modern semantics (so for example Louw-Nida), it is certainly the first time that a dictionary has been compiled by applying a thoroughly developed method of analysis and definition of the lexemes.

Last but not least, the DGENT is something more than a mere list of Greek words with the corresponding possible translations. Unlike most New Testament dictionaries, and owing to its semantic nature, the DGENT allows users to determine with precision not only the meaning of a given lexeme but also why and how the meaning of this lexeme may change according to the changing context, and this due to transformations that take place in its semantic nucleus.

In what follows I shall try to describe the method, approach and purposes of the work in progress at the University of Córdoba. Within this framework I shall divide my presentation into two parts, the first of which approaches the matter from a theoretical point of view; the second part has a more practical nature and provides some examples

that might illuminate those points that may not have become totally clear in the first section. Let me proceed to the first section.

1. The DGENT: Method, Approach and Purposes

When compared with most of the traditional dictionaries of the NT, the DGENT presents clear distinctive features. To begin with, the classification of the lexemes is neither based on grammatical classes (substantive, adjective, adverb, etc.), such as Zorell or Bauer, nor on semantic fields, such as Louw-Nida. Rather, the DGENT bases its analysis of the lexemes on five *semantic categories* – that is, those groups of words that have the same predominant semantic feature (*seme*) in common. These five semantic categories are the following [SCHEME 2]

1. **Entity** (E), is a semantic category that includes all things whether animate (beings) or inanimate (objects).
2. The second category is the so-called **Event** (H) and mainly consists of verbs, though not exclusively, for which it is important to determine the aspect, namely whether the event referred to by the lexeme is static (for example, καθεύδω ‘to sleep’), or whether it is an act (βάλλω ‘to throw’) or a process (ποιέω ‘to produce’).
3. In the third category, **Attribute** (A), are those words that fulfil the description, since they describe qualities or modalities attributed to beings.
4. **Relation** (R), in the fourth place, is the category that includes the lexemes that establish relationships among lexemes, mostly prepositions (πρός) but also adjectives (πατρικός) and adverbs (επιθύς).
5. **Determination** (D) is the category of lexemes that delimit the sense and includes, for example, the article (ο, η, τό), deictics, numerals (δύο), but also lexemes that delimit time and space (τέλος, ‘end’, μίλιον, ‘mile’, ημέρα, ‘day’).

As I shall show later on, it is on the basis of these five semantic categories that our dictionary analyses the lexical corpus of the New Testament. The organisation and presentation, however, simply follows the alphabetical order.

The semantic method behind the Greek-Spanish dictionary has its roots in the studies by A.J. Greimas, who in his *Sématique structurale* (Paris, 1966) paved the way for the analysis of the lexeme’s semantic nucleus and established an important

differentiation between ‘nuclear semes’, that is ‘meanings’ which belong to the word as such, and ‘contextual semes’, that is ‘senses’ which depend on the context in which a given word appears.

However, it is from the contributions by E.A. Nida to the study of semantics that the method received its main impulse. In point of fact, in different studies Nida¹ already established four of the five semantic categories referred to above (with the exception of Determination) and realised that some terms might include more than one semantic category – thus, for example, the term ‘father’, which combines two [Entity + Relation], or ‘teacher’, which combines three semantic categories [Entity + Attribute + Event].

The method was fully developed by Juan Mateos. I have already mentioned the theoretical and practical research preceding the appearance of the first fascicle of the DGENT. In his *Método de análisis semántico aplicado al griego del Nuevo Testamento* (Córdoba 1989), Mateos not only added the last semantic category, *Determination*, which is a necessary element both for classifying the terms and for the interpretation of texts, he also described the semantic formulas used in the drafting of the entries and proposed the most frequent patterns for the five semantic categories.

However, the dictionary would not have been possible without the methodology published a few years later by Jesús Peláez. In his *Metodología del Diccionario Griego-Español del Nuevo Testamento*, Peláez built on the method established by Mateos and, after offering a critical study of the main NT dictionaries, offered a reasoned analysis of the semantic categories, provided models for defining each of them, described the way each entry should be organized, and established the basic premises that underlie our dictionary. For the sake of brevity, I have selected just two of them [SCHEME 2]:

- First, the systematic distinction between *meaning* and *translation* in the treatment of each and every entry of the dictionary.
- Second, the construction of the definition of the lexemes and of each of its sememes or ‘senses’, which are now included in the same entry of the dictionary.

As far as the first issue is concerned, unlike other bilingual dictionaries, which do not usually give a definition of the terms but only a translation, our dictionary always

¹ E.A. Nida-C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden 1975); E.A. Nida, *Exploring Semantic Structures* (Munich 1975); idem, *Componential Analysis of Meaning* (The Hague-Paris 1975).

provides the definition of the word before proceeding to offer its translation. In this it resembles monolingual dictionaries rather than bilingual ones, which only exceptionally include definitions, such as for example in the case of words of *realia*.

In addition, we take *meaning* to be ‘a set of semantic features or components of a word, organised according to a certain hierarchy and expressed by way of a verbal paraphrase’. The meaning of a Greek word is therefore not another word from another language, which is in turn subject to being defined in its own way and could have a different meaning, but rather a descriptive statement; that is, a metalinguistic description of the same word, which we call *definition*. This definition is, in fact, ‘a paraphrase (or expansion) which demonstrates the set of semantic features contained in the lexeme or sememe (=different contextual meaning or sense), according to the order corresponding to the configuration of its components’. All this may sound somewhat cryptic, but it will become clearer, I hope, in the practical section of this paper.

The second principle or basic premise underlying our dictionary is the construction of the definition of the words. Semantic dictionaries do in general attempt to do this systematically; that is, they try to provide well-constructed definitions that may serve to give the users a glimpse into the meaning of a given term. In point of fact, however, this rarely results in anything more than good intentions, as they usually define intuitively and without a clear and solid method that may be applied to each and every entry of a corpus. This, for example, is the case with the Louw-Nida dictionary, in which in spite of serious attempts at a systematic definition, the authors do not indicate which method they apply to construct their definitions, nor are these always clear and precise.

In contrast, the Greek–Spanish dictionary has been preceded by a theoretical and methodological *Vorarbeit*, which led us to devise a method of semantic analysis to defining words in a suitable, clear and unambiguous way. This method is thoroughly explained by J. Peláez in Chapter 3 of his *Methodology of the Greek-Spanish NT Dictionary*.

2. Some Practical examples

All this will become clearer if I give you a couple of examples. Let me begin with the first basic principle or premise, namely the systematic distinction between meaning and translation.

Let us take a verbal lexeme such as $\square\gamma\nu\omicron\acute{\epsilon}\omega$. The form appears seventeen times in the New Testament, where it presents two different senses. Accordingly, our dictionary includes two separate definitions together with the corresponding translations:

1) According to the first, which is the obvious sense or lexical meaning, we define the verb $\square\gamma\nu\omicron\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ as ‘Not knowing someone or something’ and it can be translated as *being unaware of, ignorant of, not knowing, not understanding, not realising, not noticing*. With this meaning it appears, for example, in Mark 9:32, Acts of the Apostles 13:27, and Romans 2:4.

2) Sometimes, however, the lexeme adds a sense of ‘will’. In such cases, we get the second sense or sememe, which can be defined as ‘not wanting to know someone or something’ (as in Romans 10:3, Corinthians 14:38 and 2 Corinthians 6:9). The translation in this case is, ‘to ignore, to pay no attention’.

As this first example shows, the Greek-Spanish lexicon not only clearly separates both sememes or senses, but also allows the user to understand, by means of the metalinguistic description, how and why the sense changes.

Let us take another example; for instance, the nominal abstract lexeme $\square\gamma\alpha\square\omega\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta$. It appears four times in the New Testament and presents two different meanings as well. As in the previous case, two definitions are given for this nominal lexeme:

1) The first sememe or sense appears in Romans 15:14, Galatians 5:22 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11 and can be defined as ‘Willingness to do good which is manifest in the behaviour towards someone’, with the translation in context the equivalent of *goodness, kindness, benevolence, goodwill*.

2) In Ephesians 5:9, however, we find a metonymical use of the term, by which the sense changes. The lexeme is now defined as ‘Behaviour towards someone, which shows willingness to do good’. In this case the translation is *good deed, goodness*.

Owing to this analysis, and by means of the semantic formula provided along with the definition and translation of the lexeme, the reader realises not only that there is a metonymical use of the term, but also that in this metonymy an inversion of the semes takes place in the semic nucleus of the word (cf. *infra*).

Let us now take one last example:

In the treatment of ἄγαθός we find three senses or sememes with their corresponding definitions and translations:

1) In the first sememe or sense ἄγαθός is defined as ‘Being disposed to having a favourable attitude towards another or others, which is manifest in the behaviour shown towards them’: *good, charitable, benign, honest, generous*. With this sense it appears, for example, in Matthew 5:45; 12:35; 20:15, etc.

2) In the second sememe, however, we have those cases in which the lexeme is used to express that someone is fulfilling his duty appropriately. In these cases it may be defined as ‘Fulfilling one’s duty appropriately’ and, consequently, may be translated as *diligent, hardworking, reliable*. So, for example, in Matthew 25:1; Mark 10:17; John 7:46.

3) In the third sense, it is defined as ‘Being right in itself and / or favourable for man’: *good, right*; see Matthew 12:17; 12:34, etc.

This is the way we present the entries in the dictionary, which always distinguish meaning and translation, define the lexeme by means of a metalinguistic description that corresponds to the word itself (lexical meaning), and provide a suitable definition every time the word develops a new meaning due to contextual factors (contextual meaning).

It is fair to say that, with the possible exception of Louw-Nida, no other dictionary of the Greek NT establishes such a clear distinction between lexical and contextual meaning. In general, dictionaries tend to be repertories of words in which the user finds a list of possible equivalents in the reference language beside every Greek word, which do not always correspond to the exact meaning of the word. In point of fact, some of them are simply translations of the word in a given context. What is even worse, sometimes dictionaries mix up the different senses of a given lexeme and the subsections in the entries simply respond to purely grammatical and syntactic criteria rather than to semantic ones.

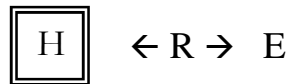
I will now present some examples of how we build up the definition of a word. Let us begin with the word ἄγαμος, an adjectival lexeme, which is easy to analyse.

In order to define it we must complete the following steps:

1) In the first place, from our knowledge of the Greek language or by consulting a dictionary, we know that it translates as the equivalent of ‘unmarried, without husband or wife’. In this sense, we can affirm that this lexeme refers to a state

(semantic class *Event*) and implies a relation of attribution (semantic class *Relation*) of this state to a personal subject (semantic class *Entity*).

2) We then proceed to establish the term's semantic formula, which in the case of $\square\gamma\alpha\mu\omicron\varsigma$, looks as follows graphically:



3) The next step is to determine which components make up each of the semantic classes included in the word's semantic formula. This detailed analysis of the semes of a term is what we call 'semic development', a full-length description of all the semantic traits included in each and every semantic class:

- In this case, the semantic class *Event* (H) is made up of three components:
 - staticity (this is a state *Event*)
 - non-union
 - conjugalinity
- The semantic class *Entity* (E) is made up of two components:
 - individuality
 - humanity
- The semantic class *Relation* (R) is in turn specified with the component:
 - attribution

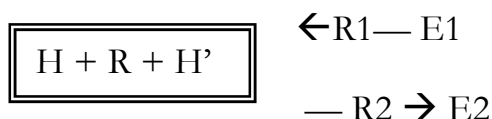
4) We are now at the point where we can formulate the definition, which should encompass all the components listed. We can provide in the first place a classificatory description of the word that helps to identify both the grammatical species and the semantic categories included in the lexeme. Thus, we say that $\square\gamma\alpha\mu\omicron\varsigma$ is an adjectival lexeme that indicates a state of non-union with a spouse (H) by a human being (E). Its definition could be 'Who is not joined in conjugal union'. It can be translated as *single*, *celibate*.

Thus the first example, for which I deliberately chose a word with simple structure and analysis in order to clearly demonstrate step by step how we proceed every

time we construct a definition. Let us now examine a more complicated one, as it is in the complexity of the lexemes analysed that the efficiency of our methodology is illustrated. Let us take as an example the verb $\square\gamma\alpha\pi\acute{\alpha}\omega$, which appears 141 times in the New Testament.

1) Having studied the contexts in which the verb appears, we conclude that it denotes, first of all, a state (semantic class *Event* –static–), which is shown (semantic class *Relation*) in the behaviour (semantic class *Event* –dynamic–). The agent of this conduct is a human being (semantic class *Entity*); the action by the subject has another human being (semantic class *Entity*) as its object or target.

2) Graphically expressed, the semantic formula of the lexeme is the following:



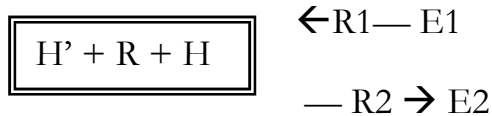
3) Each of the semantic classes in the formula may now, in turn, be decomposed into its corresponding semantic components. As you probably already noticed in the previous semantic development, this procedure generates some neologisms, so, please, do not be alarmed, since they will help us to understand what words signify for us:

- H staticity
- disposition
- innerness
- esteem
- benevolence
- R manifestness
- H1 dynamism
- behaviour
- beneficialness
- E1 personality
- individuality
- R1 agent
- R2 terminality
- E2 personality
- individuality

4) Taking this component development, or listing of the parts which make up each of the semantic classes, as the starting point, we can construct the definition of the lexeme in abstract, which expresses the lexical meaning of the word, as follows: ‘To be favourably disposed (H) towards (R2) a person (E2) who is esteemed (H) and show it (R) favouring his well-being (H)’.

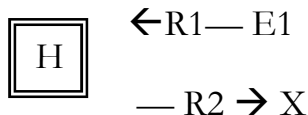
5) Once we have the definition we can proceed to find suitable translations for the term. In this case, the possible translations include *love, cherish, be fond of*. With this meaning it appears in John 3:35; 17:23; Romans 9:25; Ephesians 1:6; Hebrews 12:6, etc.

However, this definition is not valid for all the contexts in which $\square\gamma\alpha\pi\acute{\alpha}\omega$ appears. Sometimes, through metonymy (effect for cause), the context produces an inversion of the semantic classes expressed in the formula, in such a way that it is not ‘a state that manifests behaviour’, but ‘concrete behaviour that manifests a state or inner disposition of the person’:



Although the semic or component development of each of the semantic classes continues to be the same, the definition changes. It now means ‘To behave showing a favourable inner disposition and the desire for good towards someone who is cherished’. We $\square\text{H}$ give as translations: *manifest / show / display love*; as in Mark 10:2; John 3:16; Galatians 2:20; 2Thessalonians 2:16, etc.

But this does not exhaust the meaning of the verb we are studying. In the former two instances of the verb $\square\gamma\alpha\pi\acute{\alpha}\omega$, the term of the action was a personal being. There are also cases where the target is a material object or a fact. Consequently, a third sense arises in which the characteristic of manifestation (‘manifestness’ in the semic development) has disappeared. The verb now therefore includes one semantic class only; its semantic formula may be expressed as follows:



Obviously, with the appearance of a new meaning and due to the changes in the semantic formula, some changes will appear in the semic development as well:

H	staticity disposition pleasure innerness
E1	individuality humanity
R1	attribution
R2	terminality
X	objects / facts

The definition we obtain from the combination of these parts is ‘To be pleased with things or facts’. Possible translations include *be pleased by (something), take pleasure in, love*. With this meaning it appears in Luke 11:43; 1 Peter 3:10; 1 John 2:15a.

These two groups of examples serve to illustrate two of the basic principles behind the *Greek–Spanish New Testament Dictionary*. On the one hand, there is the systematic distinction between meaning and translation; on the other hand, the construction of an entry by first establishing a semantic formula, semic development and full definition that takes into account the semantic reality of the term. By giving a definition of the word every time a new meaning or sense appears, we hope to avoid the dictionary, a translator’s primary tool, turning into an unfathomable maze with no way out.

Of course, there are many other important aspects of our dictionary that I cannot deal with on this occasion. This is the case, for example, with the way to determine the various contextual factors that may change the meaning of a term by enacting transformations at the level of its semic components and to which J. Peláez dedicated a whole Chapter of his *Methodology* (Chapter 4). However, developing this point would take me too long and I do not think that this would please our chairman.

Thank you very much for your attention.