

THE INFLUENCE OF SEMANTIC PROCESSES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE AND THINKING

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Abstract: The article analyzes semantic processes closely related to language and thinking. In particular, the article reviews the concepts such as polysemy, synonymy, paronymy, hyponymy which are currently the subject of numerous discussions among world class linguistics scientists. The author presents polysemy as a phenomenon in which a broad-meaning word under the influence of the development of thinking and the specialization of existing knowledge gradually breaks up into separate words formerly denoting parts of a whole concept. It is claimed that the feature of polysemy changes in the course of the evolution of consciousness – in particular, the pre-scientific stage of the development of cognition and the evolution of consciousness, polysemy takes the form of semantic syncretism, which is observed in the tribal languages of the Middle Ages. In regards to synonymy, some linguists classify as synonyms of the words that are identical and close in meaning, which refer to one part of speech. Other scientists believe that synonyms are only words that are close or similar in meaning, or, on the contrary, only words that are identical in meaning. The author considers that these points of view are one-sided and do not enable studying synonymy thoroughly; own vision of hyponymy and paronymy is suggested.

Keywords: semantics; synonymy; polysemy; hyponymy; paronymy; language; thinking.

1 Introduction

Anthropo-linguistics is one of the influential modern directions of linguistic research which studies the development of human mentality and culture. The principle of anthropocentrism, which strongly influence almost all sciences, manifested itself in linguistics with the formation of such areas as anthropo-linguistics, linguoculturology, the theory of intercultural communication, numerous cognitive areas (cognitology, cognitive linguistics, conceptology, cognitive terminology), etc. Opportunity to explore the history of the development of culture and mentality of a person on the basis of the history of the vocabulary development was observed quite a long time ago. The ability of vocabulary to reflect the features of the culture of the nation and formation of the national mentality was noted in past centuries. The history of linguistics gives evidence that the relationship between the semantics of words and the concepts denoted by these words was studied by many philosophers and linguists.

2 Method

The research methodology is predetermined by the tasks for the solution of which both general and special scientific methods and techniques were used: historical etymological method, descriptive method, that includes the methods of observation, comparison, interpretation, and classification of the material under study; method of semantic identification, which serves to reveal the meaning of the studied expressions; distributional method, allowing revealing the meaning of the expression based on the contextual environment; method of analysis of dictionary definitions - to identify the semantic meanings of lexical means.

3 Results and Discussion

Polysemy in language and thinking

Polysemy is one of the important semantic phenomena for any national language which constantly attracts the attention of linguists, literary critics, stylisticians, and translators. Polysemy that exists in the semantic system of each national language has its own distinctive features inherent in a particular language, since it has the ability to reflect the socially determined linguistic and cultural features of a particular national thinking.

Polysemy is a phenomenon in which a broad-meaning word, under the influence of the development of thinking and the existing knowledge specialization, is gradually divided into separate words denoting parts of a once whole concept.

The general tendency in the development of cognition is the specialization of acquired knowledge, in which new sciences and new scientific disciplines appear tremendously. The knowledge specialization is reflected in the constant identification of the meaning of the word that leads to a quantitative increase in the vocabulary of languages. Therefore, it can be said that the progressive development of civilization, in other words, the development of cognition, lies in the constant removal of semantic syncretism. Polysemy plays the most significant role in the development of cognition.

It should be noted that the nature of polysemy changes in the course of cognition evolution. Initially, polysemy takes the form of a semantic overgeneralization of protowords. Overgeneralization represents a phenomenon, in which human consciousness is prone to excessive expansion of the words' meanings, to the generalization of many different objects in nature, which was presumably observed in ancient man.

At the pre-scientific stage of the development of cognition and the evolution of consciousness, polysemy acquired the form of semantic syncretism, which was observed in the tribal languages of the Middle Ages. For example, the Old English word *mōd* had such interchangeable meanings as *mind, intellect, sane, common sense, thought, feeling, heart, soul, spirit, intention, look, anger, fierce courage, fortitude, pride, ardent grief, intention, mood, character, state of mind.*

The given example indicates the absence of stable boundaries for the meanings of words. Obviously, such boundaries were unusual for ancient languages. Many researchers of the English vocabulary note the absence of clear boundaries between the semantic fields of words, which, apparently, is the norm for ancient languages.

The proto-scientific period, preceding the scientific period, was characterized by the emergence of specialization of the words of the vernacular language, which significantly increased the quantitative composition of the common vocabulary. The specialization of meaning led to the formation of many new words, the meaning of which is known only to those who perform professional functions, and was not understood outside the profession.

The tendency of the identification (concretization, specialization) of meaning continued during the scientific period, when national terminology was formed with the establishment of distinct boundaries for the meanings of terms. Studies of the historical development of the lexical composition of languages indicate that the most ancient words in any national language have a very broad meaning. And with the development of the language, the polysemy of these words is constantly decreasing due to the use of their synonyms.

Synonymy as a phenomenon in language and thinking

Despite the long history of studying the phenomenon of synonymy and its unique importance in the development of knowledge, thinking, and culture, many things may be the subject of discussion. There are a large number of works in which synonymy itself is analyzed as a phenomenon, the trends of its development and its role in the intellectual development of mankind, the types of synonyms are studied and attempts are made to classify them, the sources of synonyms and the reasons for their formation are studied. But at the same time, it should be noted that at present in linguistics there is no consistency in the understanding, definition, and description of this phenomenon.

Some linguists classify as synonyms the words that are identical and close in meaning, which refer to one part of speech. Other scientists believe that synonyms are only words that are close or similar in meaning, or, on the contrary, only words that are identical in meaning. In our opinion, the last two points of view

are one-sided and do not enable studying synonymy thoroughly.

N.F. Alefirenko [1] rightly notes that the cause for synonymy lies in continuous cognitive activity of a person, determining new features and peculiarities in already known things and leading to the need for new names for identified varieties of already known things.

This may also be the research for a more efficient designation of the existing concept, noted by A. V. Superanskaya and co-authors [7, p. 34] and the result of new naming to already existing units, as well as manifestation of consistency in terminology of different schools, alternatively leading to the need in new denomination.

As the result, we see a tendency: the more important a certain idea is for native speakers, the more synonymous names it has. Such attraction of synonyms leading to their accumulation is called synonymic attraction, and even the law of synonymic attraction.

Formulation of the mentioned law was proposed at the end of the 19th century by M. Pokrovsky (1869–1942), Russian specialist in comparative historical studies of the lexical composition of the Indo-European languages: “Phenomena and objects of reality, the most relevant for society in a given period of time, attract the largest number of synonyms” [5, p. 36].

It should be noted that most clearly synonymic attraction manifests itself in critical periods of knowledge development: namely in this period many synonyms are formed. All drastic processes (the emergence of new areas of knowledge, the change of dominant theories, filiation, i.e., extraction of new specialized areas from a given field of knowledge) certainly lead to outbreak of synonymy and polysemy [2, p. 196]. In this case, borrowing of foreign lexical units occurs with synchronous search for native equivalent names.

Synonymy is considered to be an expressive means in the national language, one of the specifications of the richness of the lexical ‘stock’ of the language, that assists the speaker in speech situations, helping either to express the thought most accurately or to present the transmitted information most vividly (emotionally, expressively). There is a commonly accepted opinion that the presence of multidivisional synonymy and the variety of its types represents the evidence of richness of the vocabulary and grammar of the vernacular language.

Synonymy in the sphere of terminology is a phenomenon that attracts attention of terminologists. For a long time, the idea that synonymy is a negative phenomenon for terminology was in the lead [5, p. 44]. But since synonymy is present in every sphere of terminology, this opinion has somewhat lost its edge and categoricalness.

It is believed that synonymy in the lexical system of a language for special purposes should be represented by a small number of examples and unextended synonymous series. The role of synonymy in the development of cognition, thinking, and culture is primarily reflective, since, according to the well known law of synonymic attraction, phenomena and objects of reality that are most relevant to society in a given period of time attract the largest number of synonyms.

In addition, it has been noted in terminology studies that a high degree of synonymy is characteristic of unstable or intensively developing terminologies, while a low degree of synonymy indicates the stability or even a stagnant state of terminology. Therefore, the level of synonymy can be used to estimate the means of terminology.

However, the function of knowledge refinement should be considered more important, in which, in the process of learning and cognition of objects, knowledge about them is clarified and concretized with the establishment of their varieties, and existing synonyms become the names of such varieties. For example, in

Russian medical terminology until recent times, “*желтуха, болезнь Боткина, and zhenatum*” (“*jaundice, Botkin's Disease, and hepatitis*”) were wholly equivalent synonyms, but with the enhancement of knowledge about this disease, two of its varieties and terms were identified: “*желтуха, болезнь Боткина*” (“*jaundice, Botkin's Disease*”) became their names, and the term “*zhenatum*” “*hepatitis*” as a generic term remained the only name of the disease.

With the development of knowledge how to close access to something, sufficient list of synonymous words has appeared to name the types of locking devices: “*замок — засов, запор, задвижка, защелка, завертка, застежка, шпингалет*”/ *lock - deadbolt, bolt, latch, door bolt, button, hasp, espagnolette*.

It should be noted that the most important concepts involve a wide range of synonyms and this facilitates the selection of names from among existing lexical units for new concepts that appear on their basis.

It has long been known in terminology studies that the meanings of synonymous terms, including variants of terms, diverge over time. For example, the former terms-synonyms diverged in the meaning: “*инструмент — документ*”- “*tool - document*”, “*гавань - порт*”- “*harbor - port*”, former variants “*кристалл — хрусталь*” – “*crystal - cut-glass, crystal*”, “*асбест — известь*”- “*asbestos - lime*”, “*ступень - стеньга*” – “*degree*”, “*леший, лесник и лесничий* - *wood spirit, forester, wood ward*”. Such a phenomenon can be explained by the fact that in human mentality there is a mannerism that different words should have different meanings, and, as a result of this, there is a desire to find a difference between synonyms. Perception of this gives impetus to a further divergence of the semantics of the former synonyms. The result is that in the language each variant of the synonym is fixed with a new meaning. Therefore, existing synonyms can be used to designate new concepts that are specific or close to the concept denoted by the main term.

It should be noted that the diachronic development of both professional and everyday thinking is the reason for the disappearance of synonymous relations between former synonyms. Thus, for example, the once synonymous words “*bolt, confinement, reclusion, siege, dungeon, skete, monastic cell and locking arrangement*” currently differ significantly in meanings. Over time, the words *rank-warrant-order* ceased to be synonymous words. Until comparatively recently (100–150 years ago), the linguistic terms “*language, speech, verb, adverb, and dialect*” were synonymous terms. Under the influence of historical development of thinking the words “*aqueduct-watercourse-water pipe*” ceased to be synonymous words and their meanings are now also different.

In the development of vocabulary, there is a general tendency towards the transformation of a word with broad-meaning, but having the same meaning, into a group of words, connected first by synonymous, and then by hyponymic relations. In the history of the formation of various types of synonyms, the subsequent transformation of such lexical group into a specific terminological system in which the results of cognition are fixed is revealed.

Desynonymization, which can take various forms, is the first step in differentiating the meanings of historically previous synonyms. Currently, in the case of borrowing words in the presence of original names with the same meaning, the following types of desynonymization are distinguished:

- The original word disappears, displaced by borrowing: the Old English word *swefn* was displaced by French word *dream*; the Old English word *thorp* was displaced by French borrowing *village*; the Old English word *dugud* was displaced by French *honneur*; the Old English word *woodsmith* — by French *carpenter*; the Old English word *ansyn* — by French *face*;
- Original word displaces the borrowing words: the Russian word *pobeda* ousted the borrowing word *viktoriya*; the

borrowing word *aerodrom* ousted Polish *lotnisko*; the borrowing *buchhalter* ousted Polish *księgowy*;

- The native word specializes and becomes a hyponym in relation to the borrowed words: the Old English *hue* ("color") after borrowing from the French word *couleur* is specialized with the same meaning and means *tone, color*;
- Borrowing narrows the meaning: French word *cit * (city) in the meaning "city" upon the availability of the Old English word *tun* (town) is specialized with that meaning and used in the meaning of "big city";
- Native word and borrowing share the areas of use: in Great Britain, the borrowing word *autumn* now is used in the meaning of autumn, but in the USA- original (leaves) *fall*;
- Division of the scope of meaning between native word and borrowing: the Old English *land* and French word *country* were differentiated; the same happened in English language with the Old English word *ox* - French *boeuf* ("beef");
- The meanings of the original word and borrowing differ significantly: *circle* and *mathematical compass*;
- The meanings of different types of borrowings diverge: the borrowing *viaduct* (literal translation "highway-over crossing") means a bridge over a ravine or gorge, but literal translation of this word means a bridge over a land route at their intersection. The existing tendency in Russian language to use the term "*idiom*" in two meanings makes it possible to assume discrepancies in its meanings with fixing this in the variants of the form: in the first meaning, it is a language formation (national language, language variant, dialect), but in the second meaning, it is a phrase that reveals in its syntactic and semantic structure the specific and unique properties of a given language.

"The globalization of language... plays an important role in the modern communicative space" [4, p. 789]. In this era realizing the importance of desynonymization is determined by the fact that each case of desynonymization fixes a step forward in the development of human cognition. It should be assumed that the meanings of most of the existing absolute synonyms will diverge with the elucidation of knowledge about the called object or phenomenon. Taking into account such discrepancy from the point of view of the development of terminology allows us to consider existing synonyms as very useful material for naming new concepts. In this case, existing synonyms can be used for naming varieties of the existing concept.

Very often synonymous processes of redistribution of conceptions within the boundaries of emerging fields are able to visually show the change of views on concepts in the process of their formation. In the development of vocabulary, there is a general tendency towards the use of synonyms as the name of emerging varieties of the original conception, and then, with further specialization, towards the establishment of hyponymic relations between them and their transformation into terminology, in which the results of cognition are fixed.

The historical tendency of the divergence of the meanings of synonymous words can be used to name the discovered varieties of the studied objects, as is already done in terminology studies: identification (logical action) — definition (the result of this action), the definition of the term (the presence of a definition) - the definitiveness of the term (reflection of the features necessary for determining in its form).

Synonymity is a multiaspect phenomenon. The further development of synonymous relations in terminologies is one of the conditions for the lexical provision of scientific and technological progress, the growth of knowledge, the development of culture, the evolution of human consciousness. A detailed study of synonymity as a phenomenon allows establishing its new, previously insufficiently studied aspects and using this phenomenon consciously to consolidate the knowledge gained. The further development of semantics as a subject area, as well as all related areas of knowledge, depends on this.

The role of hyponymy in the systematization of knowledge about the world

As it was mentioned above, hyponymy is one of the types of desynonymization. Hyponymy is a phenomenon in which there are semantic relationship between words "part / whole" (or "general / particular"). In hyponymy, the meaning of one word (hyponym) depends on another word (hypernum) and manifests itself as its variety (*flower-violet, lily, rose, etc.; tree-birch-tree, alder, oak, maple, etc.*). In most cases, the phenomenon of hyponymy is analyzed in terminology studies to reveal systematic relationship of the concepts under study. This phenomenon helps terminologist to organize the system of words according to the hierarchy of concepts identified by these words.

Hyponymy, which is a linguistic means of reflecting and fixing hierarchical generic relations, can serve as an indicator of interest in a particular thematic field and the development of knowledge in this direction, since the constantly developing system of hyponymic relations reflects the growth of knowledge specialization and, accordingly, the increasing depth of the vocabulary hierarchy.

With the advent of the sciences and their further progressive development, in the thinking of people the correlation of ideas and concepts changes (in favor of the latter), and with the development of production, the correlation of categories of natural and artificial objects (artefacts) changes. The study of the hyponymic relations between words is very important, given that hyponymy of words enables identifying and visual establishing a number of other semantic relations, such as synonymity and polysemy, as well as homonymity.

There are universal categories that are found in almost all subject areas of knowledge. Such broadest ontological categories, to which, as the result, all special categories of various knowledge areas are reckoned up, are the categories of objects (theoretical and detailed, organic and inorganic, natural and artificial /artefacts/); processes and states (natural processes and activities, states and phenomena); as well as properties [3, p. 228]. Consequently, the words "*object, process, state, property*" are the ultimate hypernyms in every branch of scientific knowledge, stand at the top of hierarchically represented generic classifications of terms.

In the course of the development of knowledge, the use of hyponymy makes it possible to systematize the primitive chaos in the perception of surrounding reality. Thus, the role of hyponymy (hierarchically generic relations) includes regulation of the understanding of the world in the process of cognition by structuring the lexical view of the world.

Paronymy, its role and meaning in the language

The phenomenon of paronymy is insufficiently studied semantic co-occurrences. It should be noted that there is no clear definition of this phenomenon. Paronyms (from Greek *paronymos, para-* "near" + *onyma* "name") are words that are pronounced or written in a similar way, but have different lexical meanings. Paronyms, as a rule, refer to one part of speech and perform similar syntactic functions in a sentence. Paronymy plays the role of messaging, indicating the limits of the possibility of using similar forms to name new concepts in a professional language.

While in the early stages the naming options could later be used for the names of related representations and concepts, at present the use of similar-sounding words can lead to mistakes and difficulties in professional communication (for example as in Russian words "*odejda — odevanie*").

It should be noted that knowledge, which is accomplished by clarification, detailing, and quantitative growth of our knowledge, is reflected in the clarification of the meanings of words - the awareness and elimination of their ambiguity due to the appearance and use of synonyms and the regulation of vocabulary using hyponymy. At the same time, the considered semantic co-occurrences not only reflect and consolidate the

results of cognition, but also serve as a means of identifying and adjustment new knowledge.

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Secondary Paper Section: AI