
THE INVESTIGATION OF FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO WORD MEANING

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the problems of word meaning which studies the linguistic features of word meaning. It discusses functional approach to word meaning.

Keywords: *approach, lexical meaning, grammatical meaning, notion, context.*

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье рассматриваются проблемы значения слова, изучаются лингвистические особенности значения слова. Обсуждается функциональный подход к значению слова.

Ключевые слова: *подход, лексическое значение, грамматическое значение, понятие, контекст.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years a new and entirely different approach to meaning known as the functional approach has begun to take shape in linguistics and especially in structural linguistics.

The functional approach maintains that the meaning of a linguistic unit may be studied only through its relation to other linguistic-units and not through its relation to either concept or referent. In a very simplified form this view may be illustrated by the following: we know, for instance, that the meaning of the two words *move* and *movement* is different because they function in speech differently.

Comparing the contexts in which we find these words we cannot fail to observe that they occupy different positions in relation to other words. (To) *move*, for example, can be followed by a noun (*move the chair*), preceded by a pronoun (*we move*), etc.

The position occupied by the word *movement* is different: it may be followed by a preposition (*movement of smth*), preceded by an adjective (*slow movement*), and so on. As the distribution¹ of the two words is different, we are entitled to the conclusion that not only do they belong to different classes of words, but that their meanings are different too.

The same is true of the different meanings of one and the same word. Analysing the function of a word in linguistic contexts and comparing these contexts, we conclude that; meanings are different (or the same) and this fact can be proved by an objective investigation of linguistic data. For example we can observe the difference of the meanings of the word take if we examine its functions in different linguistic contexts, take the tram (the taxi, the cab., etc.) as opposed to to take to somebody.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

It follows that in the functional approach:

- (1) semantic investigation is confined to the analysis of the difference or sameness of meaning;
- (2) meaning is understood essentially as the function of the use of linguistic units.

As a matter of fact, this line of semantic investigation is the primary concern, implied or expressed, of all structural linguists.

to other linguistic units.

When comparing the two approaches described above in terms of methods of linguistic analysis we see that the functional approach should not be considered an alternative, but rather a valuable complement to the referential theory.

It is only natural that linguistic investigation must start by collecting an adequate number of samples of contexts. On examination the meaning or meanings of linguistic units will emerge from the contexts themselves. Once this phase had been completed it seems but logical to pass on to the referential phase and try to formulate the meaning thus identified.

There is absolutely no need to set the two approaches against each other; each handles its own side of the problem and neither is complete without the other.

The lexical meaning of a word is the realization of a notion by means of a definite language system. A word is a language unit, while a notion is a unit of thinking. A notion cannot exist without a word expressing it in the language, but there are words which do not express any notion but have a lexical meaning. Interjections express emotions but not notions, but they have lexical meanings, for example, Alas! /disappointment/, Oh, my buttons! /surprise/ etc. There are also words which express both, notions and emotions, for example, girlie, a pig /when used metaphorically/.

The term «notion» was introduced into lexicology from logics. A notion denotes the reflection in the mind of real objects and phenomena in their relations. Notions, as

a rule, are international, especially with the nations of the same cultural level. While meanings can be nationally limited.

Grouping of meanings in the semantic structure of a word is determined by the whole system of every language. For example, the English verb «go» and its Uzbek equivalent «bormoq» have some meanings which coincide: to move from place to place, to extend /the road goes to London/, to work /Is your watch going/.

On the other hand, they have different meanings: in Uzbek we say : “Ana u kelyapti” , in English we use the verb «come» in this case. In English we use the verb «go» in the combinations: «to go by bus», «to go by train» etc. In Uzbek in these cases we use the verb «bormoq».

The number of meanings does not correspond to the number of words, neither does the number of notions. Their distribution in relation to words is peculiar in every language. Uzbek has two words for the English «man»: «kishi» and «odam».

In English, however, «man» cannot be applied to a female person. We say in Uzbek: «U yaxshiodam». In English we use the word «person»/ She is a good person»/ Development of lexical meanings in any language is influenced by the whole network of ties and relations between words and other aspects of the language.

Paradigmatic and syntagmatic studies of meaning are functional because the meaning of the lexical unit is studied first not through its relation to referent but through its functions in relation to other units.

Functional approach is contrasted to referential or onomasiological approach, otherwise called theory of nomination, in which meaning is studied as the interdependence between words and their referents, that is things or concepts they name, i.e. various names given to the same sense.

The onomasiological study of lexical units became especially prominent in the last two decades. The revival of interest in onomasiological matters is reflected in a large volume of publications on the subject. An outline of the main trends of current research will be found in the monographs on the Theory of Nomination issued by the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences.

The study of the lexical system must also include the study of the words' combinatorial possibilities — their capacity to combine with one another in groups of certain patterns, which serve to identify meanings. Most modern research in linguistics attaches great importance to what is variously called valency, distributional characteristics, colligation and collocation, combining power or otherwise. This research shows that combinatorial possibilities of words play an important part in almost every lexicological issue.

Syntagmatic relationships being based on the linear character of speech are studied by means of contextual, valency, distributional, transformational and some other types of analysis.

Paradigmatic linguistic relationships determining the vocabulary system are based on the interdependence of words within the vocabulary (synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, etc.).

Diachronically the interdependence of words within the lexical subsystem may be seen by observing shifts in the meaning of existing words that occur when a new word is introduced into their semantic sphere. This interdependence is one of the reasons why historical linguistics can never achieve any valuable results if it observes only the development of isolated words. Almost any change in one word will cause changes in one or several other words.

Characteristic examples are to be found in the influence of borrowings upon native words. The native OE *haerfest* (ModE *harvest* || Germ *Herbst*) originally meant not only the gathering of grain but also 'the season for reaping'. Beginning with the end of the 14th century, that is after the Romance word *autumne* > *autumn* was borrowed, the second meaning in the native word was lost and transferred to the word *autumn*.

When speaking about the influence of other aspects on the development of the vocabulary, we mean the phonetical, morphological and syntactical systems of the English language as they condition the sound form, morphological structure, motivation and meaning of words. This influence is manifold, and we shall have to limit our illustration to the most elementary examples.

The monosyllabic phonological type of the English word, for instance, enhances homonymy. Cf. *miss* v 'not hit', 'not catch' and *miss* n — a title for a girl or unmarried woman.

The influence of morphology is manifest, for instance, in the development of non-affixed word-formation. Cf. *harvest* n and *harvest* v.

The above considerations are not meant to be exhaustive; they are there to give some general idea of the relationships in question.

CONCLUSION

In this connection it is necessary to point out that various interpretations of the same linguistic phenomena have repeatedly been offered and have even proved valuable for their respective purposes, just as in other sciences various interpretations may be given for the same facts of reality in conformity with this or that practical

task. To be scientific, however, these interpretations cannot be arbitrary: they must explain facts and permit explanation and prediction of other facts. Therefore they must fit without bringing contradictions into the whole system of the theory created for the subject.

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