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ology

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Lecture 6

Semantic Structure of English and Ukrainian Words

Contrast is the occurance of different elements to create interest

"Linguistics without meaning is meaningless."

Roman Jakobson

Plan

- *1. Semasiology as a branch of linguistics*
- *2. Referential vs fuctional approach to meaning*
- *3. Differential vs integral approach to meaning.*
- *4. Componential analysis*
- *5. The field principle of the description of meaning*
- *6. Polysemy.*

Semasiology as a branch of linguistics

SEMASIOLOGYь

Greek *sēmasiā* 'signification' (from □δσημα - sign and□□semantikos - significant)

Greek *logos* 'learning'

Semasiology as a branch of linguistics

diachronically	synchronically
• studies the **change in meaning which words undergo**	• studies the **semantic structures typical of the language studied**

The main objects of contrastive semasiological studies

● - semantic development of words its causes and classification;

● - relevant distinctive features and types of lexical meaning;

● - polysemy and semantic structure of words;

● - semantic grouping and connections in vocabulary systems i.e. synonyms, antonyms, terminological systems etc.

terms semasiology and semantics

According to prof. J.R.Firth the English word for the historical study of change of meaning was **semasiology**, until in 1900 Breal's book (Essai de s`emantique) was published in English under the title of **Semantics.**

'pure semantics'

- refers to a branch of symbolic or mathematical logic originated by **R.Carnap.** It is a part of semiotics - the study of signs and languages in general, including all sorts of codes, such as military signals, traffic signals, etc.

SEMANTICS

● as the term semantics is widely accepted by a lot of linguists, we consider it possible to use for:

● - the branch of linguistics which specializes in the study of meaning;

● - the expressive aspect of language in general;

● - the meaning of one particular word in all its varied aspects and nuances.
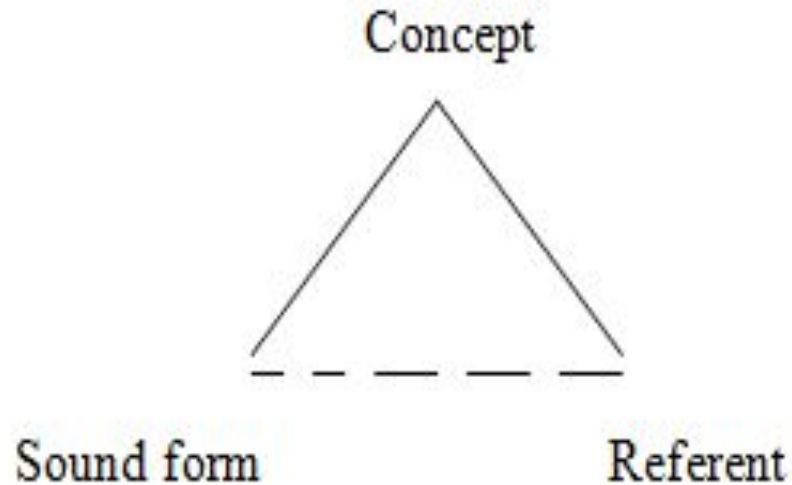
The Word and its Meaning

referential

- seeks to formulate the essence of meaning by establishing the interdependence between the words and things or concepts they denote

functional

- studies the functions of a word in speech and is concerned with how the meaning works

THE TRIANGLE OF REFERENCE

was introduces by *Charles Kay Ogden* and *Ivor Armstrong Richards* in *1923* in their book "*The Meaning of Meaning*"

Concept

Sound form   Referent

Referential approach

- Some advocates of the referential approach point out that the meaning of the linguistic sign is the concept underlying it and thus substitute meaning for concept.

- Others identify meaning with the referent.

- Suggestions have also been made about meaning as the interrelation of the sound-form, concept and referent , but not as an objectively existing part of the objective sign. With this approach to word-meaning the analysis will inevitably operate with subjective mental processes and will not be able to bring scientific order in semantic analysis.

Ukrainian linguists

- Ukrainian linguists agree in one basic principle: they all point out that lexical meaning is the realization of the notion by means of a definite language system. *Значення слова - це певне впдображення предмета, явища чи відношення в свідомості носіїв мови, що утворює в структурі слова його внутрішню сторону, у відношенні до якоі звукова сторона виступае як матеріальна оболонка слова, необхідна не тільки для вираження значення і повідомлення його іншим членам суспільства, а й для самого виникнення слова, його формування, існування і розвитку."*
- (А.М.Івченко)

componential analysis

- It is used for:
- a) a detailed comparison of meaning whether within a single language or between languages;
- b) providing a more adequate basis for translational equivalences;
- c) the judging of the semantic compatibility as an important feature of style;
- d) treating semantic transpositions of words, figurative extension in particular.

The contrastive study of the semantic structures of English and Ukrainian

- should aim at establishing the most generalized, as well as the most specific relations between word meanings. E.g., all the various relations between the variant meanings of polysemantic words may be indicated systematically. Specific distinctions can also be worked out.

Semantic features (semes)

- How would a semantic approach help us to understand something about the nature of language?
- *The hamburger ate the man*
- *My cat studied linguistics*
- *A table was listening to some music*
- Notice that the oddness of these sentences does not derive from their syntactic structure. According to some basic syntactic rules for forming English sentences we have well-structured sentences:
- The hamburger   ate   the man
- NP + V + NP

Semantic features (semes)

- This studied sentence is syntactically good but semantically odd. Since the sentence *The man ate the hamburger* is perfectly acceptable, what is the source of the oddness we experience?

- One answer may relate to the components of the meaning of the noun *hamburger* which differ significantly from those of the noun *man*, especially when those nouns are used as subjects of the verb *ate*.

- The kinds of nouns which can be subjects of the verb *ate* must denote entities which are capable of 'eating'.

differential approach to analyzing meaning.

- If you were asked to give the crucial distinguishing features of the meanings of this set of English words *(table, cow, girl. woman, boy, man),* you could do so by means of the following diagram:

	table	cow	girl	woman	boy	man
animate	-	+	+	+	+	+
human	-	-	+	+	+	+
male	-	-	-	-	+	+
adult	-	+	-	+	-	+

differential approach

- According to differential approach meaning is constituted by a certain amount of semes on the basis of which words are opposed to each other in lexical semantic groups

- This approach is not valid in many cases: *attention, world, substance*

Integral approach

- According to it lexical meaning includes both differential and non-differential (integral) semantic components

- There are different levels of the depth and adequacy of describing the meaning

- It is impossible to draw the distinct limit of meaning because:.....

Reasons

- Many objects of reality cannot be distinctly differentiated (bachelor – is Pope a bachelor?)
- The change of reality results in the change of its reflection in the consciousness of human beings (queen – leader, tyrant, unnecessary institution; robot – fantastic creature and everyday helper)
- The knowledge of the notions is increasing (earth – flat and round; crazy – possessed and mentally ill)
- There are differences in the cognition of various people black- the colour of night, coal; snow – in Africa, Europe, north)

The semantic structure of the word

- <u>The levels of the analysis of the word:</u>
- <u>Sememic</u> (on the level of sememe – a separate sense of a polysemantic word)
- <u>Semic</u> (on the level of semes – separate components of meaning)

The field principle of the description of meaning

1. The meaning is a system of components (semes) constituting a structure (sememe);

2. All components of meaning are arranged into one functional language unit – sememe;

3. The structure of meaning includes semantic components belonging both to the same and different types;

4. In the structure of the meaning macrocomponents can be singles out (connotative, denotative and others)

the description of meaning

- 5. macrocomponents are organized horizontally, microcomponents are arranged vertically;
- 6. there are semantic components belonging to nucleus and periphery;
- 7. the nucleus is constituted by constant, essential and frequent semantic components;
- 8. the semes of periphery add to the nucleus and stipulate the semantic development of the word (polysemy)
- 9. the border between the semes of nucleus and periphery is indistinct

the description of meaning

- 10. the semes that constitute one meaning can be repeated in other meanings, the semes of nucleus in one meaning can be those of periphery in a different one

- 11. meaning can differ in some semes and coincide in others (synonyms, antonyms)

Macrocomponents: Denotative meaning

- The notional content of the word is expressed by the **denotative meaning** (also called **referential or extensional**). To denote is to serve as linguistic expression for a notion or as a name for an actually existing object referred to by a word. The term **denotatum** (Lat. denotatum, pl. denotata - означување) is used in different meanings. When we speak about denotative meaning we consider it to be the notional nucleus of meaning abstracted from stylistic, pragmatic, modal, emotional, subjective, communicative and other shades. Quite often the terms denotatum and referent are being used indiscriminatedly as synonyms.

Macrocomponents: Connotative meaning

- The emotional content of the word i.e. its capacity to evoke or directly express emotions is rendered by **connotative component of meaning** (also called **emotive charge or intentional connotations**) . Connotation (Lat. connotation from connoto - маю додаткове значення) is an emotional , evaluative or stylistic component of a linguistic unit of regular or occasional character. Within the connotains of a word we distinguish its capacity to evoke or express: a) emotion (*daddy - father*) ; b) evaluation (*clique - group*); c) intensity (*adore - love*); d)stylistic colouring (*slay - kill*) etc. In a broad sense connotation is any component which adds to to the denotative meaning

Macrocomponents: grammatical meaning

- The complexity of the word-meaning is manifold. Apart from the lexical meaning including denotative and connotative meaning it is always combined with the grammatical meaning. The grammatical meaning is defined as an expression in speech of relationship between words based on contrastive features of arrangements in which they occur.

Polysemy

- a semantic universal inherent in the fundamental structure of language.

- Both in English and in Ukrainian polysemy is widespread but is more characteristic of English due to the predominance of root words.

- The greater the relative frequency of the word, the greater the number of elements that constitute its semantic structure, i.e. the more polysemantic it is.

"principle of diversity of meaning"

- G.K.Zipf tried to find a mathematical formula for it: his calculations suggested that "different meanings of a word will tend to be equal to the square root of its relative frequency (with the possible exception of the few dozen most frequent words). Put in a different way : $m = F^{1/2}$

- where *m* stands for the number of meanings and *F* for relative frequency.

- E.g. the total number of meaning registered in NED for the first thousand of the most frequent English words is almost 25 000, i.e. the average number of meanings for each these most frequent words is 25.