



ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКОЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ С ДВУМЯ ПРОФИЛЯМИ ПОДГОТОВКИ
ИНОСТРАННЫЙ ЯЗЫК И ИНОСТРАННЫЙ ЯЗЫК

СТИЛИСТИКА

LECTURE 2. THE THEORY OF MEANING

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PLAN

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2. TYPES OF MEANING
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THE WORD AND ITS MEANING

The word is a linguistic unit of major significance. A word names, qualifies and evaluates the micro- and macrocosm of the surrounding world. It expresses the concept of a thing, process, phenomenon. Doing so, it names (denotes) them. This is the most essential feature of a word.



THE WORD AND ITS MEANING

Concept is the thought of the object that singles out the most typical, the most essential features of the object. So all concepts are almost the same for the whole of humanity in one and the same period of its historical development. The meanings of words, however, are different in different languages.



THE WORD AND ITS MEANING

E.g. the concept of “a building for human habitation” is expressed in English by the word “house”, in Russian – “дом”, but their meanings are not identical as “house” does not possess the meaning of “fixed residence of family or household”, which is part of the meaning of the Russian word “дом”; it is expressed by another English word home.

THE WORD AND ITS MEANING

Concepts are always emotionally neutral as they are a category of thought. Language, however, expresses all possible aspects of human consciousness.

E.g. *big, large, tremendous*

Meaning is a certain reflection in our mind of objects, phenomena or relations that makes part of the linguistic sign – its so-called inner facet, whereas the sound form functions as its outer facet.



TYPES OF MEANING

Grammatical meaning is defined as the expression in speech of relationships between words.

Lexical meaning is the realisation of concept or emotion by means of a definite language system.

The conceptual content of a word is expressed in its **denotative** meaning. To denote is to serve as a linguistic expression for a concept or as a name for an individual object. It is the denotational meaning that makes communication possible.



TYPES OF MEANING

Connotation is the pragmatic communicative value the word receives depending on where, when, how, by whom, for what purpose and in what contexts it may be used.

There are four main types of connotations

- **stylistic**,
- **emotional**,
- **evaluative**
- **expressive or intensifying.**



TYPES OF MEANING

Stylistic connotations is what the word conveys about the speaker's attitude to the social circumstances and the appropriate functional style (slay ('умерщвлять') vs kill), **evaluative** connotation may show his approval or disapproval of the object spoken of (clique ('банда') vs group), **emotional** connotation conveys the speaker's emotions (mummy vs mother), the degree of intensity (adore vs love) is conveyed by **expressive** or **intensifying connotation**.



TYPES OF MEANING

The emotional connotation comes into being on the basis of denotative meaning but in the course of time may substitute it by other types of connotation with general emphasis, evaluation and colloquial stylistic overtone. E.g. terrific which originally meant 'frightening' is now a colloquialism meaning 'very, very good' or 'very great': terrific beauty, terrific pleasure.



TYPES OF MEANING

Unlike the denotative meaning, connotations are optional. Connotation differs from the implicational meaning of the word. Implicational meaning is the implied information associated with the word, with what the speakers know about the referent. E.g.:

- a wolf is known to be greedy and cruel (implicational meaning)
- a wild animal resembling a dog that kills sheep and sometimes even attacks men (the denotative or intentional meaning)
- a cruel greedy person (the figurative meaning)



TYPES OF MEANING

The word in one of its meanings is termed as lexico-semantic variant of this word. E.g. the word 'table' has at least 9 lexico-semantic variants:

1. a piece of furniture ('стол');
2. the persons seated at a table ('общество за столом');
3. sing. the food put on a table, meals ('трапеза');
4. a thin flat piece of stone, metal, wood, etc. ('плита');
5. pl. slabs of stone ('груда камней');
6. words cut into them or written on them (the Ten Tables) ('заповедь');
7. an orderly arrangement of facts, figures, etc. ('таблица');
8. part of a machine-tool on which the work is put to be operated on; ('стол ротора')
9. a level area, a plateau ('плато').



TYPES OF MEANING

All lexico-semantic variants of a word taken together form its semantic structure or semantic paradigm. The word 'face', for example, according to the dictionary data has the following semantic structure:

1. The front part of the head: He fell on his face,
2. Look, expression: a sad face, smiling faces, she is a good judge of faces.
3. Surface, facade: face of a clock, face of a building, He laid his cards face down.
4. fig. Impudence, boldness, courage; put a good/brave/ bold face on smth, put a new face on smth, the face of it, have the face to do, save one's face.
5. Style of typecast for printing: bold-face type.



DIRECT AND FIGURATIVE MEANINGS

(other oppositions are: main / derived; primary / secondary; particular/ abstract; central/ peripheral; general/ special; narrow / extended)

Meaning is direct when it nominates the referent without the help of a context, in isolation; meaning is figurative when the referent is named and at the same time characterised through its similarity with other objects, e.g. tough meat – direct meaning, tough politician – figurative meaning. Similar examples are: head – head of a cabbage, foot – foot of a mountain, face – put a new face on smth (‘представить в новом свете’).



DIRECT AND FIGURATIVE MEANINGS

Differentiation between the terms primary / secondary main / derived meanings is connected with two approaches to polysemy: diachronic and synchronic. If viewed **diachronically** polysemy, is understood as the growth and development (or change) in the semantic structure of the word.

E.g. 'table' in Old English had the meaning "a flat slab of stone or wood".

Synchronically polysemy is understood as the coexistence of various meanings of the same word at a certain historical period of the development of the English language.

Thus, 'table' in Modern English is "a piece of furniture".



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DIRECT AND FIGURATIVE MEANINGS

As a rule the contextual meaning represents only one of the possible lexicosemantic variants of the word. So polysemy does not interfere with the communicative function of the language because the situation and the context cancel all the unwanted meanings, as in the following sentences: *The steak is tough – This is a tough problem – Prof. Holborn is a tough examiner.*

Context is understood as the minimal stretch of speech determining each individual meaning of the word. The context individualises the meanings, brings them out.



DIRECT AND FIGURATIVE MEANINGS

The two main types of linguistic contexts which serve to determine individual meanings of words are **the lexical context** and **the grammatical context**. These types are differentiated depending on whether the lexical or the grammatical aspect is predominant in determining the meaning.



DIRECT AND FIGURATIVE MEANINGS

E.g. the adjective 'heavy' in isolation possesses the meaning "of great weight, weighty". When combined with the lexical group of words denoting natural phenomena as wind, storm, etc. it means "striking, following with force, abundant", e.g. heavy rain, wind, storm, etc. In combination with the words industry, arms, artillery and the like, heavy has the meaning "the larger kind of something as heavy industry, artillery".



DIRECT AND FIGURATIVE MEANINGS

In grammatical context it is the grammatical (mainly the syntactic) structure of the context that serves to determine various individual meanings of a polysemantic word.

E.g.: 1) I made Peter study; He made her laugh; They made him work (sing, dance, write...) 2) My friend made a good teacher 3) He made a good husband. In the pattern “to make + N(Pr)+ V inf” the word make has the meaning “to force”, and in the pattern “to make + A + N” it has the meaning “to turn out to be”. Here the grammatical context helps to determine the meaning of the word “to make”.



DIRECT AND FIGURATIVE MEANINGS

So, linguistic (verbal) contexts comprise lexical and grammatical contexts. They are opposed to extra linguistic contexts (non-verbal). In extra-linguistic contexts the meaning of the word is determined not only by linguistic factors but also by the situation itself in which the word is used.



DIRECT AND FIGURATIVE MEANINGS

The **extension** of semantic capacity of a word is the expansion of polysemy in the course of its historical development, e.g. manuscript originally “smth hand-written”.

Narrowing of meaning is the restriction of the semantic capacity of a word in the historical development, e.g. ‘meat’ in Old English meant “food and drink”.

Elevation (or **amelioration**) is the semantic change in the word which rises it from humble beginning to a position of greater importance, e.g. minister in earlier times meant merely “a servant”.

Degradation is the semantic change, by which, for one reason or another, a word falls into disrepute, or acquires some derogatory emotive charge, e.g. ‘silly’ originally meant “happy”.



DIRECT AND FIGURATIVE MEANINGS

The change in the denotational component brings about the extension or the restriction of meaning. The change in the connotational component may result in the degradation – pejorative or ameliorative development of meaning.



REFERENCES

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