

THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF POLYSEMY IN ENGLISH

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Annotation: The article covers important information about theoretical concepts of polysemy in English. Moreover, the diachronic approach and synchronic approach to studying polysemy were discussed.

Key words: *metonymic transference, Potential polysemy, ambassador extraordinary, semantic transpositions, generic words, linguistic structure, diachronic terms.*

In today's process of globalization, the effect of the radical reform of the education system of Uzbekistan is evident in all areas related to this area. The state pays special attention to the teaching and further development of foreign languages in the education system, which is a key sector of socio-economic, political and cultural life of the country, one of the vital factors that directly affect the morale of the population. at the policy level. At a video conference chaired by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev on May 6, 2021 on measures to improve the system of teaching foreign languages, the problems in the system were analyzed in detail and priorities were identified. On this basis, the issue of attitudes to foreign language teaching is addressed in the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated May 19, 2021 No PP-5117 "On measures to bring the promotion of foreign languages in the Republic of Uzbekistan to a qualitatively new level"[1].

Polysemy is a semantic inherent in the fundamental structure of the language. All languages have polysemy on several levels. A wide-spread polysemy in English is rightly considered as one of its characteristic features conditioned by the peculiarities of its structure. The main source of the development of regular polysemy is the metaphoric and metonymic transference, which is commonplace and appears to be fundamental in living language. Polysemic words make up a considerable part of the English vocabulary. Potential polysemy of words is the most fertile source of ambiguities in language.

In a limited number of cases two meanings of the same English words are differentiated

by certain formal means, as, for instance, by spelling: born — borne, draft — draught; by word-order: ambassador extraordinary — extraordinary ambassador; by inflexion: hanged — hang. The distinctions between thing-words (countables) and mass-words (uncountables) is easy enough if we look at the idea that is expressed in each single instance[2]. But in practical language the distinction is not carried through in such a way that one and the same word stands always for one and the same idea.

The problem of polysemy, in other words, the use of the same word in two or more distinct meanings is relevant to a number of other important questions. These are: the development of different types of synonyms, as a result of semantic transpositions of lexical units and homonymy. Defining polysemy as a linguistic development, Charles Bally made distinction between its two aspects: first, when one linguistic sign has several meanings, and then, when meaning is expressed by several linguistic signs.

Words may grow in connotative power in accordance with the nature with the meanings connected with them. In the power of connotation lies the reserve force of language. Without this language would lose much of its expressivity and flexibility. Polysemy more often occurs in generic words than in specific terms whose meanings are less subject to variation. It is extremely important not to lose sight of the fact that few words have simple meanings. Practically most words have, besides their direct meaning, a fringe of associated meanings. As a matter of fact, language owes very much of its expressive power to the ideas and emotions associated with words. There are usually a variety of associated meanings which appear in varying degrees of prominence determined by the context. Polysemy more often occurs in generic words than in specific terms whose meanings are less subject to variation.

If we go back to the history of polysemy modern term polysemy was popularized by Bréal in 1887. Most modern linguistics dealing with the topic of polysemy refer to the crucial date, but they rarely look further back into the past.

The “roots” of the concept of polysemy lie in the Greek philosophy, that is, the debate surrounding the problem of naturalness or arbitrariness of signs as debated in Plato’s (429-347B.C.) Cratylus.

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Bréal knew that, diachronically, polysemy stems from the fact that the new meaning or values that words acquire in use do not automatically eliminate the old ones — polysemy is therefore the result of semantic innovation. The new and the old meaning exist in the parallel. And yet, synchronically, or in language use, polysemy doesn't really exist — sense selection in the comprehension process is not a problem at all. In the context of discourse a word has one meaning — except, one should point out, in jokes and puns. The most important factor that brings about the multiplication of meaning diachronically and that helps to “reduce” the multiplicity of meaning synchronically is the context of discourse. We understand polysemous words because the words are always used in the context of a discourse and a situation, which eliminate all the adjoining meaning in favour of only one in question.

However, in the constant dialectical relation between synchrony and diachrony, and between meaning and understanding incremental changes in the meaning of words occur having understood a word in a certain context in a slightly divergent way, become themselves speakers and might use a word in the newly understood way in yet another context, which again bring about different types of understanding, and so on. In the long run, these slightly variations in use and uptake may lead to major semantic changes.

Polysemy is inherent in the very nature of words and concepts as every object and every notion has many features and a concept reflected in a word always contains a generalisation of several traits of the object. A word which has more than one meaning is called polysemantic. Different meanings of a polysemantic word may come together due to the proximity of notions which they express e.g. the word “blanket” has the following meanings: a woolen covering used on beds, a covering for keeping a horse warm, a covering of any kind (a blanket of snow), covering all or most cases used attributively, e.g. we can say “a blanket insurance policy”. There are some words in the language which are monosemantic, such as most terms, synonym, some pronouns (this, my, both), numerals. There are two processes of the semantic development of a word: radiation and concatenation. In cases of radiation the primary meaning stands in the centre and the secondary meanings proceed out of it like rays[3]. Each secondary meaning can be traced to the primary meaning. E.g. in the word “face” the primary meaning denotes “the front part of the human head” Connected with the front position the meanings: the front part of a watch, the front part of a building, the front part of a playing card were formed. Connected with the word “face” itself the meanings: expression of the face, outward appearance are formed. In cases of concatenation secondary meanings of a word develop like a chain. In such cases it is difficult to trace some meanings to the primary one. E.g. in the word “crust” the primary

meaning “hard outer part of bread” developed a secondary meaning “hard part of anything (a pie, a cake)”, then the meaning “harder layer over soft snow” was developed, then “a sullen gloomy person”, then “impudence” were developed. Here the last meanings have nothing to do with the primary ones. In such cases homonyms appear in the language. It is called the split of polysemy. In most cases in the semantic development of a word both ways of semantic development are combined.

In polysemantic words we are faced not with the problem of analysis of individual meanings, but primarily with the problem of interrelation and interdependence of the various meanings in the semantic structure of the same word. The problem may be approached from two different angles. If polysemy is viewed diachronically, it is understood as the growth and development or, in general, a change in the semantic structure of the word. The term “diachronic” is composed of the Greek morphemes *dia* meaning “through” *chromos* meaning “time”. Thus, the diachronic approach in terms of special lexicology deals with changes and the development of vocabulary in the course of time. The two approaches in lexicology (synchronic and diachronic) should not be contrasted or set one against the other; in fact, they are interconnected and interdependent: every linguistic structure and system exist in a state of a constant development so that the synchronic state of a language system is a result of a long process of linguistic evaluation, the result of the historical development of the language[4].

The diachronic approach in terms of special lexicology deals with the changes and the development of vocabulary in the course of time. The two approaches shouldn't be set one against the other. In fact, they are interconnected and interrelated because every linguistic structure and system exists in a state of constant development so that the synchronic state of a language system is a result of a long process of linguistic evaluation, its historical development. A diachronic approach is one that analyzes the evolution of something over time, allowing one to assess how that something changes throughout history. You would use this approach to analyze the effects of variable change on something. Polysemy in a diachronic terms implies that a word may retain its previous meaning or meanings and at the same time acquire one or several new ones.

To sum up all given facts above it follows that the main source of polysemy is a change in the semantic structure of the word. As can be seen from the above, in diachronic analysis of polysemy we can use many concepts and terms discussed in the paragraphs devoted to the change of meaning. We can speak, for example of metaphoric or metonymic meanings if we imply the nature of dependence of the meanings, of extended or restricted meanings, if we are

connected with the interrelation of meanings as a result of semantic change. Polysemy may also arise from homonymy. When two words become identical in sound-form, the meanings of the two words are felt as making up one semantic structure. Thus, the human ear and the ear of corn are from the diachronic point of view two homonyms. One is etymologically related to Latin *auris*, the other to Latin *acus, aceris*. Synchronically, however, they are perceived as two meanings of one and the same word. The ear of corn is felt to be a metaphor of the usual type (cf. the eye of the needle, the foot of the mountain) and consequently as one of the derived or, synchronically, minor meanings of the polysemantic word *ear*. Cases of this type are comparatively rare and, as a rule, illustrative of the vagueness of the border line between polysemy and homonymy.

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