LEXICAL MEANINGS IN DYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. The paper focuses on the word semantic structure and its dynamics in time, on how and why new word meanings emerge. Semantic transfers involved in derivation are specified: metonymic and metaphoric mechanisms are analyzed, the idea that only some of the transfers can be qualified as new meanings and find their way into dictionary entries is supported. The authors argue that the meaning emerged tends to live in the language unchanged (most often), the claim is substantiated by the practical arguments relying on the semantic derivation within the semantic structure of the English adjective "green". Another claim that the meaning is normally perceived as coinciding for the whole pool of native speakers, which means that it is at least incautious to promote the idea of its individuality. The idea is supported by empirical data. The study of changes in the semantic structure of a word is based on a comparison of the meaning of a word in synchronic and diachronic contexts. The research methods include lexicographic, lexical-semantic and contextual analyses. The word "green" is used as an example, the choice being prompted by the lexicographical sample suggested by L.V. Scherba for the French adjective "vert / verte" (green).

Keywords: meaning, semantic transfer, derivation, semantic structure, adjective.

ЛЕКСИЧЕСКОЕ ЗНАЧЕНИЕ В ДИНАМИЧЕСКОЙ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена анализу динамики семантического значения слова. В работе рассматриваются причины возникновения новых значений слов, а также семантические переносы, которые участвуют в деривации: анализируются метонимические и метафорические механизмы. Идея о том, что только некоторые из переносов могут быть квалифицированы как новые значения, фиксируемые словарями, получает аргументированное подтверждение. Авторы полагают, что возникшее значение имеет тенденцию сохраняться в языке неизменным (чаще всего), и это утверждение подкрепляется практическими аргументами, опирающимися на семантическую деривацию в рамках семантической структуры английского прилагательного green. Мысль о том, что значение обычно воспринимается как совпадающее для всего круга носителей языка, позволяет заключить, что идея об индивидуальности нового значения слова, по меньшей мере, должна рассматриваться с осторожностью. Представленные в работе результаты исследования динамики семантического значения подтверждают данное утверждение. Изучение изменений в семантической структуре слова проводится на основе сравнения значения слова в синхронном и диахроническом контекстах. Методы исследования включают лексикографический, лексико-семантический и контекстуальный анализ. В качестве примера используется слово green, выбор которого обусловлен лексикографической выборкой, предложенной Л.В. Щербой для французского прилагательного vert / verte (зеленый).

Ключевые слова: значение, семантический перенос, деривация, семантическая структура, прилагательное.

Introduction

Rewording F.de Saussure's statement that there is nothing in the language except differences we can say that there is nothing in the language except the meaning. True it is that the word / sentence meaning is the key element of language as it directly relates to the world reflecting it in the linguistic world view The semantic realm as "the interplay between matter and meanings" [1, p. 1] is part of semiotics which in turn has "a forth order of complexity" [2, p. 68] with the order of complexity starting with physical systems, biological systems, social systems, with the semiotic systems to top them all. The authors claim that changes in one of the systems "reverberate across the meta system as a whole" [1, p.1] and changes in the social context affect the semiotic changes [ibid, p. 4], which one cannot but agree. The question is how the word meanings are changing, if they do How are the world of matter and the world of meaning related?

We shall start with some general assumptions concerning the long-standing debates around definitions of meaning in language and suggest the one we shall abide by; proceed to semantic derivational mechanisms and try to distinguish a new meaning from the regular occurrences which follow some model though are not to be qualified as new meanings; then emphasize two essential features in the word meaning which challenge some current theories of meanings; finally focus on the semantic structure of an English adjective *green* as revisiting L. Scherba's claim relating to French adjective *vert-verte* in diachronic perspective and relate it to the theory advocated.

Defining the word meaning: denoting

There are still debates in linguistics concerning definitions of the meaning of a word / sentence. They cover the correlations *meaning vs concept vs notion vs referent, semantic structure of a word, semantic transfers* within this *semantic structure*, etc. We shall focus on the definition of meaning, to proceed with defining the boundaries between the meaning proper, and the pragmatic context and between the meanings in the semantic structure of the word.

The distinctions between *concept vs meaning vs notion vs referent* have been given extensive treatment (see, e.g. references in [3; 4]). We shall focus here on the seemingly trivial assumption that there is a difference between the real world and the way it is conceived of / conceptualized by the word, i.e. it explains why there are so many languages and so different words denote the same object by different words, or even why the same situation can get a variety of descriptions. What follows is that when a linguist analyzes the language they should remind themselves from time to time at least, that they hould not concentrate on the real world, they would rather focus on how this world is conceptualized in the language instead. We do admit that the authors are conscious that the world of reality is not congruous with the linguistic picture of the world, still being careless in their statements can be misleading, especially for young researchers.

Word meaning: basic assumptions

Do meanings change, if they do not — the view contrary to some theories, or to some careless/ undeliberate statements when authors meant changing semantic structure rather than the meaning as such. When the authors mention contextual variability of meaning [3, p.16] we should keep in mind that the talk is about different meanings which we do distinguish in the context, rather than about the contextual "flexibility" (see also below). Still, the misleading uncertainty remains, it seems that sometimes it is taken for granted and serves as a kind of foundation for emerging theories.

The idea that we are going to start with is that lexical meanings are not subject to continuous changes (contrary to popular statements that they are). What does change is the semantic structure of the word, which is augmented by a new meaning (usually generated by semantic transfers as a result of non-linear polysemy [3, p.117; 5]).

Challenging the idea of continuously changing meaning one can provide some arguments. First of all, if we take a XIX or XX century classical text we do understand the meaning practically of all the words (with some exceptions referring mostly to outdated realities). For example, the sentence *I will not bore those whom this narrative may reach by an account of our luxurious voyage upon the Booth liner* from a story by A.C. Doyle, written more than a century ago, is absolutely comprehensible for a reader of today (despite some slightly old-fashioned text stylistics). It means that the meanings are basically stable. What does change is the word semantic structure, when a word can **develop** a new meaning, to mention a few examples: when the word *mouse* developed a new meaning in the computer age, the "old" meaning survived, without any changes. Another example is the word *toksichny* (toxic) in Russian which is used metaphorically referring to people. This meaning has not yet found its way into any Russian dictionary, but it may in future. The "old" meaning will also be preserved. One more example refers to another adjective — *dushny* (stifling) which used to denote the atmosphere in some closed space and now seem to be developing a new meaning, denoting a person.

In other words, when they say that the word meaning has changed and started to mean something different it is not the case — the word acquired a new meaning, its semantic structure changed, the old meaning survived. Finally, the idea of continuous changes corrupts the very *raison d'etre* of dictionaries as in such a case dictionaries will have to continuously adjust to the changes. The reality, though, proves that dictionaries are normally up to the task they are meant for.

One more relevant statement running that every person relies on their own individual meaning [6, pp. 1501—1504; 7, p. 106] is also open to objections. Native-speakers share the meanings and it explains

why people understand each other. Possible misunderstandings can result from violating P.G. Grice's maxims, or cultural and social differences, rather than from differences in understanding the words meanings. The phrase *The train arrived on time* means the same for all native-speakers, though in different contexts it might carry different pragmatically relevant information, which belongs to the context, but the phrase *per se* does not change its meaning and always means the same for native-speakers. Ju. D. Apresjan remarks that the sentence of the kind *Put your suitcase here* does not change its meaning but in different contexts − e.g. in passing through the customs, or upon coming on a visit to relations − might mean something different, but the difference is due to a situational context, to pragmatics [8]. In other words, the meanings cannot be regarded as individual perceptions (contrary to popular statements that they are).

What follows is the definition of the meaning − after O.N. Seliverstova's definition − it is the information which is conveyed by the word (word combination, sentence, etc.) only (not the context, neither by extralinguistic means − the color of the letters, the font size, or else), this meaning is shared by the majority of native-speakers [9].

Dynamical processes in the word semantic structure: purpose and research methods

The next point we promote here is related to the analysis of how exactly the semantic structure is changing, what semantic transfers generate new meanings and which of them are registered in the dictionaries and which do not, why they do not need lexicographical registration. Cf., e.g. an old dispute of two outstanding Russian linguists L.V. Scherba and D.N. Ushakov when Scherba offered compelling criticism on Ushakov's enthusiastic augmentation of meanings in the semantic structure of the word *igla* (*needle*) which L. Scherba deemed redundant and suggested reducing them to a more limited number. L.V. Scherba admits that it is not easy to distinguish between a meaning proper and shades of meaning, besides quite often we are facing a regular metaphoric or metonymical transfer, when "one of the features is made prominent while others are smoothed over to some degree" [10, p. 285] − "выпячивается один какой-либо признак, а все остальные в той или другой мере затушевываются" [10, p. 285] (translation from Russian is ours

− O.S., I.P.) E.g. in the word *igla* (*needle*) it can be the eye. Moreover L.V. Scherba admits that "any even slightly complicated word deserves a monograph" [10, p. 285] − "каждое мало-мальски сложное слово в сущности должно быть предметом научной монографии» [10, p. 285] (translation from Russian is ours − O.S., I.P.).

In lexicographical practice, L.V. Scherba claims,linguists have to seek for some tradeoff, may be to offer more samples [10, p. 285], rather than augment the number of meanings without sound reasoning. Later D.N. Shmelev also drew attention to the situation when a word, such as *bank* (of the river) does not develop a new meaning in the utterance *And soon all the bank knew that sandpiper* [5, p. 61], cf. also *a lake* starts denoting all the fish living in it, though we cannot say that *lake* has a semantic component denoting animate beings. D.N. Shmelev accounted that for a regular metonymical semantic transfer *habitation − animate beings inhabiting it* which is not (and should not be) registered in the dictionary. Many of the transfers do not need such lexicographic registration as they are easily decoded by the speakers-listeners. Even such words which are commonly used to denote organizations and territories occupied by people *university, city, country* may not get special lexicographical definition, at least in popular dictionaries meant for the general reader. (Still such occurrences need a cognitive decoding operation each time they are employed, what makes D. Shmelev conclude that metonymy is more complex than metaphor). At the same time some of the most often used nominations like this ind their way into lexicography and can be regarded as new meanings.

The study of changes in the semantic structure of a word is based on a comparison of the meaning of a word in synchronic and diachronic contexts. The research methods include lexicographic, lexical-semantic and contextual analyses. The word *green* is used as an example, the choice being prompted by

the lexicographical sample suggested by L.V. Scherba for the French adjective *vert / verte* (green). Renowned scholars in the field of linguistics have extensively explored the concept of this particular hue, which boasts remarkable lexical versatility. Extensive research has been conducted on the symbolic and semantic connotations associated with this color [11; 12], along with its usage in contemporary professional discourse [13; 14].

We shall try and trace the changes in the semantic structure of the word prompted by new emerging realities and the societal craving for new expressive means, try and account for semantic transfers which gave rise to new meanings and make sure that the "original" meanings (traced in the dictionaries) survived. he first stage of the investigation procedure is the analysis of the definition of the word *green* in the Old English dictionary: ***gréne adj green; young, immature; raw; growing, living*** (https://old-engli. sh/dictionary.php). The data reveals four prominent meanings in the semantic structure, which at that moment was already quite complex and included four meanings, to be pertained through the time up to the present. The − presumably − primary meaning of the word pertains to color. In The Britannica Dictionary a more detailed description of the semantic structure of the word is offered, to include

1 having the color of growing grass: *green leaves, a green sweater*

2 a covered by green grass or other plants: *green fields*

 b consisting of green plants or of the leaves of plants: *green salad*

3 feeling envy: *made him green with envy*

4 a not ripe yet: *green tomatoes*

 b not having training knowledge or experience: *green troops, she was still very green but eager to learn*

5 *inf* having a pale or sick appearance

6 trying to protect or meant to protect the natural world: concerned with protecting the environment.

The secondary meaning featuring the definition of youthfulness and naivety stems from its correlation with the emergence of verdant sprouts and their growth into greenery. This meaning seems to have been generated through metaphoric transfer, it implied comparison with the sprouts. One more meaning refers to various flora such as herbs, trees, and flowers being a semantic metonymic derivative of the colour designation. Metonymy also covers *green salad* nomination. We argue that in these two cases no separate meaning emerged: the fields are really green (there is an agricultural term for green leaves).

The study of lexicographic sources shows that the fundamental meaning of color is the most prolific, as evidenced by the proliferation of specific shades such as *bottle-green, lemon-green, pea-green*, and *sea green*. This abundance testifies to the derivative evolution of the original word which started to generate different shades of green with the help of the nouns denoting the natural objects of the green color.

Meanings (4a) and (4b) are cross-related through metaphor, and the regularity of metaphorical transfer seems to serve as a reasonable ground for treating them as one meaning with regular contextual transfer. person (*informal*) (of a person) young and without experience *The new trainees are still very green. (https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/green_1?q=green)*

(6) can be treated as a derivational relative newcomer which − through metonymy − morphed into a separate meaning and very soon was recognized by lexicographers as a new meaning. This semantic shift in the understanding of the word *green* was promoted by environmental issues [13; 14] escalating worldwide and tackling most vital and sensitive societal values. The process gave birth to a variety of metonymical transfers: *green energy, green politics, Try to adopt a greener lifestyle, the Green Party (https:// www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/green_1?q=green)*

Most controversial is meaning (3) − it is completely context-dependent in the sense that the phrase *it made him green* without contextual support and explicit reference to the feeling of envy − we may suggest that this meaning can be somehow integrated with (6), as they are related as *appearance vs feeling*. Besides, treating green as envy or any other feeling may be strongly supported by an allusion to Shakespearian *green-eyed monster* nonce-word combination. After Shakespeare it was also documented in updated dictionaries:

Thanks to the advent of modern digital resources, the establishment of these newly formed words can be facilitated by meticulously documenting the date of their initial publication. Notably, the Word Spy website, located at https://wordspy.com/, proves instrumental in procuring the necessary research data. Table 1 features the findings of a comprehensive study, unveiling, e.g., novel linguistic derivatives from *green*, the year of their fixation in the media, as well as the first example of this meaning.

Table 1. The evolutionary trajectory of *green* derivatives in contemporary English

Word	Meaning	Year of publication	Example
Greenwash	v. To implement token environmentally friendly initiatives as a way of hiding or deflecting criticism about existing environmentally destructive practices	1989	*Continuing to '**greenwash the public**' would be foolish.* Daily Telegraph, October 14, 1989 (OED)
greenscamming (greenscam v. greenscam n. greenscammer n.)	v. Making a group or product appear more environmentally friendly than it is	1992	*In a recent debate, Sen. Robert Kasten referred to the Sierra Club as an organization that is "more Democratic than environmental," and dismissed our endorsement of his opponent, state Sen. Russ Feingold. His charge that the Sierra Club backs Democrats over Republicans regardless of record is patently false, and part of what we environmentalists refer to as "**Greenscamming**," or distorting the record to appear more environmentally concerned than the record indicates.* Carl A. Zichella, "Sierra Club: We have endorsed Republicans," Capital Times, October 29, 1992
green skeleton	n. The parkland, gardens, playing fields, and recreation areas that course through a city or region	1999	*The planners want to see Torontonians come together on a set of planning values . . . Agreement, for example, on the broad precepts of design, transportation, on the meaning of economic prosperity, on the so-called "**green skeleton**" (parks and recreation areas) and on housing choices.* Michael Valpy, "City's chief planner a man with a vision," The Globe and Mail, March 02, 1999
green urbanism	n. Urban design and planning that aims to minimize a city's impact on the environment	2007	*At urban planning conferences, the current buzz phrase is "**green urbanism**" a term coined to describe the European sustainable cities movement that started more than a decade ago.* Rosslyn Beeby, "Risk of a fountain gate on our lake," Canberra Times, April 11, 2007
green tape	n. Excessive environmental regulations and guidelines that must be followed before an official action can be taken	2012	*The Prime Minister will use a high-powered business forum in Canberra today to support industry concerns about the burden of "**green tape**" that leads to delays and cost blowouts on projects.* David Crowe & Annabel Hepworth, "PM tells premiers to cut green tape to free capital," The Australian, April 12, 2012

Discussion

In the above table, the words are arranged in the order they appeared in the media. Of special note is the fact that practically all new concepts are related to the environmental discourse, and the language answers to the vital societal requirements. Initially, verbs *greenwash* and *greenscam* pertaining to environmental concerns emerged. They were followed by nouns, with the first being *green skeleton*, representing the layout of green spaces in residential areas. The introduction of the term *green urbanism* suggests that the preceding word, *green skeleton*, does not encompass the entirety of the subject matter, necessitating a more precise term to elucidate it.

The term *green tape* emerges in later times as a result of the growing emphasis on environmental consciousness. The allusion to the phrase *red tape* in this context can be easily traced, and the formation of this term is rooted in the transfer of meaning through metonymy. The research conducted reveals that the semantic structure of words is inherently evident and self-explanatory due to the presence of their original component, which was established during the historical development of the word. It can be argued that this element embodies a steadfast meaning that continuously evolves over time.

The study of the lexical meaning of a word in a dynamic perspective is associated with linguistic developments based on the concept of "social meaning", which create a significant research perspective in the analysis of the social positioning of a person choosing a particular linguistic means in theircommunicative activity, since they show the stable nature of the connection between the linguistic sign and the socially significant context in which this word becomes a marker of a person's special social identity [15].

Conclusion and Implications

The semantic structure of a word is normally formed by several meanings, one of them may be the main, while others are derived from it by means of semantic shifts such as metonymy or metaphor. The derived ones usually "live" in the language for some time before they get officially registered in the dictionaries and it means they are accepted in the (literary) language. The new meanings may — with the time — even change their semantic status and become the main meanings, still they do not affect in any way the meaning they derived from. The long-standing problem of distinguishing between meanings as such, on the one hand, and shades of meanings, on the other, persists, leading to regular semantic shifts that are easily decodable in the speech act. The solution suggested by L.V. Scherba as far back as the 1930s to try and avoid multiplying lexicographic entries, in favour of offering more utterances illustrating the meaning, still seem plausible. The meanings are not individual, though to fully understand the utterance the recipient has to take into account the full context of the phrase — both linguistic and extralinguistic. The meaning is shared by the speaking community and is changing — if it really is — very rarely, what is subject to changes is the semantic structure of a word, and the changes are usually prompted by the rapidly changing environments and human activities.

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