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Interpretation of Language as A Social Phenomenon

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Abstract: This article considers the social essence of language as one of the main theoretical issues of modern linguistics. The transfer of word meaning as a specific manifestation of the existence of the language system is analyzed from the perspective of the existence of language, semiotics and information theory. The author emphasizes that there are still difficulties in fully resolving the fact that language is a social phenomenon, its application to lexis, grammar, stylistics, norms and its variants. It is noted that scientists who recognize the social aspects of lexis often do not connect grammar with society.

Keywords: Language, sociolinguistics, social phenomenon, means of communication, lexis, grammar, transfer of word meaning, semiotics, dialect, language functions.

Introduction: The fact that language is a social phenomenon means that there are still certain difficulties in fully solving the problem of its application to various environments and layers (lexicon, grammar, stylistics, norms and their variants). At the same time, the social nature of language is interpreted not only by recognizing its existence (by indicating the significant “socially diverse” part of words), but also by analyzing the external conditions, that is, the extralinguistic environment, by delving into the social essence of language and all its functions, including lexicon, phraseology, grammar, etc., and by analyzing all the conditions for the existence of dialects and the functions they perform in understanding this social environment. The issue of language and its social essence is the main theoretical issue of modern linguistics. The scientific understanding of the sociolinguistic essence of language depends on answering two questions:

1. What is language itself, what is its nature and what features of language determine its essence and what role does it play in knowing the world?

2. How is language related to other social and natural, mental, physiological phenomena and how does it differ from them?

The direction that distinguishes the social function of language as a means of communication and the language as a means of cognitive processes arose only at the beginning of the 21st century. This direction was formed and developed in the 20th century in the works of A. Meye, J. Vandries, V. M. Zhirmunsky, N. S. Chemodanov, A. D. Schweitzer, V. V. Nikolsky and others.

The transfer of word meaning is one of the specific manifestations of the existence of a language system. As a language system, it is its own system, a well-systematized set of units, the correct use of which is a functionally adequate form, that is, the combination of units. These units are formed by speakers in a specific place and time.

From the point of view of the existence of language: language is a product of the social psychophysiological group of skills of forming units from the sound matter by associating sounds with meaning. From the point of view of semiotics: language is a system of signs, that is, a set of special signs representing things and objects in material existence, which have the property of signifying something else existing outside themselves.

From the point of view of information theory: language is a code through which semantic information is encoded. It is clear that the presented arguments are not able to give a complete definition of language. Therefore, in the scientific world, the shortest definitions of language are used in the following order:

1) “Language is the most important means of human communication”.

2) “Language is a tool and means of human cognition of the material world”.

F.D. Saussure ends his famous “General Course in Linguistics” (1933, 207 b) with the following words: “The only and true object of linguistics is language, a phenomenon that serves in and for itself.” This creates some difficulties in generalizing the problems of the social aspect of language. If language itself is a highly social phenomenon, serving as a means of communication between people, then how can linguistics be limited to the study of language “in and for itself.” Therefore, it is customary to look for and view the problem of the social necessity of language in a given society from outside the field of linguistics. Usually, the lexicon is first of all embodied as an external factor. But this understanding is incorrect due to the following considerations: 1) the lexicon is structured on a systemic basis and exists only in the system of a particular language; 2) the grammatical structure of the language requires lexical replenishment; 3) the constant interaction between the lexicon and the grammatical system of the language is not sufficiently taken into account by linguists. Accordingly, the thesis that the lexicon is social, but the grammatical system of the language is antisocial, is incorrect.

In language, the world of things and the world of thoughts exist in parallel. The connection between the grammatical structure of a language and the history of a people is manifested through conscious development. Changes in the grammatical system depend on the development of human consciousness, on the ability of human consciousness to abstract (which grows with the process of historical development of society). If there are no major changes in the grammatical system of a language as a result of major political and social events occurring in the life of society, that is, invasions, invasions, etc., then, in turn, there will be no changes in the language at all, and everything else related to the language will be of little importance. The functioning of the language environment and the nature of its communicative activity apply to language as much as to “everything else”. The specific conditions of language activity, its various styles are determined by the conditions of social life, that is, the existing social conditions. The internal laws of language development, like its other laws, ultimately remain social. This is the main thesis in sociolinguistics, and without a correct and deep understanding of this, it is absolutely impossible to solve the problem of the social properties of language. The essence of sociolinguistics is determined by its main features: language is a social phenomenon, considered only as a social concept; language as a means of communication is not a psycho-physiological phenomenon, since a psychic phenomenon cannot be a means of communication; language is a social phenomenon; it is a social factor and belongs to the people, that is, to the community that speaks this language.

The social nature of language is one of the central theoretical problems of modern linguistics. The transfer of the meaning of the word is interpreted as a characteristic form of the language system's manifestation of its existence, and it is analyzed from the point of view of the existence aspect of the language, semiotics, and information theory. There are still some difficulties in fully solving the issue of the fact that language is a social phenomenon and how it is manifested in lexicon, grammar, stylistics, norm and norm variants. The scientific understanding of the sociolinguistic essence depends on two questions: what is the nature of language and its role in cognition, and how does language differ from other social, natural, mental and physiological phenomena. The direction separating the social function of language as a means of communication and knowledge was formed at the beginning of the 21st century. Language is interpreted as a social phenomenon, not a psycho-physiological one, and it belongs to the language-speaking community. In conclusion, language and society are inseparable, in a two-way relationship: language cannot exist without society, and society cannot exist without language.

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