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DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN POLYSEMY AND HOMONYMY

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the difficulty of distinguishing between polysemy and homonymy, their meaning and the differences between them according to using in different context. The issue of developing an integrated approach to the study of such a phenomenon in lexicology as polysemy and homonymy seems interesting and especially topical at the present time due to the huge number of polysemantic words both in English and other languages, which is the relevance of this scientific article.

KEYWORDS

Lexicology, context, syntactic context, lexical context, contextual analysis, lexical homonyms.

INTRODUCTION

Among the problems of general lexicology that allow the use of contextual analysis, first of all, we can name the removal of ambiguity of lexical units in the text. The context contains all the necessary information for an unambiguous understanding of the statement, while all the elements of the context are informative - the structure of the phrase, and the grammatical form

of the word, and the semantics of the combined words, and the order of the elements.

Context (from Latin contextus — connection) is a fragment of text that includes a unit chosen for analysis, necessary and sufficient to determine the meaning of this unit, which is consistent with the general meaning of this text. The concept of "context"

is not equivalent to the concept of "text". The number of context in the text depends on the number of its constituent units, where each has its own context¹.

Depending on the functions, several types of proper linguistic context are distinguished: permissive, supporting, repaying, compensating, intensifying. In modern linguistics, the concept of context has expanded significantly. The phrases that form the immediate environment of the word, and even a complete sentence, may not be enough to determine the meaning of the word, which becomes clear only in the context of the entire paragraph or superphrasal unity that reveals the entire situation being described, or even in the context of the entire work.

Thus, the primary role of the context in its various types in clarifying meanings becomes obvious. Awareness of this role, however, should not lead to a methodologically very important conclusion that the word has no meaning of its own, meaning outside the context, that its semantics follows entirely from the context, a conclusion that is quite widespread and essentially incorrect. Without denying or belittling the role of context, one should still recognize the indisputable fact that words have more or less constant meanings. The delimitation of the lexical meanings of a word, however, is significantly

complicated by their diffuseness, indefiniteness and unsteadiness of their boundaries, which determines both the possibility of erroneous interpretation of certain meanings, and the difficulty of distinguishing the meanings themselves, determining the status of the meaning as a separate lexico-semantic variant of the word.²

When translating texts from English into Russian, there are numerous problems with the choice of words due to the polysemy of the English language. Context plays an important role in choosing the right value. Contextual meanings arise in the process of using words in speech, depending on the environment, and are realized under the influence of a narrow, wide and extralinguistic context. Within the general concept of context, a narrow context (or micro context) and a broad context (or macro context) are distinguished.

Narrow context can be divided into syntactic and lexical.

1. The syntactic context is the syntactic construction in which the given word, phrase or subordinate clause is used.

² Chupilina E.I. "Issues of English Contextology" vol. 1, – M., 1974. – S.129.

¹ Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary 1990, p. 682

2. The lexical context is a set of specific lexical units, words and set phrases, in the environment of which this unit occurs.

The most important function of the context is to resolve the ambiguity of linguistic units. Thus, the context makes this or that language unit unambiguous and makes it possible to choose one of several potentially existing equivalents of this unit in the target language. In the process of translation, to resolve ambiguity and determine the choice of equivalent, sometimes it is enough to take into account the syntactic context of the word.

As already mentioned, contextual meanings arise in the process of using words in speech, depending on the environment and are realized under the influence of a narrow, wide and extralinguistic context. According to the degree of frequency, one can distinguish between ordinary (repeating) and occasional (random, individual) contextual meanings. Over time, the usual contextual meanings move into the category of variant correspondences. Occasional meanings are a manifestation of the subjective use of words by one or another author and are most often found in fiction. It is the occasional, unusual use of the word and the reasons for this that must be taken into account when translating. Along with this, there are cases when even the widest possible context does not

contain any indication of the meaning in which this or that unit is used in this case. In these cases, in order to obtain the required information, it is necessary to go beyond the linguistic context and refer to the extralinguistic situation. By "situation" is meant, firstly, the situation of communication, i.e. the environment in which the communicative act takes place; secondly, the subject of the message, i.e. the situation (a set of facts) described in the text; thirdly, the participants in communication, i.e. writing, speaking, listening, reading³.

The ideological orientation of the work, the ideological position of the author may not always be clear from the content of individual parts of the text or even the entire translated whole. In such cases, the ideological orientation of the text has to be established with the help of an extralinguistic context or an extralinguistic situation.

Polysemy (polysemy) is inherent in both words and morphemes; it is also inherent in constructive objects. Polysemy characterizes the vast majority of words, which can be easily seen by opening an explanatory dictionary of any language.

In the lexical system of the language, along with polysemy, there is another type of semantic ambiguity, related to and bordering on polysemy, but

³ Karimova N.R. 1975, p. 251

nevertheless different from it — this is homonymy. Homonymy (from the Greek *hōnōnymia* — same name) in linguistics — the sound coincidence of different language units, the meanings of which are not related to each other. Lexical homonyms are identical-sounding words that do not have common elements of meaning (*semia*) and are not associated associatively. The reasons for the emergence of homonyms are different:

- 1) as a result of sound changes, words that were previously different in sound may coincide (for example, *flaw crack* and *flaw gust of wind*);
- 2) borrowing foreign words;
- 3) a break in the originally unified semantics of a polysemantic word, etc.

There are full and partial homonymy, in which only certain forms of words, called *homoforms*, coincide (for example, *saw saw* and *saw form of the verb to see to see*). Along with homonyms, *homographs* are also distinguished - words that have the same spelling, but different stress or pronunciation in general (for example, *lead [led] "lead"* and *lead [li: d] "lead"*), and *homophones* - words that are pronounced the same, but differ in spelling (for example, *write — right*; *week — weak*).

So, homonymy is a phenomenon in which the same linguistic form has several meanings that, unlike polysemy, have no common semantic features, no

common elements of meaning and, accordingly, are not related to each other. However, no matter how significant the number of homonyms may seem, even in the English language, in which, according to the observations of researchers, there are much more homonymous units than in Uzbek, in general, homonymy is not as common as polysemy, despite the fact that it permeates not only vocabulary, but also morphology, word formation, syntax. In general, in modern English, homonyms make up no more than 16-18% of the total vocabulary, and the number of homonyms within the same part of speech (such as those given earlier) does not exceed 8-9%. Probably, it is precisely the lack of connections between the meanings of homonyms, depriving native speakers of the necessary support for them in mastering and storing lexical units, that makes homonymy an undesirable phenomenon for the language, simultaneously limiting the scope of its distribution. In addition, the fact that in speech homonymy can be an obstacle to understanding and recognizing the exact meaning of the statement is also important.

CONCLUSION

The difficulty of distinguishing between polysemy and homonymy leads some scholars to argue that it is advisable to consider only words that are different in origin as homonyms. However, firstly, not in all cases it is possible to establish the origin of the word, and secondly, — and this vowel — following such an attitude

would move the concept of homonymy to the field of historical lexicology, while it is for modern languages that one has to distinguish between meanings related to one with the other, and the meanings, which, although expressed by the same sound form, have nothing in common semantically. This is a question not only of linguistic theory, but also of lexicographic practice.

The causes and ways of the formation of polysemy and homonymy are radically different. It is difficult to see the direct influence of extralinguistic factors in the appearance of homonyms, as is observed in polysemy. The reasons underlying the origins of homonymy are associated primarily with the historical development of the language system, with those phonetic, phonological, morphological, semantic, etc. modifications that a language undergoes in the course of its existence.

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