

# Description of Semasiology and The Linguistic Study of Meaning

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**Abstract:** The article provides information about the field of semasiology, including its object, subject matter, and types. It also presents an overview of studies conducted within systemic-structural, anthropocentric, and synergetic approaches aimed at identifying how meaning is formed and develops, as well as its influence on human cognition and thinking.

**Keywords:** Semasiology, semantics, meaning, sememe, seme, systemic-structural paradigm, anthropocentric paradigm, synergetic approach.

**Introduction:** Semasiology is a field that studies the meaning and content of linguistic units; its subject of study is meaning, and its object comprises all language units that express meaning. In this respect, semasiology is subdivided into several branches: the meaning of phonemes is studied in phonosemasyology, the meaning of lexemes in lexical semantics, the meaning of phrasemes in phraseological semantics, the meaning of grammatical units in grammatical semasiology, and, in particular, the semantic content of syntactic units is examined in semantic (content-based) syntax. Semasiology also includes such types as general semasiology, special (particular) semasiology, historical (diachronic) semasiology, modern (synchronic) semasiology, comparative semasiology, and structural semasiology.

The study of meaning is carried out in two directions: from form to meaning and from meaning to form. "Semasiology is a branch of lexical semantics that studies meaning in the sign → meaning direction. In this case, the question is posed: 'What meaning does this sign (word, lexeme) express?' (the listener's perspective)." "Onomasiology is another aspect of semantics, in which meaning is investigated in the meaning → sign direction. Here the question is: 'Which

sign or signs express this meaning?' (the speaker's perspective)." In linguistics, the term semasiology is used both to denote the field that studies the semantic content of language units and to refer to an aspect of lexical semantics as a component of that field.

The task of semasiology is to investigate the meanings of linguistic units: to study the formation and development of meaning; to carry out componential analysis; to group linguistic units into semantic fields according to integral and differential semes; to examine paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations that arise within the lexicon on the basis of seme analysis; and to explore the expression of subjective attitudes in meaning as well as their influence on human cognition, imagination, and psyche. The semantic content of linguistic units affected by phenomena such as polysemy, homonymy, synonymy, antonymy, enantiosemy, word formation, proposition, and presupposition is also widely studied in semasiology through the method of seme (semantic-feature) analysis.

The term "semasiology" was first used by Reisig in 1939, and it emerged as an independent linguistic field in the late nineteenth century. In linguistics, the term semantics is also used in place of semasiology. "The

term ‘semantics’ was introduced into scholarship by the French linguist M. Bréal in 1883. The word semantics is of Greek origin and means ‘signifying’ (sēmantikos).”

In Uzbek linguistics, research on semasiology has developed on a broad scale. Substantial scholarly work has been carried out on studying the meaning of linguistic units, their components, structure, and development. Monographs and teaching-methodological manuals have been produced. Scholars such as M. Mirtojiev, M. Hakimova, N. Mahmudov, A. Nurmonov, and Sh. Safarov made a significant contribution to its development.

The work conducted within the systemic-structural paradigm has played an important role in the development of semasiology as an independent linguistic field. The emergence of the anthropocentric paradigm in linguistics intensified interest in how meaning is perceived by humans and realized in speech. Observing how an object is perceived by a subject, how concepts acquire meaning in language and take linguistic form, and how a word can generate different concepts—and identifying the basis of these processes—proved the necessity of an anthropocentric approach to semantic analysis. In particular, an anthropocentric approach to the study of word meaning, alongside investigating the formation and development of meaning through seme analysis, opened the way to examining the impact of words on the human psyche, thinking, and imagination; the creation and discovery of new meanings on that basis; the role of the human factor in semantic development; and the fact that meaning possesses properties of self-organization and self-development.

In world linguistics, the investigations of Wilhelm von Humboldt and Aleksandr Afanasyevich Potebnya into the semantic functions of words and the formation and development of meaning were studied within the broader framework of language and thought. Scholars such as Karl Reisig and Michel Bréal examined word meaning from a linguistic perspective and contributed to the separation of semasiology as an independent discipline. The development of lexical meaning and the factors that determine it, the components of lexical meaning, and the relations among them have been addressed in the works of S. Ullmann, G. Paul, B. A. Zvegintsev, N. F. Alefirenko, Ye. G. Belyayevskaya, Ye.

S. Kubryakova, L. A. Novikov, Z. D. Popova, I. A. Sternin, and M. S. Salomatina. M. Johnson investigated word meaning within a discursive-cognitive approach. L. V. Kulgavova studied word meaning from a synergetic perspective. V. A. Pishalnikova, viewing speech activity as a synergetic system, examined the theory of meaning in a synergetic aspect.

In Uzbek linguistics, there are many works devoted to the study of meaning, and the writings of Mahmud al-Kashgari and Alisher Navoi serve as fundamental sources for investigating the internal structure of meaning and the foundations of its development. Research into the semantic composition of words, the formation and evolution of meaning, semantic structure, and the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations of lexical meanings has been carried out extensively by scholars such as Sh. Rahmatullayev, I. Qo‘chqortoyev, A. Hojiyev, R. Yunusov, H. Jamolxonov, A. Sobirov, Sh. Iskandarova, S. Muhammedova, Y. Odilov, and D. Abdullayeva. Sh. Safarov demonstrated that meaning formation is a phenomenon governed by discursive-synergetic processes.

In world linguistics, the factors that cause changes in the system of meanings have been widely studied within systemic-structural and anthropocentric paradigms. The internal composition of word meaning has been analyzed by distinguishing such components as sememe, seme, and ema, and substantial research has been undertaken to explore how these components are perceived and how they acquire linguistic form. Increasing attention has also been given to studying language in cooperation with related disciplines such as psychology, sociology, cognitive science, and pragmatics. Determining the cognitive and psychological characteristics of meaning has become one of the central issues. The introduction of a synergetic approach into linguistic research made it necessary to examine word meaning as a self-organizing system. Since meaning is rich in sememes, semes, and emas, and since these elements are numerous and mutually influential, meaning must be studied as a complex system, which in turn requires identifying the factors that bring about such complexity. Changes occurring within the structure of word meaning have been viewed as phenomena unfolding under synergetic processes, while the forces that set them in motion have been investigated within

the framework of discursive-cognitive activity. It has been shown that, in determining the basis of semantic changes, it is essential to rely on the synergetic principles of openness, multifunctionality, and nonlinearity.

In global linguistics, attention has been directed to the fact that the meaning system of natural language has a complex structure and possesses the capacity for self-organization as an open, nonequilibrium system, as well as to the study of nonlinear phenomena that cause these processes. The language system has been examined in relation to its user—the subject who implements it. Researchers have focused on the formation and development of meaning, the accumulation of knowledge within it, and its potential for transmitting information. This, in turn, has generated different paths, methods, and approaches in meaning research. It has been confirmed that an anthropocentric approach is significant in both semasiological and onomasiological investigations of meaning. The systemic-structural paradigm became intertwined with the anthropocentric paradigm. Studying the word as an integral whole consisting only of form and meaning proved insufficient; the existence of a human–meaning–form pattern was substantiated. It has been demonstrated that meaning, as a product of perception, thinking, intellect, and consciousness, is structurally complex, multifaceted, and an open system capable of self-organization. The effectiveness of the discursive-synergetic aspect was established in identifying that the meaning system is constantly changing under the influence of external and internal factors, that derived meanings arise, and that new meanings emerge as a result of the interaction of meanings.

In Uzbek linguistics, numerous scholarly studies have been conducted on the formation of word meaning, the hierarchical classification of its components, semantic development, and the identification and analysis of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations among meanings. Extralinguistic and intralinguistic factors causing semantic development have been identified. The anthropocentric paradigm opened the way to determining psychological, cognitive, pragmatic, and socio-cultural factors influencing semantic development. The attempt to study meaning structure as an integral whole, a fixed pattern, or an

orderly configuration did not prove fully effective. The anthropocentric paradigm introduced the human factor into meaning research. The fact that a single denotatum can be perceived differently, and that word meaning can therefore be interpreted in different ways, produces a disordered (chaotic) state in the relations among semes within the sememe. Such disorder is also caused by words entering into paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. This enriches word meaning with additional semes and complicates its structure. Investigating the processes through which meaning shifts from one state to another requires approaching meaning research on the basis of synergetic regularities. In studying the order within such disorder occurring in the structure of word meaning, it becomes necessary to identify the factors influencing semantic development as well as the bifurcation points that lead meaning to diverge in different, even opposite, directions. A discursive-synergetic approach to the study of word meaning broadens the possibilities for examining changes occurring within the meaning system and for describing the pathways of its development in a precise and comprehensive manner.

A discursive-synergetic approach to language research makes it possible to study and accurately characterize processes connected with the linguistic activation of human thought, the factors influencing the development of meaning, and the nature of meaning as self-organizing and self-developing. Such approaches enrich existing views on meaning research with new ideas and theoretical perspectives.

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