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WORDMEANING. DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO MEANING.

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Annotation:

The definition of the word meaning presents no less difficulty than the definition of the word itself. The word meaning renders the emotion or the concept in the mind of the speaker which he wants to convey to the listener in the process of communication. By concept we understand any discrete unit of human cognition. The word being a unit of language enters a number of combinations with other units stands in functional relations to other linguistic signs. Thus the meaning of the word not only fixes concepts by way of generalizing and reflecting reality, but it is realized on contexts and combinations. The meaning of the word is not homogeneous. It is closely connected with the object it names and the concept it fixes. It is also connected with the sound form besides it is realized in different relations with other concepts. There are two main approaches to word meaning: 1. relative approach, according to which each linguistic sign (word) gets its meaning only in some semantic field or paradigmatic relations. 2. the referential or denotational approach, according to which the meaning of the word is autonomous, it's an integral part of the word, though is realized in contexts and this approach is shown as a triangle (symbol – the word, concept – thought; referent – object, denoted by the word).

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Every word has two aspects: the outer aspect (its sound form) and the inner aspect (its meaning) . Sound and meaning do not always constitute a constant unit even in the same language. For example the word «temple» may denote «a part of a human head» and «a large church» In such cases we have homonyms. One and the same word in different syntactical relations can develop different meanings, For example. the verb «treat» in sentences:



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- a) He treated my words as a joke. У мени сўзларимни ҳазил деб ҳисоблади.
b) The book treats of poetry. Китоб шеъриятга бағишланган.
c) They treated me to sweets. Улар мени ширинликлар билан меҳмон қилишди.

d) He treats his son cruelly. У ўз ўғлига қўпол муомала қилади. In all these sentences the verb «treat» has different meanings and we can speak about polysemy. On the other hand, one and the same meaning can be expressed by different sound forms, For example «pilot», and «airman», «horror» and «terror». In such cases we have synonyms.

Homonyms. Definition, formal classification. Homonyms are words which are identical in sound and spelling, or, at least, in one of these aspects, but different in their meaning. E. g. bank, n. — a shore, bank, n. — an institution for receiving, lending, exchanging, and safeguarding money. ball, n. — a sphere; any spherical body, ball, n. — a large dancing party. Homonyms which are the same in sound and spelling are traditionally termed homonyms proper. Bean, n. and been, Past Part, of to be are homophone- they are the same in sound but different in spelling. Homographs- words which are the same in spelling but different in sound (lead v – show smb the way, lead n – a heavy, rather soft metal). When analysing different cases of homonymy we find that some words are homonymous in all their forms, i.e. we observe full h. of the paradigms of two or more different words, e.g., in seal1 — ‘a sea animal’ and seal2 — ‘a design printed on paper by means of a stamp’. When only some of the word-forms (seal, seals, etc.) are homonymous, whereas others (sealed, sealing) are not, we can speak of partial h. - find, found, found, and found, founded, founded.

Sources of homonyms. The two main sources of h. are: 1. diverging meaning development of a polysemantic word. This process can be observed when different meanings of the same word move so far away from each other that they come to be regarded as two separate units. Ex.: flower and flour originally were one word meaning ‘the flower’ and ‘the finest part of wheat’. 2. convergent sound development of two or more different words. Ex, OE. ic and OE. eaze have become identical in pronunciation (ME. I and eye). A number of lexico-grammatical homonyms appeared as a result of convergent sound development of the verb and the noun (MnE. love — (to) love and OE. lufu — lufian). Words borrowed from other languages may through phonetic convergence become homonymous. ONorse. ras and Fr. race are homonymous in Modern English (race1 [reis] — ‘running’ and race2 [reis] — ‘a distinct ethnical stock’).



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Types of Synonyms. The role of synonyms in the development of the vocabulary. The only existing classification system for synonyms was established by Academician Vinogradov, the famous Russian scholar. In his classification system there are three types of synonyms: ideographic (which he defined as words conveying the same concept but differing in shades of meaning), stylistic (differing in stylistic characteristics) and absolute (coinciding in all their shades of meaning and in all their stylistic characteristics). A more modern and a more effective approach to the classification of synonyms may be based on the definition describing synonyms as words differing in connotations.

The strongest point in the approach is an attempt to link the notion of meaning with the process of naming the objects, processes or phenomena of concrete reality. The analytical definitions of meaning are usually criticized on the grounds that they cannot be applied to sentences. For example, the sentence "I like to read long novels" does not express a single notion, it represents composites of notions specifying the relations between them. The referential definition of meaning can hardly be applied to semantic additions that come to the surface in the process of communication. For example, "That's very clever" may mean different sorts of things including that it is not clever at all.

Another approach to the Definitions of meaning is functional or contextual. Proceeding from the assumptions that the true meaning of a word is to be found by observing what a man does with it not what he says about it, the functional approach to meaning defines it as the use of the word in the language. It has been suggested that the meaning of a word is revealed by substituting different contexts. For example, the meaning of the word cat may be singled out of contexts: cats catch mice. I bought fish for my cat. And similar sentences.

By the functional approach the meaning can be studied only through context, through its relation to other words. For example, to take the tram (a taxi), to take off, to take care of, to take ill, to take a degree, to take cold, to take it easy, to take on, to take place, to take tea, to take a bath, to take five minutes, to take notice, to take part in, to take a book, to make a table, to make a teacher, to make out, to make somebody do smth, to make up, to make up one's mind; to look at, to look forward, to look for, to look after, to look through, to look pale, to look like;

To sum up, in each case the implication would depend on the concrete situation of communication. And discussing meaning as the information conveyed would amount to the discussion of an almost endless set of possible communication situations



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which in the end will bring us back to a modified contextual or functional approach to meaning. The distinction between the two layers in the information conveyed is so important that two different terms may be used to denote them: the direct information conveyed by the units which build up a sentence may be referred to as meaning while the information added to the given extralinguistic situation may be called sense.

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