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WORD-COMBINATION (PHRASE) IN LINGUISTICS
Structure of word-combination

Word-combinations may be described through the order and arrangement of the component members. The phrase *to see something* can be classified as *a verbal – nominal group*, *to see to something* as *verbal – prepositional – nominal*, etc.

All word-combination may be also analyzed by the criterion of distribution into two big classes. If the word-combination has the same linguistic distribution as one of its members, it is described as **endocentric**, i.e. having one central member functionally equivalent to the whole phrase. The word-combinations, e. g., *red flower, bravery of all kinds*, are distributionally identical with their central components *flower* and *bravery* (cf., e.g., *I saw a red flower – I saw a flower).*

If the distribution of the word-combination is different from either of its members, it is regarded as **exocentric**, i.e. as having no such central member, for instance *side by side* or *grow smaller* and others where the component words are not syntactically substitutable for the whole word-combination.

In endocentric word-combinations the central component that has the same distribution as the whole combination is clearly the dominant member or the head to which all other members of the combination are subordinated. In the word-combination *red flower*, e.g., the head is the noun *flower* and in the word-combination *kind to people* the head is the adjective *kind*.

So the word-combinations may be classified according to their head-words into *nominal* combinations or phrases *(red flower)*, *adjectival* combinations (*kind to people*), *verbal* combinations (*to speak well*). The head is not necessarily the component that occurs first in the word-combination. In such nominal word-combinations as, for example, *very great bravery*, *bravery in the struggle* the noun *bravery* is the head whether followed or preceded by other words.

Word-combinations are also classified according to their syntactic pattern into predicative and non-predicative combinations. Such word-combinations as, for example, *John works, he went that* have a syntactic structure similar to that of a sentence, are classified as predicative, and all others as non-predicative. Non-predicative word-combinations may be subdivided according to the type of syntactic relations between the components into *subordinative* and *coordinative*. Such word-combinations as *red flower, a man of wisdom* and the like are termed *subordinative* because the words red and of wisdom are subordinated to flower and man respectively and function as their attributes. Such phrases as women and children, day and night, do or die are classified as *coordinative*. [R. S. Ginzburg. 1979. p. 67]

Meaning of word-combinations

The meaning of word-combinations may be analyzed into **lexical** and **grammatical** components. But before analyzing lexical and grammatical meanings of word-combinations it is essential to clear up what lexical and grammatical meanings of the words are.

The disciples of F. de Saussure consider meaning to be the relation between the object or notion named and the name itself. Other scholars define the meaning as the situation in which the word is uttered. The definitions of meaning given by different authors, though different in detail, agree in the basic principle: they all point out that lexical meaning is the realization of concept or emotion by means of a definite language system. [I.V. Arnold. 1986. p. 38]

The grammatical meaning is defined as an expression in speech of relationships between words based on contrastive features of arrangements in which they occur. The grammatical meaning is more abstract and more generalized than the lexical meaning, it unites words into big groups such as parts of speech or lexico-grammatical groups. [I.V. Arnold. 1986. p. 39]

As far as ***lexical meaning*** of the word-combination is concerned, it may be defined as the combined lexical meaning of the component words. Thus the lexical meaning of the word-combination *red flower* may be described denotationally as the combined meaning of the words *red* and *flower*. It should be point out, however, that the term *combined lexical meaning* is not to imply that the meaning of the word-combination is a mere additive result of all the lexical meanings of the component members. As a rule, the meanings of the component words are mutually dependent and the meaning of the word-combination naturally predominates over the lexical meaning of its constituents.

Even in word-combinations made up of technical terms which are traditionally held to be monosemantic the meaning of the word-combination cannot be described as the sum total of the meanings of its components. For example, though the same adjective *atomic* is a component of a number of terminological word-combinations, e. g. *atomic weight, atomic warfare*, etc., the lexical meaning of the adjective is different and to a certain degree subordinated to the meaning of the noun in each individual word-combination and consequently the meaning of the whole combination is modified.

Interdependence of the lexical meanings of the constituent members of word-combinations can be readily observed in word-combinations made up of polysemantic words. For example, in the nominal group *blind man (cat, horse)* only one meaning of the adjective *blind*, i.e., 'unable to see', is combined with the lexical meaning of the noun *man (cat, horse)* and it is only one of the meanings of the noun *man* – 'human being' that is perceived in combination with the lexical meaning of this adjective. The meaning of the same adjective in *blind type (print, handwriting)* is different.

So polysemantic words are used in word-combinations only in one of their meanings. These meanings of the component words in such word-combinations are mutually interdependent and inseparable. Semantic inseparability of word-combinations that allows us to treat them as self-contained lexical units is also clearly perceived in the analysis of the connotational component of their lexical meaning. Stylistic reference of word-combinations, for example, may be essentially different from that of the words making up these combinations. There is nothing colloquial or slangy about such words as *old, boy, bag, fun* when taken in isolation. The word-combinations made up of these combinations, e. g. *old boy, bags of fun*, are recognizably colloquial.

As with polymorphemic words word-combinations possess not only the lexical meaning, but also the meaning conveyed mainly by the pattern of arrangement of their constituents. A certain parallel can be drawn between the meaning conveyed by the arrangement of morphemes in words and the ***structural meaning*** of word-combinations. It will be recalled that two compound words made up of lexically identical stems may be different in meaning because of the difference in the pattern of arrangement of the stems.

For example, the meaning of such words as *dog-house* and *house-dog* is different though the lexical meaning of the components is identical. This is also true of word-combinations. Such word-combinations as *school grammar* and *grammar school* are semantically different because of the difference in the pattern of arrangement of the component words.

It is assumed that the structural pattern of word-combinations is the carrier of a certain semantic component not necessarily dependent on the actual lexical meaning of its members. In the example *school grammar* the structural meaning of the word-combination may be abstracted from the group and described as 'quality-substance' meaning. This is the meaning expressed by the pattern of the word-combination but not by either the word *school* or the word *grammar*.

It should be also noted that the ***lexical*** and ***structural*** components of meaning in word-combinations are interdependent and inseparable. The inseparability of these two semantic components in word-combinations can, perhaps, be best illustrated by the semantic analysis of individual word-combinations in which the norms of conventional collocability of words seem to be deliberately overstepped. For instance, in the word-combination *all the sun long* we observe a departure from the norm of lexical valency represented by such word-combinations as *all the day long, all the night long, all the week long* and others.

The structural pattern of these word-combinations in ordinary usage and the word-combination *all the sun long* is identical. The generalized meaning of the pattern may be described as a 'unit of time'. Replacing *day, night, week* by another noun *the sun* we do not find any change in the structural meaning of the pattern. The group *all the sun long* functions semantically as a unit of time. The noun *sun,* however, included in the group continues to carry the semantic value or, to be more exact, the lexical meaning that it has in word-combinations of other structural patterns (cf. *the sun rays, African sun*). This is also true of the word-combination *a grief ago* made up by analogy with the patterns *a week ago, a year ago*. It follows that the meaning of the word-combination is derived from the combined lexical meanings of its constituents and is inseparable from the meaning of the pattern of their arrangement.

Comparing two nominal phrases *a factory hand* – 'a factory worker' and *a hand bag* – a bag carried in the hand' we see that though the word *hand* makes part of both its lexical meaning and the role it plays in the structure of word-combinations is different which accounts for the difference in the lexical and structural meaning of the word-combinations under discussion.

It is also argued that the meaning of word-combinations is also dependent on some extra-linguistic factors, i.e. on the situation in which word-combinations are habitually used by native speakers. For example, the meaning of the nominal combination *wrong number* is linguistically defined by the combined lexical meaning of the component words and the structural meaning of the pattern. Proceeding from the linguistic meaning this group can denote any number that is wrong. Actually, however, it is habitually used by English speakers in answering telephone calls and, as a rule, denotes the wrong telephone number. [R. S. Ginzburg. 1979. p. 70]

Interdependence of structure
And meaning in word-combinations

As both structure and meaning are parts of the word-combination as a linguistic unit, the interdependence of these two facets is naturally the subject matter of lexicological analysis.

Syntactic structure (formula) and pattern of word-combinations

In connection with the problem under discussion the term *syntactic (*or *syntagmatic) structure* requires some clarification. We know that word-combinations may be generally described through the pattern of arrangement of the constituent members. The term *syntactic structure* (formula) properly speaking implies the description of the order and arrangement of member-words as part of speech. We may, for instance, describe the word-combination as made up of *an Adjective* and *a Noun* (**clever man, red flower**), *a Verb-a Noun* (**take books, build houses**), or *a Noun, a Preposition* and *a Noun* (**a touch of colour, a matter of importance**). The syntactic structure (formula) of the nominal combinations **clever man** and **red flower** may be represented as A+N, that of the verbal combinations **take books** and **build houses** as *V+N*, and so on.

These formulas can be used to describe all the possible structures of English word-combinations. We can say, e. g., that the verbal combinations comprise the following structural formulas: *V+N* (**to build houses**), *V+prp+N* (**to rely on somebody**), *V+N+prp+N* (**to hold something against somebody**), *V+N+V(inf.)* (**to make somebody work**), *V+V(inf.)* (**to get to know**), and so on.

The structure of word-combinations may be also described in relation to the head-word, e. g., the structure of the same verbal combinations (to **build houses, to rely on somebody**) is represented as **to build** + *N*, **to rely** + **on** + *N*. In this case it is usual to speak of *the patterns* of word-combinations but not of formulas. The term *pattern* implies that we are speaking of the structure of the word-combination in which a given word is used as its head.

The interdependence of the pattern and meaning of head-words can be easily perceived by comparing word-combinations of different patterns in which the same head-word is used. For example, in verbal combinations the head-word **mean** is semantically different in the patterns **mean** + *N* (**mean something**) and **mean** + *V(inf.)* (**mean to do something**). Three patterns with the verb **get** as the head-word represent three different meanings of this verb, e.g. **get** + *N* (**get a letter, information, money**), **get** + **to** + *N* (**get to Moscow, to the Institute**), **get** + *N* + *V(inf.)* (**get somebody to come, to do the work**).

This is also true of adjectival word-combinations, e.g. **clever** + *N* (**clever man**) and **clever** + **at** + *N* (**clever at arithmetic**), **keen** + *N* (**keen sight, hearing**), **keen** + **on** + *N* (**keen on sports, tennis**). Notional member-combinations in such patterns are habitually represented in

conventional symbols whereas prepositions and other form-words are given in their usual graphic form. This is accounted for by the fact that individual form-words may modify or change the meaning of the word with which it is combined, as in, e. g., **anxious** + **for** + *N* (**anxious for news**), **anxious** + **about** + *N* (**anxious about his health**). [R.S. Ginzburg. 1979. p. 71]

Broadly speaking we can conclude that as a rule the difference in the meaning of the head-word is conditioned by a difference in the pattern of the word-combination in which this word is used.

Polysemantic and Monosemantic patterns

If the structure of word-combination is different, we have ample grounds to infer that the difference in the syntactic (or syntagmatic) structure is indicative of a difference in the meaning of the head-word of word-combinations.

So we assume that verbal combinations represented by *different structural formulas*, e. g. *V + N* and *V + V(inf.)* are as a rule semantically different because of the difference in the grammatical component of meaning. This is also true of *different patterns* of word-combinations e. g. **get** + *N* and **get** + *V(inf.).*

It should be pointed out, however, that although difference in the pattern signals as a rule difference in meaning of the head-word, identity of pattern cannot be regarded as a reliable criterion for identity of meaning. Thus structurally identical patterns, e. g. **heavy** + *N*, may be representative of different meanings of the adjective **heavy** which is perceived in the word-combinations **heavy rain (snow, storm)**, cf. **heavy smoker (drinker), heavy weight (table)**, etc. all of which have the same pattern – **heavy** + *N*.

Structurally simple patterns are as a rule polysemantic, i. e. representative of several meanings of a polysemantic head-word, whereas structurally complex patterns are monosemantic and condition just one meaning of the head-member. The simple verbal structure *V + N* and the corresponding pattern are as a rule polysemantic (compare, e. g. **take** + *N* (**take tea, coffee**); **take the bus**, **the tram, take measures, precautions**), whereas a more complex pattern, e. g. **take** + **to** + *N* is monosemantic (e.g. **take to sports, to somebody**). [R.S. Ginzburg. 1979. p. 71]

Motivation in Word-combinations

Word-combinations like words may also be analysed from the point of view of their motivation. Word-combinations may be described as *lexically motivated* if the combined lexical meaning of the combinations is deducible from the meaning of their components.

The nominal combinations, e. g. **red flower, heavy weight** and the verbal combination, e. g. **take lessons**, are from this point of view motivated, whereas structurally identical word-combinations **red tap**e – 'official bureaucratic methods', **heave father** – 'serious or solemn part in a theatrical play', and **take place** – 'occur' are *lexically non-motivated.*

In these combinations the constituents do not possess, at least synchronically, the denotational meaning found in the same words outside these groups or, to be more exact, do not possess any individual lexical meaning of their own, as the word-combinations under discussion seem to represent single indivisible semantic entities. Word-combinations are said to be *structurally motivated* if the meaning of the pattern is educible from the order and arrangement of the member-words of the combination. **Red flower**, e. g., is motivated as the meaning of the pattern *quality-substance* can be deduced from the order and arrangement of the words **red** and **flower**, whereas the seemingly identical pattern red tape cannot be interpreted as *quality-substance*.

The degree of motivation may be different. Between the extremes of complete motivation and lack of motivation there are innumerable intermediate cases. For example, the degree of lexical motivation in the nominal combination **black market** is higher than in **Black Death**, but lower than in **black dress**, though none of the combinations can be considered as completely non-motivated.

This is also true of other word-combinations, e. g. **old man** and **old boy** both of which may be regarded as lexically and structurally motivated though the degree of motivation in **old man** is noticeably higher. It is of interest to note that completely motivated word-combinations are, as a rule, correlated with certain structural types of compound words. Verbal combinations having the structure *V + N*, e. g. **to read books, to love music**, are habitually correlated with the compounds of the pattern *N + (V + er)* (**book-reader, music-lover**); adjectival combinations

such as *A + prp + N* (e.g. **rich in oil, shy before girls**) are correlated with the compounds of the pattern *N + A*, e. g. **oil-rich, girl-shy.**

It should also be noted that seemingly identical word-combinations are sometimes found to be motivated or non-motivated depending on their semantic interpretation. Thus **applesauce**, e.g., is lexically and structurally motivated when it means 'a sauce made of apples' but when used to denote 'nonsense' it is clearly non-motivated. In such cases we may even speak of homonymy of word-combinations and not of polysemy. [R. S. Ginzburg. 1979. p.72]

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