

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEANING AND SENSE

The important point of the research is to clear up the difference between sense and meaning and to observe their relationship. The question arises why is it so important?

Firstly, because some people do not see any difference between them, they mix them up and cannot realize that the dictionary meaning of a word differs greatly from its meaning in the text. And secondly, because the object of this research is a lexical unit and it cannot do without its meaning, and cannot be understood without deep investigation into its usage.

The problem of meaning and sense is still debatable. But it is necessary, if not to solve this problem but, to find the most appropriate definitions of sense and meaning so that to simplify the task of the research.

What do the most famous and great scholars of lexicology think about these phenomena?

No misunderstanding arises when the problem of “meaning” is concerned. Almost all scholars define it in a similar way.

“The meaning of the word corresponds to the formal notion. The meaning of the word, as an element of the language system, contains only basic indications of an object necessary for its identification and for the correct usage of its name.”[S. D. Katsnelson, 1965, p. 19].

If the definition of “meaning” arises no controversy, it is the other way round with “sense”.

Some scholars do not define “sense”, and those who define it may be subdivided into two groups.

Those who define sense as the usage of the meaning, they even use the term “usage”. For example, Academician Vinogradov V. V. says: “It is necessary to distinguish the meaning of a word from its usage. *Meanings are permanent and general for everybody who possesses the system of the language. Usage is only a possible use of one of the meanings of the word. Sometimes it is individual; sometimes it is more or less spread. Usage is not identical to meaning, as the great semantic capacities of the word are hidden in it.*”[V. V. Vinogradov, 1986, p. 27].

To the second group belong scholars who think that if a word possesses one meaning then it is its primary meaning. But if it possesses more than one meaning, then all the other meanings may be considered as its sense. That is, they identify sense with polysemy.

To this group belong K. S. Ginzburg, A. A. Sankin. [R. S. Ginzburg, 1979].

Still notwithstanding the great variety of opinions, it’s necessary to find a compromise. The definitions of sense given by Akhmanova seems to be more suitable. *“Sense is a content which a word receives in a given context, or in a given concrete speech situation (communicative situation).”* [O. S. Akhmanova. “The dictionary of linguistic terms”]. This definition will be taken as a working one.

If a word reveals its sense in a context, then it is necessary to define what a context is. If a word is polysemantic, then a context is a decisive factor when determining a real content. Strictly speaking, it is impossible to fulfill an expressive and communicative function of the language out of the context.

Kolshansky defines the context in the following way: “From the linguistic point of view, *context is a complex of formally fixed conditions which monosemantically reveal the content of some lexical unit (lexical, grammatical, etc.).*”[G. V. Kolshansky, 1959, p. 47]

Kolshansky singles out the following types of context:

1. The signs which lie within one sentence may be called microcontext, as they are revealed on the level of a minimal language unit.
2. The limits of a passage are regarded as macrocontext.
3. The limits of a text are called thematic (situational) context. The sense of a word can be understood from the content of the whole text.

Amosova singles out 4 types of context: “variable” context, “permanent” context, “semipermanent” context or “restricted in uses” and “fixed” context.

She defines 2 types of a variable context: broad context or speech situation and narrow context.

By the narrow context she understands a variable word-combination and a variable sentence. She also singles out a special form of a broad context – dialogue.

Further she defines 2 main types of variable context: lexical and syntactical. By the lexical context she understands “a context which has such an index minimum which helps to use the meaning of a word by means of semantics of a word and of a combination of a word, irrespective of the character of their semantic relations with semantically used word” [N. N. Amosova, 1958].

She singles out the lexical context of the first and second degree.

The direct semantic relation between semantically used word and its index minimum is fulfilled in the lexical context of the second degree.

But there is no direct semantic relation between semantically used word and its index minimum in the lexical context of the second degree.

The syntactic context is a context, in which the function of an index minimum is fulfilled by the syntactic construction itself.

The permanent context, according to Amosova, is a phraseological unit itself.

Semipermanent or restricted in uses context comprises the following phrases “to pay attention”, “to pay a call”, etc., i.e. phrases which were called by Vinogradov “phraseological combinations”.

The fixed context is a context in which fixed phrases do not have semantic signs of a permanent context, i.e. they do not have a reinterpreted meaning, for example, “to struggle for existence”.

Variable context is a speech context, and the rest are language contexts.

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