

THE MAIN APPROACHES AND PRINCIPLES OF ANALYZING WORD MEANING IN LINGUISTICS

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Annotation

This article provides a scholarly overview of the main directions and principles of word meaning analysis in linguistics. It examines lexical-semantic analysis, structural, cognitive, and pragmatic approaches, highlighting their distinctive features. The paper also emphasizes the role of polysemy, contextual realization, and cultural factors in the study of meaning. Along with modern linguistic theories, practical examples are presented to demonstrate effective methods of semantic analysis.

Keywords: word meaning, linguistics, semantics, polysemy, cognitive approach, pragmatics, context.

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most important social phenomena in society, through which people express their thoughts, share their experiences, and shape culture¹. Words, as the basic building material of language, serve as the fundamental units that determine the content of speech. The study of word meaning has long been one of the most relevant topics in the history of linguistics.²

The analysis of meaning in linguistics is based on various theoretical approaches. Structuralism analyzes the place of words in the linguistic system as well as their paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations.³ Cognitive linguistics studies meaning in connection with human thinking and conceptual worldview.⁴ The pragmatic approach focuses on speech situations and context. This article examines these major approaches to the analysis of word meaning from a scientific perspective.

METHODS AND ANALYSES

The following methods were used in the study:

Lexical-semantic analysis – identifying the literal and figurative meanings of words and defining their semantic fields;

Structural analysis – studying the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations of words within the linguistic system;

Cognitive approach – linking meaning to conceptual models and mental structures;

Pragmatic analysis – interpreting meaning based on context and speech situations.

¹ F. de Saussure. Kurs obshchey lingvistiki. Moskva: Progress, 1977. — B. 56.

² S. Ullmann. Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962. — P. 14.

³ L. Bloomfield. Language. New York: Holt, 1933. — P. 29.

⁴ G. Lakoff. Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. — P. 45.



In addition, methods of contextual analysis, comparison, and explanatory illustration were applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that limiting the study of word meaning to a single approach does not provide a complete understanding. Each approach reveals meaning from a different perspective.⁵

Through lexical-semantic analysis, the literal and figurative meanings of words, as well as their synonymic and antonymic relations, are identified. For example, the word “ko‘z” (eye) literally denotes a human organ, while figuratively, in the phrase “ko‘z qorachig‘idek asrash” (“to cherish like the apple of one’s eye”), it refers to something valuable.

The structural approach reveals the interrelations of a word with other linguistic units. It focuses on paradigmatic relations (e.g., “big–small”, “good–bad”) and syntagmatic combinations.

In the cognitive approach, the meaning of a word is closely connected with human thought. For example, the concept of “home” includes not only a physical building but also notions such as “peace”, “family”, and “homeland”. This approach is of great significance in studying national mentality and culture.

The pragmatic approach interprets meaning according to the communicative situation and context. The same word can convey different meanings in different contexts. For example, the phrase “Zo‘r bo‘ldi!” (“That’s great!”) can sometimes express praise and sometimes irony.

Polysemy, i.e., the phenomenon of multiple meanings, occupies a central place in meaning analysis. Context plays a decisive role in determining which meaning is used. Moreover, cultural factors also play an important role in the formation of meaning.

In recent years, modern linguistic research has increasingly applied componential and corpus-based approaches to the analysis of word meaning.⁶ The componential approach focuses on breaking down the meaning of a word into its minimal semantic features (semes). By identifying and comparing these components, linguists can determine subtle distinctions between closely related words. For example, the words “bachelor” and “man” share features such as [+human], [+male], but differ in [+unmarried], which distinguishes their semantic fields.⁷ This method is particularly useful in lexicography, translation studies, and comparative linguistics.

The corpus-based approach, on the other hand, relies on large electronic text collections (corpora) to observe actual language use in real contexts.⁸ By analyzing word frequencies, collocations, and concordances, linguists can identify meaning patterns that are not always evident through introspection.⁹ For example, corpus analysis can reveal which adjectives most frequently collocate with the word “knowledge” (e.g., deep knowledge, practical knowledge, theoretical knowledge) and how these combinations vary across genres and registers.

These modern approaches complement traditional methods. Componential analysis provides a systematic framework for semantic decomposition, while corpus linguistics ensures empirical validity based on authentic usage. Together, they allow for more precise, objective, and context-sensitive interpretations of meaning. Furthermore, corpus tools support cross-linguistic comparisons, making them valuable in bilingual lexicography and translation.

The integration of these approaches into Uzbek linguistics offers promising prospects for the development of digital linguistic resources and computational models of meaning. As electronic

⁵ S. Levinson. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. — P. 20.

⁶ Lyons, J. *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

⁷ Katz, J. J., & Fodor, J. A. “The Structure of a Semantic Theory.” *Language*, 39(2), 1963, pp. 170–210.

⁸ Nida, E. A. *Componential Analysis of Meaning*. The Hague: Mouton, 1975.

⁹ Sinclair, J. *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.



corpora of Uzbek grow, researchers will be able to conduct large-scale semantic studies, contributing to both national and international linguistic scholarship.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of word meaning is a multifaceted process, and effective results are achieved through the integration of lexical-semantic, structural, cognitive, and pragmatic approaches. Each approach provides insights from different perspectives, and together they complement one another. This is of great importance for a deeper understanding of language, translation, lexicography, language teaching, and speech culture.

Today, the analysis of word meaning is not only of theoretical but also of practical importance. A deep and systematic analysis of meaning makes it possible to understand the internal structure of language, to reveal the interconnections among lexical units, and to ensure the semantic clarity of speech.

The development of semantic analysis directions is closely related to the evolution of linguistic theories, especially structuralism, generative grammar, cognitive linguistics, and pragmalinguistics.¹⁰

In the context of globalization, where interlingual communication is intensifying, accurate analysis of word meaning plays a crucial role in translation processes, ensuring terminological consistency, and enhancing intercultural communication. Moreover, modern methods of semantic analysis—particularly componential analysis, cognitive modeling, and corpus linguistics—reveal the multifaceted nature of linguistic units.

In Uzbek linguistics, the study of word meaning is expanding and increasingly integrating with international scholarly practices. In particular, research on euphemisms, metaphors, polysemy, semantic fields, and conceptual analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the national lexical system. In the future, the integration of semantic analysis with informatics and artificial intelligence, along with the effective use of linguistic databases and electronic corpora, will mark a new stage in linguistic research.

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¹⁰ McEnery, T., & Hardie, A. *Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

