THE DERIVATION OF LEXICAL NORM

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INTRODUCTION

The current stage of linguistic development is undoubtedly the era of studying the meaning of words. One of the main issues in the field of linguistics arises from the fact that human language, in its primary function, serves as a tool for communication, encoding, and disclosing certain information. The gradual development of this thesis has led to the acknowledgment that linguistics, including semantics—a discipline that focuses on lexical meaning—has unfortunately been overshadowed by grammatical content due to frequent misunderstandings. It is no coincidence that lexical-semantic dictionaries have become an essential part of describing language. Moreover, theoretical dictionaries that provide comprehensive semantic definitions of linguistic units serve as a basis for defining linguistic concepts with precision, which are foundational for the semantic harmony and distinctions of language objects.

Modern lexical semantics, with its historical background, intertwines with the history of several linguistic and interdisciplinary sciences, such as:

Lexicography. Practical needs in this field have placed upon theoretical semantics the task of creating a framework for unambiguous and concise interpretations of lexical meanings, descriptions of the lexical and syntactic compatibility of words, and an apparatus for illustrating their semantic relationships with other words. Lexicography primarily addresses the question: What do words mean?

It is worth noting that earlier theoretical semantics focused almost entirely on how words convey meaning. The study of meaning development—such as narrowing and broadening, differentiation and attraction, metaphor and metonymy—along with the nuanced observation of transitions (e.g., from spatial to temporal meanings, from anatomical terms to names of physical objects, and from sensually perceived qualities to visual and auditory ones), reflects this emphasis.

For this reason, semantics and lexicography long developed as separate disciplines. As L.V. Shcherba noted, "The linguistics of the 19th century, engrossed with the discoveries of Bopp, Grimm, Rask, and others, showed no interest in the theory of lexicography" [1,78]. This state of affairs persisted into the second half of the 20th century, as renowned linguist Uriel Weinreich lamented about the "dangerous chasm between theoretical and descriptive semantics," which rendered theoretical semantics ineffective and descriptive semantics atomistic [2,115].

However, for 20th-century linguistics in general, the parallel development of semantics and lexicography is noteworthy. This is reflected in the works of distinguished scholars such as L.V. Shcherba, C. Bally, E. Sapir, K. Erdman, J. Firth, and V.V. Vinogradov. Contemporary semantics has absorbed the following principles established by these scholars:

1. The so-called lexical meaning of a word is not strictly scientific but rather a "simple" concept about something relevant, often complicated by semantic and emotional associations (representations) unrelated to the significant features of the object or fact denoted by the word [3,112].

2. This meaning should be expressed in word definitions formed in a specialized "identifying intellectual language" rather than in direct semantic equivalences within natural language.

3. Words in a language do not combine freely based solely on the information about their meanings; rather, word combinations and sentences are subject to specific lexical and structural constraints.

4. Even in relatively free word combinations, the overall meaning of the combination often exceeds the sum of the meanings of its constituent words, producing a complex semantic product rather than a simple aggregation of meanings.

Lexical semantics of the mid-20th century adopted the notion of the component structure of lexical meanings, derived from earlier phonological and grammatical analyses.

For instance, lexical meanings were dissected into differential features such as:

• "foal" = "horse + male";

• "mare" = "horse + female";

• "puppy" = "dog + male";

• "bitch" = "dog + female";

• "man" = "human + male + adult";

• "woman" = "human + female + adult";

• "boy" = "human + male + not adult";

• "girl" = "human + female + not adult."

Initially, analyses focused on simple and closed systems like kinship terms, animal names, and military nomenclatures, where meanings could be fully decomposed into differential features.

M. Mathieu's 1968 work expanded the principle of analysis based on differential features to broader layers of vocabulary. In the 1960s, the traditional theory of differential semantic features was supplemented by the concept of integral features, allowing for the inclusion of semantic components in a word's meaning that are not opposed to other meanings within a thematic field.

Modern semantics acknowledges the need to consider both significant semantic features (differential and integral) and so-called "associative" or "potential" features. For example:

• For the word lightning, "speed" is an associative feature;

• For grandparents, "old" is an associative feature;

• For uncle and aunt, their older age compared to the speaker is an associative feature.

Accounting for associative features is crucial as they often serve as the basis for metaphorical transfers. For instance:

• "Lightning telegram" refers to an extremely fast telegram;

• "Dear uncle" or "dear aunt" is a term of address imbued with respect or affection.

The relationship between features should also be considered in lexical analysis. Lexical meanings can be hierarchical, as observed in the works of Potier, Heller, and Gak. For example:

• In color studies, parameters like hue, intensity, and brightness are hierarchically structured and used to describe color terms.

In V.G. Gak's theory, the core of a lexeme is its "arche-seme," with additional elements forming differential "clusters" of meaning.

The philosophical and logical tradition of explaining word meanings dates back to antiquity (Aristotle) and was further developed in the 17th-18th centuries (Locke, Leibniz, Spinoza). Contemporary works in this tradition continue to analyze words within their broader linguistic and situational contexts, aiming to simplify complex concepts into basic, binary distinctions.

For example, Spinoza used simple concepts like "good" and "bad" or "necessary" and "contingent" to explain words denoting emotions like hope, fear, trust, and despair:

• "Hope" arises when one anticipates something good and considers it likely to happen.

• "Fear" emerges when one anticipates something bad and considers it likely to happen.

• "Trust" reflects certainty about something good happening.

• "Despair" reflects certainty about something bad happening.

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