Polysemy of Linguistic Terms in Modern English

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Abstract: The article describes issues based on the usage and peculiarities of polysemy of linguistic terms in Modern English. Polysemy is a linguistic universal in the system of European languages. It is based on the asymmetry of the linguistic sign and reflects the principle of saving formal means while conveying the maximum semantic volume. Such polysemy of words in the general literary language is a factor indicating the richness of language visual means. Lexical polysemy gives speech flexibility and allows us to express the delicate shades of thought. This circumstance presents a certain difficulty for the exact understanding of the text and complicates the work of the translator. So, polysemy and synonymy contradict the nature of the functioning and purpose of the term.

Keywords: polysemy, scientific field, language, linguistic terms.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern system of knowledge, when each scientific field is differentiated into more specific scientific disciplines, the terminological fund is incremented not only due to the construction of new lexemes, but also, in particular, due to the use of existing lexical units to designate new concepts in related or contiguous fields of knowledge, for example, the term anticipation functions in syntax, style, phonology.

The development of polysemy, characteristic of the general literary language, restrains the strict logical and semantic boundaries of the term, therefore, the terms are also characterized by specific types of polysemy associated with the development of scientific knowledge.

In order to study polysemy, we will analyze specific vocabulary, since its primary, or “basic” meanings define the classification of real world phenomena, and therefore the mechanisms for the formation of secondary, or “derivative” meanings, are manifested here with the greatest clarity.

For European languages, polysemy is a linguistic universal. The widespread use of polysemy, on the one hand, indicates the constant development of the language and the acquisition of new meanings by existing lexical units, and, on the other hand, indicates the limitedness of linguistic signs and an infinite number of objects of reality that need nomination and description.

Statements about whether the words taken are homonyms, or represent the meanings of a polysemantic word, need to be substantiated in favor of one or another point of view. Currently, several criteria have been developed for distinguishing homonymy from polysemy, but none of them can be called universal. The question whether the historical point of view can resolve the issue of distinguishing between homonyms and polysemy has not been fully resolved, since there are many lexical units with unclear etymology.

When native speakers encounter the same lexical unit in different contexts, they mentally try to connect and find similarities between the concepts denoted, that is, the identity of the word is initially presumed, and only if the opposite is proved - the absence of common meaning...
components - a conclusion is made about homonymy.

But even if a native speaker does not reveal a connection between meanings, this does not mean at all that it is absent, since sometimes special lexicological research is required to establish it. Etymological analysis often makes it possible to trace the development of meanings and to establish derivational connections between them, or their absence. To do this, you need to build a scheme for the emergence of meanings for a given word, understand which way polysemy developed, whether there was a loss or obsolescence of any of the meanings, which led to the loss of a semantic connection.

Despite numerous successful studies of terminology by linguists and the requirement of unambiguity for the term, we have to admit that the term, like other lexical units of the language, is prone to the development of ambiguity. As in other cases, terminological polysemy develops against the background of the law of economy of a linguistic sign. Since the set of characters of each language system is limited, and experience and knowledge are unlimited, it is normal that the “outer shell units” turn out to be, as it were, “extensible”, easily accommodating connection with new varieties and shades of “linguistic meaning” [2, p. 109], because “the existing language of science cannot give an adequate expression to new concepts, therefore, to express a new concept, science resorts to words that already exist in the language” [6, p. 186].

With regard to the problem of terminological ambiguity and homonymy in linguistics, there are different positions. So, V.P. Danilenko recognizes the phenomenon of polysemy in terminology, “which manifests itself mainly as categorical polysemy and on the basis of metonymic and metaphorical transfer of meaning” [5, p. 205]. V.G. Gak considers the polysemy of terms as a manifestation of human tool activity, drawing a parallel between the multifunctionality of tools and the “fitting of language elements” in each act of communication [3].

Despite the fact that most researchers present polysemy and polysemy as synonyms, A.A. Filippova distinguishes between the concepts of terminological polysemy and polysemy as follows: “If the meanings of a term are presented within the framework of one dictionary entry, then we are talking about term polysemy. If the meanings of the term are revealed in the discourse and are not fixed within the framework of one dictionary entry, then we can only talk about the ambiguity of the term” [11, p. 10].

DISCUSSIONS

The above positions do not affect the problem of separating terminological polysemy from homonymy, which is interpreted very ambiguously in modern linguistics. For example, B.N. Golovin, R.Yu. Kobrin considers polysemantic terms belonging to different terminological fields to be interdisciplinary homonymy, believing that interdisciplinary homonyms serve non-intersecting areas of professional activity and do not impede special communication [4].

Following them Yu.V. Slozhenikina considers the terms of intersystem functioning as homonyms according to their different functional and communicative fixedness, and the presence of two or more meanings of a highly specialized term within the same terminological field as polysemy [10]. T.V. Ryzhenkova, having studied the process of transterminologization (the transition of terms from one system to another), comes to the conclusion that “during transterminologization, homonymous nominative units are formed, and in terms of terminology, even those nominees should be considered homonymous, which in their meanings retain a common semantic component in different term systems” [9, p. 5].

Here there is a contradiction between the above points of view and the position of leading researchers of semantics on recognizing a lexical unit as polysemy in the presence of common meaning components, believing that “in the set of lexemes of a polysemic (but not homonymous) word, as a rule, one can find a root lexeme - such that all the rest are its direct and indirect semantic derivatives. The meaning of the word thus appears as a derivational structure - a set of lexemes with a given semantic derivative relation” [8, p. 398]. In addition, Yu.D. Apresyan admits the existence of polysemy even in the absence of common components of meaning: “The
presence of semantic links between the lexemes of a polysemantic word does not necessarily imply that all its lexemes will have a semantic invariant...the well-known phenomenon of chain polysemy...rests on pairwise semantic links between neighboring lexemes, and the first and last or one of the last links of this chain may have nothing in common with each other” [1, p. 425 - 426]. E.V. Paducheva adheres to a similar position: “If the links between lexemes have a chain structure rather than a radial one, there may not be a common component in the meaning of “extreme” lexemes” [8, p. 397].

One of the key trends in the modern development of scientific knowledge is the integration of various fields of science, which is expressed in borrowing the terms of one science into another, thereby giving rise to intersectoral polysemy and forming a fairly extensive layer of intersectoral polysemantics - terms used in different specialized branches of knowledge, but united by the presence of a direct or mediated relationship between values. In the terminology of any modern language that serves a society with a developed science, there are a lot of interdisciplinary polysemantics with a very wide and diverse structure of meanings. The development of new disciplines, taking place at the “junction” of already sufficiently developed industries, leads to the involvement of their terms in a new environment. Thus, sociolinguistics, formed at the “junction” of sociology and linguistics, uses some of the terms of linguistics (“study of personal names” - anthroponymy, “bilingualism” - bilingualism), sociology (“questionnaire” - questioning, “enclave” - enclave), psychology (“behavioralism” - behaviorism, “acculturation” - acculturation), and also forms its own terminological base (“dialect autonomation” - autonomization of dialects, “unstructured communication” - unregulated communication). In cases of such a distribution of the term, it is able to acquire new shades of meaning used in different branches of science, which are subsequently transformed into polysemy. Thus, before the formation of sociology as an independent science, the term “enclave” was used in biology to designate a territory surrounded by a landscape alien to it, in medicine - denoting a tissue inclusion (in an unusual place), in international law - as a territory or part of the territory of a state surrounded by all parties by the territory of any other state.

Thus, in all meanings of the intersectoral polysemantic “enclave”, the designation of the surrounded place is traced. And the opinions of Z.N. Kotelova (considers it possible to spread the polysemy of a term beyond the terminology of any one field of knowledge and explains the emergence of terminological polysemy by “stratification of meanings depending on the use of the word in different branches of knowledge” [7, p. 124]) and O.Yu. Shmeleva (highlights “such a property of terminological information as scattering, which is associated with the use of one term in different terminological systems” [12, p. 14]) once again serve as proof that the same terms in different branches of special knowledge, if there is a connection between the meanings are interbranch polysemy.

Conventionality is inherent in an intersectoral polysemy only within the terminological field, when there is some agreement between industry experts on the designation of a denotation with a special sign, for example, “runner” in automotive terminology is ambiguous and is used to designate a moving unit and a driver of a vehicle, in construction terminology it is used in the following meanings: 1) horizontal formwork beam (during the construction of monolithic reinforced concrete floors); 2) suspension of an acoustic ceiling, and in mining - a hauler, a trolley (hauer (of trolleys). Determining the semantic invariant of an intersectoral polysemantic is often difficult, since in each science where it is used, the semantic center shifts and the appeal to the original meaning can be of an intersectoral nature, referring to another, possibly not closely related field of knowledge.

The semantic relations of an interbranch polysemantic can be considered as intersystem relations between the meanings of a polysemantic word. The meaning of the term denoting a scientific concept is dynamically and constantly developing, which is associated with the clarification of the concept, the identification of new, previously unknown properties in it.
The meanings of an interbranch polysemantic are interconnected and form a semantic structure. Functioning in different terminological systems does not deny the existence of a connection between the meanings, which in turn confirms that we have the meanings of a polysemantic term, and not homonyms. For example, the linguistic term “sentence” (sentence, saying, statement), which goes back to the Latin “sen-tire” (thought, judgment, opinion, saying, statement), shows that ambiguous words are borrowed. After borrowing, this term began to be used by the courts in the sense of “grammatically complete statement”, which is currently used in legal terminology as a noun (“verdict, court decision”) and as a verb (“sentence, make a decision”). The given example clearly demonstrates that the modern meanings of the interdisciplinary polysemantic “sentence” have a genetic connection, and the common component of the meaning “grammatically complete statement” indicates that we are dealing with the meanings of a polysemantic term, even despite the fact that its functioning has spread beyond the limits of one subject areas.

CONCLUSION

The real facts of the use of terms confirm the deviation from the unambiguous correspondence of the term-concept and indicate that the development of the ambiguity of the terminological and commonly used signs do not have any special differences. The boundaries of terminological systems of different fields of science do not have strict outlines, they are not isolated from the relatively free penetration of terms from other subject areas. Therefore, the development of intersectoral polysemy is a natural consequence of the unity and consistency of the scientific picture of the world and its linguistic reflection.

References: