

COMPARAÇÃO DA CATEGORIA COGNITIVA E DA ESTRUTURA DE UMA PALAVRA POLISSEMÂNTICA

COMPARACIÓN DE LA CATEGORÍA COGNITIVA Y LA ESTRUCTURA DE UNA PALABRA POLISEMÁNTICA

COMPARISON OF THE COGNITIVE CATEGORY AND THE STRUCTURE OF A POLY-SEMANTIC WORD

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RESUMO: *Este estudo procura analisar o fenômeno da polissemia correlacionado com a organização conceitual das categorias cognitivas, sendo a estrutura polissemântica uma categoria de natureza prototípica. Uma análise de componentes invariantes de cada um dos significados figurativos e ainda comparando-os com a semântica do primeiro significado nominativo-não-derivativo são utilizados para atender aos objetivos do estudo. Os achados da pesquisa de categorização linguística de objetos da realidade com a identificação de um conjunto de traços centrais, segundo os quais uma palavra é atribuída a uma determinada categoria, leva à extrapolação dos resultados da pesquisa para as estruturas de palavras polissemânticas. O artigo mostra que tanto os membros da categoria de sujeito cognitivo quanto os significados figurativos da polissemântica são orientados para os métodos de categorização conceitual e linguística do mundo real, e ambos são voltados “para dentro” em sua própria estrutura.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Polissemia, Categoria cognitiva, Categorização linguística, Significado, Invariante lexical*

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RESUMEN: Este estudio intenta analizar que el fenómeno de la polisemia se correlaciona con la organización conceptual de las categorías cognitivas, y la estructura polisemántica es una categoría de naturaleza prototípica. Se utiliza un análisis de componentes invariantes de cada uno de los significados figurativos y una mayor comparación con la semántica del primer significado nominativo-no derivado para cumplir con los objetivos del estudio. Los hallazgos de la investigación de categorización lingüística de los objetos de la realidad con la identificación de un conjunto de características centrales, según las cuales una palabra se atribuye a una categoría particular, lleva a la extrapolación de los resultados de la investigación a las estructuras de las palabras polisemánticas. El artículo muestra que tanto los miembros de la categoría de sujeto cognitivo como los significados figurativos de polisemántica están orientados hacia los métodos de categorización conceptual y lingüística del mundo real, y ambos están vueltos “hacia adentro” en su propia estructura.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Polisemia, Categoría cognitiva, Categorización lingüística, Significado, Invariante léxica

ABSTRACT: This study attempts to analyze the phenomenon of polysemy correlates to the conceptual organization of cognitive categories, and the polysemantic structure is a category of a proto-typical nature. An invariant-component analysis of each of the figurative meanings and further comparing them with the semantics of the first nominative-nonderivative meaning are utilized to meet the study’s aims. The findings of the research of linguistic categorization of objects of reality with the identification of a set of central features, according to which a word is attributed to a particular category, leads to extrapolation of the research results to the structures of polysemantic words. The paper shows that both the members of the cognitive subject category and the figurative meanings of polysemantic are oriented toward the methods of conceptual and linguistic categorization of the real world, and both of them are turned “inward” in their own structure.

KEYWORDS: Polysemy, Cognitive category, Linguistic categorization, Meaning, Lexical invariant

Introduction

In the early 1970s, within the framework of psycholinguistic studies of human categorization of reality, the branch of prototypical semantics begins to develop, intending the study of central or nuclear meaning of a word in order to determine the category to which this or that object of the real world belongs (Jingkun, 2022).

The central members (cognitive prototypes) of various categories have been identified by means of experiments. Thus, robin redbreasts and sparrows have been recognized as typical birds, apples and oranges – as typical fruits, peas – as a typical vegetable, hammers – as a typical tool, etc. For example, the feature “to fly” is weightier for the category *birds* for it is related to most members of this category, and the feature “to sing” has a lower weight since not all birds are songbirds. Obviously, there is a set of specific features for a typical bird in the human mind, and if he/she sees a pterodactyl or a flying fictitious creature, he/she compares it with a prototype bird. At

the same time, more time is required to identify “bad” examples, i.e. objects with the least number of features (Franco, 2022).

Worthy of attention are the difficulties associated with defining cognitive prototypes: singling out the most significant features, separating them from the less significant ones, organizing features according to the degree of importance and frequency. The meaning of a word can be significantly refracted in the context, turning into the sense. In addition, knowledge about the objects of the world seems limitless, and the problem of where to stop occurs (Pesina et al., 2021).

A special role in the organization of linguistic consciousness belongs, first of all, to the objects of basic cognitive categories: a person, a bird, a dog, a fish, a plant, a tree, a stone, etc., as the prototypes of linguistic representation of knowledge. Representation relations between the conceptual and linguistic systems are manifested mainly at the categorical level and also connect the very categories that perform the function of reference points in the process of designating objects of thought (Quilty-Dunn, 2021).

It is of interest for us, researchers of linguistic polysemy, to look into the commonality between cognitive categories and semantic structures of polysemantic words. The phenomenon of polysemy can be closely connected with the conceptual organization of cognitive categories, and semantic and logical parallels can be traced between the cognitive prototype and the lexical invariant.

Thus, similarities and differences between the cognitive categories of a prototypical type and the structure of a polysemant are supposed to be found within the scope of this article. This attempt is caused, among other things, by some inadequacy of traditional semasiological descriptions of the mechanisms of polysemy. Taking into account conceptual categories and extrapolating their properties to the structures of polysemants, perhaps, will make it possible to better understand the essence of linguistic phenomenon of polysemy, to identify and describe its properties (Evans et al., 2015).

From the point of view of mechanisms of speech production and information processing, functioning of the structure of a polysemant and cognitive category is fundamentally identical: first, there is an appeal to the semantic core of a polysemant (lexical invariant) or cognitive prototype as the best representative of the category, and then membership of a new object or meaning is determined.

There are significant differences between the two entities. Thus, cognitive prototypes as the centers of cognitive categories in the spirit of E. Roch are contextually independent and maximally recognizable meanings that are formed from the basic semantically nonderivative and nominatively independent meanings of a word. The same cannot be said of the structures of polysemantic words compared with them. The most frequent member of the polysemantic structure – metaphor – always occupies a subordinate position, for it is always derivative. It can be derived

from the first meaning directly by radial polysemy, which is not often the case. It can also be formed from another figurative meaning according to the chain model. Neither of methods is economical functional models of communication.

We are positive that linguistic consciousness functions quite effectively at the level of polysemants. Catching the signals from the context, it quickly recognizes the presence of a figurative meaning (unlike today's electronic translators that still do a poor job of decoding metaphors and phraseological units).

The assumption that consciousness leaves out the internal time-consuming scanning of all figurative meanings of polysemants before choosing the correct one. Though the hypothesis "sense enumeration lexicon" is popular in cognitive linguistics, it is believed that the meanings of polysemantic words are presented and function in our lexicon in isolation as homonyms. Thus, the meanings of words stored in lexicon in the form of lists are similar to dictionary entries (Pesina et al., 2019).

The rejection of such demanding and inefficient way of functioning of vocabulary in the lexicon, as well as the equally unattractive mechanism of comparing metaphors with a central meaning, has brought us to consider the concept of "lexical invariant". It is thought of as an abstract linguistic entity, a cluster of semantic components that, in one of their configurations, underlie all or a number of polysemantic meanings in accordance with intuition of an ordinary native speaker. The generalization and abstractness of a lexical invariant develop as the word is applied to new and new objects of a certain order. Its comparison with the categorical prototype leads to a better understanding of its functioning (Gouteraux, 2017; Pan, 2019).

Thus, the centers of cognitive thematic categories (cognitive prototypes) are contextually independent meanings. Their use in communication means cognitive simplification, for it takes a minimum of time to distinguish them. We recognize them in the text precisely as ideal examples of their category, as dominants, endowed with all the central features that characterize other members of the category only to some extent. All this is indicative of an effectiveness of communication if consciousness deals with the centers of cognitive categories (Mirgalimova et al., 2020).

The use of lexical invariants in communication also means cognitive simplification since to identify them, one needs a minimum of mental effort and a minimum of time. The effectiveness of using lexical invariants is explicit since the nominative processes in interpreting metaphors do not go through the first meaning, but through actualizing invariant dominant features (Van der Merwe, 2021).

Methods

Undertaking an invariant-component analysis of each of the figurative meanings and further comparing them with the semantics of the first nominative-nonderivative meaning, we determine the most dominant frequency semantic features behind each metaphor. The next step is to formulate a lexical invariant that includes core basic semantic components that, in any of the configurations, underlie all meanings of the word (Gouteraux, 2017; Jingkun, 2022).

Let's represent lexical units functioning at the level of cognitive category and polysemantic word. Thus, the cognitive prototype of the category human body will be the lexeme head as the most frequent (a head (1) the upper part of the human body that contains the eyes, nose, mouth, ears and brain or something resembling it) along with the lexemes a leg, a hand, an arm, a neck, a body, a finger, etc.

The lexical invariant of the polysemantic word *a head* includes more than one hundred meanings. As a result of invariant-component analysis, we have formulated it as *the most important top, often round part of an object; its beginning or end*. The lexical invariant includes the most significant integral and differential semantic components and is formed at the level of the language system via numerous contextual realizations of meanings (in particular, *head of a river/stream; head of a ship; head of a table/bed/grave; head of a cask/drum/bridge*, etc.). Those metaphor-forming semantic components used to be just potential background features that were once noticed by someone, or borrowed from literature or as a result of communication, caught up and eventually began to be effectively used by linguistic consciousness. That is, our consciousness has made these features dominant, using the most ancient mechanism of our thinking – comparison or analogy (Hurtienne, 2017).

Our consciousness resorts to cognitive prototype when it is necessary to determine categorical membership of any suitable lexeme; to lexical invariant – in the process of communication, when we have a minimum of time to grasp the metaphor. Understanding does not occur by comparing the meaning with the first meaning, but in a shorter way – by applying an invariant feature.

Both the cognitive categorical prototype and the lexical invariant are derived from the internal “intuitive contemplation” using the corresponding innate and human-specific brain algorithms, conveying the essence and delineating the boundaries of the semantic structure of a word or category.

Introspection as part of self-reflection is the method that allows for the conclusions about image-bearing imprints in the mind. Lexical invariants and cognitive prototypes are only models of real objects taken in their entirety.

At the linguistic level, we are dealing with a bundle or cluster of semantic components, and at the psycholinguistic level, we are dealing with a model of the functioning of categories of words

in the lexicon. Moreover, presumably both models are innate, which is associated with a habit of generalizing the semantics of a word (as in the case of categorization and conceptualization).

Results and discussion

Both the conceptual category and the polysemant are complex cognitive formations that have arisen as a result of the classifying activity of consciousness. We find a similar idea in earlier publications of E. Rosch herself: in accordance with the theory of prototypes, the derived meanings of a polysemant are determined by the typicality of a given meaning in relation to the original meaning. The connection of the meanings of a polysemant is based on cognitive operations of a logical and associative nature. The derived meanings of a polysemant form a kind of category which contains one or more central meanings, as well as peripheral meanings, interconnected by cognitive mechanisms of name mapping.

For lexical invariant, with use of frequency metaphors of a particular polysemant, metaphor-forming features form a kind of core, from which there is a quicker path to the metaphor than from the first meaning, because in it, as we have just shown, metaphor-forming features do not explicitly function. So, in the Russian-language culture, заяц (a hare) is mere timidity, and собака (a dog) is characterized as betrayed and evil and one dragging out a rather miserable existence. Гора / a mountain in both cultures (English and Russian) means too much of something. Плащ (a cloak) in Russian-language culture is not a cloak of hypocrisy, religion or prejudice, as in English culture, it is just a cloak. But вуаль / veil in both languages may conceal negative images behind translucency. In Russian, this is expressed in a greater degree procedurally when something can be disguised or befogged. But if we open the dictionaries, we will not find these signs in the main meanings of these words.

Thus, figurative metaphorical meanings of polysemants are formed around a kind of core which is referred to lexical invariant dominant construct or, as we call it, lexical invariant. From this core, arbitrary meanings are most likely to be generated with minimal cognitive effort and minimal thinking time. Members of cognitive categories are clustered around a cognitive prototype.

Franco (2022) considering the problem of polysemy from the point of view of the theory of prototypes, draws the conclusion that the theory of prototypes is “a model of the polysemy of lexical items”. He wonders how to depict the multi-dimensional prototypical structure of a polysemantic word using the traditional presentation of meanings in a dictionary. Thus, the lexicographer can try several tricks to overcome this difficulty, for example, indicate a prototypical meaning first, and place less frequent derived meanings at the end of a lexical entry.

Since any meaning of a polysemant rarely appears in its pure form and is refracted in the context, there is a question about the degree of independence of the cognitive prototype and the

core meaning of a polysemant from the context. The context always signals the refraction of the semantics of the meaning towards its transfer. It cannot act in accordance with its rules and laws apart from a person, for meanings recur to a native speaker as a result of cognitive processes.

Of course, the relationship between non-central meanings of polysemantic words and between members of cognitive thematic categories is somewhat different: for polysemants, they are derivatives, and for categories, they are derivatively unrelated and independent.

The central meaning of a polysemant that is fixed by dictionaries as the first one can be significantly refracted in the context. So, the usage of *Одна голова хорошо, а две лучше!* (*Two heads are better than one!*) *Ну ты голова!* (*Smart thinking!*) or *А голова-то тебе на что!* (*Literally: And what's your head for!*) do not leave the linguist asking questions – this is a metonymic transfer. For a general communicator, who is not engaged in the study of the semantics of meanings, everything is not so definite. When comprehending these phrases, an image or outline of a human head is likely to float before in mind. But when he/she deals with meanings more distant from the first meaning, like *head of a river /stream*, then the most effective way to understand these metaphors is not through the first meaning, but via the feature beginning part, but a metaphor like *head of a table/bed /grave* via the dominant invariant the most important part. Here, undoubtedly, the lexical invariant as the center of the polysemantic structure works better. It turns out that a polysemantic word has the two centers – first meaning and lexical invariant (Kiseleva & Trofimova, 2017).

The expression “*В работе море ошибок*” (*Literally: A sea of mistakes*) / *A lot of big mistakes in the work* can also evoke a flash of association with an unlimited expanse of sea as a natural object (realization of the main meaning) in the mind. On the other hand, realizing that most comparisons take place according to the principle “the sea is when there is a lot of something”, an individual can take a faster and cognitively economical path – along the path of using a lexical invariant, just conveying the concept of multiplicity and boundlessness of something.

A hierarchical similarity, although minimal, between the two compared structures exists: the members of the cognitive thematic categories and the meanings in the structure of a polysemant have different frequency of use and priority of choice. For example, the best candidates as a bird in general in the cognitive category “birds” are a sparrow and a dove (in the Russian view of the world). These cognitive prototypes are most popular for the role of a bird and are predictable. They cement their category. While the peripheral members of the category show a willingness to secede (e.g. a toy penguin, an ostrich or a pterodactyl).

In the structure of a polysemantic word, the metaphor that is determined by the minimum number of invariant features also tends to leave the semantic structure of the word. Being in the deep periphery, it can strive for independence and eventually becomes a homonym. Such

meanings, for example, can be the English *head of hank of hemp / flax / jute*. Here *head* appears in the meaning of “a skein (of flax, hemp or jute) prepared for sale”. Despite the fact that, when rolled into a ball, these skeins are round like a head, nevertheless, in our opinion, these meanings stand apart and are candidates for separating. For the concept “ball” the words *skein, hank, hasp, ravel* are more familiar. The only dominant feature “roundness” is not sufficient to firmly take its place in the structure of the polysemant *head*. Dominant nuclear features that cement the metaphorical rethinking of this word, in addition to the round component, embrace such attributes as the top part of an object, the beginning part of an object, either of the object’s extremities, the most important part of an object.

Interestingly, the English *head of a bridge* is also likely to be in the periphery of the structure *head*, for it is not entirely clear whether head is the top of the bridge or its beginning. This metaphor is semantically quite remote from the first meaning of *head* (1) *the upper part of the human body that contains the eyes, nose, mouth, ears and brain*. Apparently, the dominant feature of *the beginning part of an object* takes on a new urgency. At least, that’s what the informants say. Dictionaries, unfortunately, neglect this meaning. It is only given in the Merriam Dictionary and has no interpretation there.

Thus, the researchers of semantic core of a polysemant, as well as the researchers of cognitive categories, have to solve similar problems: the need to extract the features necessary for membership in their structures. Researchers start with the most significant semantic components, separate them from less significant ones, divide them into integral, differential, functional, explicit and potential.

For cognitive prototypes, categorical membership is not as permanent as in the structure of a word. The concept of the same object can be subsumed by consciousness under different categories. Hurtienne (2017) is of the persuasion that the inclusion or non-inclusion of an object in one or another cognitive category is due to the work of functioning preference rules, ranging the concept in one or another class. One of these rules indicates that the boundaries of a category are largely determined by the presence of similar and competing categories in the conceptual space. The inclusion or non-inclusion of an object in one category or another is probably due to a concrete attitude, depending on the situation. Unlike these situations, membership in the lexical structure is permanent, it is lexicalized by dictionaries. Although the structure of any polysemantic word undergoes changes over time, this is not a finally given entity.

The opinion of linguists on bindingness and predictability of adherence to cognitive categories and polysemantic structures is divided. Thus, Górska (2019) believes that there are no relations of predictability between the members of a prototypical category, while in a polysemant, the derived meanings can be determined by the relations of “conditional identity, implication and

inclusion, established by the rules of logical conclusions and conjectures” . There is also an opposite view: many cases of polysemy do not lend themselves to any predictions, any foresight, fall beyond any system.

It is our opinion that membership in polysemantic structures is absolutely predictable. This predictability is ensured by functioning the semantic core of a polysemant described above, and the processes of semiosis are associated with the realization of core invariant components.

For a cognitive prototype, human conscience also categorizes category members without any problems by comparing them with the prototype, for example, even if a person sees a berry or fruit for the first time. And the fundamental difference between the structure of a polysemant and the category lies in the qualitative difference between their centers: the lexical core of a polysemant consists of an abstract bundle of dominant components, hence the lexical invariant may not have a referent at all. In contrast, cognitive prototype is a well-known object, at the linguistic level it is a high-frequency neutral word of the basic functional level. As mentioned above, the very cognitive prototype is most likely a polysemant with its own structure of non-principal meanings since words in which human-relevant properties are maximally concentrated have a higher polysemy (Van der Merwe, 2021).

Such semantic web nodes or lexical ganglia as lexical invariants in the event of polysemants or categorical dominant lexemes in cognitive thematic clusters act as cognitive supports for constructing statements in the process of effective communication. This support is needed for a general perception and comprehension of the world.

Foregrounding of certain elements as certain dominants as prisms of world perception suggests that the dominant principle of organizing thinking as a whole is characteristic of successful communication. This is so, because in order for communication in the pragmatic sense to take place, a fairly general outlook on the course of things is often necessary and sufficient (Quilty-Dunn, 2021).

This principle of knowledge organization is universal; it explains the work of cognitive consciousness as a whole. All notions and concepts are systematized in the form of a hierarchical network with many outputs and connections. These connections or a kind of linguistic plasticity correspond to more or less stable semantic connections or valencies. Accordingly, the neural network of the brain is correlated with specific forms of linguistic representation through codes that we, unfortunately, do not yet have (in the foreseeable future or will not have at all).

At the same time, a person is guided by dominant features, depending on the pragmatics of his/her thinking or the goals of speech acts. The specificity of thinking entails the activation of different semantic networks, which entails the corresponding focusing of consciousness and the inclusion of one or another model of thinking. This is particularly in evidence in the selection and

various structuring of fragments of experience, in focusing attention on specific objects or elements of the conceptual structure, in profiling their characteristics and relationships, in changing the cognitive points of reference, etc (Blank, 2003; Mirgalimova et al., 2020; Cavazzana et al., 2020).

The incoming information that has been selected must be “packed” into memory “cells” in the long term, formatted through different channels, embedded in the necessary structures, establish the necessary connections with already accumulated knowledge, that is, find a place for it in cognitive system. Consciousness is not able to successfully assimilate incoming information if it is not structured in relation to certain areas of knowledge. Only structured and systematized information becomes knowledge.

A similarly structured consciousness faces the problem of processing and formatting incorrectly structured information (without bearing on various schemes, modules, models or other cognitive structures). At the same time, we insist that often a person does not need to actualize the whole concept, it is important to focus on basic or even approximate information: a swift is a small, dark, fast-flying bird that belongs to the passerine. We note an exceeding prevalence of indefinite noun phrases in English and other languages, especially in its colloquial form, due to their variable functionality and the general “laziness” of the language. For example, a group of lexical markers of the category of indefiniteness with a delimiting conjunction: or whatever, or anything, or something (like that): Bye one and get ten free or whatever. Adverbs or introductory words: like, kind of, sort of, which received the name *hedges* in English linguistic literature, and modal operators in Russian linguistics, also testify to the sufficiency of the general nature of grasping the meanings. Here are some more markers of approximation in communication: kind of dry; something like a mountain; worth a hefty sum, rather expensive; nearly an engineer, and so on. In other words, they serve as cognitive points of intralinguistic reference, i.e. reference points in the very language for the formation and transmission of a certain meaning and general knowledge about the world.

The analysis of linguistic activity also allows us to argue that the function of such cognitive dominants in linguistic consciousness is performed by prototypical means of representing knowledge in language, which, on the one hand, serve as a means of linguistic classification and generalization of the results of cognition, and on the other hand, act as points of intralinguistic reference.

Conclusion

So, within the framework of this paper, an attempt to identify the semantic relationship of meanings within polysemantic structures and characterize the effective work of the lexicon has led to the resort to the problem of cognitive categories.

In the course of studying these issues, we focused on the dominant principle as a person's orientation to certain knowledge, its structure and content, collectively or individually significant elements and values. The dominant principle of the organization of linguistic consciousness is due to the very nature of language and the interpretive nature of human consciousness as a whole, which is necessarily evident in the properties of the linguistic view of the world, the language system, its units and categories, all discursive human activity in mental and linguistic building of the world around.

As points of intralinguistic reference, cognitive dominants perform the function of structuring linguistic consciousness, for information coming from outside, including linguistic information, must also be structured in order to become part of consciousness. Accordingly, the human cognitive system is able in a certain way (according to both culturally determined and its own dominants) to format incoming information.

Thus, exploring polysemy from a cognitive standpoint, it has been found that the principles of lexical structural organization are consistent with the general principles of categorical typology. Therefore, the basic constructs of the theory of cognitive prototypes have been immediately applied to lexicosemantic categories. The invariant semantics that we are developing is valuable for determining the core meaning of a word, identifying a set of central features that characterize an object, its relation to a particular category or lexicosemantic group. The study of the functioning of polysemy at the level of lexicon may be conducive to the secrets of basic cognitive processes.

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