The Axiological Nature of the Concepts Meaning and Sense

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Abstract: The article deals with the problem of differentiation between the basic notions of linguistic semantics, namely, meaning and sense. There are different, sometimes opposite conceptions of these terms' connection with the spheres of semantic paradigmatics and syntagmatics. The present approach is aimed to show that the meaning belongs to the sphere of language-as-a-system and the sense to the sphere of speech realization. The methodological ground to clear out their ontological characteristic features is the assumption that any mind structure receiving a linguistic signature is a certain value. With respect to this, meanings constitute values and senses are meanings' realizations in the certain discourse situations. Different models of realization of meanings in the form of the speech senses are shown to prove the interconnected and at the same time relatively independent logical status of meaning and sense.

Key words: Meaning · Sense · Value · Evaluation · Concept · Interest · Significance · Importance · Axiological concepts

INTRODUCTION

The word MEANING is widely known to be the central linguistic means of representing the basic concept of linguistic semantics. In general, the problem of the linguistic and philosophical concept MEANING has been extensively investigated in modern linguistics and semiotics. Despite these studies the problem of meaning still remains far from its final solution. There exist quite a number of different approaches to its essence, leave alone the definitions given to a phenomenon in question. To put the idea more clearly, we should refer to the point of view of the famous linguist P.Grice who says that the problem of linguistic meaning is rather controversial [1]. Let's stick to that point and not to try to find any appropriate definition of the meaning, as, according to the proverb, "So many people, so many minds".

We have the opinion that to clear up the idea of the meaning one should refer to the linguistic analysis of this word's usage in actual contexts. In most cases it is viewed in the context of differentiating its categorical and speech content from another important notion of semantics and namely SENSE. The problem seems to be rather remote from its perfect solution and there is a need to view different approaches to solve it. The situation with the priority of the notions in question was somewhat obscured by the well-known German philosopher G.Frege, who insisted on the priority of the sense as related to the meaning, or referent, as the sense is always present in the utterance whereas the referent may be missed in it [2].

Therefore, to make a thorough study of evaluative use of language units one needs to first analyze the semantic paradigmatic characteristics of a unit in question in close connection with its speech actualization and only then to try finding scientific definitions to describe such units as the linguistic means of representation certain concepts.

First, let us analyze the most typical cases of using the word meaning in actual speech to denote different phenomena and situations of reality and human thinking.

As the Russian linguist Irina Kobozeva puts in, the non-semiotic meanings of the word meaning are as follows: 1. Significance, importance. 2. Eminence. 3. Value. 4. Role, part in smth. 5. Impact, influence, consequences. 6. Destination, function. 7. Power, status. She also marks down that these meanings are very close to each other and may be condensed to some common content that they represent some impact falling on a person, thing, situation and the like in the row of the similar ones. As for the word sense, I.Kobozeva defines it as some "thought, representation of some good, use serving as a motivation for some action undertaken by a subject" [3].

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The authors of this article share this opinion, but looking back to the problem expressed, they want to find one more scientific explanation concerning the problem. This particular approach may be called the lingo-axiological, or the functional-and-activity approach to the semantic study of meaning and sense.

The Main Part: Thus it seems reasonable to commence the description of the main linguistic units profiling the concept MEANING in language and speech with some other lexical units than the one representing the concept itself. Let's view some examples with the word significance:

Northumberland's last act was a cringing recantation of a Protestantism that had never been more than a mask for his greed. His career is of some significance since he sums up both the ignoble side of Protestantism and the unresting cupidity of his class [4].

In this case the evaluative meaning of the word significance is directed mainly to show the interest to the uncommon character of Northumberland's career from the point of view of those majoring in history and not so much to qualify his acts as positive or negative. There are the other language units to show evaluation (exclusively negative, conveyed by the words greed, ignoble, cupidity) in this passage. It's easy to mark the presence of the two types of evaluation in this passage: both negative moral and ethical attitude of the author to Northumberland's personality and, at the same time, some kind of cognitive approval of the dexterity with which Northumberland had gained power and influence. Thus, the word *interest* is the most appropriate synonym of the word *significance* in the following:

There was one other problem not noticed at the time about Plane 310, the craft that flew Flight 401 that night; the computers that held the plane on the proper pitch through the autopilot were slightly mismatched. Captain Loft's computer could disengage the autopilot altitude control with fifteen pounds pressure, while Bert Stockstill's would be disengaged with twenty pounds. There was more significance to this than met the eye [5].

Example (2) shows that SIGNIFICANCE of some object within a definite activity may be hidden and showing itself as a result, say, an accident, some coincidence, etc. In the particular case described above the design bureau at the airplane factory had not taken into account the possibility of the autopilot to be disengaged by chance and that led to the air crash resulting in more than 100 deaths and terrible injuries. In this case the most appropriate synonym to significance is surely importance or meaning. The same is appropriate to the explanation of significance in the next case, though it contains some sort of peculiarity:

Briefly the pain went away, then it returned, even — it seemed — more intensely. It was as if it were a cycle. Then the significance dawned upon her [6].

The patient is aware of the beginning childbirth, though she had not realized it at once and got to it after some time. She realizes both the meaning and the importance of the event and the positive gravity of it is expressed by the word significance housing both value concepts. Besides, significance is present here as some sign of having filled the cognitive gap that one of the most painful, that the result might be terrible and at the same time happiest events in the life of a woman is taking place. Here the semantic closeness of the two notions is the main factor of the problem concerning their differentiation. To some extend the same phenomenon takes place in the following example:

"Watson here knows more about my methods than you do, but I fear that even he has not quite grasped the significance of this sentence " [7].

The semantic peculiarities of this usage of the word significance become clear only while analyzing the situation in general. Henry Baskerville receives the following anonymous note where all the words but the last one has been cut off with scissors from a newspaper: AS YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE OR YOUR REASON KEEP AWAY FROM THE MOOR. After having proved that all the words but the last one had been taken from a certain issue of The Times Sherlock Holmes said that this note had given a trace to him at last and so it is very important for the future investigation.

It is remarkable that on coming to Holmes' Henry Baskerville shows the note and asks: "No, perhaps you will tell me, Mr. Holmes, what in thunder is the meaning of that and who is it that takes so much interest in my affairs?" [7]. The word meaning is of interest here. Surely, Baskerville is fully aware of the content of the note, but he wonders what is hidden behind these words and whether the note is in some way connected with his uncle's death. That's why this word suggests a complex of different factors coming out of this intricate situation. In this case the cognitive shadow of the word meaning is the concept IMPORTANCE.

Here we should point our attention to the value concept of INTEREST. As R.B.Perry points out, "That which is an object of interest is eo ipso invested with value" [8]. In [9] the point was developed that INTEREST is of axiological nature and lies in the basis of any planned activity. Later on in [10] it was shown that INTEREST can have linguistic explication by practically all notional parts of speech. In general, one can easily see that any thought or notion worth of our attention receives realizes its semiotic content through certain linguistic means. As K.Karlander writes, "we do not have any duty to pass on our beliefs to other people, unless we have reasons to suppose that they are of interest to those persons" [11].

So, it's rather easy to see the close intertwined character of the relations between the concepts MEANING and SIGNIFICANCE and the resulting possibility of the corresponding lexemes being interchanged in actual speech act. When one speaks of their evaluative usage, he can't but mentions the verbs that are the basis for morphological derivation of the named words. There exists one interesting peculiarity concerning the use of these words: the verb signify is very rare not only in its evaluative use but in semiotic one as well as compared with the verb mean.

The verb to mean is by itself of real interest to an expert in semantics, even if we don't take its synonymic and quasi-synonymic relations into account. The description of its semantic structure by the well-known Russian linguist Mikhail Nikitin seems to be one of the most consistent descriptions of this word's semantic structure. He differentiates the following main meanings of this verb: ml.l (to have) meaning as a linguistic sign; ml.2 (to have) implicational meaning ; m2 intention; m3 to have to say smth. —> the thought expressed; m4 to be of importance [12].

To give the necessary due to the following description, it must be said that these semantic different features can be revealed only in certain contexts. The usual practice is that several of the described meanings are expressed in one and the same speech situation. The combinatorial analysis gives no satisfactory result as well because the peculiarities of the syntactic-semantic combinability ('the case grammar", as Ch.Fillmore puts it) of the verb are blended in a single evaluative situation.

It is not hard to notice that meaning m 1.1 is of meta-semantic character, as it can universally be expressed by the proportional formula XI means Yl, X2 means Y2,... Xn means Yn, where X stands for a language unit of a certain level and Y -for a phenomenon of reality and thought expressed in X. The other meanings are mixed with each other. '

For instance, m 1.2 beside the main content of implication may express the purely evaluative meaning "to be of importance". In most cases such a meaning can be interpreted as "a stimulus for a certain activity" where the adjectives "important, essential, lying in the sphere of the interest of an agent" are characterized as the primary sign or an attribute stimulating this kind of activity or the further activity of the agent as connected with that sign, for instance:

(6)/ had sold two dozen at fifty cents apiece when I felt somebody pull my coat tail. I knew what that meant; so I climbed down and sneaked a five-dollar bill into the hand of a man with a German silver star on his lapel [13].

In this case Jeff Peters, an experienced street man, realizes that it was a policeman who interfered with his rogue trade of the fake medicine and he immediately bribes the policeman.

Rather often are cases when this verb can convey an evaluative attitude to a certain person or a kind of certain activity which the speaker judges as the ones which he likes or dislikes. In this case the verb governs the objects expressed by indefinite or negative pronouns, such as something, nothing etc., for example:

"He speaks Spanish as we do," Anselmo said. 'Why should he not teach Spanish? "

"Yes. But it is, in a way, presumptuous for a foreigner to teach Spanish," Fernando said. "I mean nothing against you, Don Roberto" [14].

In this particular situation the Spanish partisan Fernando disliking Robert Jordan tries to stay polite though his phrase shows that his negative attitude is still hot in rather indirect way.

There's one more peculiar use of the verb mean:

'I enjoyed this evening,' Tracy told Jeff. She meant it [15].

Though the verb mean is used to express the author's attitude (the so-called descriptive evaluation) - by that moment Tracy has still a general negative judgment of Jeff s morals and that particular evaluation is addressed to the reader to show that the improvement of the characters' relations is in progress, - there exist the cases of using this verb to express direct evaluation. Mostly it is the set-expression / mean business, the interpretation of which being dependant on the context.

The semantic scope of this expression is really vast - from persuasion to strike a profitable bargain to a direct threat, for instance, having a ready gun in one's hand and saying this to a man who does not want to surrender - to be put into the Procrustean bed of meaning ml.

The cases of meaning, mean, significance, significant described above show that their semantic features go beyond the limits imposed by the logical description. Moreover, the structure of their combinability cannot explain the reasons of their ambiguity and to differentiate them completely one needs rather a complex and spacey context, sometimes several paragraphs, to get to the essence of the word.

Now let's proceed to another concept expressing essence of the things and namely, SENSE. In general, the problem of linguistic sense has been long investigated in modern semantics, yet the results of the separation of the notions meaning and sense seem rather vague. Most linguists stick to the Fregian idea expressed by R.Jackendoff as follows: "Frege makes the all-important distinction between the *reference* [practically the same as *meaning* – I.C., O.P.] of an expression – what it denotes – from its *sense* – the manner or route by which it denotes the reference" [16].

There seems to be one important aspect characterizing both notions. It is the aspect to analyze them as axiological concepts, i.e. in the plain of the semantic theory of value and evaluation. Practically all the dictionaries viewing these words mark their evaluative use. For instance, "Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary" gives the following definitions of the axiologically marked word-combination to make sense:

"9. make sense. 9.1. If something makes sense, you can understand it. EG A sentence must make sense... 9.2. When you make sense of something, you succeed in understanding it. EG He could not make sense of his parents' mood.

9.3. If you say that someone makes sense or talks sense, you mean that they are saying wise or sensible things. EG On defense matters he talked a great deal of sense. 9.4. If a course of action makes sense, it seems reasonable and practical EG Under these conditions it made sense to adopt labour-saving methods... It often makes hard economic sense to borrow extra money".

If one paraphrases these definitions preserving their semantic content he/she can clearly see that the said word-combination may be easily substituted with the word-combination to have meaning. As we see, Definitions 9.1 and 9.2 are deprived of evaluative content, yet the rest are markedly evaluative in their semantic nature. The correlation of these definitions may be expressed in the following conclusion: 'if a thing has certain meaning, it surely makes sense. But there must be one notional remark - it makes sense in certain conditions, under certain circumstances, within certain situations.

Usually the negative content of the word-combination to make (no) sense is connected with having no logical explanation of a certain fact, as in:

Sir Thomas Legge, Assistant Commissioner at Scotland Yard, said irritably:
"But the whole thing is incredible!"
Inspector Maine said respectfully:
"I know, sir. "
The A.C. went on:
"Ten people dead on the island and not a living soul on it. It does not make sense!" [17].

In this context to make no (little) sense approaches the evaluative word-combinations having their own semantic sphere, like "to be strange/odd/queer".

The distinction between these word-combinations is of a relative character and the following example shows that:

"But nobody goes on that kind of journey without baggage. It does not make sense. "
"That's what I thought." Again Tanya hesitated. "It does not make sense unless..."
"Unless what? "
"Unless you happen to know already that the flight you 're on will never get to where it's supposed to be going" [18].

The conditional sentence is the key to withdraw categorical distinctions of the main meanings of the word-combination, as the indirect suggestion that the passenger in question has taken a bomb with him to commit suicide in the air gives the possibility to qualify such an act as well-thought in advance and thus making sense.

So, the meaning of the word-combination to make sense is rather vague to put clear distinctions between the main paradigms of its content.

As we know, there is another wide-spread collocation with the word sense, namely, to have sense. To make sense describes a certain, aimed purpose of an

action, or a certain motive to perform an action. To have sense shows that the object of evaluation shows satisfactory qualities to perform a certain kind of an action, as in:

The screenwriter had the good sense to know he was stalling. The problem was, who was going to die? [19].

Here had the good sense describes real grounds of evaluation, not its motives. It is remarkable that whereas to make good sense is quite possible, *to have bad sense with the infinitive is anomalous. At the same time the construction to have a good/bad sense of... is very recurrent in Modern English. It governs nouns of abstract semantic character, either of the sphere of sense perception (to have a sense of hunger, thirst), or a somatic one (to have a sense of giddiness, comfort), or (the most common) the sphere of emotions:

For to improve the condition of the people was their job and that relieved them of a sense of anxiety [20].

And his dependence on his sense of well-being was what annoyed Yates most [21].

Despite the strength and support of Andrew and the children she experienced a sense of "aloneness" which persisted long afterwards [22].

The difference between to make sense and to have sense is dissolved in the construction with the verb to be. In this construction the noun sense becomes a predicative, no restrictions on its structural use being imposed, as it can be met both in pre- and postposition. Besides, together with the adjectives of general estimation good è bad the parameter adjectives are also possible in the like construction (for instance, little and the like).

In the Walt Disney's Pictures movie "The Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of "The Black Đåàrl" Captain Barbossa offers an apple to the Governor's daughter, Elisabeth and when she asks: "It's poisoned?" Barbossa answers:

BARBOSSA: There would be no sense to be killing you.

When the captain explains that the crew needs to spill her blood in a certain place to get rid of their curse, he repeats with a cynic smile:

BARBOSSA: That's why there is no sense to be killing you... now.

Here the verb to be substitutes to make within the construction described. But the construction with the verb to make can be made more definite neither by an adverbial modifier nor by a clause of purpose as to make sense is self-sufficient to express the motives and purpose of an action.

CONCLUSION

Various examples of the words meaning and sense thus show that meaning is more systemic and sense is more situational. It is the axiological ground that proves it. There is meaning in actions if they pertain to certain values as complex systemic structures of human consciousness. Things mostly have meaning irrespective of the situation. Meaning is something like a law that gives validity to things [23]. Sense is connected with definite circumstances and if the situation is inadequate, thing that makes sense in one case is senseless in another one.

In this respect one should mention the cases when two paradigmatic meanings overlap in the situation and realize the common sense. These cases are rather numerous due to the vague evaluative nature of such expressions and they do not interfere with the general understanding of such utterances. As Anil Gupta points out, "Not all conceptual connections are relevant – not all are invoked, not all come into play – in every use of language" [24]. That can be explained by a certain independence of the sense of the meaning and vice versa. Sense is some synthesis of conceptual thinking and real situational conditions. Whereas a concept exist in some individual or collective mind, sense represents merely a model of some conventional situation based of re-thinking general meaning into a specific understanding of typical or particular situations.

Findings: The analysis thus shows that the notions of MEANING and SENSE are correlated with the valuation as a sphere of thought and language as both a system and its realization. In its turn, the correlation between meaning and sense is proportional to the correlation of value and evaluation. Meaning and value are paradigmatic categories whereas sense and evaluation are syntagmatic ones. Yet the problem still needs a more profound study and seems to be rather a perspective field in the sphere of cognitive linguistics. Moreover, it has rather a reliable

perspective to be applied not only to the studies in the domain of linguistic axiology, but to the general study of linguistic meaning as based on the categories of INTEREST and ACTIVITY.

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