

YU ISSN 0350-185x

UDK 808

ИНСТИТУТ ЗА СРПСКОХРВАТСКИ ЈЕЗИК

ЈУЖНОСЛОВЕНСКИ ФИЛОЛОГ

XLVII

Уређивачки одбор:

*др Даринка Гортан-Премк, др Ирена Грицкат, др Милка Ивић, др Павле
Ивић, Блаже Конески, др Тине Логар, др Александар Младеновић,
др Мирослав Николић, др Асим Пецо, др Митар Пешикан,
др Живојин Станојчић, др Драго Ђупић, др Егон Фекете*

Главни уредник:

МИЛКА ИВИЋ

БЕОГРАД

1991

MACIEJ GROCHOWSKI
(Warsaw)

HYPERONYMS AND QUOTATIONS AS COMPONENTS OF DEFINITIONS

1.1. It is assumed that basic and also the most adequate way of meaning explanation of lexical units consists in their defining. The notion of definition can be used in its broader or narrower sense. It is possible to treat each semantic characteristic of a given lexical unit as its definition in the broader sense of the term. However, if one wants a definition to be precise, exhaustive and methodologically correct then it should be subjected to stronger conditions.

First of all, it is necessary to define meaning of lexical units by means of the semantic metalanguage whose vocabulary is a part of a natural language and is composed of semantically prime and hence indefinable expressions. Moreover, it is assumed that internal structure of an ideal definition satisfies the following conditions:

(a) Definiens is a sequence of lexical units belonging to the above-mentioned vocabulary of the semantic metalanguage. The units are connected according to the grammatical rules of the language to which they belong.

Definiens is a sequence synonymuos to definiendum and it is possible to justify the truthfulness of such a hypothesis.

(c) Definition presents semantic relations between the unit to be explained and the other ones used in a given definiens. Semantic relations are warranted by virtue of conventions of a given natural language as a system of signs. Hence an ideal definition presents exclusively conventional interdependences between lexical units.

1.2. By semantic conventions I mean an interdependence between the meanings of natural language expressions, belonging to the language system and thus known to the same degree to all the native users of the language. The interdependence is based on the fact that each user of the language is willing to use expressions A and B in such a way that they will not be contradictory to each other. The willingness of such an application of language expressions

is due to the fact that each user of a language knows that all the others are willing to use the same expressions in a not contradictory way too and that they will do it in order to understand each other. Thus each user of English knows that there are, inter alia, the following interdependences between the expressions *a widow* and *a woman*, *a dachshund* and *a dog*, *to chop* and *to divide*: if somebody is a widow, then she is a woman, if something is a dachshund, then it is a dog, if somebody chops something with something, then he divides it into parts. Hence, each user of English is willing to use the expressions *a widow*, *a dachshund* and *to chop* in such a way that they would be not contradictory with the interdependences mentioned above.

My preliminary concept of semantic convention was presented in detail in one of the earlier works (cf. Grochowski 1988a).

1.3. On the basis of the accepted assumptions one can say that adequate definitions ought to be such tautological formulae in which the shapes of definiendum and definiens are not identical. In other words, definitions ought to be necessarily true sentences, that is, analytic ones. Consequently, as a result of denying such definitions self-contradictory sentences ought to arise.

An ideal definition satisfies the so-called postulate of substitution, that is to say, it is possible to replace a given lexical unit by its definiens in any context without violation of its correctness and without any change in its meaning.

If a given definition satisfies all the above-mentioned conditions, then it can be called an objective complete one. A lexical unit having a function of definiendum in the objective definition, as opposed to the metalinguistic one, is treated as an extralinguistic object, not a language expression.

2. On the basis of preliminary semantic analysis of the chosen lexical units belonging to different classes one can state without difficulty that only a certain subset of lexical units is describable by means of the objective complete definitions. There are probably at least four main reasons of this fact.

Firstly, it is very difficult in many cases to justify truthfulness of hypotheses that relation of synonymy between the units, which are defined, and the sequences of the order units does occur.

Secondly, there are difficulties in finding out a clear boundary line between semantic and extralinguistic conventions and consequently between the meanings of language objects and states of affairs denoted by them.

Thirdly, in natural languages there are lexical units whose meanings are cognizable not only on the basis of intralinguistic conventions but also as a result of a contact between expressions and extralinguistic object or states of affairs. This point will be considered below.

Fourthly, in each natural language meaningless lexical units surely exist, that is units not having a communicative function in utterances. Therefore it is natural that one cannot ascribe any semantic representation to the units and thus they are describable only in accordance with pragmatic or grammatical conventions. The question of meaningless units was considered in one of my earlier works (cf. Grochowski 1990).

Since objective complete definitions can be applied to semantic descriptions only in a limited scope it is inevitable to employ also other methods to explain meanings of lexical units. Farther on I present a few other types of definitions.

3.1. It appears that there are at least two relevant premises apart from the considered ones up to here which one should take into account when one makes inquiries about adequate ways of defining.

Firstly, there is relation of hyponymy between each meaningful lexical unit and at least one of the other lexical units. This follows from the statement that one can find out hyperonyms of the all meaningful units except the semantically prime ones. Hyperonyms are useful for forming objective partial definitions.

Secondly, there is a possibility of presenting the most typical, or at least adequate, ways of using each lexical unit. Such a presentation can consist in quotation of a given unit in its verbal context or in ascription of a unit to a given object.

3.2. The first premise requires no additional comments. The essential difference between the objective complete definition and the objective partial one consists in lack of relation of synonymy in the partial definition. Therefore it does not satisfy the postulate of substitution.

On the basis of second premise one can form, among others, such a metalinguistic definition that has an analogous function to a postulational definition known in formal logic (cf. Ajdukiewicz 1974: 79–82; 1985: II, 231–232). It will be called here a metalinguistic postulational definition. A procedure of explanation by means of such a definition is limited to referring to the unit x to be explained, for example an ambiguous one, the following descriptions: 1. expression having the meaning a when is used in the following exemplary sentences, 2. expression having the meaning b when is used in the following exemplary sentences. After that appropriate sentences are quoted.

Descriptions of that kind are mentioned by A. Bogusławski (1988: 70, 144) among the types of dictionary semantic informations which he proposed. In "Syntax of polypredicative expressions" (cf. Grochowski 1984) I applied the method under consideration to the semantic analysis of some conjunctions and prepositions (without using the above-mentioned terminology).

The metalinguistic postulational definition has on the one hand the least force of explanation but on the other hand it warrants truthfulness of the

description. It can be applied exclusively when the investigator is not able to explain a given unit even by means of its hyperonyms. Situations of that kind are not only theoretically possible but also practically unavoidable when one tries to define, for example, some interjections or particles.

3.3. On the basis of the second premise of semantic descriptions one can form also ostensive definitions, called iconographic ones. The procedure of defining by means of them consists in pointing to a certain object or state of affairs (or their picture) and referring to it, for example, the following verbal formulae: "This is x." or "When people see (hear, ...) things (events) like these they can say: this is x." In place of x one should use such a lexical unit that can be truthfully said about a given object or event. For example, I point at the window or a something green or somebody's cough at the moment and I say: "when people see (hear) things (events) like these they can say: this is a window (green, a cough)".

Ostensive definitions can be applied only to description of units denoting objects and states of affairs which are perceptible by means of one's senses.

The idea of the ostensive definitions is realized in some semantic works (cf. Wierzbicka 1985) and dictionaries (cf. Bogusławski 1983, Bondy-Lempicka, Arct 1957, Hornby 1974, Larousse 1917, Longman 1978) in such a way that pictures of objects are presented with captions under them. They can serve practically as an invaluable help in recognition of typical objects denoted by some lexical units and they are useful especially for people learning a foreign language. However, it is impossible to identify the pictures of objects with semantic representation of the lexical units under consideration.

3.4. The concept of ostensive definitions is based on the assumption that people become acquainted with some notions as a result of a contact between their shapes and appropriate objects and states of affairs. This is why a possibility to ascribe truthfully definite expression to object of a definite type exists. This follows from language conventions of reference, that is to say, from interdependences between language expressions and extralinguistic objects which belong to the language system and thus are known to the users of the language. A false sentence arises as a result of behaviour incompatible with language convention of reference. If someone uses, for example, the expression *an elephant* in order to ascribe it to a lamp then he behaves himself out of accord with such a convention.

The notion of language conventions of reference was explained in one of my earlier papers and in this connection it will not be considered here (cf. Grochowski 1988a).

4.1. On the basis of the previous analysis of ostensive definitions and also of preliminary accessible knowledge of the semantic system of natural languages it is possible to formulate the hypothesis that there are no lexical units that one should describe by means of ostensive definition but cannot

describe in any other way. It seems to me that it is possible and in many cases even necessary to combine the concept of ostensive definitions with the method of explaining by means of hyperonyms. In this connection objective definitions containing quotation of the unit to be explained are considered farther on. In these situations the units are used in the material supposition.

If one wants to assign a semantic representation of a given unit it is matter of course that, as a rule, one tries to form its objective complete definition which satisfies the conditions mentioned at the beginning of the paper. If the unit to be explained refers to a commonly known object or state of affairs then very often investigators make efforts to present all the typical features of the object or state of affairs denoted by the unit by means of definition. A definition of an extralinguistic object or a state of affairs known to somebody or at least imaginable does arise instead of semantic definition of lexical unit as a result of such an analysis. If one tries afterwards to eliminate all the components subsequent exclusively to the knowledge of extralinguistic reality from such a definition, then it appears that it is difficult to form a definition synonymous to a given unit on the basis of the set of undisputable semantic components of the unit. Hence, partial definitions in most cases arise.

Here are the following preliminary objective definitions of the units *a bed, a glass, X has a cough, an hour*:

Bed — it is a thing which was made for people in order that they can lie on it.

Glass — it is a thing which was made for people in order that they can drink something from it.

X has a cough — something happens in X's body and because of that X makes sounds.

Hour — it is a unit of time measure.

The idea of the last definition is taken from Bednarek's paper; cf. Bednarek 1990.

4.2. One can state without hesitation that the definitions proposed above contain hyperonyms of units which are explained and that the relation of synonymy is not communicated there. It is possible to justify the statements by the method of inquiring about contradiction.

Moreover, there is an additional argument for the fact that the relation of synonymy is not communicated in the definitions.

If someone wants to define the units which are semantically related but not synonymous to the explained ones, for example, such units as *a cough, a mug, X has a hiccup, a minute*, and if someone tries to eliminate from such definitions all the components subsequent to the knowledge of extralinguistic reality and to limit the scopes of the definitions to undisputable semantic components of the units, then it appears that the definitions formed in such

a way are probably identical to the above-presented ones. Such results of the analysis are not convincing. Non-contradictory sentences can be formed in order to prove this; compare for example:

This thing was made for people in order that they can lie on it but it is not a bed.

This thing was made for people in order that they can drink something from it but it is not a glass.

Something happens in X's body and because of that X makes sounds but X has not a cough.

It is a unit of time measure but it is not an hour.

Since people can communicate successfully with each other by means of the units under consideration and they do not use interchangeably the units making a given pair (because they would not be able to understand each other) one should reject the hypothesis that a relation of synonymy between the above-mentioned units does occur. If the idea concerning the possibility of combining semantic features and those which follow from knowledge of the world is rejected too, then one ought to consider two theoretically possible solutions of the problem.

The first one consists in acceptance of the opinion that units which have no full meaning but only partial ones exist in natural languages.

The second solution is grounded on the assumption that, apart from semantic conventions, other linguistic conventions exist which influence the understanding of some expressions and their truthfull application as well.

It seems that the first solution is intuitively unconvincing, though it was proposed in one of my earlier works (cf. Grochowski 1988b). Therefore only the second one will be taken into account here.

4.3. One should accept the assumption that language conventions of reference exist and that definite consequences which were earlier spoken about follow from it. On the basis of this assumption one can complete definitions of the notions, which are also ostensibly cognizable, by means of components containing the names of the appropriate notions, that is to say, the expressions used in the material supposition. Vicious circle does not arise since the definitions of the units are the objective ones. In this connection I propose the following preliminary objective definitions containing quotations for four lexical units which were defined above with the aid of their hyperonyms:

Bed — it is a thing which was made for people in order that they can lie on it and which can be spoken about "bed".

Glass — it is a thing which was made for people in order that they can drink something from it and which can be spoken about "glass".

X has a cough — something happens in X's body and because of that X makes sounds which can be spoken about "cough".

Hour — it is a unit of time measure called "hour".

In definitions of the above-presented type the relation of synonymy between definiens and definiendum does occur.

5.1. The application of the objective definitions containing quotation is not a new procedure of meaning explanation. It was applied in many semantic works, for example, by Wierzbicka (1972, 1991) for defining the names of months and days of week, the names of colours, the names of natural and cultural kinds, such as *dog* and *bread*, by Bogusławski (1988) for defining the names of human titles that is denominations conferred on people, such as *colonel*, *professor* or *dean*, by Bednarek (1990, 1991) for defining the names of measure units and numeral expressions, and also by me (cf. Grochowski 1988a, 1991) for defining some names of human artefacts and some names of sounds.

It is unforeseeable in advance without detailed empirical studies what can be a scope of application of the objective definitions containing quotation. Nevertheless, on the basis of the previous research one can state without hesitation that it is unavoidable to apply definitions of that type in semantics.

5.2. Remarks presented in the paper concerning several types of definitions which do not satisfy conditions of an ideal definition, namely the objective complete one, are treated exclusively as proposals belonging to the domain of methodology of lexical semantics. A possibility of application of such definitions to monolingual dictionaries requires separate examinations. They ought to be preceded by decisions concerning two general questions first of all.

Firstly, it is necessary to establish a general concept of meaning explanation in a given dictionary which ought to answer its purpose. One should assume that different rules are standing, for example, in scientific dictionary and in a popular one.

Secondly, for recognition of semantic system of a given natural language, not for lexicographic purpose, it is necessary to establish at first a register of foreseeable types of definitions and register of semantic classes of lexical units which can be explained by means of them.

REFERENCES

- Ajdukiewicz 1974: K. Ajdukiewicz, *Logika pragmatyczna*, Warszawa: PWN, second edition.
- Ajdukiewicz 1985: K. Ajdukiewicz, *Język i poznanie*, vol. I, II, Warszawa: PWN, second edition.
- Bednarek 1990: A. Bednarek, *O pojęciu jednostki miary. Rozważania semantyczne*, *Studia Linguistica Polono-Jugoslavica VI* (in press).
- Bednarek 1991: A. Bednarek, *Pięć. Rozważania semantyczne*, *Zbornik Matice Srpske za filologiju i lingvistiku* (in press).
- Bogusławski 1983: A. Bogusławski, *Ilustrowany słownik rosyjsko-polski, polsko-rosyjski*, vol. I, II, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.

- Bogusławski 1988: A. Bogusławski, *Język w słowniku. Desiderata semantyczne do wielkiego słownika polszczyzny*, Wrocław: Ossolineum.
- Bondy-Lempicka, Arct 1957: *Podręczny słownik języka polskiego*, eds. Z. Bondy-Lempicka, S. Arct, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.
- Grochowski 1984: M. Grochowski, *Składnia wyrażen polipredykatywnych*, (in:) *Gramatyka współczesnego języka polskiego. Składnia*, ed. Z. Topolińska, Warszawa: PWN, 213-299.
- Grochowski 1988a: M. Grochowski, *Les conventions sémantiques, les conventions référentielles et les explications des noms d'artefacts*, *Langages* 89, 39-50.
- Grochowski 1988b: M. Grochowski, *Podstawowe zasady definiowania wyrażen w słowniku jednojęzycznym*, (in:) *Wokół słownika współczesnego języka polskiego*, ed. W. Lubas, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 45-62.
- Grochowski 1990: M. Grochowski, *Mehrdeutige vs. bedeutungsleere Einheiten. Das Problem der Struktur lexikographischer Definitionen*, *Makedonski Jazik* (in press).
- Grochowski 1991: M. Grochowski, *Über eine semantische Beschreibungsmethode von Gehörperceptionsausdrücken*, (in:) *Words are physicians for an ailing mind*, eds. M. Grochowski, D. Weiss, München: Verlag Otto Sagner (in press).
- Hornby 1974: A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Larousse 1917: *Larousse élémentaire illustré*, ed. C. Augé, P. Augé, Paris: Librairie Larousse.
- Longman 1978: *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, ed. P. Procter, London: Longman.
- Wierzbicka 1972: A. Wierzbicka, *Semantic Primitives*, Frankfurt/M: Athenäum.
- Wierzbicka 1985: A. Wierzbicka, *Lexicography and Conceptual Analysis*, Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, Inc.
- Wierzbicka 1991: A. Wierzbicka, *Ostensive definitions and verbal definitions: Innate conceptual primitives and the acquisition of concepts*, (in:) *Words are physicians for an ailing mind*, eds. M. Grochowski, D. Weiss, München: Verlag Otto Sagner (in press).

Резиме

Mahej Grochowski

ХИПЕРОНИМИ И НАВОЂЕЊЕ КАО КОМПОНЕНТЕ ДЕФИНИЦИЈА

Аутор у овом чланку образлаже тезу да се помоћу синонимичних дефиниција не могу објаснити значења свих врста лексичких јединица. На основу претпоставки (а) да свака лексичка јединица која нешто значи представља хипоним бар једне друге јединице и (б) да постоји могућност презентације адекватног начина употребе сваке јединице (путем њеног навођења или одређивања њене денотације), аутор разликује следеће типове дефиниција: (1) парцијалне предметне, (2) метајезичке помоћу постулата, (3) остензивне (иконографске) и (4) предметне уз навођење. Он, даље, указује на потребу увођења предметних дефиниција које садрже како хипероним лексичке јединице која се дефинише, тако и њу саму, а онда утврђује унутрашњу структуру и принципе грађења таквих дефиниција.