Research article / Научная статья

Meaning as a Mechanism for Senses Transformation and Discourse Sense Space Structuring

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Abstract. Meaning is described as an evolving (dynamic) system; which determines the novelty of the study. The study gives a holistic analysis of significant language issue: meaning and sense. Formation of sense is a complex multifaceted process based on meanings transformation. The object is meanings of different types; as the main ones, the author distinguishes semantic, semantic-syntactic, logical-semantic and pragmatic meanings. The objective is to describe core features of the types and specify their role in senses creation and structuring the coherent discourse sense space. The principal research methods are pragmasemantic and discourse analyses; they promote revealing the mechanisms of formation of discursive meanings and senses, establishing the correlation between multilevel meanings and the created pragmatic effect, unveiling the potential of linguistic means used to form meanings and senses. This determines the relevance of the study, since the meanings system is presented from the functional perspective for constructing the discourse sense space. The main results of the study are as follows. Semantics sets the initial parameters of meanings, which in the process of contextual actualization are supplemented by syntactic and logical parameters. We see formation of semantic-syntactic meaning and its transformation into the logical-semantic one. Further, under the influence of contextual and extralinguistic factors, it increments additional pragmatic meanings which convert to discursive senses. The certain pragmasemantic effect is created. The author draws the conclusions that complex hierarchical transformation of multilevel meanings leads to senses hybridization, complication of discourse relations and links, and structuring its integral sense space.

Keywords: types of meaning, semantic, logical and pragmatic components, pragmasemantic and discourse analyses

Значение как механизм трансформации смыслов и структурирования смыслового пространства дискурса

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Аннотация. Формирование смысла — сложный, многогранный процесс, в основе которого лежит трансформация значений разных типов. Предложен целостный анализ одной из важнейших языковых проблематик: значения и смысла. С учетом этого автор описывает значения как развивающуюся (динамичную) систему, что обусловливает новизну исследования. Объектом выступают значения разных типов; в качестве основных автор выделяет семантическое, семантико-синтаксическое, логико-семантическое и прагматическое значения. Целью исследования является определение специфики каждого типа значений и степень их участия в формировании смыслов и структурировании когерентного смыслового пространства дискурса. Основные методы исследования — прагма-семантический анализ и дискурс-анализ, применение которых позволяет раскрыть механизмы формирования значений и смыслов дискурса, установить соотношение между разноуровневыми значениями и создаваемым прагматическим эффектом, выявить потенциал языковых средств конструирования значений и смыслов. Это обусловливает актуальность исследования, поскольку система значений представлена с функциональной точки зрения построения смыслового пространства дискурса. Результатами исследования является следующее. Семантика задает исходные параметры значений, которые в процессе контекстуальной актуализации дополняются синтаксическими и логическими параметрами. Происходит построение семантико-синтаксического значения и его превращение в логико-семантическое. Далее под действием контекстуального и экстралингвистического факторов происходит приращение дополнительных прагматических значений, трансформирующихся в дискурсивные смыслы. Создается определенный прагма-семантический эффект. Автор приходит к заключению о том, что сложная иерархическая трансформация многоуровневых значений приводит к гибридизации смыслов, усложнению отношений и связей дискурса, структурированию его целостного смыслового пространства.

Ключевые слова: виды значений, смысловая, логическая и прагматическая составляющие, прагма-семантический анализ, дискурс-анализ

Introduction

Discourse sense space is a complex hierarchical system based on various senses which in turn comprises two main types of meaning: semantic and pragmatic. Semantic meaning is a core component of sense; it primarily characterizes what is encoded in the language, regardless of the communication situation, communicants' features, and the context. In the process of discourse development,

semantic meaning increments additional pragmatic meanings under the influence of linguistic (context) and extralinguistic (the consciousness of communicants and the specific communication situation) factors. Pragmatic meaning conveys first of all the specificity of an utterance in the particular context: what is implied, the shades and subtleties of meanings, the correspondence between statements and their referents (objects, events, etc.). Due to pragmatic meaning, the sense system converts to more sophisticated structure. This, on the one hand, complicates discourse sense space filling it with hidden, indirect or implied meanings; but, on the other hand, this largely eliminates possible polysemy and even uncertainty of semantic meanings. However, there is no absolute difference between the two types of meaning. They are closely interconnected and interdependent.

The present study delves on describing transformation of meanings at different levels, which further lay the core of discursive senses. As the main types of meaning, we distinguish semantic, semantic-syntactic, logical-semantic and pragmatic meanings. Meanings formation is a sequential transition from one level to another; it creates some kind of trinity: the semantics of sentences in a general sense (literal meaning), the pragmatics of reference and ambiguity (explicature) and the pragmatics of intentions (implicature). This leads to complication of meanings and their converting to senses.

The **objective** of the study is to determine the specificity of each type of meanings and the extent of their participation in structuring integral discourse sense space.

What makes this issue **relevant** is the pragmasemantic analysis of discourse sense space, which helps to identify the potential of linguistic means of constructing meanings and senses, to establish optimal ways of their verbalization, which contribute to the most accurate expression of the communicative goal of the speaker and the adequate interpretation of the ultimate sense by the listener.

Application of pragmasemantic analysis in the study, as well as discourse analysis, allows unveiling the mechanisms of meanings and senses formation, and establishing the correlation between the basic semantic-syntactic meaning of the expression and the pragmatic effect the speaker wants to produce by using this expression in a certain context (pragmatic meaning). This reveals the **novelty** of the research, since pragmasemantic and discourse analyses contributes to presenting a holistic description of the meanings and senses system from the functional perspective of discourse sense space construction.

Materials and Research Methods

The theoretical basis includes works of modern linguists on issues of meaning and sense creation and discourse sense system structuring. Fiction of contemporary English-speaking authors is applied as illustrative material for analysis.

The core research methods are semantic and pragmatic analysis. There are also applied discourse analysis, content analysis, and contextual interpretation method.

Discussion and Results
Meaning as the framework for sense creation and discourse sense space structuring

The functional nature of discourse is reflected in the dynamics of its components frame; the components, on the one hand, actualize meanings of different levels and, on the other one, combine all the elements into a single structure, creating the general functional sense space [1; 2]. Meaning cannot be obviously represented only through semantic parameters. Since each utterance is unique and is created at the specific time for a certain communicative purpose, just understanding the separate meaning of words and sentences is not enough [3; 4]. What is also needed is an interpretation of a pragmatic meaning implied by a speaker when using these expressions. The specificity of the communicative situation is as essential for understanding the meanings as the semantic knowledge itself; it determines not only the appropriate combination of linguistic units for revealing the content but also comprehension of the linguistic representation in relation to the exact context [3; 5]. In other words, meaning can be analyzed only if the semantic and pragmatic principles are brought together.

Formation and comprehension of meaning much depend on the adequacy of linguistic units used — on the correspondence of the meaning of distinct linguistic units to the context, on the appropriateness and correctness of their usage [5; 6]. This promotes communication and contributes to its main goal achievement — information exchange and mutual understanding. The choice of linguistic means is determined by the initial intention of a speaker. Nevertheless, they can be replaced by other means due to the needed feedback, down to the specific communicative situation, the characteristics of the communicants, etc. The selection of a linguistic means for representing a particular meaning is provided by its inner (signified) and external (signifier) aspects. Meaning cannot be fixed and stay unambiguous: in each case, the form must be adequate to the essence, that is the linguistic unit must directly correlate with the meaning and then the sense it forms. Conveying a certain meaning, the linguistic unit also reveals information about the sense relations, which, in turn, complements and characterizes the content aspect of the language means [7; 8]. Therefore, linguistic units are directly impact dynamics of meanings formed and motivate discourse sense relations.

The complexity of the correct selection of means to express the designated meaning in the nominative form is that linguistic units relate in various ways to elements (fragments) of the conceptual system and can display objects of reality differently. Linguistic units, together with syntactic constructions, reflect fragments of reality revealing their properties, features and characteristics, and describe states, processes, actions. Let us analyze some examples.

*"How are you?" "**Fine**. You?"* (N. Hornby "High Fidelity").
*"You're okay? Really okay?" "**In the pink**."* (S. King "Hearts in Atlantis").

In the extracts, we observe formation of the meaning *the physical/emotional state of one of the communication participants*. Nevertheless, the idiomatically represented concept *in the pink* in the second example determines a greater stylistic nuance, depth, emotionality, while in the first example the meaning formed by the adjective *fine* is much more neutral.

The same we see in the following fragment, in which the metaphorical use of linguistic means contributes to the strengthening of the conveyed meaning:

> *I suddenly hated Arthur, again. I was their **last pawn**, and to save what little face they had left, they wanted all the **blood they could squeeze*** (J. Grisham "The Street Lawyer").

If in this case the metaphors are replaced by neutral means of expression, for instance, *they did not have any other chance except me* and *they wanted to use the possibility to full extent*, the meaning is not altered but the pragmatics of the discourse sounds completely different.

Comprehension of a meaning is as complicated as its formation. Interpretation, or a choice of meaning adequate to the context, can be described in terms of T. van Dijk's theory of focalization. Applied to our object of research, focalization can be presented as special processing of meanings, when, perceiving the information, the recipient places the certain meaning in focus (that is stands it out from many others); the meaning thus gets a more privileged status in relation to other meanings which acquire peripheral nature [9]. In other words, focalization performs a function of selecting a meaning from a number of possible ones; it is conditioned by the ability to process information, by knowledge, by aiming at the result of the communicative act, by interests, etc. of communicants and by implementation in meanings of all represented objects. For example:

> (1) *He recalled a letter that **had come** a week or so ago, full of puzzling possibilities* (S. Hunter "The 47th Samurai").
> (2) *He tried to give his wife pleasure in little ways, because he **had come** to realize, after nearly two decades together, how often he disappointed her in the big things. It was never intentional* (J.K. Rowling "The Casual Vacancy").
> (3) *It was a well-known syndrome — he **had come** across it before* (M. Bond "Monsieur Pamplemousse Hits the Headlines").

In the given fragments, the contextual factor (*a letter*, *a week or so ago* in (1); *he*, *to realize* in (2); *syndrome*, *he*, *across, before* in (3)) focalizes (activates) different meanings of the verb *come*: the central meaning *to come, to arrive* in (1); *to succeed, to manage* — as emphasis of the principal verb *realize* in (2); *to face, to experience, to deal with* in (3).

Thus, meanings reflect the communicative orientation, impact expression of the integral sense and structuring discourse sense plane. Creation of the discourse space is regulated to a large extent by linguistics means, by the peculiarities of their syntactic structuring, by their ambiguity and the possibilities of variation and rethinking. It is the synergy of meanings, not their simple summing, that provides

the integrity, univocality of perception and comprehension of the sense, discourse and communicative act.

Since for us relevant is the study of contribution of semantic, logical and pragmatic components to the integral functional system of discourse sense formation, it seems appropriate to consider the specificity of the corresponding types of meanings.

Types of meanings and their peculiarities

Sense formation is a complex hierarchical process. As sense is a combination of meanings created by the speaker and interpreted by the listener, depending on their background knowledge and world perception, the importance of each meaning aspect in constructing the integral discursive sense is obvious.

Meaning is formed due to the interaction of components; they are embedded in the objective reality and consciousness of the speaker and listener and in the process of communication determine the selection of linguistic means. Therefore, meaning applies to the world, language, and cognition [10; 11]. Thus, meaning is a fragment of reality, isolated and processed by human consciousness and transformed into the semantic structure of a sentence/utterance/discourse. Transferring meaning from reality to language, some linguists consider it as a complex semantic unit expressed by a sentence, and talk about overlapping of meaning on the continuum of objective phenomena [8; 12; 13].

It is semantic meaning that reflects real (or imagined) situations, objects of real (or constructed) world, and the relationships between these objects in space and time. Typically, semantic meaning is considered context-free; on the other hand, it is determined not only by the meaning of lexical units and linguistic forms, but also by semantic-syntactic rules and logical relations between these units. In other words, semantic interpretation must also advert to logical and cognitive systems. This is confirmed by some researchers who assert that an intrinsic condition for a linguistic description is the presence of logical structures that are added by a generative component; and the meanings of linguistic signs occupy a place between logical representation and a transformational component [14].

Semantic meaning makes a multilevel structure consisting of presuppositions and explicit and implicit components. Presuppositions form the core for an explicit semantic component; their interaction, in turn, is the basis for the implicit semantic component.

In a statement abstracted from a specific communicative situation, various semantic structures and meanings can arise. The restrictive function, the function of selecting the meanings which are relevant and central for the certain statement from a number of possible ones, is performed by the context. Actualization of the semantic meaning in speech, which is under the influence of the context, leads to changes in the semantic structure, due to which the meaning becomes more complex and acquires new shades. This is also influenced by the logical-informational

structure of the statement, illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect. Semantic meaning is evidently a primary parameter fixed in deep representations and then modified according to the pragmatic context.

Semantic meaning analysis allows specifying the conditions for the statements validity through their components: meanings and the means the meanings are represented by; the ways of combining components are largely determined by the syntactic component [15]. This helps structure the discourse sense singling out the proper meanings from an infinite range of possible ones due to the conditions of the communication. Thus, under the influence of syntactic factor and logical compatibility, semantic meaning converts to semantic-syntactic one.

Semantic-syntactic meaning is a sustainable meaning of a linguistic unit, an autonomous nominative function of a word of context-free nature, meaning outside the communicative act. This is the concept volume of a lexical unit in the so-called "zero context", which solely depends on the properties inherent in the nomination itself. Formation of semantic-syntactic meaning implies a linear development of the sense based on possible refinements. This process actualizes the semantics of linguistic units, builds up the syntactic interaction, and distributes the functional power.

Semantic-syntactic meaning is promoted by a variety of factors, among which the links between linguistic units are rather critical. Undoubtedly, all these parameters do not always act in the same way and unidirectionally in construction of different semantic meanings; a different combination of these factors also creates various relation between them.

(1) *Where's your radio? You **used to** carry your radio all the time* (D. DeLillo "Underworld").
(2) *A gun was different; you grew **used to** it, and it became a tool* (S. Hunter "The 47th Samurai").
(3) *Although these styles have been described in terms of capital market theory, it should be pointed out that other procedures could be **used to** implement them* (W.F. Sharpe, J.W. Bailey, G.J. Alexander "Investments").

In the given examples, the syntactic parameters — (1) *carry;* (2) *grew;* (3) *procedures*, *could be*, *implement* — activate different semantic meanings of the expression *used to*: (1) *a usual action or habit of doing something in the past*; (2) *to adapt to or hone something*; (3) *to be applied for some purpose.*

Conveying relations and links of the real (or imagined) world through semantic-syntactic structures is based on the logical content and cognitive processes of their reflection [3; 16]. The logical meaning is an objective category and is formed, on the one hand, by referring to the external world and, on the other, to the inner world of the speaker — his/her knowledge, thoughts, feelings and intentions. Thus, one could see transformation of the meanings: logic laws and pragmatic factors translate the semantic-syntactic meaning into the logical-semantic one.

*"So, who d'you reckon wrote that **stuff** about Dad?" he asked her recklessly.*
She turned a face of fury upon him.
"I don't know ... but whoever they are, it was a despicable, cowardly thing to do. Everyone's got something they'd like to hide." (J.K. Rowling "The Casual Vacancy").

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In the fragment, pragmatic factors (*a face of fury*; *a despicable, cowardly thing*; *they'd like to hide*) build up a logical chain which contributes to comprehension of a negative character of what was written (*stuff*) about one of the participants in the situation (*Dad*) — something unexpected, unpleasant, offensive for him. This constructs the logical meaning of the fragment.

As a context-sensitive relation, logical-semantic meaning can be interpreted in each situation (context) through an unlimited number of factors: where, when, referring to what the statement is constructed; who utters this statement, what he/she thinks, feels, and so on. Thus, there could be distinguished three core aspects of comprehension of this type of meaning: the choice of the linguistic means for utterance construction, the communicative situation of using the utterance, and the implicitly assumed by the speaker links that characterize the objects with which he/she relates the applied linguistic means.

Logical-semantic meaning is a kind of mechanism for extracting meaning from linguistic expressions. Words perform certain functions in a situation described in discourse, forming the main, stable, meaning and secondary meaning and structuring fields of meanings, which, in turn, create a wider field — area of pragmatics. Logical-semantic meaning is determined by the semantics of lexical units, the relations between the units, the grammatical structures, and the interpretation of these units and structures. It is a resource that communicants use to shape and interpret the discourse sense.

Logical-semantic meaning can be compared with nominations related to the global, and even ideal, designation of a situation, fact, event, etc. Being an internal form, mental content, in a specific discourse it acquires additional pragmatic components of a cognitive, emotional, subjective nature; this allows enriching the meaning with new shades or even convert it to a new one. This will ultimately be decisive in understanding the entire discursive space.

Interpretation of the entire sense of statements requires evolving of the logical-semantic meaning under the influence of contextual and extralinguistic factors into the pragmatic one, which is the meaning beyond the meaning of words. Pragmatics plays an important role in discourse. It refers to strategies (the use of general knowledge, assumptions about communicative intention, etc.), with the help of which communicants associate the lexical/grammatical meaning of statements with their communicative value in the context. Pragmatic meaning, as a rule, reflects the communicative functions that are related to the interpersonal exchange of information expressed by certain grammatical and lexical means of a certain language.

> *The director of the CIA ... showed the President of the United States pictures of **dead ducks** and sick children, apparently from Salisbury, to persuade him to take extreme action* (R. Slane "NYT claims Haspel's CIA showed Trump (fake) pictures of dead ducks, sick kids to get firm response to Skripal poisoning").
> *Anything that means spending money around here is **a dead duck** before it starts* (A. Hailey "The final Diagnosis").

One of the components forming the sense of the two abstracts is the expression *dead duck*. However, we observe the significant role of the pragmatic factor here. In the first example, the literal meaning of the expression is actualized — *birds that died*, while in the second extract the pragmatic connotation is obvious — *something that is very unlikely to be successful, doomed to failure*, since the combination in this case is a phraseologically represented concept.

If syntactically and semantically a message can be referred to as a set of signs representing objects, situations, events of the real (or imagined) world, the pragmatic aspect of meaning depends on the addressee: this is the so-called "addressee factor". Pragmatic meaning is determined by the worldview and life and linguistic experience of the author of the discourse and the recipient, their cultural background and social status, their emotional state at the moment of communication and the circumstances of the communicative situation [17–19]. These and other factors affect the ability of communicants to convey and interpret correctly the pragmatic meaning and attain the interaction goal.

To understand the differences between the semantic and pragmatic aspects of meaning, we can again turn to T. van Dijk's focalization theory. The scientist considers a pragmatic focus as an act of choice, the criterion of which is the success and effectiveness of communication and interaction [9. P. 319]. It determines the operation of selection, or focalization, when the most adequate for communication meanings is singled out. A semantic focus, on the other hand, is context-free and is defined in terms of relations existing between facts or objects, which is on a purely ontological level of semantics [9. P. 319]. This suggests that meaning as a component of sense is less important in comparison with the integral sense, for the sense has broader consequences than its components separately. Transformation of semantic meaning into pragmatic one is a process of change (alternation) of focus (T. van Dijk's term).

Another distinguishing factor between semantic and pragmatic focuses is that the former one represents perceiving of facts, objects, situations, etc. of the real (or constructed) world, while the latter is defined in terms of communication and communicants. Thus, semantic focus reflects the sequence of ideas, facts, events, etc. (given by the possible world) in the context/discourse, and pragmatic focus expresses the sequence of speech acts within a communicative situation. In the process of forming and transforming meanings, pragmatic focus may shift. This can happen due to a possible change in meanings creation because of alterations in the goals and intentions of the speaker, in the conditions and circumstances of the communicative situation. Therefore, those objects/ideas/facts/events are precisely pragmatically focused that correspond both to the context of the communicative situation and to a specific speech act at the certain time.

Pragmatic (context-sensitive) meaning promotes the sense of an utterance/text/discourse based on semantic components revealing their meanings

in immediate text environment. Nevertheless, the formation of successful, accomplished meanings depends not only on linguistic information but also on extralinguistic factors.

The foregoing allows conclude that pragmatic meaning is formed on the basis of semantic one, and since semantic meaning is connected with syntactic one, thus pragmatic meaning is also based on syntax. This can be presented as follows: first, semantics (context-free meaning) is complicated with syntax (form), then pragmatics (context-sensitive meaning) is incremented; in result, we see the formation of a synergetic hierarchical sense system: *context-free meaning > form > context-sensitive meaning*. Structuring of discourse sense space can be carried out in the directions *syntax → semantics → pragmatics*, *pragmatics → semantics* and *semantics → syntax* and even sometimes *pragmatics → syntax*.

The study reveals distinct transition from semantics to logic and further to pragmatics. This interaction reflects some kind of correlation between the processes. Semantic meaning, syntactic compatibility and logical form are linguistic coding; together they represent the semantics of a sign. Pragmatic meaning decodes logical-semantic meaning via the discourse sense plane. We see that sense is a multilayered construction; depending on context and experience of communicants, it can increment additional meanings in different ways. This once again confirms the openness and nonlinearity of discourse as a dynamic system — the core features of discourse emphasized by many linguists [1; 2; 20].

Conclusions

The presented analysis shows that communicative interaction is conditioned by different levels of meaning formation. The basic, semantic, level is a level of linguistic means which, entering into syntactic relations, make up a text. Semantics focuses on meanings and truth conditions with minimal regard to context and communication. The next level is logical. Logic explains the origin of organic correlation of thoughts and concepts. Principles of creating chains of meanings are determined by cognitive properties. The final level is a level of pragmatics, at which decoding of the meaning of utterances and discourse in general takes place. Pragmatics aims not so much at meanings as at senses creation, perspectives, and at interpretation. It takes into account contextual sociocultural interaction of communicants. Thus, pragmatic analysis focuses on discourse sense space rather than on the meaning of words or sentences. Close interweaving, interaction and interdependence of all levels can lead to certain difficulties in interpreting the communicative picture of linguistic behavior in specific situations. This also complicates a clear distinction between meaning types, since they are all in a complex correlation and are determined by the intention, communicative and pragmatic needs of communicants.

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