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LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN SENSATIONS IN MODERN ENGLISH

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Abstract

The article deals with the linguistic representation of the category of Human Sensations from the point of view of three aspects: conceptual, syntactic and evaluative. The work contributes to an investigation of the semiosphere of the human inner world within the anthropological approach to the study of linguistic phenomena. This approach puts forward the human being as the centre of attention, his inner and outer world, which is termed in the scope of the anthropological approach as bio-psycho-social nature. The paper dwells upon the dominant conceptual features, prototypical syntactic structure and the evaluative aspects of the category discussed. The category of egocentric nature is formed around a group of concepts with the meaning of human sensation, its categorical features include ecocentricity, indefiniteness, situativity and causality. The categorical situation is realized by means of semantic actants – Observer, Material/Predicative Object and Causator of the human sensation. The evaluative aspect is actualized by universal evaluative, hedonistic evaluative and sensory-affective adjectives, including the emotional component with egocentric evaluation. The model of analysis suggested can be applied in the study of other categories of the continuous semiosphere of the human inner world. The present work can be regarded as a fragment of this anthropological semiosphere of egocentric categories.

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1. Introduction

The category of Human Sensations is one of the semantic constants of the human inner world along with emotion, life and death, goodness and evil, beauty, truth and many others, since they are all focused on the bio-psycho-social nature of a person and all together constitute a continuous semiosphere of egocentric categories of the human inner world.

2. Problem Statement

Anthropological approach promotes operate with the three main terms: *constant*, *category* and *concept*. Let us clarify their contents before proceeding to the analysis.

Anthropological linguistics sees the semantic constant as “one of the components of the semiosphere of the human inner world, since it exists permanently and independently from the will of a human” (Malinovich & Malinovich, 2007).

In his philosophical pragmatism Charles Peirce singled out three universal categories of Firstness (possibility), Secondness (actuality), and Thirdness (law, habit) (Peirce, 1867). Peirce’s universal categories constitute the core of his phenomenology and the foundation of his triadic semiotics (Mittelberg, 2019), the latter will serve as the basis for the present work.

In linguistics, the term *category* is understood as an “association, grouping or sphere” (Voeikova & Kazakovskaya, 2019), and “one of the means of human cognition, that helps to accumulate experience and realize its classification” (Kubryakova, 2010, p. 86).

According to Karasik (2015), a concept is a multidimensional semantic entity in which the evaluative, figurative and conceptual aspects are distinguished. As the processes of conceptualization and categorization are closely interconnected, their definitions are similar. As Kubryakova (2010) puts it, these two cognitive processes differ in their goals: “the objective of conceptualization is to identify units of human experience in their ideal meaningful representation, categorization unites elements that are similar into classes” (Kubryakova, 2010, p. 14) The study of categorization processes, as Lakoff (2011) writes, “is extremely important for understanding how we think and how we act” (p. 6). This allows us to conclude that conceptualization is the process of understanding phenomena of reality; categorization is the classification of them.

The aforementioned allows us to define the linguistic status of the Human Sensations category in Modern English as the semantic constant of the human inner world, a multidimensional category of egocentric nature, which is formed around a group of concepts, the basic of which being the concept of Sensation.

3. Research Questions

The category Human Sensations, like any other concepts, clothed in the form of a linguistic sign, goes to the level of semiotics – a general theory of signs in which language is studied in three dimensions: semantics, syntactics, pragmatics (Morris, 1983; Peirce, 1867; Stepanov, 2019). Under the named aspects of the linguistic sign we analyze the conceptual (semantics), syntactic (syntactics) and evaluative (pragmatics) aspects of the Human Sensations category.

4. Purpose of the Study

Accordingly, the aim of the article is to observe the linguistic representation of the category of Human Sensations in three dimensions: conceptual, syntactic and evaluative.

5. Research Methods

The present paper features two main methods:

the anthropological approach that focuses on the study of a natural language in relation to the human and his bio-psycho-social nature (Malinovich & Malinovich, 2007) and the semiological approach, according to which the category under study is considered in three dimensions: conceptual, syntactic and evaluative (Morris, 1983; Reifman, 2020; Stepanov, 2019).

We also use definitional analysis, interpretational and contextual methods.

6. Findings

As we have mentioned above, this work finds us applying semiological or semiotic approach to the linguistic analysis of category of Human Sensations.

According to this approach language is considered as a web of signs in which texts are an embedded subsystem (Beheydt, 2018).

The analysis of a category from the semiotic point of view was carried out by other authors who focused their attention to ethnographic details of the processes of sign production and consumption (Yao & Gruba, 2020).

In this paper we adhere to Stepanov's semiotic approach (2019) to linguistic phenomenon investigation and observe it from the three aspects: conceptual, syntactic and evaluative.

Conceptual Aspect

Speaking about the conceptual aspect, it seems necessary to highlight the categorical meaning and categorical features of the phenomenon under study.

The analysis of lexicographic sources and linguistic corpus-based material showed that the category of Human Sensations is formed by the categorical meaning of *sensation* that brings together all the units of the given semantic class.

The dominant categorical feature of all the constants of the human inner world, including the Human Sensations, is the semantic feature of "Egocentricity" which is defined in dictionaries by means of the pronoun "you" or "your" explicating the subject of sensation:

Sensation – a feeling that you get when something affects your body (OLD).

The egocentricity is represented in the semantic role of the Subject, which is realized in different ways, for example, by the use of personal pronouns:

I felt the sting of the cold, bitter air (BNC).

We can also identify one more categorical feature, that of indefiniteness, because the analysis of the linguistic data shows that human sensations are often characterized as strange, odd, difficult to explain:

*I had the **odd** sensation (that) someone was following me (CED).*

*I had a **strange** sensation in my neck as if something was pressing against it (CED).*

Dictionary definitions also emphasize the same feature, for example:

*Sensation - of a general feeling caused by something that happens to you, especially **a feeling that you cannot describe exactly** (CED).*

Human sensations are difficult to explain and verbalize which makes the feature of indefiniteness categorical.

One more feature is the situational nature of sensations, which is realized with the help of the adverbs and adjectives denoting sudden action:

***Suddenly** she felt a burning sensation in her throat (CED).*

As one can observe, human sensations are situational, arise suddenly, and do not depend on the will of the person.

We can trace this feature in a dictionary definition too:

*Sensation – a mental process resulting from the **immediate** external stimulation of a sense organ often as distinguished from a conscious awareness of the sensory process (WED).*

Thus, indefiniteness is one of the categorical features of Human Sensations.

The next categorical feature is that of causality.

The semantic feature of causality is actualized in speech by various linguistic means, including verbs with causative semantics:

*It may **cause pain** but often there are no symptoms (BNC).*

In the definition below, we observe the causal semantics of the category of sensation due to the lexeme *effect*, explicating cause-effect relations:

*Sensation – a particular feeling or **effect** that your body experiences (WED).*

The causal semantics of the category is manifested in the language in the semantic role of Causator.

The signs nominating the causal relations are anthropocentric, as they are linguistic signs, with the help of which a person explains the causal determination of his inner world, as well as the external world. Their purpose is “to mark the actual causal essence of vital situations of the inner world of man and his environment” (Malinovich & Malinovich, 2007).

The foregoing allows us to conclude that in the conceptual dimension, the Human Sensations category possesses the semantic features of egocentricity, indefiniteness, situativity and causality that characterize and unite all the elements of the category.

Syntactic Aspect

Having identified the main categorical features, it seems necessary to identify the categorical situation of Human Sensations, i.e. the syntactic aspect. The latter can be interpreted in terms of semantic roles (Kovaleva, 2010). The categorical situation includes semantic roles of the Subject (human, the doer of the action or the subject of it), Object (the object acted upon or the object of sensation), Causator (the cause of sensation).

The prototypical Subject of sensation is the sensing subject or, in terms of role grammar (Mazarweh, 2010) – Experiencer. Analysis of lexicographic sources shows that the main feature indicated by the explanatory dictionaries of the English language is the seme “experience”, all dictionaries indicate the subject who experiences the external material world, for example:

*Sensation is an **experience** arising directly from stimulation of sense organs (ACD).*

The following example also actualizes the Experiencer of the sensation:

I experienced a stinging sensation in my arm (WED).

Another semantic role in the categorical situation is the Object. Its type depends on the kind of sensation indicated. Closest to the prototype is the material Object of sensation:

He touched her head and felt her hair (OAD).

The material Object in this situation does not create semantic shifts and expresses the situation of physical sensation prototypically.

However, the analysis of linguistic material shows that the Object can also be expressed by a predicative actant:

She felt someone touch her shoulder (OAD).

The causer of the Experiencer's tactile sensation in this situation is the whole situation, or the action of another subject. Agreeably, the Object of sensation can also be predicative, depending on the nature of the Causator.

The semantic role of Causator can also be referred as to the categorical situation as we have already mentioned above that sensations always have stimuli or cause. The nature of Causator is predicative as it is represented by an action or whole situation.

Evaluative Aspect

The Human Sensations category also includes the evaluative aspect as part of the cultural national foundation. A person does not merely sense the world as it is, but subjects it to a personal assessment. As noted by Arutyunova (1999), the ability to evaluate distinguishes a person from other living beings.

The problem of evaluation was first discussed in philosophy, namely, axiology, where it is understood as a statement establishing the absolute or comparative value of an object (Ivin, 2019). The cognitive approach to the study of evaluation (Karasik, 2015) investigates the cognitive structures and processes that underlie it. According to the anthropocentric approach, the semantic changes in qualitative adjectives are considered as a language evaluation mechanism (Malinovich & Malinovich, 2007).

Linguistic literature notes that any evaluation is self-centered (Arutyunova, 1999; Searle, 2012). Searle (2012) writes: "Values in one way or another flow from a person; they do not lie in the outside world. Otherwise, they would cease to be values and constitute a part of the objective world" (p. 12). In order to evaluate a particular object or phenomenon of reality, a person perceives it through his sensory and cognitive mechanisms: the nature of the evaluation corresponds to the nature of the person, it "cannot be independent from the person, and if the life of Mankind has a goal, the evaluation explicitly or implicitly subordinates this goal" (Arutyunova, 1999, p. 427). For example, Polish scholars discussed the background of axiological semantics while analyzing cultural differences between Polish and Estonian conversational strategies in the use of evaluative words (Vainik & Brzozowska, 2019).

Evaluative statements characterizing a person's sensations have various forms of expression. The main means of expressing assessment of human sensations are universal evaluative adjectives good / bad, hedonistic evaluative adjectives pleasant / unpleasant, as well as sensory-affective adjectives, including the emotional component itself: magnificent, wonderful, delicious, etc.; terrible, horrible, awful, etc.

The positive sensory experience is connected with harmonious interaction of the human with the external environment. They are expressed in terms of hedonistic evaluation:

*It provides a **pleasant sensation** of freshness (BNC).*

*My massage had left me with a **pleasant** tingly sensation (CED).*

Pleasant sensations are also verbalized through sensory-affective adjectives, containing their evaluation:

*I can remember the first time I went sailing - it was a **wonderful** sensation (CED).*

A positive evaluation in the above example is expressed by the sensory-affective adjective *wonderful*. As we can see, the nomination of sensation is closely related to the emotional sphere of a person.

Unpleasant sensations are nominated by the speaker in terms of hedonistic evaluation with negative prefix or particle *unpleasant/not pleasant*:

*Danger needs to be associated with an **unpleasant sensation**, or otherwise we wouldn't take it seriously (BNC).*

A negative hedonistic assessment in the above situation nominates the unpleasant sensations that are associated with the most negative feeling of danger.

Unpleasant sensations are associated with abnormal functioning of the human body and are described by means of universal evaluative and sensory-affective adjectives:

*The **bad smell** disgusted us (BNC).*

This statement verbalized the unpleasant sensation through the adjective *bad*, which not only contains negative semantics, but also indicates the intensity of the sensation the subject experienced.

In the following fragment sensory-affective adjective *terrible* expresses the negative evaluation of sensations by the Experiencer.

*The **sensation** of those **terrible** whistling sounds and of the corpses around him merged in his mind into a single feeling of terror and pity for himself (BNC).*

Thus, sensations and the evaluation related to them are egocentric, since, in the figurative expression of L.O. Cherneyko, evaluation is a boomerang (2016), because it expresses through the characteristics of an Object the properties of the Subject itself.

7. Conclusion

The category of Human Sensations has been observed from the point of view of three aspects: conceptual, syntactic and evaluative. The result of the study shows that the categorical meaning of the Human Sensations is that of sensation which possesses the semantic features of egocentricity, indefiniteness, situativity and causality, represented in categorical situation with the personal Subject (Experiencer), the material and predicative Object and the Causator of human sensations. The evaluative aspect is realized in propositions with the personal assessment by means of universal evaluative adjectives, hedonistic evaluative adjectives, as well as sensory-affective adjectives, including the emotional component.

The proposed method of analysis of a semantic category can be useful for further investigations of other categories explicating the human inner world. The study only partially contributes to the accomplishment of the aim of anthropological linguistics to observe the linguistic phenomena from the point of view of the human bio-psycho-social nature in order to create a continuous semiosphere of the human inner world.

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