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CONTEMPORARY METHODS OF SEMANTIC STUDIES AND THEIR IMPACT IN TRANSLATION³  

Abstract  

In contemporary linguistic sciences it is acknowledged that the most intriguing aspect of language is the meaningful one, an aspect with countless peculiarities in all structures, especially in relation to communication and translation. This is also evident in research on this aspect that should be assessed, with novelties and many open and controversial issues. The purpose of this paper is to address contemporary methods of lexical semantics especially from a didactic viewpoint influencing translatability in the process of English language teaching. Many books and journals on semantics and translation have been reviewed to find out the role that semantics has in the translation procedure during the teaching process. Different materials have been translated by students and problems were analyzed in terms of semantic and didactic perspectives. It was noticed, that difficulties arose from inappropriate didactic transposition of words and meanings. The combination of classical methods of research and scientific research with contemporary ones in lexical semantics is a necessity that not only reveals the work but also the ability and competence of the lecturer. To conclude for a satisfying translation, it is particularly necessary and helpful for a translator to have some general knowledge of the relationship between semantics and translation. Semantic studies provide theories; approaches or methods in understanding ‘meaning’ that are very useful in translation and teaching as well.  

Key words: semantic studies, contemporary methods, translatability, meaning, teaching process.

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1. In contemporary linguistic science, it is recognized that the most intriguing aspect of language is meaning, an aspect that comes with countless peculiarities in all strutures especially with regard to the act of communication. This is also apparent from research on this aspect, which must be estimated, with open and controversial topics. J. Lyons, 50 years ago one of the world’s most famous semantologists, as many scholars, claimed that until then nobody had even given a satisfactory outline of semantic theory.[1] Even today, despite numerous achievements, it can be said that this state can not be called completely overcome, implying lexical semantics, which deals with research on meaning and its movement. It is worth pointing out that even in Anglo-American language that, as stated above through J. Lyons, if at the beginning of the 60s in the twentieth century there was a relative backwardness in semantic studies; many linguists have produced qualitative articles on meaning. Naturally, these inputs have brought different thoughts, concepts and interpretations for the object and methods of study, conditioned by factors related to the nature of language, with the theoretical corpus where the research is based, with the traditionin of studies, with the acceptance of study experience from linguistic and non linguistic disciplines, etc...

2. The semantics of the last decades emerged as an inclusive science, with some independent subdivisions, such as lexical, morphemic, syntaxal semantics, and so on. Especially through the methods applied on the study of meaning, there is an increasing tendency from the researchers, as representatives of a given school, such as structural, functionalist, generationalist, descriptive, logicist, psychologist, etc., to break the boundaries producing a variety of works and concepts intertwined with one another. This has led to the emergence of disciplines as structural semantics, interpretative semantics, generative semantics, cognitive (formal), formal semantics, etc.

The nature of lexical semantics has changed significantly in the last 20-30 years, especially after the publication of J. Lyons Semantics [2] D. A. Cruse [3] Lexical semantics etc., that were written at a time when lexical semantics was essentially detached by major grammar generative theories. However, during the 1980s, from the XX-th century and onwards, grammatical theories became much more lexically and semantically directed, requiring greater attention to lexical meaning issues.

In semantic studies, the influence of traditional linguistics has often been felt, as the researcher J. Thomai, says “has seen the word as a basic language unit, but being insecure of its borders, especially in dealing with other related
and different languages”. [4] Structuralistic linguistics with F. De Sossyre, sought to overcome the difficulty by building other systems of language units, placing the word at the intersection of two study axes: That of the syntagmatic axis (studied in morphology, syntax and morphosyntax) and of the paradigmatic axis (studied in lexicology) “. [5]

This conception was carried in semantics, focusing not just on the boundaries, but also on the value of the word. In 1956, A. Miteran underlines that every word in terms of value belongs to a certain structure, which we should study in two axes: the first defines the possible substitutions of different words for the same meaning at the given point of expression (synonymy); while the second defines the possible combinations of the same word with the possible variation of this meaning (polysemy).

The researcher R. Memushaj affirms that “in the sense of the word appear intricate interrelationships within the lexical system and the world of concepts, links that define the semantics of the word. This means that the meaning structure of words should be studied in two axes: (a) According to the paradigmatic axis, through which the substitution links between the words in a statement are discovered; (b) According to the syntagmatic axis, which allows the possible combinations of the meanings of the word to be inferred. Due to the paradigmatic axis, synonymous phenomena are discovered, that of antonymy of hiponymy while due to the syntagmatic axis polysemy and homonymity is revealed. [6]

4. Regarding the word as a unit, as a value, as a function through this two-pronged-axial conception, when it comes to studying its meaning and, in process, to determine the main units of lexical semantics as lexemes, archilexeme, sememe, seme etc., it must be affirmed that in structuralist, functionalist or generativist linguistics there are no specific, completely clean methods (to relate only to one of the disciplines involved in these sciences), but methods that have previously been proven or worked on language systems with a pronounced systemic character, both in phonology and in grammar.

However, here we briefly mention some well known methods from our scientific environment. It should be reaffirmed that these methods, in one form or another, totally and partially, sometimes accepted and sometimes implied, are also applied in our semantic studies. During the ‘40s-50s of the twentieth century, the technique of semantic differentiation was used in linguistics by Charles E. Osgood to quantitatively measure the meaning in language. According to this technique, words may have different meanings for different individuals, as a result of their experiences in life e.g. The word riches perceived differently by people of different ages, but also from people with unequal income. Semantic differentiation catches (registers) these meanings or different shades of meaning,
finding some accuracy in how we understand the word differences. To realize this change, a typical semantic differentiation test is used, for which, a subject is required to use a stimulus word in terms of a descriptive bipolar rate (eg. the antonymic couple *bad/worse*). The subject must judge the stimulus word between the extremity and the contradictory words, which determine the end of this scale. Typically, these bipolar scales have 5-7 points. [7]

Methods of semantic research used today to study meaning and its movement.

a. The method of distributive analysis or analysis of distinctive features, which operates with features drawn from the oppositions and relies especially on the concepts of value and the semantic field. It connects to structuralism, which introduced *the principles of diferencial distinctions*, oppositions, to the lexical units, semantics through the direct method of distributional analysis and the indirect method of analysis of semantic features or distinctive features. According to this method the meaning of the word does not just reflect its connection with a given aspect of the real world. He must be taken as a resultant of semantic features arising from his affiliation in one or more specific lexical systems. The analysis of semantic features uses a system which helps to explore how things, beings, events, relationships, etc., in one group are related to one another and we are in a situation, in which it is necessary to list similarities and differences among the members of the given group. Semantic theory, based on research through this method, describes the semantic structure of the word by comparing the semantic features which include in their content quasi homosemic words.

The distributional analysis highly assessed the relationship between words. Starting from Z. Harris’ thesis, according to which two morphemes which have different meanings, are also distinguished by their distribution, J. Apresian used this distributional postulate to arrive to the concept of syntactic meaning of lexical units. So the core of this study method is the characterization of a lexical unit depending on the possibility of establishing reports with other units (known as the distribution, process).

In American linguistics, the distribution method is determined by concentrating on semantic analysis, not the word but the context of its use. Moreover this linguistics describes the semantic-lexical unit at the border of the linguistic and cultural context. We mention here that one of the most prominent representatives of structural semantics, J. Lyons, sees the meaning of the word as sum of its uses. This implies that the word may not have an independent meaningful structure (A sense or a few others), with which it is identified, is distinguished from other lexical units and is written in an explanatory dictionary. Even the researcher E. Coseriu asserted that the concrete content (of a given
object) is a fact of discourse, and meaning is a fact of language (of technical means of discourse)[8].

b. The lexical-semantic fields method was developed as a derivative of the distributional method, fields defined as paradigmatic links, as from the syntagmatic ones of lexical units. It is known that the words, through the approach of their meaning structures, are seen semantically according to the relationship of equality, relationships of exclusion, the opposition relations, the relationships of inclusion, the relationships of intersection or interruption etc. Despite these concepts, nowadays no study can be conducted in the field of lexical semantics without the method of lexical fields, introduced in linguistics first by Jost Trier). [9]

He sees the lexicon of a language as a multitude of areas that interfere with one another and model this conception with the metaphor of chain links, where each link appears as a special lexico-semantic field. According to him, the overwhelming majority of the lexicon of a language can be conceived in this way. The use of the analysis method through lexical and semantic fields means grouping lexems based on the meaning or common meaning components. The description of meaning and definition of these lexemes is done within a field and means determining the position of a lexeme in relation to other lexemes in this field. The essence of the analysis lies in the fact that a word expresses its referential meaning as a member of a semantic field through the common features it shares with other members in this field, as well as having contracting features, which distinguish it from other members of the field. With this method one can study the lexicon of a language and directly into an explanatory dictionary according to opposition practice, borrowed from phonology proposed by J. Lyons by correlation marked unit / unmarked unit.

c. Under the influence of structural studies on phonology, in the field of semantics there is another method of analysis of lexical meaning, that of the meaning particularization into the constituent elements (components). This method is based on a comparative analysis and is mostly related to the name of semantologist E. Nida. This is already known as a componential method and aims at building the profile of meanings through minimal semantic units, which, according to the different authors are called semantic components, semantic features, seme, plereme, noema, semantic units, and so on. [10] Analysis of this type of study, otherwise known as conceptualism, interpret the components of meaning as atomic concepts and the meaning of the lectures as molecular concepts. The method of componential analysis applies to discourse means, since the semantic elements of the word are extracted from all its possible positions in the phrase (In context and given use). The lexical unit, seen as
an independent entity, is not put under a separate analysis, but in its possible linguistic paradigmatic and syntagmatic links. The analysis does not apply only to the syntax units, not to lexical units either, but to both, as a two-plane analysis. Expansion of the area and object of application of the componential method is gradually done, with the completion and perfection of this method.

Here we can mention the semantic theory of Katz - Fodor, which is related to the scaling up of syntagmatic indicators from the most general semantic differentiator to the most special one, from the material - to the spiritual - to “the bird” or from the material – unspiritual – to the “object”).

d. A form of componential analysis method, which today is also accepted as a separate semantic study method, is that of seme analysis, which operates with seme and sememe concepts. Seme is seen as the minimum unit of meaning, which is not self-sufficient, because it can not be realized independently, but only within another semantic size, inside sememe (which appears as an inclusive unit as opposed to seme, as an ‘included’ unit). According to the conception, sememe is formed by a group of semantic features. This European variant, with partial or sideways modifications in ideas, in interpretations and in terminology, is still being implemented today in many West and East schools.

e. In today’s lexicon-semantic studies two types of analysis are often combined: Distributional analysis and componential analysis. One form of this combination is known as valence study method, which is nowadays the most used, especially when studies are intertwined through generative and interpretative semantics. The valence of a language unit implies the ability of this unit to connect with other language units, either directly or by subsidiary means, considering both the structure and the semantics of the units [11]. In the free syntagmatic constructions the words expose the outer valences. These valencies return to darkened valences when two- and more-membered syntagms produce phraseological or idiomatic units.

In lexical semantics, it is also operated with the concept of inner valences (The inner valence can be viewed directly on composites). [12]

5. We highlighted above that the achievements of structural linguistics in Europe conditioned by the achievements in lexical semantics, profiling it, firstly, as structural semantics. But the middle of the last century marked strong achievements in American language school. In the 60s of this century, genuine semantic studies began. Semantics, which in generative-transformative grammar was almost neglected, 1967 received a powerful impetus from theory of Katz-Fodor, which sought to integrate a new semantic theory with a generic syntax concept.

A year later Lakoff suggests that deep structures should be more abstract than
scientific research has shown in the transformative grammar and that selection constraints are merely a semantic phenomenon. But Chafe in 1968, by treating idiomacy as an anomaly in the Chomsky paradigm, sets out an alternative study model, where semantics is first, initial; in this paradigm, a semantic component generates grammatical structures and proposes generic semantics naming for this kind of semantic.

6. Among the methods of study and scientific research in the field of meaning and movement of meaning is that of semantics conditioned from the truth, related to the name of Donald Davidson. It is limited to the conclusion of the full meaning of the sentence (of the accomplished one). This method sees the meaning of statements, assertions, as the same or editable, in terms of truth. It tries to apply in the semantics of natural languages what the Tarsky’s semantic theory of truth reached in the semantics of logic. It is important to note that, just as Tarsky had originally formulated, this theory applies only to formal languages. He presented a number of reasons for not extending this theory to natural languages, arguing the problem that there is no systematic way to determine whether a spoken statement of a natural language is well-formed and that natural languages are “closed” which means that they can describe the semantic characteristics of their elements. The Tarsky method later extended to a method of understanding the theory of natural languages

7. Today we talk about cognitive semantics. In contrast to semantics conditioned by the truthfulness, cognitive Semantics connects meaning with thought and sees the meaning as an issue of interpretive semantics and conventionalism. According to this semantic, linguistic interpretation (interpretation) processes are the same as psychological processes and are involved in the processing of knowledge of the world and perceptive abilities. This way of looking and this method of study came up with complications for the problem of agreement. In cognitive semantics the dynamic explanatory method is used which claims that the words themselves are out of meaning: They have a lot of incomplete explanations, which are ways of using words, indeed. Along these lines, cognitive semantics argues that the agreement may be understandable only if they take into account not only the meaning of the statement itself, but also pragmatic elements of the speech act, as the context and purpose of the statement. Cognitive semantics is directly related to the word metaphorization process or to enhancing its signifying capability. Today, up to 27 types of language metaphors are accepted, that transform a figurative use (as a unit created instantly, in a given use) in a figurative sense (In a language unit, as a stand-alone unit even out of use) Relying on the method of concordance and minimum structures, it will be intended to derive from these statements the
minimum double-word syntax, where the valences of words are seen and the semantic movements start, as internal movements through tropes, and where the metaphorical process itself occurs.

On the following we have extracted examples translated by our students in a normal translation and interpretation subject Class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Student Translation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We will not open the door,” cried they; “you are not our mother, she has a delicate and sweet voice, and your voice is hoarse; you must be the wolf.”</td>
<td>Nuk ta hapim, jo. Ti s’je nëna jonë. Ajo e ka zërë të hollë e të ëmbël, kurse ti e ke të trashë e të ashpër. Ti je ujku, prandaj ik, se nuk t’a hapim! [13]</td>
<td>“Ne nuk do të hapim derën”, bërtitën ata, “ti nuk je nëna jonë, ajo ka një zë të delikat dhe të ëmbël dhe zëri yt është i zhurmshëm; Ju duhet të jeni ujku “. (Student Translation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Dear children,” said she, “I am going out into the wood; and while I am gone, be on your guard against the wolf, for if he were once to get inside he would eat you up, skin, bones, and all. The wretch often disguises himself, but he may always be known by his hoarse voice and black paws.”</td>
<td>Dëgjoni, o kecat e mi, une do të shkoj në pyll e do t’ju sjell të hani plot të mira. Ju rrini vetë këtu në shtëpi, po hapni sytë e kini mendjen mos ia çelni derën ujkut, se, po hyri brenda, ju hëngri e ju përpiaj me gjithë kocka! Ai do të përpiaqet t’ju gënjejë e të shtihet si tjetër kush, po ju do ta njihni nga zëri i trashë dhe nga këmbët e zeza qe ka. [13]</td>
<td>“Të dashur fëmijë,” tha ajo, “po shkoj në pyll dhe, ndërsa unë jam larguar, ju i kujdesshëm ndaj ujkut, sepse nëse ai do të hyjë brenda, ai do t’ju hante juve, lëkurën, eshtrat dhe të gjithë njerëzit shpesh e fshehin veten, por gjithmonë mund të njihet me zërin e tij të zhurmshëm dhe me këmbët e zeza “. (Student Translation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we compare these sentences we notice that there is formal equivalence between by his hoarse voice and black paws.” and zeri i trashe dhe nga kembet e zeza qe ka, because both sentences operate with same grammatical units. While between “Dear children” and Degjoni, o kecat there is textual equivalence. In English language it says Dear children (the author has used the word children for the little goats in the entire story while in Albanian language the author has used the word “kecat”). In Albanian translation we notice do t’ju sjell te hani plot te mira which is not noticed at the Source Text [the translator wants to show the good care and that it is the parent (in our case the goat is both the mother and the father) who has to provide food for its children and
protect them] and the little goats are looking forward their mother to come and bring them good things to eat. Hoarse voice and black paws have referential meaning. The author uses the words “hoarse voice and black paws” which represents evil creature even from his black color. In Albanian translation he uses “zeri i trashe dhe nga kembet e zeza” because children are afraid of it. The author implies the idea that their mother has a soft voice and white paws. “White” for purity. ”Soft” for sweet voice.

| “Open the door, my dear children, your mother is come back, and has brought each of you something. | “Hapeni, kecat e mi, hapeni! Jam une, nena juaj, hapeni shpejt, se ju kam sjelle te gjitheve gjera te shijshme per te ngrene. (Vellezerit Grim, “Ujku dhe shtate kecat”, [13]. | “Hapni derën, fëmijët e mi të dashur, nëna juaj është kthyer dhe ka sjellë secilin prej jush diçka. (Student translation) |

‘Each of you” and “te gjitheve” has a textual equivalence because the formal equivalence would be “secilit nga ju”. In English version we notice “something” and in Albanian version gjera te shijshme per te ngrene. Translator has changed the meaning in order to make it softer and more beautiful for the ear of the child. Translator has changed the word “and” with “se” instead of “because” in order to adapt it with the context because the context in the sentences differs.

**Conclusions**

The methods of semantic research used today to study meaning and its movement contributes totally or partially to the translation process.

The distribution method being determined to giving an essential role to semantic analysis, not the word but the context of its use is directly related to the process of translation. The meaning of the word seen as the sum of its uses implies that the word may not have an independent meaningful structure. The concrete content (of a given object) is a fact of discourse, and meaning is a fact of language (of technical means of discourse). The lexical-semantic field’s method was developed as a derivative of the distributional method. It is known that the words, through the approach of their meaning structures, are seen semantically according to the relationship of equality, relationships of exclusion, the opposition relations, the relationships of inclusion, the relationships of intersection or interruption etc. Nowadays no study can be conducted in the field
of lexical semantics without the method of lexical fields.

The method of the meaning particularization into the constituent elements (components) already known as a componential method, is not directly related to the process of translation.

The method of semic analysis is that of semantics conditioned from the truth, is partially related to the translation process and cognitive semantics which connects meaning with thought is also directly to the process of translation, since it is a process which is related to thought.
LITERATURE

4. Po aty, f. 29
5. Po aty, f. 29
13. (Vellezerit Grim, “Ujku dhe shtatë kecat”, f. 135)[13]