Investigation on the richness and variety of the “real world” of the terms meaning and semantics

Nargiza Masharipova,
PhD student, Urgench State University, Uzbekistan

e-mail: narziss_0787@mail.ru

Annotation: This article highlights briefly the issues related to the notions like meaning and semantics and at the same time looks through the branches of semantics providing linguistic scholars views in this field.

Key words: meaning, sense, semantics, linguistics, linguistic school, semantic theory, semasiology, language, “external” semantics, “internal” semantics

Language is the source of the ability to think and continually enrich human thinking. As far as language definitions are concerned, the following opinions can be given as an example, like “A language is a set of gestures expressing thought” (F. de Saussure); “A language is a mechanical movement of the outside world without the consciousness of a human being”; “A language is a set of spoken, restricted sounds for expressing thought” (B.Grosse). As an English writer, poet, playwright, essayist Samuel Johnson once stated “Language is the dress of thought”.

While the language is thought to play a decisive role in the development of human cognitive talent, one has to admit that the expression of meaning is a leading factor in linguistic activity as well [1, p. 5]. We can discuss infinite debate about the subject of the semantic field, as we recall the words by a Polish semasiologist Adam Schaff: “Today, semantics is so complicated as a science research and the term itself has so many different senses that if we want to avoid unpleasant confusion and logical uncertainty we have to put semantics itself into the semantic analysis” [12, p. 23]. And a monograph entitled The Meaning of Meaning by C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards was devoted to the problem of meaning. The authors mentioned about 16 groups of the term meaning in Chapter IX and proved the existence of 23 different meanings of “meaning”.

As far as the concepts of semantics and meaning are concerned, one’s attention should be drawn to the fact that the term “meaning” has at least two equivalents in every natural language:

“ма’но” and “мазмун” in Uzbek,
“смысл” and “значение” in Russian,
“Sinn” and “Bedeutung” in German, “sense” and “meaning” in English, “смисъл” and “значение” in Bulgarian, “jelentoseg” and “ertelem” in Hungarian. [5, б. 23].

- The meaning of the word is the reflection of a subject, event, or attitude (or a similarly psychic structure created by the separate elements of reality) on the mind. This reflection (description) is a part of the word itself, and it acts as an inner side of word structure and at the same time the word pronunciation serves as a material or a cortex. This cortex is not only needed for the purpose of expressing and conveying it to others but also it is necessary for its own existence, structure, and development [11, p. 89];

- **Meaning** is an idea about subject and this concept is formed on the basis of inner form (more exactly, imagination), developing or developed conception [2, б. 17];

- **Meaning** is expressed by identifying what really a particular object means for human beings who are doing aesthetic, scientific, productive, socio-political or other activities in their everyday lives [6, p. 162].

We can come up with numerous definitions of the concept of “meaning” like above mentioned. From these interpretations, it is clear that the logician and linguists’ attitude to the phenomenon of the meaning, the diversity of views encourage the broadening of the scope of the work to be implemented in practice through theoretical support of semantics and systematization of semantic material. And Cruse in his “Meaning in Language” (2000) mentioned about lexical and grammatical meaning and that in reality there is a continuously varying scale termed lexicality and grammaticality, and divided the grammatical units into closed-set items and open-set items, according to their characteristics they both carry meaning, but their different functions mean that there are differences in the characteristics of the meanings that they typically carry.

Knowing that meaning makes little sense except in the context of communication, it should be mentioned about transferring of information between human beings, more precisely, the paradigm communicative scenario. Here is a simple model, as shown in Fig. 1.1. (Lyons, 1977) of communication presented.

```
Channel

auditory (speech)

visual (normal writing, sign language)
```
(the signal travels through) tactile (Braille)

Noise

- distortion
- interference from irrelevant stimuli
- loss through fading

transmitted signal ≠ received signal

never precisely the same

As Cruse (Meaning in Language, 2000, p. 6) highlighted that there are three distinguishable aspects of meaning:

(i) speaker’s meaning ⟹ speaker’s intended message
(ii) hearer’s meaning ⟹ hearer’s inferred message
(iii) sign meaning ⟹ this can be taken to be the sum of the properties of the signal which make it (a) more apt than other signals for conveying speaker’s intended message, and (b) more apt for conveying some messages than others.

We can conclude that

Sign meanings

are not under the control of the users
the property of the speech community
have fixed meanings

Stating views on the meanings of meaning Adam Schaff (Translated from Polish by Olgierd Wojtasiewicz) introduced an interesting and at the same time a discussable idea about it, namely in his manuscript, he wrote that in principle, a linguist is not interested in what meaning is, but he wants to know what happens to meaning (e.g. without knowing what planets are ancient astronomers knew very well the movements of planets) And Quine [21, p 57] proposed three principal spheres of the linguistic interest in the issue of meaning

Principal spheres

(1) grammar
(2) lexicography
(3) semantic changes
(1) the study of those forms which have meaning
(2) the study of synonyms, i.e., expressions which have similar meanings; thus
   the subject matter of lexicography is to identify meanings, that is to list pairs
   of synonymous expressions in a language or in a pair of languages.
(3) (called by de Saussure diachronic analysis) – the study of changes in
   meanings and of regularities in such changes.

Schaff considered that the classification seems to be particularly lucid and
convenient for the presentation of certain general theoretical issues connected with
meaning.

And while looking through the history of semantic science, which deals with
the researching of meaning, it is obvious that it is impossible to determine exactly
the period of existence and origin of this field as many other subjects. Thinking
about the meaning and functions of the language is a typical feature of any
philosophical direction that is of interest to the study of the language.

In this context, the German linguist scholar Kronasser in his manuscript,
dedicated to the history of semantics, pointed out that first-ever attempts to classify
and investigate the essence of meaning were made at Plato’s (427-347 B.C.) and
Aristotle’s (384-322 BC) works, representatives of ancient Greek philosophy [19,
p. 22]. At the same time, the very early views on semantics were reflected in
Chinese philosophy (moism, min jia, and other schools) as well.

Kronasser considered that the origin of semantics as an independent field
straightly connected with a published work by an English philosopher J. Locke
(1660) and believed this to belong to the mid-17th century [7, p. 5].

And also it is thought that the term “linguistic semantics”
(лингвистическая семантика) originated in the nineteenth century. In 1839, the
German linguist K. Reisig introduced the term “Semasiology”-“a science about
the meaning” (Semasiologie in German, and semaino-to indicate, to signify, to
mean, semasia-signification, meaning in Greek) and researched it as one of the
grammatical branches [20, p. 7].

In 1883, French philologist M. Breal proposed the term “semantics” (la
semantique, Breal 1883), although this term was used in his letter to A. de
Gubernatis in 1878. After 14 years of this historical date, the linguist`s famous
work “Essai de semantique. Science des significations” (Breal, 1897) was
published. The terms “semasiology” and “semantics” are, in spite of the efforts of
some linguist scientists, had not lost their usage and topicality until the sixties of
the 20th century. In this respect, it is also worth noting that the books “The principles of semantics” by Ullmann, 1959 and “Handbuch der Semasiologie” by Kronasser, 1952 were published. Then V.A. Zvegintsev published his book titled “Семасиология” (Zvegintsev, 1957). The terms “semology” proposed by A. Noren and “sematology” used by C. Collen, did not have any major influence in linguistics and after some period of time they were considered as the out of usage terms.

Mentioning about the main branches and contemporary linguistic semantic schools, an American philosopher and logician Quine (Quine, 1973) recognized as “one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century” divided them into semantic schools related to “strong (external)” - сильная (внешняя) and “weak (internal)” - слабая (внутренняя) depending on their peculiarities and specificity [5, p. 25]. Representatives of both trends consider the meaning of language units as a researching field of semantics whereas interpret the concept of meaning in different ways.

“External semantics” describes in essence the logical semantics variant, which is the approach of logic and in logical sense learns the interpretation and explanation of the language through one or another world model. It is well-known that in linguistics, ideas, thoughts and formal logic apparatus are used to interpret natural language units. The followers of this school adhere to the logic tradition, believing that the definition of the meaning of the language is to define the rule, and thus to clarify what conforms to a particular linguistic realm or some of the universe models. In addition to linguists, logicians also actively participate on observation of the process of scientific researches on the problems of natural language semantics. We can add W.V.O. Quine (У.В.О. Куайн), D. Davidson (Д. Дэвидсон), S. Kripke (С. Крипке), P. Strawson (П. Стросон), Z. Vendler (З. Вендлер) to the list of those scholars. Formal semantics is considered as one of the influential and prestigious schools of “external semantics”. Its founder was an American logician, philosopher Richard Montague (1974). Linguists and philosophers like Lewis (Д. Льюиз 1972, 1975), B. Partee (Б.Парти), E. Keenan (Э.Кинен), Н. Kamp (Х. Камп), I. Heim (И. Хейм) were also dedicated representatives of this school. At the project “Polit.ru Public lectures” («Публичные лекции Полит.ру», 2012, Russia) Barbara Hall Partee (Барбара Парти) gave a lecture on the topic “Formal semantics as a result of linguistics and philosophy” (Формальная семантика как порождение лингвистики и философии) and stated that there are not only two parents of formal semantics but three, namely logic, philosophy and linguistics.
Research within the framework of the referential theory conducted by E.V. Paducheva (Падучева, 1985) made a significant contribution to the development of the direction, called “external semantics”. At the same time, linguists N.D. Arutyunova (Арутюнова 1976, 1988), T.V. Buligina and A.D. Shmelev (Булыгана, Шмелев 1997), (Шмелев, 1996), G.E. Kreydlin and E.V. Raxilina (Крейдлин, Рахилина, 1981) and a number of linguists, who were the participants of the seminar “Logic analysis of language” (“Логический анализ языка”, ЛЯЯ ЛЯЯ 1988, 1989, 1990) organized regularly by the РАН Institute of Linguistics under the leadership of N.D. Arutyunova, conducted scientific researches.

“Internal semantics” are regarded as the subtle mentality of the mind, the mind, not the world that describes the meaning of the language units. Linguistic meaning is not a part of the universe, but a part of their imagination, reflection on the mind. In short, the representatives of this stream claim that it is sufficient to study the internal relations and norms of the language and to compare it with the semantic representation of linguistic expressions on that basis. This approach leads to the collaboration of a number of followers of this approach under the name of “translational semantics” [10]. In particular, the founders of “semantic theory” J. Katz and J.A. Fodor (1964), (Katz 1981), researched on “the componential analysis of lexical meaning” E.Bendix (1966), Yu. Nida (1975), M. Bierwish (1967), and the author of the concept of “the language of meaning” A. Wierzbicka (1980) can be mentioned.

At the same time, linguists united under the computer translation laboratory of the МГПИЯ-Moscow State Pedagogic Institute of Foreign Languages (Moscow, Russia) in the 60s laid a foundation of “Moscow school of semantics” popularized not only in Central Asia but also in several foreign countries. Among them were linguist scientists Yu.D. Apresyan (Ю.Д.Апресян), I.A. Melchuk (И.А.Мельчук), A.K. Yolkovsky (А.К.Жолковский), N.N. Leonteva (Н.Н.Леонтьева), Yu.S. Martemanov (Ю.С.Мартемьянов), Z.M. Shalyapin (З.М.Шаляпин) who worked in the development of «Смысл<=>Текст» “Meaning<=>Text” integral model.

E.A. Kibrik states, “There is no end to the world of languages, and such diversity is at such a level that none of the scientific-theoretical fantasy can argue with the linguistic reality. Speaking about the issue related to the history of semantics, based on the brief analysis of the above mentioned data, it can be said that it was not as straightforward as the history of other linguistic fields. Nevertheless, the lack of coverage of all aspects of the semantic science that goes from the path of “revolutionary” changes in modern linguistics shows that this research area needs to be deepened and expanded.
REFERENCES


