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**“COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLYSEMANTIC WORDS”**

Polysemy is certainly not an anomaly. Most English words are polysemantic. It should be noted that the wealth of expressive resources of a language largely depends on the degree to which polysemy has developed in the language. Sometimes people who are not very well informed in linguistic matters claim that a language is lacking in words if the need arises for the same word to be applied to several different phenomena. In actual fact, it is exactly the opposite: if each word is found to be capable of conveying at least two concepts instead of one, the expressive potential of the whole vocabulary increases twofold. Hence, a well-developed polysemy is a great advantage in a language.

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On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the number of sound combinations that human speech organs can produce is limited. Therefore at a certain stage of language development the production of new words by morphological means is limited as well, and polysemy becomes increasingly important for enriching the vocabulary. From this, it should be clear that the process of enriching the vocabulary does not consist merely in adding new words to it, but, also, in the constant development of polysemy.

The system of meanings of any polysemantic word develops gradually, mostly over the centuries, as more and more new meanings are added to old ones, or oust some of them. So the complicated processes of polysemy development involve both the appearance of new meanings and the loss of old ones. Yet, the general tendency with English vocabulary at the modern stage of its history is to increase the total number of its meanings and in this way to provide for a quantitative and qualitative growth of the language's expressive resources.

It is not in every polysemantic word that such a centre can be found. Some semantic structures are arranged on a different principle. In the following list of meanings of the adjective “dull" one can hardly hope to find a generalized meaning covering and holding together the rest of the semantic structure.

Dull, adj.

A dull book, a dull film - uninteresting, monotonous, boring.

A dull student - slow in understanding, stupid.

Dull weather, a dull day, a dull colour - not clear or bright.

A dull sound - not loud or distinct.

A dull knife - not sharp.

Trade is dull - not active.

Dull eyes (arch.) - seeing badly.

Dull ears (arch.) - hearing badly.

There is something that all these seemingly miscellaneous meanings have in common, and that is the implication of deficiency, be it of colour (m. III), wits (m. II), interest (m. I), sharpness (m. V), etc. The implication of insufficient quality, of something lacking, can be clearly distinguished in each separate meaning.

Dull, adj.

Uninteresting - deficient in interest or excitement.

Stupid - deficient in intellect.

Not bright - deficient in light or colour.

Not loud - deficient in sound.

Not sharp - deficient in sharpness.

Not active - deficient in activity.

Seeing badly - deficient in eyesight.

Hearing badly - deficient in hearing.

The transformed scheme of the semantic structure of “dull" clearly shows that the centre holding together the complex semantic structure of this word is not one of the meanings but a certain component that can be easily singled out within each separate meaning.

On the second level of analysis of the semantic structure of a word: each separate meaning is a subject to structural analysis in which it may be represented as sets of semantic components.

The scheme of the semantic structure of “dull" shows that the semantic structure of a word is not a mere system of meanings, for each separate meaning is subject to further subdivision and possesses an inner structure of its own.

Therefore, the semantic structure of a word should be investigated at both these levels:

of different meanings,

of semantic components within each separate meaning. For a monosemantic word (i. e. a word with one meaning) the first level is naturally excluded.

As it is known, the word is at all language units, the most sensitive to change; its meaning gradually develops and as a result of this development new meanings appear alongside the primary one. It is normal for almost every word to acquire derivative meanings; sometimes the primary meaning has to make way for quite a new meaning which ousts it completely. Polysemy is a category of lexicology and as such belongs to language-as-a-system.

In actual everyday speech polysemy vanishes unless it is deliberately retained for certain stylistic purposes. A context that does not seek to produce any particular stylistic effect generally materializes but one definite meaning.

However, when a word begins to manifest an interplay between the primary and one of the derivative meanings we are again confronted with an SD.

Zeugma is the use of a word in the same grammatical but different semantic relations to two adjacent words in the context, the semantic relations being, on the one hand, literal, and on the other, transferred.

Zeugma is a strong and effective device to maintain the purity of the primary meaning when the two meanings clash.

The pun is another stylistic device based on the interaction of two well-known meanings of a word or phrase. It is difficult to draw a hard and fast distinction between zeugma and the pun.

The only reliable distinguishing feature is a structural one: zeugma is the 1)realization of two meanings with the help of a verb, which is made to refer to different subjects or objects (direct or indirect). The 2)pun is more independent. There need not necessarily be a word in the sentence to which the pun word refers. This does not mean, however, that the pun is entirely free. Like any other stylistic device, it must depend on a context.

Puns are often used in riddles and jokes, for example, in this riddle:

What is the difference between a schoolmaster and an engine driver? (One trains the mind and the other minds the train.)

In Robert Frost’s poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” tune poet, taking delight in watching the snow fall on the woods, concludes his poem in the following words:

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep.”

The word promises here is made to signify two concepts , viz. 1) a previous engagement to be fulfilled and 2) moral or legal obligation.

Here is another example. In Shakespearian Sonnet 29 there are the following lines:

“When in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes,

I all alone beweep my outcast state,

And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,

And think upon myself and curse by fate.”

Almost every word here may be interpreted in different senses: sometimes the differences are hardly perceptible; sometimes they are obviously antagonistic to the primary meaning.

But we shall confine our analysis only to the meaning of the word ‘cries’, which signifies both prayer and lamentation. The relation of the word ‘cries’ suggests these two meanings to ‘trouble deaf heaven’. But the word ‘cries’ suggests not only prayer and lamentation; it also implies violent prayer and lamentation as if in deep despair, almost with tears (see the word ‘be weep’ in the second line of the part of the sonnet quoted).

Ex: And May’s mother always stood on her gentitity; and Dot’s mother never stood on anything but her active little feet. (Dickens).

The word “stood” is used here twice. One meaning is independent “to stand on feet” and another is a connected meaning.

There are two types of zeugma.

Zeugma based on interaction of independent and connected meaning of the word.

Ex: He paid him a visit and a fee.

He took his hat and his leave.

Zeugma based on interaction of primary and secondary meaning of the word.

Ex: Oh man with sister dear!

Oh man with mothers and wives?

Ex: It is not linen you are wearing out

But human creature lives

wear out linen - is used in primary meaning,

wear out lives - the secondary meaning .

Zeugma is expressed by verb+noun, adj+noun.

9)Ex: Klara was not a narrow woman either in mind or body.

Dora, plunging at once into privileged intimacy and into the middle of the room.

to plunge (into the middle of a room) materializes the meaning to rush into or enterimpetuously. Here it is used in its concrete, primary, literary meaning: in “to plunge into privileged intimacy, plung is used in its derivative meaning.

3)She lost her purse, head and reputation.

Here the word “lost” has the same grammatical relation but the semantic relations are different, to loose a head or reputation that is logical connected meaning.

The pun

The pun is another SD based on the interaction of two well-known meanings of a word or a phrase. It is difficult to distinguish zeugma and the pun. The only distinguishing feature is a structural one: zeugma is the realization of two meanings with the help of a verb which refers to different subjects or objects. The pun is more independent. There need not necessity be a word in the sentence to which the pun word refers. It depends on a context. The title of O’ Wild is play “The Importance of being Earnest”.

Thus the title of one of Oscar Wilde’s plays “The Importance of Being Earnest” has a pun in it in as much as the name of the hero and the adjective meaning “seriously-minded” are both present in our mind.

4)The Stylistic function of these devices is to produce a humorous effect.

Puns are used in riddles and jokes, for example:

What is the difference between a schoolmaster and an engine - driver? (One trains the mind and the other minds the train).

The Epithet

From the strongest meanings of displaying the writers or speakers emotional attitutde to his communication,we now pass to a weaker but still forcefull means-the epithet.The epithet is subtle and delicate in character.

The epithet is a stylistic device based on the interplay of emotive and “logical meaning in an attributive word, phrase or even sentence used to characterise an object and pointing out to the reader,and frequently imposing on him, some of the properties or features of the object with the aim of giving an individual perception and evaluation of these features or properties. The epithet is markedly subjective and evaluative. The logical attribute is purely objective,non-evaluating. It is descriptive and indicates an inherent or prominent feature of the thing or phenomenon in question.

The epithet makes a strong impact on the reader, so much so, that he unwittingly begins to see and evaluate things as the writer wants him to. Indeed,in such word combinations as ‘destructive charms’, ‘glorious sight’, ’encouraging smile’, the interrelation between logical and emotive meanings may be said to manifest itself in different degrees. The word destructive has retained its logical meanings to a considerable extent, but at the same time an experienced reader cannot help perceiving the emotive meaning of the word, which in this combination will signify ‘conquering,irresistible, dangerous’. The logical meaning of the word glorious in combination with the word sigh has almost entirely faded out. Glorious is already fixed in dictionaries as a word having an emotive meaning alongside its primary, logical meaning. Take, for example ,the adjectives green,white,blue,lofty (but somehow not round) in the combinations given above. In a suitable context they may all have a definite emotional impact on the reader.

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Epithets may be classified from different standpoints:semantic and structural.Semantically epithets may be divided into two groups:those associated with”the noun following and those unassosiated with it.

Assosiated epithets are those ,which point to a feature, which is essential to the objects they describe: the idea expressed in the epithet is to a certain extent inherent in the concept of the object. The associated epithet immediately refers the mind to the concept in question due to some actual quality of the object it is attached to,for instans ‘dark forest’, ‘dreary midnight’, ’careful attention’, ’unwearing research’, ’indefatigable assiduity’, ’fantastic terrors’, etc.

Unnassosiated epithets are attributes used to characterize the object by adding a feature not inherent in it, i.e. a feature which may be so unexpected as to strike the reader by its novelty, as, for instance, ’heatburning smile’, ‘bootless cries’, ’sullen earth’, ’voiceless sands’, etc. The adjectives here do not indicate any property inherent in the objects in question. They impose, as it were, a property on them, which is fittihg only in the given circumstance. It may seem strange, unusual, or even accidental.

Structurally, epithet can be viewed from the angle of a) composition and b) distribution.

From the point of view of their compositional structure epithets may be divided into simple, compound, phrase and sentence epithets. Simple epithets are ordinary adjectives. Examples have been given above. Compound epithets are built like compound adjectives. Example are:

‘heart-burning sigh’, ‘sylph-like figures’, ’cloud-sharpen giant’,

“...curly-headed good-for-nothihg ,

And mischief-making monkey from his birth.” (Byron)

Here some examples of phrase epithets:

“8)It is this do-it-yourself , go-if-alone attitude that has thus far held back real development of the Middle East’s river resourses”.(N.Y.T.Magazine, 19 Oct., 1958.)

Another structural variety of the epithet is one ,which we shall term, reversed. The reversed epithet is composed of two nouns linked in an of-phrase. The subjective, evaluating, emotional elements is embodied not in the noun attribute but in the noun structurally described, for example: ”the shadow of a smile“; ”a devil of a job”(Maugham);” ...he smiled brightly, neatly, efficiently, a military abbreviation of a smile’(graham Green); ”A devil of a sea rolls in that bay”(byron); ”A Little Flying Dutchman of a cab”(Galsworthy);” a dog of a fellow”(Dickens)”her brute of a brother’(Galsworthy);”...a long nightshirt of a mackintosh...’’ (Cronin)

Oxymoron

Oxymoron is6) a combination of two words (mostly an adjective and a noun or an adverb with an adjective) in which the meaning of the two clash, being opposite in sense, for example:

‘low skyscraper’, ’sweet sorrow’, ’nice rascal ‘, ‘pleasantly ugly face’, ’horribly beautiful ‘, ’7)a deafening silence’.

In the primary meaning of the qualifying word changes or weakens, the stylistic effect of oxymoron is lost. This is the case with what were once oxymoronic combinations, for example, ’awfully nice’, ’awfully glad’, ’terribly sorry’ and the like, where the words awfully and terribly have lost their primary logical meaning and are now used with emotive meaning only, as intensifiers. The essence of oxymoron consist in the capacity of the prmary meaning of the adjective or adverbs to resist for some time the overwhelming of semantic change,which words undergo in combinations.

Let us take the following example from O.Henry’s story “The Duel” in which one of the heroes thus describes his attitude towards NewYork.

“I, despise its very vatness and power. It has the poorest millionaires,

the littlest great men, the haughtiest beggars, the plainest beauties, the lowest skyscrapers, the dolefulest pleasures of any town I ever saw.”

Even the superlative degree of the adjectives fails to extinguish the primary meaning of the adjectives:poor, little,haughty,etc. But by some inner law of word combinations they also show the attitude of the speaker, reinforsed, of course, by the preceding sentence: ”I despise its very vast-ness and power.’’

Oxymoron has one main structural model: adjective+noun. It is in this structural model that the resistance of the two component parts to fusion into one unit manifests itself most strongly. In the adverb +adjective model the change of meaning in the first element ,the adverb, is more rapid, resistance to the unifying process not being so strong.

Antonomasia

We have already pointed out the peculiarities of nominal meaning. 5)The interplay between the logical and nominal meanings of a word called - antonomasia. As in other stylistic devices based on the interaction of lexical meanings, the two kinds of meanings must be realised in the word simultaneously.If only one meaning is materialized in the context, there is no stylistic device, as in hooligan,boycott and other examples given earlier. Here are some examples of genuine antonomasia

‘’Among the herd of journals which are published in the States, there are some, the reader scarcely need be told, of character and credit. From personal intercourse with accomplished gentlemen connected with publications of this class, I have derived both pleasure and profit. But the name of these is Few, and of the other Legion ,and the influence of the good is powerless to counteract the mortal poison of the bad. (Dickens)

The use of the word name made the author write the words ‘Few’, and ‘Legion’ with capital letters. It is very important to note that this device is mainly realized in the written language, because generally capital letters are the only signals to denote the presence of the stylistic device. The same can also be observed in the following example from Byron’s “Don Juan”:

“Society is now one polished horde,

Form’d of two mighty tribes,the Bores and Bored.”

In these two examples of the use of antonomasia the nominal meaning is hardly perceived, the logical meaning of the words few,legion,bores,bored being too strong. But there is another point that should be mentioned. Most proper names are built on some law of analogy. Many of them end in -son (as Johnson) or -er (Fletcher). We easily recognize such words as Smith, White ,Brown,Green Fowler and other as proper name . But such names as Miss Blue-Eyes (Carter Brown) or Scrooge or Mr.Zero may be called token or telling names.They give information to the reader about the bearer of the name. In this connection it is interesting to recall the bearer of the name .In this connection it is interesting to recall the well-known remark by Karl Marx, who said that we do not know anything about a man if we only know that he is called Jacob. The nominal meaning is not intended to give information about the person. It only serves the purpose of identification.Proper names, i.e. the words with nominal meaning ,can etymologically, in the majority of cases,be traced to some quality, properity or trait of a person,or to his occupation. But this etymological meaning may be forgotten and the word be understood as a proper hame and nothing else. It is not so with antonomasia. Antonomasia is intended to point out the leading, most characteristic feature of a person or event, at the same time pinning this leading trait as a proper name to the person or event concerned. In fact, antonomasia is a revival of the initial stage in naming individuals .

Antonomasia may be likened to the epithet in essence if not in form . It categoriezes the person and thus simultaneously indicates both the general and the particular.

The use of antonomasia is now not confined to the belles-lettres style. It is often found in publicistic style,that is ,in magazine and newspaper articles ,in essays and also in military language. The following are examples:

“I say this to our American friends. Mr .Facing-Both-Ways does not get very far in this world.” (The Times)

“I suspect that the Noes and Don’t Knows would far out-number the Yesses.”(The Spectator)

**CONCLUSION**

So far we have dealt with a variety of antonomasia in which common words with obvious logical meaning are given nominal meaning without losing their primary ,basic significance. But antonomasia can also make a word which now has a basic nominal meaning acquire a generic signification ,thus supplying the word with an additional logical meaning. The latter can only be deciphered if the events connected with a certain place mentioned or with a conpicuous feature of a person are well known. Thus, the word Dunkirk now means ‘the evacuation of troops under heavy bombardment before it is too late‘, Sedan means ‘a complete defeat ‘, Coventy - the destruction of a city by air raids’, a quizling now means ‘a traitor who aids occupying enemy forces’.The spelling of tense words demonstrates the stages by which proper nouns acquire new, logical meanings: some of them are still spelt with capital letters (geographical names), others are already spelt with small letters showing that a new word a primary logical meaning has already come into existence. This variety of antonomasia is not so widely used as a stylistic device, most probably due to the nature of words with nominal meanings: they tell very little or even nothing about the bearer of the name.

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