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Article

Mechanisms of Realization and Contextual Features of Speech Meanings

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Abstract: This article analyzes the mechanisms of the realization of speech meanings and their contextual features from a linguistics perspective. The article examines how a word's lexical meaning manifests differently in each speech situation, the decisive role of the contextual factor in meaning formation, and the relationship between the layers of denotative, connotative, and pragmatic meaning. During the research, over 200 examples from Uzbek literary texts, journalistic texts, and spoken discourse were analyzed. The results show that the realization of speech meaning is directly dependent on the communicative situation, social context, the speaker's intention, and the listener's background knowledge. The research findings have practical significance for the fields of semantics and pragmalinguistics in Uzbek linguistics.

Keywords: Speech Meaning, Context, Semantics, Pragmalinguistics, Denotative Meaning, Connotative Meaning, Lexical-Semantic Analysis, Polysemy, Meaning Realization, Communicative Situation

1. Introduction

In modern linguistics, the study of the nature of word meaning, how it is formed in the speech process, and how it changes in different contexts remains a pressing scientific problem. It is known that every word in the linguistic system has certain potential semantic possibilities; however, these possibilities only acquire a specific content in a particular speech situation—that is, in context. In the words of academic N. Mahmudov, "the riddle of language" — is the phenomenon of these words finding their own unique life in speech[1]. The issue of the realization of speech meanings requires answering a number of important scientific questions: what is the relationship between a word's lexical meaning and its concrete meaning in speech? What role does context play in this relationship? Which meaning of polysemantic words is activated under which conditions? How do the socio-cultural experiences of the speaker and listener influence the realization of meaning?

Seeking scientific answers to these questions is of great importance not only for theoretical linguistics but also for practical fields such as translation theory, lexicography, stylistics, and speech culture[2]. In Uzbek linguistics, in the field of semantics, H. Ne'matov, R. Rasulov, Although valuable research has been conducted in the field of semantics in Uzbek linguistics by scholars such as H. Ne'matov, R. Rasulov, and N. Mahmudov, A. Hojiyev, and Sh. Safarov, the contextual realization mechanisms of speech meanings have not yet been sufficiently studied as a separate, comprehensive research object[3].

The purpose of the study is to identify the mechanisms of realization of speech meanings in Uzbek and to describe their contextual characteristics.

Literature Review

Scientific debates about the essence of speech meaning became active starting from the mid-20th century. After F. de Saussure distinguished between language and speech, the two sides of meaning—the linguistic and the speech act—became the primary object of linguistic analysis. This theoretical foundation was later developed in L. Wittgenstein's philosophical linguistics: The idea that meaning resides in the "use" of a word (meaning as use) prepared the theoretical groundwork for the pragmatic approach[4].

In the history of semantics, the theories of meaning by B. Russell and G. Frege hold an important place. Frege established the distinction between "sense" (Sinn) and "reference" (Bedeutung), which laid the foundation for understanding the difference between denotative and connotative meaning in linguistics. Later, J. Lyons expanded on this distinction, distinguishing the denotative, descriptive, and social layers of meaning[5].

After J. Austin and J. Searle developed the speech act theory, it became possible to take a new approach to the issue of speech meaning. Through the concept of illocutionary force, the speaker's intention and the speech situation became the central factors in the realization of meaning. G. Grice's cooperative principle and conversational maxims, in turn, clarified the mechanism by which implicature arises in speech[6].

In Uzbek linguistics, the issue of meaning has been extensively studied by H. Ne'matov and R. Rasulov in their monograph "Foundations of the Systemic Lexicology of the Uzbek Language." The authors analyzed the structural components of lexical meaning—denotative, connotative, and pragmatic—and demonstrated their distinctive manifestations in Uzbek lexicon. In N. Mahmudov's work, "Research on the Linguistic Riddle," the national-cultural aspects of the Uzbek language's semantic system are examined[7].

In his work "Cognitive Linguistics," Sh. Safarov sheds light on the problem of meaning from a cognitive perspective, demonstrating the conceptual makeup of the word and how it is activated in speech. A. Hojiyev's "Explanatory Dictionary of Linguistic Terms" and his works on lexicology have played an important role in strengthening the theoretical foundations of Uzbek semantics.

In the field of pragmalinguistics, the research of E. Begmatov and his disciples has served to reveal the characteristics of Uzbek speech acts. R. Abidova's research on the speech act of thanksgiving and other pragmalinguistic works have demonstrated the socio-cultural aspects of the realization of speech meaning. In the field of text semantics, the research of A. Madvaliyev and others is dedicated to the role of lexical and phraseological units in shaping textual meaning. The above-mentioned studies show that the mechanisms of the realization of speech meanings are a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, and that a full understanding of it requires the use of combined research methods from lexicology, semantics, pragmatics, and cognitive linguistics[8].

2. Methods

The following methods were used in the research:

Component analysis — was used to identify the semantic components of words (sememe) and to observe their activation in speech.

Contextual analysis — to determine the meaning of lexical units in different textual environments, literary, journalistic, and colloquial texts were analyzed.

Distributional analysis — the characteristics of words' co-occurrence (collocation) with other words and their impact on meaning realization were studied. As research sources, Uzbek literary texts (works by Said Ahmad, Shukur Xolmirzayev, O'tkir Hoshimov), issues of the "Xalq so'zi" newspaper from 2022–2024, and over 200 examples from spoken discourse were selected.

3. Results and Discussion

The relationship between linguistic meaning (the dictionary definition of a word) and speech meaning (the meaning realized in a specific act of speech) is complex. According to data from the Uzbek National Corpus and the "Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language," 73 percent of the 500 most frequently used words in Uzbek—that is, 365 words — are polysemantic words with two or more lexical meanings. However, in speech, usually only one meaning is activated in each use of these words, while the remaining meanings remain latent[9].

Table 1. Lexical and Speech Meaning Frequencies of Selected Polysemantic Words in the Uzbek Language

Word	Number of Lexical Meanings	Main Activation Rate in Speech (%)
ko'z (eye)	11	Primary meaning: 68%; Figurative meanings: 32%
bosh (head)	14	Primary meaning: 55%; Figurative meanings: 45%
qo'l (hand)	9	Primary meaning: 60%; Figurative meanings: 40%
yurak (heart)	7	Primary meaning: 42%; Figurative meanings: 58%
yo'l (road/way)	8	Primary meaning: 50%; Figurative meanings: 50%

The table data show that in some words (for example, "yurak"), the figurative meaning is used more frequently in contemporary Uzbek speech than the primary (anatomical) meaning. This situation, first, indicates that these words are active in the process of metaphorization, and second, that emotional-expressive speech is widespread in everyday communication[10].

According to the analysis results, the types of contexts influencing the realization of speech meaning were classified as follows:

a) Lexical-syntactic context

The words immediately surrounding a word clarify or limit its meaning. For example, the word "hard" has different meanings in the following combinations:

hard rock — the meaning of physical hardness (denotative)

hard word — a harsh, hurtful word (figurative)

to lie hard — to sleep soundly, deeply (idiomatic)

to be hard sick — to be seriously ill (degree of intensity)

These examples show that a single word can be used in four different semantic directions, and the precise meaning is determined only by the lexical-syntactic context.

b) Situational (pragmatic) context

The speech situation directly influences the realization of meaning. As part of the study, 50 situational dialogues were analyzed. For example, the sentence "Here it goes again!" was found to convey the following meanings in different situations[11]:

Situation	Realized Meaning
When a bus passes the stop without stopping	Excitement, dissatisfaction
When talking about a child's toy car in motion	Joy, description
When a patient becomes ill again	Sadness, anxiety
When the interlocutor starts talking at length again	Annoyance, irony

This situation is consistent with Grice's "relevance" principle: the listener selects the meaning that fits the context.

c) Socio-cultural context

The meaning of a word also depends on the speakers' social status and cultural knowledge. The study compared the use of the word “mehmon” in Uzbek culture and in speech environments shaped by Russian cultural influence. In Uzbek speech, the word “mehmon” usually carries a positive connotation, encompassing semantic components of “honor” and ‘respect’ (see the folk proverb “A guest is God's guest”). In 30 examples of spoken discourse, the word “mehmon” was found to be used in a positive or neutral sense in 27 instances and in a negative sense (in an awkward situation) in only 3 instances[12].

d) Discursive context

The chain of topics within the broader text also governs the realization of meaning. Analysis of 30 excerpts from the works of “O'tkir Hoshimov” revealed that the word ‘nur’ is used in a figurative-symbolic sense in 9 out of 12 instances in the literary text—meaning “hope, goodness, benevolence.”

The study identified the following 4 main mechanisms in the realization of speech meaning:

Mechanism 1: Selection (actualization) of semes. From a word's potential senses (meaning components), the set of senses that fits the speech context is activated. For example, for the word “water,” the senses of “liquid,” “temperature,” “purity,” "semes such as ‘source of life’ exist, and in the phrase ‘bring hot water,’ only the ‘temperature’ and ‘liquid’ semes are activated, whereas ‘water is life’ in a philosophical or literary context activates the ‘source of life’ seme[13].

Mechanism 2: Metaphorical shift. Through polysemy and metaphor, a new meaning emerges from the word's primary meaning. Of the 200 analyzed examples, 68 (34%) corresponded to metaphorical shift meanings. In particular, the word “ko'z” was used in 9 figurative senses, such as “eye of a needle,” “windowpane,” and “tear.”

Mechanism 3: Pragmatic interference (double meaning). In some cases, the speaker adds a hidden meaning to the word's system meaning. In the analyzed dialog excerpts, 45 instances of hidden meaning were identified. For example, in the sentence “Now the house has grown cold,” a listener in a conversation about a father perceives it to mean “the family warmth in the house is gone.”

Mechanism 4: Activation of connotative meanings. A number of words carry, in addition to their lexical primary meaning, an extra socio-emotional meaning (connotation). For example, although the words “chol” and “qari” are semantically synonymous, the word “chol” was found to have a stronger connotation of respect and affection: in 20 examples from journalistic texts, ‘chol’ was used in a positive context in 15 cases, while “qari” — was used in 12 cases in a neutral or even negative context[14].

Significant differences were observed in the meaning's realization between literary text, journalistic text, and spoken discourse:

Table 2. Frequency of Figurative Meaning Usage Across Different Text Types (Based on 200 Examples)

Text Type	Total Examples	Number of Figurative Meanings	Proportion of Figurative Meanings (%)
Literary texts	70	38	54.3
Journalistic texts	80	27	33.7
Conversational speech	50	21	42.0
Total	**200**	**86**	**43.0**

As the table shows, the use of figurative meaning in literary texts is considerably higher (54.3%) compared to other types of texts. This is because literary language is based on the principles of imagery and expressiveness. In colloquial speech, the level of figurative meaning is also relatively high (42%), indicating the widespread use of expressive expressions in everyday communication[15].

4. Conclusion

The realization of speech meanings occurs as a result of the interaction of several factors: context (lexical-syntactic, situational, socio-cultural, and discursive), the speaker's communicative purpose, and the listener's phonetic and cultural knowledge. Only through the combined influence of these factors is the meaning necessary for the utterance selected from the word's potential meanings and actualized. A dynamic relationship exists between the lexical and speech meanings of polysemantic words in Uzbek, with the figurative meanings accounting for 43 percent of the total usage frequency. This indicator attests to the high level of imagery in Uzbek speech. Four main mechanisms of speech-meaning realization have been identified: the selection (actualization) of semes, metaphorical shift, pragmatic interference (double meaning), and the activation of connotative meanings. These mechanisms operate in a mutually interconnected manner. The type of text also significantly influences meaning realization: the share of figurative meaning in literary texts (54.3%) is considerably higher than in publicistic texts (33.7%).

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