

ENGLISH SENSE PERCEPTION VERBS: SHIFT OF MEANINGS

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Abstract: The article in question deals with the investigation of the lexicosemantic variants of the verbs of sense perception *to see*, *to hear*, *to feel* and the shift of their meaning.

Key words: verbs of sense perception, lexical meaning, semantic relation, peripheral meaning

In this study, we proceed from the assumption that the process of cognition is carried out in two stages. In its succession, it goes from contemplation to thinking, and then to practice. Contemplation presents the moment of sense-test activity which is realized in such forms as feeling, sight perception, and ear perception. There are five main verbs that indicate types of sense perception – *to see*, *to feel*, *to hear*, *to smell*, *to taste* in the English language.

The **aim** of the work is bringing to light the language characteristics of the verbs of sense perception; revealing their paradigmatic and syntagmatic characteristics. The **object** of the study is to investigate the shift of meanings of the verbs of sense

perception in speech. The **subject** is to study the lexicosemantic variants of the verbs of sense perception *to see, to hear, to feel*.

From the purposes set there follow such **tasks** as to reveal the sense-notion of the verbs under consideration, to find their common and differentiating traits.

The main **methods** used in the work at the language material were the method of component analysis, the contextual analysis, the method of distribution, the method of substitution, the comparative method, etc.

A lot of outstanding linguists tried to penetrate the notional aspect and found the problem essential. Dealing with the problems of the lexical meanings of words M.M. Pokrovsky correlated the notional changes of words not so much with the associative connections of words as with the lexicomorphological and semantic-syntactic interrelations in the language. While investigating the factual material, the idea of the semantic context of a word, the ways of their receiving new lexical meanings depending on the syntactic construction in which a word realizes its meanings was put forward. The morphological and word-building regulations of the words under study are the other semasiological factors that influence the change of the word meaning [1].

The deep penetration into the essence of the notional aspect of a word helped another linguist, V. V. Vinogradov, to reveal different types of the word's lexical meaning. He concluded that the types of lexical meanings present themselves a hierarchy system, in which the degree of independence and the sphere of usage of the meanings depend on the character of the connection of the word with the signified «objects» and on the words which form its permanent semantic context [2].

Furthermore, these and some other linguists conclude that the meaning of a word is determined by main factors: 1) logical-objective meaning, which is attached to a certain sound complex; 2) regularities and the originality of the grammatical means of the language with the help of which the logical-objective meaning is put into shape, realized and reproduced; 3) correlative connections of the word with all the semantic system of the vocabulary, the obligatory element of which is this very

meaning. The adequate definition of the linguistic structure of a word is quite possible only in case of considering the word as a unity of sounding and meaning.

The objects of the outer world have a lot of properties naturally connected among themselves. The close connection of the properties of objects conditions the cooperation of different organs of perception, sense perception included.

Having received the information about an object by the organs of perception one can analyze it and treat it, make conclusions and then begin operating with the properties abstractedly.

Revealing the semantic structure of these lexical units discloses the system of the inner differences of their lexicosemantic variants, which, despite different connotations, still retain their semantic unity. The differences are gained as a result of the peculiarities of the connotative meaning.

Consequently, it is evident that the verbs of sense perception get into the synonymic relations with the verbs of mental activity, united by the meaning of «*to understand, to learn something, to be in the know*». Coincidence of the meanings of the verbs of sense perception may be the result of their getting into the sphere of the verbs of mental activity. In this case, the thesis is confirmed by the coincidence of the peripheral meanings of the investigated verbs “*to see, to hear*” with the principal (main) meaning of the verb “*to understand*” but this coincidence is not fully identical. Cf.: *I don't see how you can deny that...* [3, p. 48]; *I hear that you had a long talk with Roy last week about Edward Driffield* [3, p. 57].

The lexemes under consideration are only the markers of the relations between a person who acts and some definite fact of the objective world. The meaning of the investigated verbs *to feel, to hear* can be interpreted in the following way: the verb “*to see*” in its figurative meaning coincides with the main meaning of the verb “*to understand*”, besides, in its semantic structure it contains a variable component, i.e. “*to understand something that has been seen*”. Cf.:

I see that woman downstairs has a couple of sailors sitting there. [4, p. 47]

He felt he would breathe more freely when the ship had sailed. [4, p. 78]

Davidson started nervously when he heard it but said nothing. [4, p. 47]

As regards the peripheral meaning, these verbs express the consequence (result) of the action rather than the action itself. Just by this very reason, they may be united into a synonymic group with the common meaning of “*to understand*”. The proof of this conclusion is the compatibility of the verbs in the following substitution:

1. *Page saw that, while he was without scruple, he would never personally descend to the sordid; it would all be done for him.* [5, p. 228]

1 a. *Page left that, while he was without scruple, he would never personally descend to the sordid; it would be all done for him.*

2. *It was quite evident that Roy had felt the moment inopportune to ask me to grant him a favour.* [5, p. 56]

2a. *It was quite evident that Roy had seen the moment inopportune to ask me to grant him a favor.*

3. *Suddenly he heard, someone running down the stairs.* [5, p. 255]

3a. *Suddenly he felt someone running down the stairs.*

The fact, that between the verbs in question there exist the relations of synonymy, still more unites their semantic aspects. On the one hand, this group of verbs is united as a result of the same semantic relation of consequence, and subsequently makes a class of the verbs homogeneous in their sense-notion. On the other hand, they are bound with each other by the direct semantic affinity which is not characteristic of the main meanings of these verbs.

Therefore, the investigation of the semantic properties of these verbs allows drawing the following conclusions:

First, the semantic shift leading to the consolidation of the peripheral meaning relied on (in each of the verbs respectively) the associative connection “the cause – the result” as the peripheral meaning is the result of the preceding effect of sense perception. It enables the investigator to define the connection between the central (main) and the peripheral meanings as the semantic relations of consequence.

Second, the new meaning is stabilized in the language and forms new distribution models with their own characteristics.

Third, the main meaning of the verbs under consideration is always implicitly present when using them in speech in their peripheral meanings. This fact points out that these verbs occupy a special, isolated place in the language as compared with other polysemantic words. In their new semantic quality, verbs of sense perception stop naming actions and start representing the relations between a doer of the action and the objects of reality. Appearing of the peripheral meaning in the verbs of sense perception allows viewing them as synonymic formations, united by the meaning “*to understand*”, “*to find out*”, “*to be in the know*”. The observed shift of meanings and the parallelism of their development may be also found in the Ukrainian language where the verbs “*бачу, чую, відчую*” pass on into the class of verbs of mental perception which are objectively getting established in dictionaries.

The scheme of evolution of their meaning seems to be based on the relations of cause and consequence. It would suggest that the connection of the main and peripheral meaning is represented by the semantic relation of consequence. Considering the causal-consequent connection as a psychological association one should refer it to the experience associations. In psychology, this association belongs to the most frequent models of grouping.

It is just this causal-consequent connection reinforced by the century-old history of mankind’s practice and experience, that played the decisive role in the development of the peripheral (figurative) meanings of the verbs in question. The new meaning establishes itself firmly in the speech practice and facilitates the distribution characteristics of the word. These verbs may be used with some definite distribution. The meanings of the verbs of this group change with the change of the distribution. Thus, a new meaning reinforces its objectivity by two factors, namely, a new semantic quality (the inner factor) and new lexicosemantic connections (external factor).

The semantic side of the verbs of sense perception is characterized by certain multiformity of lexicosemantic variants. They may be used both in their main (direct) meanings and peripheral. It is necessary to distinguish between a lexical and contextual meaning of any verb of sense perception.

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