

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Synergetic Description of Word Meaning and The Foundations of Its Development

Jumayeva Feruza Uralovna

Associate Professor at Jizzakh State Pedagogical University, d.p.p.s., Uzbekistan

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Abstract

The article interprets word meaning as an open, dynamic, and self-organizing complex semantic system. It scientifically substantiates that the development of meaning occurs on the basis of discursive activity and synergetic regularities. The alternation of order and disorder within the semantic system is explained as an internal mechanism of semantic evolution. The formation of the structural units of word meaning—sememe, seme, and ema—their interaction, and their relationship with the lexeme are analyzed. It is shown that semantic structure becomes richer within paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations and expands through hypernym–hyponym, holo–meronym, synonymic, antonymic, associative, and graduonymic connections.

KEYWORDS

Ema, seme, sememe, discursive activity, synergetic processes; hypernym–hyponym, holo–meronym, synonymic, antonymic, associative, and graduonymic relations.

INTRODUCTION

Open systems receive matter, energy, and information from the environment. Closed systems, by contrast, do not have such possibilities. Word meaning, as an open system, undergoes change by accumulating knowledge and information through sememe, seme, and ema. The formation and development of word meaning (sememe, seme, and ema) takes place under the influence of discursive activity. The perception of objects and events in reality and their expression through words, the perception of a word and its figurative representation in speech, as well as the ability of a word to demonstrate semantic changes in each syntactic construction, all unfold within discursive activity. In these processes, new semes are continuously formed within the structure of word meaning, and the system develops further. Therefore, word meaning is constantly changing and evolving.

The continuous influx of knowledge and information into the structure of word meaning through ema, seme, and sememe

occurs, on the one hand, in connection with human perception and speech activity, and, on the other hand, through the meanings that words generate within various paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. We can observe how a single word reveals different semantic facets within different fields of science and in communication, in texts, and in syntactic constructions, how it creates new meanings, and how it organizes and develops itself. For example, the word *nur* (“light”) is known to display different semantic facets in medicine, physics, mathematics, or in ordinary conversational speech. Moreover, in speech, under the influence of syntactic constructions and their context, this word produces new semantic facets. For instance, in the phrase *mehr nuri* (“the light of affection”), the word *nur* under the influence of *mehr* forms many semes such as “love,” “care,” “warmth,” and “kindness.” Such a polysemous, multifunctional, and multidirectional path of semantic development of word meaning unfolds under synergetic regularities.

The changes occurring in word meaning within discursive activity—the formation and development of *ema*, *seme*, and *sememe*—have imbalanced and non-linear trajectories, and the ordering of this disorder is reflected in the meaning of the *lexeme*, that is, in lexical meaning. Through the meaning structure of the word and the *lexeme*, the process of moving from semantic disorder to order becomes visible. The meaning content of the *lexeme* undergoes semantic change and disorder under the influence of grammatical *semes*; for this reason, it is transferred into the word and begins to function as a structural component of the word. Lexical meaning, and meaning in general, becomes active in speech mainly under the influence of grammatical *semes*. If the force of grammatical *semes* acting upon a *lexeme* diminishes, the *lexeme* does not move into speech and becomes archaic. The continuous transition from word to *lexeme* and from *lexeme* back to word evokes an understanding of the ongoing alternation of disorder with order and order with disorder. Such processes are characteristic only of open systems and determine their improvement and development.

Under the influence of discursive activity, *ema*, *seme*, and *sememes* emerge in the semantic structure of a word and develop through self-organization. Their mutual influence, or their influence on incoming *semes*, makes the meaning system more complex. The fact that the number of *sememes*, *semes*, or *emas* in word meaning is extremely large, and that these units as small semantic systems can, at a bifurcation point, generate larger systems, substantiates that word meaning is a complex, self-organizing system. As fluctuations in the semantic system increase, bifurcation also increases, the evolutionary pathways of the meaning system expand, and polysemous and multifunctional words emerge. Changes in the meaning system—that is, the continual alternation of semantic disorder with order, order with disorder, and disorder again with order—constitute the basis of development, and these changes occur within discursive–synergetic regularities.

Within the semantic structure of a word, those words that form paradigmatic relations with it are present as *semes*. A word incorporates, as *semes*, almost all words that enter paradigmatic and associative relations with it. Under the influence of syntagmatic relations, words bring forth many *sememes*, *semes*, and *emas* and, on this basis, occupy positions in various paradigms. Within each paradigm, words enrich their semantic content with *semes* and *emas*. Consequently, the number of *sememes*, *semes*, and *emas* in

the semantic structure of a word is extremely large, and due to this feature the semantic system of a word is assessed as a complex system. The complexity of a system is determined, on the one hand, by the abundance of its elements, and, on the other hand, by the presence of strong opposition and contradiction between those elements. The abundance of *sememes*, *semes*, and *emas* in word meaning, their quantitative growth, and, accordingly, the increasing intensity of oppositional interaction between them demonstrate that word meaning is a complex system. Complex systems are self-organizing systems; thus, the *emas* and *semes* that constitute the structure of word meaning, as small systems, self-organize at certain bifurcation points and generate larger systems. On the basis of such transformations, word meaning self-organizes, transitions from one state to another, and remains in continuous development.

A word's semantic content is rich in *emas* and *semes*, and these *emas* and *semes* form paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations with one another. Within the scope of these relations, a *sememe* is formed. Depending on whether *semes* constitute a *sememe* in an equal (coordinative) or subordinate (hierarchical) relationship, the structure of *sememes* is of three types. Using the words presented in the Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language (EDUL) as examples, this can be explained as follows.

First, there are *sememes* formed from *semes* linked by subordination. According to such a *sememe* structure, the meaning takes the form of a word combination or a sentence pattern. For example, the *sememe* of the word *butamoq* is “to cut off the unnecessary branches and twigs of a tree,” and this *sememe* is shaped in the form of a word combination. In terms of syntactic relation analysis, the *semes* “of a tree,” “unnecessary,” and “its branches and twigs” are subordinate *semes*, while the *seme* “to cut” functions as the dominant *seme* in relation to them.

Second, there are *sememes* formed from *semes* linked by equality. According to such a structure, the *sememe* takes the form of a compound-like unit, and sometimes it may also be constituted by coordinative word combinations or even sentences. For instance, the word *butlik* consists of a series of equal *semes* such as “wholeness, completeness, faultlessness, integrity, perfection.” These *semes* are synonymous in relation to the *lexeme* *butlik*. In some cases, *semes* express the negation of the *lexeme*. For example, the word *butun* (“whole”) has *semes* such as “not broken, not fractured; not

damaged, with no cracks or defects." In such situations, the meaning of a lexeme is sometimes explained through semes that are opposite to it. For example, the word *past* ("low") denotes the seme "not high," whereas *baland* ("high") denotes the seme "not low."

Third, there are sememes that contain both subordinate and equal relations among semes. The structure of such sememes includes both a word combination and a compound-like unit. For example, the word *buyurmoq* includes the sememe "to give an instruction to fulfill a wish or demand; to give an order; to command, decree, or issue an edict."

A word, through one or several of the sememe, seme, and ema units that constitute its semantic content, enters into hypernym–hyponym (genus–species), holo–meronym (whole–part), associative, synonymic, and antonymic relations. Likewise, sememe, seme, and ema units also establish such relations among themselves within the word's structure. For instance, within the semantic content of the word *daraxt* ("tree") there are semes such as "leaf," "branch," "trunk (stem)," and "root," and the word *daraxt* stands in a whole–part (holo–meronymic) relation with these semes. Some of these semes also form the same type of relation with their own emas. In semantic structure, a word may be in a continuous whole–part relation with a seme, the seme with an ema, and the ema with its components, and one branch of word meaning is expressed in such a configuration. For example, the word *odam* ("human") relates to the seme "hand," this seme relates to the ema "finger," and this ema relates further to the meaning "nail." When such semes and emas denote parts of the denotatum, certain semes and emas of a word, in relation to that word, may express the meaning of a "whole." For example, understanding semes such as "forest" and "orchard" through the word *daraxt* indicates the existence of a part–whole relation between the word and its semes. Among words that form holo–meronymic relations, meronyms (words naming parts) exist as semes within the semantic content of a holonym (a word naming the whole), or the reverse is also observed. For example, within *daraxt* there is the seme "leaf," and within *barg* ("leaf") there is the seme "tree."

Similarly, hyponyms enrich the semantic content of a hypernym as semes. For example, the word *daraxt* has semes such as "willow," "poplar," "juniper," and "plane tree," and through these semes it stands in a hypernym–hyponym relation. In speech, the word *daraxt* can express one or all of

these semes.

The word *daraxt* also possesses semes such as "goodness," "life," and "generosity," and these semes, as products of cognitive activity, stand in an associative relation with the word *daraxt*.

Within a word's semantic content, semes that are synonymous with it may also occur. For example, the meaning of the word *yiroq* ("far"), that is, its semes, are "uzoq" and "olis" ("distant"), and the meaning of *yiroq* is clarified through these synonyms (*yiroq o'lkalar* / *uzoq o'lkalar* / *olis o'lkalar* — "far lands").

A word may simultaneously be in both synonymic and antonymic relations with certain semes or emas. For example, the word *kir* ("dirty") has antonymic semes "notoza" ("unclean," washable) and "toza" ("clean," washed). The word *kir* is synonymous with the seme "unclean," but it stands in an oppositional, contradictory relation with the seme "clean."

Sometimes, sememes, semes, or emas within a word's semantic content form graduonymic (gradation-based) relations with one another. This phenomenon is mainly observed in the structure of words that express generalized meanings. For example, the word *ayol* ("woman") has semes such as "girl → young woman → wife → old woman," and these semes, in graduonymic relation to one another, express one branch of the word's semantic structure in a graded form. Such gradation within the system of semes produces either semantic similarity or semantic opposition. For instance, the "girl" and "old woman" semes of the word *ayol* are synonymous insofar as they express "gender," but they form an oppositional relation insofar as they indicate "age." The emergence of such inter-seme relations is considered one of the important factors influencing semantic development. Within a graduonymic series, the word occupying the middle (intermediate) position typically acquires a generalized meaning. All words in the graduonymic series are present as semes within the semantic content of that middle word. For example, in the series *darcha* ("small window"), *eshik* ("door"), *darvoza* ("gate"), the word *eshik* is the intermediate one; its semantic content includes the semes "small window" and "gate." The interaction and development of these semes expand the semantic scope of the word *eshik* and activate its participation in paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, word meaning is an open and self-organizing

complex system that constantly undergoes change and development. The formation and evolution of word meaning occur under the influence of discursive activity, and within it, *emas*, *semes*, and *sememes* are continuously enriched and renewed. Therefore, word meaning is not static but a dynamic phenomenon. The alternation of order and disorder that occurs within the domain of the *lexeme* and the word emerges as an internal regularity of semantic development. A word reveals new semantic facets in various fields of knowledge, speech situations, and syntactic environments; existing *semes* broaden or new ones arise. Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations serve as the main mechanisms of this process. *Semes* form *sememes* through equal or subordinate linkage; as a result, word meaning manifests as a polysemous and multifunctional system. Within the semantic content of word meaning, *hypernym-hyponym* (genus-species), *holo-meronym* (whole-part), *synonymic*, *antonymic*, *associative*, and *graduonymic* relations exist, and these ensure the expansion and increasing complexity of meaning. In short, word meaning is a multidimensional, complex, self-developing semantic system that improves on the basis of synergetic regularities.

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