

ON THE EVALUATIVE COMPONENT OF MEANING IN TEMPORAL ADJECTIVES IN PRESENT-DAY ENGLISH

The process of logical and conceptual perception and the abstraction of reality by man condition his creative activity, as well as his linguistic ability. The role of human factor is great for acknowledging and naming the objects of his surrounding world. It would be impossible to have a clear view of man, his existence and his activity without drawing a clear demarcation line between words used to denote time, durability, transience, perpetuity, instantaneity, chronometry, posteriority, timeliness, frequency and regularity. All these words seem to have nothing in common, nevertheless there is a concept uniting all of them. This is the *concept of time* underlying these words.

Verbal communication presupposes not only the formation of new concepts in human consciousness, but also man's ability to coin new words that best reflect the features of the objects and denote man's activities, his experience and thoughts. Man's linguistic creativity is first of all connected with the specific use of linguistic expressions in everyday speech and fiction.

This paper seeks to probe into the semantic structure of temporal adjectives with the view of revealing the evaluative component of meaning which plays an essential role in making words and has an indispensable part in the process of communication.

Of special interest in this respect are temporal adjectives which due to their part of speech meaning are expected to convey some additional information apart from their denotational meaning and thus, comprise some element of evaluation in them.

Some linguists (such as G. Koshel, M. Retunskaya) are inclined to regard linguistic evaluation as consisting of three different types, namely, intellectual-logical, emotional and emotional-intellectual, which according to them, leads to various configurations of semantic components within the semantic structure of a word.

To outline the area of temporal adjectives relevant to our study we selected them by applying definitional analysis and relying on the stylistic labels provided in dictionaries.

The selected units are investigated with the aim of detecting some regularities and tendencies operative in the semantic structure of the units in question. This arrangement rests either on the dictionary definition of a vocabulary entry or on the stylistic label supplied. Thus, among different labels applied in different dictionaries the following are of frequent occurrence: *ironic*,

derogatory, disapproving, contemptuous as well as *informal, formal, figurative* and the like.

Cf. **callow** – (*formal, disapproving*) young and without experience

sappy – (*informal*) silly and sentimental, full of unnecessary information

Apart from this, evaluative component may find its way into the definition of a vocabulary unit in the form of different indicators connected with time which are suggestive enough by themselves. They include such adjectives and adverbs as *tardy, too soon, very soon, at the same time, suddenly, occasionally, irregular, regular*, etc.

There are some adjectives in our selection whose connotations are manifest both in the labels and in their definitions.

Cf. **superannuated** – (*formal or humorous*) too old for work or to be used for this original purpose

inopportune – (*formal*) not appropriate or convenient, happening at a bad time

sporadic – (*written*) happening only occasionally or at intervals that are not regular

fitful – happening only for short periods, not continuous or regular

erratic – not happening at regular times, not following any plan or regular pattern

contemporaneous – happening or existing at the same time

concurrent – existing or happening at the same time

concomitant – happening at the same time especially because one thing is related to or causes the other

imminent – likely to happen very soon

impending – that is going to happen very soon

A clear study into the semantic structure of the adjectives in question leads us to the conclusion that temporal adjectives bearing negative and positive connotation make a rather extensive group.

Negative connotations are due to the indicators which make this negative emotional reaction quite predictable and transparent.

E.g. **mistimed** – done at the wrong time, especially when this makes something bad or unpleasant happen

inopportune – (*formal*) not appropriate or convenient, happening at a bad time

The same is true of the temporal adjectives bearing positive connotations. E.g.

providential – (*formal*) lucky because it happens at the right time

propitious – likely to produce a successful result

In the present article we shall focus on the study of evaluative component of meaning in temporal adjectives in regard to 'past', 'present' and 'future'.

With the coming of Relativity it has now become clear that the measurement of time is not the same for all observers. This is the great contribution of the *Theory of Relativity* and in its treatment "Time" loses its absolute nature.

Moreover, the evaluation and perception of 'past', 'present' and 'future' can also depend on the individual person's life experience, world outlook, peculiarities of his character and moral values.

Furthermore, the attitude to the concept under study can also reflect the experience of speech community at a certain period of historical development.

The latter can be testified by the attitude of the premodern society to the *past*. It was shaped by reconsidering the past events, thus making *past* the harbour for recollections.

According to A. Gourevich, the terms "modernus", "novus" and their derivatives had evaluative rather than temporal meaning in Middle Ages. They contained positive evaluation "In the period of Christianity". The adjective 'old' had negative meaning as it was considered to be pagan. At a later period of time the real 'antiquity' was nearly forgotten and the term "antiquus" became synonymous to authority, thus acquiring positive meaning. As for the term "modernitas", it had negative meaning in Middle Ages.

It was accounted for by the fact that everything that did not pass the test of the time was considered to be suspicious, thus dangerous (Gourevich, 1).

The contemporary society is characterized by the propaganda of everything new, topical and progressive. As for the past, it is also considered as the indispensable part of the man's perception of reality.

The definitional analysis of the temporal adjectives *old*, *ancient*, *antique*, *archaic*, *previous*, *former* with the dominant *past* has yielded some interesting conclusions.

The adjective *old* accumulates in its semantics both positive and negative evaluative component of meaning.

On the one hand, we can single out such semes of negative evaluation as *time-worn*, *decayed*, on the other hand, semes of ameliorative evaluative component of meaning – *time-honoured*, *experienced*, *proficient*.

To the dual character of evaluative component of meaning in temporal adjectives *antique* and *ancient* testify such semes as *old* and *valuable* (ameliorative evaluative component of meaning) or *very old* or *old-fashioned* (pejorative evaluative component of meaning).

The evaluative component of the adjective *archaic* is mainly negative except in the word-combination *archaic words*.

It is of interest to point out that apart from evaluative component of meaning which makes the integral part of the semantic structure in the temporal adjectives there are cases when this component is perceptible only in some particular situation or context that imposes some additional implication on them.

Thus, for instance, temporal adjectives *past, previous, former* can contain adherent evaluative component of meaning depending on the words they are collocated with.

In collocation with *happiness, pleasure, delight, jubilation* the adjectives under study can obtain positive evaluation, while in combination with *misery, depression, distress, sorrow* they can contain negative evaluation.

Of special interest are the temporal adjectives which develop new meanings in regard to characteristics of *old / young* age.

It is worth mentioning that the characteristics of *old / young* age find their reflection in the semantic structure of temporal adjectives in regard to both their mental and physical abilities.

The old age is associated with wisdom and the ability to act sensibly. People of old age deserve respect and are treated respectfully.

The latter can serve as an efficient basis for revealing ameliorative connotation in the semantic structure of the following temporal adjectives. Cf.

venerable – (*formal*) people deserve respect because they are old, important, wise

mellow – calm, gentle and reasonable because of age or experience

Besides, the old age is also associated with poor memory and physical disability while the young age with lack of experience and unsound judgement.

The above-mentioned gave rise to the pejorative semantic derivation in the following temporal adjectives.

Cf. **senile** – behaving in a confused or strange way and unable to remember things because of old age

gray – (*disapproving*) not interesting or attractive

decrepit – very old and not in good condition or health

green – (*informal*) young and lacking experience

callow – (*formal*) young and without experience

The definitional analysis of the temporal adjectives *new, modern, current* with its dominant **present** testifies to their dual character as well.

The adjective *current* contains in its semantics semes *popular, generally accepted, in vogue*, often with mixture of sense: *accepted or in vogue at the time in question*

The definitional analysis of the adjective *new* has revealed the following semes in its structure: *novel, original, creative or unfamiliar, strange, unheard-of, inexperienced*. The evaluative component in the semantic structure of temporal adjectives *coming, impending, overchanging, imminent, next, near, eventual, ulterior, prospective* with its dominant **future** is also of dual character.

From one point of view future can be modified taking into consideration the past mistakes. Therefore it can be regarded as something predictable.

From the other point of view **future** is *uncertain, dim, obscure* and can arouse some negative associations. In this regard future can be considered a mystery not possible to be penetrated into.

The definitional analysis of the adjectives under study has revealed ameliorative evaluative meaning as the constituent part of the adjectives *coming, prospective*, i.e. promising future, fame, success.

Pejorative evaluative component is the constituent part in the temporal adjectives *imminent* and *impending* – likely to occur at any moment, threatening, menacing, looming.

Summarizing the results of our study we can draw the following conclusions.

Firstly, there is an overlap of temporal and evaluative meaning in the semantic structure of the adjectives under study.

Secondly, it is important to note that human speech is directed not only by purely linguistic factors. The abundant use of new formations bearing evaluative connotations vividly illustrates the role of psychology and association in nomination in general. It follows that the evaluative fund of the language is replenished mainly owing to its producing mechanism when the language creatively reproduces itself.

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