

THE ROLE OF MEANING IN HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

The concept 'meaning' is one of the main concepts of psychology. Practically in each aspect of the psychological science scientists refer to problems concerning meaning and its functioning. The systematic analysis of the human consciousness, the study of thinking and speech needs, is to study the very point of consciousness which deals with categorization and generalization.

According to Vigotsky meaning is the unity of certain features, which serve for classification; and concept is a kind of meaning in which the essential features are secluded.

A.N. Leontev (1959) gives the following definition of meaning; 'the generalized reflection of reality which becomes the property of consciousness. Meaning is fixed in the form of concept. A single word may have a number of quite different senses. The term hand, for example, may occur in several kinds of contexts in which contributes quite diverse meanings, e.g. *he raised his hand*, *we gave him a hand*, *a new hired hand*, *all hands on deck*, and *the hands of the clock*.

In most instances, a word seems to have a central meaning from which a number of other meanings are derived. And we can usually recognize or imagine some kind of connection between those different meanings and the apparent central meaning. Compare, for example, the various meanings of *head* in the hat on his head, the head of the line, the head of the fire, a head of cabbage, and the revolt came to a head. There are cases, however, in which the connection may be tenuous, or the meanings may have become so remote as to obscure any historical relation. For example, the term *bar* originally referred to an object used to secure an enclosure. By extension it referred to any kind of barrier, as in a courtroom. Later the term was used to designate a bar at which alcoholic drinks are served and it is now employed as a name for the establishment where such a bar is located.

There are many different ways to approach the problems of meaning, since meaning is related to many different functions of the language. In general, a primary distinction is made between what is sometimes called the "extensionalist" view of language, which focuses on how words are used in contexts, and the corresponding "intensionalist" view of language, which concentrates on the conceptual structures associated with particular units.

The analysis of meaning is further complicated by the diverse functions of language, of which the expressive and the informative are the most important.

To determine the linguistic meaning of any form contrast must be found, for there is no meaning apart from significant differences. If all the universe were blue, there would be no blueness, since there would be nothing to contrast with blue. The same is true for the meanings of words.

Consciousness is one of the forms of psychical expression, which originates in the result of communication. We can distinguish between individual and social consciousness. Individual consciousness as a psychic activity arises, develops and "passes away" with a man, while the social one is a separate, relatively independent system. It should be mentioned that individual consciousness, as a subjective reflection of the objective reality, is a result of social communication. The problem of consciousness is referred to with the aim of solving certain educational and communicative problems. In both cases the aim of research is to help a human being to perceive the reality with ease.

In the work of Z. Freud consciousness is connected with the unity of feelings, perception and also imagination. (Z. Freud, 1980). From Dekort's times it was regarded as a synonym of inner, psychic events. Later as a result of the separation of the separation of consciousness psychology, another viewpoint developed, according to which consciousness is not equalized with the psychic, but in forms one of its parts. The individual world of consciousness is the psychological reality. Everything which is realized in the subjective world for an individual as his aim, must in some way be reflected in memory.

The interaction of a human being with the world begins with perception. Consciousness serves to control human activity by reflecting the objective world. It not only reflects but also "creates" the world. The answer to the questions concerning the nature of consciousness varies greatly, but all of them treat consciousness as means of correlation between a man and the objective reality.

As a matter of fact, the question concerning the origin and the structure of consciousness becomes more complicated in the case when the investigators turn to the study of language. In this case consciousness is the reflection of reality, knowledge and experience of a human being.

The main components of consciousness are categories, notions, concepts, associations and images. According to academician A. Gahukyan the concept 'consciousness' is somewhat relative. It means a unity of different signs. If by saying 'sign' first of all we mean a concept, then it is clear that consciousness is a unity of concepts, a unique system, which is defined by its relation with others. (G. Gahukyan 1992).

It is known that any activity of human being is tightly connected with cognitive activity. If by 'mentality' we mean not only the cognitive activity, but all the other activities connected with consciousness, then it is difficult to

imagine any mental process without language. Thus, today philosophy defines 'mentality' as the reflection of the objective reality, and the linguistic mentality as the main means of its expressiveness. Psychology, which also studies 'mentality', separates it from cognition and consciousness.

Linguistics identifies the concepts 'mentality' and 'linguistic mentality', while for psycholinguists 'linguistic mentality' is a more specific object of study due to its connection with mentality. It should be mentioned that though the questions referring to language and mentality do not have exact final formulations.

The concepts 'meaning' and 'significance' are conditioned by the level of the level of word's fixation in consciousness.

In language there are two ways in which words may acquire meaning; they may either be associated directly with objects or events, or they acquire meaning through some process other than direct association. It is clear that children, for example, learn words through association of the word with the referent; but they also learn the meaning of many words for which they have never seen a corresponding referent. For this reason Osgood recognizes two subcategories of linguistic sign, namely the ordinary sign and the assign.

Signs are those units the meaning of which has been acquired through direct association with the significate. Assign on the other hand, have their meanings 'assigned' to them through other signs rather than through this direct association.

A typical sign might be the word 'table', learned in most instances by direct connection with the object in question. As a typical assign Osgood gave the word 'zebra', understood by most young children even though they have never seen the animal but rather have had the concept defined for them: "They have seen pictures of them, been told that they have stripes, run like horses, and are usually found wild", as a result of which "this new stimulus pattern, zebra", acquires portions of the mediating reactions already associated with the primary signs." Osgood noted that reading is a process of assign learning. The majority of words are in fact assigned, although few if any nonlinguistic signs are assigned.

Bloomfield suggested that word meaning could be characterized in terms of the distinctive features of the situation, the meaning of a word being the features common to all situations in which the word is uttered. Bloomfield was by no means the only expounder of a behavioristic theory of meaning, and after Bloomfield a group of psychologists further investigated the possibility of a behavioristic theory of meaning.

There are three main ways in which linguists and philosophers have attempted to construct explanations of meaning in natural language: (a) by defining the nature of word meaning, (b) by defining the nature of sentence meaning, and (c) by explaining the process of communication. In the first way,

word meaning is taken as the construct in terms of which sentence meaning and communication can be explained; in the second, it is sentence meaning which is taken as basic, with words characterized in terms of the systematic contribution they make to sentence meaning; and in the third, both sentence and word meaning are explained in terms of the ways in which sentences and words are used in the act of communication.

These three aspects of meaning: word meaning, sentence meaning, and communication, are reflected in different uses of the word mean. Corresponding to explanation (a) is:

Supererogatory means 'superfluous'.

Spinster means 'unmarried woman'.

Corresponding to (b) is:

(3) The sentence; James murdered Max; means that someone called James deliberately killed someone called Max.

In these two uses, the word mean has a meaning approximating to indicate. But the word mean is used in a different sense in the following conversation between two speakers, A and B,

(4) A: Are you going to bed soon?

B: What do you mean?

A: I mean that I'm tired, and the sooner you go to bed, the sooner I can.

In this case, mean is attributable to speakers and has the same meaning as the expression intend to indicate. Thus we have at least three possible starting points from which to construct an explanation of meaning- the signification of words, the interpretation of sentences, or what a speaker is intending to convey in acts of communication.

Another solution to the problem of explaining the nature of word meaning, which has an equally long tradition, is to explain the meaning of a word in terms of the image in the speaker's (or hearer's) brain. The problem here is to know what form the images take.

Neither characterization does more than say that the meaning of word is a complex concept. But in attempting to unravel the concepts is unexplanatory, and characterizing meaning seems to enter into too many problems to be a convincing solution.

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Նշանակության դերը գիտակցության մեջ

Հոդվածում հեղինակն անդրադարձել է գիտակցության և իմաստի նկարագրությանը՝ պարզաբանելով դրանց փոխկապակցվածության աստիճանը: Դիտարկվում են իմաստի և նկարագրության սահմանման տարբեր մոտեցումներ, հնարավորինս մանրամասն ներկայացվում է գիտակցության կառուցվածքը: Ներկայացվող տեսական դրույթները հաստատվում են օրինակներով: