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The mirror symmetry principle in word-sign semantics

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As is well known, there are two basic approaches in analysing word semantics: (a) the microsemantic one, which takes into account the semantic relationships within the word, and (b) the makrosemantic one, which takes into account the semantic relationships among the words in a given lexico-semantic field. Up till now microsemantics and macrosemantics have been considered separately and in isolation, and it is a common opinion that the results of such analyses are not very satisfactory.

The theory and practice of lexicography have also shown that the semantic description of any word only from a microsemantic or only from a macrosemantic point of view are incomplete and unsatisfactory. The description of the lexico-semantic system of any language only by means of the traditional uni-lingual dictionaries or only by means of lexico-semantic fields is just as unsatisfactory.

My investigation in the process of compiling the *Semantic minimum dictionary* (Kassabov 1990), which is a dictionary-construct representing the lexico-semantic system of the Bulgarian language, has shown that it is necessary to describe this system by an alphabetical arrangement of the units on the one hand, and the lexico-semantic fields which they comprise, on the other. Such an integrated approach is required by a specific character of the semantic structure of the word, which combines semantic units common for both microsemantics of the word and macrosemantics of the field. These semantic units we shall call *semantic marks* –*differential* ones, *integral* ones, and *additional* (*terminological* and *associative*) ones, which in their combination comprise the meaning of the word. For example, the meaning of the word *house* «building for people to live in», consists of the differential mark «for people to live in» and of the integral one «building». The meaning of the word *father* «parent of masculine sex» consists of the differential mark «masculine sex» and of the integral mark «parent».

It is interesting that these semantic marks play a major role in the building up of the lexico-semantic fields. By its differential mark «for people to live in», the word *house* in its meaning «building for people to live in» is included in the field *housing*. In the same way, the word *father* by its differential mark «masculine sex» in its meaning «parent of masculine sex» is included in the field *man* (people). As can be seen, the word meaning's differential mark becomes the name of the field (or one of its groups), in other words, it becomes an integral mark. The same metamorphosis can also be observed with the integral marks «building» in the meaning of the word *house*, and «parent» in the meaning of the word *father*, which determines the places of these words among the other words in corresponding fields, i.e., they turn into differential marks.

It is very significant that in these metamorphoses of differential marks of the word into integral ones in the field, and of integral marks of the word into differential in the field we can witness the mirror symmetry principle. (See the figures of the semantic structures of the example words, especially the right side of the diagrams).

Diagram 1

integral mark	LEXICO-SEMANTIC FIELD	«for people to live in» <i>HOUSING</i>
differential mark	SEMANTIC WORD	«building» <i>HOUSE</i>
integral mark	WORD MEANING	«building» « <i>BUILDING FOR</i> <i>PEOPLE TO LIVE IN</i> »
differential mark		«for people to live in»

Diagram 2

integral mark	LEXICO-SEMANTIC FIELD	«masculine sex» <i>MAN (PEOPLE)</i>
differential mark	SEMANTIC WORD	«parent» <i>FATHER</i>
integral mark	WORD MEANING	«parent» « <i>PARENT OF</i> <i>MASCULINE SEX</i> »
differential mark		«masculine sex»

These correspondences between the microsemantics (of the meanings of the word) and macrosemantics (of the lexico-semantic fields) are observed in all words in the entire lexico-semantic system of the language. The semantic marks are microsemantic and macrosemantic common elements, which are necessary for describing the entire and complex lexico-semantic system of the language. Such a description, however necessary, will be insufficient if it lacks the *additional* marks of the word semantics, namely the *terminological* ones and *associative* ones. These additional marks are potential elements of the semantic structure of the word and they can be actualized in given circumstances. For example, the terminological or associative mark can take the place of a given differential mark and in combination with the integral mark form a new meaning of the word – a terminological one, or a meaning-image.

Thus we can observe three types of combinations between semantic marks in the word's semantic structure: (a) integral mark + differential mark = *nominative* (neutral) *meaning*; (b) integral mark + terminological additional mark = *terminological meaning*; and (c) integral mark + associative additional mark = *meaning-image*.

All these marks can also be described in more popular terms:

- The terminological mark - terminological value;
- The associative mark - associative value;
- the differential mark - linguistic value;
- The integral mark - general meaning.

The combination between integral mark and some other marks (or between general meaning and some type of values) renders the above mentioned three types of lexical meanings: terminological meaning; meaning-image; and par excellence linguistic meaning. These three types of word meanings are essentially different not only from the microsemantic (inside the word) point of view, but also from the macrosemantic (between the words in the field) point of view.

A convincing proof for adequacy of this tri-partition is the fact that each of these types of meaning can be referred to as belonging to different types of semantic fields (associative, terminological, and par excellence linguistic) by right of their three types of values. Thus we can reveal the real linguistic semantic field within the boundaries of the zone of intersection of the terminological and the associative fields.

These three types of abstract meanings (terminological, linguistic and meaning-image) and their corresponding values, with the relationships

among them, held together by the integral mark, represent the semantic structure of the word in the simplest possible way.

The uniting and creative core of this structure is the integral mark as a «general meaning». This semantic structure, based on the mirror symmetry principle, gives a natural exit of the word –through its elements– to its corresponding semantic fields in the structure of the language.

Η αρχή της κατοπτρικής συμμετρίας στη σημασιολογία των λέξεων-σημείων

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Η ανακοίνωση αυτή βασίζεται στο βιβλίο μου *Λεξικό των Σημασιολογικών Ελάχιστων* (1990). Τα πρακτικά αποτελέσματα της σχετικής έρευνας δείχνουν ότι το λεξικο-σημασιολογικό σύστημα οποιασδήποτε γλώσσας έχει κοινά στοιχεία με το σύστημα σημασιών των λέξεων. Τέτοια κοινά στοιχεία είναι οι σημασιολογικοί δείκτες που περιλαμβάνουν τις λεξικές σημασίες: οι κατηγορικοί, οι διαφοροποιητικοί και οι προσθετικοί (ορολογίας και συνειρμικοί) δείκτες. Η σχέση ανάμεσα στο λεξικο-σημασιολογικό σύστημα-μακροδομή και στις σημασίες των λέξεων-μικροδομή πραγματοποιείται μέσα στα λεξικο-σημασιολογικά πεδία.

Σ' αυτά τα πεδία, ο κατηγορικός δείκτης της σημασίας της λέξης γίνεται διαφοροποιητικός, σταθεροποιεί τις σημασίες των λέξεων στο πεδίο. Από την άλλη μεριά, ο διαφοροποιητικός δείκτης γίνεται κατηγορικός, είναι το όνομα του πεδίου. Οι προσθετικοί δείκτες καθορίζουν τα όρια μεταξύ λεξικο-σημασιολογικών πεδίων, τόσο αυτά που αναφέρονται στην ορολογία όσο και τα συνειρμικά.

Βάσει της σχέσης μεταξύ σημασιολογικών δεικτών, σχηματίζονται τρεις τύποι σημασιών των λέξεων: γλωσσολογική σημασία καθεαυτή, σημασία που αναφέρεται στην ορολογία και σημασία-εικόνα. Ο ενοποιητικός και παραγωγικός πυρήνας της σημασιολογίας των λέξεων είναι ο κατηγορικός δείκτης ως «γενική σημασία». Αυτή η σημασιολογική δομή βασίζεται στην οργάνωση των σημασιολογικών δεικτών βάσει της αρχής της κατοπτρικής συμμετρίας.