METHODS AND PROCEDURES OF LEXICOLOGY

Azimbayeva Ranohon Yuldashevna
Tashkent Financial Institute, Associate Professor of Foreign Languages

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In any investigation the starting-point matters are quite significant. It is commonly recognized that acquaintance with at least some of the currently used procedures of linguistic research is of considerable importance both for language learners and for prospective teachers as it gives them possibility to observe how linguists obtain answers to particular questions and is of help in the preparation of teaching material. It also helps language learners to become good observers of how language works and this is the only lasting way to become better users of language. Growing interest in methods of study is one of the most symptomatic features of present-day linguistics. Modern scientific study has provided linguists with new assumptions which underlie methods of lexicological analysis.

The process of scientific investigation may be divided into several stages. O b s e r v a t i o n is an early and basic phase of all modern scientific investigation and is the center of what is called the inductive method of inquiry. The cardinal role of inductive procedures is that statements of fact must be based on observation, not on unsupported authority, logical conclusions or personal preferences.

The next stage after observation is c l a s s i f i c a t i o n or orderly arrangement of the data obtained through observation. For example, it is observed that in English nouns the suffixal morpheme -er is added to verbal stems (speak+ - er, writ(e)+ -er, etc.), noun stems (village+ -er, London+ -er, etc.), and that –er also occurs in non-derived words such as mother, father, etc. Accordingly all the nouns in –er may be classified into two types – derived and simple words, and the derived words may be subdivided into 2 groups according to their stems.

The following stage is usually that of generalization, i.e. the collection of data and their orderly arrangement must eventually lead to the formation of a generalization or hypothesis, rule or law. In our case we can formulate a rule that derived nouns in -er may have either verbal or noun stems. Any linguistic generalization must be followed by the verifying process.

The methods and procedures briefly discussed below are as follows:

1.Contrastive analysis; 2. method of statistical analysis; 3. IC analysis; 4. Distributional analysis; 5. Transformational analysis; 6. Componental analysis; 7. Method of semantic differential.

All methods of linguistic analysis are traditionally subdivided into formalized and non-formalized procedures. Evidently, the selection of this or that particular procedure largely depends on the goal put before the investigator. Some of the methods of lexicological analysis are of primary value for teachers of English and are widely used in the preparation of teaching material.

The first method to be discussed is that of contrastive analysis; this is followed by a brief survey of statistical methods of analysis as quantitative evaluation is usually an essential part of any linguistic procedure. The so-called formalized methods of analysis – the IC analysis, distributional and transformational procedures precede the componential analysis because the latter may be combined with distributional and/or transformational procedures.

Contrastive Analysis Contrastive analysis grew as the result of the practical demands of language teaching methodology where it empirically shown that the errors which are made recurrently by foreign language students can be often traced back to the differences in structure between the target language and the language of the learner. This naturally implies necessity of a detailed comparison of the structure of a native and a target language which has been named contrastive analysis. It is common knowledge that one of the major problems in learning the second language is the interference caused by the difference between the mother tongue of the learner and the target language. No doubt, contrastive analysis has a part to play in evaluation of errors, in predicting typical errors and thus must be seen in connection with overall endeavors to rationalize and intensify foreign language teaching.

Contrastive analysis can be carried out at three linguistic levels: phonology, grammar and lexis (vocabulary). Contrastive analysis is applied to reveal the features of sameness and difference in the lexical meaning and the semantic structure of correlated words in different languages. It should be stated that classification of the real world around us provided by the vocabulary of our mother tongue is learned and assimilated together with our first language. Because we are used to the way in which our own language structures experience we are often inclined to think of this as the only natural way of dealing with things whereas in fact it is highly arbitrary. As an example let us take the words watch and clock. It is natural association with Russian and Uzbek speakers to have a single word “soat/часы;” yet, in English they are divided into two semantic classes depending on whether or not they are customarily portable. We also find it quite natural that kinship terms should reflect the difference between male and female: brother or sister, father or mother, uncle or aunt, etc., yet in English we fail to make such a distinction in the case of “cousin” (cf. the Russian “двоюродный брат/двоюродная сестра” or Uzbek “tog’a (amaki)vacha”).

Contrastive analysis also brings to light what can be labeled problem pairs, i.e. the words that denote two entities in one language and correspond to two different words in another language (cf. “soat—clock”, “watch;” san’atkor--- “artist”; “painter”).

Statistical Analysis

An important trend in modern linguistics of the previous century was the quantitative study of language because every lexicological research is based on collecting linguistic evidence. Statistical inquiries have considerable importance not only because of their relevance to certain problems of communication engineering and information theory. Any scientific method of cognition presupposes verification of the data obtained. We'll discuss here the statistical approach to vocabulary. Statistical techniques have been successfully applied in the analysis of different linguistic phenomena: different structural types of words, affixes, lexicon of great writers, poets and even in the study of some problems of historical lexicology. Thus, the first thing to do any statistic investigation is the evaluation of the size of the sample under analysis. To illustrate this statement we may consider the frequency of word occurrences.

It's common knowledge that a comparatively small group of words makes up the bulk of any text; it was found that 1,300-1,500 most frequent words make up 85% of all words occurring in the text. No doubt that to be useful in teaching statistics should deal with meanings as well as sound-forms as not all wordmeanings are equally frequent. Besides, the number of meanings exceeds by far the number of words.

The total number of different meanings recorded and illustrated in OED for the first 500 words of the Thorndike Word List is 14,070, for the first thousand it is nearly 25,000. The semantic count is a count of the frequency of occurrence of the various senses of 2,000 most frequent words as found in a study of 5 million running words. The semantic count is based on differentiation of meanings in the OED.

Statistical methods have been also applied to various theoretical problems of meaning. An exact and exhaustive definition of the linguistic qualitative aspects of the items under discussion must precede the statistical analysis. Thus, statistical analysis is applied in different branches of linguistics including lexicology as a means of verification and as a reliable criterion for the selection of the language data provided qualitative description of lexical items is available.

Distributional Analysis Distributional analysis is commonly used by lexicologists. By the term distribution we mean the occurrence of a lexical unit relative to other lexical units of the same level (words relative to words/morphemes relative to morphemes, etc.). Concretely speaking, by this term we understand the position which lexical units occupy or may occupy in the text or in the flow of speech. It is observed that a certain component of the word-meaning is described when the word is identified distributionally. For example, in the sentence "The boy….home" the missing word is easily identified as a verb----"The boy went/came, run, etc./ home". Thus, we see that the component of meaning that is distributionally identified is actually the part-of-speech meaning but not the individual lexical meaning of the word under analysis.

The interdependence of distribution and meaning can be seen at the level of word-groups. As far as words are concerned the meaning by distribution may be defined as an abstraction on the syntagmatic level. Distributional pattern as such seems to possess a component of meaning not to be found in individual words making up the word-group or the sentence. Thus, the meaning of "make somebody do something by means of something"

cannot be traced back to the lexical meaning of the individual words in “coax somebody into accepting the suggestion”. The distributional pattern itself seems to impart this meaning to the whole irrespective of the meaning of the verb used in the structure, i.e. in the pattern V + N + into + Ving verbs of widely different lexical meaning may be used. One can say, for example, to kiss somebody into doing something; to flatter somebody into doing something; to beat somebody into doing something, etc.; in all these word-groups one finds the meaning “make somebody do something”, which is actually imparted by the distributional pattern.

Transformational Analysis

This kind of analysis in lexicological investigations may be defined as repatterning of various distributional structures in order to discover difference or sameness of meaning of practically identical distributional patterns. As distributional patterns are in a number of cases polysemantic, transformational procedures are of help not only in the analysis of semantic sameness/difference of the lexical units under investigation but also in the analysis of the factors that account for their polysemy. For example, comparing two compound words “dogfight” and “dogcart”, we see that the distributional pattern of stems is identical, i.e. N+N. The meaning of these words, broadly speaking, is also similar as the first of the stems modifies, describes the second, and we understand these compounds as “a kind of fight” and “a kind of cart”. The semantic relationship between the stems, however, is different and hence the lexical meaning of the words is also different. This can be shown by means of a transformational procedure which shows that “a dogfight” is semantically equivalent to “a fight between dogs”, whereas “a dogcart” is not “a cart between dogs”, but “a cart drawn by dogs.” Transformational analysis may also be described as a kind of translation. If we understand by translation transference of a message by different means, we may assume that there exist at least three types of translation: 1.interlingual translation (or translation from one language into another); 2.intersemiotic translation (or transference of a message from one kind of semiotic system to another); and 3. intralingual.

DICTIONARIES

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