

# The Scopes of Word Semantics

Alishova Ramila Bebir<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of English Stylistics, Azerbaijan University of Languages, Azerbaijan

Correspondence: Alishova Ramila Bebir, Department of English Stylistics, Azerbaijan University of Languages, Azerbaijan. E-mail: alishovaramila@mail.ru

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## Abstract

The article investigates the scopes of word semantics. Firstly, the author gives general information about the term concept. The author investigates the thoughts of linguists about the concepts in different languages. For instance, A. Abdullayev writes: “Concepts are inside representatives of the aspects, fragments of the environment in a human’s psychology. We can say they are inside us” (Abdullayev, 2011). N. Chomski writes: “The concepts that are created in the human’s minds define the form and the meaning of a great number of sentences, and it means that our knowledge and opinions are endless” (Bickerton, 2010). The author underlines the fact that concepts belong to human conscious, and they purely have typically mind characters. Investigating the article we observe that the author stands on the meanings of the words especially on the meanings of the words denoting life and death. Saying literally, a man can be considered to be a walking dictionary created by God. Each of the individuals has its own word stock in its mind. There exist a lot of words with various meanings, and the article deals with the meanings of the words denoting death and life. The author gives their translations both in the English language and in the Azerbaijani language, and it helps us to catch the similar and different meanings that they form inside the contexts. The author comes to the conclusion that the meanings that the people want to express and the meaning that the words express are different. The article gives the list of the meanings of the words suggested by J. Lyons.

**Keywords:** concept, language, word, meaning, mind, human, information, formation, natural, sentence

## 1. Introduction

The concepts are the parts of the knowledge that are used and activated, defended during the activities of speech acts and mind totally. They are the meaningful units that are not divided into the smallest parts in the cognitive usage process of the information, and they are not analysed. In a word, they can be meant as specific features of a mind.

The concepts that are created in the human’s minds are the creation of actions and things in the imaginations, and these lead to the formation of things and actions in the human’s minds. N. Chomski claims that all languages were organized on the same model, but it doesn’t mean that there are the same cultural sequences among the different languages. It does not show that the people who speak in different cultural languages create the explanation, or the description of the same things and actions in the same way either. He states that the creation of various concepts in different languages are related in the human’s experience of the language, and its usage. He states that the creation of concepts in the human’s mind has individual character because each individual has its own usage of cultural language, and it also depends on the condition of the individual’s living (Bickerton, 2010). Concepts reflect the environment and the changing that happen there. The specific features of constant changing of human’s knowledge is also related with this (Abdullayev, 2011). As we stated this is formed depending on the human’s cultural language theory. The perception of the language is considered to be the main factor in the formation of concepts. The genetic factors shouldn’t be forgotten in this case.

N. Chomski states that the principles of genetic factors are active in the language learning. He underlines that it doesn’t mean to learn everything. Learning is the activation of the process, and this process is the same for all cultural languages, and it is related with other cognitive processes in the mind. Concepts are created and developed in the minds of each language leaning human that was born healthy. As the individual grows, the concept in its mind also grows and grows. And this process continues until the individual dies, or it captures some mind dying disease (Bickerton, 2010). Of course, mind, behaviour and concept are related intuitively. The

conceptual knowledge of an individual and the deleveration of the same information are represented as the presentation of the stored information in the mind. C.Riesbeck writes about it: “this is the method of perception, understanding in the memory process” (Riesbeck, 1975). A question draws my attention: Does a human mind have any role in the formation, deleveration and usage of the concept? According to Q. Marcuss the brain gets the information from senses, analyses that information and then sends it to the outside immediately. The brain performs this. The brain hasn’t been created for thinking about the laws of the mankind, or hasn’t formed the laws that rule them. It only sends the information that was sent to it mechanically. As Q. Marcuss claims a brain performs its function step by step and perfectly ( Marcus, 2004).

1. The senses get the information;
2. Send it to the analising for to define;
3. Chooses the course of the movement corresponding to the analising;
4. At last it commands for performing that action.

Opinion-independence-speech creates the relation to the real world directly. A person sends the information that was stored in his brain through voices, or words. N.Chomski claims that before a person communicates the recursion process begins in his brain, and before the recursion process the concept has already been created in his mind (Bickerton, 2010). Let us carry out an experiment. We use the term /leopard/ for this experiment. When we hear the term of leopard we do not refer to a concrete object. We only imagine the animal leopard, and don’t create its imagination directly. But if we use such a sentence: “Leoprd live in Africa.” The term leoprd that we use in this sentence is expressed in a general sense. If we hear a voice of a leopard in a place (for instance, in a zoo etc), we know that it is a certain leopard that cries nearby.

Each individual that is able to speak has lots of words in its brain, and the person communicates using these words. As the dictionaries are full of complied words and their explanations, the brains of humans that was created by God are also rich in words and the meanings of them that they stored depending on their former knowledges. Saying literary, a person can be considered as a living dictionary created by God, but this kind of dictionary can walk, speak and has conscious. We ourselves don’t know that how many word stock there are in our brain and how many meaning they have. Sometimes we use such a kind of word in such a situation that we ourselves become surprised that when and where we learnt that word.

This process is related with the mistery of the creation of the human and the human language that have been under discussion for a long time by linguistics. The words that we use are the parts of a person’s linguistic knowledge, and at the same time they are part of the grammar. Do the words that are stored in the person’s brain have meaning? How are these meanings learnt? Traditionally, semantics are defined to study the meanings. This is the definition that is often used by linguists. Nowadays we often hear the term lingvocultural. Words, exactly the usage of natural languages are observed by which cutural kinds, or differences are always in the air and linguists often think about these problems.

## 2. Scope of the Study

Everyone knows the language he speaks. We mean the healthy born human. We live in the world of a language. We speak at home, at work, even we speak when there is no one near as. We constantly speak in our brains. Actually human’s brain never sleeps, it always speaks. There is also some people who speaks in their dreams. We should try to learn the nature of the languagefor to understand the mankind and the explanation of the concepts that are formed in our minds while speaking. We wouldn’t try to search the meaning sof the words when we use while speaking. A baby is born and then tries to speak. Firstly, it uses voices, then separate words, then sentences, and finally it is able to speaks. The baby uses the language in the evironment it was born. Our language is rich in different nouns, verbs, adjectives etc. Whether you were born english, japan, or Azerbaijanian your lexicon is full of different kinds of verbs denoting love, hatred, life, death etc. Even an ordinary person uses the concepts either they mean positve or negative meanings in his everyday speech. The life begins with the birth and ends with the death.

As these two notions express the beginning and the end of huma’s life we should like to use the verbs denoting life and death. Let’s look at the list of verbs denoting life and death:

to bury - to put a dead body into the ground

We buried him in December.

to cremate - to burn a body, usually as part of a funeral ceremony

She was cremated in India.

to die - to stop living or existing, either suddenly or slowly

My mother died in 2005.

to drown - to die under water

Many sailors drowned during last flood.

to execute - to kill someone as a legal punishment

He was executed for mass murder.

to kill - to cause someone or something to die

It is estimated that smoking kills 120,000 people every year.

to murder - the crime of intentionally killing a person

He was murdered last week.

to procreate - to produce young

The zoo tries to recreate the animals' natural habitats.

to suffocate - to die because of a lack of oxygen

The autopsy showed he suffocated

to bump off - to murder someone (*slang*)

He didn't die of natural causes, someone bumped him off

to commit genocide - To murder a whole group of people, especially a whole nation –

Armenians committed genocide in Azerbaijan.

to commit suicide - if a person commits suicide, they kill themselves

She committed suicide by hanging at the age of 23.

to drop dead - to die suddenly and unexpectedly

He dropped dead in the middle of a game of cards.

to give birth

She gave birth to twins

to grow up - to gradually become an adult

I grew up in England.

to pass away

He passed away last year.

to live - to continue, to be alive or have life

She lived for 100 years.

Now we try to carry out some experiments using the verbs denoting life and death in the contexts.

For instance, when a school child speaks about his father, he can use the following sentence showing his father's good character:

Oh, my father is the life of our family.

The child doesn't use many sentences. He used the expression the life of the family for describing his father, but hearing the only usage of the stated expression and seeing the expression on the child's face we can imagine what kind of person his father is. Beside, the child describes his father smiling, his face is full of love, his eyes show the admiration towards his father, namely his family. The context led us to the point. The positive concept that existed in the child's mind appeared immediately. The positive, creating concept of the verb life is expressed in this way in this context.

Other context:

(1) "I am yearning for a glass of cold water," the man said.

We use the verb *yearn* in the meaning of *desire* in the sentence. Let us change the context. We try to imagine such a situation in our mind. The man who is lost in a desert, there is no one nearby, no things at hand and of

course, there hardly water anywhere. The man is very thirsty. Glasses of water are moving in front of his eyes. The first verb we can use in this situation if we want to describe the man's desire for the water is the verb *die for*. The man is dying for a glass of water. So, we change the yearn into the verb die for as in the example:

(2) "I am dying for a glass of cold water," the man lost in the desert said.

As you see the verb *die for* has a strong effect style in the context, and it can change the whole concept in our brains.

Let us change the context using the verb die in other context. Again we will face other effect of the verb.

The wind is coming slowly to an end.

It is a simple sentence; it shows that the wind stops. Let us replace the verb *to stop* into the verb *to die*.

We knew that we were in danger. But we could not see anything. When the wind died down, we understood the problem...

As you see the verb die is not used in its literary meaning in this sentence. As soon as we see the verb wind we imagine the verbs dealing with the cease of the wind such as *to stop*, *to end*, *to calm* etc. When we translate the sentence into our native language, we use the term *kəsilmək* (to stop). The style of art expression is also very strong in the sentence. But unlike the English language as we used the verb to die (ölmək) in it, we preferred using the term *kəsilmək* (to stop).

We would like to draw your attention to the fact that the verb to die is not used in its literary meaning in this sentence. As soon as we see the verb wind, the concepts connecting with it appear in our minds such as to stop, to end, to cease, to come to an end etc

Mark Twain writes in his novel *Eve's Diary* such an episode:

"The minute I set eyes on an animal I know what it is. I don't have to reflect a moment; the right name comes out instantly ... I seem to know just by the shape of the creature and the way it acts what animal it is..."

With these Mark Twain expresses the complete shape, or namely the perfect explanation of the term concept. Hearing the voice, or seeing the figure, or reading the context don't make any difference which one we choose every action, or event, or thing base on a person's linguistic knowledge and the concept that was already formed in his brain.

The distinctions between the intentional and the non-intentional concepts organize on the one hand, what is natural, what is conventional, or symbolic, on the other hand plays a main role in the theoretical investigation of meaning and continue to do so (Lyons, 2002). The dichotomy of language-speech is used either in the written form or in the oral form.

Exactly they are used to express the cultural signs in a greater or smaller degree depending on the contexts they are used. It is necessary to stress that ontological assumptions are very important for expressing the meanings. The ontological assumptions express our assumptions about the real world. These ontological assumptions are mostly determined culturally. For instance, the dead body means the body is dead has no feeling in it for a short time.

The verb refers to an animate being with its own will and intentions, we do not interpret.

Other example:

The man was killed.

Unlike the stated example we can interpret this sentence like this:

I killed the man.

The man was killed by his enemy etc.

Depending on the situation we can device various contexts, or scenarios etc.

Generally most natural-language speeches are expressed in a larger context of the meanings. We can feel the difference when we take the verb from the context. Semantics is helpful for to clarify these meanings.

Example:

"Life of Riley" means "a soft easy life", - As you see Riley is a proper name in the English language, and the English use it when they speak about the people who leads a soft easy life. Using this sentence we draw your attention both to the meaning of the sentence and to the meaning of the usage of the English word Riley.

We pay attention to the fact that the difference can be observed between the meanings that the people want to express and the meaning that the words express. It has always been interested the philosophers. Choosing the correct word connected with the context during communication is very important. L. Wittgenstein's has a famous expression which is already a slogan about this: "Don't look at the meaning, look at the usage." The intentional meaning of the sentence organizes the base of the language theory. All know that all natural languages cover words and the words have forms and meanings. J. Lyons writes: "All natural languages have sentences, and the sentences have forms and meanings; the meanings of the sentences are defined by the meanings of the words that are used in the sentence" (Lyons, 2002).

### 3. Theories about the Menings of Words

The investigations show that there are some theories about the definition of the meanings of words. Let us make such a listing:

- 1) the referential (denotational) theory;
- 2) the ideational, or mentalistic theory;
- 3) the behaviourist theory;
- 4) the meaning-is-use theory;
- 5) the verificationist theory;
- 6) the truth-conditional theory(Lyons, 2002).

Each of these theories has its cultural kinds, and they are used to form the meanings of language usage.

The word forms are divided into two classes in English like in many other languages. The first class consists of the full (meaningful) words. For example,

*Death* (ölüm-isim), *man* (kişi-isim), *kill* (öldürmək-feil), *die* (ölmək-feil), *live* (yaşamaq-feil), *love* (sevmək-feil), *deadly* (öldürücü, ölümcül-zərf) etc. The other class consists of empty (meaningless) words for instance, *the*, *of*, *and*, *to*, *if* etc. Of course, investigations show that there is not a certain border between the two classes (Lyons, 2002).

For example, O.Musayev refers the words like *and*, *to* etc. to the class of empty words. (Musayev, 2009). Centuries ago the Greek grammatists; at the end of the nineteenth's century the English grammarian Henry Sweet; post-Bloomfieldian structuralists; the American linguist C. C. Fries (1952) and others support the division offered by J. Lyons (Lyons, 2002). N. Chomiski also supports this theory in his generative grammar (Margaret, 2011). He confronts the distinctions between the open-class and close-class forms of words (Lyons, 2002).

This theory has been drawing the attention of the linguists for some years. The full words refer to the notional parts of speech in English. For example, the noun, the verb, the adverb etc. The articles (the definite and the indefinite), the preposition, the conjunction and others.

We should like to state that the empty word forms can also be called as *function word*, *grammatical word*, *form word* (Lyons, 2002). These terms mean that both these word classes differ from each other according to their semantic and grammatical characters. Empty words are not considered as an independent term by logicians as they do not have any forms and meanins. Therefore they are not considered as categorical elements. They are syncategorematic elements (their meaning and logical function derives from the independentlydefined major categories) (Lyons, 2002).

O Musayev claims that categorical meaning is one part of the grammatical meaning (Musayev, Hajiyev, & Huseynov, 2009). J. Lyons also writes about this: categorical meaning is that part of the lexems (and other expressions) which derives from their being members of one category rather than another (nouns rather than verbs, verbs rather than adjectives, and so on (Lyons, 2002).

Each difference between the full words and empty words serves its own purpose. As the difference between the grammar of the language and its vocabulary, or lexicon serve their purposes. Traditionally grammar is considered to be the system of rules. O. Musayev writes: "Language doesn't exist without grammar. The lexicon of the language does not exist without grammar. The main function that the language performs is its communicative function and it realizes through grammar of the language. The language becomes the means of communication and serves to people" (Musayev, Hajiyev, & Huseynov, 2009). J. Lyons writes: "According to the grammatical rules the words are put together to form (grammatical well-formed sentences) phrases, phrases are put together to form (grammatically well-formed) clauses, and clauses are put together to form (grammatically well-formed) sentences" (Lyons, 2002). The combinationsof words, phrases, clauses, sentences which break the rules of the

grammar are called the ill-formed combinations. Traditionally they are described as ungrammatical (Lyons, 2002). The grammatical meaning is encoded in the grammatical structure of the language. We can not observe the special word forms defined semantically and grammatically in the English language rather than other languages in the world. Full words have both lexical and grammatical meanings though empty words do have grammatical meanings, but they do not have independent meanings; only through the relation with other full words they can form meaning (Palmer, 1981). We 'd like to say that the word is not a linguistic unit defined clearly. Some consider it purely conventional defined term. It is not the term that fills the space in the written text. It is a notion that carries a meaning. One of the main signals that draw our attention to the word in the oral speech is the stress. For example, the compound word

'diehard (mühafizəkar) can be pronounced as a single word having one stress on it though if we divide it into elements as die and hard we will have two words having stress on each of them such as 'die (ölmək) hərd (ciddi, ağır). Other words: 'deadpan, 'dead'work və 'dead'wind (Palmer, 1981). L. Bloomfield suggests that words should be considered as minimal independent forms (Bloomfield, 1933). They are the smallest forms that can be met independently. It is possible in that case if we use the word independently or separately. The words like the, is, by etc. are not used independently carrying any grammatical meaning. They should be used through the relation with other notional parts of speech. The investigation draws attention to the meaning of the same word carrying various elements (Bloomfield, 1933). S. Ullman made distinctions between transparent words and opaque words (Ullman, 1962). The meanings of the transparent words can be determined from the meaning of their parts; the meanings of the opaque words can not be determined from the meanings their parts. Example,

The words like *killer* (qatil) and *deadman* (ölü) are transparent words, but *deadpan* (solğun, ifadəsiz) və *diehard* (mühafizəkar), *dead-work* (hal-hazırda görülən iş), *dead-wind* (qarşıdan əsən külək) are opaque. If we pay attention we will see that combining some words can also be helpful to create meaning. Of course, we cannot predict that a word with a special meaning in any language is expressed by a single word or by a sequence of words. For example, in English the word "to kick" meaning *to hit sb/smt with your foot* is expressed by a single word. But in our native language it is not expressed by a single word as in English (to kick – in Azerbaijani is translated as *təpik vurmaq, dümsük vurmaq*). The meaning of the expression can also be predicted from the meaning of the individual words. The word phrases (or collocations) may involve some association with the ideas. Phraseological units, idioms also involve collocation of a special kind. Let us consider, for instance using any of the idioms denoting life and death: *kick the bucket* (ölmək), *die in the last ditch* (müharibənin, döyüşün ən sonunda ölmək), *die in harness* (iş başında ölmək), *die is cast* (dönülməz qərar, qəti alınmış qərar) etc. As we see the elements that organize the idioms are not related to the meanings of the individual words. Certainly, the words inside idioms may sometimes (though not always) be nearer to the meaning of a single word (thus *pass away* means *die*). It is necessary to state that the idiom may be used as a single word semantically, but it cannot function like one. For instance, we cannot add –ed to the last element of the idiom *die in the last ditch*. It can function as a normal sequence of grammatical words; it forms its past tense form adding –ed to the verb like *died in the last ditch*.

We know that the words may differ not only from their grammatical structure but also from their semantic structure. Sometimes the word that is considered to have the same meaning in both languages (for instance in English and in Azerbaijani) may express various meanings inside the sentence. For example,

Bored to death - *darıxmaq, cana doymaq; bezmək;*

Sick to death - *əldən düşmək, bezmək, cana doymaq;*

Dice with death - *həyatını təhlükəyə atmaq; ölümlə çilingə oynamaq; ölümlə üz-üzə gəlmək;*

Be at death's door - *ölüm ayağında olmaq; ağır vəziyyətdə olmaq; bir ayağı qəbirdə olmaq;*

The kiss of death - *təhlükəli, riskli məsələ;*

Life and soul of the party - *həyat eşqi ilə dolu olan; diqqət mərkəzində olan; başqalarından fərqlənən.*

We can use each of these idioms in any contexts. Sometimes it is difficult to give the equivalent of the idioms in the second language. In every context the main source is the word, and for understanding the meaning of the word in that sentence, firstly it is important to perceive the meaning of that context. For example,

*I wonder why he is bored to death.* (Görəsən, o nə üçün cana doyub, bezib.) If we use this sentence outside the context, the reader may doubt if there is any relation with the death or not. But if the reader knows the context, it won't be difficult for him to understand what that idiom is used in that context for. For understanding the meaning of the word, or expression etc. inside the sentence, it is necessary to read all the context, or sentence, or paragraph etc.

#### 4. Conclusion

The investigation gave us such an understanding that the word can not be considered as a natural unit for the semantics. C.Bazell commented, "To seek a semantic unit within the boundaries of the word simply because these boundaries are clearer than others is like looking for a lost ball on the lawn simply because the thicket provides poor ground for such a search" (Bazell, 1954).

We think it is the best quotation that was given by C.Bazell about the words being natural unit for semantics.

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