



POLYSEMY vs HOMONYMY, THEIR STRUCTURAL & FUNCTIONAL FEATURES IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the issues like polysemy, phenomenon close to polysemy-homonymy and states some differences and similarities in terms of structure and functions in Uzbek and English languages.

KEYWORDS: *polysemy, structure, function, language, homonymy, etymology, core meaning, first language acquisition, second language acquisition.*

INTRODUCTION

Taken from Greek, polysemy means “many meanings” and it possesses several distinct senses which, to some degree, share particular patterns in common. Hurford defines polysemy this way: a case of polysemy is one where a word has several very closely related senses. In other words, native speaker of the language has clear intuitions that in different senses are related to each other in some way. Example: “Mouth” mouth of a person and a mouth of river. Here they both mean “an opening of from the interior of some solid mass to the outside”.

As defined in Wikipedia polysemy from Greek (poly-, “many” and sēma, “sign”) is the capacity for a word or phrase to have multiple meanings, usually related by contiguity of meaning within a semantic field. Polysemy is thus distinct from homonymy—or homophony—which is an accidental similarity between two words (such as bear the animal, and the verb to bear); while homonymy is often a mere linguistic coincidence, polysemy is not. In deciding between polysemy or homonymy, it might be necessary to look at the history of the word to see if the two meanings are historically related. Dictionary writers list polysemes under the same entry; homonyms are defined separately.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A **polyseme** is a word or phrase which is the same in form and structure, having different, but generally related senses. To examine polysemy, the vagueness in the concept of the relatedness should be

confronted, thus making it difficult to judge what polysemy is. One of the natural processes of a language change is to use pre-existing words in contemporary situations and in this sense to unearth where a word derives from can be useful in finding out polysemy in a context. Yet it is not the sole way this can be done. Since words may lose their root connections over time, the method which was once considered as a useful distinction of meaning may not remain so any more. Sometimes words which are obviously unrelated may boast one and the same original root and therefore testing a word to determine if it is a polysemantic one or not by observing its etymology is not a perfect way to do so. There are other ways for testing polysemy. For example, dictionary writers also often accept speakers’ intuitions to judge polysemy in circumstances where it contradicts etymology. There are many polysemous words in English language. As an example, the verb “to get” can mean “procure” (I’ll get the food), “become” (she got tired), “understand” (I get it) etc [3].

In Uzbek linguistics polysemy is seen as a unit which occupies a crucial role in any language given. To tell if a language has a rich vocabulary or not, it is essential to take into account not only the number of words or phrases it possesses but also the lexical meanings those words and phrases bear. This is to say, the way words have related senses, in other words, polysemy has a significant role to play in enriching the vocabulary of a language [4]. Therefore, polysemy should be studied in both practical and theoretical terms.

One question arises: “How can we decide whether a word is a polysemantic word or not?”. To



answer this, we will look at the statement made by Lyons. Professor John Lyons [2] stated the following features of lexical polysemy in the form of criteria:

Three features of polysemy		
There must be a clear derived sense relation between the polysemic senses of a word.	The polysemic senses of a word must be shown to be etymologically related to the same original source word.	Lexical polysemy is a sense relation within a particular syntactic category, i.e. lexical polysemy does not cut across syntactic word class boundaries.

Polysemy occurs in the majority of languages and it is considered by linguistics as a useful phenomenon since it has a profound impact on enriching a language and rendering it, more or less, colorful. Polysemantic words can be found in virtually all parts of speech and they possess a significant amount of space in a language as an independent unit. They are often seen in nouns and verbs and have either one and the same etymological source or closely related meaning which can be understood by the people who speak the language they occur in.

According to Uzbek linguists, words which can be used in two and more senses are called polysemantic words which is “Ko’p ma’noli so’zlar” in Uzbek language. It is said there is always a relation between the dominant sense and other senses that polysemantic word possesses. And once that correlation is lost, a word is no longer regarded as a polysemantic word.

There are several senses in any given polysemantic word and one of the senses usually stands out as more dominant in comparison with other senses. That dominant meaning can be the one which has the highest frequency level and is considered as the default one. Several studies in first language acquisition (Mason et.al., 1979; Durkin et.al., 1985; Durkin et.al., 1986) and second language acquisition (Tanaka & Abe, 1984; Myers & Elliott, 1996) indicate the greater salience of one of the senses. In a norm-gathering study, Durkin and Manning (1989) asked a group of English native speakers to write “the first meaning that comes to mind” to a large number of English polysemous words. For most of the words, one of the meanings was written with greater frequency than other meanings. For instance, the “response” sense of the word answer was written by 81 subjects while the “solution” sense was written by only 18. It should be noted, however, that this is not simply a frequency effect. This meaning is also the semantic core from which other meanings derive. The “body part” meaning of the word head, for example, is the main meaning sense which has been extended to the senses “mind”, “pain”, “top”, “end of an object”, “the person in charge of a school”, etc.

The relation between the core sense and an extended sense is unidirectional: the core sense is implicated in the non-core sense, but the non-core sense is not implicated in the core sense. This has been shown

in a study by Durkin & Manning (1989) who asked a group of native English speakers to rate the salience of polysemous meanings to the interpretation of sentences biased toward either the primary meaning (i.e. core sense) or a subordinate meaning [7]. The results indicated that the dominant sense was perceived as more salient for sentences biased toward a subordinate meaning than subordinate meanings for sentences biased toward the dominant sense.

When studying polysemy it is vitally important to note that there are some other phenomena which are very close to polysemy in terms of structure and functions in a sentence. Even though polysemy can, in most cases, be noticed and easily found with the help of intuitions, sometimes it can be hard to distinguish polysemy from several phenomenon which are very similar to it. These may include homonymy, synonymy and so forth. Below one of these phenomena, namely homonymy will be researched and some distinctions will be drawn accordingly.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Polysemy and Homonymy

It is usual to see people use polysemy and homonymy on a daily basis. Despite being the same in structure, homonymy boasts words which have unrelated meanings, while the converse is the case for polysemantic words. There are two methods to employ to distinguish these phenomena from one another. First, the word’s etymology, that is, where it comes from, second, the word’s core meaning. Polysemous words are given one single entry, as they are supposed to have arisen from the same historical source and possess a core meaning. Each homonym receives a discrete entry, based on the statement that homonyms have arisen from different historical sources and that they do not possess a shared core meaning. It is stated that the progress of polysemy leads to homonymy, that is to say, as polysemy goes from specific to general, the correlation between senses fades away causing homonyms to come into existence. Some examples will be illustrated in both languages below:

-an Uzbek word “**gap**” meaning a (in English “sentence”) from a morphological point of view is a unit of a speech and there is its counterpart “gap” meaning “a small gathering between women or men to have a friendly talk and have a party together”. Though



they can be related to each other to some degree, the connection between them is lost and therefore is regarded as a homonymy not as a polysemantic word.

-as an example for a polysemantic word is “ko’z” meaning “eye” in English. This word can be used in many senses as followings: odamning ko’zi (a person’s eye) buloqning ko’zi (the spring), derazaning ko’zi (casement window). Despite being used in different contexts, there is a slightly related correlation between these examples, making the word “ko’z” a polysemantic one whose meanings can be related to one another.

Some differences between homonymy and polysemy are shown and some examples from Uzbek language are analyzed above. Several English words will be used below to show the difference between these two phenomena: homonymy and polysemy.

- an English word “book” can be another good example to illustrate how different polysemy from homonymy. In one meaning, the word “book” means an object or, to be more exact, “a set of pages that have been fastened together inside a cover to be read or written in” as Cambridge defines it.

- on the other hand, in another meaning, the word “book” is employed as a verb meaning “to arrange to have a seat, room, performer, etc. at a particular time in the future” as is defined in Cambridge dictionary for Advanced learners.

As for a polysemantic word, the word “door” can be a good example. It has two senses:

a) The object which swings open to allow entrance, as in “Open the door”.

b) The opening created thereby, as in “Walk through the door”.

Here these two words used in different contexts are correlated to each other and can be sensed by a native speaker with the help of an intuition. Therefore this word can be counted as a polysemantic one.

CONCLUSION

What makes the process of distinguishing polysemy from homonymy a little bit confusing, causing people to mistake these two is their being the same in terms of structure. Both polysemantic and homonymous words are the same in form, yet what makes the difference between them is the meaning they carry. As for native speaker, this can be easier compared to non-native speaker since a native speaker of a language has some understanding of words and their closely related meanings. However, non-native speaker might find it challenging first to understand the word and its non-dominant senses, second to distinguish polysemantic word from a homonymous one.

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