***Functional Re-evaluation of Grammatical Forms in Context. Problem of meaning ambiguity in a language***

***Plan***

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“Understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think.”

—Ludwig Wittgenstein

What does ambiguity do? How is poetic indeterminacy constitutive of propositional content? Do rhetorical and poetic tropes organize communicative acts in order to make them more understandable? Or do they rather dis-organize them in order to make them more understandable? What, then, is “understanding”? Does “the call of the phoneme” (Culler 1988) clarify and crystallize semantic reference? Distract us from the clarity of semantic reference? Simply distract us? The potential attraction and distraction of ambiguity is ever-present in discourse.

Language is an organizer of the world into meaningful units and gives form to experience. However, this organizing role of language is, by a number of accounts, the root cause of both the possibility of meaning and the inevitability of ambiguity. Because languages are inevitably smaller than the worlds of experience they describe, words have get more than one meaning.

The problem of potential polysemy in grammar is one of the most important, the one which is very complex and seems to be relevant to a number of aspects. Observations in this area have proved the efficiency of contextual, distributional and transformational methods of linguistic analysis. We distinguish here the interdependence of word-forms within the syntactic structure, the interdependence of elements within the word-forms and the influence of other levels of the same language.

***1. The meaning of ambiguity***

A word, phrase, or sentence is ambiguous if it has more than one meaning. The word 'light', for example, can mean not very heavy or not very dark. Words like '*light*', '*note*', '*bear*' and '*over*' are lexically ambiguous. They induce ambiguity in phrases or sentences in which they occur, such as *'light suit'* and *'The duchess can't bear children'*. However, phrases and sentences can be ambiguous even if none of their constituents is. The phrase *'porcelain egg container'* is structurally ambiguous, as is the sentence *'The police shot the rioters with gun*s'. Ambiguity can have both a lexical and a structural basis, as with sentences like *'I left her behind for you'* and *'He saw her duck'*.

The notion of ambiguity has philosophical applications. For example, identifying an ambiguity can aid in solving a philosophical problem. Suppose one wonders how two people can have the same idea, say of a unicorn. This can seem puzzling until one distinguishes 'idea' in the sense of a particular psychological occurrence, a mental representation, from 'idea' in the sense of an abstract, shareable concept. On the other hand, gratuitous claims of ambiguity can make for overly simple solutions. Accordingly, the question arises of how genuine ambiguities can be distinguished from spurious ones. Part of the answer consists in identifying phenomena with which ambiguity may be confused, such as vagueness, unclarity, inexplicitness and indexicality.

Although people are sometimes said to be ambiguous in how they use language, ambiguity is, strictly speaking, a property of linguistic expressions. A word, phrase, or sentence is ambiguous if it has more than one meaning. Obviously this definition does not say what meanings are or what it is for an expression to have one (or more than one). For a particular language, this information is provided by a grammar, which systematically pairs forms with meanings, ambiguous forms with more than one meaning

***2. Lexical ambiguity***

Lexical ambiguity is more common. Everyday examples include nouns like '*chip*', *'pen'* and '*suit*', verbs like '*call*', '*draw*' and '*run*', and adjectives like '*deep*', '*dry*' and '*hard*'. There are various tests for ambiguity. One test is having two unrelated antonyms, as with *'hard'*, which has both '*sof*t' and '*easy*' as opposites. Another is the conjunction reduction test. Consider the sentence, *'The tailor pressed one suit in his shop and one in the municipal court*'. Evidence that the word '*sui*t' (not to mention '*press*') is ambiguous is provided by the anomaly of the *'crossed interpretation'* of the sentence, on which '*suit'* is used to refer to an article of clothing and '*one*' to a legal action.

The above examples of ambiguity are each a case of one word with more than one meaning. However, it is not always clear when we have only one word. The verb '*desert*' and the noun '*dessert'*, which sound the same but are spelled differently, count as distinct words (they are homonyms). So do the noun '*bear*' and the verb *'bear*', even though they not only sound the same but are spelled the same? These examples may be clear cases of homonymy, but what about the noun 'respect' and the verb '*respect*' or the preposition '*over'* and the adjective '*over'*? Are the members of these pairs homonyms or different forms of the same word? There is no general consensus on how to draw the line between cases of one ambiguous word and cases of two homonymous words. Perhaps the difference is ultimately arbitrary.

Sometimes one meaning of a word is derived from another. For example, the cognitive sense of 'see' seems derived from its visual sense. The sense of '*weigh*' in *'He weighed the package'* is derived from its sense in *'The package weighed two pounds'*. Similarly, the transitive senses of *'burn', 'fly'* and *'walk'* are derived from their intransitive senses. Now it could be argued that in each of these cases the derived sense does not really qualify as a second meaning of the word but is actually the result of a lexical operation on the underived sense. This argument is plausible to the extent that the phenomenon is systematic and general, rather than peculiar to particular words. Lexical semantics has the task of identifying and characterizing such systematic phemena. It is also concerned to explain the rich and subtle semantic behavior of common and highly flexible words like the verbs *'do'* and '*put'* and the prepositions '*at*', *'in'* and *'to'*. Each of these words has uses which are so numerous yet so closely related that they are often described as 'polysemous' rather than ambiguous.

***3. Structural ambiguity***

Structural ambiguity occurs when a phrase or sentence has more than one underlying structure, such as the phrases *'Tibetan history teacher'*, *'a student of high moral principles'* and *'short men and women'*, and the sentences *'The girl hit the boy with a book'* and *'Visiting relatives can be boring'*. These ambiguities are said to be structural because each such phrase can be represented in two structurally different ways, e.g., '*[Tibetan history] teacher'* and *'Tibetan [history teacher*]'. Indeed, the existence of such ambiguities provides strong evidence for a level of underlying syntactic structure. Consider the structurally ambiguous sentence, *'The chicken is ready to eat'*, which could be used to describe either a hungry chicken or a broiled chicken. It is arguable that the operative reading depends on whether or not the implicit subject of the infinitive clause *'to eat'* is tied anaphorically to the subject (*'the chicken'*) of the main clause.

It is not always clear when we have a case of structural ambiguity. Consider, for example, the elliptical sentence, *'Perot knows a richer man than Trump'*. It has two meanings, that Perot knows a man who is richer than Trump and that Perot knows man who is richer than any man Trump knows, and is therefore ambiguous. But what about the sentence *'John loves his mother and so does Bill'*? It can be used to say either that John loves John's mother and Bill loves Bill's mother or that John loves John's mother and Bill loves John's mother. But is it really ambiguous? One might argue that the clause 'so does Bill' is unambiguous and may be read unequivocally as saying in the context that Bill does the same thing that John does, and although there are two different possibilities for what counts as doing the same thing, these alternatives are not fixed semantically. Hence the ambiguity is merely apparent and better described as semantic underdetermination.

Although ambiguity is fundamentally a property of linguistic expressions, people are also said to be ambiguous on occasion in how they use language. This can occur if, even when their words are unambiguous, their words do not make what they mean uniquely determinable. Strictly speaking, however, ambiguity is a semantic phenomenon, involving linguistic meaning rather than speaker meaning; 'pragmatic ambiguity' is an oxymoron. Generally when one uses ambiguous words or sentences, one does not consciously entertain their unintended meanings, although there is psycholinguistic evidence that when one hears ambiguous context of utterance words one momentarily accesses and then rules out their irrelevant senses. When people use ambiguous language, generally its ambiguity is not intended. Occasionally, however, ambiguity is deliberate, as with an utterance of 'I'd like to see more of you' when intended to be taken in more than one way in the very same.

***4. Semantic ambiguity***

Sentences whose semantic contents seem to differ in different contexts, in virtue of containing expressions of such sorts as the following (there may be others):

• indexicals/demonstratives: [tense], I, today, now, here, we, you, she, they, then, there, that, those

• relational terms: neighbor, fan, enemy, local, foreign

• perspectival terms: left, distant, up, behind, foreground, horizon, faint, occluded, clear, obscure

• gradable adjectives, both relative and absolute: tall, old, fast, smart; flat, empty, pure, dry

• philosophically interesting terms: know, might, necessary, if, ought, free

• prepositions: in, on, to, at, for, with

• certain short verbs: put, get, go, take

• possessive phrases, adjectival phrases, noun-noun pairs: John’s car, John’s hometown, John’s boss, John’s company; fast car, fast driver, fast tires, fast time; child abuse, drug abuse; vitamin pill, pain pill, diet pill, sleeping pill

• implicit temporal, spatial, and quantifier domain restriction

• weather and other environmental reports: (It is) raining, humid, noon, summer, noisy, eerie

• ostensibly unary expressions (when used without complements) that denote binary relations: ready, late, finish, strong enough

• “predicates of personal taste”: fun, boring, tasty, cute, sexy, gross, cool

• miscellaneous: and, or, cut, (is) green

The problems with these content misunderstandings are as follow:

1.Contextualist platitude: Many sentences, even with all their constituents being used literally and even factoring out ambiguity, can be used to mean different things in different contexts. (This doesn’t entail that there’s anything context-sensitive in or about the sentence itself.)

2. Anti-compositionalism: Many (declarative) sentences semantically express propositions that are not completely determined by the semantic contents of their constituents and their syntactic structure.

3. Unarticulated Constituentism: Many sentences semantically express propositions some of whose constituents are not the semantic contents of any of the sentence’s constituents.

4. Anti-propositionalism: Many sentences do not semantically express propositions, even in contexts (because of lexical underspecificity, phrasal underdetermination, or propositional incompleteness).

5. Psychological Anti-semanticism: The compositionally determined semantic content of a sentence, whether or not fully propositional, plays no role in the psychological processes involved in communication (on either the speaker’s or the hearer’s side).

6. Outright Anti-semanticism: Many sentences do not have (compositionally determined) semantic contents at all.

7. Utterance “Contextualism”: The semantic content of almost any given sentence, whether or not it is fully propositional, falls short of the “intuitive content” of a likely utterance of the sentence because its semantic content is too sketchy, abstract, or otherwise nonspecific to be what the speaker means.

Three forms of semantic contents (each can be stronger or weaker as to range of application and role of context, and perhaps different versions apply to different classes of expressions):

1. Indexical Contextualism: The semantic contents of many sentences vary because they contain “non-obvious” indexical expressions whose contents are determined by context.

2. Variable Contextualism: The semantic contents of many sentences vary because they contain expressions that have variables associated with them whose values are determined by context.

3. Modulational Contextualism: The semantic contents of many sentences vary because they contain expressions whose senses (and/or phrases whose modes of composition) are “modulated” by context.

***5. Re-evaluation of Verb. Aspect meaning***

Functional re-evaluation of grammatical forms is a source of constant linguistic interest. We may say that whatever may be the other problems of grammar learning the polysemantic character of grammatical forms is always primary in importance.

Most grammatical forms are polysemantic. On this level of linguistic analysis distinction should be made between synchronic and potential polysemy.

The aspective meaning of the verb reflects the mode of the realization of the process. The opposition of the continuous forms of the verb to the non-continuous represents the aspective category of development. In symbolic notation it is represented by the formula be...ing. The primary denotative meaning of the Present Continuous is characterised by three semantic elements : a) present time, b) something progressive, c) contact with the moment of speech. The three meanings make up its synchronic polysemy.

By potential polysemy we mean the ability of a grammatical form to have different connotative meanings in various contexts of its uses. Examine for illustration the connotative (syntagmatic) meanings of the Present Continuous signalled by the context in the following sentences:

*Brian said to his cousin:* ***"I'm signing on as well in a way,*** *only for life.* ***I'm getting married."*** *Both stopped walking. Bert took his arm and stared:* ***"You're not."***

*"****I am.*** *To Pauline* (Sillitoe) — future time reference. *"It was a wedding in the country. The best man makes a speech.* ***He is beaming all over his face,*** *and he calls for attention...* (Gordon) — past time reference; ... *"I'm sorry", he said, his teeth together,* ***"You're not going in there"****.* (Gordon) — the Present Continuous with the implication of imperative modality;

*"I am always thinking of him", said she.* (Maugham) — recurrent actions; ***She is always*** *grumbling* ***about trifles —*** the qualitative Present, the permanent characteristic of the subject.

Four combinations of the continuous and the indefinite are possible in principle in Modern English. E.g.: *While I was typing, Mary and Tom were chatting in the adjoining room. While I typing, Tom and Mary were chatting in the adjoining room. While I was typing, they chatted in ... While I typed, they chatted.*

Clearly, the difference in meaning cannot lie in their time denotations. The time is shown by their time signals (were - ed). The meaningful difference consists in the following: the continuous shows the action in the very process of its realization; the indefinite points it out as a mere fact. We speak of the morphological category of the verb, but care should be taken that the character of the development of the action may also be expressed lexically or remain implicit. E.g.: *When I entered the room he was writing a letter. He wrote and wrote the letter (lexically). When I entered the room, he wrote a letter.*

In the last sentence the form of the verb doesn't express the Continuous aspect explicitly because the speaker isn't interested in the action, but in the object of the action. The Continuous refers a to a definite time-point. The category of development undergoes explicit various reductions:

1. The unlimitive verbs are very easily neutralized Ex. *The night is wonderfully silent. The stars shine with a fierce brilliancy, the Southern Cross and wind. The Duke's face seemed blushed, and more lined than some of his recent photographs showed. He held a glass in his hand.*

*2. A*s to the statal verbs, their neutralization amounts to a grammatical rule. They are so called "never-used*-*in-the-Continuous" verbs: a) the unique “to be” and “to have”; b) verbs of possession, verbs of relation, of physical perception, of mental perception

3. Worthy of note is the regular neutralization with the introductory verb supporting the participial construction of parallel action. Ex. *He stood smoking a pipe.* Not normally: *He was standing smoking.*

*4.* On the other hand, the Continuous can be used to denote habitual, recurrent actions. Continuous verb forms are more expressive than non-continuous - they are used in emotional speech. Ex.: *He is always complaining.*

*5.* Special note should be of the broadening use of the Continuous with unlimitive verbs. Here are some typical examples. Ex. *I heard a rumor that a certain member here present has been seeing the prisoner this afternoon* (E.M. Forster). *I had a horrid feeling she was seeing right through me and knowing all about me. What matters is, you're being damn fools* (A.Hailey)

6. Compare similar transpositions in the expressions of anticipated future. E.g.: *Dr. Aarons will be seeing the patient this morning* (A.Hailey). *Soon we shall be hearing the news about the docking of the spaceships having gone through.*

Since the neutralization of the Continuous with these verbs is quite regular, we have an emphatic reduction serving the purpose of speech expressiveness.

*How mysterious women were! One lived alongside and knew nothing of them.* ***What could she have seen in that fellow Bosinney to send her mad?*** *For there was madness after all in what she had done* — *crazy moonstruck madness, in which all sense of values had been lost, and her life and his life ruined!* (Galsworthy)

*It's a kind of queer peace, and I often wonder how* ***I could*** *have* ***been so torn*** *and tortured.* (Galsworthy)

It is important to remember that *could* + Infinitive II may imply two diametrically opposite meanings: a) a real action in the past and b) a non-fact with reference to the past. And here the implied context is all that can be considered relevant.

***6. Meaning of category of Voice***

The category of Voice expresses relations between the subject and the object of the action or between the subject and the action.

The opposition of the passive form of the verb to the active form of the verb expresses the voice of the English Verb. E.g.: *writes - is written.* The passive form is the strong member of the opposition. On the plane of expression it is marked by the combination of the auxiliary be with the Past Participle of the notional verb. The agent may be expressed in the sentence and it's usually introduced with the help of the preposition by. Ex. *The book is written by a young writer.*

The sentence with the passive voice may include a means of the action, which is introduced, with the help of the conjunction with. Ex. *The book is covered with a newspaper.*

The category of voice has a much broader representation in the system of the English verb than in the system of the Ukrainian verb, since in English not only transitive but also intransitive verbs can be used.

The demarcation line between the passivized and non-passivized set is not rigid, and the verbs of the non-passivized set may migrate into the passivized set in various contexts. Ex. *The bed has not been slept in. The house seems not to have been lived in.*

Sometimes the opposition between 2 forms may be reduced. It means that the verb may be used in the Active Voice form with the meaning of the Passive Voice.

Some verbs which are usually followed by an object (to sell, to cut, to wash) can be used without an object and take on a passive meaning. In this case, the person carrying out the action of the Verb is not referred to. Ex. *This book sells well, i.e. it is sold to many people. The dress washes/irons well, i.e. it is easily washed/ironed. This material makes up nicely into suits, i.e. it can be used by the tailor for making suits. The butter spreads easily, i.e. it can be spread easily. The bread is cutting badly because it's very soft, i.e. to cut the bread is difficult.* Other tenses may also be used. *The book sold well. The dress has washed well. The material will make up nicely.*

Note: the verbs are followed by adverbs in the above examples. It is also possible to omit the adverb, if the meaning is clear. This is often the case in the question form and in the negative. E.g.: *The book didn't sell, so it wasn't reprinted. The dress is very pretty. Will it wash? The material should make up into a winter dress, shouldn't it? Butter won’t spread when it's been in the fridge. Will the bread cut? If not, try the other knife.*

There are some other verbs of this sort, with the nouns (subjects) that they are often used with in this construction

*(A car) drives, steers*

*(A boat) sails*

*(A clock) winds up*

*(A door) locks, unlocks*

*(A book) reads well / easily, i.e. the book is good / easy to read.*

Large native cigarettes smoked easily and coolly. The lion chops will eat better than they look.

Besides there 2 Voice some authors speak of some more Voice forms. The most popular are the Reflexive Voice and the Reciprocal Voice and the Middle Voice. Ex. *She dressed herself. They helped each other.*

The reflexive and reciprocal pronouns should be looked upon as the voice auxiliaries. Such word combinations are treated as analytical verb forms of the Reflexive or Reciprocal voice . However we can't agree to the idea , because :

1. The reflexive/reciprocal pronouns preserve their lexical meaning but auxiliaries in analytical forms loose their meanings.

2. There are syntactic relations between the components. The reflexive / reciprocal pronouns are objects to the verbs. We can prove this by using homogeneous objects. Ex. *He dressed himself and his brother. They praised one another and all the quests. He defended himself, a victim of the situation.*

Hence, such word combinations are free word combinations. As for the Middle Voice, some authors find it when comparing the following sentences: Ex. *He opened the door.-The door opened.*

The Middle Voice uses are cases of neutralizing reduction of the voice oppositions. Ex. *He broke the ice.*-*The ice broke.*

The verbs are active in form, but passive in meaning. Ex. *She was delightful to look at, witty to talk to.*

Another case of neutralization: You are mistaken (Passive in form, but active in meaning). It expresses a state.

The forms of the Active Voice can't be opposed and it there is no opposition we can't speak of any special grammatical category. In sentences like “the door opened” we should speak of medial verbs in the Active Voice.

***7. Category of Tense***

Traditional grammar speaks of 16 tense forms in English but actually there exist only 4 of them. The matter is that when speaking about an action we express its primary characteristics of tense but then it may be necessary to show the character of the development of the action or to compare the action with some other one and then in such cases the primary tense category is modified by some other verb categories such as aspect (continuous or non-continuous), perfect (perfect or non-perfect).

So we get complex analytical forms, which express not one category of tense but a number of them. Ex. If we analyze such forms, as "is reading" we should say that this verb expresses Present Tense and continuous aspect. Hence the modification of the category of Tense by the category of aspect brings about the appearance of 16 verb forms.

When speaking about the category of tense we should remember that we distinguish different tense forms on the basis of some opposition. But in a number of cases these oppositions may be reduced. It means that morphological form typical of one tense may express the meaning of some other tense. We usually observe it in definite contexts.

Ex. The form of the Present Tense may express the meaning of the Past, Future Tense in subordinate clauses of time and condition (If I see him tomorrow I will ask him to do it for you).

Besides the Present Tense may be used to express an action planned for the Future especially with verbs of motion.

When dealing with the category of tense we should touch upon one more problems, which is typical of English. The problem is known as the Sequence of Tenses. In English if the predicate verb in the main clause of a complex sentence is used in the past tense, the predicate verbs in the subordinate clauses саn be used in the present or future tenses. The Present Tense is replaced by the Past Tense modified or not modified by the Perfect and the Future Tense is replaced by the Future-in-the-Past.

The Sequence of Tenses is explained by many traditional grammars as a mechanical shift of tenses. However, this explanation can’t be treated as adequate. No mechanical shift takes place.

In the events in the main and subordinate clauses are simultaneous, then the same tense forms are used. If the events of the subordinate clause precede the events of the main clause, than the predicate verb in the subordinate clause is modified by the Perfect.

In the actions the subordinate clause follow the events of the main clause, then the predicate verb takes the specific form in the Future-in-the-Past.

We observe this correlation of events only when the starting temporal center is in the Past.

But if the starting point is in the Present, no sequence of tenses is observed and we use any tense form in the subordinate clause or clauses, which is required by the logical sequence of events. So what we mean by the traditional term Sequence of Tenses that is in reality sequence of events is nothing but a synthesis of two categorical notions:

1) The category of tense which expresses the relation of the action to some moment of time.;

2) The category of perfect, which expresses the relation of actions to each other.

***7. The most controversial category –Mood***

The category of Mood is the most controversial category of the verb.

B.A. Ilyish: " The category of mood in the present English verb has given rise to so many discussions, and has been treated in so many different ways, that it seems hardly possible to arrive at any more less convincing and universally acceptable conclusion concerning it."

The category of Mood expresses the relations between the action, denoted by the verb, and the actual reality from the point of view of the speaker. The speaker may treat the action/event as real, unreal or problematic or as fact that really happened, happens or will happen, or as an imaginary phenomenon.

It follows from this that the category of Mood may be presented by the opposition

obligue mood - direct mood

= unreality = reality.

*The former is the strong member.*

*The latter is the weak member.*

Mood relates the verbal action to such conditions as certainty, obligation, necessity, and possibility.

The most disputable question in the category of mood is the problem of number and types of Oblique Moods. Oblique Moods denote unreal or problematic actions so they can't be modified by the category of tense proper. They denote only relative time, that is simultaneousness or priority. Due to the variety of forms it's impossible to make up regular paradigms of Oblique Moods and so classify them.

Some authors pay more attention to the plane of expression, other to the plane of content. So different authors speak of different number and types of moods. The most popular in Grammar has become the system of moods put forward By Prof. Smirnitsky. He speaks of 6 mood forms:

The Indicative Mood

The Imperative Mood

Subjunctive I

Subjunctive II

The Conditional Mood

The Suppositional Mood

**Subjunctive I** expresses a problematic action. Subjunctive I is used in American English and in newspaper style. Subjunctive I coincides with the Infinitive without the particle to. Ex.: *Ring me up if he would be there.*

This mood is expressed in English to a very minor extent (e.g.: *So be it then!*). It is only used in certain set expressions, which have to be learned as wholes:

*Come what may, we will go ahead.*

*God save the Queen!*

*Suffice it to say that...*

*Be that as it may...*

*Heaven forbid that...*

*So be it then.*

*Long live the King!*

*Grammar be hanged!*

This Mood is also used in that clauses, when the main clause contains an expression of recommendation, resolution, demand, etc. The use of this subjunctive I occurs chiefly in formal style (and especially in Am E) where in less other devices, such as to - infinitive or should = infinitive.

*It is necessary that he be there.*

*It is necessary that he should be there.*

*It is necessary for him to be there.*

**Subjunctive II** denotes an unreal action and it coincides in the form with the Past Indefinite Tense (Subjunctive II Present) or Past Perfect (Subjunctive II Past). Ex*.: I wish he had told the truth. If only he were here!*

Mood is expressed in English to a much greater extent by past tense forms. E.g*.:*

*If you taught me, I would learn quickly.*

*If she was/were to do smth like that.*

*He spoke to me as if I was/ were deaf...*

*I wish I was/were was*

Note:

1) *“Was”* is more common in less formal style

2) Only *“were”* is acceptable in "As it were" (= so to speak)

3) *“Were”* is usual in "If I were you".

**The Conditional Mood** denotes an unreal action and is built by the auxiliary verb "world" + any Infinitive a non-perfect infinitive expresses simultaneousness while a perfect infinitive expresses priority. E.g.: *But for the rain we would go for a walk. But for the rain we would have gone...*

**The Suppositional Mood** also expresses a problematic action and is formed with the help of the auxiliary verb "should" for all the persons + Infinitive. E.g.: *Ring me up if he should be there.*

This mood can be used with any verb in subordinate that - clauses when the main clause contains an expression of recommendation resolution, demand etc. (demand, require, insist, suggest...) E.g.: *It is necessary that every member should inform himself of these rules = It is necessary for every member to inform... It is strange that he should have left so early.*

**Subjunctive I** and the **Suppositional Mood** are differentiated only by their form but their meaning is the same.

Taking into consideration the fact that the forms of the **Oblique Moods** coincide in many cases with the forms of the Indicative Mood, there arises a problem of homonymy or polysemy. E.g.: *He lived here.* (The indicative Mood, Past Tense, Priority, real action).

*If only he lived!* (Subjunctive II, simultaneousness, unreal action)

The meaning of each necessary grammatical abstraction makes itself clear only in the course of its usage.

Compare also the following patterns with the verb *should:*

*Had I known about it,* ***I should have come*** *yesterday. (should* + Infinitive II used with reference to a non-fact).

*That science in the USSR* ***should have attained*** *so high a level of development is but natural (should* + Infinitive II expressing a real action in the past with special emphasis laid upon its realisation).

The variety of meaning as potentially implicit in a grammatical form, we naturally associate with the development of synonymy in grammar.

***8. Synonymy in Grammar***

Synonymic forms in grammar are not exactly alike, they commonly have fine shares of difference in style and purpose, and students need to be alive to these differences. There is always selection in the distribution of grammatical forms in actual speech. They must harmonise with the context as appropriate to a given situation.

The change in synonymous grammatical forms is often a change in style, and the effect on the reader is quite different. Even a slight alteration in the grammatical device can subtly shift the meaning of the utterance. Examine the following sentence:

"... *Have you been wounding him?"*

*"It is my misfortune to be obliged to wound him", said Clara.*

*"Quite needlessly, my child,* ***for marry him you must".*** (Dreiser)

*Ellen had wrung her hands and counseled delay, in order that Scarlett might think the matter over at greater length. But to her pleadings, Scarlett turned a sullen face and a deaf ear.* ***Marry she would!*** *And quickly, too. Within two weeks.* (Mitchell)

*Cf.: Marry she would!* and *She would marry.*

We cannot fail to see that there is a marked difference in style between the two verb forms: the former is neutral, the latter is highly expressive.

Similarly:

*"But, no matter* — *when her foot healed she would walk to Jonesboro. It would be the longest walk she had ever taken in her life, but* ***walk*** *it she would".* (Mitchell)

*Cf.: walk it she would* → *she would walk it*

As synonyms in grammar express different shades of the grammatical meaning, one should be careful in the choice of the right forms, the best to convey the subtler nuances of that meaning.

Knowledge of synonymic differentiation between the grammatical forms permits a systematic, objective investigation and description of style.

With regard to the methodology employed in our description of synonymy in grammar there are certain observations which are pertinent tо a summary statement. It will be helpful to distinguish between a) paradigmatic synonyms and b) contextual synonyms or synonyms by function in speech.

In English morphology synonyms of the first group are very few in number. Such are, for instance, synthetical and analytical forms in the Subjunctive and Suppositional Mood, e. g.:

...*'I* *now move, that the report and accounts for the year 1886 be received and adopted".* (Galsworthy)

*(be received and adopted = should be received and adopted)*

Paradigmatic synonyms with similarity in function and structural features may also be exemplified by the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Non-emphatic Emphatic | |
|  | **Present Indefinite** |
| *I* *know* | *I* *do know* |
| *He knows* | *He does know* |
|  | **Past indefinite** |
| *I knew* | *I did know* |
|  | **Imperative Mood** |
| *Come* | *Do come* |

Analytical verbal forms with the intensive *do* can express a whole variety of subjective modal meanings: pleasure, admiration, affection, surprise, anger, mild reproach, encouragement, admonition, etc., e. g.

*Oh! darling, don't ache! I do so hate it for you.* (Galsworthy) *There was so much coming and going round the doors that they did not like to enter. Where does he live? I did see him coming out of the hotel.* (Galsworthy)

*Eagerly her eyes searched the darkness. The roof seemed to be intact. Could it be* — *could it be* — *? No, it wasn't possible. War stopped for no-thing, not even Tara, built to last five hundred years. It could not have passed over Tara. Then the shadowy outline did take form. The white walls did show there through the darkness. Tara had escaped. Home!* (Mitchell)

*But Swithin, hearing the name Irene, looked severely at Euphemia, who, it is true, never did look well in a dress, whatever she may have done on other occasions.* (Galsworthy)

Strong emphasis is also produced by using pleonastic patterns with segmentations, e. g.: *He never did care for the river, did Montmorency.* (Jerome)

As we have already said, there are no absolute synonyms in grammar. Synonymic forms will generally differ either in various shades of the common grammatical meaning, expressive connotation or in stylistic value. The former may be referred to as relative synonyms, the latter as stylistic ones.

Further examples of paradigmatic synonyms will be found among the so-called periphrastic forms of the English verb.

Relatively synonymous are, for instance, the Future Indefinite tense-forms and the periphrastic *"to be going to"* future. A simple affirmative statement of intention with no external circumstances mentioned (time, condition, reason, etc.) is generally expressed by the periphrastic form. When a future action depends on the external circumstances the *"to be going to"* is rare. *Cf.:*

1. a) *He will sell his house,* (rare)

b) *He's going to sell his house.* (normal)

2. a) *He'll sell it if you ask him.* (normal)

b) *He is going to sell it if you ask him.* (rare) 1

*To be going to* with a personal subject implies a much stronger intention than the Future Tense with *shall/will* does.

Patterns with the passive auxiliaries *be* and *get* will also illustrate grammatical synonyms of the first type.

The passive forms in Modern English are represented by analytic combinations of the auxiliary verb *to be* with the past participle of the conjugated verb. The verb *to get* can also function as an auxiliary of the passive, e. g.: (1) *My dress got caught on a nail.* (2) *He got struck by a stone. t*hese are not new usages, but ones which are spreading.

*To get* seems closer to the true passive auxiliary *be* in patterns like the following: *She got blamed for everything. She gets teased by the other children.*

The stabilisation of lexico-grammatical devices to indicate the aspective character of the action has also contributed to the development of synonymy in Modern English.

A special interest attaches to contextual synonyms on the grammatica1 level created through transposition of related grammatical forms, Neutralisation of the distinctive features of the opposed grammatical forms leads to situational synonymy. Here are a few examples to illustrate the statement:

**(1) *Are*** *you* ***coming*** *to the PPRS Board on Tuesday?* (Galsworthy) (The Supposition Present — Future is neutralised; *Are you coming?* is synonymus with *Will you come?)*

Similarly:

(2) *Whom do you think I travelled with? Fleur Mont. We ran up against each other at Victoria. She's* ***taking*** *her boy to boring next week to convalesce him.* (Galsworthy) *(She's taking* = *she will take)*

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Present Continuous and Present Indefinite may function as situational synonyms in cases like the following:

1. *Dicky! said James. You* ***are*** *always wasting money on something.* (Galsworthy) *(You are always wasting* is synonymous with *You always waste).*
2. *She* ***is*** *continually* ***imagining*** dangers *when they do not exist. (She is* *imagining = she imagines).*
3. *June read: Lake Okanagen. British Columbia,* ***I'm not coming*** *back to England. Bless you always.*— *John.* (Galsworthy) *(I'm not coming* = = *I shall not come).*
4. *Fleur huddled her chin in her fur. It was easterly and cold. A voice behind her said: Well, Fleur,* ***am I going*** *East?* (Galsworthy) *Cf. Am I going East?* = *Shall I go East?*

***Conclusion***

In this essay we have tried to prove that although ideational content is certainly an important aspect of linguistic communication, it is a mistake to regard clarity of referential meaning as a master skill, in two ways. First it is an error to assume that all other words serve at the pleasure of communicating speaker’s intended semantic reference; and second, it is an error to assume that all meaningful linguistic action has clarity of referential meaning as its central goal, or that only messages with clear referential content are in some sense communicative. Polysemy, ambiguity, synonymy often helps achieve a communicational goal.

No doubt this strikes many readers as obvious. And yet, while we might say that in the Western intellectual tradition they have always been recognized as an inevitable feature of natural languages, we might say with more conviction that they have usually been recognized as a problem. Sometimes they break clear transmission of thought from a speaker to an audience and only undermine meaning.

But we propose two things: first, that ambiguity may in fact be productive of understanding and not simply destructive of it; and second, that what we take as discourse forms transparent to their ideational referents often are not. This approach calls for reconsidering what we might mean when we speak of “understanding.” Usually, understanding is taken to mean recognition of the cognitive content of an utterance. We might well supplement this with a less technical idea which, at the moment, we can only call “getting it.”

When we think about linguistic communication as a multi-channel embodied participatory experience, our focus shifts to features of contextualized practice that are multimodal, multivocal, and lean more heavily on non-propositional features of communication—features that have complicated relationships to the preservation or presentation of clear referential content. The general sense in the Western tradition has been that words organize propositional content into more pleasing form—“good ideas, well expressed,” the melding of form and content. But perhaps expressions work independently of propositionality, sometimes aiding, sometimes undermining, sometimes stepping into the breach where propositionality finds itself at a loss for words.

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