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MISUSING WORDS
BASED ON THEIR CONNOTATIONS

The article deals with the problem of choosing words that suit a situation, subject of discourse and expected audience. Different shades of meaning may have different effects on the readers or listeners. Though connotations of a word are too personal and variable, some general relationships among words may be defined. In the article there are given two possible ways of approaching the problem of "meaning". The special attention is paid to the meaning of a word as its relationships with other words in the system of language.

Speaking about language let us refer to Darwin who has concluded that language ability is "an instinctive tendency to acquire an art". In "The Desent of Man" Darwin had to content with language because its confinement to humans seemed to present a challenge to his theory [3, 4]. Still, his observations are uncannily modern. In the process of acquiring the art of using language people face the problem of choosing words.

We constantly need to make choices among words that have similar meanings but different effects on people. The connotation of a word is the feeling, attitude, or set of associations it conveys. To choose a word that best suit our need in any given context, we know how connotation can effect the meaning of a word. Precisely because they involve feelings, the connotations of a wopd are sometimes too personal and variable to be defined. Yet many words do have widely accepted connotations, and these determine the electrical charge of a word — positive or negative, favorable or unfavorable, generous or harsh. Compare the adjectives in each of the following sentences:

He is ambitious; she is pushy.
He is tough-minded; she is ruthless.
He is foresighted; she is calculating.
He is firm; she is stubborn.
He is self-respecting; she is egotistical.
He is persistent; she is nagging.

Each pair of adjectives in these sentences is joined by denotation but split by connotation. The words describing "him" are generous, making him seem ideally suited for high responsibility in business. The words describing "her" are loaded with negative connotations, making her seem all but disqualified for any responsibility at all.

The communicative value of the word depends upon the circumstances under which it is used. Instead of thinking of meaning as a property which is inherently attached to the word, we can focus upon the way people use words. If we want to deceive somebody in some way we may use different words. While the verb "*to lie*" is neutral, the sentence *If he told you that, he's lying through his teeth* sounds rather informal. If we just avoid telling the truth, we use *"prevaricate"*. Sometimes we tell an unimportant and harmless lie, playfully. So, we *"fib"*. Sometimes we deceive for amusement, we *"play a joke or trick"*. However, if we describe something falsely in order to obtain an advantage we use *"misrepresent"* or *"deceive"*. To hide our real feelings, attitudes or intentions we may use *"dessemble"*. The verbs with the similar connotation are *"pretend"*, *"feign"*, *"fake"*, *"fabricate"*. But the latter may also possess a converse connotation as in the sentence *Jackson was accused of fabricating banknotes*. We may as well use the verbs *"counterfeit"*, *"falsify"*, *"doctor"* with the meaning "to copy exactly". So, the students' attention should be focused not on the meaning itself, but upon the situation when a word is used.

Essentially, traditional practice provides us with two ways of approaching the problem of meaning. We may start with the idea that the word owes its meaning to a conventional relationship with some class of things or some concept that we think exist in the non-linguistic world. If we adopt this position, "roundabout" means, for instance, a particular form

of traffic control that people decided to refer to by that word; "terrified" signifies a generally recognized condition when you find yourself been very frightened.

Alternatively, we may think of the meaning of a word as driving from the relationships it has with other words in the "system". Thus the meaning of "friend" might be thought in the way it is related to other words in English, let us say as a synonym of "ally"and an antonym af "enemy". This approach provides the basis for the notion that has been introduced by David Brazil — "existential values" [1, 2]. The idea of a relationship, whether of synonymy or antonymy or any other, is regarded as a set that embrace the entire vocabulary of the language. This approach is consistent with the aim of a speaker. If we intend to pick a word with the right meaning that suits this particular discourse, it is useful to think about meanings we should exclude. For a speaker it is important to know the relationships among words, it makes the process of choosing words for a particular situation easier.

To sum up I would like to say that appreciating the way users rely upon special here-and-now oppositions is crucial for the understanding of how used language works. The understanding of the problem can help to pick words. And this choice may well be based on the relationships existing only in the world of understanding that the speaker and hearer assume they presently share.

1. *Brazil David.* A Grammar of Speech.— Oxf.: Oxf. Univ. Press, 1995.— 263 p.

2. *Heffernan James A. W., Lincoln John E.* Writing a College Handbook.— W. W. Norton @ Company. New York, London, 1986.— P. 170—183.

3. *Pinker Steven.* The Language Instinct.— New York, 1995.— 274 p.

4. Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus. Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1992.— 286 p.

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ВИБІР СЛІВ ЗА ЇХ КОНОТАТИВНИМ ЗНАЧЕННЯМ

Статтю присвячено проблемі вибору слів, які відповідають ситуації, темі комунікації та аудиторії. Різні відтінки значення одного слова справляють не однакове враження на читача чи співрозмовника. Хоча загалом конотація слова досить особиста та змінна, проте деякі загальні відношення між словами все ж таки можуть бути встановлені. В статті розглядаються два підходи до проблеми "значення" слова. Особлива увага відводиться теорії про значення слова як відношення цього слова до інших у системі мови.