

Semantics vs Pragmatics of a Compound Word

Elena A. Smirnova^a, Ella I. Biktemirova^b and Diana N. Davletbaeva^a

^aKazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kazan, RUSSIA; ^bKazan State University of Architecture and Engineering, Kazan, RUSSIA

ABSTRACT

This paper is devoted to the study of correlation between semantic and pragmatic potential of a compound word, which functions in informal speech, and the mechanisms of secondary nomination, which realizes the potential of semantic-pragmatic features of colloquial compounds. The relevance and the choice of the research question is based on the following: firstly, the last decades in the study of the language are devoted to the analysis of 'language in action' (speech) rather than its inner form; secondly, the human factor is the leading notion in pragmalinguistics; thirdly, pragmatics is closely connected with productive word building and nomination processes. The following scientific methods were used in the research: analysis and synthesis, definition analysis, method of transformations, the semantic analysis, statistical method, descriptive analysis, and contextual method. The materials and methods chosen in the article help to prove that the meaning of a compound word is built not only on the semantic purpose but mostly on the pragmatic one, that is why the inner structure of a colloquial compound is more complicated. The research also shows that the traditional understanding of pragmatics determines the study of communicative features which appear in certain contexts. The obtained results can be applied in the educational system and are of theoretical and practical value for educational professionals who investigate the questions of pragmatics and semantics.

KEYWORDS

Semantic component of meaning, pragmatic component of meaning, colloquial compounding, informal speech

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Introduction

The interest of the linguists on semantics and linguistic pragmatics is determined by moving forward the ideas of the priority of content and secondary position of expression.

The existence of pragmatic meaning is admitted by many linguists; the term 'pragmatic meaning' is widely used. However, the status of the meaning,

CORRESPONDENCE Elena A. Smirnova ✉ s_elena_84@mail.ru

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its place and part in the content of the meaning structure of the word, content filling of the pragmatic meaning (aspect) is explained differently and makes the subject of great discussion. The dispute in the topic is focused on referring the meaning to the area of semantics or pragmatics. The separation of semantics and pragmatics often determined by the concept of the usage: pragmatics studies the sign or symbol in its context, semantics deals with interpretation of the meaning out of the context, in other words abstractly. According to N. Salmon (2005), this is just an utterance which has no explanatory function that do not allow to make a certain boundary between two notions, in case when the meaning of the expressed idea is close to the means of expressing this idea. The utterance is used in a certain context because of its meaning, and vice versa, it gets its meaning through the use of the context. From this point of view, it is clear that the meaning and the use represent direct product of each other.

G. N. Leech (1983) in his work 'Principles of Pragmatics' defines pragmatics as a study about situational meaning of the utterance. The question of the meaning is central for pragmatics and rather disputable concerning its place in reference to semantics or pragmatics. If semantics studies the meaning as a necessary feature of the linguistic unit which exists in its reference to the objects, pragmatics studies the language in speech, in the process of communication, so the meaning corresponds with the participants of communication.

Separating the terms G.N. Leech (1983) notes semantics has absolute meaning which is expressed by morphosyntactical and phonological means; pragmatic meaning does not always understandable through the meaning of its parts, but if the aim of the utterance which needs situational context and knowledge of the rules of language is used for understanding, it gets certain intentions. The researcher pays attention to the correlation between grammatical and pragmatic aspects of speech. The pragmatic explanation is less accurate and certain. The pragmatic principles do not limit language behaviour like grammar rules do. This is connected with functioning of the language as a communicative system (Leech, 1983; Posner, 1992).

It is obvious that semantics studies the unity of form and content; pragmatics focuses in cooperation between the speaker, form and meaning. It is also important to take into account one more participant of the communication process – the listener or reader (Yule, 2000).

Some other linguists interpret semantics as something that the speaker says or claims in his utterance; pragmatics – as something which is meant by the speaker or something interpreted by the listener (Salmon, 2005). However, such approach does not define the notion 'semantics' which complicates the adequate perception of the differences between semantic and pragmatic content of the uttered idea.

The linguistic literature does not have commonly used term for defining the layer of the meaning which contains the information about the relation of the person who uses the word to the object. This is also no common opinion about the notions which refer to this layer and how to describe them. Such lexical information could be pragmatic, connotative, expressive, stylistic.

Such chaos in terminology and viewpoint to the problem is connected with the idea that such aspect of the meaning of the word is recently studied, because of the change from analyzing the language as a system of sign to the analysis of

the system in communication. This information is not homogeneous in its structure and represented by three kinds: the relation of the speaker to signified, the relation of the speaker to addressee, the information of pragmatic functions of the word.

Characterizing the types (layers) of the meaning by the character of information which they contain, I. Kobozeva (2004) refers denotative and significative meanings to semantics, pragmatic meaning to pragmatics. So, denotative layer gives the information about extra-linguistic reality. Significative meaning gives the information about the way the object or situation reflect the speaker's consciousness, focusing on the features that make it possible to unite subjects and situations in one class and opposed to other classes. Pragmatic layer gives the information about the conditions of the usage of the word, different aspects of communicative situation where it is used (Kobozeva, 2004).

If we study lexical-semantic information which the word contains, all the levels will present the components of the unity, in other words lexical-semantic information. However, if the first two components (denotative and significative) are defined clearly, the pragmatic component and the information it contains has different interpretation.

All the mentioned above defined a choice of semantic and pragmatic components in the inner structure of a compound word to an article as a subject of the research. The object of the analysis includes the bulk of colloquial compounds which are peculiar for the structure of the English language in general and its informal variant as well. Thus, the aim of the research is to identify structural and semantic features which determine the realization of pragmatic potential of compounds used in informal speech and study the mechanisms influencing the appearance of secondary colloquial words.

Methodological Framework

The material under analysis includes 750 colloquial compounds, some of which have an occasional origin and are not fixed in the modern dictionaries. The following scientific methods were used in the research: analysis and synthesis, definition analysis, method of transformations, the semantic analysis, statistical method, descriptive analysis, and contextual method.

Results and Discussion

This research is based on the component structure of the word. Taking into account the fact that any word includes two components, it also has a pragmatic one which provides additional information. Consequently, it is reasonable to study the impact of this component on colloquial compound words, because the significance of this component is higher in colloquial vocabulary rather than in neutral one.

On the Study of Secondary Nomination in Colloquial Compounds

Colloquial meaning is characterized by the process of secondary naming, in which some features of the original meaning are used in production of a new colloquial stylistic significance (Brown, 1996).

The appearance of secondary nominations in the language is one of the laws of its development. It is due to the fact that primary nomination is rare in



modern languages. According to N.O. Martynova (2007), the nominator uses the units which already exist (and the ways of their combination) in relation to new nominations.

Some linguists define the primary nomination as original linguistic naming, primary word (Morrish, 1999; Fisher, 1998). In this case the primary nomination is considered to be rare. In order to note the ability of modern languages to enlarge their nominal tool-kit, the idea of 'secondary nomination' was introduced. This notion includes the use of phonetic image of the original linguistic unit for a new signified, in other words the appearance of a new meaning of this linguistic unit.

Meanwhile, the results of the secondary nomination are perceived as derived on the basis of morphological structure and meaning. The ways of secondary nomination, in this case, differ depending on linguistic means used to create new names and on the type of the relation 'name-reality'. The results of secondary naming are differentiated on the types of means:

- 1) word-building as a regular way of creating new words and meanings;
- 2) syntactical transposition where morphological means indicate the change of syntactical structure, saving lexical meaning at the same time;
- 3) semantic transposition do not change the material image of the unit and create polysemantic words as well as phraseological units of different types (Vardzelashvili, 2000).

Secondary nomination is used in all levels of the language; however, lexical-semantic system is mostly influenced by it. This regularity is explained by 1) the limited range of lexemes of any language and the necessity of using these lexical resources for naming new notions (Kolshansky, 1991); 2) limited range of means of linguistic expression and the necessity to express the unlimited conceptual content (Boldyrev & Babina, 2001).

However, taking into account pragmatic point of view, we do not fully support such approach to limits in the language. On the contrary, we connect the appearance of secondary nomination with the principle of economy which directs the nomination process to secondary nomination, in other words leads to rethinking of existing nomination means in the language (Molchkova, 2003).

The problem of choosing the word as a process we connect with different operations: firstly, on the level of inner preparation the speaker, supported by the knowledge of native language as a system, analyses the differential-semantic features and their potential pragmatic opportunities; secondly, the choice of secondary nomination is determined by the inner lexicon of the speaker, their individual world view, because to think means introducing new words; thirdly, the inner preparation is not separated from external, terminative level, so that it aims at activity which allows to achieve the desirable effect.

All in all, secondary lexical nomination represents the result of natural development of the language, determined by cognitive, communicative activity of human in the process of social-historical practice. The appearance of new social relations leads to transformation of information concentrated in word sign. Consequently, secondary lexical nomination can reflect ideology of a certain epoch, orientation and principle of cooperation of these ideas.

Mechanisms of Creating Secondary Nomination

The research is focused on the mechanisms which initiate the appearance of secondary colloquial compound words in informal speech.

The main principle of secondary naming is the use of existing linguistic signs for new signified and the concepts they reflect. As a rule, there are two kinds of secondary nomination – systematic-linguistic and speech. In the first case secondary nomination is considered to be fixed dictionaries as commonly-used in communication. In the second case secondary nomination is the consequence of occasional and individual use of existing linguistic sign for strengthening of expressiveness of the speech in a certain context (Shelyakin, 2005). Consequently, on the one hand, secondary nomination enriches the language with new signified meanings; on the other hand, secondary nomination complicates semantically and expressively speech utterances, creating their semantic figurativeness, which includes simultaneous correlation of language sign with two different denotations to the signified.

Most colloquial compounds go under figurative transfer of meaning which helps to create secondary nominations (Smirnova, Sadykova & Davletbaeva, 2014). The transferred compounds are characterized by complicated meaning structure and contain additional connotations, used for expressing a certain relation to naming the objects (Lehrer, 2007).

The transferred meaning can be different on its depth as well as its background. The semantic processes which appear between the components of the compound can realize in accordance with the existing relations between the components: equivalence, exception, contradictory, subordination, overlapping (Sadykova, 2002; Sadykova & Kayumova, 2014).

Based on the above, we note a great role of the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy processes in creating secondary nominative meanings of noun-compounds in informal speech. These two processes are studied below.

Metaphorisation

Metaphorisation is one of the most productive mechanisms of creating new lexical units which are marked as colloquial. The metaphorical transference of meaning is based on comparison. Realizing denotative functions, metaphor creates new opportunities for using old words, fills them with new meanings and expands notional volume of the word. As a result of secondary nomination, metaphor has associative nature and is irreplaceable means of linguistic expressiveness.

Since the appearance of the work 'Metaphors We Live By' (Lacoff & Johnson 1980), the number of researchers who are interested in figurative language is increasing. G. Lacoff and M. Johnson his followers state that metaphors do not manage the language; the language itself is metaphorical in its nature. Considering life experience our thoughts are structured by conceptual metaphor which helps to understand one notion with the help of the other, e.g. more abstract by exact and familiar. So, metaphorical expression is the linguistic reflection of conceptual metaphor, existing in our consciousness.

Metaphorical consciousness is an important part of metalinguistic consciousness which gives the information about metaphorical schemes. These schemes are based on the consciousness of people who speak the language and influence the use of the language.



Colloquial metaphor has the same mechanism of creation as the metaphor of other style of speech, however, it does not exclude the existence of a certain specific character of compounds with transferred meaning in informal speech.

Metaphor in colloquial word building is the main word building means. Colloquial metaphor contributes to the creation of figurativeness through juxtaposition of distant conceptual notions (Petru, 1993). Consequently, juxtaposed objects should be distant enough to create the effect of unexpectedness which will attract attention; the different features should emphasize similarity. Juxtaposition of two or more notions which do not meet in usual situation leads to the creation of absolutely unexpected figurative meaning (Benczes, 2006).

Example 1:

grease-monkey – motor mechanic. The image of a person who is compared with a monkey dirty with grease.

In neutral metaphorical nominations the accuracy is significant, but in colloquial metaphor the denotative feature is intentionally distorted to create adequate stylistic effect.

Example 2:

armpit – colloquial the most miserable and undesirable place in a particular area; the main meaning – the hollow under the junction of the arm and shoulder.

In colloquial variant the features of distance, small size are specified. The distortion of this meaning introduces negative connotation, exaggerating real denotative features. As a result, the strongest negative emotional potential is created so that the use of it is possible only in informal situation (Meyer, 1993). In fact, this potential is not realized and a certain range of negative semes is fixed as functional connotations of the sign.

Colloquial metaphor demonstrates anthropocentrism in choosing the object of nomination. The main object of nomination is human in all his manifestations. It should be mentioned that topical classification of these compounds is rather difficult, so the choice of nominees is realized from different parts of life.

Example 3:

bahama-mama (liter. Bahamas + mother, woman) – an enormous woman;

Example 4:

apple-polisher (liter. apple (fruit) + a person who makes something shine) – a person who seeks of favour through flattery;

Example 5:

beefcake (liter. meat of cow + dessert) – a man of athletic built;

Example 6:

cheesecake (liter. cheese + dessert) – naked beauty (from magazine).

Anthropological nominations have negative assessment of metaphorical units. Denoting external and essential features of person's character and activities, metaphorical transformations point at negative features that reflect the connotative aspect of meanings.

This mechanism is often used to make the speech more expressive and figurative. Such colloquialisms usually have synonyms in neutral speech:

Example 7 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Metaphorical transformation of meaning

Colloquial compounds with metaphorical transformation of meaning	Neutral meaning
god-box	organ
swallowtails	dresscoat, evening-dress
shutterbug	camera
sausage-dog	dachshund
salad-days	youth
potato-box	mouth
motion-lotion	fuel

Metaphor is used not only for expressiveness. In some cases metaphor is the best solution in order to provide accuracy, laconism and understanding. Metaphors in compounds is an efficient way to fill one word with a great range of information.

Example 8:

night-cap – a glass of alcohol at night for good sleep.

These compounds are efficient situational nominations, thanks to their laconism and content-richness.

To sum up, metaphorisation makes a great impact on enlarging colloquial lexical fund in general. Metaphor in colloquial speech is brighter than in neutral one: denotative feature is distorted with the aim to create a certain stylistic effect. The process of metaphorisation is especially interesting on the material of compounds, because complex structure helps to juxtapose distant notions to reach greater figurativeness.

Metonymy

Metonymy is not based on associative mechanism. It realizes due to the choice of a certain feature of the object which marks it. Such mechanism does not allow opening the differences between stylistically expressive metonymy in informal speech and its neutral variant.

However, colloquial compounding of metonymic nominations is rather numerous and has potential to unlimited formation. The analysis of the material showed that metonymy in colloquial speech has lower meaning.

Example 9:

billingsgate – coarsely abusive language (based on the name of a big fish market in London);

Example 10:

bluecoat – policeman (based on part of clothing);

Example 11:

bluejacket – sailor on military ship (based on part of clothing);

Example 12:

clothcap – worker (cloth cap – a symbol of working class).



A great source for metonymic colloquial compounds is the use of anthroponomy in their structure. The peculiar features are: complex structure, less availability to predict the meaning, because such compounds are built on cooperation of a lexical unit and a proper name, characterized by semantic capacity; figurative meaning of the components, connotative meaning.

Example 13:

jack-a-dandy – princeton, elegant man;

Example 14:

tomfool – dude, cheat.

In the examples above the semantic shift in dependent components can be observed: a proper name loses its lexical determination and gets the meaning of the gender differentiation. In some cases the generalized meaning and vagueness of an anthropological component, they can be interchanged each other with the same root morpheme: *jackass*, *jennyass*. The flexibility of components, which occurs in informal speech, is shown in the difference of genders expressed by the proper names and helps to create compounds of female and male gender.

However, there are some examples which can be referred to both women and men. This created certain expressiveness in naming a man with the help of woman's name.

Example 15:

mollycoddle (Molly – female name) – 1. tenderfoot; 2. coll. girl boy.

Colloquial markedness of such compounds is provided not only with the help of informal vocabulary. The colloquial meaning appears in the process of compounding and the use of shortened proper names: *Jenny* ← *Jennifer*; *Tom*, *Tommy* ← *Thomas*; *Jim* ← *James*, etc.

In total 82 colloquial compounds were analyzed. The bulk of these compounds are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Bulk of colloquial compounds

#	Name of a semantic groups	Examples of compounds	Number of lexical units (%)
1.	Names of animals and birds	tomcat, jackdaw, jack-snipe, jackrabbit, jenny-ass, magpie	11%
2.	Names of plants	jack-in-the-pulpit, rosemary, jimsonweed, kiss-me-John-in-the-garden-gate	7,3%
3.	Compounds focused on human's character	tomboy, tomfool, jack-a-dandy, hillbilly, jack-of-all-trades, crackjack	26,8%
4.	Names of drugs	jack-ups, marijane, ken-dolls, mariweege	4,9%
5.	Names of food and beverages	Peter-see-me, Johnny-cake	3,7%
6.	Names of tools	tommy-bar, jack-knife, jack-plane	6,1%
7.	Names of games	jack-stones, jack-straw, blackjack	3,7%
8.	Names of professions	jack-tar, lumberjack, Johnny-be-good	3,7%
9.	Names of military equipment	tommy-gun, chase-me-Charlie	2,4%

10.	Original occasional compounds	Benifer, J-goddess, anti-Carrie	11%
11.	Others	Demijohn	19,5%

The most numerous group is represented by the compounds focused on human's character. It is obvious that a proper name being the part of the compound influences the meaning of the whole word.

The analysis of the frequency of use of proper names in colloquial compounds is presented in Figure 1.

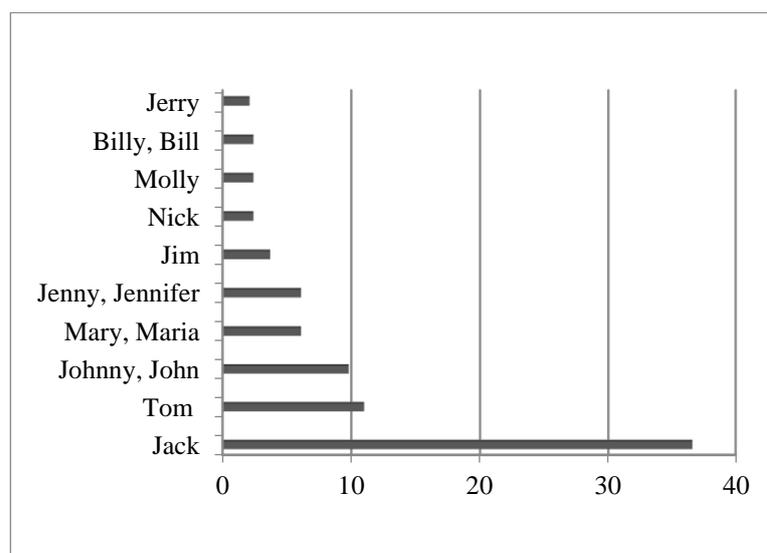


Figure 1. Analysis of the frequency of use of proper names in colloquial compounds

This figure does not include such proper names as: Jerry, Carl, Peter, Anna, Daisy, Mag, Nelly, Carrie. Each of these names was found only once. It is 1.2% of the total number of compounds under analysis. The surnames were studied separately. This group is 7.3% of the total number of compounds.

Conclusion

The meaning of the word plays important role both in semantics and pragmatics, so the study of correlation of semantic and pragmatic components within the word is quite significant. The pragmatic component carries certain lexical and semantic information and also fills the semantics of the colloquial word.

The component analysis of colloquial compounds points at the dependence of the meaning of the word on the semantics of its components. The informal speech contains compounds with apart-directed meaning.

The semantics of the colloquial compounds has a peculiarity of dividing the words into colloquial words proper and compounds with colloquial meaning. In the first case the focus is on structural motivation of the meaning which gets stylistic markedness 'colloquial', in the second case the semantic motivation is observed. The second group is characterized by the process of secondary



nomination, the appearance of which can be explained by the economy of linguistic means, phonetic form to name another object or event. The secondary nomination is connected with pragmatic attitude of the speakers aiming at efficient communication.

Two mechanisms of secondary nomination have been determined – metaphorisation and metonomisation.

Metaphorisation plays an important role in enlarging the bulk of colloquial compounds. In informal speech metaphor is brighter than in neutral speech: the denotative feature is changed on purpose to create a certain stylistic effect. The complex structure of compounds makes it interesting to study the process of metaphorisation through juxtaposition of different notions which creates the effect of unexpectedness and expressiveness.

Nominations affected by metonymy are widely spread among colloquial compounds as historically metonymy was used to form nicknames in informal speech. Colloquial metonymy shows lower meaning which is achieved by showing denotative feature with the help of signified which referred to generalised notion.

The material under analysis revealed a big group of compounds with a proper name as a component. These compounds have some features in common: most of them belong to the semantic group focused on the human's character (26.8%) and names of animals and birds (11%). The most productive proper names are: Jack, Tom, John, Mary, Jenny.

The research proves the fact that semantic and pragmatic components are equally represented in a colloquial compound word. On the one hand, it makes the inner structure of a compound word more complicated, but, on the other hand, this correlation reflects the main intention of the speaker – to impress the listener. The aim is not only in delivering information, but including subjective opinion, personal emotions and life experience. As a result, the analysis of mechanisms used to achieve the balance of semantics and pragmatics explains the richness of colloquial vocabulary in general.

The research showed that:

1) the study of pragmatics is realized in two main directions – the linguistic meaning is studied and the boundaries between semantics and pragmatics are defined;

2) traditional understanding of pragmatics determines the study of communicative features which appear in certain contexts; colloquial meaning are characterized by the process of secondary nomination, the appearance of which corresponds to the principle of saving linguistic means, so the linguistic sign and its phonetic image is used for naming another object or notion. Secondary nomination is connected with realization of pragmatic intentions of the speakers aimed at efficient communication.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Elena A. Smirnova is Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor, Leo Tolstoy Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication, Department of Germanic Philology, Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kazan, Russia.

Ella I. Biktemirova is Candidate of Education, Associate Professor, Institute of Economics and Management in Construction, Department of Economics and Business in Construction, Kazan State University of Architecture and Engineering, Kazan, Russia.

Diana N. Davletbaeva is Doctor of Philology, Associate Professor, Leo Tolstoy Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication, Department of Germanic Philology, Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kazan, Russia.

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