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Language Categorization
of Prototypical Situation "Speech"
in Modern English

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The article deals with the problem of language categorization on the sentence level. A cognitive approach to the sentence study reveals polysemy of a sentence generally depends on the sentence possibility to categorize different variations of a prototypical situation. These variations stand on two basic factors. Firstly, great numbers of alike but not equivalent situations exist in real life. A person, since he / she is capable of categorizing, confines a situation to a certain category. Secondly, the speaker can differently interpret the same situation. The latter may focus attention on different dimensions of the situation at different time. As a result, some dimensions of the situation are highlighted and the others, on the contrary, recede to the background. Nonequivalence of the similar situations and different interpretation of the same situation determine semantic and syntactical structure of the sentence. The prototypical situation of speech has been chosen for analysis to manifest this statement.

Keywords: prototypical situation, prototypical construction, categorization, dimension, figure, ground.

Research area: 10.00.00 – philology.

In cognitive grammar, *construction* is understood as unification of a cognitive model (conceptual structure) and a corresponding language form (Lakoff, 2008; Goldberg, 2003). Cognitive model or conceptual structure is often denoted as prototypical situation because the referent of any sentence is a real situation of the world, reflected in the speaker's mind. Therefore, prototypical situation is not the real situation of the world itself, but its cognitive image (Kustova,

2000: 108). In other words, prototypical situation is a piece of reality, represented in speaker's mind and in the process of representation it gets peculiar features inherent to national conscience, specified by culture of the given folk. Each prototypical situation is characterized by a set of dimensions classified as obligatory (figure) and optional (ground) ones.

In prototypical situation "speech" such dimensions as follows are observed:

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Obligatory (figure):

1. "agent" (the author of speech);
2. "process of speaking" (the speech act);
3. "addressee" (the one who perceives speech);
4. "information reported";
   Optional (ground):
5. "manner of speech":
a) "volume",
b) "velocity / rapidity",
c) "plenty / lack of emotions in the speech act";
6. "aim of speech".

As a rule, people are different from animals first of all in ability to think, to reason, to contemplate over the past, to criticize their actions and ideas, to make plans for the future, to dream and to speak. "Agent" is the author of speech or that one who speaks (performs a speech act). According to logic, that is a person, possessing brain capable of thinking or fulfilling an intellective function that makes a person speak. The author of speech in prototypical situation plays the only role: he / she speaks. In reality the role of speaking is hardly separable from the role of thinking as speaking is the process of turning thoughts into sentences and sentences into thoughts (Latin-English Dictionary of Philosophical Terms). Herewith the process of thinking in speaker's mind is directed to speech producing. In spite of it, in an "unblended" prototypical situation of speech which can be also named a model that serves as a "reference point" (Lakoff, 2008: 359), the agent plays just the only role – he / she is the author of speech.

Speech is traditionally recognized as the process of speaking itself (speech activity) (*Arutiunova*, 1990: 414). Speech activity is analogous to other activities of people. Therefore, when the agent speaks, he / she performs a certain act, a speech act, that is the second dimension of the prototypical situation.

The third dimension of the prototypical situation is the "addressee", as in the situation there must be someone the speech act is directed to. Our supposition is supported by the analysis of the vocabulary entries to the verbs of speech. The definitions of these verbs contain the seme "indefinite animate addressee", e.g., to tell – to say something *to someone,* often giving *them* information or instructions (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary).

The result of speech is speech work, memorized or written down (*Arutiunova*, 1990: 414), in other words, "information reported". This is the information the speaker is willing to send the addressee – that is the next dimension in the prototypical situation of speech.

In the process of language categorization one dimension of the prototypical situation "speech" is emphasized (highlighted) and another one recedes into the background. It depends on that how the speaker grasps the situation of real life. So, one can find obligatory (figure) dimensions as well as optional (ground) ones in any prototypical situation. The ground dimensions are the conditions that accompany the speech act: volume and velocity of speech, emotions of the speaker, the aim the speaker strives to achieve as a result of speaking. In the prototypical situation of speech these dimensions are found against a background. They are implicit. As it has been noted by linguists "figure – ground" principle represents the basic cognitive ability of a person to focus his / her attention on the most significant information (Furs, 2009: 290), and the peculiar feature of "figure – ground" mechanism in Gestalt Theory is that the figure is highlighted or explicit and the ground is against a background or implicit.

In accord with G. Lakoff and M. Johnson's theory prototypical situation is thought of as gestalt, in other words, as a set of characteristics actualized together. That, to their minds, is

more important for our experience than a discrete manifestation of each characteristic feature (Lakoff, 1980: 71). In fact, prototypical situation is actualized by one or some of its manifestations in form of this or that construction, because in reality there is hardly such a construction that is able to verbalize the whole situation at once (Kovaleva, 2008: 82). The reason is that uniqueness of the event presupposes additionally marked sense units that are often non-verbalized in the sentence structure (Furs, 2009: 31).

Constructions, categorizing the prototypical situation best of all and without the mixture of other characteristics, are called prototypical constructions. These constructions exist in speaker's mind as ready-made forms to express prototypical situation (Lakoff, 1980: 70-72).

Peculiar Features
of the Prototypical Constructions
for the Prototypical Situation
of Speech Categorization

It has been noticed that the prototypical situation "speech" is categorized best of all by the construction

$$N_{speaker} \ V_{say/speak/talk/tell} \ N_{addressee} \ N_{information.}$$

The optional or ground dimensions aren't represented by the prototypical construction, as in the prototypical situation of speech they are implicit. The first dimension is verbalized by the actant $N_{speaker}$. The latter is usually expressed by an animate noun or a personal pronoun.

On the level of surface the second dimension "speech act" is actualized by the nuclear (dominant) verbs of speech: to say, to speak, to talk and to tell, as they are stylistically neutral and the seme "manner of speaking" isn't found in their vocabulary entries. They immediately denote the speech act regardless the manner

and the aim of speech. That allows keeping the optional dimensions implicit against the background of the situation and the situation of speech prototypical. For example, to say – "*to pronounce* words or sounds, *to express* a thought, opinion, or suggestion, or *to state* a fact or instruction" (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary). Besides, the analysis of the empirical material reveals that constructions with the verbs *to say, to speak, to talk and to tell* are frequently used in speech.

The third dimension is categorized in the construction by the actant $N_{addressee}$, which can be expressed by a personal pronoun in the objective case or an animate noun. It is necessary to note that the third dimension can be non-verbalized in the construction as mostly it coincides with the speaker. Actually the omission of this actant doesn't impact the common semantic organization of the sentence and doesn't change the meaning of the sentence, as it is always implied that the speech act addresses to a definite / indefinite person.

The fourth obligatory dimension of the prototypical situation "information reported" is nominated on the surface level by the actant $N_{information}$, that, in its turn, can be expressed by an infinitive, inanimate noun, anaphoric pronoun *it,* or a subordinate objective clause. Variety of forms representing this actant is justified, in our opinion, by variety of reported information and its types. In the process of speech, the speaker is able to report any information: "*a thought, opinion, or suggestion,* or to state *a fact or instruction*" (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary). Herewith, these constructions are not equivalent semantically.

Constructions with a subordinate objective clause describe information reported by the speaker in detail, for example: (1) He finally told me *why he was so upset* (BNC). In this case, the figure dimension "information reported" is

categorized by the subordinate objective clause that represents the essence of information. Constructions with inanimate nouns just mention the type of information: (2) She always tells *stories* to children (BNC). In the following sentence even the type of information isn't pointed out: (3) She said *it* in the kitchen, on the Wednesday of that week, looking round from the Aga where she was frying bacon (BNC). Here information is represented implicitly by the pronoun *it* that fulfils an anaphoric function. Constructions with the infinitive categorize such a situation where the agent encourages the addressee to act, appeals to him / her for following some instructions: (4) He says *to close my eyes and rest quietly* (BNC).

The questions are raised: which of these constructions categorizes the prototypical situation best of all? Which of them is more prototypical?

Constructions with the inanimate nouns and anaphoric pronoun *it*, categorizing the dimension "information reported", are not informative enough, as information itself isn't represented. As far as constructions with the infinitive are concerned the figure dimension "information reported" is semantically concretized, as some instruction for the addressee to follow is meant.

A construction with the subordinate objective clause is defined as prototypical for categorization the prototypical situation of mental activity. The ground of that is as follows: naturally the verb of mental activity doesn't predict temporal and modal character of the thought, therefore, the syntactical form of the predicate actant should be able to represent tense, aspect, mood, and so on. Such a form is the subordinate clause with the tense-aspect and modal forms of the finite verb (Kovaleva, 2008: 108). As far as speaking and thinking are inseparably connected, constructions with the subordinate objective clause are the best

ones for the prototypical situation of speech categorization.

Peculiar Features
of the Non-Prototypical Constructions
for the Prototypical Situation
of Speech Categorization

In figure-ground interrelation the figure is principal and the ground is against a background, even though the ground impacts the figure indirectly. The ground manages to enhance and to reduce the figure, and depending on situation, the ground turns into the figure and the figure makes the ground (Lakoff, 1981: 358). It happens when the speaker notices optional (ground) dimensions in real situation and verbalizes them. In this case the ground dimensions are categorized on the surface level, and the construction ceases to be prototypical and turns into non-prototypical one.

In real life the speaker often pays attention to a manner and aim of speaking. Consequently, optional dimension "manner of speech" / "aim of speech" makes the figure and some obligatory dimensions recede into the background. In non-prototypical situation "manner of speech" / "aim of speech" are categorized either by the predicate or by different sirconstants.

If the speaker's attention focuses on the volume of speech act, he intuitively chooses a periphery verb of speech as a predicate: *to whisper, to shout, to cry, to hiss*, etc., because the seme "volume" is found in vocabulary entries to these verbs. For instance, to shout: "to express strong emotions *in a loud voice*" (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary). Let us observe construction (5) Mother *shouted* for the children (BNC). The speaker and the agent of speech don't coincide here. The speaker notices someone shouting. For the speaker it is more important to emphasize *the manner of speech* rather than the information itself (as we see, the dimension "information reported" isn't categorized on

the surface level at all). So, the dimension 5a "volume" is highlighted and becomes figure. Here the situation categorized is somewhat different from the prototypical one. It is semantically close to construction (6) He *spoke* in a *barely audible, husky growl* (BNC) in dimension 5a "volume", which is verbalized through the sirconstant of manner *in a barely audible, husky growl*. It is relevant for the speaker that the agent of speech could be hardly heard, but not what he says.

Speaker's attention can be paid not only to the volume of the speech producing, but also to the emotions, accompanying the process of agent's speech: (7) Paul *shouts angrily* and *loudly* at smaller children who want to play with the toys he is using (BNC). In the situation categorized by this construction two dimensions are emphasized simultaneously. They are 5a "volume" and 5c "plenty of emotions in speech act". Firstly, the speaker subconsciously resorts to using the verb to shout as the seme "strong emotion" along with the seme "volume" is found in its vocabulary entry. Secondly, one can easily observe two sirconstants *loudly* and *angrily*, they signalize dimensions 5a "volume" and 5c "plenty of emotions in speech act" make figures in this situation. Construction (7) is semantically close to construction (8) My husband sometimes *scolds loudly* my stepson but more often blames my son (BNC) in dimensions "volume" and 5c "plenty of emotions in speech act". It is revealed through the sirconstant of volume *loudly*, as well as through the semantic structure of the main verb *to scold* – "to find fault *noisily* or *angrily"* (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). At the same time constructions (7) and (8) are semantically close to construction (9) Maybe she just *said* it *in the heat of anger* or whatever (BNC) (despite the main verb to say is unexpressive and stylistically neutral) in dimension 5c "plenty of emotions in speech act". The latter makes figure here as it is noticed and verbalized by the speaker through intensifier of emotions *in the heat of*

anger. It proves that the speaker focuses his / her attention on the emotions expressed by the author of speech rather than on the information itself.

In some situations the speaker notices the velocity of speech first of all but not the information reported, as extreme rapidity or slowness can keep the addressee from perceiving reported information. So, the dimension "velocity" is highlighted and turns into figure in the situation. On the surface level, the dimension "velocity" is mostly verbalized by the sirconstant of velocity, for example: (10) He *said* it *in a rush*, leaving Rachel staring at the door (BNC). The meaning of the sentence changes because the sirconstant of manner *in a rush* is employed. The dimension "velocity" becomes figure and the rest of the dimensions apart from the agent recede to the background. The speaker first of all pays attention to the agent producing his speech in one breath, in other words, to the manner of it. The next sentence (11) Nicolo *muttered short fast phrases* behind my back (BNC) is organized by the periphery verb *to mutter*. Its vocabulary entry contains the semes "quietly", and "in a low voice" on the one hand and "worried", "complaining" on the other hand that highlight such optional dimensions as "volume" and "plenty of emotions in speech act". The dimension "velocity" in its turn is verbalized by the sirconstant of velocity *short fast*. So, the three optional dimensions at once are noticed and categorized by the speaker. Moreover the obligatory dimension "information" recedes to the background as it isn't even mentioned by the speaker.

In construction (12) Unexpectedly he *said* this phrase *with some effort* (BNC) all the obligatory dimensions of the prototypical situation of speech except the "addressee" are verbalized. In fact its omission doesn't influence the meaning of the sentence. Herewith this construction can be hardly regarded as prototypical one, because the dimension "velocity" is represented by the

sirconstant of velocity *with some efforts*. The speaker understands that the agent's speech is not dynamic, slow and that can impede information perception. The speaker pays attention mostly to the manner of speech but not to the information the agent is trying to tell on.

Besides the vocabulary of the language contains such periphery verbs that represent the dimension "velocity": *to jabber, to gibber, to rattle* etc.

So, when the dimension "velocity" is relevant for the speaker it is represented either by the sirconstant or by the predicate of speech in the sentence. These constructions are semantically close to each other in dimension "velocity".

Dimension 6 "aim of speech" makes figure when the speaker pays his / her attention to the agent's of speech intentions and to the objection of his / her speech act. The given dimension in non-prototypical construction can be represented either by the periphery verbs: *to praise, to scold, to slander, to disgrace* etc., or by the sirconstant of aim. Let us compare two constructions: (13) Mickey *told* that long coil of phrases *in order to compliment her* (BNC) and (14) George *praises* the hospitality and warmth of welcome extended by the Belgians (BNC). In construction (13) the dimension "aim of speech" is represented by the sirconstant of aim *in order to compliment her*. It proves the fact that the accent shifts to the aim of speaking, what the speaker utters his speech for. In construction (14) the same dimension makes figure as the sentence is headed by the periphery verb *to praise*. The lexical meaning of this verb is: "to express strong approval *or admiration* to someone *especially in public*" (Macmillan English Dictionary). The constructions are semantically closed in dimension 6. The aim of the utterances is to say something pleasant, to appreciate somebody. It is necessary to note that the dimension "addressee" is seldom represented in such constructions as the agent's speech is

immediately sent to more than one addressee, to public, in other words, to a "common addressee". The seme "common addressee" ("especially in public") is observed in the vocabulary entry of the periphery verbs, running the constructions.

So, the constructions with the nuclear verbs *to say, to tell, to speak, to talk* and the sirconstants of aim are semantically close to the construction headed by the periphery verbs: *to praise, to scold, to slander* etc. in dimension "aim of speech".

As it has been noticed, in the process of categorization of non-prototypical situations with the figure dimensions "volume", "velocity / rapidity", "plenty / lack of emotions in the speech act" and "aim of speech act" the speaker often resorts to using such lexical means that point out the type of the information reported or anaphoric pronoun *it*:

(15) Cleo *said* this phrase *in a penetrating voice* (BNC);

(16) Helen *whispered* that invocation *very rapidly*, being afraid to be heard (BNC).

It signalizes that the dimension "information reported" recedes to the background of the situation, because the necessary information does not reach the addressee in full. He / she remember just the process of information reporting. An extreme rapidity of speech, low / loud voice and emotional state of the agent prevent the addressee from receiving what is being reported.

Conclusion

Therefore, as far as reality is rich and multifarious in comparison with forms of thinking and language expression (Gak, 2004: 466), such phenomenon as sentence polysemy exists in the language. Sentence polysemy reveals when constructions headed by the same verb categorize different variations of the same situation.

However, there is something common that binds these constructions together. It allows

observing their semantic likeness and confining them to the same category. This is some common idea that helps the speaker use a sentence under different conditions; intuitively adapt it to each concrete case.

Since the sentences refer to a common abstract idea (one prototypical situation), they are semantically close to each other and build a paradigm, making a sense continuum, but they are not semantically equivalent. Prototypical and non-prototypical constructions possess their own peculiar features. They reflect the way the speaker grasps the situation, as in the process of categorization he / she pays more attention to some dimensions of the situation rather than to other ones.

The dimensions highlighted by the speaker can be represented by the head verb of the sentence. It explains existence of the synonyms, denoting different manners and aims of speech in the language.

The rest of the sentence parts together with the main verb form a semantic side of the sentence as the dimensions of the situations are represented by a main verb, actants, and sirconstants at once.

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Языковая категоризация прототипической ситуации "Речь" в современном английском языке

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Предметом анализа статьи является проблема языковой категоризации на уровне предложения. В рамках когнитивного подхода многозначность предложения связана со смыслом предложения в целом и заключается в том, что предложение категоризует разные вариации прототипической ситуации. Эти вариации связаны, во-первых, с наличием в реальной действительности огромного количества похожих, но не эквивалентных ситуаций, которые человек, в силу своей способности категоризовать, подводит под одну категорию, во-вторых, с различным пониманием говорящим одной и той же ситуации реальной действительности. Одна и та же ситуация может быть по-разному осмыслена говорящим, который акцентирует своё внимание то на одних параметрах ситуации, то на других. В связи с этим некоторые параметры ситуации могут выдвигаться на первый план, а другие, наоборот, – затемняться. Неидентичность похожих ситуаций реальной действительности, а также разное осмысление говорящим одной и той же ситуации реальной действительности влияет на семантическую и синтаксическую организацию предложения, что мы пытались продемонстрировать в ходе анализа на примере ситуации речи.

Ключевые слова: прототипическая ситуация, прототипическая конструкция, категоризация, параметр, фигура, фон.

Научная специальность: 10.00.00 – филология.