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LEXICAL POLYSEMY IN DIACHRONY AND SYNCHRONY

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Abstract

The paper considers the peculiarities of the origin and functioning of lexical polysemy in different languages, in particular in Ukrainian, German and English. The author examines discourse of Ukrainian scholars in terms of the study of the polysemic words causes, the relationship between the meanings of polysemic words, the distinction between the phenomena of polysemy and homonymy, the linguistic functions of polysemic units. The opinion that the polysemy of words in different languages is not an accidental phenomenon was justified.

It was emphasized that the presence of a limited amount of vocabulary, which is associated with the qualitative features of the physiological mechanism of the human brain (memory), leads to the emergence of ambiguous words. Each polysemic word has a relatively constant semantic core, independent of the context, which is a necessary basis for the functioning of polysemic units, and it ensures the semantic integrity of the word. Although the set of meanings of a polysemantic word in different languages differs, the phenomenon of polysemy is universal for all languages. It allows expanding the linguistic nominative potential and, given the cost-effectiveness of the language, to avoid increasing the number of lexical items.

The need to determine the nature of the lexical meaning of a word at the level of language and speech, its frameworks, the concept of semantic structure of a polysemic word, the semantic core of the word, connections, relationships and functioning of different meanings was described. The major factors that influence semantic changes in a polysemic word and consist in various changes in the process of historical development of languages, in which words acquire new meanings, were characterized. It leads to the emergence of more semantic aspects, which are historically fixed in the minds of the people in connection with the relationship of words with certain phenomenon. The effectiveness of the phenomenon of polysemy as a means to increase the linguistic potential of language, due to the formatting of existing values and the emergence of new ones in the process of active development of the lexicon is substantiated.

Keywords: polysemy, diachrony, synchrony, word meaning, semantic connection, semantic structure, homonymy.

1. Introduction.

In our lives we deal with the ambiguity of language signs every day: in conversations with friends, while reading the newspapers and in all communication processes. In some cases we can recognize them easy, but sometimes harder, and we identify their ambiguity only after a conscious analysis. The ambiguity of the noun *Birne* (fem.) in German is not immediately recognizable in the sentence “*Ich esse saftige Birne gern*”. As soon as the word appears in a context, there is usually only one possible meaning. In this case one eats a pear. However, not only some fruit, but also a light bulb can be called by the word *Birne*. In this respect the idea that someone likes to eat a light bulb is quite absurd and unconventional. It deals similarly with another meaning of this word in German – a punchbag (in boxing), though it is formed in a different way. Therefore, in this context, our thinking rejects the association of a word with other meanings, and we do not grasp its ambiguity immediately. The only exception may be the deliberate use of ambiguity of words to create language puns.

In the process of language learning and studying its vocabulary, the issues concerning the definition and usage of different words meanings in the relevant contextual variants become pertinent. The adequacy and correctness of the usage of the appropriate word variants is not only important for the correct understanding of the thought, but can also cause a reason for misunderstandings, for example, in international communication. According to the fact that the speaker is not only faced with the task of choosing the correct word variant to express a particular independent idea from a set of semantic meanings, but he/she also combines the chosen system of meanings with the corresponding units of translation to another language.

In such case the speaker needs to know the meanings of a word, to understand what it means, as well as to know its combinability and the connections with other words.

2. Literature Review.

A characteristic feature of a word as a linguistic unit is its ability to change structurally and semantically according to scientific or social requirements. Polysemy is the phenomenon in which this characteristic of the word is manifested the most clearly. To address this issue, scholars are trying to investigate the phenomenon of the vocabulary ambiguity more and more closely, to understand the reasons for its origin and functioning in the language.

Despite the fact, that a large number of scientific publications on the research of polysemy can be found in the linguistic literature, a lot of aspects of this topic remain incompletely studied. But it is not only linguists who benefit from the study of polysemy. Translators are also interested in it, because polysemy makes it possible to convey reality more accurately, while maintaining the mentality of different peoples.

Numerous scientific publications deal with to the study of the lexical polysemy phenomenon in different languages. The authors of such works are: I. Falkum, S. Kantemir, S. Kiyko, M. Kochergan, V. Levitsky, L. Lysychenko, V. Manakin, B. Nerlich, H. Nikula, O. Ogui, I. Olshansky, O. Potebnya, O. Selivanova, V. Simonok, and others.

These works describe the patterns of semantic relations of language units (M. Kochergan, O. Selivanova), the tendency to transfer the meanings of words (S. Kantemir, V. Levitsky, V. Manakin), the relationship between polysemy, homonymy and synonymy (S. Kantemir, S. Kiyko, L. Lysychenko, O. Ogui, O. Potebnya). Also, one of the important and topical problems in the study of polysemy is the defining and distinguishing of the basic meaning of a polysemic word and its lexical-semantic variants (I. Olshansky, O. Smirnytsky, V. Vynogradov), as well as considering some other aspects.

In the process of historical development, a language inherits the material and structure from the previous epoch; however, the dynamic changes of all aspects of life, the emergence

of new realities present new challenges. In order to implement the nominative function in such conditions, a person either creates neologisms, or subordinates already existing material to the new task of expression. This need of the language is met by adding new meanings to an existing word.

3. Aim and Objectives.

The aim of the paper is to analyse the approaches of scientists to the study of the phenomenon of polysemy, especially the causes of its development and the results of its existing.

The achievement of this aim includes the solving of the following *objectives*:

- to consider the scientific approaches to the study of the polysemy phenomenon;
- to determine the causes of polysemic words occurrence;
- to outline methods for distinguishing between polysemy and homonymy;
- to study the principles of polysemy functioning in the language.

4. Methodology.

In the process of performing certain tasks, the literature resources related to the research of the chosen problem and the different views of scientists on the phenomenon of lexical polysemy have been studied; the lexical meanings of selected polysemic words have been analysed; the component analysis of their vocabulary definitions simultaneously with a parallel comparison of their counterparts in German and English have been performed.

5. Results.

The phenomenon of polysemy exists in all languages of the world. This makes it the so-called “language universal in the system of European languages”, as noted by L. Soga. The scholar insists that polysemy “is based on the asymmetry of the language sign and reflects the principle of saving formal means in the transmission of the maximum semantic volume” (Cora, 2016, p. 4). Polysemy covers a wide layer of vocabulary and activates semantic changes in its structure. With the absence of polysemy, it would be necessary to keep many words in the lexicon that would name objects and phenomena of the world. In addition, the language would lose its expressiveness and imagery because of the lack of metaphor and metonymy, which are based on the phenomenon of word polysemy.

Understanding how people relate form and meaning is the basis for understanding language studying and it has an impact on lexicography, foreign language learning, and computer processing of natural language. In order to unravel the nature of these connections, we should become familiar with the essence of meanings for a single word or form. From the definition of polysemy, it is clear that one form is used to represent several meanings. These meanings may be semantically unrelated or show varying degrees of relatedness. There are several theories about how people store and use the meaning of these words. One of the theories states that each meaning of a word has a separate semantic representation in the mental vocabulary. Another influential theory argues that related meanings share part of their semantic representation, whereas unrelated meanings have separate representations.

As a result of various economic, cultural, political, psychological and other changes in public life and human activities, new or old concepts, objects and phenomena appear, or there is a change in people’s attitudes to old concepts, respectively, there is a need to express them by means of the language.

There are important items that cause the polysemy, namely: 1) those expanding the word meaning (the word is applied to more denotations); 2) semantic differentiation (meanings are divided into more ones).

A regular ambiguity arises in the metaphorical and metonymic change of the meaning. The most common cause of polysemy is the use of the word in new contexts, new environments. Thus, new meanings are created through metonymic shifts and metaphorical transmissions.

What is the polysemy? How do we understand the phenomenon of polysemy? While answering these questions, one should pay attention to the history of the “polysemy” term. According to I. Falkum it is “a single lexical form with two or multiple related senses” (Falkum, 2011, p. 3). The scholar’s point of view is close to the views of other researchers, linguists and even psychologists, who have been interested in the phenomenon of polysemy. Because of the challenging issues this phenomenon is used for theories of semantic representation, semantic compositionality, language processing and communication.

In order to create a complete picture of the evolution of the semantic structure of the word, a reference to the history of the language is fully justified. It happens due to the ability to indicate the possible direction of the further development of polysemic units (expansion or contraction of meaning, tendencies to abstraction), as well as it explains the patterns of certain meanings occurrence and the actualization of individual components in them. The inverse process, the disappearance of a meaning in the process of word development, can be explained by lexical borrowings from another language. In this case, the displaced word often has its effect on the semantic structure of the word.

Due to the traditional approach polysemy is “a matter of different senses being listed under a single lexical entry, with the comprehension of a polysemic word involving selection of the contextually appropriate sense from the list of senses” (ibid., p. 9). But we cannot avoid the discussion in the issue what the reason of a polysemy origin is. There are different standpoints of the scientists who describe the interaction of several factors, such as: linguistic (which is claimed by most scholars working within computational semantic frameworks), cognitive (which is held by scholars working within the cognitive grammar tradition) and communicative ones. The debate among scientists is more about which of these factors is the most important one.

The fact that some unique word can be associated with several different meanings was addressed to in the 19th century and even earlier. At first the term of “polysemy” (the presence of several meanings of a word which are related in meanings) was introduced by Michel Breal in the book “The Experience of Semantics, the Science of Meaning” in 1897. It was due to his extraordinary interest in the evolution of word meanings that the “semantics” term was first used in the history of linguistics. At that time it was the field of diachronic research to analyse historical changes in lexical meanings. According to Michel Breal, polysemy is the parallel existence of several meanings caused by historical changes in the language. Therefore, following his diachronic approach, polysemy is a “synchronous consequence of the change of meanings” in the development of the language, the result of the parallel existence of new and old meanings in the semantic structure of the word (Nerlich, 2003).

Nowadays the study of polysemy phenomenon is based on two main trends. The first one is conducted within the cognitive linguistics framework. The other one is introduced within the computational semantic frameworks, which includes the generative lexicon account more notably. But both these trends are parallel connected with each other, according to the way the work is done within the relatively new field of lexical pragmatics. The base of this approach is the communicative aspect of polysemy. It means “the interaction between the linguistically-encoded content and the contextual information in the derivation of the speaker-intended lexical meanings” (Falkum, 2011, p. 13).

Brigitte Nerlich and David Clark have a slightly different opinion in their analysis. They emphasize that there is no polysemy in the real usage. It means that each statement always has a word in a certain context, so there is only one appropriate meaning that makes sense. Individual words can often be ambiguous. But if they are included in the context, you can usually assign only a certain meaning. Based on this fact, the speaker uses only one meaning of the polysemic word and puts it into the context. Therefore, correspondingly, the listener can automatically assign only one correct meaning to polysemic words. They admit that considering polysemy as a phenomenon is possible only from a synchronous point of view as an “artefact of a linguistic analysis” (Nerlich, 2003, p. 4), because in this case the polysemic word should be considered separately from the context for exploring of its polysemy.

Similarly, a professor at the University of Turku in Finland believes that a true polysemy is an exception for lexical items. He justifies this by the fact that the number of meanings variants of polysemic words in dictionaries can be reduced by combining a structural and functional analysis with the ideas of a prototype theory. The semantic component determines the basic meaning of the word, and the prototype of the semantic component meaning shows the relationship with the non-linguistic world. That is, the idea makes it possible to take into account the current meanings and their possible lexicalization (Nikula, 2011, p. 213). He calls it “double coding” of word meanings. At first, the meanings are sharply separated from each other, and later acquire similarity due to the formation of connections with the extralinguistic world, through human perception of reality (ibid., p. 221).

The scientist demonstrates an example of parsing the German word “der Vogel” – a bird, which in “Duden Dictionary” has three meanings: 1. A vertebrate whose body is covered with feathers, has a beak and wings instead of forelegs that allow it to fly; 2. A person who is marked by something unusual, special; 3. The plane. In general, these meanings coincide with those ones recorded in the Ukrainian dictionary. According to the theory of prototypes, H. Nikula analyses the meaning into several special characteristics: “living creature”, “able to fly”, “vertebrate”, “covered with feathers”, “has wings”, “lays eggs”, “has a beak”. This structural analysis of characteristics indicates that the bird belongs to the category of words to denote living beings, and it can be contrasted with words to denote other living beings, such as a man, a dog, a monkey, a fish, a snake, and so on.

The feature “can fly” is obviously central. Of course, there are birds that do not know how to fly, but we will not consider such an assumption significant. As we can see, the characteristics first of all indicate differences and similarities and thus make it possible to form new meanings by analogy and distinguish them from each other. They are abstractions from reality, and, being connected with this reality, they, in turn, structure it.

However, these features go on structuring the idea of a prototype bird, which is also a possible lexicalized interpretation of the set of described features. In the context, this lexicalized idea is modified to a greater or less extent, resulting in a “current meaning” (or “textual meaning”), which consists of a structural meaning and a modified, context-adapted idea. That is, in this example, we transfer the central feature “can fly”, adding a remote external resemblance to the word “plane”. Such a lexicalized interpretation “makes it clear” to our senses, which represent our connection with the world (Nikula, 2011, p. 215). After the analysis of the aforementioned arguments, we see that the scientist insists on the unity of meanings of the polysemic word in terms of its characteristics. In other words, derived meanings are placed in the interpretation of the basic meaning depending on the defined context. We build a context for the use of a word in a metaphorical meaning specified on the analogy and characteristics inherent in the basic meaning.

Such an opinion is also presented in Ukrainian linguistics. It was once defended by the famous researcher O. Potebnya, who noted that “ambiguity is a false concept: there are two words where there are two meanings” (Потебня, 1958, p. 33).

6. Discussion.

The presence of different scientific views and their argumentation show that not all linguists are convinced of the existence of the lexical polysemy phenomenon. As we can observe, the contradiction in the study of the polysemy phenomenon has many factors that provoke discussions among scientists. Their arguments result in new and new research. But despite the arguments against the existence of the polysemy phenomenon, most scholars are inclined to think about its universality.

The polysemy is present not only in the process of the language mastering and developing; this phenomenon explains a large number of cases of historical change of the language, indicating a diachronic change in terms of synchronous variation. In cognitive linguistics, a word is considered to be a category that, in the case of polysemy, has several meanings connected through cognitive relations, for instance, a metaphor. Numerous scholars have used the paradigm of cognitive linguistics to show the direction of the lexical language change. After all, the methods of cognitive linguistics allow us to observe aspects of polysemy in phonology, morphology and syntax, although classical polysemy refers primarily to vocabulary.

Polysemy is recognized in lexical semantics, which explores not only the content but also the grammatical aspects of individual words and expressions. But here a new problem has arisen – it has always been difficult to find a difference between polysemy and homonymy. These two phenomena are closely related. For the most part, polysemy and homonymy are considered separately, and yet their commonality is paramount. This common essence is that both forms of lexical ambiguity have a similar effect on the form-semantic relationship of the linguistic sign. The oral and written context in which the words are placed is important, because homonymy and polysemy should not lead to communication problems. Sometimes it is difficult to decide whether a particular case of lexical ambiguity can be attributed to the phenomenon of homonymy or the emergence of polysemy.

We can say that the polysemy of lexical units functions in the system of language, and in speech the word is always unambiguous. But still, the concept of “speech” implies not only the speaker, for whom the word is unambiguous and corresponds to his understanding, but also the listener, who cannot always find the meaning fixed in the word.

Ingrid Falkum in his work “Semantics and Pragmatics of Polysemy” defines the so-called paradox of polysemy, referring to the discrepancy between the relative easiness with which it is used and understood in communication, and the range of theoretical and descriptive problems with which it is connected in lexicography, modelling of the natural languages and translation. In lexical semantics it is widely believed that the meanings of words should be based on complex representations in order to capture the semantic connections that will become elements of the polysemic unit. The researcher suggests taking into account polysemy in coordination with an adequate pragmatic theory (Falkum, 2011, p. 9).

It may mean that the unity of form and content is formed in the mind of the speaker, as well as the listener then. In this respect the linguistic content does not go beyond human consciousness, especially the process of linguistic meanings formation belongs entirely to a man as a participant in the communication, observer, bringer of experience and knowledge. This can be determined by a cognitive approach to the study of lexical items.

A word “polysemy” is the semantics of meanings that are related not only to each other but also to the meanings of other words. When studying the scope of the semantic structure

of such words, it is necessary to consider the whole set of their meanings, frequency of use, and breadth of use, and the relationship of these meanings within the word and the frameworks of each of them. It is important to remember that all meanings of a polysemic word are connected by certain common features of semantic elements. When, under the influence of certain factors, one of the polysemic meanings becomes obsolete, the connection formed on its features also disappears.

The ambiguity of a word is a consequence of a person's cognitive activity, and the peculiarity of his/her thinking and worldview allows him/her to choose a necessary meaning from several ones, which is typical of a certain communicative situation. I. Falkum and A. Vicente point out that lexical meanings are rich in conceptual information, and, as a rule, listeners should choose only part or aspect of the whole informational content provided by lexical meanings (Falkum, Vicente, 2015, p. 6).

D. Voronina-Prihodii argues this approach in her paper. She notes that people accumulate the mental experience of mankind due to the language, its lexical content in particular. It allows to systematize and categorize the phenomena of reality. The linguistic sign has boundless potential and depends only on the knowledge of reality by mankind (Voronina-Prihodii, 2019, p. 124). In other words, the whole process of cognitive thinking of mankind has a linguistic form – the presence of polysemic words.

A similar opinion is outlined in the numerous works of Yu. Shepel and M. Votintseva. They define that “on the one hand polysemy manifests itself as a consequence arising from the nature of the language, and on the other hand it comes from the peculiarities of human consciousness” (Шепель, Вотінцева, 2017, p. 229). Words of natural languages represent a universal basis for the development of polysemy; almost any unit of the language has a sufficient potential for the development of new meanings denoting different concepts, thus demonstrating the principle of saving human cognitive effort in practice.

In a common monograph devoted to the study of the relationship between unambiguity and ambiguity of words in the language, Yu. Shepel and M. Votintseva refer to P. Dean as a leading specialist in the study of the cognitive nature of polysemy. According to the scholar, there are three key points in the study of polysemy: “1) sense selection; 2) semantic relatedness; 3) category identity” (ibid., 2017, p. 230).

Following these guidelines, by choosing an adequate meaning you have to keep in mind the context in which the word will be used. We have already mentioned this. It is also worth noting the presence of semantic connections in the structure of word meanings. The research has shown that a relatively small set of basic concepts links derived meanings with the overall human experience. That is, the semantic connection is the result of the human consciousness functioning. Based on this thought, researchers conclude that from the viewpoint of cognitive linguistics, polysemy is “a natural consequence of the flexibility of conceptual organization and the peculiarities of its structure” (ibid., 2017, p. 231).

Exploring the relationships and correlations of the meanings of a polysemic word and the formation of its semantic structure, it is worth referring to the work of A. Shumeikina, who studied modern approaches to the analysis of the semantic structure of a polysemic word. She systematized the scientists' point of views on the relationship of meanings in the structure of the polysemic unit in three main areas:

- according to such scholars as I. Arnold, A. Gryshchenko, all the meanings of a polysemic word are in a hierarchical relationship with each other;
- B. Zvegintsev promotes the theory that the meanings of a polysemic word are equal and independent of each other;
- the most convincing was the theory, which adheres to Yu. Stepanov, V. Hak, L. Lysychenko, J. Lyons: both equal (independent) and unequal (hierarchical) relations

between the meanings of a polysemic word are possible at the same time (Шумейкіна, 2009, p. 63).

The phenomenon of polysemy is an important characteristic of all languages in the world. It causes the universality of the language as a means of communication. It performs important language functions, among which the most essential are communicative and cognitive. Polysemy is a means of forming an authentic and unique system of lexical meanings for each language. The basis of it is the specific conditions and historical development of the language, the system of its external differences. The presence of such external differences is a unique lexicon for each language, the elements of which often cannot be compared with the same elements of another language. Again, it is worth mentioning the limited language resources and the infinity of human experience, independent ideas that require verbal expression. As a result, polysemy becomes a means for the development of the infinite potential of words. Speakers catch changes in the semantic structure of polysemic words and activate them in speech.

V. Levitsky supports the idea of the universality and importance of the existence of the phenomenon of polysemy and emphasizes that the most important feature of polysemy is the presence of connections between individual meanings of the word. He calls this property of the polysemic word as a semantic integrity. A special characteristic feature of polysemic word, as he notes, is the lack of the established frameworks between the individual components of the word semantic structure, vagueness, blurring and unambiguity; diffuse of lexical meaning (Левицький, 2006, p. 55). This feature provides later a possibility of semantic development of the word and its functioning in the language in the historical development. But at the same time this characteristic complicates the study and ways of presenting a set of polysemic meanings in dictionaries.

It is no doubt that the prevalence of polysemy in natural languages is growing. Ingrid Falkum emphasizes that the main question is why and how this phenomenon exists. What contributes to polysemy in the language system? Why do we use one word better to describe different things or properties than different words for each concept, and what cognitive abilities allow us to do so? (Falkum, 2011, p. 7).

Polysemy is a semasiological process of the development and formation of the language systems and it is inherent in both common language and professional subtexts. But if for the everyday language it has undoubtedly a positive effect in the form of expansion and enrichment of the lexical structure of the language, then in professional subtexts it hinders to some extent, because it causes inaccuracy and violates the unambiguity of terms. And in the scientific sphere, one of the main traditional requirements for the term is its homonymy. If within a particular field the term has one meaning, it can be considered ideal for streamlining and standardizing the field terminology. But this is difficult to achieve in practice, so it is safe to say that ambiguity in terms occurs as often as in ordinary words. This is due to the fact that the form of the language sign is not developing as actively as its content. This can be called a clear example of the fact that the conceptual meaning is the basis of the word meaning. It combines the word with the concept of a real phenomenon, which it names. In other words, polysemy does not violate the unity law of word and concept, but only shows the inconsistency of the internal structure of the lexical structure of the language with the system of concepts that can be expressed. The real functioning of polysemy is present in everyday life along with the science. To cover a particular object or phenomenon fully, the speaker must hold lots of word meanings.

For a better and deeper understanding of the polysemy phenomenon O. Ogui proposes to consider it in three aspects: those of synchrony, diachrony and panchrony. The scientist emphasizes that this will allow to analyse the components of a synthetic language activity

(language and speech) and to conduct their further synthesis. Thus, in synchrony, O. Ogui defines the phenomenon of polysemy as “a process and result of constant use of a certain sound format in different applications, which create a corresponding grid of a normative use of the word” (Огуй, 2000, p. 21). That is, by studying polysemy through a synchronous approach, we record the different meanings of polysemic words, their meanings, and the nature of their relationships. The meaning that first comes to mind, or that can be understood without a special context, can represent the whole semantic structure of the word. This meaning is called the main meaning, or central meaning. It is placed first in synchronous dictionaries. Other meanings are called peripheral or insignificant.

Within the diachronic aspect, the polysemy phenomenon is manifested “as the use of a historically identical word to express different concepts. In essence, it (polysemy) is the result of procedural semantic changes, partially corresponding to the definition of semantic changes and semantic derivation” (ibid., p. 21). In other words, if the polysemic word is considered diachronically, the central factor is its historical development, change of meaning.

The meaning, recorded first in the language, in this case, is called the primary meaning and is registered in historical dictionaries at first. Other meanings are secondary, derivative and are located after the primary meaning. Due to the historical variability of the semantic structure of a polysemic unit, the primary meaning of a word may disappear over time or it may not be the most representative of the whole structure, or one of the secondary meanings may become a primary meaning.

V. Levitsky, conducting etymological and semasiological research in the field of Germanic languages, concludes that all meanings of a polysemic word have a common feature and may be derived from a single basic meaning. Turning to the information in the dictionary, you can find the entire meaning. It means the set of basic meanings under one common word. Etymologically, the emergence of different meanings can be traced to a common source – the differences arise due to the metaphorical expansion (Левицький, 2006, p. 42). This statement of the scientist contains two very important truths. On the one hand, the different meanings of a word in terms of their content must have something in common. The second fact is the so-called etymological criterion, which helps us to recognize the phenomena of polysemy and homonymy: if different meanings of a word can be deduced from the basic meaning, then the phenomenon of polysemy occurs.

O. Potebnya believes that polysemy can exist as long as the semantic connection between the meanings of the polysemic word can be traced in the form of a common feature or a semantic part. If this connection is lost, the semantic structure of the word loses its integrity, and here homonyms appear (Потебня, 1958, p. 131). R. Kuzmina points out this fact in her paper: “typicality, recurrence, ordinariness of the connection between two meanings testifies to polysemy, and on the contrary, separateness, exclusivity, uniqueness of the connection indicate homonymy” (Кузьмина, 2006, p. 131).

Yu. Shepel argues that to determine the framework between polysemy and homonymy, it is necessary to study the set of external and internal features in a single field, attention should be paid to the presence or absence of meaning in the semantics of such words, and in case of loss of motivated common feature in the semantic structure of a polysemic word they can be considered homonyms (Шепель, 2018). He points out that “polysemy is based on the interdependence of the meanings of a word: all its meanings are based on a common core meaning” (ibid.). But we should not forget that in the process of development and word usage not all meanings remain central ones and occupy a permanent place in the semantic structure of the word. The cases when a polysemic word is divided into several words that

have only a common sound form have been studied. This indicates the formation of several homonyms.

In the study of approaches to distinguishing between the phenomena of polysemy and homonymy S. Kantemir makes specific generalizations, such as:

– the problem of distinguishing between polysemy and homonymy can be solved only through a combination of different criteria and a systematic approach;

– the processes of “homonymization” and “polysemantization” in the language take place in parallel, “because some words seek for independence while others seek for the way to expand their semantic scope”;

– the distinction between the phenomena of polysemy and homonymy cannot be made once and for all, because these phenomena are in constant development;

– it is necessary to analyse the functioning of the specifics of the word for the determination and distinguishing of the polysemy and homonymy (Кантемір, 2012).

For example, we will consider the word “кінь” – a horse. In the dictionary, the word is given as a polysemic one having three meanings: 1. Large domestic equine animal, which is used to transport people and goods; 2. Chess piece that is represented by a horse’s head and neck; 3. Leather upholstered log on four legs for gymnastic exercises (АТСУМ). These meanings have some similarities, which allow us to consider the word “horse” ambiguous, where the first meaning is initial or main, and the other two meanings are transferred or derived ones. The chosen word is relevant for the description from the angle of the German language, having the difference only in the order of derived meanings. H Nikula on the example of the word “das Pferd” explains that the set of semantic characteristics associated with the first meaning of the word, “causes the recipient to imagine a prototype animal with a certain appearance and certain potential functions, which can also be realized as visual representations. Therefore, the central function of semantic characteristics is the ability of prototypes to evoke images that allow our senses to identify potential or current reference objects in non-linguistic reality” (Nikula, 2013, p. 225).

The second and third meanings are motivated by traits that show a certain resemblance to the animal. The second meaning “chess piece” has an external resemblance due to the horse’s head, which performs an identification function. Other functional similarities are even more important for the game. Like a real horse, this chess piece, unlike other chess pieces, can “jump over obstacles”. And the third meaning of “gymnastic equipment” is the body, long legs and handles, which have a certain resemblance to a horse saddle, which builds an association with riding.

It is obvious that in this example we are talking about polysemy, as it is easy to trace the semantic relationship between all meanings. If there is a break in the chain of semantic meanings, then there are homonymous forms with different meanings. In English, the word “horse” has only two meanings: an animal and a sports projectile, while the third meaning, which is present in Ukrainian and German, has the equivalent of “knight” – a rider, a knight. Obviously, the association is built on a different functional feature. This leads to the conclusion that in the case of imposing one or another meaning on always new objects of the surrounding reality, especially in the process of thinking, the semantic structure of a polysemic word develops, generalizing and abstract cognitive features are formed, which underlie the semantics of the word.

The problem of determining the difference between the individual meanings of a polysemic word by the probability of having a common semantic core, which unites all the meanings of the word, is also an important component in the study of polysemy. Scientists have proposed a lexical prototype as a meaningful core due to the long-term research to determine the semantic commonality of meanings that function within a single semantic

structure. S. Pesina devoted a considerable amount of work to the study of approaches to determining the semantic core of a polysemic word. Under the concept of “lexical prototype” she understands “invariant-associative complex, fixed in the minds of speakers, formed not only on the basis of semantic structure of the word, grammatical structure, word-forming structure, motivational connections, but also on the existing tradition of a word usage” (Песина, 2005, p. 53). The prototype is a kind of stereotype that is formed in groups of people as a result of the same perception of reality. This can facilitate the process of communication itself by pointing to the object in general, relieving speakers of the need to independently process all possible situations and allowing them to use the experience of previous generations.

According to the theory of the lexical prototype of a polysemic word, all meanings are reduced to a meaningful core. This indicates that the semantic structure of a polysemic unit is a hierarchically arranged system in which all meanings are directly or indirectly subordinate to the main meaning. The lexical prototype acts as a result of numerous actualizations of the meaning of a particular polysemic unit in the language.

The new lexical units appear in the process of developing ambiguity on the basis of existing meanings. It helps to convey the maximum amount of information using the minimum number of words. Therefore, scientists believe the main functions of polysemy is, firstly, the ability to act as a limitless and economical source of nomination, the need for which is constant for the successful development and functioning of the lexical system of the language. At the same time, it contributes to a more efficient functioning of memory, better memorization, storage and reproduction of information: the equality of the language sign form, which is present in several thought models, contributes to their convergence of conceptual content. This means that a person finds similar features between certain objects and phenomena of reality and on the basis of these similarities he/she calls them by the same words. The simplest example is the word “крило” – a wing: 1. The lethal organ of birds, insects and some mammals; 2. Fin of fish; 3. Fixed relative to the fuselage flat surface of the aircraft, supporting it in the air during flight; 4. Rotating blade of a windmill, turbine, steamer wheels; 5. Underwater part of the hull of a high-speed vessel, which keeps it in the maximum surface position during movement; 6. Tin canopy over the wheel of a car, crew, etc. to protect against dust, swamp; 7. The working part reels the harvester, the header of the combine, which bends the mown mass to the cutting machine and throws it sideways; 8. The lateral part of the building, a plane; 9. Lateral part of the fighting order; flank; 10. Extreme grouping of any political organization, direction (АТСУМ).

As we can see, in the Ukrainian language it has several meanings, which are based on the similarity of certain features. In addition, these meanings are disclosed and used for general domestic communication, and in the professional background of various sciences and fields of human activity. A component analysis of the dictionary definitions of this word in the German “Duden Dictionary” and comparison of the set of meanings indicate that the word “der Flügel” coincides with the Ukrainian equivalent in 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 meanings, and the other meanings have other names. But the German word, in turn, means “a large, piano-like musical instrument on three legs with a flat sound box, resembling the shape of a bird’s wing, the lid of which can be raised and in which the strings are stretched horizontally in the direction of the keys” (DUDEN), which corresponds to the word “рояль” – “рояль” in the Ukrainian language. According to the paper, in the “Longman Dictionary” in the English language, the word “wing” is also ambiguous and coincides with the Ukrainian equivalent in 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 meanings, and it also corresponds to the German word for denoting a “piano”.

In addition to the above-mentioned functions, polysemy plays an important role in human cognition of the world. Man uses in his life not only his own knowledge and experience, but also social knowledge, acquired by the previous generations. This is reflected in the language system, and thanks to polysemy, this knowledge can be classified and divided into categories. Finally, polysemy helps to preserve the unity of the word and ensure the semantic stability of significant layers of vocabulary. Frequently the change of objects and phenomena of reality does not require a change of their names, while their semantics has significant changes. Already familiar names are transferred to a new series of objects or phenomena that arise in the process of society development, especially if their purpose has remained unchanged. For example, the word “хліб” – bread. Today it means a product that is significantly different from what it meant a century ago. But, despite this, its main meaning is the following one: 1. Food baked from flour / The main vital food – is stored. At the same time, its derivative meanings have been preserved, although their semantics have not changed to such an extent: 2. The grain from which flour is made; 3. Cereals (rye, wheat, etc.) on the stump / Unthreshed cereals / Grain harvest; 4. Livelihoods / earnings; 5. Maintenance, provision of someone / Something basic, most necessary for functioning, existence, etc. (АТСУМ). One can compare: the German equivalent of the word “das Brot” has two meanings, which correspond to 1 and 4 meanings in the Ukrainian dictionary, and in English the word “bread” has 1 and 4 meanings, as well as the obsolete meaning “money”.

In each language, vocabulary is formed, as we know, not just from a set of lexical items. It has a structural unity, the elements of which are closely interconnected. This structure has been formed over many centuries, constantly updated, enriched and improved. In its dynamic development, the language must still retain certain stable features. This rule allows to preserve the possibility of understanding and communication between native speakers and generations in the process of historical development.

7. Conclusions.

Thus, we have reviewed the literature on the issue of polysemy. After analysing the opinions of scientists and comparing them, we can emphasize the discussion of the research question and the argumentation of opposing statements. Some scholars insist on the fact that “perfect” language consists of words that have the same meaning, and they refuse to acknowledge the phenomenon of polysemy. Others believe that such “unambiguity” reduces the possibilities of the language, deprives it of national identity, so they insist on the positive meaning of polysemy.

Numerous studies of the phenomenon of polysemy and polysemic words confirm that the phenomena, processes, and patterns that occur at the lexical level are best reflected in the semantic structure of a polysemic unit. The main reasons for such changes are the consequences of any historical, cultural, socio-political, economic changes in society.

Methods of distinguishing between polysemy and homonymy are also quite ambiguous and disputable. Scientists differ in the ways of this problem solving in their viewpoints. The main approaches are based on the fact that the word is ambiguous regardless of the context; the word acquires its ambiguity precisely in the context; the word does not matter at all without the context.

Finally, it should be noted that the phenomenon of polysemy is an effective means of expanding the linguistic potential of the language, by transforming existing meanings and the emergence of new meanings in the process of continuous development of vocabulary. In addition, the set of meanings of polysemic words are powerful means of expression, imagery, emotionality of languages.

Finally, for adequate communication the speaker needs not only to know the meaning of the word, to understand what it means, but also to realize in what connection it is with other words and how it combines with them.

The debatable views of scientists motivate further study of the polysemy phenomenon. In particular, it is important to research its consideration as a communicative phenomenon and its role in various spheres of human activity.

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Анотація

У статті досліджуються особливості виникнення та функціонування лексичної полісемії в різних мовах, зокрема наводяться приклади у розрізі української, німецької та англійської мов. Розглянуто дискурс українських вчених у підходах до вивчення причин виникнення багатозначних слів, відношень між значеннями багатозначного слова, розмежування явищ полісемії та омонімії, мовних функцій полісемантів. Обґрунтовано думку про те, що багатозначність слів у різних мовах не є випадковим явищем.

Акцентовано на тому, що наявність обмеженого об'єму лексики, яка пов'язана з якісними особливостями фізіологічного механізму людського мозку (пам'яті), спричиняє виникнення багатозначних слів. Показано, що кожне багатозначне слово має відносно постійне змістове ядро, незалежне від контексту, що є необхідною основою функціонування полісемантів, і забезпечує семантичну цілісність слова. Хоча множина значень полісемантичного слова в різних мовах відрізняється, явище полісемії є універсальним для всіх мов. Воно дозволяє розширити мовний номінативний потенціал і, враховуючи економічність мови, уникнути збільшення кількості лексичних одиниць.

Описано необхідність визначення природи лексичного значення слова на рівні мови і мовлення, його меж, поняття семантичної структури багатозначного слова, змістовного ядра слова, зв'язків, співвідношення і функціонування різних значень слова. Охарактеризовано основні фактори впливу на семантичні зміни в багатозначному слові, які полягають у різних змінах у процесі історичного розвитку мов, за яких слова набувають нових значень. Це спричиняє виникнення більшої кількості смислових сторін, які історично закріплюються у свідомості народу у зв'язку зі співвідношенням слів з певними явищами. Обґрунтовано ефективність явища полісемії як засобу для збільшення мовного потенціалу мови, завдяки форматуванню наявних значень та виникнення нових у процесі активного розвитку лексики.

Ключові слова: полісемія, діяхронія, синхронія, значення слова, семантичний зв'язок, семантична структура, омонімія.