COMPONENTS OF SEMANTIC REPRESENTATION

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The problem of the meaning of the text - the end and
product of speech activity, is a central one both for theoret-
ical linguistics, and for the applied fields connected with
it, such as artificial intelligence, question answéring,
man-machine communication, etc.

The meaning of the text or, speaking more technically,
the semantic representation is not, as it has been considered
until recently, a homogeneous entity, that is why a specific-
ation of its main dissimilar components may be helpful for
theoretical and applied investigations.

Without striving for completeness and systematicness
I will enumerate some of these components. To avoid a possible
misunderstanding it should be emphasized that I proceed from
an assumption, which is far from being shared by everyone,
that the semantic representation of an utterance has to re-
flect the complete information pertaining to the proper
interpretation of this utterance, in connection with which I
would regard the opposition of semantics and pragmatics as
invalid.

a. _Situational component_ is that part of the semantic
representation which is intended (in the norm) of express the
main information content mapping some external (in relation
to the message as such and to the speech act) situation. This
component, undoubtedly, occupies the most prestigious posit-
ion in the hierarchy of the components. It is no mere chance

then that it constantly remains in the centre of attention
in semantic investigations, or that the main unit of the
syntactic level - the sentence, is adopted exactly for its
expression.

b. Referential component is a relational one; its funct-
ion is to correlate the units of the text with the ideas
about the units of reality, to identify these units and actual-
ize the sentence. The semantic representation, which lacks a
referential component, cannot be interpreted correctly. (The
typical representatives of referential meanings are articles,
the category of number, demonstrative pronouns.)

c. Modal component, being also relational, correlates a
proposition with the extralinguistic situation. This correl-
ation expresses the degree of the speaker's certainty of
reality/irreality of the proposition, the character of this
estimation being, as a matter of fact, continuous but not
discrete. On the one end of the scale of modality there is
the meaning of reality/irreality, on the other - that of un-
certainty, in between them there are various estimations of
the degree of the speaker's certainty in relation to reality/
/irreality. (The typical representatives of modal meanings ,
are moods, modal verbs, parenthetic modal words.)

d. Deictic component correlates the content of an utter-
ance with coordinates of the speech act. Owing to the anthro-
po- and egocentrism of the natural language the orientation
of an utterance towards the speaker is perceived as the speech
norm. (The regular means for expressing deictic meanings are
the categories of person and tense, formulas of politeness,
some categories of localization.)

e. Packaging component correlates each utterance as a
part of the discourse with the whole of the discourse. The
importance of this component is determined by the basically
non-linear character of the meaning and by the compositional
problems connected with this. The non-linear meaning can be
'stretched' into a linear string by a great variety of ways,

but the arbitrariness of such a choice is extreemly problematic. The packaging component must not only currently coordinate the generated message with the previous text, but simultaneously as if control the text from the point of view of the hearer's comfort in its perception. This component partially coincides with the so called actual division of the sentence. (The units of this component are theme-rheme, old-new information, contrastiveness, topic, empathy, various kinds of anaphoric expressions, etc.)

f. Logical component correlates, or coordinates, the text with the speaker's knowledge of the world, provides the transition from the old to the new knowledge, and it is responsible for the meaningfulness of the text. (The essential elements of this component are presuppositions and the assertive part of an utterance.)

g. Emotive component correlates the content with the personality of the speaker, with his wishes, evaluations, his psychophysical condition. (It is usually, though not always, expressed by prosody.)

h. Illocutionary component correlates the utterance with the speaker's speech intentions; viz. to inform the hearer, to influence his behaviour and actions, to stimulate his emotional, verbal or intellectual reaction, etc. - what is generally connected with the notion of illocutionary force.

What can be deduced from this apparently incomplete enumeration?

1. It seems that the inability of natural languages to express, autonomously and on the surface, various components of semantic representation and the resulting necessity to amalgamate them, become obvious. It is what happens in the functioning of all natural languages, although the degree of the autonomy of this or that component can vary. The fact that components of semantic representation are not given

directly in the text, explains why some of them have been discovered comparatively late.

2. This extended interpretation of the meaning of the text, which leads to including in the structure of semantic representation the components enumerated above, proceeds from a presumption that it is wrong to regard the meaning of the text as given to the speaker in advance to be only verbally expressed. In the process of a thought-speech act the meaning is being created, or formed, that is for the functioning model of language the terminal components are not meaning and text, but thought and (vocal) speech. Unless this point of view becomes axiomatic, many fundamental contradictions of linguistic theory as well as obstacles to solving a number of applied problems, cannot be overcome.