

EXPLORING THE PRAGMATIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORD MEANING AND TEXTUAL CONTENT IN A SCIENTIFIC PAPER

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The ultimate goal of any communicative act is to create meaning. The meaningful combination of language units creates the overall content of oral or written communication and realizes the communicative intent of the writer or speaker. The aim of the present article is to study how the communicative intent of the writer unfolds through the use of words having a specific semantic component as part of the lexical meaning. Words that have a negative semantic component as part of denotative meaning as well as phrases which contain one or more words with negative denotative meaning have been picked out from the article “Genocide” by R. Lemkin¹ and studied. The communicative-semantic and pragmatic analyses of the practical material has revealed that with the help of the words and phrases containing negative referential meaning, the author creates a convincing and powerful content and achieves his goal, which is to condemn genocidal activities.

Key words: *semantics, lexicology, word meaning, denotation, persuasion, genocide, communicative-pragmatic approach*

Introduction

The words are the basic units of the language system which contain meaning and create meaningful chunks of language. In the natural flow of speech the words are assembled to form content, that is, the subject matter of oral or written communication. The process of grouping the lexical units together is regulated by certain linguistic and extralinguistic factors such as collocability, conformity to language usage in terms of grammar and style, compliance with the semantic, communicative and pragmatic requirements of the context and so on. The analysis of word meaning and content has been carried out from different standpoints in linguistics, such as lexicology and semasiology in particular, discourse analysis, pragmatics and stylistics². The aim of the present article is to explore how the communicative intent of the writer unfolds through the use of words having specific lexical meaning. The research is carried out on the mate-

¹ **Lemkin R.**, Genocide // American Scholar, Vol. 15, no. 2, 1946, p. 227-230.

² See **Palmer F. R.**, Semantics (A New Outline), Moscow, 1982, **Lyons J.**, Linguistic Semantics: An Introduction, CUP, 1996, **Halliday M.A.K.**, Language as Social Semiotic. The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning, London, Edward Arnold, 1979, **Johnstone B.**, Discourse Analysis, N.Y., Blackwell Publishing, 2002, **Eikmeyer H.-J.**, Word, Sentence and Text Meaning // Text and Discourse Constitution (Empirical Aspects, Theoretical Approaches), ed. by J. S. Petöfi, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin-N. Y., 1988, էջ 215-268, **Norricks N. R.**, Discourse and Semantics // The Handbook of Discourse Analysis, ed. by D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, H. Hamilton, Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, USA, Oxford UK, 2001, p. 76-99.

rial of the article ‘‘Genocide’’ by R. Lemkin³. The words that have a negative semantic component as part of denotative meaning and the phrases which contain words with negative denotative meaning have been picked out from the article and studied by utilizing qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The analysis of the practical material is carried out from communicative-semantic and pragmatic perspectives, taking into consideration the lexicological aspects of word meaning⁴.

The topic of the article deals with an exceptionally antihuman and savage action – genocide, a brutal and atrocious crime against mankind which must be condemned and banned. The author’s communicative intent is to persuade the readers that extermination of groups of people on the basis of their ethnic, racial, religious or any other category is a crime which should be termed ‘genocide’. He promotes the idea that any genocidal act must be punishable by international law. The study of the language material of the article reveals that with the help of the words and phrases containing negative referential meaning, the author creates a convincing and powerful content and achieves his goal, which is to condemn genocidal activities.

Pragmatic Approach to Lexical Meaning and Content

The lexicological interpretation of lexical meaning as ‘‘the main material part of the world, which reflects the concept that the given word expresses and the basic properties of the thing it denotes’’⁵ is, undoubtedly, common knowledge. So is the admission of signification as the inherent property of the word and the acknowledgement of denotative and connotative parts of meaning in Lexicology⁶. The content of any piece of language product is formed on the basis of the interplay of these two major aspects of word meaning, with either connotative or denotative meaning prevailing in different styles of language. The present research is conducted on the material of a scholarly article, i. e. a piece of writing which is formulated on the basis of scientific prose. Obviously, it has all the characteristic features of this functional style, such as precision, objectiveness and absence of emotiveness⁷. Having the aim of examining the issue of creating textual content via word meaning, my analysis will address this

³ R. Lemkin was a lawyer of Jewish descent whose family suffered from the Holocaust. He is best known for coining the term ‘‘genocide’’ and initiating the Genocide Convention. Thanks largely to his efforts, the United Nations approved the Genocide Convention, and it was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1948. Cf. **Gasparyan S., Sh. Paronyan, A. Chubaryan, G. Muradyan**, Raphael Lemkin’s Draft Convention on Genocide and the 1948 UN Convention: A Comparative Discourse Study, Yerevan, YSU Press, 2016.

⁴ See **Cruse D. A.**, *Lexical Semantics*, CUP, N.Y., 2001, **Arnold I.**, *The English Word*, M., Высшая школа, 1973.

⁵ **Girunyan G.**, *English Lexicology (Theoretical Course)*, Եր., Հեղինակային հրատարակություն, 2009, էջ 34:

⁶ **Minaeva L.**, *English Lexicology and Lexicography*, Astrel, Moscow, 2007, R. Ginsburg, S. Khidekel, G. Knyazeva, A. Sankin, *A Course in Modern Lexicology*, Moscow, 1979.

⁷ See **Anigbogu N. C.**, *The Language of Science: A Lexical Study of Academic Writing in Computer Science* // *British Journal of English Linguistics*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2016. file: // C:/Users/paron/Downloads/THE_LANGUAGE_OF_SCIENCE_pdf.pdf

aspect of the scientific material.

The aim of any research article is to prove a hypothesis, to study an object or a law, to unveil the characteristic features of a phenomenon or a condition, and to address many other scientific issues. Due to the necessity of producing an impartial, exact and accurate picture of a condition, the language employed in scientific literature is usually devoid of explicit emotiveness. The terms and terminological combinations, standard clichés and phrases, stylistically neutral words and the words used in their primary logical meaning create the factual, empirical or technical content of the research which should be unbiased and knowledge-based. Hence, we can state that in the language of scientific prose the denotative meaning, that is, the referential and extentional part of word meaning, comes to the fore. Anyhow, many linguists state that emotiveness is not completely or unconditionally excluded from research articles. As I. R. Galperin notes, there may be hypotheses, pronouncements and conclusions which, being backed up by strong belief, call for the use of some emotionally coloured words: "Our emotional reaction to facts and ideas may bear valuable information, as it itself springs from the inner qualities of these facts and ideas. We depend in no small degree upon our emotional reactions for knowledge of the outer world"⁸.

The topic of R. Lemkin's article concerns a very sensitive and heavy topic, genocide, atrocious and cruel mass killing of humans. The author's goal is to show the evil sides of this abhorring action and to persuade the readers to side with him in his attempt to raise his voice against this crime. Naturally, the tone of the language presupposes a certain amount of the author's emotional reaction to the facts and ideas formulated in it. Admittedly, it is quite impossible to write about massacres, tortures and mass deportations of people without showing any emotional attitude to those facts. Speaking about emotions, it is customary to distinguish between two opposite poles of emotive evaluation – positive and negative. The act of genocide, naturally, evokes negative feelings and emotions. Hence, R. Lemkin structures his persuasive technique around creating a content that condemns genocide. He does this with the help of words and phrases that have a negative denotative semantic component. In the next part of the paper, I will analyze the words and phrases with negative denotative meaning, and try to reveal how they contribute to the condemnatory content of the article.

Negative Semantic Component as Part of Direct Referential Meaning

The article "Genocide", which was published in 1946, bears the horrifying impact of two major international crimes of the 20th century – the annihilation of the Armenian population in Turkey and the Jews in Germany. Addressing the ferocious military and political plans of Germany during the World War II, R. Lemkin states that the ultimate aim of the Nazi leaders, which was "planned

⁸ See Galperin I. R., *Stylistics*, Высшая школа, Москва, 1979, p. 312.

throughout occupied Europe”, was “mass obliteration of nationhood”, the destruction of “national, racial and religious groups – both biologically and culturally”. The idea to commit this vicious crime was suggested and supported by certain experiences from the past, such as the destruction of religious groups in the wars of Islam and the Crusades, the massacres of the Albigenses, Waldenses and Armenians. Firstly, R. Lemkin tries to coin a precise term for the concept of mass destruction of people - genocide. He defines genocide as “the crime of destroying national, racial or religious groups”. Further, he attempts to create an international legal framework through which genocidal actions in any part of the world will be punished by law and banned in the future.

R. Lemkin creates a content which imparts negative evaluation of the phenomenon under discussion. The communicative-semantic analysis of the words used in the article has revealed a great number of words which are related to the concept of genocide. The following words, which are picked out from the article, are nouns and verbs mainly which contain negative semantic component as part of referential meaning:

annihilate, conspiracy, crime, criminal, criminality, butchery, destroy, destruction, obliterate, eradicate, exterminate, massacre, murder, eradicate, genocide, homicide, hostility, killing, mistreatment, occupant, patricide, barbarity, persecution, punish, punishable, punishment, wipe out

In order to highlight the atmosphere of negative evaluation of the genocidal actions created by the author, let us illustrate the semantic structure of some of these words via dictionary entries⁹.

Annihilate – verb, to destroy completely, to destroy something or someone; to defeat entirely.

Barbarity – noun, behaviour that deliberately causes extreme pain or suffering to others; extreme cruelty.

Crime – noun, an activity that involves breaking the law; an illegal act or activity that may be punished by law; an activity that you think is immoral or is a big mistake.

Destruction – noun, the process of being destroyed; the action of causing so much damage to something that it no longer exists or cannot be repaired.

Obliterate – verb, means to remove all signs of something, either by destroying or covering it completely.

Exterminate – verb, to kill all the members of a group of people or animals; to get rid of or destroy completely.

Massacre – noun, the killing of a large number of people especially in a cruel way.

Murder – noun, the crime of killing somebody deliberately; the act of killing a person on purpose and illegally.

⁹ See Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, A. S. Hornby, 7th Edition, OUP.2006:

Eradicate – verb, to destroy or get rid of something; to remove utterly; to destroy completely as if down to the roots.

Genocide – noun, the deliberate killing of a race of people; the deliberate and systematic extermination of a national, racial, political, or cultural group.

Proceeding from the hypothesis that the choice of particular lexical units acquires certain significance for developing the textual content or the semantic framework in R. Lemkin’s article, word-frequency count has been applied to the textual material. The results of the count are shown on Chart 1.

The count of the words that have negative denotative meaning comes to prove that the repetitive use of this semantic component pursues a well-planned communicative-pragmatic strategy. The author generates a tense and oppressive atmosphere, he makes a strong impact on the public and persuades them to take action – to pass an international law that prevents and bans genocidal policy.

Chart 1

Crime/criminal/criminality	32
Genocide/genocidal	30
Destruction/destroy	12
massacre	3
Punish/punishment	4
Exterminate/extermination	3
annihilate	3
murder	2

Information Structure as an Outcome of Word Meaning

The communicative-pragmatic strategy to condemn the act of mass murders and persuade the readers to side with the author’s point of view becomes more apparent when contextual analysis is conducted. In fact, the chunks of words - expressions, word combinations and phrases which contain the words stated above, have a strong effect of negativity and create the serious and concerned tone of the writing. Let us observe how the information structure that has negative evaluation develops in the article. Firstly, I will pick out chunks of words that contain at least one word with negative denotative meaning presented on Chart 1. Further, I will observe some of these words in the context of the textual material, and highlight the communicative-pragmatic effect that the negative semantic component produces.

Genocide: *genocide as a national crime, genocidal practices, commit genocide, every specific act of genocide, by including genocide in the indictment, the crime of genocide, persons accused of genocide, the liability for genocide, the criminal philosophy of genocide, a state of genocide, punishment of genocide, anti-genocide clauses.*

(1) **Genocide** can be carried out through acts against individuals, when the ultimate intent is to annihilate the entire group composed of these individuals;

every specific act of **genocide** as directed against individuals as members of national or racial group is illegal under the Hague Convention.

(2) Only after the cessation of hostilities could the whole gruesome picture of **genocide** committed in the occupied countries be reviewed.

(3) The crime of **genocide** should be recognized therein as a conspiracy to exterminate national, religious or racial groups.

In the above statements, the author's goal is to prove that the term 'genocide' is the best legal term that should be used to name the act of deliberate mass killings of groups of people. In example (1), the infinitive *to annihilate* in the phrase "ultimate intent is to annihilate the entire group..." denotes the aim of the doer to perform an action which has a negative denotative meaning – to destroy something or someone. This meaning is increased with the help of the word combination *ultimate intent*, where the attribute *ultimate* implies an unacceptable act that is being performed. The adjective *ultimate* expresses the highest quality of something, "most extreme, best, worst, greatest, most importance, etc."¹⁰ Thus, the adjective *ultimate*, which modifies the subject *intent* as an attribute, conveys negative evaluation (worst) to the textual content.

In the phrase *gruesome picture of genocide* in example (2), the deprecation of the act of genocide is intensified with the adjective *gruesome* that expresses negative emotional evaluation. Furthermore, the noun *cessation* in the phrase *cessation of hostilities* has the meaning of stopping an action. It is more often modified by the noun *hostility* and conveys a negative impact to the textual content.

In example (3), the author calls genocide a crime, and the phrase *conspiracy to exterminate* expresses a hidden, secret desire to perform illegal and deplorable action – to kill all the members of a group of people.

Destruction: *destruction of whole populations, destruction of entire nations, destruction of millions, biological destruction of nations and races.*

(4) The last war has focused on the phenomenon of the **destruction** of whole populations – of national, racial and religious groups – both biologically and culturally.

(5) While society sought protection against individual crimes, or rather crimes directed against individuals, there has been no serious endeavor hitherto to prevent and punish the murder and **destruction** of millions.

In example (4), the noun *destruction* is the communicative focus of the prepositional phrase *destruction of whole populations*. It highlights the harmful action which causes complete damage to groups of people - nations, races, religious groups. In this context the author conveys the idea that genocide is destruction - a drastic and ruthless action. It leads to complete non-existence of

¹⁰ See Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, A. S. Hornby, 7th Edition, OUP.2006, p. 1596

groups of people and, therefore, it should be condemned and banned.

In example (5), the noun *destruction* is again used to denote damage to a great number of people - *destruction of millions*. By stressing this act, the author tries to persuade the readers that the result of this harmful performance is highly condemnable and the problem needs legal regulation. Moreover, the use of some other words with negative denotative meaning, such as *crimes* (2 times), *punish*, *murder*, increases the effect of creating a textual content that has a clear condemning attitude.

Crime/criminal: *crime without a name, individual crime, motivation of the crime, crime of destroying, a crime of only national importance, national crime, international crime, commit a crime, guilty of the crime of genocide, criminal intent*

(6) *The problem now arises as to whether it is a **crime** of only national importance, or a **crime** in which international society as such should be vitally interested. Many reasons speak for the second alternative. It would be impractical to treat genocide as a national **crime**, since by its very nature it is committed by the state or by powerful groups which have the backing of the state.*

(7) *By its very legal, moral and humanitarian nature, genocide must be considered an international **crime**.*

In the context of R. Lemkin's paper, the noun *crime*, which denotes a punishable thing, is related to an exceptionally blameworthy and culpable action – genocide. In example (6), the author uses the phrases *a crime of only national importance, a national crime*. Hence the harmful effect of this unlawful act is emphasized by extending the size of those who are responsible for it. Furthermore, the scale of responsibility, and therefore, the effect of transgression and atrocity is made even stronger by ascribing this criminal act to the moral responsibility of even a greater number of people – “*international society*”, “*powerful groups which have the backing of the state*”. R. Lemkin considers genocide to be an *international crime* and delegates the responsibility of preventing genocidal actions to a number of states, stressing the importance of preventing this evil action.

The analysis of the words containing negative denotative meaning reveals how these words shape the content of the article, develop the stern tone of the writing and convey the author's deprecatory attitude to the acts of mass killings that were committed against mankind.

The analysis of the practical material has also revealed another communicative tactics which increases R. Lemkin's accusation of the genocidal actions. In the word combinations which contain only one word with negative denotative meaning, both the words may acquire this meaning. As a result, the effect

of conveying condemnable tone to the textual content becomes stronger. For example:

Mass obliteration, mass barbarity, mass murder, mass persecution

(8) *In this way a **mass obliteration** of nationhoods had been planned throughout occupied Europe.*

(9) ***Mass persecutions** forced **mass flight**.*

The examples (8) and (9) contain the word combination 'mass+noun'. The adjective *mass* does not contain negative denotative component in its lexical meaning. In the article it modifies a noun with negative denotative meaning: *mass obliteration, mass persecutions, mass flight*. The scale of the misconduct is increased by attributing the responsibility for committing this shameful crime to a big group of people. Hence the discouragement of the author is reinforced, and so is the negativity of the content.

The analysis of the article enables us to conclude that the communicative intent of the R. Lemkin is to persuade the readers that extermination of groups of people on the basis of their ethnic, racial, religious or any other belonging is a crime which should be termed '*genocide*'. It must be considered an act which is punishable by international law. The aim of the author is accomplished on the lexical level, through the use of words having negative denotative meaning. The communicative-pragmatic analysis comes to prove that the author achieves his goal by creating a convincing and powerful content that condemns genocidal activities with the help of words and phrases containing negative referential meaning.

Conclusion

R. Lemkin's article 'Genocide' was written back in 1946. Despite the long time span separating us from the time it was written, almost 80 years, the problem of creating preventive legislative measures against genocide remains actual. The anxiety of the author concerning mass murders in different parts of the world is insistent, the need for preventing, condemning and banning criminal acts against humanity is still under question. The mechanism for stopping genocidal actions legally has not been found. Even in the 21st century the world suffers from the same vicious and sinful attacks of one group of people against another as it did many centuries before. The shameful evidence of this is the endorsement of genocidal policy and ethnic cleansing in Artshakh, launching aggressive mass attacks on the population in Syria, Iraq, Serbia, Ukraine and elsewhere. Today mankind needs peace, empathy, reconciliation, good-will and rapport as much as ever.

ՇՈՒՇԱՆԻԿ ՊԱՐՈՆՅԱՆ – *Բառիմաստի և տեքստի բովանդակության գործարանական փոփոխարարչության հարցը գիտական հոդվածում* – Յուրաբանչյուր հաղորդակցության վերջնական նպատակը իմաստ ստեղծելն է: Իմաստալից լեզվական միավորների համադրությամբ կառուցվում է բանավոր կամ գրավոր հաղորդակցության բովանդակությունը և իրագործվում գրողի կամ բանախոսի հաղորդակցական մտադրությունը: Սույն հոդվածի նպատակն է ցույց տալ, թե ինչպես է որոշակի բառիմաստային բաղադրիչ ունեցող բառեր օգտագործելու միջոցով տեքստի շարադրանքի մեջ ձևավորվում գրողի հաղորդակցական մտադրությունը: Ռ. Լեմկինի “Genocide” («Ցեղասպանություն») հոդվածից ընտրվել և ուսումնասիրվել են այն բառերը, որոնք ունեն բացասական իմաստային բաղադրիչ՝ որպես հիմնանշանակային իմաստի մաս, ինչպես նաև այն արտահայտությունները, որոնք պարունակում են մեկ կամ մի քանի բացասական նշանակություն ունեցող բառեր: Հոդվածի հաղորդակցական-իմաստային և գործարանական քննությամբ ցույց է տրվում, որ բացասական հիմնանշանակային իմաստ պարունակող բառերի և բառակապակցությունների օգնությամբ հեղինակը հասնում է իր հաղորդակցական նպատակին՝ ստեղծել ցեղասպանական գործողությունները դատապարտող համոզիչ և հզոր բովանդակություն:

Բանալի բառեր – *իմաստաբանություն, բառագիտություն, բառիմաստ, հիմնանշանակություն, համոզում, ցեղասպանություն, հաղորդակցական-գործարանական մոտեցում*

ШУШАНИК ПАРОНЯН – *Исследование прагматических отношений между значением слова и содержанием текста в научной статье.* – Конечная цель любого коммуникативного акта состоит в том, чтобы создать смысл. Сочетанием смысловых языковых единиц создается смысловое содержание устного или письменного общения и реализуется коммуникативное намерение пишущего или говорящего. Целью настоящей статьи является исследование реализации коммуникативного замысла писателя посредством использования слов в составе лексического значения которых имеется определенный семантический компонент. Из статьи Р. Лемкина «Genocide» («Геноцид») были отобраны и изучены слова, имеющие отрицательный семантический компонент в составе денотативного значения, а также словосочетания, в состав которых входит одно или несколько слов с отрицательным денотативным значением. Коммуникативно-семантический и прагматический анализ статьи показал, что с помощью слов и словосочетаний, содержащих негативное денотативное значение, автор создает убедительное и мощное содержание, осуждающее геноцидную деятельность, и тем самым достигает своей цели.

Ключевые слова: *семантика, лексикология, значение слова, денотативная соотнесенность, убеждение, коммуникативно-прагматический подход*