

Semantic change from sociocultural perspective

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Semantic change is a key object of interest for historical linguistics (Anttila 1989; Campbell 1998; Traugott & Dasher 2001), and, during recent decades, has also attracted an increasing number of researchers in cognitive linguistics (Geeraerts 1997; Győri 2002; Winters et al. 2010; Korfhagen 2017). In general, three aspects of semantic change (linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural) are singled out (e.g., Győri 2002, 147). Linguistic instruments for semantic change (metaphor and other figurative language) and its results (extension, restriction, melioration, pejoration, etc.) have been explored thoroughly (e.g., Hock 1986; McMahon 1994); however, there is no explanation from this perspective why a particular semantic change happens in a particular moment of time, but not earlier or later. It is unclear how potential links providing semantic change could be actualized, which processes are responsible for that. This leads, in particular, to a consistent opinion that semantic change is essentially sporadic (e.g., Hock & Joseph 1996, 244).

A cognitive approach to semantic change can clarify this issue. From the cognitive perspective, communicative demands are the main triggers for semantic shifts (Geeraerts 1997, 102-122; Győri 2002, 124, 144-154). An exploration of basic elements of these demands (such as expressivity and efficiency) alongside with an analysis of cognitive mechanisms providing a communicative response to them (e.g., analogy) and possible correlations between communicative needs and characteristics of particular lexical units or groups of units (expressed, e.g., in such factors as cue-validity, cognitive economy, perceived world structure, conjunctivity (Győri 2002, 144)) has been in the focus of research interests in this scope. Meanwhile, researchers point to an obvious discrepancy between limited space-time characteristics of a semantic shift during a particular communication (chain of communications) and its validation in language in the long run.

In order to explore some regularities in the process of such validation, it is worth looking at this issue from the sociocultural perspective. The key point which underpins this avenue of research is a postulate that language change is, in many cases, a response to a particular sociocultural demand, that language change happens in the wake of a sociocultural change. This can be a local change, for instance, concerned with an emergence of a new domain in technology, but this can also be a radical transformation of basic elements of a worldview. Thus, despite a widespread view that machine metaphors came about in the early modern time as a result of the Industrial Revolution, there is robust evidence that such metaphors emerge in the Early Middle Ages because of a remarkable change of the image of the Universe from the self-contained *κόσμος* in Antiquity to a God's creature in the Middle Ages (Glebkin 2013).

Importantly, a typology of sociocultural change entailing semantic change as a response, has not been, to the knowledge of the author, an object of a special analysis in linguistics so far. In this work, a draft of such typology based on the Sociocultural Theory of Lexical Complexes (STLC) (Glebkin 2013; Glebkin 2014; Glebkin 2014a; Glebkin 2018), is presented. One of the cornerstones of STLC is the description of a conceptual structure and conceptual evolution of a particular lexical complex on two levels: Level A (everyday use of the lexical complex); and Level B (interpretations). The interplay of these levels is presented from a diachronic perspective. This provides new underpinnings for exploring the sociocultural aspect of semantic change.