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In search of linguistic meaning

First of all, I wish to state that I am not a philosopher by trade, which is very unfortunate as I have come to the conclusion that in order to offer a solution to every major problem in any area of science eventually one needs to utilise the tools of philosophy. For example, in our particular study devoted to natural communication, we came to a point when we needed to define the notion of **meaning**, i.e., from our point of view, the notion of **content** which, being the basic purpose of communication, is conveyed through formal means, i.e. linguistic texts. Those in turn, despite not being meaning themselves, conventionally **indicate** content. Within traditional linguistics the problem has not been noticed or stated, or it was replaced by the common-place understanding of the specific nature of the content being conveyed, e.g.: I will tell you what she told me, she told me (S). In that approach, the content (S) being conveyed becomes a banal reality experienced multiple times and which does not require one to transition to a higher level of reflection. However, as I shall try to indicate, the notion of meaning as the content conveyed in communication from one person to another and maintained in their memory, forced us while constructing the theory of communicational grammar to engage in more in-depth philosophical and methodological considerations, which I intend to discuss in this article.

As we propose our working hypothesis regarding the theory of meaning we are aware of the methodological difficulties related to the extremely complex process of communication which we have always perceived as something natural, obvious and simple. As Donald Davidson aptly noted: “a theory is true if its empirical implications are true” and “we can test a theory by testing the veracity of its implications.”¹ In expanding those thoughts, one could say that the formulation of a theory must be both top-down (formulation of hypothesis) and bottom-

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1 D. Davidson, *Eseje o prawdzie, języku i umyśle*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1992, p. 119 [unless indicated otherwise, English versions of quotations were translated from Polish].

up (testing individual communicational facts). If when interpreting those two research directions a significant coherence emerges, one could talk about a good direction of verifiability of a proposed theory. The notion of meaning is broad and multi-faceted, which is why one cannot offer its universal and exhaustive definition. One can only empirically link meaning with two other universal though not completely defined phenomena: **awareness** and **understanding**. Those two natural phenomena occur at the fringes of the so-called **philosophical subject**, i.e. a thinking and speaking human, which enables one to hypothesise that meaning is an anthropomorphic phenomenon or, in other words, it cannot exist outside of human awareness and understanding. The link between understanding and meaning seems to remain beyond any doubt and therefore one can easily state that if a person does not understand something, that “thing” has for them no meaning. Fortunately a person does not exist on their own and among their communicational community there can always be someone who understood that “thing” and is able to explain it to the person and lead them to a state of understanding. Within the phenomenological tradition it is assumed that it is a person’s intentional opening to the world that makes the world, once understood, appear as something meaningful, i.e. something which may have its causes and effects. Humans being constantly immersed in the world learn from the moment they are born the “furnishing” of the world by realising and understanding its organisation. To realise **something** means, first of all, to identify that **something** within an endless series of realities, and, secondly, to define the **utility** of that **something**, i.e. its empirical meaning. According to David Chalmers², that moment of realisation occurs at the level of **meta-awareness**, i.e. the intentionally realised awareness, since regular awareness, referred to some by **consciousness**, is non-reflexive and non-analytical in nature, and its purpose is only to maintain an instinctive (innate) monitoring of the surroundings without pausing on details or isolating (analysing) fragments of the surroundings. The very fact of isolating a fragment of reality and realising it enables one to assume that an area of meaning always has some limits, as it would be impossible for us to grasp and understand too big a fragment of reality, as to understand something one needs to define its organisation and limits. It is exactly through realising the entire limited area of meaning that one can **remember** it as a compact area of **meaning**, i.e. place it first in operating memory, and only then, if required, store it in various sections of permanent memory. A memorised meaning can be associated with a unit of **knowledge**, while the entire set of stored units of meaning can be presented as knowledge on the world of a subject. For many years studies have been conducted to define the limits of memorised units, i.e.

2 D.J. Chalmers, *Świadomy umysł. W poszukiwaniu teorii fundamentalnej*, trans. M. Miłkowski, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2010.

fragments of reality. Those are usually presented as scripts and patterns related to the hierarchic and thematic organisation of memory.³ The presence of such units in human memory and awareness indicates a **modular** nature of the entire process of memorising and understanding. In any instance one never grasps the entire reality, rather tries to fit to it a related module which enables one to manipulate the elements of meaning within its limits. In that case the result of understanding can be reduced to realising a presented script or a pattern stored previously in memory with a possible creative modification to its form to a new unexpected state of things.

At the meta-awareness level, humans as if isolate themselves from the sensory reception of the world, become air-tight mental beings and are capable of triggering their memory, knowledge and imagination to, based on those experiences and the available area of knowledge, build in a creative manner new subjective and previously unknown imagined meanings. That empirical fact enables them to conclude that meaning can emerge outside the entire process of communication, as unrevealed subjective content which can be revealed and verbalised at any moment if such a need arises. At this point I wish to stress that the description of extra-linguistic meanings, despite being much needed and inspiring, exceeds our competences. Therefore, we limit the entire immeasurable area of meaning to more empirically perceptible **linguistic meaning**, and that is the notion we wish to discuss. We wish to produce an empirical definition of linguistic meaning, which, according to us, is possible within the process of a careful and detailed analysis of actual human communicational activities. Linguistic meanings forms through the **verbalisation** of a speaker's starting area of meaning, and it is conveyed through reception, interpretation and understanding to the awareness of another party to communication. A difficult question arises: can one say anything one thinks? That explicit postulate by John Searle seems risky to us. Verbalisation is easier in the case of knowledge referred to by Gilbert Ryle as **declarative** knowledge⁴, i.e. *knowledge what*, mainly related to the description (report) of an observed reality, while **procedural** knowledge (*knowledge how*), which covers habits, skills and other dynamic performative or cognitive activities, not only causes difficulties for their verbalisation but sometimes even prevents the process altogether. Based on that assumption, we shall limit ourselves to studying the meaning which forms through the process of verbalising declarative knowledge, which we associate with linguistic meaning.

To begin with, we need to establish two basic analytical principles. First of all, we assume (though not everyone accepts it) that the basic purpose of linguistic

3 Cf. R.C. Schank, *Explanation Patterns. Understanding Mechanically and Creatively*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., New Jersey 1986.

4 G. Ryle, *The concept of mind*, Barnes and Noble, New York 1949.

communication is to **convey meaning** (S) which had been understood (realised) by at least one speaker and conveyed via a means of communication (language) to at least one recipient. As a result of that act of communication, meaning (S) becomes a shared area of understanding of those parties to the communication. At that point, to simplify the description, we shall not discuss whether such conveying of meaning is possible or whether the meaning (S) new for the recipient is identical to the sender's area of meaning. That minor issue has been the subject of many post-modern philosophical debates, and since we did not find in them any unequivocal conclusions, we shall save the time for, it would seem, more interesting matters. Therefore, we shall adopt an empirical definition of meaning (S):

- 1) meaning is that which forms in the mind of a sender as a defined organised mental area (S), which the sender can maintain in their operating memory and, if necessary, verbalise (linguisticise) it within the framework of the language used by them to convey it to any recipient within the same language. Within that approach we understand language as a system of **communicational habits** adopted through continued practice, i.e. habits of conveying content using conventional physically recognisable by recipients formal means (be it acoustic, graphic or gesture-based);
- 2) meaning is that which forms in the mind of a recipient through the **interpretation** and **understanding** of the sender's formal linguistic message (a communication) and, if needed, it is stored in the recipient's memory within specific limits.

Normally in analyses one associates the area of meaning with a **cognitive configuration**, which constitutes a sender's starting point for generating (verbalising) utterances within a language. A major methodological difficulty arises, which prohibits one from associating cognitive configuration with a specific utterance. First of all, cognitive configuration (S) may, for various reasons, be implicit while existing in the memory of a potential sender as a specific image or mental pattern which is an understood meaning (thought) for them. Secondly, any formal expression indicating a specific meaning may be paraphrased multiple times and each of those paraphrases indicates, to a different degree, the same or similar area of meaning, i.e. it cannot be associated with it. In traditional linguistics, people often erroneously associate a text with a meaning. We treat text as the result of the verbalisation of a sender's communicated intention, therefore we have no guarantee that the intention will be fulfilled in a manner which is perfect and adequate. One often searches for better words and edits texts in such a way for the composed text to be closer to that of which they had been thinking. Then, the resulting text must be interpreted and understood by a recipient. Without that the configuration of meaning which a text indicates will not emerge in the mind (awareness and memory) of the recipient. If due to various reasons an

interpretation of a text is not possible, it will not fulfil its proper function and the meaning which it indicated will not be conveyed.

For a long time now, since the emergence of the theory of generative grammar in the 1960s, there have emerged voices indicating the need to define and formally discuss the **semantic representation** which would exist as a record of meaning, a special kind of formula or an imitation of the meaning indicated by a text. However, the efforts of many researchers who intended to define the modes of creating such formulas proved futile. The biggest difficulty was to invent a special formal meta-language which would be capable of precisely presenting all the meaning values conveyed within a natural language, as there is no logical language which is capable of that. What researchers are left with is to utilise the units of the natural languages they have at their disposal, which, as we know, are inaccurate and ambiguous, and which treacherously change their meanings depending on the context. In our communicational analysis, we were forced to create something which could be termed a **transcription of meaning**. Similarly to a phonetic transcription (the record of the sounds of a language using a specialised alphabet), it does not present the configuration of meaning directly, but it describes it in a manner which is as close to the configuration as possible. The purpose of communicational analysis is exactly that: to provide such a transcription. We shall explain the whole procedure of developing it using the example of the analysis of a collection of paraphrases. We conducted a communicational experiment to explain how a recipient conveys the meaning they had understood by freely creating paraphrases of the meaning. A short text of recollections of Mikhail Zoshchenko, an outstanding Russian satirist, was read once to a large group of university students who after listening to it were asked to write a summary of the text. The group of language users was not homogeneous. It consisted of students of various years having various linguistic experience; there were also foreign students. We acquired hundreds of various paraphrases regarding the same events. That enabled us to better define the entire complex mechanism of natural paraphrasing. The analysis of the considerable material indicated that the act of indicating meaning using paraphrases is creative and approximative in nature; within communication there is much tolerance regarding the precision of those indications, resulting from the extensive interpretative opportunities of recipients. In this article, we shall discuss only one event from the entire text to illustrate the mechanism.

Text fragment (EP2)

Pewnego dnia w Leningradzie (MZ) został zatrzymany na ulicy przez nieznanego mu człowieka, który zaczął zarzucać mu, że w swoich opowiadaniach zniekształca rzeczywistość i przedstawia w krzywym zwierciadle ludzi radzieckich. [One day in Leningrad (MZ) was stopped in the street by a man he didn't know, who started

reproaching him for distorting the reality in his short stories and presenting a false image of the Soviet people].

For ease of analysis, we presented the entire meaning indicated by the texts in the form of a transcription, which enables one to segment it into individual components which facilitate comparing the resulting variants.

Transcription of meaning indicated by the text: PEWNEGO DNIA [one day] > W LENINGRADZIE [in Leningrad] > NA ULICY [in the street] > ZATRZYMAĆ [to stop] (someone: CZŁOWIEK [a man], someone: MZ); NIE ZNAĆ [not to know] (someone: MZ, someone: CZŁOWIEKA [a man]); & ZARZUCAĆ [to reproach] (someone: CZŁOWIEK [a man]); someone: MZ, something: W OPOWIADANIACH [in short stories] > ZNIEKSZTALCAĆ [to distort] (someone: MZ, something: RZECZYWISTOŚĆ [the reality]) & W KRZYMYM ZWIERCIADLE [a false image] > PRZEDSTAWIAĆ [to present] (someone: MZ, someone: LUDZI RADZIECKICH [Soviet people]).

The PEWNEGO DNIA [one day] time indicator and the W LENINGRADZIE, NA ULICY [in Leningrad, in the street] place indicators were also fulfilled by their functionally related variants (communicational equivalents), e.g.: “pewnego razu, któregoś dnia” [one time, some day], and other synthetic structures, such as: “idąc ulicą [while walking down the street]; podczas przechadzki [during a stroll]; podczas wędrówki [during a walk]; przechadzając się ulicami Leningradu, spacerował sobie MZ po ulicach Leningradu [while strolling the streets of Leningrad, MZ was walking the streets of Leningrad]; podczas spaceru po Leningradzie [while strolling down Leningrad]; ulicą przechadzał się satyryk MZ [MZ, the satirist, was walking down a street]” etc.

The structure ZATRZYMAĆ [to stop] (someone: CZŁOWIEK [a man], someone: MZ) was fulfilled by such communicational equivalents (CE) as: “zaczepia go na ulicy przechodzień [a passer-by engaged him in the street]; zaatakował go przechodzień [a passer-by attacked him]; spotkał człowieka [he met a person]” etc. More variants applied to the component NIE ZNAĆ [do not know] (someone: MZ, someone: CZŁOWIEKA [a man]). It generated the following types of communicational equivalents: “pewien przechodzień, przez jednego z przechodniów [some passer-by, by one passer-by]; przez przypadkowego przechodnia [by a random passer-by]; przez pewnego człowieka [by someone]; przez obcego mu człowieka [by a person unknown to him]; przez przechodnia, nieznanego [by a passer-by, a stranger]; przez obcego mężczyznę [by a man unknown to him]” etc. Some texts included additional attributes of the passer-by which appeared through the creativity founded in stereotypical knowledge: “zwolennik komuny [a proponent of communism]; radziecki osobnik, przedstawiciel władzy, jeden z tych krytyków [a Soviet individual, a representative of the authorities, one of those critics]; funkcjonariusze [officers]” etc.

Some of the texts developed by the study subjects included possible **extensions of the meaning** of the composition in the form of variants: “zaczepia go na ulicy przechodzień, który chce z nim o tym porozmawiać [he was engaged in the street by a passer-by who wanted to talk to him about it]; Pisarz Michał Zoszczenko ... spacerował po mieście, przechadzał się po Leningradzie [writer Mikhail Zoshchenko... was strolling the city, strolling down Leningrad]” etc.

The structure ZARZUCAĆ [to reproach] (someone: CZŁOWIEK [a man]; someone: MZ, something: W OPOWIADANIACH [in short stories] > ZNIEKSZTALCAĆ [to distort] (someone: MZ, something: RZECZYWISTOŚĆ [the reality]) & W KRZYMYM ZWIERCIADLE [a false image] > PRZEDSTAWIAĆ [to present] (someone: MZ, someone: LUDZI RADZIECKICH [Soviet people]) was presented in various ways in the texts of the paraphrases. Even the main predicate was expressed through communicational equivalents, e.g.: “oskarżył go, że... [he accused him that]; został poddany krytyce, ponieważ... [he was subjected to criticism that]; wytknął mu, że... [he point out to him that]; został obrzucony krytyką za [he was heavily criticised for]; usłyszał od niego skargi na temat [he heard complaints from him regarding]; zaczął atakować go za [he started attacking him for],” etc. The most variants of communicational equivalents could be found in the descriptions of the content of the very criticism (probably because the original text utilised the metaphor “przedstawić coś w krzywy zwierciadło” [present a false image of something]), e.g.: actions “na szkodę obywateli przez swoją twórczość literacką [to the detriment of the citizens through his literary output]; przedstawianie fałszywych informacji [presenting false information]; że w swoich tekstach negatywnie, zbyt prześmiewczo opisuje różne zdarzenia [that in his texts he described various events negatively, with excessive mocking]; kłamstwa pisane w jego dziełach [the lies written in his works]; przedstawia obraz rosyjskiego społeczeństwa w tak prześmiewczy sposób [he presented the image of the Russian society in such a mocking manner]; przedstawia zmyśloną rzeczywistość [he presented a fabricated reality]; w negatywnym świecie ukazuje ludzi radzieckich [he presented the Soviet people in a negative light]; ukazywanie komuny w krzywym zwierciadle [he presented a false image of communism]; zmienia rzeczywistość [he changed the reality]; wyśmiewanie się z innych [he mocked others]; fałszywe i zniekształcone ukazywanie ludności radzieckiej [false and distorted the presentation of the Soviet peoples]; oczernianie radzieckiego społeczeństwa [besmirching the Soviet society]; źle ocenia ludzi radzieckich i wyolbrzymia rzeczywistość [he wrongly evaluated the Soviet people and exaggerated the reality],” etc.

Some respondents, probably under the influence of stereotypes, misunderstood the object of criticism of the satirist. That would be the conclusion from such paraphrases as: he presented “władze radzieckie w krzywym zwierciadle”

[a false image of the Soviet authorities]; “zniekształcenie rzeczywistości i władz radzieckich” [distortion of the reality and Soviet authorities], or even: “w złym zwierciadle przedstawia żołnierzy radzieckich” [he presented a bad image of Soviet soldiers]; “nieprawdziwe przedstawianie radzieckich żołnierzy” [false presentation of Soviet soldiers], etc.

Some variants could be printed in the student humour column, e.g.: “zostaje zatrzymany w Leningradzie pod zarzutem zniekształcenia rzeczywistości” [he was arrested in Leningrad and charged with distortion of reality], etc.

What conclusions could be drawn from the analysis of the mechanisms of paraphrasing? First of all, considering the extension opportunities for supplementing and modifying meaning within the process of interpretation, one could suggest a **temporary** indication of meaning using verbal references. A sender is not terribly careful about precision when verbalising their message expecting the recipient to be able to reproduce in their imagination the original configuration of meaning. Secondly, the limits of interchangeability of the components when paraphrasing indicate a real **structure (configuration)** in a recipient’s awareness of the meaning being conveyed. Further research must be conducted in order to define those components, yet even now, based on communicational intuition, one could conclude that at the centre of the basic communication of meaning there lies a system of relations which correspond in language to the predicate-argument system, while the remaining external components, adjacent to the system, include time, space, duration and multiplicity indicators. The basic communication of meaning indicates an identifiable (through longer communicational practice) by the recipient **state of things**, or situation, which for them becomes meaningful even without the modifications introduced by the indicators. The basic meaning of the kind:

SZIEDZIEĆ [to sit] (SOMEONE, ON SOMETHING)

is generally understood without any additional modifications which would surely enrich a message and require more interpretative effort. The pattern of communication of meaning we assumed in our model of communicational grammar, is as follows:

A(t), A(loc), A(dur), A(freq) [P(a,b,c...)],

where A(t) is the time indicator, A(loc) – place indicator, A(dur) – duration indicator, A(freq) – multiplicity indicator, could be considered as the basic virtual model of the **ideational** (presented) **meaning** to which, through communication analysis, one could reduce the content of any verbal communication (every paraphrase). Very often the limits of the formal organisation of a verbal communication (a text) do not correspond to the limits which we defined in our model. That is

why communicational analysis requires one to **standardise** the organisation of a communicated meaning, which through such standardisation assumes the appropriate standard form. A presented and understood state of things often cannot be reduced to the basic form which would formally encompass a single predicate-argument system. It is very often the case that to understand a communication one needs to extend the area of meaning considerably and present it as a course of a **scenario**. If you consider the message:

Janek przeprosił Marysię [Janek apologised to Marysia],

its understanding results in the extension of meaning to the form of a possible script:

(t-3) SKRZYWDZIĆ [to harm] (someone: JANEK, someone: MARYSIA); (t-2) ZROZUMIEĆ [to understand] {someone: JANEK, something: SKRZYWDZIĆ [to harm] (someone: JANEK, someone: MARYSIA)}; (t-1) PRZEPROSIC [to apologise] {someone: JANEK, someone: MARYSIA, for something: SKRZYWDZIĆ [to harm] (someone: JANEK, someone: MARYSIA)}; (to) { WYBACZAĆ [to forgive] (someone; MARYSIA, someone: JANEK, something: SKRZYWDZIĆ [to harm] (someone: JANEK, someone: MARYSIA))}.

Clearly, there is no obvious relationship between the term (meaningful lexeme) and the structure of meaning to which it indicates; that may be the basic system (predicate-argument) or various kinds of scenarios.

One's presentation of the area of meaning as a virtual structure to which a paraphrase indicates changes the perception of the process of translation from one language to another. It becomes clear that a translator first interprets and **understands** the source paraphrase (pf₁) building in their awareness a configuration of meaning (S) to which the paraphrase indicates, and then treats that configuration as the source component for the appropriate paraphrase (pf₂) in the target language. Firstly, they utilise their linguistic competences in the source language to properly interpret and understand the meaning (S) to which the source paraphrase (pf₁) indicates, and then, based on that understanding, uses their linguistic competences in the target language to, by using the understanding (S), produce such a textual paraphrase in a new language which, according to them, indicates the closest configuration of meaning which they understood in the source language. In other words, a translator does not translate one text into another, but rather creates a paraphrase in the target language which indicates the same (or similar) meaning present in the translator's memory upon interpreting and understanding the source paraphrase. Therefore, all the discussions regarding the problem of untranslatability could be reduced to a few important processes of natural communication: firstly, to the problem of interpretation and the degree of

a translator's understanding of the source paraphrase, and, secondly, to their skills in the target language and their ability to produce the appropriate paraphrase in it based on the previously understood configuration (S). The notion of presented (ideational) meaning, which presents a selected fragment of reality, entails the problem of establishing the veracity of judgements. The problem itself is not the focus of this article, therefore, the only thing we can conclude is the assumption that the veracity of every judgements is **independent** of the understanding of its meaning. In other words, not everything that one understood immediately becomes true though the fact of realising the meaning of a message in one's awareness is the basic condition for establishing whether a judgement being conveyed is true or not. One can understand and store in their memory both true and false judgements. Only upon understanding an utterance, does one categorise judgements in that respect.

In terms of ideational (presentational) meaning, one must consider its original form related to the use of language in the original pragmatic situation, when language users apply the language to describe real elements they observed together. That situation of language use was defined by Bronisław Malinowski in his studies of indigenous languages.⁵ That communication consists of the words of a language, which frame the joint efforts of the speakers, only indicating the observed elements of reality without triggering the meanings of words from their memory. One could refer to a variant of ideational meaning which could be called **indexing meaning**. In every natural language that type of communication emerges when a category of the **observer** is added to the area of meaning. When understanding such an utterance as:

Popatrz, kto idzie!, [Look who's coming!]

the transcription of meaning is added by the component of the observer (sender):

WIDZIEĆ [to see *imperf.*] (someone: NADAWCA [a sender], something: IŚĆ [to go] (someone: ZNANY [known]) & CHCIEĆ [to want to] (someone: NADAWCA [a sender], something: ZOBACZYĆ [to see *perf.*] (someone: ODBIORCA [a recipient], something: IŚĆ [to go] (someone: ZNANY [known])).

Apart from the descriptive (ideational) meaning, natural communication offers another type of meaning, i.e. the **interactive** meaning, which in our grammar is analysed at the appropriate level, i.e. **interactive level**. There one analyses utterance

⁵ B. Malinowski, "Etnograficzna teoria języka i pewne wnioski praktyczne", [in:] *ibidem*, *Ogrody koralowe i ich magia*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1987.

which, to use John Austin's theory⁶, could be referred to as **speech acts**, i.e. such linguistic actions which "change the world", or rather the relations between a sender and the recipient. I offered a detailed discussion of the categorisation and the conditions for applying specific speech acts and other types of interactive operators in my monograph *Gramatyka interakcji werbalnej*⁷; in this article, I shall limit myself to providing a summary of how in communicational grammar the structure of the interactive meaning is understood.

Interactive meaning forms in direct linguistic contact between a sender and a recipient, and it has three basic stages of its existence. The first one is the sender's application of a speech act, where the communicational purpose is to change the existing situation S₁ to a new situation S₂. At that stage, the recipient, who is usually expected to be the executor of the change, identifies the sender's **intention**, i.e. defines the ideational meaning of the S₁ situation and the target S₂ situation. In literature, that type of understanding is referred to as a **propositional condition**. In the second stage, the recipient defines the **conditions for success** of their actions and makes an executive decision. The third stage is the actual act of **performing an action** suggested in the sender's intention, i.e. the emergence of the S₂ situation. For example, the following speech act:

Podaj mi szklankę! [Pass the glass!],

where the interactive function of an action is being fulfilled, induces the recipient to fulfil the sender's intention, which includes the desired change of the S₁ situation: NIE MIEĆ [not to have] (something: NADAWCA [a sender], something: SZKLANKI [a glass]) to situation S₂: MIEĆ [to have] (someone: NADAWCA [a sender], something: SZKLANKĘ [a glass]). Next, the recipient understands that they are expected to be executor of the action PASS (someone: ODBIORCA [a recipient], something: SZKLANKĘ [a glass], someone: NADAWCY [a sender]). At the same time, it defines the conditions for success: the ability to reach a glass and passing it to the sender. Finally, there occurs the actual physical act of passing the glass, which leads to the emergence of S₂ situation and the fulfilment of the sender's communicational objective.

Clearly, the fact of understanding of the interactive meaning of this speech act and the recipient's readiness to accept it are motivated by the heuristic rule accepted by the communicational community: *execute the order, directive, request, proposal, etc.*, which constitutes a part of the social contract. Such rules fulfil the basic rule

6 J.L. Austin, *Mówienie i poznawanie. Rozprawy i wykłady filozoficzne*, trans. B. Chwedeńczuk, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1993.

7 A. Awdiejew, *Gramatyka interakcji werbalnej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Krakow 2004.

of cooperation and integration of a communicational community without which it would not be able to survive.

One also refers to the interactive meaning all kinds of **qualifying meanings**, which are of a subjective evaluation nature. In the case of an evaluating speech act, e.g.:

Marysia jest wspaniałą kobietą [Marysia is a wonderful woman],

a recipient will always add to the area of understanding the meaning: **the sender thinks that** Marysia is a wonderful woman and the sender has the intention to inform the recipient about that. In that situation, there occurs a change of the S1 situation: the recipient did not know that the sender had such an opinion of Marysia, to the S2 situation: the recipient knows that the sender has such an opinion about Marysia. As per the definition of the success rate of speech acts, there occurs a **modification of the relationship** between the sender and recipient.

Finally, the above-discussed varieties of meaning one could also add a generalised **discursive meaning**. The understanding and the definition of the meaning, which depends on the kind of communicational contact, is related to that which discourse researchers called **rules** in that sense that every discourse has specific individual self-organisation rules, without considering which communication within its framework would have been impossible. In the model of our grammar we apply the traditional division into basic discourses: colloquial, official, journalistic, academic, and artistic, with their various varieties, i.e. sub-discourses.⁸ The self-organisation rules of those discourses are completely subordinate to that which we call **communicational objectives**. In the case of colloquial discourse, the communicational objective is the need to organise human cooperation, as first defined by Malinowski; in the case of academic discourse: to seek and discover truth (whatever one understands by that); in the case of journalistic discourse: to convince recipients to assume the proposed evaluative attitude; in the case of official discourse: to establish the correlation between the accepted legal norms and human conduct; and, finally, in the case of artistic discourse: to enable recipients to experience beauty. Those superordinate objectives introduce for individual discourses traditionally defined rules of their creation and understanding. Those general assumptions of communicational grammar require further detailed study; at this point, the goal is to emphasise the impact of the pre-established rules of how individual discourses are understood. I chose for a communicational analysis a fragment of a poem by Joanna Ślósarska *Próśba do kogokolwiek*. Poetry, being a sub-discourse of the artistic discourse, has a special nature. It can convey a major

⁸ A. Awdiejew, G. Habrajska, *Wprowadzenie do gramatyki komunikacyjnej*, Vol. 2, Oficyna Wydawnicza Leksem, Łask 2006.

area of an intended meaning through a fairly limited set of formal means. The aim of a communicational analysis is to detect the entire meaning as a **complement** to the original conveyed meaning. As I have already mentioned, the communicational objective of artistic discourse is to enable recipients to experience the beauty component, the meaning of which should be detected and described by the analysis. Ślósarska's poem is a kind of prayer, i.e. an appeal to a higher power which can change and improve her life. Please consider a short fragment of this excellent poem:

*zamknij przede mną drzwi
za którymi ludzie o duszach lokajów
ucztując
zmieniają w kamień chleb*
[close for me the door
behind which people with servile souls
while feasting
change bread into stone]

When referring it to the current situation of the Polish society, the mind of a keen recipient bursts with a whole panorama of meanings, which, based on the interpretative tradition, triggers the recipient's imagination and helps them discover various interesting mutually related areas of meaning. That could serve as the topic of an entire article or even a book. To simplify the matter, allow me to indicate that the author continued the theme of revolutionary changes which she described in the previous fragment of the poem. She metaphorically ("close for me the door") distanced herself from the community of people "with servile souls", who were the consumers of victory though being far from true humanity. She implicitly expressed her bitterness towards people who were shallow, superficial, who "change bread into stone". The metaphor of changing bread into stone is a negative reversed symbol of creativeness, which for the author is the highest purpose of one's life – to do something meaningful for people. Based on the analysis, one can define three components of meaning:

IDEATIONAL MEANING: the image of a feast with people of non-refined needs,

INTERACTIVE MEANING (EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE): solidarity with the author in her rejection of the shallow world of consumption,

AESTHETIC MEANING (AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE): acceptance of the metaphor of the rejection of the shallow world. The acceptance of the negative metaphor of wasting creative powers.

In communicational grammar, we have done little in terms of analysing poetic texts. Much better analyses of poetic meaning can be found in the publications by skilled literary scholars. Our goal is only to introduce order to the communicational processes so distant from one another.

In our search of the various kinds of linguistic meaning we are only left with the description of its major manifestation, which Jan Pleszczyński, a media and communication researcher, called **rationmorphism** (Pleszczyński 2013)⁹. It refers to the observable human skill of deductive argumentation. In my opinion, that wonderful phenomenon deserves an in-depth study, yet it is so universal that it is considered as something common and trivial. In simple terms, it could be presented as a mental process which based on an assumed **general rule** and a related **particular judgement** enables one to automatically draw conclusions in the form of a **deduction**. Already Aristotle discussed syllogisms as the areas of organised meaning (*All men are mortal, Socrates is human, ergo Socrates is mortal*). Clearly, the judgement “All men are mortal” exists in the syllogism as the general rule, the judgement “Socrates is a man” is a particular judgements, and “Socrates is mortal” is a deduction. The problem is that in a text, argumentative series in the analytical form are almost non-existent, they are not entirely realised by speakers, and if one starts analysing them, especially in colloquial discourse, one notices that despite this human rationmorphism works fine, it is often based on doubtful general rules. Those often include fallacious convictions, prejudice or even superstitions held by a communicational community. An analysis of argumentation in colloquial discourse enables one to quickly detect such logical anomalies. When one hears such utterances as: *Moja babcia ma dobry wzrok, bo je dużo marchewki* [My grandma has good vision because she eats a lot of carrots] or *Lech Poznań wygra, bo ma nowego trenera* [Lech Poznań wins because it has a new coach], which in this kind of argumentation are often viewed as justified, one does not immediately realise that the argument is based on rather dubious general rules: *Kto je dużo marchewki zawsze ma dobry wzrok* [Who eats many carrots always has good vision] or *Drużyna, która ma nowego trenera, zawsze wygrywa* [A team which has a new coach always wins]. I do not wish to take part in the long-running philosophical dispute whether rationmorphism ensured humanity’s survival, though that wonderful property of the human mind to process an old meaning into a new one surely deserves attention and further study. The era of artificial intelligence is upon us, which, as Yuval Harari prophesies ominously, may soon exceed the intelligence of some representatives of the homo sapiens.

⁹ J. Pleszczyński, *Epistemologia komunikacji medialnej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2013.

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Aleksy Awdiejew

W poszukiwaniu sensu językowego

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem artykułu jest ustalenie związku między sensem zawartym w wypowiedzi a jej formalnym ukształtowaniem. Autor sytuuje swe rozważania na gruncie badań komunikacji naturalnej. Pojęcie sensu jest tu utożsamiane z tym, co w gramatyce komunikacyjnej nazywa się konfiguracją kognitywną. Konfiguracja kognitywna wyrażana jest za pomocą tekstów, ale teksty tylko w sposób umowny wskazują na sens, jaki zamierza przekazać nadawca. Autor zwraca uwagę na mechanikę przejawiania się sensu w procesie parafrazowania wypowiedzi i jej konsekwencje dla praktyki przekładu tekstu na języki obce. Przywołuje pojęcie sensu

dyskursywnego, zakładając, że każdy dyskurs posiada określone własne reguły samoorganizacji, bez uwzględnienia których komunikowanie się w jego obrębie byłoby niemożliwe.

Słowa kluczowe: sens, konfiguracja kognitywna, dyskurs, parafrazowanie, przekład językowy.

In search of linguistic meaning

Summary

The aim of the article is to define the relationship between the meaning included in an utterance and its formal shape. The author based his discussion on the study of natural communication. The notion of meaning is in the article associated with that which in communicational grammar is referred to as cognitive configuration. It is expressed through texts, but texts indicate the meaning a sender intends to send in only a conventional manner. The author stressed the mechanism of the emergence of meaning in the process of paraphrasing utterances and its consequences for the practice of translation. He included the notion of discursive meaning assuming that every discourse has specific individual self-organisation rules without considering which communication within it would not be possible.

Keywords: meaning, cognitive configuration, discourse, paraphrasing, translation.

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