HUMANİTAR VƏ İCTİMAİ ELMLƏR

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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The Status of the Category of Comparison in Modern Linguistic Research

Abstract

The study of the category of comparison is a traditional topic of linguistics, which is acquiring particular relevance in connection with the interest of modern linguistics in comparative studies of languages and cultures. Generalization of views on the status of this category in language in the works of the last decade allows us to identify three directions in its study depending on the degree and features of taking into account the correlation of epistemological, logical and linguistic aspects.

The generalization of views on the category of comparison offered below is the result of studying modern research on this category using the material of languages of different systems. Despite the great diversity of approaches to studying this category, all of them are devoted to identifying a certain semantic invariant that unites heterogeneous elements of the system of means of expressing comparison in different languages. This work is an attempt to highlight the problems of such research in the first decade of the 21st century.

Keywords: *comparison, artworks, linguistics, construction, semantics, linguistic techniques*

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Müasir linqvistik tədqiqatlarda müqayisə kateqoriyasının vəziyyəti

Xülasə

Müqayisə kateqoriyasının öyrənilməsi müasir dilçiliyin dillərin və mədəniyyətlərin müqayisəli tədqiqinə marağı ilə əlaqədar olaraq xüsusi aktuallıq kəsb edən dilçiliyin ənənəvi mövzusudur. Son onilliyin əsərlərində bu kateqoriyanın dildəki statusuna dair fikirlərin ümumiləşdirilməsi onun tədqiqində qnoseoloji, məntiqi və linqvistik aspektlərin korrelyasiya dərəcəsi və xüsusiyyətlərindən asılı olaraq üç istiqaməti müəyyən etməyə imkan verir.

Aşağıda təklif olunan müqayisə kateqoriyası ilə bağlı fikirlərin ümumiləşdirilməsi müxtəlif sistem dillərinin materialı əsasında bu kateqoriya üzrə müasir tədqiqatların öyrənilməsinin nəticəsidir. Bu kateqoriyanın öyrənilməsinə yanaşmaların müxtəlifliyinə baxmayaraq, onların hamısı fərqli dillərdə müqayisəni ifadə vasitələri sisteminin heterojen elementlərini birləşdirən müəyyən bir semantik invariantın müəyyənləşdirilməsinə həsr edilmişdir.

Açar sözlər: *müqayisə, incəsənət əsərləri, dilçilik, konstruksiya, semantika, linqvistik üsullar*

Introduction

At present, researchers have developed an idea of the category of comparison as a complexly organized system of multi-level means of expression: morphological (in most cases, these include degrees of comparison of adjectives and adverbs), syntactic (comparative prepositions and

conjunctions, case endings, comparative phrases, etc., with the help of which comparison becomes part of a simple/complicated comparative sentence or a complex sentence), lexical and word-formation. At the same time, a significant coincidence of the systems of means of expression of comparison in different languages is noted, both according to earlier works (Cheremisina, 2006, p. 228) and in modern studies (Anokhina, 2008, p. 7). The main differences concern the different specific weight of these means in the languages under consideration.

The most controversial issue is the linguistic status of the category of comparison. The traditional definition of comparison as a syntactic category, "as an ordered set of syntactic meanings, each of which corresponds to a certain syntactic form", no longer satisfies modern researchers of this category. Many linguists believe that the traditional definition of comparison does not take into account other levels of its implementation – primarily, lexical and word-formation (Greenhill & Simon, 2014, p. 10).

However, this point of view is opposed by another one, according to which the internal structure of comparison, regardless of the level of expression, is always syntactic, since comparison is a certain general scheme for constructing a verbal sign of any level of complexity, containing the position of the "middle member" as a strictly obligatory part (Cheremisina, 2006, p. 18). Most often, this general scheme or formula of comparison is conventionally designated as A (g) B, where (g) is the "middle member", that is, a grammatical indicator of the presence of a comparison relationship (most often, a conjunction), A and B are two compared objects (objects, phenomena in different terminology) (Dzyubko, 2006, p. 45). When implementing comparative relations by multi-level means of language, this general formula of comparison is subject to varying degrees of condensation (Himmelmann, 2019).

Other problematic issues in the study of the category of comparison, which have been identified in the research of the last decade, are in one way or another connected with the solution of the above-mentioned question about the linguistic status of the category of comparison. The category of comparison is considered in modern linguistics in three aspects: epistemological, conceptual (logical) and linguistic. Depending on the degree of consideration of these aspects, three directions in the study of this category have developed, which influences the definition of its linguistic status.

Taking into account all three aspects, comparison is interpreted very broadly as a philosophical category of knowledge, a "category of categories", since "language is woven from the results of comparison", and "the very fact of naming an object, its identification and taxonomic characteristics is the establishment of its similarity with other objects". Through comparison, the process of hierarchization (categorization) of our knowledge (ideas) about the world occurs, the formation of systemic connections of objects of objective reality in our consciousness, as well as the inner world of man. A large place in the broad view of this category is given to the study of implicit means of expressing comparison, since it is emphasized that there is a huge layer of linguistic units expressing comparison either by their internal form (as a result of a figurative meaning: velvet paws), or as an "alienated in time result of the comparison operation". For example, the fact that a wolf is called a wolf, that manuscripts do not burn, etc., was based on a comparison that made it possible to define a class as a set of similar objects (Rumyantseva, 2007, p. 22).

Comparison is considered somewhat narrower when it is defined as a "linguo-conceptual" or "linguo-cognitive" formation, that is, "special forms that have cognitive status" (Denisova, 2009, p. 4, p. 25). A narrower view of comparison in this case is due to the fact that comparison is considered mainly from the standpoint of the presence of certain formal means of expression, as an explicit category. In this case, the study of the formal side of linguistic units expressing comparison is carried out in unity with the substantive side of these linguistic units. An attempt is made to systematically study all means of expressing comparison – grammatical and lexical, however, grammatical means of expressing comparison are usually assigned a central role.

In general, when studying comparison as a linguistic-conceptual formation, a connection with logical forms of cognition is traced, which, as is known, "have an outlet" in the grammatical forms of language. The conceptual nature of the category of comparison is affirmed, since it is based on

the concept of similarities and differences of compared objects. In this regard, comparison is considered as:

– a structural-semantic category of language, taking into account the fact that it has a set of multi-level means of expression (Gilquin, 2017);

– a functional-semantic category with a field structure of organization;

– a categorical situation, that is, a substantive structure representing the implementation of a particular functional-semantic field (FSF) in speech (Denisova, 2009, p. 4);

– a comparison situation.

The result of the study of the category of comparison as a multi-level formation is the conclusion of many scientists that "comparison is a weakly centered FSP, which is based not on a grammatical, but on a semantic category", that is, a common meaning that unites the system of multi-level linguistic units of its expression. When characterizing comparison as a semantic category in explicit or implicit form, scientists proceed from a fairly traditional philosophical understanding of comparison as a problem, first of all, of "comparison", "connection", "correlation" of two objects, that is, the implementation of a qualitative comparison, important indicators of which are the establishment of relations of identity and / or assimilation. Against the background of these basic categories, correlated with the relationship of similarity between the compared objects, the question of identifying the differences between them (establishing a quantitative comparison) plays a secondary role in this group of studies (Szmrecsanyi, 2009, p. 319).

In one way or another, the semantic space of a given category in a language is divided, as a rule, between three intersecting and overlapping semantic fields: identity, similarity and difference (the terminological apparatus may differ slightly in different works). At the same time, some scientists include all three microfields in the functional semantic field of comparison: identity, assimilation, difference, while others limit themselves to assimilation in different variants (Dzyubko, 2006). In a number of studies, a separate microfield of comparison is included in the functional semantic field of comparison, along with identity and assimilation, on the basis that, for example, among the verbs of comparative semantics, a group is distinguished that specializes in expressing the actual meaning of comparison.

As is evident from the conducted analysis, the description of the semantic space of this category is contradictory and ambiguous. As a result, linguists come to the conclusion about the vagueness of comparative semantics and the difficulty of its formalization at the level of means of expression (Denisova, 2009).

What is the reason for this? It seems that two main reasons can be assumed, one way or another connected with the position of this or that researcher, from which he approaches the analysis of this category.

Firstly, each author who has set the goal of studying and systematizing the semantic space of this category in the form of FSP has to solve the most difficult philosophical questions about the nature of the relationship between language, thinking and objective reality. This or that decision (conscious or intuitive) of the authors working on the creation of the semantic space of the FSP of comparison of these philosophical questions influences their vision of the semantic boundaries of this field.

Let us compare two definitions: 1) in sentences expressing comparison, two situations are likened, brought together on the basis of objective similarity or identity, or on the basis of subjective associations.

It is not difficult to notice that the first definition is broader and includes in the semantics of comparative means of language similarity of an objective nature (based on the real similarity of objects, regardless of what the speaker thinks about them). The second definition limits the sphere of comparative semantics to subjective connections (read: arbitrary, possibly imposed on the compared objects by the speaker), which are not characteristic of the compared objects in reality. Different visions of the semantic boundaries of the FSP of comparison also define the area of study of this category in language (Trudgill, 2011).

Another difficulty for researchers of the category of comparison arises, in our opinion, from the fact that when analyzing the semantics of linguistic means with the meaning of comparison, they increasingly rely on lexical semantics, leaving aside grammatical semantics – the semantics of grammatical constructions that form the framework for using lexical units in the process of comparison.

For example, what do many of the modern researchers of the category of comparison see as the fundamental differences between identity and assimilation? Without going into details, it can be argued that identity in their works is related to logical, regular, predictable / objective comparison. With its help, it is possible to compare homogeneous, easily correlated objects. And assimilation is, in the opinion of many, a manifestation of illogicality, subjectivity, introduced by the linguistic personality of the comparer. Consequently, assimilation is considered as a truly "linguistic" comparison, a manifestation of not logical, but associative thinking. It indicates a comparison of heterogeneous objects/phenomena that are initially not identical or, in other words, not logically related to each other (Varshavskaya, 2008, p. 325).

Conclusion

One should agree with a number of modern researchers who believe that the role of comparison in determining the universality and specificity of a specific linguistic picture of the world has not been sufficiently studied. The mechanism of assessing the perceived through the prism of comparison, intertwined with human activity, both universal and nationally specific, leads to the creation of a linguistic picture of the world with both typological and individual characteristics (Ivashova, 2009, p. 3).

The state of modern linguistic thought, using the example of the analysis of the category of comparison, convinces us that the noted directions in the study of the category of comparison are based either on the predominant study of similarities (universal in languages and cultures) or differences (nationally specific). A synthesis of techniques, approaches and principles for studying this category has yet to be created.

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