The Nominations with the Inherent and Adherent Approximators in the German Language[1]

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Abstract

The article deals with the description of the conceptual and linguistic nature, the modus character and the field structure of the linguistic category of the approximation. It also deals with the analysis of the role of the inherent and adherent approximators as well as the context in the realization of the invariant meaning of the approximation in the German language. Pragmatic potential of the nominations expressing versions of the values of the approximation is revealed in the analysis of the phenomena under study.

Keywords: Conceptual Signs; Semantic Function; Approximation; Indetermination; Intensity; Comparison.

1. Introduction

The approximation as a pragmatic and semantic phenomenon attracted the interest of foreign linguists when the book by Lakoff" Hedges: A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts" was published (Lakoff, 1973). The focus of many researchers are linguistic limiters - hedges, which the author uses to indicate the fuzzy designation of the concept, to express uncertainty about the reliability of the reported, mitigate the categorical subjective opinion (König, 1991; Markkanen, Schröder, 1997; Graefen, 2000). In the study of approximation as a semantic universal and a special way of nominating elements of the reflected reality in the works of domestic linguists, the focus of attention of scientists there is a multidimensionality of this category and specificity of means of its expression in different languages (Sahno, 1983; Pristinskaya, 1998; Nikishenkova, 2000; Dubovickaya, 2006; Ionova, 2006; Archakova, 2008; Adamovich, 2009; Villalobos, 2018; Niranjan, 2016).

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2. Methods

The complex approach to the research object allows to combine methods of cognitive linguistics, functional semantic study and pragmatics: the method of conceptualizing the world in lexical semantics, field structuring method, method of contextual analysis.

3. Main Part

The approximation as "one of the mental operations and the method of human cognitive activity characterizes the cognitive processes of perception, understanding, and interpretation of the message" (Ionova, 2006, p. 6), manifests itself in the appraisal relation of the subject of nomination to the name, object of the naming and the addressee and in the act of communication needs a verbal explication. This process is directly related to the pragmatic aspects of communication, since it is a way of the reflecting not only objective information, but also opinions, assessments, intentions of the subject.

It is important to note that the linguistic category of approximation has a functional semantic nature: the results of studies conducted on the material of the languages of different groups show that the concept of approximation can be expressed by means of units of different levels of the language: morphological, lexical, lexical and grammatical, syntactic. In the opinion of Dubovickaya (2006), all means of expressing approximation have a single mental basis – "the concept 'approximation'. This unifying concept is at the basis of the language category 'approximation'" (p. 32). When specifying this opinion, Boldyrev (2005) notes that all means of expressing the approximation are combined into a category by the way of conceptualization and categorization of the subject of a thought, that is, they have a conceptual linguistic nature. According to this scientist, the linguistic category of approximation, being the linguistic embodiment of the concept of approximation, has an interpretive, modusive character, reflects the specificity of human thinking and plays an important role in the formation of the linguistic picture of the world (Boldyrev, 2005, pp. 16-39).

Dubovickaya (2006) considers the evaluative nature and the lack of independence and relativity as the important signs of the concept of 'approximation'. The researcher notes that there is a correlation of two processes in the formation of this concept in the mind of a person. On the one hand, in the categorization and conceptualization of the surrounding world, "some inconsistencies or deviations in the properties of objects and phenomena from thought patterns and standards, which are in the mind"; on the other hand, when such an asymmetry is perceived to reflect

it, "a number of different levels of approximation are created in the language" (Dubovickaya, 2006, pp. 8 & 66).

Means of expressing the semantics of approximation, they are called approximators, also perform the function of evaluation. The value of approximators, superimposed on other language values, modifies them. These means are used to approximate the subject of thought, mark the result of the logical operation of its comparison with the prototype (Jabbari et al., 2019; Nakhaee & Nasrabadi, 2019).

The inner vocabulary of a person, used by him in speech, includes lexemes (words and phrases expressing a holistic concept), assimilated by a person with the system of meanings that is "a collective experience of speakers of individualization of different objects in the world and their categorization and classification" (Kubryakova, 2004, p. 65), those with semantics, which guarantees mutual understanding in the act of communication. Given this, it is possible to consider nominations that verbalize the concept of approximation, as secondary, which include a special approximation marker - an approximator whose lexical meaning has semantic attributes 'proximity (to prototype)', 'non-identity' 'similarity / similarity'. With its help, in the process of a mental operation of comparing the designated object with the prototype, a modification of the invariant meaning of the word fixed by dictionaries occurs and reveals the degree of accuracy of the name, the correspondence of the named quantitative or qualitative attribute, the substance to the prototype, the degree of their similarity, identity (Ajallooeian et al., 2015).

Researchers of the approximation category note that "its functional semantic nature brings it closer to another functional semantic category - with the category of definiteness / uncertainty, for which the dynamic equilibrium of two poles is characteristic, one of which gravitates towards accuracy, concreteness, and the other - to inaccuracy, blurring, generalization". We share the view of Archakova (2008) concerning the fact that the reasons for the formation of the category of approximation and the pole of uncertainty in the category of definiteness / uncertainty practically coincide for approximation "synthesizes both semantic plans (certainty and uncertainty) as an expression of approximations in one functional and pragmatic foreshortening, namely, nominative" (Archakova, 2008, p. 2).

The study of approximation as a category having a prototypical character and field structure involves the consideration of the traditionally debatable question of the dichotomy of language and speech, the semantics of language units at the system level (paradigmatic significance) and the semantics that they realize in the utterance, in a certain context, taking into account the communicative situation (functional, syntagmatic meaning). In this regard, it should be noted that different terms used to determine the status of the approximation category (prototypical,

logical and grammatical, functional semantic), only show different approaches to the interpretation of a complex linguistic phenomenon. The latter, in turn, are due to the fact that "the determination of the specifics of the ways of representing mental content in linguistic meanings is one of the central problems of modern linguistics" (Bondarko, 1996, p. 74). 'Approximation' as the primary semantic function, i.e. value that does not overlap with values such as 'uncertainty', 'intensity', 'modality' is characterized by a number of conceptual features (approximation, inaccuracies, comparability). It is expressed by a relatively small amount of lexical means forming a main component of the functional semantic field of approximation due to the implementation of "a complete set of conceptual features and prototypical characteristics" (Dubovickaya, 2006, pp. 67&73). This kind of lexical means of expressing the meaning of approximation Adamovich (2009, p. 71) calls inherent.

To universal inherent approximants that express approximations in the sphere of quantitative and qualitative concepts in German the lexemes are tokens with a debatable morphological status *fast, beinahe, nahezu* and adjectives / adverbs *ungefähr, annähernd*. The approximate number (objects or persons, the duration of an event, age, time indicators) is expressed by the combination of approximators with numerals or nouns that have in their meaning 'quantity' or 'duration':

(1) Als die Arbeiten in der Allee begannen, lag der Krieg <u>fast fünfzehn</u>, als sie abgeschlossen wurden, schon <u>beinahe *zwanzig*</u> *Jahre zurück* (Engler W. Die Ostdeutschen, 1999. S. 60); (2)*... in* <u>annähernd *der Hälfte*</u> *aller bekannt gewordenen Fälle ...* (Die Zeit, 24.05.1996); (3) *Ich weiß nicht mehr, wie lange es dauerte, <...> aber es zog sich wohl* <u>ungefähr *einen Tag und eine Nacht*</u> *hin* (Moers W. Die 13 1/2 Leben des Käpt'n Blaubär, 1999. S. 49).

In combination with adjectives, verbs and nouns denoting quality, processes, condition, persons, objects or phenomena, these approximators indicate the proximity, but incompleteness of identifying the named subject of speech to the stereotype representation fixed by the meaning of the word modified by the approximator. Contexts in which approximate nominations realize different versions of the invariant value of approximation, usually serve as an additional background which only accentuates the estimated nature of the category of approximation. In the following examples, the context emphasizes the realization of the value of approximation as an incomplete degree of quality manifestation:

(4) Sein Fell war dunkel , <u>fast *schwarz*</u>*, wie bei einem Gorilla, und auch ansonsten glich er ... diesem Tier* (Moers W. Die 13 1/2 Leben des Käpt'n Blaubär, 1999. S. 113); (5) *Die war* <u>beinahe *wohlhabend, verdiente jedenfalls genug.*</u> *Der City-Einzelhandel aus der Textilbranche gehört zu ihrer Klientel* (Degenhardt F.J. Für ewig und drei Tage, 1999. S. 115); *(6) Die Kommunikation muss sprachlich*

annähernd *richtig, muss jedenfalls verständlich sein* (Luhmann N. Die Gesell-schaft der Gesellschaft, 1997. S. 459); *(7) Sein Gang wurde leicht und federnd,* fast *tänzerisch* (Moers W. Die 13 1/2 Leben des Käpt'n Blaubär, 1999. S. 184).

The role of the context is similar in the case of the expression in nominations with the inclusive universal approximators of such variants of the approximative value, as an unreachable action or process of its manifestation in full (8, 9) or inaccuracy of the action (10, 11):

(8) Aber dass er zum Schluss beinahe *weinte - Liliane sagte: „tränennassen Auges verhielt"-, verblüffte doch viele* (Degenhardt F. J. Für ewig und drei Tage, 1999, S. 251); *(9) Er* schläft *beim Gehen* fast ein. Seine kleinen Ringelaugen werden schwer   (Lebert B. Crazy, 1999. S. 105); *(10) Daran kannst du dir* ungefähr *die Chancen* ausrechnen, *die du hast (*Moers W. Die 13 1/2 Leben des Käpt'n Blaubär, 1999. S. 187); *(11) Wenn wir etwa hören, dass einfache Handwerker mit einigermaßen gesichertem Lebensunterhalt bereits zu den „Reichen" gezählt wurden, können wir uns vielleicht* annähernd *vorstellen, was Armut in dieser Zeit bedeutet haben muss* (Kurz R. Schwarzbuch Kapitalismus, 1999. S. 20).

The pragmatic attitude of the utterance subject can be different and does not affect the realization of the semantics of approximation since the approximators are prototypical means of expressing this thought content. This is also confirmed by examples in which approximate nominations of analytical nature actualize the semantics of approximate assimilation:

(12) In der Nacht ein Schrei im Hof. „Agnes!" Fast ein Kreischen. *„Agnes!" Ein Fenster öffnet sich* (Bahnhof Berlin, hrsg. Lange-Müller K., 1997. S. 22); *(13) Was lag näher als die Erwartung, dass* die annähernd *Gleichen auch in ihrem privaten Lebensstil wenig Umstände machen und die alten Unterscheidungs-zwänge abschütteln würden?* (Engler W. Die Ostdeutschen, 1999. S. 67); *(14)* Er sang gern und immer noch im vereinigten evangelischen Kirchenchor. "*Für einen praktizierenden Katholiken merkwürdig und* beinahe *Häresie", meinte sein Vater…* (Degenhardt F.J. Für ewig und drei Tage, 1999. S. 14). *(15) ... was bedeutet, dass ein Gegenstand, der in den Malmstrom fiele, auf seinen Grund mit* nahezu *Lichtgeschwindigkeit aufprallen würde* (Moers W. Die 13 1/2 Leben des Käpt'n Blaubär, 1999. S. 687).

Along with universal inherent approximators, in each sphere of quantitative and qualitative relations there are approximators which mark the semantics of approximation only in this sphere. Their list for the French, English, German, Russian and Belarusian languages, as well as shades of the approximation expressed by them, have already been largely determined in the works of the linguists previously mentioned. Of more interest to study are adherent (the term Adamovich),

or peripheral, means of expressing the meaning of approximation. The semantics of approximation intersect in this case with the semantics of uncertainty, intensity (graded manifestation of a feature) or modality. Adherent approximators (usually lexical, lexical and syntactic) in a certain context serve as means of expressing approximation, while performing their secondary semantic function - the estimated one. According to Boldyrev (2005), their semantics is not oriented towards reflecting the realities of the objective world, but on their evaluation or interpretation by the speaking subject (p. 22). The taxonomy of these means in languages on the basis of which the category of approximation is investigated is installed but it leaves room for replenishment since not all contexts have been investigated, taking into account the varieties of functional styles and genres of texts.

At the level of speech, even in the minimal syntactic unit - the combination of an adherent approximator with a significant word, the language values of lexical units, and a new meaning is formed - the 'approximation' of the evaluation of the naming subject (quantity, quality, qualitative determinateness of the subject concept), therefore nominations with semantics of approximation in most cases have an analytical character. We illustrate this with examples in which approximators of the adherent type indicate an approximate analogy of the named subject of thought (time of day, a subject, an event) to the concept expressed by a significant word:

(15) Gegen Abend stieg er wieder zur Höhle hinab (Süsskind P. Das Parfum, 1994. S. 174); *(16) Vielleicht, überlegte ich, könnte ich mir in meiner Zelle eine Art Schachbrett konstruieren…*(Zweig S. Die unsichtbare Sammlung, 1988. S. 111); *(17) "Ist das eine Insel?" – "So etwas wie eine Insel", bestätigte er. "Wahrscheinlich Schwemmland"* (Zinner H. Ausgewählte Werke in Einzel-ausgaben. Katja. Die Lösung, 1980. S. 227); *(18) Und dann geschah ein Wunder. Oder so etwas Ähnliches wie ein Wunder, nämlich etwas dermaßen Unbegreifliches, Unerhörtes und Unglaubliches, dass alle Zeugen es im nachhinein als Wunder bezeichnet haben würden…*(Süsskind P. Das Parfüm, 1994. S. 299).

In examples 15 and 16 the role of approximants of the adherent type is fulfilled by a preposition with the value of the time approximation gegen and a noun with an indefinite article eine Art, which, in combination with another noun, loses its classifying significance (the designation of the genus-species relations) and acquires a determinatively-comparative value - the value of approximate identification. In examples 17 and 18 a lexical and syntactic approximator is used (a comparative construction so etwas wie that marks the approximate character of the author's identification of the designated phenomena statement) the objective and eventual notions, that in both cases the above contexts confirm. The content dominant in these contexts is approximation, incomplete identification with the existing stereotypical representation (the prototype) which is indicated by the approximator. The

approximate character of the nominations is strengthened in the context with the help of the modal word wahrscheinlich and other nominations with the same referential correlation (Schwemmland, Wunder).

4. Conclusion

In our opinion, the category of approximation is a concept with a complex structure, the elements of which are several concepts, such as inaccuracy, incompleteness of the qualitative state, incomplete similarity / similarity. It reflects the perception of the world and generalizes the experience of mankind verbalized by such linguistic means as nominations with approximate semantics that have a complex structure of the secondary sign (a compound word like der Beinahezusammenstoß, die Fast-Heirat or a word combination expressing an integral concept, that is, a multiple-word nomination, for example, fast taub, eine Art Zaun).

The conceptual structure of approximation, represented by nominations with an approximate value, includes two modifications of the concept of approximation: inaccuracy of any quantitative characteristics and incompleteness of the assimilation of a 'piece' of a real or virtual world (quality, process, substance, whole denotative situation) to its prototype.

The approximator brings to the nomination value a rationally-appraising component, marking the incomplete correspondence of the main component of the nomination to the denoted element of the denotative situation. The specification of the approximate value consists in its gradual character. It is as if 'superimposed' on other values - a sign (quantitative, qualitative, procedural) or a substance. Therefore nominations with an approximate value, as a rule, are secondary (word-formation – *stutenartig, das Fast-Abkommen, der Beinahzusammenstoß,* lexical and grammatical - *weit über* 60 (sein), *ungefähr* gleichaltrig, syntactic – … *dass diese Person ungefähr so beschaffen war, wie sich Kurt seine Frau vorstellen mochte*) and can have in the text a different communicative or pragmatic load.

We believe that the types of approximators considered in this article (the list of which in German is, of course, much wider) allow us to emphasize the complexity and multidimensionality of the category of approximation, which can be expressed both at the level of the linguistic system and at the level of speech, in the conditions of communication.

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