

## PARAMETERS OF EVALUATION AS A LINGUISTIC CATEGORY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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În articol sunt analizate caracteristicile evaluării drept categorii lingvistice, funcțiile și componentele evaluării (subiectul, obiectul, aspectul semantic și gradul evaluării), relațiile dintre semele evaluative și emotive ale unităților lexicale. O deosebită atenție se acordă comparației dintre structura semantică a vocabularului evaluativ pozitiv și a celui negativ.

In linguistics evaluation is one of the most multifaceted phenomena. The capacity of the evaluative vocabulary, i.e. certain words and phrases to express a favorable or unfavorable judgment of facts and people implies the existence of special characteristics in their semantic structure which make this evaluation possible. Therefore, the semantics of the evaluative vocabulary is different from that of other types of vocabulary and requires a special study.

Peculiarities of evaluative vocabulary have increasingly fallen under the scrutiny of linguists in the past years [7] and still remain in the focus of scientific interest [13, p.14]. As L.Yu. Ivanov has duly noted, “though the concept of evaluation is intuitively clear, it can hardly be subjected to the definition that can satisfy if not all, then at least the majority of linguists” [11, p.69]. In English linguistics the most valuable contribution in the study of evaluation was made by such linguists as J.Martin, S.Hunston, G.Thompson, S.Conrad, D.Biber and others. In Russian linguistics a big contribution in the scientific investigations in the field of evaluation has been made primarily by such linguists as N.D. Arutiunova, N.A. Lukianova, V.N. Telia, E.J. Volf, V.L. Shakhovski, L.M. Vasiliev and many others.

The term “**evaluation**” is used as an equivalent to J. Martin’s **appraisal** [6] and in S. Conrad, D. Biber’s **attitudinal stance** [2]. It is defined by the above-named linguists as referring to the linguistic expression of speaker/writer’s opinion along a number of semantic dimensions or parameters. That is, evaluation can relate to judgments of entities/propositions as good or bad, important or unimportant, comprehensible or incomprehensible, likely or unlikely, genuine or fake, expected or unexpected, etc. [1, p.1].

According to S. Hunston and G. Thompson, evaluation is important for three main reasons. First, it serves to express the speaker’s or writer’s opinion, and in such a way, to reflect the value system of that person and their community. Every act of evaluation goes towards building up that value-system. Second, evaluation serves to build and maintain relations between writer and reader through manipulation (the process of persuading the reader to see the writer’s point of view), hedging (adjusting the truth-value or certainty attached to a statement, attaching the degree of certainty to the statement), which is politeness device. Third, as evaluation tends to occur throughout the text at its boundary points (at the end of each unit, for example, at the end of a paragraph), it serves in organizing the discourse [4, p.8-13]. These three functions of evaluation determine linguistic means of its expression in the discourse. For example, expressing the speaker’s or writer’s opinion is mainly possible thanks to a great variety of lexical units which have an evident evaluative meaning. Building and maintaining relations between writer and reader is achieved also by various conjuncts, but organizing the discourse is often done with the help of comparator adverbs (*e.g. just, only, at least*) adverbs that serve as evaluative disjuncts (*e.g. importantly, surprisingly, fortunately, etc.*) or with the help of syntactical means of expressing evaluation.

S.Hunston and G.Thompson identify four main parameters of evaluation as a linguistic category. First, they reveal the good-bad parameter, that is evaluation in its broad sense is expressing either a positive or a negative emotion/judgment/ value. The second parameter presupposes a certain level of certainty, that is the speaker must be certain that something is either good or bad and express this certainty very clearly. The third parameter is the evidence for positive/negative evaluation of a fact/action and the fourth parameter is importance or relevance of the evaluated fact/action [4, p.25]. These four parameters determine the comparative, subjective and value-laden nature of evaluation.

Taking into account the whole semantic structure of the evaluative vocabulary, it should be said that evaluation is embodied in the connotative component of the lexical meaning of the word, which is also known as **evaluative connotation** [15, p.86] or what D.Cruse calls **evaluative features** [14, p.47]. However, such linguists as A.V. Filippov and V.I. Shakhovski [20] argue that evaluative features of the word are included in the denotational component of the lexical meaning of the word. The logic of such judgments is grounded on the fact that the subject of thinking activity derives from the person's own attitude to the subject from understanding of its value for somebody's and for others. This view is also supported by N.F. Alefirencu who states that the semantic structure of some words "makes it impossible to reveal the semes of evaluation" [10, p.168].

The split of views on whether evaluative component is a part of connotational or denotational component is caused by the fact that evaluativeness is a very complex phenomenon indeed. In some cases it is really difficult to determine whether evaluative element should be included in denotational or connotational component of the evaluative meaning of the word. For example, the evaluative semes of the verb "to criticize" belong to its denotational component, but the semantic analysis of the word "cop" shows that the element of disapproval and pejorative meaning are parts of connotation. Consequently, the evaluative seme can hold different positions in the semantic structure of the word depending on its functions.

E.M. Volf defines evaluation as "positive or negative, explicit or implicit attitude of the subject (a person, groups of people or society) to the objects of reality, which is socially codified with the concrete usage in semantics of language units" [11, p.18]. Basing on this definition E.M. Volf singles out different **components of evaluation** among which there is **subject of evaluation**, i.e. the person who makes the evaluation; **object of evaluation**, i.e. who/what is being evaluated; **scale of evaluation**, i.e. different grades of evaluation, from moderate to high (for example, moderate praise/criticism – excessive praise/criticism); **semantic unity of evaluation**, i.e. a certain feature of the evaluated object [11, p.22]. The existence of so many components of evaluation proves the fact that it is a very complex phenomenon that should be viewed from several angles/perspectives.

A.V. Kunin's definition of evaluation as a linguistic category is similar in its sense to E.M. Volf's definition but is expressed in a more concise form. According to him, evaluation is "objective-subjective or subjective-objective attitude of a person to a certain object of reality, expressed by linguistic means either explicitly or implicitly" [14, p.181]. It is worth mentioning that A.V. Kunin's definition of evaluation focuses on the fact that both objective and subjective attitude of a person towards the objects have the right to exist. This is a crucial point for our investigation of politicians' speeches expressing praise or criticism of the opponents' actions because in some cases the evaluation is subjective, but in a rather big number of cases, it can be subjective. It does not mean that subjective evaluation is less worthy, for it is just another type of evaluation.

Alongside evaluation, A.V. Kunin singles out four categories – emotiveness, expressiveness, intensity and evaluation. The emotiveness is the expression of people's moods and feelings by linguistic means, whereas the expressiveness is defined as qualities of a word or a phraseological unit conditioned by imagery, intensity and emotiveness. But intensity is a quality of a word to intensify the features of the object it denotes [15, p.180]. Evaluation, in its turn, is the attitude of a person towards the object (person, animal, action, state, situation, etc.), which can be, on the one hand, objective or subjective, and, on the other hand, positive or negative [15, p.181]. A.V. Kunin point out that emotiveness is always expressive and it always has evaluation but not vice versa. It means that evaluation can be not accompanied by emotiveness. Consequently, it is possible to give evaluation without emotional coloring, which would make evaluation objective.

Another important concept, which is included in the field of evaluation, is the evaluative attitude analyzed by V.N. Telia, L.M. Vasiliev, V.I. Plotnicov, R.B. Brandt, etc. V.N. Telia states that **the evaluative attitude** is one of the types of modality, which has a certain linguistic expression. By **the evaluative modality** she means a connection, which is established between the value system of the speaker and the given reality (either the property or some aspects of this reality) [19, p.22-23]. In this way, the semantic structure of lexical units with positive or negative evaluation has the encoded information about social norms and values of a given language community.

Next important characteristic of evaluation as a linguistic category is **the degree of evaluation**, i.e. different grades of evaluation, from moderate to high. Only in the recent years the degree of evaluation has started to be analyzed deeply by such modern linguists as E.N. Starikova, S.N. Kolesnik and Yu.S. Starostina. These linguists distinguish three degrees of evaluation – low, moderate and high [17, p.58]. According to

them, the evaluative statements of low degree are neutral by their emotionality and categoricalness. Moderate degree of evaluation is characterized by increasing role of the **emotional-evaluative component**, which, according to I.A. Sternin, is the result of the close relationship between emotiveness and evaluative potential of a word [18]. Usually they are expressed by lexical units which have both denotative and connotative meaning, the latter consisting of emotional and evaluative component. But high degree of evaluation is expressed by the lexical units with a distinct emotional meaning [17, p.59]. This investigation is very important for our analysis of the evaluative paradigm “Approval-Disapproval” because it includes lexical units with low, moderate and high degree of evaluation.

Depending on the attitude of the subject of evaluation linguists the majority of linguists (O.S. Akhmanova, E.M. Volf, A.V. Kunin, T.V. Matveeva, E.A. Bajenova and many others) distinguish positive and negative evaluation. Some linguists like P.A. Safina, N.D. Arutiunova and M.P. Jeltuhina single out neutral evaluation. The classification of evaluation into positive and negative is not as simple as it seems to be from the first sight. The matter is that the context exerts a significant influence on the character of emotional evaluation and as a result one and the same word can acquire an opposite type of evaluation (positive or negative). Under the specific influence of wide and narrow context a generally positive word may obtain a negative evaluation and vice versa [18, p.10]. Although in the English language the adjective ‘generous’ expresses a positive evaluation, under the influence of micro-context it acquires a negative evaluation, e.g.:

*Webb has led them [the troops] along that path by proposing a GI bill that some Republicans including John McCain, have opposed – much to McCain’s political discomfort – because they think it’s **too generous** (Time, June 12 2008).*

The above-mentioned example shows that although in the English language the adjective ‘generous’ expresses a positive evaluation, under the influence of micro-context it acquires a negative evaluation.

The comparison of evaluative vocabulary has revealed the predominance of the lexical units with negative evaluation over those with positive one. This phenomenon can be explained by the phenomenon, which was called by V.Shakhovsky the dichotomy depending on the type of the evaluative sign [20]. However, lexical units with negative evaluation are used in real communication much more rarely than lexical units than positively charged evaluative signs. This observation allows making a conclusion that in general, emotional systems of different peoples and cultures are similar with negativity prevailing in lexicon but leaving behind positivity in usage and syntagmatic combination, which can be explained by the psychological aspiration of people towards positivity and, consequently, optimism.

The linguistic analysis of positive and negative emotional vocabulary (there are no investigations of such kind in the sphere of evaluative vocabulary, which is regarded by us as a perspective for our further analysis) made by W.Noth in the 1990-s showed that positive emotions are expressed by different peoples in a more or less similar way than negative emotions, which are often concrete, definite and multi-faced [7, p.83]. According to A.Wierbitcka, E.M. Volf, O.P. Ermakova, G.N. Sklearevskaya the vocabulary system of any language is dominated by the units with pejorative connotation [9, p.357]. As G.N. Sklearevskaya has observed, almost 80% of language metaphors are of pejorative character [16, p.111]. Therefore, negative evaluative vocabulary is more semantically and structurally diverse than positive evaluative vocabulary.

The above-explained predominance of negative evaluative vocabulary over positive evaluative vocabulary in the language has resulted in the fact that the first has been studied much deeply by linguists than the latter. Before N.V. Korobova, a modern specialist in evaluative semantics, there were practically no works dedicated to the modern state of positive evaluative vocabulary. N.V. Korobova studies ameliorative tendencies in conversational English on the example of modern British novels. She has analyzed two approaches to the treatment of ameliorative nature which there are in modern linguistics – semantic and pragmatic [17, p.4]. According to this semantic approach, ameliorative semes are the semes in the semantic structure of which there are semes of positive evaluation.

Another important achievement of N.V. Korobova is that she has revealed the most frequent users and recipients of positive evaluative vocabulary. According to her opinion, the usage of positive evaluative vocabulary is most frequent in the communication among two age groups – children and elder population. During the communication with the elder population ameliorative lexical units are used as a means of support and encouragement with various strategic aims. The usage of ameliorative vocabulary (words of loud, affection, respect) among the youth and middle-aged generation depends to a great extent from psychological

peculiarities of communicators and social environment where they were formed [13, p.10]. Ameliorative words form the emotional system of a child and thus, contribute to its normal psychological development.

The analysis of more than 5000 lexical units of positive and negative evaluative vocabulary in pre-election campaign articles shows that evaluation is not just expressing favourable or unfavorable judgment or opinion but it is a complex phenomenon, which is realized in real communication in numerous semantic variants depending on such parameters as **the semantic unity of evaluation** and **the degree of evaluation**. The types of semantic unities of positive/negative evaluation with a strong degree are the following: adoration/ hatred, praise/ criticism, positive/ negative significance of an object/event. The types of semantic unities of positive evaluation with a moderate degree are the following: approval/disapproval, support/discouragement, respect/disrespect, acknowledgment/, satisfaction/ dissatisfaction. The aspects of negative evaluation with a low degree are: lack of negative attitude, agreement/ disagreement.

Thus, as a linguistic category, evaluation is defined mainly as a positive/negative attitude of a person to a certain object or objects of reality, expressed by certain linguistic means. Being a complex phenomenon, evaluation consists of many components such as the subject and object of evaluation, evaluative predicate, evaluative stereotype, evaluative moment, evaluative attitude, and evaluative reaction, the most important components being type of semantic unity and degree of evaluation. Basing on these two components of evaluation, 10 thematic groups are identified within the evaluative paradigm. Despite the predominance of the lexical units with negative evaluation over those with positive one, lexical units with negative evaluation are used in real communication much rarer than lexical units with positively charged evaluative signs.

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