

Elena Paducheva

VERB TAXONOMY AND DECOMPOSITIONAL SEMANTICS OF LEXICON

elena708@gmail.com

One of the main advantages of the Russian National Corpus (<http://www.ruscorpora.ru>) is its semantic tagging – based on extensive SEMANTIC CLASSIFICATIONS of lexicon.

The last two or three decades of development in semantics revealed an important role played in grammar by semantics of lexicon. A lexicographic definition of a word is now considered to be its DECOMPOSITIONAL SEMANTIC REPRESENTATION.

Meaning is flexible and context dependent – REGULAR POLYSEMY is strikingly widespread. Semantic representations in lexicon should take this flexibility and context dependency of meaning into account: both MEANING and MEANING CHANGE must be accounted for.

My talk is devoted to decompositional semantic representations contained in the database of Russian verbs called «Lexicographer» (<http://www.rusling.narod.ru>). In the first place, those aspects of lexical meaning are taken into consideration that are grammatically relevant.

Semantic representations of the Lexicographer type provide semantic substantiation for two main verb taxonomies – for traditional thematic classification and for Vendler's verb classes (categories). Examples are given of how morphosyntactic behavior of a verb can be predicted from its semantic representation. The following topics are touched upon: category shifts (e.g., deagentivization); shifts of ontological class; accomplishments and achievements in aspectual perspective; ballistic movement and momentaneity; focalization, i.e. thematic highlighting; decausativization and causative alternation.

«Lexicographer» suggests a theory of EVENT STRUCTURE representation. Event structure types not accounted for in Vendler's verb classification are introduced and discussed.

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