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Lexical Analysis of Colloquial Sign Speech

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Annotation: This article is devoted to the lexical analysis of Sign Language. Gesture, the main semantic unit of Sign Language, consists of two main components - configuration and movement, which is characterized by localization in space, direction and quality. Contradictions, or oppositions, of gesture components are relevant for expressing lexica-semantic and grammatical meanings in Sign Language. The lexical composition of Sign Language is diverse and ensures the satisfaction of the communicative needs of deaf interlocutors who use Sign Language, as a rule, in a relaxed, informal setting.
Keywords: Component, gesture, gesture structures, dactyl, lexical unit, action, verbosity, configuration, synonymous series, idiomatic expressions

I. INTRODUCTION

Sound language arose about 30-50 thousand years ago and since then has been the main means of communication in human society. So many years and communication between people with the help of gestures. Some scientists believe that sign language preceded sound, that is, people communicated with gestures before they learned to speak. To date, the functions of verbal speech continue to expand, the scope of non-verbal signs is quite significant and includes the use of conditional graphic symbols and various gestures.

Gestures are involved in direct interpersonal communication, making up a non-verbal component. They are used in different ways, depending on the purpose and situation of communication. Usually, gestures accompany the verbal text, providing the missing information in it.

Colloquial utterances are the result of the interaction of verbal and non-verbal components, however, the set of gestures used as non-verbal components in colloquial speech utterances does not constitute an independent communicative system.

Despite subtle observations and some valuable findings of a number of specialists, for example, the German psychologist W. Wundt, domestic researchers P.M. Boschis, N.G. Morozova et al., failed to create a linguistic description of sign language. This is due, in particular, to the fact that the methods of traditional descriptive linguistics turned out to be powerless, Sign Language could not be analyzed using these methods, since traditional linguistics operates with such concepts and categories as “part of speech”, “noun”, “verb”, “sentence member”, etc., which are absent in the usual sense in sign language. Only with the development of a new direction - structural linguistics, it turned out to be possible to set and solve the problems of a truly scientific study of the Sign Language of the deaf [1, 26]. The modern interpretation of the problem was first proposed by the American scientist W.C. Stokoe in the 60s. Prior to Stokou's work, gesture was viewed as an indivisible unit, a "hieroglyph". Studies have shown that Sign Language is a multi-level linguistic system and that gesture, the main meaningful (semantic) unit, has a complex structure.

Stokou identified three main components that make up each gesture: configuration, spatial position and movement. He described the characteristics of each component (i.e., all possible configurations, locations, and movements of the gesturing arm or arms in American Sign Language). Following Stock, the structure of the gesture was revealed in other national sign languages: English, German, Swedish, Finnish, etc. Let us analyze the structure of gesture in Sign Language. Let us consider the characteristics of two main components: configuration and movement. The configuration component is characterized in one-handed gestures by the position of the fingers and hand (usually the right hand), in two-handed gestures by the position of the fingers and hand of each hand and the relative position of both hands. When performing some two-handed gestures, the configuration of the right and left hands is the same, in others it is different. It is convenient to give the characteristics of the configurations based on their comparison with the configuration of the hand when showing the corresponding letter of the dactyl alphabet or the dactyl designation of a number. Sign Language has 20 main configurations: A, B, C, 1, 5, etc.

The movement component is characterized by the place where the gesture is performed (localization), the direction and quality of the movement. Each of these three characteristics of movement can be described using a fixed set of features: 10 features make it possible to describe all the main localizations of sign language gestures; 8 signs - directions of movement; 8 signs - the quality of movements. We will not give a complete set of features here, we will give only examples, illustrating how each gesture can be represented by characterizing its components. As we noted above, the configuration component will be assigned a characteristic in one parameter, and the motion component - in three[4, 84]

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The specificity of the structure of a gesture lies primarily in the peculiarity of the connections between its components: they are embodied in the gesture at the same time. This gesture is fundamentally different from the word, in which phonemes are realized sequentially in time. This feature of the gesture structure is very important, essential (relevant) for the expression of lexico-semantic and grammatical meanings in Sign Language.

It is well known that changes in phonemes or their oppositions make it possible to contrast, differentiate words with different lexical and semantic meanings (“bal” - “small”) and convey grammatical information (“hand” - “hands”, i.e. singular and plural). It turned out that changing the characteristics of one or both components of a gesture performs the same service in Russian sign language.

The pronounced connection of Sign Language with the situation of conversation (consituency) determines another important feature of its vocabulary. In the lexical composition of Sign Language, there are no specialized designations for “what is always present in a conversation”, for example, parts of the body (head, hand, nose, etc.). These meanings are expressed simply by pointing to one's hand, head, nose, etc. Pointing gestures are very widely used in Sign Language and have a wide range of functions. So, telling what color the tree trunk is in the picture, the subject in the experiment conducted by G.L. Zaitseva, pointed to the street (through the window): ‘the trunk of the tree is of the same color as the trunks of the trees that grow here’. The use of a pointing gesture is possible due to the commonality of the preliminary information of the participants in the conversation, their knowledge of the surrounding life, etc.

The syncretism of many sign language lexical units is also manifested in the fact that one gesture is used to designate different objects of the real world (denotations). At the same time, the use of one gesture to express different meanings is subject to certain patterns. So, one gesture can mean: 1) action - an instrument of action ('iron' and 'ironing', 'broom' and 'sweep', etc.), 2) action - a doer - an instrument of action ('skiing', ' skier', 'skis', etc.).

At the same time, the lexical composition of Sign Language contains many gestures that convey meanings analytically, dissected. With the help of this kind of designations, the meanings of ‘furniture’ are conveyed: table chair bed different; ‘vegetables’: potatoes cabbage different cucumber, etc. Dissection is clearly expressed in conditions when it is required to express a meaning for which there is no ready-made gesture. For example, for the name of a blueberry, a gesture construction is used: berry is a black language; for the value 'turquoise' - for example blue negative (green negative) mix. The last two examples show that in sign language there is a very strong tendency towards the emergence of new lexical units, in which there is a need in the process of communication [8, 49].

A special kind of dismemberment (verbosity) is associated with the originality of the substance of the gesture. So, each of the meanings ‘stands on two legs’, ‘stands on one leg’, ‘stands on four legs’, ‘stands a chair’, etc. is conveyed differently. In this case, the specificity of the Sign Language substance allows one to characterize one or another action with the help of a special configuration and movement. Thus, different meanings are directly divorced for the interlocutor who perceives information visually.

Thus, in the lexicon of Sign Language, two tendencies seem to be opposed - towards syncretism and dismemberment. The same tendencies are found in colloquial varieties of other languages, including Russian colloquial speech.

There are many branched synonymous rows in Sign Language, which make it possible to accurately differentiate not only the main meanings, but also subtle semantic shades. For example, the meaning 'impossible' is expressed by five synonymous gestures, the meaning 'is, there is' is expressed by three gestures (and their modifications).

Finishing the story about the lexical composition of Sign Language, it must be said that there are still a lot of “white spots” here. Particularly poorly studied and described is the class of gestures that are used only in the Sign Language and are not included in the vocabulary of the Sign Language. The existing sign dictionaries contain mainly gestures that are common to Sign Language and RZhL, as well as gestures that belong only to Sign Language.

Our knowledge of the lexical composition of Sign Language is incomplete if we have a poor idea of the features of exactly that class of gestures that belongs only to Sign Language, including phraseological units, idiomatic expressions, etc. Research in this direction is being carried out by scientists.

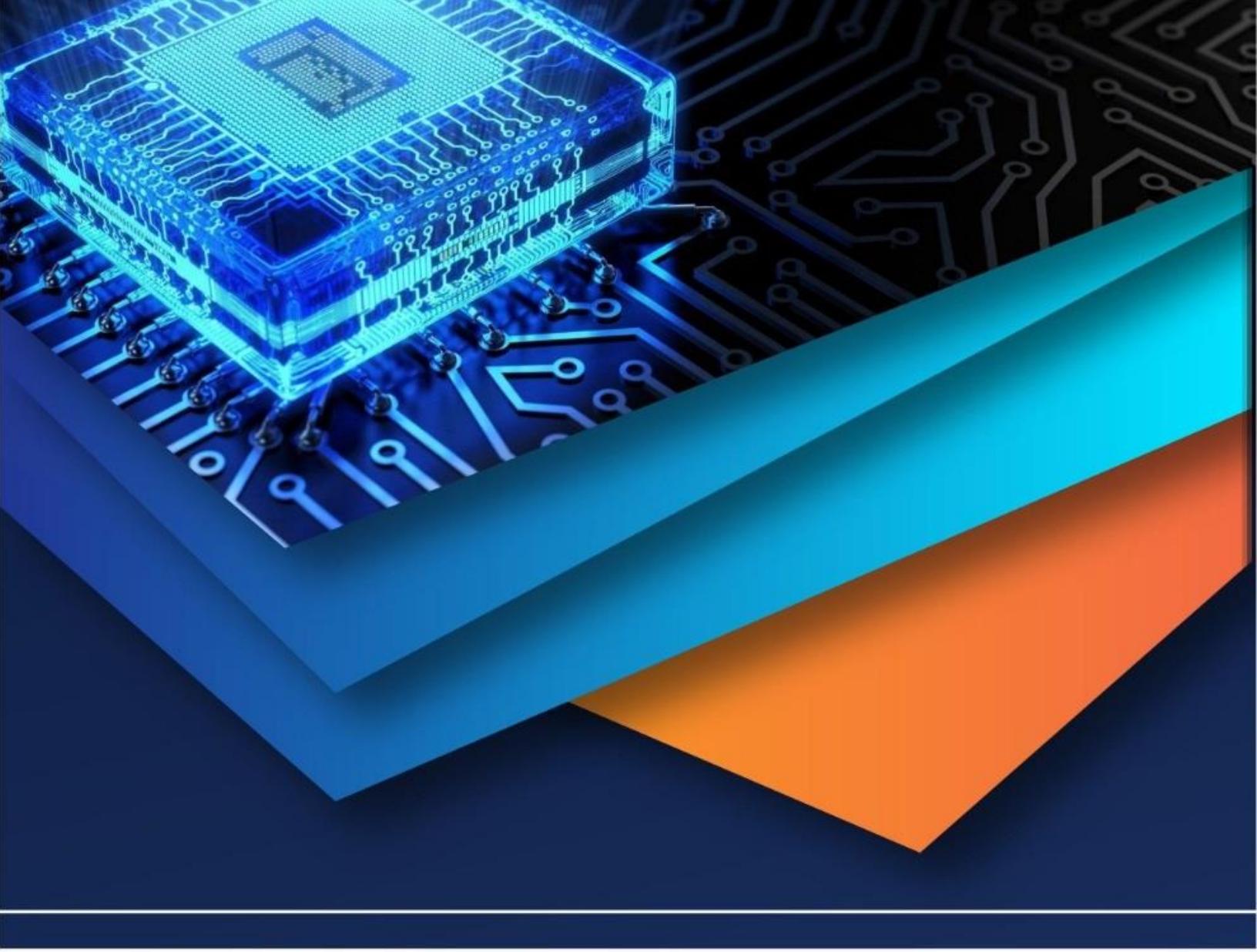
The peculiarities of the lexical composition of the Sign Language are explained by the peculiarity of the substance of the gesture and the functional purpose of the Sign Language. The first class of Sign Language gestures are gestures in which the way of expressing meanings is determined by the substance and which convey various external signs of denotations. The second class is gestures that are semantically most closely related to the Sign Language function. The specificity of the functional purpose imposes some kind of restrictions on the scope of this class and on its composition, and determines the ways of expressing values. The close connection with constitution, the confrontation between tendencies towards syncretism and dismemberment are the most important features that characterize the lexical units of the second class of gestures.

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The lexical composition of Sign Language ensures the satisfaction of the communicative needs of deaf interlocutors who quite successfully use Russian Sign Language in informal, informal communication. With the penetration of Sign Language into the sphere of official communication, new lexical units appear that are necessary to convey the content of a scientific, socio-political and other nature.

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