

## THE SEMANTIC CHANGES IN THE VOCABULARY (ON THE BASIS OF THE RUSSIAN AND AZERBAIJANI LANGUAGES)

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### ABSTRACT

*The article deals with the analysis of the semantic changes in the vocabularies of the Russian and Azerbaijani languages caused by the influence of the different factors. Semantic archaisms are systematized according their belonging to the concrete part of speech (nouns, adjectives, verbs) and given in the appropriate tables. The reasons of the semantic changes during the historical development of the language are explained.*

*Some Russian semantic archaisms are still used in the other Slavic languages (Ukrainian, Polish, Serbian). The historical excursus is carried out in the article, as necessary.*

*So though the meanings of the Russian and Azerbaijani words considered in the article are archaic they are preserved in the structure of the modern words and might be relevant to the specific fields. They are used as terms in the different fields of science, they are preserved in the dialects, folklore. They are also important components of idioms, proverbs, sayings as they are relics of the past retained in the modern Russian and Azerbaijani languages. They have their own characteristics that makes them unique lexical items.*

*Research of such semantic changes caused by the different factors is very interesting and significance both from the linguistic and historical standpoints.*

**Keywords:** *semantic changes, semantic archaisms, vocabulary, Russian, Azerbaijani, language, factors, historical development.*

It is known that vocabulary of any language including the Russian and Azerbaijani languages is a dynamic, developing, open system that is subjected to the influence of the different extra – and intralinguistic factors. Such factors cause the phonetic, morphological, syntactic and semantic changes in the vocabulary. In our view, the semantic changes are of the utmost interest.

Semantic changes lead with change on meaning of words, however this change does not occur of a sudden. On the contrary, this is a slow process into language evolution, development and these differences are only realised as time goes by. There are many objective and subjective reasons to transformation and change over a word meaning. They can

be adopted thanks to the different historical, political, geographical, social-economic, cultural factors, insertion of vocabulary from another language, by borrowing or even through popular usage of a word inside another context, resulting its differentiation to the whole. Historical linguistics treats the semantic change process throughout years, explaining its alternation.

Our review of the scientific works on lexicology, semasiology shows that the factors accounting for semantic changes are subdivided into two groups by the Russian and Azerbaijani linguists: a) extra-linguistic, and b) linguistic causes. By extra-linguistic causes they mean various changes in the life of the speech community, changes in economic and social structure, changes in ideas, scientific concepts, way of life and other spheres of human activity as reflected in word meaning. The appearance of a new meaning is due either to 1) the appearance, of new referents (e.g. *radio, television, computer*) or a factual change of referents or to 2) a change of knowledge of the referent or a change in emotional attitude to the referent, while in reality the referent remains unchanged [2; 3; 7; 8; 11; 12; 16]. Thus Semantic change (also semantic shift, semantic progression, semantic development, or semantic drift) is a form of language change regarding the evolution of word usage-usually to the point that the modern meaning is radically different from the original usage. In diachronic (or historical) linguistics, semantic change is a change in one of the meanings of a word. Every word has a variety of senses and connotations, which can be added, removed, or altered over time, often to the extent that cognates across space and time have very different meanings. The study of semantic change can be seen as part of etymology, onomasiology, semasiology, and semantics. "The alteration of meaning occurs because words are constantly used and what is intended by speakers is not exactly the same each time. If a different intention for a word is shared by the speech community and becomes established in usage then a semantic change has occurred." "Like any linguistic change, a **semantic change** is not acquired simultaneously by all members of a speech community. An innovation enters into a language and spreads through the speech community along socially determined lines. The original meaning of a form is not immediately displaced by the innovated meaning, but the two coexist for some time. "Semantic change is not a change in meaning per se, but the addition of a meaning to the semantic system or the loss of a meaning from the semantic system while the form remains constant" [17, p.59].

There are very interesting and original examples of semantic changes in the vocabulary of the Russian and Azerbaijani languages. The scientists consider such words to be semantic archaisms" or paleosemantisms that retained their forms but acquired new meanings or stylistic coloring [2; 6; 7; 12; 16]. It should be considered that the analysis and explanation of the meanings of words and nuances in the vocabularies of the Russian and Azerbaijani languages must be done from the position of today. It requires certainly to recognize the linguistic spirit of the time. Full disclosure of meanings, their explanation and illustration show that the wealth and strength of lexicon of any language including the Russian and Azerbaijani languages is not just in the amount of different words, but their many meanings and various shades of meaning. Certainly word meaning is liable to change during the historical development of language. Words acquire new meanings while some of the old ones die away. When the new meaning replaces the older or exists side by side with it as part of the semantic structure of a polysemantic word, it enriches the vocabulary qualitatively. When it exists side by side with the older meaning, but is no longer associated with it so that the semantic development results in the emergence of a new word, this contributes to the quantitative growth of the vocabulary.

The studies have shown that there are quite a lot of examples of semantic archaisms in the vocabularies of the Russian and Azerbaijani languages. As it is impossible to consider all of them within one article we'll consider some of them that are of the utmost interest in our opinion.

**a) in the Russian language**

<b>Noun</b>	
<b>the archaic meaning</b>	<b>the modern meaning</b>
жена – woman	wife
муж – man	husband
дети – servants	children
вратарь – gate keeper, door keeper, doorman	goalkeeper
язык – people	language
вор – state criminal	thief
гость – visitor	guest
позор – sight; spectacle, view	shame, disgrace
мечта – thought	dream
пароход – steam, locomotive	steamer, steamship
клятва – damnation	oath
город – fenced place	city; town
урод – beauty; harvest	freak; ugly creature
лето – year	summer
неделя – day off	week
наказание – homily, sermon	punishment
глагол – word	verb
варенье – any boiled meal	jam
печенье – any baked meal	biscuits, cookies
гад – snake	skunk; vermin
слово – speech	word
страсть – suffering	passion
приказ – government agency	order, command
прелесть – deceit, fraud	charm, fascination
очарование – sorcery, witchcraft	charm, fascination
зелье – greenery, green	poison draught; poisonous concoction
босоножка – barefooted girl/woman	open-toe sandals
крыло – covering	wing
<b>Adjectives</b>	
безбедный – safe; secure	well off
обольстительный – deceiving	aphrodisiac; alluring
правый – correct	right (antonym of the word left)
равнодушный – unanimous	indifferent
странный – wayfaring, wandering	strange
тощий – vain, futile	scraggy; hollow- cheeked, gaunt
пошлый – popular	vulgar, banal, trivial
рассеянный – full of pleasure, entertainments	absent-minded
замечательный – outstanding, noteworthy	wonderful
<b>Verbs</b>	
давать – to sell	to give
обожать – to deify, to idolize	to adore
орать – to plough	to yell, to shout
пищать – to play the flute	to peep, to squeak
решать – to set free, to release (from), to liberate	to decide; to solve
течь – to move quickly, to run	to flow
молвить – to make a noise, to bustle, to fuss about	to say, to utter
озорничать – to get violent, to whoot it up	to be naughty, to play pranks

The other examples: *разве* – the archaic meaning: besides, the modern meaning: really? Isn't it clear; shouldn't one. For example: *Разве он не сказал тебе об этом вчера?* – Didn't he tell you about it yesterday?

The word «присутствие» used to be a concrete word and meant “institution; organization”. At present it is an abstract word and means “presence”. The word «босоножка» used to mean a person – barefooted girl/woman, now it means a subject – open-toe sandals.

No less interesting and original examples of semantic archaisms are in the Azerbaijani language. The vocabulary of the Azerbaijani language was subjected to the different changes during the long history of its development including semantic ones [7, p.15-16]. There are following examples that demonstrate such changes:

<b>Nouns</b>	
<b>the archaic meaning</b>	<b>the modern meaning</b>
kişi – person, human being	man
ər – hero	husband
qoçu – hero	robber, smuggler
donluq – present, gift	1. salary scale; pay; salary 2. material (for clothes)
aş – food, meal	plov – one of the most widespread dishes in Azerbaijan made of rice. The verb <i>aşmaq</i> “to guzzle; to hog” is used in the Azerbaijani common speech
yazı – steppe, plain	writing; script; inscription
uğur – way; fate; fortune	success
ayaq – wine – glass, rummer	foot
çin – time (for example: for times, many times etc.)	1. cogged sickle; 2. epaulets; shoulder straps; 3. trip; run
düyün – wedding	1. knot; string; tie; 2. a bough in the log, board
bəbək – baby	pupil of the eye
qulluqçu – servant, maid	serve; employee; office worker
uşaq – manager (of an estate); housekeeper	child
vekil – adviser in the palace who was plenipotentiary in the decision of state issues	lawyer; attorney
yağma – robbery; pillage, plundering	fall (is related to the rain, snow and hail, for example: <i>yağış yağır</i> “it is raining” <i>qar yağır</i> “it is snowing”)
dil – heart	language
qat – 1. side; time (for example: for times, five times etc.)	layer; stratum; tier
soy – song	family, kin; origin; stock
su – side	water
tütün – smoke	tobacco
uc – end; finish	tip; point
<b>Adjectives</b>	
ağır – big great	heavy; hard
ala – big	parti – coloured, many – coloured, motley
qızıl – red	gold; golden
qatı – big; strong	thick, dense
qara – big, strong, powerful	black
uçmaq – heaven; paradise	to fly (this word used to be a noun, but now it is a verb).
<b>Verbs</b>	
yapmaq – to build, to construct	to stick (something to, on)

It should be noted that some of these semantic archaisms are preserved in the idioms, paremiology, dialects of the Azerbaijani language [4], for example: *Ağır adam* “an imposing, weighty person”; *Ağır otur batman gəl* “Behave respectably”, *Ağır oturmaq* “to be serious, staid, imposing”.

The word *qızıl* in the color meaning is used in some historical, zoological terms, toponyms etc. For example: *Qızıl Meydan* “Red Square” (the famous city square in Moscow”); *Qızıl ordu* “Red Army” (The Red Army (*Krasnaya Armiya*) was a common name for the Russian National Military Forces from 1918 to 1946, which was also known by the abbreviation RKKa (Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army). The name refers to the color red. In the workers’ movement red symbolized the bloodshed in the struggle against oppression); *qızılqaz* “pink flamingo”; *qızıləhmədi* “a kind of dark-red apples”; *qızılbaş* “a kind of mushrooms with a red cap”; *qızılquyruq* “redstart (a song-bird with the bright-red tail with a slight golden tint)”; *qızıl söyüd* “red willow” etc.

There is an interesting fact connected with the archaic semantics of the coloronym in the modern Russian language, too. It is about the coloronym *красный* “red” that used to mean “nice”. The adjective *красный* was formed from the word *краса* “beauty” and meant “nice”. Then its meaning changed and it obtained the meaning “red”. It is used in this meaning in the modern Russian language but its archaic meaning “nice” is preserved in Russian folklore, poetry, idioms, proverbs and sayings [11], for example: *красна девица* “pretty, nice girl”; *красный молодец* “handsome brave fellow” (in folklore); *не красна изба углами, а красна пирогами* “the house is nice and remarkable for its hospitality”; *красную речь и красно слушать*: literal translation (hereinafter the literal translation is made by the author of this article – S.M.): It is nice to listen to the nice speech”; *красно поле пшеном, а беседа умом* “The field is nice for the wheat, the talk is nice for mind”; *серенькое утро- красный денек* “the literal translation: The grey morning – the nice day”; *красное слово не ложь* “literal translation: a nice word is not a lie”; *красное слово всегда впору* “literal translation: A nice word is always appropriate” (proverbs and sayings) [5].

As it was mentioned in the table, the word «лето» used to mean “year”, but it means “summer” in the modern Russian language. Its archaic meaning is preserved in the plural form related to the age: *Ему 40 лет* - He is 40 years old; *35 лет тому назад* - 35 years ago; *через 20 лет назад* - In 20 years. This meaning is also preserved in the botanical terms: *однолетнее растение* “annual plant” (a plant that completes its lifecycle within one year); *столетник* “kind of aloe”. *двухлетнее растение* “biennial planet” (a flowering plant that takes two years to complete its biological lifecycle); *многолетнее растение* “perennial planet (a plant that lives more than two years)”.

It is also used in the historical terms: *Столетняя война* “The Hundred years’ War” (this name has been used by historians since the beginning of the XIX century to describe the long conflict that pitted the kings and kingdoms of France and England against each other from 1337 to 1453).

*Тридцатилетняя война* “The Thirty Years’ War” (a war fought primarily in Central Europe between 1618 and 1648. One of the most destructive conflicts in human history. Initially a war between various Protestant and Catholic states in the fragmented Holy Roman Empire, it gradually developed into a more general conflict involving most of the European great powers. These states employed relatively large mercenary armies, and the war became less about religion and more of a continuation of the France–Habsburg rivalry for European political pre-eminence);

*Семилетняя война* “The Seven Years’ War” — it was a global conflict fought between 1756 and 1763. It involved every European great power of the time and spanned five continents,

affecting Europe, the Americas, West Africa, India, and the Philippines etc. This word is also the a part of the compound word “однолетки” that is a synonym of the words *ровесники*, *сверстники* “they are the same age”.

The archaic meaning of the word *город* was “any fenced place”. This word means only “city; town” in the modern Russian language, but its archaic meaning is preserved in the structure of such words as: **nouns**: *о город* “kitchen garden”, *ограда* “fence, enclosure”, *ограждение*, *преграда* “barrier”; **verbs**: *огородить* “to fence (something) in”, *оградить* “to fence off”, *заградить* “to block” etc.

Such word as *пятилетний план*, *пятилетка* “the five-years plan” was used during the Soviet period. The five-year plans for the development of the national economy of the Soviet Union (USSR) consisted of a series of nationwide centralized economic plans in the Soviet Union, beginning in the late 1920s. The Soviet state planning committee Gosplan developed these plans based on the theory of the productive forces that formed part of the ideology of the Communist Party for development of the Soviet economy. Fulfilling the current plan became the watchword of Soviet bureaucracy. The initial five-year plans aimed to achieve rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union and thus placed a major focus on heavy industry.

The word *позор* has lost its original meaning “sight; spectacle” view” and means only “shame, disgrace” in the modern Russian language. But the archaic meaning of this words preserves its etymological relations with such words as *зрение* “eyesight”, *зрачок* “eye-pupil”, *обозревать* “to observe”, *взор* “gaze, glance”, *зритель* “onlooker, spectator” etc. All these words go back to the common ancient Slavic root *zor-zr* “to see”. It is interesting that the meaning “sight, spectacle, view” is preserved in the other Slavic language – Serbian: compare: *позориште* “theatre”.

The word *позор* “sight, spectacle, view” was widely used in the Russian poetry, for example:

Благодарю, что вновь чудес, красот позор.

Открыл мне в жизни толь блаженной (Г.Р.Державин. Евгению).

(literal translation): I’m thankful for the view of beauties, miracles that life shows me”- (G.R.Derzhavin. To Evgeniy, 1807);

Величествен и грустен был позор

Пустынных вод, лесов, долин и гор

(Е.А. Баратынский. Последняя смерть).

(literal translation):

How majestic and sad the view of the rivers, forests and valleys was

(Y.A.Baratinski, The last death. 1827).

The archaic meaning of the word *урод* “beauty” that means only “ugly creature; freak” in the modern Russian language is preserved in the other Slavic language: *урода* in the polish language means “beauty, beautiful girl/woman; “beauty” *врода*.

So though the meanings of the Russian and Azerbaijani words considered above are archaic they are preserved in the structure of the modern words and might be relevant to the specific fields. They are used as terms in the different fields of science, [9;14] they are preserved in the dialects, [4] folklore. They are also important components of idioms, proverbs, sayings

as they are relics of the past retained in the modern Russian and Azerbaijani languages. They have their own characteristics that makes them unique lexical items.

Study of such semantic changes caused by the different factors is very interesting and significance both from the linguistic and historical standpoints.

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