'HOW OLD ARE YOU?' IN THE ASPECT OF SEMANTIC UNIVERSALS IN THE EURASIAN LANGUAGES

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The Conference on Language Universals was held at Gould House, Dobbs Ferry, New York in 1961. In accordance with the suggestion of the staff member of the Social Science Research Council Committee Joseph B. Casagrande the three members of the Committee Joseph H. Greenberg, James J. Jenkins and Charles E. Osgood prepared a memorandum to serve as a basis for theoretical investigation in the area of universals in language and for the planning of a Conference. The Conference where "linguistics took a giant step from being merely a method for describing language to being a full-fledged science of language" was called "a bloodless revolution." (Osgood, 1976: 299.) From that time on language universals became one of the main problems of linguistics. In the presented Memorandum as the most general laws of a science of linguistics language universals were defined "by their very nature summary statements about characteristics or tendencies shared by all human speakers. " (Memorandum, 1976: XY.) Since universals of change at any levels of language have important psycholinguistic implications it is necessary to note that language universals bear a direct relaton to dichronic facts of languages as well.

As a matter of fact universals in language at the semantic level are connected with the "universal laws of thought which are reflected in the laws of change of meaning....even in the Science of Meaning....has not yet made much advance towards discovering them. " (Jespersen, 1925: 217) Stephen Ulmann in his paper "Semantic Universals" assumes that the term "semantic" is used throughout his paper "solely with reference to wordmeaning... It follows that semantic problems will arise not only at the word level but also....at the level of bound morphemes and....at the levels of phrases and the higher combinations. " (Ulmann, 1976: 219.)

There are two wide categories of words in every human language—words devoid of symbolic values and words having symbolic values. In the process of investigation one can find some motivated words in the various families of languages that have not only one and the same meaning, but the similar grammatic structure. In the English language the word *wagtail* corresponds to *motacilla/coda trepida* (Latin), *vastarakki* (Finnish), *cutretta/coditremola* (Italian), *daloynadan/getoynadan* (Azerbaijani), *kuyruksallayan* (Turkish), *tryasoguzka* (Russian), *trasoritka* (Czech), *domjonband* (Persian). Probably such little birds is called in various languages of the world in this way, because their main feature arresting attention is the fact that wagtail usually tosses her tail. That is why I dare qualify similar cases as manifestation of language universals at the semantic level.

So if a word while changing its meaning at the level of bound morphemes or of phrases and the higher combinations at least in three typologically different languages corresponds to one another not only from the semantic

point of view, but in accordance with their phonomorphological structure as well I suggest to qualify it as a fact of display of semantic universals.

The meaning of *chin* (English) correlates not only with the meaning of *Kinn* (German) and *kin* (Netherlandish), but with the Gothic and Scandinavian forms *kinnus*, where *kinn* from Old Icelandic up to the modern languages means "cheek". (Bloomfield, 1968:167) In some Turkic languages *əng/eng* means either "lower jaw, jaw bone, chin" or "face, cheeks." (Rasanen, 1969:45; Drevnetjurkskij slovar, 1969:174; Clauson, 1972:183; Sevortjan, 1974:284-285). The words *yanğaq* "cheeks" and *änlik* "the red colour which women put on the faces, especially cheeks" go back to the word *əng* from the etymological point of view. As we see from the above-mentioned words *cin* (Old English) and *kinn* (German) from one hand and *geneion* "chin" and *genus* "cheek"from the other hand we have right to conclude that on the base of language universals at the semantic level one can investigate the history of changing of meaning even In the unwritten language of other typological structure. "Despite the basically arbitrary quality of semantic 'mapping' displayed by languages, there are nevertheless remarkable parallelisms between both related and unrelated languages." (Weinreich, 1976:143) Uriel Weinreich conciders that among the others the following lines of inquiry might be profitable and then he questions: "How are these parallelisms to be formulated and quantified?" (Ibid, 143) Almost on the next lines he confesses that "as the references scattered in the present discussion show, there is much to read, but no obvious place to look things up." (Ibid, 143)

In accordance with the development of human thought and tenor of life the basic word stock of language undergoes certain changes. In the process of investigation one can see that for example even such ordinary words as *to eat, to drink, to live, to die, to work* suffer changes not only from the phonomorphological point of view but from the semantical-lexical point of view as well. As a matter of fact ascertainment of process of phonomorphological change of word structure depends on the development of the sound system of language, but to ascertain the natural reasons of semantical-lexical change is more complicated process, because narrowing and extension of meaning, substitution of one meaning with another depend on various factors the scientific interpretation of motives of which sometimes may carry subjective character. When a word preserving its relation with the previous denotation gains new relations with the new denotation we discover metaphor as a language phenomenon. As soon as transfer of nomination consolidates its position the word receives metaphorical meaning. The metaphorical meaning becomes the main meaning of the word in the process of development.

I suppose that the words *iş* "work" and *əmək* "work" in Azerbaijani as well as in the other Turkic languages go back to the premordial root *'i-* that meant in prototurkic "to torment oneself (over)." Following K. Baldinger on the basis of investigation one may come into conclusion that the etymon of "work", "to work" in many languages of the world goes back to "to torment oneself (over)", "to suffer", "to worry". (Baldinger, 1958:59-93) So the word *labour/labor* in modern English in the meaning of "work or a task done or to be done", "to work" is the French loan-word that has Latin origin. The word *labor/laborare* in Latin premordially was used in the meanings of

"torment", "to suffer (from)". In K. Baldinger's opinion Romance dialect word *trebalh* primarily was used in the meaning of "torment, suffering" and then gained the meaning of "work". *travailler* (French), *trabajar* (Spanish), *trabalhar* (Portuguese), *trebellar* (Catalanish) may be traced back to Latin *tripaliare*, that premordially meant "to torture", then more generally "to torment", "to give pain", and after all "to work". (Baner, 1972: 22) In modern Rumanian the verb a *munci* "to work" etymologically was derived from *monka* (Slav) "torture". (Baner, 1972: 23) The word *trud* "work" in Russian has been derived from Slav truda in the meaning of "torment", "hard work". It must be added that the meaning of the Arabic verbs *kadda* and *kadaha* "to work" is connected with the meaning "to make efforts".

So in the modern Azerbaijani language the word *iş* consists of two sounds and in the modern stage of its development is qualified as a primary simple noun meaning "work", "labour". Polivanov conciders that "the word *iş* has been grammaticalized and appears in the form of deverbative nomin actionis". {Polivanov, 1991:162) To all appearence Kotwicz W. agrees with Polivanov. (Kotwicz, 1962: 56) I suppose that the word *is* is a derived word, because it has been given with long i not only in the "Old Turkic Dictionary", but in Rasanen's (174), Clauson's (254) and Sevortjan's (395) dictionaries as well. But I can not agree with Sevortjan E. V. who while determining the meanings of *i: ş* postulates that "the foundation of the semantic structure is formed by meanings of the first group ('work', 'labour') on the basis of which the oldest derived words *işlə-* ('to work', 'to labour'), its medial form *işlən-* and causative form *işlət-* and *işçi* "worker" have been made up". (Sevortjan, 1974: 395) Sevortjan defines 8 meanings of the word *i: ş* and after his above given note on the meaning of the first group he writes that all of the other meanings are secondary, even those groups that historically carry metaphoric character. (Sevortjan, 1974: 395) In this case the meanings given under the seventh group as "trouble", "annoyance", "sin" (the author underlines that these meanings are metaphorical, because they have been gained afterwards) but really at least two out of these meanings must be considered as premordial meanings.

There is a word *əmək* "work" in modern Azerbaijani, that goes back to əm-gək, derived from the stem of the archaic verb *əmgə-* "to torment". This verb in its turn is derivative from the root əm im with the meaning "torture", "work". Sevortjan inclines to the idea that *əm/ im* goes back to the oldest form *en* or more exactly to *eñ*, that has been preserved in the Chuvash verb *anka-* "to suffer from starvation and thrist" and in the Kazach noun enbek (Sevortjan, 1974:273). But I am sure that *əm/ im* as well as the above-mentioned noun *iş* are derivatives from the oldest stem *i-:* "torture", "to give pain". Even the derivative verb *iməklə-* "to crawl (infants)" may be traced back to the stem *i-:*. There can arise a natural question: Why do the meanings of words "work", "to work" nearly in every modern languages of the world go back to the words premordially designating "torture", "torment"? For me the answer is very simple: In the deep antiquity when people had no instruments of production but their hands and shoulders any kind of manual labour might really seem to them torment or torture.

When a person wants to know the age of a man/woman to whom he/she speaks as usual asks him/her: *How old are you?* (English) or *Wie alt bist du?*

(German) The meanings of the components in these interrogative sentences do not need any etymological analyse, because they are clear for everybody who speaks English either German. But in Azerbaijani, as well as in many other Turkic languages grammatical and semantic structure of which has nothing in common with Romance and Germanic languages in such cases one can ask: *Neçə yaşin var?*

In accordance with the etymological analyse the word *ya:ş* meant basically "fresh" and "moist": from this extended meanings developed: (1) "fresh" to "green (vegetables)"; (2) "moist" to "running with moisture; tears"; and perhaps also (3) "fresh every year" to "a year of one's life". (Clauson, 1972: 975) It is necessary to note that from the meaning "green" the meaning "young" developed. Such development may be seen in many languages and may be qualified as the display of semantic universals in languages. The title of one of the novels written by the English writer A. J. Cronin is *"The Green Years"*, where the word 'green' is used in the meaning of 'young' and proceeding from the main contents of the novel but not at all by chance the translater of the novel into Russian has translated the title as 'Юные годы', i. e. *'The Years of Youth'*. In Russian there is a saying *'Молодо-зелено'* that may be translated into English as 'He is in his unripe /immature age'.

In accordance with the phonetic correspondence between prototurkic *ş:/* and *aч* arrive at a conclusion that *yas* "one's age" and *yil* "year" as a result of phonetic splitting in former times were one and the same word. Interrogative pronouns *neçə* "how many/much" and *neçə* "how" have been derived from the interrogative prononun *nə* "what" and at that time when there didn't exist any opposition between c and ч the meanings of "how many/much" and "how" were expressed with one and the same interrogative pronoun. So the interrogative sentence *Neçə yaşin var?* "How old are you?" from the etymological point of view may be understood as "How young are you?" Logically there is no difference between the questions *"How old are you?"* and *"How young are you?"* In fact here we have one and the same meaning and structure.

One can meet in Mongolian the formant *nil* in the stem of the words meaning "moist", "sputum", "tears", "newborn", "green", "to spit". (Poppe, 1938: 253) The roots *nil* and *nas* in Mongolian, *yil* and *yaş* in Turkic from one hand and semantic-structural idendity of the interrogative sentences used to know the age of a man/woman to whom we speak from the other hand allow me to assume that Mongolian *nil-nas* and Turkic *yil-yas* have common origin from the etymological point of view. So we may say with confidence that in the above given sentences and words of the languages from geographical point of view existing in Europe (English and German) and of the language groups geographically existing as a whole in Asia (Turkic and Mongolian) we are standing before the fact of universals in languages.

But we must bear in mind that in some language groups to define interlocutar's age one may put another question that differs from the above given examples. In some semitic languages including Arabic we may ask: *Kəm sinnun ləkə?* word for word translation of which gives 'How many teeth have you?' But in English we have a phraseological unit *'to look in the mouth of a gift horse'* that has the similar versions in Russian *'дареному коню в зуб не*

смотрят' and in Azerbaijani *'bəy verən athn dişinə baxmazlar'*. For me these phraseological units must be interpreted as a fact of semantic universals. So semantic universals are closely connected with the typology of human thought and they may be successfully investigated only if the linguists from the different centers of the world can consent to combine their efforts in the decision of this problem.

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