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Informativeness of a Term

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The purpose of this contribution is to present a model for explaining and describing the informativeness of a term. The model is based on the linguistic theory of the motivation of linguistic units, complemented by certain basic concepts (such as necessary knowledge and information accuracy) from theory information theory. Its explanatory force has been tested on material from modern Bulgarian terminology. (Author)

The concept of information as understood by Yu.A.Shrejder (1) is applied here to the form of a term which, if linguistically motivated (2), will be viewed as the carrier of necessary knowledge about the object designated by it. The theoretical grounds for such an approach are:

a) The conception of the term as a linguistic sign, owing to which it is characterized - besides certain specifics, derived from its conventional nature - also by the properties of a meaningful unit of a given natural language;

b) the idea advanced by linguistics about the linguistic unit's remarkable property of not being entirely conditional (3).

To the three more general questions posed by Yu.A.Shrejder, the following linguistic solution is offered:

1. The necessary information carried by the linguistic form of the motivated term consists of conceptual features. In other words, this is where the information is included about the integral feature, differential feature, and the relationship between them, which can be taxonomic, partitive or associative (4,5).

2. The informativeness of a term is defined only with regard to the concept with its features, which are premised in the system of knowledge. It follows hence that: a) the informativeness of a term cannot be construed as informativeness of the linguistic unit (its form) in general, but only in the precisely defined correlation between concep-

tual and linguistic structures; b) only the necessary information is taken into consideration: thus the terms formed by proper nouns (cf. Newton, Pascal, Boyle-Mariotte's law) are informative, but the information they give through their form is not a necessary type of information, because it does not refer to the conceptual features, but to marginal circumstances.

3. The concept of 'information accuracy' is introduced; information accuracy is carried by the linguistic form of the term with two of its aspects: the one referring to the monosemy - polysemy of the term's form as a linguistic unit within a system of a given natural language; the other refers to the monosemy - polysemy of the correlation between the semantic value of the conceptual and linguistic structures of the separate term.

The two aspects of information accuracy shown in item 3 are used as basic constituents of a model which explains the informativeness and non-informativeness of terms on the first level of analysis, and the accuracy of information derived from the term's form on the second level of analysis.

The explanatory force of the model being advanced has been tested in an evaluation of terms with the suffix of foreign origin '-tor' applied in the modern Bulgarian language.

References:

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