

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.18454/RULB.11.09>

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ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ БЕЗРЕФЕРЕНТНОЙ ЛЕКСИКИ В НАУЧНОМ ТЕКСТЕ*Аннотация*

В статье рассматривается феномен употребления безреферентных слов в научном тексте по лингвистике. В традиционной логике слова с несуществующим референтом рассматриваются как ложные или ошибочные, однако в современной философии языка им придается иной смысл, диктуемый прагматикой языка. В статье приводятся аргументы в пользу того, что безреферентная лексика может использоваться и в научном тексте как инструмент, позволяющий лучше понять теоретическую мысль исследователя. Использование безреферентной лексики в научном тексте определяется индивидуальным стилем автора.

Ключевые слова: референция, ложный референт, научный текст, фантастика, идиостиль.

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THE USE OF NON-REFERENTIAL WORDS IN ACADEMIC TEXTS*Abstract*

The article deals with the phenomenon of non-referential word use in academic texts on linguistics. In traditional logic words with no real referents were considered to be false or erroneous, though in modern philosophy of language they gain a different meaning thanks to pragmatics. The author gives arguments for the fact that non-referential words can be used in academic texts as tools in grasping researcher's theoretical idea. The use of non-referential words in academic texts is determined by the individual writing style of researchers.

Keywords: reference, false referent, academic discourse, fiction, individual style.

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Introduction

The category of fantasticity that I defined [1], [2], [7] as a category of thought with a specific use of power of imagination has two main ways of representation in language: by means of metaphor and by words and expressions that have no referents in reality. My study of the role of fantasy in academic texts on linguistics (by U. Eco, R.A. Harris, R. Harris, S. Shaumyan and others) led me to the idea that academic knowledge can be expressed by words that have no real referents. Beside metaphors that have an acknowledged power to reveal the important sides of phenomena making use of fantasy, words that are not related to any existing referents and that are used in the text not metaphorically can also be used in academic language as a means of reasoning and persuasion. In this paper the non-referential means of representation of the category of fantasticity in academic texts is considered. The terms non-referential words and words with false / fictional referents are used as synonymous because they all represent particular sides of the category of fantasticity with a stress laid on different aspects of the category interpretation [2].

Methods

The methods of study of non-referential words in academic texts are logical, semiotic and lexicological types of analysis. Words with no real referent, or empty words, have been studied by many outstanding philosophers, logicians, linguists and semioticians (B. Russell, Ch. Piers, R. Bart, H. Weinrich, Yu. Lotman and others).

Discussion

Traditionally word is viewed as shorthand for an object in reality. But this claim was challenged many times throughout the history of language study. Let us begin with considering the views of the four mainstream philosophies of language on words and their referents: ideal language philosophy, ordinary language philosophy, cognitivism and the new language philosophy.

Within the framework of ideal language philosophy words that referred to real, i.e. existing objects were considered as 'true' words, and words that didn't have any existing referents in reality were named 'empty names'.

Bertrand Russel's widely known example with the word "unicorn" demonstrates the gist of the classical theory of reference [9]. It consisted mainly in the idea that if a word had no referent neither it had any meaning. Such conclusion led to the stripping of a great part of vocabulary of its right to have meaning. This view however is valuable for the study of non-referential means of representation of the category of fantasticity as it gives us a tool to single out in the text any word and expression that represent constructive fantasy. Under the term 'constructive fantasy' I mean any fiction of imagination that transfers a meaningful idea from the world of nonexistent objects into text shaping its cognitive content.

Ordinary language philosophy restored the right to have meaning to the words like 'unicorn'. Its main claim was that word had conventional meaning and that meanings of words depended on pragmatics. Thus, we all understand the word 'unicorn' though it has no real referent. We have a picture of a unicorn in our head, along with the associations connected with this image. So there is a good reason to use a word 'unicorn' in our speech hinting at some similarity of the image it has, and another image or object of reality.

Further illustration of viability of ideas of ordinary language study on non-referential words or words with false referents can be the use of such words in the text of a myth or, to be more precise, a contemporary literary rendering of a myth. The text of a myth has two intertwined layers – fictitious and pragmatic. Initially it was a narration about the creation of the world and the explanation of the natural phenomena of the world [3, P. 16]. At least it was perceived as such by primitive people. For this reason in such texts there are many non-referential words that describe some 'supernatural' structures of the world. From the standpoint of a contemporary intellect such words are absolutely empty, they transfer either void figments or erroneous knowledge.

Cognitive approach to the language has connected word meaning with mental states they express [6]. It has been claimed that most of these mental states get their meanings through reference to the external world [8, P. 559]. I believe that words that have no real referent in this external world evoke the strongest mental response because they make

reference to the mental images. These mental images are not bound by strong rules of a physical world; they are quite flexible to the mind and allow constructing new knowledge on their basis. Thus for example, the word “centaur” could be used metaphorically in an academic text [10]. Though “centaur” has no real referent, it has the ability to convey a new conceptual meaning, like “centaur phoneme” or “centaur concept”.

The new philosophy of language that emerged in the 70s of the XXth century combines the ideas of the previous three philosophies. In general it is concerned about the connection between words and reality, it is descriptive, it distinguishes between what is said and what is meant, it draws attention to the mental states of the language user, and it is concerned with making semantic and pragmatic theories consistent.

Modern philosophers of language hold the idea of referential intuitions [5]. In their view reference of words can be verified by language users because referential intuitions are mainly about linguistic usage of words. Thus reference is considered from the two main points: as semantic reference and as speaker’s reference. Semantic reference deals with fixed meanings of words and speaker’s reference deals with speaker’s intentions.

Results

As we have seen, the study of words with fictional referents mainly concentrates on the following ideas: a) these words are empty and false; b) they reflect erroneous ideas of speakers. But how are we to understand academic texts that make most use of false or, rather, fictional referents? What is the aim of such words in academic discourse?

There are plenty of texts in the field of both science and the humanities that abound with words with fictional referents. One of the genius examples of the use of such words is the article ‘On Truth: A Fiction’ written by Umberto Eco [4]. The whole article is created in the form of a recording of the conversations between Terrestrials – researchers from the Earth, and Antipodeans, inhabitants of the Twin Earth. Researchers from the Earth try to learn the way of thinking, reasoning and understanding of Antipodeans. Let us consider the passage from the article:

“The members of Putnam’s expedition on Twin Earth were defeated by dysentery. [...] Next came Rorty’s expedition. In this case, the native informants called

Antipodeans, were tested in order to discover whether they had feelings and / or mental representations elicited by the word *water*. It is well known that the explorers were unable to ascertain whether or not Antipodeans had a clear distinction between mind and matter, since they used to speak only in terms of the state of their nerves. If an infant neared a hot stove, his mother cried: *Oh my God, he will stimulate his C-fibers!* instead of saying *It looked like an elephant, but then it struck me that elephants don’t occur on this continent, so I realized that it must be a mastodon*, they used to say *I had G-412 together with F-11, but then I had S-147*” [4, P. 262].

The author of the article consciously chooses the non-referential words (*Putnam’s expedition, Twin Earth, Rorty’s expedition, Antipodean, C-fibers, mastodon, G-412, F-11, S-147, etc.*) and creates a fictional ‘pretend’ story. It is wrong to say that these words with fictional referents are ‘empty’, they surely have definite pragmatic meaning. In the case of the above example they imply just about the following: *Putnam’s research; unknown culture or civilization; Rorty’s research; natives of the civilization under study; nerve receptors; big mammal; belief; understanding; knowledge*. This ‘pretend’ story represents a mental experiment constructed by the author to make his theoretical idea more vivid though sometimes a bit ambiguous. Ambiguity in this case allows adding our own ideas, expanding what have been said by the author. It seems that such story based on words with fictional referents is akin to a myth: it has two layers of reality – one made up and another implied.

Conclusion

Imagination and fantasy are the tools of all kinds of art and creativity, from literary creativity to scientific research. The scientific journal named *Futures* edited by Elsevier Science Ltd. deals with the problem of conceptual foresight and predicting possible ways of development of different fields of science, though the mere concept of foresight and predicting is based on imagination. It proves the belief of academic people in constructive power of imagination and ability to operate with fictional concepts to construct new theoretical ideas. In my opinion the use of non-referential words in academic discourse is an effective tool of stimulating creative thinking. It is also characteristic for individual style of only particular researchers.

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