
ON THE NATURE OF LINGUISTIC VARIATION AND ITS TYPES

Nilufar Nuridinovna Kakharova*

*Teacher,

Department of Russian Language and Literature,

Kokand State Pedagogical Institute,

Kokand, UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Topical issues of the general theory of linguistic variability are considered; the specificity of linguistic variation, its types in synchrony and diachrony are determined, lexical variability and the phenomena of doublet, heterophony, and language differentiation are distinguished. The differentiation of variant and linguistic differentiation seems to us more justified than the compromise allocation of "complete" and "incomplete", "commonly used", "professional" and "territorial variants" in a number of works.

KEYWORDS: *Language variation, word variants, free variation, linguistic variation, competitive variation, semantic variants.*

INTRODUCTION

The traditional understanding of linguistic variation as a modification of a linguistic object within a single entity presupposes the possibility of different interpretations of the very nature of variability, its causes and possible manifestations in synchrony and diachrony. Variant-invariant relations permeate the entire structure of the language, since they reflect the specifics of the language sign. The asymmetry of the relations of the signified and the signifier (according to S. Kartsevsky) can be considered the reason for the manifestation of various kinds of fluctuations in the form and semantics of a linguistic object. The conditionality of linguistic variation by the nature of a linguistic sign makes it possible to interpret variation as an absolute linguistic universal. The characteristic of variation in the aspect of universals shows the dual nature of this phenomenon. On the one hand, variation is a synchronic universal, since the very functioning of a linguistic unit is inevitably associated with its modification (variability), on the other hand, variation is a diachronic universal, since variation is the cause and consequence of linguistic evolution. Linguistic variation is a universal of both inductive and deductive nature, which is confirmed by direct observations of natural languages and at the same time follows from the postulate of the sign nature of language. Of particular interest is the question of the types of linguistic variation that are related to the nature of the relationship between the variants. This is quite clearly evident in the material of the Russian language. The variants may not be positionally conditioned and interchangeable, such as, in particular, lexical variants such as твОрог\творОг, калоша\галoша, suffixal variants -оХоньк-\-ошеньк-: чернеХонь-кий\чернешенький, prefix variants кое-\кой-: кое-какой\кой-какой, inflection variants -ою\-ой: рукой\рукою, etc. Such variant morphs are usually qualified as "complete variants".

The relative independence of such forms, "variations" - in terms of L. Elmslev [1], their independence from positional conditions, the possibility of substitution allows us to call such variation free. "Free" variation, however, is not completely free. Although free variants are possible in the same phonological and grammatical positions, their interchangeability may be limited by a number of other reasons, primarily stylistic. "Free" variation always implies a kind of competition of variant forms, therefore it can also be called competitive variation. Even among the

above examples of "free" variant pairs, one of the variants, at least in part, turns out to be preferable: more frequent, less complicated by various kinds of stylistic shades, etc. Competitive variation by its nature cannot be stable. With it, there is a temporary coexistence of several variant forms, the competition of which usually ends with the displacement of an unpromising option and the "extinction" of the variant. According to K.S. Gorbachevich, "the continuity of variation can be considered only as a companion of the eternal movement of the language as a whole, but not as a permanent property of a specific linguistic unit. Variants of the word arise and coexist, competing with each other only in a certain historical period. After that, they either diverge in lexical meanings, acquiring the status of independent words (sharpness - sharpness, godfather - godfather), or lose the ability to freely vary due to the restriction in compatibility (sharpen the knife - sharpen the skis, zero attention - reduce to zero), or (which happens most often) the productive option completely displaces its competitor (distant - distant, Fishing - fishing, trains - trains, etc.)" [2].

As we can see, competitive variation implies a change, an evolution of the form, i.e. when considering it, the diachronic aspect turns out to be very noticeable even with synchronous characterization of variants. It should be borne in mind that the tendency identified by K.S. Gorbachevich to decrease variation at the word level does not lead to the denial of the phenomenon of lexical variation as a whole, since "the elimination of variation in one of the links of the language system is often accompanied by the occurrence of variation in another area" [3]. The "free" (non-positional) variation of linguistic objects presupposes the competition of variants during their coexistence with further "attenuation" of the variation of a certain object, but not of the system as a whole. The diachronic nature of non-positional variation is obvious. This form of variation can be qualified as impulse. The appearance of several objects identical in meaning and similar in shape gives an impetus to their variation, i.e. temporary competitive coexistence. The attenuation of the pulse of variation is accompanied by a change in the qualitative characteristics of the object, the transition of variants of one entity into independent objects, i.e., the "outgrowth" of variation into variability. Emerging new objects, in turn, can give rise to the next variant impulse, stimulating their further development. In our opinion, the concept of variant impulse introduced by us is ontologically more justified than the concepts of "degree of variation", "wave of variation", similar in meaning, found in the work of V.N.Yartseva "Problems of linguistic variation: historical aspect". Sr: "... the degree of variation, which is of great importance in the codification of the literary standard, reaches its apogee by the time of the creation of normative grammars, explanatory dictionaries and other works of a prescriptive nature... However, after a while there is an increasing wave of variation again..." [3].

It is necessary to point out the obvious fact that this kind of variation is limited to the formal side of linguistic objects. This is due to the fact that interpretative semantic variation fundamentally excludes the competition of variants. Semantic variants, i.e. contextually (in the broadest sense) conditioned meanings complement each other, never "intersecting" because of the infinite variety of contexts. Variation of this kind is also observed among formal modifications in the case of their positional dependence. At the same time, the formal variants (variants [2], according to L. Elmslev) of a functioning linguistic object are in relation to an additional distribution (distribution), i.e. they occur in mutually exclusive positions. There is no competition of options, because there is no possibility of their interchanging. This type of variation can be qualified as positional, or allomatic. Coexisting allophones of the same phoneme, allomorphs of the same morpheme, etc., are in a state of stability, since they are fixed to certain positions and complement each other. Such a purely synchronous variation, in contrast to the pulsed diachronic, to a certain extent can be characterized as inertial, stably supporting the functioning of the object between variant pulses. So, the main types of linguistic variation are:

1. Impulsive "free" variation, suggesting a competition of variants in diachrony;
2. Inertial alloemic variation of functioning synchronous objects.

The problem of identifying variation as a specific phenomenon does not lose its relevance. Qualifying linguistic variation as a partial formal or semantic change of a linguistic unit that does not violate its essential features and psychological integrity, it is important to highlight the specifics of variation in relation to a number of related phenomena, such as synonymy, doublet, linguistic differentiation, heterophony (suppletivism) in connection with formal lexical variation. These phenomena occupy a kind of "borderline" position in relation to language variation, some of them are even qualified as "limits" of variation. The criterion for distinguishing between variation and related phenomena is the preservation of the identity of the linguistic object. If the fluctuations in shape or value are not so significant as to change the essential features of the object, then we can talk about its variation. If the number of changes reaches the limit level and causes a qualitative deformation of the form or value, then this leads to the appearance of a new object, its "separation" from the former essence. These objects – the original and the new - can be synonymous, i.e. close or even identical when duplicated. So, if *spasm/spasm*, *cottage cheese\cottage cheese*, *nonresident\nonresident* are formal variants of one word, then *illiterate* and *illiterate*, *impulsive* and *impulsive*, *stacking* and *stacking* are pairs of different synonymous words. Synonymy, generally assuming similarity in meaning, can be very close, up to a complete coincidence of meaning: *fox - fox*, *fishing - catching*, *wolf - she-wolf*. It is more expedient to consider such single-root formations with different word-formation elements as single-root synonyms, rather than variants due to their different word-formation characteristics. The terms "word-forming synonyms", "word-forming doublets" most adequately reflect the relationship between the members of pairs of the type of fishing. In fact, these relationships are the same as in *illiterate – illiterate*, *fade–fade* pairs, which have never been interpreted as variant forms. Unfortunately, the question of distinguishing formal variants and synonyms, despite the clarity of the original principle: one object is variants, different objects are synonyms, presents great practical difficulties. Many researchers, and with an equal degree of argumentation, consider the same forms either as variants or as synonyms (especially *fox–fox* pairs), sometimes even contaminating these concepts. For example, "...Most phonetic variants are stylistically colored synonyms" [4].

According to R.P. Rogozhnikova, single-root words with different word-forming affixes are not variants, but synonyms, although they may completely coincide in meaning: "...identity of meaning... brings them closer to variants", but nevertheless they are different words representing different word-formation units" [5]. It is impossible not to agree with the fact that "variants of words and synonyms are phenomena of different planes: variants of words are opposed to words, synonyms are different words, both different-rooted and single-rooted - not synonyms" [6].

The difficulty of distinguishing formal variants and synonyms is related to both linguistic and psychological aspects, since the problem of identifying an object, including a linguistic object, by its essential features is not purely linguistic. Thus, it is from the standpoint of "common sense" that it is impossible to combine typical lexical doublets with a common denotative meaning into one linguistic object: *hippopotamus - hippopotamus*, *linguistics - linguistics*, etc., i.e. the same being entity can be called different linguistic entities. The understanding of heterophony (suppletivism) is close to this: *I – me*, *man - people*, *good - better*, etc. Psychological "splitting" is layered on a purely linguistic understanding of the unity of the object, and it is this that turns out to be decisive in the perception of such forms: suppletive bases are different bases, and not variants of one. The psychological parameter that clearly identifies different sounds as different objects turns out to be very significant when determining the essential features of similar-sounding objects. It seems that only the involvement of data from a psycholinguistic experiment can in many ways clarify the essence of the issue of the differentiation of variation and synonymy. In

connection with the problems of lexical variation, a number of publications have considered the phenomenon of so-called linguistic differentiation (in particular, on the material of Germanic languages). Differentiation, in contrast to variation, presupposes the disparity of coexisting forms, unites "phenomena associated with the differentiation of the sphere of use or with the specialization of the use of any phenomenon of language".

According to O.I. Moskalskaya, "linguistic differentiation has characteristics diametrically opposed to the phenomenon of variation, in particular, differentiation is not bound by the framework of the literary norm and it assumes mandatory additional information expressed by members of the series in addition to the main lexical and grammatical meaning". "Not a single word of the language," according to O.I. Moskalskaya, "remains outside of one or another aspect of language differentiation". At the same time, the following systems of oppositions are possible: the vocabulary of the literary language – the vocabulary of various non-literary forms of the language (dialects, jargons, vernacular, etc.), non-terminological vocabulary - terminological vocabulary, the vocabulary of the neutral style of the non-terminological layer of the literary language - stylistically expressive vocabulary - the vocabulary of the colloquial style of speech, as well as the opposition of territorial variants of the German literary language (German national variant - Austrian national variant - Swiss national variant).

Russian literature, apart from the last opposition, which is uncharacteristic of the Russian literary language, all the others allow us to draw clearer boundaries of the actual linguistic variation on Russian soil, separating it from the phenomena of differentiation. Thus, most of the "dubious" examples carried out even in classical works on lexical variation (V.V. Vinogradov, A.I. Smirnitsky, F.P. Filin, K.S. Gorbachevich) should be qualified not as variant, but as differential lexical forms: Atom - ATOM (literary - professional), acute – acute (literary – dialectal or colloquial), golden – golden (neutral style – expressive-stylistic vocabulary), etc. Russian literary language is characterized by the differentiation of the etymological character of "Russian - church Slavonic", directly related to the stylistic differentiation of "neutral - bookish": golden - golden, city - city, once – once, daughter - daughter, etc. In our opinion, the well-founded introduction of the concept of linguistic differentiation, opposed to variation, contributes to a deeper understanding of the variation itself: its scope narrows, the boundaries become more distinct. All formal modifications that carry additional information or are outside the literary norm cannot be varieties of the same object, they are different entities, therefore, non-variants. The differentiation of variant and linguistic differentiation seems to us more justified than the compromise allocation of "complete" and "incomplete", "commonly used", "professional" and "territorial variants" in a number of works. As we can see, variation is possible only within the framework of one object, one linguistic and psychological entity. In this regard, it is opposed to phenomena associated not with modification, but with an essential change of a linguistic object.

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