The Process of Polysemization of English Verb *Rise* and its Bengali Counterpart *Uttha*

Munira Tasnim
Graduate School of Information Science, Tohoku University
E-mail: muniratasnim@yahoo.com

Abstract

This presentation examines the process of polysemization of the English verb *rise* and its partially Bengali counterpart *uttha*. Using historical data and *cognitive semantic study of meaning extension* we observe that *rise* and *uttha* are highly potential for polysemization, because they adopt various meanings during the gradual course of semantic change through the context dependent mechanisms like generalization and metaphorization. According to *Oxford English Dictionary* the polysemy of *rise* arose in the year 1200. From this period we can trace the diversity of meanings of *rise* to be constructed. Following Gronemeyer (1998) the claim of this thesis is that *rise and uttha have one basic lexical entry and all other meaning constructions are accessed via this entry*. According to Oxford English Dictionary the basic lexical entry or the core meaning of *rise* is: *To get up from sitting, lying and kneeling position*, which is attested in 1200. Thus from the data in *OED* we can infer that the basic image schema for *rise* is: *To move from a lower level to an upper level*. Using historical data and cognitive study of meaning extension of *rise* and *uttha* we conclude that from this basic image schema all other meanings of *rise* and *uttha* can be constructed. Throughout the thesis we will see how this basic schema is preserved in the construction of meanings of *rise* and *uttha*. Using *Corpus of Historical American English* we will deal with a considerable number of meanings of *rise* that were constructed during the last 200 years:

1. Physical upward movement of a volitional subject- core meaning of *rise* and *uttha* (the sun rises from the horizon, I rose from the table)
2. Physical upward movement of a non-volitional subject- by the process of generalization (smoke rises from the chimney)
3. Upward movement of an abstract entity - by the process of metaphorization(increase in number and amount-the price of gas rises)
4. To become visible - by the process of generalization (island, stair rose from the water)
5. From non-existence to come into existence - by the process of metaphorization (the river rises from the hill, riot rises from some cause feeling rises, horror rises).
6. To vanish from some location- by the process of metaphorization (applicable for Bengali only- stain rises from the cloth)
7. Positive upward movement in the second verb of Bengali V+V compound- by the process of metaphorization (applicable only for Bengali uttha).

8. A sense of inception, completion and suddenness in the second verb of Bengali V+V compound -by the process of metaphorization (applicable only for Bengali uttha).

Using contemporary theory of metaphor and generalization we have given in our thesis a detail analysis of how and why the above semantic change of rise and uttha occurred by the mechanisms like metaphorization and generalization. In this paper we have tried to prove Lackoff’s claim that “the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another.”

Gronemeyer (1998) showed that syntactic change motivates semantic change. On the other hand in case of rise we claim that one single syntactic structure can give rise to several categories of semantically different rise or uttha. The meanings of rise and uttha are determined by the semantic analysis of the other constituents of the utterance. When semantic analysis becomes inadequate to determine the meaning of rise and uttha we apply contextual or pragmatic analysis of the verb. So when Gronemeyer shows the interdependence of syntax and semantics, we show semantic-pragmatic analysis of semantic change. According to Elizabeth Traugott and J. Paul Hopper……“it (semantic-pragmatic analysis) is a part of the larger mechanism of semantic change in general.

Using cognitive semantic study of new meaning construction we infer that the new meanings of rise and uttha are constructed by two analogical, context dependent mechanisms. One is Metaphorization and the other is Generalization. The basic image schema preservation is the key process of all cognitive mechanisms of new meaning construction. One of the aims of this paper is to prove the semantic relation between the basic or the core meaning and the newly constructed meanings of rise and uttha. In other words the aim of this paper is to explain where and how the basic or the core meaning of rise and uttha is preserved in all the new meaning constructions of rise and uttha.

References:


(c) Copyright George Lakoff, 1992
To Appear in Ortony, Andrew (ed.) Metaphor and Thought (2nd edition), Cambridge University Press.