Basic categories
for a theory of language

KAZIMIERZ A. SROKA

Abstract

The present paper makes reference to its author's work *The Dynamics of Language* (1976) and presents three basic and indispensable categories for a theory and description of language, namely form, signification, and location, with special emphasis on the last two. After a short introduction, the following problems are considered: (1) language theory and semantics, (2) language sign and the dichotomy *significans* : *significatum*, (3) (morpho)semanteme and the trichotomy: form, signification, location, (4) form, signification, and location in the process of encoding and decoding, (5) context and the contextual theory of meaning according to J. R. Firth, (6) the influence of context and speech situation on the signification of the element of text. The conclusion (7) summarizes the presentation of the trichotomy of the defining categories for the (morpho)semanteme, i.e. form, signification, and location, and of their role in the description of language and of the process of verbal communication. It also draws attention to the relation that holds between context in the broad sense and location in the sense defined in the paper and shows the advantages following from the introduction of the latter concept into the theory and description of language.[1]

Catégories fondamentales dans la théorie du langage

Résumé

L'article fait référence à l'ouvrage de son auteur intitulé *The Dynamics of Language* (1976) et il présente trois catégories de base essentielles dans la théorie et la description du langage, c'est-à-dire la forme, la signification et l'emplacement, en particulier les deux dernières. Après une courte introduction, on examine les questions suivantes : (1) la théorie du langage et la sémantique, (2) le signe linguistique et la dichotomie *signifiant / signifié*, (3) le (morpho)-sémantème et la trichotomie : forme / signification / emplacement, (4) la forme, la signification et l'emplacement dans le processus de codage et de décodage, (5) le contexte et la théorie contextuelle du sens selon J. R. Firth, (6) l'influence du contexte et de la consituation sur la signification d'un élément du texte. La conclusion (7) résume la présentation de la trichotomie des catégories définitionnelles du (morpho)sémantème, c'est-à-dire : forme, signification et emplace-ment, et leur rôle dans la description du langage et du processus de la communication verbale. On souligne aussi la relation entre le contexte au sens large et l'emplacement dans le sens défini dans l'article et on présente les bénéfices qui viennent de l'introduction de cette dernière notion dans la théorie et dans la description du langage.

Mots-clés

Podstawowe kategorie teorii języka

Abstrakt

Artykuł nawiązuje do pracy jego autora pt. *The Dynamics of Language* (1976) i omawia trzy podstawowe i niezbędne kategorie teorii i opisu języka, a mianowicie formę, sygnifikację i lokację, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem tych dwu ostatnich. Po krótkim wstępie rozważane są następujące zagadnienia: (1) teoria języka a semantyka, (2) znak językowy i dychotomia *significans* : *significatum*, (3) (morfo)semantem i trychotomia: forma, sygnifikacja, lokacja, (4) forma, sygnifikacja i lokacja w procesie kodowania i dekodowania, (5) kontekst i kontekstualna teoria znaczenia według J. R. Firtha, (6) wpływ kontekstu i konsytuacji na sygnifikację elementu tekstu. Zakończenie (7) podsumowuje prezentację trychotomii kategorii definicyjnych (morfo)semantemu, czyli formy, sygnifikacji i lokacji i ich roli w opisie języka i procesu komunikacji werbalnej. Zwraca też uwagę na stosunek zachodzący pomiędzy kontekstem w sensie szerokim a lokacją w ujęciu zdefiniowanym w artykule oraz podaje korzyści wynikające z wprowadzenia tego ostatniego pojęcia do teorii i opisu języka.

Słowa kluczowe

dekodowanie, element tekstu, forma, kodowanie, konsytuacja, kontekst, lokacja, (morfo)semantyka, (morfo)semantem, sygnifikacja, teoria i opis języka, znak językowy

0. Introduction

In *The Dynamics of Language* (1976), the present author speaks of three basic and indispensable categories (or, parameters) for a theory and description of language, viz. form, signification and location. Because of the continuing validity of that distinction as well as of the whole work,[2] the author

---

[2] *The Dynamics od Language* was its author's habilitation work. Although it was published in 1976, because of unfavourable external circumstances, its author obtained the degree of Habilitated Doctor in general and English linguistics only in 1990 after the habilitation colloquium which took place at the University of Wrocław. The theory of language proposed in the disserta-

wishes to take a closer look at the essence of these categories with special attention given to signification and location and to the importance of the latter for a unified interpretation of particular varieties of modern linguistics (or domains of language description), among others, such as pragmatics, psycholinguistics, or sociolinguistics.

1. Language theory and semantics

Language theories with regard to the role they assign to semantics can, as shown in Figure 1, be divided into semantic (*B* + *C*) and asemantic (*A*), this division intersecting with the division into (post)Saussurean (*C*) and non-Saussurean (*A* + *B*).

(Post)Saussurean theories (*C*) (e.g. Hjelmslev 1953, Zawadowski 1966) and asemantic theories (*A*) (e.g. Harris 1951 (1961)) are contradictory, and their negations make a common part (*B*), viz. a theory which is semantic but simultaneously non-Saussurean (such as is represented by Firth 1935 (1951)) (cf. Sroka 1976: 11–18).

tion was the basis of his lecture courses in general linguistics, which he gave at universities and other schools, and an important lodestar in his lecture courses and classes in phonology and English historical grammar as well as in master seminars. It was also the point of departure of his successive theoretical and descriptive research, whose results were presented at numerous conferences in Poland and abroad and published in the form of papers. The topics discussed concern, among others, the theory and description of grammatical categories mainly with reference to the category of gender (e.g. Sroka 1983, 1988, 1998a), the category of role (e.g. Sroka 1981, 1984, 2011), and particularly the category of definiteness (e.g. Sroka 2003, 2015 and the references given there, as well as the author's paper submitted for publication). The material for analysis and illustration is taken from the languages: English, Hungarian (which is the object of the author's special interest mainly because of the category of definiteness), French, German, Swedish, Bulgarian, Polish, as well as Latin, Greek, and Gothic. Many of his analyses, including the comparative ones, are carried out on the basis of the texts of the New Testament of the Bible in the Greek original, its translation into Latin (the *Vulgate*), and in translations from Latin or Greek into other languages.
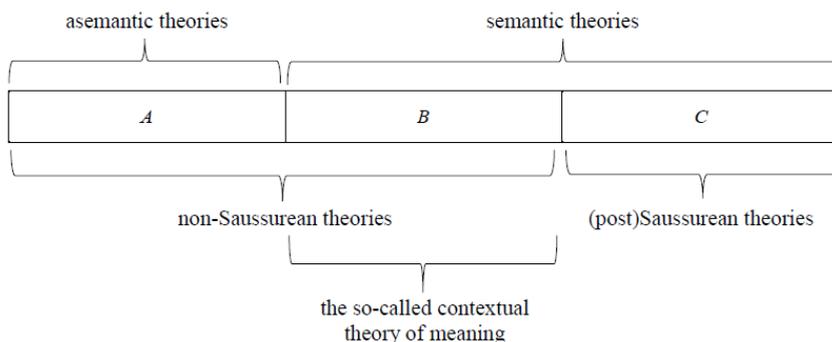
Figure 1
A classification of language theories
with regard to their approach to semantics

2. Language sign and the dichotomy *significans* : *significatum*

The category Fr. *signifiant*, L. *significans*, i.e. the signifying element, and Fr. *signifié*, L. *significatum*, i.e. the signified element, make the basic dichotomy of (post)Saussurean linguistics and of, coming from it, functional linguistics, whose variety is, in many aspects, also cognitive grammar, e.g. its foundations formulated by R. W. Langacker 1987 and 1991 (see Kalisz 2001: mainly 9 and 36–43).[3]

According to F. de Saussure (1916 (2005): 97–102), *signifiant* (the signifying element) is an acoustic image (Fr. *image acoustique*), and *signifié* (the signified element) is a concept (Fr. *concept*). These are arbitralily connected parts of a language sign (Fr. *signe linguistique*) situated in the human mind. Such a conception of the language sign is bilateral and psychologistic (mentalistic). A conception opposite to that, viz. unilateral and non-psychologistic (non-mentalistic), is proposed by Leon Zawadowski (1966: 79–130).

---

[3] The problem of the relation between cognitive linguistics and pragmatics is discussed by R. Kalisz (2016).

In Zawadowski's approach, attention is focused not so much on the language sign as on the textual element (*T*) which performs a representative function, i.e. an element which, owing to its characteristic set of features (which is at the level of the Saussurean *signifiant*) conventionally (arbitrarily) corresponds to a given element of the (extrasegmental) reality (*R*) in the latter's characteristic set of features (i.e. meaning, which is at the level of the Saussurean *signifié*). A language sign is only a concrete realization of such a textual element. Between *T* and *R* there holds the relation of implication: $T \rightarrow R$, which means that the presence of *T* always results in the presence of *R*, but not in the opposite way (see Zawadowski 1966: 84f.).

3.   (Morpho)semanteme and the trichotomy: form, signification, location

3.0. In the present author's approach, similarly as in Zawadowski's, what is in focus is the textual element (or, textual entity) which has a representative value. Such an element (or, entity) is, however, considered in three basic categories, viz. form (*F*), signification (*S*), and location (*L*). We propose to call it a morphosemanteme but for practical reasons we shall use a shorter form corresponding only to the second part of this name, i.e. semanteme. It may be a morpheme, i.e. a simple textual entity with a representative value (simple semanteme) as well as a word, phrase, clause, or sentence/ uttereme (complex semanteme).

3.1. Form

The form (*F*) of a semanteme is the shape or structure of a segment of an articulatory-phonic continuum or visual continuum (in the case of writing). What is relevant here is its characteristic set of features, i.e. the set of its essential, and not accidental, features.

Form is a category whose values are intrasegmental features of the semanteme while signification and location are categories whose values are its extrasegmental features.

3.2. Signification

3.2.0. The signification (*S*) of a semanteme, in most general terms, is the property of its form consisting in representing a given (extrasegmental) reality (*R*). The (extrasegmental) reality (*R*) as such includes everything that may be the object of representation and communication, and, therefore, besides the objects of the real world, also mental objects, fictitious objects, etc.

In order to show the problem of signification in detail, we shall present the participation of the form of the semanteme in the relation of signification and in morphosemantic functions.

3.2.1. Participation of form in the relation of signification

The signification of a semanteme is a relational category connected with the (extrasegmental) reality. It follows from the participation of its form in the relation of signification, whose members are: the signifying element (*significans*), i.e. the active member, and the signified element (*significatum*), i.e. the passive member. The form of the semanteme participates namely in the relation of signification as its active member, i.e. the signifying element (*significans*), whereas the passive member of the relation, i.e. the signified element (*significatum*), is the (extrasegmental) reality.

The signification of a given semanteme is, therefore, the connection between a given form of the semanteme and a given (extrasegmental) reality, as the *significatum*; this connection has its source in the linguistic convention, i.e. in morphosemantic rules accepted by a given community. In other words, the signification (*S*) of a given semanteme consists in the fact that its form represents a given (extrasegmental) reality, or that the form in question is the representation, or sym-

bol, of that reality. Representation itself, however, concerns only the essence (i.e. the characteristic set of features), and not the existence, of the reality.

Thus, if a given semanteme has a given form, then it has also a given signification, and possessing a given signification means that a given form represents a given (extrasegmental) reality. This belongs to the morphosemantic rules of a given language, i.e. to the language system. It finds also its application in the process of verbal communication and is realized in the following way: if, in the text constructed and produced (i.e. uttered or written) in the communication schema, there appears a given form, then, owing to its representative value, it evokes in the decoder's mind the concept (i.e. mental representation) of a given (extrasegmental) reality, and at the same time communicates, i.e. assigns existence to, that reality, which, however, does not mean that the reality in question in fact exists (in the case of an assertive sentence, is true) because the encoder may, for example, commit a mistake or may lie.

The view expressed above differs from what is maintained by Leon Zawadowski in the sentences: "One should note that assignment does not need to involve implication. Thus in the case of connections between textual segments and elements of R [= reality] there is not an assignment of whatever kind but just assignment and implication: if there is a specimen of a given class T [= text], there is always also a specimen of a c o r r e s p o n d i n g class R" (Zawadowski 1966: 84f., translation by K. A. S.). The differences between Zawadowski's and the present author's approach consist, among others, in that (1) Zawadowski speaks of connections between segments of text (T) (whose counterpart is our form (F)) and elements of the reality (R), whereas the present author speaks of the connection between form (F) and signification (S), i.e. the state of representing such a reality, and (2) Zawadowski speaks of the relation of implication between T and R, i.e. $T \rightarrow R$, while the present author speaks of the relation of unidirectional system of selections between particular values of F and particular values of S, i.e. $F \Rightarrow S$ (where the symbol '$\Rightarrow$' indicates that we

deal here with a system of selections, and not a single selection, for which we would use the symbol '–>'). This means that the fact that a semanteme has a given form selects the state of representing the essence of a given reality, and that form used in the schema of communication can assign existence to that reality but there is no guarantee that the reality in question does exist.

3.2.2. Participation of form in morphosemantic functions

3.2.2.1. Semasiological function (realized in decoding)

One can also, using the concept of a function extending over a homogeneous set of semantemes, say that the signification of a semanteme follows from the participation of its form in a morphosemantic function of type *B*, i.e. semasiological function, in the role of an argument, i.e. a value of the independent variable *x*, in which case the value of the dependent variable *y* and the value of the function is the state of representing a given (extrasegmental) reality. For the semasiological function we shall use the symbol *Sem*, and its full formula will have the following shape:

Sem (x) = y.

In the realization of that function, the independent variable *x* takes its values from the set of forms, and the dependent variable *y* takes its values from the set of states of representing particular elements of the (extrasegmental) reality.

The basis of the morphosemantic function of type *B*, i.e. of the semasiological function *Sem*, is a **selectional system**, whose essence is a unidirectional (and thus, dynamic) correlational arrangement, in a homogeneous set of semantemes, between particular forms, as selecting elements, and particular states of representing the (extrasegmental) reality, as selected elements. This system is realized as basic at the stage of de-

coding. It is system *B.* Briefly: a value of *F* selects a value of *S*, i.e. $F_x => S_y$.

3.2.2.2. Onomasiological function (realized in encoding)

The reverse of the selectional system described above is a system in which the selecting elements belong to the set of states of representing particular elements of the (extrasegmental) reality, and the selected elements belong to the set of forms of the semantemes. The latter system is realized at the stage of encoding. It is system *A*. It is the basis of the morphosemantic function of type *A*, i.e. onomasiological function, *Onom*, formalized as:

Onom (x) = y,

in which the independent variable *x* takes its values from the set of states of representing particular elements of the (extrasegmental) reality, and the dependent variable *y* takes its values from the set of forms of the semantemes. Briefly: a value of *S* selects a value of *F*, i.e. $S_x => F_y$.

3.3. Location

The (actual or potential) location (*L*) of a semanteme is the (actual or potential) occurrence of its form in a given environment.

We distinguish two types of location depending on the type of the environment. If the environment is an accompanying textual entity, i.e. context (in the narrower sense), then location is **intratextual** (distributional**).** If, however, the environment is the speech situation (Pol. *konsytuacja*, Fr. *consituation*, G. *Konsituation*), i.e. consists of the extratextual phenomena which accompany the speech process, then location is **speech-situational**.

Speech-situational location involves many factors, such as the place and time of the process of speech, i.e. of the process

of verbal communication, events accompanying that process as well as the persons who directly participate in the process (speakers and those addressed to) or are only its observers – along with their social status, knowledge, views, expectations etc.

Speech-situational location involves also the presence or absence of personal and extrapersonal conditions of efficient, or felicitous, communication (cf. e.g. Searle 1975: 60f. and Kalisz 1993: 11) including as well the observance, or its lack, on the part of the encoder, of H. P. Grice's (1975: 45–47) co-operative principle with its maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner.

Among the factors relevant to establishing location, one can to some extent find place for the components of J. R. Firth's context of situation, which includes both verbal and non-verbal phenomena (see the account of Firth's theory given below, 5.1–2). According to our approach, however, one should exclude at least that part of verbal action, i.e. that part of text, which is the object of actual analysis (description), and which, as Firth puts it, is also part of the situational context.

3.4. Central vs. peripheral categories in the definition of the semanteme

3.4.0. One should note that, according to the definitions given above, signification and location are not categories which are outside of the semanteme but such ones as include its features – features which make part of the essence of the semanteme although, which is true, they are its relational features, i.e. features which follow from a relation to something situated outside of the semanteme.

3.4.1. Figure 2 shows the characteristic features of the semanteme. In the figure, the categories of form (F), signification (S), and location (L), which are the essential components of the semanteme, occupy the central position. The types of reality connected with signification and location, i.e. represented real-

ity (*RR*) and environment (*E*), repectively, occupy peripheral positions. These peripheral elements shown in the present figure make a supplement to the original figure proposed by the present author (see Sroka 1976: 8).

3.4.2. The central elements are the defining nucleus of the semanteme, whereas the peripheral ones, although indispensable for the former, stay outside. Hence one should not identify signification simply with meaning in the sense of the signified element (*significatum*) and thus in the sense of the represented (extrasegmental) reality although the signified element must here be taken into account as the object of signification. As shown above (see 3.2.1), the term *signification* is used here in the sense of the participation of form in the relation of signification in such a way that form is the active member (*significans*), i.e. the signifying (representing) element, whereas the passive member (*significatum*), i.e. the signified (represented) element, is a given (extrasegmental) reality.
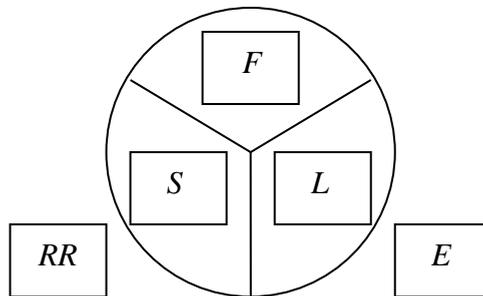

Figure 2
Semanteme
Component categories: *F* = form, *S* = signification, *L* = location
Types of reality connected with *S* and *L*: *RR* = represented reality,
E = environment, respectively

Analogously, the location of the semanteme is the **occurrence** of its form in a given environment, and it is not the environment itself.

4.   Form, signification, and location
   in the process of encoding and decoding

4.0. Form, signification, and location play the essential role in the operations taking place in the process of speech, i.e. in the process of verbal communication. In this process, there are two basic stages: those of encoding and decoding. From the point of view of form, signification, and location, the two stages basically differ in the direction of the operations involved but in both cases there is a choice of a feature which is a value of one of the three categories by a feature which is a value of one of the other categories.

4.1. At the stage of encoding, a given signification (i.e. the state of representing a given (extrasegmental) reality) selects a given form, and then a given location may make a further choice between possible variants of the form. E.g., the speaker, when addressing his listener, will have, in Polish, to choose between *Ty* ('you' in sing., i.e. 'thou') and *Pani*/*Pan* ('Mrs./Miss/Mr.' without a name); then speech-situational location will dictate him which of the two possibilities he should use. In this case, location is active. It should, however, be noted that if location is a grammatical formative, i.e. if the occurrence of a given form in a given environment has a given significational (semantic) value at the grammatical level, then at the stage of encoding, the choice of the base of the grammatical construction is followed by the choice of a proper location. Here location is passive. Such a case can be exemplified by the choice of the position (and thus, location) of the noun in relation to the verb in the active voice in English depending on whether the noun should appear in the role of the agent or patient, e.g. *John visited Mary* vs. *Mary visited John* (for location as a grammatical formative, see Sroka 1981).

4.2. At the stage of decoding, a given form selects a given signification, whereas a given location may make a further choice among possible variants of the signification or among possible elements of the set of various significations of a polysemous semanteme, e.g. Pol. *zamek* representing, among others, (1) castle, (2) lock, (3) zip. If, however, location is a grammatical formative, then its value selects a given significational value of the formative, e.g. agent or patient (see above, 4.1).

5. Context and the contextual theory of meaning according to J. R. Firth

5.0. The category of location proposed by the present author was intuitively taken into account in linguistics much earlier. It is namely connected with what was called "context" irrespective of the way in which this term was understood. And its understanding varied. In Polish linguistics, Pol. *kontekst* is, first of all, the textual environment of the textual element (entity) which is under description (cf. English "co-text") and it is distinguished from Pol. *konsytuacja* (Fr. *consituation*, G. *Konsituation*) 'speech situation;' yet the term Pol. *kontekst* is used also in the broader sense including both the textual environment and the speech situation (cf. English "context").

5.1. Context was understood in a different way by a, rather isolated in his views, British linguist, John Rupert Firth.[4]

---

[4] Firth rejected much of de Saussure's theory but took from him the concept of value (Fr. *valeur*) (see Palmer (ed.) 1968: 7).

Although his contribution to linguistics was enormous, Firth was misunderstood and largely ignored by almost all his contemporaries except those, but not all, either, of his immediate circle. He rejected Hjelmslev's theory as a mere "linguistic philosophy" and had little contact with the American linguists of the forties and fifties of the past century, whose "mechanical procedures" were not worth attention to him and who had no interest in his theories or in objections he had to theirs. Firth was himself largely to blame for being so misunderstood both during his lifetime and later because, apart from the works on prosodic analysis by his younger colleagues, there are few examples of the application of his theories (see Palmer (ed.) 1968: 1f.)

As regards prosodic analysis (see Firth 1957 (1968)), its starting point was essentially the complete rejection by Firth of the phoneme as a satisfac-

Firth represents a semantic but non-Saussurean approach to language. He wanted to create some objective principles of studying language in terms of meaning, some objective principles of semantics. He rejects de Saussure's concept of the language sign as a basis of language theory and semantics not

---

tory basis for phonological analysis. The prosodic approach has two major characteristics: (1) its elements are not confined to the narrow segments of the phoneme but may extend to parts of the syllable, the syllable, the word, or even the 'longer piece', (2) it rejects the rigid division between morphology and phonology of, contemporary to Firth, American linguistics (see Palmer (ed.) 1968: 8).

Firth's name was associated with M. A. K. Halliday's 'neo-Firthian' 'scale and category grammar', which, as Halliday explicitly stated in his "Categories of the theory of grammar" (1961), derived from Firth. However, as Palmer (ed.) (1968) says, Halliday's essentially monosystemic categorization seems to have little in common with Firth's approach which, as Firth constantly stressed, was essentially polysystemic, and, most significantly, Halliday's theory retains the phoneme, a linguistic unit so typical of the kind of segmentation and classification that Firth rejected; the terminology used by Halliday is in its form largely Firth's but in what it stands for it departs from the latter's theory (see Palmer (ed.) 1968: 8f.).

According to Palmer (ed.) (1968), some of Firth's viewpoints seemed to be similar to those represented by the transformational-generative school, but in a negative sense, i.e. in what he rejected. Hence, the first American edition of *Studies in Linguistics Analysis* (1957) containing, among others, "A synopsis of linguistic theory" obtained an uncomprehending and almost utterly negative review whose author was R. T. Stockwell (*IJAL* 25.4: 254–259 (1959)) before his conversion to transformational-generative grammar. Yet when the second edition of this collection appeared, it was thoughtfully and favourably discussed by a scholar from M.I.T, D. T. Langendoen (*Language* 40.2: 305–321 (1964)) (see Palmer (ed.) 1968: 9).

The present author, under the influence of Firth, made an attempt to give a locational interpretation of semantic meaning, i.e. an interpretation of that meaning as the use of a textual element (entity) in relation to some environment (see Sroka 1971), but later, as can be seen in *The Dynamics of Language* and papers following it (including the present one), he gave up that attempt, coming to the conclusion that meaning (and, more exactly, signification) and location (i.e. occurrence in a given environment) are two different matters and that, according to what is said by L. Zawadowski (1966), meaning (and, more exactly, signification) is connected with the fact that a given element of text (or, its form) represents a given (extrasegmental) reality.

Firth's approach to meaning, because of emphasizing the role of context and sociological aspect, might, with appropriate modifications, be taken into account in linguistic pragmatics and in sociolinguistics. However, in the case of the British linguist, S. C. Levinson's, *Pragmatics* (1983), the name of Firth appears neither in the main text nor in the attached bibliography although many times, for example when possible types of definitions of pragmatics are discussed, context is mentioned.

only because of its being mentalistic (psychologistic) but also because of its structure involving the dichotomy of *signifiant* and *signifié*. Rejecting also the dualism of body and mind, he calls his approach monistic, in contrast to dualistic. He proposes a linguistic theory which he calls a contextual theory of meaning. Central in that theory is the concept of meaning or function (these terms being used by him interchangeably), which he describes as the "use of some language form or element in relation to some context" (Firth 1935 (1957): 19; see also Sroka 1976: 12f.).

5.2. From the definition of meaning or function quoted above it follows that context belongs to the core of Firth's approach. In his understanding, however, context is not the environment of the textual element under description but a structure of which this element is part. He distinguishes various types of context, connecting them with the levels of analysis and levels of meaning. There are as many general types of context as there are levels of analysis and levels of meaning. They make a series, one type of context including another. Starting with the narrowest type and proceeding towards broader ones, they yield the phonetic, phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic, collocational, and situational contexts; these are followed by a still broader context, viz. the context of culture. Analogously, there are the phonetic, phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic, collocational, and semantic functions or meanings. The semantic function is connected with the situational context or, as it is most frequently referred to, the context of situation (for a critical and documented study of Firth's contextual theory of meaning, see Sroka 1972a; see also Sroka 1972b and 1976: 12–14).

Firth's context of situation includes the following constituents: (1) participants: persons, personalities and relevant features of these, (a) verbal action of the participants, (b) non-verbal action of the participants, (2) relevant objects and non-

verbal and non-personal events, (3) effect the verbal action (see Firth 1957 (1968a: 177).[5]

6. The influence of context and speech situation on the signification of the element of text

The influence of context and speech situation upon the meaning of the element of text attracted the attention of linguists already in the nineteenth century. One of such linguists was P. Wegener who in his work *Untersuchungen über die Grundfragen des Sprachlebens* (1885) created a theory of "situation" (G. *Situation*) (accompanying a text) which makes a given expression change its meaning. There are three types of situation: (a) the situation of consideration or point of view (G. *die Situation der Anschauung*), (b) the situation of memory or remembering (G. *die Situation der Erinnerung*), and (c) the situation of awareness or consciousness (G. *die Situation des Bewusstseins*) (see Wegener 1885: 21–27 as discussed by Firth 1957 (1968): 147 in connection with his concept of context of situation).

The role of context and speech situation continues to be the object of interest in modern linguistics irrespective of its orientations. In this respect, special attention is due to the approach by Leon Zawadowski, mainly in his paper "Rzeczywisty i pozorny wpływ kontekstu na znaczenie" (= Real and apparent influence of the context upon meaning) (1951). In that paper, Zawadowski is right to claim that context, and, more exactly, its meaning, does not change the meaning of the element of text which is under attention but only **selects** that meaning from among the meanings the element of text possesses. It

---

[5] Firth owed his 'context of situation' to the ethnographer, Bronisław Malinowski, and he speaks about that in the paper "Ethnographic analysis and language with reference to Malinowski's views" (Firth 1957 (1968b). The paper not only discusses Malinowski's contribution to linguistics but also indicates that, deriving his theory of context of situation from Malinowski, Firth nevertheless developed it in his own way and produced essentially quite a different theory (see Palmer (ed.) 1968: 4). Firth insisted that for him context of situation involved abstraction, and was not, as it had been for Malinowski, 'in rebus' (see Palmer (ed.) 1968: 6).

should be noted that Zawadowski uses here the term Pol. *znaczenie* 'meaning' in the sense of *significatum*, and, more specifically, in the sense of the represented reality. His statement, however, keeps its validity when the viewpoint is shifted from meaning understood in that way to signification in the sense proposed by the present author.

Context in the broad sense (in our approach: (intratextual and speech-situational) location) plays an essential role in establishing the so-called "indirect (implied or understood) meaning" of an utterance, which belongs to the domain of pragmatics, although here, too, that meaning is chosen (selected) from a certain set of meanings, namely the meanings which are the consequence of the basic meaning of the utterance (i.e., in our approach, the meaning corresponding to the signification of the uttereme). Such a solution was proposed by the present author in the paper "Lokacja jako kategoria opisu w semantyce i pragmatyce" (= Location as a category of description in semantics and pragmatics) given at the 70th Meeting of the Polish Linguistic Society in Bydgoszcz in 2012 (in the References below: Sroka 2012b).

Pragmaticists, when discussing the essence and scope of pragmatics, take also context into consideration. For example, Levinson (1983), after having discussed various possible definitions of pragmatics, including those which take context into account, comes to the following conclusion:

> The most promising are the definitions that equate pragmatics with 'meaning minus semantics', or with a theory of language understanding that takes context into account, in order to complement the contribution that semantics makes to meaning.[6] (Levinson 1983: 32)

---

[6] I would like to thank the Author of the monograph *Pragmatics,* S. C. Levinson, and the Cambridge University Press for permitting me to quote from this work.

Levinson's (1983) as well as Kalisz's (1993) treatment of the essence and scope of pragmatics is discussed by Sroka (2010: 125–134, 2012a and 2012b).

7. Conclusion

7.1. Summing up, we have proposed a trichotomy of the defining categories of a textual element which has a representative value, i.e. of a (morpho)semanteme, a trichotomy consisting of form, signification, and location and we have defined each of these components.

The form of a semanteme is the shape (or, structure) of a segment of an articulatory-phonic continuum or visual continuum (in the case of writing).

The signification of a semanteme, which is a relational category, follows from the participation of its form in the relation of signification as its active member, i.e. as the signifying element (*significans*), the (extrasegmental) reality being its passive member, i.e. the signified element (*significatum*). Briefly: the signification of a semanteme is the property of its form consisting in the fact that it represents some (extrasegmental) reality.

The location of a semanteme is the occurrence of its form in a given textual environment or in a given speech situation.

There are interdependences among the three components of the trichotomy described, i.e. form, signification, and location, which actualize in the process of communication according to the selectional systems proper to the stages of encoding and decoding. At the stage of encoding, a given signification, i.e. the state of representing a given (extrasegmental) reality, selects a given form, and a given location selects a corresponding variant of the form. If location is a grammatical formative, then a given grammatical signification selects a given location for the base. At the stage of decoding, basically, a given form selects a given set of significations, and a given location selects a particular element of that set. If location is a grammatical

formative, then a given location selects a given significational value of the formative.

7.2. The term "location" proposed by the present author takes into account the category whose forerunner in earlier linguistics was the concept of context in the broader sense. In the present approach, however, location is one of the defining components of the semanteme; it is the **occurrence** of a given form in a given environment (i.e. context or speech situation) while the environment itself is situated beyond the semanteme. The advantages of location understood in that way are the following: (1) we have at our disposal one common term which covers the scopes of both the term *context* in the narrower sense and the term *speech situation* (Pol. *konsytuacja*), (2) location becomes a participant of operations taking place in functions working on the basis of selectional systems characteristic of a homogeneous set of semantemes.

7.3. The category of location permits to look in a unified way at all external conditionings of language and to determine the relation between morphosemantics (covering a reorganized area of former morphology, syntax, and semantics)[7] and such

---

[7] Morphosemantics is a domain of language description postulated now by the present author and requiring an empirical verification. It would include (1) morphology and syntax, which should be treated together as morphosyntax (such a term occurs in linguistic literature) and concentrate on form but also take signification into account, and (2) semantics putting stress on signification but not separated from form, and including lexicology and lexicography (those necessarily taking also into consideration the morphological structure of a word and the syntactic structure of a phrase). Morphosemantics understood in that way would be situated between phonology and pragmatics but the two latter should be in close relationship with the former.

To exemplify modern divisions within morphology, syntax, and semantics, we shall briefly review the approach represented by Antoni Furdal (2000). In his monograph *Językoznawstwo otwarte* (= Open linguistics) (3rd ed.), he devotes Part Four (pp. 100–140) to language structure and includes three chapters: IX. Units and elements of language, X. Syntactic system, and XI. Semantic system. Chapter IX deals, among others, with the problem of a message (its essence, types, and internal structure). Chapter X presents, among others, three scopes of syntax, viz. (1) relations between the encoder and the content of a sentence, (2) relations among sentences, and (3) inter-

varieties of linguistics (or domains of language description) as, among others, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, or sociolinguistics. Pragmatic, psychological, or sociological conditionings of the language system and of the process of speech can be reduced to location combined, however, with form and signification (see Sroka 2012b).

References

Firth, John R. (1935 (1957)). "The technique of semantics". In: John R. Firth. *Papers in Linguistics 1934–1951*. London: Oxford University Press, 7–33.

Firth, John R. (1957 (1968a)). "A synopsis of linguistic theory, 1930–55". In: F. R. Palmer (ed.) (1968). *Selected Papers of J. R. Firth 1952–59*. London: Longmans, 168–205.

Firth, John R. (1957 (1968b). "Ethnographic analysis and language with reference to Malinowski's views". In: F. R. Palmer (ed.) (1968). *Selected Papers of J. R. Firth 1952–59*. London: Longmans, 137–167.

Furdal, Antoni (2000). *Językoznawstwo otwarte* [Open linguistics]. Wydanie trzecie poprawione i uzupełnione [3rd ed. corrected and completed]. Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im Ossolińskich, Wydawnictwo.

Grice, H. Paul (1975). "Logic and conversation". In: P. Cole, J. L. Morgan (eds.). *Syntax and Semantics*. Vol. 3: *Speech Acts*. New York etc.: Academic Press, 41–58.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1961). "Categories of the theory of grammar". *Word* 17: 241–292.

Harris, Zellig S. (1951 (1961)). *Structural Linguistics*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press (Originally published as *Methods in Structural Linguistics*, 1951).

---

nal structure of a sentence. Chapter XI discusses, among others, such problems as: a word in, and outside of, a message, relations among concepts, word-formation derivation, phraseological derivation, semantic vs. lexical system. From the descriptions given in the chapter, it follows that word-formation derivation and phraseological derivation are connected with the morphological structure of a word and the syntactic structure of a phrase, respectively.

Hjelmslev, Louis (1953). *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*. Trans. J. Whitfield. Baltimore: Indiana University (Danish original: *Omkring sprogteoriens grundlaeggelse*. København, 1943).

Jaszczołt, Katarzyna (2006). "Pomiędzy semantyką a pragmatyką" [Between semantics and pragmatics]. In: *Metodologie językoznawstwa: Podstawy teoretyczne*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 131–154.

Kalisz, Roman (1993). *Pragmatyka językowa* [Linguistic pragmatics]. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.

Kalisz, Roman (2001). *Językoznawstwo kognitywne w świetle językoznawstwa funkcjonalnego* [Cognitive linguistics in the light of functional linguistics]. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.

Kalisz, Roman (2016). "Językoznawstwo kognitywne a pragmatyka językowa" [Cognitive linguistics and linguistic pragmatics]. In: M. Kurpaska, T. Wicherkiewicz, M. Kanert (eds.). *Thesaurus gentium & linguarum: A Festschrift to Honour Professor Alfred F. Majewicz*. Poznań, 177–197.

Langacker, Ronald W. (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. Vol. 1. *Theoretical Prerequisites.* Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press.

Langacker, Ronald W. (1991). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. Vol. 2. *Descriptive Application.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Levinson, Stephen C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Palmer, F. R. (ed.) (1968). *Selected Papers of J. R. Firth 1952–59*. London: Longmans.

Saussure, Ferdinand de (1916 (2006)). *Cours de linguistique générale*. Publié par Charles Bally et Albert Séchehaye avec la collaboration de Albert Riedlinger. Édition critique préparée par Tullio de Mauro. Postface de Louis-Jean Calvet. Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages.

Searle, John R. (1975). "Indirect speech acts". In: P. Cole, J. L. Morgan (eds.). *Syntax and Semantics*. Vol. 3: *Speech Acts*. New York etc.: Academic Press, 59–82.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (1971). "Compositional and locational features of verbal constructions". *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 3: 95–106.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (1972a). "A review (with a critical study of Firth's contextual theory of meaning) of F. R. Palmer (ed.), *Selected Pa-*

pers of J. R. Firth (London: Longmans 1968)". *Linguistics* 78: 78–109.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (1972b). "Kontekstualizm J. R. Firtha" [Contextualism of J. R. Firth]. *Sprawozdania Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk* 84: 78–84.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (1976). *The Dynamics of Language*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (1981). "Grammatical formatives in description and comparison". *Linguistica et Anglica Gedaniensia* 2: 33–62.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (1983). "Kategorie gramatyczne w aspektach: teoretycznym i porównawczym" [Grammatical categories in the aspects: theoretical and comparative]. *Sprawozdania Gdańskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* 9: 57–62.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (1984). "Konstrukcja roli: jej istota i zróżnicowanie wśród języków" [= Role construction: its essence and variation among languages]. *Sprawozdania Gdańskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* 10: 91–97.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (1988). "Grammatical categories: their nature and interlanguage variation". In: W. Buszkowski, W. Marciszewski, J. van Benthem (eds). *Categorial grammar*. Amsterdam – Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 333–356.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (1998a). "On the concept of grammatical category". In: B. Caron (ed.). *Proceedings of the 16th International Congress of Linguists*. Oxford: Pergamon, CD-ROM, No. 0208, 17 pp.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (1998b). "Kontekst i konsytuacja w procesie mowy" [= Context and speech situation in the process of speech]. *Sprawozdania Gdańskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* 24: 45–52.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (2003). "Definiteness and scope restriction". In: E. Hajičová, A. Kotešovcová, J. Mírovský (eds.). *Proceedings of the 17th International Congress of Linguists, Prague 2003*. Prague: Matfyzpress, MFF UK, CD-Rom, 13 pp.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (2010). "Pragmatics and the problem of definiteness". In: D. Stanulewicz, T. Z. Wolański, J. Redzimska (eds.). *Lingua terra cognita* II: *A Festschrift for Professor Roman Kalisz*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 125–165.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (2011). "Synthetic and analytic formatives in languages: A revision". In: W. Kürschner, R. Rapp, J. Strässler, M. Vliegen, H. Weber (eds.). *Neue linguistische Perspektiven. Festschrift für Abraham P. ten Cate*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 77–89.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (2012a). "The category of location and its relevance to semantics and pragmatics". A paper given at the 47th Linguistics Colloquium in Olsztyn (Unpublished).

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (2012b). "Lokacja jako kategoria opisu w semantyce i pragmatyce" [Location as a category of description in semantics and pragmatics]. A paper given at the 70th Meeting of the Polish Linguistic Society in Bydgoszcz (Unpublished).

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (2015). "Stałość i zmienność w języku na przykładzie gramatycznej kategorii określoności" [Stability and changeability in language on the example of the grammatical category of definiteness]. *Biuletyn Polskiego Towarzystwa Językoznawczego* 70: 81–92.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (submitted for publication). "The initial stage in the development of the definite article: Evidence from Gothic". In: *Akten des 50. Linguistischen Kolloquiums in Innsbruck 2015.*

Wegener, Philipp (1885). *Untersuchungen über die Grundfragen des Sprachlebens.* Halle: Max Niemeyer.

Zawadowski, Leon (1951). "Rzeczywisty i pozorny wpływ kontekstu na znaczenie" [Real and apparent influence of the context upon meaning]. *Sprawozdania Wrocławskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* 4/1949, Dodatek 2: 1–18.

Zawadowski, Leon (1966). *Lingwistyczna teoria języka* [A linguistic theory of language]. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.

Kazimierz A. Sroka
Instytut Anglistyki i Amerykanistyki
Uniwersytet Gdański
ul. Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
Email: angkas@ug.edu.pl