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Determination of the Semantic Category 'Processes'

(Considering the Terminology)

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The purpose of this article is to determine the content of the semantic category 'processes', used a priori in linguistics without specifying the characteristics of this category. Though other points of view for the category 'processes' are possible (for example considering the semantic classification of lexes), its content in the article becomes clear with a view to its role in terminology and especially for the study of terms of 'processes'. Defining a term as the designation of a process needs a theoretical motivation. The interpretation of the category 'processes', offered in the paper, could serve as a theoretical basis for identification of terms of 'processses', as well as for comparing them with terms of 'events' or 'states'.

In order that the content of the semantic category 'processes' may be defined, it is necessary to consider some problems related to the essence of the ontological category (OC) and of the semantic category (SC). The OC is a logical unit reflecting the most general and essential characteristics of the forms of being in the way they really are. The SC is also a logical unit, but it reflects the most general and essential characteristics of the forms of being in the way they are presented in the semantic area. The category 'processes' is an ontological one in Vinocur's interpretation, who determines it as "a basic logical category of labour and technology". The SC 'processes' is used, for example, by J.Lyons, T.Buligina, and O.Seliverstova.

The fact that the SC is directly oriented not towards reality, but towards its reflection in consciousness, is a reason for a certain subjectivity in determining the content of the individual SC's.

Subjectivity explains the existence of different interpretations of some SC's (for example 'activity', 'dynamism'). An SC in different interpretations can be adequate or inadequate in its content compared with the relevant OC. For example, the SC 'processes' in Seliverstova's interpretation has to some extent conventional character because of its being determined by two semantic features - 'physicality' and 'absence of agent', the latter, however, ontologically ungrounded. Real processes can be both spontaneous and intentional, i.e. caused and performed by an agent.

Determining the content of an SC is to some extent a subjective process, so it is necessary to specify in advance what principle would be followed up in such a process. In order that the manifestations of subjectivity and conventionality of the SC may be minimized, it is considered that it should be ontologically grounded, i.e. correspond in its content to the analogical OC. The requirement for ontological validity makes it necessary to define the SC 'processes' in parallel in order that it can be sought together with the OC 'processes'. Through a linguistic way, which is demonstrated in the paper (by analyzing several definitions of the word 'process' in different languages) three characteristics of the OC 'processes' are determined. Having them in mind, the essence of the SC 'processes' is defined. It includes three hierarchically ordered semantic features: 'localization in time', 'changeability (dynamics), and 'duration' (accepted as opposition to momentariness). The semantic feature 'changeability' distinguishes the SC 'processes' from static types of states and the semantic feature 'duration' distinguishes it from momentary types of events.