



A SEMANTIC STUDY OF THE INNER WORLD OF A WORD

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Abstract

This article undertakes a historico-semantic analysis of the key concept of Russian culture - the word “dushá” (soul) - through the lens of V.V. Vinogradov’s grammatical and lexicological doctrine. The study examines the interaction of concrete and abstract meanings within the semantic structure of the word, its phraseological productivity, and its role in the formation of syntactic units that reflect the national patterns of thought. The article traces the evolution of the semantic structure of the word “dushá,” identifies the principal vectors of its grammatical and phraseological functioning, and demonstrates how its history mirrors the general patterns governing the development of the Russian literary language.

Keywords: V.V. Vinogradov, history of words, semantics, phraseology, concept, linguistic worldview, lexicology, grammar.

Introduction

СЕМАНТИЧЕСКОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ВНУТРЕННЕГО МИРА СЛОВА

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Аннотация

В настоящей статье предпринимается попытка историко-семантического анализа ключевого концепта русской культуры – слова «душа» через призму грамматического и лексикологического учения В.В. Виноградова. Исследуется взаимодействие вещественного и абстрактного значений в семантической



структуре слова, его фразеологическая продуктивность и роль в формировании синтаксических единств, отражающих национальный склад мышления. Прослеживается эволюция семантической структуры слова «душа», выявление основных векторов его грамматического и фразеологического функционирования и показать, как его история отражает общие закономерности становления русского литературного языка.

Ключевые слова: В.В. Виноградов, история слов, семантика, фразеология, концепт, языковая картина мира, лексикология, грамматика.

SO'ZNING ICHKI DUNYOSINING SEMANTIK O'RGANISHI

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Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada rus madaniyatining asosiy tushunchasi - "jon" so'zini V.V. Vinogradovning grammatik va leksikologik ta'limoti nuqtai nazaridan tarixiy-semantik tahlil qilishga harakat qilingan. So'zning semantik tuzilishida moddiy va mavhum ma'nolarning o'zaro ta'siri, frazeologik mahsuldorligi, milliy tafakkur tarzini aks ettiruvchi sintaktik birliklarning shakllanishidagi o'rni tadqiq etilgan. "Dusha" so'zining semantik tuzilishi evolyutsiyasi kuzatiladi, uning grammatik va frazeologik faoliyatining asosiy vektorlari aniqlanadi va uning tarixi rus adabiy tili shakllanishining umumiy qonuniyatlarini qanday aks ettirishi ko'rsatiladi.

Tayanch iboralar: V.V. Vinogradov, so'z tarixi, semantika, frazeologiya, konsept, olamning lisoniy manzarasi, leksikologiya, grammatika.

In his foundational work "The Russian Language: A Grammatical Study of the Word," V.V. Vinogradov argued that a word is not merely a nominative unit but a complex organism in which grammatical forms, lexical meanings, and the historical destinies of the national language are interwoven. It is precisely this multi-faceted approach that reveals the depth of meaning contained in what are called the "key words" of



culture. The lexeme “dushá” (soul) represents an ideal object for such an inquiry, constituting a nexus in which folk worldview, religious-philosophical thought, and everyday language converge.

From Vinogradov’s perspective, the meaning of a word is a system of internally connected and historically mutable nuances. In the case of the word “dushá,” we observe a classic example of the interaction between direct, concrete and figurative, abstract-metaphysical meanings. Historically primary is the meaning of “breath” or “windpipe,” traceable to the Common Slavic root “*duxŭ” (spirit, breath). This meaning, now archaic, is preserved in dialects and in certain fixed expressions (cf. the colloquial phrase “stat’ poperek dushi” - literally “to stand athwart the soul,” meaning to be deeply repugnant).

Under the influence of Christian culture, the meaning of the word shifted into the realm of the immaterial, becoming the designation of the immortal, incorporeal essence of the human being and the centre of his emotional and moral life: “bessmertnaya dushá” (immortal soul), “dushevnye muki” (spiritual torments), “shirokaya dushá” (a generous soul). In this semantic sphere, a powerful antonymic paradigm develops in opposition to the lexemes “telo” (body) and “plot” (flesh).

In the Russian language of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the word “dushá” acquired unique social connotations. It became a unit of taxation and census enumeration: “revizskaya dushá” (a registered soul). This metonymy, as Vinogradov observed, vividly reflects the socio-historical context of the era and permeated literature - cf. “Dead Souls” by N.V. Gogol - where a brilliantly oxymoronic metaphor is generated, laying bare the contradiction between juridical abstraction and living humanity. In the collective and quantitative sense (“v dome ni dushi” - not a soul in the house; “pyat’ dush detei” - five souls of children), the word “dushá” functions as a synecdoche, wherein the part (the soul as essence) denotes the whole - the human being. This meaning demonstrates the high degree of abstraction attained by the word in the course of its semantic development.

Thus, the semantics of the word “dushá” constitutes a complex hierarchy of meanings, in which historical strata are superimposed upon one another, creating a rich palette of sense.

Vinogradov particularly emphasised the inseparable connection between lexical meaning and grammatical forms and phraseological environment. Being a feminine-



gender noun that is simultaneously animate and abstract, the word “dushá” possesses a unique combinatorial range. It readily takes adjectives denoting internal qualities:

The deeper the pain of the rebellious soul,
The clearer shine the worlds above.
The azure God, so pure and tender,
Sends forth His gifts to one and all.

A. Blok

as well as those denoting external qualities transposed onto the inner world:

Allow my soul to open wide before you,
And in sweet friendship find solace and repose.
Grown weary of this life, by vanity tormented,
Beside you, tender friend, I long for rest...

A.S. Pushkin

I grieve not for the years spent all in vain,
Nor for the lilac bloom that graced my soul.
The rowan’s crimson bonfire burns in the garden,
Yet cannot warm a single living soul.

S. Yesenin

Its syntactic valency is exceptionally high: the word readily enters constructions with the genitive case (“chelovek vysokoy dushi” - a man of noble soul), the dative (“govorit’ po dushe” - to speak from the heart), and the instrumental (“stat’ dushoy obshchestva” - to become the life and soul of the company).

The word “dushá” is one of the most productive centres of Russian phraseology. In his works on phraseology, Vinogradov classified phraseological units into fusions, unities, and combinations. Among “fusions” (idioms whose meaning cannot be derived from the sum of their components), one may include expressions such as “ni slukhu ni dukhu” (no word, no sign of life) and “chort-te chto” (God knows what - a euphemism originally associated with the soul). Among “unities,” which retain figurative motivation, are “dushá v pyatki ushla” (the soul has sunk into one’s heels, i.e. one’s heart leapt with fright), “dushá ne na meste” (the soul is not at rest, i.e. one feels uneasy), and “vynimat’ dushu” (to drag out one’s soul, i.e. to torment). Among “combinations,” where one word is contextually bound, are “zabota o dushe” (care for the soul) and “krivit’ dushoy” (to act against one’s conscience).



This phraseological “fertility” attests to the fact that the concept of “soul” is deeply rooted in the Russian linguistic consciousness and serves to express a wide spectrum of emotional and ethical evaluations.

Following Vinogradov’s method of studying the language of literary art, one cannot overlook the role of this word in the work of the Russian classics. In F.M. Dostoevsky, the word “dushá” becomes the field of ideological struggle, the centre of the moral quests and spiritual anguish of his characters. In N.V. Gogol, as already noted, it acquires a socio-satirical and simultaneously mystical resonance: “One writes not in order to compete with anyone, but because the soul yearns to pour forth its sensations.” In A.P. Chekhov, the “soul” frequently delineates the inner world of the “little man,” his most intimate, unseen experiences and his longing for a different life: “Chervyakov’s soul is the soul of a slave, who fears his superiors more than death.”

An analysis of individual authorial contexts demonstrates that a common word, upon entering the stylistic system of a given writer, foregrounds certain nuances of its meaning in accordance with the overall ideological and artistic purpose.

The analysis conducted confirms the validity of V.V. Vinogradov’s grammatical and lexicological conception. The word “dushá” emerges not as a static label but as a living, evolving micro-organism within the system of the language. Its history is a history of the interaction of grammar, semantics, and stylistics. From the archaic meaning of “breath” to the most complex philosophical and social abstractions, this word carries the imprint of the national spirit and cultural experience. Its phraseological richness and grammatical flexibility render it an indispensable instrument for expressing the most delicate stirrings of the human heart - as the great Russian writers demonstrated with consummate brilliance. Thus, the study of such “key words” through the prism of Vinogradov’s methodology remains one of the central tasks of Russian historical lexicology.

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