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The Problem of the Classification of Temporal Adverbs in Modern English

Our attitude to the time has socially-psychological character. Objective reality is perceived psychologically, then generalized logically and has its expression in different language means. So we can speak about linguistic time. At first linguistic time was applied to the verb. Later, with the development of the concepts of space and time there were picked out the words from other parts of speech which have temporal meaning. The adverbs are among them.

The word “adverb” (ad-verb) suggests the idea of adding to the meaning of a verb. However, the adverb can modify: adjectives; other adverbs; nouns; prepositional phrases; complete sentences.

Adverbs make up a rather complicated group of words varying widely in form and distribution.

Semantic classification of temporal adverbs (or adverbs of time) tends to vary too. We are going to analyse the adverbs of time (yesterday, today, tomorrow, ago, soon, then, often, sometimes, usually, always, suddenly, already) as the words which have temporal meaning in one of their lexico-semantic variants. By temporal meaning in its turn we understand meaning the sense of which is socially determined reflection of temporal characteristics of reality.

Among a great number of temporal meanings the word “time” is the most capacious as the subject of this sign and its notion coincide. So “time” is a categorical word. The mentioned adverbs have the word “time” in one of their lexico-semantic variants.

Classifying the adverbs of time into lexico-semantic groups linguists have different points of view.

The adverbs “yesterday”, “today”, “tomorrow” cause no doubts in their temporal meanings. L.G. Alexander refers them to the group of adverbs of definite time and gives them in the subgroup “points of time”. E.P. Shubin, V.V. Sytel, M.A. Ganshina, N.M. Vasilevskaya, K.N. Kachalova, G. V. Verba and L.G. Verba, B.S. Khaimovich, B.I. Rogovskaya, E.M. Gordon, Ī.P. Krylova consider that “yesterday”, “today” and “tomorrow” are timing adverbs. Of the same opinion are scholars M. Celce-Murcia and D. Larsen-Freeman. The position of these adverbs in most cases is at the end of the sentence, or at the beginning, e.g.: I'll see you tomorrow.

The adverb “ago” should be referred to the group of definite time too as it can be placed after a noun or a noun phrase, e.g.: seven years ago. Occupying the place after an adverb, “ago” shows indefinite time (A.S. Hornby), e.g.: long ago.

The adverbs “soon”, “then” belong to the group of indefinite time (N.A. Kobrina, E.A. Korneyeva and others). These adverbs are usually placed at the end of the sentence, or before the verb and (to focus interest) at the beginning, e.g.: Soon he called on again and proposed to drive to the country.

As to the adverbs “often”, “sometimes”, “usually”, “always”, “already” most of the native and foreign linguists classify them as the adverbs of frequency, while the adverb “suddenly” is classified as the adverb of manner (E.M. Gordon, V.L. Kaushanskaya).

L.G. Alexander distinguishes the adverbs of indefinite frequency: “always”, “often”, “sometimes”; in R.A. Close's opinion “already”, “soon”, “suddenly” are the

adverbs of relative time; “soon”, “always”, “already” are the adverbs of indefinite time (N.A. Kobrina). The usual position of these adverbs is after auxiliary and before a full verb, e.g.: He is always late. To cause interest or to show the emotional colouring these adverbs are replaced to the position before the predicate of the sentence, e.g.: He always is late.

The adverb “suddenly” has double nature. It can be analysed as the adverb of relative time in the sentences like: I’ve suddenly thought of an idea; but “suddenly” is an adverb of manner in : He came in suddenly (R.A. Close).

M I. Rudometkina considers that the adverb “suddenly” together with other ten temporal words has the meaning of a starting or ceasing point (limit) of the action or its momentary character. In our work we shall analyse the above mentioned adverbs as the representatives of three lexico-semantic groups: 1) the lexico-semantic group of Location (lat locus, place); 2) the lexico-semantic group of Correlation (correlation - mutual relationship); 3) the lexico-semantic group of Modification (lat modus, manner) (M.I. Rudometkina).