

MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF INVARIANT IN LINGUISTICS

Arifjanov Zokir Toxirovich

Senior Lecturer, International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan,
Uzbekistan, Tashkent

Abstract

The concepts of invariant and variant, characteristic of any essential characteristic of objects, phenomena, events of reality and their specific implementation in one terminology or another, are present in many sciences about the world. In one way or another, the concept of an invariant reflects the general properties of the classes of objects under study. Invariants are actually considered a metalinguistic designation of the content of a categorical seme. In the "Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary", an invariant is characterized by V. M. Solntsev as "an abstract designation of the same entity (for example, the same unit) in abstraction from its specific modifications - variants". With such an interpretation, in our opinion, an invariant appears to be an abstraction that is not directly related to the specific implementation of a particular linguistic unit. It seems that such a sharp opposition between language and speech and the concepts of an invariant and variants related to these two planes is unjustified.

Keywords: Variability, invariant, variant, phoneme, grammeme, lexeme, diffusive character, prototype.

Introduction

In semantics, it is obvious that one should proceed from the invariance of a denotate as a certain "standard" representative of a class of homogeneous objects. The authors of the "Linguistic Dictionary" note that in linguistics invariants are called "elements that remain unchanged (or that are considered unchanging)" In this definition, we are no longer talking about dematerialized abstractions, but about a material common element (structural-syntactic, lexical, morphological, phonetic), repeated as a common element in the individual in each of the members of the class (paradigm). To a certain extent, prototypes can be attributed to such invariants of a non-metalinguistic nature. In modern linguistics, such a correlation takes place. Such an interpretation of an invariant is associated with the understanding of the presence in its content of categorical semantic features present in all syntagmatic variants.

The attribute of immutability is retained in the definition of an invariant in logic as well: there, an invariant is proposed to be called "an expression, a number..., associated with some integral set of objects and which remains unchanged throughout the entire transformation of this set of objects".

Thus, on the one hand, an invariant is called a concept of those substantive and formal features that a

certain exemplary representative of a particular categorical relation (or meaning) must possess. On the other hand, an invariant relates to phenomena of the linguistic plane as a certain synthesized, but designed according to the laws of a given language, unit of a particular linguistic level and therefore equally usable as a categorical substitute in any of the corresponding contexts. In this understanding, an invariant is as material as each of the variants of its implementation.

We use the concept of an invariant precisely in this second meaning, recognizing, however, a certain validity of the first approach to its understanding. The establishment of invariants of categorical meanings in the intra-categorical plan means the establishment of a hierarchical paradigm of syntagmatic meanings (or syntagmatic variants of a general meaning). Therefore, in the invariant approach, linguists see the establishment of semantic unity.

In accordance with the tradition of transformational grammar, we can talk about an invariant - a categorical substrate of the meaning of a particular categorized propositional or non-propositional sign. Such an invariant of meaning, which, although certainly mentioned during the heyday of transformational grammar, could not yet be clearly defined at that period of development of linguistics, meant the so-called typical situation, which can be considered an extralinguistic prototype of a linguistic event categorical invariant. In our opinion, we should distinguish between invariance of varying degrees of generalization: invariants of categories, paradigms, classes, i.e. categorical linguistic archetypes, and invariants within the framework of a metalinguistic description: including those abstracted modeled entities that can be presented in the form of formulas, schemes, transcriptions, theoretical descriptions or definitions. In fact, A. V. Bondarko speaks of such a possibility in his definition of an invariant, which we have given above.

For significant units of language, the selection of invariants is very difficult. For syntactic (grammatical) semantics, this is an even more difficult task, although the ideas of invariance and variability have proven productive for this area of semantics as well: for the systemic study of its basic unit - the sentence.

In general, the prepositional sign acts as a sign of a typical situation. Within the opposition “typical situation / categorical prepositional sign of a typical situation”, the typical situation in its functional (relational) semantic structure as a categorical denotate actually acts as an invariant of the meaning of those relations of interacting substances that are presented in its direct projection onto the propositional nominant.

On the other hand, the propositional invariant of the signifying propositional sign as a nuclear (elementary) structure derived from syntagmatic manifestations, conveying one or another propositional categorical content in the most neutral, most economical form, is associated with syntagmatic variants of the realization of these categorical meanings. In prepositional signs, which represent the unity of the signifier and the signified, the signified in the invariant is always extralinguistically motivated in semantic (and logical) aspects (unlike non-propositional signs). It is presented isofunctionally and isosyntactically in relation to the signifier, therefore, it is possible to

speak separately about the invariance of the propositional signified and the propositional signifier only hypothetically and for research purposes.

Modern linguist V.M. Solntsev writes that from this understanding of invariance it follows that “an invariant should be called some abstract object characterized by abstract properties. An invariant, therefore, is something common that objectively exists in a class of relatively homogeneous objects or phenomena. An invariant as an abstract object is constructed mentally by extracting what is common from a number of objects or phenomena and abstracting from differences between objects that are insignificant for a given class. An invariant is an ideal object that can be used to study the general properties of a given series of objects and any object included in this series”.

Consequently, any object included in any set of objects is a variant in relation to each other object (but not a variant of another object!) and is at the same time a variant in relation to an abstract object - an invariant, which is mentally, i.e. in abstraction, constructed as a generalized name of a given set of objects. Each specific object, therefore, is a variant in relation to another specific object, which, in turn, is a variant in relation to the first” The concept of variants and invariants entered linguistics through phonology. According to A. Martinet, “the opposition of variants and invariants was established in terms of expression by the Prague phonologists, as well as by Daniel Jones and his students. Invariants were called phonemes” If a phoneme began to be characterized as an invariant, then its sound realizations began to be defined as variants.

L. Hjelmslev was the scientist who first gave a detailed definition of the concepts of variant and invariant in linguistics.

Describing the process of dividing a text into some segments, he states: “It turns out that in many places in the text there is “the same” complex sentence, “the same” simple sentence, “the same” word, etc. - in other words, we can say that there are many samples of each complex sentence, each simple sentence, each word, etc. We will call these samples variants, and the entities of which they are samples - invariants”.

In LES, an invariant is interpreted as “an abstract designation of one and the same entity (e.g. one and the same unit) in abstraction from its concrete modifications – variants” [Solntsev // LES 2002: 81].

As a rule, an invariant is considered in connection with a variant. In this case, if the term variant characterizes the mode of existence and functioning of units of language and the system as a whole, then the invariant will reflect the essential properties of the language system. In essence, this is a nuclear structure, “stretched” across the entire language continuum. Along with variance, invariance will act as one of the fundamental properties of the language system.

It is known that the variant-invariant approach to linguistic phenomena was first established in phonology, where it was reflected in detail in the works of representatives of the Prague Linguistic Circle. From phonology this approach was transferred to other sections of linguistics, which entailed the use of empirical and ethical terms denoting invariant and variable units. Accordingly, two series of units arose, which are, on the one hand, in opposition, on the other hand, in close interconnection.

Thus, in LES they are called phoneme, morpheme, lexeme and, accordingly, background, or allophone, morph, or allomorph, lexa, or allolexa.

Usually we introduce all units into these series, starting from sound and letter and ending with functional styles, stylistically differentiated texts: phoneme - background (background), allophone, sound; morpheme - morph (morpha), allomorph; lexeme - lexa, allolexa, lexical-semantic variant; grapheme - graph; word - word form; structural scheme of a phrase - phrase; structural scheme of a sentence - sentence; invariant of functional style – functional style; information model of functional style; invariant of text – text, information model of text; invariant of communicative quality – communicative quality of speech; functional-stylistic invariant of word formation system – information model of word formation type, etc.

At the same time, we take into account that there are invariants of different degrees of abstractness. For example, functional-stylistic invariant of language system is modified sometimes as functional-stylistic invariant of communicative quality of speech, sometimes as functional-stylistic invariant of word formation system, etc.

Functional-stylistic invariant of text, in turn, is modified sometimes as invariant of description, sometimes as invariant of narration, sometimes as invariant of reasoning. Further, for example, functional-stylistic invariant of description is modified with the help of information models of portrait, landscape, interior, etc. "The concept of an invariant reflects the general properties of a class of objects formed by variants. The invariant itself does not exist as a separate object, it is not a representative of a class, not a standard, not a "model variant". An invariant is an abbreviated name for a class of relatively homogeneous objects. As a name, an invariant has a verbal form of existence. Each variant - an object belonging to a given invariant series, carries invariant properties inherent in each member of this series, and can be assessed as a representative of a given class.

V.M. Solntsev, referring to the principle of linearity of speech, which goes back to F. de Saussure, according to which one instance - a variant of a language unit - can claim one place in a speech chain, believes that invariant units are not characteristic of speech. At the same time, he points to the widespread opinion that language consists of invariants. According to V. M. Solntsev, language cannot consist of abstractions alone. Since it is a means of communication, it consists of concrete, variant units and of abstract, invariant units. It should be recognized that such linguistic asymmetry: speech = variants: language = variants + invariants – may well take place. However, given that the same unit, whether it is recorded in the speech stream or in the language system, is the bearer of both variable and invariant properties, we are inclined to assume that symmetry can be traced in the above relationship: speech = variants + invariants: language = variants + invariants. Such a relationship can be observed in two cases: 1) if language and speech coincide (this point of view is known in linguistics); 2) if we assume that in speech we are dealing with invariants of the first level of abstraction, and in language – with invariants of a higher level of abstraction (although, for example, the invariant of text reflects a fairly high level of abstraction, given that text as a unit is much closer to

the member of the dichotomy of speech than to the concept of language). At least, the question of invariants in language and speech remains open for now.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that modern linguistics is characterized by the blurring of the boundaries adopted in the period of structuralism: the boundaries between dictionary and encyclopedic information, essential and optional semantic features, between individual meanings of polysemantic lexemes, linguistic and speech uses (which are manifestations of linguistic ability), diachronic and synchronic description. Critical understanding of the theory of variability in relation to bilateral linguistic units is a manifestation of the development of modern research processes in linguistics.

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