

## **Semantics of contextual synonymy: the case of Anton Chekhov**

### ABSTRACT

The paper explores semantic mechanisms of formation of contextual-synonymic relations in texts by Anton Chekhov. First, the background relevant to the research is briefly outlined, and pertinent theories described. It is stressed in the paper that the contextual nature of synonymization mechanisms has been either overlooked or downplayed in recent and current studies. In particular, no work has yet been done on contextual synonymy either within or outside Slavic studies. Second, a theory of contextual synonymy is proposed which allows us to describe and model linguistically the process of generation of common semantic components within words forming contextual-synonymic relations in a text. The choice of material is motivated in the paper: Chekhov's texts reveal an abundance of contextually synonymous pairs, and the material has been collected and codified in Grishanina (2008), so that the current research extensively builds on the already created lexicographic legacy. It is argued that the formation of contextual-synonymic relations is determined both syntactically (reduplication of the syntactic constituent in a sentence) and semantically (several conditions should be satisfied which govern semantic relations among the synonymous words as well as their head element). The mechanism of formation of contextual-synonymic relations is presented as a step-by-step search for a syntactically and semantically suitable candidate within the author-induced set of domains. An attempt is then made to apply the proposed theory to practice by generating a novel contextual-synonymic construction from an arbitrarily constructed sentence.

## 1. Objectives

The present paper will discuss at length the phenomenon of contextual synonymy works by Anton Chekhov. Following a brief review of existing theories of synonymy, the author's theory of contextual synonymy will be articulated along with by the analysis of collected data.

## 2. Theoretical prerequisites

In recent and current studies, there is a general tendency to capture terminologically types of context-free and context-dependant synonymy. Different terms, under a comparative look, turn out to be notational variants of each other: “complete and total synonyms” vs. “context-dependant synonyms” (Lyons 1968: 452-453); “lexical synonyms” vs. “quasisynonyms” (Apresian 1974: 223); “cognitive synonyms” vs. “plesionims” (Cruse 1984: 270); “language” vs. “contextual” synonyms (Shansky 1964: 67); “general language” (общезыковые) vs. “individually-authored”(индивидуально-авторские) synonyms (Kozhina 1977: 102-103); “general language” (общезыковые) vs. “contextual speech” (контекстуально-речевые) synonyms (Fomina 1986: 24) (see also Ullmann (1962: 153) for a brief discussion of cases of collocation-based synonymy in figurative language; and Kobozeva (2007) for an attempt to unify the approaches).

The diversity of criteria underlying such classifications, however, prevents us from deriving a unified notion of contextual synonymy: the concepts overlap only partially and indicate various aspects of the phenomenon. Most scholars indicate contextual interchangeability and semantic similarity as two major conditions for contextual synonyms (Lyons 1968; Shansky 1964; Cruse 1984; Fomina 1986).

All works cited above share several features. First, context-based synonymy is granted minimal attention and marginal space in typologies. Second, no or minimal interest is expressed in context-based synonymy in figurative language<sup>1</sup>. Third, the typologies are mostly descriptive in nature; no exhaustive explanation is proposed as to how non-synonymous items become synonymous in certain contexts<sup>2</sup>. Whereas the two criteria for contextual synonymy are cited legitimately, no attempt is made to describe how the search for and the selection of contextual synonyms is made based on these criteria. Overall, the literature on synonymy describes no mechanisms of dynamic “contextual synonymic adjustment” of non-synonymous words.

The framework of componential analysis provides methodological grounds for describing contextual synonymy. A brief overview of the framework will follow.

Following Lamb (1964), Lounsbury (1956), Goodenough (1956), the theory of componential analysis was further reiterated in Nida (1975) and Lyons (1968)<sup>3</sup>. Katz and Fodor (1963) Katz (1973) provided a robust methodological framework and techniques of formal analysis. The fundamental premise underlying the componential analysis boils down to the idea that linguistic meaning is compositional and can be described formally (see works Katz and Fodor 1963; Katz 1973, Weinreich 1966, etc. for in-depth discussion study). Although the idea of describing potentially infinite elements of meaning with the

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<sup>1</sup> A number of factors can be cited that impede the interest in poetics on behalf of modern Linguistic theory, the major one being the competence-driven nature of the Linguistic paradigm, which leaves no room for individualized language use (Bruss 1975). Another factor is the perennial and currently unresolved methodological issue of relation between the body, purview and premises of Linguistics and Poetics noted in Kroesch (1929), Vinogradov (1959), Hendricks (1974: 5), Volf (1979) and Grishanina (2008).

<sup>2</sup> A most notable attempt to define synonymy by proposing semantic rules is introduced in Apresian (1974); because the author rejects the criterion of interchangeability, the class of synonyms is extended onto traditionally non-synonymous units, like morphemic derivatives (e.g. набирать – собирать), which detracts significantly from an otherwise fundamental work.

<sup>3</sup> Allan (2001) refers to works by John Wilkins as first attempts to formulate and implement the idea of semantic compositionality (Allan 2001; Wilkins 1968).

minimal amount of semantic components faced real-life difficulties (see Raskin and Weiser 1987) and revealed internal inconsistencies (see Weinreich 1966; Lehrer 1972 for criticism), componential analysis provides formal descriptive tools for defining mechanisms of contextual synonymy. Its body, purview and premises<sup>4</sup> have been clearly defined by various authors, and this makes the framework easy to employ and extrapolate on contextual synonymy – phenomenon not yet approached by componentialists.

### **3. Defining contextual synonyms: the case of Anton Chekhov**

Texts by Anton Chekhov were used as data. Two reasons motivated our choice: first, the abundance of contextual synonyms in Chekhov's works, and second, the availability of collected data<sup>5</sup>. We admit that the downside of a theory built on limited data may be the lack of relevant generalizations, but we attempted to have built a framework that would serve as a sound foothold for further research. In what follows we will outline necessary and sufficient properties of contextual synonymy.

#### **3.1 Status of contextual synonymy in the sentence**

In relation to the sentence, contextual synonymy in most cases is semantically and structurally optional. It is optional semantically because it provides additional and auxiliary characteristics to objects, properties or events. It is optional structurally because its incorporation typically does not change the sentence structure. The two observations

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed study of theory structure and relations among its components see Nirenburg and Raskin (2004).

<sup>5</sup> The instances of contextual synonyms have been collected and analyzed by Elena Grishanina (Grishanina 2008) with whom the present author had a privilege to work during his graduate years in Russia. The full corpus of Chekhov's texts has been analyzed, and a dictionary of contextual synonyms of Chekhov is also being developed currently. Several coauthored publications were the result of the work on different aspects of contextual synonyms in Chekhov's texts. I am grateful to the scholar for having shared her ideas and experience during the collaboration.

above can be evidenced by the fact that most contextual synonymic constructions can be removed from the sentence without the detriment to its propositional meaning.

### 3.2 Status of the members of contextually synonymic construction

Within the contextual synonymic construction, the status of the members is different. In most cases, it is the final member that triggers contextual synonymy. An example below (very typical structurally) illustrates that in contextual synonymic construction the degree of semantic predictability of the final component plummets drastically compared to the other members:

Шлю Вам *большое, громадное, шестиэтажное* спасибо за Вашу милую телеграмму (А. Л. Вишневному, 26 декабря 1898).

I am sending to you my *big, huge, six-storied* thanks for your lovely telegram (To A. L. Vishnevsky, December 26 1898)

The italicized string forms a contextual synonymic construction. The final member “шестиэтажный” [six-storied], given its basic dictionary meaning, is not semantically justified and does not form synonymic relations with two other members. Additionally, this member is optional in that its removal would not affect in any way the meaning or the syntactic construction of the sentence.

Based on observations above the following conclusion can be drawn. Contextual synonymy is generated within a single syntactic constituent. Within this constituent, the final member of the contextual synonymic construction is generated after the syntactic structure of the sentence has been derived and semantic properties assigned. The final member of the contextual synonymic construction is added as a result of stylistic

enhancement of the sentence. It is the final member of the construction that triggers the formation of contextual synonymy.

The stylistic enhancement procedure is heavily dependent on the author's intention to provide additional characteristics of the objects, properties and events referred to in the sentence. Contextual synonymy is thus motivated poetically and is propositionally optional.

A syntactic constituent enhanced by contextual synonymy typically has a form of two or more sister categories modifying (and thus sharing) one head. We propose to term a “candidate” the member that is added during stylistic enhancement. The diagram below illustrates the status of contextual synonymy in the sentence, and the status of the members of a contextual synonymic construction.

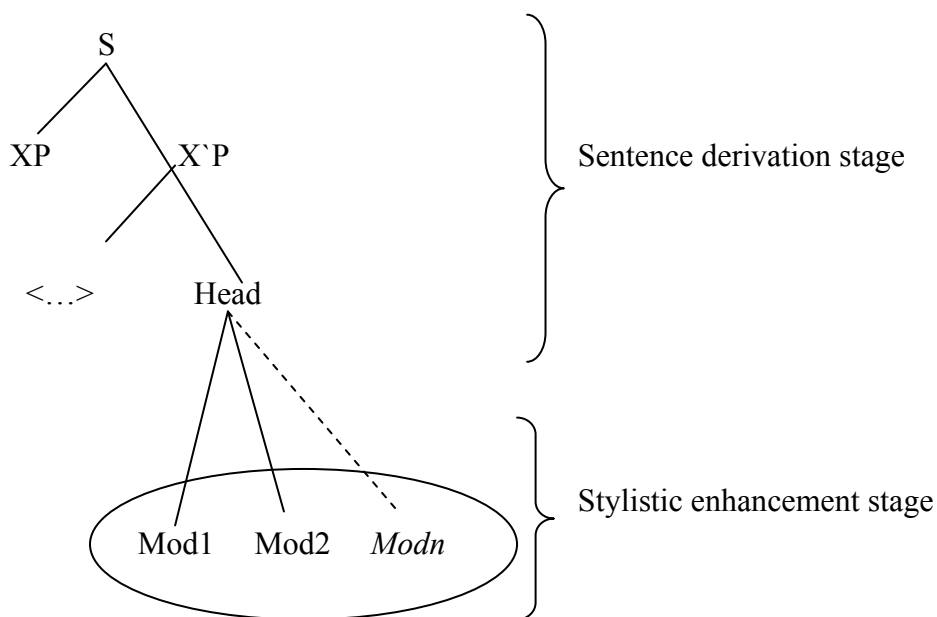


Diagram 1: Contextual synonymy in relation to the sentence and its members

Notational conventions:

<...> – any syntactic category determined by a particular sentence structure;

XP, X`P – phrase markers, determined by a particular sentence structure;

Head – a syntactic category modified by the members of the contextual synonymic construction;

Mod1, Mod2, *Modn* – modifiers (members of the contextual synonymic construction);

Mod1, Mod2 – members of the contextual synonymic construction which are an inherent part of the sentence structure and have been generated during the sentence derivation stage;

Italicized *Modn* – member of contextual synonymic construction, not part of the sentence structure; generated during stylistic enhancement stage; triggers contextual synonymy; semantically and syntactically optional.

Figure brackets indicate two stages of sentence derivation with the final member of the contextual synonymic construction as a part of stylistic enhancement stage.

We can thus derive a tentative definition: contextual synonymic construction is a string of (two or more) stylistic enhancers which function as syntactic sisters by modifying one head and of which the final sister is semantically optional and the other(s) is not. The optional member – a candidate – plays a leading role in the triggering of

contextual synonymy. Contextual synonymic construction is propositionally optional for the sentence and is motivated poetically.

We have so far delineated surface parameters related to contextual synonymy and now will outline the conditions for forming contextual synonymic relations among non-synonymous words.

### **3.3 Conditions for contextual synonymy**

The greater the semantic distance between synonymous components, the greater the role of the immediate context, i.e. syntactic constituents of the sentence (see (Grishanina 2008) for a detailed elaboration of this thesis, along with the review of pertinent literature).

It is argued in this paper that for two or more non-synonymous words to form the relations of contextual synonymy, two conditions must be satisfied, which we have termed “the condition on the sister member” and “the condition on the head member”. Both conditions set specific requirements for a candidate to satisfy in order to be incorporated into the sentence as a contextual synonym:

Condition (1): the condition on the sister member stipulates that the candidate either share semantic components with its sister or derive semantic components from those of its sister.

Condition (2): condition on the head member stipulates that the candidate violate selection restrictions<sup>6</sup> of the head of the syntactic constituent into which it is incorporated. Let us consider the two conditions in detail by analyzing an example:

Тоска сжимала ее сердце, и дух захватывало от одного *страстного, еретического* желания (Цветы запоздалые)

Sadness was gripping her heart, and the her breath was held by mere *passionate, heretic* desire (Belated flowers)

In this sentence, the syntactic constituent NP has a structure of the head “желание” [desire] and two adjectives-modifiers “страстный” [passionate] and “еретический” [heretic]. We also see that the final member, “еретический” [heretic], is semantically unmotivated. We can assume that the lack of semantic support, as well as the unexpectedness of “еретический” [heretic], comes from the fact that the word does not match the selection restrictions imposed by the head “желание” [desire] which takes adjectives with parametric meaning of degree/gradation of emotion: “желание” [desire] <adj: degree/gradation of emotion>. The word “еретический” [heretic] is rather selected by nouns belonging to the domain of religion (with the subdomain of Christianity).

We thus see that “желание” [desire] violates selection restrictions of the head member. The violation of the selection restriction, however, does not rule the word out of the sentence, and “желание” [desire] and “страстный” [passionate] do develop

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of selection restrictions has been introduced in Katz and Fodor (1963) and further elaborated on in Katz (1973) (see also Weinreich (1966) and Lehrer (1972) for discussion in depth). In Katz and Fodor (1963) selection restriction, along with semantic markers and distinguishers, is a minimal semantic component that constitutes the meaning of a word. Whereas markers and distinguishers capture systemic (general) and individual meaning of the word (i.e. (human) (male) vs. [never married] for the word “bachelor”), selection restriction specifies its distributional properties. Thus, for instance, the head “the truth” would not select the modifier “is strawberry-flavored” and the sentence would be absurd, unlike “the truth is important”, and selection restriction is meant to account for that. Katz (1973) specified that selection restriction is responsible for building suitable sentences and rule out unsuitable ones (Ibid: 92). Selection restriction is represented in angled brackets <>; we use the same notation.

synonymic relations, which can be attained in two ways. One way is identifying common semantic components within the two words. Another way is deriving new semantic components in the candidate from the sister. The two words consist of the following semantic components:

страстный (sexual desire) (high degree)

еретический (condemned by Christian Church)

In this case, no common semantic components could be found, therefore semantic derivation applies. Based on the analysis of Chekhov's texts, it was possible to identify three derivation rules used in order to generate new semantic components in candidates during the formation of contextual synonymic relation.

Derivation rules:

Analogy rule: from the semantic component X of the sister member derive a new component Y of the candidate such as that:

- 1) X has common parts with Y;
- 2) X has common properties with Y;
- 3) X has common functions with Y.

Rule notation:  $an(X) \rightarrow Y$ ;

Gradation rule: from the semantic component X of the sister member derive a new component Y of the candidate such as that a high degree of X becomes Y.

Rule notation:  $magn(X) \rightarrow Y$ ;

Tokenization rule: from the semantic component X of the sister member derive a new component Y of the candidate such as that Y is an instance of X.

Rule notation: token(X) → Y;

Which of the three rules is applied is largely dependent on the author's intention.

In our example, apparently the gradation rule has been applied:

magn(sexual desire) → (forbidden)

The newly derived semantic component is incorporated into the semantic structure of the candidate, which forms contextual synonymic relation with its sister member:

страстное(sexual desire), еретическое(magn(forbidden)) желание(<selection restriction violated by еретическое>).

The semantic scope of the given theory would not predict which of the semantic components of the sister will be targeted by derivation rules. Author's poetic preferences largely determine which derivation rules will be applied to which semantic components.

A large number of examples presents cases when common semantic components are found between the candidate and the sister. An example below illustrates the point:

Это была *большая, серьезная* любовь со слезами и клятвами, а я хотел, чтобы не было ничего серьезного — ни слез, ни клятв, ни разговоров о будущем (Страх).

It was a *big, serious* love with tears and vows, and I wanted nothing serious – no tears, no vows, no talks about the future (Fear).

The candidate “серьезный” [serious] shares semantic component (sincere) with its sister “большой” [big] and violates selection restriction of the head “любовь” [love]. It should be noted that the adjective “большой” [big] which functions as a modifier of “love” has a peculiar semantic structure:

big (serious) (long term).

The adjective “большой” [big] has been generated together with the sentence structure when the base standard semantic components (size) (large) have been neutralized and replaced with those compatible with the componential structure of the head “любовь” [love].

The condition on the head member is necessary for the synonymic construction to be considered contextual. To illustrate, we will discuss the following example:

Работку нашел Вам *маленькую, чахоточную*, но на плату за слушание лекций, во всяком случае, хватит... (Е.И. Юношевой, июнь около 17 1884)

I have found a *small, consumptive* job for you, but this should be enough at least to pay for the lectures... (to E.I. Yunosheva, circa 17 June 1884)

The following CS construction is formed:

маленькая, чахоточная работа [small, consumptive job]

The adjective-candidate “чахоточный” [consumptive] obviously violates selection restriction of the head “работа” [job] <adj: value/salary level/complexity>ж it is clear that the selection restrictions do not license an adjective from the domain MEDICAL. Had a candidate been chosen which meets the selection restrictions imposed

by the head “работа” [job] (provided the condition on the sister is satisfied), a standard, (i.e. context-free) synonymic construction would have been formed.

Работку нашел Вам *маленькую, незначительную*, но на плату за слушание лекций, во всяком случае, хватит...

I have found a *small, unimportant* job for you, but this should be enough at least to pay for the lectures...

The two synonyms in the construction “маленькая, незначительная работа” [small, unimportant job] are obviously motivated by their standard linguistic meanings; both share the common semantic component (low-valued) and meet selection restriction imposed by the head “работа” [job].

The observation above provides an important clue about the role of the two conditions in the formation of contextual synonymic relations. If the condition on the head member is not satisfied, synonymy can still form but will not be contextual. If the condition on the sister member is not satisfied, the construction will be semantically anomalous (at this point, it is timely to recall Katz 1973 stating that violating selection restriction leads to semantic incomprehensibility).

Earlier in this section we resorted to the notion of domain when describing cases of violation of selection restriction by a candidate within a contextual synonymic construction. Thus, the contextual synonymic construction “страстное, еретическое желание” [passionate, heretic desire] has the member “страстный” [passionate] which belongs to the domain of RELIGION, any member of which hardly meets the selection restriction of the head “желание” [desire].

The notion of domain turns out to be a handy tool for describing the process of the author's search for a candidate. Since any the member of any domain can equally violate the selection restriction of the head member, we may conclude that the selection of domain is dependent solely on the author's intentions and constitutes one of the areas in where the discussion of the author's poetic style is in order. Our theory is not designed to capture the tendencies reflecting or principles regulating the selection of the domain. We believe that an author's poetic manner delineates a limited range of domains most frequently employed by the author. With respect to contextual synonymy, we can identify a number of domains repeatedly utilized by Chekhov:

MEDICAL	TEMPERATURE
RELIGION	LIQUID
ANIMAL	SOLID OBJECT
COLOR	SHAPE
SOUND	PROPER NAME
MONTH	SEASON

A legitimate observation can be made that Chekhov's medical background may have determined a frequent use of the domain of MEDICAL in his works (see the analyzed example of construction *маленькая, чахоточная работа* [small, consumptive job]. The question of domain-specific contextual synonymy obviously needs further research.

### 3.4. Definition and generalization

Having described the process of formation of contextual synonymy and its necessary conditions, we are now in the position to provide an axiomatic definition of contextual synonymy and generalize our theory.

1. Contextual synonymy (CS) is a process of acquiring or deriving shared semantic components in several (typically two or three) language items within one syntactic constituent in a sentence.
2. CS is semantically and syntactically optional: it is poetically motivated; it occurs in the already generated sentence and its absence does not affect the propositional meaning of the sentence. CS thus functions as a syntactic enhancer.
3. CS occurs only within one syntactic constituent.
4. CS involves syntactic reduplication that is, adding a sister category into a constituent of an already formed sentence. The adding may be recursive.
5. Within the constituent, the head member is the modified word and the sister members are words modifying the head.
6. Among the sisters, the word being added is the candidate, and the word (or words) generated earlier with the whole sentence is the sister. The candidate and its sister (or sisters) form contextual synonymy.
7. CS is licensed if two conditions are satisfied:
  - 7.1. The condition on the sister member: the candidate must either share semantic component(s) with its sister or derive semantic components based on rules of analogy, causality and gradation.
  - 7.2. The condition on the head member: the selection restrictions of the candidate must violate selection restrictions of the head either by being incongruous with or by being opposed to them.
9. If condition 7.1 is not satisfied, CS does not form; standard (i.e. context-free) synonymy does not form.
10. If condition 7.2 is not satisfied, standard (i.e. context-free) synonymy forms.
11. The process of CS formation is highly dependent on the intentions and needs of a subject (author, speaker, etc.); a number of areas particularly sensitive to the subject's choice are:

- the need to enhance the syntactic constituent with a sister category;
- domain selection;
- candidate selection;
- candidate's part of speech selection.

### **3.5. Modeling contextual synonymy**

This section will present a dynamic description of contextual synonymy based on the introduced theory. The dynamic description will show *how* contextual synonymy is formed on a step-by-step basis.

Unlike standard (i.e. context-free) synonymy, contextual synonymy does not constitute a static element of language and has to be generated on the case-by-case basis. This view diverts from the one expressed by Apresian (1974: 223) who argues that synonymic resources of natural language do not require rules for derivation because they are already given in natural language. The description of contextual synonymy formation requires a flexible schema of generation which would be effective enough to capture context-driven sense derivation, and which would be sensitive to the author's preferences.

Our model of contextual synonymy is meant to capture linguistic mechanisms of contextual synonymy formation. The model shows how, in a step-by-step fashion, an appropriate word is found which can enter into contextual synonymic relations with the word in a given sentence. The process of contextual synonymy formation can be viewed as a process of filling in the empty slot within a syntactic constituent. The author's preferences determine which syntactic constituent needs stylistic enhancement.

The heuristics for the search of the candidate constitutes the core of the model. At every step of the search, specific criteria are applied and after every step new features of the future filler are assigned so that the search narrows down.

Step 1. Select the sentence for stylistic enhancement. Within the sentence, select the syntactic constituent; identify its head and the sister's part of speech.

Step 2. Select a domain from which a candidate will be drawn. Select candidate-fillers that share part of speech with the sister<sup>7</sup>. Assign the features to the future fillers according to the results of steps 1-2: [DOMAIN, part of speech]

Step 3. Identify the semantic components of the sister. Within the selected domain, select a candidate which would share one or more semantic components with the sister member.

3.1. Candidate found? Go to step 5.

3.2. Candidate not found? Go to step 4.

3.3. Candidate found and discarded by the author? Go to step 4.

Step 4. In the selected domain, find a word, identify its semantic components and apply one of the derivation rules (analogy rule, gradation rule and tokenization rule), assign newly derived components to the semantic structure of the future filler.

Step 5. Within the syntactic constituent, identify the selection restriction of the head member.

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<sup>7</sup> The principle of part-of-speech sharedness is typically observed for CS, however, is not considered a rule.

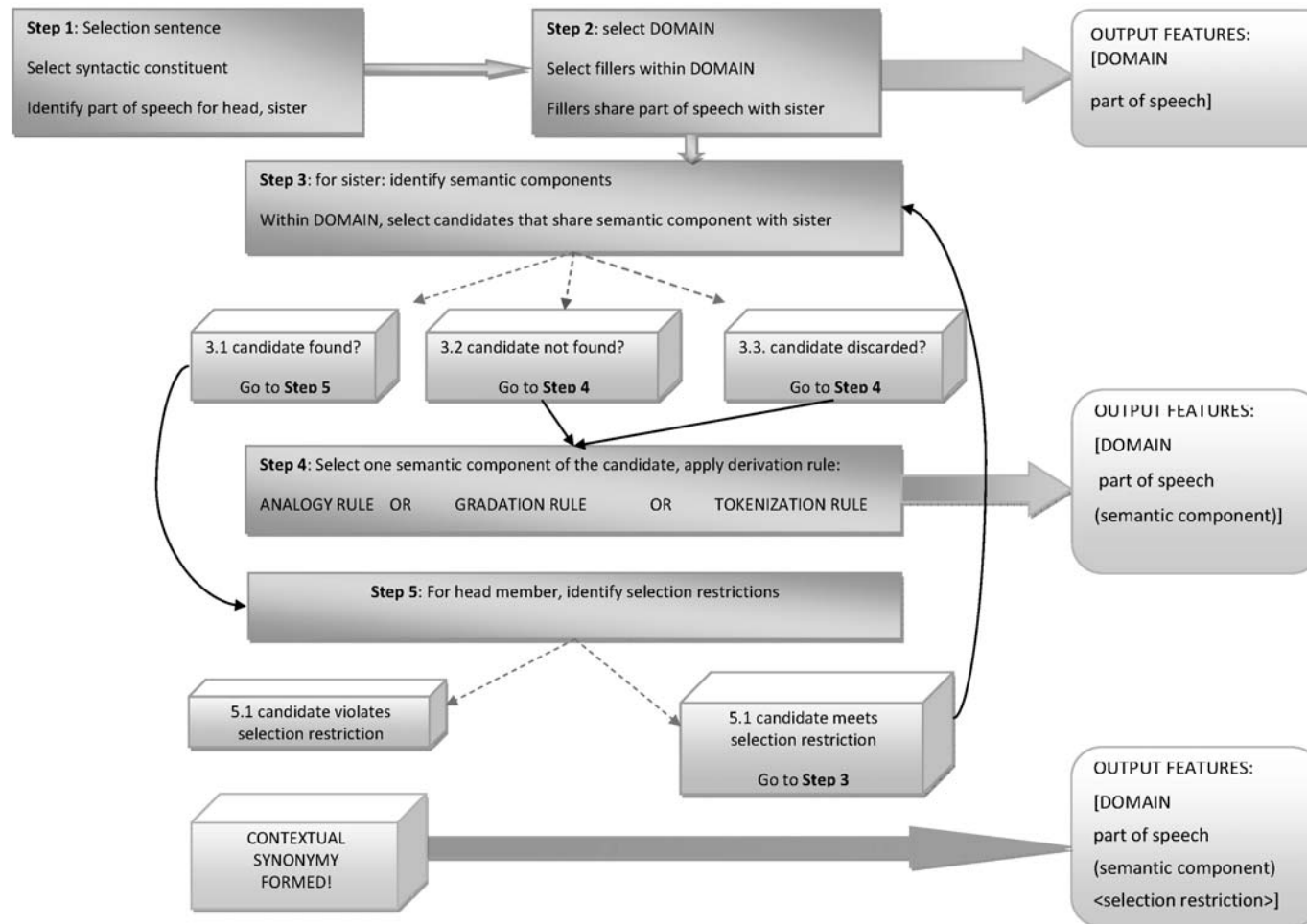
5.1 Candidate violates selection restriction of the head? Fill in the slot, contextual synonymic construction is formed.

5.2. Candidate meets selection restriction of the head? Discard the candidate, go to step 3.

Figure 1 provides schematic visualization of the algorithm presented above. Right-hand boxes indicate output with new features identified and assigned to a candidate after a new step: Step 2 yields the features DOMAIN and part of speech; Step 4 adds (semantic component) to the features set; and Step 5.1 completes the search by adding the <selection restriction> feature to the set.

The search procedure is recursive that is, it can be applied as many times and at any stage as the author would need, and the search is likely to yield multiple fillers. The author's choice will play a decisive role in making the ultimate choice of specific filler.

Figure 1: Formation of Contextual Synonymy



### 3.6. Examples: Applying the heuristics scheme

In what follows we will demonstrate our heuristics scheme by trying to form a contextual synonymic construction based on a randomly constructed sentence. By doing that, we do not claim to emulate the style of Anton Chekhov or any other writer. This attempt is rather meant to reveal the consistency of our theory and, through that, possibly illuminate some basic principles of context-driven synonymy. We will apply the scheme described in the section above in order to stylistically enhance the following sentence:

В этом ветхом доме уже давно никто не живет [Nobody lives in this shabby house now].

Step 1. After the sentence has been selected, the syntactic constituent needs to be identified. Our theory does not predict the selection results: any constituent having a head can become a subject for stylistic enhancement. Given the frequency of AdjP enriched with contextual synonymy, we will focus on the constituent “ветхий дом” [shabby house]. Given that the contextual synonymy formation allows multiple syntactic sisters modifying one head, we can form an empty slot next to the adjective “старый” [old] so that the whole constituent will have the form:

ветхий [slot] дом

Having identified the constituent, we can determine the head “дом” (house) and the part of speech of the sister “ветхий” – adjective.

Step 2. Our theory does not predict DOMAIN selection; therefore we will take a random pick and employ the domain SOUND. Based on the sister member's grammatical properties, we can assign the following features to the future slot filler: [SOUND Adj]

Step 3. The sister has the following semantic components:

Ветхий (old) (unstable) (vertically positioned) <buildings>

Within the domain SOUND, candidates are searched which share one of the following semantic properties:

[SOUND Adj (old)/(unstable)/(vertically positioned)]

Candidates are searched which share the domain SOUND, grammatical class and one of the semantic components:

Candidates for [SOUND Adj (old)]: кряхтящий (groaning), скрипящий (creaking) (причастие = Adjective in English).

Candidates for [SOUND Adj (unstable)]: not found.

Candidates for [SOUND Adj (vertically positioned)]: not found.

Thus the candidates

“кряхтящий” [groaning], “скрипящий” [creaking]

are selected because they share semantic components with the sister member “ветхий” [shabby].

The application of Step 4 depends on:

- 1) whether candidates have been found at Step 3;

2) whether the author has or has not discarded the selected candidates;

If (1) or (2) is met (i.e. a candidate has not been found or has been discarded by the author), then the set of derivation rules would have been employed for generating new semantic components from each of those in the sister's semantic structure. Each of the three derivation rules would have been applied to each of the three semantic components in the sister word “ветхий” [shabby], so that the following inventory would have been available to the author:

Base form: ветхий (old)  
 Rule: Analogy an(old)  
 Features: [SOUND Adj (an(old)) <noun: NOT buildings>]  
 Result: not found

Base form: ветхий (old)  
 Rule: Tokenization token(old)  
 Features: [SOUND Adj (token(old)) <noun: NOT buildings>]  
 Result: not found

Base form: ветхий (unstable)  
 Rule: Gradation magn(unstable)  
 Features: [SOUND Adj (magn(unstable)) <noun: NOT buildings>]  
 Result: not found

Base form: ветхий (unstable)  
 Rule: Analogy an(unstable)  
 Features: [SOUND Adj (magn(unstable)) <noun: NOT buildings>]  
 Result: not found

Base form: ветхий (unstable)  
 Rule: tokenization token(unstable)  
 Features: [SOUND Adj (token(unstable)) <noun: NOT buildings>]  
 Result: not found

Base form: ветхий (vertically positioned)  
 Rule: Gradation magn(vertically positioned)  
 Features: [SOUND Adj (magn(vertically positioned)) <noun: NOT buildings>]  
 Result: not found

Base form: ветхий (vertically positioned)  
 Rule: Analogy an(vertically positioned)  
 Features: [SOUND Adj (an(vertically positioned)) <noun: NOT buildings>]  
 Result: not found

Base form: ветхий (vertically positioned)  
 Rule: Tokenization token(vertically positioned)  
 Features: [SOUND Adj (token(vertically positioned)) <noun: NOT buildings>]  
 Result: not found

Step 5. The selection restriction of the head “дом” [house] now needs to be identified:

дом [house] <adj: size/age/value/color>

At this point the two selected candidates are checked for their compatibility with the selection restriction of the head. The main goal is to determine whether the candidates' and the head's selection restrictions do not match.

кряхтящий (groaning) <noun: NOT buildings>

скрипящий (creaking) <noun: NOT buildings>

As we can see, the two candidates violate election restriction by virtue of being unable to indicate any of the properties (size/age/value/color) indicated by the selection restriction of the head “дом” (house). This being determined, the two candidates are then promoted to the slot fillers, which yields the following sentence enriched with the CS construction:

Теперь в этом ветхом, [кряхтящем/скрипящем] доме никто не живет. [Nobody lives in this groaning/creaking house now]

The final choice of the actual filler is subject to the author's will, as is the decision to use the selected candidates which can always be discarded, which in turn trigger a new search. The new search may be done within the same or different domains. The collected data show that sharedness of grammatical class may also be ignored in some cases.

We thus have presented our theory of contextual synonyms based on texts by Anton Chekhov. We have shown how and at what stages of sentence derivation contextual synonymy occurs, what conditions are necessary for it, and how, by using our theory, a possible search for contextual synonyms can be modeled and explained.

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