

Zaslonkina A. V.,
 PhD, Senior Lecturer at
 Department of English,
 Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University

PERFORMANCE OF PERCEPTION: THE SEMIOTICS OF THE SENSIBLE AND BEYOND

Summary. This paper is a modest contribution to the ongoing discussions on the Greimassian semiotics of the sensible, mainly to the description of cognitive mechanisms determining the arrangement of morphological parameters of the so-called thymic verbs. Contextual proximity of the verbs to feel and to sense testifies to the contiguity of the thymic category members, chiefly those having emotional and cognitive features. The verb to feel is appropriate for the designation of any perception type as it expresses the result of a holistic observable.

Key words: thymic category, experiencer, observer, diathesis.

Problem statement. The study of the modes in which linguistic consciousness conceptualizes objective reality has been gaining importance in recent years. As a general rule, the anthropocentric approach to language studies today is a necessary complement to the conventional cognitive discursive modeling. The aforementioned approach spotlights such categories as “observer” and “observable”, with the observer being construed as a linguistic persona experiencing and cognizing the surroundings through the unity of emotional, volitional, intellectual, and physical states. For this reason, the human organism as a holistic system facilitating comprehension of perception phenomena has been widely investigated. Nevertheless, there are still some relevant problems to be addressed, such as pragmatic and onomasiological features of the names of the concepts conveying information on the semantics of perception.

Literature review. In *corporeal semantics* (A. Damasio [1]; P. Gärdenfors [2]) and *integrative theory of cognition* (A. Martynyuk [3]) the immediate role of body and emotions in cognitive processes is accentuated. Similarly, the *semiotics of the sensible* (in other words, the inquiry of A. Greimas and J. Fontanille [4]) peruses the correlation between perception, language, thinking, and action. A. Greimas advanced his research by introducing the so-called *thymic category* (from the Greek word *thymus* meaning “of passions and emotions within the entire physical structure of human organism”). Accordingly, the soi-disant thymic category is formed as a result of cognitive activity which generalizes and classifies the knowledge structures about perceptual, cognitive, and emotional aspects of perception evolving around the accumulation of their similarities.

Previous research [5, p. 224-225] has documented that the conceptual triad SENSE : FEELING : EMOTION composes the semiotic space of the thymic category in modern English due to the fact that the verbal forms *sense, feeling, emotion* as well as their paradigmatic groupings correlate with the knowledge structures relevant to perceptual, cognitive, emotional aspects of perception. More significantly, content word representatives of each unit of the triad under study form *the thymic lexis corpus* of modern English. Allowing for the verity of the statement about a person using the basic level concepts in their diurnal communication [6, p. 337-338], the thymic category is adjudged a linguistic

construct of the basic categorial level, whereas the thymic nouns *sense, feeling, emotion* are labeled *basic* and the thymic lexemes belonging to different parts of speech as well as the expedient collocations and idioms are labeled *marginal*.

Thus, in the literature several theories have been proposed to explain the verbal expression of the perceived. However, to the author’s knowledge, the thymic lexemes have been scarcely investigated from the point of view of their morphological potential.

This research is **aimed** at the description of the cognitive mechanisms determining the arrangement of morphological parameters of the thymic verbs. The aim of the research-work predetermined the **tasks** of the investigation: to perform a comprehensive analysis of both basic and marginal thymic verbs in terms of the following aspects recommended by S. Moiseeva [7, p. 68]: lexical-semantic (the verb is examined as a lexeme), semantic-syntactic (the verb is studied as a component of a notional sentence structure), and dynamic-functional (the verb is analyzed as a structural-functional ligature of the syntactic scheme of a sentence).

Discussion. The thymic verbs are referred to “mental predicates” by A. Wierzbicka [8, p. 173], while U. Neisser restricts this verbal series to “the predicates of sensory perception” [9, p. 10]. The universal meaning of the verb “to perceive” is reduced to “getting a picture of something / someone in a certain way: by means of thought, intuition or sensory organs” [10, p. 52]. Thus, the concept “perception” might be interpreted as a more general one if compared to the other thymic category units. This can be attributable to the fact that the concept in question is verbalized implicitly by embedding into the other concepts which are consistent with it. The referential sphere of the verbs *to feel, to emote, to sense* and the derivatives from the periphery of the last two ones, in particular *to emote, to remove, to emotionalize, to sensitize, to sensationalize* etc. is the human’s specific activity directed at the perception of the environment, the understanding of the latter, that is at the perceptual, cogitative, evaluative actions.

The verbal units of the thymic lexis corpus cluster around the categorial opposition (see Table 1 below).

The categorial opposition: state (the basic meaning of the predicates with the semantics of perception) vs. action (the fundamental taxonomic category of any verb) vs. happening illustrates the agentive feature of the thymic verbs. The feature in question accentuates the semasiological role of “causation” (the term introduced by E. Paducheva [12, p. 30]) within the semantic structure of a thymic verb. Consequently, the basic thymic verbs develop a multidirectional polysemy of interpretation formats. Henceforward the results of the basic thymic lexemes analysis are valid for the marginal thymic lexemes as well. Interestingly, the table given above was formed to demonstrate the meanings of the two basic thymic verbs regarding the significant prevalence of their usage over that of another basic thymic verb *to emote*. The correlation of the cases of

Interpretation formats of the thymic verbs

Interpretation format	Basic thymic verbs	TO SENSE	TO FEEL
<i>Non-Agentive Accomplishments</i> (hereinafter in this column the terms offered by D. Dowty [11] are given) – objectless event		–	<i>to feel</i> (to get a particular feeling or impression): <i>It feels like rain. How does it feel to be alone all day?</i> [21, p. 429].
<i>Intentional Agentive Accomplishments</i> – purposeful activity		<i>to sense</i> (become aware of something even though you cannot see it, hear it, etc.): <i>Sensing danger, they started to run</i> [21, p. 1072].	<i>to feel</i> (to become aware of something even though you cannot see it, hear it, etc.): <i>Can you feel the tension in this room?</i> [21, p. 429].
<i>Non-Intentional Agentive Accomplishments</i> – events with an active subject or a diathetically marked event (in this respect there is one initial diathesis among several ones of the thymic verb).		–	<i>to feel</i> (to have a particular physical quality which you become aware of by touching): <i>The water feels warm. This wallet feels like leather</i> [21, p. 429].
<i>Stative Causatives</i> – an inducing event		<i>to sensitize</i> (become sensitive to physical, emotional or chemical changes): <i>So I prefer to take no risk, being sensitized by my long captivity</i> (A. Piers, Virtual Mode, p. 34).	–
<i>Simple Achievements</i> – qualitative action		<i>to sense</i> (to discover and record something): <i>equipment that senses the presence of toxic gases</i> [21, p. 1072].	<i>to feel</i> (to deliberately move your fingers over something in order to find out what it is like): <i>Try to tell what this is just by feeling it</i> [21, p. 429].

usage of the verbs *to feel*, *to sense*, *to emote* in modern English fiction amounts to 4671 : 2386 : 7 accordingly.

Apart from the main meaning, the basic thymic verbs in modern English are mediated by a series of coordinating meanings including: the meaning of the inert state, the meaning of activity, the meaning of the passive state, and epistemological meaning.

When the basic thymic verb bears the meaning of the inert state, the perceiving person (experiencer) is passively receptive. The given semantic sector embodies the meaning of the verb *to feel* expressing bodily sensations (*Now I feel fine, not even tired* (A. Piers, Split Infinity, p.112)); in other words, *to feel* as the verb of pure perception conveys the meaning of the experiencer having this or that sensation without mentioning the object producing this sensation.

The meaning of activity objectifies the ostensible “growing perception”, when the experiencer conscientiously directs his / her attention at a certain object. L. Talmy asserted that experiencer “emits a probe” [13, p. 103] to search for the object in their own perceptual field. In that case the basic thymic verbs *to sense* and *to feel* have the role of discourse activators of new objects due to their binary sensory-existential structure, which the sentence acquires if it contains a thymic verb: *X senses / feels Y* may be interpreted as “in the X’s perception field there is a fragment signaling them the presence of the object Y in their surroundings”, e.g. *He could feel the electricity crackling between them* (B. Bova, Jupiter, p. 39); *As we floated waiting in free fall, I sensed how both my hearts knocked* (P. Anderson, Explorations, p. 14).

The basic thymic verbs *to sense*, *to feel* with the coordinating meaning of activity in the sentences like *At least a section of the Jews felt that the only answer was a holy war* (BNC) and *I sensed support from many on the council* (D. Brin, Glory Season, p. 59) contain the information on the fact that the mental reflection of an event happens as a result of mental efforts, chiefly subconscious inferences. Yet when carrying the meaning of the inert state the verb *to feel* points either to the involuntary act of reflection (recognition) independent of the perceiving subject’s efforts (*He felt eyes all around him* (T. Brooks, The Druid of Shannara, p. 177)) or to the intuitive comprehension (*But now Maia felt something stronger than either – a desire to strike back* (D. Brin, Glory Season, p. 82)).

The intuitive cognizance conveyed by means of the semantics of the verb *to feel* was observed by A. Wierzbicka [6, p. 364],

whereas E. Wolf designated the propositions included into the same contexts with *to feel* “the ones that are not modally determined” [14, p. 222–223], e.g. *Wren felt something unspoken pass between them* (T. Brooks, The Elf Queen of Shannara, p. 82). In the last example the basic thymic verb does not convey the statement about the real state of things, but manifests the subjective idea. Modally undetermined propositions are peculiar to the contexts containing the verb *to sense* as it is indicated by such modal exponents as *something* (*He could sense something was wrong* (B. Bova, The Watchmen, p. 240)) and *probably* (*They could probably sense the other anchors too* (A. Piers, Fractal Mode, p. 48)).

Both the verbs having the meaning of activity and the verbs with the meaning of the inert state allow the progressive tense without restraint: *I am feeling the ground. Sensing something I had come home a day early* (BNC).

The coordinative meaning of the passive state presupposes the diathesis with the experiencer off screen as contrasted with both the meaning of activity relating to category and the meaning of the inert state relating to diathesis, since “the passive is the diathetic shift” [12, p. 203].

In terms of the passive state meaning, the object-participant becomes a subject, whilst the experiencer falls within the off screen space, that is to say they become observers: *To talk simply of empires and patriotic duty was sensed to be no longer convincing as a public justification for these sacrifices* (BNC). As it can be seen from the example, the basic thymic verb in the passive form will, when being interpreted, remain an agentive one, namely the causator (agent) can be found among the participants of the situation it signifies. Transitive basic thymic verbs *to sense*, *to feel* can be used as intransitive ones, their intransitivity being a semantic derivative of the source causative thymic verb: *Pain felt on the skin, muscle, joints, bones and ligaments is called somatic pain* (BNC). The sample illustrates how the above-described happening, not action, establishes the taxonomic category of the thymic verb.

Regarding the semantic aspect, the meanings of activity and the passive state originate from one and the same meaning of the inert state extended by the verbs which are the exponents of physical, perceptual, and cognitive states: *I (could) feel / felt X* (inertness: physical state) → *I am feeling / sensing X* (activity: perceptual and cognitive states) → *X is (being) felt / sensed* (diathesis with the observer: physical, perceptual, cognitive states).

The epistemological meaning stems from the above adduced meanings; the former is distinctive of the thymic verbs the argument structure of which contains the participant (image). The syntactic object of such a thymic verb denotes two participants at a time, viz. stimulus and image: *I feel / sense something*, the image can be chiefly interpreted as a subconscious reflection of solely semantic categories. This finding is in line with the results obtained by O. Seliverstova [15, p. 327]: in the following sentence *I couldn't sense her presence* the perception device failed to reflect the substance symbolized by the concession of the sounds perceived.

The basic thymic verb as a central component of the dictum of the proposition may correlate with an argument block, i.e. diathesis with a deictic observer, when those being in the close proximity to the speaker (including the latter) are integrated into the subject of perception: *Every one of us felt the sense of achievement = The sense of achievement was felt by every one of us* (BNC). Coreference between the subject and the object of perception is represented by reflexive thymic verbs: *Oliver felt himself being carried across rough ground* (BNC).

Overall, the predicates of sensory perception are currency-oriented, whereby the environment is being perceived in its presentive, processual, and event-related aspects, when an observer perceives the objects belonging directly to their perception zone. It is a case of the soi disant external observer, that means the classical subject of perception remains in all-channels-of-perception-functioning mode.

In fact, the verb *to feel* is appropriate whatever the type of perception is. In addition, it can convey the result of a holistic observable: *I feel there's a fire being burned* (BNC). In the given instance the proposition with the basic thymic verb extends the observable, herewith the semantics of this verb admits of both solely perceptual meaning and the meaning of intuitiveness. The semantic emphases are laid with the unfolding of the context. Therefore, perception is not separated from the mental operations, for this reason "the verbs with perceptual semantics can generate epistemic and evaluative meaning" [16, p. 413]. These verbs notably acquire the function of the thymic verbs of propositional relation with an emotive component.

The predicate of emotional state *to emote* describes the subject's frame of mind. As it has already been noted, this predicate as a meaningful verb-centered sentence element is an exceedingly rare case. Even so, its meaning is implicitly transferred by the peculiar emotivity recipients, namely the basic thymic verbs *to feel*, *to sense* or the derivatives of the latter. Alternatively, a number of linguists (see works of A. Wierzbicka [6], [8] and A. Zalizniak [17]) agree that sentence actualization of the verbs of perception identified with the thymic ones in the current research is not even in the English language, because connotative adaptedness of the verb *to feel* is more expressive than that of the other verbs of perception.

Decomposition of the verb *to feel* presupposes two participants: experiencer (Y) feeling an emotion and stimulus (X), the latter disintegrating into three units – the substance of the mental act (Y thought), the intellectual assessment, and the reason for the emotion. J.L. Austin completes the decomposition of the verb *to feel* with the process of identification of emotion [18, p. 62]. In that case, the cognition cycle of the thymic state unfolds from perception to knowledge. The transfer of the thymic verbs with an emotional component to the category of propositional regime is connected with the weakening of emotional semantics and shifting the epistemic meaning to the forefront (*Not that your life would be ruined,*

but you'd never feel completely happy (P. Anderson, *The Stars Are Also Fire*, p. 5)). When it comes to the basic thymic verbs *to sense*, *to feel* bearing the meaning of perception, the transfer occurs with the advance of their cognitive semantics.

Despite the fact that the mental senses having the meaning of the predicates of propositional regime combine with the perceptual and emotional ones, they are well ordered: for the sensory-marked verb *to sense* the position of the predicate is primary. From this position the thymic feature shifts to the position of propositional regime, mainly to the verb *to feel*: *I sensed that the people of Donegal felt faintly disappointed at having such a rational church service* (BNC). Nevertheless, the marginal thymic verb *to sensationalize* requires no syntactic tools to specify its emotional component: *Sensationalize a story, so don't believe what you read, most of it is crap* (BNC). In the sample sentence: *Elizabeth felt a thrill now, instead of a chill, at the word "husband"* (BNC) the implicature functions as the assertive component of the explication of the proposition, the implicature mediating the causative connection between sensory-perceptive (*to feel chill*) and emotive (*to feel a thrill*) approaching senses.

The predicates *to feel*, *to sense* can replace one another; however, a shift of meaning is then observed: *to sense* introduces epistemological semantics to the utterance, i.e. the meaning of knowing is yielded by the observer not on the basis of inner belief, but as a result of inferences about the connection between emotional state and its causes. Cf. *He wasn't certain what the point was, but he felt that it had to be made* (D. Adams, *The Long Dark Tea-time of The Soul*, p. 28) where the predicate *felt* adds the semantic component *to believe* to the sentence, whereas in the dependent proposition the emotional state with the connotation of uncertainty is concerned, the emotional state being amplified by means of the modality exponent *wasn't certain* and *Toshio suspected she sensed his attraction to her* (D. Brin, *Startide Rising*, p. 67) where the predicate *sensed* introduces the semantic component *to comprehend* to the sentence, the sense-bearing emphasis being put on the cause of emotional state in the dependent proposition. Hence, the basic thymic predicates *to feel* and *to sense* clearly demonstrate the opposition of emotional state and cognitive state. More significantly, the semantics of *to feel* features the shift along the probability scale towards likelihood. The contextual approach of the basic thymic verbs *to feel*, *to sense* points to the possible advance of both emotional and cognitive states within the thymic category, e.g. : *He saw, sensed, felt every part of the ship* (B. Bova, *Jupiter*, p. 112); *Shea and Flick felt the fear even more deeply, they sensed that something was wrong* (T. Brooks, *The Sword of Shannara*, p. 6).

Verboides (the participle and the gerund) objectified by the lexical units of the thymic category are worth special attention. The present participle is the exponent of nonsimultaneous course of actions, one of which is denoted by the thymic verb and precedes the other one. The usage of this verbal form generally takes a direct object and fixates the given moment: *The ambulance headed to the scene and, sensing a story, I followed* (BNC). The past participle of the thymic verbs with sensory-perceptive component can function as a predicate: <...> *when a potential emergency was sensed* (BNC), but, on the other hand, the past participle of emotionally-coloured thymic verbs may function as an adverbial modifier: *What blinds people and when felt it hurts but people still go after it* (BNC), particularly the adverbial modifier of state: *Even now, if it was felt worthwhile, we could build a transmitter that could send signals to the nearest stars* (B. Bova, *Voyagers*, p. 25).

Being a morphological exponent of the thymic state, the gerund can cause a discrepancy which was described by A. Kravchenko as “the contention between the generalized nature of sensory perception state and infeasibility to identify an observer” [19, p. 93]. In this case the modification of gerundial thymic construction by means of possessive pronouns is typical of the English language: *His long, inexplicable silence had resulted in her feeling such misery that she was finding it difficult to eat or sleep* (BNC).

From the perspective of the major categories of verbs, basic and marginal thymic verbs indicate: either personalized or erratic thymic states of the speaker / observer / protagonist (the category of person), the relation of the process of perception to the subject and object (the category of voice), and the relation of the process of perception to the reality (the category of mood), the verbalized dominance of efficiency / inefficiency of perception (the category of aspect), the temporal characteristic of perception (the category of tense), quantitative indices of the participants of the case of perception (the category of number).

Conclusions. A series of the basic thymic verbs *to feel, to sense, to emote* is conducive to the ascertainment of the ternary quality of the concept SENSE : FEELING : EMOTION. A semantic connector is typical of this series, the latter expands in accordance with the complicacy of the lexico-grammatical structure of the verbs in question and their distribution system. The actualization of this feature might be attributable to the relational potential of the thymic verbs, i.e. the power to fixate immanent states, particularly the thymic ones, which may not be subjected to observation. Besides, the informational complex of the thymic category manifests the following features: the tendency towards pragmatic and semiotic blocking of the predicate of the emotional state *to emote*; as well as the characteristic of the predicate *to feel* when it becomes the intermediate link between emotional and cognitive processes, that is to say, the whole thymic category can be replaced by its part in the dictum of the proposition.

Clearly, further research will be required to validate the fact of the thymic deficit compensation by the corresponding thymic nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.

References:

1. Damasio A. The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999. 386 p.
2. Gärdenfors P. Conceptual Spaces: The Geometry of Thought. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000. 308 p.
3. Мартынюк А.П. Лингвистика эмоций в интеграционной перспективе. Світ емоцій у дзеркалі когніції: мова, текст, дискурс: тези доповідей Круглого столу, присвяч. ювілею проф. О.П. Воробйової (КНЛУ, Київ, 27 вересня 2012 р.). К., 2012. С. 10.
4. Греймас А.Ж., Фонтань Ж. Семиотика страстей. От состояния вещей к состоянию души: пер. с фр. И. Г. Меркуловой. М.: Изд. ЛКИ, 2007. 336 с.
5. Заслонкіна А.В. Семіотичний простір тимічної категорії в сучасній англійській мові. Актуальні проблеми романо-германської філології та прикладної лінгвістики: науковий журнал, 2016. Вип. 11–12. Ч. 1. С. 222–226.
6. Вежицкая А. Восприятие: семантика абстрактного словаря. Новое в зарубежной лингвистике. Логический анализ естественного языка. 1986. Вып. XVIII. С. 336–369.
7. Моисеева С.А. Семантическое поле глаголов восприятия в западно-романских языках: монография. Белгород: Изд. БелГУ, 2005. 248 с.
8. Вежицкая А. Семантические универсалии и описание языков. М.: Языки русской культуры, 1999. 780 с.

9. Найссер У. Познание и реальность: смысл и принципы когнитивной психологии: пер. с англ. В. В. Лучковой; вступ. статья и общ. редакция Б. М. Величковского. М.: Прогресс, 1981. 230 с.
10. Васильев Л.М. Семантика русского глагола. М.: Высшая школа, 1981. 184 с.
11. Dowty D.R. Word Meaning and Montague Grammar. The Semantics of Verbs and Times in Generative Semantics and in Montague's PTQ. Dordrecht (Holland): Reidel, 1979. 415 p.
12. Падучева Е.В. Динамические модели в семантике лексики М.: Языки славянской культуры, 2004. 608 с.
13. Talmy L. Toward a Cognitive Semantics. Vol. 2: Concept Structuring Systems. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000. 450 p.
14. Вольф Е.М. Функциональная семантика оценки: изд. 2-е, доп. М.: Едиториал УРСС, 2002. 280 с.
15. Селиверстова О.Н. Труды по семантике. М.: Языки славянской культуры, 2004. 960 с.
16. Арутюнова Н.Д. Язык и мир человека. М.: Языки русской культуры, 1999. 895 с.
17. Зализняк А.А. Семантика глагола бояться в русском языке: изв. АН СССР: серия «Литература и язык», 1983. Т. 42. № 1. С. 59–66.
18. Austin J.L. Other minds: Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. Idem. Philosophical Papers. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961. P. 44–84.
19. Кравченко А.В. Язык и восприятие: Когнитивные аспекты языковой категоризации. Иркутск: Изд. Иркут. ун-та, 1996. 160 с.

References of illustrative material:

1. Библиотека современной англоязычной литературы [Электронный ресурс]: в 47 томах / Douglas Adams, Poul Anderson, Piers Anthony, Robert Asprin, Iain Banks, Arthur C. Clarke, Ben Bova, David Brin, Terry Brooks и др. 1 электрон. опт. диск (CD-ROM); 12 см. Систем. вимоги: Pentium; 32 Mb RAM; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP. Назва з титул. екрану.
2. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English /edited by Sally Wehmeier: Sixth edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 1422 p.
3. The British National Corpus Database: Британський комп'ютерний національний корпус бази даних. URL: <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>.

Заслонкіна А. В. Діяльнісний аспект сприйняття: в межах семіотико-афективної концепції та поза нею

Анотація. У статті зроблено спробу поширити науковий доробок А.Ж. Греймаса, зокрема пропонується опис когнітивних механізмів організації морфологічних параметрів тимічних дієслів. Контекстуальне зближення дієслів *to feel, to sense* вказує на можливість зближення членів тимічної категорії із емоційною і когнітивною ознаками. Дієслово *to feel* є коректним за будь-якого типу сприйняття та може передавати результат голістичного спостережуваного.

Ключові слова: тимічна категорія, експеріент, спостерігач, діатеза.

Заслонкина А. В. Деятельностный аспект восприятия: в рамках семіотико-афективной концепции и вне её

Аннотация. В статье делается попытка расширить научное наследие А.Ж. Греймаса, в частности предлагается описание когнитивных механизмов организации морфологических параметров тимических глаголов. Контекстуальное сближение глаголов *to feel, to sense* указывает на возможность сближения членов тимической категории с эмоциональным и когнитивным признаками. Глагол *to feel* является корректным при любом типе восприятия и может передавать результат холистического наблюдаемого.

Ключевые слова: тимическая категория, эксперимент, наблюдатель, диатеза.