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POLYSEMY IN SOME MARATHI ADJECTIVES

Maitreyi Puntambekar*
Mona Parakh**

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine polysemy in Marathi adjectives, more specifically, the physical property adjectives viz., wet, cold, tiny, hard, and hot. These adjectives are studied by analysing as to how different meanings relate to the central or primary meaning. Some meanings are very close to the central meaning, while others may be more farther off. It is to be noted that different contexts often lead to slight differences in meaning. This paper will take a look at these differences and study their relatedness to the central meaning.

Keywords: Polysemy, Meaning, Physical Properties, Adjectives, Marathi

1. Introduction

Usually, a distinction is made between homonymy and polysemy. They both deal with various senses of the same phonological word, but if the senses are judged to be related then the words are said to share the relation of polysemy (Saeed, 2016). According to Oxford Research Encyclopaedia, polysemy is characterized as the phenomenon whereby a single word form is associated with several related senses. In the lexicon if a word form has various related meanings, those meanings are all listed under a single entry. Lexicographers tend to use various criteria to identify polysemy. These criteria include relatedness of meaning, speakers' intuitions, and what is known about the historical development of the items.

Polysemy arises because words are linked to a network of lexical concepts. However, there is usually a central or 'typical' meaning that relates the others (Vicente and Falkum, 2017). A polysemous item associates a phonological form with a number of more or less discreet though related meanings, which cluster in a family resemblance category (Taylor 2003).

* Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, India

** Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, India

The purpose of this paper is to look for polysemous meanings of some commonly used Marathi adjectives that describe physical properties of objects and to note how these meanings relate to the central meaning. The data was collected by referring to different Marathi-Marathi or Marathi-Marathi-English dictionaries for lexical entries of the adjectives and finding different meanings under the same entry. The informants were asked to form sentences using different adjectives. These sentences were then analysed for differences and nuances in meaning. Finally, these meanings were analysed in relation to the central meaning using the criteria of relatedness of meaning and the native speakers' intuition.

2. Analysis of Different Adjectives

In the backdrop of the above discussion the paper aims to look at five Marathi adjectives viz. /olə/ 'wet', /gar/ 'cold', /barik/ 'tiny', /kəḍək/ 'hard', and /gəram/ 'hot' and analyse the different meanings that they take through polysemy.

2.1 /olə/

/olə/ means 'wet' in Marathi. It is a declinable adjective, and, as such, has case inflections. The various polysemous meanings of /olə/ are provided below.

1. /kʌpɖe ole aheʃ/

clothes wet are

The clothes are wet.

In this sentence the meaning of /olə/ is 'wet'. This is the core meaning of /olə/ as given in the dictionary (Savarkar, 2016). The sentence is describing the clothes as having the property of wetness. Here wetness carries a simple and straightforward meaning of something that has moisture in it.

2. /mi oli hələḍ tʃi kəʃimbɪr keli ahe/

I wet turmeric's salad made have

I have made a salad of fresh turmeric.

Here, the adjective /olə/ takes on the meaning 'fresh'. The sense of fresh comes through due to fresh turmeric having moisture content in it, as opposed to something that is dry or without moisture.

3. /olja narəʃatsə paŋi piʃil ka/

wet coconut's water drink question

Will you drink green coconut water?

/olə/ refers to a green coconut in this sentence. A green coconut is both fresh and has more moisture or water content than a brown or dried one. In this case /olə/ is taken to mean ‘green’ coconut.

4. /ʃaskiə karjaləjəʃi kahi kərməʃjari swəʃtahtʃe haʃ ole kəron
gʰeʃʃiʃiʋaj

*government office’s some workers of their own hands wet do
without koṅṭehi kam kərəṅ nahi/*

any work do not

Some government officers don’t do any work without getting benefit from it.

Here, the adjective /ole / is used in a metaphorical sense, and it means ‘taking advantage or getting benefit’. The action of getting hands wet is like taking some sort of bribe, or stealing someone’s things while doing their work. In this context, it has the meaning of giving oneself advantage in financial terms, or kind.

5. /haʃ ola tər məʃrəbʰ əla/

hand wet then friend good

Our friend is friendly whilst our hand is full.

This is an idiomatic use of the adjective /ola/ (Apte, 1990). It implies that as long as someone is affluent and helping his friends, he has a lot of friends. This idiom came from the practice of making money wet before gifting it to someone or giving it as charity. For example, when invited over for some celebration, guests are given some amount of money as a gift, but that money is first made wet. In this example, the cultural practice of making the money wet is transferred over to the hand, through metonymy.

6. /tʃa bʰəkəʃa mələla ai ne oli bʰikʃa dili/

that hungry boy mother cooked alms gave

Mother gave cooked food to that hungry boy.

In this sentence, /oli/ carries the meaning of ‘cooked’. When giving alms to someone, it is generally money or fruit. But when cooked food is given it is known as /oli bʰikʃa/, literally ‘wet alms’, to suggest cooked food given as alms.

7. /səʃʃə tʃiə mʊsəʃdʰar pavsane maharəʃʃrə məʃʃe oli a:g pəʃali/

constant heavy rain Maharashtra in wet fire came

Constant heavy rains caused floods in Maharashtra.

In this example, the term /oli a:g/ ‘wet fire’ means floods (Apte, 1996). Fire is dangerous and destructive when out of control. So, /oli a:g/ literally translates to “wet fire”, which is a metaphorical usage of /oli/, and is, therefore, used for floods that cause high levels of damage.

8. /tʌtʃi kus azon oli ahe/

her uterus still wet is

Her uterus is still delicate.

It is an expression used for a new mother who has recently given birth to a child (Apte, 1996). The adjective /oli/ ‘wet’ is used for uterus to indicate that it is still delicate, immediately after giving birth.

The central or core meaning of /olə/ is ‘wet’ with various polysemous meanings including ‘fresh’, ‘affluent’, ‘taking advantage’, ‘cooked’, ‘wet fire’, and ‘delicate’.

2.2 /gar/

/gar/, in Marathi, primarily means ‘cold’. It is an indeclinable adjective, so it doesn’t have case inflections. Examples of polysemy are provided below:

9. /gar vara suʃla ahe/

cold wind left is

A cold wind is blowing.

In this sentence, /gar/ means cold in the general sense of cold temperature. The wind is described as being cold.

10. /kʌpde gar vaʃtə ahe/

clothes cold feel are

The clothes feel damp.

In this sentence, /gar/ is taken to mean dampness. Generally, during winters, it isn’t easy determining whether clothes have dried or not, as the clothes get cold and one can’t tell if it’s due to the weather or if it’s because they’re damp. So the sense of damp is implied in this usage of /gar/.

11. /mənʃjavər maŋsatsə aŋg gar pədtə/

on death man’s body cold becomes

On death, man’s body turns cold.

In this context, usually, if one says a body has turned cold, its implication is that the person is dead. When someone dies, his/her body

does turn cold as there is no more circulation of blood. So here /gar/ takes on the meaning of ‘dead’.

12. /tʃatsə vagnə bəghʊn mi gar pəɖle/

his behaviour seeing I cold became

I was shocked on seeing his behaviour.

The meaning of /gar/ here is a metaphorical one. When expressing immense shock, /gar/ implies the intensity of surprise or shock to be death-like. Just as in example 11, a dead person’s body turns cold; similarly, the experience of an intense shock is likened to death and the body of the person experiencing the shock, turns cold like a dead body.

13. /pɔli gar hoil tʃa aɖhi kʰaʊn gʰe/

flat bread cold will happen that before eat

Eat the flatbread before it gets cold.

In this sentence, the meaning of /gar/ is ‘hard’. When flatbread gets cold, it hardens up and becomes difficult to eat. This sense of /gar/ generally applies to food items that tend to harden when dried out due to cold.

The adjective /gar/ has various polysemous meanings. The central meaning is cold temperature. Other meanings include ‘dampness’, ‘death’, ‘shock’, and ‘hardness’.

2.3 /barik/

/barik/ means ‘tiny or small’ and is an indeclinable adjective, which means that it doesn’t take case inflections. The various polysemous meanings of /barik/ are provided below through examples.

14. /ʃaŋɖuʌ la barik kide lagɖe/

rice acc. tiny insects has

The rice has tiny insects.

Here, the dictionary meaning of /barik/ is ‘tiny’ which is its core meaning (Savarkar, 2016). It is used to describe the size of the insects infesting the grain. The central meaning for /barik/ is used here.

15. /ɖəbəi tʃi reɖ kʰəp barik ahe/

Dubai ‘s sand very fine is

The sand in Dubai is very fine.

In this example, the adjective /barik/ means ‘fine’. Here, it is used to indicate something that is granulated and has a dusty or powdery texture, as opposed to something coarse.

16. /mi t̪ud̪ʒʰja vəjat̪i əst̪ana t̪k̪its barik hoʈi/

I your age when being this thin was

When I was of your age I was this thin too.

Here, /barik/ takes the meaning ‘thin or the quality of thinness’, which is physical in this context. It also has an extended meaning when used for animate nouns, for reduced weight, indicating someone has gotten thinner due to loss of weight.

17. /mazʰə t̪ud̪ʒʰja kama vər barik ləkʃə ahe/

my your work on close attention is

I’m paying close attention to your work.

Here, /barik/ indicates close attention one is giving to someone or something. When something is being observed closely, /barik/ is used with /ləkʃə/ (attention or focus). So, in this context, /barik/ implies paying attention to the smallest details.

18. /ʈan:i lak̪da vər barik korivkam kelə ahe/

they wood on fine carving done is

They have carved on wood with great detail.

In this sentence /barik/ takes the meaning ‘intricate’. It emphasizes the carving work done on wood as being intricate or having fine detail. This connects to the central meaning as intricate work is a result of working on the smallest or minutest details. This is generally used when describing details in art, and hence, this sense of /barik/ can also be used to talk about embroidery.

19. /redio t̪sa awaz barik k̪ɪ/

radio’s sound less do

Reduce the volume of the radio.

Here, /barik/ refers to lowering of the volume of the radio. The meaning relates to the central meaning by virtue of the low amplitude of sound.

20. /t̪ozʰa awaz barik ahe/

your voice thin is

Your voice is thin.

Here, /barik/ is used to call a person’s voice ‘high pitched’ or ‘thin’. In this example, the ‘thinness’ is applied to the auditory sense.

The central meaning of /barik/ is ‘tiny’ or ‘small’. Other polysemous meanings include ‘fine’, ‘intricate’, ‘close attention’, ‘low volume’, and ‘high pitched’.

2.4 /kəḍək/

The adjective /kəḍək/ primarily has the meaning ‘hardness or stiffness’. It is an indeclinable adjective and so it doesn’t take any case inflections.

21. /pɔli kəḍək v^hartʃi^a aḍ^hi k^haʊn g^he/

flatbread hard becomes before eat

Eat the flatbread before it gets hard.

Here, the meaning of the adjective is the primary meaning which is ‘hard’. When flatbread gets cold, it starts to get hard which makes it difficult to break and eat. This applies to all kinds of flatbread. The colder it gets, the harder it is to eat.

22. /ek kʌp kəḍək tʃa^ha tək/

one cup strong tea make

Make a cup of strong tea.

Here, /kəḍək/ means strong. Generally, people who drink tea like it strong, which is achieved by adding more tea leaves than the required amount, giving it a stronger taste and flavour. So the meaning of strong derives from the increase in the intensity of its taste. This use of /kəḍək/ for strong can be seen as a metaphoric extension from a tactile sense to the sense of taste.

23. /tʃan:i tʃantʃi^a poran:a kəḍək ʃi^htə laoli ahe/

they their children strict discipline apply have

They have taught strict discipline to their children.

In this sentence, /kəḍək/ means ‘tight’. This meaning is also used in contexts like arrangements or organisation of events like /kəḍək bʌnḍobʌstʃ/ meaning ‘tight arrangement’. Just as it is difficult to break through something that has a hard surface or texture, similarly when a disciplinary condition or an arrangement is difficult to break through, it is referred to as being tight or strict. This too is a metaphorical extension of the use of the word /kəḍək/.

24. /aḍ^hi tʃi^a ka[ʌtʃa]eḍ kəḍək ʃikʃa mi[artʃi/

Before of time in school harsh punishment got

In the old times punishment was very harsh in school.

In this example, /kəɖək/ refers to harshness of a punishment. This meaning is also used as /kəɖəkswəb^hav/ ‘strict or short tempered nature’ for a person’s character or temperament. This meaning of ‘harshness’ and the above sense of ‘strict’ are similar in that both have the sense of hard, as something that is difficult to breach or get through. Moreover, they can be used to mean one of the both meanings simultaneously, as in harsh punishment, harsh discipline, harsh temperament or strict punishment, strict discipline, strict temperament.

25. /pausatʃi̯ agar aliʃe kəɖək viz pəɖajtʃi̯ sʌmb^havəna ahe/

rain prediction came intense lightning come chances are

Rainfall has been predicted, intense thunder and lightning might take place.

In this sentence, while the word /viz/ means lightning, when one says /kəɖək viz/ the meaning is generally taken for both lightning and thunder. In this example, /kəɖək/ refers to the highly intense or powerful thunder and lightning.

The central meaning of /kəɖək/ is ‘hard’. Other polysemous meanings that it indicates are ‘strong flavour’, ‘strict’, ‘harsh’, ‘angry temperament or nature’ and ‘high intensity’.

2.5 /gərəm/

The adjective /gərəm/ primarily means ‘hot’ or ‘high in temperature’. It is an indeclinable adjective. The adjective /gərəm/ is the opposite of ‘gar’ discussed in section 2.2.

26. /ʌn:ə gərəm ahe t̪ə pəɾjənt̪ə d̪ʒevon g^he/

Food hot is till then eat

Eat while the food is still hot.

This is an example of the primary meaning of /gərəm/. It is used to modify the noun /ʌn:ə/ meaning ‘food’ to indicate that the food is hot.

27. /səka| pason maz^hə dokə gərəm ahe/

Morning from my head hot is

I am angry since morning.

Here the adjective /gərəm/, when paired with /dokə/ ‘head’, means anger or being angry. Like in English when people say a person is hot headed, here the person’s head is ‘hot’ when they’re angry. It is also used to describe an individual’s temperament, much like its English counterpart. It is also used for a person’s overall temperament, like /gərəmswəb^hav/ ‘hot temperament’.

28. /bazaraṅṅə gəram məsala g^heun je/

From market hot masala take come

Bring garam masala from the market.

The name of the spice itself is garam masala where /gəram/ literally means 'hot' and /məsala/ means 'spices'. But the meaning is rooted in the heat of the spices that leave a burning sensation in one's mouth. It is a metaphorical extension where heat, as a tactile sense, is mapped onto the taste or gustatory sense.

29. /niʃa tʃi prəkruṅṅi gəram ahe/

Nisha's tendency hot is

Nisha's body tendency is hot.

As per Ayurveda, there are three *doshas* 'body types' based on the constitution of individuals. These include/vatə/ 'wind (body type)', /pittə/ 'acidic (body type)' and /kap^hə/ 'cough or cold (body type)'. It is believed that a healthy person tends to have these *doshas* in balance, however, when a person has more /pittə/or acidic constitution, his/her body tendency (or body type) is said to be hot. This is because the /pittə/ *dosha* is made up of the water and fire elements and a person who is primarily of this type is considered to have a fiery, bold and decisive personality. So the meaning of /gəram/ in the context of the body temperament has the meaning 'acidic'.

30. /kaʃmir la gəram kaṛṇṇe g^heun za/

Kashmir to hot clothes take go

'Take warm clothes to Kashmir.

In this example the meaning of /gəram/ is warm. The degree of heat as expressed by the general use of /gəram/ is reduced when it collocates with clothes, as warm clothes. The clothes themselves are not warm but they provide warmth to the ones who wear it. This is an example where /gəram/ 'warm' collocates with clothes instead of the people. It is the people who wear clothes to keep their body temperature warm, but we see a case of metonymic transference from the people to the clothes that they wear.

The central meaning of the adjective /gəram/ is 'hot'. Other meanings that it indicates are 'anger' or 'hot headedness', 'spiciness', 'acidic body constitution', and 'warm clothes'

3. Conclusion

In section 2, the words with their central meanings of /olə/ 'wet'; /gar/ 'cold'; /barik/ 'tiny'; /kaḍək/ 'hard'; and /gəram/ 'hot' are

demonstrated with peripheral meanings, which move away from the central meaning but are still related in some aspect. This relatedness of meanings is what makes them polysemous. This notion of central and peripheral meanings brings about metaphorical usages of these words. Ungerer and Schmid (2006) argue that even though metaphors and metonymies are viewed as figures of speech used in rhetorical style, in fact they are an integral part of how we use language on a day-to-day basis by extending meanings of common words and by applying new interpretations in new and varied contexts.

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