

HOMONYMS. SYNONYMS. ANTONYMS

Lecture 10

Homonyms

words identical in sound and spelling or, at least, in one of these aspects, but different in their meaning

bank, n. — a shore

bank, n. — an institution for receiving, lending, exchanging, and safeguarding money

ball, n.—a sphere; any spherical body

ball, n. — a large dancing party

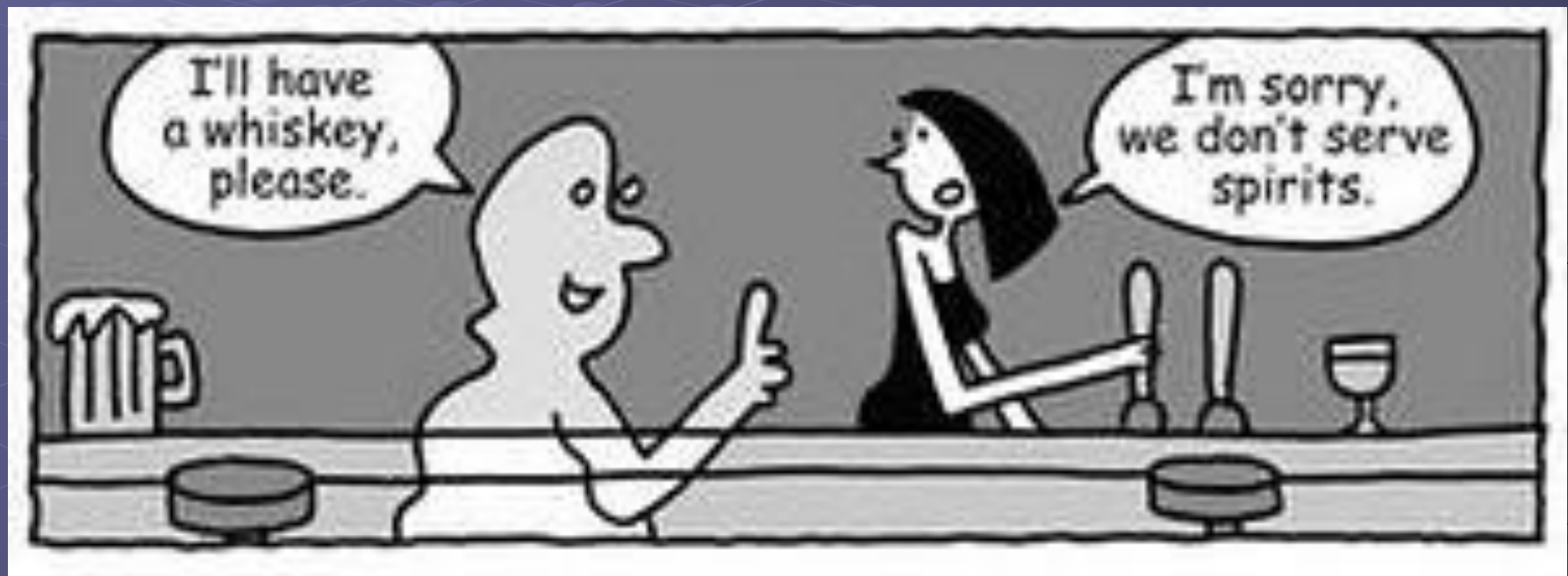


Origin and Function

- homonyms are accidental and, therefore, purposeless. In the process of communication, they are more of an encumbrance, resulting in confusion or misunderstanding.
- Yet, they underpin popular humour (*pun*).

Pun

- a joke based on the play on words of the similar form but different meaning (i. e. on homonyms) as in the following



Types of Homonyms

Homonyms

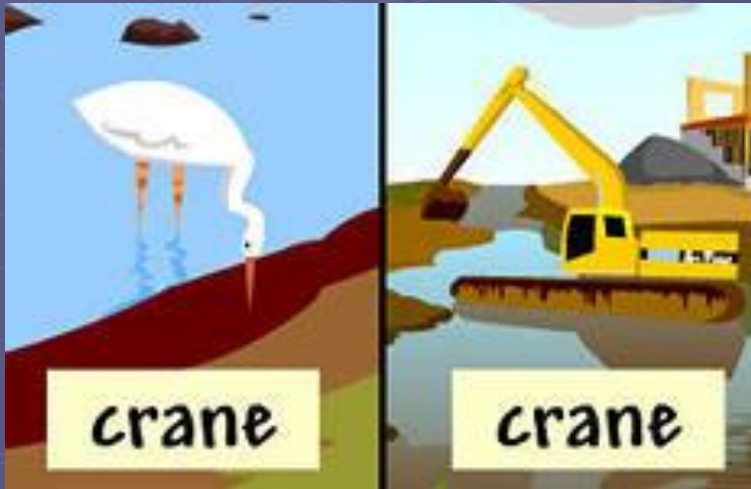
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graph TD; A[Homonyms] --> B[Homonyms Proper]; A --> C[Homophones]; A --> D[Homographs];
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Homonyms
Proper

Homophones

Homographs

Homonyms Proper

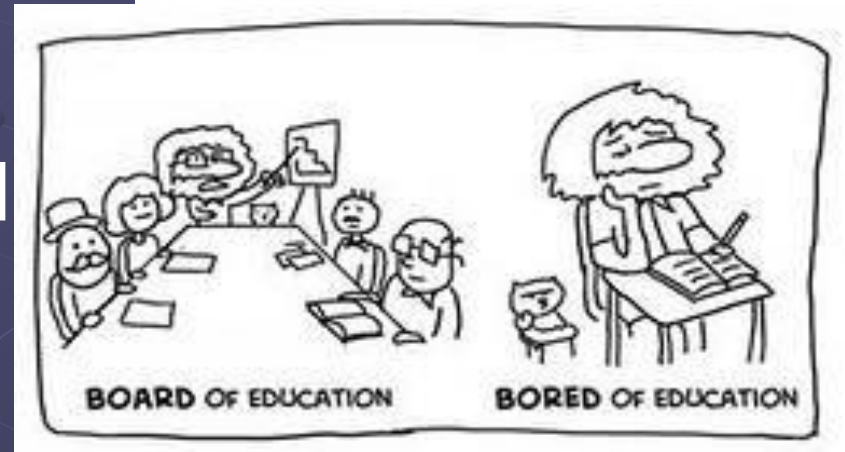
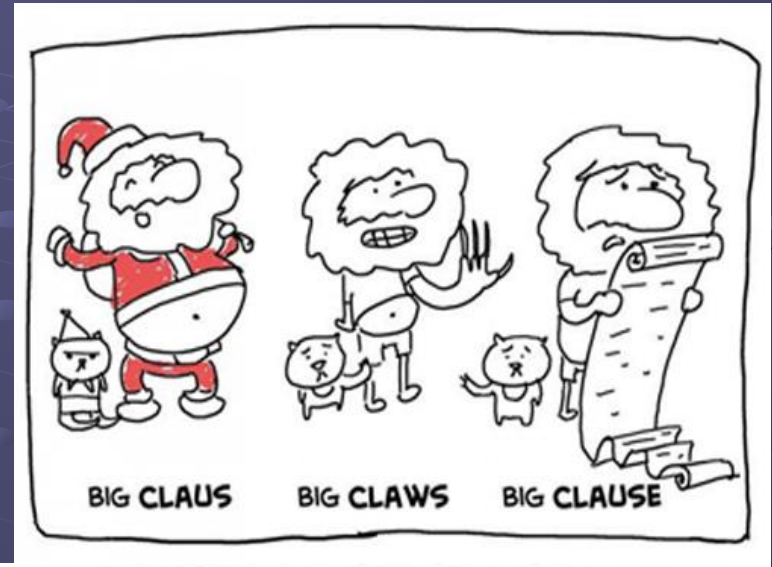


- words identical in sound and spelling

HOMONYMS	
pine	I pine for the pine trees of my native Black Forest.
well	Stacy didn't feel well after drinking the water from the well.

Homophones

- Words identical in sound but different in spelling:
night, n.—knight, n.;
piece, n. —peace, n.;
scent, n.—cent, n.—sent, v. (past indef., past part, of to send);
rite, n.—to write, v.—right, adj.;
sea, n.—to see, v.—C [si:] (the name of a letter).



Homographs



- words identical in spelling but different in sound:
to bow [bau], v.— to incline the head or body in salutation
bow [bou], n. — a flexible strip of wood for propelling arrows
to lead [li:d], v. — to conduct on the way, go before to show the way
lead [led], n. — a heavy, rather soft metal

SOURCES OF HOMONYMS

- *phonetic changes*
- *borrowings*
- *word-building*
- *split polysemy*

Phonetic Changes

- in the course of their historical development, two or more words formerly pronounced differently may develop identical sound forms and thus become homonyms:

Night and *knight* were not homonyms in Old English as the initial *k* in the second word was pronounced, and not dropped as it is in its modern sound form: O. E. *kniht* (cf. O. E. *niht*).

A more complicated change of form brought together another pair of homonyms: *to knead* (O. E. *cnedan*) and *to need* (O. E. *neodian*).

In Old English the verb *to write* had the form *writan*, and the adjective *right* had the forms *reht*, *riht*.

Borrowings

- A borrowed word may, in the final stage of its phonetic adaptation, duplicate in form either a native word or another borrowing: in the group of homonyms *rite*, n. — *to write*, v. — *right*, adj. the second and third words are of native origin whereas *rite* is a Latin borrowing (< Lat. *ritus*).

Word-Building

- *conversion*
- *shortening*
- *sound-imitation (onomatopoeia)*

Conversion

- the most important type in these terms. Such pairs of words as *comb*, n.— *to comb*, v., *pale*, adj.— *to pale*, v., *to make*, v. — *make*, n. are numerous in the vocabulary.
- Homonyms of this type, which are the same in sound and spelling but amount to different categories of parts of speech, are *lexico-grammatical homonyms*.

Shortening

- type of word-building which adds the number of homonyms.
 - *fan*, n. in the sense of "an enthusiastic admirer of some kind of sport or of an actor, singer, etc." is a shortening produced from *fanatic*.
 - Its homonym *fan*, n. is a Latin borrowing which denotes a device for waving lightly to produce a cool current of air.

Onomatopoeia

- forms pairs of homonyms with other words: e. g. *bang*, n. ("a loud, sudden, explosive noise") — *bang*, n. ("a fringe of hair combed over the forehead").

Common Features of the Sources of Homonymy

- In onomatopoeia and shortening, the pairs or triples of words homonyms have purely incidental similarity.
- Conversion, however, is an exception, for, one word of the pair is produced from the other:
 - *a find < to find.*)

Split Polysemy

- Two or more homonyms can originate from different meanings of the same word when, for some reason, the semantic structure of the word breaks into several parts.

Reasons of the Split Polysemy

- the semantic structure of a polysemantic word is a system, within which all its constituent meanings are held together by logical associations
- In most cases, the semantic unity of all meanings is conditioned by one of the meanings (e.g. the meaning "flame" in the noun *fire*).
- If this meaning drops out from the word semantic structure, associations between the rest of the meanings may no longer hold, the semantic structure loses its unity and falls into two or more parts that then are viewed as independent lexical units.

Split Synonymy (board – n.)

- *board, n.*—a long and thin piece of timber
- *board, n.*—daily meals, esp. as provided for pay, e. g. *room and board*
- *board, n.*—an official group of persons who direct or supervise some activity, e. g. *a board of directors*

PIECE
OF TIMBER

BOARD
=>
TABLE

MEALS

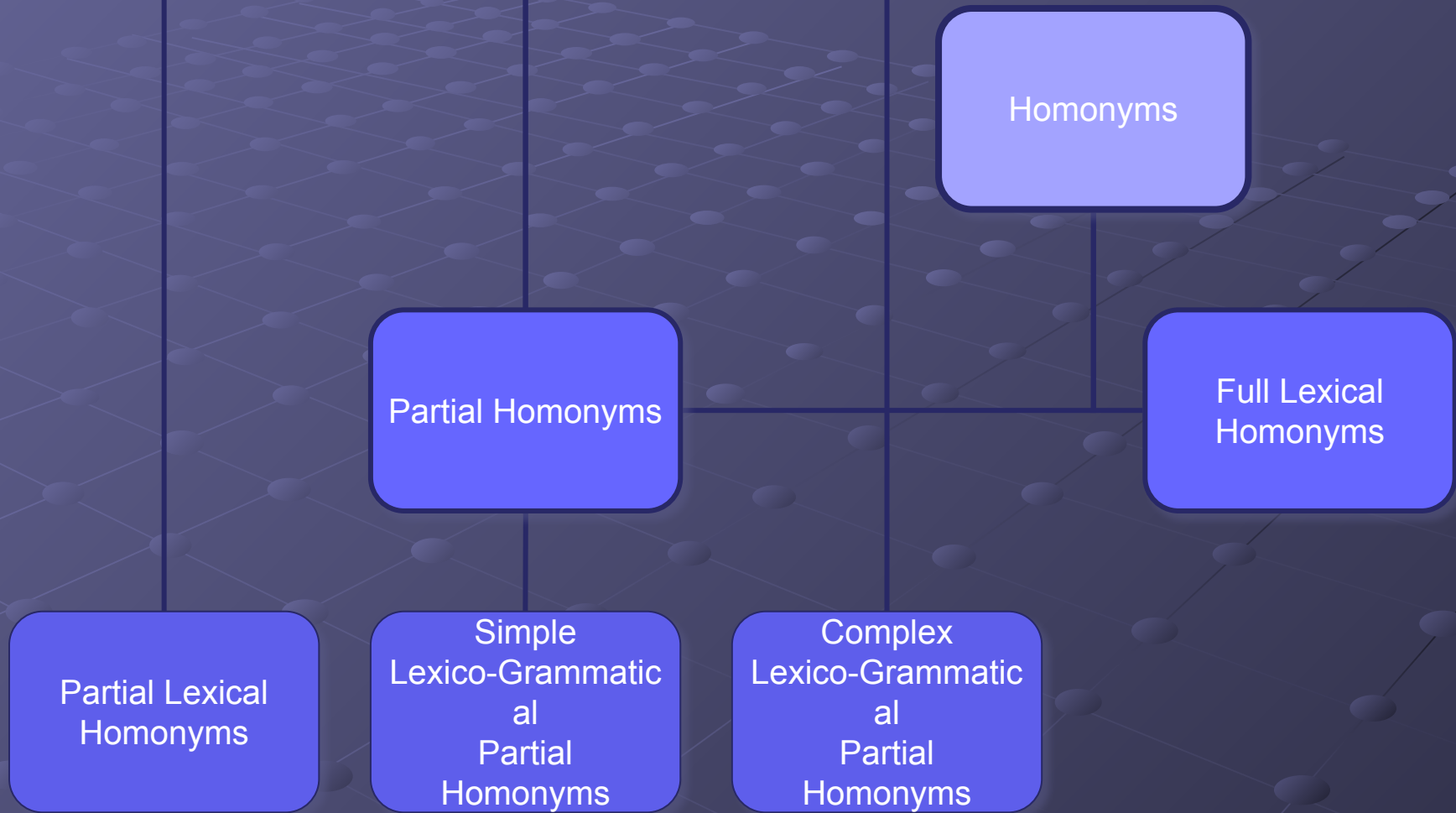
OFFICIAL
GROUP
OF
PERSONS

- Nowadays, however, the item of furniture, on which meals are served and round which boards of directors meet, is no longer denoted by the word *board* but by the French Norman borrowing *table*, and *board* in this meaning, though still registered by some dictionaries, can very well be marked as archaic as it is no longer used in common speech. Consequently, the semantic structure of *board* was split into three units.

Lexico-Grammatical Typology of Homonyms

- homonyms may amount to both the same and different parts of speech.
- Obviously, the classification of homonyms is underpinned by this distinctive feature.
- Also, the paradigm of each word should be considered, since the paradigms of some homonyms coincide completely, and that of others only partially.

Types of Homonyms



Full Lexical Homonyms

- Words of the same part of speech with an identical paradigm:

match, n. — a game, a contest;

match, n.—a short piece of wood used for producing fire

Partial Lexical Homonyms

- words of the same part of speech identical only in their corresponding forms:

to lie (*lay, lain*), v. *to lie* (*lied, lied*), v.

to hang (*hung, hung*), v. *to hang*
(*hanged, hanged*), v.

to can (*canned, canned*) (I) *can* (*could*)

Simple Lexico-Grammatical Partial Homonyms

- words of the same part of speech. Their paradigms have one identical form, but it is never the same form:

(to), found, v. - found, v. (past indef., past part, of to find)

to lay, v. - lay, v. (past indef. of to lie)

to bound, v. - bound, v. (past indef., past part. of to bind)

Complex Lexico-Grammatical Partial Homonyms

- words of different parts of speech with one identical form in their paradigms.

rose, n. - *rose*, v. (past indef. of *to rise*)

maid, n. - *made*, v. (past indef., past part. of *to make*)

left, adj. - *left*, v. (past indef., past part, of *to leave*)

SYNONYMS: ARE THEIR MEANINGS THE SAME OR DIFFERENT?

"I have always *liked* you very much, I *admire* your talent, but, forgive me, — I could never *love* you as a wife should love her husband."

(From *The Shivering Sands* by V. Halt)

Though they all render more or less the same feeling of liking, each of the three verbs describes it in its own way: "I like you, i. e. I have certain warm feelings towards you, but they are not strong enough for me to describe them as "love" — so that *like* and *love* are in a way opposed to each other.

- In terms of component analysis, *synonyms may be defined as words with the same denotation, or the same denotative component, but differing in connotations, or in connotative components.*
- A group of synonyms may be studied via their dictionary definitions (*definitional analysis*), like in the following:
look, stare, gaze, glare, glance, peer.

Semantic Typology of Synonyms

Synonyms

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graph TD; A[Synonyms] --- B[ideographic]; A --- C[stylistic]; A --- D[absolute];
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ideographic

stylistic

absolute

Ideographic Synonyms

- *ideographic* (words that render the same notion but differ in the shades of meaning):
 - ***assemble*** - *amass, collect, convene, summon, mobilize*
 - ***table*** – *bar, bench, board, buffet, bureau, console, dresser, slab*

Stylistic Synonyms

- *stylistic* (words that differ in terms of their usage in functional styles):
 - **assemble** – *convene, gather; bunch, flock, huddle; gang up, hang around;*
 - **good** – *favourable, acceptable, reputable; delux, first-class, super; bully, bad, crack, rad, sick.*

Absolute Synonyms

- *absolute* (identical in their shades of meaning and in all their stylistic features):

articulation, pronunciation, verbalization

However, absolute synonyms are rare in vocabulary and, at the diachronic level, the phenomenon of absolute synonymy is anomalous and consequently temporary: the vocabulary system invariably tends to eliminate it either via abolishing one of the absolute synonyms or by developing semantic or contextual differentiation in one or both (or all) of them.

Antonyms

- words of the same part of speech with contrasting meanings:
hot — cold,
light — dark,
happiness — sorrow,
to accept — to reject,
up — down.



- If synonyms form whole, often numerous, groups, antonyms are usually believed to appear in the counterpart pairs. For instance, the adjective *cold* has *warm* for its antonym, and *sorrow* may be contrasted with *gaiety*.
- On the other hand, a polysemantic word may have an antonym (or several antonyms) for each of its meanings. So, the adjective *dull* has the antonyms
 - for its meaning "deficient in interest": *interesting, amusing, entertaining,*
 - for its meaning "deficient in intellect": *clever, bright, capable*
 - for its meaning "deficient in activity": *active* etc.

Antonyms and Parts of Speech

- Most antonyms are **adjectives** which is natural because qualitative features are easily compared and contrasted: *high — low, wide — narrow, strong — weak, old — young, friendly — hostile*.
- **Verbs** take second place. Yet, verbal pairs of antonyms are fewer in number: *to lose — to find, to live — to die, to open — to close, to weep — to laugh*.
- **Nouns** do not feature the plethora of antonyms, however, there are some: *friend — enemy, joy — grief, good — evil, heaven — earth, love — hatred*.
- Antonymic **adverbs** split in two groups:
 - a) adverbs derived from adjectives: *warmly — coldly, merrily — sadly, loudly — softly*;
 - b) adverbs proper: *now — then, here — there, ever — never, up — down, in — out*