

# Word Meaning

## Lecture # 6

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# Word Meaning

- Approaches to word meaning
- Meaning and Notion (*понятие*)
- Types of word meaning
- Types of morpheme meaning
- Motivation




Each word has ***two aspects***:

- *the outer aspect*  
( *its sound form*)

*cat*

- *the inner aspect*  
(*its meaning*)

*long-legged, furry animal with sharp teeth*



Sound and meaning **do not** always  
constitute a constant unit even in the same  
language

**EX** a temple

- *a part of a human head*
- *a large church*



# **Semantics (Semasiology)**

Is a branch of lexicology which studies the meaning of words and word equivalents



# Approaches to Word Meaning

- *The Referential (analytical) approach*
- *The Functional (contextual) approach*
- *Operational (information-oriented) approach*

# The Referential (analytical) approach

- formulates the essence of meaning by establishing the interdependence between words and things or concepts they denote
- distinguishes between three components closely connected with meaning:

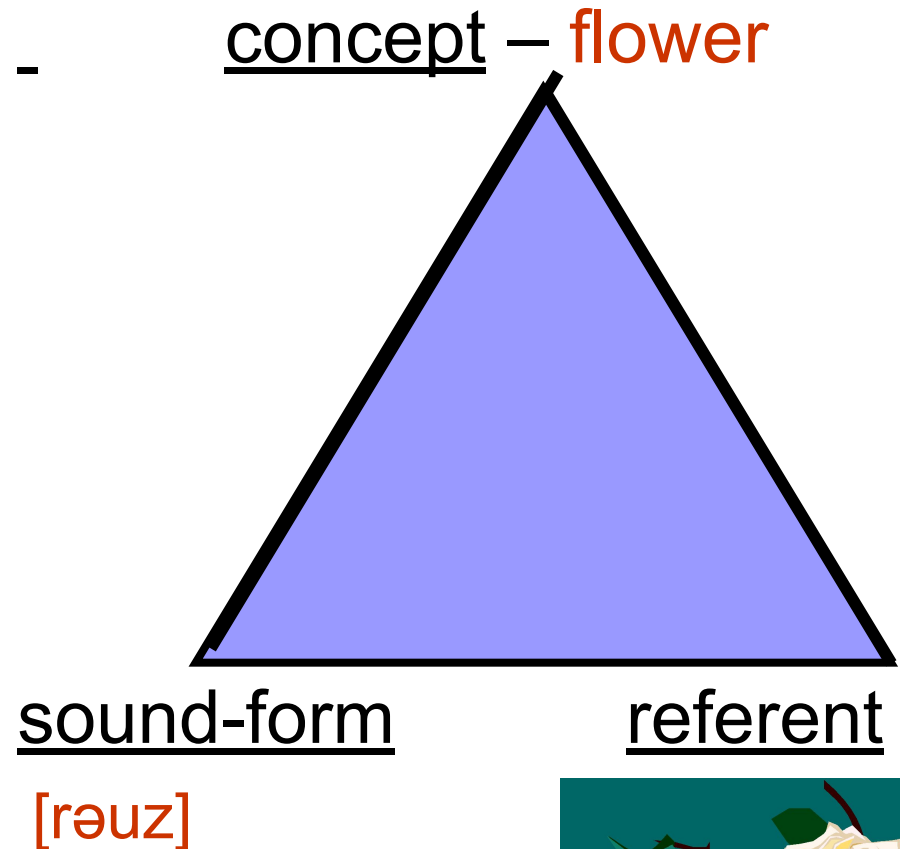
*the sound-form of the linguistic sign,*

*the concept*

*the actual referent*

# Basic Triangle

- concept (thought, reference) – *the thought of the object that singles out its essential features*
- referent – *object denoted by the word, part of reality*
- sound-form (symbol, sign) – *linguistic sign*





- are not identical

different

*EX. dove* - [dʌv] *English*

*[golub'] Russian*

*[taube] German*

the same *meaning*

sound-forms  
convey one  
and

# Meaning and Sound-form

- nearly identical sound-forms have different meanings in different languages

*EX. [kot] English – a small bed for a child*  
*[kot] Russian – a male cat*

- identical sound-forms have different meanings (homonyms)

*EX. knight [nait]*  
*night [nait]*

# Meaning and Sound-form

- even considerable changes in sound-form do not affect the meaning

**EX** *Old English* **lufian** [lʊvian] – **love** [lʌv]

# Meaning and Concept

- **concept** *is a category of human cognition*
- **concept** *is abstract and reflects the most common and typical features of different objects and phenomena in the world*
- **concept** *is almost the same for the whole humanity in one and the same period of its historical development*
- **meanings** *of words are different in different languages*

# Meaning and Concept

- identical concepts may have different semantic structures in different languages

*EX. concept “a building for human habitation” –*

*English*

*HOUSE*

*Russian*

*ДОМ*

+ *in Russian ДОМ*

*“fixed residence of family or household*

*In English*

*HOME*

# Meaning and Referent

- one and the same object (referent) may be denoted by more than one word of a different meaning



*cat*

*pussy*

*animal*

*tiger*

# Functional Approach

- studies the functions of a word in speech
- meaning of a word is studied through relations of it with other linguistic units

*EX. **to move** (we move, move a chair)*

***movement** (movement of smth, slow movement)*

**The distribution** ( *the position of the word in relation to others*) of the verb **to move** and a noun **movement** is different as they belong to different classes of words and their meanings are different

# Operational approach

is centered on defining meaning through its role in the process of communication

EX John came at 6

**Beside the direct meaning the sentence may imply that:**

- He was late
- He failed to keep his promise
- He was punctual as usual
- He came but he didn't want to

**The implication depends on the concrete situation**



# Lexical Meaning and Notion

- Notion denotes the reflection in the mind of real objects
  - Notion is a unit of thinking
- Lexical meaning is the realization of a notion by means of a definite language system
- Word is a language unit

# Lexical Meaning and Notion

- Notions are international especially with the nations of the same cultural level

Meanings are nationally limited

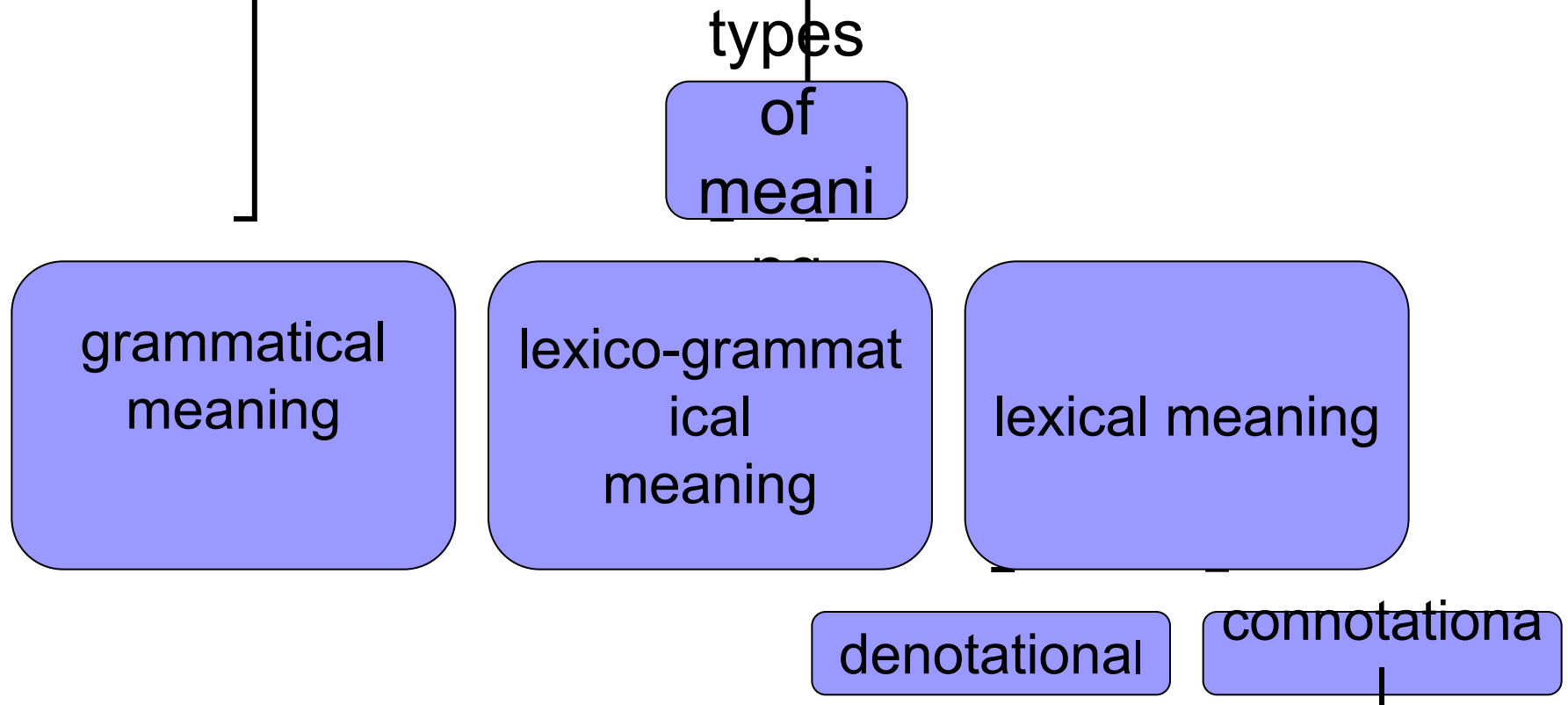
EX GO (E) ---- ИДТИ(R)  
“To move”

**BUT !!!**

To GO by bus (E)  
ЕХАТЬ (R)

EX Man -мужчина, человек  
Она – хороший человек (R)  
She is a good person (E)

# Types of Meaning



# Grammatical Meaning

- component of meaning recurrent in identical sets of individual forms of different words

**EX. girls, winters, toys, tables** –  
*grammatical meaning of plurality*  
**asked, thought, walked** –  
*meaning of past tense*



# **Lexico-grammatical meaning (part –of- speech meaning)**

- is revealed in the classification of lexical items into major word classes (N, V, Adj, Adv) and minor ones (artc, prep, conj)
- words of one lexico-grammatical class have the same paradigm

# Lexical Meaning

- is the meaning proper to the given linguistic unit in all its forms and distributions

*EX . Go – goes - went*

*lexical meaning* – *process of movement*



# Aspects of Lexical meaning

- The denotational aspect
- The connotational aspect
- The pragmatic aspect

# Denotational Meaning

“denote” – to be a sign of, stand as a symbol for”

- *establishes the correlation between the name and the object*
- *makes communication possible*

*EX booklet*

*“a small thin book that gives info about smth”*



# Connotational Meaning

- reflects the attitude of the speaker towards what he speaks about
- it is optional – a word either has it or not

Connotation includes:

- *The emotive charge*      EX Daddy (for father)
- *Intensity*      EX to adore (for to love)
- *Imagery*      EX to wade “to walk with an effort”  
to wade through a book

# The pragmatic aspect

- associations concern the situation in which the word is uttered,
- the social circumstances (formal, informal, etc.),
- social relationships between the interlocutors (polite, rough, etc.), t
- the type and purpose of communication (poetic, official, etc.)

*EX horse (neutral)*

*steed (poetic)*

*nag (slang)*

*gee-gee (baby language)*



# Types of Morpheme Meaning

- lexical
- differential
- functional
- distributional

# Lexical Meaning in Morphemes

- root-morphemes that are homonymous to words possess lexical meaning

*EX. boy – boyhood – boyish*

- affixes have lexical meaning of a more generalized character

*EX. –er “agent, doer of an action”*

# Lexical Meaning in Morphemes

- has denotational and connotational components

*EX. -ly, -like, -ish –*

*denotational meaning of similarity*

*woman**ly**, woman**like**, woman**ish***

*connotational component –*

***-ly** (positive evaluation), **-ish** (derogatory)*

*женственный - женоподобный*

# Differential Meaning

- a semantic component that serves to distinguish one word from all others containing identical morphemes

*EX. cranberry, blackberry, gooseberry*

# Functional Meaning

- found only in derivational affixes
- a semantic component which serves to refer the word to the certain part of speech

*EX. just, adj. – justice, n.*

# Distributional Meaning

- the meaning of the order and the arrangement of morphemes making up the word
- found in words containing more than one morpheme
- different arrangement of the same morphemes would make the word meaningless

*EX. sing- + -er = singer,*  
*-er + sing- = ?*



# Motivation

- denotes the relationship between the phonetic or morphemic composition and structural pattern of the word on the one hand, and its meaning on the other
- can be *phonetical*  
*morphological*  
*semantic*

# Phonetical Motivation

- when there is a certain similarity between the sounds that make up the word and those produced by animals, objects, etc.

*EX. sizzle, boom, splash, cuckoo*

# Morphological Motivation

- when there is a direct connection between the structure of a word and its meaning

*EX. finger-ring – ring-finger,*

- A direct connection between the lexical meaning of the component morphemes

*EX think –rethink “thinking again”*

# Semantic Motivation

- based on co-existence of direct and figurative meanings of the same word

*EX a watchdog –*

*“a dog kept for watching property”*

*a watchdog –*

*“a watchful human guardian” (semantic motivation)*