

# Lecture 2. Meaning as a linguistic notion

- Analytical (referential) definition of meaning. Ogden/Richards's "Semiotic Triangle"
- Different dimensions of meaning: reference, denotation and sense
- Functional definition of meaning
- Operational definition of meaning
- Bühler's "Organon Model"

# Meaning as a linguistic notion

- Analytical or referential definition of meaning;
- Functional or contextual definition of meaning;
- Operational or information-oriented definition of meaning.

# The semantic triangle

*Ferdinand de Saussure*  
The word as a linguistic sign

Referential approach  
*C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards*

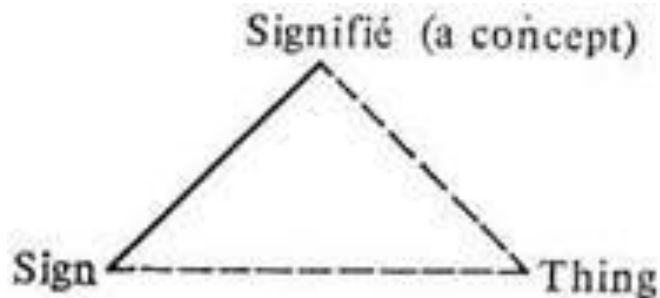
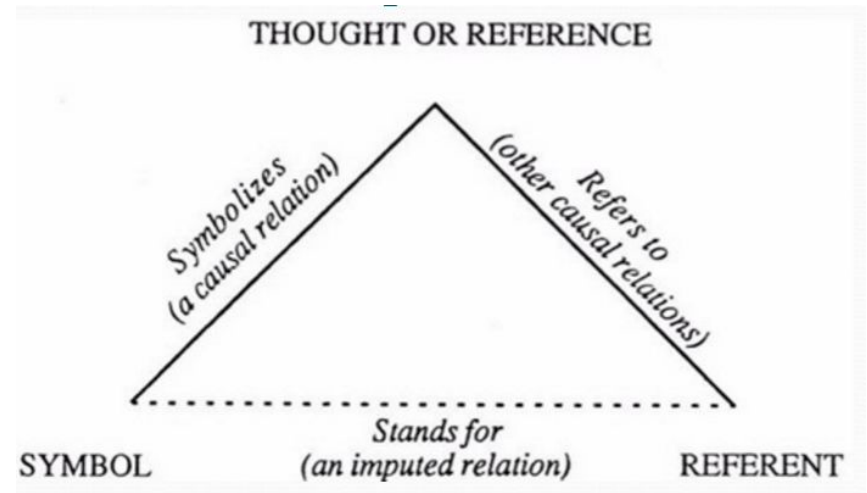


Fig. 1



<https://vimeo.com/24512519>

# Word

is not only the form of the linguistic sign but also its meaning and what it refers to

*I. Arnold*

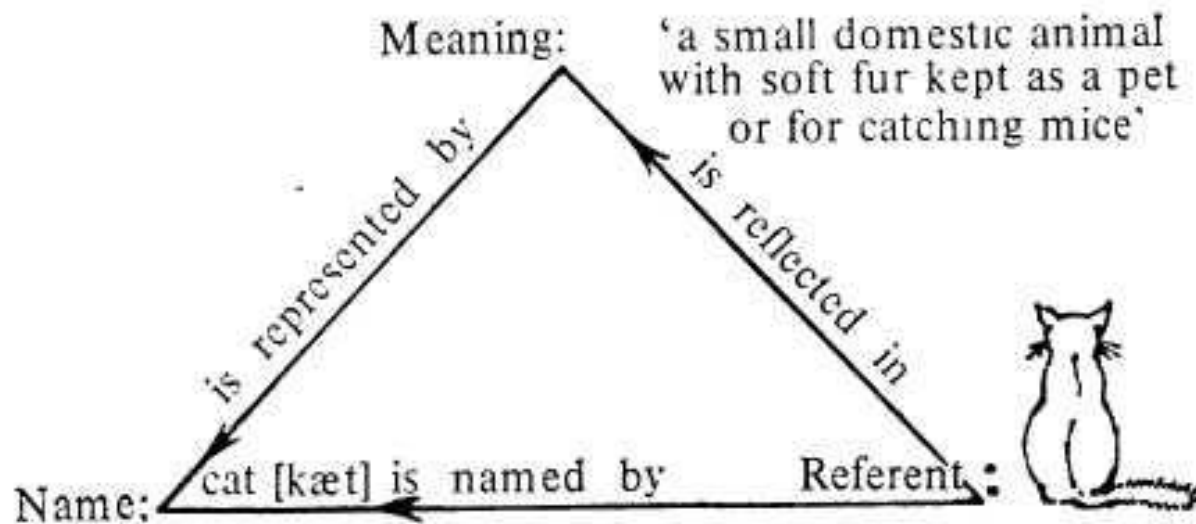


Fig. 3

# Lexical meaning

- “The **meaning** of the word is a certain reflection of the object, phenomenon or relation in the mind of language users, which creates the internal part of the word structure, and, in reference to this structure, the sound form is the material shell of the word, which is necessary not only for reflecting the meaning and sending the message to other members of the society, but for creating of the word itself, its formation, existence and development.”
  - (M.Ivchenko, 1956)

# Kinds of meaning

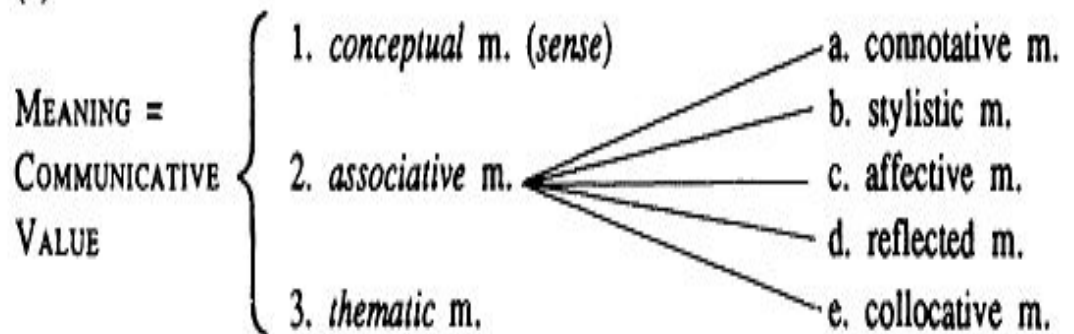
## Lyons (1977)

- 'descriptive meaning',
- 'social meaning',
- 'expressive meaning'

## Leech (1981)

(5)

MEANING =  
COMMUNICATIVE  
VALUE



# Reference, denotation, sense

(11a)

Denotation – Denotatum

RELATION: lexeme → class of objects  
*DOG, COW, ANIMAL, MAMMAL;*

Lyons (1977: 207) defines the **denotation** of a lexeme as: the relationship that holds between that lexeme and persons, things, places, properties, processes and activities external to the language-system.

**Denotatum**\* - the class of objects, properties, etc., to which the expression correctly applies.

The **denotation** of a lexeme is independent of the concrete circumstances of an utterance.

# Reference, denotation, sense

(11b)

Reference – Referent

RELATION:

expression

'definite  
description'



→ specific object

*the man over there, the cow, Napoleon,  
the queen, the king of France.*

## **Reference**

the relationship which holds between an expression and what that expression stands for on particular occasions of its utterance.



# Reference, denotation, sense

- **G. Frege** (1970[1892])
- The **reference** (or "referent"; Bedeutung) of a proper name is the object it means or indicates (bedeuten), its **sense** (Sinn) is what the name expresses.  
*Beethoven's home town*  
and  
*The former capital of the Deutschland's Republic*
- both have the same reference, *Bonn*, but different sense.
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lPIGkWd9\\_Dk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lPIGkWd9_Dk)
- **Sense** is mental representation of the type of thing that can be used to refer to (*A. Cruse*).
- **Sense** is a matter of the relations between a word and other words in a language. (*J. Lyons*). **Sense** is an interlexical or intralingual relation; it defines relations within the same language. **Denotation** relates expressions to classes of entities in the world.  
  
*There is no such animal as unicorn*
- **unicorn** has no denotation, but nevertheless have sense

# Concepts which have no reference although they have sense;

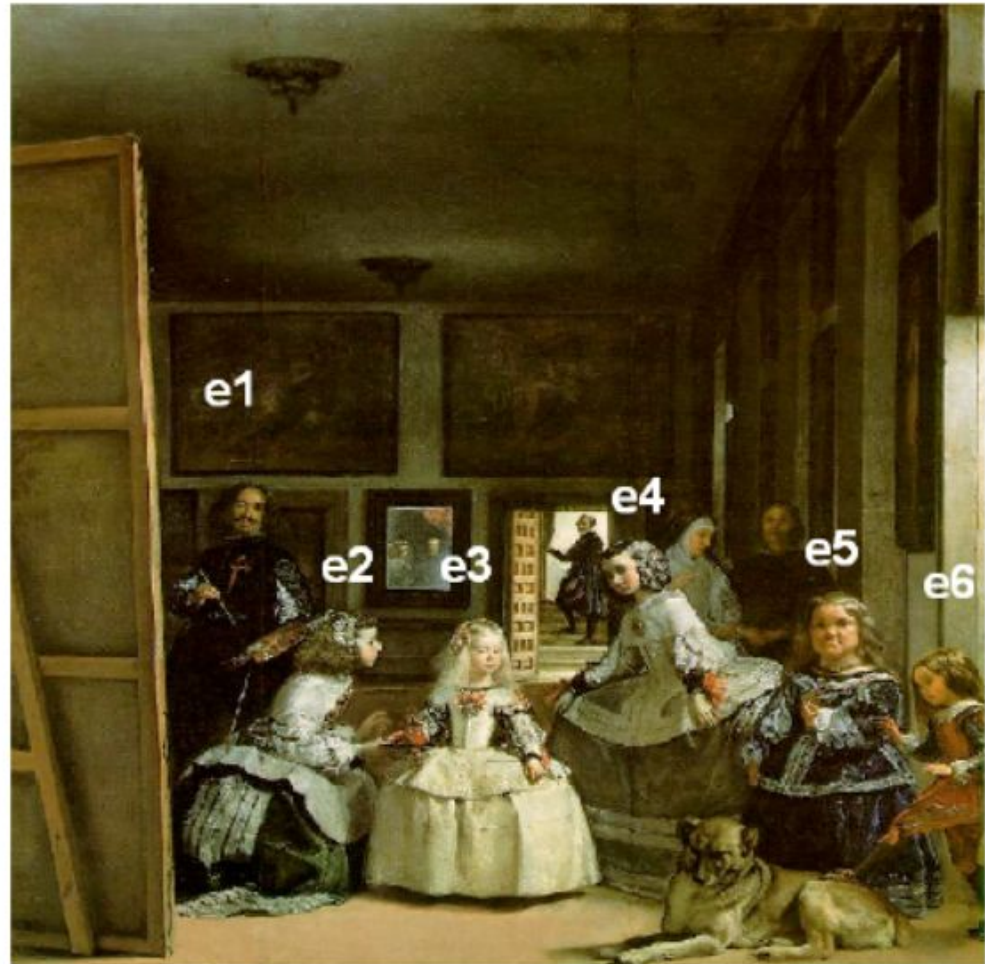
- Myth creatures: *'unicorn' or 'phoenix'*
- Functional words: *a, in, and...*
  - *He seems a nice man*
- Abstract nouns: *love, hate, idea...*
  
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSpXHxBK2ac&t=160s>

## Reference

Imagine you're standing in front of this painting by Velasquez in Prado:

The guy next to you asks:  
*"Which of those figures is the Princess of Spain?"*

You know that it's the figure marked "e3"

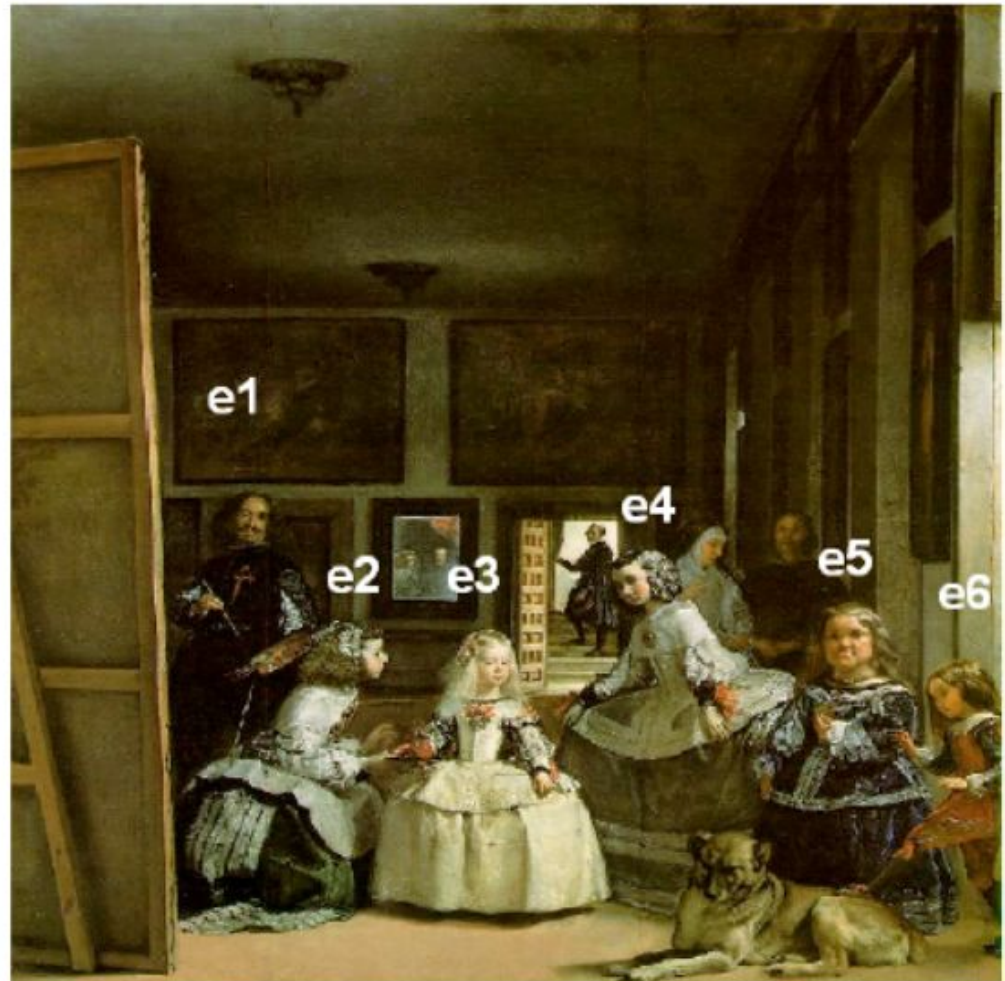


# Reference

Clearly, there are many ways to reply:

- *"the girl in the white dress."*
- *"the girl in the middle."*
- *"the person being tended to by the kneeling maid."*

Obviously, these different phrases mean different things, i.e. they have different contents.



# Reference

But they all pick out the same entity in this context:

They all **REFER** to the princess of Spain =>



In a different context, "the girl in the white dress" could pick out something different or even nothing at all.



So, reference is a context-bound speaker action.

## Searle (1969:81) "definite reference"

- 1. Proper names, *e.g. Socrates, Ukraine;*
- 2. Complex noun phrases in the singular - often with a definite article - a category that is normally termed definite descriptions in philosophy, *e.g. the m a n who called, John's brother;*
- 3. Pronouns, *e.g. this, that, I, he, she, it;*
- 4. Titles, *e.g. the P r i m e M i n i s t e r , the Pope.*

# Functional or contextual definition of meaning

- (L.Bloomfield)

defining meaning in the situation in which the word is used;

**Context** is the minimum stretch of speech necessary and sufficient to determine the meaning of the word;

*e.g. to take a seat vs. to take to sth*

**Meaning** is understood as a function of a linguistic unit

# Operational or information-oriented definition of meaning

defining meaning through its role in the process of communication;

**Meaning** is information conveyed from the speaker to the listener in the process of communication.

e.g. *John came at 6.*

Beside the direct meaning the sentence may imply that:

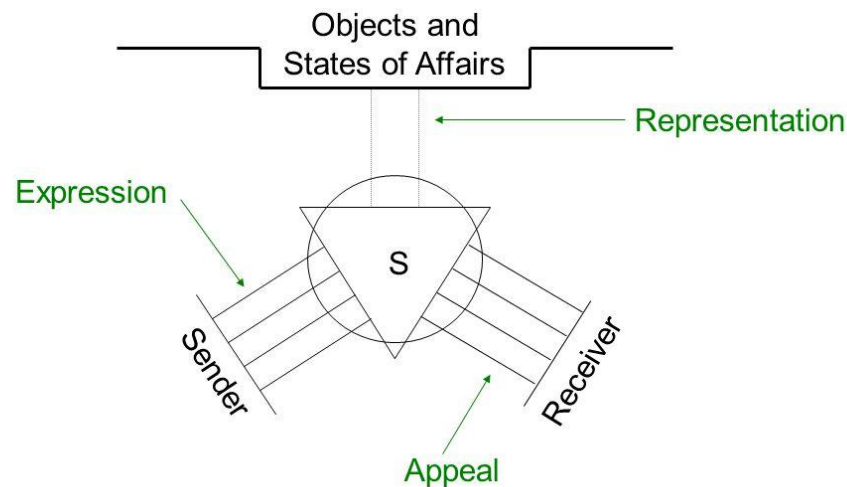
- *He was late*
- *He failed to keep his promise*
- *He was punctual as usual*
- *He came but he didn't want to*



# Words as instruments

## Communication as action

Bühler's Organon Model (1934)



(<http://www.uni-kassel.de/fb8/misc/lfb/html/text6.html>)

*Have you heard that strange story about the drunk who decided to play barber and cut off his friend's ear?*