




LEXICAL MEANING AS A LINGUISTIC CATEGORY



POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is meaning?
- Semantic structure of the word. Polysemy.
- Types of lexical meaning.
- The process of development and change of meaning.
- Homonymy.



“Meaning is the reverberation in the human consciousness of an object of extralinguistic reality which becomes a fact of language because of constant association with a definite linguistic expression.”

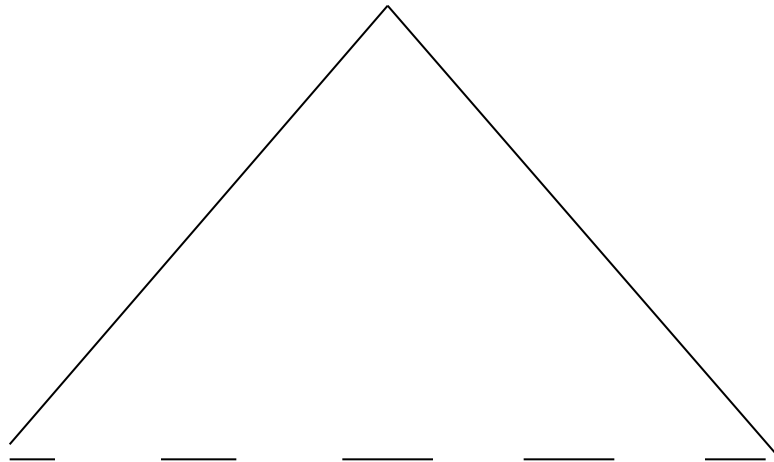
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Meaning

idea

word

referent





Polysemy – the existence within one word of several connected meanings as the result of development and changes of its original meaning.



Context -

- the linguistic environment of a unit of language which reveals the conditions and the characteristic features of its usage in speech;
- the semantically complete passage of written speech sufficient to establish the meaning of a given word

context

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graph TD; context --> minimum; context --> second_degree;
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■ Minimum

Ex:

Blind monk

Blind handwriting

Dull pupil

Dull book

Dull weather

■ Second-degree

Ex:

The man was large.

*But his wife was even
fatter.*

Semantic structure with the main (direct) meaning holding it together

Bar, n

I any kind of barrier


II profession
of a lawyer

III counter
for drinks

Semantic structure with a common component holding it together

Dull, adj.

- *A dull book* – **not** interesting
 - *A dull student* – **not** clever
 - *A dull day* – **not** bright
 - *A dull knife* – **not** sharp
 - *Dull eyes* – **not** seeing well
- implication
of
deficiency



Diachronic and synchronic approaches towards meaning *quick, adj.*

Diachronic:

- **Etymological**

flexible

- **Archaic**

alive (Ex: *the quick and the dead*)

Synchronic:

- **Main**

fast

- **Secondary**

...




TYPES OF LEXICAL MEANING

- Nominative
- Nominative-derivative
- Linguistically (colligationally and collocationally) bound
- Phraseologically bound



The processes of development and change of meaning

- Transference based on similarity (linguistic metaphor)
- Transference based on contiguity (linguistic metonymy)
- Generalization and specialization of meaning
- “Degeneration” and “elevation” of meaning



Homonyms – words identical in sound form and spelling (or, at least, in one of these aspects) but different in their meaning

Sources of homonymy

- Phonetic changes;
- Borrowing;
- Word-building:
 - conversion
 - shortening
 - sound-imitation
- Split polysemy

Split polysemy

I – *board*, n – piece of timber

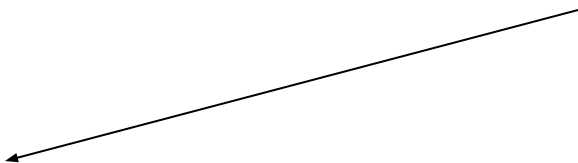
II – *board*, n – daily meals for pay

III – *board*, n – an official group of people

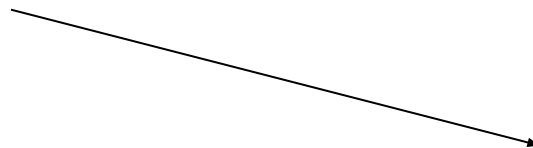
I



A piece of furniture



II



III

Split polysemy

I – *board*, n – piece of timber

II – *board*, n – daily meals for pay

III – *board*, n – an official group of people

I

II

III

Professor's A.I. Smirnitsky's classification of homonyms

Full lexical homonyms

Ex: *match*, n – *match*, n

Partial homonyms

- Simple lexico-grammatical partial
Ex: *to found* (Inf) – *found* (Past Ind.)
- Complex lexico-grammatical partial
Ex: *rose*, n – *rose*, v
maid, n – *made*, v
left, adj. – *left*, v
one, num. – *won*, v
- Partial lexical
Ex: *to lie*, v – *to lie*, v
to can, v – *can*, modal v