

# GRAMMATICAL MEANING OF THE WORD



- 1. The problem of word definition.**
- 2. The notion of the word-form.**
- 3. The notion of "grammatical meaning".**
- 4. Types of grammatical meaning.**
- 5. The notion of "grammatical category".**
- 6. The notion of "opposition".**

# 1. The Problem of Word Definition

**The word is considered to be the central (though not the only) linguistic unit of language.**



# The Problem of Word Definition

**In the written language** words are clearly identified by spaces between them.



# The Problem of Word Definition

**In the spoken language** the problem cannot be solved this way.



If we listen to an unfamiliar language, we find it difficult to divide up the speech into single words.

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# The Problem of Word Definition

## Approaches

to the problem of word definition:

- 1) the word is a semantic unit, a unit of meaning;
- 2) the word is a marked phonological unit;
- 3) the word is an indivisible unit.

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# The Problem of Word Definition

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Semantic definition of the word:

**“...a unit of a particular meaning with a particular complex of sounds capable of a particular grammatical employment”.**



The word is a linguistic unit that has a single meaning.



# The Problem of Word Definition

**BUT:**

*heavy smoker*  $\neq$  *heavy* and  
*smoker*

*criminal lawyer;*

*the King of England's hat.*

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# The Problem of Word Definition

*The problem:*

the word is not always a single unit.

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# The Problem of Word Definition

A phonological criterion

*that stuff*

*that's tough*

*a nice cake*

*an ice cake*

*grey day*

*Grade A*



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# The Problem of Word Definition

**It is hard to distinguish the real  
meaning without a proper context.**

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# The Problem of Word Definition

**The word as an indivisible unit**

*“The word is a minimum free form”*

(L. Bloomfield)



**The word is the smallest unit of speech that can occur in isolation.**

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# The Problem of Word Definition

**BUT:**

*a or the*

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# The Problem of Word Definition

Thus,

**the word is a linguistic unit  
larger than a morpheme but  
smaller than a phrase.**

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# The Problem of Word Definition

In this case the word can be defined  
as:

- An *orthographic word*  
(something written with  
white spaces at both ends but  
no white space in the middle).

# The Problem of Word Definition

- A *phonological word* (something pronounced as a single unit).



# The Problem of Word Definition

- A *lexical item*, or *lexeme*, (a dictionary word).

# The Problem of Word Definition

- A *grammatical word-form* (GWF) (or *morphosyntactic word*) (any one of the several forms which a lexical item may assume for grammatical purposes).

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# The Problem of Word Definition

The item *ice cream* is:

- two orthographic words,  
but
- a single phonological word (it is pronounced as a unit),
- a single lexical item (it has its own entry in a dictionary),
- a single GWF (indeed, it hardly has another form unless you think the plural *ice cream* is good English).

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# The Problem of Word Definition

The singular *dog* and the plural *dogs*:

- a single orthographic word,
  - a single phonological word,
  - a single GWF,
- but they both
- represent the same lexical item (only one entry in the dictionary).

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# The Problem of Word Definition



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*take, takes, took, taken,  
is taking:*

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# The Problem of Word Definition

*take, takes, took, taken* and *is taking*:

- five orthographic words,
- five phonological words,
- five GWFs (at least),  
but only
- one lexical item.

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# The Problem of Word Definition



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the contraction *hasn't*

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# The Problem of Word Definition

The contraction *hasn't* is:

- a single orthographic word,
- a single phonological word,
- two lexical items (*have* and *not*),
- two GWFs (*has* and *not*).

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# The Problem of Word Definition



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The phrasal verb *make up*  
(as in *She made up her  
face*)

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# The Problem of Word Definition

The phrasal verb *make up* (as in *She made up her face*):

- two orthographic words,
- two phonological words,
- one lexical item (because of its unpredictable meaning, it must be entered separately in the dictionary).
- has several GWFs (*make up, makes up, made up, making up*).

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# The Problem of Word Definition



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*make up*

*(She made up a story)*

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# The Problem of Word Definition

*make up (She made up a story):*

- a different lexical item from the preceding one (a separate dictionary entry is required),

but

- this lexical item exhibits the same orthographic, phonological and grammatical forms as the first.

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# The Problem of Word Definition

So,

*the word is not a clearly  
definable linguistic unit.*

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# The Problem of Word Definition

For the sake of linguistic description, we will proceed from the following statements:

**- the word is a meaningful unit differentiating word-groups at the upper level and integrating morphemes at the lower level;**



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# The Problem of Word Definition

- the word is the main expressive unit of human language, which ensures the thought-forming function of language;



# The Problem of Word Definition

- the word It is also the basic nominative unit of language with the help of which the naming function of language is realized;





# The Problem of Word Definition

- in the structure of language the word belongs to the upper stage of the morphological level;



# The Problem of Word Definition

- the word is a unit of the sphere of "language" and it exists only through its speech actualization;



# The Problem of Word Definition

- one of the most characteristic features of the word is its indivisibility.



# The Problem of Word Definition

- the word is a bilateral entity

**WORD** =  $\frac{\text{concept}}{\text{sound image}}$



## 2. The Notion of the Word -Form

The term "word-form" shows that the word is a carrier of grammatical information.

*E.g.: speaks* - the present tense third  
person singular

*Speak, spoke, is speaking*



Here the relational property of grammatical meaning is revealed.

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# The Notion of the Word -Form

**Grammatical meanings** of a word-form are very abstract and general.

They are peculiar of a whole class of words, unite it so that each word of the class expresses the corresponding grammatical meaning together with its individual, concrete semantics.

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# The Notion of the Word -Form

E.g.:

the meaning of the plural is rendered by the regular plural suffix *-(e)s*, phonemic interchange and a few lexeme-bound suffixes.



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# The Notion of the Word -Form

Due to the generalized character of the plural, we say that different groups of nouns "take" this form with strictly defined variations in the mode of expression.

The variations can be of more systemic (phonological conditioning) and less systemic (etymological conditioning) nature.

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# The Notion of the Word -Form

*Cf.*: faces, branches, matches, judges;  
books, rockets, boats, chiefs, proofs;  
dogs, beads, films, stones, hens;  
lives, wives, thieves, leaves;  
oxen, children, brethren;  
swine, sheep, deer;  
men, women, feet, teeth, geese, mice, lice;  
formulae, antennae;  
data, errata, strata, addenda, memoranda;  
radii, genii, nuclei;  
crises, bases, analyses, axes;  
phenomena, criteria.

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# The Notion of the Word -Form

**The lexical meaning of the word is irrelevant for the detection of the type of the word-form.**

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# The Notion of the Word -Form

**A word-form may be analytical by structure.** In this case it is equivalent to one word as it expresses one unified content of a word, both from the point of view of grammatical and lexical meaning.

E.g.: *has spoken*

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# The Notion of the Word -Form

Words (as well as morphemes) are directly observable units by nature as they are characterized by a definite material structure of their own.

They can be registered and enumerated in any language.



# The Notion of the Word -Form

The system of morphological units is a closed system. It means that all its items are on the surface and can be embraced in an inventory of forms.



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# The Notion of the Word -Form

*Every word is a unit of grammar as a part of speech.*

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# The Notion of the Word -Form

**Parts of speech are usually considered a lexico-grammatical categories since:**

- they show lexical groupings of words;
- these groupings present generalized classes, each with a unified, abstract meaning of its own.

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# 3. The Notion of Grammatical Meaning

Notional words combine two meanings in their semantic structure:

- **lexical;**
- **grammatical.**

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# The Notion of Grammatical Meaning

**Lexical meaning** is the individual meaning of the word

E.g.: *table - a definite piece of furniture with a flat top supported by one or more upright legs,*

*speak – to express thoughts aloud, using the voice.*

# The Notion of Grammatical Meaning

**Grammatical (morphological) meaning is not individual.**



It is the meaning of the whole class or a subclass

E.g.: *table* (grammatical meaning of the class of nouns (*thingness / substance*) and the grammatical meaning of a subclass – *countableness*).

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**What are grammatical meanings of:**

**- verbs;**

**- adjectives;**

**- adverbs?**



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# The Notion of Grammatical Meaning

There are some classes of words that are devoid of any lexical meaning and possess the grammatical meaning only.

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**What are they?**

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# The Notion of Grammatical Meaning

Function words

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# 4. Types of Grammatical Meaning

The grammatical meaning may be:

- **explicit;**
- **implicit.**

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# Types of Grammatical Meaning

The implicit grammatical meaning is not expressed formally

E.g.: *table* (the meaning of inanimate object)

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# Types of Grammatical Meaning

The explicit grammatical meaning is always marked morphologically

E.g.: *-s* in *cats* (the grammatical meaning of plurality);

*'s* in *cat's* (the grammatical meaning of possessiveness);

*is ...ed* in *is asked* (the grammatical meaning of passiveness)

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# Types of Grammatical Meaning

Types of the implicit  
grammatical meaning:

-general

- dependent

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# Types of Grammatical Meaning

- **general** (the meaning of the whole word-class, of a part of speech)

E.g.: thingness of nouns

# Types of Grammatical Meaning

- **dependent** (the meaning of a subclass within the same part of speech)

E.g.: the verb (transitivity/ intransitivity,  
terminativeness / non-terminativeness,  
stativity / non-stativity);  
the noun (countableness / uncountableness,  
animateness / inanimateness)

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# Types of Grammatical Meaning

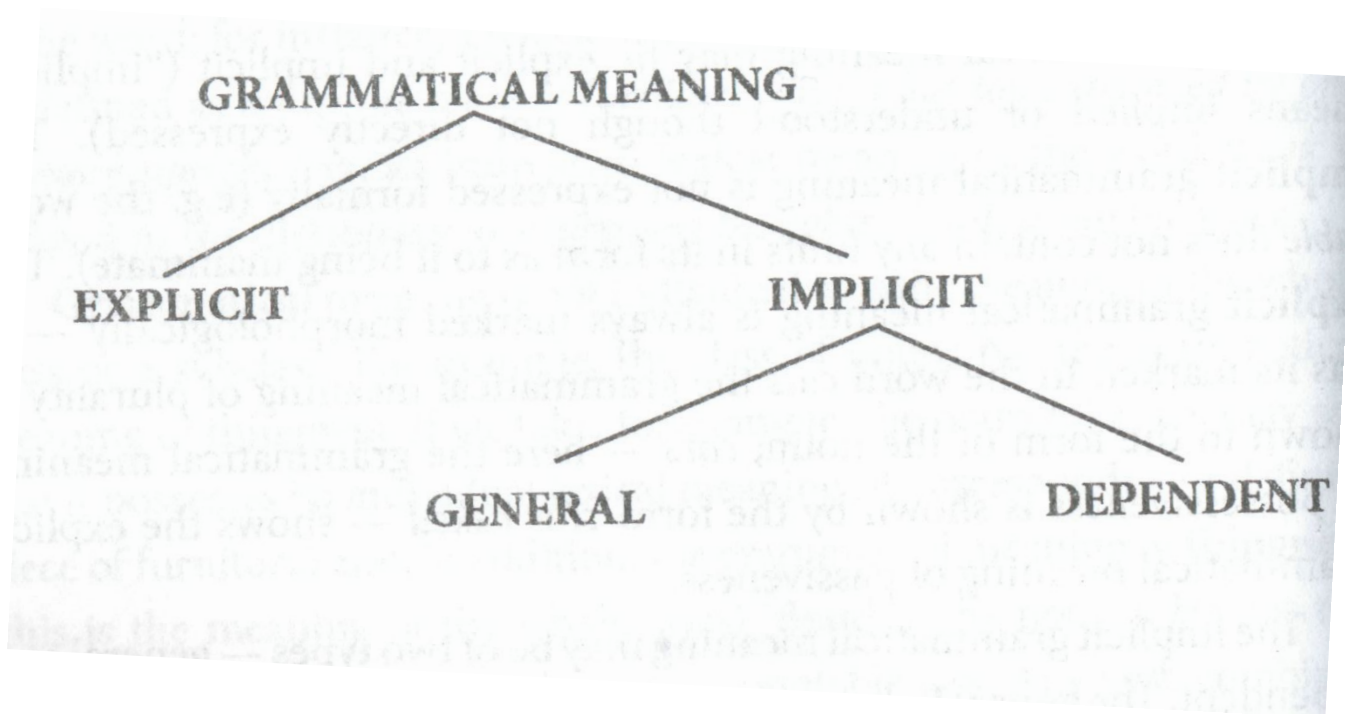
The dependent grammatical meaning influences the realization of grammatical categories restricting them to a subclass.

E.g.: *the number category* for the subclass of countable nouns;

*the category of case* for the subclass of animated nouns;

*the category of voice* for transitive verbs, etc.

# Types of Grammatical Meaning



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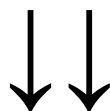
# 5. The Notion of Grammatical Category

A **grammatical category** is a linguistic category which has the effect of modifying the forms of some class of words in a language.



# The Notion of Grammatical Category

Its structure displays two or more forms applied to a definite class of words and used in somewhat different grammatical circumstances.

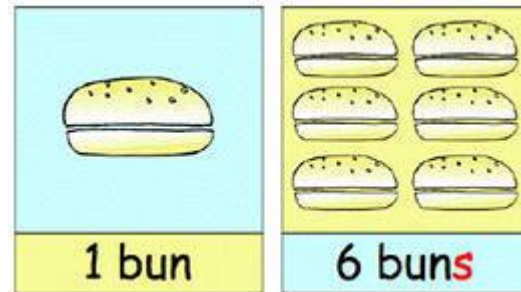




# The Notion of Grammatical Category

Grammatical categories are made up by the unity of identical grammatical meanings that have the same form and meaning

E.g. *singular : plural*

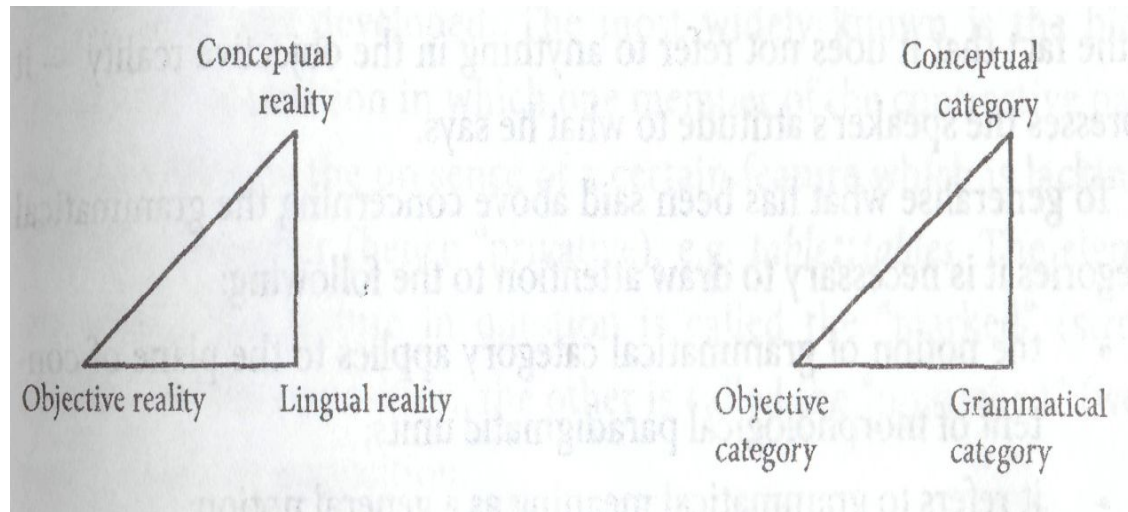


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# The Notion of Grammatical Category

Due to dialectal unity of language and thought, grammatical categories correlate, on the one hand, with the conceptual categories and, on the other hand, with the objective reality:



# The Notion of Grammatical Category

**Thus,**

grammatical categories are references of the corresponding objective categories.

E.g.: *the objective category of time* →

the grammatical category of tense,

*the objective category of quantity*

→ the grammatical category of number.

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# The Notion of Grammatical Category

Grammatical categories that have references in the objective reality are **referential**.

Objective correlate



Lingual correlate

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# The Notion of Grammatical Category

Grammatical categories that do not correspond to anything in the objective reality and correlate only with conceptual matters are **significational**. They are few (e.g. the categories of mood and degree).

Conceptual correlate



Lingual correlate

# The Notion of Grammatical Category

## *Classifications of Gr. Categories*

1. According to the referent relation:

- **immanent;**
- **reflective.**

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# The Notion of Grammatical Category

*Immanent* gr. categories are:

1) innate for a given lexemic class, organically connected with its functional nature

E.g.: *the number category of nouns,  
the substantive-pronominal  
person*

2) closed within a word-class

E.g.: *the tense category of verbs,  
the comparison of adjectives and  
adverbs*

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# The Notion of Grammatical Category

*Reflective* gr. categories are of a secondary, derivative semantic value

E.g.: *the number category of verbs,*  
*the verbal person*

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# The Notion of Grammatical Category

2. According to the changeability of the exposed feature

- **unchangeable / derivational** (constant feature categories)

E.g.: *the gender category of nouns represented by the system of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns*

- **changeable / demutative** (variable feature categories)

E.g.: *the number category of nouns, the degrees of comparison*

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# The Notion of Grammatical Category

**NB:**

1. The notion of grammatical category applies to the plane of content of morphological paradigmatic units;

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# The Notion of Grammatical Category

2. It refers to grammatical meaning as a general notion;

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# The Notion of Grammatical Category

3. It does not nominate things but expresses relations, that is why it has to be studied in terms of oppositions;

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# The Notion of Grammatical Category

4. Grammatical categories of language represent a realization of universal categories produced by human thinking in a set of interrelated forms organized as oppositions;

# The Notion of Grammatical Category

5. Grammatical categories are not uniform, they vary in accordance with the part of speech they belong to and the meaning they express;

# The Notion of Grammatical Category

6. The expression of grammatical categories in language is based upon close interrelation between their forms and the meaning they convey.

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## 6. The Notion of Opposition

The concept of opposition is that it distinguishes something.





# The Notion of Opposition

One thing can be distinguished from another only if it can be contrasted with something else or opposed to it.



# The Notion of Opposition

Any grammatical category must be represented by at least two grammatical forms

E.g. *the grammatical category of number*: singular and plural forms.

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# The Notion of Opposition

Thus,

the relation between two grammatical forms that differ in meaning and external signs is called *opposition*.

# The Notion of Opposition

The most widely known opposition is the *binary "privative" opposition*.

In it one member of the contrastive pair is characterized by the presence of a certain feature which the other member lacks



# The Notion of Opposition

E.g. *table::tables*



“unmarked”

“marked”

(weak) member

(strong) member



**non-plural**

**plural**



more general and abstract

more particular and  
concrete

(used in a wider range of contexts)

# The Notion of Opposition

**FYI:**

Some scholars, however, hold the opinion that oppositions can be

- **gradual** (different degree of a feature)

E.g.: *big — bigger — biggest*

- **equipollent** (different positive features)

E.g.: *am — is — are.*

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# The Notion of Opposition

**NB:**

A grammatical category is definable only on the basis of oppositions.

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# The Notion of Opposition

Means of realization of grammatical categories:

- **synthetic** (*near — nearer*);
- **analytical** (*beautiful — more beautiful*).



Thank You!

