SEMASIOLOGY

LECTURE 1

Plan

1. Approaches to Analyzing Meaning.
   a) *Referential Approach to Meaning;*
   b) *Functional Approach to Meaning;*
   c) *Operational Approach to Meaning.*
2. Types of Meaning of Words.
3. Two Approaches to the Content Facet Units.

SEMASIOLOGY –

an area of Lexicology that is devoted to the study of meaning.

There is no universally accepted definition of meaning.

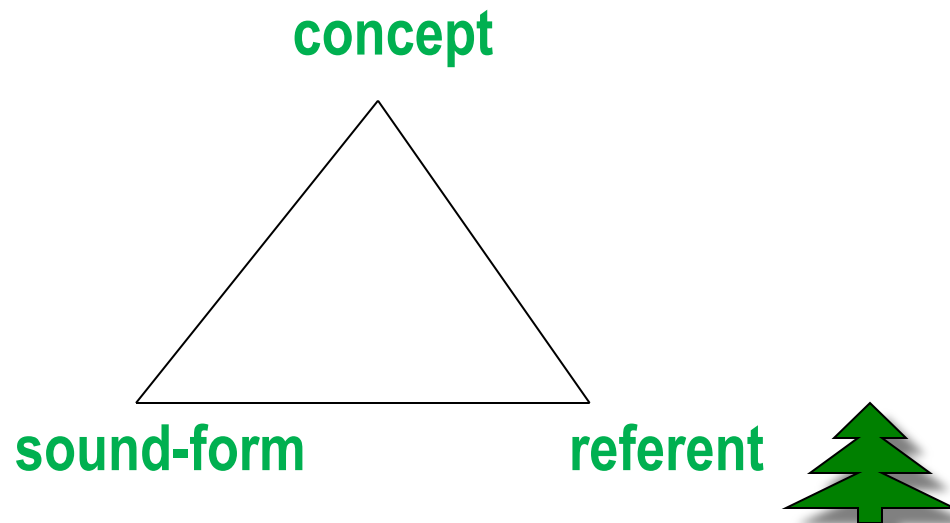Three main categories of definitions of meaning may be referred to:

- *Referential (analytical) approach;*

- *Functional (contextual) approach;*

- *Operational (information-oriented) approach.*

1.1. Referential Approach

3 components connected with meaning:

1. The ***sound-form*** of the linguistic sign;
2. The ***concept*** underlying the sound-form;
3. The ***referent*** – the part of aspect of reality to which the linguistic sign refers.

The referential model of meaning – **basic triangle**

concept

sound-form   **referent**

In what way does the meaning correlate with each element of the triangle and in what relation does it stand to each other?

1. The **sound-form** of the word [fWtri:] is not identical with the meaning of the word *fir-tree*,

   because sound-forms of words in different languages are different,

   but express the same meaning:

   e.g. English *fir-tree* [fWtri:], Russian *ёлка* ['jOIkq].

2. The **meaning** of the word is closely connected with the underlying **concept**, but it is not identical with it.

Concept is the thought of an object.

The meanings of words are different in different languages.

concept / language	'activity that involves physical or mental effort'	'work that you do to earn money'
English	work	job
Russian	работа	работа

3. One object can be denoted by some words of different meanings:

In speech the referent of can be denoted by the word

cat, animal, pussy, Jerry, pet, etc.

All these words have the same referent, but different meanings.

There are words that have distinct meaning but do not refer to any existing thing

□ *mermaid* – an imaginary sea creature that has the upper body of a woman and a fish's tail;

□ *angel* – a spirit that in some religions is believed to live in heaven with God;

The meaning is not to be identical with any of the three points of the triangle (sound-form – concept – referent), but is closely connected with them

The referential definitions of meaning are usually criticized on the ground that:

1. They cannot be applied to sentences;

2. They cannot account for certain semantic additions emerging in the process of communication;

3. They fail to account for the fact that one word may denote different objects and phenomena (polysemy) while one and the same object may be denoted by different words (synonymy).

1.2. Functional Approach

Principle: **The meaning of a linguistic unit can be studied only through its <u>relation to other linguistic units</u>.**

It is based on analysis of various contexts.

Arrive at, in / early, late, sudden arrival of, etc.

Movement can be followed by a noun (*to move a table*) and preceded by a pronoun (*he moves*).

Movement maybe followed by a preposition (*movement of a plane*) and preceded by an adjective (*quick movement*).

They occupy different positions in relation to other words.

The functions of the verb *to take* in different linguistic contexts are different: *take in, take off, take out, take down,* etc.

Distribution of the word – the position of a word in relation to other words.

Context – the minimum stretch of speech necessary and sufficient to determine which of the possible meanings of a polysemantic word is used.

The functional approach

is described as contextual as it is based on the analysis of various contexts.

In the functional approach which is typical of structural linguistics semantic investigation is confined to the analysis of the difference or sameness of meaning. Meaning is understood as the function of a linguistic unit.

1.3. Operational Approach

Principle: defining meaning through its role in the process of communication.

Thus this approach studies words in action and is more interested in how meaning works than in what it is.

It refers to communicative aspect of the language when the object of study was shifted to relations between the language we use and the situations within which it is used, thus exploring the capacity of human beings to use the language appropriately.

Ann arrived at 6 o'clock.

It may imply: Ann was some hours late or

Failed to keep her promise or

She was punctual as usual.

The implication depends on the concrete situation of communication.

Meaning – the direct information conveyed by the units consisting the sentence;

Sense – the information added to the extralinguistic situation.

II. Types of word meaning

Word-meaning is not homogeneous.

Word-meaning is made up of various components – types of meanings.

The main types of meaning:

1) the grammatical meaning;'

2) the lexical meaning;

3) part-of-speech meaning. It is based on the interaction of the major types and is called the part of speech (lexico-grammatical) meaning

1. **The grammatical meaning** – an expression of relationship between words in speech.

   G.m. is the component of meaning recurrent in identical sets of individual forms of words:

the tense meaning: *went, played, saw, broke, spent..*

the case meaning: *boy's, children's, brother's…*

the meaning of plurality: *toys, books, joys, girls…*

2. **<u>The lexical meaning</u>** – the meaning proper to the given linguistic unit in all its forms and distributions:

go, goes, went, gone, going –

the same **semantic component** 'the process of movement',

but different **grammatical meanings** (tense, person, number).

The lexical and grammatical meaning cannot exist without each other.

сведения – plural

information – singular

are not semantically identical.

3. **The part-of-speech meaning** expresses the reference to a certain class of words.

Major word-classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs;

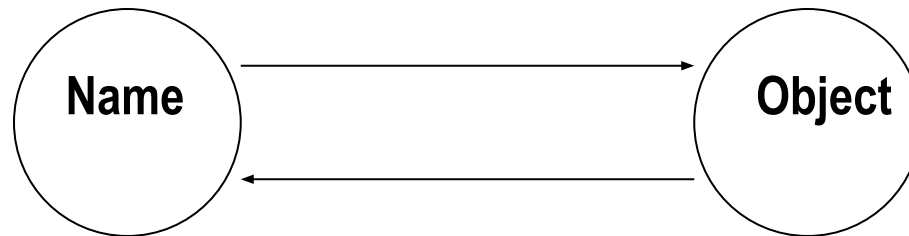**Minor word-classes**: articles, prepositions, conjunctions…

All members of a major word-class share a distinguishing *semantic component* as a lexical one of a **part-of-speech meaning**: nouns have the meaning of thingness or substantiality, though they possess different grammatical meanings of number and case.

The *grammatical aspect* of **part-of-speech meaning** is conveyed as a rule by a set of forms: number *table-tables* and case *boy – boy's*.

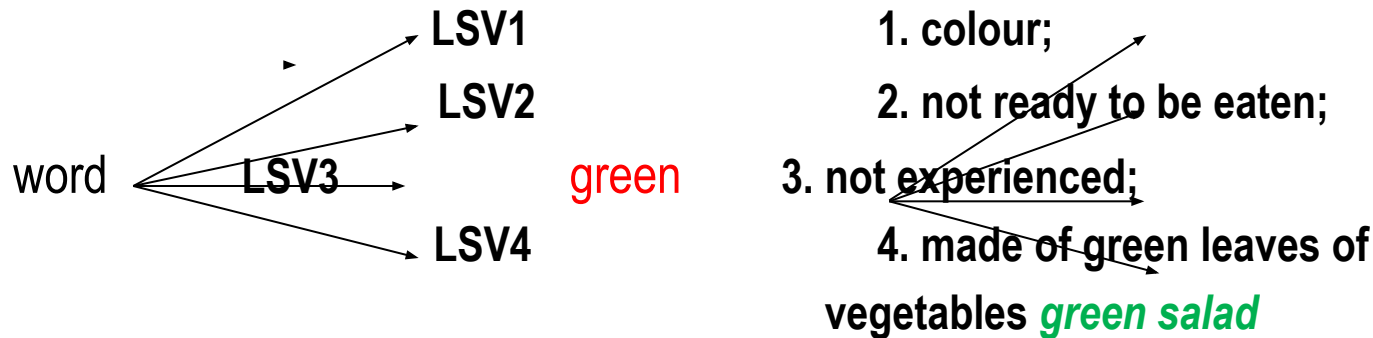# III. Two Approaches to the Content Facet Units

1. **Semasiological** – starts with the name (form) and consists in considering different meanings of the word, determining interrelations between them, as well as discovering semantic relations between different words.

2. **Onomasiological** – starts from the object and consists in analyzing different words correlated with it. This approach helps to discover how meaning is formed, considering its basic properties and peculiarities.
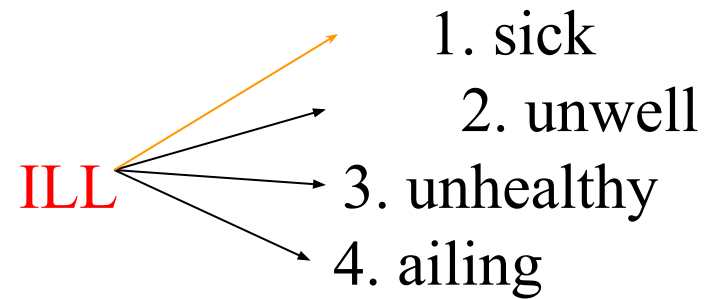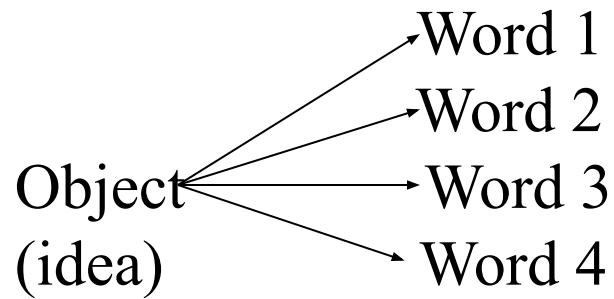
The ***semasiological approach*** (polysemy)

The ***onomasiological approach*** (synonymy)

Semasiological Approach to Meaning (Polysemy)

word

LSV1
LSV2
LSV3
LSV4

green

1. colour;
2. not ready to be eaten;
3. not experienced;
4. made of green leaves of vegetables *green salad*

Onomasiological Approach to Meaning (Synonymy)

Object
(idea)
→ Word 1
→ Word 2
→ Word 3
→ Word 4

ILL
→ 1. sick
→ 2. unwell
→ 3. unhealthy
→ 4. ailing

Conclusion

The study of the semantic side of the word may start with the name (word) or with the object denoted.

The semasiological approach consists in considering different meanings of the word, while the onomasiological approach consists in analyzing different words correlated with the certain object or idea.

References:

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