## **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, fury animal with sharp teeth
 and claws



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



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

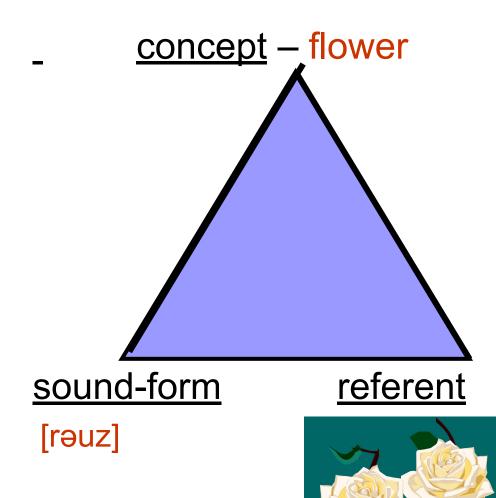
 formulates the essence of meaning by establishing the interdependence between words and things or concepts they denote

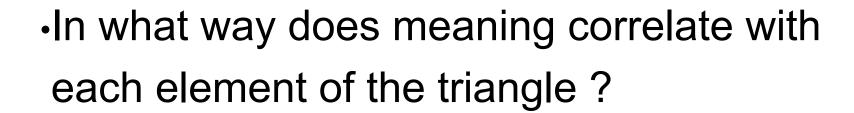
distinguishes between three components closely connected with meaning:

the sound-form of the linguistic sign, the concept the actual referent



- 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





•In what relation does meaning stand to each of them?

#### **Meaning and Sound-form**

are not identical

different

EX. dove - [d v] English [golub'] Russian [taube] German

sound-forms

BÚT

the\_same

meaning

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#### **Meaning and Sound-form**

 nearly identical sound-forms have different meanings in different languages

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EX. [kot] Russian – a male cat
[kot] English – a small bed for a child
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 identical sound-forms have different meanings ('homonyms)

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EX. knight [nait] night [nait]
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### **Meaning and Sound-form**

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

EX Old English lufian [luvian] - love [l n v]

## **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

meanings of words are different in different languages

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### **Meaning and Concept**

 identical concepts may have different semantic structures in different languages

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EX. concept "a building for human habitation" –
English Russian
HOUSE ДОМ
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+ in Russian ДОМ "fixed residence of family or household" In English HOME



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



cat pussy animal tiger



### Meaning

is not identical with any of the three points of the triangle – the sound form, the concept the referent

#### **BUT**

is closely connected with them.

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### **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 distriution (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 <u>GO</u> by bus (E) <u>EXATЬ</u> (R)

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

### **Types of Meaning**

Types of meaning

grammatical meaning

lexico-grammat ical meaning

lexical meaning

denotational

connotation

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### **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)
- 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

<u>lexical meaning</u> – process of movement

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#### PRACTICE

Group the words into 3 column according to the grammatical, lexical or part-of –speech meaning

- Boy's, nearest, at, beautiful,
- think, man, drift, wrote,
- tremendous, ship's, the most beautiful,
- table, near, for, went, friend's,
- handsome, thinking, boy,
- nearer, thought, boys,
- lamp, go, during.

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#### Grammatical

- 1. The case of nouns: boy's, ship's, friend's
- 2. The degree of comparison of adj: nearest, the most beautiful
- 3. The tense of verbs: wrote, went, thought

#### Lexical

- 1. Think, thinking, thought
- 2. Went, go
- 3. Boy's, boy, boys
- 4. Nearest, near, nearer
- 5. At, for, during ("time")
- 6. Beautiful, the most beautiful

#### Part-of-speech

Nouns---verbs---adj----prep

### **Aspects of Lexical meaning**

The denotational aspect

The connotational aspect

The pragmatic aspect

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#### **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"

#### **PRACTICE**

#### **Explain denotational meaning**

- A lion-hunter
- To have a heart like a lion
- To feel like a lion
- To roar like a lion
- To be thrown to the lions
- The lion's share
- To put your head in lion's mouth

#### **PRACTICE**

A lion-hunter

A host that seeks out celebrities to impress guests

To have a heart like a lion

To have great courage

To feel like a lion

To be in the best of health

To roar like a lion

To shout very loudly

To be thrown to the lions

To be criticized strongly or treated badly

The lion's share

Much more than one's share

To put your head in lion's mouth



"

#### **Connotational Meaning**

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

#### Connotation gives additional information and includes:

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



#### **PRACTICE**

#### Give possible interpretation of the sentences

- She failed to buy it and felt a strange pang.
- Don't be afraid of that woman! It's just barking!
- He got up from his chair moving slowly, like an old man.
- The girl went to her father and pulled his sleeve.
- He was longing to begin to be generous.
- She was a woman with shiny red hands and work-swollen finger knuckles.

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#### **PRACTICE**

#### Give possible interpretation of the sentences

She failed to buy it and felt a strange pang.

(pain---dissatisfaction that makes her suffer)

Don't be afraid of that woman! It's just barking!

(make loud sharp sound----the behavior that implies that the person is frightened)

He got up from his chair moving slowly, like an old man.

(to go at slow speed---was suffering or was ill)

The girl went to her father and pulled his sleeve.

(to move smth towards oneself--- to try to attract smb's attention)

He was longing to begin to be generous.

(to start doing--- hadn't been generous before)

She was a woman with shiny red hands and work-swollen finger knuckles.

(colour--- a labourer involved into physical work ,constant contact with water)

## The pragmatic aspect of lexical meaning

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

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EX horse (neutral)
steed (poetic)
nag (slang)
gee-gee (baby language)
```

#### **PRACTICE**

#### State what image underline the meaning

- I heard what she said but it <u>didn't sink into my mind.</u>
- You should be ashamed of yourself, <u>crawling</u> to the director like that.
- They <u>seized on</u> the idea.
- Bill, chasing some <u>skirt</u> again?
- I saw him <u>dive</u> into a small pub.
- Why are you trying to pin the blame on me?
- He only married her for her dough.



#### **PRACTICE**

#### State what image underline the meaning

- I heard what she said but it <u>didn't sink into my mind.</u>
- (to understand completely)
- You should be ashamed of yourself, <u>crawling</u> to the director like that.

(to behave humbly in order to win favour)

They <u>seized on</u> the idea.

(to be eager to take and use)

Bill, chasing some <u>skirt</u> again?

(a girl)

• I saw him dive into a small pub.

(to enter suddenly)

Why are you trying to pin the blame on me?

(to blame smb unfairly)

He only married her for her dough.

(money)

# **Types of Morpheme Meaning**

- lexical
- differential
- functional
- distributional

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#### **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"

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#### **Lexical Meaning in Morphemes**

has denotational and connotational components
 EX. -Iy, -like, -ish denotational meaning of similarity
 womanly, womanish

```
<u>connotational component</u> –

-ly (positive evaluation), -ish (deragotary) 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.

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#### **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

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#### **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)

# •PRACTICE

# Analyze the meaning of the words. Define the type of motivation

- a) morphologically motivated
- b) semantically motivated
- Driver
- Leg
- Horse
- Wall
- Hand-made
- Careless
- piggish

- Analyze the meaning of the words. Define the type of motivation a) morphologically motivated b) semantically motivated
- Driver

Someone who drives a vehicle morphologically motivated

Leg

The part of a piece of furniture such as a table semantically motivated

Horse

A piece of equipment shaped like a box, used in gymnastics semantically motivated



Wall

Emotions or behavior preventing people from feeling close semantically motivated

Hand-made

Made by hand, not machine morphologically motivated

Careless

Not taking enough care morphologically motivated

Piggish

Selfish

semantically motivated

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  - I heard what she said but it didn't <u>sink in</u> my mind "do down to the bottom"
     'to be accepted by mind" <u>semantic motivation</u>
  - Why are you trying to pin the blame on me?
     "fasten smth somewhere using a pin" –
     "to blame smb" <u>semantic motivation</u>
  - I was following the man when he <u>dived into</u> a pub.
     "jump into deep water" –
     "to enter into suddenly" <u>semantic motivation</u>
  - You should be ashamed of yourself, <u>crawling to</u> the director like that
  - "to move along on hands and knees close to the ground" –
    "to behave very humbly in order to win favor" semantic motivation