

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, furry 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*



Semantics (Semasiology)

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:

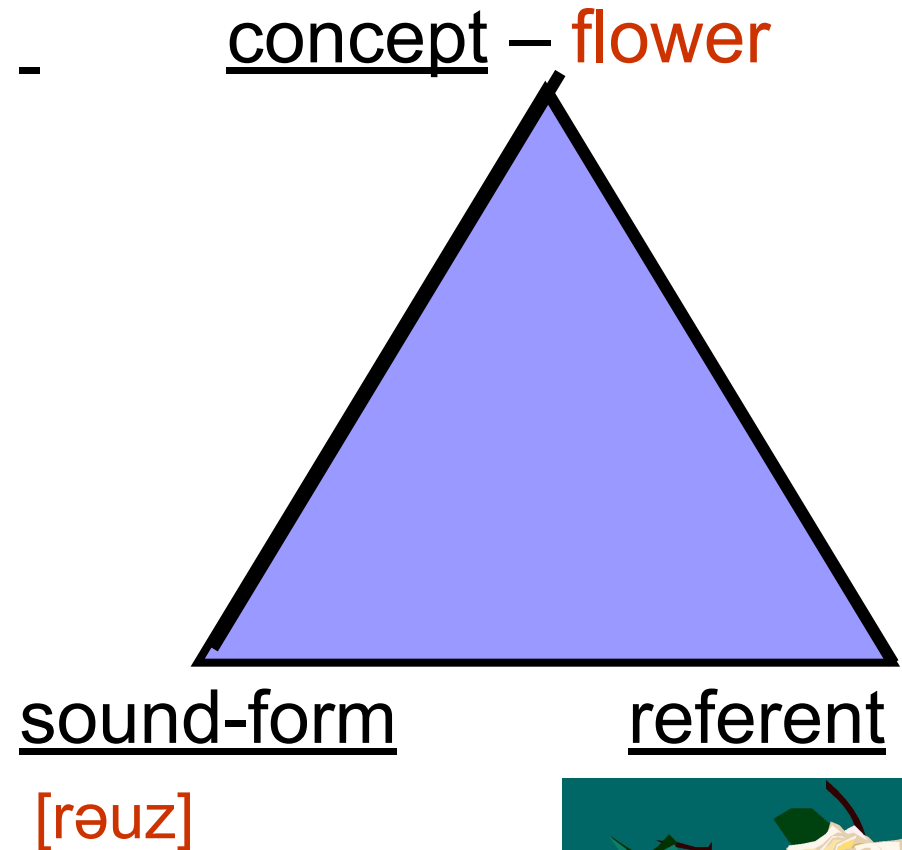
the sound-form of the linguistic sign,



the concept

the actual referent

Basic Triangle

- 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 way does meaning correlate with each element of the triangle ?
 - In what relation does meaning stand to each of them?

Meaning and Sound-form

- are not identical

different

EX. dove - [dʌv] *English*

[golub'] *Russian*

[taube] *German*

sound-forms

BUT

the same

meaning

Meaning and Sound-form

- nearly identical sound-forms have different meanings in different languages

EX. [kot] Russian – a male cat

[kot] English – a small bed for a child

- identical sound-forms have different meanings ('homonyms')

EX. knight [nait]

night [nait]

Meaning and Sound-form

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

EX *Old English* **lufian** [lʊvian] – **love** [lʌv]

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*

Meaning and Concept

- identical concepts may have different semantic structures in different languages

EX. concept “a building for human habitation” –

<i>English</i>	<i>Russian</i>
<i>HOUSE</i>	<i>ДОМ</i>

+ *in Russian ДОМ*

“fixed residence of family or household”

<i>In English</i>	<i>HOME</i>
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Meaning and Referent

- 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.

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 distribution (*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 GO by bus (E)
ЕХАТЬ (R)

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

Types of Meaning

Types of meaning

grammatical
meaning

lexico-grammat
ical
meaning

lexical
meaning

denotational

connotation
al

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

lexical meaning – *process of movement*

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.*



- **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

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

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.

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.)

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 didn't sink into my mind.
- You should be ashamed of yourself, crawling to the director like that.
- They seized on the idea.
- Bill, chasing some skirt again?
- I saw him dive 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 didn't sink into my mind.

• *(to understand completely)*

- You should be ashamed of yourself, crawling to the director like that.

(to behave humbly in order to win favour)

- They seized on the idea.

(to be eager to take and use)

- Bill, chasing some skirt 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

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”

Lexical Meaning in Morphemes

- has denotational and connotational components

EX. -ly, -like, -ish –

denotational meaning of similiarity

womanly , womanish

connotational component –

-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.

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

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

- I heard what she said but it didn't sink in my mind

“do down to the bottom”

“to be accepted by mind” semantic motivation

- Why are you trying to pin the blame on me?

“fasten smth somewhere using a pin” –

“to blame smb” semantic motivation

- I was following the man when he dived into a pub.

“jump into deep water” –

“to enter into suddenly” semantic motivation

- You should be ashamed of yourself, crawling to 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