ENGLISH LEXICOLOGY 1:

An Introduction to Lexical Semantics

A Textbook

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An Introduction to Lexical Semantics

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PREFACE

Lexicology is the study of words from all the different aspects. The study of the vocabulary is not an easy task, although we often assume that we intuitively know what words are. Yet, when it comes to describing and analysing words, it becomes clear that words are complex units that carry different pieces of information such as phonetic information, morpho-syntactic information, semantic and pragmatic information.

The textbook *English Lexicology 1: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* analyses words and phrases in terms of their meaning. The meaning is the most important information associated with each word. Although we all easily talk about meaning or meanings of words, it is very difficult to define the concept of word meaning. Meaning is a complex phenomenon resulting from a network of relationships. It contains several interrelated aspects such as sense, reference, connotation, as well as the pragmatic and sociolinguistic components. For this reason, each unit in the textbook considers meaning from different perspectives and is accompanied by several review questions adapted from *English Lexicology: A Workbook* by Jovanka Lazarevska-Stanchevska, slightly reworked to align with the texts.

This textbook is aimed at students of English language/linguistics because it covers the core topics of lexical semantics. The aim of this textbook is to help students in mastering primarily the different aspects of meaning of the English vocabulary. The advice to students is always to have to hand a good up-to-date online English dictionary and to consult it all the time, just as judges refer to legal statutes.

The *English Lexicology 1: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* arises from the course *English Lexicology 1* which I have taught over many years at the Department of English language and literature, at "Ss Cyril and Methodius" University. The textbook takes into consideration the study program created by my professors Olga Mišeska-Tomić and Ljupčo Stefanovski as well as the textbooks written by them. In the textbook, some

of the included examples are constructed for explanatory and illustrative purposes and were generated with the assistance of ChatGPT (OpenAI).

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my professors Olga Mišeska-Tomić and Marija Janeva-Mihajlovska, as well as to my colleague, Anastazija Kirkova-Naskova for their support throughout the entire process.

Jovanka Lazarevska-Stanchevska

UNIT 1

Lexicology and Other Branches of Linguistics

Lexicology is a branch of linguistics which studies the vocabulary of a given language. It deals with all the different aspects of words, in terms of their origin, form, meaning, their development through time and their usage in different contexts. Therefore, lexicology is essential for understanding how language functions and develops[1].

Lexicology is divided into two major subfields: **general lexicology** and **special lexicology**. General lexicology focuses on general principles related to words and vocabulary, regardless of any specific language, while special lexicology studies the vocabulary of a particular language in details. For example, English lexicology examines the lexicon of the English language. Yet, general and special lexicology are interrelated and operate simultaneously.

Lexicology is also subdivided into **synchronic** or **descriptive** and **diachronic** or **historical lexicology,** according to its temporal focus. Synchronic or descriptive lexicology, on the one hand, analyzes the vocabulary of a language at a given point in time. For example, the vocabulary used in English during the 18th century or contemporary internet slang both could be subjects of synchronic studies. Diachronic or historical lexicology, on the other hand, studies the historical development of words, including their changes in form and meaning over time. An example of diachronic change can be seen in the word *baggage*, which originally meant a 'worthless person' but now it means 'luggage'. Similarly, the word *meat* once referred to 'any kind of food', whereas today it is restricted to 'edible animal flesh'. The term *business*, which originally meant 'anxiety', has shifted in contemporary use to mean 'occupation or profession'. Diachronic lexicology often involves phonological changes as well, such as the transformation of Latin *strata* into the English word *street*. Therefore, diachronic lexicology is closely related to **etymology**. Etymology studies the origin of words and how they have changed their

[1] For introduction to lexicology and word structure see also Bauer (2022), Cruise (2011), Jackson & Ze Amvela (2022) and Lipka (2002).

meaning and form through time, the way they were borrowed from one language into another. For example, the word *lexicology* derives from the Greek words *lexis* 'word' and *logos* 'study' or 'science'. The word *trivial* originates from the Latin *trivium*, itself composed of *tri* 'three' and *via* 'road', referring to 'a place where three roads meet'; i.e. referring to public crossroads and thus commonplaces. Understanding etymology not only provides insights into the history of a language, but it also reveals cultural and social influences on its vocabulary, such as the influences of Greek and Latin over the English vocabulary or how French influenced and shaped English vocabulary, especially in the period after the Norman Conquest. For example, words such as *monarch, prince, duke, royal, count*, were borrowed from French and reflect French influence in the field of nobility.

As lexicology deals with words and all the different aspect of words, it is related with other branches of linguistics such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics.

Phonology is the study of speech sounds and their function in the sound system of a language. Although phonemes - the smallest units of sound - do not carry meaning on their own, they serve to distinguish between meanings. For instance, the words *bit* and *pit* differ only in their initial phonemes /b/ and /p/. Another example is *cat* vs *cut*, where the change in vowel sound creates a different lexical item. Stress patterns also influence word meaning and lexical category: *permit* with stress on the first syllable is a noun, while stress on the second syllable indicates a verb (*'permit* (n.) vs. *per'mit* (v.)). These phonological features are essential for description of words and therefore relevant for lexicology.

Morphology, which studies the structure and formation of words, is deeply embedded in lexicology. Words are composed of morphemes - the smallest meaningful and functioning units. They can be roots, stems, bases, prefixes, suffixes, or infixes. For example, the plural noun *trees* consists of the root *tree* and the inflectional suffix *-s*. The verb *reconstruct* includes the prefix *re-* (indicating 'repetition') and the root *construct*. Derivational morphology plays a role in word formation, as seen in *happiness* (from *happy* + *-ness*) or *disagree* (*dis-* + *agree*). Morphological processes help us identify the original word forms and understand how existing words change form to serve different grammatical or semantic roles.

Syntax is defined as a study of the rules governing the way words are combined to form sentences. So, lexicology is closely connected with syntax because it is concerned with the different word forms which appear in different syntactic contexts. The selection of a particular form of a word

on a given occasion depends on the syntactic construction in which it appears. For example, the verb *smile*, has various inflected forms (*smiles*, *smiled*, *smiling*) that are chosen depending on the syntactic environment. Also, a word's form depends on its function in the sentence as in: She *smiled* with effort. (v.) vs Her *smiling* makes people feel good. (n.). So, lexicology has to take into account how grammatical patterns influence the word form.

Lexicology studies not only simple words from all the different aspect, but it also studies compounds, complex words and phrases in terms of their form and meaning. Therefore, it is closely related to semantics. **Semantics** is a branch of linguistics which deals with the meaning of words. The most important information which is contained in one word is its meaning. Meaning is a very complex phenomenon that includes two major segments: **sense** (the inner concept) and **reference** (relation between the word and the outside world). Although the relationship between the word and its meaning is arbitrary, yet the further extension of meaning is far from arbitrary. For example, the word *head* refers to a 'body part' which is further extended into 'the front, forward or upper part of something' as in the example "the *head* of the bed" and even further to 'a person in charge of an organization' as in the example "the *head* of the English department". Also, the meaning of the adjective *big* varies depending on its collocational context as in the examples I have a *big* house ('large in size') vs My *big* sister is a doctor ('older in age'). Similarly, contextual usage determines the sense of the word *love* as in I *love* my kids ('expressing emotion') vs I *love* my job ('expressing satisfaction') vs I *love* pizza. ('expressing liking or preferences').

In many cases, factors such as the level of formality together with the contextual usage predetermine the choice of words. Words such as *put off, delay, postpone* and *procrastinate* are synonymous, but their use depends on the combination of these factors. Yet, certain words contain completely different meanings although they have the same ultimate origin. Such is the example with the word *bank* that may refer to 'a financial institution' or 'the side of a river'.

Pragmatics deals with how words are used in a context. It examines how speakers use words to achieve their goals, the choices they make in doing so, the constraints they face in the process of communication, and the effects their use of words have on the other participants in the process of communication. Phrases such as *No comment*. or *How clever of you!* have nothing to do with their original meaning in certain contexts, but are

used to express irritation or sarcasm, respectively. Therefore, lexicology is closely connected to pragmatics because it takes into account how words are actually used in real communicative situations.

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics which deals with the relationship between the language and the society. It focuses on the usage of words in relation to the needs of social communication. For example, the choice between *Mrs* and *Ms* reflects the attitude of the society towards the marital status of women in the society. The use of *matrimony* (formal) vs *marriage* (neutral), or *residence* (formal) vs *home* (neutral/informal) signals differences in register. Vocabulary also varies by regions: *autumn* (British English) vs *fall* (American English), or *biscuit* (BrE: sweet baked item) vs *biscuit* (AmE: savoury bread). Such differences reveal how society and social relations shape and are reflected in lexical choices.

Finally, **lexicography**[2] is the theory and practice of making dictionaries. It focuses on compiling, organizing, and presenting words in dictionaries. And as such, it is closely connected with lexicology which provides theoretical basis for lexicography. Lexicology provides the patterns that are used by lexicographers for making dictionaries, more specifically selection of words, their forms, meaning, pronunciation, usage, and etymology. A lexicologist may study how a word like *to stream* with the original meaning of 'to flow' has evolved to include digital meanings as 'to transmit video or audio materials through internet'(e.g., *live stream, streaming platforms*), while a lexicographer decides how best to define and illustrate it in a dictionary.

In summary, lexicology is a continually growing branch of linguistics defined as a diachronic and synchronic study of the form and the structure, origin and development, referential and contextual meaning, as well as the usage of words (Stefanovski, 2007, p. 17). In the current era, words or more precisely, tokens serve as the fundamental units of input and output that are used by the artificial intelligence systems such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity and others. These tokens are the building blocks that the model uses to understand and generate language. As ChatGPT itself states its understanding and generation of language depend entirely on learning how words function together.

[2] In this lexicological and lexicographic research, different types of dictionaries and corpora are consulted depending on the focus of analysis. General monolingual dictionaries (e.g., Oxford English Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Dictionary) define word meaning, provide comprehensive information and grammatical details; bilingual dictionaries (e.g.,Comprehensive English-Macedonian Dictionary) provide translations; while large electronic corpora such as Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) supply authentic usage data, collocations, and patterns of distribution.

Review questions:

1. Lexicology is defined as a branch of linguistics that deals with the form and the structure of words, their origin and development through time, their referential and contextual meaning, as well their usage. Based on the above given definition, try to analyze the following words in terms of their a) form, b) meaning(s), c) contextual usage(s) and d) etymology:

- play
  a) _____
  b) _____
  c) _____
  d) _____

- game
  a) _____
  b) _____
  c) _____
  d) _____

2. Look up *the etymology* of the following words:

- democracy _____
- boycott _____
- biography _____
- algebra _____
- token _____

3. Give *the anthroponyms* of your names.

_____

UNIT 2

Words, Morphemes and Their Structure

Words

As noted in Unit 1, words are the basic units of lexicology. Therefore, it is necessary to define the notion of word. When students are asked about words, i.e. if they know what words are, most of them answer that they are familiar with the concept of words. In fact, all of us instinctively know what words are[1]. However, defining a "word" is not as simple as it seems. Linguists have offered numerous definitions, each capturing a different aspect of this fundamental unit, but they have not come up with a precise and a comprehensive definition of words.

Definition of a word

There are several different definitions of a word:

- A word is a union of meaning, sound, and grammatical function.
- A word is a unit conveying a single idea.
- A word is a segment of a sentence preceded and followed by spaces or pauses in speech.
- A word is a minimal free form by Bloomfield (1933/5, as cited in Jackson & Ze Amvela, 2022, p.27).
- A word is an arbitrary pairing of sound and meaning — a view influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure (1959) and structuralists.
- A word is a linguistic unit.

Limitations of word definitions

While these definitions are useful, they are far from perfect. Each one has its own limitations:

[1] Carstairs-McCarthy (2002, p.1) states that we are right to think this, at some level; … yet we'll talk about words more confidently knowing which ingredients of the notion we have in mind at any time.

- A word is a union of meaning, sound, and grammatical function is a comprehensive definition because it takes into account all the aspects of words. Words are combination of sounds, they express a certain meaning and when used in a sentence they perform a certain grammatical function. For instance, the word *computer* has a meaning 'a device for storing and processing data', it is a combination of the sounds *c-o-m-p-u-t-e-r* and can be a subject, object, complement when used in a sentence. The shortcomings of this definition are that it can be applied to phrases, as well. For example, the idiom *a piece of cake* possesses all the previous characteristics and still it is not a word.
- A unit conveying a single idea. This definition is limited in terms of its use, because not all words express a single idea. Words such as *flower, computer* or *door* might express a single idea, yet, words such as *a* and *an* do not express single ideas, they perform a grammatical function, but they are still words.
- A segment of a sentence preceded and followed by spaces or pauses. This definition functions well for the written language. In the written language, it is easy to identify words simply by identifying spaces before and after every single word. Yet, certain problems arise with compounds written separately and referring to one word and a single idea, such as *bedroom, washing machine, lap top, ...* However, words are not only part of the written language, they are also uttered. So, in the spoken language it is not easy to identify words, because when speaking speakers do not make pauses after every single word.
- The definition of a word as a minimal free form (Bloomfield, 1933/5, as cited in Jackson & Ze Amvela, 2022, p. 27) is a concise definition, but not comprehensive because it does not cover complex words that contain more than one morpheme such as *teacher, reconstruction, undoable*, etc.
- The definition of a word as an arbitrary pairing of sound and meaning Suggested by de Saussure (1959) is not precise because it can also refer to idioms such as *out of the blue* or to phrasal verbs as *give up.*
- The definition a word is a linguistic unit is very general and it does not help in identifying words. It is as if we said: "man is a living being" (Stefanovski, 2007, p.20).

The properties of words

Despite the difficulties in defining words, they still display several consistent properties. They carry different types of linguistic information necessary for identifying and understanding words.

- **Phonetic information** includes pronunciation and stress patterns.
- **Morphological information** refers to the internal structure of words and their constituent elements.
- **Syntactic information** covers how words function in a sentence and combine with others to form grammatically correct sentences and phrases.
- **Semantic information** addresses the meaning(s) words convey, including both sense and reference.
- **Pragmatic information** refers to the meaning of words in context — how words are used depending on speaker intention, social setting, or discourse.

Lexemes and word forms

In linguistic analyses, a distinction is made between **lexemes** and **word forms**. A lexeme is an abstract unit — a dictionary entry — that represents a set of related word forms. It encompasses all the major characteristics of the word. For example, the lexeme *SHARE* encompasses *share*, *shares*, *shared*, and *sharing*. These are different word forms of the same lexeme.

Lexemes are abstract entities and they are not tied to a specific grammatical context; instead, they capture the shared core meaning across the different word forms. This distinction helps linguists and lexicographers categorize and analyze vocabulary systematically. Lexicographers introduced the term **citation form** of a word as the base form that appears as a headword in dictionaries. For example, *walk* is the citation form which includes *walks*, *walked*, and *walking*. Citation forms serve as reference points when compiling dictionaries. Yet, on the other hand, there are **grammatical words**, that take identical forms but differ in syntactic roles. Such example is *dancing* in: She is *dancing* in the rain (here *dancing* is a verb) and She wore her *dancing* shoes (here *dancing* is an adjective).

Morphemes: The building units of words

A **morpheme** is defined as the smallest meaningful and functional unit in a composition of words. It is an abstract unit. It cannot be further divided

or analyzed without losing its meaning. Unlike syllables, which are phonological units used for easier articulation, morphemes are lexical and grammatical units. Words consist of morphemes. They can consist of one morpheme in which case it cannot be broken down into smaller meaningful units. These morphemes are free and stand by themselves. For example:

- Single morphemes – monomorphemic words: *boy*, *walk*, *study*.

Words can consist of more than one morpheme in which case they can be either complex or compound words. Complex words contain free and bound morpheme(s). For example:

- Free and bound morphemes: *walked* = *walk* (free) + *-ed* (bound); *revisit* = *re-* (bound) + *visit* (free).

Compound words contain more than one free morpheme and optionally bound morpheme(s). For example:

- Free + free morphemes + optional bound morphemes: *network* = *net* (free) + *work* (free); *weekend* = *week* (free) + *end* (free); *babysitter* = *baby* (free) + *sit* (free) + *-er* (bound).

A single sentence can usually contain more morphemes than words. For instance:

- *They played cards the other day*.

There are six words but eight morphemes: *they*, *play*, *-ed*, *card*, *-s*, *the*, *other*, *day*.

Morphs and allomorphs

Morphemes are abstract units which are represented in written or oral language through **morphs**. Morphs are physical representations of morphemes. So, morphemes *girl, stay, nice* are represented through morphs *girl, stay, nice.* Most of the morphemes are realized through morphs. There are morphemes that have more than one physical realization which is called an **allomorph**. Allomorphs are different realizations of one and the same morpheme. For example, the indefinite article in English is realized through the allomorphs *a* as in *a* girl and *an* as in *an* apple. The major characteristic of allomorphs is that they are in a complementary distribution which means the use of one allomorph excludes the use of all the others. For example, the use of the indefinite article *a* excludes the use of *an* in the same context. Linguists introduced the concept of allomorphy in order to

explain "the exceptions to the rule" or more precisely different realizations of one and the same morpheme that appear due to different reasons. Allomorphs appear as a result of different linguistic conditions. Therefore, it is stated that allomorphs can be phonologically, grammatically, lexically and orthographically conditioned.

a) Phonologically conditioned allomorphy arises when the pronunciation of a morpheme changes to adapt to the phonological properties of the neighbouring sounds. For example, the plural morpheme *-s* is realized as:

   - /s/ in *cats* → /s/ after voiceless consonants
   - /z/ in *dogs* → /z/ after voiced consonants
   - /ɪz/ in *judges* → /iz/ after sibilants

The change of the phonological properties of the phonemes when the phoneme agrees with the surrounding sounds is known as the process of **assimilation**. When the suffix agrees with the root it is called **progressive** assimilation like in *dogs* - /z/ after voiced consonants. When the consonant of the root agrees with the suffix it is called **regressive** assimilation like in *knife – knives.*

b) Grammatically conditioned allomorphy occurs when the form of a morpheme varies according to the grammatical categories such as gender, number, or case. For example, in Macedonian, the definite article agrees with the gender and number of the corresponding noun.

   - *убава**та** жена* (feminine, singular)
   - *убави**те** луѓе* (plural)

c) Lexically conditioned allomorphy occurs when the choice of the morpheme is strictly connected with a certain lexical word. For example the plural morpheme *-s* in English is realized through the allomorph *-en* with words such as *child* and *ox*:

   - *child → children*
   - *ox → oxen*

The plural morpheme *-s* in English is realized through *vowel change* with certain nouns such as *mouse, goose, tooth,* etc.:

   - *mouse → mice*
   - tooth → *teeth*[2]

[2] Forms such as *child – children, mouse – mice* are remnants of the Old English plural system.

d) Orthographically conditioned allomorphy is a result of the spelling rules in English that condition the change of the form of the morpheme:

- *write* + *-ing* = ***writ****ing* (silent "e" dropped and *writ* is allomorph of *write)*
- *smile* + *-ing* = ***smil****ing* (silent "e" dropped and *smil* is allomorph of *smile*)

Classification of morphemes

As it has been mentioned previously, morphemes are the basic and fundamental units in the composition of words. Therefore, they are further classified in several categories for better understanding and easier analyses. Classifications of morphemes are performed on several different bases. They are subclassified based on their ability to stand on their own and based on their meaning and function.

Free and bound morphemes

Morphemes are classified into **free** when they stand on their own and constitute a word by themselves. The morpheme *girl* or *stay* are free morphemes because they can be used as words by themselves. Whereas, the prefix *re-* in *reread* or the suffix *-s* in *songs* are **bound** morphemes because they must be attached to another element. Consequently, words can be monomorphemic if they consist of one free morpheme such as *read, song, dry* or polymorphemic if they consist of multiple morphemes such as *reconstruct*, *unavailable* or *storage*.

Further, free morphemes can function as **roots**. Roots carry the core meaning of the whole word and cannot be further analyzed without losing their identity. For ex. *create* or *mother* are roots to which affixes can be added as in *recreation* or *motherhood.* Root is the most important element in a polymorphemic word because it carries the main component of meaning and from a historical perspective it is the earliest determinable form of a word. **Base** is a form of a word to which affixes are added. For ex. the word *institutionalize* contains the root *institute* which at the same time is a base to which the suffix *-ion* is added to form the word *institution*, which further serves as a base to which the suffix *-al* is added to form the word *institutional* which at the same time serves as a base to which the suffix *-ize* is added to finally form the word *institutionalize*.

- institute (root & base) + -ion = institution (base) + -al = institutional (base) + -ize = institutionalize

Some linguists use the term **stem** to refer to the base to which only inflectional suffixes can be added. Stem can be monomorphemic as in *girl* + *-s* = *girls*, polymorphemic as in *recreation* + *-s* = *recreations* or a compound stem as in *bedroom* + *-s* = *bedrooms*.

Affixes are bound morphemes as they must be attached to other elements. They are subdivided into **prefixes, infixes** and **suffixes**, depending on their position in the word. Prefixes are added at the beginning of a base such as *dis-* in *disagree* or *neo-* in *neoclassical*. Suffixes appear after the base as *-al* in *approval* or *-ous* in *famou*s. Infixes are inserted into the base, but these are not typical for English.

Morphemes can also be subclassified into **lexical** and **grammatical** morphemes based on their meaning and function. Lexical morphemes carry meaning, they contain the core semantic content such as the following examples: *go*, *friend*, *ex-, -al*. Grammatical morphemes express grammatical meaning and function; such examples are *a*, *the*, *-s -ed*. When grammatical morphemes such as *the* or *of* stand on their own they are referred to as **function** or **grammatical words**.

	Free morphemes	Bound morpheme
Lexical morphemes	love, play, nice, cool, well, glass, paint, grow;	re- **re**invent, dis- **dis**able, -ous fam**ous**, -ess hapin**ess**, -hood child**hood**;
Grammatical morphemes	a, an, the, the, and, more, most, that;	-s (plural), -'s (possessive) -s (3rd person, present), -ed (past tense), -en (past participle), -ing (present participle), -er (comparative), -est (superlative).

Morphemes that don't follow the rules

Although the definitions for morphemes are clear and precise, there are morphemes that are exceptions to the rules. There are not many exceptions, but they need to be noted. By stating and explaining them, one can easily understand the grammatical deviations, and how and why they appear.

Therefore, linguists categorized the non-patterned behaviour in several categories or groups.

The term **portmanteau morph** is used to refer to morphemes which incorporate and express several features such as in the following examples:

- the suffix *-s* in *walks* represents 3 grammatical categories: 3rd person, number - singular, tense – present;
- the suffix *-er* in *taller* expresses comparative degree, whereas -er in teacher denotes an agent noun.

The term **zero morph** is used in cases when there is no visible or obvious marker of a particular morpheme such as in the following examples.

The sheep *is* a domestic animal vs The sheep *are* domestic animals.

There is no plural marker *-s* in the second example, although it is expected because the verb itself signals plural subject.

I *hit* the alarm clock every time it rings. vs She *hit* the wall by accident.

There is no past tense marker -ed in the second example, but the grammatical context helps in determining the tense of the sentence

The term **empty morph** appears when there is a presence of a morph which doesn't represent any morpheme and does not appear to be related to any element of meaning. So, if we compare the two sets of examples that contain the suffix *-al*, we will notice that the second set contains the morpheme *-u* which does not represent any morpheme, it is just added to ease the pronunciation.

origin – original	intellect - intellect**u**al
culture – cultural	habit - habit**u**al
accident - accidental	context - context**u**al

The term **cranberry** or **unique morphs** refers to morphemes which have no meaning on their own, but they acquire meaning only when used in combination with certain words. Such morphs are *cran* in cranberry, *logan* in loganberry, *luke* in lukewarm.

Roots that don't follow the rules

In English, there is a group of roots that do not strictly follow the rules. They are lexical items that have meaning on their own, but can not be used as

free morphemes. These are elements that originate from Latin and Ancient Greek and were borrowed in English as bound morphemes. However, since they have full lexical content, but cannot be used by themselves, linguists named them **bound roots.** Such examples are: *demo* in democracy, *geo* in geography, *bio* in biology, *tele* in television.

In addition to morphemes and morphs that do not follow general rules, there are certain linguistic irregularities for which linguists have tried to find plausible explanations. One such phenomenon is **suppletion**, which refers to the inability to establish a regular connection between the word forms or more precisely, completely different forms are used within the same word's paradigm. Typical examples include the verb *go* with its past and past participle forms *went* and *gone*, or the comparative and superlative forms of *good*, namely *better* and *best*.

Review questions:

1. Identify *roots* and *bases* in the following examples:

- move, movement, remove, removal

_____

- employ, employer, employee, employment

_____

- care, careful, careless, carelessness

_____

2. Identify the different *types of morphemes, i.e. free, bound, lexical* and *grammatical morphemes* in the following examples:

- They watched the film silently. _____
- The car was damaged by a falling tree. _____

UNIT 3

Word Meaning

The meaning is the most important information associated with each word. Although we all easily talk about meaning or meanings of words, it is very difficult to define the concept of word meaning. Meaning is a complex phenomenon and it is a result of a network of relationships. It contains different aspects which are to be discussed in this unit.

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that deals with the word meaning(s). Lexical semantics, in particular, is concerned with all the different aspects of word meanings as they function in everyday language use. First, it includes the prototypical (most widely spread) meanings of words and phrases. Then, it tries to explain how words and larger phrases convey information and how meanings are constructed and interpreted by speakers, and how these meanings vary depending on contexts, speaker intention, dialect, temporal variation and discourse.

Lexical semantics distinguishes between different types of meanings. As Hurford et al. (2007, p.3) state the distinction is useful when analysing various kinds of communication. The primary distinction is between sentence or word meaning, on the one hand, and speaker meaning, on the other hand. Sentence or word meaning is what sentences or words literally mean and literally refer to independent of the context. For example, in the sentence *John is in the park*, the literal interpretation is that a person named John is located in a park or in *She speaks French*, the literal meaning is that the female individual is capable of communicating in the French language. Speaker meaning refers to what speakers mean or what their intention is when uttering a certain word or an expression. Speaker meaning, however, captures what the speaker intends to communicate, which may be different from the literal sentence meaning. Therefore, there is a distinction between literal and non-literal speaker meaning. Literal speaker meaning is equivalent to sentence or word meaning. When we speak literally, we mean what our words mean. Non-literal speaker meaning distinguishes from literal or sentence/word meaning. When we speak non-literally or figuratively, we mean something different from what our words mean,

such as the use of irony, sarcasm or metaphors. For example, the literal meaning of the expression *How clever of you*! expresses praise, but if the speaker uses it non-literally, it expresses criticism or sarcasm. Similarly, the use of metaphors such as in *Time is flying by* or in *She was shining with joy* express meanings that are not literal, but are easily understood by speakers of the same language through shared conceptual associations. These figurative expressions are part of the everyday communication, they enrich the language and exemplify the complexity of speaker meaning.

Apart from the literal and non-literal distinction, sentence or word meaning can be further subclassified into lexical and grammatical meaning. Lexical meaning is carried by content words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs; for example words like *joy, run* or *calm* refer to concepts, actions, or qualities. These words have semantic content. Grammatical meaning, by contrast, is conveyed by function or grammatical words, such as determiners, auxiliary verbs, conjunctions, prepositions. These elements do not carry full lexical content, but together with inflections are essential for forming grammatically correct sentences.

It is also important to note that meaning is not uniform across all speakers in language communities. Meanings can also vary across individual speakers and across language communities. There are variations based on idiolects, dialects and registers. Idiolectal meaning refers to the unique linguistic patterns of individual speakers. Each person has their own way of using the language, influenced by personal experience, education, and social environment. For example, in the sentence *Friday classes interfere with my weekend* the verb *interfere* carries an affective dimension and it does not merely describe 'overlap', but it implies 'an unwelcome intrusion' into time the speaker views as reserved for rest or personal enjoyment.

Dialectal variation of meaning refers to systematic differences in vocabulary and meaning among groups of language speakers. For instance, the word *bully* historically referred to as 'a lover, a sweetheart', now it means 'a person who intimidates others'. This shift represents temporal or historical dialect variation. Regional dialects differ geographically, as seen in the British English use of the word *government* and the American usage of *administration*. There are also stylistic or functional variations as in the following pairs of synonyms: *ophthalmologist* vs *eye doctor*, or *proceed* vs *continue*. These word pairs often convey similar meanings, but differ in formality or context of use. Lastly, social dialects or sociolects reflect differences in word choice based on different social or cultural background, different education, different age groups, etc.; for example, *collapse* vs *faint*, or *abundance* vs *plenty*.

Sense and reference

The two important aspects of word meaning are **sense** and **reference**. Reference is the link between words and objects in the outside world. Lyons (1977, p. 207) defines reference as a relationship that holds between an expression and what the expression stands for on a particular occasion. In other words, by means of reference, a speaker indicates which things are being talked about. For example, in the sentence *The classroom is sunny and cold*, the words *classroom, sunny,* and *cold* refer to a specific location, weather condition and a temperature, respectively. The real-world entities to which words point are known as referents. It is also possible for multiple expressions to refer to the same entity. In the sentence *John is a kind man* and *My boss is a kind man*, if both refer to the same person, then *John* and *My boss* are said to be coreferential expressions.

In contrast, sense is concerned with the relationships inside the language. Sense of a word is its place in a system of semantic relations with other words in the language (Stefanovski, 2007, p. 36). On the one hand, as Jackson & Ze Amvela (2022, p. 255) simply state sense is one of the several meanings of a polysemous word. So, for example the sense of the word *love* will be: 'affection', 'fondness', 'liking', 'intimacy'….. Therefore, in the sentence *I love my children* the sense of *love* is 'deep affection', while in *I love ice cream* the sense of *love* is 'liking'. Or the sense of the word *emotion* will be: 'feeling', 'sentiment', 'sensation', 'passion', 'intensity' ... In the example *Her voice trembled with emotion during the speech,* the sense of *emotion* is 'feeling and intensity', while in *Reactions should be based on arguments not on emotion*, the sense of emotion is 'sentiment'. On the other hand, Jackson & Ze Amvela (2022, p. 110) also state that sense is an internal meaning relation and sense relations hold between words within the vocabulary. So, we can add that different sense relations such as synonymy, polysemy, homonymy, hyponymy, antonymy constitute the sense of a word. The sense of the word *love* includes related concepts such as *emotion, liking, fancying, adoration, worship, passion,* as well as opposites like *hate, dislike, indifference,* and *jealousy*. In fact, all these words contribute to understanding the sense of the word *love* and its appropriate use in a context[1].

[1] Murphy (2003) describes word senses as dynamic and flexible, constantly developing to fit the requirements of a particular context.

Connotation and denotation

The sense-reference distinction is often paralleled or regarded similar with the concepts of **connotation** and **denotation**. Lyons (1977, p. 207) defines denotation as the relationship that holds between the lexeme and persons, things, properties, activities, processes outside the language. So, for example the denotation for the word *student* will be a certain individual/student in the outside world. Connotation, by contrast, refers to the emotional, cultural, or associative meanings a word might carry. Bauer (2022, p. 107) defines connotation as the emotional overtone which accompanies the denotation. For example, the word c*ocktail* denotes an alcoholic drink, but it may connote *enjoyment, pleasantness, luxury, elegance,* or *a social gathering*, depending on the context.

Intension and extension

The distinction between **intension** and **extension** is comparable to the sense–reference and connotation–denotation dichotomies. The extension of a word is the set of entities that the actual word refers to or it picks out in the world. The intension of the word is its inherent sense or all the concepts that the actual word evokes. For example:

	extension	intension
sunglasses	all sunglasses	sun protection, dark lenses, fashionable accessory
Friday	the actual day	last day of the working week, happiness, joy, TGIF
love	emotion	passion, like, happiness, adore, worship, fancy …….

In summary, all three pairs sense–reference, connotation–denotation and intension-extension capture slightly different yet complementary aspects of how words relate to meaning and the outside world.

Sentence meanings

Words are further combined into phrases, phrases into sentences and sentences into larger texts. So is with the meaning. Word meaning and

its key components sense and reference or connotation and denotation participate in the meaning of the whole sentence. In order to understand and interpret the meaning of a sentence correctly and further the meaning of the whole text, semanticists introduced the concepts of **sentences, utterances,** and **propositions.**

Semanticists treat sentence as an abstract entity, formed by the grammatical rules of a given language. Sentences are not tied to any specific contexts. For example, *The classroom is dark and cold* is a sentence when it does not refer to any specific classroom and its conditions, but it has a general meaning that arises from the meaning of the constituent lexemes. When the sentence is uttered and it refers to a specific classroom in a particular building with a precise reference to the classroom conditions, then it becomes an utterance. So, an utterance is the physical realization of a sentence - a stretch of speech or writing produced by a particular person at a specific time and place. Since the utterance is used with clear references, the meaning becomes concrete and precise. The distinction between a sentence and an utterance is important from a semantic perspective because utterances reveal the real and the concrete meaning of the expressions.

However, utterances contain propositions. Propositions represent the underlying meaning or sense of an utterance, independent of its syntactic form. For example, *Jenna speaks Hindi* and *Does Jenna speak Hindi*? are syntactically different, but they share the same propositional content which is 'Jenna speaks Hindi'. The corresponding declarative and interrogative sentences have the same propositional content. Proposition is that part of the meaning of the utterance of a simple declarative sentence which describes some state of affairs (Hurford et al.,2007, p.18). However, propositions are distinct from thoughts. While thoughts are internal, private mental processes, propositions are public and available to different persons. (Hurford et al.,2007, p. 23). Proposition is not a process, it is an entity.

For further understanding of the sentence meaning, semanticists introduced the concepts of **referring, non-referring expressions** and **predicators**. All these three elements contribute to transferring the sentence meaning. Referring expressions are any expressions used in an utterance to refer to someone or something, i.e. used with a specific referent in mind. They are realized through proper names, definite or indefinite nouns and pronouns. In the following examples, the underlined words are referring expressions.

I love *Mary*.

Our house in the middle of *our street*.

There is *a student* waiting *outside*.

Non-referring expressions are not used with a specific referent in mind. So in the example:

The cat is *a domestic animal*.

The underlined expressions are non-referring. They refer to a class, not to specific entities. Sometimes, proper nouns can be used as non-referring expressions as in the following examples.

John lives here. vs There is no John here.

She married *a Dutch*. vs She wants to marry a Dutch.

The underlined noun phrases are referring expressions, while the same non-underlined counterparts are non-referring expressions.

The third segment that participate in building the sentence meaning is called predicator. Predicators are words or expressions that are not referring expressions but still make the most specific contribution to the meaning of a sentence. Predicators are those words that are left after stripping away referring expressions and the verb "to be". (Hurford *et al.,*2007, p.44). So, in the examples that follow the underlined words are predicators.

I am a *teacher*.

She *lives in* New York.

They are what remains when referring expressions and the verb "to be" are removed.

Predicators can be realized through nouns, adjectives, verbs and prepositions. In the following examples, predicators are underlined.

Ann is a *genius*.(noun)

I am a *teacher*. (noun)

She is *nice*. (adjective)

John *loves* Mary. (verb)

The president *resigned*. (verb)

Sarah is *between* Mary and Liz. (preposition)

The meaning of a whole sentence results from the combination of the meaning of referring expressions, non-referring ones and predicators.

Finally, in order to be able to communicate easily, we need to have a background knowledge which enables us to talk about concrete and abstract concepts. Communication is not limited only to physically present, real-world objects. Language users frequently refer to abstract ideas, hypothetical situations, or even imaginary entities. To make such communication possible, speakers and listeners must share a common background knowledge called **the universe of discourse**. The universe of discourse is defined as the context or world (real, imaginary, or hybrid) that speakers assume when participating in the process of communication (Hurford et al.,2007, p.59). For instance, the word *weekend* can denote the days Saturday and Sunday, but in another context, it may imply relaxation, leisure activities, and freedom from obligations. When someone says: *I don't let anything or anyone interfere with my weekend*, they are drawing upon a shared cultural and experiential understanding of what weekends represent. If the participants in the communication are familiar with climate issues, they will easily understand the utterance *A coalition of island nations declares zero tolerance for carbon emissions after 2030.* because its universe of discourse is real and concerns climate changes.

In conclusion, semantics is a crucial area of linguistic analyses that examines how meaning is constructed, interpreted, and communicated.

Review questions:

1. Write *the sense* of the following words:

- mobile phone - _____
- cuisine - _____
- cookies - _____
- sun - _____

2. Why is the concept of *Universe of discourse* important for the process of communication. Base your explanation on the following examples:

- My phone is dead again. - _____

- Vampires live on blood, it's their nourishment and strength.-

_____

- The football player was shown red card for the cynical insult. -

_____

- After the scandal, the minister's position remained morally indefensible.

_____

- Keep seat belts fastened until turbulences stop.

_____

Why don't we have problems in understanding the above examples?

UNIT 4

Historical Approaches to the Study of Word Meaning

The question of what words mean and how they acquire their meaning has fascinated scholars for thousands of years. Linguists, philosophers, and, more recently, engineers working in information technology have all been trying to reveal the meanings of words in natural languages. Since ancient times, philosophers have tried to understand how words relate to the things they describe, how meaning is stored in the mind, and how speakers use words in communication. The study of word meaning has a long history, going back to Ancient Greece, where many of the fundamental debates that shaped the linguistic thought were first articulated.

Over time, various theories have emerged trying to explain the relationship between word form and meaning, the processes through which meaning is conveyed, and the mental and social mechanisms involved in its interpretation. As a result, there are many different approaches to the study of word meaning. This unit gives an overview of some of the most important approaches to the study of word meaning, outlining their main principles, strengths, and shortcomings.

Ancient Greece: Naturalists vs Conventionalists

One of the earliest debates about meaning took place in Ancient Greece, between the so-called Naturalists and Conventionalists. This discussion, documented by Plato (428/423 – 348-/47 BC) in his dialogue *Cratylus*[1], focused on whether there is a natural connection between the sound of a word and the object or concept it denotes, or whether this connection is purely a matter of speakers' agreement. Naturalists believed that words have an inherent, natural link to their referents. In their view, the sounds that make up words were not chosen arbitrarily but were somehow motivated by the nature of the things they represent. One example that seems to support this position is onomatopoeia—words that imitate natural

[1] *Cratylus* (2025, November 13). In *Wikipedia.* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cratylus_(dialogue)

sounds. For instance, words like *buzz*, *boo, meow*, and *bang* resemble, in their sound patterns, the noises they describe. These examples suggest a natural relationship between sound and meaning.

By contrast, Conventionalists argued that there is no inherent or necessary link between the form of a word and its meaning. Word forms, they claimed, are the product of convention and social agreement. Aristotle, one of the most prominent representatives of this approach, argued that language is based on convention rather than nature, and that names are not inherently linked to the things they denote. Many centuries later, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1959) revived and formalized the Conventionalist position. He introduced the concept of the *linguistic sign*, which links a "signifier" (the form of a word) to a "signified" (the concept it denotes). Crucially, Saussure (1959) stressed *the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign*. For example, there is nothing in the combination of the sounds *d-o-g* that naturally makes it the name of that animal – it is simply a product of convention.

The Image Theory of Meaning

Another approach to the word meaning is named the Image Theory of Meaning, which proposes that the meaning of a word is a mental image associated with it in the mind of the speaker or listener. This theory works well with words such as *unicorns, dragons, witches, Pegasus, Zeus, ...* For example, when one hears the word *witch*, one might understand the meaning of the word simply by evoking the mental image which is formed based on one's cultural background, phantasy, imagination, reading or visual experience. This theory works particularly well for imaginary entities like *Santa Claus* or *mermaids*. However, the Image Theory faces difficulties as different people may have different mental images for the same word, based on their experiences and cultural background. Also, many words, especially abstract nouns (*love*, *freedom*), verbs (*run*, *think*), pronouns (*she*, *they*), and function words (*and*, *or*, *because, the*), do not correspond to a single, clear mental picture. What are the images for pronouns when they denote different persons/objects at different times or what are the images for conjunctions *and, or, therefore, nevertheless*? Even for concrete objects such as *houses* or *buildings*, people form mental images shaped by their own experiences; this is even more true for emotions, which are felt and interpreted in highly individual ways.

The Conceptual Theory of Meaning

Due to the shortcomings of the Image Theory of Meaning, linguists and philosophers tried to overcome its limitations and provide a more comprehensive account of the concept of word meaning. This led to the development of The Conceptual Theory of Meaning, which proposes that words and the world are linked indirectly through mental concepts. More precisely, we understand the meaning of words indirectly through mental concepts, formed in our minds, that connect words with the objects in the outside world. In this model, the relationship can be illustrated as:

Sign (word) → Concept (meaning) → Referent (object)

A concept is a general mental representation of a category of objects, formed by abstracting shared properties from many individual instances. Concepts differ from images in that they are built on criterial features deduced by speakers from their real-world experience. For example:

- The concept of *table* might include "flat surface" and "supported by legs."
- The concept of *car* might include "four wheels," "steering wheel," and "enclosed structure."

Although the theory addressed some unresolved issues of The Image Theory of Meaning, it still had shortcomings and failed to provide a comprehensive explanation of how speakers understand word meaning. Key points remain: How do we determine which features are essential to a concept? Different people will have different concepts and different essential properties will be included in one concept. For example, dog owners will have different mental concepts closely associated with their own dogs. And, most fundamentally, do speakers truly understand the meaning of words through concepts at all?

The Referential Theory of Meaning

The theory states that the meaning of each word is the actual object it refers to; i.e. its referent. This Referential Theory of Meaning is straightforward and pragmatic because it implies that if you know the object or entity to which a word points, you know the meaning of the word. However, this approach faces several challenges. First, there are many words in languages that have no referents in the real-physical world, yet they are not meaningless. Such

examples include words that refer to imaginary entities as *unicorn*, *dragon*, *witch*, and *ghost* or words that refer to abstract concepts as *justice, equality, courage, truth*. These words have no actual referent in reality, but speakers still understand them and use them in meaningful sentences. Second, the problem arises when two words or expressions share the same referent but differ in meaning; in such cases, they are not synonymous. For instance, *a university professor* and *a novelist* could refer to the same person, yet these expressions convey different information. Similarly, *the president of the state* and *the chief army commander* might designate the same individual in certain political systems, but they highlight different roles or aspects of that person, so they have different meaning. These issues suggest that meaning cannot be reduced to reference alone.

The Use Theory of Meaning

The Use Theory of Meaning, associated with the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein[2], holds that the meaning of a word is its use in the language. In this view, to understand a word's meaning is to understand how it is used in various contexts by members of a linguistic community. This approach focuses on the pragmatic nature of meaning which is an important element in understanding the word meaning. The theory itself was not further developed and remained limited in scope, leaving many questions open. However, it also has limitations:

- Words have a meaning even outside any particular context.
- To use a word correctly, speakers need prior knowledge of its meaning.

Meaning and Semantic Features

The Theory of Componential Analysis appeared in the second half of the twentieth century. It states that meanings can be broken down into smaller units called semantic features or semantic components. According to this theory, language speakers understand the meaning of words simply by decomposing the meaning into smaller components, also called features, distinguishers or markers, and thus reaching the ultimate core of the meaning. The semantic components are universal, primitive elements that appear in the meanings of many words. For example:

[2] *Ludwig Wittgenstein* (2026, March 3). In *Wikipedia.* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_Wittgenstein

- *girl* can be represented as + HUMAN + FEMALE - ADULT.
- *mother* can be represented as + HUMAN + FEMALE + ADULT + PARENT.

This method works particularly well for words in clearly related sets, allowing linguists to highlight systematic differences between them. However, it is less effective for words whose meanings resist such decomposition, such as *yellow*, *simple*, *run*, or *commit*. It is not possible to decompose the meaning of these words into sufficient number of components that would completely explain their meaning. How many semantic features are needed in order to reach the ultimate core of the word meaning? It also raises the question of whether ordinary speakers actually represent and understand meaning in their minds in terms of discrete features.

The Prototype Theory

In the 1970s, Eleanor Rosch conducted research by which she found out that people identify members of a category by matching them with a typical member or a prototype of that category. Rosch developed The Prototype Theory as an alternative to the idea that categories are defined by a set of necessary and shared features. Her research showed that some members of a category are considered "better examples" than others. For instance, in the category *fish*, a *trout* is a more typical or prototypical member than an *eel*. According to Rosh (1975) the concepts are formed by mental comparison with the best examples – prototypes of their referents. Similarly, colour concepts are often centered around the most striking examples of each colour, which serve as prototypes.

The Prototype Theory was used in linguistics as a base for understanding a range of meanings associated with a certain word. According to this theory speakers/hearers understand the extended meanings of already existing words by making comparisons with their prototypical meanings. Yet, the initial relation between the word and its meaning is simply a naming relation. In fact, The Prototype Theory helps explain metaphorical extensions of meaning[3] since speakers understand the extended meanings on the basis of perceived similarity with the prototypical meaning as it can be seen in the examples that follow.

[3] Metaphors and metaphorical extensions of meaning will be further explained in the units that follow.

The boy *climbed* the tree.

The airplane *climbed* to 3000 ft.

The temperature *climbed* to 40 C degrees.

Prices are *climbing* day by day.

The Prototype theory served as a base for the development of a Cognitive Linguistic Theory which analyzes meaning in relation to human cognition and perception. According to this theory meaning results from the way speakers perceive and understand the reality.

Summary

Across history, scholars have approached the study of word meaning from many perspectives. Each theory tried to give a comprehensive and precise answer of how speakers understand the word meanings, but none has completely succeeded in it. Taken together, these approaches reveal that word meaning contains several layers. It has at least three main aspects:

1. **Referential** – the relationship between words and the entities or situations in the outside world.
2. **Connotational** – the sense, intension or connotation; i.e. different meanings and overtones associated with words.
3. **Pragmatic** – the role of context and speaker's intention in shaping meaning.

For linguists, understanding word meaning means recognizing that it is not a single, simple characteristic, but the result of complex interactions between sounds, thought, reality, and social usage and context. Historical perspectives on this topic not only enrich our understanding of how meaning works, but also show that the questions posed in Ancient Greece remain deeply relevant in modern linguistic theory, as well as in modern times.

Review questions:

1. What will be the *extension* and *intension* of the following examples:

- a bridge - a)_____
  b)_____
- a flower - a)_____
  b)_____
- a political party - a)_____
  b)_____
- an idea - a)_____
  b)_____

2. According to *the Prototype Theory of Meaning* what would be the prototype or the central meaning of the following examples. Also, state the other extended meanings or semantic variations of the prototypical meaning of each of the above examples:

- branch - a)_____
  b)_____
  c)_____
- dark - a)_____
  b)_____
  c)_____
- open - a)_____
  b)_____
  c)_____
- to drive - a)_____
  b)_____
  c)_____

UNIT 5

Lexical Meaning and Related Notions

Introduction

Lexical semantics studies meaning in relation to words. As it has been stated previously, meaning is a complex phenomenon and it needs to be analyzed from different aspects. The two main aspects of meanings are sense and reference. Sense relations are internal to the vocabulary of a language, i.e. they are relationships between words within the lexicon of a given language, while reference denotes the external relations that hold between the language and the outside world. The third important component of meaning is the pragmatic component, how we use words in different contexts.

For example, the word *book* has sense relations with the verbs *read, publish, borrow*, with the nouns that are constituent elements of *book* such as *chapter, page*, *cover*, *index*, *preface*, or with nouns that are synonyms with *book* such as *publication, work, volume*. Additionally, the reference of the word *a book* will be any object in the outside world. Both aspects are essential to understanding the meaning of the word *book* and further on, how to use the word in the process of communication. Therefore, the pragmatic component of the meaning of the word *book* depends on the context and the aim of communication. In the following examples the meaning of *book* is straight forward: *Her book was translated in English* or *Her name was written in the guest book.* The word *book* can be used metaphorically referring to 'strict rules' as in the example *He plays by the book* or sarcastically, as a criticism as in the following example *Oh, you wrote the book on excuses, didn't you?* with the meaning 'being an expert'.

The study of lexical meaning is not just of theoretical interest. It has practical applications in lexicography, language teaching, translation, computational linguistics, and even in fields such as marketing and law. Understanding how meaning of words are related, how they are grouped, and how they change over time helps us navigate and manipulate meaning more effectively.

Lexical fields (semantic fields)

The notion of **a lexical field** was introduced when linguists realized that a word's meaning is shaped not only by its own features but also by its relationships with other words in the vocabulary. In fact, the vocabulary of a language is not simply a listing of lexical items alphabetically ordered, but it is organized into fields on the basis of the meaning shared by these lexical items. Each lexical item is defined in relation to the other lexemes in the field. Even, our knowledge of lexical items is organized into lexical fields. For example, textbooks of foreign languages introduce and organize new vocabulary in correlation with lexical fields.

The most general definition of a lexical field is a set of words that refer to the same area of meaning, for example *communication*, *cooking* (Jackson & Ze Amvela, 2022, p. 253). Words in a lexical field are linked by this shared meaning and often occur together in similar contexts. Ferdinand de Saussure (1959) pointed out that concepts gain value by being contrasted with related concepts, i.e. words gain meaning from their relationships within this system. Later, John Lyons (1977, p. 268) defined the lexical field as a subset of the vocabulary organised both paradigmatically, through relations of choice and syntagmatically, through relations of combination.

Paradigmatic relations are relations of choice or substitution. Words that can substitute for each other in the same slot, on the vertical axis, belong to the same lexical field. Paradigmatic relations are relations set on a vertical axis. For ex.

- They live in a *house*. → *house* could be replaced by *apartment, cottage, villa, bungalow. House, apartment, cottage, villa, bungalow* all belong to the same lexical field of *dwelling*, and they stand in a paradigmatic relation because they can substitute for one another in the same context.
- She wore a pair of *shoes* → *shoes* could be replaced *by sandals, boots, sneakers, or slippers. Shoes, sandals, boots, sneakers,* and *slippers* all belong to the same lexical field of *footwear*, and they stand in a paradigmatic relation because they can substitute for one another in the same context.

Syntagmatic relations are relations of chains or collocations. Words that tend to co-occur with each other are said to belong to the same lexical field. Syntagmatic relations are relations set on a horizontal axis.

- They spread *fake* ____ → likely completions include *news*, *information*, *reports*. So, *fake* and *news, information* and *reports* are linked by this shared meaning and often occur together in similar contexts, i.e. they belong to the field of *communication*.
- She baked *fresh* ____ → *bread, cookies, cake, muffins*. So, *fresh* collocates with *bread, cookies, cake, muffins* and they often appear in similar contexts, i.e. they belong to the field of *food/pastry*.

These relations show that the meaning of a word is not understood or experienced only in isolation, but depends on its place within a network of associations. Therefore, in language learning, organising vocabulary by fields helps learners make connections and remember words more easily.

Lexical cohesion

Lexical cohesion is one of the crucial characteristics of a well-structured text. It enables language users to create a text that will be precise and concise with a smooth flow within and between sentences. One of the instruments for achieving lexical cohesion is the knowledge of words belonging to a lexical field. If we analyze the following short text on pastry, we will see the lexical ties between words that belong to the same lexical field.

The bakery displayed a wide range of baked goods. Fresh *bread*, from crusty *baguettes* to soft *rye loaves,* filled the shelves. Nearby were jars of *cookies*, including *oatmeal biscuits* and *gingerbread*. A rich *sponge cake* stood beside a creamy *cheesecake*, while baskets of *muffins—blueberry, banana*, and *bran*, almost like *cupcakes* or *scones*—tempted every passer-by.

There are obvious lexical ties between the words in italics in the text. The lexical ties are based on the sense relations of synonymy and hyponymy between the italicized words. *Baguettes* and *rye loaves* are tied with *bread*, *biscuits* and *gingerbread* with *cookies, muffins, cupcakes,* or *scones* with *cakes*. Jackson & Ze Amvela (2022, p. 131) state that lexical ties are achieved when there is some lexical relationship between two or more words in successive sentences in text.

This shows that words from the same lexical field create cohesive links within a text. They serve to structure the text, to make it coherent and thus easy to follow.

Collocations and fixed expressions

Collocations

A collocation is a pair or group of words that are often used together in a language. The combination is not entirely fixed, but there is a strong expectation that the words will co-occur. Collocations are characterised by high degree of mutual expectancy, which means that one lexeme expects another to occur with it. They are not fixed because there is always some degree of choice left. The following are examples of collocations:

blue sky, crystal clear, absolutely positive, data analysis, *trial and error*, *highly recommended, work hard;*

Fixed expressions

Fixed expressions are combinations of two or more words that are closely connected so they demonstrate a very high degree of mutual expectancy. There are 3 types of fixed expressions: clichés, proverbs, and idioms.

Clichés are fixed expressions in which the mutual expectancy of lexemes has become fixed and as a result they have lost originality. They are ossified collocations which have become meaningless through excessive use.

real bargain, best buy, you can't buy love, fair and democratic elections, dangerous precedents, real progress;

Clichés are good and useful in different situations when one doesn't know what to say such as in:

- Christmas cards: *Merry Christmas, Happy New Year*;
- party: *welcome*, *good to see you, all the best, many happy returns of the d*ay;
- funerals: *my condolences*;
- correspondence: *sincerely yours, best regards, looking forward to seeing/hearing you*;

Proverbs or short wise sayings are fixed expressions that convey wisdom, often expressed in a metaphoric way. There is a contrast and discrepancy between the literal meaning and the context to which they refer. They reflect a shared cultural fund of folk knowledge and wisdom. (Stefanovski, 2007, p. 57).

An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
All that glitters is not gold.
Easy come, easy go.
When in Rome, do as the Romans do.
Every cloud has a silver lining.

Idioms are fixed expressions consisting of two or more than two words whose meaning cannot be derived from the literal meanings of constituent words[1]:

out of the blue, spill the beans, a piece of cake,
under the weather, kick the bucket.

Lexical gaps

A lexical gap is the absence of a lexical item where one might expect to find it (Stefanovski, 2007, p. 59). More precisely, it is the absence of a word at the expected structural place in a lexical field. For example in the semantic field of kinship terms there are words that are missing although their presence is expected:

mother	father
sister	brother
wife	husband
aunt	uncle
cousin	/

Lexical gaps can reveal much about how a language's vocabulary is structured and how it reflects the culture of the language community. Apart from lexical gaps, there are phonological gaps that refer to possible but unused sound combinations in a language, then grammatical gaps that denote missing forms in a paradigm such as some irregular verbs that lack certain forms (the modal verb *must* has no past tense form, unlike

[1] **Phrasal verbs** are multi-word lexemes that consist of a verb and one or more particles (adverbs or prepositions) and create a meaning different from the meaning of the verb as in: *give up* 'stop trying', *look up to* 'admire', *look up* 'search for information'.

other modal verbs) and derivational gaps that occur when words cannot be formed even though the morphological pattern exists (*unhappy* is fine, but *ungood** is not). Lexical gaps show how languages differ because each language community conceptualizes the world in its own way, following its social and cultural background.

Linguistic theories of meaning

Language is the main instrument for creating, sharing, and interpreting meaning. Therefore, linguists have always been concerned with how languages function, how speakers use languages, how they learn foreign languages and why languages differ in the way they express reality. As a result, two major linguistic theories developed, known as theory of linguistic relativity and theory of linguistic universalism. They offer contrasting views on the relationship between language, thought, and reality.

Linguistic Relativity

The theory of linguistic relativity claims that languages differ in how they conceptualise reality and that the vocabulary of no two languages matches perfectly well. Examples that support the theory are:

- Eskimo languages have multiple distinct words for various types of *snow*.
- Arabic has many different words for *camel*.
- Chinese has several terms for *rice*.
- English distinguishes *think* and *mean*, while Macedonian uses *misli* as an equivalent for both words.

Grammatical structures can also differ significantly:

- English has the Present Perfect tense, which Macedonian lacks.
- English uses articles (*the*, *a*), while Russian does not.

Linguistic Determinism

A stronger form of relativity is linguistic determinism, which argues that language shapes and even limits the range of thought. According to this view, speakers cannot conceptualise ideas for which their language has no words or structures. This extreme position is challenged by the fact that

people can learn new languages and that translation between languages is possible, even if sometimes imperfect.

Linguistic Universalism

The theory of linguistic universalism thesis holds that all human languages share common underlying structures because language is an innate human capacity. Language speakers acquire the language they are surrounded by from their early childhood. While surface forms differ, there are universal linguistic categories such as tense, number, pronouns, colour terms that appear in all languages. Only their realization is different. Universalism suggests that differences between languages are variations on a shared cognitive template. The representatives support their theory by stating arguments that people learn foreign languages, translate from one into another language.

Colours and kinship terms as arguments for both theories

Representatives of both theories use lexical fields of colours and kinship terms as arguments to support their theories.

Colours are a good example of a lexical field where the two theories of relativity and universality intersect.

a) On the one hand, colours are a physical property, that exist in nature and distinguish along three dimensions:

Hue – wavelength of light

Luminosity – brightness or darkness

Saturation – intensity or dilution with white.

The fact that colours exist in nature goes in favour of linguistic universality, because colours are universal and available to all humans.

b) On the other hand, different languages use different number of colour terms and different colour shades, depending on the needs of the society in which certain language lives. Therefore, this argument goes in favour of linguistic universalism.

Kinship terminology also illustrates both cultural variation and universal tendencies. While all languages distinguish between three dimensions: sex (male, female, neutral) lineality-vertical line (grandparents, parents, children) and collaterality-horizontal axis (siblings), the number of kinship terms vary widely across different languages.

English, for example, has one term *uncle* for mother's or father's brother or any close male relative, while in Macedonian there are three terms *вујко* (mother's brother), *стрико* (father's brother), *метин* (mother's sister husband) depending on the kinship relations. The number and variety of kinship terms depend on the tradition, culture, standards of living. The richness of kinship vocabulary often reflects the social and cultural reality and importance of extended family relationships.

Summary

Lexical meaning is a rich and complex area of study. Words exist in structured relationships—both paradigmatic and syntagmatic—and are part of larger lexical fields. Their meanings are shaped when used in combinations with other words from the lexical field and by the way speakers use them in contexts. The social and cultural factors also influence the way speakers understand and present the reality which is further reflected in differences in lexical fields. Nevertheless, languages are similar because of the universal sets of semantic categories, yet they differ because they reflect the social and cultural features of the societies in which they live and develop. Theories of linguistic relativity and universalism offer different explanations for similarities and differences in vocabularies across languages. Evidence from domains such as colour terms and kinship terms shows that languages can vary greatly while still sharing universal linguistic categories.

Review questions:

1. According to Lyons (1977, p. 268) *lexical fields* are paradigmatically and syntagamatically structured subset of the vocabulary. Take into account the above definition and provide the lexical fields of the following English words:

- a star - a)_____

b)_____

- a profile - a)_____

b)_____

- a dream - a)_____

b)_____

2. Provide possible collocations with the words listed below:

- to launch - _____
- to give - _____
- recommended - _____
- podcast - _____

UNIT 6

Synonymy: Similarity of Sense

Introduction

One of the central topics in lexicology is how meanings are related to each other, both at the level of individual words and at the level of phrases and sentences. Sense relations reveal how words are interrelated within the language. The sense relation of synonymy is crucial and one of the most discussed due to the large number of synonyms in a language. English is especially rich with synonyms primarily because it borrowed a lot of words from other languages, especially from French and Latin, and also it is a mother tongue of people living in different geographical regions which additionally enrich the English lexicon.

Synonymy

Synonymy is a sense relation between words that are distinct in form but share the same or nearly the same meaning. Roughly speaking, synonymy is the 'sameness' of meaning. The word "synonymy" originates from the Greek word *sunonumon* i.e. from *sun*-'with' and *onoma* 'name'. In theory, synonyms are words that can be used interchangeably in all contexts without a change in meaning. For example:

begin - start
end - finish
say - tell
help - assist
ask - inquire
show - demonstrate
use - apply
buy - purchase
destroy - ruin
happy – joyful

big - large
sad - unhappy
angry - furious
smart – intelligent

All the above examples exhibit same or nearly the same meaning. And if we try to use them interchangeably in all contexts, we will realize that it is almost impossible because they are not absolute synonyms.

- *big* and *large*:
a big / large house;
my big sister but not *my large sister**** is odd.

- *buy* and *purchase*:
I want to *buy / purchase* a new laptop.
Money *can't buy* love, but not Money *can't purchase* love***.

- *angry* and *furious*:
I was *angry / furious* about the delay.
A *furious* blizzard shut the roads, but not An *angry* blizzard shut the roads.***

Absolute/strict and loose synonymy

There is a general classification of synonyms into absolute and loose synonyms. Theoretically speaking, absolute or strict synonyms are two words that can be used interchangeably in most of the contexts, whereas loose synonyms show a certain degree of overlap in meaning. The degree of meaning overlap of loose synonyms may vary to a greater or lesser extent. So, *smart* and *intelligent* are loose synonyms because they overlap in one aspect of meaning like in the following examples:

She is a *smart/intelligent* student who always gets top grades.
He looks *smart* in that new suit, but he isn't very *intelligent*.

Absolute or strict synonymy means perfect synonymy. However, linguists have long emphasized the fact that perfect synonymy does not exist. Language economy does not allow existence of absolute synonyms

because in that way language will become overloaded with so many words and the communication will become difficult or even impossible. Therefore, synonyms almost always differ in at least one aspect: register, style, connotation, frequency, or collocational range. So, if we analyze some of the above examples (see Synonymy) in different contexts, we will see the difference in terms of one of the aspects. For ex.

- *help* and *assist* are synonyms that are distinguished at the level of formality;

I will *help* you with the boxes. (neutral)

Please, assist him in moving the boxes. (more formal)

Partial synonymy

In many cases, synonyms can be described as instances of partial synonymy**.** Partial synonyms are words that share at least one sense in common, but diverge in others. For instance, *see, understand,* and *realize* share the figurative sense of 'grasping mentally' as in:

- I *see / understand / realise* what you mean.

but differ in terms of their original meanings such as:

- I can *see* the mountain peak. / I can *understand* the concept. /

He *realized* his ambition.

Similarly, synonyms often differ in **connotation.** "I'm *tired*" and "I'm *exhausted*" both express fatigue, but the latter carries a more intense, stronger degree of it. Or, in the examples "He is *crazy*", "He is *mad*", "He is *insane*", the words *crazy, mad* and *insane* are synonyms, but they differ in connotation since they reflect the speaker's feelings and emotions towards the actual event. Connotational synonyms express speaker's attitude and perception towards the topic of conversation.

Sources of synonymy

The richness of synonymy in English results from the various ways and sources the language uses to expand its lexicon in order to express different senses, nuances, and subtleties of meaning. As mentioned previously, the major reason is extensive borrowing from other languages, mostly from French and Latin and regional dialects. Synonymy arises from multiple sources (Stefanovski, 2007, p. 73).

- **Borrowings** from foreign languages are a major contributor. English, in particular, has borrowed extensively from French, Latin, and Greek, as well as from other languages:

  begin – initiate – commence
  rise – mount – ascend
  kingly – royal – regal
  belly – stomach – abdomen
  end – finish – complete
  gather – assemble – collect

- **Different regional dialects** provide alternative forms, especially British and American English. The following examples are synonym pairs in British and American English:

  caravan – trailer
  pavement – sidewalk
  lift – elevator
  farm – ranch
  autumn – fall
  tin – can

- **Level of formality** also create synonym pairs. The following pairs of synonyms illustrate neutral (on the left) and more formal (on the right) words:

  question – interrogate
  hearty – cordial
  youth – adolescent
  begin – commence
  stop – cease
  marriage – matrimony

- **Level of technicality** distinguishes between jargon and non-jargon words:

  lexeme – word
  analgesic – painkiller

gender – sex
orthography – spelling
cardiologist – heart doctor
hypertension – high blood pressure

- **Single verbs** and **phrasal verbs** illustrate stylistic choice:

establish – set up
discover – find out
continue – go on
handle – deal with
abandon – give up
reject – turn down
postpone – put off

- **Compounding** also produces synonyms like:

home sick – nostalgic
fireworks – pyrotechnics
newborn – baby
blood vessel – vein
heart beat - pulse
sweetheart – lover

- **Generic verbs** with **deverbal nouns**:

to rest – to take a rest
to sleep – to have a sleep / take a sleep
to smile – to give a smile
to kiss – to give a kiss
to fight – to have a fight
to look – to take a look / have a look

- **Clipping** results in pairs like:

ad – advertisement
info – information
promo – promotion

bus – omnibus
pub – public house
fridge – refrigerator

- **Euphemisms** introduce softer or more polite synonyms:

pass away – die
hearing impaired – deaf
collateral damage – civilian deaths
escort - prostitute
expecting - pregnant
urinate – pee

So, we can conclude that synonyms are an essential part of any language because they enrich expression**,** increase precision, and offer stylistic variety. By choosing among synonyms, speakers and writers can adjust their language to suit different contexts, audiences, and purposes — whether formal, informal, emotional, or neutral. In this way, synonymy contributes both to the richness and flexibility of vocabulary and to the organization of the lexicon itself, showing how words interrelate and structure our understanding of experience.

Hyponymy and meronymy

Synonymy is a symmetric sense relation between two or more than two words. Hyponymy and meronymy are sense relations that relate the words hierarchically.

Hyponymy is the relation of inclusion, where the sense of one lexeme is included in the sense of another. The more general term is the hyper(o)-nym or the superordinate term whose meaning includes the meaning of the hyponym or the subordinate term. For example:

Hyper(o)nym	Hyponyms
fruit	apple, banana, peach, orange …..
profession	doctor, teacher, lawyer, engineer ….
flower	tulip, rose, daffodil, daisy …..
vehicle	car, bus, ship, bicycle, airplane …..

This relation allows us to organize vocabulary into hierarchies, much like biological taxonomy.

Meronymy, by contrast, refers to part-whole relations. Words such as *lips, nose, forehead* are meronyms of *face. Computer* is seen as whole, while *monitor, keyboard, mouse, processor* are its meronyms. *Tree* is a whole, whereas *root, trunk, branches, leaves* are its meronyms.

Both hyponymy and meronymy are hierarchical sense relations, but they are different. Within the sense relation of hyponymy, hyponyms are kind of the hyper(o)nym such as *tulips, roses, daisies* are kind of *flowers*. Within the sense relation of meronymy, meronyms denote indispensable parts of a whole, such as *lips*, *nose*, and *forehead*, which are parts of the *face*.

Synonymy, hyponymy, and meronymy show that words are connected in lexical networks, and we usually explain one word by referring to other related words in the same network.

Truth relations

Truth relations are sense relations between sentences. Sentences may be related through **paraphrase, entailment, presupposition, contradiction,** or **ambiguity**. Each of these categories illustrates a different way in which two utterances can be linked through meaning.

Paraphrase

A paraphrase is a sense relation between sentences, when one sentence expresses the same proposition/meaning as another, even though it may differ in wording or syntactic arrangement. In other words, two paraphrases are truth-conditionally equivalent: if one is true, the other must also be true. Consider the examples: *The company hired five new employees.*/ *Five new employees were hired by the company.* Despite differences in grammatical structure (active vs passive voice), the propositional content remains the same. The following examples maintain the same propositional content despite the differences in the vocabulary as in: *I own this car* is equivalent in meaning to *This car belongs to me.* Also, *The team consists of five experts.* is equivalent in meaning to *Five experts make up the team.*

The relationship of paraphrase is parallel to the sense relation of synonymy. Paraphrase is important in communication because it allows for flexibility of expression while preserving the same meaning. Writers, teachers, and translators rely on paraphrase to adjust style, emphasis, or register, while still communicating the same basic message.

Entailment

Entailment is a sense relation between two sentences in such a way that the truth of one sentence necessarily implies the truth of another. The relationship of entailment is parallel to the sense relation of hyponymy. While paraphrase expresses symmetry or equivalence, entailment refers to a non-symmetric or one-way relationship: if the first sentence is true, the second must necessarily be true, but not necessarily vice versa. For example, *The police wounded the terrorist* entails *The terrorist is injured.* The act of wounding logically implies injury, but the reverse does not always hold: *a terrorist may be injured in ways not caused by the police*. Another example is *The committee approved the proposal.* which entails *The proposal is accepted.* The approval necessarily results in acceptance, so the second sentence follows inevitably from the first. Entailment reflects the logical structure of language. It shows how the meaning of one proposition can contain the meaning of another, and it functions as the underlying principle for interpreting meaning and deducing logical conclusions in communication.

Presupposition

A different type of meaning relation is presupposition. Presuppositions are assumptions or background beliefs implied by the speaker, as opposed to what is explicitly asserted. For instance, the question *Would you like another glass of wine?* presupposes the hearer has already had a glass of wine. The sentence *The Mayor of London is a woman* presupposes that London has a mayor. Similarly, *Have you stopped smoking?* presupposes that the hearer used to smoke. Presuppositions are crucial and are inevitable part of the process of communication since it shortens communication and makes it more efficient. Instead of re-explaining the whole situation, we can use forms that automatically "carry" background assumptions.

Contradiction

Another important relation is contradiction, which occurs when the truth of one sentence necessarily implies the falsity of another. For example, *My brother is a bachelor, but he is married* contains a contradiction, since the concept of bachelorhood is incompatible with marriage. But it is logical in cases when the person behaves in a certain manner. Likewise, *The car is expensive, in fact cheap* juxtaposes mutually exclusive propositions. Yet,

the sentence is reasonable when the car maintenance is cheap although the sales price was high. Also, the sentence *Let's agree to disagree* shows contradiction at the lexical and pragmatic level. However, it makes sense when people tend to overcome different approaches to a certain problem. The relationship of contradiction is parallel to the sense relation of antonymy. Contradiction is often exploited in rhetoric, humour, and paradox. Recognizing contradiction is also essential for logical reasoning and argumentation.

Ambiguity

Finally, sentences may be related through ambiguity, a condition in which a single sentence can be assigned more than one meaning. So, the sentence *He is looking for a match.* is ambiguous because the word *match* is ambiguous and it can mean: *match* 'a suitable partner', *match* 'a sports game,' or *match* 'a small stick for making fire'. Also, the sentence *They found the bat in the attic.* is ambiguous because of the ambiguity of the word *bat* which can refer to 'a flying mammal' or 'a sports equipment (baseball/cricket)'. This type of ambiguity is a lexical ambiguity due to the completely different senses that the words *match* and *bat* possess. The relationship of ambiguity is parallel to the sense relation of homonymy or polysemy.

Ambiguity can be structural when the words in the same sentence relate to each other in different ways, although none of the words are ambiguous. So, for example the sentence *Intelligent students and professors were part of the project.* can be interpreted as meaning that 'both students and professors were intelligent', or 'only the students'.

Other example that illustrates structural ambiguity is *The teacher spoke to the student with a smile.* which might mean that 'the teacher smiled while speaking' or that 'the student had a smile while being spoken to'.

The sentence *Someone loves everyone* exhibits scope ambiguity; i.e. it could be interpreted as 'there is a particular person who loves every person' or 'each person is loved by at least one person (not necessarily the same one)'.

Ambiguity is not merely a linguistic problem: it is often deliberately employed in news headlines, literature, advertising, and humour, where the richness of multiple meanings can add value to the communication, simply by attracting attention, engaging the audience or provoking curiosity.

Summary

Synonymy and hyponymy are fundamental sense relations that reveal how words are interconnected within the language system. By linking words of similar or hierarchical meaning, we manage to understand subtle distinctions and organize vocabulary into coherent lexical fields. These relations not only expand and enrich the lexicon but also enhance expressiveness and precision in communication. In discourse, they enable variation and depth, making language more flexible, nuanced, and creative. As for truth relations, they show how speakers can express the same idea in different ways, understand more than what is directly said or manipulate the language for various purposes. For students of lexicology, knowing these concepts is important because they explain how meaning works and help in using language more clearly and effectively.

Review questions:

1. What are the possible sources of synonymy in the following pairs of synonyms:

- job – occupation - _____
- statistics – stats - _____
- choose – select - _____
- come in – enter - _____
- slow down – decelerate - _____

2. Provide synonyms for the underlined words that will suit the following word combinations:

- They <u>charged</u> me €20 for delivery. _____
- The police <u>charged</u> him with fraud. _____
- I need to <u>charge</u> my phone. _____
- She <u>runs</u> a small café. _____

- The software runs smoothly on my laptop. _____
- Tears ran down his cheeks. _____
- The museum holds a rare collection _____
- They held a meeting on Monday _____
- She held her breath. _____

3. The sense relations between sentences are known as truth relations: *paraphrase, presupposition, contradiction* and *ambiguity*.

a) Provide *paraphrase* of the following example:
- The conference was postponed because of the storm.

_____

b) What is the *presupposition* in the following examples:
- It is unusual for the professor to make mistakes.

_____

c) What is the *contradiction* in this phrase:
- We must be cruel to be kind.

_____

d) What are the different interpretations of the following *ambiguous sentence*:
- I need a key.

_____

UNIT 7

Antonymy: Oppositeness and Dissimilarity of Sense

One of the most important sense relations in semantics, together with synonymy, is antonymy or oppositeness of meaning. Antonymy is not as ubiquitous as synonymy, but it helps us understand how words are connected through contrast, how the vocabulary of a language is structured, and how meaning can be expressed through opposites. It is a relation between two or more words that belong to the same lexical field and the same part of speech, but they are different or incompatible in one feature of meaning. For example, pairs such as *hot–cold*, *dark–light*, *young–old, kind–rude, happy–sad*, *love–hate*, *in–out*, *up–down* or *wife–husband* illustrate this relation. These words are similar in all aspects except in one crucial feature of meaning which defines their opposition. Antonymy is typical for adjectives (*long–short*), but it also appears with other word classes such as nouns (*life–death*), verbs (*love–hate*), prepositions/prepositional adverbs (*in–out*) and adverbs (*slowly–quickly*).

Unlike synonyms, antonyms do not differ in style, emotional tone, or distribution; their contrast lies purely in meaning. For instance, *hot* and *cold* can be used in the same contexts without stylistic difference.

Use and co-occurrence of antonym pairs

Antonymy plays an important role in the organization of vocabulary and in the way speakers structure their thoughts and descriptions of the world. So, antonyms very frequently appear together in the same sentence or in neighbouring sentences (Fellbaum, 1995, as cited in Jackson & Ze Amvela, 2022, p. 119). There are three major reasons for their co-occurrence. One is when the full range of a concept or activity is expressed through the opposite ends of an antonym pair such as in: *He came early and left late.* or *She loves peace and hates violence.* The second reason is that certain structures appear as fixed expressions or collocations, so we use them as ready-made phrases such as *for better or for worse, sooner or later, a matter of life and death, wanted dead or alive, ups and downs in one's*

life. The third reason is when speakers want to emphasize the point or to create a stylistic effect as in *Is this the beginning of the end or the end of the beginning?*, *Is it a step forward or a step back?* or *He acted out of love, not hate.*

Types of antonymy

Antonyms exhibit different types of oppositeness of meaning. Therefore, they are subclassified into four major types of antonymy: **gradable antonymy, complementary antonymy, relational (**or **converse) antonymy,** and **taxonomic sisters** or **multiple incompatibility**. These four major types of antonyms are root antonyms since they are not morphologically related. In addition, linguists also identify derivational antonymy, antipodals, and phrasal antonymy as minor or extended types.

Gradable antonymy

Gradable antonyms are pairs of words that express opposite ends of a continuous scale of values or spectrum. Between these two extremes, there are often intermediate items. Examples of gradable antonyms are the following pairs:

cold – hot
good – bad
old – young
rich – poor
long – short
fast – slow
expensive – cheap
beautiful – ugly
love – hate

Gradable antonyms, as the term itself suggests, refer to words that can be compared or graded because they represent different degrees of a quality or a value along a continuous scale or spectrum. The opposition is therefore not absolute, but relative. So, most of the members of gradable antonyms are adjectives. The antonyms *cold* and *hot* define two ends of the temperature scale, but between them we can find words such as *cool*,

lukewarm, and *warm*. Similarly, *good* and *bad* have intermediate values like *fair*, *poor*, and *average*. The pair *old–young* also allows for intermediate stages such as *middle-aged*.

Gradable antonyms can be tested by seeing whether they can combine with degree modifiers such as *very*, *quite*, *too*, or comparative forms such as *colder* and *hotter*. For instance, we can say *very cold*, *quite warm*, or *How hot is it today?*, which shows that these words are part of a continuum and therefore gradable.

Relativity of gradable antonyms

An important feature of gradable antonyms is that they do not refer to absolute standards. What counts as *old* or *tall* depends on perspective and context. From the perspective of a twenty-year-old person, someone who is fifty years old will be considered relatively old, whereas from the perspective of a seventy-year-old person, the fifty-year-old will be regarded as relatively young. A fifteen-year-old boy may be *tall* compared with his classmates but *short* compared with professional basketball players. Gradable antonyms therefore express relative and context-dependent meanings rather than fixed oppositions. In addition, one of the words in a gradable pair is often **unmarked**, meaning it is the neutral or more general term, while the other is **marked**. The unmarked member is more widely used. For example, we normally ask *How old is your baby?* instead of *How young is your baby?* or *How tall is she?* rather than *How short is she?*. The unmarked terms *old* and *tall* are thus more common and more flexible in use, while the marked members are used when the speaker wants to differentiate and emphasize the quality.

Complementary antonymy

Complementary antonyms represent a binary opposition in which the two members are mutually exclusive. It is *an either/or* relationship of oppositeness, so the existence of one member excludes the existence of the other. There are no intermediate possibilities between them, and both cannot be true at the same time. The group of complementary antonyms is heterogeneous regarding the word class of antonyms, since it includes adjectives, nouns, verbs and prepositions. The following are examples of complementary or contradictory antonyms:

present – absent
open – shut
alive – dead
male – female
true – false
on – off
permit – forbid
win – lose

The above examples illustrate complementary antonymy. If a person is *present at the class*, they cannot be *absent*; if a door is *open*, it cannot be *shut*; if the person is *alive*, they cannot be *dead*. The meaning of one member automatically excludes the other. This type of antonymy expresses absolute contrasts rather than degrees of difference. Yet, the language sometimes allows metaphorical extensions for achieving stylistic effects such as in 'He was more dead than alive'.

Relational (converse) antonymy

Relational or converse antonymy describes pairs of words that express the same relationship from opposite perspectives. The difference between them lies in the direction of the relationship, not in degree or absolute opposition. The following are examples of relational antonyms:

above – below
in front of – behind
before – after
buy – sell
own – belong to
borrow – lend
parent – child
teacher – student
husband – wife
north of – south of

In each case, the two members describe a reciprocal relationship between the same participants. If *A* is *above B*, then *B* is *below A*. If *Mary*

owns a house, the house *belongs to* Mary. If Mary is John's *wife*, then John is Mary's *husband*. The relation itself remains the same, but the perspective changes. The group of relational antonyms includes the word classes of verbs, nouns and prepositions.

Multiple incompatibles or taxonomic sisters

Another important type of opposition is multiple incompatibility or taxonomic sisters, which involves a set of words that are mutually exclusive but belong to the same category or system. Multiple incompatibles do not come in pairs, they are always more than two, or a whole group of lexical items that together covers the entire semantic field. The following are examples of multiple incompatibles:

spring, summer, autumn, winter	(four seasons)
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday …..	(days of the week)
black, white, yellow, red, green, blue, …	(colours)
north, south, east, west	(directions)

For example, the four seasons *spring, summer, autumn,* and *winter* are taxonomic antonyms because each term represents one part of the same system, and choosing one excludes the others. Similarly, the days of the week (*Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc.*), colours (*red, blue, green, yellow*), and directions (*north, south, east, west*) are examples of such systems. Each member of the taxonomic set occupies its own position within a field, and all members are on the same semantic level. The choice of one member of the set excludes the use of all the other members.

Derivational antonymy

Derivational antonyms are formed by adding affixes, both prefixes or suffixes, to the existing roots. Affixes typically add a negative or opposite, reverse meaning to the base word, thus creating a lexical contrast. Derivational antonymy is very productive in English. The following affixes are used for deriving antonyms:

a-	amoral, asymmetry, anarchy
anti-	anticlimax, antifreeze
dis-	dislike, disobey

in-	inaccurate, illegal, impossible
mis-	misbehave, misinform, mislabel
non-	non-existent, non-smoker
un- (1)	unhappy, unfair, unpleasant
un- (2)	untie, unzip, undo, unlock
-less	careless, speechless, moneyless

There are eight prefixes and one suffix used for deriving antonyms. Derivational antonyms are often complementary pairs, such as *existent - non-existent* or *possible - impossible*.

Antipodals and phrasal antonymy

Some antonyms indicate the extreme points on a scale, known as antipodals. They mark the outermost ends of a well-defined continuum or plane of reference. Antipodals usually function as fixed expressions in a language. The following are examples of antipodals:

head to toe
cradle to grave
first to last
top to bottom
dawn to dusk
day to night

Phrasal antonymy, on the other hand, occurs in multi-word expressions or fixed phrases. For example:

in front of – at the back of
by accident – on purpose
in sight – out of sight
on duty – off duty
at the top of – at the bottom of

These pairs show that the concept of oppositeness does not only include individual words but it also includes larger linguistic units.

Summary

To summarize, antonymy represents the relationship of oppositeness of meaning between words belonging to the same part of speech and the same lexical field. The major types of antonymy—gradable, complementary, relational, and taxonomic—are typically formed from root words and therefore express absolute or direct oppositions. Derivational antonyms are created through morphological processes such as prefixation and suffixation. There is also so-called syntactic antonymy which is expressed through negation at a sentence level. However, syntactic antonymy is softer than derivational antonymy. Thus, a meaning like *She is unhappy* is much stronger than a meaning like *She is not happy*.

Understanding antonymy helps students see how words are connected through contrast, how meaning can be expressed through degrees and how opposites function logically as in *a bittersweet memory* or *a cruel kindness*. It also highlights the creative potential of language, where opposites can be exploited for emphasis, irony, humour or expressiveness.

Review questions:

1. For the following words give the a) absolute antonyms, b) derivational antonyms and c) syntactic antonyms.

- accurate: a) _____
  b) _____
  c) _____
- legal: a) _____
  b) _____
  c) _____
- approve: a) _____
  b) _____
  c) _____

2. Create contradictions by using the following pairs of antonyms like in the example given:

ex. agree – disagree; *We agree to disagree.*

- win - lose - _____

- forget - remember - _____

- love – hate - _____

- open – close - _____

UNIT 8

Polysemy and Homonymy: Ambiguity of Sense

Ambiguity occurs when a word, phrase, or sentence can be understood in more than one way or when they have more than one interpretations. More precisely, ambiguity results from the sense relations of polysemy and homonymy, as well from the way words interact in a sentence. Sometimes, the scope of reference in a sentence can include more than one possible referent, thus creating ambiguity.

Polysemy and the extension of meaning

A large part of ambiguity in language results from the natural tendency of words to develop new meanings over time. Polysemy refers to a language phenomenon, in which one word has two or more related senses. The various meanings are connected by association, often through metaphor or metonymy. Examples of polysemy include:

hand – 'the end part of the human arm' / 'a side or a direction' / 'to pass something or to assist'

eye – 'organ of sight' / 'ability to notice details'

foot – 'lower part of the leg' / 'bottom part of a mountain'

paper – 'thin material used for writing or printing' / 'academic essay' / 'document'

iron – 'metal' / 'device for pressing clothes'

face – 'the front part of the head' / 'the front side of an object'

run – 'to move swiftly' / 'a flow of a river' / 'to operate'

Polysemy must be considered as an invaluable factor of economy and flexibility in language (Jackson & ZéAmvela, 2022, p. 41). A single word can serve several communicative needs, and speakers rely on context to select the intended sense. In fact, most of the words in a language are polysemous because whenever a new idea or concept appears, it is much easier and more practical to extend the meaning of the already existing

words than to create new ones. If new words were coined all the time, the lexicon would become overloaded with so many new words so speakers wouldn't be able to memorize them and consequently, unable to communicate effectively.

Homonymy and its subtypes

While polysemy involves related meanings, homonymy involves words that share the same form but have entirely different and unrelated meanings. Examples include:

park — 'public green area' / 'to leave a vehicle temporarily'
file — 'folder of documents' / 'tool for smoothing surfaces'
bark — 'sound made by a dog' / 'outer layer of a tree'
bank — 'financial institution' / 'side of a river'
pen — 'writing tool' / 'animal enclosure'
club — 'a social organization' / 'a blunt weapon'
cool — 'cold' / 'brilliant' 'astonishing'

Homophony

Homophony is a subtype of homonymy where words sound alike but differ in spelling and meaning.

pair / pear	/peə(r)/
break / brake	/breɪk/
heir / air	/eə(r)/
write / right	/raɪt/
knight / night	/naɪt/
sail / sale	/seɪl/
cent / sent / scent	/sent/

Homophones are treated as separate entries in dictionaries.

Homography

In homography, words share spelling but differ in pronunciation and meaning.

desert /ˈdezət/ ‘arid region of sand’ vs desert /dɪˈzɜːt/ ‘to abandon’
lead /liːd/ ‘to guide’ vs lead /led/ ‘heavy grey metal’
minute /ˈmɪnɪt/ ‘unit of time’ vs minute /maɪˈnjuːt/ ‘extremely small’
tear /tɪə/ ‘drop from the eye’ vs tear /teə/ ‘rip something apart’
wind /wɪnd/ ‘a blow of air’ vs wind /waɪnd/ ‘to turn something around’

Patterned and partial homonymy

When the same form functions in different grammatical categories but retains some shared sense, it is called patterned homonymy, e.g., *round* (noun, verb, adjective, preposition and adverb) or *act* (noun, verb). For example:

Let’s have *a round* of tennis. (noun)
They *rounded* the corner. (verb)
The knights of the *round* table. (adjective)
She turned *round* the corner. (preposition)
She turned the glass *round* and *round* again. (adverb)

If the homonymy appears only in some grammatical forms, we speak of partial homonymy, as in *light* (noun) and *light–lighter–lightest* (adjective).

Sources of homonymy

Homonymy in English is motivated primarily by its analytic structure, as well as by the monomorphemic structure of a huge number of words. Since English words have a few inflections, the same form easily develops unrelated meanings, as seen in *kind, flat, way,* or *sack*. Also, as a result of the metaphorical and metonymic extensions and gradual development of word meanings over time, many senses have diverged, and from a present perspective, have become completely distinct from one another. In fact, behind most of the cases of homonymy, there is a remote polysemy. For example, the word *board* is a homonym because in modern English it has completely different meanings such as ‘a long, thin, flat piece of wood’ and ‘the provision of regular meals when one stays somewhere’. But, when

one checks its etymology and historical development of its meanings, one will realize that there is a remote polysemy behind these modern unrelated meanings, since, according to OED the word *board* originates from Old Norse *broth* 'board, table', and it was used archaically with the meaning 'a table set for a meal'.

Historically, homonymy also arises through convergent sound development (different words coming to sound alike) and divergent sense development (a single form developing unrelated meanings).

Examples of convergent sound development are:

punch – 'blow with a fist' (from ME *pounce)* and punch – 'fruity alcoholic drink' (from Sanskrit *panca* 'five, five kinds of')

sound – 'healthy' (from OE *gesund*) and sound 'audible vibrations' (from Lat. *sonus*)

Example of a divergent sense development:

springan – 'to leap, burst forth' (OE origin) diverged into modern English meanings: 'to jump', 'to originate', 'a season', 'a well', 'a coil'.

Distinction between polysemy and homonymy

The definition of polysemy as a situation when the word has two or more related meanings and the definition of homonymy where two or more words share the same form but completely different and unrelated meanings are clear and precise. Yet, in practice the differentiation between polysemy and homonymy, i.e. polysemous and homonymous words is not easy at all. In many cases, it is rather difficult to state if lexical items exhibit the sense relation of polysemy or homonymy as illustrated in the following examples, *branch* ('a part of a tree' vs 'a field of study') or *head* ('the upper part of the body' vs 'a leader, a chief'). Therefore, the analyses are not always strict and precise and may allow for arguments supporting both interpretations. Consequently, modern online dictionaries list and define all the related and unrelated senses without always drawing strict boundaries between polysemy and homonymy.

Metaphor as a source of meaning development

Metaphor is the major source for the sense relations of polysemy and homonymy, because it is the most frequent and most familiar way of transferring the meaning. According to Kövecses (2008, p. 216) metaphors and metonymies serve as cognitive links between two or more distinct senses of a word[1]. It allows speakers to understand one concept through another, often abstract concepts in terms of more concrete ones. Thus, speakers use the already existing words that they are familiar with, to talk about new or more abstract concepts or ideas. For example:

We are all under *pressure* these days. ('physical pressure' → 'psychological pressure')

Their relationship *cooled off*. *('*temperature degrees' → 'emotional distance')

Time *flies* when you're having fun. ('movement in air' → 'passage of time')

I *see* what you mean. ('visual perception' → 'mental understanding')

All the above words, in italics, contain different, but transferred meanings that result from the use of metaphors. So, for example, *physical pressure* is perceived as *an emotional stress*, *low temperature* is experienced as *an emotional distance*, *moving in the air* as *time passage*, and *visual perception* as *understanding*. In fact, metaphors are hidden comparisons based on perceived, not real, similarity. However, they are not merely stylistic ornaments, they are cognitive tools, because they enable speakers to understand abstract concepts through concrete ones. So, whenever a new meaning emerges, usually a more abstract one, speakers connect it with an already existing word, one they are familiar with, and in that way they extend word's meaning. Therefore, metaphor is a tool used for extending meanings and hence a source for development of polysemy and homonymy. Through transference, words acquire new meanings that later become conventionalized and used by speakers on a regular basis. This process of metaphorical extensions explains the network of senses that a single word may possess.

[1] Lee (2001,p. 6) describes metaphor as a device that involves conceptualizing one domain of experience in terms of another.

Referential versatility and vagueness

While polysemy and homonymy deal with multiple senses within a word, referential versatility and vagueness are concerned with the range and precision of reference.

An expression is referentially versatile when it can denote and refer to a wide variety of entities. Personal pronouns (*I, you, she*) and deictic expressions (*here, there, now, then*) are typical examples. Their meaning depends entirely on context.

An expression is referentially vague when its boundaries are not clearly defined. For instance, in the pair *tall–short* or *mountain–hill*, there is no precise dividing line between the two extremes. Vague expressions function along a continuum rather than at fixed points, and speakers rely on social or contextual norms to interpret them.

Words or expressions which are referentially versatile or vague are not ambiguous in the same way as polysemous and homonymous expressions; they do not have different senses, they simply refer to different entities and different referential standards at different occasions. Referential versatility and vagueness are a functional property of language, because they allow flexibility and generalization in communication, making expressions adaptable to different contexts.

Sentence ambiguity - lexical and structural ambiguity

Polysemy and homonymy give rise to sense ambiguity, which may sometimes result in different interpretations of one and the same sentence. A sentence is considered ambiguous if it has two or more completely distinct readings or interpretations. Ambiguity in sentences may be unintentional or may be a result of a speaker's deliberate attempt to produce certain effects. Before we discuss ambiguity at the sentence level, it is important to distinguish between lexical ambiguity, arising from the ambiguity of a single word and structural ambiguity, arising from the syntactic structure of the sentence.

Lexical ambiguity

Lexical ambiguity occurs when the sentence contains a word that has two or more different meanings. This type of ambiguity often results from polysemy or homonymy. The following examples are ambiguous because they contain words that are ambiguous.

He *blocked* me. → *block* 'prevented communication (social media)' / 'physically obstructed'

She opened a new *file*. → *file* 'folder or document' / 'metal tool for smoothing'

The *interest* increased. → *interest* 'financial charge' / 'curiosity'

He opened a new *account*. → *account* 'bank record' / 'user profile'

The ambiguity is not a real problem in everyday communication because in most of the cases the context helps in disambiguating the ambiguous sentences.

Structural ambiguity

Structural ambiguity arises not from the meaning of individual words but from the organization of the sentence - more precisely, from the fact that the words of a sentence can relate to each other in different ways. For example:

The police chased the suspect with a drone.

This sentence is ambiguous because of the prepositional phrase *with a drone* which relates with other sentence elements in different ways. So, one reading is that 'Police used a drone for chasing the suspect' in which case the prepositional phrase *with a drone* relates to the subject of the sentence, whereas the other reading is that 'Police chased the suspect who had a drone' in which case the prepositional phrase *with a drone* relates to the object of the sentence.

Competent women and men hold all the good jobs in the firm.

This sentence is ambiguous because the adjective *competent* may enter different relations with other sentence elements. So, one reading is that 'only women are competent', while the other is that 'both women and men are competent'.

Some sentences involve both lexical and structural ambiguity. For example:

Mary claims that John saw her duck. — *duck* can mean 'lower down' or 'bird' and the syntax allows multiple readings:

Mary claims that John saw *her bird.* ("her bird" is a direct object of the verb "see")

Mary claims that John saw her *lower down.* ("lower down" is a bare infinitive form after verbs of perception).

Summary

Polysemy and homonymy are important sense relations that enrich the language by extending the meanings of already existing words and creating networks of related senses. Such extensions often arise with the help of metaphor, that serves as a powerful cognitive tool that allow speakers to transfer meanings from concrete, physical experiences to more abstract domains. Our everyday experience thus shapes how new senses develop and how old ones evolve.

Review questions:

1. The following pairs of sentences contain words that are metaphorically used. Identify the metaphorically used words, and the source and the target domain of the metaphors.

Stop wasting my time. / That shortcut will save you an hour.

a) source domain _____

b) target domain _____

She attacked my point. / He defended his position

a) source domain _____

b) target domain _____

He's feeling down. / She's on top of the world.

a) source domain _____

b) target domain _____

2. For each of the following words provide at least two distinct senses:

club, ruler, ring, jam, seal, yard, order, case, plot.

UNIT 9

Word Formational Processes and Lexical Change

Introduction

Language is not a static system, but it is like a living being, evolving and developing all the time. Over time, words are created, meanings shift, and older items fall out of use. The study of word formation and lexical change helps us understand how vocabulary expands and adapts to the communicative, cultural, and technological needs of language speakers. Lexicology, as the study of the vocabulary of a language, examines both the processes of creating new words and the mechanisms through which existing words change their meanings.

Word formation can be primary or secondary, depending on whether words are created from scratch or derived from existing ones. Lexical change, on the other hand, deals with the evolution of meaning—how words acquire new senses, broaden, narrow, or even shift their semantic content. Together, these processes reveal the extraordinary flexibility and creativity of human language.

Primary word formation

Primary word formation or coining refers to the creation of completely new words from scratch. It is very difficult to coin new words because it is not just to be created, but the new word has to be accepted by the language community. Therefore, primary word formation is rare, whereas deriving new words out of the already existing ones is far more frequent. New words are coined or derived whenever there is a new meaning to be denoted, such as new concepts, experiences, or entities that appear in the reality.

Words that imitate the sounds of nature are examples of primary word formation or coining. In fact, onomatopoeia is a source of primary word formation. *Cuckoo*, *buzz*, *beep, sizzle, slam*, and *knock*, are examples of onomatopoeia; i.e. they reflect the sounds they describe. Such words enter the lexicon as original forms. Over time, they may themselves become bases for further derivation, for example, *buzz → buzzer, buzzing*.

Secondary word formation

As it is stated previously, most of the new words in a language, however, are not coined from scratch but derived from existing lexical material. This is known as secondary word formation. It relies on morphological and syntactic processes such as:

- **Affixation** – adding prefixes or suffixes to a base (e.g. *un*happy, friend*ship*).
- **Compounding** – combining two or more bases (e.g. *blackboard, toothpaste*).
- **Conversion** – changing a word's grammatical class or subclass without adding an affix (e.g. *a bottle → to bottle, an email → to email*).
- **Clipping** – shortening a longer word (e.g. *exam* from *examination*).
- **Blending** – merging non-morphemic parts of two words (e.g. *smog* from *smoke* + *fog*).
- **Back-formation** – creating a new part of speech by removing a supposed affix (e.g. *to edit* from *editor*).
- **Acronymy** – forming words from initial letters (e.g. *UNESCO, NATO, laser*).

These processes show that languages are pragmatic simply because they use the existing resources to derive new meanings.

Lexical change: understanding its principles

Lexical change is a substantial modification of the lexicon (Stefanovski, 2007, p. 116). It is a process when the already existing words acquire new meanings. The new meanings appear as a result of the changes in the society, appearance of new concepts, ideas, objects or elimination of the outmoded ones. The lexical change is usually conducted through metaphorical extensions.

see – 'perceive', 'understand' 'accompany'

cloud – 'grey or white mass in the sky', 'a computer network where files can be stored'

stream – 'small river', 'continuous flow of data'

In general, lexical change refers to any modification in the vocabulary of a language—whether through the addition of new words, loss of old

ones, or shifts in meaning. It reflects the interaction between language and society, as words evolve to express new realities and discard outdated ones. The two extreme types of lexical change are lexical addition and lexical loss.

Lexical addition

New lexical items are added to the lexicon to cover the new concepts, ideas, objects that appear as a result of the social and technological developments, contacts with other cultures. They fill the gaps caused by the scientific progress, the cultural change, and the globalization. The twenty-first century, for instance, has seen a major outbreak of technological vocabulary such as *to google, USB, Bluetooth, Instagram, selfie, download*. Apart from coining words to cover the new concepts or artefacts, borrowing from other languages is another frequent source of lexical addition, enriching English with international expressions such as *sushi, emoji, feng shui, hygge.*

Lexical loss

Lexical loss is opposite of lexical addition. Words disappear from the lexicon when their referents become obsolete or fall out of everyday use. The loss of words frequently occurs due to changes in society or technological developments, so the outmoded objects or concepts are eliminated. For example, the word *cheorl* was lost since the concept of 'the free peasant who formed the basis of society in Anglo -Saxon England' disappeared. Many Old English words were replaced after the Norman Conquest by French borrowings, especially in domains like law, religion, and government.

Old English (obsolete)	Current word[1]
wone	home
demend	judge
greed	voice

Some of the so called "lost or obsolete" words, however, survive in dialects or poetic usage, showing that lexical loss is rarely absolute.

[1] Examples are taken from Stefanovski (2007: 121)

Lexical change

As mentioned previously, lexical change refers to the process when already existing words acquire new meanings. Semantic changes can occur in several different ways, as semantic broadening, semantic narrowing, semantic shift, semantic extension and semantic intension.

Semantic broadening

Semantic broadening is a process in which the meaning of a word has become general or more inclusive than its historically earlier form. The new meaning covers a wide range of referents. So, as meanings broaden, they often become less vivid, and the content becomes poorer and more abstract. This process demonstrates the human tendency to extend familiar categories to new experiences and to use concrete meanings to refer to more abstract ones. The following are examples of English words whose meanings used to be more concrete and specific and now they become more general and more inclusive.

	Earlier meaning	Modern meaning
place	'open space'	'any location or position'
journey	'a day's travel'	'a travel of any duration'
aunt	'father's sister'	'father's/mother' sister'
butcher	'one who slaughters goats'	'one who slaughters any meat'
manage	'handle a horse'	'handle anything'
ready	'prepare for ride'	'prepare'
companion	'one who breaks/ eats bread with another' (*com*-'with' + *panis*-'bread')	'any associate or friend'

Semantic narrowing

Semantic narrowing is the opposite of semantic broadening. It is the process in which the meaning of the word has become less general and less inclusive. The meaning becomes more restricted and specific.

	Earlier meaning	Modern meaning
wife	‘any woman’	‘married woman’
accident	‘any event’	‘disastrous event’
starve	‘die’	‘die from hunger’
meat	‘any type of food’	‘edible animal flesh’
deer	‘any wild beast’	‘specific hoofed animal’
witch	‘male/female sorcerer’	‘female sorcerer’

Narrowing typically occurs when a word once used broadly becomes limited to a particular context or when new, more specific terms emerge.

Semantic Shift

A semantic shift takes place when a word completely changes its meaning, losing its original sense and acquiring a new one.

	Earlier meaning	Modern meaning
brave	‘splendid’	‘courageous’
nice	‘foolish, ignorant’	‘pleasant, kind’
artificial	‘artistic, full of skill and art’	‘unnatural, man-made’
bully	‘a lover, a sweetheart’	‘a person who intimidates others’
baggage	‘a worthless person’	‘luggage’

Sometimes, semantic shifts can be a result of a series of semantic shifts occurring over an extended period of time. For example, the original meaning of the word *sentence* in Latin was ‘a way of thinking, opinion’, which later evolved into ‘judgement, decision’, then in Middle English entered with the meaning of ‘doctrine’, ‘authoritative teaching’ and finally in Modern English gained the meaning of ‘a set of words combined according to the rules of a given language’ and ‘a punishment’.

Semantic extension

Semantic extension occurs when proper nouns evolve into common nouns. Proper names often undergo broadening. They often broaden through repeated use, becoming generic labels for similar items or concepts.

Many scientific instruments and commercial products are named after their inventors, manufacturers, or toponyms. For example, the following common nouns originate from proper names:

Common noun	Proper name
sandwich	Lord Sandwich
chauvinism	Nicolas Chauvin (French veteran)
macadam (road)	John McAdam (Scottish engineer)
bikini	a small island in Western Pacific
spa	a town in eastern Belgium
watt	James Watt (Scottish engineer)
Noble Prize Winner	Swedish chemist and engineer Alfred Noble
boycott	Captain Charles Boycott

Many commercial brands or inventions follow this path—*hoover, xerox, kleenex*—gradually turning into everyday vocabulary.

Semantic intension

Semantic intension is the opposite process of semantic extension. It refers to formation of proper names out of common nouns. This process often affects toponyms and symbolic expressions.

the Highlands —	the region in Scotland
Wall street —	the American financial market
the White House —	the American administration
Broadway —	the New York theatres and entertainment district
New Castle —	the city in UK
Salt Lake City —	the city in USA

Mechanisms behind lexical changes

The most frequent tools behind lexical changes are **metaphor**, **metonymy**[2] and **synecdoche**. As mentioned previously (in Unit 8) metaphor is a key mechanism of meaning transfer because it enables speakers to interpret one concept in terms of another. In this way, abstract ideas are often understood

[2] Metaphor and metonymy are discussed in detail in *Metaphor: A practical Introduction,* Kövecses (2010).

through more concrete experience. Through transference, words acquire new meanings that later become conventionalized and used by speakers on a regular basis.

Metonymy uses one entity to refer to another related one within the same conceptual domain like in the following examples:

He married *money*. ('money' for someone who has money)

Wall Street reacted negatively. ('Wall Street' for stock exchange market)

Synecdoche, a subtype of metonymy, uses the part to represent the whole or vice versa:

All *hands* on deck. ('hands' for sailors)

Great *minds* think alike. ('minds' for people)

Short-hands are economical expressions which are strictly connected to the context in which they appear. They also depend on synecdoche, as well as, the shared knowledge and cultural context.

A *Chardonnay* for me, please. (A glass of Chardonnay wine.)

I'll have *the chicken*. (The chicken dish.)

Linguistic causes of lexical change

In most of the cases lexical changes appear as a result of the changes in the society in all its segments; yet there are three linguistic factors that cause lexical changes. These are **differentiation of synonymy, fixed context restriction** and **ellipsis.**

Differentiation of synonymy occurs as a result of language economy. More precisely, languages do not allow absolute synonyms, so, they tend to eliminate them. The examples below were once, for a short period of time, absolute synonyms, but with the course of time one member of the pairs took on a different or more specific meaning in order to survive.

bread & loaf (*loaf* restricted its meaning to 'a single, shaped piece of bread')

beast & animal (*beast* restricted its meaning only to 'wild animal')

crafty & skillful (*crafty* took on the meaning 'deceitful, cunning')

time & tide (*tide* took on the meaning 'shifting waters')

Fixed context restriction refers to a phenomenon when certain words became limited to fixed phrases, whereas borrowed words were used in all the other contexts. In other words, one member of a formerly synonymous pairs survives only in fixed expressions, thus avoiding complete elimination as a result of language economy. A good example is the pair *deed* and *act*: *deed* now survives in *good deed, heroic deeds, title deed,* whereas *act* is used in all the other contexts.

Ellipsis in lexicology refers to the phenomenon in which the omission of one element from a fixed phrase results in the development of a new lexical meaning. For example, when *expecting* is used as a single word without an object, it has acquired the meaning 'pregnant' or *to propose* used without an object means 'offer a marriage'.

In conclusion, word formation and lexical change together illustrate the way languages function and reflect the current needs of the society in which they live.

Review questions:

1. Use online dictionaries or AI tools to explain how the meanings of the following words have changed over time and to give examples of their different meanings.

- nice - a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

- broadcast - a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

What are the possible reasons for the lexical changes of the above examples?

2. Identify the different meanings of the modal verb *must* in the following three examples. (Consult an online dictionary.) Then, try to find out which meaning is the oldest. How do you think the other meanings have developed out of the first one?

- Mary must be right. _____
- You must leave immediately. _____
- He must have been here. _____

_____

3. Distinguish between *semantic extension* and *semantic intension*. Provide examples either from English or from your mother tongue by consulting online dictionaries or any AI tools.

_____

UNIT 10

The Structure and Classification of Words: Form and Meaning

The previous units were dedicated to lexical semantics and to understanding how meaning functions. Units that follow will try to explain how word meaning is realized through the processes of word formation or word derivation. For this purpose, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between specific types of word classes that participate in word formational processes. Furthermore, careful attention must be paid to the grammatical characteristics of words and affixes in order to understand the principles of word formation.

The lexicon of English is traditionally divided into two main groups: **content words** and **function words**. This distinction is important because it reflects two different types of lexical items: those that carry lexical meaning and those whose primary role is to express grammatical relationships and ensure that meaning is structured and interpreted correctly within a sentence.

Content words, major parts of speech, open classes

Content words are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. They are named content words because they have content, more precisely they contain lexical meaning. These are the words that transfer the meaning or the message in the process of communication. They are the most important elements and without them the communication won't be possible. Therefore, they are called major parts of speech. They are also called open word classes because they allow new members easily enter their class. Theoretically speaking, a new word is being added into these classes almost "every single day". This is so, because the world changes constantly and new concepts emerge, so new items can enter with ease. For example, nouns such as *selfie*, *podcast*, *cryptocurrency* or *emoji* did not exist a few decades ago. Similarly, new verbs have emerged such as *to google*, *to DM*, *to ghost*, and adjectives like *viral* (in the sense 'widely shared online') or *clickable*.

The open nature of these categories demonstrates the flexibility of English or any other language to accommodate changes.

Nouns

Nouns typically denote people (*teacher, sibling*), objects (*table, phone*), abstract concepts (*justice, happiness*), places (*beach, Europe*), and events (*meeting, celebration*). They display the grammatical category of number (*book–books*) and case / possession (*Maria's idea*). Nouns may also function as heads of noun phrases and combine with determiners, adjectives, and other nouns to form complex noun phrases. In the examples that follow, words in italics are head nouns.

- the tall *building*
- three delicious *cakes*
- this unexpected *result*
- the bus *stop*

Verbs

Verbs encode actions (*run, write*), processes (*grow, melt*), states (*belong, know*), and experiences (*feel, hear*). They show the grammatical categories of tense (*walked*), aspect (*is walking*), and voice (*was written*) and show agreement with the subject (*she speaks*). Verbs are crucial for sentence structure because they determine the presence and type of objects or complements.

Adjectives and adverbs

Adjectives modify nouns, describing qualities, characteristics, or states (*happy student*, *blue sky*, *difficult task*). Some of them exhibit the grammatical category of comparison (*big-bigger-the biggest*). Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs, typically expressing manner, degree, time, or frequency, and like adjectives, some adverbs also show comparison. In the following examples adverbs are italicised: She sings *beautifully.* / The exam was *extremely* difficult. / He *very* quickly understood the instructions.

Function words, minor parts of speech, closed classes

Function words are pronouns, determiners, auxiliaries, prepositions, conjunctions and specifiers. They are called function words because their main function is to transfer the meaning or the message in a grammatically correct way. In other words, they do not contribute significantly in expressing the lexical meaning, but they provide the grammatical framework for sentences. Therefore, they are also called minor parts of speech because, they do not transfer the message. Even if the sentence is not grammatically correct, the message will still be transferred. These word classes are known as closed classes, because their number is fixed and they do not let new members enter their class. For example, the class of auxiliaries has not been changed for quite a long period of time. Also, the pronominal system has remained largely unchanged for centuries, until recently, when the plural pronoun *they* began to be used as a gender-neutral singular pronoun.

As a summary, function words are essential for grammatical well-formedness, and without them, sentences would resemble mere lists of content words:

- Content words only: *dog run quickly street morning*
- With function words: *The dog ran quickly down the street this morning.*

Pronouns

Pronouns substitute nouns and noun phrases. They are primarily used to avoid repetition and to maintain cohesion in discourse. They are subclassified into several groups:

- Personal pronouns: *I, me, we, us, you, he, she, it, they, them*
- Possessive pronouns: *mine, yours, hers, his, ours, theirs*
- Reflexive pronouns: *myself, yourself, themselves*
- Reciprocal pronouns: *each other, one another*
- Interrogative: *who, what, which*
- Relative: *who, which, that*
- Demonstrative: *this, that, these, those*
- Indefinite: *someone, everyone, anything, nothing*[1]

[1] The lists above do not include all pronouns belonging to each group.

They perform two major functions:

A. Anaphoric: Pronouns refer back to an element already mentioned in the discourse:

- *Maria* submitted *the report* yesterday. *She* emailed *it* to the Dean.

(Here, *she* refers to *Maria* and *it* refers to *the report*.)

B. Deictic: These pronouns rely on the speaker's physical position or perspective: *this, that, these, those; here, there; now, then.*

- Put *that* over *there.*
- *This* is delicious, said the speaker while holding the dish.

Auxiliaries

Auxiliary verbs assist lexical verbs and help express tense, aspect, voice, modality, and negation. English uses:

- Primary auxiliaries: *be, have, do*
- Modal auxiliaries: *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would,* etc.

Determiners

Determiners specify the scope of a noun or a noun phrase, narrowing down its reference.

- Possessive: *my, your, her*
- Definite: *a/an, the, this, that*
- Demonstratives: *this, these, that, those*
- Quantifiers: *some, many, few, no*
- Numerals: *one, two, thirty*[2]

They usually precede a noun phrase like in the examples that follow:

- *this* book, *my* new car, *several* ideas, *no* reason.

Determiners are obligatory elements in most of the noun phrases and they are mutually exclusive; **the my book***** is ungrammatical.

[2] The lists above do not include all determiners belonging to each group.

Prepositions

Prepositions express meaningful relationships between verbs and nouns, and nouns and nouns. They usually express spatial, temporal, and abstract relationships.

- *on* the table, *in* June, *about* politics, *at* university.

Prepositions are followed by nouns or noun phrases, forming prepositional phrases.They are heads of prepositional phrases because they govern the noun phrase as in:

- *before* the meeting, *after* the class.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions connect words, phrases, clauses, or sentences and are subclassified into:

- Coordinating conjunctions connecting elements with the same status: *and, but, or*
- Subordinating conjunctions introducing subordinate clauses: *although, if, unless, because, while, as, before….*

Other word classes

- Degree words or intensifiers: *very, more, quite, too,*
- Qualifiers: *always, ever, never, often, perhaps*
- Clitics (forms unable to stand alone): *They**'ve** been here. I**'m** leaving now.*
- Idioms: a group of words whose meaning cannot be deduced out of the constituent elements as in *a piece of cake* - 'easy'. Structurally, they are like syntactic phrases.

Criteria for identifying parts of speech

Classifying a word into a part of speech is not always straightforward. This difficulty arises largely because English contains a lot of short, monomorphemic words that can easily shift from one part of speech into another without any morphological changes. As a result, it is often difficult to determine the class membership of a word when it is considered in isolation, that is, without context. In fact, many English words belong to

more than one class depending on context. For example, the word *back* can belong to four different word classes as in:

- Noun: My *back* hurts.
- Adjective: She sat in the *back* row.
- Verb: They will *back* the proposal.
- Adverb: Go *back* home.

These examples show that classification must rely on several criteria rather than meaning alone. Meaning provides an initial clue. It is based on the inner qualities of words. Yet this criterion alone is insufficient. For example, *performance* is a noun although it denotes an activity, whereas *to perform* is a verb and it also denotes an action. Therefore, other criteria have to be included for precise categorization. The following two criteria are formal. One is based on shared paradigms, i.e. the use of inflections with certain word classes.

- Nouns take plural suffix -s as in *books*, possessive suffix –'s as in *student's*
- Verb suffixes for person, tense, aspect: *walk–walks–walked–walking*
- Adjective suffixes for comparative and superlative degree: *tall–taller–tallest*

The other criterion is based on distribution, also known as co-occurrence. This refers to the patterns of words that typically occur together:

- Nouns co-occur with determiners: *a book*, *the decision*
- Main verbs co-occur with modal verbs: *will come*, *might go*
- Adjectives and adverbs co-occur with intensifiers: *very beautiful, too quickly*.

Sometimes all three criteria operating simultaneously can give us the precise answers.

Inflectional suffixes as formal markers

Inflectional suffixes encode grammatical information without changing the word class or core meaning of the word to which they are attached. English has a simple inflectional paradigm; it contains only eight inflectional affixes:

Noun inflection:

- plural: *–s* (*girl–girls*)
- possessive: *–'s* (*Emma's bike*)

Adjective inflection:

- comparative: *–er* (*fast–faster*)
- superlative: *–est* (*fast–fastest*)

Verb inflection:

- 3rd person singular present: *–s* (*walks*)
- past tense: *–ed* (*walked*)
- present participle: *–ing* (*walking*)
- past participle: *–en* / *–ed*[2] (*broken, eaten*)

Inflectional vs derivational affixes

Inflectional affixes indicate the grammatical characteristics of words when used in a sentence and they express grammatical categories such as tense, number, aspect, possession or comparison. Derivational affixes are used in the formation of new words. There are several characteristics that distinguish derivational affixes from inflectional ones (see Akmajian et al., 2001).

Change of word class

Inflectional suffixes do not change the word class of the words to which they are attached:
girl–girls (both nouns)

Derivational affixes may or may not change the word class:
read (v) → readable (adj.)
boy (n) → boyhood (n)

Position within the word

Inflectional suffixes always appear last, they are external:
modern-ize-s

Derivational affixes appear closer to the root, they are internal, and appear always before the inflectional suffixes:
abstract-ion (-s), industry-al-ize-ed, teach-er(-s)

Change of meaning

Inflectional affixes do not change the core meaning:
walk–walked still expresses the concept 'to walk'.

Derivational affixes always change the meaning of the words to which they are attached:
kind → unkind; logic → illogical; friend → friendship.

Stacking

Inflectional suffixes are mutually exclusive:
walk-s, *walk-ed*, *walk-ing* cannot co-occur. (**not** walk-s-ed-ing ***)

Derivational affixes are not mutually exclusive, they may stack: *friend-li-ness*, *nation-al-iz-ation*.

Productivity

Inflectional affixes are highly productive: *-ed* applies to all regular verbs.

Derivational affixes are less productive; for example *-hood* attaches to only a small set of nouns (*brotherhood, childhood, neighbourhood*).

Form

Inflectional affixes are only suffixes, whereas derivational affixes can be both prefixes and suffixes.

Inflection: stay-s, work-ed, short-est.

Derivation: re-schedule, un-do, free-dom.

Obligatoriness

Inflectional affixes are obligatory elements, whereas derivational affixes are optional.

Identical forms with different functions

Sometimes the same suffix can function both as an inflectional and a derivational one.

- *She is sing**ing**.* (-ing functions as an inflectional suffix for signalling progressive aspect)
- *Her sing**ing** annoyed me.* (-ing functions as a derivational suffix for creating a noun)

- *She has brok**en** the vase.* (-en functions as an inflectional suffix for signalling perfective aspect)
- *the brok**en** vase* (-en functions as a derivational suffix for creating an adjective).

Phrase structure: heads and modifiers

In order to express more complex meanings, language users combine words into phrases, and phrases into larger and more complex phrases or clauses. Phrases and clauses function according to the rules of a given language. Every phrase contains a central element, known as the **head**, which carries the core meaning of the phrase. In syntax, the head of a phrase determines the phrase's category

- Noun Phrase: the tall ***student*** → head = *student*
- Verb Phrase: might be ***coming*** → head = *coming*
- Adjective Phrase: extremely ***tall*** → head = *tall*
- Prepositional Phrase: ***by*** the lake → head = *by*

When a phrase consists of more than one element, the remaining elements typically function as **modifiers**, providing additional or more specific information about the head.

- ***the talented young*** musician (pre-modifiers: *talented, young*)
- ran ***quickly away from home*** (post-modifiers: *quickly, away, from home*)

When words are combined into phrases and clauses they follow grammatical rules. Two major characteristics of the grammatical relationships between words within a phrase are **government** and **agreement**. Government refers to a relationship in which one word selects or requires a particular form of its complement. For example, verbs govern their objects (*give* + objects), and prepositions govern nouns (*by the river*). Agreement, by contrast, involves the matching of grammatical features between words. It most commonly operates within the noun phrase, where the determiner agrees with the head noun in number, as in *this student* vs *these students*.[3]

[3] Agreement in English is not complex as in Macedonian where modifiers agree with the head noun in grammatical categories such as number, gender and definitness.

or within a clause where the verb agrees with the subject as in : *I am* vs *you are* vs *she is*.

Summary

Understanding word meaning, the role of content words and minor word classes, as well as derivation as a means of creating new meanings and inflection as a means of ensuring grammatical correctness, is essential for precise message transmission and for linguistic analysis. In addition, concepts such as heads and modifiers, together with the principles of government and agreement, function as tools for organizing lexical items into higher structural units.

Review questions:

1. State the distinction between content or open word classes and function or closed word classes. Then, provide at least 5 new open class words that entered English in the last decade. You can consult ChatGPT or any other AI tool.

_____

2. Identify the word class of the word *clean* and *smooth,* respectively, in the following set of examples and state the criteria for your decision:

- The kitchen is finally *clean*. _____
- Please *clean* the board. _____
-He made a *clean* break from the past. _____
- She hit the ball *clean*. _____
- The *clean* of the cut surprised everyone. _____
- The surface is *smooth*. _____
- *Smooth* the mixture until it is creamy. _____
- It was a *smooth* transition between topics. _____

- The car ran *smooth* for the first hour. _____

- The *smooth* of the fabric felt luxurious. _____

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Meaning is the most important information associated with each word. Although we easily talk about the meanings of words, defining meaning precisely is far from simple. This textbook aims to guide students in understanding and mastering the various aspects of meaning in the English vocabulary.