

**Федеральное агентство по образованию
Государственное образовательное учреждение
высшего профессионального образования**

**НИЖЕГОРОДСКИЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ
ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ**

С Е М А С И О Л О Г И Я

**Учебное пособие для студентов
III курса факультета английского языка
Часть I**

Нижний Новгород 2006

Печатается по решению редакционно-издательского совета ГОУ НГЛУ.

УДК 811,111'37 (075.8)

ББК 81.432.1-93

Р 982

Семасиология: учебное пособие для студентов III курса факультета английского языка. Часть I. - Нижний Новгород: Нижегородский государственный лингвистический университет им. Н.А. Добролюбова, 2006 г. - 68 с.

Цель предлагаемого пособия - ознакомить студентов с методами исследования лексических единиц и новыми направлениями в семасиологии английского языка.

Составитель канд. филол. наук, доцент К.М. Рябова

Рецензенты: канд. филол. наук, доцент Е.С. Гриценко

докт. филол. наук, профессор М.С. Ретунская

© Издательство ГОУ ВПО НГЛУ, 2006.

© Рябова К.М., 2006

Chapter 1

WHAT IS SEMASIOLOGY?

1.1. Semasiology and onomasiology

Semasiology is a branch of linguistics, which investigates and describes the meaning of linguistic units. The name originates from the Greek *semasia* “signification” (Gr. *sema* “sign”). Some scholars regard semasiology as a branch of lexicology, which is not accurate as meanings are attached not only to words, morphemes, set-phrases (i.e. lexical units investigated by lexicology), but also to linguistic units of other ranks - free word-combinations, sentences and even texts. In other words, semasiology does not pertain to any particular level; it is an all-level discipline.

Semasiology should be distinguished from **onomasiology**. As has been stated above, semasiology deals with meanings, conveyed by linguistic units, whereas onomasiology is the theory of naming. If we regard a linguistic unit from the point of view of the idea it conveys and its relations with other linguistic units of identical rank, in other words, if we proceed from form to meaning, we approach the problem from the point of view of semasiology. If, on the contrary, we have an idea in our mind and consider different

ways of naming this idea, we follow the principles of onomasiology. In this case we proceed from meaning to form.

Thus, the sound form of the word “*gun*” is associated in our mind with a number of meanings the word denotes: 1) any type of weapon that fires bullets or shells; 2) the signal to begin a race, made by firing a starting pistol; 3) a tool that forces out a substance or an object (a staple-gun); 4) a person who carries a gun in order to shoot people (a hired gun). One of the tasks of semasiology is to reveal the relationships observed in the semantic structure of the word: the second and the fourth meanings are derived from the first by means of metonymic transfer, the third meaning is also motivated by the first, but is the result of metaphor.

Onomasiology treats the problems of nomination of extralingual objects. There may be various ways of expressing the same idea – we may call a woman *a cat, a goose, a beauty, a jellyfish, a lady, a duckling, a tigress* etc, or “you might speak of the “fragrance” of a certain perfume if you liked it, of its “reek” if you didn’t, or simply “odor” if you didn’t care”(22). Our choice depends on many factors, but in any case, we have an idea in mind and seek for a suitable name for this idea, thus proceeding from meaning to form. Analysis of various types of nomination cannot be successful without the data of semasiology. They are interconnected and their differentiation shows merely the general directions of research.

There is one more point that needs specification – that is the ambiguity of the terms “*semantics*” and “*semasiology*”, which are sometimes used as synonyms. The term “*semasiology*” is preferable as it is used only in one meaning – to denote the science which investigates meaning, whereas “*semantics*” beside being a synonym when applied to philology also has some additional areas of application: a) it happens to be used instead of the word-meaning; b) in some current trends of philosophy it is employed as a generic term for the study of relations between signs and things signified (e.g. “*pure semantics*” is a branch of symbolic or mathematical logic originated by Carnap), which is a part of semiotics – the study of signs and languages in general, including all sorts of codes, its subject being formalized language.

1.2. Meaning of Meaning

A linguistic sign, which registers the reflection of the material world in our mind and which is manifested through a certain sequence of sounds or letters, is located in human conscience. Outside human psychics a linguistic sign ceases to be a sign, becoming just some physical event – sounds or letters, devoid of any sense. The social importance of a linguistic sign manifests itself through its recurrence in the individual signal systems common for all the members of the speaking community.

A linguistic sign is a two-facet unit. In its structure we distinguish ***signifier***, the outer facet of the linguistic sign, i.e. our idea of the form of the linguistic sign, and ***signified*** the inner facet of the sign – the meaning of the signifier. There is nothing in the linguistic sign beside signifier and signified, but in the act of nomination another phenomenon is involved – the so-called denotatum.

Denotatum is a mental image of properties and qualities of an object, reflected in human conscience. It is a property or more often a totality of properties which are relevant for the speaker in the act of speech. Denotatum is not verbalized and not correlated with any definite linguistic sign. Denotatum should not be identified with ***referent*** – the object of speech, some material object of extra linguistic reality reflected in the human mind in the form of some corresponding visual image. (In linguistic literature the terms “referent” and “denotatum” are sometimes used indiscriminately).

The speaker selects the most relevant properties of the referent or of the whole class of referents, which differentiate it from another class of referents – denotatum. It correlates with the concept or, according to C. Morris ***designatum*** – the inner facet of the linguistic sign. This designatum calls up the acoustic image or sequence of signs (letters) associated with it – the outer facet (10).

1.3. Structure of Meaning

Scholars who investigate meaning more or less universally accept the idea that word meaning is not a homogeneous whole. It is evident that word meaning contains various components, which are interconnected and interrelated, and those connections and relations between the components of meaning determine the designatum (inner facet) of the word.

Lexical and grammatical components of meaning form the principal opposition in the structure of word meaning. These two components are in reciprocal relations and one cannot exist without the other. Thus the lexical meaning of the noun *work* is determined by the distributions in which it occurs and which attribute it to the class of nouns: e.g. *my work is hard. The work is done. He fulfilled his part of work.*

At the same time it contrasts it to the distributions in which the verb *to work* functions: *He works hard. He started to work etc.* In other words those two words have different grammatical meanings. Grammatical meaning is the part of meaning common for the whole class of lexically different words. Thus the word *work v* is similar in its grammatical meaning with *think v, do v, walk v* etc. Those words have identical grammatical paradigms:

Walk – walks – walked - has walked – has been walking;

Think – thinks – thought - has thought – has been thinking.

Grammatical meaning may be characterized as general as soon as it unites different words into groups and categories: the

third person singular of verbs: *works, thinks, walks, does*; the plural of nouns: *cats, people, houses*; the category of adjectives: *smart, gentle, nice*.

Thus grammatical meaning may be defined as the component of meaning recurrent in identical forms of different words, which expresses relations between words on the basis of the distributions in which they occur.

Since grammatical meaning is characterized as general, lexical meaning may be termed as special, as it is individual for every word: grammatically identical words *works, walks, stops, starts* have individual lexical meanings, which are the same in all their grammatical forms.

Lexical meaning is the realization of the notion by means of a definite language system.

The interrelation of lexical and grammatical meanings is not of the same nature in different word-classes and even in different groups of words within the same class. There are some classes of words in which grammatical meaning is predominant. Lexical meaning of some prepositions is rather vague; sometimes they serve to modify the lexical meaning of the notional words with which they occur. Some notional words become delexicalized in some distributions, their lexical meaning becoming vague: e.g. *She grew angry.*

He turned red.

In these sentences grammatical meaning prevails over lexical meaning – the word “*grew*” in the example has nothing to do with growing, nor is “*turned*” associated with actual turning.

1.3.1. Denotation and Connotation

The fact that lexical meaning has a complicated structure of interrelated but different in content components is not debated nowadays. It is customary to distinguish two main factors entering into verbal configurations. The notional content of a word is expressed by ***denotational meaning***

It covers the most essential properties of the object to which the word refers. Thus, in the word *bachelor* we observe the following components of denotational meaning: 1) a human being, 2) male, 3) unmarried. The word *spinster* denotes 1) a human being, 2) female, 3) unmarried, 4) elderly. We may distinguish denotational components not only in words denoting objects but also in words referring to actions, states, qualities: e.g. the verb *to run* denotes an action, characterized by rapid movement.

Denotational meaning is the component (or components) of meaning, which expresses the most essential characteristics of the object to which the word refers.

Some scholars prefer the term “referential meaning”, which does not seem quite adequate as the place of reference in

semasiology is controversial. The problem with word meaning in terms of reference is that some words (abstract nouns, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions etc.) do not seem to refer to anything. Many words are quite vague in their reference with no clear dividing-line between them (*hill / mountain*), (*river / stream / brook*). Some words may be used for sets of objects that are very different in appearance: *dog* covers a wide range of dog breeds; *table* is used to denote various pieces of furniture.

Since there are some theoretical problems with referential meaning, which seems inapplicable to certain classes of words, some philologists use the term “cognitive meaning” as opposed to emotive or evaluative meaning. In traditional terms this is the difference between denotation and connotation introduced by J.S. Mill in his “System of Logic”.

As it has been stated above, denotation refers to the direct relationship between a term and the object, idea or action it designates.

C o n n o t a t i o n, also known as affective meaning, refers to the emotional and associational aspect of a term. It should thus include affective as well as volitional aspects, and, from another angle, both expressions of one’s own feelings and arousing of feelings in other people.

Denotational and connotational components of meaning perform different functions. The expressive function of connotations is just as fundamental as cognitive function of

denotation. In theory, every utterance is both communicative and emotive: there is always something to be said, and a subjective interest in saying it (27). The two elements are in principal always compresent in speech; it is only their dosage that varies. Hence also the difficulty of separating the two aspects – connotational and denotational: psychologists have spoken of the “Siamese indivisibility”, of the subtle interweaving of the two functions.

Many attempts have been made to separate intellectual (denotation) from emotive and evaluative factors (connotation). I.A. Richards distinguishes between sense, tone (attitude to thing meant), feeling (attitude to hearer), and intention (25). Scholars who investigate cultural aspects of language define connotation as a certain cultural component of meaning, which gives some additional information with concern to the national culture (6).

The sources of connotations are manifold. According to the most satisfactory classification, that of Charles Bally, two groups of factors are involved: 1) intrinsic: the emotive resources of the word itself, the name as well as the sense; 2) external: the special tone attaching to foreign words, archaisms, technical terms, slang and jargon, etc (4).

In present day linguistics connotation is interpreted in different ways. The definition of connotation depends on the approach to the problem. In terms of stylistics connotation is

defined as the part of the semantic structure of lingual elements, which is not a carrier of lexical or grammatical information but a mere indicator of the type of communication in which the unit is current (10).

In the pragmatic theory connotation (or pragmatic meaning) expresses the attitude of the speaker towards the thing or phenomenon in question and covers emotive, evaluative, modal and other aspects (7). Semanticists prefer the term “emotive substratum” (15), “emotive meaning” (9,14). Some scholars emphasize the implicit character of connotation and identify it with any additional shade of meaning a unit acquires in a certain context (17).

In cognitive approach connotation is regarded as “what is being naturally believed about a meaning of a word. ...what differentiates synonyms in certain context in such a way that no two words can substitute each other in every context in natural languages”(16).

Those who investigate cultural aspects of language define connotation as a certain cultural component of meaning, which gives some additional information with concern to the national culture (6).

It would be wrong to assume that some of the above mentioned definitions of connotation are more correct than the others. All are logical and may be applied to language phenomena. At issue is the approach a scholar employs in his

investigation – we may regard connotation from the point of view of stylistics, pragmatics, cognitive semantics etc.

On the other hand, there are certain objective factors, which are responsible for the divergence of opinions: connotation is a complementary (not an obligatory) component of word meaning. The majority of words do not contain any connotation in their semantics: e.g. such words as *give*, *take*, *peas*, *grass* used in their direct meaning, denote but not connote anything. Their meanings contain only denotation and perform only cognitive function. Many words combine in their meaning both – denotation and connotation: e.g. *bromide* (зануда), *hog* (эгоист, нахал), *smear* (порочить, бесчестить). Besides performing the cognitive function these words contain the indication of the communicative situation in which they are current; the emotive component expressing the attitude of the speaker towards the object and a certain evaluation of the object on the part of the speaker. In other words, we may single out different types of connotations in the meaning of the words.

The word *drifter* denotes “an aimless person without a permanent job or address”. The word is not used in formal types of speech; it is marked by colloquial reference – its **s t y l i s t i c** connotation refers it to informal (colloquial) sphere of communication. Besides the word is used towards someone whose way of life is disapproved of, in other

words, it arouses in the speaker's mind negative emotions (*e m o t i v e – e v a l u a t i v e* connotation).

Thus by connotation we mean components of meaning, which express emotive attitude of the speaker towards the object of speech, evaluation of the object and stylistic reference of a linguistic unit. Therefore, two types of connotations may be distinguished: stylistic and emotive-evaluative.

1.3.2. Stylistic connotation

As it has been stated above, stylistic connotation identifies the place a linguistic unit occupies on the scale of aesthetic values. It attributes a unit to a certain layer of the vocabulary – bookish, poetic, official or, on the contrary, colloquial, dialectal, slang, jargon, vulgar.

Stylistic connotation is “something like a label to a thing, some kind of trademark showing where the unit was manufactured, where it generally belongs.”(26). On hearing the word *pig* in reference to a human being, we are aware of the stylistic appurtenance of the word – the word is subneutral and cannot be used in formal types of speech.

Stylistic connotation bears an indication of the stylistic status of a unit, it signals about the distribution, typical of the linguistic unit (by distribution we mean the totality of environments of the unit). The word *mummy* calls up an

informal context in which it customary occurs, thus attributing the word to colloquial layer on account of its minimal degree of degradation. There is nothing ethically improper about colloquial words such as *chap* (fellow), *granny* (grandmother), *prof* (professor), *frock* (monk), etc. Nevertheless, a native speaker or a foreigner with a good command of English will never resort to those words in formal communication. It results from the knowledge of the stylistic value (stylistic connotation) of the words.

At the same time, such words as *main* (ocean), *methinks* (I believe), to *behold* (to see), (cf. in Russian: ланиты, уста, очи, путник, etc.) will sound out of place and even funny in informal everyday discourse as their stylistic connotation places them with poetic diction.

In many cases stylistic connotation is revealed through the context in which the word occurs. Sometimes, however, even these contexts are unnecessary – stylistic connotation is quite obvious, it is a permanent accompaniment of the word: e.g. *goof* (a stupid or awkward person), *greener* (an inexperienced person), *cabby* (a taxi driver), *matey* (a friend). Stylistic connotation of these words refers them undoubtedly to informal type of communication due to the fact that they are not used outside colloquial sphere, their sound complexes cannot be associated with any other type of speech – their connotations are definite and fixed.

In case of polysemantic words we can never state with assurance what stylistic layer the word belongs to. Various meanings of a polysemantic word used in varying functions have quite different connotations. Thus, stylistic connotation does not refer to the word as such, but only to its lexico-semantic variants (LSVs), each with a meaning of its own: *e.g. gown* is registered in dictionaries as a polysemantic word with a number of meanings: 1) a loose flowing garment; 2) a woman's dress; 3) an academic, clerical or official robe; 4) a Roman toga; 5) coll. toilet paper. The first four LSVs are referred to the neutral layer, it means that they are current in various spheres of intercourse – their stylistic reference is indefinite. Only the fifth LSV, which bears the stylistic label “coll” is marked by definite stylistic connotation, which refers it to the colloquial sphere of communication. Different LSVs of the word *scrub* have different stylistic connotations. The primary meaning of the word is neutral (brush). But the derived meanings of the word have different stylistic connotations: coll. *jade*; jargon *football or baseball team*.

The plurality of meaning does not interfere with the communicative function of the language, as in every particular situation the context, i.e. the environment of the word cancels all the meanings but one. The denotational and connotational differences in meanings of a polysemantic word are not observed in speech (text), the speaker makes use of only one

LSV, the meaning of which (both denotational and connotational) is revealed through the context.

Thus, we may draw the conclusion that stylistic connotation is not the information about the object of speech as it does not contain any characteristics of the object of speech. Stylistic connotation conveys the information about the linguistic unit, its stylistic appurtenance and ***e v a l u a t i o n*** of the aesthetic value of the unit.

1.3.3. E m o t i v e – e v a l u a t i v e c o n n o t a t i o n

The same thought, idea, opinion, emotion, feeling or attitude of mind can be expressed in more than one way: *girl – lass – maiden; mother – mummy – mater; little – tiny – teeny – weeny – wee – minute – miniature – micro* and so on.

The words within each group have identical denotations and may be referred to the same object but the usage of this or that word in the group depends not so much on the qualities of the object as on the speaker's attitude to the object of speech and on the social situation.

The first word *girl* is used in any sphere of intercourse and carries no connotation, it is stylistically neutral and conveys no emotions. *Lass (or lassie)* comes from the Scottish dialect and has a rustic colouring; it is a term of endearment and connotes affection. *Maiden* is an archaic and poetic word and has a lofty ring; its usage is very limited. Thus we may say that these

words have different connotations - stylistic and emotive-evaluative. Hence connotation not only indicates the functioning of the word in a certain sphere but also conveys emotions; it may connote solemnity or casualness, familiarity or distance, seriousness or facetiousness or irony.

These two kinds of evaluation (stylistic and emotive) are closely connected but not identical. Stylistic connotation deals with evaluation of the linguistic unit from the point of view of its stylistic reference whereas emotive connotation evaluates the object of speech. The essence of emotive evaluation is based on the emotional attitude of the speaker towards the notion correlated with the linguistic unit. Emotive connotation of the word is its capacity to evoke and express emotion.

Things or phenomena of objective reality arouse in the mind of the speaker various emotions ranging from subtle displeasure to strong indignation and fury. Depending on the character of the emotion experienced by the speaker he selects from the list of linguistic units he has at his disposal the one which corresponds to the emotion felt. Accordingly he may call a woman a *kitten* or a *cat*, a *mouse* or a *rat*, a *duckling* or a *goose*. The selected word should convey the emotion the speaker experiences and reveal the emotive evaluation of the object.

Emotive evaluation is not subjective or arbitrary. It depends neither on the speaker's intention, nor on his individual feeling. It is present in the semantics of the word as an objective

component of meaning. The objective character of emotive evaluation enables us to convey our emotions to the interlocutor. If a speaker might have imparted his own subjective emotive charge to a linguistic unit he would have failed to achieve his communicative purpose: e.g. if someone calls a woman *a cat* meaning that she is as affectionate and graceful as a cat without making those qualities explicit, he is likely to be misunderstood and the compliment will be taken for an abuse for the emotive evaluation attached to the English word is quite definite and conveys negative colouring: *a spiteful woman*. **Thus emotive evaluation is an objective component of meaning common for all the members of the speaking community, which consists in the capacity to evoke and express emotions.**

Objectivity of emotive evaluation is ensured by the fact that it bears characteristics obligatory and common for all the language users. The word *girlie* irrespective of the intention of the speaker contains the component conveying diminutive hypocoristic attitude to the object of speech; the word *rotter* bears the indication to the pejorative emotions aroused in the mind of the speaker and hearer.

Emotive evaluation should not be identified with ***l o g i c a l*** (or rational) evaluation which is determined by the qualities of the object or phenomenon actualized in the meaning of the word. This kind of evaluation is reflected in the denotation of the

word meaning. The object of reality to which the word refers may be regarded from the point of view of its logical evaluation as positive or negative on account of its conformity to the moral and ethical norms of the society.

Logical evaluation may be positive, if the object or phenomenon reflected in the denotation of the word meaning is evaluated as positive i.e. corresponding to the moral and ethical norms of the society. It is negative if certain characteristics of the denotation do not correspond to the requirements of the ethical norms and principles. The majority of words are logically evaluated as neutral: e.g. *bikini*, *vac*, *gym* are devoid of logical evaluation though the words are stylistically marked. The words *brain* (a clever man), *cutie* (a beautiful girl), are evaluated as positive, whereas *brock* (a scoundrel), *to green* (to deceive), *cocky* (impudent) denote the qualities which are regarded as negative.

The degree of emotional intensity of linguistic units may vary; the emotive value of some words may be distinctly ameliorative: *swell* (fine fellow), *smashing* (great); hypocoristic: *mom*, *dad*; or diminutive: *duckling*, *doggie*; jocular: *pudding-head*, *pin-head* (a stupid person); ironic: *wait-a-bit* (thorny bush), *smoke-pipe* (top-head); pejorative: *kisser* (a mouth), *pig* (an untidy person) etc. Ameliorative and pejorative emotive evaluation develop in the majority of cases on the basis of positive and negative logical

evaluation in the denotation: in the words *blow* (boasting), *do-little* (a lazy person) pejorative emotive evaluation is determined by negative logical evaluation as boasting and laziness are generally regarded negative human qualities.

Emotive evaluation as an objective semantic feature should not be confused with emotive implications that words may acquire in certain contexts. Even the most prosaic objects can suddenly acquire unexpected sentimental overtones:

Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
 Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne!
 Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this!
 But what see I ? No Thisby do I see.
 O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!
 Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

Midsummer Night's Dream, Act V

These or similar emotive associations are not part of the language system since they are confined to the individual and unintelligible for the rest of the community.

Actually any word may acquire emotive value on some occasion. It may not be part of the traditional semantic structure of a word, but only the situation will show to what extent it will come into play. The word "*swallow*" is used unemotionally by a zoologist but in O.Wilde's "Happy Prince" acquires emotive value. Even a word like "*overcoat*" which would seem to have nothing potentially affective about it, may acquire powerful

sentimental overtones in situations like those in Gogol's well-known short story. In both cases the measure of emotiveness will depend entirely on the context.

Emotive and stylistic connotations are closely connected with **expressiveness** of a linguistic unit though these phenomena should not be identified (some scholars regard expressiveness as a type of connotation alongside with stylistic reference and emotive evaluation). The difference is that of cause and effect. Expressiveness is the effect produced by a linguistic unit on the hearer due to the presence in its semantics of connotational components of meaning. We may speak of vivid expressiveness of such words as *bromide* (a dull person), *slow coach* (a slow person) etc. on account of the emotional overtones they convey and stylistic colouring they express. In other words connotation is the means of creating expressiveness.

1.3.4. Componential Analysis

As the name implies, componential analysis involves the analysis of the sense of a lexical unit into its component parts. This approach was first used by anthropologists for the analysis of kinship terms. Originally componential analysis dealt with sense relations by means of a single set of constructs. Lexical units were analyzed in terms of semantic features or sense components: for example such sets as *man/woman*, *bull/cow*,

ram/ewe have the proportional relationships *man:woman = bull:cow = ram:ewe*. Here the components [male] / [female], and [human] / [bovine] / [ovine] may account for all the differences of meaning. Generally, components are treated as binary opposites distinguished by pluses or minuses: e.g. [+male] / [-male] or [+female] / [-female].

Componential analysis has a long history in philosophical discussions of language. But it is only recently that it has been employed at all exclusively by linguists. It has been successfully applied for discrimination of meanings of polysemantic words in lexicography.

Componential analysis consists in decomposition of the word meaning into semes – minimal components of meaning. Seme is not the only term used in componential analysis; other terms, such as differential element (F.de Saussure); semantic factor (Ю.Д.Апресян, А.К.Жолковский); elementary sense (И.В.Арнольд); semantic marker (D.Bolinger, J.J.Katz and J.A.Fodor) etc., are used synonymously to denote the elementary unit of sense.

The term “seme” is the most widely used one (E.A.Nida, A.J.Greimas, K.Baldinger; М.Д.Степанова, В.Г.Гак, А.А.Уфимцева, Э.С.Азнаурова).

V.G.Gak gives the following definition of seme: “The semantic structure of word meaning is the totality of elementary senses – semes”.

The approach to componential analysis varies in different linguistic schools.

The procedure of componential analysis employed by J.J.Katz and J.A.Fodor is based not on the analysis of a separate word, but the utterance in which the word occurs. The meaning of the word is atomized into *semantic markers* reflecting semantic relations between the word and other linguistic units and *distinguishes* – the remaining units of sense peculiar to this meaning of the word received as a result of superposition of the meaning on the semantic markers of another meaning of the same unit (20).

D.Bolinger made an attempt to apply the system of generative grammar to the study of meaning (18). The procedure of componential analysis is based on the idea of semantic markers in terms of which semantic relations between the components within the semantic structure of the word as well as semantic relations with other words may be revealed.

Nowadays componential analysis is successfully applied not only to lexicological research but to morphology as well. Attempts have been made to investigate syntactic structures by means of componential analysis. But it proved to be most effective for the problems of word meaning and finds an ever-widening application in this sphere providing us with a deeper insight into semantic aspects of the language.

Now let us see how the method of componential analysis may be used for decomposition of meaning of the word *gasbag*, which is defined as “one given to much idle or boastful talk”. At the first stage of analysis we disintegrate the meaning of the word into “bundles of semes” which actualize denotational and connotational aspects of meaning. The next stage is aimed at semantic differentiation of the “bundles of semes”. In the denotation we distinguish the following semes: 1) human being; 2) of too many words; 3) given to idle talk; 4) boastful. Besides, the denotation contains a certain indication to the negative logical evaluation of the object: talkativeness, especially idle and boastful, is not regarded as a virtue. There is also a seme, which expresses intensity (**much** talk, of **too** many words). These are the denotational semes in which the most essential characteristics of the object are reflected. In the connotational bundle of semes we distinguish 1) the seme which actualizes the stylistic reference of the word to colloquial type of speech; 2) the seme which reveals emotive attitude of the speaker towards the object of speech – pejorative emotive evaluation.

The synonymous word *chatterer* has quite a different semantic structure and componential analysis enables us to reveal the difference. The meaning of the word contains the following denotational semes: 1) human being; 2) talks too much; 3) negative logical evaluation; 4) intensifying seme, expressed in the definition by “too much”. The connotational

aspect is represented by the seme actualizing negative emotive evaluation. Stylistic connotation is not present in the semantic structure as the word is stylistically neutral and may be used in any type of discourse. Thus, the difference between the two words becomes obvious in both the aspects – connotational and denotational.

Hierarchy of semes. The fact that semes do not form a linear row in the semantics of a word but make a hierarchy was first stated by E.A.Nida in 1951. A.G.Greimas made an attempt to systematize the hierarchial relations of semes. He suggested two directions of analysis: from specific to general (hyponemic relation) and the opposite direction (hyponemic relation).

V.G.Gak worked out a hierarchial system of semes in the word meaning. He singled out the *archiseme* which expresses the generic meaning: e.g. *wolf* – a living being; *to come* – an action; *table* – an object; *beautiful* – a quality.

The second group of semes is made up of *differential* semes which carry some additional information, modify or qualify the idea expressed by the archiseme: e.g. *spinster* may be split into the following semes: 1) a human being (archiseme); 2) female; unmarried; elderly (differential semes). There may be several differential semes in the word meaning. V.G.Gak distinguishes differential semes of two types: 1) descriptive, reflecting the qualities of the object which are revealed through the opposition of lexical units in terms of differences and similarities (male / female;

married / unmarried); 2) relative, reflecting relations between different objects – functional, temporal etc.

The third group is represented by *p o t e n t i a l* semes which are actualized in the word meaning under the influence of a certain context.

e.g. *cat* does not contain in its semantics such semes as “scratchy”, “purring”, “gentle”, “soft” etc. These semes are made prominent in some particular contexts; on these grounds they are referred to potential semes (8)

Chapter 2

SEMANTIC CHANGE

Semantic change is a process which occurs whenever a new sense is attached to a name. As a result of semantic change a word develops multiple meanings. When a word retains its previous sense or senses and at the same time acquires one or several new senses it becomes *polysemantic*. But the emergence of polysemy through name transfer is one side of the picture – the result of semantic change may be envisaged from another angle: e.g. by being transferred into the abstract sphere, the word *smear* (to soil < to disgrace) becomes not only a polysemantic word with several senses but also a synonym of other words with the same sense

– to disgrace, to dishonour etc. Thus semantic change is responsible for both polysemy and synonymy.

There should be distinguished and treated separately *c a u s e s* of semantic change, *s e m a n t i c c h a n g e* proper and *r e s u l t s* of semantic change.

2.1. Causes of semantic change

The genesis of semantic relationships through change of meaning is more complex than it may seem. The controversy of the issue results in multiple classifications suggested by different philosophers and philologists approaching the problem of causes from different angles.

Before considering the problem of causes of semantic change, it may be useful to analyze first a few concrete examples calculated to give some idea of the range and complexity of the causes involved.

1. When we talk of *a mouth of a river* there are a number of common features between the part of the human body and the geographical phenomenon. The two senses are similar, which enables us to transfer the name *mouth* from one to the other.
2. *Paper* has travelled a long way since the “papyrus” of antiquity. Here it is the technical evolution of the referent through the centuries that is reflected in the difference between the classical and the modern meanings of the word.

3. English *bishop* is derived from the Latin *episcopus*; the word originally meant *overseer*. Like other ecclesiastical terms of similar provenance (presbyter, ecclesia) it owed its new sense to having passed into specialized social group, that of the early Christian community.
4. The word *queer* in the meaning of *mad* owes its sense to the tendency of substituting unpleasant, rough or rude expressions by milder ones: *belly* – *abdomen*; *drunk* – *intoxicated*
5. *Sky-scraper* is a jocular, expressive and picturesque image by which popular imagination has sought to label the huge and towering buildings devised by modern American architecture. The success of the term bears witness to the appropriateness of the analogy. Yet, there was a specific reason presiding over the emergence of this expression at that particular time: a new architectural device had to be named, a gap in the vocabulary had to be filled. The process took no more than a few years: the building of the new type of giant houses began around 1883-84 and the name was found around 1891 (27).
6. The meaning of the word *Burgundy* rests on a twofold connection: that between the two senses, the wine and the province, and that between the two names combined into the phrase *Burgundy wine* on so many occasions that

eventually the latter term can be safely omitted and the remaining *Burgundy* acquires the meaning of the whole.

7. The word *stool* originally meant *chair*. After the word *chair* was borrowed from French, the meaning of the word *stool* underwent semantic change and began to mean a *seat without a back*.

8. The words *grasp*, *get*, *gather* acquire the meaning of *understand* by analogy with the word *catch* belonging to the same synonymic row, which was the first to be used in the new sense.

The above choice of examples is no more than a brief indication of the most typical influences responsible for semantic change.

There exist at least two highly ingenious theories endeavouring to introduce some system into the wide and varied range of efficient causes and to bring them under some general principles.

The first one was put forward by Antoine Meillet who came to the conclusion that ultimate causes of semantic change fall into three distinct and irreducible types:

- a) changes due to historical reasons (examples 2 and 5);
- b) changes due to social stratification (example 3);
- c) changes due to linguistic reasons (examples 6,7,8).

The idea of this classification of causes was basically legitimate and fruitful for it provided a workable platform for investigation and systematization.

Professor Sperber approached the issue from an entirely different direction applying the psycho-analytical approach to semantic history and seeking in emotive force the clue to changes in meaning. In many respects his theory provides a natural complement on the Milleit scheme. It focuses attention on just that set of forces, which Milleit had tended to disregard. To make Milleit's classification complete it should have distinguished at least one more type: psychological causes. This category would have accommodated forces like taboo, euphemism, craving for novelty of expression, a psychological effort to express one kind of thing in terms of another¹.

The main causes will be briefly considered and analyzed through linguistic examples thus providing a test and countercheck for completeness and validity.

Changes due to historical reasons. Changes in the life of the speech community, the economic development of the society, changes in the scientific concepts, in social and other spheres of human activity find reflection in the vocabulary system of the language. Some words are borrowed from other

¹ For A.Meillet and H.Sperber theories see St. Ullmann. The Principles of Semantics. Glasgow, 1957, p.193-195.

languages, others drop out of usage, but some words change their meaning to be able to express the changed realia.

Present day *paper* has nothing to do with the plant *papyrus* from which it was made; *artillery* denoted quite a different concept before gunpowder was invented; *ship* of the Second World War and after hardly resembled the Viking *sceop*: *culture* covers a much wider scope of concepts than *agriculture* which it used to denote. There seems to have been fairly continuous development in the history of the above mentioned concepts and a lot of others connected with science, technique, etc. and yet the mental content attaching to these names is not the same today as in mediaeval times.

Historical causes are also responsible for the appearance of transferred names to denote new objects and phenomena (see ex.5 “skyscraper”).

Changes due to social reasons. Meillet claims, that the existence of social groups within the speech community is the essential cause in the change of meaning. This point in Meillet’s scheme calls for revision for social stratification of the society in itself is not responsible for social stratification of the vocabulary. The reason for the appearance and existence of slang, jargon etc. is purely psychological and will be dwelled upon in more detail in changes due to psychological reasons.

Changes due to linguistic reasons. Language has been alternately blamed and praised for the fluid and ill-defined nature of its word-meaning. Semantic vagueness and its consequences, mobility and elasticity are the result of the ever changing character of the language and its units. Some of the changes within the semantic system of the language are due to purely linguistic reasons:

a) linguistic analogy – is the process which results in the acquisition of a new sense by the members of a synonymic row by analogy with a member of this row which has already acquired the new sense (example 8).

We observe analogical change in the words *overlook* and *oversee*.

The verb *overlook* was employed in the sense of “look with an evil eye upon, cast a spell over smb.” from which there developed the sense “deceive”. Later we find a synonym of *overlook* employed in the sense of *deceive* (*oversee*). The two words were closely associated and the one recalled the other on other occasions in other meanings which the two had in common. The use of the one for the other in the new meaning is, therefore, easily understood.

b) ellipsis consists in the omission of part of a phrase and transfer the meaning onto the remaining part (example 6). The verb *to starve* (OE *steorfvan*) used to mean *to die*. After the verb *to die* was borrowed from

Scandinavian *to starve* was used in collocation with the word *hunger*. Later the verb acquired the meaning of the whole phrase and the second element dropped out. Similar phenomena may be observed in

a private < a private soldier

a general < a general officer

an editorial < an aditorial article

a native < a native man

a daily < a daily newspaper etc.

c) ***discrimination of synonyms***; total synonymy is a luxury no language can afford. Thus, as soon as synonymous ways of expressing an idea appear in the language, discrimination of synonyms leads to modification of meaning of one of the synonymous language units (example 7). Another example is the Scandinavian *sky*, which ousted the native word *heaven* to a narrower sphere of application. For a certain period of time the two words functioned as absolute synonyms, then the word *heaven* acquired different semantic properties and started to be used as a religious term. The difference between the discriminated synonyms may be not necessarily denotational, it may involve changes in the connotations of the words: *child – infant; room – chamber; begin – commence*.

The native words (child, room, begin) are neutral in their stylistic reference whereas the corresponding synonyms of French origin are marked by lofty connotation.

Changes due to psychological reasons. Psychological factors make the essential causes facilitating semantic change. Semantic change proper (metaphor and metonymy) is determined by psychological reasons (examples 1,3,4).

a) it is our mental ability to see the surrounding objects through other objects that brings about semantic change. When we see smooth surface of the water in the pond we characterize it through its relation to glass (glassy surface); when we speak of someone in the dancing profession we characterize him through his relation to this profession , we say “he is in dance”. We comprehend one concept in terms of another. Our conceptual system in terms of which we both think and act is fundamentally metaphoric and metonymic. The linguistic evidence is a sound proof of the metaphoric and metonymic nature of our conceptual system. These facts play a vital part in the mechanism of innovations; they provide the speaker with a “reservoir” of transfers on which to draw whenever the occasion arises (21).

b) another psychological reason is striving for novelty. Deliberate efforts to break away from routine usage may

be at work alongside of other impulses in the same direction. A speaker will deliberately decide to employ a new, striking, expressive or picturesque term, partly on account of its intrinsic merits, partly because its use might confer on him some kind of distinction, an advantageous social connotation, or a cachet of fashionable and up-to-date novelty.

It is especially true for such social jargons as **cant** (a secret lingo of the underworld), where striving for novelty is determined by one of its primary functions – secrecy: as soon as a term gains too much popularity outside the special sphere, it ceases to serve a sign of recognition as it loses its secrecy. It accounts for its substitution by another term obtained usually through semantic change of a common, neutral, usually widely used word: e.g. cabbage, dough, beans, bones, etc. in the meaning of money.

c) eupheme may be the motive force for name transfer. It is the great toning-down device employed to mitigate anything holy and dangerous or unpleasant and indecent. **The term “euphemism” (eu pheme – Gr. ”speaking well”) implies the social practice of replacing the tabooed words by words and phrases that seem less straightforward, milder, more harmless or at least less offensive.** The notion of eupheme is closely

connected with taboo, as verbal superstition is one of the most constant features of human society. It may assume widely different forms depending on the degree of civilization attained by the community, but it has its roots everywhere and at all times in the same incredible force: belief in the magic power of the word, spoken as well as written. We find elaborate systems of taboo in primitive groups, in the ancient and mediaeval cultures. In the present day civilized society there are also a lot of verbal prohibitions. One of them is the avoidance of the name of God in different religions. Hence in English we find such substitutes for God in colloquial speech: goodness, good gracious, etc. On the other hand vulgar words, too offensive for polite usage are also substituted by euphemisms: e.g. the word bloody is replaced by adjectives and participles beginning with the same sound combination: blooming, blasted, blessed, blamed. In both the cases we do not deal with the change of meaning, as there is no semantic association between the notions. The euphemisms are created on the basis of phonetic similarity between the tabooed word and its substitute.

In the majority of cases eupheme as a psychological motive is responsible for acquisition of a new sense in a name through metaphor or metonymy. Words referring to human physiological functions are regarded to be indecent and are substituted by

either medical terms (belly - abdomen (metonymy) or milder and more acceptable terms (to vomit – to throw out (metaphor), drunk – intoxicated (metonymy)).

Thus eupheme is a powerful force, which is based on psychological nonappropriateness of a harsh or indecent term and its substitution by a more suitable one created through different types of semantic change.

Some linguists regard eupheme as a type of semantic change. The reason for referring eupheme to semantic change lies in indiscriminate treatment of causes of semantic change, the process itself and its result. The scholars who share this opinion refuse to view the elements separately and try to set them against a wider background.

2.2. Process of semantic change

Though it might seem that words and phrases have once and for all established connections with objects and phenomena of reality, it is not exactly so. They only correlate in our minds with general ideas of objects and events they denote. Thus, the connection between the linguistic units and the sense is not arbitrary but conventional.

One and the same object may be given different names in different situations and by different speakers. So you may call a male human being *a gentleman, an ass, a pin-head, a jelly-fish, his highness, his lordship, hog, the man living next door, this*

black moustache. And the speaker is free to choose any denomination which serves the purpose of communication.

But the denotation of the referent is not a chance occurrence, but rather subject to certain logical laws. We cannot shift meanings as we please, we cannot use any word instead of a given one. We can call a man *jellyfish*, if he is weak-willed and subject to influence; or “you, black moustache, over there”, if he has moustache, but you cannot call a man *this residence*, or *scrambled eggs*, or *plural*, as there is no connection between the object of nomination and these things.

It is possible to generalize all denominations to a few logical patterns which in linguistic literature bear the name of semantic change.

Semantic change is a process of development of a new meaning which consists in transference of a name from one object to another on the basis of association between them.

With the passage of time a certain development in the semantics of a word may take place – a word may retain its previous sense or senses and, at the same time, acquire one or several new senses.

Notwithstanding the fact that there certainly exist some limitations on the scope of transfers, it should be noted that the caprice of associative process is extremely flexible.

The association between the senses may be based on outward resemblance or connection. *Teeth* of a saw resemble

human teeth; *head* of a cabbage is of the same shape with human head; *foot* in the meaning of infantry – are soldiers serving on foot; unfit for *table* is unfit for a meal taken at table; *wooden* manners are clumsy manners, lacking animation and grace as if a person is made of wood; *bromide* – a dull, platitudinous person as if from the use of bromides as sedatives.

The associations are at work when the occasion arises. They may be conscious or unconscious, deliberate or involuntary, but as soon as the innovation becomes indicated and acceptable by the members of the speech community, it is to be embodied in the language system.

Many investigators of semantic change attribute to it the so-called widening and narrowing of meaning which we observe in such words as *meat*, which originally meant any kind of food, and nowadays means edible flesh of animals (narrowing), or *pipe*, which meant a musical instrument and now is applied to any object of oblong cylindrical shape (narrowing).

This indiscriminate treatment of semantic processes based on associations of different kinds, on the one hand, and the change in the range of meaning (metaphor and metonymy), on the other, will hardly carry conviction since semantic change is a mental process of associations of two referents whereas widening and narrowing is the result of this mechanism of transfer.

The same concerns degradation and elevation of meaning which will be dealt with in the next paragraph. It causes

underlying the processes of semantic change and the results of those processes are kept apart, semantic change proper is limited to two types of associative transference:

- 1) transference based on similarity, likelihood, resemblance of two referents – metaphor;
- 2) transference based on real connection of two referents – metonymy.

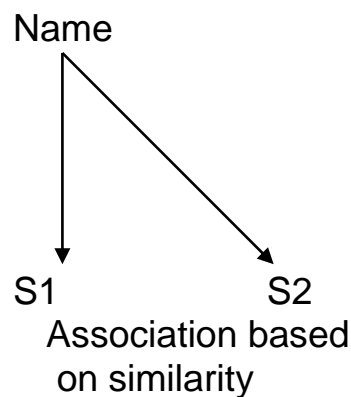
2.2.1. Metaphor

Metaphor is a process of name transference from one object to another on the basis of resemblance, likelihood, similarity between the two objects.

neck of a human being – neck of a bottle

The association of the two objects is due to their outward similarity. The secondary, transferred meaning of the bottleneck “the narrow part of a bottle near the top” developed on the basis of resemblance of this object with the human neck.

The mechanism at work is implicit in the following diagram:



Sense1 (S1) has some features in common with the other object (S2) lying within the associative field. The attention should be focused on the common trait or characteristic, on the overlap between the notional ranges of the two objects, and the name (N) pertaining to S1 is felt as an adequate designation for S2.

Metaphoric nature of some words may be revealed only with the help of etymological analysis:

e.g. protogermanic *bitraz “biting” (derived from * bito “I bite”) resulted in the appearance of *bitter* – “sharp, acrid, unpleasant to taste”.

Such metaphors are called etymological or dead. Though in the majority of linguistic units metaphoric transfer is quite transparent and the basis for comparison between the objects is evident. The word *head* is used in reference to the *head of the army*, *head of the household*, the front part of something (*head of a vessel*), the working end of a tool or implement (*head of hammer*), the foremost or leading position (marched *at the head of the parade*) and even *the head of the cabbage*. The word *tongue* is used to denote different objects resembling the shape of a tongue – the fleshy muscular human organ – *tongues of flame*, *tongue of a shoe*, *tongue of a bell* etc. We may speak of *root of all evil*, *leg of a table*, *back of a chair*. People may be characterized as *sharp*, or *keen*, or *bright*, or *dull*; feelings may be *warm* or *cold*.

All the above given metaphors are lexicalized, it means that they belong to the vocabulary system of the language. Though their motivation is not completely lost, they are hardly felt as metaphors as they do not create an image and their expressive force has been obliterated by long usage. Such metaphors are known to all language users and the things named metaphorically often have no other names. How else would you call *back of a chair* or *leg of a table*? How would you characterize prices that *sink* – only by using another metaphor “*go down*”?

Lexicalized metaphors are trite for they have no stylistic value. They are different from genuine, fresh metaphors, which are the result of the author’s creative imagination and are used with a special stylistic aim in view. In genuine metaphors the reference is felt as figurative, both the author and the reader are aware that the object is given an original name instead of the customary one. Thus, describing Irene, J. Galsworthy calls her “*this passive goddess*”. The relationship of the direct meaning of the word “*goddess*” and the meaning it acquires in the literary context is based on the similarity between Irene’s attractive appearance and the beauty of a goddess. The original metaphor here adds to the vividness of description.

Concrete to concrete metaphors. Metaphors may be based on similarity between two physical objects of different semantic planes. To this group such metaphors may be referred:

teeth of a saw

head of a cabbage

tongue of a bell or a shoe

leg of a table

foot of a hill

lemon or peach (in reference to a woman)

Very often names of animals are used to denote human beings on the basis of associations of certain qualities of animals with similar ones typical of human beings. This phenomenon is called **zoosemy**: a fierce, aggressive or audacious person may be called *a tiger*; a crafty, sly or clever man may be named *a fox*; if a man is self-indulgent and filthy he may be referred to as *a hog*; a sneaky person is called *a rat*; a treacherous one – *a snake*. A fussy old woman may be called *a hen*, a silly woman – *a goose*, a spiteful one – *a cat*.

Concrete to abstract metaphors. Another group of metaphors is represented by cases of transference based on similarity where association is built between a concrete object and an abstract notion. The word “fountain” in the meaning of “a device that produces or contains a jet or stream of water” transferred its name to another object which acquired its new denomination in the combination “fountain of youth” on the basis of similarity between a powerful stream of water and unbounded resources of

energy in the young age. To this group the following metaphors may be referred:

a ray of hope

a shade of doubt

a stormy heart

a sharp tongue

a beam of the sun

to move to tears

Metaphors are based on different types of similarity which may concern any property, for instance:

- similarity of shape: *tongue of a bell or shoe*

- similarity of function: *leg of a table,*

head of a household

- similarity of position: *head of a hammer*

foot of a page

- similarity of the character of motion or speed:

snail (a sluggish person)

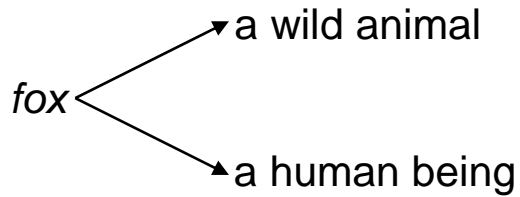
slowcoach (a slow, habitually lazy person)

- similarity of dimensions: *dumpling* (a short, chubby creature)

peanut (a small, insignificant person)

- similarity of value: *dirt cheap.*

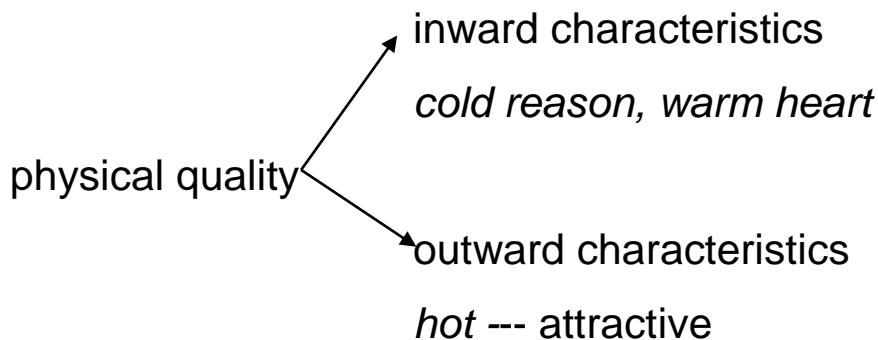
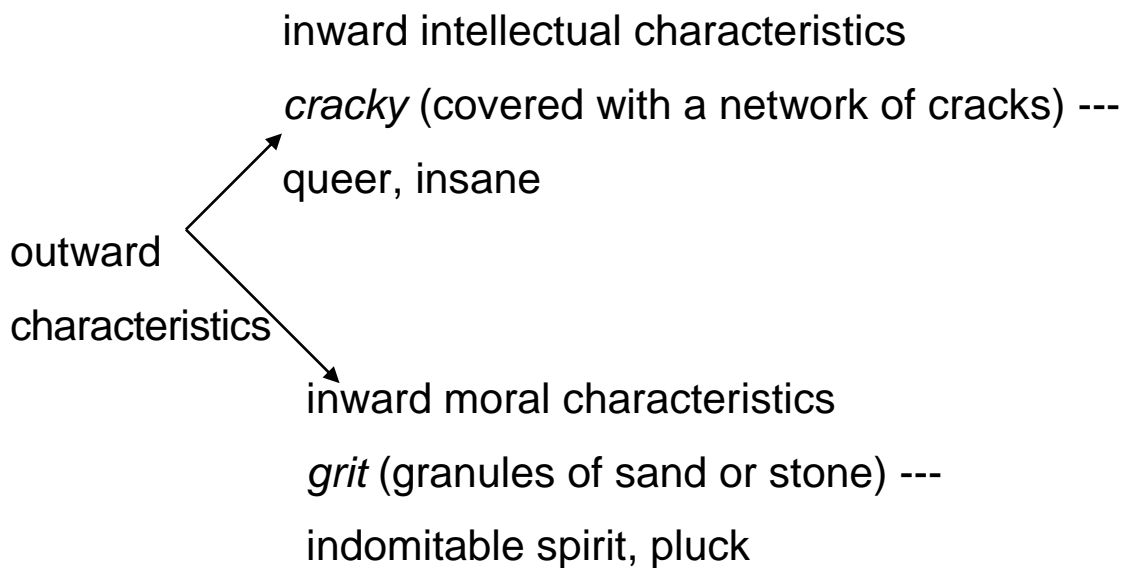
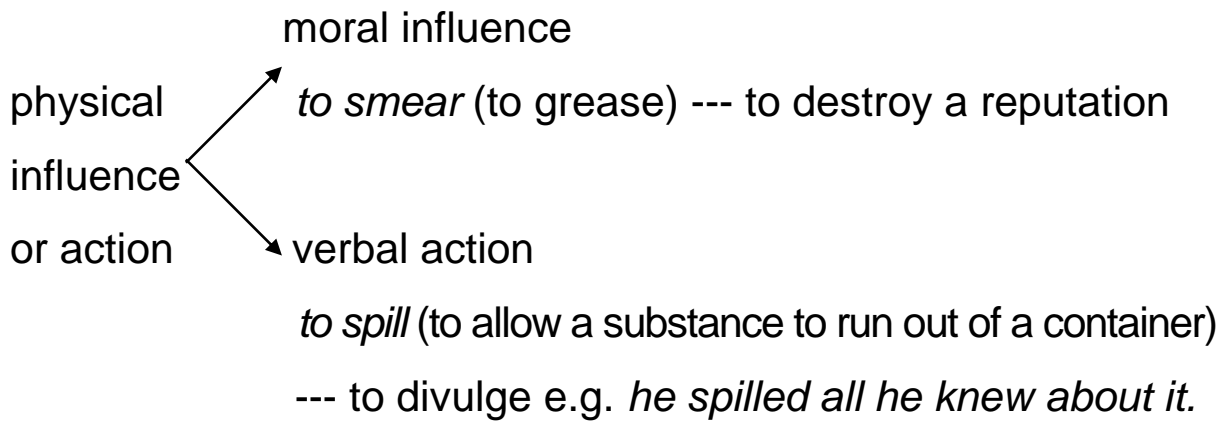
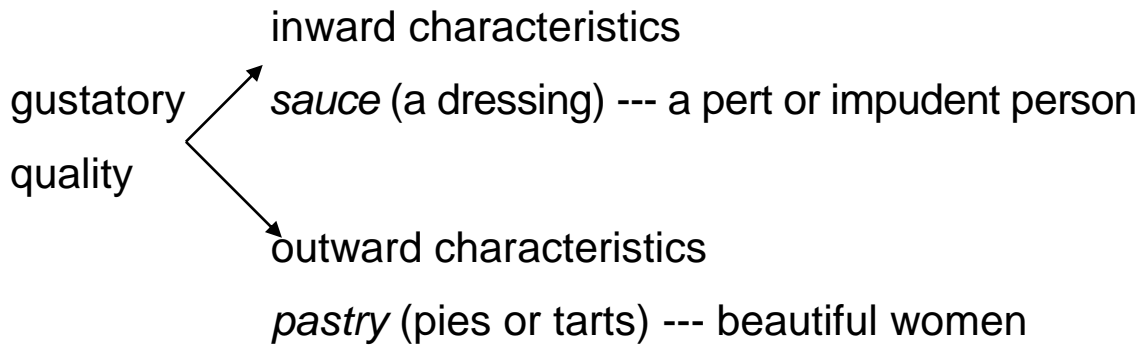
If we compare the semantic ranges of the correlated notions, we will see that the semantic component, which serves as the basis for the transference is present in both the notions.

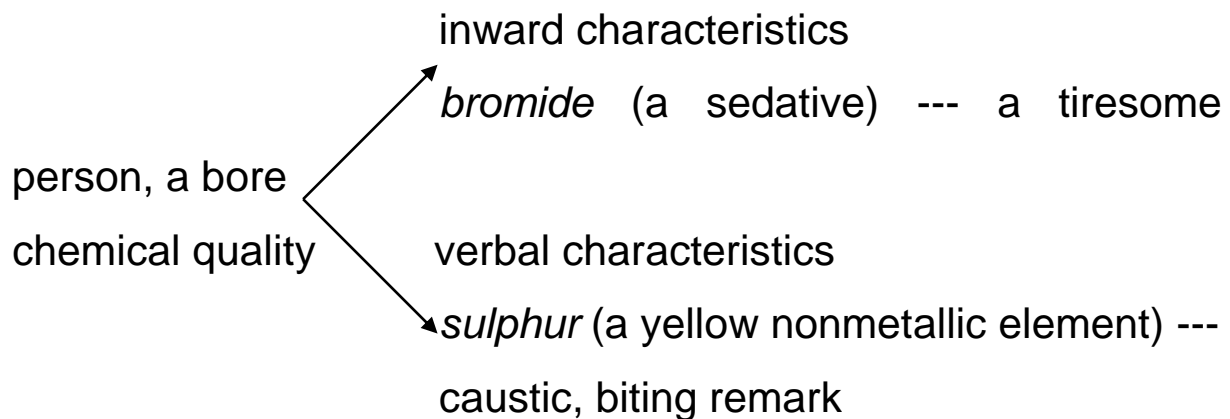


The wild animal is known for its clever, crafty, sly nature. Those qualities serve as the basis for comparison between the two objects – an animal and a human being. Thus the transference of the name is based on the characteristics (sly, clever, crafty) which are present in both the notions. This type of relations between the correlated notions is called ***relations of intersection***.

On the other hand, when the name “*lemon*” is transferred from the acid, juicy fruit to a human being (an unpopular person, who proves to be unsatisfactory). The acid tartness of the fruit, which leaves a bad taste in the mouth is not present in the correlated notion – a human being cannot be characterized with a gustatory sense. The seme which serves as the basis for the transference is transformed from the gustatory sense to the inward characteristic of a person. The type of relations between the correlated notions, in which the motivating seme is transformed from one sensory sphere to another may be termed ***relations of succession***.

Transformation may concern different kinds of physical or moral qualities:





It should be noted that the above given types of trasferences do not make up an exhaustive list as the number of associations which occur in our minds is indefinite and infinite.

Metaphoric transference is frequently found in set-expressions:

to get one's brains fried – to sunbathe for an excessive length of time

to sink one's teeth into smth – to have smth real or solid to think about

to lose ground – to go back, to retreat

money burns a hole in one's pocket – to be likely to spend money quickly

to eat out of one's hand – to trust someone fully.

Special calculations have shown that over 30% of set-phrases in English are metaphors. (Skrebnev U.M. p 123).

A special group of metaphors is made up by proper names of historical, literary or mythological personages transferred to

common names: *a Don Juan* – a lady's man, *Othello* – a jealous man, *Juda* – a traitor. The basis for these transferences is the resemblance of the characteristic features of well-known personages with those to whom the names are applied.

Metaphor in cognitive semantics. It was George Lakoff and Mark Johnson who suggested quite an original approach to the essence of metaphor which they see in understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another (21). They proceed from the assumption that our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act is fundamentally metaphorical in nature – that is what we experience, the way we think and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking or acting, language is an important source of evidence for what the system is like. To prove that a concept is metaphorical they analyse the concept *argument* and the conceptual metaphor *argument is war*.

We not only talk of argument in terms of war – many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war:

We can *win* or *lose* arguments,

We *attack* our opponent's position and *defend* our own,

We *gain* or *lose* ground,

We plan or use strategies,

We can take a new line of attack

Though there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle And the structure of an argument – *attack, defence, lose or win* etc – reflects this. Arguments and wars are different kinds of things – verbal discourse and armed conflict – are different kinds of actions. But argument is partially structured, understood, performed, talked about in terms of war. The concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and consequently, the language is metaphorically structured.

We are hardly conscious of the metaphors we use speaking about arguments because metaphors are not merely in the words we use but in the very concept of an argument. There is no aesthetic value in those metaphors, they are neither poetic nor rhetorical. We talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way. Thus, the human thought processes are largely metaphorical.

Metaphors like *argument is war, time is money* are called **structural metaphors** i.e. metaphors where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another. But there is another kind of metaphorical concept, one that does not structure one concept in terms of another but instead organizes a whole system of concepts with respect to one another. They are called **orientational metaphors**, since most of them have

to do with spatial orientation: up – down, in – out, front – back, on – off, deep – shallow, central - peripheral.

e.g. happy is up

sad is down

I'm feeling up

I'm feeling down

That boosted my spirits

I'm depressed

My spirits rose

I'm really low these days

You're in high spirits

My spirits sank

Physical basis of the metaphors lies in the functions of our body – drooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture - with positive emotional state.

high status is up

low status is down

He has a lofty position

He is at the bottom of the social

She'll rise to the top

hierarchy

He's at the peak of his career *She fell in status*

Status is correlated with social power and power is up.

good is up

bad is down

things are looking up

things are at an all-time low

He hit a peak last year

his rating is going down

Good is up gives an *up* orientation to general well-being, and this orientation is coherent with special cases like *happy is up, health is up, alive is up, control is up*.

Our physical and cultural experience provides many possible basis for spatialization metaphors. Which ones are chosen and which ones are major, may vary from culture to culture.

Our experience of physical objects and substances provides a further basis for understanding – understanding our experience in terms of objects and substances. It allows us to pick out parts of our experience and treat them as discrete entities or substances of a uniform kind. Just as the basic experiences of human spatial orientations give rise to orientational metaphors, so our experiences with physical objects proved the basis for an extraordinary wide variety of ***ontological metaphors***, that is, ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc. as entities and substantives.

Mind is a machine, mind is a brittle object are examples of ontological metaphors.

Mind is a machine

My mind just isn't operating today

I'm a little rusty today

Mind is a brittle machine

You have to handle him with care

He broke under cross-examination

She is easily crushed

I'm going to pieces

These metaphors focus on different aspects of mental experience. The machine metaphors give us a conception of the mind as an internal mechanism, a source of energy. The brittle object metaphor allows us to talk only about psychological strength. Ontological metaphors are so natural

and so pervasive in our thought that they are usually taken as self-evident. The fact that they are metaphorical never occurs to most of us. The reason is that metaphors as *the mind is a brittle object* are an integral part of the model of the mind that we have in this culture; it is the model most of us think and operate in terms of (21).

2.2.2. Metonymy

Metonymy is a process of name transference from one object to another on the basis of contiguity, real connection between the two objects.

The connection between the objects may be quite obvious :

hand – extremity of the arm

hands – a worker

head – the uppermost part of the body

heads – the cattle population

In some cases metonymy is disguised and is hardly recognizable as the contiguity between the objects is difficult to trace on the synchronistic level:

e.g. *cash* goes back to the French word *caisse* (box). From naming the container it came to mean what was contained – money. The original meaning of the word was ousted by the word *safe* and dropped out of usage.

OE *boc* had the meaning of *beech* (a common forest tree), then the name of the material was applied to the product, while the original meaning was forgotten.

Yard originally meant “*a strait thin branch*” from which it developed the meaning “*a unit of measure of 3 feet 36 inches*” and then “*a piece of material this length.*” The connection between the first and the second meaning is lost as the meaning “*a strait thin branch*” has become obsolete.

OE *pen* originates from Latin *penna* “feather” – the early instrument for writing. Though modern pens have nothing in common with feathers, except the function, the name remains.

All these examples are instances of etymological metonymy, they can be revealed only with the help of etymological data. They are part of the language system and have no expressive force.

Metonymy may be a useful stylistic device when it is an original author’s creation, as it focuses the attention of the reader on the essential characteristics of an object: e.g. Golsworthy calls June Forsyte “*all hair and spirit*”, thus placing emphasis on her most characteristic feature.

Types of metonymy-forming interrelations of two objects are manifold. They may be:

- instrument → agent

pen is used to denote a writer or a poet: “the best *pen* of the epoch”

violin may be used in reference to the musician who plays it: “there are eight *violins* in the orchestra”.

- consequence → cause

grey hair means old age

- symbol → the thing symbolized

crown → monarchy

- material → the thing made of the material

glass → articles made of glass

silver → money (silver coins)

- container → the thing contained

he drank *a cup*

the school approves of this action

- name of the thing → quality of the thing

a tongue → ready tongue

an ear → *an ear* for music

- name of a place → institution

Tony Blair does not want to move from *Downing street, 10*

- name of a place → event connected with the place

American people don't want another *Vietnam*

- action → the object of the action

love → the object of affection

reading → matter for reading

- action → the subject of the action
support (act of supporting) → the one who supports
safeguard (protection) → the one who protects
- quality → the thing or the person possessing the quality
talent → he is a real *talent*
beauty → all those *beauties* of Hollywood
- quality → the result of the quality
ancient → an aged man, an elder or senior

Synecdoche is a variety of metonymy which is often treated as a separate semantic change. It is the simplest kind of metonymy which consists in using the name of a part to denote the whole or visa versa.

e.g. OE *mete* “food” developed into Modern English *meat* “edible flesh”, (which is also a kind of food), thus the name of the whole was transferred to its part. In the very well known example of *hands* we observe the reverse process.

e.g. *Hands* are wanted – the name of the part is used to denote the whole.

To synecdoche we may refer many of the above given instances of metonymy: material – the thing made of the material, symbol – the thing symbolized, instrument – the agent, and others. In synecdoche there are many parts that can stand for the whole, but we do not pick them out at random. Which part we pick out determines which aspect of the whole we are focusing on. Both *good heads* and *good hands* may mean

people, good workers. But in the first case we call them *heads* as we focus on the “intelligence” which is associated with the *head*. In the second case we pick out another particular characteristic of the person, namely “skill” which might be achieved with good work of *hands*.

Metonymy is responsible for a lot of common names derived from proper names:

e.g. *volt* – the unit of electromotive force received its name from Alessandro Volta, an Italian physicist, who made the discovery. The same sauce is found in *ohm*, *ampere*, *watt*, etc.

In *he bought a Ford* the name of the producer is transferred to the product of the company bearing the name.

Sandwich goes back to John Montagu, Earl of Sandwich (18th century), who ordered his butler to serve his guest card-players with sliced veal in between two slices of bread so that they could eat them during the card game to avoid soiling the cards.

Metonymy in cognitive semantics is treated as a kind of process different from metaphor on the basis of the difference in functions. Metaphor is principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding. Metonymy, on the other hand, has primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to stand for another. But metonymy is not only a referential device.

It also serves the function of providing understanding – it allows us to focus more specifically on certain aspects of what is being referred to. Metonymic concepts are part of the ordinary everyday way we think and act as well as talk.

Like metaphors, metonymies are not random or arbitrary occurrences, to be treated as isolated instances. Metonymic concepts are also systematic. They are instances of certain general metonymic concepts (part for the whole, producer for product, institution – people etc) in terms of which we organize our thoughts and actions. Metonymic concepts allow us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relation to something else. When we think of *a Picasso*, we are not just thinking of a work of art alone, in and of itself. We think of it in terms of its relations to the artist, that is, his conception of art, his technique, his role in art history, etc. Similarly, when a waitress “ *The ham sandwich* wants his check” she is not interested in the person as a person but only as a customer, which is why the use of such a sentence is dehumanizing.

Thus, like metaphors, metonymic concepts structure not just our language, but our thoughts, attitudes and actions. And, like metaphoric concepts, metonymic concepts are grounded in our experience. In fact, the grounding of metonymic concepts is in general more obvious than is the case with metaphoric concepts since it usually involves direct physical or causal associations (21).

2.3. Results of semantic change

2.3.1. “Narrowing” and “Widening” of meaning

The process of name transference sometimes results in the change in range of meaning. Some words, which formerly represented notions of a narrow scope came to render notions of a broader scope, in other words, their meaning became wider as a result of semantic change.

Thus, the word *barn* originally meant *a place for storing barley*. In Modern English the word has widened its combinability and developed a more general meaning: *a building in which grain, hay, etc. are stored*. The word *season* meant *the period for harvesting; ready* (in OE a derivative of the verb *ridan* “to ride”) meant *prepared for a ride*.

The Modern English meaning of the word *to arrive* – *to come to a place* developed through name transference based on contiguity, but the derived meaning is much wider than the original one – *to come to a shore*.

Thus, **widening of meaning** is a result of semantic transference which consists in the development of a wider range of word meaning.

The word *uncle* originally meant “*a maternal uncle*” (mother’s brother). Its present day meaning is much wider – it may denote *the brother of one’s father or mother or an aunt’s husband*. In Ebonics it may mean *any elderly man*.

Old French *bochier* (*butcher*) was borrowed into English in the meaning of “*the one who kills goats*” – now its primary meaning is “*one whose business is to slaughter cattle for food*”.

Picture meant “something painted” (from Latin *picture* – *to paint*). Now it means any imitative representation of an object, a visible or visual image.

The process of name transference may lead to a reverse result – ***narrowing of meaning***:

e.g. the word *girl* meant *a child of either sex*, but gradually the name was transferred to *a female child*.

In Old English *deer* (*deor* or *dior*) meant *any beast*. “Rats and mice and such small deer...” (Shakespeare). Now its meaning is reduced to a particular species – *a hoofed mammal of the family Cervidae, having antlers borne only by males*.

Old English *mete* (Mod. E *meat*) meant *food*) but now means a particular kind of food – *edible flesh*. The old meaning is preserved in the compound *sweetmeat* – “ a food rich in sugar”.

OE *fugol* (*bird*) gave Mod E *fowl* (*domestic bird*). The original meaning is found in phraseology (*fowls of the air*) and in poetic diction.

OE *hund* meant *any kind of dog*, now *hound* is restricted to *a species of hunting dog*.

Token (OE *tacen*) means *an indication or an evidence* (token of love, respect, etc.). Originally it had a much broader sense of *sign* or *mark*.

In all the above mentioned examples of widening or narrowing of meaning we observe metonymic transfer as contiguity is the most typical type of connection between the objects in such cases.

Nevertheless, in the word *pipe* we observe an instance of metaphor underlying the widening of meaning. The original meaning of the word *pipe* was *a musical wind instrument*, then due to similarity of shape the word broadened its semantic range and began to denote *any hollow oblong cylindrical body* (*smoking pipe, water pipe, etc.*).

2.3.2. “Degradation” and “elevation” of meaning

The terms “**degradation**” and “**elevation**” of meaning are customarily referred to cases of semantic change in the connotational structure of the word. But we can hardly speak of meaning in terms of degradation and elevation as it is the referent that acquires certain positive or negative characteristics, which are reflected first in the denotation, then in the connotation of the word.

In most cases degradation and elevation are not independent semantic transfers. They are connected with

metonymy and sometimes metaphor and often appear as a result of semantic transfer:

e.g. OE *cnafa* meant *a boy*, then a boy-servant and finally acquired a derogatory sense – *a swindler, a scoundrel*. We can hardly speak of degradation as a semantic process proper as soon as the mechanism of name transference, which is observed here is based on the contiguity between two objects i.e. metonymy.

Knave: **a male** child from birth to manhood → **a male** servant →
a false, deceitful male

The object to which the name referred acquired negative characteristics, and the meaning developed a negative evaluative connotation.

The word *Tory* was first applied to the Irish bog-trotters and robbers, then on the basis of contiguity the name was transferred to the most hot-headed asserters of the royal prerogative and finally to a member of a Conservative party. In the word-story we see how the meaning gradually lost its negative evaluative component and became indefinite – neither positive nor negative. The negative emotive connotation disappeared together with the logical evaluation of the referent.

Modifications in the denotational components, which result in the change of emotive evaluative connotations can be hardly

called “elevation” or “degradation” (or pejoration and amelioration) of meaning, as the terms “better” or “worse” can be hardly applied to meaning. The changes in the connotational structure of the word is the result of the denotational changes usually caused by metaphoric or metonymic transfer.

In the case of *knight* (originally *manservant*) the derived meaning “one of gentle birth bred to arms, admitted to feudal times to a certain honorable military rank” developed due to the process of transference based on contiguity. The second meaning acquired certain positive evaluation as compared to the primary meaning of *manservant*. It accounts for the changes in connotations and the development of positive emotive evaluation.

But it is always the notion itself that is responsible for connotation changes. Connotations never spring from nowhere – they are always the result of denotational development.

e.g. Until George Bush’s 1988 presidential campaign the term *liberal* was marked by positive evaluation as it was related to Kennedy’s Peace corps, protest against the Vietnam War, the rights movement of 1970s. With Bush’s campaign platform, *liberal* underwent pejoration and developed negative evaluation, for Bush presented liberals as welfare statist and argued that they legislated the care of others only in order to enrich themselves through diverting funds. All these characteristics which recreated *liberal* into a “dirty word” caused modification in

the denotational meaning of the word on account of which negative connotation developed – the emotional reaction of the language users to the liberal moved from positive to utterly negative.

Bibliography

1. Азнаурова Э.С. Очерки по стилистике слова. Ташкент, 1973.
2. Арнольд И.В. The English Word. М., 1966.
3. Апресян Ю.Д. Лексическая семантика: Синонимические средства языка. М., 1974.
4. Балли Ш. Французская стилистика. М., 1961.
5. Блумфилд Л. Язык. М.: Прогресс, 1982.
6. Верещагин Е.М., Костомаров В.Г. Язык и культура. Лингвострановедение в преподавании русского языка как иностранного. М.: Рус. Яз., 1976.
7. Винтгенштейн П. Философские исследования // Новое в лингвистике. Вып. 16, М., 1985
8. Гак В.Г. К проблеме семантической синтагматики. – В кн. Проблемы структурной лингвистики 1971. М.: Наука, 1982.
9. Новиков Л.А. Семантика русского языка. М.: Высш. шк., 1982.
10. Скребнев Ю.М. Очерк теории стилистики. Горький, 1975.
11. Соссюр Ф. де Курс общей лингвистики // Труды по языкознанию М., 1974.
12. Степанова М.Д. О лингвистической вероятности.- В кн. Проблемы языкознания. М., 1967.
13. Уфимцева А.А. Лексика // Общее языкознание: Внутренняя структура языка. М., 1972.

14. Шаховский В.И. Значение и эмотивная валентность языка единиц языка и речи. – ВЯ, 1984, №6
15. Шмелев Д.Н. Проблемы семантического анализа лексики. М.: Наука, 1973.
16. Allan K. Natural language Semantics.
17. Bloomfield L. Language, NY, 1933.
18. Bolinger D. The Atomization of meaning, “Language”, v. 49, 1965, №4.
19. Greimas A.J. ‘L’ Actualite du saussurisme. F.M. 1956.
20. Katz J.J. and Fodor J.A. The Structure of a Semantic Theory, “Language”, v.39, 1963.
21. Lakoff George & Johnson Mark. Metaphors we live by. – USA. The University of Chicago Press. 1980.
22. Mednicova E.M. Seminars in English Lexicology. – Moscow, 1978.
23. Nida E.A. Morphology. The Descriptive Analysis of Words; University of Michigan, 1946.
24. Ogden C.K., Richards I.A. The Meaning of Meaning. London, 1936.
25. Richards I.A. The philosophy of Rhetoric. Oxford: Univ. Press, 1965.
26. Skrebnev Y.M. Fundamentals of English stylistics. M,1994.
27. Ullmann St. The Principles of Semantics. Glasgow, 1957.

Contents

Chapter 1.	What is meaning?.....	3
1.1.	Semasiology and onomasiology.....	3
1.2.	Meaning of meaning.....	5
1.3.	Structure of meaning.....	7
1.3.1.	Denotation and connotation.....	9
1.3.2.	Stylistic connotation.....	14
1.3.3.	Emotive-evaluative connotation....	17
1.3.4.	Componential analysis.....	22
Chapter 2.	Semantic change.....	27
2.1.	Causes of semantic change.....	28
2.2	Process of semantic change.....	38
2.2.1.	Metaphor.....	41
2.2.2.	Metonymy.....	53
2.3.	Results of semantic change.....	59
2.3.1	“Widening” and “narrowing” of meaning.....	59
2.3.2.	“Degradation” and “elevation” of meaning.....	61

С Е М А С И О Л О Г И Я

Учебное пособие для студентов
III курса факультета английского языка
Часть I

Составитель Ксения Марковна Рябова

Редакторы: Л.П. Шахрова
Н.И. Морозова

Лицензия ПД № 18-0062 от 20.12.2000

Подписано к печати	31.05.04	Формат	60 x 90 1/16.
Печ. л.	Тираж	экз.	Заказ
Цена договорная			

Типография НГЛУ им. Н.А. Добролюбова
603155, Н. Новгород, ул. Минина, 31а