

## SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF THE ENGLISH WORDS

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the semantic structure of the English words. It two approaches towards the meanings of words in English. In this article several types of meanings of English words are described with some examples.

**Key words:** Semantics, Semasiology, Denotational meaning, Connotational meaning

Semantics means the meaning and interpretation of words, signs, and sentence structure. Semantics largely determine our reading comprehension, how we understand others, and even what decisions we make as a result of our interpretations. The internal structure of the word, or its meaning, is nowadays commonly referred to as the word's semantic structure. This is certainly the word's main aspect.

### **1. The problem of word meaning**

The branch of Linguistics which studies the meaning of different linguistic units is called **Semantics**. The part of Lexicology which studies the meaning and the development of meaning of words is called **Semasiology**.

There are different approaches to the problem of word meaning: 1) The **referential**, or **denotational approach** is characterized by the thought that the essence of meaning lies in the interconnection and interdependence between: the word as the sound form, the referent, and the concept. Here **meaning** is the realization of the concept/notion by means of a definite language system.

2) The **functional**, or **contextual approach** is characterized by the idea that the meaning of a linguistic unit may be studied only through its relation to other linguistic units. Thus, **meaning** is understood as the function of linguistic signs, or their use in context.

Word meaning is represented by different types of meaning: grammatical, lexical, lexico-grammatical.

**Grammatical meaning** is the component of word meaning, recurrent in identical sets of individual forms of different words. It is expressed by: word-form (such as books, girls, boys – the meaning of plurality; looked, asked – tense meaning);

the position of the word in relation to other words (e.g. He sings well, She dances badly – ‘sings’ and ‘dances’ are found in identical positions between a pronoun and an adverb, their identical distribution proves that they have identical gr.m.)

**Lexico-grammatical meaning** of the word is the common denominator to all the meanings of the words belonging to a certain lexico-grammatical class or group of words.

**Lexical meaning** is the component of word meaning recurrent in all the forms of the word. The word forms go, goes, went, gone, going have different gr.m., but they have one and the same l.m. ‘the process of movement’.

The **main component of L.m.** are:

the **denotational meaning** of words is the same for all the speakers. It is the realization of the concept by means of the given language.

The **pragmatic aspect** of l.m. is the part of meaning, that conveys information on the situation of communication: information on the ‘time and space’ relationship of the participants, information on the participants in the given language community, information on the register of communication.

The **connotational meaning** conveys the speaker’s attitude toward what he is speaking about. There are 4 main types of connotations:

1. Example: The restaurant's décor was not just charming; it was a vibrant tapestry of cozy elegance, inspiring a sense of enchantment.

- Explanation: In this sentence, the word "charming" is intensified to convey a deeper, emotionally evocative impression. By describing the décor as a "vibrant tapestry of cozy elegance," the connotational meaning is amplified, invoking a stronger sense of allure and warmth.

2. Example: The old book wasn't just worn; it carried the weight of history within its weathered pages, evoking the spirits of generations past.

- Explanation: By intensifying the connotational meaning of "worn," the sentence emphasizes the book’s historical value and the depth of experience it represents, surpassing the simple physical condition of being old.

3. Example: Her singing voice wasn't merely pleasant; it painted an ethereal canvas of sound, weaving dreams and memories in every note.

- Explanation: By intensifying the connotational meaning of "pleasant," the sentence moves beyond the superficial experience of listening to a nice voice and elevates it to a transformative, dreamlike realm.

4. Example: The sunset wasn't just beautiful; it ignited the sky, casting a spell of fiery tranquility over the horizon.

- Explanation: Here, the connotational meaning of "beautiful" is intensified to evoke a profound visual and emotional impact, going beyond a mere aesthetic quality and delving into a vivid and emotive portrayal.

5. Example: The art exhibition wasn't simply intriguing; it unfolded a symphony of emotion and symbolism in every brushstroke and hue.

- Explanation: By intensifying the connotational meaning of "intriguing," the sentence presents the exhibition as a profound and multi-layered experience carrying deep emotional and symbolic resonance.

a) The **emotional** connotation expresses human emotions and feelings (e.g. daddy, father);

1. Example: The sight of her childhood home filled her with a profound sense of nostalgia and warmth, conjuring memories of carefree days spent in the grassy backyard.

- Explanation: In this sentence, the use of "nostalgia" and "warmth" conveys an emotional connotational meaning, evoking a deep sense of sentimentality and comfort associated with the memories of her childhood home.

2. Example: The elderly couple's gentle embrace exuded a profound sense of tenderness, a testament to the enduring love that had weathered the trials of time.

- Explanation: Here, "tenderness" carries an emotional connotational meaning, eliciting a feeling of deep affection and sweetness in the description of the couple's embrace.

3. Example: The mournful melody of the violin resonated through the hall, casting a poignant veil of sorrow over the audience, leaving many with tearful eyes.

- Explanation: In this sentence, "mournful," "poignant," and "sorrow" are examples of words that carry emotional connotational meanings, evoking a deep sense of sadness and emotional resonance within the music.

4. Example: His sincere apology and remorseful expression conveyed a genuine sense of contrition, revealing a desire to mend the emotional wounds he had caused.

- Explanation: In this sentence, "sincere," "remorseful," and "contrition" carry emotional connotational meanings, indicating a genuine feeling of regret and a heartfelt attempt to make amends.

5. Example: The tranquil beauty of the sunset bathed the landscape in a serene glow, calming the hearts of all who paused to witness the spectacle.

- Explanation: Here, "tranquil," "serene," and "calming" embody emotional connotational meanings, suggesting a soothing and peaceful emotional effect associated with witnessing the sunset.

b) The **evaluative** connotation expresses approval or disapproval (e.g. agent and spy, planning and scheming=planning secretly);

c) The **intensifying** connotation adds emphasis to the meaning. (e.g. enormous, huge, tremendous=very);

1. Original Sentence: The old house was pleasant.

- Intensified: The old house wasn't just pleasant; it was a sanctuary of warmth and tranquility, emanating a timeless charm that embraced all who entered.

2. Original Sentence: The tree was big.

- Intensified: The tree wasn't just big; it towered above the landscape like an ancient guardian, its sprawling branches embracing the sky and earth with majestic authority.

3. Original Sentence: Her voice was nice.

- Intensified: Her voice wasn't just nice; it was a soothing melody that wove through the air, inviting comfort and solace to all who heard its gentle cadence.

4. Original Sentence: The movie was interesting.

- Intensified: The movie wasn't just interesting; it was a captivating odyssey, delving into the depths of human emotion and imagination, leaving its indelible mark on the hearts of all who watched.

5. Original Sentence: The painting was beautiful.

- Intensified: The painting wasn't just beautiful; it was a breathtaking masterpiece, a symphony of color and emotion that transported the viewer to a world of wonder and awe.

d) The **stylistic** connotation determines the functional speech style characteristic of the word usage (dad-father-parent;

1. Original Sentence: The sky was blue.

- Stylistically Connotated: The sky was a vast cerulean canvas, stretching endlessly above the earth.

2. Original Sentence: She sang a song.

- Stylistically Connotated: Her voice wove through the air, embracing the room with a melody that carried the essence of dreams.

3. Original Sentence: The cat moved quietly.

- Stylistically Connotated: The sleek feline slinked through the shadows, silent as the whispers of night.

4. Original Sentence: The flower smelled good.

- Stylistically Connotated: The delicate bloom exuded an enchanting fragrance, a whispered secret of nature's grace.

5. Original Sentence: He walked to the store.

- Stylistically Connotated: He strolled along the thoroughfare, a purposeful pilgrimage toward the emporium of provisions.

**Polysemy** is the ability of a word to have more than one m-g. The causes of the development of polysemy in Eng. Are

1) the great amount of monosyllabic root words;

2) an abundance of words of long duration, which in the course of time were used to express more new m-gs thus becoming highly polysemantic.

**Monosemantic words**, i.e. words which have only one m-g form. They are mostly names of birds (blackbird, swallow), animals (walrus, weasel), fishes (ruff, perch) & special terms (systole, phoneme). The bulk of Eng. words are polysemantic, i.e. they have several m-gs. The m-g in speech is contextual. In a definite context any polysemantic word expresses only one m-g.

The actual number of meanings of the commonly used words ranges from five to about a hundred. In fact, the commoner the word the more meanings it has. The word table, e.g., has at least nine meanings in Modern English: 1. a piece of furniture; 2. the persons seated at a table; 3. sing. the food put on a table, meals; 4. a thin flat piece of stone, metal, wood, etc.; 5. pl. slabs of stone; 6. words cut into them or written on them (the ten tables); 7. an orderly arrangement of facts, figures, etc.; 8. part of a machine-tool on which the work is put to be operated on; 9. a level area, a plateau.

If polysemy is viewed diachronically, it is understood as the growth and development of or, in general, as a change in the semantic structure of the word. Polysemy in diachronic terms implies that a word may retain its previous meaning or meanings and at the same time acquire one or several new ones.

## 2. The main semantic processes.

**The nature of semantic change.** It is important to remember that the nature of semantic change is a gradual process. The meaning of a word doesn't just change in an instant, it can take many years. Semantic change often occurs as societal values change. This means that different social or ethnic groups may experience semantic change differently for different words.

Semantics: From Meaning to Text is a remarkable book in many ways. It is the crowning achievement of a long and illustrious career in linguistics and communicates in its author's unique voice a synthesis of decades of experience in the description, analysis, and modelling of natural language. It is a Big Picture book that addresses fundamental questions about the nature of language and the linguistic enterprise, and comes up with original, unexpected answers. Sadly, it is for this reason alone that it may not get the readership it deserves, particularly in North America, where linguistics is currently riven into opposing ideological camps within neither of which this volume fits comfortably. Still, open-minded readers from both sides will encounter something of interest here. Partisans of the formal schools of linguistics will find an example of a theoretically-complete, formalizable model of human language built along entirely different design principles than current semantic theories centred on truth-conditional logic. Members of the anti-formalist camps will see an illustration of formalism in the service of descriptive accuracy, and will find a toolkit (or, rather, a kit for building tools) for the detailed and accurate analysis of a wide range of linguistic phenomena. At the heart of this book is the question that many of us feel should lie at the heart of linguistics, but which seems to have been lost from view: how is meaning expressed in

a language? Or, more precisely, how are the messages intended by speakers encoded by the lexical, morphosyntactic, and phonological means afforded to them by their linguistic repertoire? Igor Mel’Cuk asks this question directly, and Meaning-Text Theory (MTT) is nothing else but an attempt at an answer. The answer may not be definitive (nothing in science ever is), but the value of the question lies in the manner of its asking.

Understanding the semantic structure of language is crucial for comprehending how words combine to form meanings, how sentences convey information, and how larger units of language convey coherent messages.

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