

Word Meaning

1. Two schools of thought.
2. Denotation and connotation. Types of connotation.
3. Polysemy.
4. Semantic changes (metaphor, metonymy, narrowing /specialization, broadening /generalization).
5. Secondary ways of semantic change.

- The term semasiology comes from Greek *sema* "sign" + *semantikos* "significant"
- It was introduced into linguistic studies in 1825 by the classical scholar **C. Reisig** who set up a new division of grammar (semasiology, etymology and syntax).
- He regarded **semasiology** as a historical discipline that should **establish the principles of governing the development of meaning.**

- In 1883 **Michel Breal** (the French philologist) published an article in which he argued that there ought to be a science of meaning which he proposed to call **semasiology**.
- In 1897 he published his book which soon spread to other languages and in 1900 after its publication was translated into English under the title: ***Semantics: Studies in the Science of Meaning***.

- Another famous book on semantics is ***The meaning of meaning*** by **C. K. Ogden** and **I. A. Richards** published in 1923.
- The term **semantics** was first used to refer to the ***development and change of meaning***. It is originated from Greek word "*semantikos*" ("significant").
- It is the **study of meanings** – *dealing with the relationship between symbols (words, signs, etc.) and what they refer to ('referents')* – and **of behavior in reaction to non-verbal symbols and verbal symbols (words)**.

Two schools of thought

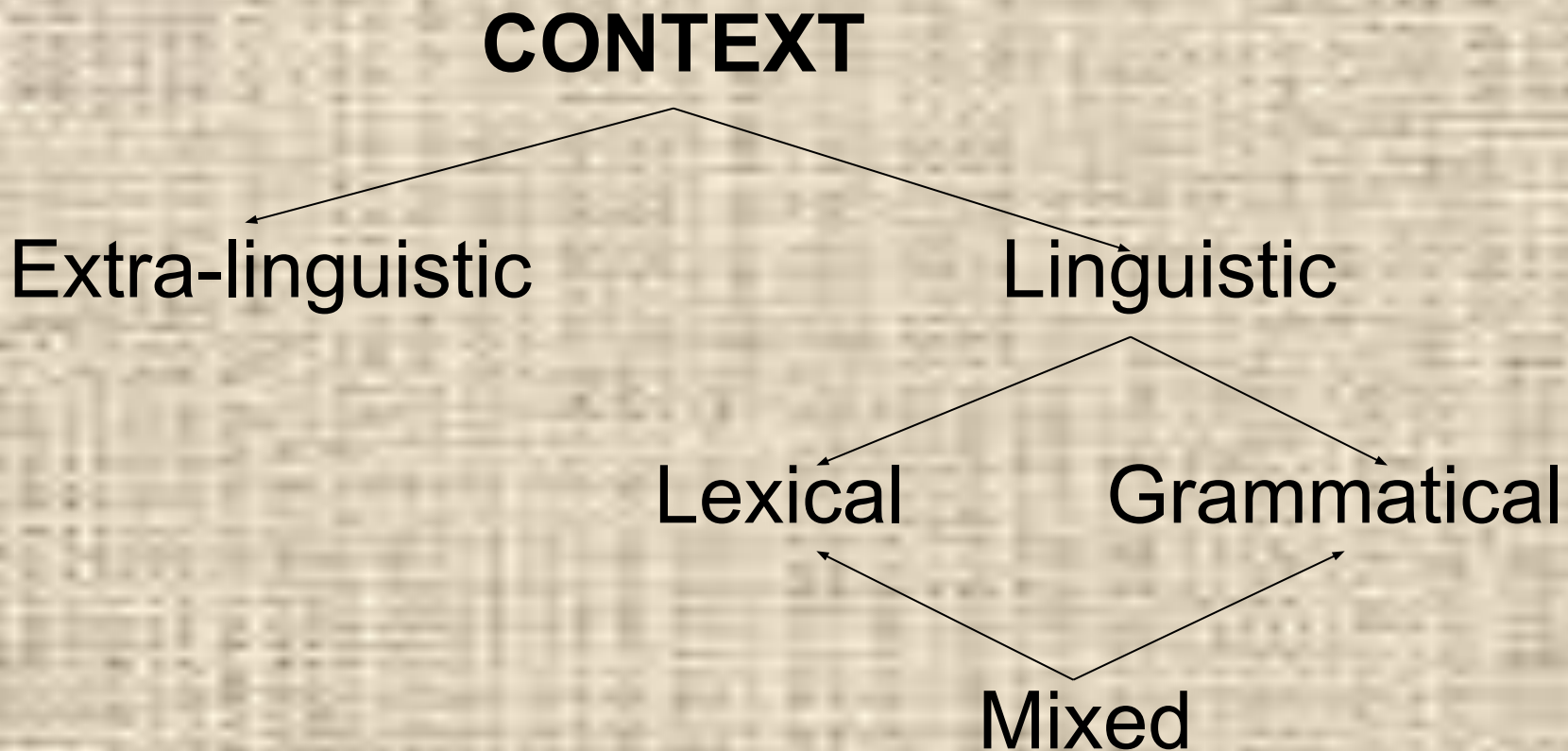
- **relative** or **functional** approach

- **denotational** or **referential** approach

- The **relative approach** is based on treating the *language as a semiotic system* – the theory of relations .
- The **denotational trend of semantic studies** considers *a word as a unit possessing its own meaning*.

Relative approach

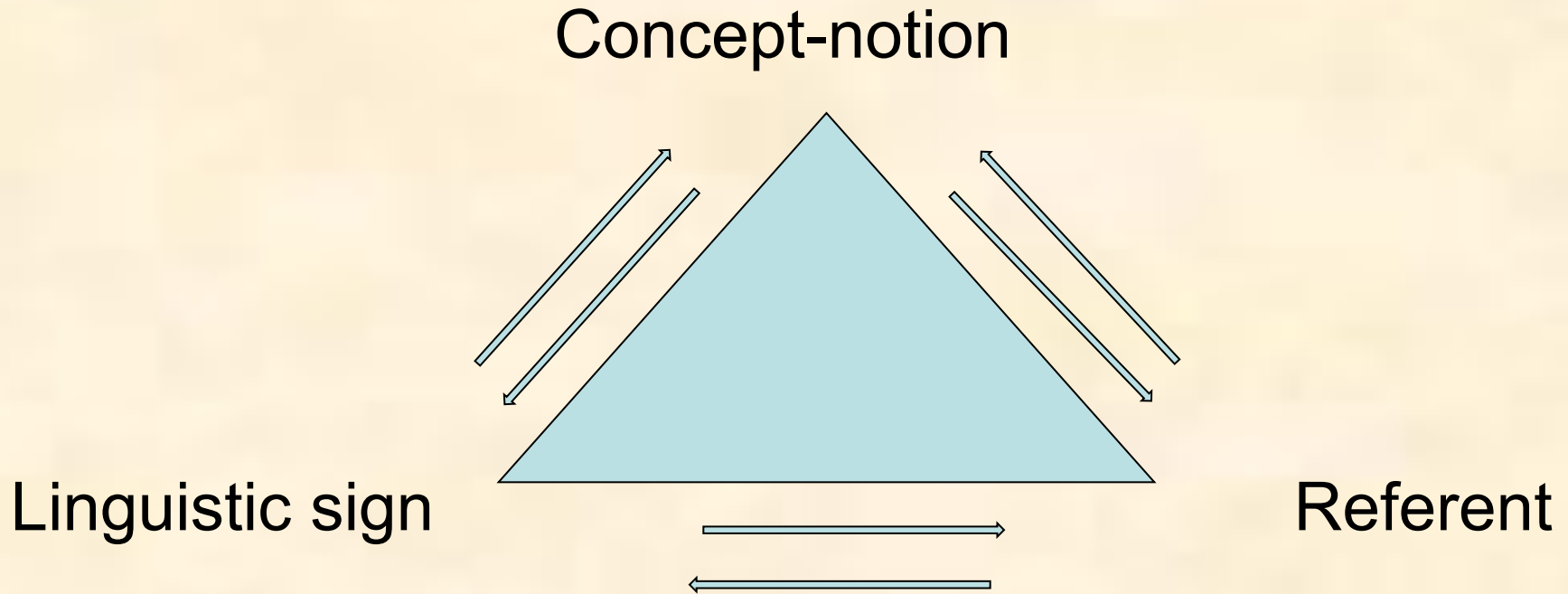
- ***Each sign achieves a meaning only in comparison with other signs***, its neighbours: meaning can be studied only through context.



Referential approach

- The main problem is the **relation between the word, its meaning and the object in reality** which it denotes.
- The basis of the denotational theory is the double nature (ideal and material) of the word.
- The material side of the word (**symbol**), its **meaning**, and the **referent** are connected with one another.

- The meaning of a word is the reflection of the objective reality in our consciousness.

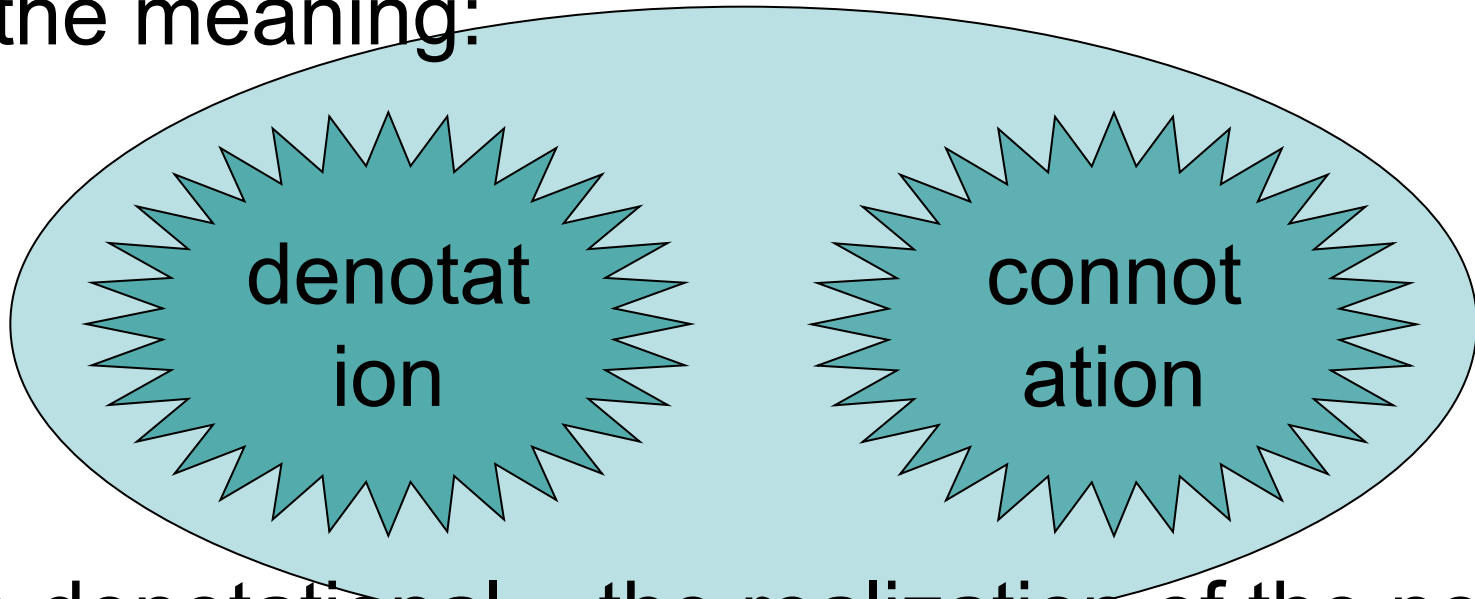


- The word is a form of a notion's material existence.

- Every word has two aspects: **the outer aspect** (its sound form) and **the inner aspect** (its meaning).
- The lexical meaning of a word is the realization of a notion by means of a definite language system.
- A **word** is a **language unit**, while a **notion** is a **unit of thinking**.
- A notion denotes the **reflection in the mind of real objects and phenomena** in their essential features and relations.

- Notions, as a rule, are international.
- Meanings can be nationally limited.
- **The development of lexical meanings in any language, as well as the grouping of meanings in the semantic structure of a word, is determined by the whole system of every language.**

- Word meaning is made up of various components. There are 2 important elements of the meaning:



- the denotational – the realization of the notion (which makes communication possible) and the connotational – the pragmatic communicative value of the word.

- The **denotation** of a word is the **direct explicit meaning that makes communication possible.**
- *When we say that a word denotes something, we mean that it is the name of a thing.*
- To **denote** is to **serve as a linguistic expression for a concept.**
- The **conceptual content of a word is expressed in its denotative meaning.**

- The **connotation** of a word is **what the word implies** in addition to its denotational meaning. It is the set of associations that a word's use can evoke:
- *a **hovel** denotes "a small house" and besides implies that it is a miserable dwelling place, dirty, in bad repair, and, in general, unpleasant to live in.*
- We call connotation what the word conveys about the speaker's **attitude** to the social circumstances and the appropriate functional **style**, about his **approval** or **disapproval** of the object spoken, or the degree of **intensity**.

There are 4 main types of connotation:

- **stylistic** (*to beat it – to retire, horse – steed*),
- **emotive** (*dog – doggie*),
- **evaluative** (*famous/ well-known – notorious*), and
- **expressive or intensifying** (*splendid, superb, fantastic, beastly*, etc. are used colloquially as terms of exaggeration).
- We can also speak of **pragmatic** connotations, i.e., those of duration, manner, attending circumstances, etc.

- The connotation is the idea suggested by its place near /in association with other words or phrases.
- *Childlike* and *childish* both have the **denotation** of "like or characteristic of a child". However the two words have their own **connotations**.
- ***Childlike*** suggests the favourable qualities considered typical of a child: *innocence* and *trustworthiness*.
- ***Childish*** connotes the unfavourable characteristics of a child: *foolishness* or *immaturity*.

- The context of the word can also help to reveal the general and added meanings. The **context** is the part of the statement in which the word or passage at issue occurs, that which leads up to and follows a particular expression:
- *The actress captured perfectly the character's childlike qualities in her performance.*
- *Your childish behaviour is quite annoying in a grown person.*

- **Denotative** and **connotative** components make up the semantic structure (or semantic paradigm) of a word which is presented by a structure of ***semes***.
- A **seme** is the smallest unit of meaning.
- Thus, the meaning of the word ***giggle*** includes semes of ***action, living being and sex, negative evaluation*** and ***intensity***.

- ***KEY TERMS: semasiology, semantics, relative, referential, denotation, connotation, seme.***
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