Change of meaning. Extension, narrowing, elevation, degradation of meaning of a word, metaphor, metonymy.

- Definition of changes of word meaning
- Types of changes
 - 1. Extension
 - 2. Elevation
 - 3. Narrowing
 - 4. Degradation
 - Metaphor
 - Metonomy

Changes in word meaning

- When a word loses its old meaning and comes to refer to something different, the result is a change in word meaning.
- Change of meaning refers to the **alternation** of the meaning of existing words, as well as the **addition** of new meaning to a particular word.
- Changing word meaning **has never ceased** since the beginning of the language and will continue in the future.
- The changes in meaning are **gradual**, and words are not changed in a day.

Types of Semantic Change

- -Extension of meaning
- -Narrowing of meaning
- -Elevation of meaning
- -Degradation of meaning

Extension of Meaning

Generalization of Meaning

 It is a process by which a word which originally had a specialized meaning has now become generalized or has extended to cover a broader concept.

salary

- (original) a sum of money given to Roman soldiers to enable them to buy salt
- (present) fixed payment made by employer at regular intervals to employees

holiday

- (original) holy day, a day of religious significance
- (present) day of festivity or recreation

A large proportion of <u>polysemous words</u> of modern English have their meanings extended sometime in the course of development. Some words are generalized to such a degree that they can mean almost everything.

She is such a pretty little *thing*.

I have to pack my *things* for the journey.

There is another *thing* I want to ask you about.

That only makes *things* worse.

The *thing* is, can we finish the job in time?

"Thing" which used to mean "a public assembly" or "a council" in Anglo-Saxon times, now has become an all-purpose word. Its meaning so general, and we metimes call this n a 'light

Generalization of meaning is also found in many <u>technical</u> <u>terms</u>, which are confined to specialized use.

allergic

(original) too sensitive to medicine

(present) averse or disinclined

alibi

(original) a legal term signifying "the plea that the accused is not at the place when the crime is committed" (present) excuse

Narrowing of Meaning

- It is a process by which a word of <u>wide meaning</u> acquires <u>a narrow or specialized sense</u>. In other words, a word which used to have a more general sense becomes restricted in its application and conveys a special concept in present-day English.
- Narrowing; specialization; restriction

Example	Original Meaning	Meaning after Narrowing
meat	food	flesh of animals
disease	discomfort	illness
wife	woman	married woman
starve	to die	to die of hunger
accident	event	unfortunate event

Narrowing of Meaning

For economy, some phrases are shortened and only one element of the original, usually an adjective, is left to retain the meaning of the whole. Such <u>adjectives</u> have thus taken on specialized meanings.

- a *general* = a *general* officer
- an *editorial* = an *editoria* article

Some <u>material nouns</u> are used to refer to objects made of them and thus have a more specific sense.

□glassa cup-like container or a mirror□irondevice for smoothing clothes

Change in associative meaning

- Both extension and narrowing of meaning are talking about the changes in conceptual meaning. Next we will talk about the changes in associative meaning.
 - **D** Elevation of meaning
 - Degradation of meaning

Elevation of Meaning (amelioration)

- -It is the process by which words rise from humble beginnings to positions of importance.
- -Some words early in their history signify something quite low or humble, but change to designate something agreeable or pleasant.
- -A "snarl" word becomes a "purr" word, or a slang becomes a common word.
- -elevation; amelioration

Examples of elevation

-ignorant --- foolish --- delightful, pleasant

<u>fond</u>

-foolish --- affectionate

<u>awesome</u>

-terrible---terrific

Terrific headache

Terrific party

<u>marshal</u>

-a keeper of horses --- a high ranking army officer **<u>constable</u>**

-a keeper of horses --- a policeman

Degradation of Meaning

- It is a process by which words with appreciatory or neutral affective meaning fall into ill reputation or come to be used in a derogatory sense.
- A "purr" word becomes a "snarl" word.
 degradation, degeneration, pejoration

Examples

blessed and happy--- innocent----simple or simple-minded ----foolish

sad

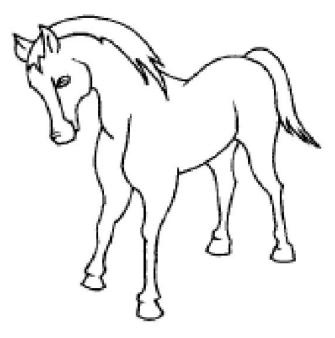
full, satisfied, contented ----- calm ----- serious
 ----sorrowful

Semantic transfer

Change in word meaning may result from the figurative use of the language. Metaphor and metonymy are two important figures of speech.

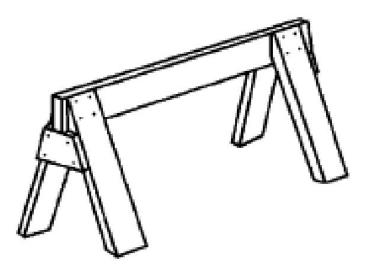
- Metaphor is a figure of speech containing an implied comparison based on similarity.
- E.x.: A cunning person may be referred to as a fox. Here "fox" means something other than its literal meaning. The word "fox" gets the figurative meaning of "a cunning person".

Metaphor



A Real Horse

This is also a horse, but a metaphorical horse.



A Metaphorical Horse

Example of a linguistic metaphor: foot foot This meaning is derived through the metaphor "The last line on this page is the foot of the page."

1. The lower extremity of the vertebrate leg that is in direct contact with the ground in standing or walking.

2. The lowest part; the bottom the foot of a mountain the foot of a page Metonymy is another important factor in semantic change. It is a figure of speech by which an object or an idea is described by the name of something else closely related to it.

Example: seat

Seat (its sense is extended to the right to sit as a member of a committee, such as the House of Commons)

He lost his seat in House of Commons.

The word "seat" has acquired the meaning of "the right to sit as a member" through the above metonym.

More Example: cradle

Cradle

These meanings are derived through the following metonyms.

1. A small low bed for an infant, often furnished with rockers

2. The earliest period of life; infancy *from the cradle to the grave*3. A place of origin; a birthplace

the cradle of civilization.