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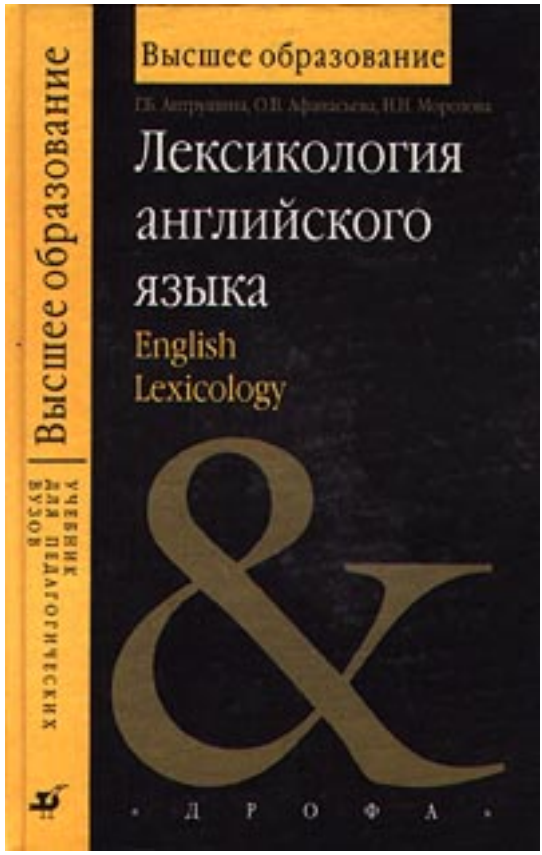
Лексикология английского языка



English Lexicology

Учебное пособие включает разделы: предмет и задачи курса, этимологический состав и стилевые слои словарного состава английского языка, словообразование, семантология, фразеология, синонимия и антонимия современного английского языка. Теоретический материал тесно увязан с материалом для практической самостоятельной работы и работы на семинарах, а также с текстами и упражнениями для лексического анализа.

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Preface

In this book the reader will find the fundamentals of the word theory and of the main problems associated with English vocabulary, its characteristics and subdivisions. Each chapter contains both theory and exercises for seminar and independent work.

The book is intended for English language students at Pedagogical Universities (3d and 4th years of studies) taking the course of English lexicology and fully meets the requirements of the programme in the subject. It may also be of interest to all readers, whose command of English is sufficient to enable them to read texts of average difficulty and who would like to gain some information about the vocabulary resources of Modern English (for example, about synonyms and antonyms), about the stylistic peculiarities of English vocabulary, about the complex nature of the word's meaning and the modern methods of its investigation, about English idioms, about those changes that English vocabulary underwent in its historical development and about some other aspects of English lexicology. One can hardly acquire a perfect command of English without having knowledge of all these things, for a perfect command of a language implies the conscious approach to the language's resources and at least a partial understanding of the "inner mechanism" which makes the huge language system work.

This book is the first attempt to embrace both the theory and practical exercises in the one volume, the two parts being integrated. The authors tried to establish links between the theory of lexicology and the reality of living speech, on the one hand, and the language-learning and language-teaching process, on the other, never losing sight of the fact that the majority of intended readers of the book are teachers and students of Pedagogical Universities.

The authors tried to present the material in an easy and comprehensible style and, at the same time, to meet the reader on the level of a half-informal talk. With the view of making the book more vivid and interesting, we have introduced extracts from humorous authors, numerous jokes and anecdotes and extracts from books by outstanding writers, aiming to show how different lexicological phenomena are used for stylistic purposes.

Theory and exercises to Ch. 1—2 were written by G. B. Antrushina, exercises to Introduction and Ch. 5, 6, 9, 10, 11 by O. V. Afanasyeva and to Ch. 3, 4, 7, 8,12,13,14 by N. N. Morozova.

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Authors

INTRODUCTION

What Is a Word? What Is Lexicology?

What's is a name? that which we call a rose By any other

name would smell as sweet...

(W. Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet,* Act II, Sc. 2)

These famous lines reflect one of the fundamental problems of linguistic research: what is in a name, in a word? Is there any direct connection between a word and the object it represents? Could a rose have been called by "any other name" as Juliet says?

These and similar questions are answered by lexicological research. *Lexicology,* a branch of linguistics, is the study of words.

For some people studying words may seem uninteresting. But if studied properly, it may well prove just as exciting and novel as unearthing the mysteries of Outer Space.

It is significant that many scholars have attempted to define the word as a linguistic phenomenon. Yet none of the definitions can be considered totally satisfactory in all aspects. It is equally surprising that, despite all the achievements of modern science, certain essential aspects of the nature of the word still escape us. Nor do we fully understand the phenomenon called "language", of which the word is a fundamental unit.

We do not know much about the origin of language and, consequently, of the origin of words. It is true that there are several hypotheses, some of them no less fantastic than the theory of the divine origin of language.

We know nothing — or almost nothing — about the mechanism by which a speaker's mental process is converted into sound groups called "words", nor about the reverse process whereby a listener's brain converts the acoustic phenomena into concepts and ideas, thus establishing a two-way process of communication.

We know very little about the nature of relations between the word and the referent (i. e. object, phenomenon, quality, action, etc. denoted by the word). If we assume that there is a direct relation between the word and the referent — which seems logical — it gives rise to another question: how should we explain the fact that the same referent is designated by quite different sound groups in different languages.

We *do* know by now — though with vague uncertainty — that there is nothing accidental about the vocabulary of the language;[1] that each word is a small unit within a vast, efficient and perfectly balanced system. But we do not know why it possesses these qualities, nor do we know much about the processes by which it has acquired them.

The list of unknowns could be extended, but it is probably high time to look at the brighter side and register some of the things we *do* know about the nature of the word.

First, we do know that the word is a unit of speech which, as such, serves the purposes of human communication. Thus, the word can be defined as a *unit of communication.*

Secondly, the word can be perceived as the total of the sounds which comprise it.

Third, the word, viewed structurally, possesses several characteristics.

The modern approach to word studies is based on distinguishing between the external and the internal structures of the word.

[1] By the *vocabulary* of a language is understood the total sum of its words. Another term for the same is the *stock of words.*

By external structure of the word we mean its morphological structure. For example, in the *word post-impressionists* the following morphemes can be distinguished: the prefixes *post-, im-,* the root *press,* the noun-forming suffixes *-ion, -ist,* and the grammatical suffix of plurality *-s.* All these morphemes constitute the external structure of the word *post-impressionists.*

The external structure of words, and also typical word-formation patterns, are studied in the section on word-building (see Ch. 5, 6).

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. Words can serve the purposes of human communication solely due to their meanings, and it is most unfortunate when this fact is ignored by some contemporary scholars who, in their obsession with the fetish of structure tend to condemn as irrelevant anything that eludes mathematical analysis. And this is exactly what meaning, with its subtle variations and shifts, is apt to do.

The area of lexicology specialising in the semantic studies of the word is called *semantics* (see Ch. 7, 8).

Another structural aspect of the word is its unity. The word possesses both external (or formal) unity and semantic unity. Formal unity of the word is sometimes inaccurately interpreted as indivisibility. The example of *post-impressionists* has already shown that the word is not, strictly speaking, indivisible. Yet, its component morphemes are permanently linked together in opposition to word-groups, both free and with fixed contexts, whose components possess a certain structural freedom, e. g. *bright light, to take for granted* (see Ch. 12).

The formal unity of the word can best be illustrated by comparing a word and a word-group comprising identical constituents. The difference between a *blackbird* and *a black bird* is best explained by their relationship with the grammatical system of the language. The word *blackbird,* which is characterised by unity, possesses a single grammatical framing: *blackbird/s.* The first constituent *black* is not subject to any grammatical changes. In the word-group a *black bird* each constituent can acquire grammatical forms of its own: *the blackest birds I've ever seen.* Other words can be inserted between the components which is impossible so far as the word is concerned as it would violate its unity: *a black night bird.*

The same example may be used to illustrate what we mean by semantic unity.

In the word-group a *black bird* each of the meaningful words conveys a separate concept: *bird* — a kind of living creature; *black* — a colour.

The word *blackbird* conveys only one concept: the type of bird. This is one of the main features of any word: it always conveys one concept, no matter how many component morphemes it may have in its external structure.

A further structural feature of the word is its susceptibility to grammatical employment. In speech most words can be used in different grammatical forms in which their interrelations are realised.

So far we have only underlined the word's major peculiarities, but this suffices to convey the general idea of the difficulties and questions faced by the scholar attempting to give a detailed definition of the word. The difficulty does not merely consist in the considerable number of aspects that are to be taken into account, but, also, in the essential unanswered questions of word theory which concern the nature of its meaning (see Ch. 7).

All that we have said about the word can be summed up as follows.

The *word* is a speech unit used for the purposes of human communication, materially representing a group of sounds, possessing a meaning, susceptible to grammatical employment and characterised by formal and semantic unity.

The Main Lexicological Problems

Two of these have already been underlined. The problem of word-building is associated with prevailing morphological word-structures and with processes of making new words. Semantics is the study of meaning. Modern approaches to this problem are characterised by two different levels of study: *syntagmatic and paradigmatic.*

On the syntagmatic level, the semantic structure of the word is analysed in its linear relationships with neighbouring words in connected speech. In other words,

the semantic characteristics of the word are observed, described and studied on the basis of its typical contexts.

On the paradigmatic level, the word is studied in its relationships with other words in the vocabulary system. So, a word may be studied in comparison with other words of similar meaning (e. g. *work,* n. — *labour,* n.; *to refuse,* v. — *to reject* v. — *to decline,* v.), of opposite meaning (e. g. *busy,* adj. — *idle,* adj.; *to accept, v, — to reject,* v.), of different stylistic characteristics (e. g. *man,* n. — *chap,* n. — *bloke,* n. — *guy,* n.). Consequently, the main problems of paradigmatic studies are synonymy (see Ch. 9, 10), antonymy (see Ch. 10), functional styles (see Ch. 1, 2).

Phraseology is the branch of lexicology specialising in word-groups which are characterised by stability of structure and transferred meaning, e. g. *to take the bull by the horns, to see red, birds of a feather,* etc. (see Ch. 12, 13).

One further important objective of lexicological studies is the study of the vocabulary of a language as a system. The vocabulary can be studied synchronically, that is, at a given stage of its development, or diachronically, that is, in the context of the processes through which it grew, developed and acquired its modern form (see Ch. 3, 4). The opposition of the two approaches accepted in modern linguistics is nevertheless disputable as the vocabulary, as well as the word which is its fundamental unit, is not only what it is now, at this particular stage of the language's development, but, also, what it was centuries ago and has been throughout its history.

Exercise

Consider your answers to the following.

1 . In what way can one analyse a word a) socially, b) linguistically?

2. What are the structural aspects of the word?

3. What is the external structure of the word *irresistible?* What is the internal structure of this word?

4. What is understood by formal unity of a word? Why is it not quite correct to say that a word is indivisible?

5. Explain why the word *blackboard* can be considered a unity and why the combination of words *a black board* doesn't possess such a unity.

6. What is understood by the semantic unity of a word? Which of the following possesses semantic unity — *a bluebell* (R. *колокольчик)* or *a blue bell* (R. *синий бубенчик).*

7. Give a brief account of the main characteristics of a word.

8. What are the main problems of lexicology?

9. What are the main differences between studying words syntagmatically and paradigmatically?

CHAPTER 1
Which Word Should We Choose, Formal or Informal?

Just as there is formal and informal dress, so there is formal and informal speech. One is not supposed to turn up at a ministerial reception or at a scientific symposium wearing a pair of brightly coloured pyjamas. (Jeans are scarcely suitable for such occasions either, though this may be a matter of opinion.) Consequently, the social context in which the communication is taking place determines both the mode of dress and the modes of speech. When placed in different situations, people instinctively choose different kinds of words and structures to express their thoughts. The suitability or unsuitability of a word for each particular situation depends on its stylistic characteristics or, in other words, on the func-

tional style it represents.

The term *functional* style is generally accepted in modern linguistics. Professor I. V. Arnold defines it as "a system of expressive means peculiar to a specific sphere of communication". [23]

By the sphere of communication we mean the circumstances attending the process of speech in each particular case: professional communication, a lecture, an informal talk, a formal letter, an intimate letter, a speech in court, etc.

All these circumstances or situations can be roughly classified into two types: formal (a lecture, a speech in court, an official letter, professional communication) and informal (an informal talk, an intimate letter).

Accordingly, functional styles are classified into two groups, with further subdivisions depending on different situations.

Informal Style

Informal vocabulary is used in one's immediate circle: family, relatives or friends. One uses informal words when at home or when feeling at home.

Informal style is relaxed, free-and-easy, familiar and unpretentious. But it should be pointed out that the informal talk of well-educated people considerably differs from that of the illiterate or the semi-educated; the choice of words with adults is different from the vocabulary of teenagers; people living in the provinces use certain regional words and expressions. Consequently, the choice of words is determined in each particular case not only by an informal (or formal) situation, but also by the speaker's educational and cultural background, age group, and his occupational and regional characteristics.

Informal words and word-groups are traditionally divided into three types: *colloquial, slang* and *dialect words and word-groups.*

Colloquial Words

Among other informal words, *colloquialisms* are the least exclusive: they are used by everybody, and their sphere of communication is comparatively wide, at least of *literary colloquial words.* These are informal words that are used in everyday conversational speech both by cultivated and uneducated people of all age groups. The sphere of communication of literary colloquial words also includes the printed page, which shows that the term "colloquial" is somewhat inaccurate.

Vast use of informal words is one of the prominent features of 20th century English and American literature. It is quite natural thatinformal words appear in dialogues in which they realistically reflect the speech of modern people:

> "You're at *some sort of* technical college?" she said to Leo, not looking at him ... .
>
> "Yes. I hate it though. I'm *not good enough at maths.* There's a *chap* there *just down from* Cambridge who *puts us through* it. I can't *keep up.* Were you good at maths?"
>
> "Not bad. But I imagine school maths are different."
>
> "Well, yes, they are. I can't *cope with* this *stuff* at all, it's the whole way of thinking that's beyond me... I think I'm going to *chuck it* and take *a job."*
>
> (From *The Time of the Angels* by I. Murdoch)

However, in modern fiction informal words are not restricted to conversation in their use, but frequently appear in descriptive passages as well. In this way the narrative is endowed with conversational features. The author creates an intimate, warm, informal atmosphere, meeting his reader, as it were, on the level of a friendly talk, especially when the narrative verges upon non-personal direct speech.

> "Fred Hardy was a *bad lot.* Pretty women, chemin de fer, and an unlucky *knack* for *backing* the wrong horse had *landed him in* the bankruptcy court by the time he was twenty-five ...

...If he thought of his past it was with complacency; he *had had a good time,* he had enjoyed his *ups and downs;* and now, with good health and a clear conscience, he was prepared to settle down as a country gentleman, *damn it,* bring up the *kids* as kids should be brought up; and when the *old buffer* who sat for his *Constituency pegged out, by George,* go into Parliament himself."

(From *Rain and Other Short Stories* by W. S. Maugham)

Here are some more examples of literary colloquial words. *Pal* and *chum* are colloquial equivalents of *friend; girl,* when used colloquially, denotes a woman of any age; *bite* and *snack* stand for *meal; hi, hello* are informal greetings, and so *long* a form of parting; *start, go on, finish* and *be through* are also literary colloquialisms; *to have a crush on somebody* is a colloquial equivalent of *to be in love. A bit (of)* and *a lot (of)* also belong to this group.

A considerable number of shortenings are found among words of this type. E. g. *pram, exam, fridge, flu, prop, zip, movie.*

Verbs with post-positional adverbs are also numerous among colloquialisms: *put up, put over, make up, make out, do away, turn up, turn in,* etc.

Literary colloquial words are to be distinguished from familiar colloquial and low colloquial.

The borderline between the literary and familiar colloquial is not always clearly marked. Yet the circle of speakers using familiar colloquial is more limited: these words are used mostly by the young and the semi-educated. This vocabulary group closely verges on slang and has something of its coarse flavour.

E. g. *doc* (for *doctor), hi* (for *how do you do), ta-ta* (for *good-bye), goings-on* (for *behaviour,* usually with a negative connotation), *to kid smb.* (for *tease, banter), to pick up smb.* (for *make a quick and easy acquaintance), go on with you* (for *let me alone), shut up* (for *keep silent), beat it* (for *go away).*

Low colloquial is defined by G. P. Krapp as uses "characteristic of the speech of persons who may be broadly described as uncultivated". [31] This group is stocked with words of illiterate English which do not present much interest for our purposes.

The problem of functional styles is not one of purely theoretical interest, but represents a particularly important aspect of the language-learning process. Students of English should be taught how to choose stylistically suitable words for each particular speech situation.

So far as colloquialisms are concerned, most students' mistakes originate from the ambiguousness of the term itself. Some students misunderstand the term "colloquial" and accept it as a recommendation for wide usage (obviously mistaking "colloquial" for "conversational"). This misconception may lead to most embarrassing errors unless it is taken care of in the early stages of language study.

As soon as the first words marked "colloquial" appear in the students' functional vocabulary, it should be explained to them that the marker "colloquial" (as, indeed, any other stylistic marker) is not a recommendation for unlimited usage but, on the contrary, *a sign of restricted usage.* It is most important that the teacher should carefully describe the typical situations to which colloquialisms are restricted and warn the students against using them under formal circumstances or in their compositions and reports.

Literary colloquial words should not only be included in the students' functional and recognition vocabularies, but also presented and drilled in suitable contexts and situations, mainly in dialogues. It is important that students should be trained to associate these words with informal, relaxed situations.

Slang

Much has been written on the subject of slang that is contradictory and at the same time very interesting.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines slang as "language of a highly colloquial style, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and con-

sisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense." [33]

This definition is inadequate because it equates slang with colloquial style. The qualification "highly" can hardly serve as the criterion for distinguishing between colloquial style and slang.

Yet, the last line of the definition "current words in some special sense" is important and we shall have to return to this a little later.

Here is another definition of slang by the famous English writer G. K. Chesterton:

"The one stream of poetry which in constantly flowing is slang. Every day some nameless poet weaves some fairy tracery of popular language. ...All slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry. ...The world of slang is a kind of topsy-turvydom of poetry, full of blue moons and white elephants, of men losing their heads, and men whose tongues run away with them — a whole chaos of fairy tales." [10]

The first thing that attracts attention in this enthusiastic statement is that the idioms which the author quotes have long since ceased being associated with slang: neither *once in a blue moon,* nor *the white elephant,* nor *your tongue has run away with you* are indicated as slang in modern dictionaries. This is not surprising, for slang words and idioms are short-lived and very soon either disappear or lose their peculiar colouring and become either colloquial or stylistically neutral lexical units.

As to the author's words "all slang is metaphor", it is a true observation, though the second part of the statement "all metaphor is poetry" is difficult to accept, especially if we consider the following examples: *mug* (for *face), saucers, blinkers (for eyes), trap (for mouth, e.* g. *Keep your trap shut), dogs* (for *feet), to leg (it) (for to walk).*

—All these meanings are certainly based on metaphor, yet they strike one as singularly unpoetical.

Henry Bradley writes that "Slang sets things in their proper place with a smile. So, to call a hat 'a lid' and a head 'a nut' is amusing because it puts a hat and a pot-lid in the same class". [17] And, we should add, a head and a nut in the same class too.

"With a smile" is true. Probably "grin" would be a more suitable word. Indeed, a prominent linguist observed that if colloquialisms can be said to be wearing dressing-gowns and slippers, slang is wearing a perpetual foolish grin. The world of slang is inhabited by odd creatures indeed: not by men, but by *guys* (R. чучела) and *blighters* or *rotters* with *nuts* for heads, *mugs* for faces, *flippers* for hands.

All or most slang words are current words whose meanings have been metaphorically shifted. Each slang metaphor is rooted in a joke, but not in a kind or amusing joke. This is the criterion for distinguishing slang from colloquialisms: most slang words are metaphors and jocular, often with a coarse, mocking, cynical colouring.

This is one of the common objections against slang: a person using a lot of slang seems to be sneering and jeering at everything under the sun. This objection is psychological. There are also linguistic ones.

G. H. McKnight notes that "originating as slang expressions often do, in an insensibility to the meaning of legitimate words, the use of slang checks an acquisition of a command over recognised modes of expression ... and must result in atrophy of the faculty of using language". [34]

H. W. Fowler states that "as style is the great antiseptic, so slang is the great corrupting matter, it is perishable, and infects what is round it". [27]

McKnight also notes that "no one capable of good speaking or good writing is likely to be harmed by the occasional employment of slang, provided that he is

conscious of the fact..." [34]

Then why do people use slang?

For a number of reasons. To be picturesque, arresting, striking and, above all, different from others. To avoid the tedium of outmoded hackneyed "common" words. To demonstrate one's spiritual independence and daring. To sound "modern" and "up-to-date".

It doesn't mean that all these aims are achieved by using slang. Nor are they put in so many words by those using slang on the conscious level. But these are the main reasons for using slang as explained by modern psychologists and linguists.

The circle of users of slang is more narrow than that of colloquialisms. It is mainly used by the young and uneducated. Yet, slang's colourful and humorous quality makes it catching, so that a considerable part of slang may become accepted by nearly all the groups of speakers.

Dialect Words

H. W. Fowler defines a dialect as "a variety of a language which prevails in a district, with local peculiarities of vocabulary, pronunciation and phrase". [19] England is a small country, yet it has many dialects which have their own distinctive features (e. g. the Lancashire, Dorsetshire, Norfolk dialects).

So dialects are regional forms of English. Standard English is defined by the Random House Dictionary as the English language as it is written and spoken by literate people in both formal and informal usage and that is universally current while incorporating regional differences. [54]

Dialectal peculiarities, especially those of vocabulary, are constantly being incorporated into everyday colloquial speech or slang. From these levels they can be transferred into the common stock, i. e. words which are not stylistically marked (see "The Basic Vocabulary", Ch. 2) and a few of them even into formal speech and into the literary language. *Car, trolley, tram* began as dialect words.

A snobbish attitude to dialect on the part of certain educationalists and scholars has been deplored by a number of prominent linguists. E. Partridge writes:

"The writers would be better employed in rejuvenating the literary (and indeed the normal cultured) language by substituting dialectal freshness, force, pithiness, for standard exhaustion, feebleness, long-windedness than in attempting to rejuvenate it with Gallicisms, Germanicisms, Grecisms and Latinisms." [38]

In the following extract from *The Good Companions* by J. B. Priestley, the outstanding English writer ingeniously and humorously reproduces his native Yorkshire dialect. The speakers are discussing a football match they have just watched. The author makes use of a number of dialect words and grammatical structures and, also, uses spelling to convey certain phonetic features of "broad Yorkshire".

"'Na Jess!' said the acquaintance, taking an imitation calabash pipe out of his mouth and then winking mysteriously.

'Na Jim!' returned Mr. Oakroyd. This 'Na' which must once have been 'Now', is the recognised salutation in Bruddersford,[1] and the fact that it sounds more like a word of caution than a word of greeting is by no means surprising. You have to be careful in Bruddersford.

'Well,' said Jim, falling into step, 'what did you think on 'em?'

'Think on 'em!' Mr. Oakroyd made a number of noises with his tongue to show what he thought of them.

[1] Bruddersford, the scene of the extract, is easily recognizable as Bradford, Priestley's birthplace.

... 'Ah '11 tell tha[7] what it is, Jess,' said his companion, pointing the stem of his pipe and becoming broader in his Yorkshire as he grew more philosophical. 'If t' United[1] had less brass[2] to lake[3] wi', they'd lake better football.'His eyes searched the past for a moment, looking for the team that had less money and had played better football. 'Tha can remember when t' club had niwer[4] set eyes on two thousand pahnds, when t' job lot wor not worth two thahsand pahnds, pavilion and all, and what sort of football did they lake then? We know, don't we? They could gi' thee[1] summat[5] worth watching then. Nah, it's all nowt,[6] like t' ale an' baccy[7] they ask so mich[8] for — money fair thrawn away, ah calls it. Well, we mun[9] 'a' wer teas and get ower it. Behave thi-sen/[10] Jess!' And he turned away, for that final word of caution was only one of Bruddersford's familiar good-byes.

'Ay,[11] replied Mr. Oakroyd dispiritedly. 'So long, Jim!'"

[1] *tha (thee)* — the objective case of *thou;* [2] *brass* — money; [3] *to lake* — to play; [4] *nivver* — never; [5] *summat* — something; [6] *nowt* — nothing; [7] *baccy* — tobacco; [8] *mich* — much; [9] *mun* — must; [10] *thi-sen* (= *thy-self)* — yourself; [11] *ay(e)* — yes.

Exercises

I. Consider your answers to the following.

1 . What determines the choice of stylistically marked words in each particular situation?

2. In what situations are informal words used?

3. What are the main kinds of informal words? Give a brief description of each group.

[1] *United* — the name of a football team. ther approached a farmer who was standing nearby and asked: "Can we take this road to Sheffield?" The farmer eyed the car and its contents sourly, then: "Aye, you mun as well, you've takken nigh everything else around here."

V. Make up a dialogue using colloquial words from your lists and from the extracts given in the chapter.

a. In the first dialogue, two undergraduates are dis cussing why one of them has been expelled from his college. (Don't forget that young people use both literary and familiar colloquial words.)

b. In the second dialogue, the parents of the dismissed student are wondering what to do with him. (Older people, as you remember, are apt to be less informal in their choice of words.)

CHAPTER 2

Which Word Should We Choose, Formal or Informal? *(continued)*

Formal Style

We have already pointed out that formal style is restricted to formal situations. In general, formal words fall into two main groups: words associated with professional communication and a less exclusive group of so-called *learned words.*

Learned Words

These words are mainly associated with the printed page. It is in this vocabulary stratum that poetry and fiction find their main resources.

The term "learned" is not precise and does not adequately describe the exact characteristics of these words. A somewhat out-of-date term for the same category of words is "bookish", but, as E. Partridge notes, ""book-learned' and 'bookish' are now uncomplimentary. The corresponding complimentaries are 'erudite', 'learned', 'scholarly'. 'Book-learned' and 'bookish' connote 'ignorant of life', however much book-learning one may possess". [30]

The term "learned" includes several heterogeneous subdivisions of words. We find here numerous words that are used in scientific prose and can be identified by their dry, matter-of-fact flavour (e. g. *comprise, compile, experimental, heterogeneous, homogeneous, conclusive, divergent,* etc.).

To this group also belongs so-called "officialese" (cf. with the R. *канцеляризмы).* These are the words of the official, bureaucratic language. E. Partridge in his dictionary *Usage and Abusage* gives a list of officialese which he thinks should be avoided in speech and in print. Here are some words from Partridge's list: *assist* (for *help), endeavour* (for *try), proceed* (for *go), approximately* (for *about), sufficient* (for *enough), attired* (for *dressed), inquire* (for *ask).*

In the same dictionary an official letter from a Government Department is quoted which may very well serve as a typical example of officialese. It goes: *"You are authorized to acquire the work in question by purchase through the ordinary trade channels."* Which, translated into plain English, would simply mean: *"We advise you to buy the book in a shop."* [38]

Probably the most interesting subdivision of learned words is represented by the words found in descriptive passages of fiction. These words, which may be called "literary", also have a particular flavour of their own, usually described as "refined". They are mostly polysyllabic words drawn from the Romance languages and, though fully adapted to the English phonetic system, some of them continue to sound singularly foreign. They also seem to retain an aloofness associated with the lofty contexts in which they have been used for centuries. Their very sound seems to create complex and solemn associations. Here are some examples: *solitude, sentiment, fascination, fastidiousness, facetiousness, delusion, meditation, felicity, elusive, cordial, illusionary.*

There is one further subdivision of learned words: modes of po-

etic diction. These stand close to the previous group many words from which, in fact, belong to both these categories. Yet, poetic words have a further characteristic — a lofty, high-flown, sometimes archaic, colouring:

> *"Alas!* they had been friends in youth; But whispering tongues can poison truth
> And *constancy* lives in *realms* above; And life is thorny; and youth is vain; And to be *wroth* with one we love, *Doth* work like madness in the brain..."
>
> (Coleridge)

* * *

Though learned words are mainly associated with the printed page, this is not exclusively so. Any educated English-speaking individual is sure to use many learned words not only in his formal letters and professional communication but also in his everyday speech. It is true that sometimes such uses strike a definitely incongruous note as in the following extract:

> "You should find no difficulty in obtaining a secretarial post in the city." Carel said "obtaining a post" and not "getting a job". It was part of a bureaucratic manner which, Muriel noticed, he kept reserved for her."
>
> (From *The Time of the Angels* by I. Murdoch)

Yet, generally speaking, educated people in both modern fiction and real life use learned words quite naturally and their speech is certainly the richer for it.

On the other hand, excessive use of learned elements in conversational speech presents grave hazards. Utterances overloaded with such words have pretensions of "refinement" and "elegance" but achieve the exact opposite verging on the absurd and ridiculous.

Writers use this phenomenon for stylistic purposes. When a character in a book or in a play uses too many learned words, the obvious inappropriateness of his speech in an informal situation produces a comic effect,

When Lady Bracknell in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* recommends Jack "to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is over", the statement is funny because the seriousness and precision of the language seems comically out-of-keeping with the informal situation.

The following quotations speak for themselves. (The "learned" elements are italicized.)

Gwendolen in the same play declaring her love for Jack says:

> "The story of your *romantic origin* as *related* to me by mamma, with *unpleasing comments,* has naturally *stirred* the deepest *fibres* of my nature. Your Christian name has an *irresistible fascination.* The simplicity of your nature makes you *exquisitely incomprehensible* to me..."

Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion* by B. Shaw engaging in traditional English small talk answers the question "Will it rain, do you think?" in the following way:

> *"The shallow depression* in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly *in an easterly direction.* There are no *indications* of any great change in *the barometrical situation."*

Freddie Widgeon, a silly young man in *Fate* by Wodehouse, try-

ing to defend a woman whom he thinks unduly insulted, says:

> "You are *aspersing* a woman's name," he said.
> "What?!"
> "Don't *attempt to evade the issue,"* said Freddie...
> "You are aspersing a woman's name, and — what
> makes it worse — you are doing it in a bowler-hat.
> Take off that hat," said Freddie.

However any suggestion that learned words are suitable only for comic purposes, would be quite wrong. It is in this vocabulary stratum that writers and poets find their most vivid paints and colours, and not only their humorous effects.

Here is an extract from Iris Murdoch describing a *summer* evening:

"... A bat had noiselessly *appropriated* the space between, a flittering weaving almost *substanceless fragment* of the *invading* dark. ... A collared dove groaned once in the *final* light. A pink rose *reclining* upon the big box hedge *glimmered* with contained electric *luminosity.* A blackbird, trying to *metamorphose* itself into a nightingale, began a long *passionate complicated* song." (From *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* by I. Murdoch)

This piece of modern prose is rich in literary words which underline its stern and reserved beauty. One might even say that it is the selection of words which makes the description what it is: serious, devoid of cheap sentimentality and yet charged with grave forebodings and tense expectation.

* * *

What role do learned words play in the language-learning and language-teaching process? Should they be taught? Should they be included in the students' functional and recognition vocabularies?

As far as passive recognition is concerned, the answer is clear: without knowing some learned words, it is even impossible to read fiction (not to mention scientific articles) or to listen to lectures delivered in the foreign language.

It is also true that some of these words should be carefully selected and "activised" to become part of the students' functional vocabulary.

However, for teaching purposes, they should be chosen with care and introduced into the students' speech in moderation, for, as we have seen, the excessive use of learned words may lead to absurdities.

Archaic and Obsolete Words

These words stand close to the "learned" words, particularly to the modes of poetic diction. Learned words and archaisms are both associated with the printed page. Yet, as we have seen, many learned words may also be used in conversational situations. This cannot happen with archaisms, which are invariably restricted to the printed page. These words are moribund, already partly or fully out of circulation, rejected by the living language. Their last refuge is in historical novels (whose authors use them to create a particular period atmosphere) and, of course, in poetry which is rather conservative in its choice of words.

Thou and *thy, aye* ("yes") and *nay* ("no") are certainly archaic and long since rejected by common usage, yet poets use them even today.

(We also find the same four words and many other archaisms among dialectisms, which is quite natural, as dialects are also conservative and retain archaic words and structures.)

Numerous archaisms can be found in Shakespeare, but it should be taken into consideration that what appear to us today as archaisms in the works of Shakespeare, are in fact examples of everyday language of Shakespeare's time.

There are several such archaisms in Viola's speech from *Twelfth Night:*

> "There is a *fair* behaviour in *thee,* Captain, And though that nature with a *beauteous* wall *Doth oft* close in pollution, yet of thee I will believe *thou hast* a mind that suits With this *thy* fair and outward character. I *prithee* — and I'll pay thee *bounteously* — Conceal me what I am, and be my aid For such disguise as *haply* shall become The form of my intent..."
>
> (Act I, Sc. 2) 32

Further examples of archaisms are: *morn* (for *morning), eve* (for *evening), moon* (for *month), damsel* (for *girl), errant* (for *wandering, e.* g. *errant knights),* etc.

Sometimes, an archaic word may undergo a sudden revival. So, the formerly archaic *kin* (for *relatives; one's family) is* now current in American usage.

The terms "archaic" and "obsolete" are used more or less indiscriminately by some authors. Others make a distinction between them using the term "obsolete" for words which have completely gone out of use. The Random House Dictionary defines an obsolete word as one "no longer in use, esp. out of use for at least a century", whereas an archaism is referred to as "current in an earlier time but rare in present usage". [46]

It should be pointed out that the borderline between "obsolete" and "archaic" is vague and uncertain, and in many cases it is difficult to decide to which of the groups this or that word belongs.

There is a further term for words which are no longer in use: *historisms*. By this we mean words denoting objects and phenomena which are, things of the past and no longer exist.

Professional Terminology

Hundreds of thousands of words belong to special scientific, professional or trade terminological systems and are not used or even understood by people outside the particular speciality. Every field of modern activity has its specialised vocabulary. There is a special medical vocabulary, and similarly special terminologies for psychology, botany, music, linguistics, teaching methods and many others.

Term, as traditionally understood, is a word or a word-group which is specifically employed by a particular branch of science, technology, trade or the arts to convey a concept peculiar to this particular activity.

So, *bilingual, interdental, labialization, palatalization, glottal stop, descending scale* are terms of theoretical phonetics.

There are several controversial problems in the field of terminology. The first is the puzzling question of whether a term loses its terminological status when it comes into common usage. Today this is a frequent occurrence, as various elements of the media of communica-

tion (TV, radio, popular magazines, science fiction, etc.) ply people with scraps of knowledge from different scientific fields, technology and the arts. It is quite natural that under the circumstances numerous terms pass into general usage without losing connection with their specific fields.

There are linguists in whose opinion terms are only those words which have retained their exclusiveness and are not known or recognised outside their specific sphere. From this point of view, words associated with the medical sphere, such as *unit* ("доза лекарственного препарата"), *theatre* ("операционная"), *contact* ("носитель инфекции") are no longer medical terms as they are in more or less common usage. The same is certainly true about names of diseases or medicines, with the exception of some rare or recent ones only known to medical men.

There is yet another point of view, according to which any terminological system is supposed to include all the words and word-groups conveying concept peculiar to a particular branch of knowledge, regardless of their exclusiveness. Modern research of various terminological systems has shown that there is no impenetrable wall between terminology and the general language system. To the contrary, terminologies seem to obey the same rules and laws as other vocabulary strata. Therefore, exchange between terminological systems and the "common" vocabulary is quite normal, and it would be wrong to regard a term as something "special" and standing apart.

Two other controversial problems deal with *polysemy* and *synonymy*.

According to some linguists, an "ideal" term should be *monosemantic* (i. e. it should have only one meaning). *Polysemantic* terms may lead to misunderstanding, and that is a serious shortcoming in professional communication. This requirement seems quite reasonable, yet facts of the language do not meet it. There are, in actual fact, numerous polysemantic terms. The linguistic term *semantics* may mean both the meaning of a word and the branch of lexicology studying meanings. In the terminology of painting, the term *colour* may denote *hue* ("цвет") and, at the same time, *stuff used for colouring* ("краска").

The same is true about synonymy in terminological systems. There are scholars who insist that terms should not have synonyms because, consequently, scientists and other specialists would name the same objects and phenomena in their field by different terms and would not be able to come to any agreement. This may be true. But, in fact, terms do possess synonyms. In painting, the same term *colour* has several synonyms in both its meanings: *hue, shade, tint, tinge* in the first meaning ("цвет") and *paint, tint, dye* in the second ("краска").

Basic Vocabulary

These words are stylistically neutral, and, in this respect, opposed to formal and informal words described above. Their stylistic neutrality makes it possible to use them in all kinds of situations, both formal and informal, in verbal and written communication.

Certain of the stylistically marked vocabulary strata are, in a way, exclusive: professional terminology is used mostly by representatives of the professions; dialects are regional; slang is favoured mostly by the young and the uneducated. Not so basic vocabulary. These words

are used every day, everywhere and by everybody, regardless of profession, occupation, educational level, age group or geographical location. These are words without which no human communication would be possible as they denote objects and phenomena of everyday importance (e. g. *house, bread, summer, winter, child, mother, green, difficult, to go, to stand,* etc.).

The basic vocabulary is the central group of the vocabulary, its historical foundation and living core. That is why words of this stratum show a considerably greater stability in comparison with words of the other strata, especially informal.

Basic vocabulary words can be recognised not only by their stylistic neutrality but, also, by entire lack of other connotations (i. e. attendant meanings). Their meanings are broad, general and directly convey the concept, without supplying any additional information.

For instance, the verb *to walk* means merely "to move from place to place on foot" whereas in the meanings of its synonyms *to stride, to stroll, to trot, to stagger* and others, some additional information is encoded as they each describe a different manner of walking, a different gait, tempo, purposefulness or lack of purpose and even length of paces (see Ch. 10). Thus, *to walk,* with its direct broad meaning, is a typical basic vocabulary word, and its synonyms, with their elaborate additional information encoded in their meanings, belong to the periphery of the vocabulary.

The basic vocabulary and the stylistically marked strata of the vocabulary do not exist independently but are closely interrelated. Most stylistically marked words have their neutral counterparts in the basic vocabulary. (Terms are an exception in this respect.) On the other hand, colloquialisms may have their counterparts among learned words, most slang has counterparts both among colloquialisms and learned words. Archaisms, naturally, have their modern equivalents at least in some of the other groups.

The table gives some examples of such synonyms belonging to different stylistic strata.

Basic vocabulary	Informal	Formal
begin	start, *get started*	*commence*
continue	*go on, get on*	*proceed*
end	*finish, be through, be over*	*terminate*
child, baby	*kid, brat, beam* (dial.)	*infant, babe* (poet.)

In teaching a foreign language, the basic vocabulary words comprise the first and absolutely essential part of the students' functional and recognition vocabularies. They constitute the beginner's vocabulary. Yet, to restrict the student to the basic vocabulary would mean to deprive his speech of colour, expressive force and emotive shades, for, if basic vocabulary words are absolutely necessary, they also decidedly lack something: they are not at all the kind of words to tempt a writer or a poet. Actually, if the language had none other but basic vocabulary words, fiction would be hardly readable, and poetry simply non-existent.

The following table sums up the description of the stylistic strata of English vocabulary.

Stylistically-neutral words	Stylistically-marked words	
	Informal	Formal
Basic vocabulary	I. Colloquial words A. literary, B. familiar, C. low. II. Slang words. III. Dialect words.	I. Learned words A. literary, B. words of scientific prose, C. officialese, D. modes of poetic diction. II. Archaic and obsolete words. III. Professional terminology.

Exercises

I. Consider your answers to the following.

1 . Where are formal words used?

2. Are learned words used only in books? Which type of learned words, do you think, is especially suitable for verbal communication? Which is least suitable and even undesirable?

3. What are the principal characteristics of archaic words?

4. What are the controversial problems connected with professional terminology?

5. Do you think that students of English should learn terms? If so, for which branch or branches of knowledge?

6. What is understood by the basic vocabulary?

7. Which classes of stylistically marked words, in your opinion, should be included in the students' functional and recognition vocabularies in 1) junior and 2) senior school vocabularies?

II. **a. The italicized words and word-groups in the following extracts belong to formal style. Describe the stylistic peculiarities of each extract in general and say whether the italicized represents learned words, terms or archa**isms. **Look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary.**

in re[1] Miss Ernestina Freeman

We are *instructed* by Mr. Ernest Freeman, father of the *above-mentioned* Miss Ernestina Freeman, to *request* you to *attend* at these *chambers* at 3 o'clock this coming Friday. Your failure to attend will be regarded as an acknowledgement of our client's right *to proceed."*

(From *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by J. Fowles]

2. "I have, with *esteemed* advice ..." Mr. Aubrey bowed briefly towards the sergeant, ... "... prepared *an admission of guilt.* I should *instruct* you that Mr. Freeman's decision not to proceed immediately is most strictly *contingent* upon your client's signing, on this occasion and in our presence, and witnessed *by all present,* this document."

(Ibid.;

3. R o m e o ... So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows, As *yonder* lady o'er her fellows shows. The *measure*[2] done, I'll watch her place of stand, And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand. Did my heart love till now? *Forswear* it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

[1] Usually in modern correspondence you will find the form *re* [ri:] without the in.

[2] *measure* (here) — dance.

CHAPTER 3

The Etymology of English Words.[1] Are All English Words Really English?

As a matter of fact, they are — if we regard them in the light of present-day English. If, however, their origins are looked into, the picture may seem somewhat bewildering. A person who does not know English but knows French (Italian, Latin, Spanish) is certain to recognise a great number of familiar-looking words when skipping through an English book.

It is true that English vocabulary, which is one of the most extensive amongst the world's languages contains an immense number of words of foreign origin. Explanations for this should be sought in the history of the language which is closely connected with the history of the nation speaking the language. In order to have a better understanding of the problem, it will be necessary to go through a brief survey of certain historical facts, relating to different epochs.

* * *

The first century B. C. Most of the territory now, known to us as Europe is occupied by the Roman Empire. Among the inhabitants of the continent are Germanic tribes, "barbarians" as the arrogant Romans call them. Theirs is really a rather primitive stage of development, especially if compared with the high civilisation and refinement of Rome. They are primitive cattle-

> By *etymology* of words is understood their origin breeders and know almost nothing about land cultivation. Their tribal languages contain only Indo-European and Germanic elements. The latter fact is of some importance for the purposes of our survey.

Now comes an event which brings an important change. After a number of wars between the Germanic tribes and the Romans these two opposing peoples come into peaceful contact. Trade is carried on, and the Germanic people gain knowledge of new and useful things. The first among them are new things to eat. It has been mentioned that Germanic cattle-breeding was on a primitive scale. Its only products known to the Germanic tribes were meat and milk. It is from the Romans that they learn how to make butter and cheese and, as there are naturally no words for these foodstuffs in their tribal languages, they are to use the Latin words to name them (Lat. *butyrum, caseus).* It is also to the Romans that the Germanic tribes owe the knowledge of some new fruits and vegetables of which they had no idea before, and the Latin names of these fruits and vegetables enter their vocabularies reflecting this new knowledge: *cherry* (Lat. *cerasum), pear* (Lat. *pirum), plum* (Lat. *prunus), pea* (Lat. *pisum), beet* (Lat. *beta), pepper* (Lat. *piper).* It is interesting to note that the word *plant* is also a Latin borrowing[1] of this period (Lat. *planta).*

Here are some more examples of Latin borrowings of this period: *cup* (Lat. *cuppa), kitchen* (Lat. *coquina), mill* (Lat. *molina), port* (Lat. *portus), wine* (Lat. *vinum).*

The fact that all these borrowings occurred is in itself significant. It was certainly important that the Germanic tribal languages gained a

considerable number of new words and were thus enriched. What was even more significant was that all these Latin words were destined to become the earliest group of borrowings in the future English language which was — much later — built on the basis of the Germanic tribal languages. Which brings us to another epoch, much closer to the English language as we know it, both in geographical and chronological terms.

[1] By a *borrowing* or *loan-word* we mean a word which came into the vocabulary of one language from another and was assimilated by the new language. (For more about the assimilation of borrowings see Ch. 4.)

The fifth century A. D. Several of the Germanic tribes (the most numerous amongst them being the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes) migrated across the sea now known as the English Channel to the British Isles. There they were confronted by the Celts, the original inhabitants of the Isles. The Celts desperately defended their lands against the invaders, but they were no match for the military-minded Teutons and gradually yielded most of their territory. They retreated to the North and South-West (modern Scotland, Wales and Cornwall). Through their numerous contacts with the defeated Celts, the conquerors got to know and assimilated a number of Celtic words (Mod. E. *bald, down, glen, druid, bard, cradle).* Especially numerous among the Celtic borrowings were place names, names of rivers, bills, etc. The Germanic tribes occupied the land, but the names of many parts and features of their territory remained Celtic. For instance, the names of the rivers Avon, Exe, Esk, Usk, Ux originate from Celtic words meaning "river" and "water".

Ironically, even the name of the English capital originates from Celtic *Llyn + dun* in which *llyn* is another Celtic word for "river" and *dun* stands for "a fortified hill", the meaning of the whole being "fortress on the hill over the river".

Some Latin words entered the Anglo-Saxon languages through Celtic, among them such widely-used words as *street* (Lat. *strata via)* and *wall* (Lat. *vallum).*

The seventh century A. D. This century was significant for the christianisation of England. Latin was the official language of the Christian church, and consequently the spread of Christianity was accompanied by a new period of Latin borrowings. These no longer came from spoken Latin as they did eight centuries earlier, but from church Latin. Also, these new Latin borrowings were very different in meaning from the earlier ones. They mostly indicated persons, objects and ideas associated with church and religious rituals. E. g. *priest (Lai. presbyter), bishop (Lai. episcopus), monk* (Lat. *monachus), nun (Lai. nonna), candle (Lai. candela).*

Additionally, in a class of their own were educational terms. It was quite natural that these were also Latin borrowings, for the first schools in England were church schools, and the first teachers priests and monks. So, the very word *school* is a Latin borrowing (Lat. *schola,* of Greek origin) and so are such words *as scholar (Lai. scholar(-is)* and *magister* (Lat. *ma-gister).*

From the end of the 8th c. to the middle of the 11th c. England underwent several Scandinavian invasions which inevitably left their trace on English vocabulary. Here are some examples of early Scan-

dinavian borrowings: *call,* v., *take,* v., *cast,* v., *die,* v., *law,* п., *husband,* n. (< Sc. *hus* + *bondi,* i. e. "inhabitant of the house"), *window* n. (< Sc. *vindauga,* i. e. "the eye of the wind"), *ill,* adj., *loose,* adj., *low,* adj., *weak,* adj.

Some of the words of this group are easily recognisable as Scandinavian borrowings by the initial *sk-* combination. E. g. *sky, skill, skin, ski, skirt.*

Certain English words changed their meanings under the influence of Scandinavian words of the same root. So, the O. E. *bread* which meant "piece" acquired its modern meaning by association with the Scandinavian *brand.*

The O. E. *dream* which meant "joy" assimilated the meaning of the Scandinavian *draumr(cf.* with the Germ. *Traum* "dream" and the R. *дрёма).*

1066. With the famous Battle of Hastings, when the English were defeated by the Normans under William the Conqueror, we come to the eventful epoch of the Norman Conquest. The epoch can well be called eventful not only in national, social, political and human terms, but also in linguistic terms. England became a bi-lingual country, and the impact on the English vocabulary made over this two-hundred-years period is immense: French words from the Norman dialect penetrated every aspect of social life. Here is a very brief list of examples of *Norman French borrowings.*

Administrative words: *state, government, parliament, council, power.*

Legal terms: *court, judge, justice, crime, prison.*

Military terms: *army, war, soldier, officer, battle, enemy.*

Educational terms: *pupil, lesson, library, science, pen, pencil.*

Everyday life was not unaffected by the powerful influence of French words. Numerous terms of everyday life were also borrowed from French in this period: e. g. *table, plate, saucer, dinner, supper, river, autumn, uncle,* etc.

The *Renaissance Period.* In England, as in all European countries, this period was marked by significant developments in science, art and culture and, also, by a revival of interest in the ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome and their languages. Hence, there occurred a considerable number of Latin and Greek borrowings. In contrast to the earliest Latin borrowings (1st c. B. C.), the Renaissance ones were rarely concrete names. They were mostly abstract words (e. g. *major, minor, filial, moderate, intelligent, permanent, to elect, to create).* There were naturally numerous scientific and artistic terms *(datum, status, phenomenon, philosophy, method, music).*[1] The same is true of Greek Renaissance borrowings (e. g. *atom, cycle, ethics, esthete).*

The Renaissance was a period of extensive cultural contacts between the major European states. Therefore, it was only natural that new words also entered the English vocabulary from other European languages. The most significant once more were French borrowings. This time they came from the Parisian dialect of French and are known as *Parisian borrowings.* Examples: *regime, routine, police, machine, ballet, matinee, scene, technique, bourgeois,* etc. (One should note that these words of French origin sound and "look" very different from their Norman predecessors. We shall return to this question later (see Ch. 4).)

Italian also contributed a considerable number of words to English, e. g. *piano, violin, opera, alarm, colonel.*

* * *

There are certain structural features which enable us to identify some words as borrowings and even to determine the source language. We have already established that the initial *sk* usually indicates Scandinavian origin. You can also recognise words of Latin and French origin by certain suffixes, prefixes or endings. The two tables below will help you in this.

The historical survey above is far from complete. Its aim is just to give a very general idea of the ways in which English vocabulary developed and of the major events through which it acquired its vast modern resources.

[1] *Phenomenon, philosophy, method, music,* etc. were borrowed into English from Latin and had earlier come into Latin from Greek.

I. Latin Affixes

Nouns	The suffix *-ion*	*communion, legion, opinion, session, union,* etc.
	The suffix *-tion*	*relation, revolution, starvation, temptation, unification,* etc.
Verbs	The suffix *-ate* [eit]	*appreciate, create, congratulate,* etc.
	The suffix *-ute* [ju:t]	*attribute, contribute, constitute, distribute,* etc.
	The remnant suffix *-ct*	*act, conduct, collect, connect,* etc.
	The remnant suffix *-d(e)*	*applaud, divide, exclude, include,* etc.
	The prefix *dis-*	*disable, distract, disown, disagree,* etc.
Adjectives	The suffix *-able*	*detestable, curable,* etc.
	The suffix *-ate* [it]	*accurate, desperate, graduate,* etc.
	The suffix *-ant*	*arrogant, constant, important,* etc.
	The suffix -ent	*absent, convenient, decent, evident,* etc.
	The suffix *-or*	*major, minor, junior, senior,* etc.
	The suffix -al	*cordial, final, fraternal, maternal,* etc.
	The suffix *-ar*	*lunar, solar, familiar,* etc.

II. French Affixes

Nouns	The suffix *-ance*	*arrogance, endurance, hindrance,* etc.
	The suffix *-ence*	*consequence, intelligence, patience,* etc.
	The suffix *-ment*	*appointment, development, experiment,* etc.
	The suffix *-age*	*courage, marriage, passage, village,* etc.
	The suffix *-ess*	*tigress, lioness, actress, adventuress,* etc.
Adjectives	The suffix -ous	*curious, dangerous, joyous, serious,* etc.
Verbs	The prefix *en-*	*enable, endear, enact, enfold, enslave,* etc.

Notes. 1. The tables represent only the most typical and frequent structural elements of Latin and French borrowings.

2. Though all the affixes represented in the tables are Latin or French borrowings, some of the examples given in the third column are later formations derived from native roots and borrowed affixes (e. g. *eatable, lovable).*

By remnant suffixes are meant the ones that are only partially preserved in the structure of the word (e. g. Lat. *-ct* < Lat. *-ctus).*

It seems advisable to sum up what has been said in a table.

The Etymological Structure of English Vocabulary

The native element[1]	The borrowed element
ıdo-European element	I. Celtic (5th — 6th c. A. D.)
II. Germanic element	II. Latin 1st group: 1st c. B. C. 2nd group: 7th c. A. D. 3rd group: the Renaissance period

English Proper element (no earlier than 5th c. A. D.)	III. Scandinavian (8th — 11th c. A. D.) IV. French 1. Norman borrowings: 11th — 13th c. A. D. 2. Parisian borrowings (Renaissance) V. Greek (Renaissance) VI. Italian (Renaissance and later) VII. Spanish (Renaissance and later) VIII.German IX. Indian X. Russian And some other groups

The table requires some explanation. Firstly, it should be pointed out that not only does the second column contain more groups, but it also implies a greater quantity of words. Modern scholars estimate the percentage of borrowed words in the English vocabulary at 65—70 per cent which is an exceptionally high figure:

[1] *By the native element we mean words which were not borrowed from other languages but represent the original stock of this particular language.*

one would certainly expect the native element to prevail. This anomaly is explained by the country's eventful history and by its many international contacts.

On a straight vocabulary count, considering the high percentage of borrowed words, one would have to classify English as a language of international origin or, at least, a Romance one (as French and Latin words obviously prevail). But here another factor comes into play, the relative frequency of occurrence of words, and it is under this heading that the native Anglo-Saxon heritage comes into its own. The native element in English comprises a large number of high-frequency words like the articles, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, auxiliaries and, also, words denoting everyday objects and ideas (e. g. *house, child, water, go, come, eat, good, bad,* etc.).

Furthermore, the grammatical structure is essentially Germanic having remained unaffected by foreign influence.

It is probably of some interest to mention that at various times purists have tried to purge the English language of foreign words, replacing them with Anglo-Saxon ones. One slogan created by these linguistic nationalists was: "Avoid Latin derivatives; use brief, terse Anglo-Saxon monosyllables". The irony is that the only Anglo-Saxon word in the entire slogan is "Anglo-Saxon". [31]

Now let us turn to the first column of the table representing the native element, the original stock of the English vocabulary. The column consists of three groups, only the third being dated: the words of this group appeared in the English vocabulary in the 5th c. or later, that is, after the Germanic tribes migrated to the British Isles. As to the Indo-European and Germanic groups, they are so old that they cannot be dated. It was mentioned in the historical survey opening this chapter that the tribal languages of the Angles, the Saxons, the Jutes, by the time of their migration, contained only words of Indo-

European and Germanic roots plus a certain number of the earliest Latin borrowings.

By the Indo-European element are meant words of roots common to all or most languages of the Indo-European group. English words of this group denote elementary concepts without which no human communication would be possible. The following groups can be identified.[1]

I. Family relations: *father, mother, brother, son, daughter.*
II. Parts of the human body: *foot* (cf. R. *пядь), nose, lip, heart.*
III. Animals: *cow, swine, goose.*
IV. Plants: *tree, birch* (cf. R. *береза), corn* (cf. R. *зерно).*
V. Time of day: *day, night.* VI. Heavenly bodies: *sun, moon, star.* VII. Numerous adjectives: *red* (cf. Ukr. *рудий,* R. *рыжий), new, glad* (cf. R. *гладкий), sad* (cf. R. *сыт).*
VIII. The numerals from one to a hundred. IX. Pronouns — personal (except *they* which is a Scandinavian borrowing); demonstrative. X. Numerous verbs: *be* (cf. R. *быть), stand* (cf. R. *стоять), sit* (cf. R. *сидеть), eat* (cf. R. *есть), know* (cf. R. *знать, знаю).*

The Germanic element represents words of roots common to all or most Germanic languages. Some of the main groups of Germanic words are the same as in the Indo-European element.

I. Parts of the human body: *head, hand, arm, finger, bone.*

[1] *The classification and examples are taken from Ара-кин В. Д. Очерки по истории английского языка, с. 251.*

II. Animals: *bear, fox, calf.*
III. Plants: *oak, fir, grass.*
IV. Natural phenomena: *rain, frost.*
V. Seasons of the year: *winter, spring, summer.*[1] VI. Landscape features: *sea, land.* VII. Human dwellings and furniture: *house, room, bench.*
VIII. Sea-going vessels: *boat, ship.* IX. Adjectives: *green, blue, grey, white, small, thick, high, old, good.*
X. Verbs: *see, hear, speak, tell, say, answer, make, give, drink.*

* * *

It has been mentioned that the English proper element is, in certain respects, opposed to the first two groups. Not only can it be approximately dated, but these words have another distinctive feature: they are specifically English having no cognates[2] in other languages whereas for Indo-European and Germanic words such cognates can always be found, as, for instance, for the following words of the Indo-European group.

Star: Germ. *Stern,* Lat. *Stella,* Gr. *aster.*

Sad: Germ, *satt,* Lat. *satis,* R. *сыт,* Snscr. *sd-.*

Stand: Germ, *stehen,* Lat. *stare, R. стоять,* Snscr. *stha-.*

Here are some examples of English proper words. These words stand quite alone in the vocabulary system of Indo-European languages: *bird, boy, girl, lord, lady, woman, daisy, always.*

Of course, one might remark that Russian vocabulary also has the

words *лорд, леди, бой* (in the meaning

[1] *Autumn is a French borrowing.*
[2] *Cognates — words of the same etymological root, of com mon origin.*

of "native servant"). The explanation is simple: these words have been borrowed by Russian from English and therefore are not cognates of their English counterparts.

It should be taken into consideration that the English proper element also contains all the later formations, that is, words which were made after the 5th century according to English word-building patterns (see Ch. 5, 6) both from native and borrowed morphemes. For instance, the adjective 'beautiful' built from the French borrowed root and the native suffix belongs to the English proper element. It is natural, that the quantity of such words is immense.

Exercises

I. Consider your answers to the following.

1 . How can you account for the fact that English vo cabulary contains such an immense number of words of foreign origin?

2. What is the earliest group of English borrowings? Date it.

3. What Celtic borrowings are there in English? Date them.

4. Which words were introduced into English vocab ulary during the period of Christianization?

5. What are the characteristic features of Scandina vian borrowings?

6. When and under what circumstances did England become a bi-lingual country? What imprint features were left in English vocabulary by this period?

7. What are the characteristic features of words bor rowed into English during the Renaissance?

8. What suffixes and prefixes can help you to recog nize words of Latin and French origin?

9. What is meant by the native element of English vocabulary?

II. Subdivide all the following words of native origin into: a) Indo-european, b) Germanic, c) English proper.

Daughter, woman, room, land, cow, moon, sea, red, spring, three, I, lady, always, goose, bear, fox, lord, tree, nose, birch, grey, old, glad, daisy, heart, hand, night, to eat, to see, to make.

III. Read the following jokes. Explain the etymology of the italicized words. If necessary consult a dictionary.[1]

1 . He dropped around to the *girl's house* and as he ran up the steps he was confronted by her *little brother.*

"Hi, Billy."
"Hi,"said the brat.
"Is your *sister* expecting me?"
"Yeah."
"How do you know that?"
"She's gone out."

2. A *man* was at a theatre. He was sitting behind *two women* whose continuous chatter became more than he could bear. Leaning forward, he tapped *one* of them on the *shoulder.*

"Pardon me, madam," he said, "but I can't *hear."* "You are not supposed to — this is a private conversation," she hit back.

3. Sonny: *Father,* what *do* they *make* asphalt roads of?

Father: That makes a *thousand* question you've asked today. Do give me a *little* peace. What do you *think* would happen if I had asked my father so *many* questions?

Sonny: You might have learnt how to answer some of mine.

[1] *Skeat W.* A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language. Oxford, 1961; *Weckley E.* An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English. V. I—II. No 4, 19.

CHAPTER 4

The Etymology of English Words *(continued)*

Why Are Words Borrowed?

This question partially concerns the historical circumstances which stimulate the borrowing process. Each time two nations come into close contact, certain borrowings are a natural consequence. The nature of the contact may be different. It may be wars, invasions or conquests when foreign words are in effect imposed upon the reluctant conquered nation. There are also periods of peace when the process of borrowing is due to trade and international cultural relations.

These latter circumstances are certainly more favourable for stimulating the borrowing process, for during invasions and occupations the natural psychological reaction of the oppressed nation is to reject and condemn the language of the oppressor. In this respect the linguistic heritage of the Norman Conquest seems exceptional, especially if compared to the influence of the Mongol-Tartar Yoke on the Russian language. The Mongol-Tartar Yoke also represented a long period of cruel oppression, yet the imprint left by it on the Russian vocabulary is comparatively insignificant.

The difference in the consequences of these evidently similar historical events is usually explained by the divergence in the level of civilisation of the two conflicting nations. Russian civilisation and also the level of its language development at the time of the Mongol-Tartar invasion were superior to those of the invaders. That is why the Russian language successfully resisted the influence of a less developed language system. On the other hand, the Norman culture of the 11th c. was certainly superior to that of the Saxons. The result was that an immense number of French words forced their way into English vocabulary. Yet, linguistically speaking, this seeming defeat turned into a victory. Instead of being smashed and broken by the powerful intrusion of the foreign element, the English language managed to preserve its essential structure and vastly enriched its expressive resources with the new borrowings.

But all this only serves to explain the conditions which encourage

the borrowing process. The question of *why* words are borrowed by one language from another is still unanswered.

Sometimes it is done to fill a gap in vocabulary. When the Saxons borrowed Latin words for "butter", "plum", "beet", they did it because their own vocabularies lacked words for these new objects. For the same reason the words *potato* and *tomato* were borrowed by English from Spanish when these vegetables were first brought to England by the Spaniards.

But there is also a great number of words which are borrowed for other reasons. There may be a word (or even several words) which expresses some particular concept, so that there is no gap in the vocabulary and there does not seem to be any need for borrowing. Yet, one more word is borrowed which means almost the same, — almost, but not exactly. It is borrowed because it represents the same concept in some new aspect, supplies a new shade of meaning or a different emotional colouring (see Ch. 10). This type of borrowing enlarges groups of synonyms and greatly provides to enrich the expressive resources of the vocabulary. That is how the Latin *cordial* was added to the native *friendly,* the French *desire* to *wish,* the Latin *admire* and the French *adore* to *like* and *love.*

Do Borrowed Words Change or Do They Remain the Same?

The eminent scholar Maria Pei put the same question in a more colourful way: "Do words when they migrate from one language into another behave as people do under similar circumstances? Do they remain alien in appearance, or do they take out citizenship papers?" [39]

Most of them take the second way, that is, they adjust themselves to their new environment and get adapted to the norms of the recipient language. They undergo certain changes which gradually erase their foreign features, and, finally, they are assimilated. Sometimes the process of assimilation develops to the point when the foreign origin of a word is quite unrecognisable. It is difficult to believe now that such words as *dinner, cat, take, cup* are not English by origin. Others, though well assimilated, still bear traces of their foreign background. *Distance* and *development,* for instance, are identified as borrowings by their French suffixes, *skin* and *sky* by the Scandinavian initial *sk, police* and *regime* by the French stress on the last syllable.

Borrowed words are adjusted in the three main areas of the new language system: the phonetic, the grammatical and the semantic.

The lasting nature of phonetic adaptation is best shown by comparing Norman French borrowings to later ones. The Norman borrowings have for a long time been fully adapted to the phonetic system of the English language: such words as *table, plate, courage, chivalry* bear no phonetic traces of their French origin. Some of the later (Parisian) borrowings, even the ones borrowed as early as the 15thc., still sound surprisingly French: *regime, valise, matinee, cafe, ballet.* In these cases phonetic adaptation is not completed.

The three stages of gradual phonetic assimilation of French borrowings can be illustrated by different phonetic variants of the word *garage:*

ɡə́ rɑːʒ > ˊ ɡærɑːʒ > ˊ ɡærɪʤ (Amer.).

Grammatical adaptation consists in a complete change of the for-

mer paradigm of the borrowed word (i. e. system of the grammatical forms peculiar to it as a part of speech). If it is a noun, it is certain to adopt, sooner or later, a new system of declension; if it is a verb, it will be conjugated according to the rules of the recipient language. Yet, this is also a lasting process. The Russian noun *пальто was* borrowed from French early in the 19th c. and has not yet acquired the Russian system of declension. The same can be said about such English Renaissance borrowings as *datum* (pl. *data), phenomenon* (pl. *phenomena), criterion* (pl. *criteria)* whereas earlier Latin borrowings such as *cup, plum, street, wall* were fully adapted to the grammatical system of the language long ago.

By semantic adaptation is meant adjustment to the system of meanings of the vocabulary. It has been mentioned that borrowing is generally caused either by the necessity to fill a gap in the vocabulary or by a chance to add a synonym conveying an old concept in a new way. Yet, the process of borrowing is not always so purposeful, logical and efficient as it might seem at first sight. Sometimes a word may be borrowed "blindly", so to speak, for no obvious reason, to find that it is not wanted because there is no gap in the vocabulary nor in the group of synonyms which it could conveniently fill. Quite a number of such "accidental" borrowings are very soon rejected by the vocabulary and forgotten. But there are others which manage to take root by the process of semantic adaptation. The adjective *large,* for instance, was borrowed from French in the meaning of "wide". It was not actually wanted, because it fully coincided with the English adjective *wide* without adding any new shades or aspects to its meaning. This could have led to its rejection. Yet, *large* managed, to establish itself very firmly in the English vocabulary by semantic adjustment. It entered another synonymic group with the general meaning of "big in size". At first it was applied to objects characterised by vast horizontal dimensions, thus retaining a trace of its former meaning, and now, though still bearing some features of that meaning, is successfully competing with *big* having approached it very closely, both in frequency and meaning.

The adjective *gay* was borrowed from French in several meanings at once: "noble of birth", "bright, shining", "multi-coloured". Rather soon it shifted its ground developing the meaning "joyful, high-spirited" in which sense it became a synonym of the native *merry* and in some time left it far behind in frequency and range of meaning. This change was again caused by the process of semantic adjustment: there was no place in the vocabulary for the former meanings of *gay,* but the group with the general meaning of "high spirits" obviously lacked certain shades which were successfully supplied by *gay.*

The adjective *nice* was a French borrowing meaning "silly" at first. The English change of meaning seems to have arisen with the use of the word in expressions like *a nice distinction,* meaning first "a silly, hair-splitting distinction", then a precise one, ultimately an attractive one. But the original necessity for change was caused once more by the fact that the meaning of "foolish" was not wanted in the vocabulary and therefore *nice* was obliged to look for a gap in another semantic field.

International Words

It is often the case that a word is borrowed by several languages, and not just by one. Such words usually convey concepts which are significant in the field of communication.

Many of them are of Latin and Greek origin. Most names of sci-

ences are international, e. g. *philosophy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, linguistics, lexicology.* There are also numerous terms of art in this group: *music, theatre, drama, tragedy, comedy, artist, primadonna.*

It is quite natural that political terms frequently occur in the international group of borrowings: *politics, policy, revolution, progress, democracy, communism, anti-militarism.*

20th c. scientific and technological advances brought a great number of new international words: *atomic, antibiotic, radio, television, sputnik.* The latter is a Russian borrowing, and it became an international word (meaning a man-made satellite) in 1961, immediately after the first space flight by Yury Gagarin.

The English language also contributed a considerable number of international words to world languages. Among them the sports terms occupy a prominent position: *football, volley-ball, baseball, hockey, cricket, rugby, tennis, golf,* etc.

Fruits and foodstuffs imported from exotic countries often transport their names too and, being simultaneously imported to many countries, become international: *coffee, cocoa, chocolate, coca-cola, banana, mango, avocado, grapefruit.*

It is important to note that international words are mainly borrowings. The outward similarity of such words as the E. *son,* the Germ. *Sohn* and the R. *сын* should not lead one to the quite false conclusion that they are international words. They represent the Indo-European group of the native element in each respective language and are cognates, *i. e.* words of the same etymological root, and not borrowings.

Etymological Doublets

The words *shirt* and *skirt* etymologically descend from the same root. *Shirt* is a native word, and *skirt* (as the initial *sk* suggests), is a Scandinavian borrowing. Their phonemic shape is different, and yet there is a certain resemblance which reflects their common origin. Their meanings are also different but easily associated: they both denote articles of clothing.

Such words as these two originating from the same etymological source, but differing in phonemic shape and in meaning are called *etymological doublets.*

They may enter the vocabulary by different routes. Some of these pairs, like *shirt* and *skirt,* consist of a native word and a borrowed word: *shrew,* n. (E.) — *screw,* n. (Sc.).

Others are represented by two borrowings from different languages which are historically descended from the same root: *senior* (Lat.) — *sir* (Fr.), *canal* (Lat.) — *channel* (Fr.), *captain* (Lat.) — *chieftan* (Fr.).

Still others were borrowed from the same language twice, but in different periods: *corpse* [ko:ps] (Norm. Fr.) — *corps* [ko:] (Par. Fr.), *travel* (Norm. Fr.) — *travail* (Par. Fr.), *cavalry* (Norm. Fr.) — *chivalry* (Par. Fr.), *gaol* (Norm. Fr.) — *jail* (Par. Fr.).

Etymological triplets (i. e. groups of three words of common root) occur rarer, but here are at least two examples: *hospital* (Lat.) — *hostel* (Norm. Fr.) — *hotel* (Par. Fr.), *to capture* (Lat.) — *to catch* (Norm. Fr.) — *to chase* (Par. Fr.).

A doublet may also consist of a shortened word and the one from which it was derived (see Ch. 6 for a description of shortening as a

type of word-building): *history — story, fantasy — fancy, fanatic — fan, defence — fence, courtesy — curtsy, shadow — shade.*

Translation-Loans

The term *loan-word* is equivalent to *borrowing.* By translation-loans we indicate borrowings of a special kind. They are not taken into the vocabulary of another language more or less in the same phonemic shape in which they have been functioning in their own language, but undergo the process of translation. It is quite obvious that it is only compound words (i. e. words of two or more stems) which can be subjected to such an operation, each stem being translated separately: *masterpiece* (from Germ. *Meisterstück), wonder child* (from Germ. *Wunderkind), first dancer* (from Ital. *prima-ballerina), collective farm* (from R. *колхоз), five-year plan* (from R. *пятилетка).*

The Russian *колхоз* was borrowed twice, by way of translation-loan *(collective farm)* and by way of direct borrowing *(kolkhoz).*

The case is not unique. During the 2nd World War the German word *Blitzkrieg* was also borrowed into English in two different forms: the translation-loan *lightning-war* and the direct borrowings *blitzkrieg* and *blitz.*

Are Etymological and Stylistic Characteristics of Words at All Interrelated?

Is it possible to establish regular associations between any of the groups of etymological classification (see p. 52) and the stylistic classification of English vocabulary (Ch. 2)? The answer must be in the affirmative.

It is quite natural to expect to find a considerable number of native words in the basic vocabulary, if we remember that the latter comprises words denoting essential objects and phenomena. Yet, one should keep in mind that among basic vocabulary words there are also rather numerous Latin and French borrowings.

In general, we should not be misled into thinking that all short common words are native, and that only three- and four-syllable words came from foreign sources. Words like *very, air, hour, cry, oil, cat, pay, box, face, poor, dress* are of foreign origin despite their native appearance and common use. So it would be correct to state that, though native words prevail in the basic vocabulary, this stratum also comprises a considerable number of old borrowings which have become so fully adapted to the English language system that they are practically indistinguishable from the native stock.

The centre of gravity of borrowed words in the stylistic classification is represented by two groups: learned words and terminology. In these strata the foreign element dominates the native. It also seems that the whole opposition of "formal versus informal" is based on the deeper underlying opposition of "borrowed versus native", as the informal strata, especially slang and dialect, abound in native words even though it is possible to quote numerous exceptions.

Comparing the expressive and stylistic value of the French and the English words in such synonymic pairs as *to begin — to commence, to wish — to desire, happiness — felicity,* O. Jespersen remarks: "The French word is usually more formal, more refined, and

has a less strong hold on the emotional side of life." [29]

The truth of this observation becomes even more obvious if we regard certain pairs within which a native word may be compared with its Latin synonym: *mother ly — maternal, fatherly — paternal, childish — infan tile, daughterly — filial,* etc. *Motherly love* seems much warmer than *maternal feelings* — which sounds dutiful but cold. The word *childish* is associated with all the wonder and vivid poetry of the earliest human age whereas *infantile* is quite dry. You may speak about *childish games* and *childish charm,* but about *infantile diseases,* whereas *infantile mind* implies criticism.

It is interesting to note that a similar pair of words *sunny — solar* cannot even be regarded as synonyms though semantically they both pertain to the sun. Yet, if a fine day can be described as *sunny,* it certainly cannot be characterised by the word *solar* which is used in highly formal terminological senses (e. g. *solar energy).* The same is true about *handy — manual, toothy* (e. g. a *toothy grin) — dental* (term again), *nosy* (e. g. *a nosy kind of person) — nasal* (e. g. *nasal sounds, voice)*[1].

Exercises

I. Consider your answers to the following.

1 . Which conditions stimulate the borrowing pro cess?

2. Why are words borrowed?

3. What stages of assimilation do borrowings go through?

4. In what spheres of communication do international words frequently occur?

5. What do we understand by etymological doublets?

6. What are the characteristic features of translation-loans?

7. How are the etymological and stylistic characteristics of words interrelated?

II. Explain the etymology of the following words. Write them out in three columns: a) fully assimilated words; b) partially assimilated words; c) unassimilated words. Explain the reasons for your choice in each case.

Pen, hors d'oeuvre, ballet, beet, butter, skin, take, cup, police, distance, monk, garage, phenomenon,

[1] Also see Supplementary Material, p.p. 276.

CHAPTER 5

How English Words Are Made. Word-Building[1]

Before turning to the various processes of making words, it would be useful to analyse the related problem of the composition of words, i. e. of their constituent parts.

If viewed structurally, words appear to be divisible into smaller units which are called *morphemes.* Morphemes do not occur as free forms but only as constituents of words. Yet they possess meanings of their own.

All morphemes are subdivided into two large classes: *roots* (or *radicals)* and *affixes.* The latter, in their turn, fall into *prefixes* which precede the root in the structure of the word (as in *re-read, mis-pronounce, unwell)* and *suffixes* which follow the root (as in *teach-er, cur-able, diet-ate).*

Words which consist of a root and an affix (or several affixes) are called *derived words* or *derivatives* and are produced by the process of word-building known as *affixation* (or *derivation).*

Derived words are extremely numerous in the English vocabulary. Successfully competing with this structural type is the so-called *root word* which has only a root morpheme in its structure. This type is

[1] *By word-building are understood processes of producing new words from the resources of this particular language. Together with borrowing, word-building provides for enlarging and enriching the vocabulary of the language.*

widely represented by a great number of words belonging to the original English stock or to earlier borrowings *(house, room, book, work, port, street, table,* etc.), and, in Modern English, has been greatly enlarged by the type of word-building called *conversion* (e. g. *to hand,* v. formed from the noun *hand; to can,* v. from *can,* п.; *to pale,* v. from *pale,* adj.; *a find,* n. from *to find,* v.; etc.).

Another wide-spread word-structure is a compound word consisting of two or more stems[1] (e. g. *dining-room, bluebell, mother-in-law, good-for-nothing).* Words of this structural type are produced by the word-building process called *composition.*

The somewhat odd-looking words like *flu, pram, lab, M. P., V-day, H-bomb* are called *shortenings, contractions* or *curtailed words* and are produced by the way of word-building called *shortening (contraction).*

The four types (root words, derived words, compounds, shortenings) represent the main structural types of Modern English words, and conversion, derivation and composition the most productive ways of word-building.

To return to the question posed by the title of this chapter, of how words are made, let us try and get a more detailed picture of each of the major types of Modern English word-building and, also, of some minor types.

Affixation

The process of *affixation* consists in coining a new word by adding an affix or several affixes to some root morpheme. The role of the affix in this procedure is very important and therefore it is necessary to consider certain facts about the main types of affixes.

[1] *Stem* is part of the word consisting of root and affix. In English words stern and root often coincide.

From the etymological point of view affixes are classified into the same two large groups as words: native and borrowed.

Some Native Suffixes[1]

Noun-forming	-er	worker, *miner,* teacher, painter, etc.
	-ness	*coldness, loneliness, loveliness,* etc.

	-ing	feel*ing*, mean*ing*, sing*ing*, read*ing*, etc.
	-dom	free*dom,* wis*dom,* king*dom,* etc.
	-hood	child*hood*, man*hood*, mother*hood*, etc.
	-ship	friend*ship*, companion*ship*, master-*ship*, etc.
	-th	leng*th*, bread*th*, heal*th,* tru*th,* etc.
Adjective-forming	-ful	care*ful,* joy*ful,* wonder*ful,* sin*ful,* skil*ful,* etc.
	-less	care*less*, sleep*less*, cloud*less*, sense-*less,* etc.
	-y	coz*y,* tid*y,* merr*y,* snowy, show*y,* etc.
	-ish	Englis*h*, Spanis*h*, reddis*h*, childis*h*, etc.
	-ly	*lonely, lovely, ugly, likely, lordly, etc.*
	-en	*wooden, woollen,* silken, golden, etc.
	-some	hand*some,* quarrel*some*, tire*some*, etc.
Verb-forming	-en	wid*en*, redd*en*, dark*en*, sadd*en*, etc.
Adverb-forming	-ly	warm*ly,* hard*ly*, simp*ly*, careful*ly*, cold*ly, etc.*

[1] The table gives examples of especially frequent native affixes.

Borrowed affixes, especially of Romance origin are numerous in the English vocabulary (Ch. 3). It would be wrong, though, to suppose that affixes are borrowed in the same way and for the same reasons as words. An affix of foreign origin can be regarded as borrowed only after it has begun an independent and active life in the recipient language, that is, is taking part in the word-making processes of that language. This can only occur when the total of words with this affix is so great in the recipient language as to affect the native speakers' subconscious to the extent that they no longer realise its foreign flavour and accept it as their own.

* * *

Affixes can also be classified into productive and non-productive types. By *productive* affixes we mean the ones, which take part in deriving new words in this particular period of language development. The best way to identify productive affixes is to look for them among *neologisms* and so-called *nonce-words,* i. e. words coined and used only for this particular occasion. The latter are usually formed on the level of living speech and reflect the most productive and progressive patterns in word-building. When a literary critic writes about a certain book that it is an *unputdownable thriller,* we will seek in vain this strange and impressive adjective in dictionaries, for it is a nonce-word coined on the current pattern of Modern English and is evidence of the high productivity of the adjective-forming borrowed suffix *-able* and the native prefix *un-*.

Consider, for example, the following:

Professor Pringle was a thinnish, baldish, dispeptic-lookingish cove with an eye like a haddock.

(From *Right-Ho, Jeeves* by P. G. Wodehouse)

The adjectives *thinnish* and *baldish* bring to mind dozens of other adjectives made with the same suffix: *oldish, youngish, mannish, girlish, fattish, longish, yellowish,* etc. But *dispeptic-lookingish* is the author's creation aimed at a humorous effect, and, at the same time, proving beyond doubt that the suffix *-ish* is a live and active one.

The same is well illustrated by the following popular statement: "*I don't like Sunday evenings: I feel so Mondayish". (Mondayish* is certainly a nonce-word.)

One should not confuse the productivity of affixes with their frequency of occurrence. There are quite a number of high-frequency affixes which, nevertheless, are no longer used in word-derivation (e. g. the adjective-forming native suffixes *-ful, -ly;* the adjective-forming suffixes of Latin origin *-ant, -ent, -al* which are quite frequent).

Some Productive Affixes

Noun-forming suffixes	-er, -ing, -ness, -ism[1] *(materialism),* -ist[1] *(impressionist),* -ance
Adjective-forming suffixes	-y, -ish, -ed *(learned),* -able, -less
Adverb-forming suffixes	-ly
Verb-forming suffixes	-ize/-ise *(realise),* -ate
Prefixes	un- *(unhappy),* re- *(reconstruct),* dis- *(disappoint)*

Note. Examples are given only for the affixes which are not listed in the tables at p. 82 and p. 83.

International suffixes.

Some Non-Productive Affixes

Noun-forming suffixes	-th, -hood
Adjective-forming suffixes	-ly, -some, -en, -ous
Verb-forming suffix	-en

Note. The native noun-forming suffixes *-dom* and *-ship* ceased to be productive centuries ago. Yet, Professor I. V. Arnold in *The English Word* gives some examples of comparatively new formations with the suffix *-dom: boredom, serfdom, slavedom* **[15].** The same is true about *-ship* (e. g. *salesmanship).* The adjective-forming *-ish,* which leaves no doubt as to its productivity nowadays, has comparatively recently regained it, after having been non-productive for many centuries.

Semantics of Affixes

The *morpheme,* and therefore affix, which is a type of morpheme, is generally defined as the smallest indivisible component of the word possessing a meaning of its own. Meanings of affixes are specific and considerably differ from those of root morphemes. Affixes have

widely generalised meanings and refer the concept conveyed by the whole word to a certain category, which is vast and all-embracing. So, the noun-forming suffix *-er* could be roughly defined as designating persons from the object of their occupation or labour *(painter* — the one who paints) or from their place of origin or abode *(southerner* — the one living in the South). The adjective-forming suffix *-ful* has the meaning of "full of", "characterised by" *(beautiful, careful)* whereas *-ish* may often imply insufficiency of quality *(greenish* — green, but not quite; *youngish* — not quite young but looking it).

Such examples might lead one to the somewhat hasty conclusion that the meaning of a derived word is always a sum of the meanings of its morphemes: *un/eat/able* = "not fit to eat" where *not* stands for *un-* and *fit* for *-able.*

There are numerous derived words whose meanings can really be easily deduced from the meanings of their constituent parts. Yet, such cases represent only the first and simplest stage of semantic readjustment within derived words. The constituent morphemes within derivatives do not always preserve their current meanings and are open to subtle and complicated semantic shifts.

Let us take at random some of the adjectives formed with the same productive suffix *-y,* and try to deduce the meaning of the suffix from their dictionary definitions:

brainy (inform.) — intelligent, intellectual, i. e. *characterised by* brains

catty — quietly or slyly malicious, spiteful, i. e. *characterised by features* ascribed to a cat

chatty — given to chat, *inclined to* chat

dressy (inform.) — showy in dress, i. e. *inclined to* dress well or to be overdressed

fishy (e. g. in *a fishy story,* inform.) — improbable, hard to believe *(like* stories told by fishermen)

foxy — foxlike, cunning or crafty, i. e. *characterised by features* ascribed to a fox

stagy — theatrical, unnatural, i. e. *inclined to* affectation, to unnatural theatrical manners

touchy — apt to take offence on slight provocation, i. e. *resenting* a touch or contact (not at all inclined to be touched)[1]

The Random-House Dictionary defines the meaning of the *-y* suffix as "characterised by or inclined to the substance or action of the root to which the affix is at-

[1] *Some of the listed adjectives have several meanings, but only one is given so as to keep the list manageable.*

tached". [46] Yet, even the few given examples show that, on the one hand, there are cases, like *touchy* or *fishy* that are not covered by the definition. On the other hand, even those cases that are roughly covered, show a wide variety of subtle shades of meaning. It is not only the suffix that adds its own meaning to the meaning of the root, but the suffix is, in its turn, affected by the root and undergoes certain semantic changes, so that the mutual influence of root and affix creates a wide range of subtle nuances.

But is the suffix *-y* probably exceptional in this respect? It is sufficient to examine further examples to see that other affixes also offer an interesting variety of semantic shades. Compare, for instance, the meanings of adjective-forming suffixes in each of these groups of adjectives.

1 . *eatable (fit* or *good* to eat)[1]
lovable (worthy of loving)
questionable (open to doubt, to question)
imaginable (capable of being imagined)

2. *lovely* (charming, beautiful, i. e. *inspiring* love)
lonely (solitary, without company; lone; the meaning of the suffix does not seem to add any thing to that of the root)
friendly (characteristic of or *befitting* a friend) *heavenly (resembling* or *befitting* heaven; beautiful, splendid)

3. *childish (resembling* or *befitting* a child)
tallish (rather tall, but not quite, i. e. *approaching the quality of* big size)
girlish (like a girl, but, often, in a bad imitation of one)
bookish (1) *given or devoted to* reading or study; (2) more acquainted with books than with real

[1] The italicised words roughly convey the meanings of the suffixes in each adjective.

life, i. e. *possessing the quality of* bookish learning)

The semantic distinctions of words produced from the same root by means of different affixes are also of considerable interest, both for language studies and research work. Compare: *womanly — womanish, flowery — flowered — flowering, starry — starred, reddened — reddish, shortened — shortish.*

The semantic difference between the members of these groups is very obvious: the meanings of the suffixes are so distinct that they colour the whole words.

Womanly is used in a complimentary manner about girls and women, whereas *womanish* is used to indicate an effeminate man and certainly implies criticism.

Flowery is applied to speech or a style (cf. with the R. цветистый), *flowered* means "decorated with a pattern of flowers" (e. g. *flowered silk or chintz, cf.* with the R. цветастый) and *flowering* is the same as *blossoming* (e. g. *flowering bushes or shrubs, cf.* with the R. цветущий).

Starry means "resembling stars" (e. g. *starry eyes)* and starred — "covered or decorated with stars" (e. g. *starred skies).*

Reddened and *shortened* both imply the result of an action or process, as in *the eyes reddened with weeping* or *a shortened version of a story* (i. e. a story that has been abridged) whereas *shortish* and *reddish* point to insufficiency of quality: *reddish* is not exactly red, but tinged with red, and a *shortish* man is probably a little taller than a man described as short.

Conversion

When in a book-review a book is referred to as a *splendid read,* is *read* to be regarded as a verb or a noun? What part of speech is *room* in the sentence: *I was to room with another girl called Jessie.* If a character in a novel is spoken about as one who *had to be satisfied with the role of a has-been,* what is this odd-looking *has-been,* a verb or a noun? One must admit that it has quite a verbal appearance, but why, then, is it preceded by the article?

Why is the word *if* used in the plural form in the popular proverb: *If ifs and ans were pots and pans?* (an = if, dial., arch.)

This type of questions naturally arise when one deals with words produced by conversion, one of the most productive ways of modern English word-building.

Conversion is sometimes referred to as an affixless way of word-building or even affixless derivation. Saying that, however, is saying very little because there are other types of word-building in which new words are also formed without affixes (most compounds, contracted words, sound-imitation words, etc.).

Conversion consists in making a new word from some existing word by changing the category of a part of speech, the morphemic shape of the original word remaining unchanged. The new word has a meaning which differs from that of the original one though it can more or less be easily associated with it. It has also a new paradigm peculiar to its new category as a part of speech.

nurse, n.		*to nurse,* v
Substantive paradigm	-*s,* pl. -*'s,* poss. c., sg. -*s',* poss. c., pl	Verbal paradigm	-*s,* 3rd p. sg. -*ed,* past indef., past part. -*ing,*- pres. part., gerund

The question of conversion has, for a long time, been a controversial one in several aspects. The very essence of this process has been treated by a number of scholars (e. g. H. Sweet), not as a word-building act, but as a mere functional change. From this point of view the word *hand* in *Hand me that book* is not a verb, but a noun used in a verbal syntactical function, that is, *hand (me)* and *hands* (in *She has small hands)* are not two different words but one. Hence, the caзe cannot be treated as one of word-formation for no new word appears.

According to this functional approach, conversion may be regarded as a specific feature of the English categories of parts of speech, which are supposed to be able to break through the rigid borderlines dividing one category from another thus enriching the process of communication not by the creation of new words but through the sheer flexibility of the syntactic structures.

Nowadays this theory finds increasingly fewer supporters, and conversion is universally accepted as one of the major ways of enriching English vocabulary with new words. One of the major arguments for this approach to conversion is the semantic change that regularly accompanies each instance of conversion. Normally, a word changes its syntactic function without any shift in lexical meaning. E. g. both in *yellow leaves* and in *The leaves were turning yellow* the adjective denotes colour. Yet, in *The leaves yellowed* the converted unit no longer denotes colour, but the process of changing colour, so that there is an essential change in meaning.

The change of meaning is even more obvious in such pairs as *hand > to hand, face > to face, to go > a go, to make > a make,* etc.

The other argument is the regularity and completeness with which converted units develop a paradigm of their new category of part of speech. As soon as it has crossed the category borderline, the new word automatically acquires all the properties of the new category, so that if it has entered the verb category, it is now regularly used in all the forms of tense and it also develops the forms of the participle and the gerund. Such regularity can hardly be regarded as indicating a mere functional change which might be expected to bear more occasional characteristics. The completeness of the paradigms in new conversion formations seems to be a decisive argument proving that here we are dealing with new words and not with mere functional variants. The data of the more reputable modern English dictionaries confirm this point of view: they all present converted pairs as homonyms, i. e. as two words, thus supporting the thesis that conversion is a word-building process.

Conversion is not only a highly productive but also a particularly English way of word-building. Its immense productivity is considerably encouraged by certain features of the English language in its modern stage of development. The analytical structure of Modern English greatly facilitates processes of making words of one category of parts of speech from words of another. So does the simplicity of paradigms of English parts of speech. A great number of one-syllable words is another factor in favour of conversion, for such words are naturally more mobile and flexible than polysyllables.

Conversion is a convenient and "easy" way of enriching the vocabulary with new words. It is certainly an advantage to have two (or more) words where there was one, all of them fixed on the same structural and semantic base.

The high productivity of conversion finds its reflection in speech where numerous occasional cases of conversion can be found, which are not registered by dictionaries and which occur momentarily, through the immediate need of the situation. *"If anybody oranges me again tonight, I'll knock his face off,* says the annoyed hero of a story by O'Henry when a shop-assistant offers him oranges (for the tenth time in one night) instead of peaches for which he is looking ("Little Speck in Garnered Fruit"). One is not likely to find the verb *to orange* in any dictionary, but in this situation it answers the need for brevity, expressiveness and humour.

The very first example, which opens the section on conversion in this chapter *(the book is a splendid read),* though taken from a book-review, is a nonce-word, which may be used by reviewers now and then or in informal verbal communication, but has not yet found its way into the universally acknowledged English vocabulary.

Such examples as these show that conversion is a vital and developing process that penetrates contemporary speech as well. Subconsciously every English speaker realises the immense potentiality of making a word into another part of speech when the need arises.

* * *

One should guard against thinking that every case of noun and verb (verb and adjective, adjective and noun, etc.) with the same morphemic shape results from conversion. There are numerous pairs of words (e. g. *love,* n. — *to love,* v.; work, n. — *to work,* v.; *drink,* n. — *to drink,* v., etc.) which did, not occur due to conversion but coincided as a result of certain historical processes (dropping of endings, simplification of stems) when before that they had different forms (e. g. O. E. *lufu,* n. — *lufian,* v.). On the other hand, it is quite true that the first cases of conversion (which were registered in the 14th c.) imitated such pairs of words as *love,* n. — *to love,* v. for they were numerous in the vocabulary and were subconsciously accepted by native speakers as one of the typical language patterns.

* * *

The two categories of parts of speech especially affected by conversion are nouns and verbs. Verbs made from nouns are the most numerous amongst the words produced by conversion: e. g. *to hand, to back, to face, to eye, to mouth, to nose, to dog, to wolf, to monkey, to can, to coal, to stage, to screen, to room, to floor, to blackmail, to blacklist, to honeymoon,* and very many others.

Nouns are frequently made from verbs: *do* (e. g. *This is the queerest do I've ever come across. Do* — event, incident), *go* (e. g. *He has still plenty of go at his age. Go* — energy), *make, run, find, catch, cut, walk, worry, show, move,* etc.

Verbs can also be made from adjectives: *to pale, to yellow, to cool, to grey, to rough* (e. g. *We decided to rough it in the tents as the weather was warm),* etc.

Other parts of speech are not entirely unsusceptible to conversion as the following examples show: *to down, to out* (as in a newspaper heading *Diplomatist Outed from Budapest), the ups and downs, the ins and outs, like,* n, (as in *the like of me and the like of you).*

* * *

It was mentioned at the beginning of this section that a word made by conversion has a different meaning from that of the word from which it was made though the two meanings can be associated. There are certain regularities in these associations which can be roughly classified. For instance, in the group of verbs made from nouns some of the regular semantic associations are as indicated in the following list:

I. The noun is the name of a tool or implement, the verb denotes an action performed by the tool: *to hammer, to nail, to pin, to brush, to comb, to pencil.*

II. The noun is the name of an animal, the verb denotes an action or aspect of behaviour considered typical of this animal: *to dog, to wolf, to monkey, to ape, to fox, to rat.* Yet, *to fish* does not mean "to behave like a fish" but "to try to catch fish". The same meaning of hunting activities is conveyed by the verb *to whale* and one of the meanings of *to rat;* the other is "to turn in former, squeal" (sl.).

III. The name of a part of the human body — an ac tion performed by it: *to hand, to leg* (sl.), *to eye, to elbow, to shoulder, to nose, to mouth.* However, *to face* does not imply doing something by or even with one's face but turning it in a certain direction. *To back* means either "to move backwards" or, in the figurative sense, "to support somebody or something".

IV. The name of a profession or occupation — an activity typical of it: *to nurse, to cook, to maid, to groom.*

V. The name of a place — the process of occupying the place or of putting smth./smb. in it *(to room, to house, to place, to table, to cage).*

VI. The name of a container — the act of putting smth. within the container *(to can, to bottle, to pocket).*

VII. The name of a meal — the process of taking it *(to lunch, to supper).*

The suggested groups do not include all the great variety of verbs made from nouns by conversion. They just represent the most obvious cases and illustrate, convincingly enough, the great variety of semantic interrelations within so-called converted pairs and the complex nature of the logical associations which specify them.

In actual fact, these associations are not only complex but sometimes perplexing. It would seem that if you know that the verb formed from the name of an animal denotes behaviour typical of the animal, it would be easy for you to guess the meaning of such a verb provided that you know the meaning of the noun. Yet, it is not always easy. Of course, the meaning of *to fox* is rather obvious being derived from the associated reputation of that animal for cunning: *to fox* means "to act cunningly or craftily". But what about *to wolf?* How is one to know which of the characteristics of the animal was picked by the speaker's subconscious when this verb was produced? Ferocity? Loud and unpleasant howling? The inclination to live in packs? Yet, as the following example shows, *to wolf* means "to eat greedily, voraciously": *Charlie went on wolfing the chocolate.* (R. Dahl)

In the same way, from numerous characteristics of the dog, only one was chosen for the verb *to dog* which is well illustrated by the following example:

> *And what of Charles? I pity any detective who would have to dog him through those twenty months.*
>
> (From *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by J. Fowles)

(To dog — to follow or track like a dog, especially with hostile intent.)

The two verbs *to ape* and *to monkey,* which might be expected to mean more or less the same, have shared between themselves certain typical features of the same animal:

to ape — to imitate, mimic (e. g. *He had always aped the gentleman in his clothes and manners.* — J. Fowles);

CHAPTER 6

How English Words Are Made.

Word-Building

(continued)

Composition

This type of word-building, in which new words are produced by combining two or more stems, is one of the three most productive types in Modern English, the other two are conversion and affixation. Compounds, though certainly fewer in quantity than derived or root words, still represent one of the most typical and specific features of English word-structure.

There are at least three aspects of composition that present special interest.

The first is the structural aspect. Compounds are not homogeneous in structure. Traditionally three types are distinguished: neutral, morphological and syntactic.

In neutral compounds the process of compounding is realised without any linking elements, by a mere juxtaposition of two stems, as in *blackbird, shop-window, sunflower, bedroom, tallboy,* etc. There are three subtypes of neutral compounds depending on the structure of the constituent stems.

The examples above represent the subtype which may be described as simple neutral compounds: they consist of simple affixless stems.

Compounds which have affixes in their structure are called derived or derivational compounds. E. g. *absent-mindedness, blue-eyed, golden-haired, broad-shouldered, lady-killer, film-goer, music-lover, honey-mooner, first-nighter, late-comer, newcomer, early-riser, evil-doer.* The productivity of this type is confirmed by a considerable number of comparatively recent formations, such as *teenager, babysitter, strap-hanger, fourseater* ("car or boat with four seats"), *double-decker* ("a ship or bus with two decks"). Numerous nonce-words are coined on this pattern which is another proof of its high productivity: e. g. *luncher-out* ("a person who habitually takes his lunch in restaurants and not at home"), *goose-flesher* ("murder story") or *attention getter* in the following fragment:

> "Dad," I began ... "I'm going to lose my job." That should be an attention getter, I figured.
>
> (From *A Five-Colour Buick* by P. Anderson Wood)

The third subtype of neutral compounds is called *contracted com-*

pounds. These words have a shortened (contracted) stem in their structure: *TV-set (-program, -show, -canal,* etc.), *V-day (Victory day), G-man (Government man* "FBI agent"), *H-bag (handbag), T-shirt,* etc.

Morphological compounds are few in number. This type is non-productive. It is represented by words in which two compounding stems are combined by a linking vowel or consonant, e. g. *Anglo-Saxon, Franko-Prussian, handiwork, handicraft, craftsmanship, spokesman, statesman* (see also p. 115).

In syntactic compounds (the term is arbitrary) we once more find a feature of specifically English word-structure. These words are formed from segments of speech, preserving in their structure numerous traces of syntagmatic relations typical of speech: articles, prepositions, adverbs, as in the nouns *lily-of-the-valley, Jack-of-all-trades, good-for-nothing, mother-in-law, sit-at-home.* Syntactical relations and grammatical patterns current in present-day English can be clearly traced in the structures of such compound nouns as *pick-me-up, know-all, know-nothing, go-between, get-together, whodunit.* The last word (meaning "a detective story") was obviously coined from the ungrammatical variant of the word-group *who (has) done it.*

In this group of compounds, once more, we find a great number of neologisms, and *whodunit* is one of them. Consider, also, the two following fragments which make rich use of modern city traffic terms.

> Randy managed to weave through a maze of oneway-streets, no-left-turns, and no-stopping-zones ...
>
> (From *A Five-Colour Buick* by P. Anderson Wood)
>
> "... you go down to the Department of Motor Vehicles tomorrow and take your behind-the-wheel test."
>
> (Ibid.)

The structure of most compounds is transparent, as it were, and clearly betrays the origin of these words from word-combinations. The fragments below illustrate admirably the very process of coining nonce-words after the productive patterns of composition.

> "Is all this really true?" he asked. "Or are you pulling my leg?"
>
> ... Charlie looked slowly around at each of the four old faces... They were quite serious. There was no sign of joking or leg-pulling on any of them.
>
> (From *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by R. Dahl)

"I have decided that you are up to no good. I am well aware that that is your natural condition. But I prefer you to be up to no good in London. Which is more used to up-to-no-gooders."

(From *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by J. Fowles)

> "What if they capture us?" said Mrs. Bucket. "What if they shoot us?" said Grandma Georgina. "What if my beard were made of green spinach?" cried Mr. Wonka. "Bunkum and tommyrot! You'll never get anywhere if you go about what-iffing like that. ...We want no what-iffers around, right, Charlie?"
>
> (From *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* by R. Dahl)

The first of the examples presents the nonce-word *leg-pulling* coined on the pattern of neutral derivational compounds. The *what-iffing* and *what-iffers* of the third extract seem to represent the same type, though there is something about the words clearly resembling syntactic compounds: their *what-if*-nucleus is one of frequent patterns of living speech. As to the *up-to-no-gooders* of the second example, it

is certainly a combination of syntactic and derivational types, as it is made from a segment of speech which is held together by the *-er* suffix. A similar formation is represented by the nonce-word *breakfast-in-the-bedder* ("a person who prefers to have his breakfast in bed").

* * *

Another focus of interest is the semantic aspect of compound words, that is, the question of correlations of the separate meanings of the constituent parts and the actual meaning of the compound. Or, to put it in easier terms: can the meaning of a compound word be regarded as the sum of its constituent meanings?

To try and answer this question, let us consider the following groups of examples.

(1) *Classroom, bedroom, working-man, evening-gown, dining-room, sleeping-car, reading-room, dancing-hall.*

This group seems to represent compounds whose meanings can really be described as the sum of their constituent meanings. Yet, in the last four words we can distinctly detect a slight shift of meaning. The first component in these words, if taken as a free form, denotes an action or state of whatever or whoever is characterised by the word. Yet, a sleeping-car is not a car that sleeps (cf. a *sleeping child),* nor is a dancing-hall actually dancing (cf. *dancing pairs).*

The shift of meaning becomes much more pronounced in the second group of examples.

(2) *Blackboard, blackbird, football, lady-killer, pick pocket, good-for-nothing, lazybones, chatterbox.*

In these compounds one of the components (or both) has changed its meaning: a blackboard is neither a board nor necessarily black, football is not a ball but a game, a chatterbox not a box but a person, and a lady-killer kills no one but is merely a man who fascinates women. It is clear that in all these compounds the meaning of the whole word cannot be defined as the sum of the constituent meanings. The process of change of meaning in some such words has gone so far that the meaning of one or both constituents is no longer in the least associated with the current meaning of the corresponding free form, and yet the speech community quite calmly accepts such seemingly illogical word groups as *a white blackbird, pink bluebells* or an entirely confusing statement like: *Blackberries are red when they are green.*

Yet, despite a certain readjustment in the semantic structure of the word, the meanings of the constituents of the compounds of this second group are still transparent: you can see through them the meaning of the whole complex. Knowing the meanings of the constituents a student of English can get a fairly clear idea of what the whole word means even if he comes across it for the first time. At least, it is clear that a *blackbird* is some kind of bird and that a *good-for-nothing* is not meant as a compliment.

(3) In the third group of compounds the process of deducing the meaning of the whole from those of the constituents is impossible. The key to meaning seems to have been irretrievably lost: *ladybird* is not a bird, but an insect, *tallboy* not a boy but a piece of furniture, *bluestocking,* on the contrary, is a person, whereas *bluebottle* may denote both a flower and an insect but never a bottle.

Similar enigmas are encoded in such words as *man-of-war* ("warship"), *merry-to-round* ("carousel"), *mother-of-pearl* ("irridescent substance forming the inner layer of certain shells"), *horse-marine* ("a

person who is unsuitable for his job or position"), *butter-fingers* ("clumsy person; one who is apt to drop things"), *wall-flower* ("a girl who is not invited to dance at a party"), *whodunit* ("detective story"), *straphanger* (1. "a passenger who stands in a crowded bus or underground train and holds onto a strap or other support suspended from above"; 2. "a book of light genre, trash; the kind of book one is likely to read when travelling in buses or trains").

The compounds whose meanings do not correspond to the separate meanings of their constituent parts (2nd and 3rd group listed above) are called *idiomatic compounds,* in contrast to the first group known as *non-idiomatic compounds.*

The suggested subdivision into three groups is based on the degree of semantic cohesion of the constituent parts, the third group representing the extreme case of cohesion where the constituent meanings blend to produce an entirely new meaning.

The following joke rather vividly shows what happens if an idiomatic compound is misunderstood as non-idiomatic.

Patient: They tell me, doctor, you are a perfect lady-killer.

Doctor: Oh, no, no! I assure you, my dear madam, I make no distinction between the sexes.

In this joke, while the woman patient means to compliment the doctor on his being a handsome and irresistible man, he takes or pretends to take the word *lady-killer* literally, as a sum of the direct meanings of its constituents.

The structural type of compound words and the word-building type of composition have certain advantages for communication purposes.

Composition is not quite so flexible a way of coining new words as conversion but flexible enough as is convincingly shown by the examples of nonce-words given above. Among compounds are found numerous expressive and colourful words. They are also comparatively laconic, absorbing into one word an idea that otherwise would have required a whole phrase (cf. *The hotel was full of week-enders* and *The hotel was full of people spending the week-end there).*

Both the laconic and the expressive value of compounds can be well illustrated by English compound adjectives denoting colours (cf. *snow-white —* as *white as snow).*

In the following extract a family are discussing which colour to paint their new car.

"Hey," Sally yelled, "could you paint it canary yellow, Fred?"

"Turtle green," shouted my mother, quickly getting into the spirit of the thing.

"Mouse grey," Randy suggested.

"Dove white, maybe?" my mother asked.

"Rattlesnake brown," my father said with a deadpan look...

"Forget it, all of you," I announced. "My Buick is going to be peacock blue."

(From *A Five-Colour Buick* by P. Anderson Wood)

It is obvious that the meaning of all these "multi-coloured" adjectives is based on comparison: the second constituent of the adjective is the name of a colour used in its actual sense and the first is the name of an object (animal, flower, etc.) with which the comparison is drawn. The pattern immensely extends the possibilities of denoting all imaginable shades of each colour, the more so that the pattern is productive and a great number of nonce-words are created after it. You can actually coin an adjective comparing the colour of a defined ob-

ject with almost anything on earth: the pattern allows for vast creative experiments. This is well shown in the fragment given above. If *canary yellow, peacock blue, dove white* are quite "normal" in the language and registered by dictionaries, *turtle green* and *rattlesnake brown*[1] are certainly typical nonce-words, amusing inventions of the author aimed at a humorous effect.

Sometimes it is pointed out, as a disadvantage, that the English language has only one word *blue* for two different colours denoted in Russian by синий and голубой.

But this seeming inadequacy is compensated by a large number of adjectives coined on the pattern of comparison such as *navy blue, cornflower blue, peacock blue, chicory blue, sapphire blue, china blue, sky-blue, turquoise blue, forget-me-not blue, heliotrope blue, powder-blue.* This list can be supplemented by compound adjectives which also denote different shades of blue, but are not built on comparison: *dark blue, light blue, pale blue, electric blue, Oxford blue, Cambridge blue.*

* * *

A further theoretical aspect of composition is the criteria for distinguishing between a compound and a word-combination.

This question has a direct bearing on the specific feature of the structure of most English compounds which has already been mentioned: with the exception

[1] *R. "цвета гремучей змеи". The father of the family is absolutely against the idea of buying the car, and the choice of this word reflects his mood of resentment.*

of the rare morphological type, they originate directly from word-combinations and are often homonymous to them: cf. *a tall boy — a tallboy.*

In this case the *graphic* criterion of distinguishing between a word and a word-group seems to be sufficiently convincing, yet in many cases it cannot wholly be relied on. The spelling of many compounds, *tallboy* among them, can be varied even within the same book. In the case of *tallboy* the *semantic* criterion seems more reliable, for the striking difference in the meanings of the word and the word-group certainly points to the highest degree of semantic cohesion in the word: *tallboy* does not even denote a person, but a piece of furniture, a chest of drawers supported by a low stand.

Moreover, the word-group *a tall boy* conveys two concepts (1. a young male person; 2. big in size), whereas the word *tallboy* expresses one concept.

Yet the semantic criterion alone cannot prove anything as phraseological units also convey a single concept and some of them are characterised by a high degree of semantic cohesion (see Ch. 12).

The *phonetic* criterion for compounds may be treated as that of a single stress. The criterion is convincingly applicable to many compound nouns, yet does not work with compound adjectives:

cf. *'slowcoach, blackbird, 'tallboy,*
but: *blue-'eyed, 'absent-'minded, 'ill-'mannered.*

Still, it is true that the morphological structure of these adjectives and their hyphenated spelling leave no doubt about their status as words and not word-groups.

Morphological and *syntactic* criteria can also be applied to compound words in order to distinguish them from word-groups.

In the word-group *a tall boy* each of the constituents is independently open to grammatical changes peculiar to its own category as a part of speech: *They were the tallest boys in their form.*

Between the constituent parts of the word-group other words can be inserted: *a tall handsome boy.*

The compound *tallboy* — and, in actual fact, any other compound — is not subject to such changes. The first component is grammatically invariable; the plural form ending is added to the whole unit: *tallboys.* No word can be inserted between the components, even with the compounds which have a traditional separate graphic form.

All this leads us to the conclusion that, in most cases, only several criteria (semantic, morphological, syntactic, phonetic, graphic) can convincingly classify a lexical unit as either a compound word or a word group.

Semi-Affixes

Consider the following examples.

"... The Great Glass Elevator is shockproof, waterproof, bombproof, bulletproof, and Knidproof[1] ..." (From *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* by R. Dahl)

Lady Malvern tried to freeze him with a look, but you can't do that sort of thing to Jeeves. He is look-proof.
(From *Carry on, Jeeves* by P. G. Wodehouse)

Better sorts of *lip-stick* are frequently described in advertisements as *kissproof.* Some building materials may be advertised as *fireproof.* Certain technical devices are *foolproof* meaning that they are safe even in a fool's hands.

[1] *Knids — fantastic monsters supposed to inhabit the Cosmos and invented by the author of this book for children.*

All these words, with *-proof* for the second component, stand between compounds and derived words in their characteristics. On the one hand, the second component seems to bear all the features of a stem and preserves certain semantic associations with the free form *proof.* On the other hand, the meaning of *-proof* in all the numerous words built on this pattern has become so generalised that it is certainly approaching that of a suffix. The high productivity of the pattern is proved, once more, by the possibility of coining nonce-words after this pattern: *look-proof* and *Knidproof,* the second produced from the non-existent stem *Knid.*

The component *-proof,* standing thus between a stem and an affix, is regarded by some scholars as a semi-affix.

Another example of semi-affix is *-man* in a vast group of English nouns denoting people: *sportsman, gentleman, nobleman, salesman, seaman, fisherman, countryman, statesman, policeman, chairman,* etc.

Semantically, the constituent *-man* in these words approaches the generalised meaning of such noun-forming suffixes as *-er, -or, -ist* (e. g. *artist), -ite* (e. g. *hypocrite).* It has moved so far in its meaning from the corresponding free form *man,* that such word-groups as *woman policeman* or Mrs. *Chairman* are quite usual. Nor does the statement *Lady, you are no gentleman* sound eccentric or illogical for

the speaker uses the word *gentleman* in its general sense of a noble upright person, regardless of sex. It must be added though that this is only an occasional usage and that *gentleman* is normally applied to men.

Other examples of semi-affixes are *-land* (e. g. *Ire land, Scotland, fatherland, wonderland), -like* (e. g. *ladylike, unladylike, businesslike, unbusiness like, starlike, flowerlike,* etc.), *-worthy* (e. g. *seaworthy, trustworthy, praiseworthy).*

Shortening (Contraction)

This comparatively new way of word-building has achieved a high degree of productivity nowadays, especially in American English.

Shortenings (or contracted/curtailed words) are produced in two different ways. The first is to make a new word from a syllable (rarer, two) of the original word. The latter may lose its beginning (as in *phone* made from *telephone, fence* from *defence),* its ending (as in *hols* from *holidays, vac* from *vacation, props* from *properties, ad* from *advertisement)* or both the beginning and ending (as in *flu* from *influenza, fridge* from *refrigerator).*

The second way of shortening is to make a new word from the initial letters of a word group: *U.N.O.* ['ju:neu] from *the United Nations Organisation, B.B.C.* from the *British Broadcasting Corporation, M.P.* from *Member of Parliament.* This type is called initial shortenings. They are found not only among formal words, such as the ones above, but also among colloquialisms and slang. So, *g. f.* is a shortened word made from the compound *girl-friend.* The word, though, seems to be somewhat ambiguous as the following conversation between two undergraduates clearly shows:

— Who's the letter from?
— My g. f.
— Didn't know you had girl-friends. A nice girl?
— Idiot! It's from my grandfather!

It is commonly believed that the preference for shortenings can be explained by their brevity and is due to the ever-increasing tempo of modern life. Yet, in the conversation given above the use of an ambiguous contraction does not in the least contribute to the brevity of the communication: on the contrary, it takes the speakers some time to clarify the misunderstanding. Confusion and ambiguousness are quite natural consequences of the modern overabundance of shortened words, and initial shortenings are often especially enigmatic and misleading.

Both types of shortenings are characteristic of informal speech in general and of uncultivated speech particularly. The history of the American *okay* seems to be rather typical. Originally this initial shortening was spelt *O.K.* and was supposed to stand for *all correct.* The purely oral manner in which sounds were recorded for letters resulted in *O.K.* whereas it should have been AC. or *aysee.* Indeed, the ways of words are full of surprises.

Here are some more examples of informal shortenings. *Movie* (from *moving-picture), gent* (from *gentleman), specs* (from *spectacles), circs* (from *circumstances, e.* g. *under the circs), I. O. Y.* (a written acknowledgement of debt, made from *I owe you), lib* (from *liberty,* as in *May I take the lib of saying something to you?), cert* (from *certainty,* as in *This enterprise is a cert if you have a bit of capital),*

metrop (from *metropoly,* e. g. *Paris is a gay metrop), exhibish* (from *exhibition), posish (from position).*

Undergraduates' informal speech abounds in words of the type: *exam, lab, prof, vac, hol, co-ed* (a girl student at a coeducational school or college).

Some of the Minor Types of Modern Word-Building. Sound-Imitation (Onomatopoeia[1])

Words coined by this interesting type of word-building are made by imitating different kinds of sounds that may be produced by animals, birds, insects, human beings and inanimate objects.

[1] *[onemaete'pie]. This type of word-formation is now also called echoism (the term was introduced by O. Jespersen).*

It is of some interest that sounds produced by the same kind of animal are. frequently represented by quite different sound groups in different languages. For instance, English dogs *bark* (cf. the R. *лаять)* or *howl* (cf. the R. *выть).* The English cock cries *cock-a-doodle-doo* (cf. the R. *ку-ка-ре-ку).* In England ducks *quack* and frogs *croak* (cf. the R. *крякать* said about ducks and *квакать* said about frogs). It is only English and Russian cats who seem capable of mutual understanding when they meet, for English cats *mew* or *miaow (meow).* The same can be said about cows: they *moo* (but also *low).*

Some names of animals and especially of birds and insects are also produced by sound-imitation: *crow, cuckoo, humming-bird, whip-poor-will, cricket.*

The following desperate letter contains a great number of sound-imitation words reproducing sounds made by modern machinery:

The Baltimore & Ohio R. R. Co.,
Pittsburg, Pa.
Gentlemen:

Why is it that your switch engine has to ding and fizz and spit and pant and grate and grind and puff and bump and chug and hoot and toot and whistle and wheeze and howl and clang and growl and thump and clash and boom and jolt and screech and snarl and snort and slam and throb and soar and rattle and hiss and yell and smoke and shriek all night long when I come home from a hard day at the boiler works and have to keep the dog quiet and the baby quiet so my wife can squawk at me for snoring in my sleep?

Yours

(From *Language and Humour* by G. G. Pocheptsov.)

There is a hypothesis that sound-imitation as a way of word-formation should be viewed as something much wider than just the production of words by the imitation of purely acoustic phenomena. Some scholars suggest that words may imitate through their sound form certain unacoustic features and qualities of inanimate objects, actions and processes or that the meaning of the word can be regarded as the immediate relation of the sound group to the object. If a young chicken or kitten is described as *fluffy* there seems to be something in the sound of the adjective that conveys the softness and the downy quality of its plumage or its fur. Such verbs as *to glance, to glide, to slide, to slip* are supposed to convey by their very sound the nature of the smooth, easy movement over a slippery surface. The sound form of the words *shimmer, glimmer, glitter* seems to reproduce the waver-

ing, tremulous nature of the faint light. The sound of the verbs *to rush, to dash, to flash* may be said to reflect the brevity, swiftness and energetic nature of their corresponding actions. The word *thrill* has something in the quality of its sound that very aptly conveys the tremulous, tingling sensation it expresses.

Some scholars have given serious consideration to this theory. However, it has not yet been properly developed.

Reduplication

In *reduplication* new words are made by doubling a stem, either without any phonetic changes as in *bye-bye* (coll, for *good-bye)* or with a variation of the root-vowel or consonant as *in ping-pong, chit-chat* (this second type is called *gradational reduplication).*

This type of word-building is greatly facilitated in Modern English by the vast number of monosyllables. Stylistically speaking, most words made by reduplication represent informal groups: colloquialisms and slang. E. g. *walkie-talkie* ("a portable radio"), *riff-raff* ("the worthless or disreputable element of society"; "the dregs of society"), *chi-chi* (sl. for *chic* as in a *chi-chi girl).*

In a modern novel an angry father accuses his teenager son of *doing nothing but dilly-dallying all over the town.*

(dilly-dallying — wasting time, doing nothing, loitering)

Another example of a word made by reduplication may be found in the following quotation from *The Importance of Being Earnest* by O. Wilde:

> L a d y B r a c k n e l l . I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd.
>
> *(shilly-shallying* — irresolution, indecision)

Back-Formation (Reversion)

The earliest examples of this type of word-building are the verb *to beg* that was made from the French borrowing *beggar, to burgle* from *burglar, to cobble* from *cobbler.* In all these cases the verb was made from the noun by subtracting what was mistakenly associated with the English suffix *-er.* The pattern of the type *to work — worker* was firmly established in the subconscious of English-speaking people at the time when these formations appeared, and it was taken for granted that any noun denoting profession or occupation is certain to have a corresponding verb of the same root. So, in the case of the verbs *to beg, to burgle, to cobble* the process was reversed: instead of a noun made from a verb by affixation (as *in painter* from *to paint),* a verb was produced from a noun by subtraction. That is why this type of word-building received the name of *back-formation* or *reversion.*

Later examples of back-formation are to *butle* from *butler, to baby-sit* from *baby-sitter, to force-land* from *forced landing, to blood-transfuse* from *blood-transfu*ing *sorry* for *everybody who* isn't a *girl* and who *can't come* here, I am sure the college you *attended* when you were a *boy* couldn't have been so nice.

My room is up in a tower. There are *three* other *girls* on the same floor of the tower — a *Senior* who wears spectacles and is *always* asking us please to be a little more quiet, and two *Freshmen named* Sallie McBride and Julia Rutledge Pendleton. Sallie has *red* hair and a *turn-up nose* and is quite *friendly;* Julia comes from one of the first families in New York and hasn't noticed me yet. *They room* together and

the Senior and I have *singles.*

Usually Freshmen can't get singles; they are very few, but I got one without even asking. I suppose the register didn't think it would *be* right to ask a *properly* brought up girl to room with a *foundling.* You see there are *advantages.*

(From *Daddy-Long-Legs* by J. Webster)

CHAPTER 7

What Is "Meaning"?

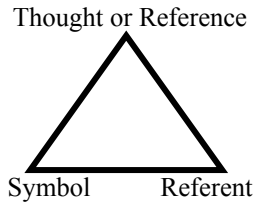
Language is the amber in which a thousand precious and subtle thoughts have been safely embedded and preserved.

(From Word and Phrase by J. Fitzgerald)

The question posed by the title of this chapter is one of those questions which are easier to ask than answer. The linguistic science at present is not able to put forward a definition of meaning which is conclusive.

However, there are certain facts of which we can be reasonably sure, and one of them is that the very function of the word as a unit of communication is made possible by its possessing a meaning. Therefore, among the word's various characteristics, meaning is certainly the most important.

Generally speaking, meaning can be more or less described as a component of the word through which a concept is communicated, in this way endowing the word with the ability of denoting real objects, qualities, actions and abstract notions. The complex and somewhat mysterious relationships between *referent* (object, etc. denoted by the word), *concept* and *word* are traditionally represented by the following triangle [35]:



By the "symbol" here is meant the word; thought or reference is concept. The dotted line suggests that there is no immediate relation between word and referent: it is established only through the concept.

On the other hand, there is a hypothesis that concepts can only find their realisation through words. It seems that thought is dormant till the word wakens it up. It is only when we hear a spoken word or read a printed word that the corresponding concept springs into mind.

The mechanism by which concepts (i. e. mental phenomena) are converted into words (i. e. linguistic phenomena) and the reverse process by which a heard or a printed word is converted into a kind of mental picture are not yet understood or described. Probably that is the reason why the process of communication through words, if one gives it some thought, seems nothing short of a miracle. Isn't it fantastic that the mere vibrations of a speaker's vocal chords should be taken up by a listener's brain and converted into vivid pictures? If magic does exist in the world, then it is truly the magic of human speech; only we are so used to this miracle that we do not realise its almost

supernatural qualities.

The branch of linguistics which specialises in the study of meaning is called *semantics.* As with many terms, the term "semantics" is ambiguous for it can stand, as well, for the expressive aspect of language in general and for the meaning of one particular word in all its varied aspects and nuances (i.e. the semantics of a word = the meaning(s) of a word).

As Mario Pei puts it in *The Study of Language,* "Semantics is 'language' in its broadest, most inclusive aspect. Sounds, words, grammatical forms, syntactical constructions are the tools of language. Semantics is language's avowed purpose" [39]

The meanings of all the utterances of a speech community are said by another leading linguist to include the total experience of that community; arts, science, practical occupations, amusements, personal and family life.

The modern approach to semantics is based on the assumption that the inner form of the word (i. e. its meaning) presents a structure which is called the *semantic structure* of the word.

Yet, before going deeper into this problem, it is necessary to make a brief survey of another semantic phenomenon which is closely connected with it.

Polysemy. Semantic Structure of the Word

The semantic structure of the word does not present an indissoluble unity (that is, actually, why it is referred to as "structure"), nor does it necessarily stand for one concept. It is generally known that most words convey several concepts and thus possess the corresponding number of meanings. A word having several meanings is called *polysemantic,* and the ability of words to have more than one meaning is described by the term *polysemy.*

Two somewhat naive but frequently asked questions may arise in connection with polysemy:

1 . Is polysemy an anomaly or a general rule in English vocabulary?

2. Is polysemy an advantage or a disadvantage so far as the process of communication is concerned?

Let us deal with both these questions together.

Polysemy is certainly not an anomaly. Most English words are polysemantic. It should be noted that the wealth of expressive resources of a language largely depends on the degree to which polysemy has developed in the language. Sometimes people who are not very well informed in linguistic matters claim that a language is lacking in words if the need arises for the same word to be applied to several different phenomena. In actual fact, it is exactly the opposite: if each word is found to be capable of conveying, let us say, at least two concepts instead of one, the expressive potential of the whole vocabulary increases twofold. Hence, a well-developed polysemy is not a drawback but a great advantage in a language.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the number of sound combinations that human speech organs can produce is limited. Therefore at a certain stage of language development the production of new words by morphological means becomes limited, and polysemy becomes increasingly important in providing the means for enriching the vocabulary. From this, it should be clear that the process of enriching the vocabulary does not consist merely in adding new

words to it, but, also, in the constant development of polysemy.

The system of meanings of any polysemantic word develops gradually, mostly over the centuries, as more and more new meanings are either added to old ones, or oust some of them (see Ch. 8). So the complicated processes of polysemy development involve both the appearance of new meanings and the loss of old ones. Yet, the general tendency with English vocabulary at the modern stage of its history is to increase the total number of its meanings and in this way to provide for a quantitative and qualitative growth of the language's expressive resources.

When analysing the semantic structure of a polysemantic word, it is necessary to distinguish between two levels of analysis.

On the first level, the semantic structure of a word is treated as a system of meanings. For example, the semantic structure of the noun *fire* could be roughly presented by this scheme (only the most frequent meanings are given):

Fire, *n.*

I

Flame

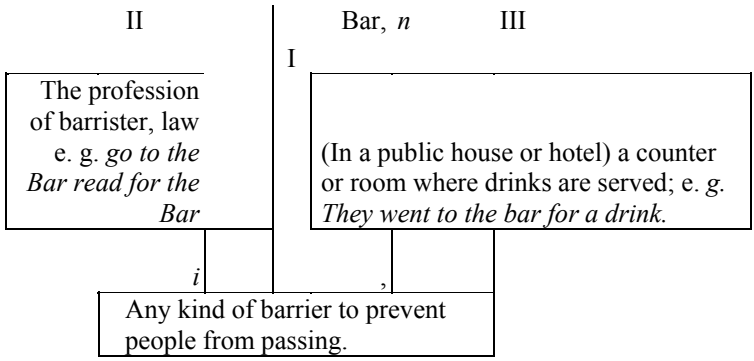
II	III	IV	V
An instance of destructive burning; e. g. *a forest fire.*	Burning material in a stove, fireplace, etc.; e. g. *There is a fire in the next room. A camp fire.*	The shooting of guns, etc.; e. g. *to open (cease) fire.*	Strong feeling, passion, enthusiasm; e. g. a *speech lacking fire.*

The above scheme suggests that meaning I holds a kind of dominance over the other meanings conveying the concept in the most general way whereas meanings II—V are associated with special circumstances, aspects and instances of the same phenomenon.

Meaning I (generally referred to as *the main meaning)* presents the centre of the semantic structure of the word holding it together. It is mainly through meaning I that meanings II—V (they are called *secondary meanings)* can be associated with one another, some of them exclusively through meaning I, as, for instance, meanings IV and V.

It would hardly be possible to establish any logical associations between some of the meanings of the noun *bar* except through the main meaning:[1]

[1] We give only a fragment of the semantic structure of *bar,* so as to illustrate the point.



Meanings II and III have no logical links with one another whereas each separately is easily associated with meaning I: meaning II through the traditional barrier dividing a court-room into two parts; meaning III through the counter serving as a kind of barrier between the customers of a pub and the barman.

Yet, it is not in every polysemantic word that such a centre can be found. Some semantic structures are arranged on a different principle. In the following list of meanings of the adjective *dull* one can hardly hope to find a generalised meaning covering and holding together the rest of the semantic structure.

Dull, *adj.*

I. Uninteresting, monotonous, boring; e. g. *a dull book, a dull film.*
II. Slow in understanding, stupid; e. g. *a dull student.*
III. Not clear or bright; e. g. *dull weather, a dull day, a dull colour.*
IV. Not loud or distinct; e. g. *a dull sound.*
V. Not sharp; e. g. a *dull knife.*
VI. Not active; e. g. *Trade is dull.* VII. Seeing badly; e. g. *dull eyes* (arch.). VIII, Hearing badly; e. g. *dull ears* (arch.),

Yet, one distinctly feels that there is something that all these seemingly miscellaneous meanings have in common, and that is the implication of deficiency, be it of colour (m. III), wits (m. II), interest (m. I), sharpness (m. V), etc. The implication of insufficient quality, of something lacking, can be clearly distinguished in each separate meaning.

In fact, each meaning definition in the given scheme can be subjected to a transformational operation to prove the point.

Dull, *adj.*

I. Uninteresting ----- > deficient in interest or excitement.
II. ... Stupid ---------- > deficient in intellect.
III. Not bright----------> deficient in light or colour.
IV. Not loud----------> deficient in sound.
V. Not sharp ----------> deficient in sharpness.
VI. Not active ---------- > deficient in activity.
VII. Seeing badly ----------> deficient in eyesight.
VIII. Hearing badly---------- > deficient in hearing.

The transformed scheme of the semantic structure of *dull* clearly shows that the centre holding together the complex semantic structure of this word is not one of the meanings but a certain *component* that can be easily singled out within each separate meaning.

This brings us to the second level of analysis of the semantic

structure of a word. The transformational operation with the meaning definitions of *dull* reveals something very significant: the semantic structure of the word is "divisible", as it were, not only at the level of different meanings but, also, at a deeper level.

Each separate meaning seems to be subject to structural analysis in which it may be represented as sets of semantic components. In terms of *componential analysis,* one of the modern methods of semantic research, the meaning of a word is defined as a set of elements of meaning which are not part of the vocabulary of the language itself, but rather theoretical elements, postulated in order to describe the semantic relations between the lexical elements of a given language.

The scheme of the semantic structure of *dull* shows that the semantic structure of a word is not a mere system of meanings, for each separate meaning is subject to further subdivision and possesses an inner structure of its own.

Therefore, the semantic structure of a word should be investigated at both these levels: a) of different meanings, b) of semantic components within each separate meaning. For a monosemantic word (i. e. a word with one meaning) the first level is naturally excluded.

Types of Semantic Components

The leading semantic component in the semantic structure of a word is usually termed *denotative component* (also, the term *referential component* may be used). The denotative component expresses the conceptual content of a word.

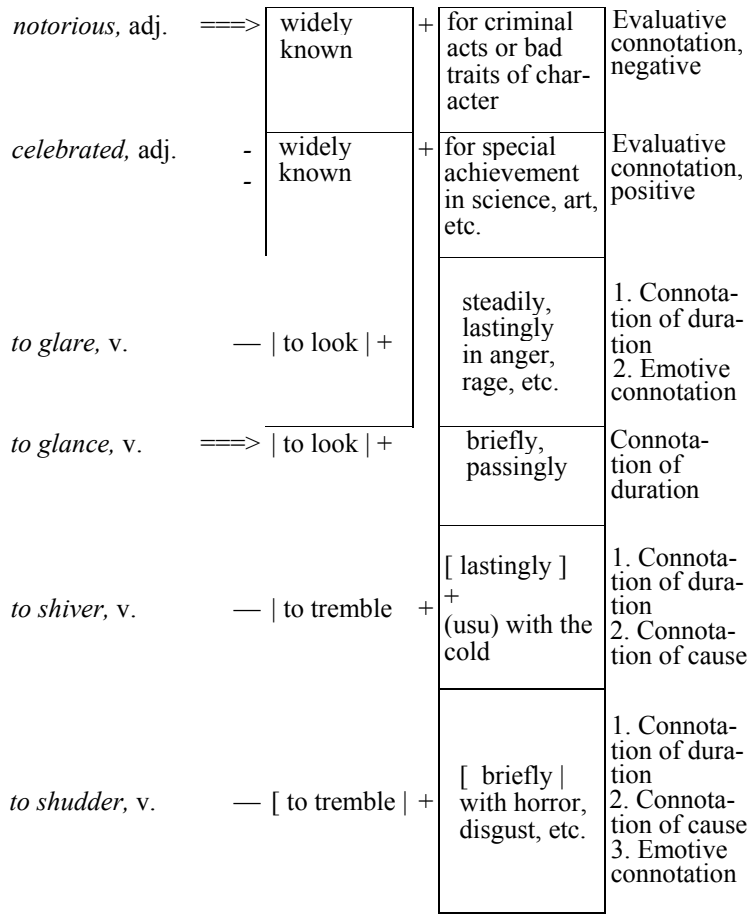
The following list presents denotative components of some English adjectives and verbs:

		Denotative components
lonely, adj.	------- »	[alone
notorious, adj.	------- »	[widely
celebrated, adj.	------- »	[widely
to glare, v.	------- »	[to look] .....
to glance, v.	____ »	[to look] .....
to shiver, v.	____ »	[to tremble] .....
to shudder, v.	------- »	[to tremble] .....

It is quite obvious that the definitions given in the right column only partially and incompletely describe the meanings of their corresponding words. To give a more or less full picture of the meaning of a word, it is necessary to include in the scheme of analysis additional semantic components which are termed *connotations* or *connotative components.*

Let us complete the semantic structures of the words given above introducing connotative components into the schemes of their semantic structures.

		Denotative components		Connotative components	
lonely, adj.	===>	alone, without company	+	melancholy, sad	Emotive connotation



The above examples show how by singling out denotative and connotative components one can get a sufficiently clear picture of what the word really means. The schemes presenting the semantic structures of *glare, shiver, shudder* also show that a meaning can have two or more connotative components.

The given examples do not exhaust all the types of connotations but present only a few: emotive, evaluative connotations, and also connotations of duration and of cause. (For a more detailed classification of connotative components of a meaning, see Ch. 10.)

Meaning and Context

In the beginning of the paragraph entitled "Polysemy" we discussed the advantages and disadvantages of this linguistic phenomenon. One of the most important "drawbacks" of polysemantic words is that there is sometimes a chance of misunderstanding when a word is used in a certain meaning but accepted by a listener or reader in another. It is only natural that such cases provide stuff of which jokes are made, such as the ones that follow:

> Customer. I would like a book, please. Bookseller. Something light? Customer. That doesn't matter. I have my car with me.

In this conversation the customer is honestly misled by the polysemy of the adjective *light* taking it in the literal sense whereas the bookseller uses the word in its figurative meaning "not serious; entertaining".

In the following joke one of the speakers pretends to misunderstand his interlocutor basing his angry retort on the polysemy of the noun *kick:*

The critic started to leave in the middle of the second act of the play.

"Don't go," said the manager. "I promise there's a terrific kick in the next act."

"Fine," was the retort, "give it to the author."-[1]

Generally speaking, it is common knowledge that context is a powerful preventative against any misunderstanding of meanings. For instance, the adjective *dull,* if used out of context, would mean different things to different people or nothing at all. It is only in combination with other words that it reveals its actual meaning: *a dull pupil, a dull play, a dull razor-blade, dull weather,* etc. Sometimes, however, such a minimum context fails to reveal the meaning of the word, and it may be correctly interpreted only through what Professor N. Amosova termed a second-degree context [1], as in the following example: *The man was large, but his wife was even fatter.* The word *fatter* here serves as a kind of indicator pointing that *large* describes a stout man and not a big one.

Current research in semantics is largely based on the assumption that one of the more promising methods of investigating the semantic structure of a word is by studying the word's linear relationships with other words in typical contexts, i. e. its *combinability* or *collocability.*

Scholars have established that the semantics of words characterised by common occurrences (i. e. words which regularly appear in common contexts) are correlated and, therefore, one of the words within such a pair can be studied through the other.

Thus, if one intends to investigate the semantic structure of an adjective, one would best consider the adjective in its most typical syntactical patterns A + *N* -adjective + noun) and *N* + *l* + *A* (noun + link verb +

kick. n. -- 1 thrill, pleasurable excitement *(inform.);* 2. a blow

with the foot adjective) and make a thorough study of the meanings of nouns with which the adjective is frequently used.

For instance, a study of typical contexts of the adjective *bright* in the first pattern will give us the following sets: a) *bright* colour (flower, dress, silk, etc.). b) *bright* metal (gold, jewels, armour, etc.), c) *bright* student (pupil, boy, fellow, etc.), d) *bright* face (smile, eyes, etc.) and some others. These sets will lead us to singling out the meanings of the adjective related to each set of combinations: a) intensive in colour, b) shining, c) capable, d) gay, etc.

For a transitive verb, on the other hand, the recommended pattern would be *V* + *N* (verb + direct object expressed by a noun). If, for instance, our object of investigation are the verbs *to produce, to create, to compose,* the correct procedure would be to consider the semantics of the nouns that are used in the pattern with each of these verbs: what is it that is produced? created? composed?

There is an interesting hypothesis that the semantics of words regularly used in common contexts (e. g. *bright colours, to build a house, to create a work of art,* etc.) are so intimately correlated that each of them casts, as it were, a kind of permanent reflection on the meaning of its neighbour. If the verb *to compose* is frequently used with the object *music,* isn't it natural to expect that certain musical associations linger in the meaning of the verb *to compose?*

Note, also, how closely the negative evaluative connotation of the adjective *notorious* is linked with the negative connotation of the nouns with which it is regularly associated: *a notorious criminal,*

thief, gangster, gambler, gossip, liar, miser, etc.

All this leads us to the conclusion that context is a good and reliable key to the meaning of the word. Yet, even the jokes given above show how misleading this key can prove in some cases. And here we are faced with two dangers. The first is that of sheer misunderstanding, when the speaker means one thing and the listener takes the word in its other meaning.

The second danger has nothing to do with the process of communication but with research work in the field of semantics. A common error with the inexperienced research worker is to see a different meaning in every new set of combinations. Here is a puzzling question to illustrate what we mean. Cf.: *an angry man, an angry letter.* Is the adjective *angry* used in the same meaning in both these contexts or in two different meanings? Some people will say *"two"* and argue that, on the one hand, the combinability is different *(man* — name of person; *letter* — name of object) and, on the other hand, a letter cannot experience anger. True, it cannot; but it can very well convey the anger of the person who wrote it. As to the combinability, the main point is that a word can realise the same meaning in different sets of combinability. For instance, in the pairs *merry children, merry laughter, merry faces, merry songs* the adjective *merry* conveys the same concept of high spirits whether they are directly experienced by the children (in the first phrase) or indirectly expressed through the merry faces, the laughter and the songs of the other word groups.

The task of distinguishing between the different meanings of a word and the different variations of combinability (or, in a traditional terminology, different usages of the word) is actually a question of singling out the different denotations within the semantic structure of the word.

Cf.: 1) *a sad woman,*
2) *a sad voice,*
3) *a sad story,*
4) *a sad scoundrel* (= an incorrigible scoundrel)
5) *a sad night (= a* dark, black night, arch, poet.)

CHAPTER 8

How Words Develop New Meanings

It has been mentioned that the systems of meanings of polysemantic words evolve gradually. The older a word is, the better developed is its semantic structure. The normal pattern of a word's semantic development is from monosemy to a simple semantic structure encompassing only two or three meanings, with a further movement to an increasingly more complex semantic structure.

In this chapter we shall have a closer look at the complicated processes by which words acquire new meanings.

There are two aspects to this problem, which can be generally described in the following way: a) Why should new meanings appear at all? What circumstances cause and stimulate their development? b) How does it happen? What is the nature of the very process of development of new meanings?

Let us deal with each of these questions in turn.

Causes of Development of New Meanings

The first group of causes is traditionally termed *historical* or *extra-linguistic.*

Different kinds of changes in a nation's social life, in its culture, knowledge, technology, arts lead to gaps appearing in the vocabulary which beg to be filled. Newly created objects, new concepts and phenomena must be named. We already know of two ways for providing new names for newly created concepts: making new words (word-building) and borrowing foreign ones. One more way of filling such vocabulary gaps is by applying some old word to a new object or notion.

When the first textile factories appeared in England, the old word *mill* was applied to these early industrial enterprises. In this way, *mill* (a Latin borrowing of the first century B. C.) added a new meaning to its former meaning "a building in which corn is ground into flour". The new meaning was "textile factory".

A similar case is the word *carriage* which had (and still has) the meaning "a vehicle drawn by horses", but, with the first appearance of railways in England, it received a new meaning, that of "a railway car". -

The history of English nouns describing different parts of a theatre may also serve as a good illustration of how well-established words can be used to denote newly-created objects and phenomena. The words *stalls, box, pit, circle* had existed for a long time before the first theatres appeared in England. With their appearance, the gaps in the vocabulary were easily filled by these widely used words which, as a result, developed new meanings.[1]

New meanings can also be developed due to linguistic factors (the second group of causes).

Linguistically speaking, the development of new meanings, and also a complete change of meaning, may

[1] *It is of some interest to note that the Russian language found a different way of filling the same gap: in Russian, all the parts of the theatre are named by borrowed words: партер, ложа, амфитеатр, бельэтаж.*

be caused through the influence of other words, mostly of synonyms.[1]

Let us consider the following examples.

The Old English verb *steorfan* meant "to perish". When the verb *to die* was borrowed from the Scandinavian, these two synonyms, which were very close in their meaning, collided, and, as a result, *to starve* gradually changed into its present meaning: "to die (or suffer) from hunger".

The history of the noun *deer* is essentially the same. In Old English (O. E. *deor)* it had a general meaning denoting any beast. In that meaning it collided with the borrowed word *animal* and changed its meaning to the modern one ("a certain kind of beast", R. *олень).*

The noun *knave* (O. E. *knafa)* suffered an even more striking change of meaning as a result of collision with its synonym *boy.* Now it has a pronounced negative evaluative connotation and means "swindler, scoundrel".

The Process of Development and

Change of Meaning

The second question we must answer in this chapter is *how* new meanings develop. To find the answer to this question we must investigate the inner mechanism of this process, or at least its essential features. Let us examine the examples given above from a new angle, from within, so to speak.

[1] Most scholars distinguish between the terms *development of meaning* (when a new meaning and the one on the basis of which it is formed coexist in the semantic structure of the word, as in *mill, carriage,* etc.) and *change of meaning* (when the old meaning is completely replaced by the new one, as in the noun *meat* which in Old English had the general meaning of "food" but in Modern English is no longer used in that sense and has instead developed the meaning "flesh of animals used as a food product").

Why was it that the word *mill* — and not some other word — was selected to denote the first textile factories? There must have been some connection between the former sense of *mill* and the new phenomenon to which it was applied. And there *was* apparently such a connection. Mills which produced flour, were mainly driven by water. The textile factories also firstly used water power. So, in general terms, the meanings of *mill,* both the old and the new one, could be defined as "an establishment using water power to produce certain goods". Thus, the first textile factories were easily associated with mills producing flour, and the new meaning of *mill* appeared due to this association. In actual fact, all cases of development or change of meaning are based on some association. In the history of the word *carriage,* the new travelling conveyance was also naturally associated in people's minds with the old one: horse-drawn vehicle > part of a railway train. Both these objects were related to the idea of travelling. The job of both, the horse-drawn carriage and the railway carriage, is the same: to carry passengers on a journey. So the association was logically well-founded.

Stalls and *box* formed their meanings in which they denoted parts of the theatre on the basis of a different type of association. The meaning of the word *box* "a small separate enclosure forming a part of the theatre" developed on the basis of its former meaning "a rectangular container used for packing or storing things". The two objects became associated in the speakers' minds because boxes in the earliest English theatres really resembled packing cases. They were enclosed on all sides and heavily curtained even on the side facing the audience so as to conceal the privileged spectators occupying them from curious or insolent stares.

The association on which the theatrical meaning of *stalls* was based is even more curious. The original meaning was "compartments in stables or sheds for the accommodation of animals (e. g. *cows, horses,* etc.)". There does not seem to be much in common between the privileged and expensive part of a theatre and stables intended for cows and horses, unless we take into consideration the fact that theatres in olden times greatly differed from what they are now. What is now known as the *stalls* was, at that time, standing space divided by barriers into sections so as to prevent the enthusiastic crowd from knocking one other down and hurting themselves. So, there must have been a certain outward resemblance between theatre stalls and cattle stalls. It is also possible that the word was first used humorously or satirically in this new sense.

The process of development of a new meaning (or a change of

meaning) is traditionally termed *transference.*

Some scholars mistakenly use the term "transference of meaning" which is a serious mistake. It is very important to note that in any case of semantic change it is not the meaning but the word that is being transferred from one referent onto another (e. g. from a horse-drawn vehicle onto a railway car). The result of such a transference is the appearance of a new meaning.

Two types of transference are distinguishable depending on the two types of logical associations underlying the semantic process.

Transference Based on Resemblance (Similarity)

This type of transference is also referred to as *linguistic metaphor.* A new meaning appears as a result of associating two objects (phenomena, qualities, etc.) due to their outward similarity. *Box* and *stall,* as should be clear from the explanations above, are examples of this type of transference.

Other examples can be given in which transference is also based on the association of two physical objects. The noun *eye,* for instance, has for one of its meanings "hole in the end of a needle" (cf. with the R. *ушко иголки),* which also developed through transference based on resemblance. A similar case is represented by *the neck of a bottle.*

The noun *drop* (mostly in the plural form) has, in addition to its main meaning "a small particle of water or other liquid", the meanings: "ear-rings shaped as drops of water" (e. *g. diamond drops)* and "candy of the same shape" (e. g. *mint drops).* It is quite obvious that both these meanings are also based on resemblance. In the compound word *snowdrop* the meaning of the second constituent underwent the same shift of meaning (also, in *bluebell).* In general, metaphorical change of meaning is often observed in idiomatic compounds.

The main meaning of the noun *branch* is "limb or subdivision of a tree or bush". On the basis of this meaning it developed several more. One of them is "a special field of science or art" (as in *a branch of linguistics).* This meaning brings us into the sphere of the abstract, and shows that in transference based on resemblance an association may be built not only between two physical objects, but also between a concrete object and an abstract concept.

The noun *bar* from the original meaning *barrier* developed a figurative meaning realised in such contexts as *social bars, colour bar, racial bar.* Here, again, as in the abstract meaning of *branch,* a concrete object is associated with an abstract concept.

The noun *star* on the basis of the meaning "heavenly body" developed the meaning "famous actor or actress". Nowadays the meaning has considerably widened its range, and the word is applied not only to screen idols (as it was at first), but, also, to popular sportsmen (e. g. *football, stars),* pop-singers, etc. Of course, the first use of the word *star* to denote a popular actor must have been humorous or ironical: the mental picture created by the use of the word in this new meaning was a kind of semi-god surrounded by the bright rays of his glory. Yet, very soon the ironical colouring was lost, and, furthermore the association with the original meaning considerably weakened and is gradually erased.

The meanings formed through this type of transference are frequently found in the informal strata of the vocabulary, especially in slang (see Ch. 1). A red-headed boy is almost certain to be nicknamed *carrot* or *ginger* by his schoolmates, and the one who is given to spying and sneaking gets the derogatory nickname of *rat.* Both

these' meanings are metaphorical, though, of course, the children using them are quite unconscious of this fact.

The slang meanings of words such as *nut, onion (= head), saucers (= eyes), hoofs* (== *feet)* and very many others were all formed by transference based on resemblance.

Transference Based on Contiguity

Another term for this type of transference is *linguistic metonymy.* The association is based upon subtle psychological links between different objects and phenomena, sometimes traced and identified with much difficulty. The two objects may be associated together because they often appear in common situations, and so the image of one is easily accompanied by the image of the other; or they may be associated on the principle of cause and effect, of common function, of some material and an object which is made of it, etc.

Let us consider some cases of transference based on contiguity. You will notice that they are of different kinds.

The Old English adjective *glad* meant "bright, shining" (it was applied to the sun, to gold and precious stones, to shining armour, etc.). The later (and more modern) meaning "joyful" developed on the basis of the usual association (which is reflected in most languages) of light with joy (cf. with the R. *светлое настроение; светло на душе).*

The meaning of the adjective *sad* in Old English was "satisfied with food" (cf. with the R. *сыт(ый)* which is a word of the same Indo-European root). Later this meaning developed a connotation of a greater intensity of quality and came to mean "oversatisfied with food; having eaten too much". Thus, the meaning of the adjective *sad* developed a negative evaluative connotation and now described not a happy state of satisfaction but, on the contrary, the physical unease and discomfort of a person who has had too much to eat. The next shift of meaning was to transform the description of physical discomfort into one of spiritual discontent because these two states often go together. It was from this prosaic source that the modern meaning of *sad* "melancholy", "sorrowful" developed, and the adjective describes now a purely emotional state. The two previous meanings ("satisfied with food" and "having eaten too much") were ousted from the semantic structure of the word long ago.

The *foot* of a bed is the place where the feet rest when one lies in the bed, but the *foot* of a mountain got its name by another association: the foot of a mountain is its lowest part, so that the association here is founded on common position.

By the *arms* of an arm-chair we mean the place where the arms lie when one is setting in the chair, so that the type of association here is the same as in *the foot of a bed.* The *leg* of a bed (table, chair, etc.), though, is the part which serves as a support, the original meaning being "the leg of a man or animal". The association that lies behind this development of meaning is the common function: a piece of furniture is supported by its legs just as living beings are supported by theirs.

The meaning of the noun *hand* realised in the context *hand of a clock (watch)* originates from the main meaning of this noun "part of human body". It also developed due to the association of the common function: the hand of a clock points to the figures on the face of the clock, and one of the functions of human hand is also that of pointing to things.

Another meaning of *hand* realised in such contexts as *factory hands, farm hands* is based on another kind of association: strong, skilful hands are the most important feature that is required of a person engaged in physical labour (cf. with the R. *рабочие руки).*

The adjective *dull* (see the scheme of its semantic structure in Ch. 7) developed its meaning "not clear or bright" (as in *a dull green colour; dull light; dull shapes)* on the basis of the former meaning "deficient in eyesight", and its meaning "not loud or distinct" (as in *dull sounds)* on the basis of the older meaning "deficient in hearing". The association here was obviously that of cause and effect: to a person with weak eyesight all colours appear pale, and all shapes blurred; to a person with deficient hearing all sounds are indistinct.

The main (and oldest registered) meaning of the noun *board* was "a flat and thin piece of wood; a wooden plank". On the basis of this meaning developed the meaning "table" which is now archaic. The association which underlay this semantic shift was that of the material and the object made from it: a wooden plank (or several planks) is an essential part of any table. This type of association is often found with nouns denoting clothes: e. g. a *taffeta* ("dress made of taffeta"); *a mink* ("mink coat"), a *jersy* ("knitted shirt or sweater").

Meanings produced through transference based on contiguity sometimes originate from geographical or proper names. *China* in the sense of "dishes made of porcelain" originated from the name of the country which was believed to be the birthplace of porcelain.
Tweed ("a coarse wool cloth") got its name from the river Tweed and *cheviot* (another kind of wool cloth) from the Cheviot hills in England.

The name of a painter is frequently transferred onto one of his pictures: *a Matisse — a painting by Matisse.*[1]

Broadening (or Generalisation) of Meaning.

Narrowing (or Specialisation) of Meaning

Sometimes, the process of transference may result in a considerable change in range of meaning. For instance, the verb *to arrive* (French borrowing) began its life in English in the narrow meaning "to come to shore, to land". In Modern English it has greatly widened its combinability and developed the general meaning "to come" (e. g. *to arrive in a village, town, city, country, at a hotel, hostel, college, theatre, place,* etc.). The meaning developed through transference based on contiguity (the concept of coming somewhere is the same for both meanings), but the range of the second meaning is much broader.

Another example of the broadening of meaning is *pipe.* Its earliest recorded meaning was "a musical wind instrument". Nowadays it can denote any hollow oblong cylindrical body (e. g. *water pipes).* This meaning developed through transference based on the similarity of shape (pipe as a musical instrument is also a hollow oblong cylindrical object) which finally led to a considerable broadening of the range of meaning.

The word *bird* changed its meaning from "the young of a bird" to its modern meaning through transference based on contiguity (the association is obvious). The second meaning is broader and more general.

It is interesting to trace the history of the word *girl* as an example of the changes in the range of meaning in the course of the semantic development of a word.

[1] *Also: see Supplementary Material, p. 279.*

In Middle English it had the meaning of "a small child of either sex". Then the word underwent the process of transference based on contiguity and developed the meaning of "a small child of the female sex", so that the range of meaning was somewhat narrowed. In its further semantic development the word gradually broadened its range of meaning. At first it came to denote not only a female child but, also, a young unmarried woman, later, any young woman, and in modern colloquial English it is practically synonymous to the noun *woman* (e. g. *The old girl must be at least seventy),* so that its range of meaning is quite broad.

The history of the noun *lady* somewhat resembles that of *girl.* In Old English the word (OE hlæfdiŻe) denoted the mistress of the house, i. e. any married woman. Later, a new meaning developed which was much narrower in range: "the wife or daughter of a baronet" (aristocratic title). In Modern English the word *lady* can be applied to any woman, so that its range of meaning is even broader than that of the OE hlæfdiŻe. In Modern English the difference between *girl* and *lady* in the meaning of *woman* is that the first is used in colloquial style and sounds familiar whereas the second is more formal and polite. Here are some more examples of narrowing of meaning:

Deer: \ any beast] > [a certain kind of beast]

Meat: [any food] > | a certain food product [

Boy: | any young person of the male sex [> [servant of the male sex]

It should be pointed out once more that in all these words the second meaning developed through transference based on contiguity, and that when we speak of them as examples of narrowing of meaning we simply imply that the range of the second meaning is more narrow than that of the original meaning.

CHAPTER 9

Homonyms: Words of the Same Form

Homonyms are words which are identical in sound and spelling, or, at least, in one of these aspects, but different in their meaning.

E. g. J *bank,* n. — a shore

bank, n. — an institution for receiving, lending, exchanging, and safeguarding money

ball, n. — a sphere; any spherical body *ball,* n. — a large dancing party

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English vocabulary is rich in such pairs and even groups of words. Their identical forms are mostly accidental: the majority of homonyms coincided due to phonetic changes which they suffered during their development.

If synonyms and antonyms can be regarded as the treasury of the language's expressive resources, homonyms are of no interest in this respect, and one cannot expect them to be of particular value for communication. Metaphorically speaking, groups of synonyms and pairs of antonyms are created by the vocabulary system with a particular purpose whereas homonyms are accidental creations, and therefore purposeless.

In the process of communication they are more of an encumbrance, leading sometimes to confusion and misunderstanding. Yet it is this very characteristic which makes them one of the most important sources of popular humour.

The *pun* is a joke based upon the play upon words of similar form but different meaning (i. e. on homonyms) as in the following:

> "A tailor guarantees to give each of his customers a perfect fit."

(The joke is based on the homonyms: I. *fit,* n. — perfectly fitting clothes; II. *fit,* n. — a nervous spasm.)

Homonyms which are the same in sound and spelling (as the examples given in the beginning of this chapter) are traditionally termed *homonyms proper.*

The following joke is based on a pun which makes use of another type of homonyms:

> "Waiter!" "Yes, sir." "What's this?" "It's bean soup, sir."
> "Never mind what it has been. I want to know what it is now."

Bean, n. and *been,* Past Part, of *to be* are *phones.* As the example shows they are the same in sound but different in spelling. Here are some more examples of homophones:

> *night,* n. — *knight,* n.; *piece,* n. — *peace,* n.; *scent,* n. — *cent,* n. — *sent,* v. (Past Indef., Past Part, of *to send); rite,* n. — *to write,* v. — *right,* adj.; *sea, n. — to see,* v. — *C* [si:] (the name of a letter).

The third type of homonyms is called *homographs.* These are words which are the same in spelling but different in sound.

E.g.

to bow [bau], v.	to incline the head or body in salutation a flexible strip of
bow [bqu], п.	wood for propelling arrows

to lead [li:d],*v.*— to conduct on the way, go before to show the way - a heavy, rather soft metal

	to pull apart or in pieces by force
lead [led]*, n. to*	a drop of the fluid secreted by the lacrinial glands of the eye
tear [teq], v.	
tear [tie], n.	

Sources of Homonyms

One source of homonyms has already been mentioned: *phonetic changes* which words undergo in the course of their historical development. As a result of such changes, two or more words which were formerly pronounced differently may develop identical sound forms and thus become homonyms.

Night and *knight,* for instance, were not homonyms in Old English as the initial *k* in the second word was pronounced, and not dropped as it is in its modern sound form: O.E. *kniht* (cf. O.E. *niht).* A more complicated change of form brought together another pair of homonyms: *to knead (O.E. cnēdan)* and *to need* (O.E. *nēodian).*

In Old English the verb *to write* had the form *writan,* and the adjective *right* had the forms *reht, riht.* The noun *sea* descends from the Old English form sæ, and the verb *to see* from O. E. sēon. The noun *work* and the verb *to work* also had different forms in Old English: *wyrkean* and *weork* respectively.

Borrowing is another source of homonyms. A borrowed word may, in the final stage of its phonetic adaptation, duplicate in form either a native word or another borrowing. So, in the group of homonyms *rite,* n. — *to write,* v. — *right,* adj. the second and third words are of native origin whereas *rite* is a Latin borrowing (< Lat. *ritus).* In the *pair piece,* n. — *peace,* п., the first originates from O.F. *pais,* and the second from O.F. (< Gaulish) *pettia. Bank,* n. ("shore") is a native word, and *bank,* n. ("a financial institution") is an Italian borrowing. *Fair,* adj. (as in a *fair deal, it's not fair)* is native, and *fair,* n. ("a gathering of buyers and sellers") is a French borrowing. *Match,* n. ("a game; a contest of skill, strength") is native, and *match,* n. ("a slender short piece of wood used for producing fire") is a French borrowing.

Word-building also contributes significantly to the growth of homonymy, and the most important type in this respect is undoubtedly *conversion.* Such pairs of words as *comb,* n. — *to comb,* v., *pale,* adj. — *to pale,* v., *to make,* v. — *make,* n. are numerous in the vocabulary. Homonyms of this type, which are the same in sound and spelling but refer to different categories of parts of speech, are called *lexico-grammatical homonyms.* [12]

Shortening is a further type of word-building which increases the number of homonyms. E.g. *fan,* n. in the sense of "an enthusiastic admirer of some kind of sport or of an actor, singer, etc." is a shortening produced from *fanatic.* Its homonym is a Latin borrowing *fan,* n. which denotes an implement for waving lightly to produce a cool current of air. The noun *rep,* n. denoting a kind of fabric (cf. with the R. *penc)* has three homonyms made by shortening: *rep,* n. (< *repertory), rep,* n. (< *representative),* rep, n. (< *reputation)',* all the three are informal words.

During World War II girls serving in the Women's Royal Naval Service (an auxiliary of the British Royal Navy) were jokingly nicknamed *Wrens* (informal). This neologistic formation made by shortening has the homonym *wren,* n. "a small bird with dark brown plumage barred with black" (R. *крапивник).*

Words made by sound-imitation can also form pairs of homonyms with other words: e. g. *bang,* n. ("a loud, sudden, explosive noise") — *bang,* n. ("a fringe of hair combed over the forehead"). Also: *mew,* n. ("the sound a cat makes") — *mew,* n. ("a sea gull") — *mew,* n. ("a pen in which poultry is fattened") — *mews* ("small terraced houses in Central London").

The above-described sources of homonyms have one important

feature in common. In all the mentioned cases the homonyms developed from two or more different words, and their similarity is purely accidental. (In this respect, conversion certainly presents an exception for in pairs of homonyms formed by conversion one word of the pair is produced from the other: *a find < to find.)*

Now we come to a further source of homonyms which differs essentially from all the above cases. Two or more homonyms can originate from different meanings of the same word when, for some reason, the semantic structure of the word breaks into several parts. This type of formation of homonyms is called *split polysemy.*

From what has been said in the previous chapters about polysemantic words, it should have become clear that the semantic structure of a polysemantic word presents a system within which all its constituent meanings are held together by logical associations. In most cases, the function of the arrangement and the unity is determined by one of the meanings (e. g. the meaning "flame" in the noun *fire* — see Ch. 7, p. 133). If this meaning happens to disappear from the word's semantic structure, associations between the rest of the meanings may be severed, the semantic structure loses its unity and falls into two or more parts which then become accepted as independent lexical units.

Let us consider the history of three homonyms:

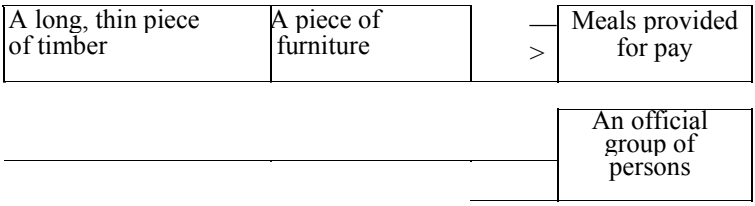
board, n. — a long and thin piece of timber

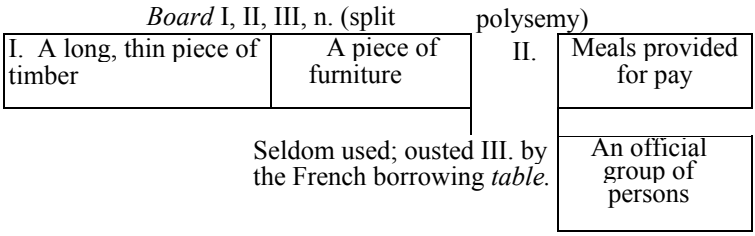
board, n. — daily meals, esp. as provided for pay, e. g. *room and board board,* n. — an official group of persons who direct or supervise some activity, e. g. *a board of directors*

It is clear that the meanings of these three words are in no way associated with one another. Yet, most larger dictionaries still enter a meaning of *board* that once held together all these other meanings "table". It developed from the meaning "a piece of timber" by transference based on contiguity (association of an object and the material from which it is made). The meanings "meals" and "an official group of persons" developed from the meaning "table", also by transference based on contiguity: meals are easily associated with a table on which they are served; an official group of people in authority are also likely to discuss their business round a table.

Nowadays, however, the item of furniture, on which meals are served and round which boards of directors meet, is no longer denoted by the word *board* but by the French Norman borrowing *table,* and *board* in this meaning, though still registered by some dictionaries, can very well be marked as archaic as it is no longer used in common speech. That is why, with the intrusion of the borrowed *table,* the word *board* actually lost its corresponding meaning. But it was just that meaning which served as a link to hold together the rest of the constituent parts of the word's semantic structure. With its diminished role as an element of communication, its role in the semantic structure was also weakened. The speakers almost forgot that *board* had ever been associated with any item of furniture, nor could they associate the concepts of meals or of a responsible committee with a long thin piece of timber (which is the oldest meaning of *board).* Consequently, the semantic structure of *board* was split into three units. The following scheme illustrates the process:

Board, **n.** (development of meanings)





A somewhat different case of split polysemy may be illustrated by the three following homonyms:

spring, n. — the act of springing, a leap *spring,* n. — a place where a stream of water comes up out of the earth (R. *родник, источник) spring,* n. — a season of the year.

Historically all three nouns originate from the same verb with the meaning of "to jump, to leap" (O. E. *sprin-gan),* so that the meaning of the first homonym is the oldest. The meanings of the second and third homonyms were originally based on metaphor. At the head of a stream the water sometimes leaps up out of the earth, so that metaphorically such a place could well be described as *a leap.* On the other hand, the season of the year following winter could be poetically defined as *a leap* from the darkness and cold into sunlight and life. Such metaphors are typical enough of Old English and Middle English semantic transferences but not so characteristic of modern mental and linguistic processes. The poetic associations that lay in the basis of the semantic shifts described above have long since been forgotten, and an attempt to re-establish the lost links may well seem far-fetched. It is just the near-impossibility of establishing such links that seems to support the claim for homonymy and not for polysemy with these three words.

It should be stressed, however, that split polysemy as a source of homonyms is not accepted by some scholars. It is really difficult sometimes to decide whether a certain word has or has not been subjected to the split of the semantic structure and whether we are dealing with different meanings of the same word or with homonyms, for the criteria are subjective and imprecise. The imprecision is recorded in the data of different dictionaries which often contradict each other on this very issue, so that *board* is represented as two homonyms in Professor V. K. Muller's dictionary [41], as three homonyms in Professor V. D. Arakin's [36] and as one and the same word in Hornby's dictionary [45].

Spring also receives different treatment. V. K. Muller's and Hornby's dictionaries acknowledge but two homonyms: I. a season of the year, II. a) the act of springing, a leap, b) a place where a stream of water comes up out of the earth; and some other meanings, whereas V. D. Arakin's dictionary presents the three homonyms as given above.

Classification of Homonyms

The subdivision of homonyms into *homonyms proper, homo-*

phones and *homographs* is certainly not precise enough and does not reflect certain important features of these words, and, most important of all, their status as parts of speech. The examples given in the beginning of this chapter show that homonyms may belong both to the same and to different categories of parts of speech. Obviously, a classification of homonyms should reflect this distinctive feature. Also, the paradigm of each word should be considered, because it has been observed that the paradigms of some homonyms coincide completely, and of others only partially.

Accordingly, Professor A. I. Smirnitsky classified homonyms into two large classes: I. full homonyms, II. partial homonyms [15].

Full lexical homonyms are words which represent the same category of parts of speech and have the same paradigm.

E. g. / *match,* n. — a game, a contest
I match, n. — a short piece of wood used for
I producing fire

wren, n. — a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service *wren,* n. — a bird

Partial homonyms are subdivided into three subgroups:

A. Simple lexico-grammatical partial homonyms are words which belong to the same category of parts of speech. Their paradigms have one identical form, but it is never the same form, as will be seen from the examples.

E. g. / *(to) found, v.*
\ *found,* v. (Past Indef., Past Part. of *to (find)*

/ *to lay,* v.
I *lay,* v. (Past Indef. of *to lie)*

[*to bound,* v.
I *bound,* v. (Past Indef., Past Part, of *to (bind)*

B. Complex lexico-grammatical partial homonyms are words of different categories of parts of speech which have one identical form in their paradigms.

E. g. f *rose,* n.
rose, v. (Past Indef. of *to rise)*

maid, n.
made, v. (Past Indef., Past Part, of *to make)*

left, adj.
left, v. (Past Indef., Past Part, of *to leave)*

bean, n.
been, v. (Past Part, of *to be)*

one, num.
won, v. (Past Indef., Past Part, of *to win)*

C. Partial lexical homonyms are words of the same category of parts of speech which are identical only in their corresponding forms.

E. g. \ *to lie (lay, lain),* v. *to lie (lied, lied),* v.

to hang (hung, hung), v.
to hang (hanged, hanged), v.

to can (canned, canned) (I) can (could)

Exercises

I. Consider your answers to the following.

1 . Which words do we call homonyms?

2. Why can't homonyms be regarded as expressive means of the language?

3. What is the traditional classification of homo nyms? Illustrate your answer with examples.

4. What are the distinctive features of the classifica tion of homonyms suggested by Professor A. I. Smirnitsky?

CHAPTER 10

Synonyms:
Are Their Meanings the Same or Different?

Synonymy is one of modern linguistics' most controversial problems. The very existence of words traditionally called *synonyms* is disputed by some linguists; the nature and essence of the relationships of these words is hotly debated and treated in quite different ways by the representatives of different linguistic schools.

Even though one may accept that synonyms in the traditional meaning of the term are somewhat elusive and, to some extent, fictitious it is certain that there are words in any vocabulary which clearly develop regular and distinct relationships when used in speech.

In the following extract, in which a young woman rejects a proposal of marriage, the verbs *like, admire* and *love,* all describe feelings of attraction, approbation, fondness:

> "I have always *liked* you very much, I *admire* your talent, but, forgive me, — I could never *love* you as a wife should love her husband."
>
> (From *The Shivering Sands* by V. Holt)

Yet, each of the three verbs, though they all describe more or less the same feeling of liking, describes it in its own way: "I like you, i. e. I have certain warm feelings towards you, but they are not strong enough for me to describe them as "love"," — so that *like* and *love* are in a way opposed to each other.

The duality of synonyms is, probably, their most confusing feature: they are somewhat the same, and yet they are most obviously different. Both as pects of their dual characteristics are essential for them to perform their function in speech: revealing different aspects, shades and variations of the same phenomenon.

> "— Was she *a pretty* girl?
> — I would certainly have called her *attractive."*
>
> (Ibid.)

The second speaker in this short dialogue does his best to choose

the word which would describe the girl most precisely: she was good-looking, but *pretty* is probably too good a word for her, so that *attractive* is again in a way opposed to *pretty (not* pretty, only attractive), but this opposition is, at the same time, firmly fixed on the sameness of *pretty* and *attractive:* essentially they both describe a pleasant appearance.

Here are some more extracts which confirm that synonyms add precision to each detail of description and show how the correct choice of a word from a group of synonyms may colour the whole text.

The first extract depicts a domestic quarrel. The infuriated husband shouts and glares at his wife, but "his *glare* suddenly softened into a *gaze* as he turned his eyes on the little girl" (i. e. he had been looking furiously at his wife, but when he turned his eyes on the child, he looked at her with tenderness).

The second extract depicts a young father taking his child for a Sunday walk.

> "Neighbours were apt to smile at the long-legged bare-headed young man leisurely strolling along the street and his small companion demurely trotting by his side."
>
> (From *Some Men and Women* by B. Lowndes)

The synonyms *stroll* and *trot* vividly describe two different styles of walking, the long slow paces of the young man and the gait between a walk and a run of the short-legged child.

In the following extract an irritated producer is talking to an ambitious young actor:

> "Think you can play Romeo? Romeo should *smile,* not *grin, walk,* not *swagger, speak* his lines, not *mumble* them."
>
> (Ibid.)

Here the second synonym in each pair is quite obviously and intentionally contrasted and opposed to the first: "... smile, *not* grin." Yet, to *grin* means more or less the same as *to smile,* only, perhaps, denoting a broader and a rather foolish smile. In the same way *to swagger* means "to walk", but to walk in a defiant or insolent manner. *Mumbling* is also a way of speaking, but of speaking indistinctly or unintelligibly.

Synonyms are one of the language's most important expressive means. The above examples convincingly demonstrate that the principal function of synonyms is to represent the same phenomenon in different aspects, shades and variations.

And here is an example of how a great writer may use synonyms for stylistic purposes. In this extract from *Death of a Hero* R. Aldington describes a group of survivors painfully retreating after a defeat in battle:

> "... The Frontshires [name of battalion] staggered rather than walked down the bumpy trench ... About fifty men, the flotsam of the wrecked battalion, stumbled past them .... They shambled heavily along, not keeping step or attempting to, bent wearily forward under the weight of their equipment, their unseeing eyes turned to the muddy ground."

In this extract the verb *to walk* is used with its three synonyms, each of which describes the process of walking in its own way. In contrast to *walk* the other three words do not merely convey the bare

idea of going on foot but connote the manner of walking as well. *Stagger* means "to sway while walking" and, also, implies a considerable, sometimes painful, effort. *Stumble,* means "to walk tripping over uneven ground and nearly falling." *Shamble* implies dragging one's feet while walking; a physical effort is also connoted by the word.

The use of all these synonyms in the extract creates a vivid picture of exhausted, broken men marching from the battle-field and enhances the general atmosphere of defeat and hopelessness.

A carefully chosen word from a group of synonyms is a great asset not only on the printed page but also in a speaker's utterance. It was Mark Twain who said that the difference between the right word and just the right word is the difference between the lightning and the lightning-bug.

The skill to choose the most suitable word in every context and every situation is an essential part of the language learning process. Students should be taught both to discern the various connotations in the meanings of synonyms and to choose the word appropriate to each context.

Criteria of Synonymy

Synonymy is associated with some theoretical problems which at present are still an object of controversy. Probably, the most controversial among these is the problem of criteria of synonymy. To put it in simpler words, we are still not certain which words should correctly be considered as synonyms, nor are we agreed as to the characteristic features which qualify two or more words as synonyms.

Traditional linguistics solved this problem with the conceptual criterion and defined synonyms as words of the same category of parts of speech conveying the same concept but differing either in shades of meaning or in stylistic characteristics.

Some aspects of this definition have been criticised. It has been pointed out that linguistic phenomena should be defined in linguistic terms and that the use of the term concept makes this an extralinguistic definition. The term "shades of meaning" has been condemned for its vagueness and lack of precision.

In contemporary research on synonymy semantic criterion is frequently used. In terms of componential analysis synonyms may be defined as words with the same denotation, or the same denotative component, but differing in connotations, or in connotative components (see Ch. 7).

Though not beyond criticism, this approach has its advantages and suggests certain new methods of analysing synonyms.

A group of synonyms may be studied with the help of their dictionary definitions (definitional analysis). In this work the data from various dictionaries are analysed comparatively. After that the definitions are subjected to transformational operations (transformational analysis). In this way, the semantic components of each analysed word are singled out.

Here are the results of the definitional and transformational analysis of some of the numerous synonyms for the verb *to look.*

]

	Denotation	Connotations	
to *stare: to*	to look	steadily, lastingly	in surprise, curiosity, etc.
glare: to	to look	steadily, lastingly	in anger, rage, fury
gaze: to	to look	steadily, lastingly	in tenderness, admiration, wonder
glance: to	to look	briefly, in passing	
peer:	to look	steadily, lastingly	by stealth; through an opening or from a concealed location
to peer:	to look	steadily, lastingly	with difficulty or strain

The common denotation convincingly shows that, according to the semantic criterion, the words grouped in the above table are synonyms. The connotative components represented on the right side of the table highlight their differentiations.

In modern research on synonyms **the criterion of interchangeability** is sometimes applied. According to this, synonyms are defined as words which are interchangeable at least in some contexts without any considerable alteration in denotational meaning. [4]

This criterion of interchangeability has been much criticised. Every or almost every attempt to apply it to this or that group of synonyms seems to lead one to the inevitable conclusion that either there are very few synonyms or, else, that they are not interchangeable.

It is sufficient to choose any set of synonyms placing them in a simple context to demonstrate the point. Let us take, for example, the synonyms from the above table.

Cf.: *He glared at her* (i. e. He looked at her angrily). *He gazed at her* (i. e. He looked at her steadily and attentively; probably with admiration or interest).

He glanced at her (i. e. He looked at her briefly and turned away).

He peered at her (i. e. He tried to see her better, but something prevented: darkness, fog, weak eyesight).

These few simple examples are sufficient to show that each of the synonyms creates an entirely new situation which so sharply differs from the rest that any attempt at "interchanging" anything can only destroy the utterance devoiding it of any sense at all.

If you turn back to the extracts on p. 184—187, the very idea of interchangeability will appear even more incredible. Used in this way, in a related context, all these words (/ *like you, but I cannot love you; the young man was strolling, and his child was trotting by his side; Romeo should smile, not grin,* etc.) clearly demonstrate that substitution of one word for another is impossible: it is not simply the context

that firmly binds them in their proper places, but the peculiar individual connotative structure of each individual word.

Consequently, it is difficult to accept interchange-ability as a criterion of synonymy because the specific characteristic of synonyms, and the one justifying their very existence, is that *they are not, cannot and should not be interchangeable,* in which case they would simply become useless ballast in the vocabulary.

Synonyms are frequently said to be the vocabulary's colours, tints and hues (so the term *shade* is not so inadequate, after all, for those who can understand a metaphor). Attempts at ascribing to synonyms the quality of interchangeability are equal to stating that subtle tints in a painting can be exchanged without destroying the picture's effect.

All this does not mean that no synonyms are interchangeable. One can find whole groups of words with half-erased connotations which can readily be substituted one for another. The same girl can be described as *pretty, good-looking, handsome* or *beautiful.* Yet, even these words are far from being totally interchangeable. Each of them creates its own picture of human beauty. Here is an extract in which a young girl addresses an old woman:

> "I wouldn't say you'd been exactly *pretty* as a girl — *handsome* is what I'd say. You've got such strong features."
>
> (From *The Stone Angel* by M. Lawrence)

So, handsome is *not* pretty and pretty is not necessarily handsome. Perhaps they are not even synonyms? But they are. Both, the criterion of common denotation ("good-looking, of pleasing appearance") and even the dubious criterion of inter-changeability seem to indicate that.

In conclusion, let us stress that even if there are some synonyms which *are* interchangeable, it is quite certain that there are also others which are not. A criterion, if it is a criterion at all, should be applicable to all synonyms and not just to some of them. Otherwise it is not acceptable as a valid criterion.

Types of Synonyms

The only existing classification system for synonyms was established by Academician V. V. Vinogradov, the famous Russian scholar. In his classification system there are three types of synonyms: *ideographic* (which he defined as words conveying the same concept but differing in shades of meaning), *stylistic* (differing in stylistic characteristics) and *absolute* (coinciding in all their shades of meaning and in all their stylistic characteristics) [8].

However, the following aspects of his classification system are open to question.

Firstly, absolute synonyms are rare in the vocabulary and, on the diachronic level, the phenomenon of absolute synonymy is anomalous and consequently temporary: the vocabulary system invariably tends to abolish it either by rejecting one of the absolute synonyms or by developing differentiation characteristics in one or both (or all) of them. Therefore, it does not seem necessary to include absolute synonyms, which are a temporary exception, in the system of classification.

The vagueness of the term "shades of meaning" has already been mentioned. Furthermore there seems to be no rigid demarcation line between synonyms differing in their shades of meaning and in stylistic characteristics, as will be shown later on. There are numerous synonyms which are distinguished by both shades of meaning and

stylistic colouring. Therefore, even the subdivision of synonyms into ideographic and stylistic is open to question.

A more modern and a more effective approach to the classification of synonyms may be based on the definition describing synonyms as words differing in connotations. It seems convenient to classify connotations by which synonyms differ rather than synonyms themselves. It opens up possibilities for tracing much subtler distinctive features within their semantic structures.

Types of Connotations

I. *The connotation of degree or intensity* can be traced in such groups of synonyms as *to surprise — to astonish — to amaze — to astound;*[1] *to satisfy — to please — to content — to gratify — to delight — to exalt; to shout — to yell — to bellow — to roar; to like — to admire — to love — to adore — to worship.*

As the table on p. 189 shows, some words have two and even more connotative components in their semantic structures. In the above list the synonymic groups headed by *to satisfy* and *to like* contain words which can be differentiated not only by the connotation of intensity but by other types which will be described later.

II. In the group of synonyms *to stare — to glare — to gaze — to glance — to peep — to peer,* all the synonyms except *to glance* denote a lasting act of looking at somebody or something, whereas *to glance* describes a brief, passing look. These synonyms may be said to have a *connotation of duration* in their semantic structure.

Other examples are: *to flash (brief) — to blaze (lasting); to shudder (brief) — to shiver (lasting); to say (brief) — to speak, to talk (lasting).*

All these synonyms have other connotations besides that of duration.

III. The synonyms *to stare — to glare — to gaze* are differentiated from the other words of the group by *emotive connotations,* and from each other by the nature of the emotion they imply (see the table on p. 189).

In the group *alone — single — lonely — solitary,* the adjective *lonely* also has an emotive connotation.

[1] *Groups of synonyms here and further on in the text are given selectively.*

She was alone implies simply the absence of company, *she was lonely* stresses the feeling of melancholy and desolation resulting from being alone. *A single tree on the plain* states plainly that there is (was) only one tree, not two or more. *A lonely tree on the plain* gives essentially the same information, that there was one tree and no more, but also creates an emotionally coloured picture.

In the group *to tremble — to shiver — to shudder — to shake,* the verb *to shudder* is frequently associated with the emotion of fear, horror or disgust, etc. (e. g. *to shudder with horror)* and therefore can be said to have an emotive connotation in addition to the two others (see the scheme in Ch. 7, p. 136).

One should be warned against confusing words with emotive connotations and words with emotive denotative meanings, e. g. *to love — to admire — to adore — to worship; angry — furious — enraged; fear — terror — horror.* In the latter, emotion is expressed by the leading semantic component whereas in the former it is an accompa-

nying, subsidiary characteristic.

IV. *The evaluative connotation* conveys the speaker's attitude towards the referent, labelling it as *good* or *bad.* So in the group *well-known — famous — notorious — celebrated,* the adjective *notorious* bears a negative evaluative connotation and *celebrated* a positive one. Cf.: *a notorious murderer, robber, swindler, coward, lady-killer, flirt, but a celebrated scholar, artist, singer, man-of-letters.*

In the group *to produce — to create — to manufacture — to fabricate,* the verb *to create* characterises the process as inspired and noble. *To manufacture* means "to produce in a mechanical way without inspiration or originality". So, *to create* can be said to have a positive evaluative connotation, and *to manufacture* a negative one.

The verbs *to sparkle* and *to glitter* are close synonyms and might well be favoured by supporters of the interchangeability criterion. Yet, it would be interesting to compare the following sets of examples:

A. *His (her) eyes sparkled with amusement, merriment, good humour, high spirits, happiness,* etc. (positive emotions).

B. *His (her) eyes* ***glittered*** *with anger, rage, hatred, malice,* etc. (negative emotions).

The combinability of both verbs shows that, at least, when they are used to describe the expression of human eyes, they have both emotive and evaluative connotations, and, also, one further characteristic, which is described in the next paragraph.

V. *The causative connotation* can be illustrated by the examples *to sparkle* and *to glitter* given above: one's eyes sparkle *with positive emotions* and glitter *with negative emotions.* However, this connotation of *to sparkle* and *to glitter* seems to appear only in the model "Eyes + Sparkle/Glitter".

The causative connotation is also typical of the verbs we have already mentioned, *to shiver* and *to shudder,* in whose semantic structures the cause of the act or process of trembling is encoded: *to shiver with cold, from a chill, because of the frost; to shudder with fear, horror,* etc.

To blush and *to redden* represent similar cases: people mostly blush from modesty, shame or embarrassment, but usually redden from anger or indignation. Emotive connotation can easily be traced in both these verbs.

VI. *The connotation of manner* can be singled out in some groups of verbal synonyms. The verbs *to stroll — to stride — to trot — to pace — to swagger — to stagger — to stumble* all denote different ways and types of walking, encoding in their semantic structures the length of pace, tempo, gait and carriage, purposefulness or lack of purpose (see, for instance, the quotations on p. 184—187).

. The verbs *to peep* and *to peer* also have this connotation in their semantic structures: *to peep* = to look at smb./smth. *furtively, by stealth; to peer* = to look at smb./smth. *with difficulty or strain.*

The verbs *to like — to admire — to love — to adore — to worship,* as has been mentioned, are differentiated not only by the connotation of intensity, but also by the connotation of manner. Each of them describes a feeling of a different type, and not only of different intensity.

VII. The verbs *to peep* and *to peer* have already been mentioned.

They are differentiated by connotations of duration and manner. But there is some other curious peculiarity in their semantic structures. Let us consider their typical contexts.

One *peeps* at smb./smth. through a hole, crack or opening, from behind a screen, a half-closed door, a newspaper, a fan, a curtain, etc. It seems as if a whole set of scenery were built within the word's meaning. Of course, it is not quite so, because "the set of scenery" is actually built in the context, but, as with all regular contexts, it is intimately reflected in the word's semantic structure. We shall call this *the connotation of attendant circumstances*.

This connotation is also characteristic of *to peer* which will be clear from the following typical contexts of the verb.

One *peers* at smb./smth. in darkness, through the fog, through dimmed glasses or windows, from a great distance; a short-sighted person may also peer at things. So, in the semantic structure of to *peer* are encoded circumstances preventing one from seeing clearly.

VIII. The synonyms *pretty, handsome, beautiful* have been mentioned as the ones which are more or less interchangeable. Yet, each of them describes a special type of human beauty: *beautiful* is mostly associated with classical features and a perfect figure, *handsome* with a tall stature, a certain robustness and fine pro portions, *pretty* with small delicate features and a fresh complexion. This connotation may be defined as *the connotation of attendant features.*

IX. *Stylistic connotations* stand somewhat apart for two reasons. Firstly, some scholars do not regard the word's stylistic characteristic as a connotative component of its semantic structure. Secondly, stylistic connotations are subject to further classification, namely: colloquial, slang, dialect, learned, poetic, terminological, archaic. Here again we are dealing with stylistically marked words (see Ch. 1, 2), but this time we approach the feature of stylistic characteristics from a different angle: from the point of view of synonyms frequent differentiation characteristics.

Here are some examples of synonyms which are differentiated by stylistic connotations (see also Ch. 2). The word in brackets starting each group shows the denotation of the synonyms.

(Meal). Snack, bite *(coll.),* snap *(dial.),* repast, refreshment, feast *(formal).*

These synonyms, besides stylistic connotations, have connotations of attendant features.

Snack, bite, snap all denote a frugal meal taken in a hurry; *refreshment* is also a light meal; *feast* is a rich or abundant meal.

(Girl). Girlie *(coll.),* lass, lassie *(dial.),* bird, birdie, jane, fluff, skirt *(sl.),* maiden *(poet.),* damsel *(arch.).*

(To leave). To be off, to clear out *(coll.),* to beat it, to hoof it, to take the air *(sl.),* to depart, to retire, to withdraw *(formal).*

5. A man entered the bar and called for "a Martinus". The barman *observed* as *he picked up* a glass, "You mean Martini, sir!" "No, indeed I don't," the man replied. "I was taught Latin properly and I only want
one."

6. A foreigner was *relating* his experience in studying the English language. He said: "When I first *discovered* that if I was quick I was fast; that if I was tied I was
fast; and that not to eat was fast, I was discouraged. But when I came across the sentence, 'The first one wonone-dollar prize' I *gave up* try-

ing."

7. J a n e: Would you be *insulted* if that good-looking stranger offered you some champagne?

Joan: Yes, but I'd probably swallow the insult.

CHAPTER 11

Synonyms *(continued).* Euphemisms. Antonyms

The Dominant Synonym

The attentive reader will have noticed that in the previous chapter much use was made of the numerous synonyms of the verb *to look,* and yet, the verb *to look* itself was never mentioned. That doesn't seem fair because it is, certainly, a verb which possesses the highest frequency of use compared with its synonyms, and so plays an important role in communication. Its role and position in relation to its synonyms is also of some importance as it presents a kind of centre of the group of synonyms, as it were, holding it together.

Its semantic structure is quite simple: it consists only of denotative component and it has no connotations.

All (or, at least, most) synonymic groups have a "central" word of this kind whose meaning is equal to the denotation common to all the synonymic group. This word is called the *dominant synonym.*

Here are examples of other dominant synonyms with their groups:

To surprise — *to astonish — to amaze — to astound.*

To shout — *to yell — to bellow — to roar.*

To shine — *to flash — to blaze — to gleam — to glisten — to sparkle — to glitter — to shimmer — to glimmer.*

To tremble — *to shiver — to shudder — to shake.*

To make — *to produce — to create — to fabricate — to manufacture.*

Angry — *furious — enraged.* Fear — *terror — horror.*

The dominant synonym expresses the notion common to all synonyms of the group in the most general way, without contributing any additional information as to the manner, intensity, duration or any attending feature of the referent. So, any dominant synonym is a typical basic-vocabulary word (see Ch. 2). Its meaning, which is broad and generalised, more or less "covers" the meanings of the rest of the synonyms, so that it may be substituted for any of them. It seems that here, at last, the idea of interchangeability of synonyms comes into its own. And yet, each such substitution would mean an irreparable loss of the additional information supplied by connotative components of each synonym. So, using *to look* instead of *to glare, to stare, to peep, to peer* we preserve the general sense of the utterance but lose a great deal in precision, expressiveness and colour.

Summing up what has been said, the following characteristic features of the dominant synonym can be underlined:

I. High frequency of usage.

II. Broad combinability, i. e. ability to be used in combinations with various classes of words.

III. Broad general meaning.

IV. Lack of connotations. (This goes for stylistic con notations as well, so that neutrality as to style is

also a typical feature of the dominant synonym.)

Euphemisms

There are words in every language which people instinctively avoid because they are considered indecent, indelicate, rude, too direct or impolite. As the "offensive" referents, for which these words stand, must still be alluded to, they are often described in a roundabout way, by using substitutes called *euphemisms.* This device is dictated by social conventions which are sometimes apt to be oversensitive, see "indecency" where there is none and seek refinement in absurd avoidances and pretentiousness.

The word *lavatory* has, naturally, produced many euphemisms. Here are some of them: *powder room, washroom, restroom, retiring room, (public) comfort station, ladies' (room), gentlemen's (room), water-closet, w.c.* ([dȕbljuː'siː]), *public conveniences* and even *Windsor castle* (which is a comical phrase for "deciphering" w.c.).

Pregnancy is another topic for "delicate" references. Here are some of the euphemisms used as substitutes for the adjective *pregnant: in an interesting condition, in a delicate condition, in the family way, with a baby coming, (big) with child, expecting.*

The apparently innocent word *trousers,* not so long ago, had a great number of euphemistic equivalents, some of them quite funny: *unmentionables, inexpressibles, indescribables, unwhisperables, you-mustn't-men-tion 'ems, sit-upons.* Nowadays, however, nobody seems to regard this word as "indecent" any more, and so its euphemistic substitutes are no longer in use.

A landlady who refers to her lodgers as *paying guests* is also using a euphemism, aiming at half-concealing the embarrassing fact that she lets rooms.

The love of affectation, which displays itself in the excessive use of euphemisms, has never been a sign of good taste or genuine refinement. Quite the opposite. Fiction writers have often ridiculed pretentious people for their weak attempts to express themselves in a delicate and refined way.

> "... Mrs. Sunbury never went to bed, she *retired,* but Mr. Sunbury who was not quite so refined as his wife always said: "Me for Bedford" ..."
>
> (From *The Kite* by W. S. Maugham)

To *retire* in this ironical passage is a euphemistic substitute for *to go to bed.*

Another lady, in *Rain* by the same author, easily surpasses Mrs. Sunbury in the delicacy of her speech. She says that there are so many mosquitoes on the island where the story is set that at the Governor's parties "all the ladies are given a pillow-slip to put their — their *lower extremities* in."

The speaker considers the word *legs* to be "indelicate" and substitutes for it its formal synonym *lower extremities* (cf. with the R. *нижние конечности).* The substitution makes her speech pretentious and ridiculous.

Eating is also regarded as unrefined by some minds. Hence such substitutes as to *partake of food (of refreshment), to refresh oneself, to break bread.*

There are words which are easy targets for euphemistic substitution. These include words associated with drunkenness, which are very numerous.

The adjective *drunk,* for instance, has a great number of such substitutes, some of them "delicate", but most comical. E. g. *intoxicated* (form.), *under the influence* (form.), *tipsy, mellow, fresh, high, merry, flustered, overcome, full* (coll.), *drunk as a lord* (coll.), *drunk as an owl* (coll.), *boiled* (sl.), *fried* (sl.), *tanked* (sl.), *tight* (sl.), *stiff* (sl.), *pickled* (sl.), *soaked* (sl.), *three sheets to the wind* (sl.), *high as a kite* (sl.), *half-seas-over* (sl.), etc.

The following brief quotation from P.G. Wodehouse gives two more examples of words belonging to the same group:

"Motty was *under the surface.* Completely *sozzled."*

(From *Pight-Ho, Jeeves* by P. G. Wodehouse)

In the following extracts from P. G. Wodehouse we find slang substitutes for two other "unpleasant" words: *prison* and *to imprison.*

"Oh, no, he isn't ill," I said, "and as regards accidents, it depends on what you call an accident. He's *in chokey."*

"In what?"

"In prison."

"... And now Mr. Sipperley is *in the jug...* He couldn't come himself, because he was *jugged* for biffing a cop on Boat-Race Night."

(Ibid.)

Euphemisms may, of course, be used due to genuine concern not to hurt someone's feelings. For instance, a liar can be described as a person who *does not always strictly tell the truth* and a stupid man can be said to be *not exactly brilliant.*

All the euphemisms that have been described so far are used to avoid the so-called *social taboos.* Their use, as has already been said, is inspired by social convention.

Superstitious taboos gave rise to the use of other type of euphemisms. The reluctance to call things by their proper names is also typical of this type of euphemisms, but this time it is based on a deeply-rooted subconscious fear.

Superstitious taboos have their roots in the distant past of mankind when people believed that there was a supernatural link between a name and the object or creature it represented. Therefore, all the words denoting evil spirits, dangerous animals, or the powers of nature were taboo. If uttered, it was believed that unspeakable disasters would result not only for the speaker but also for those near him. That is why all creatures, objects and phenomena threatening danger were referred to in a round-about descriptive way. So, a dangerous animal might be described as *the one-lurking-in-the-wood* and a mortal disease as *the black death.* Euphemisms are probably the oldest type of synonyms, for it is reasonable to assume that superstitions which caused real fear called for the creation of euphemisms long before the need to describe things in their various aspects or subtle shades caused the appearance of other synonyms.

The Christian religion also made certain words taboo. The proverb *Speak of the devil and he will appear* must have been used and taken quite literally when it was first used, and the fear of *calling the devil by name* was certainly inherited from ancient superstitious beliefs. So, the word *devil* became taboo, and a number of euphemisms were substitutes for it: *the Prince of Darkness, the black one, the evil one,*

dickens (coll.), *deuce* (coll.), *(Old) Nick* (coll.).

The word *God,* due to other considerations, also had a great number of substitutes which can still be traced in such phrases as Good *Lord!, By Heavens/, Good Heavens!, (My) goodness!, (My) goodness gracious!, Gracious me!*

Even in our modern emancipated times, old superstitious fears still lurk behind words associated with death and fatal diseases. People are not superstitious nowadays and yet they are surprisingly reluctant to use the verb *to die* which has a long chain of both solemn and humorous substitutes. E. g. *to pass away, to be taken, to breathe one's last, to depart this life, to close one's eyes, to yield (give) up the ghost, to go the way of all flesh, to go West* (sl.), *to kick off* (sl.), *to check out* (sl.), *to kick the bucket* (sl.), *to take a ride* (sl.), *to hop the twig* (sl.), *to join the majority* (sl.).

The slang substitutes seem to lack any proper respect, but the joke is a sort of cover for the same old fear: speak of death and who knows what may happen.

Mental diseases also cause the frequent use of euphemisms.

A mad person may be described as *insane, mentally unstable, unbalanced, unhinged, not (quite) right* (coll.), *not all there* (coll.), *off one's head* (coll.), *off one's rocker* (coll.), *wrong in the upper storey* (coll.), *having bats in one's belfry* (coll.), *crazy as a bedbug* (coll.), *cuckoo* (sl.), *nutty* (sl.), *off one's nut* (sl.), *loony* (sl.), *a mental case, a mental defective,* etc.

A clinic for such patients can also be discreetly referred to as, for instance, *an asylum, sanitarium, sanatorium, (mental) institution,* and, less discreetly, as *a nut house* (sl.), *booby hatch* (sl.), *loony bin* (sl.), etc.

In the story by Evelyn Waugh "Mr. Loveday's Little Outing" a clinic of this kind, treating only very rich patients, is described as *large private grounds suitable for the charge of nervous or difficult cases.* This is certainly the peak of euphemistic "delicacy".

The great number of humorous substitutes found in such groups of words prove particularly tempting for writers who use them for comical purposes. The following extracts from a children's book by R. Dahl are, probably, not in the best of taste, but they demonstrate the range of colloquial and slang substitutes for the word *mad.*

"He's gone off his rocker!" shouted one of the fathers, aghast, and the other parents joined in the chorus of frightened shouting.

"He's crazy!" they shouted.

"He's balmy!"

"He's nutty!"

"He's screwy!"

"He's batty!"

"He's dippy!"

"He's dotty!"*

"He's daffy!"

"He's goofy!"

"He's beany!"

"He's buggy!"

"He's wacky!"

"He's loony!"

"No, he is not!" said Grandpa Joe.

(From *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by R. Dahl)

... "What did I tell you!" — cried Grandma Georgina. "He's

round the twist! He's bogged as a beetle! He's dotty as a dingbat! He's got rats in the roof!..."

(Ibid.)

* * *

All the above examples show that euphemisms are substitutes for their synonyms. Their use and very existence are caused either by social conventions or by certain psychological factors. Most of them have stylistic connotations in their semantic structures. One can also assume that there is a special euphemistic connotation that can be singled out in the semantic structure of each such word. Let us point out, too, that euphemistic connotations in formal euphemisms are different in "flavour" from those in slang euphemistic substitutes. In the first case they are solemn and delicately evasive, and in the second rough and somewhat cynical, reflecting an attempt to laugh off an unpleasant fact.

Antonyms

We use the term *antonyms* to indicate words of the same category of parts of speech which have contrasting meanings, such as *hot — cold, light — dark, happiness — sorrow, to accept — to reject, up — down.*

If synonyms form whole, often numerous, groups, antonyms are usually believed to appear in pairs. Yet, this is not quite true in reality. For instance, the adjective *cold* may be said to have *warm* for its second antonym, and *sorrow* may be very well contrasted with *gaiety.*

On the other hand, a polysemantic word may have an antonym (or several antonyms) for each of its meanings. So, the adjective *dull* has the antonyms *interesting, amusing, entertaining* for its meaning of "deficient in interest", *clever, bright, capable* for its meaning of "deficient in intellect", and *active* for the meaning of "deficient in activity", etc.

Antonymy is not evenly distributed among the categories of parts of speech. Most antonyms are adjectives which is only natural because qualitative characteristics are easily compared and contrasted: *high — low, wide — narrow, strong — weak, old — young, friendly — hostile.*

Verbs take second place, so far as antonymy is concerned. Yet, verbal pairs of antonyms are fewer in number. Here are some of them: *to lose — to find, to live — to die, to open — to close, to weep — to laugh.*

Nouns are not rich in antonyms, but even so some examples can be given: *friend — enemy, joy — grief, good — evil, heaven — earth, love — hatred.*

Antonymic adverbs can be subdivided into two groups: a) adverbs derived from adjectives: *warmly — coldly, merrily — sadly, loudly — softly;* b) adverbs proper: *now — then, here — there, ever — never, up — down, in — out.*

*** * ***

Not so many years ago antonymy was not universally accepted as a linguistic problem, and the opposition within antonymic pairs was regarded as purely logical and finding no reflection in the semantic structures of these words. The contrast between *heat* and *cold* or *big* and *small,* said most scholars, is the contrast of things opposed by their very nature.

In the previous chapter dealing with synonymy we saw that both

the identity and differentiations in words called synonyms can be said to be encoded within their semantic structures. Can the same be said about antonyms? Modern research in the field of antonymy gives a positive answer to this question. Nowadays most scholars agree that in the semantic structures of all words, which regularly occur in antonymic pairs, a special antonymic connotation can be singled out. We are so used to coming across *hot* and *cold* together, in the same contexts, that even when we find *hot* alone, we cannot help subconsciously registering it as *not cold,* that is, contrast it to its missing antonym. The word possesses its full meaning for us not only due to its direct associations but also because we subconsciously oppose it to its antonym, with which it is regularly used, in this case to *hot.* Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the semantic structure of *hot* can be said to include the antonymic connotation of "not cold", and the semantic structure of *enemy* the connotation of "not a friend".

It should be stressed once more that we are speaking only about those antonyms which are characterised by common occurrences, that is, which are regularly used in pairs. When two words frequently occur side by side in numerous contexts, subtle and complex associations between them are not at all unusual. These associations are naturally reflected in the words' semantic structures. Antonymic connotations are a special case of such "reflected associations".

* * *

Together with synonyms, antonyms represent the language's important expressive means. The following quotations show how authors use antonyms as a stylistic device of contrast.

How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a *good* deed in a *naughty*[1] world. (From *Merchant of Venice* by W. Shakespeare. Act V, Sc. I)

... But then my soul's imaginary sight Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,

[1] *naughty* — wicked, evil *(obs.)*

Which like a jewel hung in *ghastly* night, Makes black night *beauteous* and her *old* face *new.* (From *Sonnet XXVII* by W. Shakespeare)

Welcome *joy,* and welcome *sorrow,*
Lethe's weed and Hermes' feather,
Come *to-day,* and come *to-morrow,*
I do love you both together!
I love to mark *sad* faces in fair weather;
And hear a *merry* laughter amid the thunder;
Fair and foul I love together.

(From *A Song of Opposites* by J. Keats)

... The writer should seek his reward in the pleasure of his work and in release from the burden of his thought; and indifferent to aught else, care nothing *for praise or censure, failure or success.*

(From *The Moon and Sixpence* by W. S. Maugham)

They [the Victorians] were busy *erecting,* of course; and we have been busy *demolishing* for so long that now erection seems

as ephemeral an activity as bubble-blowing.

(From *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by J. Fowles)

Exercises

I. Consider your answers to the following.

1 . Which word in a synonymic group is considered to be the dominant synonym? What are its characteristic features?

2. Can the dominant synonym be substituted for cer tain other members of a group of synonyms? Is the cri terion of interchangeabitity applicable in this case?

[1] *For information on Hyponymy see Supplementary Material, p. 280.*

V.: Do you want me to ride on the wrong side?

P.: You are driving on the wrong side.

V.: But you said that I was driving on the right side.

P.: That is right. You are on the right, and that's wrong.

V.: A strange country! If right is wrong, I'm right when I'm on the wrong side. So why did you stop me?

P.: My dear sir, you must keep to the left. The right side is the left.

V.: It's like a looking-glass! I'll try to remember. Well, I want to go to Bellwood. Will you kindly tell me the way?

P.: Certainly. At the end of this road, turn left.

V.: Now let me think. Turn left! In England left is right, and right is wrong. Am I right?

P.: You'll be right if you turn left. But if you turn right, you'll be wrong.

V.: Thank you. It's as clear as daylight.

(After G. C. Thornley)[1]

2. Flying instructors say that pilot trainees are divided into optimists and pessimists when reporting the amount of fuel during flights. Optimists report that their fuel tank is half full while pessimists say it's half empty. 3. The canvas homes, the caravans, the transportable timber frames — each had its light. Some moving, some still. 4. His words seemed to point out that sad, even, tragic things could never be gay. 5. It was warm in the sun but cool under the shady trees. 6. He is my best friend and he is my bitter enemy. 7. Every man has feminine qualities and every woman has masculine ones. 8. He hated to be exposed to strangers, to be accepted or rejected.

[1] *The text is borrowed from Look, Laugh and Learn to Speak by I. B. Vasilyeva, I. A. Kitenko, D. V. Menyajlo. L., 1970.*

CHAPTER 12

Phraseology: Word-Groups with Transferred Meanings

Phraseological units, or *idioms,* as they are called by most western scholars, represent what can probably be described as the most picturesque, colourful and expressive part of the language's vocabulary.

If synonyms can be figuratively referred to as the tints and colours of the vocabulary, then phraseology is a kind of picture gallery in

which are collected vivid and amusing sketches of the nation's customs, traditions and prejudices, recollections of its past history, scraps of folk songs and fairy-tales. Quotations from great poets are preserved here alongside the dubious pearls of philistine wisdom and crude slang witticisms, for phraseology is not only the most colourful but probably the most democratic area of vocabulary and draws its resources mostly from the very depths of popular speech.

And what a variety of odd and grotesque images, figures and personalities one finds in this amazing picture gallery: dark horses, white elephants, bulls in china shops and green-eyed monsters, cats escaping from bags or looking at kings, dogs barking up the wrong tree and men either wearing their hearts on their sleeves or having them in their mouths or even in their boots. Sometimes this parade of funny animals and quaint human beings looks more like a hilarious fancy-dress ball than a peaceful picture gallery and it is really a pity that the only interest some scholars seem to take in it is whether the leading component of the idiom is expressed by a verb or a noun.

The metaphor *fancy-dress ball* may seem far-fetched to skeptical minds, and yet it aptly reflects a very important feature of the linguistic phenomenon under discussion: most participants of the carnival, if we accept the metaphor, wear masks, are disguised as something or somebody else, or, dropping metaphors, word-groups known as phraseological units or idioms are characterised by a double sense: the current meanings of constituent words build up a certain picture, but the actual meaning of the whole unit has little or nothing to do with that picture, in itself creating an entirely new image.

So, *a dark horse* mentioned above is actually not a horse but a person about whom no one knows anything definite, and so one is not sure what can be expected from him. The imagery of a *bull in a china shop* lies very much on the surface: the idiom describes a clumsy person (cf. with the R. *слон в посудной лавке). A white elephant,* however, is not even a person but a valuable object which involves great expense or trouble for its owner, out of all proportion to its usefulness or value, and which is also difficult to dispose of. *The green-eyed monster* is jealousy, the image being drawn from *Othello*[1] . *To let the cat out of the bag* has actually nothing to do with cats, but means simply "to let some secret become known". In *to bark up the wrong tree* (Amer.), the current meanings of the constituents create a vivid and amusing picture of a foolish dog sitting under a tree and barking at it while the cat or the squirrel has long since escaped. But the actual meaning of the idiom is "to follow a false scent; to look for somebody or something in a wrong place; to expect from somebody what he is unlikely to do". The idiom is not infrequently used

[1] *O, beware, my lord, of jealousy; It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock The meat it feeds on...*
(Iago's words from Act III, Sc. 3)

in detective stories: *The police are barking up the wrong tree as usual* (i.e. they suspect somebody who has nothing to do with the crime).

The ambiguousness of these interesting word groups may lead to an amusing misunderstanding, especially for children who are apt to accept words at their face value.

Little Johnnie *(crying):* Mummy, mummy, my auntie Jane is dead.

Mother: Nonsense, child! She phoned me exactly five minutes ago.

Johnnie: But I heard Mrs. Brown say that her neighbours cut her dead.

(To *cut somebody dead* means "to rudely ignore somebody; to pretend not to know or recognise him".)

Puns are frequently based on the ambiguousness of idioms:

"Isn't our Kate a marvel! I wish you could have seen her at the Harrisons' party yesterday. If I'd collected the bricks she dropped all over the place, I could build a villa."

(To drop a brick means "to say unintentionally a quite indiscreet or tactless thing that shocks and offends people".)

So, together with synonymy and antonymy, phraseology represents expressive resources of vocabulary-

V. H. Collins writes in his *Book of English Idioms:* "In standard spoken and written English today idiom is an established and essential element that, used with care, ornaments and enriches the language." [26]

Used with care is an important warning because speech overloaded with idioms loses its freshness and originality. Idioms, after all, are ready-made speech units, and their continual repetition sometimes wears them out: they lose their colours and become trite clichés. Such idioms can hardly be said to "ornament" or "enrich the language".

On the other hand, oral or written speech lacking idioms loses much in expressiveness, colour and emotional force.

In modern linguistics, there is considerable confusion about the terminology associated with these word-groups. Most Russian scholars use the term "phraseological unit" *("фразеологическая единица*") which was first introduced by Academician V.V.Vinogradov whose contribution to the theory of Russian phraseology cannot be overestimated. The term "idiom" widely used by western scholars has comparatively recently found its way into Russian phraseology but is applied mostly to only a certain type of phraseological unit as it will be clear from further explanations.

There are some other terms denoting more or less the same linguistic phenomenon: *set-expressions, set-phrases, phrases, fixed word-groups, collocations.*

The confusion in the terminology reflects insufficiency of positive or wholly reliable criteria by which phraseological units can be distinguished from "free" word-groups.

It should be pointed out at once that the "freedom" of free word-groups is relative and arbitrary. Nothing is entirely "free" in speech as its linear relationships are governed, restricted and regulated, on the one hand, by requirements of logic and common sense and, on the other, by the rules of grammar and combinability. One can speak of *a black-eyed girl* but not of *a black-eyed table* (unless in a piece of modernistic poetry where anything is possible). Also, to say *the child was glad* is quite correct, but a *glad child* is wrong because in Modern English *glad* is attributively used only with a very limited number of nouns (e. g. *glad news),* and names of persons are not among them.

Free word-groups are so called not because of any absolute freedom in using them but simply because they are each time built up anew in the speech process where as idioms are used as ready-made units with fixed and constant structures.

How to Distinguish Phraseological Units from Free Word-Groups

This is probably the most discussed — and the most controversial

— problem in the field of phraseology. The task of distinguishing between free word-groups and phraseological units is further complicated by the existence of a great number of marginal cases, the so-called *semi-fixed* or *semi-free word-groups,* also called *non-phraseological word-groups* which share with phraseological units their structural stability but lack their semantic unity and figurativeness (e. g. *to go to school, to go by bus, to commit suicide).*

There are two major criteria for distinguishing between phraseological units and free word-groups: semantic and structural.

Compare the following examples:

A. Cambridge don: I'm told they're inviting more American professors to this university. Isn't it rather carrying coals to Newcastle?

(To carry coals to Newcastle means "to take something to a place where it is already plentiful and not needed". Cf. with the R. *В Тулу со своим самоваром.)*

B. This cargo ship is carrying coal to Liverpool.

The first thing that captures the eye is the semantic difference of the two word-groups consisting of the same essential constituents. In the second sentence the free word-group is *carrying coal* is used in the direct sense, the word *coal* standing for real hard, black coal and *carry* for the plain process of taking something from one place to another. The first context quite obviously has nothing to do either with coal or with transporting it, and the meaning of the whole word-group is something entirely new and far removed from the current meanings of the constituents.

Academician V. V. Vinogradov spoke of the semantic change in phraseological units as "a meaning resulting from a peculiar chemical combination of words". This seems a very apt comparison because in both cases between which the parallel is drawn an entirely new quality comes into existence.

The semantic shift affecting phraseological units does not consist in a mere change of meanings of each separate constituent part of the unit. The meanings of the constituents merge to produce an entirely new meaning: e. g. *to have a bee in one's bonnet* means "to have an obsession about something; to be eccentric or even a little mad". The humorous metaphoric comparison with a person who is distracted by a bee continually buzzing under his cap has become erased and half-forgotten, and the speakers using the expression hardly think of bees or bonnets but accept it in its transferred sense: "obsessed, eccentric".

That is what is meant when phraseological units are said to be characterised by semantic unity. In the traditional approach, phraseological units have been defined as word-groups conveying a single concept (whereas in free word-groups each meaningful component stands for a separate concept).

It is this feature that makes phraseological units similar to words: both words and phraseological units possess semantic unity (see Introduction). Yet, words are also characterised by structural unity which phraseological units very obviously lack being combinations of words.

Most Russian scholars today accept *the semantic criterion* of distinguishing phraseological units from free word-groups as the major one and base their research work in the field of phraseology on the definition of a phraseological unit offered by Professor A. V. Koonin,

the leading authority on problems of English phraseology in our country:

"A phraseological unit is a stable word-group characterised by a completely or partially transferred meaning." [12]

The definition clearly suggests that the degree of semantic change in a phraseological unit may vary ("completely or partially transferred meaning"). In actual fact the semantic change may affect either the whole word-group or only one of its components. The following phraseological units represent the first case: *to skate on thin ice (~ to* put oneself in a dangerous position; to take risks); *to wear one's heart on one's sleeve*[1] (~ to expose, so that everyone knows, one's most intimate feelings); *to have one's heart in one's boots (~* to be deeply depressed, anxious about something); *to have one's heart in one's mouth (~* to be greatly alarmed by what is expected to happen); *to have one's heart in the right place (~* to be a good, honest and generous fellow); *a crow in borrowed plumes* (£ a person pretentiously and unsuitably dressed; cf. with the R. *ворона в павлиньих перьях); a wolf in a sheep's clothing*[2] *(~* a dangerous enemy who plausibly poses as a friend).

The second type is represented by phraseological units in which one of the components preserves its current meaning and the other is used in a transferred meaning: *to lose (keep) one's temper, to fly into a temper, to fall ill, to fall in love (out of love), to stick to one's word (promise), to arrive at a conclusion, bosom friends, shop talk* (also: *to talk shop), small talk.*

[1] The origin of the phrase is in a passage in *Othello* where Iago says:

> ... 'tis not long after
> But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve For
> daws to peck at.
>
> (Act I, Sc. 1)

[2] The allusion is to a fable of Aesop.

Here, though, we are on dangerous ground because the border-line dividing phraseological units with partially changed meanings from the so-called *semi-fixed* or *non-phraseological word-groups* (marginal cases) is uncertain and confusing.

The term "idiom", both in this country and abroad, is mostly applied to phraseological units with completely transferred meanings, that is, to the ones in which the meaning of the whole unit does not correspond to the current meanings of the components. There are many scholars who regard idioms as the essence of phraseology and the major focus of interest in phraseology research.

The structural criterion also brings forth pronounced distinctive features characterising phraseological units and contrasting them to free word-groups.

Structural invariability is an essential feature of phraseological units, though, as we shall see, some of them possess it to a lesser degree than others. Structural invariability of phraseological units finds expression in a number of restrictions.

First of all, restriction in substitution. As a rule, no word can be substituted for any meaningful component of a phraseological unit without destroying its sense. *To carry coals to Manchester* makes as little sense as Б *Харьков со своим самоваром*.

The idiom *to give somebody the cold shoulder* means "to treat somebody coldly, to ignore or cut him", but a *warm shoulder* or *a cold elbow* make no sense at all. The meaning of *a bee in smb's bonnet* was explained above, but *a bee in his hat* or *cap* would sound a

silly error in choice of words, one of those absurd slips that people are apt to make when speaking a foreign language.

At the same time, in free word-groups substitution does not present any dangers and does not lead to any serious consequences. In *The cargo ship is carrying coal to Liverpool* all the components can be changed:

The ship/vessel/boat carries/transports/takes/brings coal to (any port).

The second type of restriction is the restriction in introducing any additional components into the structure of a phraseological unit.

In a free word-group such changes can be made without affecting the general meaning of the utterance: *This big ship is carrying a large cargo of coal to the port of Liverpool.*

In the phraseological unit *to carry coals to Newcastle* no additional components can be introduced. Nor can one speak about *the big white elephant* (when using *the white elephant* in its phraseological sense) or about somebody *having his heart in his brown boots.*

Yet, such restrictions are less regular. In *Vanity Fair* by W. M. Thackeray the idiom *to build a castle in the air* is used in this way:

> "While dressing for dinner, she built *for herself* a *most magnificent* castle in the air *of which she was the mistress ..."*

In fiction such variations of idioms created for stylistic purposes are not a rare thing. In oral speech phraseological units mostly preserve their traditional structures and resist the introduction of additional components.

The third type of structural restrictions in phraseological units is grammatical invariability. A typical mistake with students of English is to use the plural form of *fault* in the phraseological unit to *find fault with somebody* (e. g. *The teacher always found faults with the boy).* Though the plural form in this context is logically well-founded, it is a mistake in terms of the grammatical invariability of phraseological units >. A similar typical mistake often occurs in the unit *from head to foot* (e. g. *From head to foot he was immaculately dressed).* Students are apt to use the plural form of *foot* in this phrase thus erring once more against the rigidity of structure which is so characteristic of phraseological units.

Yet again, as in the case of restriction in introducing additional components, there are exceptions to the rule, and these are probably even more numerous.

One can *build a castle in the air,* but also *castles.* A shameful or dangerous family secret is picturesquely described as *a skeleton in the cupboard,* the first substantive component being frequently and easily used in the plural form, as in: *I'm sure they have skeletons in every cupboard! A black sheep* is a disreputable member of a family who, in especially serious cases, may be described as *the blackest sheep of the family.*

Proverbs

Consider the following examples of proverbs:

We never know the value of water till the well is dry.

You can take the horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink.

Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

Even these few examples clearly show that proverbs are different from those phraseological units which have been discussed above. The first distinctive feature that strikes one is the obvious structural dissimilarity. Phraseological units, as we have seen, are a kind of

ready-made blocks which fit into the structure of a sentence performing a certain syntactical function, more or less as words do. E. g. *George liked her for she never put on airs* (predicate). *Big bugs like him care nothing about small fry like ourselves,* (a) subject, b) prepositional object).

Proverbs, if viewed in their structural aspect, are sentences, and so cannot be used in the way in which phraseological units are used in the above examples.

If one compares proverbs and phraseological units in the semantic aspect, the difference seems to become even more obvious. Proverbs could be best compared with minute fables for, like the latter, they sum up the collective experience of the community. They moralise *(Hell is paved with good intentions),* give advice *(Don't judge a tree by its bark),* give warning *(If you sing before breakfast, you will cry before night),* admonish *(Liars should have good memories),* criticise *(Everyone calls his own geese swans).*

No phraseological unit ever does any of these things. They do not stand for whole statements as proverbs do but for a single concept. Their function in speech is purely *nominative* (i. e. they denote an object, an act, etc.). The function of proverbs in speech, though, is *communicative* (i. e. they impart certain information).

The question of whether or not proverbs should be regarded as a subtype of phraseological units and studied together with the phraseology of a language is a controversial one.

Professor A. V. Koonin includes proverbs in his classification of phraseological units and labels them *communicative phraseological units* (see Ch. 13). From his point of view, one of the main criteria of a phraseological unit is its stability. If the quotient of phraseological stability in a word-group is not below the minimum, it means that we are dealing with a phraseological unit. The structural type — that is, whether the unit is a combination of words or a sentence — is irrelevant.

The criterion of nomination and communication cannot be applied here either, says Professor A. V. Koonin, because there are a considerable number of verbal phraseological units which are word-groups (i. e. nominative units) when the verb is used in the Active Voice, and sentences (i. e. communicative units) when the verb is used in the Passive Voice. E. g. *to cross (pass) the Rubicon — the Rubicon is crossed (passed); to shed crocodile tears — crocodile tears are shed.* Hence, if one accepts nomination as a criterion of referring or not referring this or that unit to phraseology, one is faced with the absurd conclusion that such word-groups, when with verbs in the Active Voice, are phraseological units and belong to the system of the language, and when with verbs in the Passive Voice, are non-phraseological word-groups and do not belong to the system of the language. [12]

It may be added, as one more argument in support of this concept, that there does not seem to exist any rigid or permanent border-line between proverbs and phraseological units as the latter rather frequently originate from the former.

So, the phraseological unit *the last straw* originated from the proverb *The last straw breaks the camel's back,* the phraseological unit *birds of a feather* from the proverb *Birds of a feather flock together,* the phraseological unit *to catch at a straw (straws)* from *A drowning man catches at straws.*

What is more, some of the proverbs are easily transformed into phraseological units. E. g. *Don't put all your eggs in one basket > to*

put all one's eggs in one basket; don't cast pearls before swine > to cast pearls before swine.

Exercises

I. Consider your answers to the following.

1 . What do we mean when we say that an idiom has a "double" meaning?

2. Why is it very important to use idioms with care? Should foreign-language students use them? Give reasons for your answer.

3. The term "phraseological unit" is used by most Russian scholars. What other terms are used to de scribe the same word-groups?

4. How can you show that the "freedom" of free word-groups is relative and arbitrary?

5. What are the two major criteria for distinguishing between phraseological units and free word-groups?

6. How would you explain the term "grammatical in variability" of phraseological units?

7. How do proverbs differ from phraseological units?

8. Can proverbs be regarded as a subdivision of phraseological units? Give reasons for your answer.

II., What is the source of the following idioms? If in doubt consult your reference books.

The Trojan horse, Achilles heel, a labour of Hercules, an apple of discord, forbidden fruit, the serpent in the tree, an ugly duckling, the fifth column, to hide one's head in the sand.

III. Substitute phraseological units with the noun "heart" for the italicised words. What is the difference between the two sentences?

1. He is not a man who *shows his feelings openly. 2.* She may seem cold but she *has true, kind feelings.* 3. I learned that piece of poetry *by memory.* 4. When I think about my examination tomorrow I *feel in despair.* 5. When I heard that strange cry in the darkness I *was terribly afraid.* 6. It was the job I *liked very much. 7.* I didn't win the prize but I'm *not discouraged.*

IV. Show that you understand the meaning of the following phraseological units by using each of them in a sentence.

1. Between the devil and the deep sea; 2. to have one's heart in one's boots; 3. to have one's heart in the right place; 4. to wear one's heart on one's sleeve; 5. in the blues; 6. once in a blue moon; 7. to swear black is white; 8. out of the blue; 9. to talk till all is blue; 10. to talk oneself blue in the face.

V. Substitute phraseological units incorporating the names of colours for the italicised words.

1. I'm *feeling* rather *miserable* today. 2. He spends all his time on *bureaucratic routine.* 3. A thing like that happens very *rarely.* 4. You can *talk till you are tired of it* but I shan't believe you. 5. The news was a great shock to me. It came quite *unexpectedly.* 6. I won't believe it unless I see it *in writing. 7.* You can never believe what he says, he will *swear anything* if it suits his purpose.

VI. Read the following jokes. Why do little children often misun-

derstand phraseological units? Explain how the misunderstanding arises in each case.

1 . "Now, my little boys and girls," said the teacher. "I want you to be very still — so still that you can hear a pin drop." For a minute all was still, and then a little boy shrieked out: "Let her drop."

2. "You must be pretty strong," said Willie, aged six to the young widow who had come to call on his mother.

"Strong? What makes you think so?"

"Daddy said you can wrap any man in town around your little finger."

S.Tom: What would you do if you were in my shoes?

Tim: Polish them!

4. Little Girl: Oh, Mr. Sprawler, do put on your skates and show me the funny figures you can make.

Mr. Sprawler: My dear child, I'm only a beginner. I can't make any figures.

Little Girl: But Mother said you were skating yesterday and cut a ridiculous figure.

VII. Read the following jokes. Explain why the italicised groups of words are not phraseological units.

Warning

The little boy whose father was *absorbed in reading* a newspaper on the bench *in the city park,* exclaimed:

"Daddy, look, a plane!"

His father, still reading the paper, said: "All right, but don't *touch it."*

Great Discovery

A scientist rushed into the ops room of the space mission control centre: "You know that new gigantic computer which was to be the brain of the project? We have just *made a great discovery!"*

"What discovery?"

"It doesn't work!"

VIII. Explain whether the semantic changes in the following phraseological units are complete or partial. Paraphrase them.

To wear one's heart on one's sleeve; a wolf in a sheep's clothing; to fly into a temper; to stick to one's word; bosom friend; small talk; to cast pearls before swine; to beat about the bush; to add fuel to the fire; to fall ill; to fall in love; to sail under false colours; to be at sea.

IX. Say what structural variations are possible in the following phraseological units. If in doubt, consult the dictionaries.

To catch at a straw; a big bug; the last drop; to build a castle in the air; to weather the storm; to get the upper hand; to run for one's life; to do wonders; to run a risk; just the other way about.

CHAPTER 13

Phraseology: Principles of Classification

It would be interesting now to look at phraseological units from a different angle, namely: how are all these treasures of the language approached by the linguistic science? The very miscellaneous nature

of these units suggests the first course of action: they must be sorted out and arranged in certain classes which possess identical characteristics.

But which characteristics should be chosen as the main criteria for such a classification system? The structural? The semantic? Those of degree of stability? Of origin?

It should be clear from the previous description that a phraseological unit is a complex phenomenon with a number of important features, which can therefore be approached from different points of view. Hence, there exist a considerable number of different classification systems devised by different scholars and based on different principles.

The traditional and oldest principle for classifying phraseological units is based on their original content and might be alluded to as *"thematic"* (although the term is not universally accepted). The approach is widely used in numerous English and American guides to idiom, phrase books, etc. On this principle, idioms are classified according to their sources of origin, "source" referring to the particular sphere of human activity, of life of nature, of natural phenomena, etc. So, L. P. Smith gives in his classification groups of idioms used by sailors, fishermen, soldiers, hunters and associated with the realia, phenomena and conditions of their occupations. In Smith's classification we also find groups of idioms associated with domestic and wild animals and birds, agriculture and cooking. There are also numerous idioms drawn from sports, arts, etc.

This principle of classification is sometimes called *"etymological"*. The term does not seem appropriate since we usually mean something different when we speak of the etymology of a word or word-group: whether the word (or word-group) is native or borrowed, and, if the latter, what is the source of borrowing. It is true that Smith makes a special study of idioms borrowed from other languages, but that is only a relatively small part of his classification system. The general principle is not etymological.

Smith points out that word-groups associated with the sea and the life of seamen are especially numerous in English vocabulary. Most of them have long since developed metaphorical meanings which have no longer any association with the sea or sailors. Here are some examples.

To be all at sea — to be unable to understand; to be in a state of ignorance or bewilderment about something (e. g. *How can I be a judge in a situation in which I am all at sea? I'm afraid I'm all at sea in this problem).* V. H. Collins remarks that the metaphor is that of a boat tossed about, out of control, with its occupants not knowing where they are. [26]

To sink or swim — to fail or succeed (e. g. *It is a case of sink or swim. All depends on his own effort.)*

In deep water — in trouble or danger.

In low water, on the rocks — in strained financial circumstances.

To be in the same boat with somebody — to be in a situation in which people share the same difficulties and dangers (e. g. *I don't like you much, but seeing that we're in the same boat I'll back you all I can).* The metaphor is that of passengers in the life-boat of a sunken ship.

To sail under false colours — to pretend to be what one is not; sometimes, to pose as a friend and, at the same time, have hostile intentions. The metaphor is that of an enemy ship that approaches its intended prey showing at the mast the flag ("colours") of a pretended friendly nation.

To show one's colours — to betray one's real character or inten-

tions. The allusion is, once more, to a ship showing the flag of its country at the mast.

To strike one's colours — to surrender, give in, admit one is beaten. The metaphor refers to a ship's hauling down its flag (sign of surrender).

To weather (to ride out) the storm — to overcome difficulties; to have courageously stood against misfortunes.

To bow to the storm — to give in, to acknowledge one's defeat.

Three sheets in(to) the wind (sl.) — very drunk.

Half seas over (sl.) — drunk.

Though, as has been said, direct associations with seafaring in all these idioms have been severed, distant memories of the sea romance and adventure still linger in some of them. The faint sound of the surf can still be heard in such phrases as *to ride out the storm* or *breakers ahead! (=* Take care! Danger!). Such idioms as *to sail under false colours, to nail one's colours to the mast (~* to be true to one's convictions, to fight for them openly) bring to mind the distant past of pirate brigs, sea battles and great discoveries of new lands.

It is true, though, that a foreigner is more apt to be struck by the colourfulness of the direct meaning of an idiom where a native speaker sees only its transferred meaning, the original associations being almost fully forgotten. And yet, when we Russians use or hear the idiom *первая ласточка,* doesn't a dim image of the little bird flash before our mind, though, of course, we really mean something quite different? When we say *на воре и шапка горит,* are we entirely free from the picture built up by the direct meanings of the words? If it were really so and all the direct associations of the idioms had been entirely erased, phraseology would not constitute one of the language's main expressive resources. Its expressiveness and wealth of colour largely — if not solely — depend on the ability of an idiom to create two images at once: that of a ship safely coming out of the storm — and that of a man overcoming his troubles and difficulties *(to weather/ride out the storm);* that of a ship's crew desperately fighting against a pirate brig — and that of a man courageously standing for his views and convictions *(to nail one's colours to the mast),*

The thematic principle of classifying phraseological units has real merit but it does not take into consideration the linguistic characteristic features of the phraseological units.

The considerable contribution made by Russian scholars in phraseological research cannot be exaggerated. We have already mentioned the great contribution made by Academician V. V. Vinogradov to this branch of linguistic science.

The classification system of phraseological units devised by this prominent scholar is considered by some linguists of today to be outdated, and yet its value is beyond doubt because it was the first classification system which was based on *the semantic principle.* It goes without saying that semantic characteristics are of immense importance in phraseological units. It is also well known that in modern research they are often sadly ignored. That is why any attempt at studying the semantic aspect of phraseological units should be appreciated.

Vinogradov's classification system is founded on the degree of semantic cohesion between the components of a phraseological unit. Units with a partially transferred meaning show the weakest cohesion between their components. The more distant the meaning of a phraseological unit from the current meaning of its constituent parts, the greater is its degree of semantic cohesion. Accordingly, Vinogradov classifies phraseological units into three classes: *phraseological com-*

binations, unities and fusions (R. *фразеологические сочетания, единства и сращения).* [9]

Phraseological combinations are word-groups with a partially changed meaning. They may be said to be clearly motivated, that is, the meaning of the unit can be easily deduced from the meanings of its constituents.

E. g. *to be at one's wits' end, to be good at something, to be a good hand at something, to have a bite, to come off a poor second, to come to a sticky end* (coll.), *to look a sight* (coll.), *to take something for granted, to stick to one's word, to stick at nothing, gospel truth, bosom friends.*

Phraseological unities are word-groups with a completely changed meaning, that is, the meaning of the unit does not correspond to the meanings of its constituent parts. They are motivated units or, putting it another way, the meaning of the whole unit can be deduced from the meanings of the constituent parts; the metaphor, on which the shift of meaning is based, is clear and transparent.

E. g. *to stick to one's guns* (~ to be true to one's views or convictions. The image is that of a gunner or guncrew who do not desert their guns even if a battle seems lost); *to sit on the fence (~ in* discussion, politics, etc. refrain from committing oneself to either side); *to catch/clutch at a straw/straws (~* when in extreme danger, avail oneself of even the slightest chance of rescue); *to lose one's head (~* to be at a loss what to do; to be out of one's mind); *to lose one's heart to smb.* (~ to fall in love); *to lock the stable door after the horse is stolen* (~ to take precautions too late, when the mischief is done); *to look a gift horse in the mouth (=* to examine a present too critically; to find fault with something one gained without effort); *to ride the high horse (~ to* behave in a superior, haughty, overbearing way. The image is that of a person mounted on a horse so high that he looks down on others); *the last drop/straw* (the final culminating circumstance that makes a situation unendurable); *a big bug/pot,* sl. (a person of importance); *a fish out of water* (a person situated uncomfortably outside his usual or proper environment).

Phraseological fusions are word-groups with a completely changed meaning but, in contrast to the unities, they are demotivated, that is, their meaning cannot be deduced from the meanings of the constituent parts; the metaphor, on which the shift of meaning was based, has lost its clarity and is obscure.

E. g. *to come a cropper* (to come to disaster); *neck and crop* (entirely, altogether, thoroughly, as in: *He was thrown out neck and crop. She severed all relations with them neck and crop.); at sixes and sevens* (in confusion or in disagreement); *to set one's cap at smb.* (to try and attract a man; spoken about girls and women. The image, which is now obscure, may have been either that of a child trying to catch a butterfly with his cap or of a girl putting on a pretty cap so as to attract a certain person. In *Vanity Fair: "Be careful, Joe, that girl is setting her cap at you."); to leave smb. in the lurch* (to abandon a friend when he is in trouble); *to show the white feather* (to betray one's cowardice. The allusion was originally to cock fighting. A white feather in a cock's plumage denoted a bad fighter); *to dance attendance on smb.* (to try and please or attract smb.; to show exaggerated attention to smb.).

It is obvious that this classification system does not take into account the structural characteristics of phraseological units. On the other hand, the border-line separating unities from fusions is vague and even subjective. One and the same phraseological unit may appear motivated to one person (and therefore be labelled as a unity)

and demotivated to another (and be regarded as a fusion). The more profound one's command of the language and one's knowledge of its history, the fewer fusions one is likely to discover in it.

The structural principle of classifying phraseological units is based on their ability to perform the same syntactical functions as words. In the traditional structural approach, the following principal groups of phraseological units are distinguishable.

A. Verbal. E. g. *to run for one's (dear) life, to get (win) the upper hand, to talk through one's hat, to make a song and dance about something, to sit pretty* (Amer. sl.).

B. Substantive. E. g. *dog's life, cat-and-dog life, calf love, white lie, tall order, birds of a feather, birds of passage, red tape, brown study.*

C. Adjectival. E. g. *high and mighty, spick and span, brand new, safe and sound.* In this group the so-called comparative word-groups are particularly expressive and sometimes amusing in their unanticipated and capricious associations: (as) *cool as a cucumber, (as) nervous as a cat, (as) weak as a kitten, (as) good as gold* (usu. spoken about children), (as) *pretty as a picture, as large as life, (as) slippery as an eel, (as) thick as thieves, (as) drunk as an owl (sl.), (as) mad as a hatter/a hare in March.*

D. Adverbial. E. g. *high and low* (as in *They searched for him high and low), by hook or by crook* (as in *She decided that, by hook or by crook, she must marry him), for love or money* (as in *He came to the conclusion that a really good job couldn't be found for love or money), in cold blood* (as in *The crime was said to have been committed in cold blood), in the dead of night, between the devil and the deep sea* (in a situation in which danger threatens whatever course of action one takes), *to the bitter end* (as in *to fight to the bitter end), by a long chalk* (as in *It is not the same thing, by a long chalk).*

E. Interjectional. **E. g.** *my God/ by Jove! by George! goodness gracious! good Heavens! sakes alive!* (Amer.)

Professor Smirnitsky offered a classification system for English phraseological units which is interesting as an attempt to combine the structural and the semantic principles [12] Phraseological units in this classification system are grouped according to the number and semantic significance of their constituent parts. Accordingly two large groups are established:

A. one-summit units, which have one meaningful constituent (e. g. *to give up, to make out, to pull out, to be tired, to be surprised*[1]*);*

B. two-summit and multi-summit units which have two or more meaningful constituents (e. g. *black art, first night, common sense, to fish in troubled waters).*

Within each of these large groups the phraseological units are classified according to the category of parts of speech of the summit constituent. So, one-summit units are subdivided into: a) verbal-adverbial units equivalent to verbs in which the semantic and the grammatical centres coincide in the first constituent (e. g. *to give up);* b) units equivalent to verbs which have their semantic centre in the second constituent and their grammatical centre in the first (e. g. *to be tired); c)* prepositional-substantive units equivalent either to adverbs or to copulas and having their semantic centre in the substantive constituent and no grammatical centre (e. g. *by heart, by means of).*

Two-summit and multi-summit phraseological units are classified into: a) attributive-substantive two-summit units equivalent to nouns (e. g. *black art),*

[1] *It should be pointed out that most Russian scholars do not re-*

gard these as phraseological units; so this is a controversial point.

b) verbal-substantive two-summit units equivalent to verbs (e. g. *to take the floor),* c) phraseological repetitions equivalent to adverbs (e. g. *now or never);* d) adverbial multi-summit units (e. g. *every other day).*

Professor Smirnitsky also distinguishes proper phraseological units which, in his classification system, are units with non-figurative meanings, and idioms, that is, units with transferred meanings based on a metaphor.

Professor Koonin, the leading Russian authority on English phraseology, pointed out certain inconsistencies in this classification system. First of all, the subdivision into phraseological units (as non-idiomatic units) and idioms contradicts the leading criterion of a phraseological unit suggested by Professor Smirnitsky: it should be idiomatic.

Professor Koonin also objects to the inclusion of such word-groups as *black art, best man, first night* in phraseology (in Professor Smirnitsky's classification system, the two-summit phraseological units) as all these word-groups are not characterised by a transferred meaning. It is also pointed out that verbs with post-positions (e. g. *give up)* are included in the classification but their status as phraseological units is not supported by any convincing argument.

* * *

The classification system of phraseological units suggested by Professor A. V. Koonin is the latest out-standing achievement in the Russian theory of phraseology. The classification is based on the combined structural-semantic principle and it also considers the quotient of stability of phraseological units.

Phraseological units are subdivided into the following four classes according to their function in communication determined by their structural-semantic characteristics.

1 . Nominative phraseological units are represented by word-groups, including the ones with one meaningful word, and coordinative phrases of the type *wear and tear, well and good.*

The first class also includes word-groups with a predicative structure, such as *as the crow flies,* and, also, predicative phrases of the type *see how the land lies, ships that pass in the night.*

2. Nominative-communicative phraseological units include word-groups of the type *to break the ice — the ice is broken,* that is, verbal word-groups which are transformed into a sentence when the verb is used in the Passive Voice.

3. Phraseological units which are neither nominative nor communicative include interjectional word-groups.

4. Communicative phraseological units are represented by proverbs and sayings.

These four classes are divided into sub-groups according to the type of structure of the phraseological unit. The sub-groups include further rubrics representing types of structural-semantic meanings according to the kind of relations between the constituents and to either full or partial transference of meaning.

The classification system includes a considerable number of subtypes and gradations and objectively reflects the wealth of types of phraseological units existing in the language. It is based on truly scientific and modern criteria and represents an earnest attempt to take into account all the relevant aspects of phraseological units and combine them within the borders of one classification system. [10].