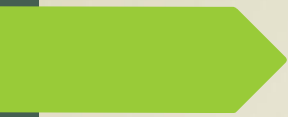# Meaning Formation. Meaning and Notion. Meaning in Morphemes.

English Lexicology, lecture 4.

Ecaterina Albu, MA, senior university lecturer

- 2 approaches to word meaning
- Meaning and Notion
- Types of Word Meaning
- Types of Morpheme Meaning

Semantics

branch of linguistics which studies **meaning** of words and **word equivalents**

2 Approaches to Word Meaning

- The **Referential** Approach
- The **Functional** Approach

Referential Approach

- essence of meaning => **interdependence** between **words** and **things** or **concepts** they **denote**

- distinguishes between **3 components** closely connected with meaning:

- the **sound-form** of the linguistic sign

- the **concept**

- the **referent**

Semantic Triangle

a small animal with fur, four legs, a tail, and claws, usually kept as a pet or for catching mice

Cute, independent, elegant, intelligent, mean, ancient Egypt, bad luck,

concept
(thought, reference)
the thought of the object that singles out its essential features
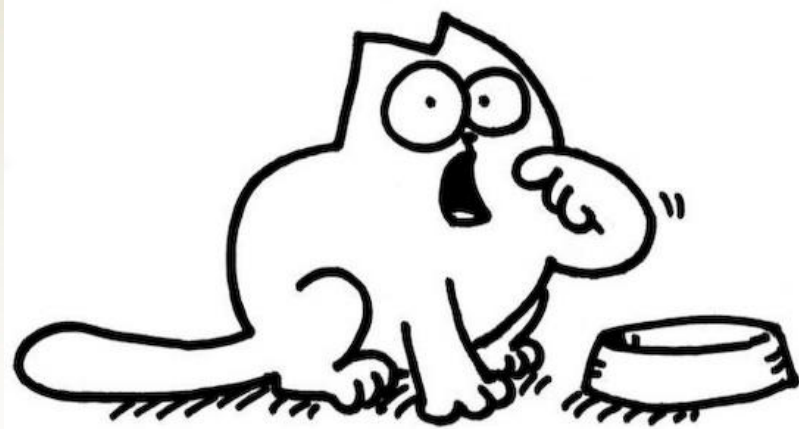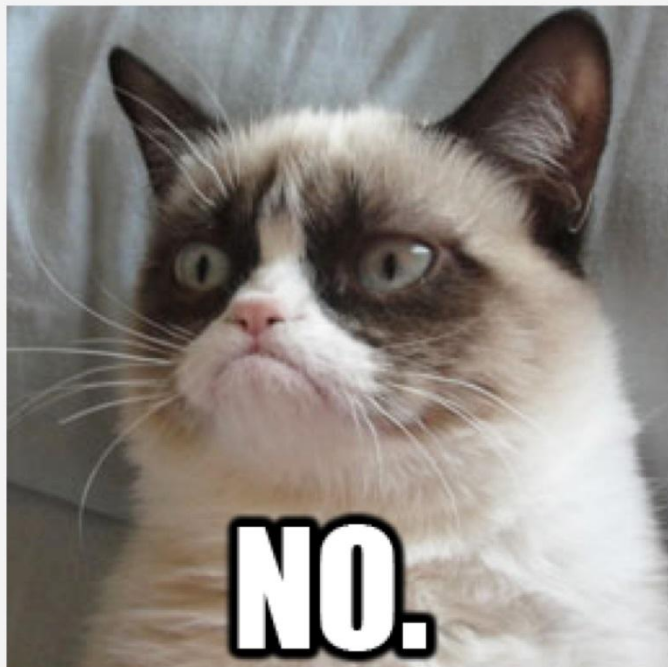
sound-form
(symbol, sign)
linguistic sign

/kæt/

猫

Cat (Eng)
Pisica (Ro)
Кот (Ru)
Neko (Jap)
Katze (Germ)
Gato (Sp)

referent
object
denoted by
the word, part
of reality
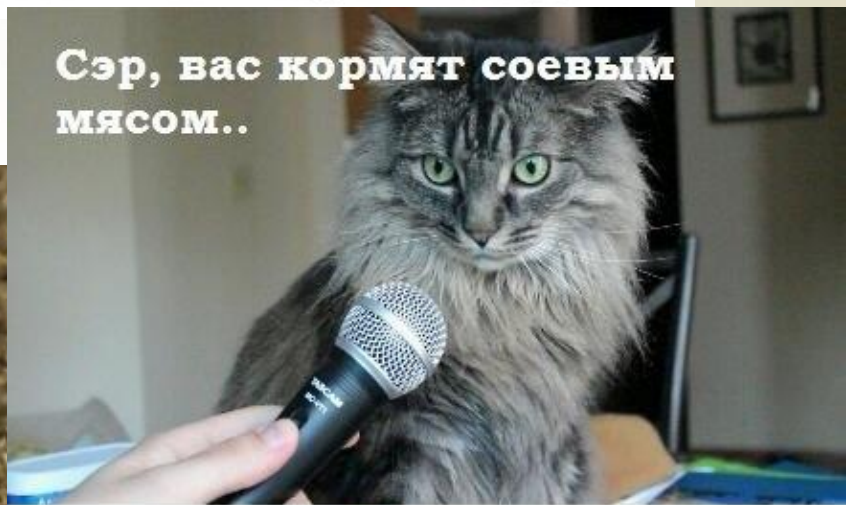
Meaning and Sound-form

☐ are not identical

cat (Eng)
pisica (Ro)
кот (Ru)
Katze (Germ)
gato (Sp)
neko (Jap)
chat (Fr)

different sound-forms MAY convey *one* and the same mng

- **nearly identical sound-forms may have different meanings in different languages**

e.g. *[**kot**] English – a small bed for a child* **- cot**

*[**kot**] Romanian – elbow* **- cot**

*[**kot**] Russian – a male cat* - **кот**

- **identical sound-forms may have different meanings (homonyms)**

e.g. *knight [nait]*

night [nait]

even considerable changes in sound-form do not affect the meaning

e.g. OE lufian [luvian] – love [lʌv]

What's a "cat"?

a small animal with fur, four legs, a tail, and claws, usually kept as a pet or for catching mice

Meaning and Concept

- **concept** is a category of human **cognition**

- **concept** is **abstract** and reflects the most **common** and **typical features** of different objects and phenomena in the world

- **concept** is **almost the same** for the whole humanity in one and the same period of its historical development

- **meanings** of words are **different** in different languages

- **identical concepts may have different semantic structures in different languages**

e.g. concept "a building for human habitation" – in English HOUSE ≠

in Russian ДОМ (+ "fixed residence of family or household)=> HOME

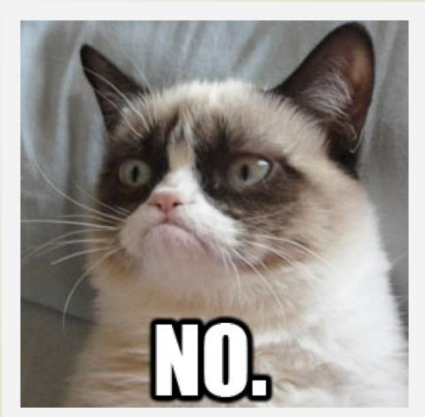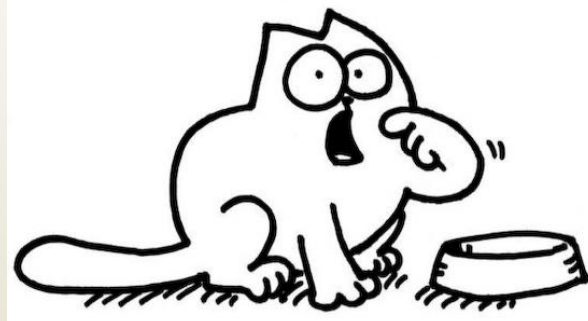- **one and the same concept possess meaning which is felt as different in each of the units**

e.g. "young child" – child, baby, babe, infant

Meaning and Referent

- **referent** is **beyond** the scope of lge =has nothing to do with lge

- one and the same **object** (referent) may be **denoted** by **more than one word** of a different meaning

e.g. cat – kitty, animal, that stupid thing, monster, pig

Один иностранец путешествовал по российским глубинкам, и в одной из деревушек увидел, как бабка гусей гоняет, приговаривая "Пошли, пошли собаки", тот ничего не понимая заглядывает в словарь (нет, все вроде верно - гуси), тогда он спрашивает у бабки "Это гуси?"
Она ему отвечает
"Да гуси, гуси" -"А почему же вы их тогда собаками называете?"
-"Да потому что они мне, свиньи, весь огород вытоптали!!!!!"

angel

Meaning

- **a component of a word** through which **a concept is communicated**, in this way giving the word the **ability** to **denote objects, qualities, abstract notions**
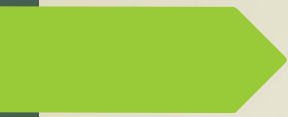
Functional Approach

☐ studies the **functions** of a word in speech

☐ meaning of a word is studied through **relations of it with other linguistic units**

e.g. *to move* (_we_ move, move _a chair_)

   movement (movement _of smth_, _slow_ movement)

- **Notion** denotes the **reflection in the mind of real objects** and phenomena in their relations
- **Notion** is a **unit** of **thinking**
- **Lexical meaning** is the realization of a notion by means of a **definite language system**
- **Word** is a **language unit**

Lexical Meaning and Notion

- **Notions** are always **emotionally neutral** as they are a **category of thought**.

- **Lexical meanings** convey not only reflection of objective reality but also the **speaker's state of mind** and his **attitude** to what he is speaking about.
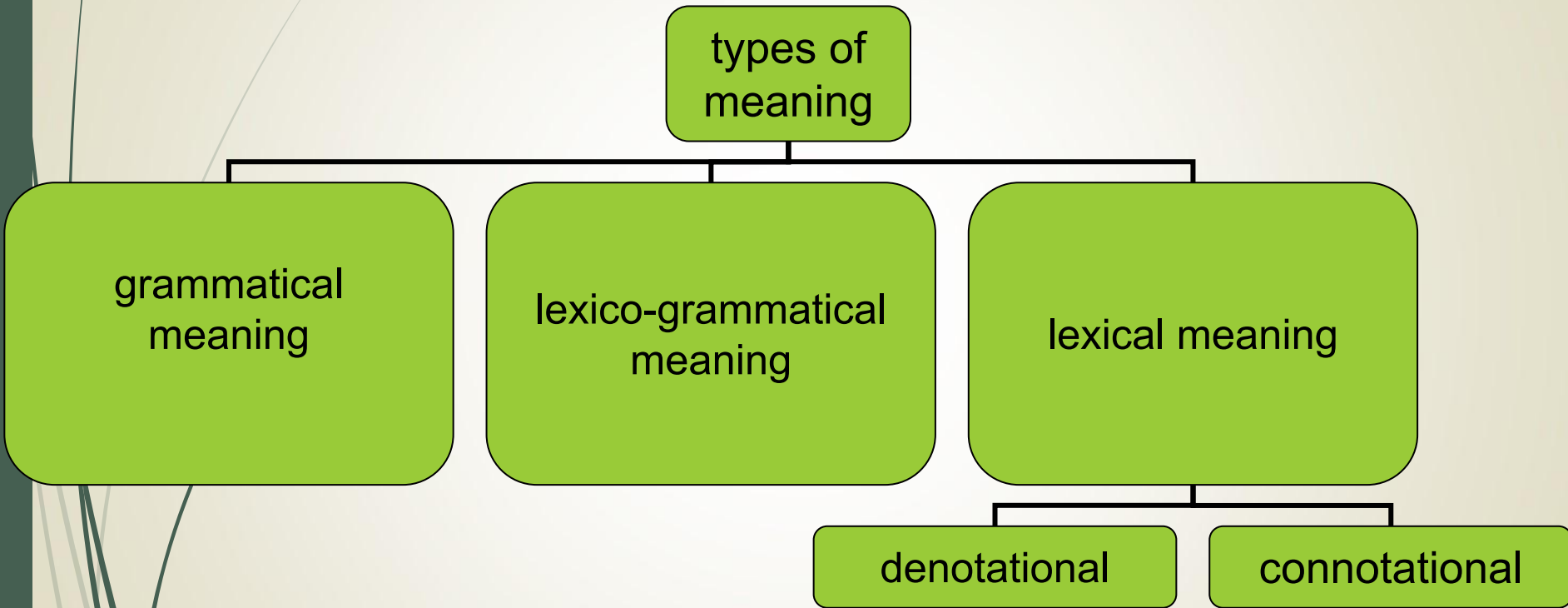
child

kid, brat, sweetie

Types of Meaning

```
                    ┌─────────────┐
                    │  types of   │
                    │  meaning    │
                    └─────────────┘
        ┌──────────────────┼──────────────────┐
┌───────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
│  grammatical  │  │ lexico-grammatical│  │  lexical meaning │
│   meaning     │  │     meaning       │  │                  │
└───────────────┘  └──────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘
                                          ┌────────┴────────┐
                                    ┌─────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
                                    │ denotational│  │ connotational│
                                    └─────────────┘  └──────────────┘
```

Grammatical Meaning

- component of meaning recurrent in identical sets of individual forms of different words

e.g. ***girls, winters, toys, tables*** – *grammatical meaning of* ***plurality***

asked, thought, walked – *meaning of* ***past tense***

Grammatical inflection	MEANING
-ed	Past simple
-ing	Continuous aspect
-s / -es	Present Simple, 3rd person, singular
-s	Plural
-'s	Possessive case
-er	Comparative degree
(the) –est	Superlative degree

Lexico-grammatical meaning

- Name of all the meanings of words belonging to a lexico-grammatical class

*e.g. **action** – generic term for verbs*

- words of one lexico-grammatical class have the same **paradigm (set of all grammatical forms)**

Lexical Meaning

- component of meaning proper to a word as a linguistic unit met in all word-forms

e.g. **go-goes-went-gone**

lexical *meaning* – **process** *of movement*

grammatical *meaning* – **tense** *and* **person**

Morphemes have

- **lexical** mng
- **differential** mng
- **functional** mng
- **distributional** mng

Lexical Meaning in Morphemes

- **root-morphemes** that are **homonymous** to words possess **lexical** meaning

e.g. *boy* – *boy*hood – *boy*ish

- affixes have lexical meaning of a more **generalized** character

e.g. **–er** – *agent, doer of an action*

*teach**er**, work**er**, writ**er**, comput**er***

Lexical Meaning in Morphemes

☐ has **denotational** and **connotational** components

e.g. **–ly, -like, -ish** – *denotational meaning of similiarity* – *woman**ly**, woman**like**, woman**ish***

connotational component - ***-ly** (positive evaluation),* ***-ish** (derogatory)*

Differential Meaning

▪ a semantic component that serves to **distinguish one word from all others** containing **identical** morphemes

*e.g. **cran**berry, **black**berry, **rasp**berry, **straw**berry*

Functional Meaning

 found **only** in **derivational** affixes (suffixes, prefixes)

 a **semantic** component which serve to refer the word to the certain **part of speech**

*e.g. just, adj. – just**ice**, n.*

*effect, n. – effect**ive**, adj.*

Distributional Meaning

- the meaning of the **order** and the **arrangement** of morphemes making up the word

- is found in words containing more than one morpheme

- **different arrangement** of the same morphemes would make the **word meaningless**

e.g. sing- + -er =singer, -er + sing- = ?