

English Lexicology

Lecture 5

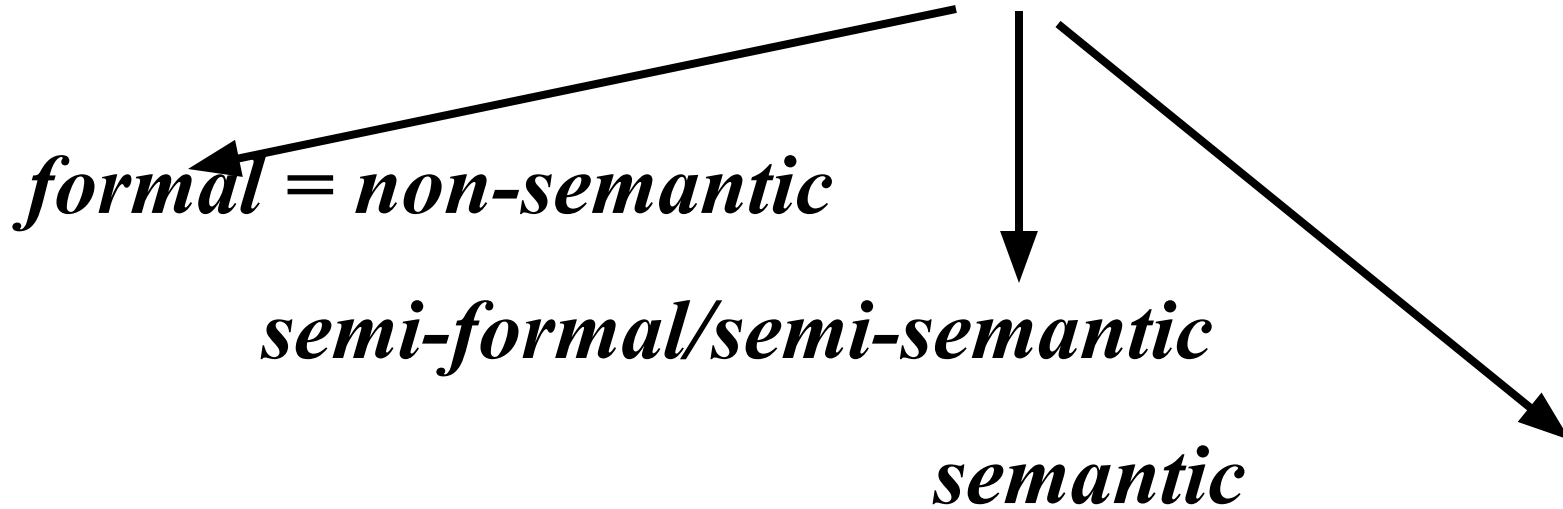
SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF THE LEXICON

Questions for discussion:

- 1. Approaches to the classification of the lexicon.**
- 2. Semantic classifications of the lexicon.**
- 3. Semi-semantic classifications of the lexicon.**

**How exactly do the lexemes within
the lexicon *relate to each other*?**

CLASSIFICATION of the lexicon



FORMAL classifications of words:

- 1) *alphabetical* organization;
- 2) according to the *frequency of usage*;
- 3) according to the *length of words*;
- 4) into *homographs & homophones*;
- 5) according to the *morphological structure of words* (*root words, derivatives, compound words*)

SEMANTIC STRUCTURE of
the lexicon – *the totality of all mg
relationships connecting lexemes
together*

2. SEMANTIC classifications of words:

- 1) semantic/lexical fields (SF/LF);**
- 2) hypero-hyponymic sets (HHS);**
- 3) synonymic sets (SS);**
- 4) antonymic sets (AS).**

2.1. **LEXICAL FIELD** – a closely organized sector of vocabulary, whose elements fit together & define each other in specific ways (*‘delimit each other like pieces in a mosaic’*).

**The common denominator of mg –
one of the components of mg that
can be found in all the lexical units
belonging to the LF.**

- **SF: sphere of reality is analysed & classified in a unique way: particular vision of the world is reflected**

CULTURAL differences:

- **kinship terms:** ‘*mother-in-law*’, ‘*sibling*’/*siblings*;
 - **names of meals:** ‘*lunch*’;
- **scale of colours:** ‘*taupe*’ = ‘coffee with milk’;
‘*marine*’ = ‘colour of the sea wave’, ‘*blue*’
- ‘**red**’: scarlet, vermilion, crimson, poppy, burgundy, maroon, purple

❖ **number & nature of colour distinctions is a matter of **habit & convention****

▪ **the field of COLORS is structured differently in different lgs & sometimes it is very difficult, if not impossible, to translate names of colors, even if the chromatic spectrum perceived by people in different countries (i.e. the conceptual field) is the same.**

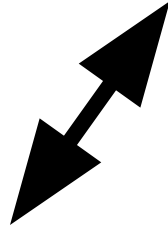
❖ **comparison of semantic fields** →:

✓ **a semantic universal?**

✓ **ways of ‘structuring’ a field?**

✓ **frequency of these ways?**

Mg of a word & its place in the lexical field



- ‘**white**’; ‘*white* coffee’, ‘*white* wine’, ‘*white* people’;
- ‘**good**’: 1) qualities
2) hotel rating.

□ the mg of a word is defined by *its place in the corresponding LF*

LEXICAL-SEMANTIC GROUP (LSG) –
comparatively *small* lexical groups belonging
to *the same part of speech* & linked by the
same concept

Semantic field theory develops from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1922):

- lg -- an interconnected system of signs**
- an alteration of any of the elements involves a change in the entire system**

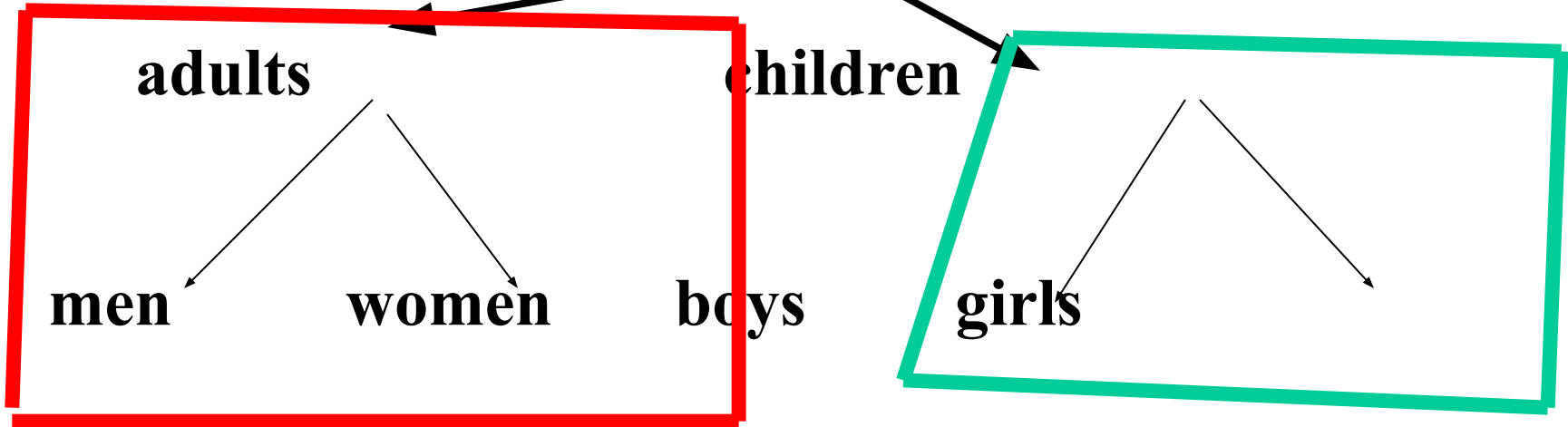
2.2. **HYPERO-HYPONYMIC SETS** – based on a semantic relationship of *inclusion*.

HHS – a LSG of words in which we differentiate btw a *hyperonym/hypernym* (a *more general* term) & a *hyponym* (a *more specific* one)

- **professions** (teachers, doctors etc.);
- **red** (scarlet, vermilion, crimson)

HHS of people:

People (hyperonym)



- **hyperonym** ↔ **hyponym**

CULTURAL differences:

(Eng.) *meals*: breakfast, lunch, dinner, -- supper

(Rus.) -- : завтрак, -- обед, полдник, ужин

- **no one-to-one correspondence** btw hyponyms &/or hyperonyms in different lgs
- **another approach to the classification of vocabulary items into LF/LSGs**

LEXICAL GAPS ???

- **The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis:**

“We dissect nature along the lines laid down by our native lg”



lg imposes a conceptual framework on our thinking w/out our noticing it

2.3. **SYNONYMIC** sets

- based on the *semantic similarity*

SYNONYMS – words different in their *sound-form*, but similar in their *denotational mg & interchangeable* at least in some *contexts*.



Types of **SYNONYMS**:

- 1) **perfect** (spectacles/eyeglasses; eye-doctor/oculist);
- 2) **stylistic** (happen, befall; insane, loony; salt, sodium chloride);
- 3) **ideographic** (big, gigantic; to walk – to stroll – to stride);
- 4) **collocational** (*rancid* bacon/*rotten* meat; *kingly* feast/*royal* mail);
- 5) **dialectal** (autumn/fall; post/mail)
- 6) **contextual** (exceptional/abnormal)

- the *law of synonymic attraction*
- the *dominant synonym* – the central word in a set (broad general mg; stylistically neutral, no connotations; high frequency of usage; broad combinability):

to shout, to yell, to bellow, to roar

■ 8 000

■ borrowing: *begin* (nat.)  *commence* (Fr.)
 *initiate* (Lat.)

2.4. **ANTONYMIC** sets

- based on the *semantic contrast*

ANTONYMS – words different in *sound-form* and characterised by different types of *semantic contrast of denotational mg & interchangeable* at least in some *contexts*.

- **complete antonyms** – rare: *veto – approval, vertical -- horizontal*
- **several antonyms (p/sem. words):** *thin (thick; fat)*

Types of ANTONYMS:

- 1) *gradable* = capable of comparison (large/small, happy/sad, wet/dry);
 - 2) *complementary* = ‘either/or’ relations, mutually exclusive (single/married, male/female, alive/dead);
 - 3) *converse terms* = mutually dependent (wife/husband, buy/sell, over/under).
- *derivational*: illogical, dislike, useless

SEMI-FORMAL

classifications of words:

- 1) associative fields;**
- 2) syntagmatic & paradigmatic relations;**
- 3) thematic groups.**

3.1. ASSOCIATIVE FIELD

letter, book, memoirs, SMS, blog;

pen, pencil, chalk;

scribble, scrabble, scrawl;

to write

read, speak;

writing, writer, handwriting, typewrite;

right, rite;

Twitter, Facebook, Instagram



ASSOCIATIVE FIELD – the whole
totality of associations aroused by a word

Typical features:

- 1) **unstable, highly variable;**
- 2) **vague ('subjective').**

3.2. PARADIGMATIC & SYNTAGMATIC RELATIONS

the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure:

2 groups of relations:

- **those on a paradigmatic &**
- **those on a syntagmatic level**

3.2. SYNTAGMATIC RELATIONS

P
A
R
A
D
I
G
M
A
T
I
C

My aunt bought a red automobile.

uncle purchased green car.

cousin sold black Ford.

accountant put on a second-hand dress.

SYNTAGMATIC relations – relations of words co-occurring in speech:

- free word-combinations
- idiomatic collocations/combinations

PARADIGMATIC relations – relations of single words outside speech contexts (*common function, similar mg in a lg system*).

3.3. **THEMATIC groups** – based on the common contextual associations of words (us. within the framework of the sentence):

- *journey – train – taxi – bags – tickets*

- ❖ no common denominator of mg

- ❖ *common contextual associations within the framework of the sentence*

- ❖ based on associations of words naming objects of *one peace of reality*

❖ *Roget's Thesaurus* (abstract relations, space, material world, intellect, volition, sentimental/moral power)

Interconnection btw different subdivisions !!!

P
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SYNTAGMATIC RELATIONS

Spheres of application:

- 1) foreign lg teaching**
- 2) speech therapy**
- 3) lg acquisition by young children**