

Metaphor and
metonymy
as basic mechanisms
of meaning change



What is Semantics?

- - In Linguistics, Semantics (from the Greek *semantikos*, or 'significant meaning', derived from *sema* 'sign') is traditionally defined as the study of meaning
- - the branch of linguistics that deals with the study of meaning, changes in meaning, and the principles that govern the relationship between sentences or words and their meanings

What is Semantic change?

- In semantics and historical linguistics, *semantic change* refers to any change in the meaning(s) of a word over the course of time. Also called *semantic shift*, *lexical change*, and *semantic progression*
- Semantic change in the context of words describes the gradual shift in the conventional meaning of words, as people use them in new types of contexts and these usages become normal. Often in the course of semantic change, a word shifts its meaning to the point that the modern meaning is radically different from the original usage.

- *awful* **originally** meant 'awe-inspiring, filling (someone) with deep awe'.

...the awful majesty of the mountains.

However, the word in informal usage **now** just means 'very bad'.

...an awful smell of paint...

The situation is awful for all of us

- "Semantic change is not a change in meaning per se, but the addition of a meaning to the semantic system or the loss of a meaning from the semantic system while the form remains constant."

(David P. Wilkins, "Natural Tendencies of Semantic Change and the Search for Cognates" in *The Comparative Method Reviewed*, ed. by M. Durie and M. Ross. Oxford University Press, 1996)

What is metaphor?

The word **metaphor** comes from Greek *metapherein*, which means — «to carry over», «to transfer»

Basically speaking, metaphor is describing one thing in terms of some other. These things have similarities as well as difference. The most significant difference is that the two belong to different domains.

A *metaphor* is a figure of speech in which an implied comparison is made between two unlike things that actually have something in common, for example “he is a lion in battle”

- A metaphor is an expression. This expression shows the similarity between two things on some aspects.
- Metaphor, literally, means “this for that.” Or, replacing this word for that word.

Metaphor is traditionally thought of as a kind of comparison.

- He is a tiger in class”
- *You are the sunshine of my life*
- *Candle in the wind*

- mouse(animal) > mouse (pointing device for computers)
- *grasp* 'seize" > grasp 'understand,

- **Compare:**

- The encyclopedia is a Gold mine.

Here the encyclopediall and Gold minell are totally different but they have **similarity** in a certain aspect

- The encyclopedia is a dictionary.

In this sentence, the encyclopediall and dictionary belong to the same category. It is not a metaphor

