

# **Stylistic Semasiology. Meaning from a Stylistic Point of View.**

## **Lecture 3**



# **Stylistic semasiology**

- a branch of stylistics which studies stylistic phenomena in the sphere of semantics (sphere of meanings).

**Meaning** - object of investigation for SS.

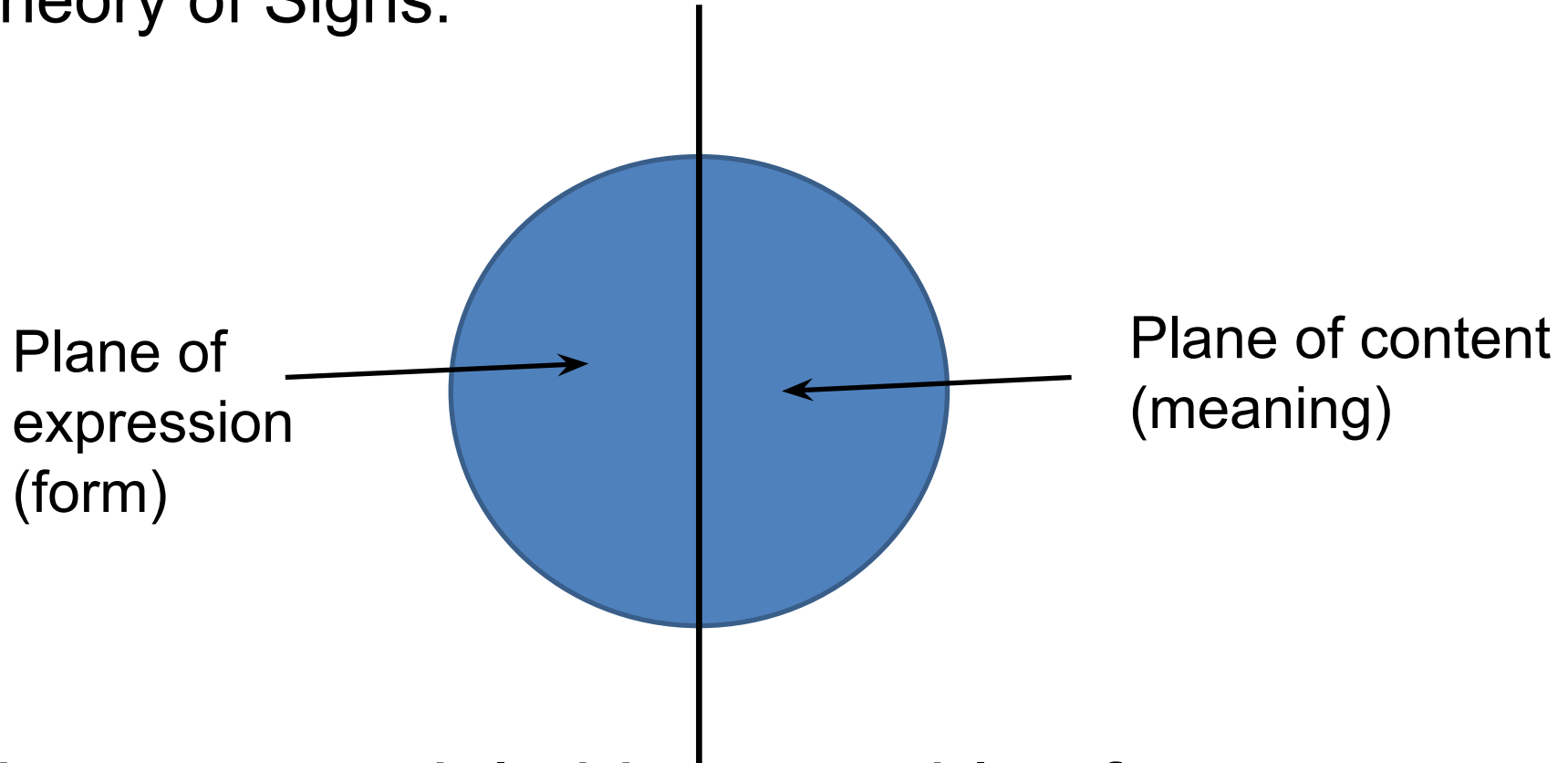
# **Semasiology vs Stylistic Semasiology**

**Semasiology (semantics)** - study of meaning in general.

**Stylistic Semasiology** - interactions of meanings, laws and patterns of shifts of meanings and stylistic functions of these shifts.

# What is meaning?

Theory of Signs:



Sign - a material object capable of denoting another object or idea.

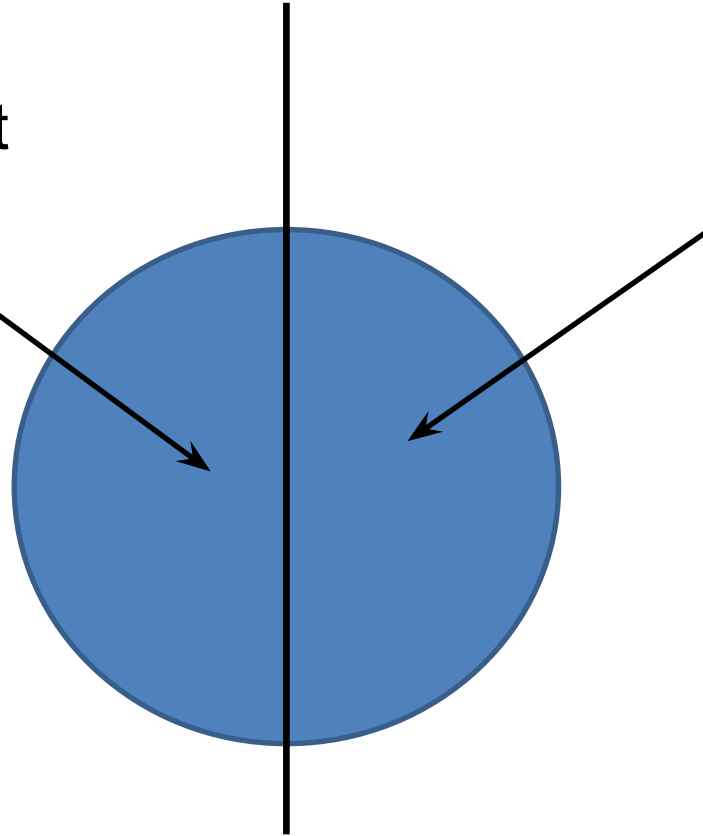
# Sign

- does not possess the properties of the object it denotes
- is made to denote another object
- people impose on certain objects the quality to denote other objects



# Words are signs

**Form:** a chain of vowel or consonant sounds / a chain of graphical signs



**Meaning:**  
materialized  
manifestations  
of ideas, things,  
phenomena,  
events, actions,  
properties and  
other concepts

Word has double nature - material and spiritual

# **Word in grammar and lexicology**

- a unit complete in itself
- its potentiality to acquire new meanings is restricted to semantic and grammatical acceptability
- a new-born meaning is acknowledged only when it has firmly asserted itself in language and become recognized by the majority of the language community

# **Word in stylistics**

A word has an almost unlimited **potentiality of acquiring new meanings**.

Meaning can be imposed on the words by the context (**contextual meanings**).



# Dictionary and Contextual Meaning

1. The governor said that he should not allow the presence of federal troops on the soil of his State.” (*the fact of being present*)
2. “... the General has been faced with the problem of the country’s presence on foreign soil, the stubborn resistance of officers and officials..” (*occupation*)

1. the fact of being present (dictionary meaning)
2. occupation (contextual – disappears if the context is changed)

1. bombing (negative)
2. air support (positive, contextual euphemistic synonym)

# **Denotational and Connotational Meaning**

1. Denotation (basic primary meaning)
2. Connotation (supplementary meaning of a word which accompanies the realization of its basic primary meaning)

# Connotation

- supplementary meaning of a word, which is added to the main meaning of the word, and expresses all sorts of emotive, expressive, evaluative, stylistic overtones which accompany the realization of its basic primary meaning

(Arnold 1981)

# **Emotive Connotation**

- a part of the word's content, reflecting the speaker's feeling, affections, experiences or prejudices.

(Arnold 1981)

e.g. darling, fascism

# Evaluative Connotation

- a part of the word's content, expressing the speaker's attitudes – of approval (positive evaluation) or disapproval (negative evaluation).

(Arnold 1981)

e.g. time-tested and out-of-date method

# **Stylistic Connotation**

- a part of the word's content, acquired by the word through associations concerning the situation in which the word is uttered, the social circumstances (formal, familiar, etc.), the social relationships between the interlocutors, the type and purpose of communication.

(Arnold 1981)

e.g. to begin – to commence  
to go on – to proceed



# **Another Approach to Connotation**

differentiation between what a word explicitly names (denotes) and suggests (connotes)

e.g. cobra (a particular kind of snake) and connotations of “danger”, “attack”

# **Western Tradition**

**Connotation** - emotional associations (personal or general) which are part of the meaning of a lexical item.

(D. Crystal, R. Altick)

# **Figures of Speech**

- stylistic phenomena affected by various shifts of meanings

**Figures of replacement** (based on replacement of the habitual name of a thing by its situational (contextual) substitute)

**Figures of co-occurrence**

(based on combination of meanings in speech)

# Figures of Speech

## I. Figures of replacement (tropes)    II. Figures of co-occurrence

### 1. Figures of quantity

1. Hyperbole

2. Meiosis  
(= understatement)

### 2. Figures of quality

1. Metonymy  
(contiguity)

2. Metaphor  
(similarity)

3. Irony  
(contrast)

### 1. Figures of identity

- simile
- quasi-identity
- synonymous replacers

### 2. Figures of inequality

- climax
- anti-climax
- pun
- zeugma
- tautology

### 3. Figures of contrast

- oxymoron
- antithesis

Thank you!

