

CHAPTER II

LEXICAL SEMANTICS: WORD MEANING

1/ Reference and referent:

=> **Reference** is the **relationship** between a **word** or an **expression** and the **object** it is used to refer to (**referent**).

1.1/ Variable reference:

-> one expression is used to refer to different things or persons.

e.g: computer, classroom, Huong, Thang, Prime Minister...

1.2/ Constant reference:

-> one expression is used to refer to only one thing or person.

e.g: The Sun, the Moon, Vietnam, Halley's comet...

1.3/ Same referent:

-> different expressions refer to same thing or person.

e.g: General Secretary of the party and President of the country.

=> **Referent** of a referring expression is the **thing**, **person** picked out by the use of that expression on a **particular occasion** of utterance.

2/ Referring expressions:

-> a referring expression is any expression used in an utterance to refer to something or someone (or a clearly delimited collection of things or people) i.e. used with **a particular referent in mind**.

eg: 1/ I saw some of you gamble in a café.

(a café in this utterance is a referring expression because the speaker has a particular place in mind).

2/ Many students often sit in a café instead of in their classroom.

(a café in this utterance is **not** a referring expression because in this case the speaker would not have a particular place in mind).

Note: The same expression can be a referring expression or not depends on the linguistic context and on circumstances of utterance.

The following types of words can be used as referring expressions:

=> proper nouns. (e.g: John, Mary, Huong, Thang)

=> pronouns. (e.g: I, you, he, she)

=> definite noun phrases. (e.g: the writer, the island, the cat)

=> indefinite noun phrases. (e.g: a man, a woman, a house)

=> descriptive noun phrases. (e.g: the blue book, the man with a ...)₂

REFERENCE & DEFINITENESS

DEFINITENESS is a feature of a NP selected by a speaker to convey his assumption that **the hearer will be able to identify the referent of the NP**, usually because it is the only thing of its kind in the context of the utterance (**THAT BOOK**), or because it is unique in the universe of discourse (**THE EARTH**).

The **3 main types** of definite NP in English are : (1) **proper names, personal pronouns**, (2) **the only thing in a normal universe of discourse known by this name (THE EARTH)**, (3) **phrases introduced by a definite determiner (THIS, THAT +N/NP)**.

All definite NPs are referring expressions. But we don't assume that every NP using the so-called definite article **THE** is necessarily semantically definite. For example : in generic sentences (The whale is a mammal.) or in other cases(If anyone makes too much noise, you have my permission to strangle him; Every man who owns a donkey beats it...)

Utterances (containing definite or indefinite referring expressions) do not differ in truth value.

(a) *I've just stuck the fork through my foot;*

(b) *I've just stuck a fork through my foot.)*

The definiteness of a referring expression **tells us nothing about the referent itself**, but rather relates to the question of whether the referent has been mentioned in the preceding discourse. **The definiteness of a referring expression gives the hearer a clue in identifying its referent.**

3/ Extension:

-> The extension of a noun/ an adjective is the complete set of all things which could potentially be the referent of a referring expression whose head constituent is that noun/ adjective.

e.g: the extension of house is the set of all houses.

the extension of red is the set of all red things.

4/ Prototype:

-> the prototype is a **typical member** of its extension.

e.g: + a double-decker bus is a prototype of bus in British cities.

+ a thatch-roofed house can be a prototype for house for a Vietnamese living in the countryside.

5/ Stereotype:

-> the stereotype of a noun is a list of the typical characteristics of things to which the noun may be applied.

e.g: cat ☞ stereotype -> *quadruped, domesticated, either black or white or gray or combination of these colours....*

6/ Deictic expressions:

-> A deictic word is one which takes some element of its meaning from the situation (i.e. the speaker, the addressee, the time and the place) of the utterance in which it is used.

-> Deixis is a term from Greek meaning **pointing via language**.

6.1/ Person deixis (I, he, me, you): used to indicate people.

6.2/ Spatial deixis (here, there, this): used to indicate location.

6.3/ Temporal deixis (today, yesterday, now, then): used to indicate time.

7/ Sense:

-> **Sense** is the additional meaning and is like **connotation**.

-> Meaning is like **denotation**.

-> REFERENCE AND SENSE

Trong giao tiếp thông thường, các từ như *meaning, means, mean* có khi được dùng để chỉ định **sự định danh (reference)** và có khi lại được dùng để chỉ định **ý nghĩa (sense)**.

Lưu ý quan hệ giữa *sense* và *reference*: *referent (biểu vật)* của một từ ngữ là một người hoặc một vật trong khi *sense* của nó không phải là vật chất cụ thể

The referent of an expression is often a thing or a person in the world; whereas the sense of an expression is not a thing at all.

⇒ **Rule: Every expression that has meaning has sense, but not every expression has reference (not refer to any thing).**

E.g: The words *almost, probable, and, if* do not refer to things in the world, but they have meanings; thus they have some sense.

8/ Sense relations involving words

8.1/ Synonymy => Synonyms

Synonyms are words of the same part of speech having the same or nearly the same meanings.

There are many types of synonyms (absolute, territorial, semantic, stylistic synonyms, euphemisms, synonymous set expression.)

e.g: also - too (absolute); Autumn - Fall (territorial); to look - to glance - to glare (semantic); mother - mummy (colloquial); valley - dale (poetic); to die - to be no more (euphemism); after all - in the long run (set expression)

8.2/ Antonymy => Antonyms

Antonyms are the words of the same part of speech but they are opposite in meaning.

a/ Gradable antonyms:

Two words are gradable antonyms if they are at opposite ends of a continuous scale of values. (e.g: hot - cold; rich - poor; tall – short; good – bad; easy - difficult)

b/ Complementary/binary antonyms:

are words which come in pairs and between them exhaust all the relevant possibilities. If the one word is applicable, then the other cannot be, and vice-versa.

e.g: true - false; same - different; dead - alive; male – female; pass – fail; urban – rural; deciduous – evergreen)

c/ Converses/relational opposites:

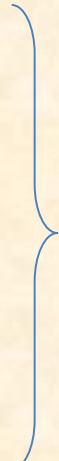
If a word describes a relationship between two things (or people) and some other word describes the same relationship when the two things (or people) are mentioned in the opposite order, then the two words are converses of each other.

e.g: parent - child; below - above; buy - sell; borrow – lend; better than – worse than.

d/ Multiple incompatibles:

There are many systems of words in which the meanings of the words are opposite in the manner.

e.g: system of cards, of seasons, of directions.

- System of physical state: liquid, solid, gas, earth, fire, water, air.**
 - System of weekdays: Monday, Tuesday,..., Sunday.**
 - System of months: January, February, March,....., December.**
 - System of color: blue, green, red,**
 - System of plants: holly, daffodil, oak,...**
 - System of metals: brass, copper, iron, tin, ...**
 - System of vehicles: car, bus, train,....**
 - System of animals: cat, dog, tiger,....**
 - System of furniture: table, chair, bed,....**
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8.3/ Hyponymy => Hyponyms

Hyponymy is a paradigmatic relation between words which refer to the inclusion of the meaning of one word in that of another.

e.g: scarlet is the **hyponym** of red => red is the **superordinate**

tulip, daffodil, rose are **co-hyponyms** of flower => flower: **superordinate**.

sadness, anger, happiness are co-hyponym of mood (superordinate).

cottage, bungalow, hut are co-hyponyms of house (superordinate).

cauliflower, lettuce, cabbage are co-hyponyms of vegetable (superordinate).

dizziness, nausea, chill are co-hyponyms of discomfort (superordinate).

honesty, fair play, self-respect are co-hyponyms of virtue (superordinate).

8.4/ Polysemy

Polysemy occurs when a word has two or more related senses.

e.g: bright = shining/intelligent

a deposit = minerals in the earth/ money in the bank

red = colour/ lucky/ revolution.

8.5/ Homophony => Homophones

are words which sound alike but are written differently and often have different meanings.

e.g: sew - sow; dear - deer; night - knight

8.6/ Homograph

a word that is spelt like another word but has a different meaning from it, and may have a different pronunciation.

e.g: bow /baʊ/, bow /bəʊ/

8.7/ Homonymy => Homonyms

Homonyms are words which sound alike, written in the same way, but have different meanings.

e.g: bank (the edge of a river) - bank (a financial institution)
sole (fish) - sole (bottom of foot)

Note: The difference between Homonymy and Polysemy.

Homonyms: different senses are far apart from each other and not obviously related to each other in any way.

e.g: rock (stone vs. kind of music).

mug (drinking vessel vs. gullible person).

bark (of a dog vs. of a tree).

grass, hard, file, punch, steer, ...

Polysemy: a word has several very closely related senses.

e.g: mouth (of a river vs. of an animal).

fork (in a road vs. instrument for eating).

tail (of a coat vs. of an animal).

lip (of a jug vs. of a person).

chimney, cup, guard, ceiling, Earth/earth, drive...

8.8/ Ambiguity

a word is ambiguous when it has more than one sense.

e.g: The captain corrected the list.

The ball is colorful.

a sentence is ambiguous if it has two or more paraphrases.

e.g: The chicken is ready to eat.

Old men and women are loving people.

8.9/ Part - Whole relationships/Meronymy

is the relationship between words in pairs of words in which one word is a part of the other word.

e.g: hand is a part of arm -> part - whole relationship

mouse is a part of a computer -> part - whole relationship

8.9/ Semantic/Lexical field

Semantic/Lexical field is a set of related words and expressions organized into a system which shows their relationship to one another.

e.g: **cook** = *bake, steam, boil, fry, roast, French fry, grill, stew...*

8.10/ Collocation

refers to the restrictions on how words can be used together

e.g: **white** snow, **blue** sky, **do** a favour, **make** an effort...