

Section 2: Word meaning or lexical meaning

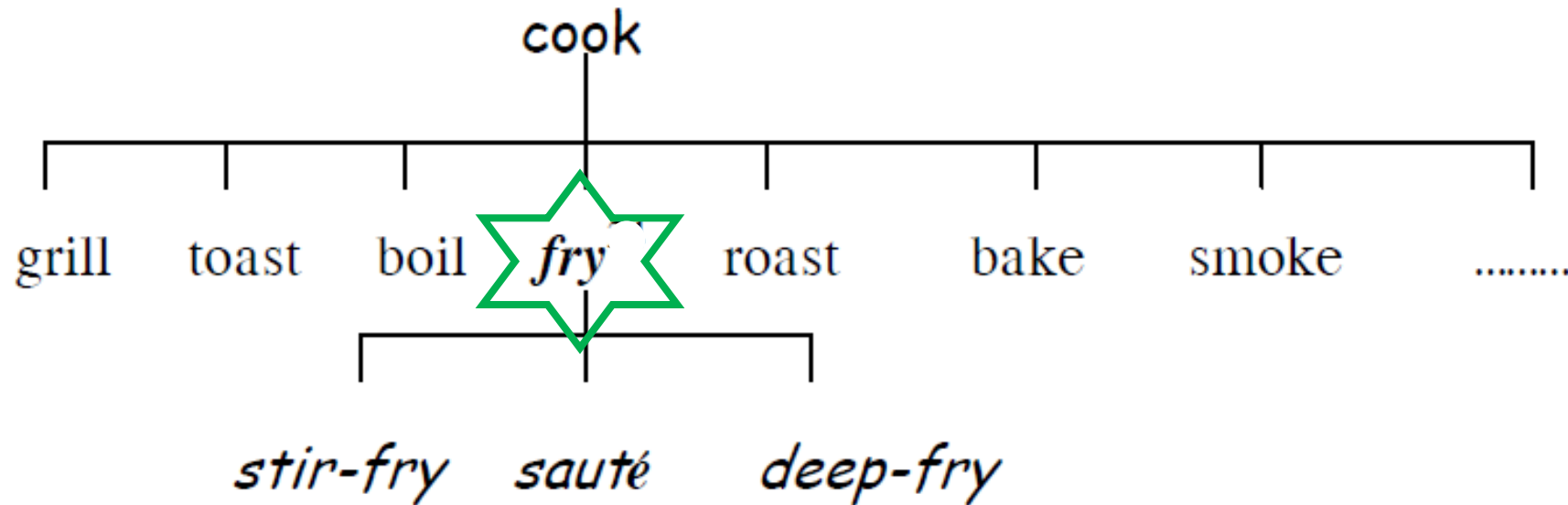
Part 2 (Cont.)

Sense relations/Semantics relationships

- 1. Hyponymy**
- 2. Synonymy**
- 3. Antonymy**
- 4. Homonymy**
- 5. Polysemy**
- 6. Lexical ambiguity**

Hyponymy

- Definition: **Hyponymy** is a relation in which the referent of a word is totally included in the referent of another word.
- In other words, *hyponymy is the relationship between each of the **hyponyms** (the “lower” word) and its **superordinate** (the “higher” word):*



Synonymy

- **Synonymy** is a relation in which various words have **different** (written and sound) **forms** but have **the same or nearly the same meaning**.

Ex1: The two English verbs **hide** and **conceal** are synonyms; they both mean *keep somebody/something from being seen or known about*.

Ex2: The four English nouns **kind**, **type**, **sort** and **variety** are synonyms; they all refer to *a group having similar characteristics*.

True synonymy

- There are **few** true synonyms in the lexicon of a language.

Example 1: **movie**, **film**, **flick** and **motion picture** may be considered as synonyms because they have the same denotative meaning.

However, these lexical items differ in their connotative meanings:

- **movie** may strike you as American
 - **film** may strike you as British or as appropriate for movie classics or art movies;
 - **flick** is used chiefly in very informal contexts
 - **motion picture** is quaintly outdated flick n [C] (dated, informal) cinema film and has connotations as a term from the thirties or forties of the 20th century.
- In brief, **movie**, **film**, **flick** and **motion picture** are not true synonyms.

True synonymy

- Example 2: **fast**, **quick** and **rapid** may be considered as synonyms because they may be used interchangeably in: *He's a fast/quick/rapid runner.*

However;

- a **fast** talker: one who is able to get out of trouble by talking cleverly,
- a **quick** talker: one who usually talks in a rapid manner;
- OR He has a **quick** mind, not a rapid mind or a fast mind;
- OR He gave her a **quick** glance, not a rapid glance or a fast glance.
- In brief, **fast**, **quick** and **rapid** are not true synonyms.

Although *true synonymy is rare*, the notion is useful because it helps describe similarities between the meanings of different terms in the lexicon.

Partial synonymy

- *Partial synonymy* is a relation in which *a polysemous word* shares *one of its meanings* with another word.
- Example:
 - (1a). You have my deep sympathy.
 - (1b). You have my profound sympathy.
 - (2a). The river is very deep at this point.
 - (2)b. *The river is very profound at this point.
- Partial synonymy leads to collocations: *a bunch of keys, a herd of sheep, a school of ants, a flock of birds, a group of teachers, a gang of thieves, etc.*

Antonymy

- Definition: **Antonymy** is a relation in which two words *have different (written and sound) forms and are opposite in meaning*.
- Example:
 - *pass--fail, hot--cold and thinner--fatter* are three pairs of antonyms.
 - *true--false, big--small and buy--sell* are three pairs of antonyms.
- Classification
 - Binary antonymy
 - Gradable antonymy
 - Relational antonymy

Classification of Antonymy

Binary antonymy is a relation in which two members of a pair of antonyms:

- **are mutually exclusive: not A is B:** not alive is dead and not dead is alive.

- **cannot be used in a comparative or superlative sense:**

*He is more single/more married than his brother.

- **cannot be used in questions with how to ask about degrees:**

*How single/How married is he?

→ alive--dead and married--single are two pairs of binary antonyms.

The meaning of the word is absolute, not relative, there is no intermediate ground between two of them.

Classification of Antonymy

Gradable antonymy is a relation in which two members of a pair of antonyms:

- **are gradable**: between hot and cold are three “intermediate terms” warm, tepid (or lukewarm) and cool.
- **can be used in a comparative or superlative sense**: wider is less narrow, more difficult is less easy, etc.
- **can be used in questions with how to ask about degrees**: How difficult is the test?

→ hot--cold and difficult--easy are two pairs of gradable antonyms.

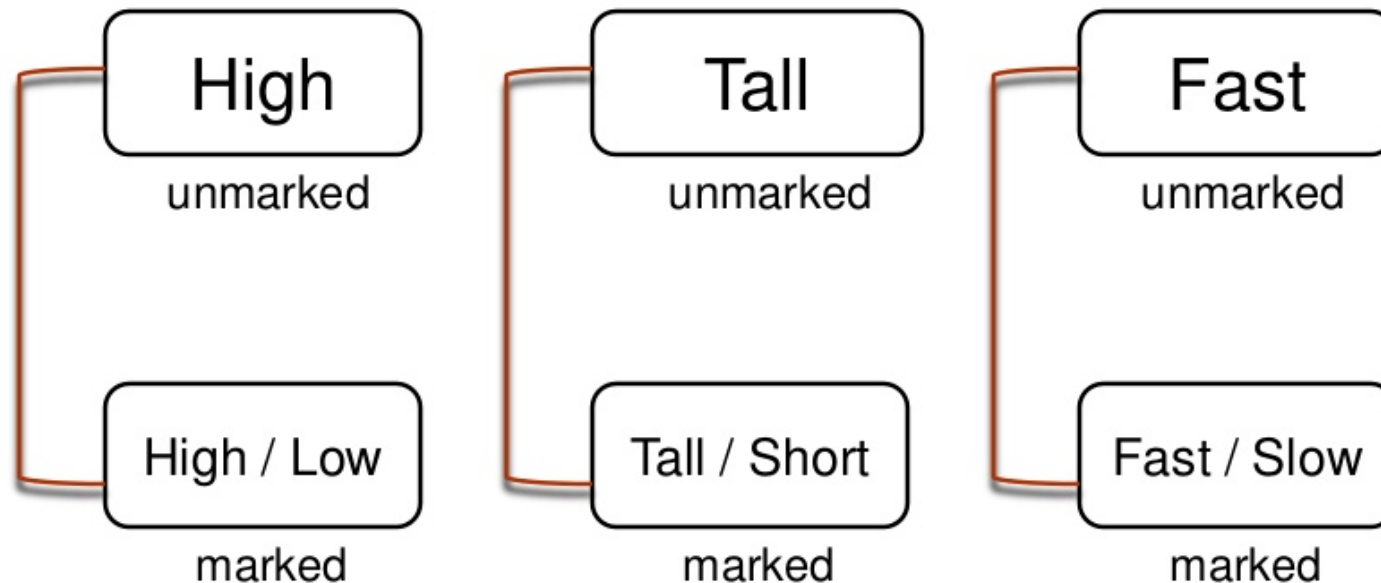
This type describes something which can be measured and compared with something else.

Gradable antonymy and (un)markedness

Words that are in an antonymous relationship often do not have equal status with respect to markedness.

In a pair of antonyms, one member is more unmarked and the other is more marked or *one member is marked and the other is unmarked*.

The unmarked member is the one used in questions of degree.



Classification of Antonymy

Relational antonymy: two members of a pair of relational antonyms display symmetry in their meaning.

- The “**if..., then ...**” **formula** can be used to test and identify relational antonyms:
 - *if Mr. Brown is Jack’s **employer**, then Jack is Mr. Brown’s **employee**;*
 - *if Jenny is **thinner** than Mary, then Mary is **fatter** than Jenny;*
 - *if John **bought** a car from Fred, then Fred **sold** a car to John; etc.*
- Relational antonyms are also called converses: the pairs of words are the reversal of a relationship of words.

Example: give – receive , husband – wife, above – below...

Homonymy

- Definition: **Homonymy** is a relation in which various words have **the same** (sound and written) **form** but **have different meanings**.
 - Classified as three homonyms are :
 - the noun *bear*, which refers to a large heavy animal with thick fur,
 - the verb *bear*₁, which means give birth to,
 - the verb *bear*₂, which means tolerate;
- all being pronounced /beə(r)/ in RP.

Homophony

- **Homophony** is a relation in which various words have *the same sound form* (also referred to as pronunciation) but have *different meanings and written forms*.
- Classified as two homophones are:
the noun *hour*, which means a twenty-fourth part of a day and night,
the possessive adjective *our*, which means belonging to us;
both being pronounced /aʊə(r)/ in RP

Homography

- **Homography** is a relation in which various words have *the same written form* (also referred to as *spelling*) but have *different meanings* and *sound forms*.
- Classified as two homographs are:
the bare infinitive form *read* /ri:d/
the past tense form *read* /red/.

Polysemy

Definition: **Polysemy** is a relation in which *a single word* has *two or more slightly different but closely related meanings*.

Example: The noun *chip* has the three following meanings:

- a small piece of some hard substance which has been broken off from something larger: a chip of wood/glass.
- a small cut piece of potato which is fried for eating. Can I try one of your chips?
- a small but vital piece of a computer: This computer has got a faster chip than the old one.

Ambiguity – Lexical ambiguity

- Any ambiguity resulting from **the ambiguity of a word** is lexical ambiguity.
- Example 1: *They were waiting at **the bank** in two different ways:*
 - They were waiting at ***the financial institution***.
 - They were waiting at ***the shore of the river***.

Example 2: *That robot is **bright** in two different ways:*

- *That robot is **shining**.*
- *That robot is **intelligent**.*

Thus, both polysemy and homonymy contribute to lexical ambiguity.

Sense relations/Semantics relationships

1. Hyponymy

2. Synonymy

3. Antonymy

- Binary antonymy
- Gradable antonymy
- Relational antonymy

4. Homonymy

- Homophony (phone/phoneme)
- Homography (graph)

5. Polysemy

6. Lexical ambiguity

What is the relationship between the words in the following pairs?

1. permit – allow
2. lead (v) – lead (n)
3. sheep – ram
4. teach – learn
5. strong – weak
6. feat – feet
7. accept – refuse
8. cup (drinking vessel) – cup (an ornamental trophy)
9. kids - children
10. bark (of a dog) – bark (of a tree)
11. host – guest
12. row (a quarrel) – row (a line)
13. postpone – delay
14. flour – flower
15. clever – stupid
16. walk - tiptoe
17. pass – fail
18. happy – pleased
19. well (adv) – well (n)
20. fork (in a road) – fork (instrument for eating)

Mini test

What is the relationship between the words in the following pairs?

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2. lead (v) – lead (n)
3. sheep – ram
4. teach – learn
5. big – small
6. feat – feet
7. accept – refuse
8. fair (n) – fair (a)
9. kids - children
10. bark (of a dog) – bark (of a tree)

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6. walk - tiptoe
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