

# LEXICAL SEMANTICS



March 25-29

# Three definitions of semantics

*[sɪ'mæntɪks]; [sə'mantɪks]*

- is the branch of linguistics and logic concerned with **meaning**.
- is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences.
- Linguistic semantics deals with the conventional meaning conveyed by the use of words and sentences of a language

# ETYMOLOGIA DIVINA APERIT!

**Etymology** concerns the origins of a word and how its meaning may have changed over time.

# Lord and Lady

*Origin: Old English hlāford, from hlāfweard 'bread-keeper', from a Germanic base (see loaf I, ward).*

*loaf I noun (pl. loaves) a quantity of bread that is shaped and baked in one piece and usually sliced before being eaten a loaf of bread. - half a loaf is better than no bread - use one's loaf*

*Origin: Old English hlāf, of Germanic origin; related to German Laib*

*Origin: Old English hlǣfdige*

*from hlāf 'loaf' + a Germanic base meaning 'knead', related to dough; compare with lord.*

*knead verb [with obj.] work (moistened flour or clay) into dough or paste with the hands*

Даны слова на древнеиндийском языке санскрит и их переводы на русский язык в перепутанном порядке:

MAKE

GOOD

MATCHES!

- a) yaḥ
- b) tathā
- c) sarvatra
- d) ekaḥ
- e) yadā
- f) tatra
- g) yatra
- h) sarvaḥ

- 1. везде
- 2. где
- 3. всякий
- 4. когда
- 5. который
- 6. так
- 7. там
- 8. тот же самый

# Бабушка из Норвегии

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- Даны четыре норвежских слова:

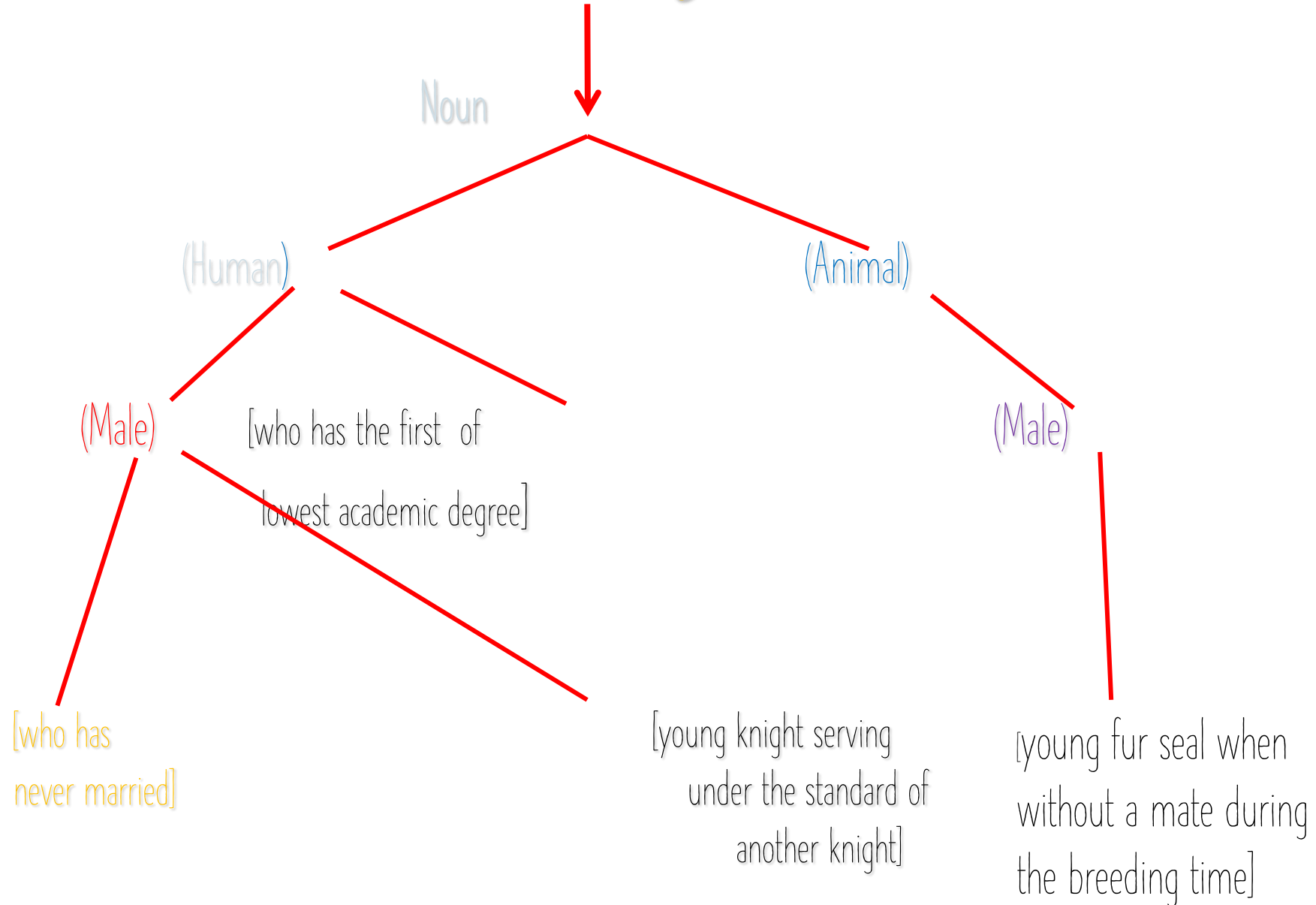
farmor, farfar, mormor, morfar.

Первое из них можно перевести на русский язык как «бабушка», но в хороших норвежско-русских словарях обычно проводится более точное его значение.

You are a husband	You are a wife
?? father-in-law	Свекор ??
?? mother-in-law	Свекровь
Шурин	?? brother-in-law
?? sister-in-law	Золовка
Свояк brother-in-law	?? (female)
	Ятровь
Кума	

# Bachelor

Noun





# Prototypes



# *The Prototype Theory*

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- When people think of birds, they often think of flying. And yet there are birds that can't fly: **penguins and ostriches** for example.
- We also associate birds with wings.
- But **bats** have wings (and fly) and yet they are not birds.

# *The Prototype Theory*

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- Prototypicality is the other way round you can try to explain the meaning of words. It is linked, to some extent, to the difficulties people might have in constructing a definition of words which will describe their meaning exactly and precisely

# *The Prototype Theory*

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- Many speakers of English the most typical bird is the **robin**. In other words, we could talk about prototypical and less prototypical examples of a certain category.

# *The Prototype Theory*

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- Prototypicality can be a useful notion, in a way, when you discuss **colours** as well.

**Paronyms** ['pærənɪm] are words that are pronounced or written in a similar way but which have different lexical meanings.

A **synonym** is a word with an identical or very similar meaning to another word.

The term **antonym** / *'æntə,nɪm* / (and the related antonymy) is commonly taken to be synonymous with opposite, but antonym also has other more restricted meanings.



- ❑ *Graded (or gradable) antonyms* are word pairs whose meanings are opposite and which lie on a continuous spectrum (hot, cold).
- ❑ *Complementary antonyms* are word pairs whose meanings are opposite but whose meanings do not lie on a continuous spectrum (*push, pull*).

- ❑ A complementary antonym, sometimes called a *binary* or *contradictory* antonym (Aarts, Chalker & Weiner 2014), is one of a pair of words with opposite meanings, where the two meanings do not lie on a continuous spectrum. There is no continuous spectrum between 'odd' and 'even', but they are opposite in meaning and are therefore complementary antonyms.

*Relational antonyms* are word pairs where opposite makes sense only in the context of the relationship between the two meanings (*teacher, pupil*).

*hypernym* ['hʌɪpənɪm] *hyper|nym* noun a word with a broad meaning constituting a category into which words with more specific meanings fall; a superordinate. For example, colour is a hypernym of red Contrasted with hyponym  
Origin: 1970s: from hyper- 'beyond' + -onym

*hyponym* ['hɪpə(ʊ)nɪm] *hypo|nym noun* a word of more specific meaning than a general or superordinate term applicable to it. For example, spoon is a hyponym of cutlery  
Contrasted with hypernym Derivatives:  
*hyponymy noun*

# *HYPERNYM and Hyponyms*

**Hypernym**

**Color**

**Hyponyms**

**Purple**

**Red**

**Blue**

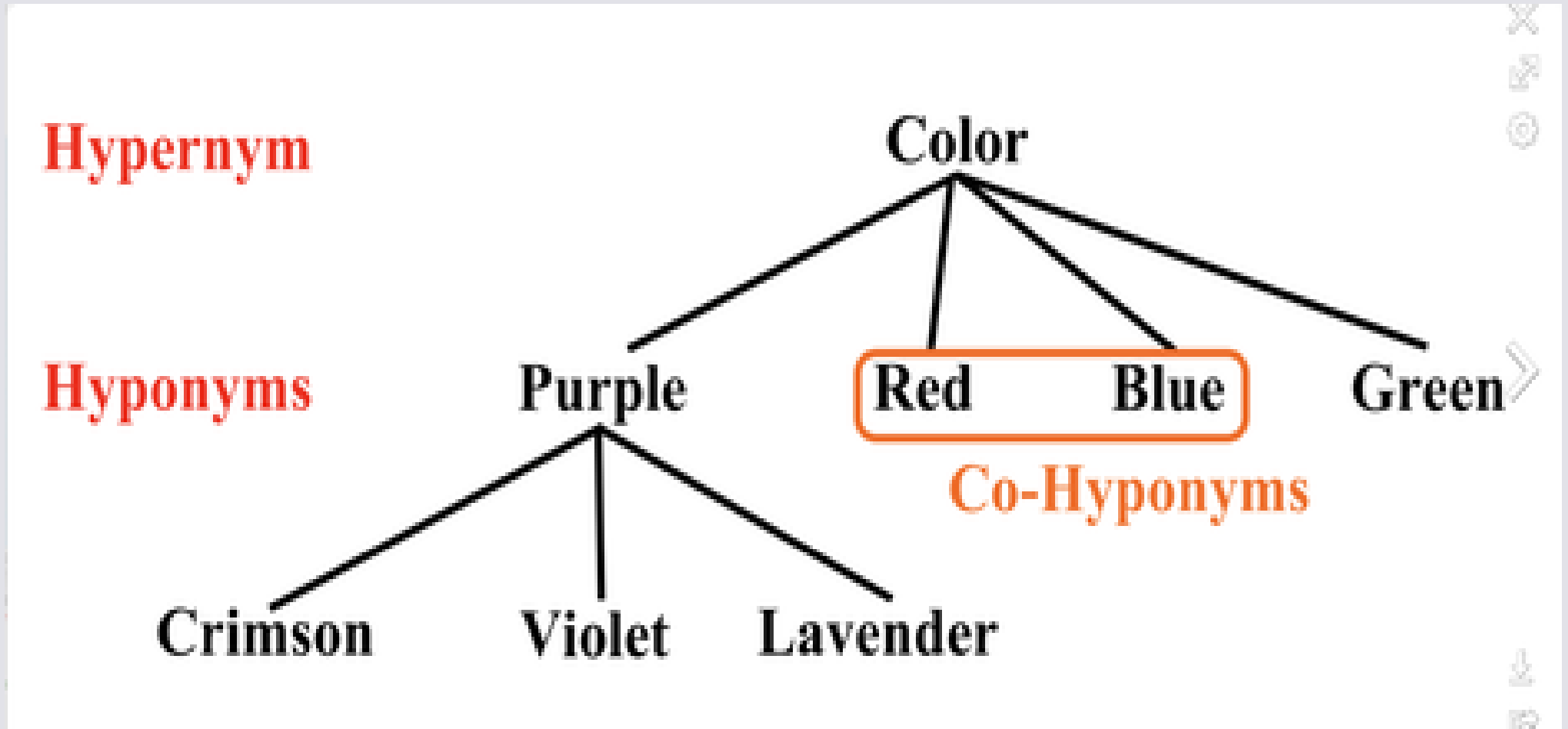
**Green**

**Co-Hyponyms**

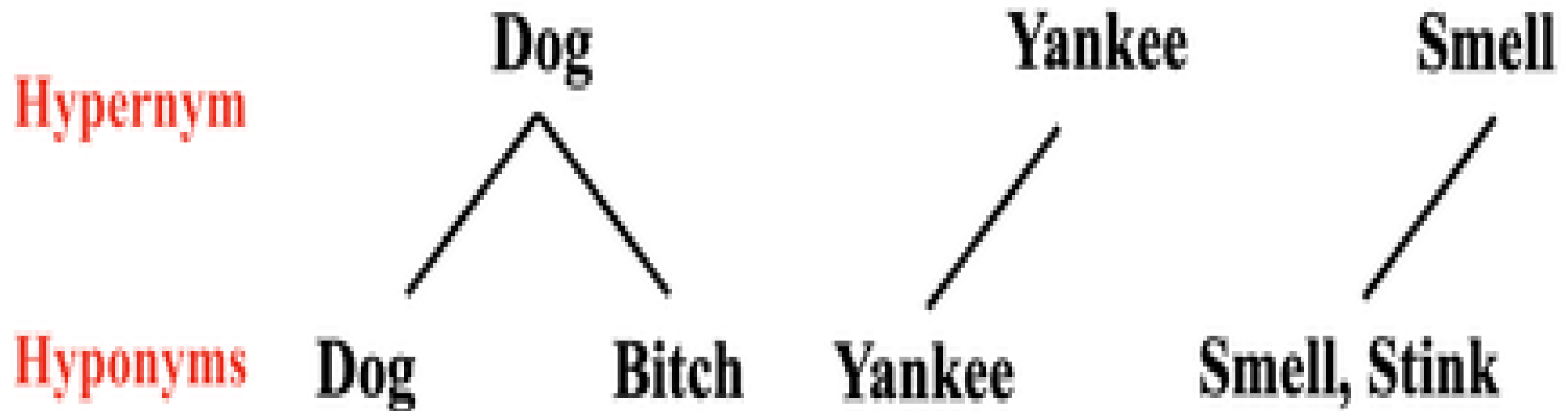
**Crimson**

**Violet**

**Lavender**



A word is an *auto-hyponym* if it is used for both a hypernym and its hyponym:



**Polysemy** [ˌpɒliˈsiːmi, pəˈlɪsəmi]

is the existence of several meanings in a single word

Compare: monosemy

**Etymology:** from New Latin polysēmia,  
from Greek polusēmos having many meanings ,  
from POLY- + sēma a sign

Derived words: *polysemous*



**Enantiosemy = contronym = contranym = auto-antonym**  
[ɔ:tə(u)-'æntənɪm]= self-antonym  
(Gr. ἐνάντιος [enantíos] “opposite” and σημασία [semasia] “meaning”) – is a word which means opposite things.

In other words enantiosemy is  
a linguistic phenomenon of antonymy [æn'tənəmi]  
within the same word.

The **origin** of this phenomenon is **three-fold**:

1) some cases of enantiosemy are homographs, that is two words which used to be quite different in the past, but developed the same form in modern English. For instance, the word cleave is an example of enantiosemy which means “to separate” and “to adhere”. The meaning “separate” comes from Old English clēofan. The meaning “adhere” comes from Old English clifian;

The **origin** of this phenomenon is **three-fold**:

2) some cases of enantiosemy are a form of polysemy, a word that developed several meanings some of which are opposite. For instance, quite (“clear” or “free” in Middle English) means “slightly” (quite nice) or “completely” (quite right). A considerable number of English words in this category are the nouns which became verbs, e.g. to dust (“to remove dust” and “to add dust”); to seed (“to produce seeds” and “to remove seeds”);

The **origin** of this phenomenon is **three-fold**:

3) finally, some cases of enantiosemy are words which come from different languages (or language varieties) and have the opposite meanings in these languages.

One such instance is in the picture above. In this picture, there are three lines in English, Spanish, and French correspondingly. The English word flammable means “catching fire easily” while inflammable would mean “not susceptible to fire”.

The **origin** of this phenomenon is **three-fold**:

Another such example is BrE to table a deal “to present a deal for discussion” vs AmE to table a deal “to withdraw a deal from a discussion”. These examples may qualify for translator’s false friends. However, not all translator’s false friends are enantiosemy, but only those which are opposite in meaning.

Some other examples of **enantiosemy** include:

custom = “standard” and “tailored”

fast = “immovable” and “moving quickly”

presently = “now” and “not now, but shortly in the future”

to rent = “to borrow from” and “to lend to”

to sanction = “to allow” and “to forbid”

to trim = “to add edging” and “to cut away at the edges”

## Homonym

| BrE 'hɒmənɪm, AmE 'hɑmənɪm, 'hoʊmənɪm |

## Homophone

| BrE 'hɒməfəʊn, 'həʊməfəʊn, AmE 'hɑməfoʊn,  
'hoʊməfoʊn |

**Homograph** / 'hɒməgr(ɹ)æf /;

**Heteronym** / 'het.ə.ɹoʊ.nɪm /

Dictionaries also distinguish between **homonyms**. These are words which are pronounced the same and are sometimes spelt the same but which have different and sometimes completely unrelated meanings. **Another name for them is homophones.**



**Homonyms** are a tricky and confusing area because there are different types.

**Homographs** are a type of homonym but they refer to words which have the same spelling but different meanings and are sometimes pronounced differently as well.

**Heteronyms** are a further category.

These refer to words which differ in meaning and pronunciation but have the same spelling.

# Exercise 8A

For each, list a few examples in the table below:

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**Homonyms**

**Homophones**

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**Homographs**

**Heteronyms**

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Homonyms	mean / <u>mi:n</u> / (noun, adjective, verb)
Homophones	<u>two</u> versus <u>too</u>
Homographs	bow versus bow; progress / <u>'prɒɡres</u> / progress / <u>prɒ'ɡres</u> /;
Heteronyms (also known as a <u>heterophone</u> )	v. lead   <u>BrE li:d</u> , <u>AmE lid</u>   versus n lead   <u>BrE læd</u> , <u>AmE læd</u>

## Exercise 10b Answer the questions.

1. Are words 'impressive' and 'expressive' just cognates, synonyms, antonyms or paronyms?  
What sort of?
2. Are words 'terrible' and 'terrific' just cognates, synonyms, antonyms or paronyms?
3. Are words 'alternately' and 'alternatively' just cognates, synonyms, antonyms or paronyms?
4. Are words 'entrance' and 'exit' just cognates, synonyms, antonyms or paronyms?

5. Do various meanings of the word **mundane** /mʌn'deɪn/ show that these are just cognates, paronyms or some sort of homonyms?

Here are they:

земно́й /worldly/;

светский /secular/;

обыкновенный /ordinary/;

ску́чный /tedious/;

## Exercise 11

Look up the following words in a dictionary:  
pupil; expire; mouse.

- How are the different meanings dealt with?
- Did they have separate entries?

Think of **at least three more homonyms** and use a dictionary to see how the different meanings are dealt with.

# Distributional Semantics

**Distributional semantics** is a research area that develops and studies theories and methods for quantifying and categorizing **semantic similarities** between linguistic items based on their distributional properties in large samples of language data.

The basic idea of distributional semantics can be summed up in the so-called

**Distributional hypothesis:**

linguistic items with similar distributions have similar meanings.

The underlying idea that "a word is characterized by the company it keeps" was popularized by **John Rupert Firth** in the 1950s.



## Установите семантические закономерности

### Exercise 13

Fill in the missing word in the following sentences:

- How \_\_\_\_\_ is the mountain?
- How \_\_\_\_\_ are you in metres?
- How \_\_\_\_\_ are you at your next birthday?
- How \_\_\_\_\_ does your car go?

# KEY WORD MEANING COMPONENTS

## **Denotation:**

Part of the meaning of a word or phrase that relates it to phenomena in the real world.

*Ex: child → a young human being*

## **Connotation:**

The additional meaning that a word or phrase has beyond its central meaning.

These meanings show people's emotions and attitudes.

*Ex: child = a young human being → many other characteristics can be associated to this word by different people (positive and negative)*

# TASK

Below is a list of English compound nouns.

One very common pattern is for the second element to identify the type of thing the compound is, while the 1rst is some kind of qualifier. The qualification can identify a subtype, be what the thing is used for, what the thing is made of, where or when the thing happens, etc. So a teacup is a cup used for tea. Divide the list below into two types: one where the meaning is predictable from the meaning of the two parts and a second type where the meaning is not predictable in this way. For the 1rst type, which shows a certain **compositionality**, how would you characterize the type of qualification made by the 1rst part of the compound? Check your explanations against a dictionary's entries.

agony aunt ;	eye candy;	houseboat;	shopping list;
blackmail;	firsthand;	housewife;	software;
boyfriend;	flea market;	human being;	speed limit;
businessman;	foxhound;	mailbox;	spin doctor;
bus stop;	gravy train;	monkey business;	sunglasses;
climate change;	greenhouse;	mousetrap;	sweatshop;
daydream;	horseshoe	nightmare;	taste bud;
doormat;	hotdog;	redhead;	video game.

## REVIEW EXERCISE

### Learning activity

Below you will find some meanings of bank the way they are listed in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. What we have not shown here, however, is whether the dictionary listed these as the meanings of one polysemous lexeme bank or whether some meanings belong to one lexeme bank<sub>1</sub> and some to a second, homonymous lexeme bank<sub>2</sub>.

Look at the meanings and try to decide for yourself how they should be grouped and how many lexemes you think we are dealing with here. Then check your intuitions with two or three dictionaries. Did the dictionaries themselves treat bank differently?

a. a business that keeps and lends money and provides other financial services

b. land along the side of a river or lake;

c. a large mass of clouds or mist;

d. a place where human blood, etc.

is stored until someone needs it;

e. a large number of machines, television screens, etc.

arranged close together in a row.

Check a few other words in the dictionaries you have available to you. For example, look up the nouns **head**, **pool** and **tap**.

Do the dictionaries attribute different meanings to these words, do they take different decisions with respect to the distinction between polysemy and homonymy?

Dictionaries usually include introductory parts where they sometimes explain what principles were behind the decision-taking process of the people who wrote them.

## REVIEW

Learning activity

What distinguishes the synonyms below from each other?

Use one of the synonyms in a sentence. Can you substitute the other synonyms? Does the substitution change the meaning of the sentence?

Are there contexts where one of the sentences is appropriate, but the same sentence with a synonym is not?

You may want to check your intuitions with a suitable dictionary.

a. clever, smart, bright, brilliant, brainy, cunning

b. walk, stroll, wander, stride, stagger

c. doctor, quack

d. violin, fiddle

e. tap, faucet.



# REVIEW

## Learning activity

Examine the antonyms below.

Are they gradable or non-gradable?

- a. dead, alive
- b. happy, unhappy
- c. come, go
- d. short, tall
- e. thin, thick
- f. black, white.

# REVIEW

## Learning activity

Propose a componential analysis of words that name various types of publications, for example:

article, book, pamphlet, leaflet, monograph, newspaper, magazine, journal.

- Did you encounter any difficulties?
- How about words like angry, annoyed, amused, perplexed, livid, furious?
- From your reading, try to list some shortcomings of this approach to lexical semantics.

## The Task

In the table below indicate with a cross which adjective collocates with which noun.

milk	fish	butter	bread	eggs
rancid				
stale				
addled				
curdled				
rotten				