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# ЛЕКСИКОЛОГИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Допущено

Министерством просвещения СССР

в качестве учебного пособия

для студентов педагогических институтов

по специальности № 2103 «Иностранные языки»



МОСКВА

«ВЫСШАЯ ШКОЛА»

1985

Рецензенты:

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А 72 Лексикология английского языка: Учеб. для студ. пед. ин-тов по спец. № 2103 «Иностр. яз.». — М.: Высш. шк., 1985. — 223 с.

На обл.: G. B. Antrushina, O. V. Afanasyeva, N. N. Morozova. English Lexicology.

Текст: англ.

45 к.

Учебник включает разделы: предмет и задачи курса, этимологический состав и стилиевые слои словарного состава английского языка, словообразование, семасиология, фразеология, синонимия и антонимия, варианты современного английского языка. Теоретический материал тесно увязан с материалом для семинарской или самостоятельной работы, с текстами и упражнениями для лексического анализа.

А  $\frac{4602010000-917}{001(01)-85}$  200—85

ББК 81.2 Англ-9  
4И (Англ)



## PREFACE

In this book the reader will find the fundamentals of the word theory and of the main problems associated with English vocabulary, its characteristics and subdivisions. Each chapter contains both theory and exercises for seminar and independent work.

The book is intended for English language students at Pedagogical Institutes (3d and 4th years of studies) taking the course of English lexicology and fully meets the requirements of the programme in the subject.<sup>1</sup> It may also be of interest to all readers, whose command of English is sufficient to enable them to read texts of average difficulty and who would like to gain some information about the vocabulary resources of Modern English (for example, about synonyms and antonyms), about the stylistic peculiarities of English vocabulary, about the complex nature of the word's meaning and the modern methods of its investigation, about English idioms, about those changes that English vocabulary underwent in its historical development and about some other aspects of English lexicology. One can hardly acquire a perfect command of English without having knowledge of all these things, for a perfect command of a language implies the conscious approach to the language's resources and at least a partial understanding of the "inner mechanism" which makes the huge language system work.

This book is the first attempt to embrace both the theory and practical exercises in the one volume, the two parts being integrated. The authors tried to establish links between the theory of lexicology and the reality of living speech, on the one hand, and the language-learning and language-teaching process, on the other, never losing sight of the fact that the majority of intended readers of the book are teachers and students of Pedagogical Institutes.

The authors tried to present the material in an easy and comprehensible style and, at the same time, to meet the reader on the level of a half-informal talk. With the view of making the book more vivid and interesting, we have introduced extracts from humorous authors, numerous jokes and anecdotes and extracts from books by outstanding writers, aiming to show how different lexicological phenomena are used for stylistic purposes.

Theory and exercises to Ch. 1-2 were written by G. B. Antrushina, exercises to Introduction and Ch. 5, 6, 9, 10, 11 by O. V. Afanasyeva and to Ch. 3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14 by N. N. Morozova.

The authors wish to acknowledge the considerable assistance afforded them by their English colleague Mr. Robert T. Pullin, Lecturer in Education, Russian and French at the University of Sheffield, U. K., who kindly acted as stylistic editor before final publication.

We are also sincerely grateful to our colleagues at the Pyatigorsk and Irkutsk Institutes of Foreign Languages and at the Pedagogical Institute of Sverdlovsk who read the book in manuscript and made valuable suggestions.

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<sup>1</sup> Программы педагогических институтов: Лексикология современного английского языка. Для специальности № 2103 (иностраннные языки). М.: Просвещение, 1979.

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS A WORD?

## WHAT IS LEXICOLOGY?

What's in a name? that which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet ...

(W. Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet*,  
Act II, Sc. 2)

These famous lines reflect one of the fundamental problems of linguistic research: what is in a name, in a word? Is there any direct connection between a word and the object it represents? Could a rose have been called by "any other name" as Juliet says?

These and similar questions are answered by lexicological research. *Lexicology*, a branch of linguistics, is the study of words.

For some people studying words may seem uninteresting. But if studied properly, it may well prove just as exciting and novel as unearthing the mysteries of Outer Space.

It is significant that many scholars have attempted to define the word as a linguistic phenomenon. Yet none of the definitions can be considered totally satisfactory in all aspects. It is equally surprising that, despite all the achievements of modern science, certain essential aspects of the nature of the word still escape us. Nor do we fully understand the phenomenon called "language", of which the word is a fundamental unit.

We do not know much about the origin of language and, consequently, of the origin of words. It is true that there are several hypotheses, some of them no less fantastic than the theory of the divine origin of language.

We know nothing — or almost nothing — about the mechanism by which a speaker's mental process is converted into sound groups called "words", nor about the reverse process whereby a listener's brain converts the acoustic phenomena

into notions and ideas, thus establishing a two-way process of communication.

We know very little about the nature of relations between the word and the referent (i. e. object, phenomenon, quality, action, etc. denoted by the word). If we assume that there is a direct relation between the word and the referent — which seems logical — it gives rise to another question: how should we explain the fact that the same referent is designated by quite different sound groups in different languages.

We *do* know by now — though with vague uncertainty — that there is nothing accidental about the vocabulary of the language;<sup>1</sup> that each word is a small unit within a vast, efficient and perfectly balanced system. But we do not know why it possesses these qualities, nor do we know much about the processes by which it has acquired them.

The list of unknowns could be extended, but it is probably high time to look at the brighter side and register some of the things we *do* know about the nature of the word.

*First*, we do know that the word is a unit of speech which, as such, serves the purposes of human communication. Thus, the word can be defined as a *unit of communication*.

*Secondly*, the word can be perceived as the total of the sounds which comprise it.

*Third*, the word, viewed structurally, possesses several characteristics.

The modern approach to word studies is based on distinguishing between the external and the internal structures of the word.

By external structure of the word we mean its morphological structure. For example, in the word *post-impressionists* the following morphemes can be distinguished: the prefixes *post-*, *im-*, the root *press*, the noun-forming suffixes *-ion*, *-ist*, and the grammatical suffix of plurality *-s*. All these morphemes constitute the external structure of the word *post-impressionists*.

The external structure of words, and also typical word-formation patterns, are studied in the section on word-building (see Ch. 5-6).

The internal structure of the word, or its *meaning*, is

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<sup>1</sup> By the *vocabulary* of a language is understood the total sum of its words. Another term for the same is the *stock of words*.

nowadays commonly referred to as the word's *semantic structure*. This is certainly the word's main aspect. Words can serve the purposes of human communication solely due to their meanings, and it is most unfortunate when this fact is ignored by some contemporary scholars who, in their obsession with the fetish of structure tend to condemn as irrelevant anything that eludes mathematical analysis. And this is exactly what meaning, with its subtle variations and shifts, is apt to do.

The area of lexicology specialising in the semantic studies of the word is called *semantics* (see Ch. 7-8).

Another structural aspect of the word is its unity. The word possesses both external (or formal) unity and semantic unity. Formal unity of the word is sometimes inaccurately interpreted as indivisibility. The example of *post-impressionists* has already shown that the word is not, strictly speaking, indivisible. Yet, its component morphemes are permanently linked together in opposition to word-groups, both free and with fixed contexts, whose components possess a certain structural freedom, e. g. *bright light, to take for granted* (see Ch. 12).

The formal unity of the word can best be illustrated by comparing a word and a word-group comprising identical constituents. The difference between *a blackbird* and *a black bird* is best explained by their relationship with the grammatical system of the language. The word *blackbird*, which is characterized by unity, possesses a single grammatical framing: *blackbird*[s]. The first constituent *black* is not subject to any grammatical changes. In the word-group *a black bird* each constituent can acquire grammatical forms of its own: *the blackest birds I've ever seen*. Other words can be inserted between the components which is impossible so far as the word is concerned as it would violate its unity: *a black night bird*.

The same example may be used to illustrate what we mean by semantic unity.

In the word-group *a black bird* each of the meaningful words conveys a separate concept: *bird* — a kind of living creature; *black* — a colour.

The word *blackbird* conveys only one concept: the type of bird. This is one of the main features of any word: it always conveys one concept, no matter how many component morphemes it may have in its external structure.

A further structural feature of the word is its susceptibility to grammatical employment. In speech most words

can be used in different grammatical forms in which their interrelations are realized.

So far we have only underlined the word's major peculiarities, but this suffices to convey the general idea of the difficulties and questions faced by the scholar attempting to give a detailed definition of the word. The difficulty does not merely consist in the considerable number of aspects that are to be taken into account, but, also, in the essential unanswered questions of word theory which concern the nature of its meaning (see Ch. 7).

All that we have said about the word can be summed up as follows.

The *word* is a speech unit used for the purposes of human communication, materially representing a group of sounds, possessing a meaning, susceptible to grammatical employment and characterized by formal and semantic unity.

### The Main Lexicological Problems

Two of these have already been underlined. The problem of word-building is associated with prevailing morphological word-structures and with processes of making new words. Semantics is the study of meaning. Modern approaches to this problem are characterized by two different levels of study: *syntagmatic* and *paradigmatic*.

On the syntagmatic level, the semantic structure of the word is analysed in its linear relationships with neighbouring words in connected speech. In other words, the semantic characteristics of the word are observed, described and studied on the basis of its typical contexts.

On the paradigmatic level, the word is studied in its relationships with other words in the vocabulary system. So, a word may be studied in comparison with other words of similar meaning (e. g. *work*, n. — *labour*, n.; *to refuse*, v. — *to reject* v. — *to decline*, v.), of opposite meaning (e. g. *busy*, adj. — *idle*, adj.; *to accept*, v. — *to reject*, v.), of different stylistic characteristics (e. g. *man*, n. — *chap*, n. — *bloke*, n. — *guy*, n.). Consequently, the main problems of paradigmatic studies are synonymy (see Ch. 9, 10), antonymy (see Ch. 10), functional styles (see Ch. 1, 2).

*Phraseology* is the branch of lexicology specialising in word-groups which are characterized by stability of structure and transferred meaning, e. g. *to take the bull by the horns*, *to see red*, *birds of a feather*, etc. (see Ch. 12, 13).



One further important objective of lexicological studies is the study of the vocabulary of a language as a system. The vocabulary can be studied synchronically, that is, at a given stage of its development, or diachronically, that is, in the context of the processes through which it grew, developed and acquired its modern form (see Ch. 3, 4). The opposition of the two approaches accepted in modern linguistics is nevertheless disputable as the vocabulary, as well as the word which is its fundamental unit, is not only what it is now, at this particular stage of the language's development, but, also, what it was centuries ago and has been throughout its history.

### EXERCISE

Consider your answers to the following.

1. In what way can one analyse a word a) socially, b) linguistically?
2. What are the structural aspects of the word?
3. What is the external structure of the word *irresistible*? What is the internal structure of this word?
4. What is understood by formal unity of a word? Why is it not quite correct to say that a word is indivisible?
5. Explain why the word *blackboard* can be considered a unity and why the combination of words *a black board* doesn't possess such a unity.
6. What is understood by the semantic unity of a word? Which of the following possesses semantic unity — *a bluebell* (R. *колокольчик*) or *a blue bell* (R. *синий бубенчик*).
7. Give a brief account of the main characteristics of a word.
8. What are the main problems of lexicology?
9. What are the main differences between studying words syntagmatically and paradigmatically?

### CHAPTER 1

## WHICH WORD SHOULD WE CHOOSE, FORMAL OR INFORMAL?

Just as there is formal and informal dress, so there is formal and informal speech. One is not supposed to turn up at a ministerial reception or at a scientific symposium wearing

a pair of brightly coloured pyjamas. (Jeans are scarcely suitable for such occasions either, though this may be a matter of opinion.) Consequently, the social context in which the communication is taking place determines both the mode of dress and the modes of speech. When placed in different situations, people instinctively choose different kinds of words and structures to express their thoughts. The suitability or unsuitability of a word for each particular situation depends on its stylistic characteristics or, in other words, on the functional style it represents.

The term *functional style* is generally accepted in modern linguistics. Professor I. V. Arnold defines it as "a system of expressive means peculiar to a specific sphere of communication." [15]

By the sphere of communication we mean the circumstances attending the process of speech in each particular case: professional communication, a lecture, an informal talk, a formal letter, an intimate letter, a speech in court, etc.

All these circumstances or situations can be roughly classified into two types: formal (a lecture, a speech in court, an official letter, professional communication) and informal (an informal talk, an intimate letter).

Accordingly, functional styles are classified into two groups, with further subdivisions depending on different situations.

### INFORMAL STYLE

Informal vocabulary is used in one's immediate circle: family, relatives or friends. One uses informal words when at home or when feeling at home.

Informal style is relaxed, free-and-easy, familiar and unpretentious. But it should be pointed out that the informal talk of well-educated people considerably differs from that of the illiterate or the semi-educated; the choice of words with adults is different from the vocabulary of teenagers; people living in the provinces use certain regional words and expressions. Consequently, the choice of words is determined in each particular case not only by an informal (or formal) situation, but also by the speaker's educational and cultural background, age group, and his occupational and regional characteristics.

Informal words and word-groups are traditionally divided into three types: *colloquial*, *slang* and *dialect words and word-groups*.



## Colloquial Words

Among other informal words, *colloquialisms* are the least exclusive: they are used by everybody, and their sphere of communication is comparatively wide, at least of *literary colloquial words*. These are informal words that are used in everyday conversational speech both by cultivated and uneducated people of all age groups. The sphere of communication of literary colloquial words also includes the printed page, which shows that the term "colloquial" is somewhat inaccurate.

Vast use of informal words is one of the prominent features of 20th c. English and American literature. It is quite natural that informal words appear in dialogues in which they realistically reflect the speech of modern people:

"You're at *some sort of* technical college?" she said to Leo, not looking at him ...

"Yes. I hate it though. I'm *not good enough at maths*. There's a *chap* there *just down from* Cambridge who *puts us through* it. I can't *keep up*. Were you good at maths?"

"Not bad. But I imagine school maths are different."

"Well, yes they are. I can't *cope with this stuff* at all, it's the whole way of thinking that's beyond me. ... I think I'm going to *chuck it* and take a *job*."

(From *The Time of the Angels* by I. Murdoch)

However, in modern fiction informal words are not restricted to conversation in their use, but frequently appear in descriptive passages as well. In this way the narrative is endowed with conversational features. The author creates an intimate, warm, informal atmosphere, meeting his reader, as it were, on the level of a friendly talk, especially when the narrative verges upon non-personal direct speech.

"Fred Hardy was *a bad lot*. Pretty women, *chemin de fer*, and an unlucky *knack* for *backing* the wrong horse had *landed him in* the bankruptcy court by the time he was twenty-five ...

... If he thought of his past it was with complacency; he *had had a good time*, he had enjoyed

his *ups and downs*; and now, with good health and a clear conscience, he was prepared to settle down as a country gentleman, *damn it*, bring up the *kids* as kids should be brought up; and when the *old buffer* who sat for his Constituency *pegged out*, by *George*, go into Parliament himself."

(From *Rain and Other Short Stories* by W. S. Maugham)

Here are some more examples of literary colloquial words. *Pal* and *chum* are colloquial equivalents of *friend*; *girl*, when used colloquially, denotes a woman of any age; *bite* and *snack* stand for *meal*; *hello* is an informal greeting, and *so long* a form of parting; *start*, *go on*, *finish* and *be through* are also literary colloquialisms; *to have a crush on somebody* is a colloquial equivalent of *to be in love*. *A bit (of)* and *a lot (of)* also belong to this group.

A considerable number of shortenings are found among words of this type. E. g. *pram*, *exam*, *fridge*, *flu*, *prop*, *zip*, *movie*.

Verbs with post-positional adverbs are also numerous among colloquialisms: *put up*, *put over*, *make up*, *make out*, *do away*, *turn up*, *turn in*, etc.

Literary colloquial words are to be distinguished from familiar colloquial and low colloquial.

The borderline between the literary and familiar colloquial is not always clearly marked. Yet the circle of speakers using familiar colloquial is more limited: these words are used mostly by the young and the semi-educated. This vocabulary group closely verges on slang and has something of its coarse flavour.

E. g. *doc* (for *doctor*), *hi* (for *how do you do*), *ta-ta* (for *good-bye*), *goings-on* (for *behaviour*, usually with a negative connotation), *to kid smb.* (for *tease, banter*), *to pick up smb.* (for *make a quick and easy acquaintance*), *go on with you* (for *let me alone*), *shut up* (for *keep silent*), *beat it* (for *go away*).

Low colloquial is defined by G. P. Krapp as uses "characteristic of the speech of persons who may be broadly described as uncultivated". [25] This group is stocked with words of illiterate English which do not present much interest for our purposes.

The problem of functional styles is not one of purely theoretical interest, but represents a particularly important

aspect of the language-learning process. Students of English should be taught how to choose stylistically suitable words for each particular speech situation.

So far as colloquialisms are concerned, most students' mistakes originate from the ambiguousness of the term itself. Some students misunderstand the term "colloquial" and accept it as a recommendation for wide usage (obviously mistaking "colloquial" for "conversational"). This misconception may lead to most embarrassing errors unless it is taken care of in the early stages of language study.

As soon as the first words marked "colloquial" appear in the students' functional vocabulary, it should be explained to them that the marker "colloquial" (as, indeed, any other stylistic marker) is not a recommendation for unlimited usage but, on the contrary, *a sign restricted usage*. It is most important that the teacher should carefully describe the typical situations to which colloquialisms are restricted and warn the students against using them under formal circumstances or in their compositions and reports.

Literary colloquial words should not only be included in the students' functional and recognition vocabularies, but also presented and drilled in suitable contexts and situations, mainly in dialogues. It is important that students should be trained to associate these words with informal, relaxed situations.

### Slang

Much has been written on the subject of slang that is contradictory and at the same time very interesting.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines slang as "language of a highly colloquial style, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense." [25]

This definition is inadequate because it equates slang with colloquial style. The qualification "highly" can hardly serve as the criterion for distinguishing between colloquial style and slang.

Yet, the last line of the definition "current words in some special sense" is important and we shall have to return to this a little later.

Here is another definition of slang by the famous English writer G. K. Chesterton:

"The one stream of poetry which in constantly flowing is slang. Every day some nameless poet weaves some fairy tracery of popular language. ... All slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry. ... The world of slang is a kind of topsy-turvydom of poetry, full of blue moons and white elephants, of men losing their heads, and men whose tongues run away with them — a whole chaos of fairy tales." [9]

The first thing that attracts attention in this enthusiastic statement is that the idioms which the author quotes have long since ceased being associated with slang: neither *once in a blue moon*, nor *the white elephant* nor *your tongue has run away with you* are indicated as slang in modern dictionaries. This is not surprising, for slang words and idioms are short-lived and very soon either disappear or lose their peculiar colouring and become either colloquial or stylistically neutral lexical units.

As to the author's words "all slang is metaphor", it is a true observation, though the second part of the statement "all metaphor is poetry" is difficult to accept, especially if we consider the following examples: *mug* (for *face*), *saucers*, *blinkers* (for *eyes*), *trap* (for *mouth*, e. g. *Keep your trap shut*), *dogs* (for *feet*), *to leg* (it) (for *to walk*).

All these meanings are certainly based on metaphor, yet they strike one as singularly unpoetical.

Henry Bradley writes that "Slang sets things in their proper place with a smile. So, to call a hat 'a lid' and a head 'a nut' is amusing because it puts a hat and a pot-lid in the same class". [17] And, we should add, a head and a nut in the same class too.

"With a smile" is true. Probably "grin" would be a more suitable word. Indeed, a prominent linguist observed that if colloquialisms can be said to be wearing dressing-gowns and slippers, slang is wearing a perpetual foolish grin. The world of slang is inhabited by odd creatures indeed: not by men, but by *guys* (R. *чучела*) and *blighters* or *rotters* with *nuts* for heads, *mugs* for faces, *flippers* for hands.

All or most slang words are current words whose meanings have been metaphorically shifted. Each slang metaphor is rooted in a joke, but not in a kind or amusing joke. This is the criterion for distinguishing slang from colloquialisms: most slang words are metaphors and jocular, often with a coarse, mocking, cynical colouring.

This is one of the common objections against slang: a person using a lot of slang seems to be sneering and jeering at everything under the sun. This objection is psychological. There are also linguistic ones.

G. H. McKnight notes that "originating as slang expressions often do, in an insensibility to the meaning of legitimate words, the use of slang checks an acquisition of a command over recognized modes of expression ... and must result in atrophy of the faculty of using language". [26]

H. W. Fowler states that "as style is the great antiseptic, so slang is the great corrupting matter; it is perishable, and infects what is round it". [19]

McKnight also notes that "no one capable of good speaking or good writing is likely to be harmed by the occasional employment of slang, provided that he is conscious of the fact ..." [26]

Then why do people use slang?

For a number of reasons. To be picturesque, arresting, striking and, above all, different from others. To avoid the tedium of outmoded hackneyed "common" words. To demonstrate one's spiritual independence and daring. To sound "modern" and "up-to-date".

It doesn't mean that all these aims are achieved by using slang. Nor are they put in so many words by those using slang on the conscious level. But these are the main reasons for using slang as explained by modern psychologists and linguists.

The circle of users of slang is more narrow than that of colloquialisms. It is mainly used by the young and uneducated. Yet, slang's colourful and humorous quality makes it catching, so that a considerable part of slang may become accepted by nearly all the groups of speakers.

All that has been said about slang should make it clear that it should not be included in the students' functional vocabulary. Nor should students be encouraged to use slang in their speech in class.

## Dialect Words

H. W. Fowler defines a dialect as "a variety of a language which prevails in a district, with local peculiarities of vocabulary, pronunciation and phrase". [19] England is a small country, yet it has many dialects which have their

own distinctive features (e. g. the Lancashire, Dorsetshire, Norfolk dialects).

So dialects are regional forms of English. Standard English is defined by the Random House Dictionary as the English language as it is written and spoken by literate people in both formal and informal usage and that is universally current while incorporating regional differences. [46]

Dialectal peculiarities, especially those of vocabulary, are constantly being incorporated into everyday colloquial speech or slang. From these levels they can be transferred into the common stock, i. e. words which are not stylistically marked (see "The Basic Vocabulary", Ch. 2) and a few of them even into formal speech and into the literary language. *Car, trolley, tram* began as dialect words.

A snobbish attitude to dialect on the part of certain educationalists and scholars has been deplored by a number of prominent linguists. E. Partridge writes:

"The writers would be better employed in rejuvenating the literary (and indeed the normal cultured) language by substituting dialectal freshness, force, pithiness, for standard exhaustion, feebleness, long-windedness than in attempting to rejuvenate it with Gallicisms, Germanicisms, Grecisms and Latinisms." [30]

In the following extract from *The Good Companions* by J. B. Priestley, the outstanding English writer ingeniously and humorously reproduces his native Yorkshire dialect. The speakers are discussing a football match they have just watched. The author makes use of a number of dialect words and grammatical structures and, also, uses spelling to convey certain phonetic features of "broad Yorkshire".

"'Na Jess!' said the acquaintance, taking an imitation calabash pipe out of his mouth and then winking mysteriously.

'Na Jim!' returned Mr. Oakroyd. This 'Na' which must once have been 'Now', is the recognized salutation in Bruddersford,<sup>1</sup> and the fact that it sounds more like a word of caution than a word of greeting is by no means surprising. You have to be careful in Bruddersford.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruddersford, the scene of the extract, is easily recognizable as Bradford, Priestley's birthplace.



'Well,' said Jim, falling into step, 'what did you think on 'em?'

'Think on 'em!' Mr. Oakroyd made a number of noises with his tongue to show what he thought of them.

... 'Ah 'll tell tha' what it is, Jess,' said his companion, pointing the stem of his pipe and becoming broader in his Yorkshire as he grew more philosophical. 'If t' United<sup>1</sup> had less brass<sup>2</sup> to lake<sup>3</sup> wi', they'd lake better football.' His eyes searched the past for a moment, looking for the team that had less money and had played better football. 'Tha can remember when t' club had nivver<sup>4</sup> set eyes on two thousand pahnds, when t' job lot wor not worth two thahsand pahnds, pavilion and all, and what sort of football did they lake then? We know, don't we? They could gi' thee<sup>1</sup> summat<sup>5</sup> worth watching then. Nah, it's all nowt,<sup>6</sup> like t' ale an' baccy<sup>7</sup> they ask so mich<sup>8</sup> for – money fair thrawn away, ah calls it. Well, we mun<sup>9</sup> 'a' wer teas and get ower it. Behave thi-sen,<sup>10</sup> Jess!' And he turned away, for that final word of caution was only one of Brudersford's familiar good-byes.

'Ay,<sup>11</sup>' replied Mr. Oakroyd dispiritedly. 'So long, Jim!' "

<sup>1</sup> *tha* (*thee*) – the objective case of *thou*; <sup>2</sup> *brass* – money; <sup>3</sup> *to lake* – to play; <sup>4</sup> *nivver* – never; <sup>5</sup> *summat* – something; <sup>6</sup> *nowt* – nothing; <sup>7</sup> *baccy* – tobacco; <sup>8</sup> *mich* – much; <sup>9</sup> *mun* – must; <sup>10</sup> *thi-sen* (= *thy-self*) – yourself; <sup>11</sup> *ay(e)* – yes.

## EXERCISES

### 1. Consider your answers to the following.

1. What determines the choice of stylistically marked words in each particular situation?
2. In what situations are informal words used?
3. What are the main kinds of informal words? Give a brief description of each group.
4. What is the difference between colloquialisms and slang? What are their common features? Illustrate your answer with examples.
5. What are the main features of dialect words?
6. Why should slang and dialect words not be included in the students' functional vocabulary?

<sup>1</sup> *United* – the name of a football team.

II. The italicized words and word-groups in the following extracts are informal. Write them out in two columns and explain in each case why you consider the word slang/colloquial. Look up any words you do not know in your dictionary.

1. The Flower Girl. ... Now you are talking! I thought you'd come off it when you saw a chance of getting back a bit of what you chucked at me last night.<sup>1</sup> (*Confidentially*). You'd had a drop in, hadn't you?

2. Liza. What call would a woman with that strength in her have to die of influenza? What become of her new straw hat that should have come to me? Somebody pinched it; and what I say is, them as pinched it done her in.

Mrs. Eynsfordhill. What does doing her in mean?

Higgins (*hastily*). Oh, thats the new small talk. To do a person in means to kill them.

3. Higgins. ... Ive picked up a girl.

Mrs. Higgins. Does that mean that some girl has picked you up?

Higgins. Not at all. I don't mean a love affair.

Mrs. Higgins. What a pity!

(From *Pygmalion* by B. Shaw)

4. Jack (*urgently*). Mrs. Palmer, if I ask you a straight question, will you please give me a straight answer?

Muriel: All right. Fire away.

Jack: Is your mother divorced?

Muriel: Divorced? Mum? Of course not.

Jack (*quietly*): Thank you. That was what I had already gathered.

Muriel: Mind you, she's often thought of divorcing Dad, but somehow never got round to doing it. Not that she's got a good word to say for him, mind you. She says he was the laziest, pottiest, most selfish chap she's ever come across in all her life. "He'll come to a sticky end," she used to say to me, when I was a little girl. "You mark my words, Mu," she used to say, "if your Dad doesn't end his days in jail my name's not Flossie Gosport."

(From *Harlequinade* by T. Rattigan)

<sup>1</sup> Eliza means the money that Higgins gave her on their previous meeting.



5. My wife has been *kiddin'* me about my friends ever since we was married. She says that ... they ain't nobody in the world got a *rummier bunch* of friends than me. I'll admit that the most of them ain't, well, what you might call *hot*; they're different somehow than when I first *hung around* with them. They seem to be lost without a brass rail to rest their *dogs* on. But of course they are old friends and I can't *give them the air*.

(From *Short Stories* by R. Lardner)

### III. a) Read the following extract.

A young man, Freddie by name, had invited a pretty young girl April to a riverside picnic. April could not come and sent her little sister to keep Freddie company.

It was naturally with something of a pang that Freddie tied the boat up at their destination. ... The only living thing for miles around appeared to be an elderly horse which was taking a snack on the river-bank. In other words, if only April had been there and the kid hadn't, they would have been alone together with no human eye to intrude upon their sacred solitude. They could have read Tennyson to each other till they were blue in the face, and not a squawk from a soul.

... Still, as the row had given him a nice appetite, he soon dismissed these wistful yearnings and started unpacking the luncheon-basket. And at the end of about twenty minutes he felt that it would not be amiss to chat with his little guest.

"Had enough?" he asked.

"No," said the kid. "But there isn't any more."

"You seem to tuck away your food all right."

"The girls at school used to call me Teresa the Tapeworm," said the kid with a touch of pride.

It suddenly struck Freddie as a little odd that with July only half over this child should be at large. The summer holidays, as he remembered it, always used to start round about the first of August.

"Why aren't you at school now?"

"I was bunked last month."

"Really?" said Freddie, interested. "They gave you the push, did they? What for?"

"Shooting pigs."

"Shooting pigs?"

"With a bow and arrow. One pig, that is to say. Percival. He belonged to Miss Maitland, the headmistress. Do you ever pretend to be people in books?"

"Never. And don't stray from the point at issue. I want to get to the bottom of this thing about the pig."

"I'm not straying from the point at issue. I was playing William Tell."

"The old apple-knocker, you mean?"

"The man who shot an apple off his son's head. I tried to get one of the girls to put the apple on her head, but she wouldn't, so I went down to the pig-sty and put it on Percival's. And the silly goop shook it off and started to eat it just as I was shooting, which spoiled my aim and I got him on the left ear. He was rather vexed about it. So was Miss Maitland. Especially as I was supposed to be in disgrace at the time, because I had set the dormitory on fire the night before."

Freddie blinked a bit.

"You set the dormitory on fire?"

"Yes."

"Any special reason, or just a passing whim?"

"I was playing Florence Nightingale."

"Florence Nightingale?"

"The Lady with the Lamp. I dropped the lamp."

"Tell me," said Freddie. "This Miss Maitland of yours. What colour is her hair?"

"Grey."

"I thought as much."

(From *Young Men in Spats* by P. G. Wodehouse)

b) Write out the informal words and word-groups which occur in the above passage and explain why you think the author uses so many of them.

IV. Read the following jokes. Write out the informal words and word-groups and say whether they are colloquial, slang or dialect.

1. A Yankee passenger in an English train was beguiling his fellow passengers with tall stories<sup>1</sup> and remarked: "We can start with a twenty-story apartment house this month, and have it finished by next."

This was too much for the burly Yorkshireman, who sat next to him. "Man, that's nowt," he said. "I've seen 'em in Yorkshire when I've been going to work just laying the foundation stone and when I've been coming home at neet they've been putting the folk out for back rent."

<sup>1</sup> tall stories – stories that are hard to believe.

2. A driver and his family had gathered bluebells, primrose roots, budding twigs and so on from a country lane. Just before they piled into the car to move off Father approached a farmer who was standing nearby and asked: "Can we take this road to Sheffield?" The farmer eyed the car and its contents sourly, then: "Aye, you mun as well, you've takken nigh everything else around here."

V. Make up a dialogue using colloquial words from your lists and from the extracts given in the chapter.

a) In the first dialogue, two undergraduates are discussing why one of them has been expelled from his college. (Don't forget that young people use both literary and familiar colloquial words.)

b) In the second dialogue, the parents of the dismissed student are wondering what to do with him. (Older people, as you remember, are apt to be less informal in their choice of words.)

## CHAPTER 2

### WHICH WORD SHOULD WE CHOOSE, FORMAL OR INFORMAL?

(continued)

#### FORMAL STYLE

We have already pointed out that formal style is restricted to formal situations. In general, formal words fall into two main groups: words associated with professional communication and a less exclusive group of so-called *learned words*.

#### Learned Words

These words are mainly associated with the printed page. It is in this vocabulary stratum that poetry and fiction find their main resources.

The term "learned" is not precise and does not adequately describe the exact characteristics of these words. A somewhat out-of-date term for the same category of words is "bookish", but, as E. Partridge notes, "'book-learned' and 'bookish' are now uncomplimentary. The corresponding complimentaries are 'erudite', 'learned', 'scholarly'. 'Book-learned' and 'bookish' connote 'ignorant of life', however much book-learning one may possess". [30]

The term "learned" includes several heterogeneous subdivi-

sions of words. We find here numerous words that are used in scientific prose and can be identified by their dry, matter-of-fact flavour (e. g. *comprise*, *compile*, *experimental*, *heterogeneous*, *homogeneous*, *conclusive*, *divergent*, etc.).

To this group also belongs so-called “officialese” (cf. with the R. *канцеляризмы*). These are the words of the official, bureaucratic language. E. Partridge in his dictionary *Usage and Abuse* gives a list of officialese which he thinks should be avoided in speech and in print. Here are some words from Partridge’s list: *assist* (for *help*), *endeavour* (for *try*), *proceed* (for *go*), *approximately* (for *about*), *sufficient* (for *enough*), *attired* (for *dressed*), *inquire* (for *ask*).

In the same dictionary an official letter from a Government Department is quoted which may very well serve as a typical example of officialese. It goes: “*You are authorized to acquire the work in question by purchase through the ordinary trade channels.*” Which, translated into plain English, would simply mean: “*We advise you to buy the book in a shop.*” [30]

Probably the most interesting subdivision of learned words is represented by the words found in descriptive passages of fiction. These words, which may be called “literary”, also have a particular flavour of their own, usually described as “refined”. They are mostly polysyllabic words drawn from the Romance languages and, though fully adapted to the English phonetic system, some of them continue to sound singularly foreign. They also seem to retain an aloofness associated with the lofty contexts in which they have been used for centuries. Their very sound seems to create complex and solemn associations. Here are some examples: *solitude*, *sentiment*, *fascination*, *fastidiousness*, *facetiousness*, *delusion*, *meditation*, *felicity*, *elusive*, *cordial*, *illusionary*.

There is one further subdivision of learned words: modes of poetic diction. These stand close to the previous group many words from which, in fact, belong to both these categories. Yet, poetic words have a further characteristic — a lofty, high-flown, sometimes archaic, colouring:

“*Alas! they had been friends in youth;  
But whispering tongues can poison truth  
And constancy lives in realms above;  
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;  
And to be wroth with one we love,  
Doth work like madness in the brain ...*”

(Coleridge)

Though learned words are mainly associated with the printed page, this is not exclusively so. Any educated English-speaking individual is sure to use many learned words not only in his formal letters and professional communication but also in his everyday speech. It is true that sometimes such uses strike a definitely incongruous note as in the following extract:

“You should find no difficulty in obtaining a secretarial post in the city.” Carel said “obtaining a post” and not “getting a job”. It was part of a bureaucratic manner which, Muriel noticed, he kept reserved for her.”

(From *The Time of the Angels* by I. Murdoch)

Yet, generally speaking, educated people in both modern fiction and real life use learned words quite naturally and their speech is certainly the richer for it.

On the other hand, excessive use of learned elements in conversational speech presents grave hazards. Utterances overloaded with such words have pretensions of “refinement” and “elegance” but achieve the exact opposite verging on the absurd and ridiculous.

Writers use this phenomenon for stylistic purposes. When a character in a book or in a play uses too many learned words, the obvious inappropriateness of his speech in an informal situation produces a comic effect.

When Lady Bracknell in Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* recommends Jack “to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is over”, the statement is funny because the seriousness and precision of the language seems comically out-of-keeping with the informal situation.

The following quotations speak for themselves. (The “learned” elements are italicized.)

Gwendolen in the same play declaring her love for Jack says:

“The story of your *romantic origin* as related to me by mamma, with *unpleasing comments*, has naturally *stirred* the deepest *fibres* of my nature. Your Christian name has an *irresistible fascination*. The simplicity of your nature makes you *exquisitely incomprehensible* to me ...”

Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion* by B. Shaw engaging in traditional English small talk answers the question “Will it rain, do you think?” in the following way:

"*The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation.*"

Freddie Widgeon, a silly young man in *Fate* by Wodehouse, trying to defend a woman whom he thinks unduly insulted, says:

"You are *aspersing* a woman's name," he said.

"What?!"

"Don't *attempt to evade the issue*," said Freddie ...

"You are aspersing a woman's name, and — what makes it worse — you are doing it in a bowler-hat. Take off that hat," said Freddie.

However any suggestion that learned words are suitable only for comic purposes, would be quite wrong. It is in this vocabulary stratum that writers and poets find their most vivid paints and colours, and not only their humorous effects.

Here is an extract from Iris Murdoch describing a summer evening:

"... A bat had noiselessly *appropriated* the space between, a flittering weaving almost *substanceless fragment* of the *invading* dark. ... A collared dove groaned once in the *final* light. A pink rose *reclining* upon the big box hedge *glimmered* with *contained* electric *luminosity*. A blackbird, trying to *metamorphose* itself into a nightingale, began a long *passionate complicated* song."

(From *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* by I. Murdoch)

This piece of modern prose is rich in literary words which underline its stern and reserved beauty. One might even say that it is the selection of words which makes the description what it is: serious, devoid of cheap sentimentality and yet charged with grave forebodings and tense expectation.

\* \* \*

What role do learned words play in the language-learning and language-teaching process? Should they be taught? Should they be included in the students' functional and recognition vocabularies?

As far as passive recognition is concerned, the answer is clear: without knowing some learned words, it is even



impossible to read fiction (not to mention scientific articles) or to listen to lectures delivered in the foreign language.

It is also true that some of these words should be carefully selected and “activized” to become part of the students’ functional vocabulary.

However, for teaching purposes, they should be chosen with care and introduced into the students’ speech in moderation, for, as we have seen, the excessive use of learned words may lead to absurdities.

### Archaic and Obsolete Words

These words stand close to the “learned” words, particularly to the modes of poetic diction. Learned words and archaisms are both associated with the printed page. Yet, as we have seen, many learned words may also be used in conversational situations. This cannot happen with archaisms, which are invariably restricted to the printed page. These words are moribund, already partly or fully out of circulation, rejected by the living language. Their last refuge is in historical novels (whose authors use them to create a particular period atmosphere) and, of course, in poetry which is rather conservative in its choice of words.

*Thou* and *thy*, *aye* (“yes”) and *nay* (“no”) are certainly archaic and long since rejected by common usage, yet poets use them even today. (We also find the same four words and many other archaisms among dialectisms, which is quite natural, as dialects are also conservative and retain archaic words and structures.)

Numerous archaisms can be found in Shakespeare, but it should be taken into consideration that what appear to us today as archaisms in the works of Shakespeare, are in fact examples of everyday language of Shakespeare’s time.

There are several such archaisms in Viola’s speech from *Twelfth Night*:

“There is a *fair* behaviour in *thee*, Captain,  
And though that nature with a *beauteous* wall  
*Doth oft* close in pollution, yet of thee  
I will believe *thou hast* a mind that suits  
With this *thy* fair and outward character.  
I *prithee* — and I’ll pay thee *bounteously* —  
Conceal me what I am, and be my aid  
For such disguise as *happly* shall become  
The form of my intent ...”

(Act I, Sc. 2)

Further examples of archaisms are: *morn* (for *morning*), *eve* (for *evening*), *moon* (for *month*), *damsel* (for *girl*), *errant* (for *wandering*, e. g. *errant knights*), etc.

Sometimes, an archaic word may undergo a sudden revival. So, the formerly archaic *kin* (for *relatives*; *one's family*) is now current in American usage.

The terms "archaic" and "obsolete" are used more or less indiscriminately by some authors. Others make a distinction between them using the term "obsolete" for words which have completely gone out of use. The Random House Dictionary defines an obsolete word as one "no longer in use, esp. out of use for at least a century", whereas an archaism is referred to as "current in an earlier time but rare in present usage". [46]

It should be pointed out that the borderline between "obsolete" and "archaic" is vague and uncertain, and in many cases it is difficult to decide to which of the groups this or that word belongs.

There is a further term for words which are no longer in use: *historisms*. By this we mean words denoting objects and phenomena which are things of the past and no longer exist.

### Professional Terminology

Hundreds of thousands of words belong to special scientific, professional or trade terminological systems and are not used or even understood by people outside the particular speciality. Every field of modern activity has its specialized vocabulary. There is a special medical vocabulary, and similarly special terminologies for psychology, botany, music, linguistics, teaching methods and many others.

*Term*, as traditionally understood, is a word or a word-group which is specifically employed by a particular branch of science, technology, trade or the arts to convey a notion peculiar to this particular activity.

So, *bilingual*, *interdental*, *labialization*, *palatalization*, *glottal stop*, *descending scale* are terms of theoretical phonetics.

There are several controversial problems in the field of terminology. The first is the puzzling question of whether a term loses its terminological status when it comes into common usage. Today this is a frequent occurrence, as various elements of the media of communication (TV, radio, popular magazines, science fiction, etc.) ply people with scraps



of knowledge from different scientific fields, technology and the arts. It is quite natural that under the circumstances numerous terms pass into general usage without losing connection with their specific fields.

There are linguists in whose opinion terms are only those words which have retained their exclusiveness and are not known or recognized outside their specific sphere. From this point of view, words associated with the medical sphere, such as *unit* (“доза лекарственного препарата”), *theatre* (“операционная”), *contact* (“носитель инфекции”) are no longer medical terms as they are in more or less common usage. The same is certainly true about names of diseases or medicines, with the exception of some rare or recent ones only known to medical men.

There is yet another point of view, according to which any terminological system is supposed to include all the words and word-groups conveying notions peculiar to a particular branch of knowledge, regardless of their exclusiveness. Modern research of various terminological systems has shown that there is no impenetrable wall between terminology and the general language system. To the contrary, terminologies seem to obey the same rules and laws as other vocabulary strata. Therefore, exchange between terminological systems and the “common” vocabulary is quite normal, and it would be wrong to regard a term as something “special” and standing apart.

Two other controversial problems deal with *polysemy* and *synonymy*.

According to some linguists, an “ideal” term should be *monosemantic* (i. e. it should have only one meaning). *Polysemantic* terms may lead to misunderstanding, and that is a serious shortcoming in professional communication. This requirement seems quite reasonable, yet facts of the language do not meet it. There are, in actual fact, numerous polysemantic terms. The linguistic term *semantics* may mean both the meaning of a word and the branch of lexicology studying meanings. In the terminology of painting, the term *colour* may denote *hue* (“цвет”) and, at the same time, *stuff used for colouring* (“краска”).

The same is true about synonymy in terminological systems. There are scholars who insist that terms should not have synonyms because, consequently, scientists and other specialists would name the same objects and phenomena in their field by different terms and would not be able to come to any agreement. This may be true. But, in fact, terms do possess

synonyms. In painting, the same term *colour* has several synonyms in both its meanings: *hue, shade, tint, tinge* in the first meaning (“цвет”) and *paint, tint, dye* in the second (“краска”).

### Basic Vocabulary

These words are stylistically neutral, and, in this respect, opposed to formal and informal words described above. Their stylistic neutrality makes it possible to use them in all kinds of situations, both formal and informal, in verbal and written communication. Certain of the stylistically marked vocabulary strata are, in a way, exclusive: professional terminology is used mostly by representatives of the professions; dialects are regional; slang is favoured mostly by the young and the uneducated. Not so basic vocabulary. These words are used every day, everywhere and by everybody, regardless of profession, occupation, educational level, age group or geographical location. These are words without which no human communication would be possible as they denote objects and phenomena of everyday importance (e. g. *house, bread, summer, winter, child, mother, green, difficult, to go, to stand*, etc.).

The basic vocabulary is the central group of the vocabulary, its historical foundation and living core. That is why words of this stratum show a considerably greater stability in comparison with words of the other strata, especially informal.

Basic vocabulary words can be recognized not only by their stylistic neutrality but, also, by entire lack of other connotations (i. e. attendant meanings). Their meanings are broad, general and directly convey the notion, without supplying any additional information.

For instance, the verb *to walk* means merely “to move from place to place on foot” whereas in the meanings of its synonyms *to stride, to stroll, to trot, to stagger* and others, some additional information is encoded as they each describe a different manner of walking, a different gait, tempo, purposefulness or lack of purpose and even length of paces (see Ch. 10). Thus, *to walk*, with its direct broad meaning, is a typical basic vocabulary word, and its synonyms, with their elaborate additional information encoded in their meanings, belong to the periphery of the vocabulary.

The basic vocabulary and the stylistically marked strata of the vocabulary do not exist independently but are closely interrelated. Most stylistically marked words have

their neutral counterparts in the basic vocabulary. (Terms are an exception in this respect.) On the other hand, colloquialisms may have their counterparts among learned words, most slang has counterparts both among colloquialisms and learned words. Archaisms, naturally, have their modern equivalents at least in some of the other groups.

The table gives some examples of such synonyms belonging to different stylistic strata.

Basic vocabulary	Informal	Formal
<i>begin</i>	<i>start, get started</i>	<i>commence</i>
<i>continue</i>	<i>go on, get on</i>	<i>proceed</i>
<i>end</i>	<i>finish, be through, be over</i>	<i>terminate</i>
<i>child, baby</i>	<i>kid, brat, bearn (dial.)</i>	<i>infant, babe (poet.)</i>

In teaching a foreign language, the basic vocabulary words comprise the first and absolutely essential part of the students' functional and recognition vocabularies. They constitute the beginner's vocabulary. Yet, to restrict the student to the basic vocabulary would mean to deprive his speech of colour, expressive force and emotive shades, for, if basic vocabulary words are absolutely necessary, they also decidedly lack something: they are not at all the kind of words to tempt a writer or a poet. Actually, if the language had none other but basic vocabulary words, fiction would be hardly readable, and poetry simply non-existent.

The following table sums up the description of the stylistic strata of English vocabulary.

Stylistically-neutral Words	Stylistically-marked words	
	Informal	Formal
Basic vocabulary	I. Colloquial words A. literary, B. familiar, C. low. II. Slang words. III. Dialect words.	I. Learned words A. literary, B. words of scientific prose, C. officialese, D. modes of poetic diction. II. Archaic and obsolete words. III. Professional terminology.

## EXERCISES

### I. Consider your answers to the following.

1. Where are formal words used?
2. Are learned words used only in books? Which type of learned words, do you think, is especially suitable for verbal communication? Which is least suitable and even undesirable?
3. What are the principal characteristics of archaic words?
4. What are the controversial problems connected with professional terminology?
5. Do you think that students of English should learn terms? If so, for which branch or branches of knowledge?
6. What is understood by the basic vocabulary?
7. Which classes of stylistically marked words, in your opinion, should be included in the students' functional and recognition vocabularies? in 1) junior and 2) senior school vocabularies?

II. a) The italicized words and word-groups in the following extracts belong to formal style. Describe the stylistic peculiarities of each extract in general and say whether the italicized represents learned words, terms or archaisms. Look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary.

1. "Sir,  
*in re*<sup>1</sup> Miss Ernestina Freeman

We are *instructed* by Mr Ernest Freeman, father of the *above-mentioned* Miss Ernestina Freeman, *to request* you *to attend* at these *chambers* at 3 o'clock this coming Friday. Your failure to attend will be regarded as an acknowledgment of our client's right *to proceed*."

(From *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by J. Fowles)

2. "I have, with *esteemed* advice ..." Mr Aubrey bowed briefly towards the sergeant, ... "... prepared *an admission of guilt*. I should *instruct* you that Mr. Freeman's decision not to proceed immediately is most strictly *contingent* upon your client's signing, on this occasion and in our presence, and witnessed *by all present*, this document."

(Ibid.)

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<sup>1</sup> Usually in modern correspondence you will find the form *re* [ri:] without the *in*.

3. Romeo ... So shows a snowy dove trooping with  
crows,

As *yonder* lady o'er her fellows shows.

The *measure*<sup>1</sup> done, I'll watch her place of stand,  
And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.

Did my heart love till now? *Forswear* it, sight!

For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

Tybalt. This, by his voice should be a Montague.

Fetch me my rapier, boy. What! dares the slave

Come *hither*, cover'd with an *antick* face,

To *flee* and scorn at our *solemnity*?

Now, by the stock and honour of my *kin*,

To strike him dead I hold it not a sin.

(From *Romeo and Juliet* by  
W. Shakespeare, Act I, Sc. 5)

4. "... I want you to keep an eye on that *air-speed indicator*. Remember that an airplane stays in the air because of its *forward speed*. If you let the speed drop too low, it stalls – and falls out of the air. Any time the *ASI* shows a *reading* near 120, you tell George instantly. Is that clear?" "Yes, Captain. I understand." "Back to you, George ... I want you to unlock the *autopilot* – it's clearly marked on the *control column* – and take the airplane yourself. ... George, you watch the *artificial horizon* ... *Climb and descent indicator* should stay at zero."

(From *Runway Zero-Eight* by A. Hailey, J. Castle)

5. Mr. Claud Gurney's production of *The Taming of the Shrew* shows a violent *ingenuity*. He has learnt much from Mr. Cochran; there is also a touch of Hammersmith in his *ebullient* days. *The speed, the light, the noise, the deployment* of expensively coloured figures ... amuse the senses and sometimes *divert* the mind from the unfunny brutality of the play, which *evokes* not one natural smile. (From a *theatrical review*).

6. Arthur: Jack! Jack! Where's the *stage manager*?

Jack: Yes, Mr. Gosport?

Arthur: *The lighting* for this scene has gone mad. This isn't our *plot*. There's far too much light. What's gone wrong with it?

Jack: I think the trouble is they have crept in numbers two and three too early. (*Calling up to the flies.*) Will,

<sup>1</sup> *measure* (here) – dance.

check your plot, please. Number two and three *spots* should be *down to a quarter* instead of full. ... And you've got your *floats* too high, too.

(From *Harlequinade* by T. Rattigan)

7. It was none other than Grimes, the Utility *outfielder*, Connie had been forced to use in the last game because of the injury to Joyce — Grimes whose miraculous *catch* in the eleventh *inning* had robbed Parker of a *home run*, and whose own *homer* — a fluky one — had given the Athletics another World's Championship.

(From *Short Stories* by R. Lardner)

b) Make up lists from the italicized words classifying them into:  
A. learned: 1) officialese, 2) literary; B. terms (subdivide them into groups and state to what professional activity each belongs); C. archaic words.

III. a) Make up a list of literary learned words selected from the following.

1. Absent, he was still unescapably with her, like a guilty conscience. Her solitudes were endless meditations on the theme of him. Sometimes the longing for his tangible presence was too achingly painful to be borne. Disobeying all his injunctions, breaking all her promises, she would drive off in search of him. Once, at about midnight, Tonino was called down from his room at the hotel by a message that a lady wanted to speak to him. He found her sitting in the car. "But I couldn't help it, I simply couldn't help it," she cried, to excuse herself and to mollify his anger. Tonino refused to be propitiated. Coming like this in the middle of the night! It was madness, it was scandalous! ...

(From *Brief Candles* by A. Huxley)

2. To one who has been long in city pent,  
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair  
And open face of heaven,— to breathe a prayer  
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.  
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,  
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair  
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair  
And gentle tale of love and languishment?

(J. Keats)

b) Make up a list of learned words used in the extract from "Trouble Down at Tudsleigh" by P. G. Wodehouse (page 30). Point out the lines in which the incongruity of formal and informal elements used together produces a humorous effect.



IV. Read the following jokes. Look up the italicized words in the dictionary (unless you know their meanings) and show why they are professional terms. State to which sphere of human activity they belong. On what is the humour based in each of the jokes?

1. A sailor was called into the witness-box to give evidence.

"Well, sir," said the lawyer, "do you know the *plaintiff* and *defendant*?"

"I don't know the drift of them words," answered the sailor.

"What! Not know the meaning of "plaintiff" and "defendant"?" continued the lawyer. "A pretty fellow you to come here as a witness! Can you tell me where on board the ship the man struck the other?"

"*Abaft the binnacle*," said the sailor.

"*Abaft the binnacle*?" said the lawyer. "What do you mean by that?"

"A pretty fellow you," responded the sailor, "to come here as a lawyer, and don't know what "*abast the binnacle*" means!"

2. "Where did the car hit him?" asked the coroner.

"At the junction of *the dorsal and cervical vertebrae*," replied the medical witness.

The burly foreman rose from his seat.

"Man and boy, I've lived in these parts for fifty years," he protested ponderously, "and I have never heard of the place."

3. The doctor's new secretary, a conscientious girl, was puzzled by an entry in the doctor's notes on an emergency case: "*Shot in the lumbar region*," it read. After a moment she brightened and, in the interest of clarity, typed into the record: "*Shot in the woods*".

V. Revise your lists of formal and informal words and the examples given in Ch. 1 and 2, and compose the following brief situations. Your style should suit both the subject and the situation.

a) A short formal letter to a Mrs. Gray, a distant acquaintance, in which you tell her that you cannot accept her invitation to a party. Explain the reason.

b) An informal letter on the same subject to an intimate friend.

c) A conversation between two students discussing a party they both attended and the friends they met there.

d) A similar conversation between two much older, very prim and proper ladies.

- e) A short review on a theatrical production or film.
- f) A discussion between two teenagers about the same play or film.

### CHAPTER 3

## THE ETYMOLOGY OF ENGLISH WORDS.<sup>1</sup> ARE ALL ENGLISH WORDS REALLY ENGLISH?

As a matter of fact, they are — if we regard them in the light of present-day English. If, however, their origins are looked into, the picture may seem somewhat bewildering. A person who does not know English but knows French (Italian, Latin, Spanish) is certain to recognize a great number of familiar-looking words when skipping through an English book.

It is true that English vocabulary, which is one of the most extensive amongst the world's languages contains an immense number of words of foreign origin. Explanations for this should be sought in the history of the language which is closely connected with the history of the nation speaking the language. In order to have a better understanding of the problem, it will be necessary to go through a brief survey of certain historical facts, relating to different epochs.

\* \* \*

*The first century B. C.* Most of the territory now known to us as Europe is occupied by the Roman Empire. Among the inhabitants of the continent are Germanic tribes, "barbarians" as the arrogant Romans call them. Theirs is really a rather primitive stage of development, especially if compared with the high civilization and refinement of Rome. They are primitive cattle-breeders and know almost nothing about land cultivation. Their tribal languages contain only Indo-European and Germanic elements. The latter fact is of some importance for the purposes of our survey.

Now comes an event which brings an important change. After a number of wars between the Germanic tribes and the Romans these two opposing peoples come into peaceful contact. Trade is carried on, and the Germanic

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<sup>1</sup> By *etymology* of words is understood their origin.



people gain knowledge of new and useful things. The first among them are new things to eat. It has been mentioned that Germanic cattle-breeding was on a primitive scale. Its only products known to the Germanic tribes were meat and milk. It is from the Romans that they learn how to make butter and cheese and, as there are naturally no words for these foodstuffs in their tribal languages, they are to use the Latin words to name them (Lat. *būtyrum*, *cāseus*). It is also to the Romans that the Germanic tribes owe the knowledge of some new fruits and vegetables of which they had no idea before, and the Latin names of these fruits and vegetables enter their vocabularies reflecting this new knowledge: *cherry* (Lat. *cerasum*), *pear* (Lat. *pirum*), *plum* (Lat. *prunus*), *pea* (Lat. *pisum*), *beet* (Lat. *bēta*), *pepper* (Lat. *piper*). It is interesting to note that the word *plant* is also a Latin borrowing<sup>1</sup> of this period (Lat. *planta*).

Here are some more examples of Latin borrowings of this period: *cup* (Lat. *cuppa*), *kitchen* (Lat. *coquina*), *mill* (Lat. *molina*), *port* (Lat. *portus*), *wine* (Lat. *vinum*).

The fact that all these borrowings occurred is in itself significant. It was certainly important that the Germanic tribal languages gained a considerable number of new words and were thus enriched. What was even more significant was that all these Latin words were destined to become the earliest group of borrowings in the future English language which was — much later — built on the basis of the Germanic tribal languages. Which brings us to another epoch, much closer to the English language as we know it, both in geographical and chronological terms.

*The fifth century A. D.* Several of the Germanic tribes (the most numerous amongst them being the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes) migrated across the sea now known as the English Channel to the British Isles. There they were confronted by the Celts, the original inhabitants of the Isles. The Celts desperately defended their lands against the invaders, but they were no match for the military-minded Teutons and gradually yielded most of their territory. They retreated to the North and South-West (modern Scotland, Wales and Cornwall). Through

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<sup>1</sup> By a *borrowing* or *loan-word* we mean a word which came into the vocabulary of one language from another and was assimilated by the new language. (For more about the assimilation of borrowings see Ch. 4.)

their numerous contacts with the defeated Celts, the conquerors got to know and assimilated a number of Celtic words (Mod. E. *bald*, *down*, *glen*, *druid*, *bard*, *cradle*). Especially numerous among the Celtic borrowings were place names, names of rivers, hills, etc. The Germanic tribes occupied the land, but the names of many parts and features of their territory remained Celtic. For instance, the names of the rivers Avon, Exe, Esk, Usk, Ux originate from Celtic words meaning "river" and "water".

Ironically, even the name of the English capital originates from Celtic *Llyn* + *dun* in which *llyn* is another Celtic word for "river" and *dun* stands for "a fortified hill", the meaning of the whole being "fortress on the hill over the river".

Some Latin words entered the Anglo-Saxon languages through Celtic, among them such widely-used words as *street* (Lat. *strāta via*) and *wall* (Lat. *vallum*).

*The seventh century A. D.* This century was significant for the christianization of England. Latin was the official language of the Christian church, and consequently the spread of Christianity was accompanied by a new period of Latin borrowings. These no longer came from spoken Latin as they did eight centuries earlier, but from church Latin. Also, these new Latin borrowings were very different in meaning from the earlier ones. They mostly indicated persons, objects and ideas associated with church and religious rituals. E. g. *priest* (Lat. *presbyter*), *bishop* (Lat. *episcopus*), *monk* (Lat. *monachus*), *nun* (Lat. *nonna*), *candle* (Lat. *candela*).

Additionally, in a class of their own were educational terms. It was quite natural that these were also Latin borrowings, for the first schools in England were church schools, and the first teachers priests and monks. So, the very word *school* is a Latin borrowing (Lat. *schola*, of Greek origin) and so are such words as *scholar* (Lat. *schōlar(-is)*) and *magister* (Lat. *magister*).

*From the end of the 8th c. to the middle of the 11th c.* England underwent several Scandinavian invasions which inevitably left their trace on English vocabulary. Here are some examples of early Scandinavian borrowings: *call*, v., *take*, v., *cast*, v., *die*, v., *law*, n., *husband*, n. (< Sc.

*hūs + bōndi*, i. e. "inhabitant of the house"), *window* n. (< Sc. *vindauga*, i. e. "the eye of the wind"), *ill*, adj., *loose*, adj., *low*, adj., *weak*, adj.

Some of the words of this group are easily recognizable as Scandinavian borrowings by the initial *sk-* combination. E. g. *sky*, *skill*, *skin*, *ski*, *skirt*.

Certain English words changed their meanings under the influence of Scandinavian words of the same root. So, the O. E. *brēad* which meant "piece" acquired its modern meaning by association with the Scandinavian *brauð*. The O. E. *drēam* which meant "joy" assimilated the meaning of the Scandinavian *draumr* (cf. with the Germ. *Traum* "dream", and the R. *òpěma*).

1066. With the famous Battle of Hastings, when the English were defeated by the Normans under William the Conqueror, we come to the eventful epoch of the Norman Conquest. The epoch can well be called eventful not only in national, social, political and human terms, but also in linguistic terms. England became a bi-lingual country, and the impact on the English vocabulary made over this two-hundred-years period is immense: French words from the Norman dialect penetrated every aspect of social life. Here is a very brief list of examples of *Norman French borrowings*:

Administrative words: *state*, *government*, *parliament*, *council*, *power*.

Legal terms: *court*, *judge*, *justice*, *crime*, *prison*.

Military terms: *army*, *war*, *soldier*, *officer*, *battle*, *enemy*.

Educational terms: *pupil*, *lesson*, *library*, *science*, *pen*, *pencil*.

Everyday life was not unaffected by the powerful influence of French words. Numerous terms of everyday life were also borrowed from French in this period: e. g. *table*, *plate*, *saucer*, *dinner*, *supper*, *river*, *autumn*, *uncle*, etc.

*The Renaissance Period*. In England, as in all European countries, this period was marked by significant develop-

ments in science, art and culture and, also, by a revival of interest in the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome and their languages. Hence, there occurred a considerable number of Latin and Greek borrowings. In contrast to the earliest Latin borrowings (1st c. B. C.), the Renaissance ones were rarely concrete names. They were mostly abstract words (e. g. *major, minor, filial, moderate, intelligent, permanent, to elect, to create*). There were naturally numerous scientific and artistic terms (*datum, status, phenomenon, philosophy, method, music*).<sup>1</sup> The same is true of Greek Renaissance borrowings (e. g. *atom, cycle, ethics, esthete*).

The Renaissance was a period of extensive cultural contacts between the major European states. Therefore, it was only natural that new words also entered the English vocabulary from other European languages. The most significant once more were French borrowings. This time they came from the Parisian dialect of French and are known as *Parisian borrowings*. Examples: *regime, routine, police, machine, ballet, matinée, scene, technique, bourgeois*, etc. (One should note that these words of French origin sound and "look" very different from their Norman predecessors. We shall return to this question later (see Ch. 4).)

Italian also contributed a considerable number of words to English, e. g. *piano, violin, opera, alarm, colonel*.

\* \* \*

There are certain structural features which enable us to identify some words as borrowings and even to determine the source language. We have already established that the initial *sk* usually indicates Scandinavian origin. You can also recognize words of Latin and French origin by certain suffixes, prefixes or endings. The two tables below will help you in this.

The historical survey above is far from complete. Its aim is just to give a very general idea of the ways in which English vocabulary developed and of the major events through which it acquired its vast modern resources.

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<sup>1</sup> *Phenomenon, philosophy, method, music*, etc. were borrowed into English from Latin and had earlier come into Latin from Greek.

## I. Latin Affixes

Nouns	The suffix <i>-ion</i>	<i>communion, legion, opinion, session, union, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-tion</i>	<i>relation, revolution, starvation, temptation, unification, etc.</i>
Verbs	The suffix <i>-ate</i> [et]	<i>appreciate, create, congratulate, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-ute</i> [ju:t]	<i>attribute, contribute, constitute, distribute, etc.</i>
	The remnant suffix <i>-ct</i>	<i>act, conduct, collect, connect, etc.</i>
	The remnant suffix <i>-d(e)</i>	<i>applaud, divide, exclude, include, etc.</i>
	The prefix <i>dis-</i>	<i>disable, distract, disown, disagree, etc.</i>
Adjectives	The suffix <i>-able</i>	<i>detestable, curable, disown, disagree, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-ate</i> [it]	<i>accurate, desperate, graduate, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-ant</i>	<i>arrogant, constant, important, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-ent</i>	<i>absent, convenient, decent, evident, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-or</i>	<i>major, minor, junior, senior, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-al</i>	<i>cordial, filial, fraternal, maternal, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-ar</i>	<i>lunar, solar, familiar, etc.</i>

## II. French Affixes

Nouns	The suffix <i>-ance</i>	<i>arrogance, endurance, hindrance, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-ence</i>	<i>consequence, intelligence, patience, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-ment</i>	<i>appointment, development, experiment, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-age</i>	<i>courage, marriage, passage, village, etc.</i>
	The suffix <i>-ess</i>	<i>tigress, lioness, actress, adventuress, etc.</i>
Adjectives	The suffix <i>-ous</i>	<i>curious, dangerous, joyous, serious, etc.</i>
Verbs	The prefix <i>en-</i>	<i>enable, endear, enact, enfold, enslave, etc.</i>

*Notes.* 1. The tables represent only the most typical and frequent structural elements of Latin and French borrowings.

2. Though all the affixes represented in the tables are Latin or French borrowings, some of the examples given in the third column are later formations derived from native roots and borrowed affixes (e. g. *eatable*, *lovable*).

3. By remnant suffixes are meant the ones that are only partially preserved in the structure of the word (e. g. Lat. *-ct* < Lat. *-ctus*).

It seems advisable to sum up what has been said in a table.

### The Etymological Structure of English Vocabulary

The native element <sup>1</sup>	The borrowed element
I. Indo-European element II. Germanic element  III. English Proper element (not earlier than 5th c. A. D.)	I. Celtic (5th – 6th c. A. D.) II. Latin 1st group: 1st c. B. C. 2nd group: 7th c. A. D. 3rd group: the Renaissance period III. Scandinavian (8th – 11th c. A. D.)  IV. French 1. Norman borrowings: 11th – 13th c. A. D. 2. Parisian borrowings (Renaissance) V. Greek (Renaissance) VI. Italian (Renaissance and later) VII. Spanish (Renaissance and later) VIII. German IX. Indian X. Russian And some other groups

The table requires some explanation. Firstly, it should be pointed out that not only does the second column contain more groups, but it also implies a greater quantity of words. Modern scholars estimate the percentage of borrowed words in the English vocabulary at 65-70 per cent which is an exceptionally high figure: one would certainly expect the native element to prevail. This anomaly is explained by the country's eventful history and by its many international contacts.

On a straight vocabulary count, considering the high percentage of borrowed words, one would have to classify

<sup>1</sup> By the *native element* we mean words which were not borrowed from other languages but represent the original stock of this particular language.



English as a language of international origin or, at least, a Romance one (as French and Latin words obviously prevail). But here another factor comes into play, the relative frequency of occurrence of words, and it is under this heading that the native Anglo-Saxon heritage comes into its own. The native element in English comprises a large number of high-frequency words like the articles, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, auxiliaries and, also, words denoting everyday objects and ideas (e. g. *house, child, water, go, come, eat, good, bad*; etc.).

Furthermore, the grammatical structure is essentially Germanic having remained unaffected by foreign influence.

It is probably of some interest to mention that at various times purists have tried to purge the English language of foreign words, replacing them with Anglo-Saxon ones. One slogan created by these linguistic nationalists was: "Avoid Latin derivatives; use brief, terse Anglo-Saxon monosyllables." The irony is that the only Anglo-Saxon word in the entire slogan is "Anglo-Saxon". [31]

Now let us turn to the first column of the table representing the native element, the original stock of the English vocabulary. The column consists of three groups, only the third being dated: the words of this group appeared in the English vocabulary in the 5th c. or later, that is, after the Germanic tribes migrated to the British Isles. As to the Indo-European and Germanic groups, they are so old that they cannot be dated. It was mentioned in the historical survey opening this chapter that the tribal languages of the Angles, the Saxons, the Jutes, by the time of their migration, contained only words of Indo-European and Germanic roots plus a certain number of the earliest Latin borrowings.

By the Indo-European element are meant words of roots common to all or most languages of the Indo-European group. English words of this group denote elementary notions without which no human communication would be possible. The following groups can be identified.

- I. Family relations: *father, mother, brother, son, daughter*.
- II. Parts of the human body: *foot* (cf. R. *нога*), *nose, lip, heart*.

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<sup>1</sup> The classification and examples are taken from the book  
Аракин В. Д. Очерки по истории английского языка, с. 251.



- III. Animals: *cow, swine, goose*.
- IV. Plants: *tree, birch* (cf. R. *береза*), *corn* (cf. R. *зерно*).
- V. Times of day: *day, night*.
- VI. Heavenly bodies: *sun, moon, star*.
- VII. Numerous adjectives: *red* (cf. Ukr. *рудий*, R. *рыжий*), *new, glad* (cf. R. *гладкий*), *sad* (cf. R. *сѣм*).
- VIII. The numerals from one to a hundred.
- IX. Pronouns — personal (except *they* which is a Scandinavian borrowing); demonstrative.
- X. Numerous verbs: *be* (cf. R. *быть*), *stand* (cf. R. *стоять*), *sit* (cf. R. *сидеть*), *eat* (cf. R. *есть*), *know* (cf. R. *знать, знаю*).

The Germanic element represents words of roots common to all or most Germanic languages. Some of the main groups of Germanic words are the same as in the Indo-European element.

- I. Parts of the human body: *head, hand, arm, finger, bone*.
- II. Animals: *bear, fox, calf*.
- III. Plants: *oak, fir, grass*.
- IV. Natural phenomena: *rain, frost*.
- V. Seasons of the year: *winter, spring, summer*.<sup>1</sup>
- VI. Landscape features: *sea, land*.
- VII. Human dwellings and furniture: *house, room, bench*.
- VIII. Sea-going vessels: *boat, ship*.
- IX. Adjectives: *green, blue, grey, white, small, thick, high, old, good*.
- X. Verbs: *see, hear, speak, tell, say, answer, make, give, drink*.

\* \* \*

It has been mentioned that the English proper element is, in certain respects, opposed to the first two groups. Not only can it be approximately dated, but these words have another distinctive feature: they are specifically English having no cognates<sup>2</sup> in other languages whereas for Indo-

<sup>1</sup> *Autumn* is a French borrowing.

<sup>2</sup> *Cognates* — words of the same etymological root, of common origin.

European and Germanic words such cognates can always be found, as, for instance, for the following words of the Indo-European group.

*Star*: Germ. *Stern*, Lat. *stella*, Gr. *aster*.

*Sad*: Germ. *satt*, Lat. *satis*, R. *сым*, Snscr. *sā-*.

*Stand*: Germ. *stehen*, Lat. *stare*, R. *стоять*, Snscr. *stha-*.

Here are some examples of English proper. These words stand quite alone in the vocabulary systems of Indo-European languages: *bird*, *boy*, *girl*, *lord*, *lady*, *woman*, *daisy*, *always*.

Of course, one might remark that Russian vocabulary also has the words *лорд*, *леди*, *бой* (in the meaning of "native servant"). The explanation is simple: these words have been borrowed by Russian from English and therefore are not cognates of their English counterparts.

## EXERCISES

I. Consider your answers to the following.

1. How can you account for the fact that English vocabulary contains such an immense number of words of foreign origin?

2. What is the earliest group of English borrowings? Date it.

3. What Celtic borrowings are there in English? Date them.

4. Which words were introduced into English vocabulary during the period of Christianization?

5. What are the characteristic features of Scandinavian borrowings?

6. When and under what circumstances did England become a bi-lingual country? What imprint features were left in English vocabulary by this period?

7. What are the characteristic features of words borrowed into English during the Renaissance?

8. What suffixes and prefixes can help you to recognize words of Latin and French origin?

9. What is meant by the native element of English vocabulary?

II. Subdivide all the following words of native origin into a) Indo-European, b) Germanic, c) English proper.

daughter, woman, room, land, cow, moon, sea, red, spring, three, I, lady, always, goose, bear, fox, lord,

tree, nose, birch, grey, old, glad, daisy, heart, hand, night, to eat, to see, to make

III. Read the following jokes. Explain the etymology of the italicized words. If necessary consult a dictionary.<sup>1</sup>

1. He dropped around to the *girl's house* and as he ran up the steps he was confronted by her *little brother*.

"Hi, Billy."

"Hi," said the brat.

"Is your *sister* expecting me?"

"Yeah."

"How do you know that?"

"She's gone out."

2. A *man* was at a theatre. He was sitting behind *two women* whose continuous chatter became more than he could bear. Leaning forward, he tapped *one* of them on the *shoulder*.

"Pardon me, madam," he said, "but I can't *hear*."

"You are not supposed to — this is a private conversation," she hit back.

3. Sonny: *Father*, what *do* they *make* asphalt roads of?

Father: That makes a *thousand* question you've asked today. Do give me a *little* peace. What do you *think* would happen if I had asked my father so *many* questions?

Sonny: You might have learnt how to answer some of mine.

IV. Identify the period of the following Latin borrowings; point out the structural and semantic peculiarities of the words from each period.

wall, cheese, intelligent, candle, major, moderate, priest, school, street, cherry, music, phenomenon, nun, kitchen, plum, pear, pepper, datum, cup, status, wine, philosophy, method

V. In the following sentences find examples of Latin borrowings; identify the period of borrowings.

1. The garden here consisted of a long smooth lawn with two rows of cherry trees planted in the grass.

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<sup>1</sup> Skeat W. A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language. Oxford, 1961; Weckley E. An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English. V. I-II. No 4, 19.

2. They set to pork-pies, cold potatoes, hard-boiled eggs, cold bacon, ham, crabs, cheese, butter, gooseberry-tarts, cherry-tarts, bread, more sausages and yet again pork-pies. 3. Instead of commendation, all we got was a tirade about the condition of the mackintosh sheets which Matron had said were a disgrace both to the hospital and the nursing profession. 4. A cold wind knifing through downtown streets penetrated the thin coat she had on. 5. The substance of my life is a private conversation with myself which to turn into a dialogue would be equivalent to self-destruction. 6. It was the money, of course; money which did strange things to human beings, making them greedy, panicked, at times sub-human. 7. On the morning of burial — taking no chances — an archbishop, a bishop and a monsignor concelebrated a Mass of the Resurrection. A full choir intoned responses to prayers with reassuring volume. Within the cathedral which was filled, a section near the altar had been reserved for Rosselli relatives and friends. 8. The room was full of young men, all talking at once and drinking cups of tea. 9. I made way to the kitchen and tried the kitchen door which gave on to the fire-escape. 10. "Lewis, dear," Edwina said, "could you interrupt your speech and pour more wine?" 11. All Anna's life worked to schedule; like a nun, she would have been lost without her watch.

VI. Study the map of Great Britain and write out the names of the cities and towns ending in a) *caster* (*chester*),<sup>1</sup> b) *wick*, *thorpe*, *by*.<sup>2</sup>

VII. Study the map of Great Britain and find the names of places, rivers and hills of Celtic origin.

VIII. In the sentences given below find the examples of Scandinavian borrowings. How can the Scandinavian borrowings be identified?

1. He went on to say that he was sorry to hear that I had been ill. 2. She was wearing a long blue skirt and a white blouse. 3. Two eyes — eyes like winter windows, glared at him with ruthless impersonality. 4. The sun was high, the sky unclouded, the air warm with a dry fresh breeze. 5. If Eastin were right, Wainwright reasoned, the presence of the husband could tie in with Wainwright's own theory of an outside accomplice. 6. It's

<sup>1</sup> *caster* (*chester*) < Lat. "military camp"

<sup>2</sup> *wick*, *thorpe*, *by* < Sc. "place"

not such a bad thing to be unsure sometimes. It takes us away from rigid thinking.

IX. Read the following jokes and identify the Scandinavian borrowings.

1. "Very sorry, Mr. Brown, but the coffee is exhausted," the landlady announced.

"Not at all surprised," came back Mr. Brown. "I've seen it growing weaker and weaker every morning."

2. Small boy: I say, dad, teacher said this morning that the law of gravity kept us on the earth. Is that right?

Father: Yes, my boy, that's correct.

Small boy: Well, how did we get on before the law was passed?

3. "I want a man to do odd jobs about the house, run errands, one who never answers back and is always ready to do my bidding," explained a lady to an applicant for a post in the household.

"You're looking for a husband, ma'am, not a servant," said the seeker for work.

X. Copy out the examples of Norman and Parisian borrowings from the following passage. Describe the structural peculiarities of these words.

1. It was while they were having coffee that a waitress brought a message to their table. 2. I knew nothing about the film world and imagined it to be a continuous ferment of personal intrigue. 3. The masseur and majordomo quietly disappeared. Replacing them like one more character emerging on stage was a chef, a pale, worried pencil of a man. 4. A limousine and chauffeur, available at any time from the bank's pool of cars, were perquisites of the executive vice-president's job, and Alex enjoyed them. 5. He would have dinner quickly and then get down to work. But as he opened the door he smelt Eau-de-Cologne and there was Ruth in a chair by the grate. 6. His bandaged head was silhouetted in the light from the little window. 7. "I don't see the matter," said Steven, helping himself to more mayonnaise. 8. Apart from being an unforgivable break of etiquette, you only make yourself extremely ridiculous. 9. However this John Davenant evidently knew more about the army and commerce than either of them. 10. At last I began to want my break-

fast. I began walking in the direction of Madge's hotel and set down en route at a café not far from the Opera.

XI. Read the following extract. Which of the italicized borrowings came from Latin and which from French?

*Connoisseurs* of the song will be *familiar* with the name of Anna Quentin, distinguished blues singer and versatile *vocalist*. Miss Quentin's admirers, who have been regretting her *recent retirement* from the limelight, will hear with mixed feelings the report that she is bound to Hollywood. Miss Quentin, leaving for a short stay in Paris, *refused* either to *confirm* or to *deny* a *rumour* that she had signed a long-term *contract* for work in America.

XII. Explain the etymology of the following words.

sputnik, kindergarten, opera, piano, potato, tomato, droshky, czar, violin, coffee, cocoa, colonel, alarm, cargo, blitzkrieg, steppe, komsomol, banana, balalaika

XIII. Think of 10-15 examples of Russian borrowings in English and English borrowings in Russian.

XIV. Read the following text. Identify the etymology of as many words as you can.

### The Roman Occupation

For some reason the Romans neglected to overrun the country with fire and sword, though they had both of these; in fact after the Conquest they did not mingle with the Britons at all but lived a semi-detached life in villas. They occupied their time for two or three hundred years in building Roman roads and having Roman Baths, this was called the Roman Occupation, and gave rise to the memorable Roman law, 'He who baths first baths fast', which was a good thing and still is. The Roman roads ran absolutely straight in all the directions and all led to Rome. The Romans also built towns wherever they were wanted, and, in addition, a wall between England and Scotland to keep out the savage Picts and Scots.

(From *1066 and All That* by C. W. Sellar, R. J. Yeatman)



## THE ETYMOLOGY OF ENGLISH WORDS

*(continued)***Why Are Words Borrowed?**

This question partially concerns the historical circumstances which stimulate the borrowing process. Each time two nations come into close contact, certain borrowings are a natural consequence. The nature of the contact may be different. It may be wars, invasions or conquests when foreign words are in effect imposed upon the reluctant conquered nation. There are also periods of peace when the process of borrowing is due to trade and international cultural relations.

These latter circumstances are certainly more favourable for stimulating the borrowing process, for during invasions and occupations the natural psychological reaction of the oppressed nation is to reject and condemn the language of the oppressor. In this respect the linguistic heritage of the Norman Conquest seems exceptional, especially if compared to the influence of the Mongol-Tartar Yoke on the Russian language. The Mongol-Tartar Yoke also represented a long period of cruel oppression, yet the imprint left by it on the Russian vocabulary is comparatively insignificant.

The difference in the consequences of these evidently similar historical events is usually explained by the divergence in the level of civilization of the two conflicting nations. Russian civilization and also the level of its language development at the time of the Mongol-Tartar invasion were superior to those of the invaders. That is why the Russian language successfully resisted the influence of a less developed language system. On the other hand, the Norman culture of the 11th c. was certainly superior to that of the Saxons. The result was that an immense number of French words forced their way into English vocabulary. Yet, linguistically speaking, this seeming defeat turned into a victory. Instead of being smashed and broken by the powerful intrusion of the foreign element, the English language managed to preserve its essential structure and vastly enriched its expressive resources with the new borrowings.

But all this only serves to explain the conditions which encourage the borrowing process. The question of *why* words are borrowed by one language from another is still unanswered.

Sometimes it is done to fill a gap in vocabulary. When the Saxons borrowed Latin words for “butter”, “plum”, “beet”, they did it because their own vocabularies lacked words for these new objects. For the same reason the words *potato* and *tomato* were borrowed by English from Spanish when these vegetables were first brought to England by the Spaniards.

But there is also a great number of words which are borrowed for other reasons. There may be a word (or even several words) which expresses some particular notion, so that there is no gap in the vocabulary and there does not seem to be any need for borrowing. Yet, one more word is borrowed which means almost the same, — almost, but not exactly. It is borrowed because it represents the same notion in some new aspect, supplies a new shade of meaning or a different emotional colouring (see Ch. 10). This type of borrowing enlarges groups of synonyms and greatly provides to enrich the expressive resources of the vocabulary. That is how the Latin *cordial* was added to the native *friendly*, the French *desire* to *wish*, the Latin *admire* and the French *adore* to *like* and *love*.

### Do Borrowed Words Change or Do They Remain the Same?

The eminent scholar Mario Pei put the same question in a more colourful way: “Do words when they migrate from one language into another behave as people do under similar circumstances? Do they remain alien in appearance, or do they take out citizenship papers?” [31]

Most of them take the second way, that is, they adjust themselves to their new environment and get adapted to the norms of the recipient language. They undergo certain changes which gradually erase their foreign features, and, finally, they are assimilated. Sometimes the process of assimilation develops to the point when the foreign origin of a word is quite unrecognizable. It is difficult to believe now that such words as *dinner*, *cat*, *take*, *cup* are not English by origin. Others, though well assimilated, still bear traces of their foreign background. *Distance* and *development*, for instance, are identified as borrowings

by their French suffixes, *skin* and *sky* by the Scandinavian initial *sk*, *police* and *regime* by the French stress on the last syllable.

Borrowed words are adjusted in the three main areas of the new language system: the phonetic, the grammatical and the semantic.

The lasting nature of phonetic adaptation is best shown by comparing Norman French borrowings to later ones. The Norman borrowings have for a long time been fully adapted to the phonetic system of the English language: such words as *table*, *plate*, *courage*, *chivalry* bear no phonetic traces of their French origin. Some of the later (Parisian) borrowings, even the ones borrowed as early as the 15th c., still sound surprisingly French: *regime*, *valise*, *matinée*, *café*, *ballet*. In these cases phonetic adaptation is not completed.

The three stages of gradual phonetic assimilation of French borrowings can be illustrated by different phonetic variants of the word *garage*:

gə'ra:ʒ > 'gæra:ʒ > 'gændʒ (Amer.)

Grammatical adaptation consists in a complete change of the former paradigm of the borrowed word (i. e. system of the grammatical forms peculiar to it as a part of speech). If it is a noun, it is certain to adopt, sooner or later, a new system of declension; if it is a verb, it will be conjugated according to the rules of the recipient language. Yet, this is also a lasting process. The Russian noun *пальто* was borrowed from French early in the 19th c. and has not yet acquired the Russian system of declension. The same can be said about such English Renaissance borrowings as *datum* (pl. *data*), *phenomenon* (pl. *phenomena*), *criterion* (pl. *criteria*) whereas earlier Latin borrowings such as *cup*, *plum*, *street*, *wall* were fully adapted to the grammatical system of the language long ago.

By semantic adaptation is meant adjustment to the system of meanings of the vocabulary. It has been mentioned that borrowing is generally caused either by the necessity to fill a gap in the vocabulary or by a chance to add a synonym conveying an old notion in a new way. Yet, the process of borrowing is not always so purposeful, logical and efficient as it might seem at first sight. Sometimes a word may be borrowed "blindly", so to speak, for no obvious reason, to find that it is not wanted

because there is no gap in the vocabulary nor in the group of synonyms which it could conveniently fill. Quite a number of such "accidental" borrowings are very soon rejected by the vocabulary and forgotten. But there are others which manage to take root by the process of semantic adaptation. The adjective *large*, for instance, was borrowed from French in the meaning of "wide". It was not actually wanted, because it fully coincided with the English adjective *wide* without adding any new shades or aspects to its meaning. This could have led to its rejection. Yet, *large* managed to establish itself very firmly in the English vocabulary by semantic adjustment. It entered another synonymic group with the general meaning of "big in size". At first it was applied to objects characterized by vast horizontal dimensions, thus retaining a trace of its former meaning, and now, though still bearing some features of that meaning, is successfully competing with *big* having approached it very closely, both in frequency and meaning.

The adjective *gay* was borrowed from French with several meanings at once: "noble of birth", "bright, shining", "multi-coloured". Rather soon it shifted its ground developing the meaning "joyful, high-spirited" in which sense it became a synonym of the native *merry* and in some time left it far behind in frequency and range of meaning. This change was again caused by the process of semantic adjustment: there was no place in the vocabulary for the former meanings of *gay*, but the group with the general meaning of "high spirits" obviously lacked certain shades which were successfully supplied by *gay*.

The adjective *nice* was a French borrowing meaning "silly" at first. The English change of meaning seems to have arisen with the use of the word in expressions like *a nice distinction*, meaning first "a silly, hair-splitting distinction", then a precise one, ultimately an attractive one. But the original necessity for change was caused once more by the fact that the meaning of "foolish" was not wanted in the vocabulary and therefore *nice* was obliged to look for a gap in another semantic field.

### International Words

It is often the case that a word is borrowed by several languages, and not just by one. Such words usually convey notions which are significant in the field of communication.

Many of them are of Latin and Greek origin. Most names of sciences are international, e. g. *philosophy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, linguistics, lexicology*. There are also numerous terms of art in this group: *music, theatre, drama, tragedy, comedy, artist, prima donna*.

It is quite natural that political terms frequently occur in the international group of borrowings: *politics, policy, revolution, progress, democracy, communism, anti-militarism*.

20th c. scientific and technological advances brought a great number of new international words: *atomic, antibiotic, radio, television, sputnik*. The latter is a Russian borrowing, and it became an international word (meaning a man-made satellite) in 1961, immediately after the first space flight by Yury Gagarin.

The English language also contributed a considerable number of international words to world languages. Among them the sports terms occupy a prominent position: *football, volley-ball, baseball, hockey, cricket, rugby, tennis, golf*, etc.

Fruits and foodstuffs imported from exotic countries often transport their names too and, being simultaneously imported to many countries, become international: *coffee, cocoa, chocolate, coca-cola, banana, mango, avocado, grapefruit*.

It is important to note that international words are mainly borrowings. The outward similarity of such words as the E. *son*, the Germ. *Sohn* and the R. *сын* should not lead one to the quite false conclusion that they are international words. They represent the Indo-European group of the native element in each respective language and are cognates, i. e. words of the same etymological root, and not borrowings.

### Etymological Doublets

The words *shirt* and *skirt* etymologically descend from the same root. *Shirt* is a native word, and *skirt* (as the initial *sk* suggests) is a Scandinavian borrowing. Their phonemic shape is different, and yet there is a certain resemblance which reflects their common origin. Their meanings are also different but easily associated: they both denote articles of clothing.

Such words as these two originating from the same etymological source, but differing in phonemic shape and in meaning are called *etymological doublets*.

They may enter the vocabulary by different routes. Some of these pairs, like *shirt* and *skirt*, consist of a native word and a borrowed word: *shrew*, n. (E.) – *screw*, n. (Sc.).

Others are represented by two borrowings from different languages which are historically descended from the same root: *senior* (Lat.) – *sir* (Fr.), *canal* (Lat.) – *channel* (Fr.), *captain* (Lat.) – *chieftan* (Fr.).

Still others were borrowed from the same language twice, but in different periods: *corpse* [kɔ:ps] (Norm. Fr.) – *corps* [kɔ:] (Par. Fr.), *travel* (Norm. Fr.) – *travail* (Par. Fr.), *cavalry* (Norm. Fr.) – *chivalry* (Par. Fr.), *gaol* (Norm. Fr.) – *jail* (Par. Fr.).

*Etymological triplets* (i. e. groups of three words of common root) occur rarer, but here are at least two examples: *hospital* (Lat.) – *hostel* (Norm. Fr.) – *hotel* (Par. Fr.), *to capture* (Lat.) – *to catch* (Norm. Fr.) – *to chase* (Par. Fr.).

A doublet may also consist of a shortened word and the one from which it was derived (see Ch. 6 for a description of shortening as a type of word-building): *history* – *story*, *fantasy* – *fancy*, *fanatic* – *fan*, *defence* – *fence*, *courtesy* – *curtsy*, *shadow* – *shade*.

### Translation-Loans

The term *loan-word* is equivalent to *borrowing*. By translation-loans we indicate borrowings of a special kind. They are not taken into the vocabulary of another language more or less in the same phonemic shape in which they have been functioning in their own language, but undergo the process of translation. It is quite obvious that it is only compound words (i. e. words of two or more stems) which can be subjected to such an operation, each stem being translated separately: *masterpiece* (from Germ. *Meisterstück*), *wonder child* (from Germ. *Wunderkind*), *first dancer* (from Ital. *prima-ballerina*), *collective farm* (from R. *колхоз*), *five-year plan* (from R. *пяти-летка*).

The Russian *колхоз* was borrowed twice, by way of translation-loan (*collective farm*) and by way of direct borrowing (*kolkhoz*).

The case is not unique. During the 2nd World War the German word *Blitzkrieg* was also borrowed into English in two different forms: the translation-loan *lightning-war* and the direct borrowings *blitzkrieg* and *blitz*.



## Are Etymological and Stylistic Characteristics of Words at All Interrelated?

Is it possible to establish regular associations between any of the groups of etymological classification (see p. 40) and the stylistic classification of English vocabulary (Ch. 2)? The answer must be in the affirmative.

It is quite natural to expect to find a considerable number of native words in the basic vocabulary, if we remember that the latter comprises words denoting essential objects and phenomena. Yet, one should keep in mind that among basic vocabulary words there are also rather numerous Latin and French borrowings.

In general, we should not be misled into thinking that all short common words are native, and that only three- and four-syllable words come from foreign sources. Words like *very*, *air*, *hour*, *cry*, *oil*, *cat*, *pay*, *box*, *face*, *poor*, *dress* are of foreign origin despite their native appearance and common use. So it would be correct to state that, though native words prevail in the basic vocabulary, this stratum also comprises a considerable number of old borrowings which have become so fully adapted to the English language system that they are practically indistinguishable from the native stock.

The centre of gravity of borrowed words in the stylistic classification is represented by two groups: learned words and terminology. In these strata the foreign element dominates the native. It also seems that the whole opposition of "formal versus informal" is based on the deeper underlying opposition of "borrowed versus native", as the informal strata, especially slang and dialect, abound in native words even though it is possible to quote numerous exceptions.

Comparing the expressive and stylistic value of the French and the English words in such synonymic pairs as *to begin* — *to commence*, *to wish* — *to desire*, *happiness* — *felicity*, O. Jespersen remarks: "The French word is usually more formal, more refined, and has a less strong hold on the emotional side of life." [21]

The truth of this observation becomes even more obvious if we regard certain pairs within which a native word may be compared with its Latin synonym: *motherly* — *maternal*, *fatherly* — *paternal*, *childish* — *infantile*, *daughterly* — *filial*, etc. *Motherly love* seems much warmer than *maternal feelings* — which sounds dutiful but cold. The word *childish* is as-

sociated with all the wonder and vivid poetry of the earliest human age whereas *infantile* is quite dry. You may speak about *childish games* and *childish charm*, but about *infantile diseases*, whereas *infantile mind* implies criticism.

It is interesting to note that a similar pair of words *sunny* – *solar* cannot even be regarded as synonyms though semantically they both pertain to the sun. Yet, if a fine day can be described as *sunny*, it certainly cannot be characterized by the word *solar* which is used in highly formal terminological senses (e. g. *solar energy*). The same is true about *handy* – *manual*, *toothy* (e. g. *a toothy grin*) – *dental* (term again), *nosy* (e. g. *a nosy kind of person*) – *nasal* (e. g. *nasal sounds. voice*).

## EXERCISES

### I. Consider your answers to the following.

1. Which conditions stimulate the borrowing process?
2. Why are words borrowed?
3. What stages of assimilation do borrowings go through?
4. In what spheres of communication do international words frequently occur?
5. What do we understand by etymological doublets?
6. What are the characteristic features of translation-loans?
7. How are the etymological and stylistic characteristics of words interrelated?

II. Explain the etymology of the following words. Write them out in three columns: a) fully assimilated words; b) partially assimilated words; c) unassimilated words. Explain the reasons for your choice in each case.

pen, hors d'œuvre, ballet, beet, butter, skin, take, cup, police, distance, monk, garage, phenomenon, wine, large, justice, lesson, criterion, nice, coup d'état, sequence, gay, port, river, loose, autumn, low, uncle, law, convenient, lunar, experiment, skirt, bishop, regime, eau-de-Cologne

III. Explain the etymology of the italicized words; identify the stage of assimilation.

1. Obviously, *chère madame*, the thief would take care to recover the money before he returned the dog. 2. Heyward went to the *kitchen* for a glass of milk. 3. It was a commercial *coup d'état* which sent Supranational (bank)

shares soaring on the New York and London markets. 4. *Arriving* in Paris always causes me pain, even when I have been away for only a short while. It is a city which I never fail to approach with *expectation* and leave with *disappointment*. 5. Dave raised his hand when he saw me with the *dignified gesture* of a *patriarch* greeting the appearance of an expected sign. 6. *Negotiations* began but failed, not least because the *students presented* non-negotiable demands. After two days the administration summoned *state police*, later unwisely *supplemented* by *National Guard*. An *assault* was launched upon the building. 7. Madge seemed slimmer and more *piquant*, even her movements were more *gracious*. 8. Leaving her desk, Edwina walked a few paces to one of the *large plate-glass windows*, part of the *street frontage* of the building. What she saw *amazed* her. A long *queue of people*, four or five abreast, *extended* from the main front door past the entire length of the building. 9. He regretted their lost *tête-à-tête*. 10. I *lunched* with Betty today, and she was telling me about a place they went to, on Lake Como. They had fresh *peaches* at every meal and at night the fishermen go out in boats and sing under your windows. Doesn't it sound *romantic*?

IV. State the origin of the following etymological doublets. Compare their meanings and explain why they are called "etymological doublets".

1. captain — chieftan, canal — channel, cart — chart.
2. shirt — skirt, shriek — screech, shrew — screw.
3. gaol — jail, corpse — corps, travel — travail.
4. shadow — shade, off — of, dike — ditch.

V. In the following sentences find one of a pair of etymological doublets and name the missing member of the pair.

1. I led Mars (a dog) into the shadow of the building and looked around me. 2. "Unreliable," he said, "those fancy locks. Always getting jammed, aren't they?" 3. The children hung on to her skirts and asked to play with them. 4. Nurse Lawson had been sent to the hostel to clean aprons for all of us. 5. When the four o'clock race at Nottingham was won by Hal Adair, cool channels of sweat ran down my back and sides. 6. The lunch was late because Steven had had an extra big clinic at his London hospital. 7. He was attached to the ward which specialized in head injuries and was called 'Corelli'. 8. A story was sometimes told about a teardown crew which, as a practical joke, worked in spare time to disassemble a car,

belonging to one of their members. 9. Why, isn't he in jail? 10. Canvas sacks containing cash were being delivered from an armoured truck outside, the money accompanied by two armed guards.

VI. Classify the following borrowings according to the sphere of human activity they represent. What type of borrowings are these?

television, progress, football, grapefruit, drama, philosophy, rugby, sputnik, tragedy, coca-cola, biology, medicine, atom, primadonna, ballet, cricket, hockey, chocolate, communism, democracy.

VII. Read the following text. Copy out the international words. State to what sphere of human activity they belong.

### British Dramatists

In the past 20 years there has been a considerable increase in the number of new playwrights in Britain and this has been encouraged by the growth of new theatre companies. In 1956 the English Stage Company began productions with the object of bringing new writers into the theatre and providing training facilities for young actors, directors and designers; a large number of new dramatists emerged as a result of the company productions. Regional repertory theatres, too, have helped contemporary dramatists by including new plays in their programmes. Among the dramatists whose work was first produced by the English Stage Company are John Osborne, Arnold Wesker, Edward Bonds, John Arden and David Storey. Television has been an important factor in the emergence of other dramatists who write primarily for it; both the BBC and IBA transmit a large number of single plays each year as well as drama series and serials.

(From *The Promotion of the Arts in Britain*)

VIII. Read the following jokes. Identify examples of international words.

1. Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration. 2. A psychologist is a man who watches everybody else when a beautiful girl enters the room. 3. An expert is a man who knows a great deal about very little; and who goes on knowing more and more about less and less until finally he knows practically everything about nothing; whereas a reviewer is a man who knows very little about a great deal and keeps on knowing

less and less about more and more until finally he knows practically nothing about everything.

IX. State the origin of the following translation-loans. Give more examples.

five-year plan, wonder child, masterpiece, first dancer, collective farm, fellow-traveller

X. What is the difference between the words in the following pairs? Analyse the examples and prove that etymological and stylistic characteristics of words are closely interrelated.

motherly — maternal, fatherly — paternal, childish — infantile, daughterly — filial, womanly — feminine, brotherly — fraternal, to begin — to commence, to wish — to desire, to love — to adore, to build — to construct, to go on — to proceed, to take part in — to participate

XI. Supply the adjectives of Latin origin corresponding to the following nouns. Comment upon their stylistic characteristics.

nose, tooth, sun, hand, child, town, sea, life, youth

XII. Describe the etymology of the following words. Comment upon their stylistic characteristics. If necessary use an etymological dictionary.

to rise — to mount — to ascend, to ask — to question — to interrogate, fire — flame — conflagration, fear — terror — trepidation, holy — sacred — consecrated, time — age — era, goodness — virtue — probity

XIII. Read the following extract. State the etymology of the italicized words. Comment upon their stylistic characteristics.

The *Oxford accent exists*, but it defies *definition*. It is not, as the French think, the kind of English which is spoken within a *twenty mile radius* of the city. Indeed, it is not an accent at all, but a *manner* of speaking. In *particular* it is a manner of pausing in your speech, of pausing not at the end of *sentences*, where you might be *interrupted*, but in the middle of sentences. Nobody, it is to be hoped, will be so rude as to interrupt you when you are in the middle of a sentence. So pause there, to *decide* what your next sentence is going to be. Then, having decided, move quickly forward to it without a *moment's* pause at the full stop. Yes, jumping your full stops — that is the Oxford accent. Do it well, and you will be able to talk forever. Nobody will have the *chance* of breaking in and stealing the *conversation* from you.

(From *Oxford Life* by D. Balsden)

XIV. Read the following text. What words were borrowed into English during the period described in it? Describe the borrowings of this period. Comment upon the etymological and stylistic peculiarities of the italicized words.

#### Caesar Invades Britain

The *first date* in English *History* is 55 B. C., in which year Julius Caesar (the *memorable* Roman *Emperor*) landed, like all other *successful* invaders of these islands, at Thanet. This was in the Olden Days, when the Romans were top *nation* on account of their *classical education*, etc.

Julius Caesar advanced very energetically, but the *Ancient* Britons fought as heroically under their dashing queen Woadicea [ˌboudiˈsiːə], as they did later under their good Queen Victoria. Julius Caesar was therefore compelled to invade Britain again the following year (54 B. C., not 56, owing to the peculiar Roman *method* of counting) and having defeated the Ancient Britons by unfair means, set the *memorable* Latin sentence '*Veni, Vidi, Vici*',<sup>1</sup> which the Romans, who were all very well educated, *constructed correctly*.

The Britons, however, who of course still used the old *pronunciation*, understanding him to have *called* them '*Weeny, Weedy, Weakly*',<sup>2</sup> lost heart and gave up the struggle.

(From *1066 and All That* by C. W. Sellar, R. J. Yeatman)

#### CHAPTER 5

### HOW ENGLISH WORDS ARE MADE.

#### WORD-BUILDING<sup>3</sup>

Before turning to the various processes of making words, it would be useful to analyse the related problem of the composition of words, i. e. of their constituent parts.

If viewed structurally, words appear to be divisible into smaller units which are called *morphemes*. Morphemes do not occur as free forms but only as constituents of words. Yet they possess meanings of their own.

All morphemes are subdivided into two large classes: *roots* (or *radicals*) and *affixes*. The latter, in their turn,

<sup>1</sup> *Veni, Vidi, Vici* (Lat.) – I came, I saw, I conquered (famous words ascribed to Julius Caesar).

<sup>2</sup> *Weeny, Weedy, Weakly* means "tiny", "frail", "weak".

<sup>3</sup> By *word-building* are understood processes of producing new words from the resources of this particular language. Together with borrowing, word-building provides for enlarging and enriching the vocabulary of the language.



fall into *prefixes* which precede the root in the structure of the word (as in *re-read*, *mis-pronounce*, *un-well*) and *suffixes* which follow the root (as in *teach-er*, *cur-able*, *dict-ate*).

Words which consist of a root and an affix (or several affixes) are called *derived words* or *derivatives* and are produced by the process of word-building known as *affixation* (or *derivation*).

Derived words are extremely numerous in the English vocabulary. Successfully competing with this structural type is the so-called *root word* which has only a root morpheme in its structure. This type is widely represented by a great number of words belonging to the original English stock or to earlier borrowings (*house*, *room*, *book*, *work*, *port*, *street*, *table*, etc.), and, in Modern English, has been greatly enlarged by the type of word-building called *conversion* (e. g. *to hand*, v. formed from the noun *hand*; *to can*, v. from *can*, n.; *to pale*, v. from *pale*, adj.; *a find*, n. from *to find*, v.; etc.).

Another wide-spread word-structure is a compound word consisting of two or more stems<sup>1</sup> (e. g. *dining-room*, *bluebell*, *mother-in-law*, *good-for-nothing*). Words of this structural type are produced by the word-building process called *composition*.

The somewhat odd-looking words like *flu*, *pram*, *lab*, *M. P.*, *V-day*, *H-bomb* are called *shortenings*, *contractions* or *curtailed words* and are produced by the way of word-building called *shortening* (*contraction*).

The four types (root words, derived words, compounds, shortenings) represent the main structural types of Modern English words, and conversion, derivation and composition the most productive ways of word-building.

To return to the question posed by the title of this chapter, of how words are made, let us try and get a more detailed picture of each of the major types of Modern English word-building and, also, of some minor types.

## Affixation

The process of *affixation* consists in coining a new word by adding an affix or several affixes to some root morpheme. The role of the affix in this procedure is very

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<sup>1</sup> *Stem* is part of the word consisting of root and affix. In English words stem and root often coincide.

important and therefore it is necessary to consider certain facts about the main types of affixes.

From the etymological point of view affixes are classified into the same two large groups as words: native and borrowed.

### Some Native Suffixes<sup>1</sup>

Noun-forming	-er	worker, miner, teacher, painter, etc.
	-ness	coldness, loneliness, loveliness, etc.
	-ing	feeling, meaning, singing, reading, etc.
	-dom	freedom, wisdom, kingdom, etc.
	-hood	childhood, manhood, motherhood, etc.
	-ship	friendship, companionship, mastership, etc.
	-th	length, breadth, health, truth, etc.
Adjective-forming	-ful	careful, joyful, wonderful, sinful, skilful, etc.
	-less	careless, sleepless, cloudless, senseless, etc.
	-y	cozy, tidy, merry, snowy, showy, etc.
	-ish	English, Spanish, reddish, childish, etc.
	-ly	lonely, lovely, ugly, likely, lordly, etc.
	-en	wooden, woollen, silken, golden, etc.
	-some	handsome, quarrelsome, tiresome, etc.
Verb-forming	-en	widen, redden, darken, sadden, etc.
Adverb-forming	-ly	warmly, hardly, simply, carefully, coldly, etc.

Borrowed affixes, especially of Romance origin are numerous in the English vocabulary (Ch. 3). It would be wrong, though, to suppose that affixes are borrowed in the same way and for the same reasons as words. An affix of foreign origin can be regarded as borrowed only after it has begun an independent and active life in the recipient language, that is, is taking part in the word-

<sup>1</sup> The table gives examples of especially frequent native affixes.

making processes of that language. This can only occur when the total of words with this affix is so great in the recipient language as to affect the native speakers' subconscious to the extent that they no longer realize its foreign flavour and accept it as their own.

\* \* \*

Affixes can also be classified into productive and non-productive types. By *productive* affixes we mean the ones, which take part in deriving new words in this particular period of language development. The best way to identify productive affixes is to look for them among *neologisms* and so-called *nonce-words*, i. e. words coined and used only for this particular occasion. The latter are usually formed on the level of living speech and reflect the most productive and progressive patterns in word-building. When a literary critic writes about a certain book that it is *an unputdownable thriller*, we will seek in vain this strange and impressive adjective in dictionaries, for it is a nonce-word coined on the current pattern of Modern English and is evidence of the high productivity of the adjective-forming borrowed suffix *-able* and the native prefix *un-*.

Consider, for example, the following:

Professor Pringle was a thinnish, baldish, dispeptic-lookingish cove with an eye like a haddock.

(From *Right-Ho, Jeeves* by P. G. Wodehouse)

The adjectives *thinnish* and *baldish* bring to mind dozens of other adjectives made with the same suffix: *oldish*, *youngish*, *mannish*, *girlish*, *fattish*, *longish*, *yellowish*, etc. But *dispeptic-lookingish* is the author's creation aimed at a humorous effect, and, at the same time, proving beyond doubt that the suffix *-ish* is a live and active one.

The same is well illustrated by the following popular statement: "*I don't like Sunday evenings: I feel so Mondayish*". (*Mondayish* is certainly a nonce-word.)

One should not confuse the productivity of affixes with their frequency of occurrence. There are quite a number of high-frequency affixes which, nevertheless, are no longer used in word-derivation (e. g. the adjective-forming native suffixes *-ful*, *-ly*; the adjective-forming suffixes of Latin origin *-ant*, *-ent*, *-al* which are quite frequent).

### Some Productive Affixes

Noun-forming suffixes	<b>-er, -ing, -ness, -ism<sup>1</sup></b> ( <i>materialism</i> ), <b>-ist<sup>1</sup></b> ( <i>impressionist</i> ), <b>-ance</b>
Adjective-forming suffixes	<b>-y, -ish, -ed</b> ( <i>learned</i> ), <b>-able, -less</b>
Adverb-forming suffix	<b>-ly</b>
Verb-forming suffixes	<b>-ize/-ise</b> ( <i>realize</i> ), <b>-ate</b>
Prefixes	<b>un-</b> ( <i>unhappy</i> ), <b>re-</b> ( <i>reconstruct</i> ), <b>dis-</b> ( <i>disappoint</i> )

*Note.* Examples are given only for the affixes which are not listed in the tables at p. 39 and p. 61.

### Some Non-Productive Affixes

Noun-forming suffixes	<b>-th, -hood</b>
Adjective-forming suffixes	<b>-ly, -some, -en, -ous</b>
Verb-forming suffix	<b>-en</b>

*Note.* The native noun-forming suffixes *-dom* and *-ship* ceased to be productive centuries ago. Yet, Professor I. V. Arnold in *The English Word* gives some examples of comparatively new formations with the suffix *-dom*: *boredom, serfdom, slavery* [15]. The same is true about *-ship* (e. g. *salesmanship*). The adjective-forming *-ish*, which leaves no doubt as to its productivity nowadays, has comparatively recently regained it, after having been non-productive for many centuries.

### Semantics of Affixes

The *morpheme*, and therefore affix, which is a type of morpheme, is generally defined as the smallest indivisible component of the word possessing a meaning of its own. Meanings of affixes are specific and considerably differ from those of root morphemes. Affixes have widely generalized meanings and refer the concept conveyed by the whole word to a certain category, which is vast and all-embracing. So, the noun-forming suffix *-er* could be roughly defined as designating persons from the object of their occupation or labour (*painter* — the one who paints) or from their place of origin or abode (*southerner* — the one living in the South). The adjective-forming suffix

<sup>1</sup> International suffixes.

-ful has the meaning of "full of", "characterized by" (*beautiful, careful*) whereas -ish may often imply insufficiency of quality (*greenish* — green, but not quite; *youngish* — not quite young but looking it).

Such examples might lead one to the somewhat hasty conclusion that the meaning of a derived word is always a sum of the meanings of its morphemes: *un/eat/able* = "not fit to eat" where *not* stands for *un-* and *fit* for *-able*.

There are numerous derived words whose meanings can really be easily deduced from the meanings of their constituent parts. Yet, such cases represent only the first and simplest stage of semantic readjustment within derived words. The constituent morphemes within derivatives do not always preserve their current meanings and are open to subtle and complicated semantic shifts.

Let us take at random some of the adjectives formed with the same productive suffix -y, and try to deduce the meaning of the suffix from their dictionary definitions:

- brainy* (inform.) — intelligent, intellectual, i. e. *characterized by brains*  
*catty* — quietly or slyly malicious, spiteful, i. e. *characterized by features ascribed to a cat*  
*chatty* — given to chat, *inclined to chat*  
*dressy* (inform.) — showy in dress, i. e. *inclined to dress well or to be overdressed*  
*fishy* (e. g. in *a fishy story*, inform.) — improbable, hard to believe (*like stories told by fishermen*)  
*foxy* — foxlike, cunning or crafty, i. e. *characterized by features ascribed to a fox*  
*stagy* — theatrical, unnatural, i. e. *inclined to affectation, to unnatural theatrical manners*  
*touchy* — apt to take offence on slight provocation, i. e. *resenting a touch or contact (not at all inclined to be touched)*<sup>1</sup>

The Random-House Dictionary defines the meaning of the -y suffix as "characterized by or inclined to the substance or action of the root to which the affix is attached". [46] Yet, even the few given examples show that, on the one hand, there are cases, like *touchy* or *fishy* that are not covered by the definition. On the other hand, even those cases that are roughly

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the listed adjectives have several meanings, but only one is given so as to keep the list manageable.

covered, show a wide variety of subtle shades of meaning. It is not only the suffix that adds its own meaning to the meaning of the root, but the suffix is, in its turn, affected by the root and undergoes certain semantic changes, so that the mutual influence of root and affix creates a wide range of subtle nuances.

But is the suffix -y probably exceptional in this respect? It is sufficient to examine further examples to see that other affixes also offer an interesting variety of semantic shades. Compare, for instance, the meanings of adjective-forming suffixes in each of these groups of adjectives.

1. *eatable* (*fit or good to eat*)<sup>1</sup>  
*lovable* (*worthy of loving*)  
*questionable* (*open to doubt, to question*)  
*imaginable* (*capable of being imagined*)
2. *lovely* (*charming, beautiful, i. e. inspiring love*)  
*lonely* (*solitary, without company; lone; the meaning of the suffix does not seem to add anything to that of the root*)  
*friendly* (*characteristic of or befitting a friend*)  
*heavenly* (*resembling or befitting heaven; beautiful, splendid*)
3. *childish* (*resembling or befitting a child*)  
*tallish* (*rather tall, but not quite, i. e. approaching the quality of big size*)  
*girlish* (*like a girl, but, often, in a bad imitation of one*)  
*bookish* (1) *given or devoted to reading or study;*  
2) *more acquainted with books than with real life, i. e. possessing the quality of bookish learning*)

The semantic distinctions of words produced from the same root by means of different affixes are also of considerable interest, both for language studies and research work. Compare: *womanly* — *womanish*, *flowery* — *flowered* — *flowering*, *starry* — *starred*, *reddened* — *reddish*, *shortened* — *shortish*.

The semantic difference between the members of these groups is very obvious: the meanings of the suffixes are so distinct that they colour the whole words.

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<sup>1</sup> The italicized words roughly convey the meanings of the suffixes in each adjective.



*Womanly* is used in a complimentary manner about girls and women, whereas *womanish* is used to indicate an effeminate man and certainly implies criticism.

*Flowery* is applied to speech or a style (cf. with the R. *цветочный*), *flowered* means "decorated with a pattern of flowers" (e. g. *flowered silk* or *chintz*, cf. with the R. *цветастый*) and *flowering* is the same as *blossoming* (e. g. *flowering bushes* or *shrubs*, cf. with the R. *цветущий*).

*Starry* means "resembling stars" (e. g. *starry eyes*) and *starred* — "covered or decorated with stars" (e. g. *starred skies*).

*Reddened* and *shortened* both imply the result of an action or process, as in *the eyes reddened with weeping* or a *shortened version of a story* (i. e. a story that has been abridged) whereas *shortish* and *reddish* point to insufficiency of quality: *reddish* is not exactly red, but tinged with red, and a *shortish* man is probably a little taller than a man described as short.

## Conversion

When in a book-review a book is referred to as *a splendid read*, is *read* to be regarded as a verb or a noun? What part of speech is *room* in the sentence: *I was to room with another girl called Jessie*. If a character in a novel is spoken about as one who *had to be satisfied with the role of a has-been*, what is this odd-looking *has-been*, a verb or a noun? One must admit that it has quite a verbal appearance, but why, then, is it preceded by the article?

Why is the word *if* used in the plural form in the popular proverb: *If ifs and ans were pots and pans?* (an = if, dial., arch.)

This type of questions naturally arise when one deals with words produced by conversion, one of the most productive ways of modern English word-building.

Conversion is sometimes referred to as an affixless way of word-building or even affixless derivation. Saying that, however, is saying very little because there are other types of word-building in which new words are also formed without affixes (most compounds, contracted words, sound-imitation words, etc.).

Conversion consists in making a new word from some existing word by changing the category of a part of speech, the morphemic shape of the original word re-

maining unchanged. The new word has a meaning which differs from that of the original one though it can more or less be easily associated with it. It has also a new paradigm peculiar to its new category as a part of speech.

*nurse*, n.

>

*to nurse*, v.

Substantive paradigm	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} -s, \text{ pl.} \\ -s', \text{ poss. c.,} \\ \text{sg.} \\ -s', \text{ poss. c.,} \\ \text{pl.} \end{array} \right.$	Verbal paradigm	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} -s, \text{ 3rd p. sg.} \\ -ed, \text{ past indef.,} \\ \text{past part.} \\ -ing, \text{ pres. part.,} \\ \text{gerund} \end{array} \right.$
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The question of conversion has, for a long time, been a controversial one in several aspects. The very essence of this process has been treated by a number of scholars (e. g. H. Sweet), not as a word-building act, but as a mere functional change. From this point of view the word *hand* in *Hand me that book* is not a verb, but a noun used in a verbal syntactical function, that is, *hand (me)* and *hands* (in *She has small hands*) are not two different words but one. Hence, the case cannot be treated as one of word-formation for no new word appears.

According to this functional approach, conversion may be regarded as a specific feature of the English categories of parts of speech, which are supposed to be able to break through the rigid borderlines dividing one category from another thus enriching the process of communication not by the creation of new words but through the sheer flexibility of the syntactic structures.

Nowadays this theory finds increasingly fewer supporters, and conversion is universally accepted as one of the major ways of enriching English vocabulary with new words. One of the major arguments for this approach to conversion is the semantic change that regularly accompanies each instance of conversion. Normally, a word changes its syntactic function without any shift in lexical meaning. E. g. both in *yellow leaves* and in *The leaves were turning yellow* the adjective denotes colour. Yet, in *The leaves yellowed* the converted unit no longer denotes colour, but the process of changing colour, so that there is an essential change in meaning.

The change of meaning is even more obvious in such pairs as *hand* > *to hand*, *face* > *to face*, *to go* > *a go*, *to make* > *a make*, etc.

The other argument is the regularity and completeness with which converted units develop a paradigm of their new category of part of speech. As soon as it has crossed the category borderline, the new word automatically acquires all the properties of the new category, so that if it has entered the verb category, it is now regularly used in all the forms of tense and it also develops the forms of the participle and the gerund. Such regularity can hardly be regarded as indicating a mere functional change which might be expected to bear more occasional characteristics. The completeness of the paradigms in new conversion formations seems to be a decisive argument proving that here we are dealing with new words and not with mere functional variants. The data of the more reputable modern English dictionaries confirm this point of view: they all present converted pairs as homonyms, i. e. as two words, thus supporting the thesis that conversion is a word-building process.

Conversion is not only a highly productive but also a particularly English way of word-building. Its immense productivity is considerably encouraged by certain features of the English language in its modern stage of development. The analytical structure of Modern English greatly facilitates processes of making words of one category of parts of speech from words of another. So does the simplicity of paradigms of English parts of speech. A great number of one-syllable words is another factor in favour of conversion, for such words are naturally more mobile and flexible than polysyllables.

Conversion is a convenient and "easy" way of enriching the vocabulary with new words. It is certainly an advantage to have two (or more) words where there was one, all of them fixed on the same structural and semantic base.

The high productivity of conversion finds its reflection in speech where numerous occasional cases of conversion can be found, which are not registered by dictionaries and which occur momentarily, through the immediate need of the situation. "*If anybody oranges me again tonight, I'll knock his face off,*" says the annoyed hero of a story by O'Henry when a shop-assistant offers him oranges (for the tenth time in one night) instead of peaches for which he is looking ("Little Speck in Garnered Fruit"). One is not likely to find the verb *to orange* in any dictionary, but in this situation it answers the need for brevity, expressiveness and humour.

The very first example, which opens the section on conversion in this chapter (*the book is a splendid read*), though taken from a book-review, is a nonce-word, which may be used by reviewers now and then or in informal verbal communication, but has not yet found its way into the universally acknowledged English vocabulary.

Such examples as these show that conversion is a vital and developing process that penetrates contemporary speech as well. Subconsciously every English speaker realizes the immense potentiality of making a word into another part of speech when the need arises.

\* \* \*

One should guard against thinking that every case of noun and verb (verb and adjective, adjective and noun, etc.) with the same morphemic shape results from conversion. There are numerous pairs of words (e. g. *love*, n.—*to love*, v.; *work*, n.—*to work*, v.; *drink*, n.—*to drink*, v., etc.) which did not occur due to conversion but coincided as a result of certain historical processes (dropping of endings, simplification of stems) when before that they had different forms (e. g. O. E. *lufu*, n.—*lufian*, v.). On the other hand, it is quite true that the first cases of conversion (which were registered in the 14th c.) imitated such pairs of words as *love*, n.—*to love*, v. for they were numerous in the vocabulary and were subconsciously accepted by native speakers as one of the typical language patterns.

\* \* \*

The two categories of parts of speech especially affected by conversion are nouns and verbs. Verbs made from nouns are the most numerous amongst the words produced by conversion: e. g. *to hand*, *to back*, *to face*, *to eye*, *to mouth*, *to nose*, *to dog*, *to wolf*, *to monkey*, *to can*, *to coal*, *to stage*, *to screen*, *to room*, *to floor*, *to blackmail*, *to blacklist*, *to honeymoon*, and very many others.

Nouns are frequently made from verbs: *do* (e. g. *This is the queerest do I've ever come across. Do — event, incident*), *go* (e. g. *He has still plenty of go at his age. Go — energy*), *make*, *run*, *find*, *catch*, *cut*, *walk*, *worry*, *show*, *move*, etc.

Verbs can also be made from adjectives: *to pale, to yellow, to cool, to grey, to rough* (e. g. *We decided to rough it in the tents as the weather was warm*), etc.

Other parts of speech are not entirely unsusceptible to conversion as the following examples show: *to down, to out* (as in a newspaper heading *Diplomatist Outed from Budapest*), *the ups and downs, the ins and outs, like*, n. (as in *the like of me and the like of you*).

\* \* \*

It was mentioned at the beginning of this section that a word made by conversion has a different meaning from that of the word from which it was made though the two meanings can be associated. There are certain regularities in these associations which can be roughly classified. For instance, in the group of verbs made from nouns some of the regular semantic associations are as indicated in the following list:

I. The noun is the name of a tool or implement, the verb denotes an action performed by the tool: *to hammer, to nail, to pin, to brush, to comb, to pencil*.

II. The noun is the name of an animal, the verb denotes an action or aspect of behaviour considered typical of this animal: *to dog, to wolf, to monkey, to ape, to fox, to rat*. Yet, *to fish* does not mean "to behave like a fish" but "to try to catch fish". The same meaning of hunting activities is conveyed by the verb *to whale* and one of the meanings of *to rat*; the other is "to turn informer, squeal" (sl.).

III. The name of a part of the human body — an action performed by it: *to hand, to leg* (sl.), *to eye, to elbow, to shoulder, to nose, to mouth*. However, *to face* does not imply doing something by or even with one's face but turning it in a certain direction. *To back* means either "to move backwards" or, in the figurative sense, "to support somebody or something".

IV. The name of a profession or occupation — an activity typical of it: *to nurse, to cook, to maid, to groom*.

V. The name of a place — the process of occupying the place or of putting smth./smb. in it (*to room, to house, to place, to table, to cage*).

VI. The name of a container — the act of putting smth. within the container (*to can, to bottle, to pocket*).

VII. The name of a meal — the process of taking it (*to lunch, to supper*).

The suggested groups do not include all the great variety of verbs made from nouns by conversion. They just represent the most obvious cases and illustrate, convincingly enough, the great variety of semantic interrelations within so-called converted pairs and the complex nature of the logical associations which underly them.

In actual fact, these associations are not only complex but sometimes perplexing. It would seem that if you know that the verb formed from the name of an animal denotes behaviour typical of the animal, it would be easy for you to guess the meaning of such a verb provided that you know the meaning of the noun. Yet, it is not always easy. Of course, the meaning of *to fox* is rather obvious being derived from the associated reputation of that animal for cunning: *to fox* means "to act cunningly or craftily". But what about *to wolf*? How is one to know which of the characteristics of the animal was picked by the speakers' subconscious when this verb was produced? Ferocity? Loud and unpleasant howling? The inclination to live in packs? Yet, as the following example shows, *to wolf* means "to eat greedily, voraciously": *Charlie went on wolfing the chocolate.* (R. Dahl)

In the same way, from numerous characteristics of the dog, only one was chosen for the verb *to dog* which is well illustrated by the following example:

*And what of Charles? I pity any detective who would have to dog him through those twenty months.*

(From *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by J. Fowles)

(*To dog* — to follow or track like a dog, especially with hostile intent.)

The two verbs *to ape* and *to monkey*, which might be expected to mean more or less the same, have shared between themselves certain typical features of the same animal:

*to ape* — to imitate, mimic (e. g. *He had always aped the gentleman in his clothes and manners.* — J. Fowles);

*to monkey* — to fool, to act or play idly and foolishly. *To monkey* can also be used in the meaning "to imitate", but much rarer than *to ape*.

The following anecdote shows that the intricacies of semantic associations in words made by conversion may



prove somewhat bewildering even for some native speakers, especially for children.

"Mother," said Johnny, "is it correct to say you 'water a horse' when he's thirsty?"

"Yes, quite correct."

"Then," (*picking up a saucer*) "I'm going to milk the cat."

The joke is based on the child's mistaken association of two apparently similar patterns: *water*, n.—*to water*, v.; *milk*, n.—*to milk*, v. But it turns out that the meanings of the two verbs arose from different associations: *to water a horse* means "to give him water", but *to milk* implies getting milk from an animal (e. g. *to milk a cow*).

### EXERCISES

I. Consider your answers to the following.

1. What are the main ways of enriching English vocabulary?

2. What are the principal productive ways of English word-building?

3. What do we mean by derivation?

4. What is the difference between frequency and productivity of affixes? Why can't one consider the noun-forming suffix *-age*, that is commonly met in many words (*cabbage*, *village*, *marriage*, etc.), a productive one?

5. Give examples of your own to show that affixes have meanings.

6. Look through Chapter 3 and say what languages served as the main sources of borrowed affixes. Illustrate your answer by examples.

7. Prove that the words *a finger* and *to finger* ("to touch or handle with the fingers") are two words and not the one word *finger* used either as a noun or as a verb.

8. What features of Modern English have produced the high productivity of conversion?

9. Which categories of parts of speech are especially affected by conversion?

10. Prove that the pair of words *love*, n. and *love*, v. do not present a case of conversion.

II. The italicized words in the following jokes and extracts are formed by derivation. Write them out in two columns: A. Those formed

with the help of productive affixes. B. Those formed with the help of non-productive affixes. Explain the etymology of each borrowed affix.

1. Willie was invited to a party, where *refreshments* were *bountifully* served.

"Won't you have something more, Willie?" the *hostess* said.

"No, thank you," replied Willie, with an *expression* of great *satisfaction*. "I'm full."

"Well, then," smiled the hostess, "put some *delicious* fruit and cakes in your pocket to eat on the way home."

"No, thank you," came the rather *startling* response of Willie, "they're full too."

2. The scene was a *tiny* wayside railway platform and the sun was going down behind the *distant* hills. It was a *glorious* sight. An *intending* passenger was chatting with one of the *porters*.

"Fine sight, the sun tipping the hills with gold," said the poetic passenger.

"Yes," reported the porter; "and to think that there was a time when I was often as *lucky* as them 'ills."

3. A lady who was a very *uncertain* driver stopped her car at traffic signals which were against her. As the green flashed on, her engine stalled, and when she *restarted* it the colour was again red. This flurried her so much that when green returned she again stalled her engine and the cars behind began to hoot. While she was waiting for the green the third time the constable on duty stepped across and with a smile said: "Those are the only colours showing to-day, ma'am."

4. "You have an *admirable* cook, yet you are always growling about her to your friends."

"Do you suppose I want her lured away?"

5. Patient: Do you extract teeth *painlessly*?

Dentist: Not always — the other day I nearly *dislocated* my wrist.

6. The *inspector* was paying a hurried visit to a *slightly overcrowded* school.

"Any *abnormal* children in your class?" he inquired of one harassed-looking *teacher*.

"Yes," she replied, with knitted brow, "two of them have good manners."

7. "I'd like you to come right over," a man phoned

an *undertaker*, "and supervise the burial of my poor, departed wife."

"Your wife!" gasped the undertaker. "Didn't I bury her two years ago?"

"You don't understand," said the man. "You see I married again."

"Oh," said the undertaker. "*Congratulations.*"

#### 8. Dear Daddy-Long-Legs.

Please forget about that *dreadful* letter I sent you last week — I was feeling *terribly lonely* and *miserable* and *sore-throaty* the night I wrote. I didn't know it, but I was just coming down with tonsillitis and grippe ... I'm in the infirmary now, and have been for six days. The head nurse is very *bossy*. She is tall and *thinnish* with a dark face and the *funniest* smile. This is the first time they would let me sit up and have a pen or a pencil. Please forgive me for being *impertinent* and *ungrateful*.

Yours with love.  
Judy Abbott

(From *Daddy-Long-Legs* by J. Webster)<sup>1</sup>

9. The *residence* of Mr. Peter Pett, the well-known *financier*, on Riverside Drive, New York, is one of the *leading* eyesores of that *breezy* and *expensive* boulevard ... Through the rich *interior* of this *mansion* Mr. Pett, its *nominal* proprietor, was wandering like a lost spirit. There was a look of *exasperation* on his *usually patient* face. He was *afflicted* by a sense of the pathos of his *position*. It was not as if he demanded much from life. At that moment all that he wanted was a quiet spot where he might read his Sunday paper in *solitary* peace and he could not find one. *Intruders* lurked behind every door. The place was congested. This sort of thing had been growing

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<sup>1</sup> The extract is taken from the book "Daddy-Long-Legs" by an American writer Jean Webster. The novel is written in the form of letters. The author of these letters, a young girl, Judy by name, writes them to her guardian, a rich man whom she has never seen.

Judy was brought up in the John Grier Home orphan asylum where her life was hard. She was a very bright girl and when she finished school, her guardian sent her to college. The girl knows almost nothing about him. She knows only that he is a very tall man. That is why she jokingly calls him Daddy-Long-Legs.

worse and worse ever since his *marriage* two years *previously*. Marriage had *certainly complicated* life for Mr. Pett, as it does for the man who waits fifty years before trying it. There was a strong *literary* virus in Mrs. Pett's system. She not only wrote *voluminously* herself — but aimed at maintaining a salon ... She gave shelter beneath her terra-cotta roof to no fewer than six young *unrecognized* geniuses. Six *brilliant youths*, mostly *novelists* who had not yet started ...

(From *Piccadilly Jim* by P. G. Wodehouse. Abridged)

III. Write out from any five pages of the book you are reading examples which illustrate borrowed and native affixes in the tables in Ch. 3 and 5. Comment on their productivity.

IV. Explain the etymology and productivity of the affixes given below. Say what parts of speech are formed with their help.

-ness, -ous, -ly, -y, -dom, -ish, -tion, -ed, -en, -ess, -or, -er, -hood, -less, -ate, -ing, -al, -ful, un-, re-, im (in)-, dis-, over-, ab-

V. Write out from the book you are reading all the words with the adjective-forming suffix *-ly* and not less than 20 words with the homonymous adverb-forming suffix. Say what these suffixes have in common and in what way they are differentiated.

VI. Deduce the meanings of the following derivatives from the meanings of their constituents. Explain your deduction. What are the meanings of the affixes in the words under examination?

reddish, *adj.*; overwrite, *v.*; irregular, *adj.*; illegal, *adj.*; retype, *v.*; old-womanish, *adj.*; disrespectful, *adj.*; inexpensive, *adj.*; unladylike, *adj.*; disorganise, *v.*; renew, *v.*; eatable, *adj.*; overdress, *v.*; disinfection, *n.*; snobbish, *adj.*; handful, *n.*; tallish, *adj.*; sandy, *adj.*; breakable, *adj.*; underfed, *adj.*

VII. In the following examples the italicized words are formed from the same root by means of different affixes. Translate these derivatives into Russian and explain the difference in meaning.

1. a) Sallie is the most *amusing* person in the world — and Julia Pendleton the least so. b) Ann was wary, but *amused*. 2. a) He had a charming smile, almost *womanish* in sweetness. b) I have kept up with you through Miss Pittypat but she gave me no intimation that you had developed *womanly* sweetness. 3. — I have been having a *delightful* and entertaining conversation with my old chum,

Lord Wisbeach. — Say, are you doing anything? — Nothing in particular. — Come and have a yarn. There's a place. I know just round be here. — *Delighted*. 4. a) Sallie thinks everything is funny — even flunking — and Julia is bored at everything. She never makes the slightest effort to be *pleasant*. b) — Why are you going to America? — To make my fortune, I hope. — How *pleased* your father will be if you do. 5. a) Long before he reached the brownstone house ... the first fine *careless* rapture of his mad outbreak had passed from Jerry Mitchell, leaving nervous apprehension in its place. b) If your nephew has really succeeded in his experiments you should be awfully *careful*. 6. a) The trouble with college is that you are expected to know such a lot of things you've never learned. It's very *confusing* at times. b) That platform was a *confused* mass of travellers, porters, baggage, trucks, boys with magazines, friends, relatives. 7. a) At last I decided that even this rather *mannish* efficient woman could do with a little help. b) He was only a boy not a man yet, but he spoke in a *manly* way. 8. a) The boy's *respectful* manner changed noticeably. b) It may be a *respectable* occupation, but it sounds rather criminal to me. 9. a) "Who is leading in the pennant race?" said this strange butler in a *feverish* whisper. b) It was an idea peculiarly suited to her temperament, an idea that she might have suggested herself if she had thought of it ... this idea of his *fevered* imagination. 10. Dear Daddy-Long-Legs. You only wanted to hear from me once a month, didn't you? And I've been peppering you with letters every few days! But I've been so *excited* about all these new adventures that I must talk to somebody ... Speaking of classics, have you ever read *Hamlet*? If you haven't, do it right off. It's perfectly *exciting*. I've been hearing about Shakespeare all my life but I had no idea he really wrote so well; I always suspected him of going largely on his reputation. (J. Webster)<sup>1</sup>

VIII. Explain the difference between the meanings of the following words produced from the same root by means of different affixes. Translate the words into Russian.

watery — waterish, embarrassed — embarrassing, manly — mannish, colourful — coloured, distressed — distressing, respected — respectful — respectable, exhaustive — exhausting — exhausted, bored — boring, touchy — touched — touching

<sup>1</sup> See footnote on p. 74.

IX. Find cases of conversion in the following sentences.

1. The clerk was eyeing him expectantly. 2. Under the cover of that protective din he was able to toy with a steaming dish which his waiter had brought. 3. An aggressive man battled his way to Stout's side. 4. Just a few yards from the front door of the bar there was an elderly woman comfortably seated on a chair, holding a hose linked to a tap and watering the pavement. 5.—What are you doing here?—I'm tidying your room. 6. My seat was in the middle of a row. I could not leave without inconveniencing a great many people, so I remained. 7. How on earth do you remember to milk the cows and give pigs their dinner? 8. In a few minutes Papa stalked off, correctly booted and well muffled. 9. "Then it's practically impossible to steal any diamonds?" asked Mrs. Blair with as keen an air of disappointment as though she had been journeying there for the express purpose. 10. Ten minutes later I was speeding along in the direction of Cape Town. 11. Restaurants in all large cities have their ups and downs. 12. The upshot seemed to be that I was left to face life with the sum of £ 87 17s 4d. 13. "A man could be very happy in a house like this if he didn't have to poison his days with work," said Jimmy. 14. I often heard that fellows after some great shock or loss have a habit, after they've been on the floor for a while wondering what hit them, of picking themselves up and piecing themselves together.

X. One of the italicized words in the following examples was made from the other by conversion. What semantic correlations exist between them?

1. a) "You've got a funny *nose*," he added. b) He began to *nose* about. He pulled out drawer after drawer, pottering round like an old bloodhound. 2. a) I'd seen so many cases of fellows who had become perfect slaves of their *valets*. b) I supposed that while he had been *valeting* old Worplesdon Florence must have trodden on his toes in some way. 3. a) It so happened that the night before I had been present at a rather cheery little *supper*. b) So the next night I took him along to *supper* with me. 4. a) Buck seized Thornton's *hand* in his teeth. b) The desk clerk *handed* me the key. 5. a) A small hairy object sprang from a basket and stood yapping in the middle of the *room*. b) There are advantages, you see, about *rooming* with Julia. 6. a) "I'm engaged



for *lunch*, but I've plenty of time." b) There was a time when he and I had been lads about town together, *lunching* and dining together practically every day. 7. a) Mr. Biffen rang up on the *telephone* while you were in your bath. b) I found Muriel singer there, sitting by herself at a table near the door. Corky, I took it, was out *telephoning*. 8. Use small *nails* and *nail* the picture on the wall. 9. a) I could just see that he was waving a letter or something equally foul in my *face*. b) When the bell stopped, Crane turned around and *faced* the students seated in rows before him. 10. a) Lizzie is a good *cook*. b) She *cooks* the meals in Mr. Priestley's house. 11. a) The *wolf* was suspicious and afraid. b) Fortunately, however, the second course consisted of a chicken fricassee of such outstanding excellence that the old boy, after *wolfing* a plateful, handed up his dinner-pail for a second instalment and became almost genial. 12. Use the big *hammer* for those nails and *hammer* them in well. 13. a) "Put a ribbon round your hair and be Alice-in-Wonderland," said Maxim. "You look like it now with your *finger* in your mouth." b) The coach *fingered* the papers on his desk and squinted through his bifocals. 14. a) The room was airy but small. There were however, a few vacant spots, and in these had been *placed* a washstand, a chest of drawers and a midget rocker-chair. b) "Well, when I got to New York it looked a decent sort of *place* to me ..." 15. a) These men wanted *dogs*, and the dogs they wanted were heavy dogs, with strong muscles ... and furry coats to protect them from the frost. b) "Jeeves," I said, "I have begun to feel absolutely haunted. This woman *dogs* me."

XI. Explain the semantic correlations within the following pairs of words.

shelter — to shelter, park — to park, groom — to groom,  
elbow — to elbow, breakfast — to breakfast, pin — to pin,  
trap — to trap, fish — to fish, head — to head, nurse —  
to nurse

XII. Which of the two words in the following pairs is made by conversion? Deduce the meanings and use them in constructing sentences of your own.

star, *n.* — to star, *v.*  
picture, *n.* — to picture, *v.*  
colour, *n.* — to colour, *v.*

age, *n.* — to age, *v.*  
touch, *n.* — to touch, *v.*  
make, *n.* — to make, *v.*

blush, *n.* — to blush, *v.*  
key, *n.* — to key, *v.*  
fool, *n.* — to fool, *v.*  
breakfast, *n.* — to breakfast, *v.*  
house, *n.* — to house, *v.*  
monkey, *n.* — to monkey, *v.*  
fork, *n.* — to fork, *v.*  
slice, *n.* — to slice, *v.*

finger, *n.* — to finger, *v.*  
empty, *adj.* — to empty, *v.*  
poor, *adj.* — the poor, *n.*  
pale, *adj.* — to pale, *v.*  
dry, *adj.* — to dry, *v.*  
nurse, *n.* — to nurse, *v.*  
dress, *n.* — to dress, *v.*  
floor, *n.* — to floor, *v.*

**XIII.** Read the following joke, explain the type of word-building in italicized words and say everything you can about the way they were made.

A successful old lawyer tells the following story about the beginning of his professional life:

"I had just installed myself in my office, had put in a phone, when, through the glass of my door I saw a shadow. It was doubtless my first client to see me. Picture me, then, grabbing the nice, shiny receiver of my new phone and plunging into an imaginary conversation. It ran something like this:

'Yes, Mr. S!' I was saying as the stranger entered the office. 'I'll attend to that corporation matter for you. Mr. J. had me on the phone this morning and wanted me to settle a damage suit, but I had to put him off, as I was too busy with other cases. But I'll manage to sandwich your case in between the others somehow. Yes. Yes. All right. Goodbye.'

Being sure, then, that I had duly impressed my prospective client, I hung up the receiver and turned to him.

'Excuse me, sir,' the man said, 'but I'm from the telephone company. I've come to connect your instrument.'"

## CHAPTER 6

### HOW ENGLISH WORDS ARE MADE.

#### WORD-BUILDING

(continued)

#### Composition

This type of word-building, in which new words are produced by combining two or more stems, is one of the three most productive types in Modern English; the other two are conversion and affixation. Compounds, though cer-

tainly fewer in quantity than derived or root words, still represent one of the most typical and specific features of English word-structure.

There are at least three aspects of composition that present special interest.

The first is the structural aspect. Compounds are not homogeneous in structure. Traditionally three types are distinguished: neutral, morphological and syntactic.

In neutral compounds the process of compounding is realized without any linking elements, by a mere juxtaposition of two stems, as in *blackbird*, *shop-window*, *sunflower*, *bedroom*, *tallboy*, etc. There are three subtypes of neutral compounds depending on the structure of the constituent stems.

The examples above represent the subtype which may be described as simple neutral compounds: they consist of simple affixless stems.

Compounds which have affixes in their structure are called derived or derivational compounds. E. g. *absent-mindedness*, *blue-eyed*, *golden-haired*, *broad-shouldered*, *lady-killer*, *film-goer*, *music-lover*, *honey-mooner*, *first-nighter*, *late-comer*, *newcomer*, *early-riser*, *evil-doer*. The productivity of this type is confirmed by a considerable number of comparatively recent formations, such as *teenager*, *baby-sitter*, *strap-hanger*, *four-seater* ("car or boat with four seats"), *doubledecker* ("a ship or bus with two decks"). Numerous nonce-words are coined on this pattern which is another proof of its high productivity: e. g. *luncher-out* ("a person who habitually takes his lunch in restaurants and not at home"), *goose-flesher* ("murder story") or *attention getter* in the following fragment:

"Dad," I began ... "I'm going to lose my job."  
That should be an attention getter, I figured.

(From *A Five-Colour Buick*  
by P. Anderson Wood)

The third subtype of neutral compounds is called *contracted compounds*. These words have a shortened (contracted) stem in their structure: *TV-set* (-program, -show, -canal, etc.), *V-day* (*Victory day*), *G-man* (*Government man* "FBI agent"), *H-bag* (*handbag*), *T-shirt*, etc.

Morphological compounds are few in number. This type is non-productive. It is represented by words in which two compounding stems are combined by a linking

vowel or consonant, e. g. *Anglo-Saxon*, *Franko-Prussian*, *handiwork*, *handicraft*, *craftsmanship*, *spokesman*, *statesman* (see also p. 88).

In syntactic compounds (the term is arbitrary) we once more find a feature of specifically English word-structure. These words are formed from segments of speech, preserving in their structure numerous traces of syntagmatic relations typical of speech: articles, prepositions, adverbs, as in the nouns *lily-of-the-valley*, *Jack-of-all-trades*, *good-for-nothing*, *mother-in-law*, *sit-at-home*. Syntactical relations and grammatical patterns current in present-day English can be clearly traced in the structures of such compound nouns as *pick-me-up*, *know-all*, *know-nothing*, *go-between*, *get-together*, *whodunit*. The last word (meaning "a detective story") was obviously coined from the ungrammatical variant of the word-group *who (has) done it*.

In this group of compounds, once more, we find a great number of neologisms, and *whodunit* is one of them. Consider, also, the two following fragments which make rich use of modern city traffic terms.

Randy managed to weave through a maze of one-way-streets, no-left-turns, and no-stopping-zones ...

(From *A Five-Colour Buick* by P. Anderson Wood)

"... you go down to the Department of Motor Vehicles tomorrow and take your behind-the-wheel test."

(Ibid.)

The structure of most compounds is transparent, as it were, and clearly betrays the origin of these words from word-combinations. The fragments below illustrate admirably the very process of coining nonce-words after the productive patterns of composition.

"Is all this really true?" he asked. "Or are you pulling my leg?"

... Charlie looked slowly around at each of the four old faces ... They were quite serious. There was no sign of joking or leg-pulling on any of them.

(From *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by R. Dahl)

"I have decided that you are up to no good. I am well aware that that is your natural condition. But I

prefer you to be up to no good in London. Which is more used to up-to-no-gooders.”

(From *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by J. Fowles)

“What if they capture us?” said Mrs. Bucket.

“What if they shoot us?” said Grandma Georgina.

“What if my beard were made of green spinach?” cried Mr. Wonka. “Bunkum and tommyrot! You’ll never get anywhere if you go about what-iffing like that. ... We want no what-iffers around, right, Charlie?”

(From *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* by R. Dahl)

The first of the examples presents the nonce-word *leg-pulling* coined on the pattern of neutral derivational compounds. The *what-iffing* and *what-iffers* of the third extract seem to represent the same type, though there is something about the words clearly resembling syntactic compounds: their *what-if-nucleus* is one of frequent patterns of living speech. As to the *up-to-no-gooders* of the second example, it is certainly a combination of syntactic and derivational types, as it is made from a segment of speech which is held together by the *-er* suffix. A similar formation is represented by the nonce-word *breakfast-in-the-bedder* (“a person who prefers to have his breakfast in bed”).

\* \* \*

Another focus of interest is the semantic aspect of compound words, that is, the question of correlations of the separate meanings of the constituent parts and the actual meaning of the compound. Or, to put it in easier terms: can the meaning of a compound word be regarded as the sum of its constituent meanings?

To try and answer this question, let us consider the following groups of examples.

(1) *Classroom, bedroom, working-man, evening-gown, dining-room, sleeping-car, reading-room, dancing-hall.*

This group seems to represent compounds whose meanings can really be described as the sum of their constituent meanings. Yet, in the last four words we can distinctly detect a slight shift of meaning. The first component

in these words, if taken as a free form, denotes an action or state of whatever or whoever is characterized by the word. Yet, a sleeping-car is not a car that sleeps (cf. *a sleeping child*), nor is a dancing-hall actually dancing (cf. *dancing pairs*).

The shift of meaning becomes much more pronounced in the second group of examples.

(2) *Blackboard, blackbird, football, lady-killer, pickpocket, good-for-nothing, lazybones, chatterbox.*

In these compounds one of the components (or both) has changed its meaning: a blackboard is neither a board nor necessarily black, football is not a ball but a game, a chatterbox not a box but a person, and a lady-killer kills no one but is merely a man who fascinates women. It is clear that in all these compounds the meaning of the whole word cannot be defined as the sum of the constituent meanings. The process of change of meaning in some such words has gone so far that the meaning of one or both constituents is no longer in the least associated with the current meaning of the corresponding free form, and yet the speech community quite calmly accepts such seemingly illogical word groups as *a white blackbird, pink bluebells* or an entirely confusing statement like: *Blackberries are red when they are green.*

Yet, despite a certain readjustment in the semantic structure of the word, the meanings of the constituents of the compounds of this second group are still transparent: you can see through them the meaning of the whole complex. Knowing the meanings of the constituents a student of English can get a fairly clear idea of what the whole word means even if he comes across it for the first time. At least, it is clear that a *blackbird* is some kind of bird and that a *good-for-nothing* is not meant as a compliment.

(3) In the third group of compounds the process of deducing the meaning of the whole from those of the constituents is impossible. The key to meaning seems to have been irretrievably lost: *ladybird* is not a bird, but an insect, *tallboy* not a boy but a piece of furniture, *bluestocking*, on the contrary, is a person, whereas *bluebottle* may denote both a flower and an insect but never a bottle.

Similar enigmas are encoded in such words as *man-of-war* ("warship"), *merry-go-round* ("carousel"), *mother-of-pearl* ("iridescent substance forming the inner layer of certain shells"), *horse-marine* ("a person who is unsuitable for his



job or position”), *butter-fingers* (“clumsy person; one who is apt to drop things”), *wall-flower* (“a girl who is not invited to dance at a party”), *whodunit* (“detective story”), *straphanger* (1. “a passenger who stands in a crowded bus or underground train and holds onto a strap or other support suspended from above”; 2. “a book of light genre, trash; the kind of book one is likely to read when travelling in buses or trains”).

The compounds whose meanings do not correspond to the separate meanings of their constituent parts (2nd and 3rd group listed above) are called *idiomatic compounds*, in contrast to the first group known as *non-idiomatic compounds*.

The suggested subdivision into three groups is based on the degree of semantic cohesion of the constituent parts, the third group representing the extreme case of cohesion where the constituent meanings blend to produce an entirely new meaning.

The following joke rather vividly shows what happens if an idiomatic compound is misunderstood as non-idiomatic.

**Patient:** They tell me, doctor, you are a perfect lady-killer.

**Doctor:** Oh, no, no! I assure you, my dear madam, I make no distinction between the sexes.

In this joke, while the woman patient means to compliment the doctor on his being a handsome and irresistible man, he takes or pretends to take the word *lady-killer* literally, as a sum of the direct meanings of its constituents.

The structural type of compound words and the word-building type of composition have certain advantages for communication purposes.

Composition is not quite so flexible a way of coining new words as conversion but flexible enough as is convincingly shown by the examples of nonce-words given above. Among compounds are found numerous expressive and colourful words. They are also comparatively laconic, absorbing into one word an idea that otherwise would have required a whole phrase (cf. *The hotel was full of week-enders* and *The hotel was full of people spending the week-end there*).

Both the laconic and the expressive value of compounds can be well illustrated by English compound adjectives denoting colours (cf. *snow-white* — as *white as snow*).

In the following extract a family are discussing which colour to paint their new car.

"Hey," Sally yelled, "could you paint it canary yellow, Fred?"

"Turtle green," shouted my mother, quickly getting into the spirit of the thing.

"Mouse grey," Randy suggested.

"Dove white, maybe?" my mother asked.

"Rattlesnake brown," my father said with a dead-pan look...

"Forget it, all of you," I announced. "My Buick is going to be peacock blue."

(From *A Five-Colour Buick* by P. Anderson Wood)

It is obvious that the meaning of all these "multi-coloured" adjectives is based on comparison: the second constituent of the adjective is the name of a colour used in its actual sense and the first is the name of an object (animal, flower, etc.) with which the comparison is drawn. The pattern immensely extends the possibilities of denoting all imaginable shades of each colour, the more so that the pattern is productive and a great number of nonce-words are created after it. You can actually coin an adjective comparing the colour of a defined object with almost anything on earth: the pattern allows for vast creative experiments. This is well shown in the fragment given above. If *canary yellow*, *peacock blue*, *dove white* are quite "normal" in the language and registered by dictionaries, *turtle green* and *rattlesnake brown*<sup>1</sup> are certainly typical nonce-words, amusing inventions of the author aimed at a humorous effect.

Sometimes it is pointed out, as a disadvantage, that the English language has only one word *blue* for two different colours denoted in Russian by *синий* and *голубой*.

But this seeming inadequacy is compensated by a large number of adjectives coined on the pattern of comparison such as *navy blue*, *cornflower blue*, *peacock blue*, *chicory blue*, *sapphire blue*, *china blue*, *sky-blue*, *turquoise blue*, *forget-me-not blue*, *heliotrope blue*, *powder-blue*. This list can be supplemented by compound adjectives which also

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<sup>1</sup> R. "цвета гремучей змеи". The father of the family is absolutely against the idea of buying the car, and the choice of this word reflects his mood of resentment.

denote different shades of blue, but are not built on comparison: *dark blue*, *light blue*, *pale blue*, *electric blue*, *Oxford blue*, *Cambridge blue*.

\* \* \*

A further theoretical aspect of composition is the criteria for distinguishing between a compound and a word-combination.

This question has a direct bearing on the specific feature of the structure of most English compounds which has already been mentioned: with the exception of the rare morphological type, they originate directly from word-combinations and are often homonymous to them: cf. *a tall boy* — *a tallboy*.

In this case the *graphic* criterion of distinguishing between a word and a word-group seems to be sufficiently convincing, yet in many cases it cannot wholly be relied on. The spelling of many compounds, *tallboy* among them, can be varied even within the same book. In the case of *tallboy* the *semantic* criterion seems more reliable, for the striking difference in the meanings of the word and the word-group certainly points to the highest degree of semantic cohesion in the word: *tallboy* does not even denote a person, but a piece of furniture, a chest of drawers supported by a low stand.

Moreover, the word-group *a tall boy* conveys two concepts (1) a young male person, 2) big in size), whereas the word *tallboy* expresses one concept.

Yet the semantic criterion alone cannot prove anything as phraseological units also convey a single concept and some of them are characterized by a high degree of semantic cohesion (see Ch. 12).

The *phonetic* criterion for compounds may be treated as that of a single stress. The criterion is convincingly applicable to many compound nouns, yet does not work with compound adjectives:

cf. *'slowcoach*, *'blackbird*, *'tallboy*,  
but: *'blue-'eyed*, *'absent-'minded*, *'ill-'mannered*.

Still, it is true that the morphological structure of these adjectives and their hyphenated spelling leave no doubt about their status as words and not word-groups.

*Morphological* and *syntactic* criteria can also be applied to compound words in order to distinguish them from word-groups.

In the word-group *a tall boy* each of the constituents is independently open to grammatical changes peculiar to its own category as a part of speech: *They were the tallest boys in their form.*

Between the constituent parts of the word-group other words can be inserted: *a tall handsome boy.*

The compound *tallboy* – and, in actual fact, any other compound – is not subject to such changes. The first component is grammatically invariable; the plural form ending is added to the whole unit: *tallboys*. No word can be inserted between the components, even with the compounds which have a traditional separate graphic form.

All this leads us to the conclusion that, in most cases, only several criteria (semantic, morphological, syntactic, phonetic, graphic) can convincingly classify a lexical unit as either a compound word or a word group.

### Semi-Affixes

Consider the following examples.

“... The Great Glass Elevator is shockproof, wat-  
erproof, bombproof, bulletproof, and Knidproof<sup>1</sup> ...”

(From *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* by R. Dahl)

Lady Malvern tried to freeze him with a look, but  
you can't do that sort of thing to Jeeves. He is  
look-proof.

(From *Carry on, Jeeves* by P. G. Wodehouse)

Better sorts of *lip-stick* are frequently described in advertisements as *kissproof*. Some building materials may be advertised as *fireproof*. Certain technical devices are *fool-proof* meaning that they are safe even in a fool's hands.

All these words, with *-proof* for the second component, stand between compounds and derived words in their characteristics. On the one hand, the second component seems to bear all the features of a stem and preserves certain semantic associations with the free form *proof*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Knids* – fantastic monsters supposed to inhabit the Cosmos and invented by the author of this book for children

On the other hand, the meaning of *-proof* in all the numerous words built on this pattern has become so generalized that it is certainly approaching that of a suffix. The high productivity of the pattern is proved, once more, by the possibility of coining nonce-words after this pattern: *look-proof* and *Knidproof*, the second produced from the non-existent stem *Knid*.

The component *-proof*, standing thus between a stem and an affix, is regarded by some scholars as a semi-affix.

Another example of semi-affix is *-man* in a vast group of English nouns denoting people: *sportsman*, *gentleman*, *nobleman*, *salesman*, *seaman*, *fisherman*, *countryman*, *statesman*, *policeman*, *chairman*, etc.

Semantically, the constituent *-man* in these words approaches the generalized meaning of such noun-forming suffixes as *-er*, *-or*, *-ist* (e. g. *artist*), *-ite* (e. g. *hypocrite*). It has moved so far in its meaning from the corresponding free form *man*, that such word-groups as *woman policeman* or *Mrs. Chairman* are quite usual. Nor does the statement *Lady, you are no gentleman* sound eccentric or illogical for the speaker uses the word *gentleman* in its general sense of a noble upright person, regardless of sex. It must be added though that this is only an occasional usage and that *gentleman* is normally applied to men.

Other examples of semi-affixes are *-land* (e. g. *Ireland*, *Scotland*, *fatherland*, *wonderland*), *-like* (e. g. *ladylike*, *unladylike*, *businesslike*, *unbusinesslike*, *starlike*, *flowerlike*, etc.), *-worthy* (e. g. *seaworthy*, *trustworthy*, *praiseworthy*).

### Shortening (Contraction)

This comparatively new way of word-building has achieved a high degree of productivity nowadays, especially in American English.

Shortenings (or contracted/curtailed words) are produced in two different ways. The first is to make a new word from a syllable (rarer, two) of the original word. The latter may lose its beginning (as in *phone* made from *telephone*, *fence* from *defence*), its ending (as in *hols* from *holidays*, *vac* from *vacation*, *props* from *properties*, *ad* from *advertisement*) or both the beginning and ending (as in *flu* from *influenza*, *fridge* from *refrigerator*).

The second way of shortening is to make a new word from the initial letters of a word group: *U.N.O.* ['ju:nou] from *the United Nations Organization*, *B.B.C.*

from the *British Broadcasting Corporation*, *M.P.* from *Member of Parliament*. This type is called *initial shortenings*. They are found not only among formal words, such as the ones above, but also among colloquialisms and slang. So, *g. f.* is a shortened word made from the compound *girl-friend*. The word, though, seems to be somewhat ambiguous as the following conversation between two undergraduates clearly shows:

- Who's the letter from?
- My *g. f.*
- Didn't know you had girl-friends. A nice girl?
- Idiot! It's from my grandfather!

It is commonly believed that the preference for shortenings can be explained by their brevity and is due to the ever-increasing tempo of modern life. Yet, in the conversation given above the use of an ambiguous contraction does not in the least contribute to the brevity of the communication: on the contrary, it takes the speakers some time to clarify the misunderstanding. Confusion and ambiguousness are quite natural consequences of the modern overabundance of shortened words, and initial shortenings are often especially enigmatic and misleading.

Both types of shortenings are characteristic of informal speech in general and of uncultivated speech particularly. The history of the American *okay* seems to be rather typical. Originally this initial shortening was spelt *O.K.* and was supposed to stand for *all correct*. The purely oral manner in which sounds were recorded for letters resulted in *O.K.* whereas it should have been *A.C.* or *aysee*. Indeed, the ways of words are full of surprises.

Here are some more examples of informal shortenings. *Movie* (from *moving-picture*), *gent* (from *gentleman*), *specs* (from *spectacles*), *circs* (from *circumstances*, e. g. *under the circs*), *I. O. U.* (a written acknowledgement of debt; made from *I owe you*), *lib* (from *liberty*, as in *May I take the lib of saying something to you?*), *cert* (from *certainty*, as in *This enterprise is a cert if you have a bit of capital*), *metrop* (from *metropoly*, e. g. *Paris is a gay metrop*), *exhibish* (from *exhibition*), *posish* (from *position*).

Undergraduates' informal speech abounds in words of the type: *exam*, *lab*, *prof*, *vac*, *hol*, *co-ed* (a girl student at a coeducational school or college).



## Some of the Minor Types of Modern Word-Building Sound-Imitation (Onomatopoeia<sup>1</sup>)

Words coined by this interesting type of word-building are made by imitating different kinds of sounds that may be produced by animals, birds, insects, human beings and inanimate objects.

It is of some interest that sounds produced by the same kind of animal are frequently represented by quite different sound groups in different languages. For instance, English dogs *bark* (cf. the R. *лаять*) or *howl* (cf. the R. *выть*). The English cock cries *cock-a-doodle-doo* (cf. the R. *ку-ка-ре-ку*). In England ducks *quack* and frogs *croak* (cf. the R. *крякать* said about ducks and *квакать* said about frogs). It is only English and Russian cats who seem capable of mutual understanding when they meet, for English cats *mew* or *miaow* (*meow*). The same can be said about cows: they *moo* (but also *low*).

Some names of animals and especially of birds and insects are also produced by sound-imitation: *crow*, *cuckoo*, *humming-bird*, *whip-poor-will*, *cricket*.

The following desperate letter contains a great number of sound-imitation words reproducing sounds made by modern machinery:

The Baltimore & Ohio R.R. Co.,  
Pittsburg, Pa.

Gentlemen:

Why is it that your switch engine has to ding and fizz and spit and pant and grate and grind and puff and bump and chug and hoot and toot and whistle and wheeze and howl and clang and growl and thump and clash and boom and jolt and screech and snarl and snort and slam and throb and soar and rattle and hiss and yell and smoke and shriek all night long when I come home from a hard day at the boiler works and have to keep the dog quiet and the baby quiet so my wife can squawk at me for snoring in my sleep?

Yours

From *Language and Humour* by G. G. Pocheptsov.

<sup>1</sup> [ɔnəmətə'piə]. This type of word-formation is now also called *echoism* (the term was introduced by O. Jespersen).

There is a hypothesis that sound-imitation as a way of word-formation should be viewed as something much wider than just the production of words by the imitation of purely acoustic phenomena. Some scholars suggest that words may imitate through their sound form certain unacoustic features and qualities of inanimate objects, actions and processes or that the meaning of the word can be regarded as the immediate relation of the sound group to the object. If a young chicken or kitten is described as *fluffy* there seems to be something in the sound of the adjective that conveys the softness and the downy quality of its plumage or its fur. Such verbs as *to glance*, *to glide*, *to slide*, *to slip* are supposed to convey by their very sound the nature of the smooth, easy movement over a slippery surface. The sound form of the words *shimmer*, *glimmer*, *glitter* seems to reproduce the wavering, tremulous nature of the faint light. The sound of the verbs *to rush*, *to dash*, *to flash* may be said to reflect the brevity, swiftness and energetic nature of their corresponding actions. The word *thrill* has something in the quality of its sound that very aptly conveys the tremulous, tingling sensation it expresses.

Some scholars have given serious consideration to this theory. However, it has not yet been properly developed.

### Reduplication

In *reduplication* new words are made by doubling a stem, either without any phonetic changes as in *bye-bye* (coll. for *good-bye*) or with a variation of the root-vowel or consonant as in *ping-pong*, *chit-chat* (this second type is called *gradational reduplication*).

This type of word-building is greatly facilitated in Modern English by the vast number of monosyllables. Stylistically speaking, most words made by reduplication represent informal groups: colloquialisms and slang. E. g. *walkie-talkie* ("a portable radio"), *riff-raff* ("the worthless or disreputable element of society"; "the dregs of society"), *chi-chi* (sl. for *chic* as in *a chi-chi girl*).

In a modern novel an angry father accuses his teenage son of *doing nothing but dilly-dallying all over the town*. (*dilly-dallying* – wasting time, doing nothing, loitering)

Another example of a word made by reduplication may be found in the following quotation from *The Importance of Being Earnest* by O. Wilde:

Lady Bracknell. I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd.

(*shilly-shallying* — irresolution, indecision)

### Back-Formation (Reversion)

The earliest examples of this type of word-building are the verb *to beg* that was made from the French borrowing *beggar*, *to burgle* from *burglar*, *to cobble* from *cobbler*. In all these cases the verb was made from the noun by subtracting what was mistakenly associated with the English suffix *-er*. The pattern of the type *to work* — *worker* was firmly established in the subconscious of English-speaking people at the time when these formations appeared, and it was taken for granted that any noun denoting profession or occupation is certain to have a corresponding verb of the same root. So, in the case of the verbs *to beg*, *to burgle*, *to cobble* the process was reversed: instead of a noun made from a verb by affixation (as in *painter* from *to paint*), a verb was produced from a noun by subtraction. That is why this type of word-building received the name of *back-formation* or *reversion*.

Later examples of back-formation are *to butle* from *butler*, *to baby-sit* from *baby-sitter*, *to force-land* from *forced landing*, *to blood-transfuse* from *blood-transfusion*, *to fingerprint* from *finger printings*, *to straphang* from *straphanger*.

### EXERCISES

1. Consider your answers to the following.

1. What is understood by composition? What do we call words made by this type of word-building?

2. Into what groups and subgroups can compounds be subdivided structurally? Illustrate your answer with examples.

3. Which types of composition are productive in Modern English? How can this be demonstrated?

4. What are the interrelationships between the meaning of a compound word and the meanings of its constituent parts? Point out the principal cases and give examples.

5. What are the criteria for distinguishing between a compound and a word-combination?

6. What are the italicized elements in the words given below? What makes them different from affixes? from stems?

*statesman*, *waterproof*, *cat-like*, *trustworthy*.

7. What are the two processes of making shortenings? Explain the productivity of this way of word-building and stylistic characteristics of shortened words. Give examples.

8. What minor processes of word-building do you know? Describe them and illustrate your answer with examples.

II. Find compounds in the following jokes and extracts and write them out in three columns: A. Neutral compounds. B. Morphological compounds. C. Syntactic compounds.

1. Pat and Jack were in London for the first time. During a tour of the shops in the West End they came to an expensive-looking barber's. "Razors!" exclaimed Pat. "You want one, don't you? There's a beauty there for twenty-five bob,<sup>1</sup> and there's another for thirty bob. Which would you sooner have?" "A beard," said Jack, walking off.

2. The children were in the midst of a free-for-all.<sup>2</sup> "Richard, who started this?" asked the father as he came into the room. "Well, it all started when David hit me back."

3. That night, as they cold-suppered together, Barmy cleared his throat and looked across at Pongo with a sad sweet smile. "I mean to say, it's no good worrying and trying to look ahead and plan and scheme and weigh your every action, because you never can tell when doing such-and-such won't make so-and-so happen — while, on the other hand, if you do so-and-so it may just as easily lead to such-and-such."

4. When Conan Doyle arrived in Boston, he was at once recognized by the cabman whose cab he engaged. When he was about to pay his fare, the cabman said:

"If you please, sir, I should prefer a ticket to your lecture."

Conan Doyle laughed. "Tell me," he said, "how you knew who I was and I'll give you tickets for your whole family."

---

<sup>1</sup> *bob* — a shilling (*pl.* bob)

<sup>2</sup> a *free-for-all* — a fight without rules in which any number of people join or become involved

"Thank you, sir," was the answer. "On the side of your travelling-bag is your name."

5. An old tramp sailed up to the back door of a little English tavern called The George and Dragon and beckoned to the landlady.

"I've had nothing to eat for three days," he said. "Would you spare an old man a bite of dinner?"

"I should say not, you good-for-nothing loafer," said the landlady and slammed the door in his face.

The tramp's face reappeared at the kitchen window.

"I was just wonderin'," he said, "if I could 'ave a word or two with George."

6. "Where are you living, Grumpy?"

"In the Park. The fresh-air treatment is all the thing nowadays."

7. Arriving home one evening a man found the house locked up. After trying to get in at the various windows on the first floor he finally climbed upon the shed roof and with much difficulty entered through a second-story window. On the dining-room table he found a note from his absent-minded wife: "I have gone out. You'll find the key under the door mat."

8. One balmy, blue-and-white morning the old woman stood in her long, tidy garden and looked up at her small neat cottage. The thatch on its tip-tilted roof was new and its well-fitting doors had been painted blue. Its newly-hung curtains were gay ... Bird-early next morning Mother Farthing went into the dew-drenched garden. With billhook and fork she soon set to work clearing a path to the apple tree.

(From *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* by R. Dahl)

III. Identify the neutral compounds in the word combinations given below and write them out in 3 columns: A. Simple neutral compounds. B. Neutral derived compounds. C. Neutral contracted compounds.

an air-conditioned hall; a glass-walled room; to fight against H-bomb; a loud revolver-shot; a high-pitched voice; a heavy topcoat; a car's windshield; a snow-white handkerchief; big A. A. guns; a radio-equipped car; thousands of gold-seekers; a big hunting-knife; a lightish-coloured

man; to howl long and wolflike; to go into frantic U-turns;<sup>1</sup> to fix M-Day<sup>2</sup>

IV. Arrange the italicized compounds in the following extracts into two groups: A. Idiomatic compounds. B. Non-idiomatic compounds. Define the structural type of the compounds under study.

1. The mammal<sup>3</sup> husband originates from a man in love. Love is only a temporary transient state, which is lost altogether when the man in love turns into a husband. All this is very much the same as the spring *love-singing* with *blackbirds*. In the morning, scarcely out of bed, the husband is surprised at being served very hot tea. This proves that his knowledge of the elementary laws of physics is very poor, for he is obviously unaware of the fact that water boils at 100 °C, irrespective of one's being or not being, in a hurry to get to work. Then he shows his annoyance if he has not got a fresh *handkerchief*. At such moments he is venomous, and it is better to keep out of his way. 2. We've some plain, blunt things to say and we expect the same kind of answers, not a lot of *double-talk*. 3. Picture the *dining-room* of the John Grier Home with its *oil-cloth-covered* tables, and *wooden-handed* knives and forks. 4. Being a *matchmaker* is one thing. A *match-breaker* is something other. 5. She could imagine the polite, disinterested tone, the *closed-down, non-giving* thin expression on the thin, *handsome lady-killer* face, still tan with the mountain sun. 6. Crane's brother had played *fullback* on the *football* team, but the brothers had rarely been seen together, and the fact that the huge, graceful athlete and the *scarecrow bookworm* were members of the same family seemed like a freak of eugenics to the students who knew them both. 7. On a giant poster above the entrance, a gigantic girl in a *nightgown* pointed a pistol the size of a cannon at a *thirty-foot-tall* man in a *dinner jacket*. 8. So the fellow took Barmy out, and there was the girl sitting in a *two-seater*. The girl stared at him, dropping a slice of *bread-and-butter* in her emotion.

V. Arrange the compounds given below into two groups: A. Idiomatic. B. Non-idiomatic. Say whether the semantic change within

---

<sup>1</sup> *U-turn* ['ju : tʒ : n] — R. поворот «кругом»

<sup>2</sup> *M-day* — the first day of mobilization

<sup>3</sup> *mammal* — one of the class of animals which feed their young with milk from the breast (e. g. human beings, dogs, whales)



idiomatic compounds is partial or total. Consult the dictionary if necessary.

light-hearted, *adj.*; butterfly, *n.*; homebody, *n.*; cabman, *n.*; medium-sized, *adj.*; blackberry, *n.*; bluebell, *n.*; good-for-nothing, *adj.*; wolf-dog, *n.*; highway, *n.*; dragon-fly, *n.*; looking-glass, *n.*; greengrocer, *n.*; bluestocking, *n.*; gooseberry, *n.*; necklace, *n.*; earthquake, *n.*; lazy-bones, *n.*

VI. Identify the compounds in the word-groups below. Say as much as you can about their structure and semantics.

Emily, our late maid-of-all-work; a heavy snowfall; an automobile salesman; corn-coloured chiffon; vehicle search-lights; little tidbit<sup>1</sup> in The Afro-American;<sup>2</sup> German A. A. fire;<sup>3</sup> a born troubleshooter; to disembark a stowaway;<sup>4</sup> an old schoolmate; a cagelike crate; a slightly stoop-shouldered man; a somewhat matter-of-fact manner; a fur-lined boot; to pick forget-me-nots and lilies-of-the-valley; a small T-shirt; a sportscar agency

VII. Say whether the following lexical units are word-groups or compounds. Apply the criteria outlined in the foregoing text to motivate your answer.

railway platform, snowman, light dress, traffic light, railway station, landing field, film star, white man, hungry dog, medical man, landing plane, top hat, distant star, small house, green light, evening dress, top student, bluecoat,<sup>5</sup> roughhouse,<sup>6</sup> booby trap,<sup>7</sup> black skirt, medical student, hot dog, blue dress, U-shaped trap, black shirt<sup>8</sup>

VIII. Find shortenings in the jokes and extracts given below and specify the method of their formation.

1. Brown: But, Doc, I got bad eyes!

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<sup>1</sup> *tidbit* — very important news

<sup>2</sup> *The Afro-American* — the name of a newspaper

<sup>3</sup> *A. A. fire* — anti-aircraft fire (R. зенитный огонь)

<sup>4</sup> *stowaway* — one who hides himself on a ship to make a journey without paying

<sup>5</sup> *bluecoat* — policeman

<sup>6</sup> *roughhouse* — play that has got out of hand and turned into brawling (R. скандал, драка)

<sup>7</sup> *booby trap* — a trap laid for the unwary as a practical joke, often humiliating (R. ловушка)

<sup>8</sup> *black shirt* — a fascist (black shirts were part of uniform of the Italian Fascist party)

Doctor: Don't worry. We'll put you up front.<sup>1</sup>  
You won't miss a thing.

2. "How was your guard duty yesterday, Tom?"

"O. K. I was remarkably vigilant."

"Were you?"

"Oh, yes. I was so vigilant that I heard at once the relief sergeant approaching my post though I was fast asleep."

3. "Excuse me, but I'm in a hurry! You've had that phone 20 minutes and not said a word!" "Sir, I'm talking to my wife."

4. Two training planes piloted by air cadets collided in mid-air. The pilots who had safely tailed out were interrogated about the accident:

"Why didn't you take any evasive action to avoid hitting the other plane?"

"I did," the first pilot explained, "I tried to zigzag. But he was zigzagging, too, and zagged when I thought he was going to zig."

5. Any pro<sup>2</sup> will tell you that the worst thing possible is to overrehearse.

6. Hedy cut a giant birthday cake and kissed six GIs<sup>3</sup> whose birthday it was.

7. A few minutes later the adjutant and the O. D.<sup>4</sup> and a disagreeable master sergeant were in a jeep tearing down the highway in pursuit of the coloured convoy.

IX. What is the type of word-building by which the italicized words in the following extracts were made?

1. If they'd anything to say to each other, they could *hob-nob*<sup>5</sup> over *beef-tea* in a *perfectly* casual and natural manner. 2. No sooner had he departed than we were surrounded by cats, six of them, all *miaowing piteously* at once. 3. A man who has permitted himself to be made a thorough fool of is not anxious to *broadcast* the fact.

<sup>1</sup> We'll put you up front. — R. 1. Мы пошлем вас на передовую.

2. Мы посадим вас в первый ряд (игра слов).

<sup>2</sup> pro — (here) professional actor (sl.)

<sup>3</sup> GI — Government issue, WWII servicemen

<sup>4</sup> O. D. — officer of the day, officer on duty

<sup>5</sup> to hob-nob — to be on familiar terms

4. "He must be a very handsome fellow," said Sir Eustace. "Some young *whipper-snapper*<sup>1</sup> in Durban." 5. In South Africa you at once begin to talk about a stoep—I do know what a stoep is—it's the thing round a house and you sit on it. In various other parts of the world you call it a veranda, a piazza, and a *ha-ha*.<sup>2</sup> 6. All about him black metal pots were boiling and *bubbling* on huge stoves, and kettles were *hissing*, and pans were *sizzling*, and strange iron machines were *clanking* and *spluttering*. 7. I took the *lib* of barging in. 8. I'd work for him, *slave* for him, steal for him, even *beg* or borrow for him. 9. I've been meaning to go to the good old *exhibish* for a long time. 10. Twenty years of *butling* had trained him to wear a mask.

X. Define the particular type of word-building process by which the following words were made and say as much as you can about them.

a mike; to babysit; to buzz; a torchlight; homelike; theatrical; old-fashioned; to book; unreasonable; SALT;<sup>3</sup> Anglo-American; to murmur; a pub; to dilly-dally; okay; eatable; a make; a greenhorn;<sup>4</sup> posish; a dress coat;<sup>5</sup> to bang; merry-go-round; H-bag; B.B.C.; thinnish; to blood-transfuse; a go; to quack; M.P.; to thunder; earthquake; D-region;<sup>6</sup> fatalism; a find

XI. Read the following extract. Consider the italicized words in respect of a) word-building, b) etymology and say everything you know about each of them.

Dear *Kind-Trustee-Who-Sends-Orphans-to-College*,<sup>7</sup>

Here *I am*! I travelled yesterday for four hours in a train. It's a *funny sensation*, isn't it? I never rode in *one* before. College is *the* biggest, most bewildering place. I get lost *whenever* I leave my room.

I love college and I love you for sending me—I'm very, very *happy*, and so *excited* every *moment* of the time, that I can *hardly* sleep. You can't imagine how *different* it is from

<sup>1</sup> *whipper-snapper*—young, esp. undersized boy who behaves with more self-importance than is proper

<sup>2</sup> *ha-ha*—fence, hedge or wall hidden in a ditch or trench so as not to interrupt a landscape

<sup>3</sup> SALT—strategic armament limitation talks

<sup>4</sup> *greenhorn*—a raw, simple, inexperienced person, easily fooled

<sup>5</sup> *dress coat*—a black, long-tailed coat worn by men for formal evening occasions

<sup>6</sup> *D-region*—the lowest region of the ionosphere extending from 60 to 80 km

<sup>7</sup> See footnote on p. 74.

the John Grier Home. I never *dreamed* there was such a *place* in the world. I'm feeling *sorry* for *everybody* who isn't a *girl* and who *can't* come here, I am sure the college you *attended* when you were a *boy* couldn't have been so nice.

My room is up in a tower. There are *three* other *girls* on the same floor of the tower — a *Senior* who wears spectacles and is *always* asking us please to be a little more quiet, and two *Freshmen* named Sallie McBride and Julia Rutledge Pendleton. Sallie has *red* hair and a *turn-up* nose and is quite *friendly*; Julia comes from one of the first families in New York and hasn't noticed me yet. *They* *room* together and the *Senior* and I have *singles*.

*Usually* Freshmen can't get singles; they are very few, but I got one without even asking. I suppose the register didn't think it would *be* right to ask a *properly* brought up girl to room with a *foundling*. You see there are *advantages*.

(From *Daddy-Long-Legs* by J. Webster)

## CHAPTER 7

### WHAT IS "MEANING"?

Language is the amber in which a thousand precious and subtle thoughts have been safely embedded and preserved.

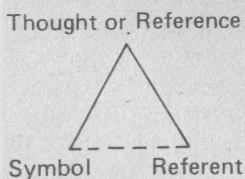
(From *Word and Phrase* by J. Fitzgerald)

The question posed by the title of this chapter is one of those questions which are easier to ask than answer. The linguistic science at present is not able to put forward a definition of meaning which is conclusive.

However, there are certain facts of which we can be reasonably sure, and one of them is that the very function of the word as a unit of communication is made possible by its possessing a meaning. Therefore, among the word's various characteristics, meaning is certainly the most important.

Generally speaking, meaning can be more or less described as a component of the word through which a concept is communicated, in this way endowing the word with the ability

of denoting real objects, qualities, actions and abstract notions. The complex and somewhat mysterious relationships between *referent* (object, etc. denoted by the word), *concept* and *word* are traditionally represented by the following triangle [27]:



By the “symbol” here is meant the word; thought or reference is concept. The dotted line suggests that there is no immediate relation between word and referent: it is established only through the concept.

On the other hand, there is a hypothesis that concepts can only find their realization through words. It seems that thought is dormant till the word awakens it up. It is only when we hear a spoken word or read a printed word that the corresponding concept springs into mind.

The mechanism by which concepts (i. e. mental phenomena) are converted into words (i. e. linguistic phenomena) and the reverse process by which a heard or a printed word is converted into a kind of mental picture are not yet understood or described. Probably that is the reason why the process of communication through words, if one gives it some thought, seems nothing short of a miracle. Isn't it fantastic that the mere vibrations of a speaker's vocal chords should be taken up by a listener's brain and converted into vivid pictures? If magic does exist in the world, then it is truly the magic of human speech; only we are so used to this miracle that we do not realize its almost supernatural qualities.

The branch of linguistics which specialises in the study of meaning is called *semantics*. As with many terms, the term “semantics” is ambiguous for it can stand, as well, for the expressive aspect of language in general and for the meaning of one particular word in all its varied aspects and nuances (i. e. the semantics of a word = the meaning(s) of a word)

As Mario Pei puts it in *The Study of Language*, “Semantics is ‘language’ in its broadest, most inclusive aspect. Sounds, words, grammatical forms, syntactical construction are the tools of language. Semantics is language's avowed purpose.” [31]

The meanings of all the utterances of a speech community are said by another leading linguist to include the total experience of that community; arts, science, practical occupations, amusements, personal and family life.

The modern approach to semantics is based on the assumption that the inner form of the word (i. e. its meaning) presents a structure which is called the *semantic structure* of the word.

Yet, before going deeper into this problem, it is necessary to make a brief survey of another semantic phenomenon which is closely connected with it.

### **Polysemy. Semantic Structure of the Word**

The semantic structure of the word does not present an indissoluble unity (that is, actually, why it is referred to as "structure"), nor does it necessarily stand for one concept. It is generally known that most words convey several concepts and thus possess the corresponding number of meanings. A word having several meanings is called *polysemantic*, and the ability of words to have more than one meaning is described by the term *polysemy*.

Two somewhat naive but frequently asked questions may arise in connection with polysemy:

1. Is polysemy an anomaly or a general rule in English vocabulary?

2. Is polysemy an advantage or a disadvantage so far as the process of communication is concerned?

Let us deal with both these questions together.

Polysemy is certainly not an anomaly. Most English words are polysemantic. It should be noted that the wealth of expressive resources of a language largely depends on the degree to which polysemy has developed in the language. Sometimes people who are not very well informed in linguistic matters claim that a language is lacking in words if the need arises for the same word to be applied to several different phenomena. In actual fact, it is exactly the opposite: if each word is found to be capable of conveying, let us say, at least two notions instead of one, the expressive potential of the whole vocabulary increases twofold. Hence, a well-developed polysemy is not a drawback but a great advantage in a language.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the number of sound combinations that human speech organs can produce is limited. Therefore at a certain stage of language

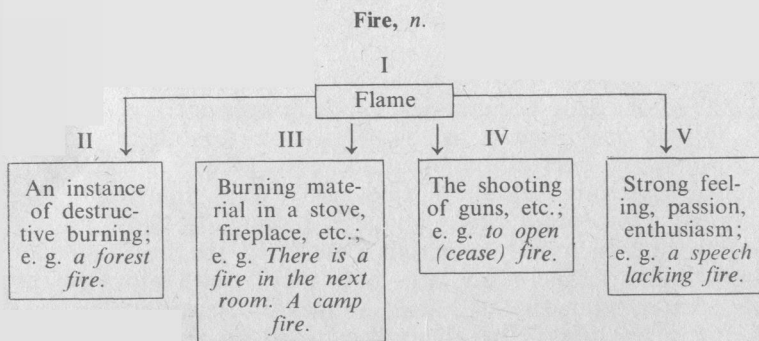


development the production of new words by morphological means becomes limited, and polysemy becomes increasingly important in providing the means for enriching the vocabulary. From this, it should be clear that the process of enriching the vocabulary does not consist merely in adding new words to it, but, also, in the constant development of polysemy.

The system of meanings of any polysemantic word develops gradually, mostly over the centuries, as more and more new meanings are either added to old ones, or oust some of them (see Ch. 8). So the complicated processes of polysemy development involve both the appearance of new meanings and the loss of old ones. Yet, the general tendency with English vocabulary at the modern stage of its history is to increase the total number of its meanings and in this way to provide for a quantitative and qualitative growth of the language's expressive resources.

When analysing the semantic structure of a polysemantic word, it is necessary to distinguish between two levels of analysis.

On the first level, the semantic structure of a word is treated as a system of meanings. For example, the semantic structure of the noun *fire* could be roughly presented by this scheme (only the most frequent meanings are given):



The above scheme suggests that meaning I holds a kind of dominance over the other meanings conveying the concept in the most general way whereas meanings II – V are associated with special circumstances, aspects and instances of the same phenomenon.

Meaning I (generally referred to as *the main meaning*) presents the centre of the semantic structure of the word holding it together. It is mainly through meaning I that

meanings II – V (they are called *secondary meanings*) can be associated with one another, some of them exclusively through meaning I, as, for instance, meanings IV and V.

It would hardly be possible to establish any logical associations between some of the meanings of the noun *bar* except through the main meaning:<sup>1</sup>

**Bar, n.**

II

III

The profession of barrister, lawyer; e. g. *go to the Bar; read for the Bar.*

(In a public house or hotel) a counter or room where drinks are served; e. g. *They went to the bar for a drink.*

I

Any kind of barrier to prevent people from passing.

Meanings II and III have no logical links with one another whereas each separately is easily associated with meaning I: meaning II through the traditional barrier dividing a court-room into two parts; meaning III through the counter serving as a kind of barrier between the customers of a pub and the barman.

Yet, it is not in every polysemantic word that such a centre can be found. Some semantic structures are arranged on a different principle. In the following list of meanings of the adjective *dull* one can hardly hope to find a generalized meaning covering and holding together the rest of the semantic structure.

**Dull, adj.**

- I. Uninteresting, monotonous, boring; e. g. *a dull book, a dull film.*
- II. Slow in understanding, stupid; e. g. *a dull student.*
- III. Not clear or bright; e. g. *dull weather, a dull day, a dull colour.*
- IV. Not loud or distinct; e. g. *a dull sound.*
- V. Not sharp; e. g. *a dull knife.*

<sup>1</sup> We give only a fragment of the semantic structure of *bar*, so as to illustrate the point.

- VI. Not active; e. g. *Trade is dull.*
- VII. Seeing badly; e. g. *dull eyes* (arch.).
- VIII. Hearing badly; e. g. *dull ears* (arch.).

Yet, one distinctly feels that there is something that all these seemingly miscellaneous meanings have in common, and that is the implication of deficiency, be it of colour (m. III), wits (m. II), interest (m. I), sharpness (m. V), etc. The implication of insufficient quality, of something lacking, can be clearly distinguished in each separate meaning.

In fact, each meaning definition in the given scheme can be subjected to a transformational operation to prove the point.

### **Dull, adj.**

- I. Uninteresting —→ deficient in interest or excitement.
- II. ... Stupid —→ deficient in intellect.
- III. Not bright —→ deficient in light or colour.
- IV. Not loud —→ deficient in sound.
- V. Not sharp —→ deficient in sharpness.
- VI. Not active —→ deficient in activity.
- VII. Seeing badly —→ deficient in eyesight.
- VIII. Hearing badly —→ deficient in hearing.

The transformed scheme of the semantic structure of *dull* clearly shows that the centre holding together the complex semantic structure of this word is not one of the meanings but a certain *component* that can be easily singled out within each separate meaning.

This brings us to the second level of analysis of the semantic structure of a word. The transformational operation with the meaning definitions of *dull* reveals something very significant: the semantic structure of the word is "divisible", as it were, not only at the level of different meanings but, also, at a deeper level.

Each separate meaning seems to be subject to structural analysis in which it may be represented as sets of semantic components. In terms of *componential analysis*, one of the modern methods of semantic research, the meaning of a word is defined as a set of elements of meaning which are not part of the vocabulary of the language itself, but rather theoretical elements, postulated in order to describe the semantic relations between the lexical elements of a given language.

The scheme of the semantic structure of *dull* shows that the semantic structure of a word is not a mere system of meanings, for each separate meaning is subject to further subdivision and possesses an inner structure of its own.

Therefore, the semantic structure of a word should be investigated at both these levels: a) of different meanings, b) of semantic components within each separate meaning. For a monosemantic word (i. e. a word with one meaning) the first level is naturally excluded.

### Types of Semantic Components

The leading semantic component in the semantic structure of a word is usually termed *denotative component* or *denotation* (also, the term *referential component* may be used). The denotative component expresses the conceptual (notional) content of a word.

The following list presents denotative components of some English adjectives and verbs:

		Denotative components	
<i>lonely</i> , adj.	→	alone, without company	-----
<i>notorious</i> , adj.	→	widely known	-----
<i>celebrated</i> , adj.	→	widely known	-----
<i>to glare</i> , v.	→	to look	-----
<i>to glance</i> , v.	→	to look	-----
<i>to shiver</i> , v.	→	to tremble	-----
<i>to shudder</i> , v.	→	to tremble	-----

It is quite obvious that the definitions given in the right column only partially and incompletely describe the meanings of their corresponding words. To give a more or less full picture of the meaning of a word, it is necessary to include in the scheme of analysis additional semantic components which are termed *connotations* or *connotative components*.

Let us complete the semantic structures of the words given above introducing connotative components into the schemes of their semantic structures.

	Denotative components	Connotative components	
<i>lonely</i> , adj. →	alone, without company	melancholy, sad	(Emotive connotation)
<i>notorious</i> , adj. →	widely known	for criminal acts or bad traits of character	(Evaluative connotation, negative)
<i>celebrated</i> , adj. →	widely known	for special achievement in science, art, etc.	(Evaluative connotation, positive)
<i>to glare</i> , v. →	to look	<div> <div>steadily, lastingly</div> <div>in anger, rage, etc.</div> </div>	(1) Connotation of duration 2) Emotive connotation
<i>to glance</i> , v. →	to look	briefly, passingly	(Connotation of duration)
<i>to shiver</i> , v. →	to tremble	<div> <div>lastingly</div> <div>(usu) with the cold</div> </div>	(1) Connotation of duration 2) Connotation of cause
<i>to shudder</i> , v. →	to tremble	<div> <div>briefly</div> <div>with horror, disgust, etc.</div> </div>	(1) Connotation of duration 2) Connotation of cause 3) Emotive connotation

The above examples show how by singling out denotative and connotative components one can get a sufficiently clear picture of what the word really means. The schemes presenting the semantic structures of *glare*, *shiver*, *shudder* also show that a meaning can have two or more connotative components.

The given examples do not exhaust all the types of connotations but present only a few: emotive, evaluative

connotations, and also connotations of duration and of cause. (For a more detailed classification of connotative components of a meaning, see Ch. 10.)

## Meaning and Context

In the beginning of the paragraph entitled "Polysemy" we discussed the advantages and disadvantages of this linguistic phenomenon. One of the most important "draw-backs" of polysemantic words is that there is sometimes a chance of misunderstanding when a word is used in a certain meaning but accepted by a listener or reader in another. It is only natural that such cases provide stuff of which jokes are made, such as the ones that follow:

C u s t o m e r. I would like a book, please.

B o o k s e l l e r. Something light?

C u s t o m e r. That doesn't matter. I have my car with me.

In this conversation the customer is honestly misled by the polysemy of the adjective *light* taking it in the literal sense whereas the bookseller uses the word in its figurative meaning "not serious; entertaining".

In the following joke one of the speakers pretends to misunderstand his interlocutor basing his angry retort on the polysemy of the noun *kick*:

The critic started to leave in the middle of the second act of the play.

"Don't go," said the manager. "I promise there's a terrific kick in the next act."

"Fine," was the retort, "give it to the author."<sup>1</sup>

Generally speaking, it is common knowledge that context is a powerful preventative against any misunderstanding of meanings. For instance, the adjective *dull*, if used out of context, would mean different things to different people or nothing at all. It is only in combination with other words that it reveals its actual meaning: *a dull pupil*, *a dull play*, *a dull razor-blade*, *dull weather*, etc. Sometimes, however, such a minimum context fails to reveal the meaning of the word, and it may be correctly interpreted only through what Professor N. Amosova termed a second-degree context [1], as in the following example: *The man was large, but*

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<sup>1</sup> *Kick*, n. — 1. thrill, pleasurable excitement (*inform.*); 2. a blow with the foot



his wife was even fatter. The word *fatter* here serves as a kind of indicator pointing that *large* describes a stout man and not a big one.

Current research in semantics is largely based on the assumption that one of the more promising methods of investigating the semantic structure of a word is by studying the word's linear relationships with other words in typical contexts, i. e. its *combinability* or *collocability*.

Scholars have established that the semantics of words characterized by common occurrences (i. e. words which regularly appear in common contexts) are correlated and, therefore, one of the words within such a pair can be studied through the other.

Thus, if one intends to investigate the semantic structure of an adjective, one would best consider the adjective in its most typical syntactical patterns *A + N* (adjective + noun) and *N + I + A* (noun + link verb + adjective) and make a thorough study of the meanings of nouns with which the adjective is frequently used.

For instance, a study of typical contexts of the adjective *bright* in the first pattern will give us the following sets: a) *bright* colour (flower, dress, silk, etc.), b) *bright* metal (gold, jewels, armour, etc.), c) *bright* student (pupil, boy, fellow, etc.), d) *bright* face (smile, eyes, etc.) and some others. These sets will lead us to singling out the meanings of the adjective related to each set of combinations: a) intensive in colour, b) shining, c) capable, d) gay, etc.

For a transitive verb, on the other hand, the recommended pattern would be *V + N* (verb + direct object expressed by a noun). If, for instance, our object of investigation are the verbs *to produce*, *to create*, *to compose*, the correct procedure would be to consider the semantics of the nouns that are used in the pattern with each of these verbs: what is it that is produced? created? composed?

There is an interesting hypothesis that the semantics of words regularly used in common contexts (e. g. *bright colours*, *to build a house*, *to create a work of art*, etc.) are so intimately correlated that each of them casts, as it were, a kind of permanent reflection on the meaning of its neighbour. If the verb *to compose* is frequently used with the object *music*, isn't it natural to expect that certain musical associations linger in the meaning of the verb *to compose*?

Note, also, how closely the negative evaluative connotation of the adjective *notorious* is linked with the negative connotation of the nouns with which it is regularly associated:

a notorious criminal, thief, gangster, gambler, gossip, liar, miser, etc.

All this leads us to the conclusion that context is a good and reliable key to the meaning of the word. Yet, even the jokes given above show how misleading this key can prove in some cases. And here we are faced with two dangers. The first is that of sheer misunderstanding, when the speaker means one thing and the listener takes the word in its other meaning.

The second danger has nothing to do with the process of communication but with research work in the field of semantics. A common error with the inexperienced research worker is to see a different meaning in every new set of combinations. Here is a puzzling question to illustrate what we mean. Cf.: *an angry man, an angry letter*. Is the adjective *angry* used in the same meaning in both these contexts or in two different meanings? Some people will say "two" and argue that, on the one hand, the combinability is different (*man* — name of person; *letter* — name of object) and, on the other hand, a letter cannot experience anger. True, it cannot; but it can very well convey the anger of the person who wrote it. As to the combinability, the main point is that a word can realize the same meaning in different sets of combinability. For instance, in the pairs *merry children, merry laughter, merry faces, merry songs* the adjective *merry* conveys the same concept of high spirits whether they are directly experienced by the children (in the first phrase) or indirectly expressed through the merry faces, the laughter and the songs of the other word groups.

The task of distinguishing between the different meanings of a word and the different variations of combinability (or, in a traditional terminology, different usages of the word) is actually a question of singling out the different denotations within the semantic structure of the word.

- Cf.: 1) *a sad woman*,  
2) *a sad voice*,  
3) *a sad story*,  
4) *a sad scoundrel* (= an incorrigible scoundrel)  
5) *a sad night* (= a dark, black night, arch. poet.)

How many meanings of *sad* can you identify in these contexts? Obviously the first three contexts have the common denotation of sorrow whereas in the fourth and fifth contexts the denotations are different. So, in these five contexts we can identify three meanings of *sad*.

All this leads us to the conclusion that context is not the ultimate criterion for meaning and it should be used in combination with other criteria. Nowadays, different methods of componential analysis are widely used in semantic research: definitional analysis, transformational analysis, distributional analysis. Yet, contextual analysis remains one of the main investigative methods for determining the semantic structure of a word.

## EXERCISES

### I. Consider your answers to the following.

1. What is understood by "semantics"? Explain the term "polysemy".
2. Define polysemy as a linguistic phenomenon. Illustrate your answer with your own examples.
3. What are the two levels of analysis in investigating the semantic structure of a word?
4. What types of semantic components can be distinguished within the meaning of a word?
5. What is one of the most promising methods for investigating the semantic structure of a word? What is understood by collocability (combinability)?
6. How can one distinguish between the different meanings of a word and the different variations of combinability?

### II. Define the meanings of the words in the following sentences. Say how the meanings of the same word are associated one with another.

1. I walked into Hyde Park, *fell* flat upon the grass and almost immediately *fell* asleep.
2. a) 'Hello', I said, and thrust my hand through the *bars*, whereon the dog became silent and licked me prodigiously. b) At the end of the long *bar*, leaning against the counter was a slim pale individual wearing a red bow-tie.
3. a) I began to search the flat, looking in drawers and boxes to see if I could find a *key*. b) I tumbled with a sort of splash upon the *keys* of a ghostly piano. c) Now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music and the opera of voices pitches a *key* higher. d) Someone with a positive manner, perhaps a detective, used the expression 'madman' as he bent over Welson's body that afternoon, and the authority of his voice set the *key* for the newspaper report next morning.
4. a) Her *mouth* opened crookedly half an inch, and she shot a few words at one like pebbles. b) Would you like me to come to the *mouth* of the river with you?
5. a) I sat down for a few

minutes with my head in my *hands*, until I heard the phone taken up inside and the butler's voice calling a taxi.  
b) The minute *hand* of the electric clock jumped on to figure twelve, and, simultaneously, the steeple of St. Mary's whose vicar always kept his clock by the wireless began its feeble imitation of Big Ben. 6. a) My *head* felt as if it were on a string and someone were trying to pull it off.  
b) G. Quartermain, board chairman and chief executive of Supernational Corporation was a bull of a man who possessed more power than many *heads* of the state and exercised it like a king.

III. Copy out the following pairs of words grouping together the ones which represent the same meaning of each word. Explain the different meanings and the different usages, giving reasons for your answer. Use dictionaries if necessary.

*smart*, adj.

smart clothes, a smart answer, a smart house, a smart garden, a smart repartee, a smart officer, a smart blow, a smart punishment

*stubborn*, adj.

a stubborn child, a stubborn look, a stubborn horse, stubborn resistance, a stubborn fighting, a stubborn cough, stubborn depression

*sound*, adj.

sound lungs, a sound scholar, a sound tennis-player, sound views, sound advice, sound criticism, a sound ship, a sound whipping

*root*, n.

edible roots, the root of the tooth, the root of the matter, the root of all evil, square root, cube root

*perform*, v.

to perform one's duty, to perform an operation, to perform a dance, to perform a play

*kick*, v.

to kick the ball, to kick the dog, to kick off one's slippers, to kick smb. downstairs

IV. The verb "to take" is highly polysemantic in Modern English. On which meanings of the verb are the following jokes based? Give your own examples to illustrate the other meanings of the word.

1. "Where have you been for the last four years?"  
"At college taking medicine."  
"And did you finally get well?"

2. "Doctor, what should a woman take when she is run down?"

"The license number, madame, the license number."

3. Proctor (*exceedingly angry*): So you confess that this unfortunate Freshman was carried to this frog pond and drenched. Now what part did you take in this disgraceful affair?

Sophomore (*meekly*): The right leg, sir.

V. Explain the basis for the following jokes. Use the dictionary when in doubt.

1. Caller: I wonder if I can see your mother, little boy. Is she *engaged*?

Willie: *Engaged*! She's married.

2. Booking Clerk (*at a small village station*): You'll have to *change* twice before you get to York.

Villager (*unused to travelling*): Goodness me! And I've only brought the clothes I'm wearing.

3. The weather forecaster hadn't been right in three months, and his resignation caused little surprise. His alibi, however, pleased the city council.

"I can't stand this town any longer," read his note. "The climate doesn't *agree* with me."

4. Professor: You *missed* my class yesterday, didn't you?

Unsubdued student: Not in the least, sir, not in the least.

5. "Papa, what kind of a robber is a page?"

"A what?"

"It says here that two pages *held up* the bride's train."

VI. Choose any polysemantic word that is well-known to you and illustrate its meanings with examples of your own. Prove that the meanings are related one to another.

VII. Read the following jokes. Analyse the collocability of the italicized words and state its relationship with the meaning.

1. Lady (*at party*): Where is that pretty maid who was passing our cocktails a while ago?

Hostess: Oh, you are *looking for* a drink?

Lady: No, I'm *looking for* my husband.

2. Peggy: I want to help you, Dad. I shall get the dress-maker to teach me to *cut out* gowns.

D a d: I don't want you to go that far, Peg, but you might *cut out* cigarettes, and taxi bills.

3. There are cynics who claim that movies would be better if they *shot* less films and more actors.

4. Kitty: Is your wound sore, Mr. Pup?

Mr. Pup: Wound? What wound?

Kitty: Why, sister said she *cut* you at the dinner last night.

VIII. Try your hand at being a lexicographer. Write simple definitions to illustrate as many meanings as possible for the following polysemantic words. After you have done it, check your results using a dictionary.

face, heart, nose, smart, to lose

IX. Try your hand at the following research work.

a) Illustrate the semantic structure of one of the following words with a diagram; use the dictionary if necessary.

foot, *n.*; hand, *n.*; ring, *n.*; stream, *n.*; warm, *adj.*; green, *adj.*; sail, *n.*; key, *n.*; glass, *n.*; eye, *n.*

b) Identify the denotative and connotative elements of the meanings in the following pairs of words.

to conceal — to disguise, to choose — to select, to draw — to paint, money — cash, photograph — picture, odd — queer

c) Read the entries for the English word "court" and the Russian «суд» in an English-Russian and Russian-English dictionary. Explain the differences in the semantic structure of both words.

## CHAPTER 8

### HOW WORDS DEVELOP NEW MEANINGS

It has been mentioned that the systems of meanings of polysemantic words evolve gradually. The older a word is, the better developed is its semantic structure. The normal pattern of a word's semantic development is from monosemy to a simple semantic structure encompassing only two or three meanings, with a further movement to an increasingly more complex semantic structure.

In this chapter we shall have a closer look at the complicated processes by which words acquire new meanings.

There are two aspects to this problem, which can be generally described in the following way. a) Why should new



meanings appear at all? What circumstances cause and stimulate their development? b) How does it happen? What is the nature of the very process of development of new meanings?

Let us deal with each of these questions in turn.

### Causes of Development of New Meanings

The first group of causes is traditionally termed *historical* or *extra-linguistic*.

Different kinds of changes in a nation's social life, in its culture, knowledge, technology, arts lead to gaps appearing in the vocabulary which beg to be filled. Newly created objects, new notions and phenomena must be named. We already know of two ways for providing new names for newly created notions: making new words (word-building) and borrowing foreign ones. One more way of filling such vocabulary gaps is by applying some old word to a new object or notion.

When the first textile factories appeared in England, the old word *mill* was applied to these early industrial enterprises. In this way, *mill* (a Latin borrowing of the first century B. C.) added a new meaning to its former meaning "a building in which corn is ground into flour". The new meaning was "textile factory".

A similar case is the word *carriage* which had (and still has) the meaning "a vehicle drawn by horses", but, with the first appearance of railways in England, it received a new meaning, that of "a railway car".

The history of English nouns describing different parts of a theatre may also serve as a good illustration of how well-established words can be used to denote newly-created objects and phenomena. The words *stalls*, *box*, *pit*, *circle* had existed for a long time before the first theatres appeared in England. With their appearance, the gaps in the vocabulary were easily filled by these widely used words which, as a result, developed new meanings.<sup>1</sup>

New meanings can also be developed due to linguistic factors (the second group of causes).

Linguistically speaking, the development of new meanings,

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<sup>1</sup> It is of some interest to note that the Russian language found a different way of filling the same gap: in Russian, all the parts of the theatre are named by borrowed words: *партер*, *ложь*, *амфитеатр*, *бельэтаж*.

and also a complete change of meaning, may be caused through the influence of other words, mostly of synonyms.<sup>1</sup>

Let us consider the following examples.

The Old English verb *stēorfan* meant “to perish”. When the verb *to die* had been borrowed from the Scandinavian, these two synonyms, which were very close in their meaning, collided, and, as a result, *to starve* gradually changed into its present meaning: “to die (or suffer) from hunger”.

The history of the noun *deer* is essentially the same. In Old English (O. E. *dēor*) it had a general meaning denoting any beast. In that meaning it collided with the borrowed word *animal* and changed its meaning to the modern one (“a certain kind of beast”, R. *олень*).

The noun *knave* (O. E. *knāfa*) suffered an even more striking change of meaning as a result of collision with its synonym *boy*. Now it has a pronounced negative evaluative connotation and means “swindler, scoundrel”.

## The Process of Development and Change of Meaning

The second question we must answer in this chapter is *how* new meanings develop. To find the answer to this question we must investigate the inner mechanism of this process, or at least its essential features. Let us examine the examples given above from a new angle, from within, so to speak.

Why was it that the word *mill* — and not some other word — was selected to denote the first textile factories? There must have been some connection between the former sense of *mill* and the new phenomenon to which it was applied. And there *was* apparently such a connection. Mills which produced flour, were mainly driven by water. The textile factories also firstly used water power. So, in general terms, the meanings of *mill*, both the old and the new one, could be defined as “an establishment using water power to produce certain goods”. Thus, the

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<sup>1</sup> Most scholars distinguish between the terms *development of meaning* (when a new meaning and the one on the basis of which it is formed coexist in the semantic structure of the word, as in *mill*, *carriage*, etc.) and *change of meaning* (when the old meaning is completely replaced by the new one, as in the noun *meat* which in Old English had the general meaning of “food” but in Modern English is no longer used in that sense and has instead developed the meaning “flesh of animals used as a food product”).

first textile factories were easily associated with mills producing flour, and the new meaning of *mill* appeared due to this association. In actual fact, all cases of development or change of meaning are based on some association. In the history of the word *carriage*, the new travelling conveyance was also naturally associated in people's minds with the old one: horse-drawn vehicle > part of a railway train. Both these objects were related to the idea of travelling. The job of both, the horse-drawn carriage and the railway carriage, is the same: to carry passengers on a journey. So the association was logically well-founded.

*Stalls* and *box* formed their meanings in which they denoted parts of the theatre on the basis of a different type of association. The meaning of the word *box* "a small separate enclosure forming a part of the theatre" developed on the basis of its former meaning "a rectangular container used for packing or storing things". The two objects became associated in the speakers' minds because boxes in the earliest English theatres really resembled packing cases. They were enclosed on all sides and heavily curtained even on the side facing the audience so as to conceal the privileged spectators occupying them from curious or insolent stares.

The association on which the theatrical meaning of *stalls* was based is even more curious. The original meaning was "compartments in stables or sheds for the accommodation of animals (e. g. *cows, horses*, etc.)". There does not seem to be much in common between the privileged and expensive part of a theatre and stables intended for cows and horses, unless we take into consideration the fact that theatres in olden times greatly differed from what they are now. What is now known as the *stalls* was, at that time, standing space divided by barriers into sections so as to prevent the enthusiastic crowd from knocking one another down and hurting themselves. So, there must have been a certain outward resemblance between theatre stalls and cattle stalls. It is also possible that the word was first used humorously or satirically in this new sense.

The process of development of a new meaning (or a change of meaning) is traditionally termed *transference*.

Some scholars mistakenly use the term "transference of meaning" which is a serious mistake. It is very important to note that in any case of semantic change

it is not the meaning but the word that is being transferred from one referent onto another (e. g. from a horse-drawn vehicle onto a railway car). The result of such a transference is the appearance of a new meaning.

Two types of transference are distinguishable depending on the two types of logical associations underlying the semantic process.

### Transference Based on Resemblance (Similarity)

This type of transference is also referred to as *linguistic metaphor*. A new meaning appears as a result of associating two objects (phenomena, qualities, etc.) due to their outward similarity. *Box* and *stall*, as will be clear from the explanations above, are examples of this type of transference.

Other examples can be given in which transference is also based on the association of two physical objects. The noun *eye*, for instance, has for one of its meanings "hole in the end of a needle" (cf. with the R. *ушко иглой*), which also developed through transference based on resemblance. A similar case is represented by *the neck of a bottle*.

The noun *drop* (mostly in the plural form) has, in addition to its main meaning "a small particle of water or other liquid", the meanings: "ear-rings shaped as drops of water" (e. g. *diamond drops*) and "candy of the same shape" (e. g. *mint drops*). It is quite obvious that both these meanings are also based on resemblance. In the compound word *snowdrop* the meaning of the second constituent underwent the same shift of meaning (also, in *bluebell*). In general, metaphorical change of meaning is often observed in idiomatic compounds.

The main meaning of the noun *branch* is "limb or subdivision of a tree or bush". On the basis of this meaning it developed several more. One of them is "a special field of science or art" (as in *a branch of linguistics*). This meaning brings us into the sphere of the abstract, and shows that in transference based on resemblance an association may be built not only between two physical objects, but also between a concrete object and an abstract concept.

The noun *bar* from the original meaning *barrier* developed a figurative meaning realized in such contexts as *social bars*, *colour bar*, *racial bar*. Here, again, as in the abstract

meaning of *branch*, a concrete object is associated with an abstract concept.

The noun *star* on the basis of the meaning "heavenly body" developed the meaning "famous actor or actress". Nowadays the meaning has considerably widened its range, and the word is applied not only to screen idols (as it was at first), but, also, to popular sportsmen (e. g. *football stars*), pop-singers, etc. Of course, the first use of the word *star* to denote a popular actor must have been humorous or ironical: the mental picture created by the use of the word in this new meaning was a kind of semi-god surrounded by the bright rays of his glory. Yet, very soon the ironical colouring was lost, and, furthermore the association with the original meaning considerably weakened and is gradually erased.

The meanings formed through this type of transference are frequently found in the informal strata of the vocabulary, especially in slang (see Ch. 1). A red-headed boy is almost certain to be nicknamed *carrot* or *ginger* by his schoolmates, and the one who is given to spying and sneaking gets the derogatory nickname of *rat*. Both these meanings are metaphorical, though, of course, the children using them are quite unconscious of this fact.

The slang meanings of words such as *nut*, *onion* (= *head*), *saucers* (= *eyes*), *hoofs* (= *feet*) and very many others were all formed by transference based on resemblance.

### Transference Based on Contiguity

Another term for this type of transference is *linguistic metonymy*. The association is based upon subtle psychological links between different objects and phenomena, sometimes traced and identified with much difficulty. The two objects may be associated together because they often appear in common situations, and so the image of one is easily accompanied by the image of the other; or they may be associated on the principle of cause and effect, of common function, of some material and an object which is made of it, etc.

Let us consider some cases of transference based on contiguity. You will notice that they are of different kinds.

The Old English adjective *glad* meant "bright, shining" (it was applied to the sun, to gold and precious stones, to shining armour, etc.). The later (and more modern)

meaning "joyful" developed on the basis of the usual association (which is reflected in most languages) of light with joy (cf. with the R. *светлое настроение; светло на душе*).

The meaning of the adjective *sad* in Old English was "satisfied with food" (cf. with the R. *сыт(ый)* which is a word of the same Indo-European root). Later this meaning developed a connotation of a greater intensity of quality and came to mean "oversatisfied with food; having eaten too much". Thus, the meaning of the adjective *sad* developed a negative evaluative connotation and now described not a happy state of satisfaction but, on the contrary, the physical unease and discomfort of a person who has had too much to eat. The next shift of meaning was to transform the description of physical discomfort into one of spiritual discontent because these two states often go together. It was from this prosaic source that the modern meaning of "sad" "melancholy", "sorrowful" developed, and the adjective describes now a purely emotional state. The two previous meanings ("satisfied with food" and "having eaten too much") were ousted from the semantic structure of the word long ago.

The *foot* of a bed is the place where the feet rest when one lies in the bed, but the *foot* of a mountain got its name by another association: the foot of a mountain is its lowest part, so that the association here is founded on common position.

By the *arms* of an arm-chair we mean the place where the arms lie when one is sitting in the chair, so that the type of association here is the same as in *the foot of a bed*. The *leg* of a bed (table, chair, etc.), though, is the part which serves as a support, the original meaning being "the leg of a man or animal". The association that lies behind this development of meaning is the common function: a piece of furniture is supported by its legs just as living beings are supported by theirs.

The meaning of the noun *hand* realized in the context *hand of a clock (watch)* originates from the main meaning of this noun "part of human body". It also developed due to the association of the common function: the hand of a clock points to the figures on the face of the clock, and one of the functions of human hand is also that of pointing to things.

Another meaning of *hand* realized in such contexts as *factory hands, farm hands* is based on another kind of



association: strong, skilful hands are the most important feature that is required of a person engaged in physical labour (cf. with the R. *работче руку*).

The adjective *dull* (see the scheme of its semantic structure in Ch. 7) developed its meaning "not clear or bright" (as in *a dull green colour*; *dull light*; *dull shapes*) on the basis of the former meaning "deficient in eyesight", and its meaning "not loud or distinct" (as in *dull sounds*) on the basis of the older meaning "deficient in hearing". The association here was obviously that of cause and effect: to a person with weak eyesight all colours appear pale, and all shapes blurred; to a person with deficient hearing all sounds are indistinct.

The main (and oldest registered) meaning of the noun *board* was "a flat and thin piece of wood; a wooden plank". On the basis of this meaning developed the meaning "table" which is now archaic. The association which underlay this semantic shift was that of the material and the object made from it: a wooden plank (or several planks) is an essential part of any table. This type of association is often found with nouns denoting clothes: e. g. *a taffeta* ("dress made of taffeta"); *a mink* ("mink coat"), *a jersy* ("knitted shirt or sweater").

Meanings produced through transference based on contiguity sometimes originate from geographical or proper names. *China* in the sense of "dishes made of porcelain" originated from the name of the country which was believed to be the birthplace of porcelain. *Tweed* ("a coarse wool cloth") got its name from the river Tweed and *cheviot* (another kind of wool cloth) from the Cheviot hills in England.

The name of a painter is frequently transferred onto one of his pictures: *a Matisse* = *a painting by Matisse*.

### Broadening (or Generalization) of Meaning.

#### Narrowing (or Specialization) of Meaning

Sometimes, the process of transference may result in a considerable change in range of meaning. For instance, the verb *to arrive* (French borrowing) began its life in English in the narrow meaning "to come to shore, to land". In Modern English it has greatly widened its combinability and developed the general meaning "to come" (e. g. *to*

arrive in a village, town, city, country, at a hotel, hostel, college, theatre, place, etc.). The meaning developed through transference based on contiguity (the concept of coming somewhere is the same for both meanings), but the range of the second meaning is much broader.

Another example of the broadening of meaning is *pipe*. Its earliest recorded meaning was "a musical wind instrument". Nowadays it can denote any hollow oblong cylindrical body (e. g. *water pipes*). This meaning developed through transference based on the similarity of shape (pipe as a musical instrument is also a hollow oblong cylindrical object) which finally led to a considerable broadening of the range of meaning.

The word *bird* changed its meaning from "the young of a bird" to its modern meaning through transference based on contiguity (the association is obvious). The second meaning is broader and more general.

It is interesting to trace the history of the word *girl* as an example of the changes in the range of meaning in the course of the semantic development of a word.

In Middle English it had the meaning of "a small child of either sex". Then the word underwent the process of transference based on contiguity and developed into the meaning of "a small child of the female sex", so that the range of meaning was somewhat narrowed. In its further semantic development the word gradually broadened its range of meaning. At first it came to mean not only a female child but, also, a young unmarried woman, later, any young woman, and in modern colloquial English it is practically synonymous to the noun *woman* (e. g. *The old girl must be at least seventy*), so that its range of meaning is quite broad.

The history of the noun *lady* somewhat resembles that of *girl*. In Old English the word (O. E. *hlæfdīze*) denoted the mistress of the house, i. e. any married woman. Later, a new meaning developed which was much narrower in range: "the wife or daughter of a baronet" (aristocratic title). In Modern English the word *lady* can be applied to any woman, so that its range of meaning is even broader than that of the O. E. *hlæfdīze*. In Modern English the difference between *girl* and *lady* in the meaning of *woman* is that the first is used in colloquial style and sounds familiar whereas the second is more formal and polite. Here are some more examples of narrowing of meaning:

*Deer*: any beast > a certain kind of beast

*Meat*: any food > a certain food product

*Boy*: any young person of the male sex > servant of the male sex

It should be pointed out once more that in all these words the second meaning developed through transference based on contiguity, and that when we speak of them as examples of narrowing of meaning we simply imply that the range of the second meaning is more narrow than that of the original meaning.

### The So-Called "Degeneration" ("Degradation") and "Elevation" of Meaning

These terms are open to question because they seem to imply that meanings **can** become "better" or "worse" which is neither logical nor plausible. But, as a matter-of-fact, scholars using these terms do not actually mean the degeneration or elevation of meaning itself, but of the referent onto which a word is transferred, so that the term is inaccurate.

But let us try and see what really stands behind the examples of change of meaning which are traditionally given to illustrate degeneration and elevation of meaning.

#### I. "Degeneration" of meaning.

*Knave*: boy > swindler, scoundrel

*Villain*: farm-servant, serf > base, vile person

*Gossip*: god parent > the one who talks scandal; tells slanderous stories about other people

These examples show that the second meaning, in contrast with the one from which it developed, denotes a person of bad repute or character. Semantically speaking, the second meaning developed a negative evaluative connotation which was absent in the first meaning.

Such a readjustment in the connotative structure accompanying the process of transference can be sometimes observed in other parts of speech, and not only in nouns.

E. g. *Silly*: happy > foolish

## II. "Elevation" of meaning.

*Fond*: 

foolish
---------

 > 

loving, affectionate
----------------------

*Nice*: 

foolish
---------

 > 

fine, good
------------

In these two cases the situation is reversed: the first meaning has a negative evaluative connotation, and the second meaning has not. It is difficult to see what is actually "elevated" here. Certainly, not the meaning of the word.

Here are two more examples.

*Tory*: 

brigand, highwayman
---------------------

 > 

member of the Tories
----------------------

*Knight*: 

manservant
------------

 > 

noble, courageous man
-----------------------

In the case of *Tory*, the first meaning has a pronounced negative connotation which is absent in the second meaning. But why call it "elevation"? Semantically speaking, the first meaning is just as *good* as the second, and the difference lies only in the connotative structure.

The case of *knight*, if treated linguistically, is quite opposite to that of *Tory*: the second meaning acquired a positive evaluative connotation that was absent in the first meaning. So, here, once more, we are faced with a mere readjustment of the connotative components of the word.

There are also some traditional examples of "elevation" in which even this readjustment cannot be traced.

*Marshal*: 

manservant attending horses
-----------------------------

 > 

the highest rank in the army
------------------------------

*Lord*: 

master of the house, head of the family
--

 > 

baronet (aristocratic title)
------------------------------

*Lady*: 

mistress of the house, married woman
---

 > 

wife or daughter of baronet
--------------------------------

In these three words the second meaning developed due to the process of transference based on contiguity. *Lord* and *lady* are also examples of narrowing of meaning if we compare the range of the original and of the resultant meanings. No connotations of evaluation can be observed in either of the meanings. The fact that in all these three cases the original meaning denoted a humble

ordinary person and the second denotes a person of high rank is absolutely extralinguistic.

All that has been said and the examples that have been given show that the terms "degradation" and "elevation" of meaning are imprecise and do not seem to be an objective reflection of the semantic phenomena they describe.

It would be more credible to state that some cases of transference based on contiguity may result in development or loss of evaluative connotations.

## EXERCISES

### I. Consider your answers to the following.

1. What causes the development of new meanings? Give examples.
2. What is the basis of development or change of meaning? Explain what we mean by the term *transference*.
3. What types of transference can you name?
4. What is meant by the widening and the narrowing of meaning?
5. Give examples of the so-called "degradation" and "elevation" of meaning. Why are these terms imprecise?

### II. Read the following extracts and explain the semantic processes by which the italicized words acquired their meanings.

1. '*Bureau*', a desk, was borrowed from French in the 17th. c. In Modern French (and English) it means not only the desk but also the office itself and the authority exercised by the office. Hence the familiar bureaucracy is likely to become increasingly familiar. The desk was called so because covered with *bureau*, a thick coarse cloth of a brown russet.

(From *The Romance of Words* by E. Weekley)

2. An Earl of Spencer made a short overcoat fashionable for some time. An Earl of Sandwich invented a form of light refreshment which enabled him to take a meal without leaving the card-table. Hence we have such words as *spencer* and *sandwich* in English.

(From *The Romance of Words* by E. Weekley)

3. A common name for overalls or trousers is *jeans*. In the singular *jean* is also a term for a durable twilled

cotton and is short for the phrase *jean fustian* which first appeared in texts from the sixteenth century. *Fustian* (a Latin borrowing) is a cotton or cotton and linen fabric, and *jean* is the modern spelling of Middle English *Jene* or *Gene*, from *Genes*, the Middle French name of the Italian city *Genoa*, where it was made and shipped abroad.

(From *The Merriam-Webster Book of Word Histories*)

4. Formally *barn* meant “a storehouse for barley”; today it has widened to mean “any kind of storehouse” for animals or equipment as well as any kind of grain. The word *picture* used to refer only to a representation made with paint; today it can be a photograph or a representation made with charcoal, pencil or any other means. A *pen* used to mean “feather” but now has become generalized to include several kinds of writing implements – fountain, ballpoint, etc. The meaning of *sail* as limited to moving on water in a ship with sails has now generalized to mean “moving on water in any ship”.

(From *Teaching English Linguistically*  
by J. Malmstrom, J. Lee)

III. Read the following extract and criticize the author's treatment of the examples. Provide your own explanations.

Words degenerate in meaning also. In the past *villain* meant “farm labourer”; *counterfeiter* meant “imitator” without criminal connotations, and *sly* meant “skilful”. A *knave* meant a “boy” and *immoral* meant “not customary”, and *hussy* was a “housewife”.

Other words improve in meanings. *Governor* meant “pilot” and *constable* meant “stable attendant”. Other elevations are *enthusiasm* which formally meant “fanaticism”, *knight* which used to mean “youth”, *angel* which simply meant “messenger” and *pretty* which meant “sly”. No one can predict the direction of change of meaning, but changes occur constantly.

(From *Teaching English Linguistically*  
by J. Malmstrom, J. Lee)

IV. Explain the logical associations in the following groups of meanings for the same words. Define the type of transference which has taken place.



1. the wing of a bird — the wing of a building; the eye of a man — the eye of a needle; the hand of a child — the hand of a clock; the heart of a man — the heart of the matter; the bridge across the river — the bridge of the nose; the tongue of a person — the tongue of a bell; the tooth of a boy — the tooth of a comb; the coat of a girl — the coat of a dog

2. green grass — green years; black shoes — black despair; nickel (*metal*) — a nickel (*coin*); glass — a glass; copper (*metal*) — a copper (*coin*); Ford (*proper name*) — a Ford (*car*); Damascus (*town in Syria*) — damask; Kashmir (*town in North India*) — cashmere

V. Analyse the process of development of new meanings in the italicized words in the examples given below.

1. I put the letter well into the *mouth* of the box and let it go and it fell turning over and over like an autumn leaf. 2. Those who had been the *head* of the line paused momentarily on entry and looked around curiously. 3. A cheerful-looking girl in blue *jeans* came up to the stairs whistling. 4. Seated behind a desk, he wore a light patterned suit, switch from his usual *tweeds*. 5. Oh, Steven, I read a *Dickens* the other day. It was awfully funny. 6. They sat on the rug before the fireplace, savouring its warmth, watching the rising *tongues* of flame. 7. He inspired universal confidence and had an *iron* nerve. 8. A very small boy in a green *jersey* with light red hair cut square across his forehead was peering at Steven between the electric fire and the side of the fireplace. 9. While the others were settling down, Lucy saw Pearson take another bite from his *sandwich*. 10. As I walked nonchalantly past Hugo's house on the other side they were already carrying out *the Renoirs*.

VI. Explain the basis for the following jokes. Trace the logical associations between the different meanings of the same word.

1. Father was explaining to his little son the fundamentals of astronomy.

"That's a comet."

"A what?"

"A comet. You know what a comet is?"

"No."

"Don't you know what they call a star with a tail?"

"Sure — Mickey Mouse."

2. "Pa, what branches did you take when you went to school?"

"I never went to high school, son, but when I attended the little log school-house they used mostly hickory and beech and willow."

3. What has eyes yet never sees? (Potato)

4. He (*in telephone booth*): I want a box for two.

Voice (*at the other end*): Sorry, but we don't have boxes for two.

5. He: But aren't you the box office of the theatre?

Voice: No, we are the undertakers.

VII. In the examples given below identify the cases of widening and narrowing of meaning.

1. While the others waited the elderly executive filled his pipe and lit it. 2. Finn was watching the birds. 3. The two girls took hold of one another, one acting gentleman, the other lady; three or four more pairs of girls immediately joined them and began a waltz. 4. He was informed that the president had not arrived at the bank, but was on his way. 5. Smokey had followed a dictum all his life: If you want a woman to stick beside you, pick an ugly one. Ugly ones stayed to slice the meat and stir the gravy.

VIII. Have the italicized words evaluative connotations in their meanings? Motivate your answer and comment on the history of the words.

1. The directors now assembling were admirals and field *marshals* of commerce. 2. For a businessman to be invited to serve on a top-flight bank board is roughly equivalent to being *knighted* by the British *Queen*. 3. I had a nice newsy *gossip* with Mrs. Needham before you turned up last night. 4. The little half-starved guy looked more a victim than a *villain*. 5. Meanwhile I nodded my head vigorously and directed a happy smile in the direction of the two *ladies*. 6. I shook hands with Tom; it seemed *silly* not to, for I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child.

IX. Read the following. Find examples of "degeneration" and "elevation" of meaning. Comment on the history of the words.

1. King Arthur invented Conferences because he was secretly a Weak King and liked to know what his memorable thousand and one knights wanted to do next. As they were all jealous knights he had to have the memorable Round

Table made to have the Conferences at, so that it was impossible to say which was top knight.

(From *1066 and All That* by C. W. Sellar, R. J. Yeatman)

2. Alf: Where are you going, Ted?

Ted: Fishing at the old mill.

Alf: But what about school?

Ted: Don't be silly. There aren't any fish there!

X. Try your hand at the following scientific research. Write a short essay on the development of the meanings of three of the following words. Try to explain each shift of meaning. Use "The Shorter Oxford Dictionary" or "The Merriam-Webster Book of Word Histories".

fee, cattle, school, pupil, nice, pen, gossip, coquette, biscuit, apron, merry, silly, doom, duke, pretty, yankee

## CHAPTER 9

### HOMONYMS: WORDS OF THE SAME FORM

*Homonyms* are words which are identical in sound and spelling, or, at least, in one of these aspects, but different in their meaning.

E. g.     { *bank*, n. — a shore  
           { *bank*, n. — an institution for receiving, lending, exchanging, and safeguarding money  
  
           { *ball*, n. — a sphere; any spherical body  
           { *ball*, n. — a large dancing party

English vocabulary is rich in such pairs and even groups of words. Their identical forms are mostly accidental: the majority of homonyms coincided due to phonetic changes which they suffered during their development.

If synonyms and antonyms can be regarded as the treasury of the language's expressive resources, homonyms are of no interest in this respect, and one cannot expect them to be of particular value for communication. Metaphorically speaking, groups of synonyms and pairs of antonyms are created by the vocabulary system with a particular purpose whereas homonyms are accidental creations, and therefore purposeless.

In the process of communication they are more of an encumbrance, leading sometimes to confusion and misunderstanding. Yet it is this very characteristic which makes them one of the most important sources of popular humour.

The *pun* is a joke based upon the play upon words of similar form but different meaning (i. e. on homonyms) as in the following:

“A tailor guarantees to give each of his customers a perfect fit.”

(The joke is based on the homonyms: I. *fit*, n. — perfectly fitting clothes; II. *fit*, n. — a nervous spasm.)

Homonyms which are the same in sound and spelling (as the examples given in the beginning of this chapter) are traditionally termed *homonyms proper*.

The following joke is based on a pun which makes use of another type of homonyms:

“Waiter!”

“Yes, sir.”

“What’s this?”

“It’s bean soup, sir.”

“Never mind what it has been. I want to know what it is now.”

*Bean*, n. and *been*, past part. of *to be* are *homophones*. As the example shows they are the same in sound but different in spelling. Here are some more examples of homophones:

*night*, n. — *knight*, n.; *piece*, n. — *peace*, n.; *scent*, n. — *cent*, n. — *sent*, v. (past indef., past part. of *to send*); *rite*, n. — *to write*, v. — *right*, adj.; *sea*, n. — *to see*, v. — *C* [si:] (the name of a letter).

The third type of homonyms is called *homographs*. These are words which are the same in spelling but different in sound.

E. g. { *to bow* [bau], v. — to incline the head or body in salutation  
          { *bow* [bou], n. — a flexible strip of wood for propelling arrows

{ *to lead* [li : d], v. — to conduct on the way, go before to show the way  
          { *lead* [led], n. — a heavy, rather soft metal

{ *to tear* [tɛə], v. — to pull apart or in pieces by force  
          { *tear* [tiə], n. — a drop of the fluid secreted by the lacrimal glands of the eye

## Sources of Homonyms

One source of homonyms has already been mentioned: *phonetic changes* which words undergo in the course of their historical development. As a result of such changes, two or more words which were formerly pronounced differently may develop identical sound forms and thus become homonyms.

*Night* and *knight*, for instance, were not homonyms in Old English as the initial *k* in the second word was pronounced, and not dropped as it is in its modern sound form: O. E. *kniht* (cf. O. E. *niht*). A more complicated change of form brought together another pair of homonyms: *to knead* (O. E. *cnēdan*) and *to need* (O. E. *neōdian*).

In Old English the verb *to write* had the form *writan*, and the adjective *right* had the forms *reht*, *riht*. The noun *sea* descends from the Old English form *sæ*, and the verb *to see* from O. E. *sēon*. The noun *work* and the verb *to work* also had different forms in Old English: *wyrkean* and *weork* respectively.

*Borrowing* is another source of homonyms. A borrowed word may, in the final stage of its phonetic adaptation, duplicate in form either a native word or another borrowing. So, in the group of homonyms *rite*, n.—*to write*, v.—*right*, adj. the second and third words are of native origin whereas *rite* is a Latin borrowing (< Lat. *rītus*). In the pair *piece*, n.—*peace*, n., the first originates from O. F. *pais*, and the second from O. F. (< Gaulish) *pettia*. *Bank*, n. (“a shore”) is a native word, and *bank*, n. (“a financial institution”) is an Italian borrowing. *Fair*, adj. (as in *a fair deal*, *it's not fair*) is native, and *fair*, n. (“a gathering of buyers and sellers”) is a French borrowing. *Match*, n. (“a game; a contest of skill, strength”) is native, and *match*, n. (“a slender short piece of wood used for producing fire”) is a French borrowing.

Word-building also contributes significantly to the growth of homonymy, and the most important type in this respect is undoubtedly *conversion*. Such pairs of words as *comb*, n.—*to comb*, v., *pale*, adj.—*to pale*, v., *to make*, v.—*make*, n. are numerous in the vocabulary. Homonyms of this type, which are the same in sound and spelling but refer to different categories of parts of speech, are called *lexico-grammatical homonyms*. [12]

*Shortening* is a further type of word-building which increases the number of homonyms. E. g. *fan*, n. in the sense of "an enthusiastic admirer of some kind of sport or of an actor, singer, etc." is a shortening produced from *fanatic*. Its homonym is a Latin borrowing *fan*, n. which denotes an implement for waving lightly to produce a cool current of air. The noun *rep*, n. denoting a kind of fabric (cf. with the R. *penc*) has three homonyms made by shortening: *rep*, n. (< *repertory*), *rep*, n. (< *representative*), *rep*, n. (< *reputation*); all the three are informal words.

During World War II girls serving in the Women's Royal Naval Service (an auxiliary of the British Royal Navy) were jokingly nicknamed *Wrens* (informal). This neologistic formation made by shortening has the homonym *wren*, n. "a small bird with dark brown plumage barred with black" (R. *крапивник*).

Words made by sound-imitation can also form pairs of homonyms with other words: e. g. *bang*, n. ("a loud, sudden, explosive noise") — *bang*, n. ("a fringe of hair combed over the forehead"). Also: *mew*, n. ("the sound a cat makes") — *mew*, n. ("a sea gull") — *mew*, n. ("a pen in which poultry is fattened") — *mews* ("small terraced houses in Central London").

The above-described sources of homonyms have one important feature in common. In all the mentioned cases the homonyms developed from two or more different words, and their similarity is purely accidental. (In this respect, conversion certainly presents an exception for in pairs of homonyms formed by conversion one word of the pair is produced from the other: *a find* < *to find*.)

Now we come to a further source of homonyms which differs essentially from all the above cases. Two or more homonyms can originate from different meanings of the same word when, for some reason, the semantic structure of the word breaks into several parts. This type of formation of homonyms is called *split polysemy*.

From what has been said in the previous chapters about polysemantic words, it should have become clear that the semantic structure of a polysemantic word presents a system within which all its constituent meanings are held together by logical associations. In most cases, the function of the arrangement and the unity is determined by one of the meanings (e. g. the meaning "flame" in the noun *fire* — see p. 102). If this meaning happens to disappear from



the word's semantic structure, associations between the rest of the meanings may be severed, the semantic structure loses its unity and falls into two or more parts which then become accepted as independent lexical units.

Let us consider the history of three homonyms:

*board*, n. — a long and thin piece of timber

*board*, n. — daily meals, esp. as provided for pay, e. g. *room and board*

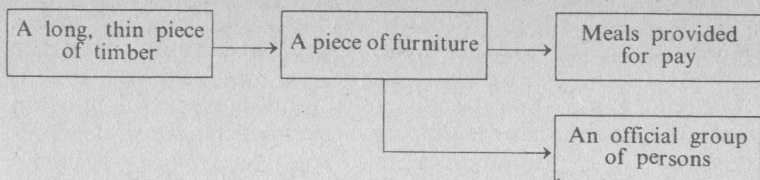
*board*, n. — an official group of persons who direct or supervise some activity, e. g. *a board of directors*

It is clear that the meanings of these three words are in no way associated with one another. Yet, most larger dictionaries still enter a meaning of *board* that once held together all these other meanings "a table". It developed from the meaning "a piece of timber" by transference based on contiguity (association of an object and the material from which it is made). The meanings "meals" and "an official group of persons" developed from the meaning "table", also by transference based on contiguity: meals are easily associated with a table on which they are served; an official group of people in authority are also likely to discuss their business round a table.

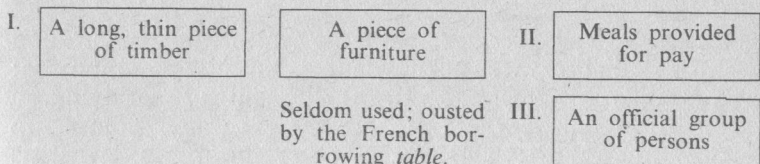
Nowadays, however, the item of furniture, on which meals are served and round which boards of directors meet, is no longer denoted by the word *board* but by the French Norman borrowing *table*, and *board* in this meaning, though still registered by some dictionaries, can very well be marked as archaic as it is no longer used in common speech. That is why, with the intrusion of the borrowed *table*, the word *board* actually lost its corresponding meaning. But it was just that meaning which served as a link to hold together the rest of the constituent parts of the word's semantic structure. With its diminished role as an element of communication, its role in the semantic structure was also weakened. The speakers almost forgot that *board* had ever been associated with any item of furniture, nor could they associate the notions of meals or of a responsible committee with a long thin piece of timber (which is the oldest meaning of *board*). Consequently, the semantic structure of *board* was split into three units.

The following scheme illustrates the process:

*Board, n. (development of meanings)*



*Board I, II, III, n. (split polysemy)*



A somewhat different case of split polysemy may be illustrated by the three following homonyms:

*spring, n.* — the act of springing, a leap

*spring, n.* — a place where a stream of water comes up out of the earth (R. *родник, источник*)

*spring, n.* — a season of the year

Historically all three nouns originate from the same verb with the meaning of “to jump, to leap” (O. E. *springan*), so that the meaning of the first homonym is the oldest. The meanings of the second and third homonyms were originally based on metaphor. At the head of a stream the water sometimes leaps up out of the earth, so that metaphorically such a place could well be described as *a leap*. On the other hand, the season of the year following winter could be poetically defined as *a leap* from the darkness and cold into sunlight and life. Such metaphors are typical enough of Old English and Middle English semantic transferences but not so characteristic of modern mental and linguistic processes. The poetic associations that lay in the basis of the semantic shifts described above have long since been forgotten, and an attempt to re-establish the lost links may well seem far-fetched. It is just the near-impossibility of establishing such links that seems to support the claim for homonymy and not for polysemy with these three words.

It should be stressed, however, that split polysemy as a source of homonyms is not accepted by all scholars. It is really difficult sometimes to decide whether a certain

word has or has not been subject to the split of the semantic structure and whether we are dealing with different meanings of the same word or with homonyms, for the criteria are subjective and imprecise. The imprecision is recorded in the data of different dictionaries which often contradict each other on this very issue, so that *board* is represented as two homonyms in Professor V. K. Müller's dictionary [41], as three homonyms in Professor V. D. Arakin's [36] and as one and the same word in Hornby's dictionary [45].

*Spring* also receives different treatment. V. K. Müller's and Hornby's dictionaries acknowledge but two homonyms: I. a season of the year, II. a) the act of springing, a leap, b) a place where a stream of water comes up out of the earth; and some other meanings, whereas V. D. Arakin's dictionary presents the three homonyms as given above.

## Classification of Homonyms

The subdivision of homonyms into *homonyms proper*, *homophones* and *homographs* is certainly not precise enough and does not reflect certain important features of these words, and, most important of all, their status as parts of speech. The examples given in the beginning of this chapter show that homonyms may belong both to the same and to different categories of parts of speech. Obviously, a classification of homonyms should reflect this distinctive feature. Also, the paradigm of each word should be considered, because it has been observed that the paradigms of some homonyms coincide completely, and of others only partially.

Accordingly, Professor A. I. Smirnitsky classified homonyms into two large classes: I. full homonyms, II. partial homonyms [12].

Full lexical homonyms are words which represent the same category of parts of speech and have the same paradigm.

E. g.  $\begin{cases} \text{match, n.} - \text{a game, a contest} \\ \text{match, n.} - \text{a short piece of wood used for} \\ \text{producing fire} \end{cases}$

{ *wren*, n. — a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service  
 { *wren*, n. — a bird

Partial homonyms are subdivided into three sub-groups:

A. Simple lexico-grammatical partial homonyms are words which belong to the same category of parts of speech. Their paradigms have one identical form, but it is never the same form, as will be seen from the examples.

- E. g.  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{(to) found, v.} \\ \text{found, v. (past indef., past part. of to find)} \end{array} \right.$   
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{to lay, v.} \\ \text{lay, v. (past indef. of to lie)} \end{array} \right.$   
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{to bound, v.} \\ \text{bound, v. (past indef., past part. of to bind)} \end{array} \right.$

B. Complex lexico-grammatical partial homonyms are words of different categories of parts of speech which have one identical form in their paradigms.

- E. g.  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{rose, n.} \\ \text{rose, v. (past indef. of to rise)} \end{array} \right.$   
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{maid, n.} \\ \text{made, v. (past indef., past part. of to make)} \end{array} \right.$   
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{left, adj.} \\ \text{left, v. (past indef., past part. of to leave)} \end{array} \right.$   
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{bean, n.} \\ \text{been, v. (past part. of to be)} \end{array} \right.$   
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{one, num.} \\ \text{won, v. (past indef., past part. of to win)} \end{array} \right.$

C. Partial lexical homonyms are words of the same category of parts of speech which are identical only in their corresponding forms.

- E. g.  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{to lie (lay, lain), v.} \\ \text{to lie (lied, lied), v.} \end{array} \right.$   
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{to hang (hung, hung), v.} \\ \text{to hang (hanged, hanged), v.} \end{array} \right.$   
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{to can (canned, canned)} \\ \text{(I) can (could)} \end{array} \right.$

**I. Consider your answers to the following.**

1. Which words do we call homonyms?
2. Why can't homonyms be regarded as expressive means of the language?
3. What is the traditional classification for homonyms? Illustrate your answer with examples.
4. What are the distinctive features of the classification of homonyms suggested by Professor A. I. Smirnitsky?
5. What are the main sources of homonyms? Illustrate your answer with examples.
6. In what respect does split polysemy stand apart from other sources of homonyms?
7. Prove that the language units *board* ("a long and thin piece of timber") and *board* ("daily meals") are two different words (homonyms) and not two different meanings of one and the same word. Write down some other similar examples.
8. What is the essential difference between homonymy and polysemy? What have they in common? Illustrate your answer with examples.

**II. Find the homonyms in the following extracts. Classify them into homonyms proper, homographs and homophones.**

1. "Mine is a long and a sad tale!" said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing. "It is a long tail, certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; "but why do you call it sad?" 2. a) My seat was in the middle of a row. b) "I say, you haven't had a row with Corky, have you?" 3. a) Our Institute football team got a challenge to a match from the University team and we accepted it. b) Somebody struck a match so that we could see each other. 4. a) It was nearly December but the California sun made a summer morning of the season. b) On the way home Crane no longer drove like a nervous old maid. 5. a) She loved to dance and had every right to expect the boy she was seeing almost every night in the week to take her dancing at least once on the weekend. b) "That's right," she said. 6. a) Do you always forget to wind up your watch? b) Crane had an old Ford without a top and it rattled so much and the wind made so much noise. 7. a) In Brittany there was once a knight called Eliduc. b) She looked up through

the window at the night. 8. a) He had a funny round face. b) — How does your house face? — It faces the South. 9. a) So he didn't shake his hand because he didn't shake cowards' hands, see, and somebody else was elected captain. b) Mel's plane had been shot down into the sea. 10. a) He was a lean, wiry Yankee who knew which side his experimental bread was buttered on. b) He had a wife of excellent and influential family, as finely bred as she was faithful to him. 11. a) He was growing progressively deafer in the left ear. b) I saw that I was looking down into another cove similar to the one I had left. 12. a) Iron and lead are base metals. b) Where does the road lead? 13. Krkanus invited him and a couple of the other boys to join him for a drink, and while Hugo didn't drink, he went along for the company.

**III. On what linguistic phenomenon is the joke in the following extracts based? What causes the misunderstanding?**

1. "Are your father and mother in?" asked the visitor of the small boy who opened the door.

"They was in," said the child, "but they is out."

"They was in. They is out. Where's your grammar?"

"She's gone upstairs," said the boy, "for a nap."

2. "Yes, Miss Jones, it's true my husband has left his job. He thought it was better for him to enlist rather than to be called up. Anyway, he has burned his bridges behind him."

"Oh, well, I shouldn't worry about that. They'll provide him with a uniform in the Army," commented the neighbour.

3. "I got sick last night eating eggs."

"Too bad."

"No, only one."

4. Husband and wife were enjoying a quiet evening by their fireside, he deep in a book and she in a crossword puzzle. Suddenly she questioned him:

"Darling, what is a female sheep?"

"Ewe," he replied. His further explanation hardly soothed her.

5. "I spent last summer in a very pretty city in Switzerland."

"Berne?"

"No, I almost froze."



6. Officer (to driver in parked car): Don't you see that sign "Fine for parking"?

Driver: Yes, officer, I see and agree with it.

IV. a) Find the homonyms proper for the following words; give their Russian equivalents.

1. *band* — a company of musicians. 2. *seal* — a warm-blooded, fish-eating sea-animal, found chiefly in cold regions. 3. *ear* — the grain-bearing spike of a cereal plant, as in corn. 4. *cut* — the result of cutting. 5. *to bore* — to make a long round hole, esp. with a pointed tool that is turned round. 6. *corn* — a hard, horny thickening of the skin, esp. on the foot. 7. *fall* — the act of falling, dropping or coming down. 8. *to hail* — to greet, salute, shout an expression of welcome. 9. *ray* — any of several cartilaginous fishes, as the stingray, skate, etc. 10. *draw* — something that attracts attention.

b) Find the homophones to the following words, translate them into Russian or explain their meanings in English.

heir, dye, cent, tale, sea, week, peace, sun, meat, steel, knight, sum, coarse, write, sight, hare

c) Find the homographs to the following words and transcribe both.

1. *to bow* — to bend the head or body. 2. *wind* — air in motion. 3. *to tear* — to pull apart by force. 4. *bear* — a large, heavy animal with rough hair. 5. *to desert* — to go away from a person or place. 6. *row* — a number of persons or things in a line.

V. a) Classify the following italicized homonyms. Use Professor A. I. Smirnitsky's classification system.

1. a) He should give the *ball* in your honour as the bride. b) The boy was playing with a *ball*. 2. a) He wished he could explain about his *left* ear. b) He *left* the sentence unfinished. 3. a) I wish you could stop *lying*. b) The yellow mouse was still dead, *lying* as it had fallen in the crystal clear liquid. 4. a) This time, he turned on the *light*. b) He wore \$ 300 suits with *light* ties and he was a man you would instinctively trust anywhere. 5. a) When he's at the door of her room, he sends the *page* ahead. b) Open your books at *page* 20. 6. a) Crockett's voice *rose* for the first time. b) I'll send you roses, one *rose* for each year of your life. 7. a) He was *bound* to keep the peace for six months. b) You should *bound* your desires by reason. 8. a) The pain was almost more than

he could *bear*. b) Catch the *bear* before you sell his skin. 9. a) To *can* means to put up in airtight tins or jars for preservation. b) A man *can* die but once.

b) Explain the homonyms which form the basis for the following jokes. Classify the types as in part a).

1. An observing man claims to have discovered the colour of the wind. He says he went out and found it blew.

2. Child: Mummy, what makes the Tower of Pisa lean?

Fat mother: I have no idea, dear, or I'd take some myself.

3. Advertisement: "Lion tamer wants tamer lion."

4. Father: Didn't I tell you not to pick any flowers without leave?

Child: Yes, daddy, but all these roses had leaves.

5. Diner: Waiter, the soup is spoiled.

Waiter: Who told you that?

Diner: A little swallow.

6. The difference between a cat and a comma is that a cat has its claws at the end of its paws, and a comma has its pause at the end of a clause.

7. A canner exceedingly canny

One morning remarked to his grannie:

"A canner can can anything that he can,

But a canner can't can a can, can'e?"

VI. Provide homonyms for the italicized words in the following jokes and extracts and classify them according to Professor A. I. Smirnitsky's classification system.

1. Teacher: *Here* is a map. Who *can* show us America?

Nick goes to the map and finds America on it.

Teacher: Now, tell me, boys, who *found* America?

Boys: Nick.

2. Father: I promised to *buy* you a car if you *passed* your examination, and you have failed. What were you doing *last* term?

Son: I was learning to drive a car.

3. "What time do you get up in summer?"

"As soon as the first *ray* of the *sun* comes into my window."

"Isn't that rather early?"

"No, my room *faces* west."

4. "Here, waiter, it seems to me that this *fish* is not so fresh as the fish you served us last Sunday."

"Pardon, sir, it is the very same fish."

5. Old Gentleman: Is it a *board* school you go to, my dear?

Child: No, sir. I believe it be a brick one!

6. Stanton: I think telling the truth is about as healthy as skidding round a corner at sixty.

Freda: And life's got a lot of dangerous corners — hasn't it, Charles?

Stanton: It can have — if you don't choose your *route* well. *To lie* or not to lie — what do you think, Olwen?

(From *Dangerous Corner* by J. B. Priestley)

VII. Explain how the following italicized words became homonyms.

1. a) Eliduc's overlord was the king of Brittany, who was very fond of the *knight*. b) "I haven't slept a wink all *night*, my eyes just wouldn't shut."
2. a) The tiger did not *spring*, and so I am still alive. b) It was in a saloon in Savannah, on a hot night in *spring*.
3. a) She left her *fan* at home. b) John is a football *fan*.
4. a) "My lady, ... send him a belt or a ribbon — or a ring. So *see* if it pleases him." b) Eliduc rode to the *sea*.
5. a) The Thames in London is now only beautiful from certain viewpoints — from Waterloo Bridge at dawn and at night from Cardinal's Wharf on the South *Bank*. b) Perhaps the most wide-spread pleasure is the spectacle of the City itself, its people, the *bank* messengers in their pink frock coats and top hats.
6. a) The young page gave her good advice: no *need* to give up hope so soon. b) The verb *to knead* means to mix and make into a mass, with the hands or by machinery, especially, mix flour and water into dough for making bread.
7. a) *Ads* in America are ubiquitous. They fill the newspapers and cover the walls, they are on menu cards and in your daily post. b) "Is that enough?" asked Fortune. "Just a few more, *add* a few more," said the man.
8. a) The teacher told her pupils to write a composition about the last football *match*. b) Give me a *match*, please.
9. a) I can *answer* that question. b) He had no *answer*.
10. a) Does he really *love* me? b) Never trust a great man's *love*.
11. a) *Board* and lodging, £ 2 a week. b) The proficiency of students is tested by the Examining *Board*.
12. a) A *rite* is a form

in which a ceremony or observance is carried out. b) I would *write* letters to people. c) He put the belt on himself, and was rather careful to get it *right*.

VIII. Do the following italicized words represent homonyms or poly-semantic words? Explain reasons for your answers.

1. 26 *letters* of the ABC; to receive *letters* regularly.  
2. no *mean* scholar; to *mean* something. 3. to propose a *toast*; an underdone *toast*. 4. a *hand* of the clock; to hold a pen in one's *hand*. 5. to be six *foot* long; at the *foot* of the mountain. 6. the *capital* of a country; to have a big *capital* (money). 7. to *date* back to year 1870; to have a *date* with somebody. 8. *to be engaged* to Mr. N; *to be engaged* in conversation. 9. to make a *fire*; to sit at the *fire*(place). 10. to peel the *bark* off the branch; to *bark* loudly at the stranger. 11. A *waiter* is a person who, instead of *waiting* on you at once, makes you *wait* for him, so that you become a *waiter* too.

IX. To revise what you have learned from the preceding chapters, say everything you can about the italicized words in one of the following aspects: 1. a) etymology, b) word-building, c) homonymy.

A *boy* came home with torn clothes, his *hair* full of dust and his *face* bearing *marks* of a severe *conflict*.

"Oh, Willie," said his *mother*. "You *disobeyed* me again. You must not play with that Smith boy. He is a bad boy."

"*Ma*," said Willie, washing the blood from his *nose*, "do *I* look as if I had been playing with *anybody*?"

2. a) etymology, b) word-building, c) stylistic characteristics.

"But *I* love the Italians," continued Mrs. Blair. "*They* are so *obliging* — though even that *has* its embarrassing side. You *ask* them the way *somewhere*, and instead of *saying* '*first* to the *right*, *second* to the *left*' or something that *one* could follow, they pour out a flood of *well-meaning* directions, and when you *look* bewildered they *take* you kindly by the arm and *walk* all the way there with you."

(From *The Man in the Brown Suit* by A. Christie)

3. a) stylistic characteristics, b) semantics, c) word-building.

Once in the driving seat, with reins *handed* to him, and blinking over his pale old cheeks in the full *sunlight*, he took a slow *look* round. Adolf was already up

behind; the cockaded groom at the horses' head stood ready to go; *everything* was prepared for the signals, and Swithin gave it. The *equipage* dashed forward, and *before you could say Jack Robinson*, with a *rattle* and flourish drew up at Soames' door.

(From *The Forsyte Saga* by J. Galsworthy)

4. a) homonymy, b) word-building.

Soames arrived on the stroke of time, and *took* his seat alongside the *Board*, who, in a row, each Director behind his own *inkpot*, *faced* their *Shareholders*.

In the centre of this row old Jolyon, *conspicuous* in his black, *tightly-buttoned frock-coat* and his white moustaches, was leaning back with *finger-tips* crossed on a copy of the Directors' report and accounts.

(Ibid.)

## CHAPTER 10

### SYNONYMS: ARE THEIR MEANINGS THE SAME OR DIFFERENT?

Synonymy is one of modern linguistics' most controversial problems. The very existence of words traditionally called *synonyms* is disputed by some linguists; the nature and essence of the relationships of these words is hotly debated and treated in quite different ways by the representatives of different linguistic schools.

Even though one may accept that synonyms in the traditional meaning of the term are somewhat elusive and, to some extent, fictitious it is certain that there are words in any vocabulary which clearly develop regular and distinct relationships when used in speech.

In the following extract, in which a young woman rejects a proposal of marriage, the verbs *like*, *admire* and *love*, all describe feelings of attraction, approbation, fondness:

"I have always *liked* you very much, I *admire* your talent, but, forgive me,—I could never *love* you as a wife should love her husband."

(From *The Shivering Sands* by V. Halt)

Yet, each of the three verbs, though they all describe more or less the same feeling of liking, describes it in

its own way: "I like you, i. e. I have certain warm feelings towards you, but they are not strong enough for me to describe them as "love", — so that *like* and *love* are in a way opposed to each other.

The duality of synonyms is, probably, their most confusing feature: they are somewhat the same, and yet they are most obviously different. Both aspects of their dual characteristics are essential for them to perform their function in speech, revealing different aspects, shades and variations of the same phenomenon.

“— Was she a *pretty* girl?

— I would certainly have called her *attractive*.”

(Ibid.)

The second speaker in this short dialogue does his best to choose the word which would describe the girl most precisely: she was good-looking, but *pretty* is probably too good a word for her, so that *attractive* is again in a way opposed to *pretty* (~ *not pretty*, only attractive), but this opposition is, at the same time, firmly fixed on the sameness of *pretty* and *attractive*: essentially they both describe a pleasant appearance.

Here are some more extracts which confirm that synonyms add precision to each detail of description and show how the correct choice of a word from a group of synonyms may colour the whole text.

The first extract depicts a domestic quarrel. The infuriated husband shouts and glares at his wife, but “his *glare* suddenly softened into a *gaze* as he turned his eyes on the little girl” (i. e. he had been looking furiously at his wife, but when he turned his eyes on the child, he looked at her with tenderness).

The second extract depicts a young father taking his child for a Sunday walk.

“Neighbours were apt to smile at the long-legged bare-headed young man leisurely strolling along the street and his small companion demurely trotting by his side.”

(From *Some Men and Women* by B. Lowndes)

The synonyms *stroll* and *trot* vividly describe two different styles of walking, the long slow paces of the young man and the gait between a walk and a run of the short-legged child.



In the following extract an irritated producer is talking to an ambitious young actor:

“Think you can play Romeo? Romeo should *smile*, not *grin*, *walk*, not *swagger*, *speak* his lines, not *mumble* them.”

(Ibid.)

Here the second synonym in each pair is quite obviously and intentionally contrasted and opposed to the first: “... *smile*, not *grin*.” Yet, *to grin* means more or less the same as *to smile*, only, perhaps, denoting a broader and a rather foolish smile. In the same way *to swagger* means “to walk”, but to walk in a defiant or insolent manner. *Mumbling* is also a way of speaking, but of speaking indistinctly or unintelligibly.

Synonyms are one of the language’s most important expressive means. The above examples convincingly demonstrate that the principal function of synonyms is to represent the same phenomenon in different aspects, shades and variations.

And here is an example of how a great writer may use synonyms for stylistic purposes. In this extract from *Death of a Hero* R. Aldington describes a group of survivors painfully retreating after a defeat in battle:

“... The Frontshires [name of battalion] staggered rather than walked down the bumpy trench ... About fifty men, the flotsam of the wrecked battalion, stumbled past them .... They shambled heavily along, not keeping step or attempting to, bent wearily forward under the weight of their equipment, their unseeing eyes turned to the muddy ground.”

In this extract the verb *to walk* is used with its three synonyms, each of which describes the process of walking in its own way. In contrast to *walk* the other three words do not merely convey the bare idea of going on foot but connote the manner of walking as well. *Stagger* means “to sway while walking” and, also, implies a considerable, sometimes painful, effort. *Stumble* means “to walk tripping over uneven ground and nearly falling.” *Shamble* implies dragging one’s feet while walking; a physical effort is also connoted by the word.

The use of all these synonyms in the extract creates

a vivid picture of exhausted, broken men marching from the battle-field and enhances the general atmosphere of defeat and hopelessness.

A carefully chosen word from a group of synonyms is a great asset not only on the printed page but also in a speaker's utterance. It was Mark Twain who said that the difference between the right word and just the right word is the difference between the lightning and the lightning-bug.

The skill to choose the most suitable word in every context and every situation is an essential part of the language learning process. Students should be taught both to discern the various connotations in the meanings of synonyms and to choose the word appropriate to each context.

### Criteria of Synonymy

Synonymy is associated with some theoretical problems which at present are still an object of controversy. Probably, the most controversial among these is the problem of criteria of synonymy. To put it in simpler words, we are still not certain which words should correctly be considered as synonyms, nor are we agreed as to the characteristic features which qualify two or more words as synonyms.

Traditional linguistics solved this problem with the *notional criterion* and defined synonyms as words of the same category of parts of speech conveying the same notion but differing either in shades of meaning or in stylistic characteristics.

Some aspects of this definition have been criticized. It has been pointed out that linguistic phenomena should be defined in linguistic terms and that the use of the term "notion" makes this an extralinguistic definition. The term "shades of meaning" has been condemned for its vagueness and lack of precision.

In contemporary research on synonymy *semantic criterion* is frequently used. In terms of componential analysis synonyms may be defined as words with the same denotation, or the same denotative component, but differing in connotations, or in connotative components (see Ch. 7).

Though not beyond criticism, this approach has its advantages and suggests certain new methods of analysing synonyms.

A group of synonyms may be studied with the help of their dictionary definitions (definitional analysis). In this work the data from various dictionaries are analysed comparatively. After that the definitions are subjected to transformational operations (transformational analysis). In this way, the semantic components of each analysed word are singled out.

Here are the results of the definitional and transformational analysis of some of the numerous synonyms for the verb *to look*.

	Denotation		Connotations		
<i>to stare:</i>	to look	+	steadily, lastingly	+	in surprise, curiosity, etc.
<i>to glare:</i>	to look	+	steadily, lastingly	+	in anger, rage, fury
<i>to gaze:</i>	to look	+	steadily, lastingly	+	in tenderness, ad- miration, wonder
<i>to glance:</i>	to look	+	briefly, in passing		
<i>to peep:</i>	to look	+	steadily, lastingly	+	by stealth; through an opening or from a concealed loca- tion
<i>to peer:</i>	to look	+	steadily, lastingly	+	with difficulty or strain

The common denotation convincingly shows that, according to the semantic criterion, the words grouped in the above table are synonyms. The connotative components represented on the right side of the table highlight their differentiations.

In modern research on synonyms the criterion of interchangeability is sometimes applied. According to this, synonyms are defined as words which are interchangeable at least in some contexts without any considerable alteration in denotational meaning. [4]

This criterion of interchangeability has been much criticized. Every or almost every attempt to apply it to this or that group of synonyms seems to lead one to the inevitable conclusion that either there are very few synonyms or, else, that they are not interchangeable. It is sufficient to choose any set of synonyms placing them in a simple context to demonstrate the point. Let us take, for example, the synonyms from the above table.

Cf.: *He glared at her* (i. e. He looked at her angrily).

*He gazed at her* (i. e. He looked at her steadily and attentively; probably with admiration or interest).

*He glanced at her* (i. e. He looked at her briefly and turned away).

*He peered at her* (i. e. He tried to see her better, but something prevented: darkness, fog, weak eyesight).

These few simple examples are sufficient to show that each of the synonyms creates an entirely new situation which so sharply differs from the rest that any attempt at "interchanging" anything can only destroy the utterance devoiding it of any sense at all.

If you turn back to the extracts on p. 142-144, the very idea of interchangeability will appear even more incredible. Used in this way, in a related context, all these words (*I like you, but I cannot love you; the young man was strolling, and his child was trotting by his side; Romeo should smile, not grin*, etc.) clearly demonstrate that substitution of one word for another is impossible: it is not simply the context that firmly binds them in their proper places, but the peculiar individual connotative structure of each individual word.

Consequently, it is difficult to accept interchangeability as a criterion of synonymy because the specific characteristic of synonyms, and the one justifying their very existence, is that they are not, cannot and should not be interchangeable, in which case they would simply become useless ballast in the vocabulary.

Synonyms are frequently said to be the vocabulary's colours, tints and hues (so the term *shade* is not so inadequate, after all, for those who can understand a metaphor). Attempts at ascribing to synonyms the quality of interchangeability are equal to stating that subtle tints in a painting can be exchanged without destroying the picture's effect.

All this does not mean that no synonyms are interchange-

able. One can find whole groups of words with half-erased connotations which can readily be substituted one for another. The same girl can be described as *pretty*, *good-looking*, *handsome* or *beautiful*. Yet, even these words are far from being totally interchangeable. Each of them creates its own picture of human beauty. Here is an extract in which a young girl addresses an old woman:

"I wouldn't say you'd been exactly *pretty* as a girl — *handsome* is what I'd say. You've got such strong features."

(From *The Stone Angel* by M. Lawrence)

So, handsome is *not* pretty and pretty is *not* necessarily handsome. Perhaps they are not even synonyms? But they are. Both, the criterion of common denotation ("good-looking; of pleasing appearance") and even the dubious criterion of interchangeability seem to indicate that.

In conclusion, let us stress that even if there are some synonyms which *are* interchangeable, it is quite certain that there are also others which are not. A criterion, if it is a criterion at all, should be applicable to all synonyms and not just to some of them. Otherwise it is not acceptable as a valid criterion.

### Types of Synonyms

The only existing classification system for synonyms was established by Academician V. V. Vinogradov, the famous Soviet scholar. In his classification system there are three types of synonyms: *ideographic* (which he defined as words conveying the same notion but differing in shades of meaning), *stylistic* (differing in stylistic characteristics) and *absolute* (coinciding in all their shades of meaning and in all their stylistic characteristics) [8].

However, the following aspects of his classification system are open to question.

Firstly, absolute synonyms are rare in the vocabulary and, on the diachronic level, the phenomenon of absolute synonymy is anomalous and consequently temporary: the vocabulary system invariably tends to abolish it either by rejecting one of the absolute synonyms or by developing differentiation characteristics in one or both (or all) of them. Therefore, it does not seem necessary to include

absolute synonyms, which are a temporary exception, in the system of classification.

The vagueness of the term "shades of meaning" has already been mentioned. Furthermore there seems to be no rigid demarcation line between synonyms differing in their shades of meaning and in stylistic characteristics, as will be shown later on. There are numerous synonyms which are distinguished by both shades of meaning and stylistic colouring. Therefore, even the subdivision of synonyms into ideographic and stylistic is open to question.

A more modern and a more effective approach to the classification of synonyms may be based on the definition describing synonyms as words differing in connotations. It seems convenient to classify connotations by which synonyms differ rather than synonyms themselves. It opens up possibilities for tracing much subtler distinctive features within their semantic structures.

## Types of Connotations

I. The connotation of degree or intensity can be traced in such groups of synonyms as *to surprise* — *to astonish* — *to amaze* — *to astound*,<sup>1</sup> *to satisfy* — *to please* — *to content* — *to gratify* — *to delight* — *to exalt*, *to shout* — *to yell* — *to bellow* — *to roar*, *to like* — *to admire* — *to love* — *to adore* — *to worship*.

As the table on p. 146 shows, some words have two and even more connotative components in their semantic structures. In the above list the synonymic groups headed by *to satisfy* and *to like* contain words which can be differentiated not only by the connotation of intensity but by other types which will be described later.

II. In the group of synonyms *to stare* — *to glare* — *to gaze* — *to glance* — *to peep* — *to peer*, all the synonyms except *to glance* denote a lasting act of looking at somebody or something, whereas *to glance* describes a brief, passing look. These synonyms may be said to have a *connotation of duration* in their semantic structure.

Other examples are: *to flash* (brief) — *to blaze* (lasting); *to shudder* (brief) — *to shiver* (lasting); *to say* (brief) — *to speak*, *to talk* (lasting).

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<sup>1</sup> Groups of synonyms here and further on in the text are given selectively.



All these synonyms have other connotations besides that of duration.

III. The synonyms *to stare* — *to glare* — *to gaze* are differentiated from the other words of the group in *emotive connotations*, and from each other by the nature of the emotion they imply (see the table on p. 146).

In the group *alone* — *single* — *lonely* — *solitary*, the adjective *lonely* also has an emotive connotation. *She was alone* implies simply the absence of company, *she was lonely* stresses the feeling of melancholy and desolation resulting from being alone. *A single tree of the plain* states plainly that there is (was) only one tree, not two or more. *A lonely tree on the plain* gives essentially the same information, that there was one tree and no more, but also creates an emotionally coloured picture.

In the group *to tremble* — *to shiver* — *to shudder* — *to shake*, the verb *to shudder* is frequently associated with the emotion of fear, horror or disgust, etc. (e. g. *to shudder with horror*) and therefore can be said to have an emotive connotation in addition to the two others (see the scheme in Ch. 7, p. 106).

One should be warned against confusing words with emotive connotations and words with emotive denotative meanings, e. g. *to love* — *to admire* — *to adore* — *to worship*, *angry* — *furious* — *enraged*, *fear* — *terror* — *horror*. In the latter, emotion is expressed by the leading semantic component whereas in the former it is an accompanying, subsidiary characteristic.

IV. The *evaluative connotation* conveys the speaker's attitude towards the referent, labelling it as *good* or *bad*. So in the group *well-known* — *famous* — *notorious* — *celebrated*, the adjective *notorious* bears a negative evaluative connotation and *celebrated* a positive one. Cf.: *a notorious murderer, robber, swindler, coward, lady-killer, flirt*, but *a celebrated scholar, artist, singer, man-of-letters*.

In the group *to produce* — *to create* — *to manufacture* — *to fabricate*, the verb *to create* characterizes the process as inspired and noble. *To manufacture* means "to produce in a mechanical way without inspiration or originality". So, *to create* can be said to have a positive evaluative connotation, and *to manufacture* a negative one.

The verbs *to sparkle* and *to glitter* are close synonyms and might well be favoured by supporters of the interchangeability criterion. Yet, it would be interesting to compare the following sets of examples:

A. *His (her) eyes sparkled with amusement, merriment, good humour, high spirits, happiness, etc.* (positive emotions).

B. *His (her) eyes glittered with anger, rage, hatred, malice, etc.* (negative emotions).

The combinability of both verbs shows that, at least, when they are used to describe the expression of human eyes, they have both emotive and evaluative connotations, and, also, one further characteristic, which is described in the next paragraph.

V. *The causative connotation* can be illustrated by the examples *to sparkle* and *to glitter* given above: one's eyes *sparkle with positive emotions* and *glitter with negative emotions*. However, this connotation of *to sparkle* and *to glitter* seems to appear only in the model "Eyes + Sparkle/Glitter".

The causative connotation is also typical of the verbs we have already mentioned, *to shiver* and *to shudder*, in whose semantic structures the cause of the act or process of trembling is encoded: *to shiver with cold, from a chill, because of the frost; to shudder with fear, horror, etc.*

*To blush* and *to redden* represent similar cases: people mostly blush from modesty, shame or embarrassment, but usually redden from anger or indignation. Emotive connotation can easily be traced in both these verbs.

VI. *The connotation of manner* can be singled out in some groups of verbal synonyms. The verbs *to stroll* — *to stride* — *to trot* — *to pace* — *to swagger* — *to stagger* — *to stumble* all denote different ways and types of walking, encoding in their semantic structures the length of pace, tempo, gait and carriage, purposefulness or lack of purpose (see, for instance, the quotations on p. 143-144).

The verbs *to peep* and *to peer* also have this connotation in their semantic structures: *to peep* = to look at smb./smth. *furtively, by stealth; to peer* = to look at smb./smth. *with difficulty or strain*.

The verbs *to like* — *to admire* — *to love* — *to adore* — *to worship*, as has been mentioned, are differentiated not only by the connotation of intensity, but also by the connotation of manner. Each of them describes a feeling of a different type, and not only of different intensity.

VII. The verbs *to peep* and *to peer* have already been mentioned. They are differentiated by connotations of duration and manner. But there is some other curious peculiarity in their semantic structures. Let us consider their typical contexts.

One *peeps* at smb./smth. through a hole, crack or opening, from behind a screen, a half-closed door, a newspaper, a fan, a curtain, etc. It seems as if a whole set of scenery were built within the word's meaning. Of course, it is not quite so, because "the set of scenery" is actually built in the context, but, as with all regular contexts, it is intimately reflected in the word's semantic structure. We shall call this *the connotation of attendant circumstances*.

This connotation is also characteristic of *to peer* which will be clear from the following typical contexts of the verb.

One *peers* at smb./smth. in darkness, through the fog, through dimmed glasses or windows, from a great distance; a short-sighted person may also *peer* at things. So, in the semantic structure of *to peer* are encoded circumstances preventing one from seeing clearly.

VIII. The synonyms *pretty*, *handsome*, *beautiful* have been mentioned as the ones which are more or less interchangeable. Yet, each of them describes a special type of human beauty: *beautiful* is mostly associated with classical features and a perfect figure, *handsome* with a tall stature, a certain robustness and fine proportions, *pretty* with small delicate features and a fresh complexion. This connotation may be defined as *the connotation of attendant features*.

IX. *Stylistic connotations* stand somewhat apart for two reasons. Firstly, some scholars do not regard the word's stylistic characteristic as a connotative component of its semantic structure. Secondly, stylistic connotations are subject to further classification; namely: colloquial, slang, dialect, learned, poetic, terminological, archaic. Here again we are dealing with stylistically marked words (see Ch. 1, 2), but this time we approach the feature of stylistic characteristics from a different angle: from the point of view of synonyms' frequent differentiation characteristics.

Here are some examples of synonyms which are differentiated by stylistic connotations (see also Ch. 2). The word in brackets starting each group shows the denotation of the synonyms.

(Meal). *Snack*, bite (*coll.*), *snap* (*dial.*), *repast*, refreshment, *feast*. (*formal*).

These synonyms, besides stylistic connotations, have connotations of attendant features.

*Snack*, *bite*, *snap* all denote a frugal meal taken in a hurry; *refreshment* is also a light meal; *feast* is a rich or abundant meal.

(Girl). Girlie (*coll.*), lass, lassie (*dial.*), bird, birdie, jane, fluff, skirt (*sl.*), maiden (*poet.*), damsel (*arch.*).

(To leave). To be off, to clear out (*coll.*), to beat it, to hoof it, to take the air (*sl.*), to depart, to retire, to withdraw (*formal*).

## EXERCISES

### I. Consider your answers to the following.

1. Say why synonyms are one of the language's most important expressive means. Illustrate your answer with examples.

2. Synonyms are sometimes described as words with "dual" characteristics. What is meant by this?

3. The meanings of two apparent synonyms may be in a way opposed to each other. Why are such words still regarded as synonyms? Give examples.

4. How are synonyms traditionally defined? On what criterion is this definition based? Which aspects of this definition are open to criticism?

5. How can synonyms be defined in the terms of componential analysis? On what criterion is this definition based?

6. Show how the dual nature of synonyms can be clearly seen if they are regarded through semantic criterion.

7. Why is the definition of synonyms based on the criterion of interchangeability open to question? Illustrate your answer with examples.

8. What types of synonyms were defined in Academician V. V. Vinogradov's classification system? Which aspects of this classification are open to question?

9. What is the modern approach to classifying synonyms? Illustrate this classification with examples.

10. What connotations differentiate the verbs *to peep* and *to peer*; the adjectives *pretty*, *handsome* and *beautiful*?

II. The sentences given below contain synonyms. Write them out in groups and explain the difference where the words are familiar.

1. a) While Kitty chatted gaily with her neighbours she watched Walter. b) Ashenden knew that R. had not sent for him to talk about weather and crops. c) As he spoke he rose from the bed. d) He is said to be honest. e) He'll tell you all about himself. f) If you wish to converse with me define your terms. 2. a) She felt on a sudden a cold chill pass through her limbs and she shivered. b) Her lips trembled so that

she could hardly frame the words. c) I was shaking like a leaf when I came here. d) He shuddered with disgust. 3. a) He gave his wrist-watch a glance. b) Tommy gave her a look out of the corner of her eye. c) But her abstract gaze scarcely noticed the blue sea and the crowded shipping in the harbour. d) Let me have just one peep at the letter. 4. a) Bessie gets up and walks towards the window. b) He did nothing from morning till night but wander at random. c) I saw a man strolling along. d) The men sauntered over to the next room. 5. a) I began to meditate upon writer's life. b) You had better reflect a little. c) The more he thought of it the less he liked the idea. d) I'm sure that a little walk will keep you from brooding. 6. a) The next witness was Dr. Burnett, a thin middle-aged man. b) The woman was tall with reddish curly hair and held a scarlet kimono round her slender figure. c) The girl was slim and dark. d) Studying him, Mrs. Page saw a spare young man with high cheekbones and blue eyes. 7. a) There was a fat woman, who gasped when she talked. b) She came in like a ship at full sail, an imposing creature, tall and stout. c) She was twenty-seven perhaps, plump, and in a coarse fashion pretty. d) He was a person of perhaps forty, red-faced, cheerful, thick. 8. a) Strange, unstable woman. It was rather embarrassing that she would cry in a public gallery. b) It was a life that perhaps formed queer characters. c) I thought it odd that they should allow her to dance quite quietly in Berlin. d) It is a veritable picture of an old country inn ... with low, quaint rooms and latticed windows.

III. Give as many synonyms for the italicized words in the following jokes as you can. If you do not know any of them consult your dictionaries.<sup>1</sup> Revise Ch. 10.

1. "I hear there's a new *baby* over at your house, William," said the teacher. "I don't think he's new," *replied* William. "The way he cries shows he's had lots of experience." 2. A little boy who had been used to receiving his old brother's old toys and clothes remarked: "Ma, will I have to marry his widow when he *dies*?"

<sup>1</sup> A. Gandel'sman. English Synonyms Explained and Illustrated. M., 1963; G. Crabb. English Synonyms. H. Y. Grosset and Dunlap, 1945; N. Webster. Webster's Synonyms, Antonyms and Homonyms. N. Y., 1962; Ю. Д. Апресян, В. В. Ботякова, Т. Э. Латышева и др. Англо-русский синонимический словарь. М. 1979

3. *Small Boy (to governess)*: Miss Smith, please excuse my *speaking* to you with my mouth full, but my *little* sister has just fallen into the pond. 4. A *celebrated* lawyer once said that the three most troublesome clients he ever had were a young lady who *wanted* to be married, a married woman who wanted a divorce, and an *old maid* who didn't know what she wanted. 5. *Boss*: You are twenty minutes late again. Don't you know what time we *start* to work at this office? *New Employee*: No, sir, they are always at it when I *get* here. 6. *He* (as they drove along a *lonely* road): You look *lovelier* to me every minute. Do you know what that's a sign of? *She*: Sure. You are about to run out of gas. 7. *Husband* (*shouting* upstairs to his wife): For last time, Mary, are you coming? *Wife*: Haven't I been *telling* you for the last hour that I'll be down in a minute. 8. "Oh, Mummie, I hurt my toe!" *cried small* Janey, who was playing in the garden, "Which toe, dear?" *I inquired*, as I *examined* her foot. "My youngest one," *sobbed* Janey.

IV. Carry out definitional and transformational analysis on the italicized synonyms using the explanations of meanings given below. Examples of this type of analysis are given on p. 146. Draw diagrams and define the types of connotations found in them.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Old* means having lived a long time, far advanced in years; *elderly* means approaching old age, between middle and old age, past middle age, but hardly old; *aged* is somewhat old, implies greater age than *elderly*; *ancient* is so old as to seem to belong to a past age.

2. To *create* means to make an object which was not previously in existence, to bring into existence by inspiration or the like; to *manufacture* is to make by labour, often by machinery, especially on a large scale by some industrial process; to *produce* is to work up from raw material and turn it into economically useful and marketable goods.

3. To *break* is to separate into parts or fragments; to *crack* is to break anything hard with a sudden sharp blow without separating, so that the pieces remain together; to *shatter* is to break into fragments, particles and in numerous directions; to *smash* is to destroy, to break thoroughly to pieces with a crashing sound by some sudden act of violence.

<sup>1</sup> The explanations are taken from A. Gandel'sman's English Synonyms Explained and Illustrated. M.. 1963.



4. To *cry* is to express grief or pain by audible lamentations, to shed tears with or without sound; to *sob* is to cry desperately with convulsive catching of the breath and noisily as from heart-rending grief; to *weep* means to shed tears more or less silently which is sometimes expression of pleasurable emotion.

5. *Battle* denotes the act of struggling, a hostile encounter or engagement between opposite forces on sea or land; *combat* denotes a struggle between armed forces, or individuals, it is usually of a smaller scale than battle, less frequently used in a figurative sense; *fight* denotes a struggle for victory, either between individuals or between armies, ships or navies, it is a word of less dignity than battle, *fight* usually implies a hand-to-hand conflict.

V. Consult the diagram on p. 146 and using the meaning definitions of the following synonyms and the explanation given in the English-Russian Synonymic Dictionary<sup>1</sup> prove that synonyms possess a dual nature. Draw the diagrams of meanings to illustrate your answer as in Exercise IV.

1. to shake — to tremble — to shiver — to shudder. 2. smell — scent — odour — aroma. 3. to walk — to stroll — to saunter — to wander. 4. to want — to wish — to desire. 5. weak — feeble — frail — fragile. 6. large — big — great. 7. to jump — to leap — to spring — to skip — to hop. 8. pain — ache — pang — twinge. 9. to discuss — to argue — to debate — to dispute. 10. dim — dusky — obscure.

VI. Single out the denotative and connotative components of meanings of the synonyms in the examples given below.

1. a) At the little lady's command they all three *smiled*. b) George, on hearing the story *grinned*. 2. a) Forsyte — the best palate in London. The palate that in a sense had made his fortune — the fortunes of the *celebrated* tea men, Forsyte and Treffry ... b) June, of course, had not seen this, but, though not yet nineteen, she was *notorious*. 3. a) Noticing that they were no longer *alone*, he turned and again began examining the lustre. b) June had gone. James had said he would be *lonely*. 4. a) The child was *shivering* with cold. b) The man *shuddered* with disgust. 5. a) I am *surprised* at you. b) He was *astonished* at the woman's determination. 6. a) It's impolite to *stare* at people like that. b) The little boys stood *glaring* at each other ready to start a fight. c) The lovers stood *gazing* into each other's eyes.

<sup>1</sup> Ю. Д. Апресян, В. В. Ботякова, Т. Э. Латышева и др. Англо-русский синонимический словарь. М., 1979.

7. a) They *produce* great amounts of wine but this is not all they produce in that part. b) The story was *fabricated* from beginning to end. 8. a) On hearing from Bosinney that his limit of twelve thousand pounds would be exceeded by something like four hundred, he had grown white with *anger*. b) "It's a damned shame," Andrew burst out, forgetting himself in a sudden rush of *indignation*. 9. a) He was an *aged* man, but not yet *old*. b) He was an *elderly* man at the time of his marriage. 10. The distance between the earth and the sun may be said to be *immense*; the distance between the poles is *vast*.

VII. Look through Ch. 10 and, if necessary, through synonymic dictionaries and prove that the rows of words given below are synonyms. Use the semantic criterion to justify your opinion.

1. to shout — to yell — to roar. 2. angry — furious — enraged. 3. alone — solitary — lonely. 4. to shudder — to shiver — to tremble. 5. fear — terror — horror. 6. to cry — to weep — to sob. 7. to walk — to trot — to stroll. 8. to stare — to gaze — to glare. 9. to desire — to wish — to want. 10. to like — to admire — to worship.

VIII. Say why the italicized synonyms in the examples given below are not interchangeable.

1. a) The little boys stood *glaring* at each other ready to start a fight. b) The Greek myth runs that Narcissus *gazed* at his own reflection in the water until he fell in love with it and died. 2. a) She is a very *pretty* American girl of twenty-two, with fair hair and blue eyes. b) She was a tall, blonde woman, slender, and stately and *beautiful*. 3. a) You don't know what a shock it was, Constance. I was knocked endways. I've been *brooding* over it ever since till I was afraid I should go mad. b) She'd evidently had time to *reflect* because when I came again she asked me quite calmly what it was exactly that I proposed. 4. a) She began to *sob* hysterically. b) Mortimer looks from Marie Louise who is quietly *weeping* to Constance with the utmost bewilderment. 5. a) You only *want* a car that you can be independent of me. b) She *longed* with all her heart for him to take her in his arms so that she could lay her head on his breast. 6. a) People turned in the street and *stared* at her with open mouths. b) R. got up and strolled slowly about the room and when he passed the windows as though in idle curiosity, *peeped* through the

heavy rep curtains that covered them, and then returning to his chair once more comfortably put his feet up. 7. a) He was *puzzled* at the letter. b) I was *astonished* at seeing him so changed. 8. a) Many of them had their sleeves rolled up, revealing *bare* arms. b) He saw *naked* children playing on the heaps of rubbish. 9. a) There was a *scent* of honey from the lime-trees in flowers. b) The room was permeated with the familiar *smells* of dust and yesterday's cooking. 10. a) Questions are never indiscreet. *Answers* sometimes are. b) He sought for a crushing phrase, some final and intimidating *repartee*.

IX. From the sentences given below write out the synonyms in groups and classify them into A. Synonyms differentiated by the connotation of duration. B. Synonyms differentiated by the connotation of degree or intensity. C. Synonyms differentiated by the causative connotation. Explain the reasons for your decisions.

1. He *shuddered* at the thought of a meeting that lay before him. 2. The whole situation, he *tells* me, was extraordinary, like that of an African explorer who, endeavouring to ignore one of the local serpents, finds himself exchanging *glances* with a man-eating tiger. 3. He merely *blushed* and said that he was jolly well going to go, because this girl was in Cannes. 4. Gosh, how I used to *admire* you at the dear old school. You were my hero. 5. What I really *want* is a meal. 6. That is the trouble about Cannes in August — it becomes very mixed. You get there splendid chaps who were *worshipped* by their schoolmates — and you also get men like this hookie. 7. He resents their cold *stare*. 8. Her voice was *trembling* with excitement. 9. He made a short speech in French, and the mothers all applauded, and the babies all *yelled*. 10. The girl was *shivering* with cold. 11. I must confess I am a little *surprised*. 12. "A truck driver," *shouted* someone from the audience. 13. "You have settled it!" *cried* the *astonished* parent. 14. The audience *roared* with laughter. 15. He was *speaking* for half an hour or so. 16. His face *reddened*, he could hardly keep his temper. 17. "I *adore* you, Mary," he said. 18. His eyes *glittered* with malice. 19. She would have *liked* to go there herself but couldn't. 20. His eyes were *blazing* as he heard how cruelly the children had been treated. 21. I was perfectly *amazed* that one man, all by himself, should have been able to beat down and capture such battalions of practised fighters. 22. His eyes *sparkled* with happiness.

X. Classify the following synonyms in two columns according to a) degree (intensity) of the referent, b) brief or lengthy duration of the referent.

1. gratify, please, exalt, content, satisfy, delight. 2. cry, weep, sob. 3. glance, gaze, glare, stare. 4. tremble, shiver, shudder, shake. 5. worship, love, like, adore, admire. 6. talk, say, tell, speak. 7. roar, shout, cry, bellow, yell. 8. astound, surprise, amaze, astonish. 9. cold, cool, chilly. 10. want, long, yearn, desire, wish. 11. vast, immense, large.

XI. Write out synonymic groups and classify them into A. Synonyms differentiated by evaluative connotations. B. Synonyms differentiated by connotation of manner.

1. Besides, Jack is a *notorious* domesticity for John! 2. His eyes *sparkled* with amusement. 3. "Joey — Joey ...!" I said *staggering* unevenly towards the peacock. 4. Betty would have liked to *peep* in but could not. 5. Presently I saw a man *strolling* along. 6. Her eyes *glittered* with hatred. 7. Those artisans *produce* pottery with great skill. 8. He was a *well-known* scientist. 9. It's getting late, so I must *trot* away. 10. The boy was *peering* into a dark room. 11. He *swaggered* along the corridor, evidently in high spirits. 12. The will was *fabricated*. 13. There was a picture of a *celebrated* painter on the wall.

XII. Within the following synonymic groups single out words with emotive connotations.

1. fear — terror — horror. 2. look — stare — glare — gaze — glance. 3. love — admire — adore — worship. 4. alone — single — solitary — lonely. 5. tremble — shiver — shudder — shake. 6. wish — desire — yearn — long.

XIII. Do the italicized words possess stylistic connotations? If so, what are their stylistic characteristics?

1. a) I was a very young *man* when I first came to London and I made mistakes. b) I've found him very useful. Not a bad *chap*. c) I put a very smart *lad* on the job. d) He is a very nice *fellow*. 2. a) The sister drew back the cloth and displayed four tiny, naked *infants*. b) She knew that he had desperately wanted her to bear a *child*. c) You ought to have a *kid* or two. 3. a) What I really want is a *meal*. b) I could do with a *snack*. c) Let's have a *bite*. d) They decided to order some *refreshment*. 4. a) "Now *clear out*," Althrope says; "both of you." b) He nodded, grinned again at her, then *withdrew* and went out to the main deck. c) In silence the widow *departed*. d) When he

left the house he promised to return at nine o'clock that night. e) I'm busy. *Clear off* quickly. f) She liked to read before *retiring* for the night. 5. a) "Fool around with chalk and crayons. It'll be fun." "*Bosh!*" b) "There it is, young man," he snapped. "Such *foolishness*. *Poppycock!*" c) He said he wouldn't stand that *nonsense* of yours.

XIV. Identify the stylistic connotations for the following italicized words in the jokes given below and write their synonyms with other stylistic connotations.

1. "I must say these are fine biscuits!" exclaimed the young husband. "How could you say those are fine biscuits?" *inquired* the young wife's mother, in a private interview. "I didn't say they were fine. I merely said I must say so."

2. "Willie," said his mother. "I wish you would run across the street and see how old Mrs. Brown is this morning." "Yes'm," *replied* Willie and a few minutes later he returned and *reported*: "Mrs. Brown says it's none of your business how old she is."

3. "Yes, she's married to a real-estate agent and a good, honest *fellow*, too."

"My gracious! Bigamy?"

4. Willie: Won't your pa spank you for staying out so late?

Tommy (*whose father is a lawyer*): No, I'll get an injunction from ma *postponing* the spanking, and then I'll *appeal* to grandma and she'll have it made *permanent*.

5. A man entered the bar and called for "a Martinus". The barman *observed* as he *picked up* a glass, "You mean Martini, sir!" "No, indeed I don't," the man replied. "I was taught Latin properly and I only want one."

6. A foreigner was *relating* his experience in studying the English language. He said: "When I first *discovered* that if I was quick I was fast; that if I was tied I was fast; and that not to eat was fast, I was discouraged. But when I came across the sentence, 'The first one won one-dollar prize' I *gave up* trying."

7. Jane: Would you be *insulted* if that good-looking stranger offered you some champagne?

Joan: Yes, but I'd probably swallow the insult.

SYNONYMS (*continued*). EUPHEMISMS. ANTONYMS

## The Dominant Synonym

The attentive reader will have noticed that in the previous chapter much use was made of the numerous synonyms of the verb *to look*, and yet, the verb *to look* itself was never mentioned. That doesn't seem fair because it is, certainly, a verb which possesses the highest frequency of use compared with its synonyms, and so plays an important role in communication. Its role and position in relation to its synonyms is also of some importance as it presents a kind of centre of the group of synonyms, as it were, holding it together.

Its semantic structure is quite simple: it consists only of denotative component and it has no connotations.

All (or, at least, most) synonymic groups have a "central" word of this kind whose meaning is equal to the denotation common to all the synonymic group. This word is called the *dominant synonym*.

Here are examples of other dominant synonyms with their groups:

**To surprise** — *to astonish* — *to amaze* — *to astound*.

**To shout** — *to yell* — *to bellow* — *to roar*.

**To shine** — *to flash* — *to blaze* — *to gleam* — *to glisten* — *to sparkle* — *to glitter* — *to shimmer* — *to glimmer*.

**To tremble** — *to shiver* — *to shudder* — *to shake*.

**To make** — *to produce* — *to create* — *to fabricate* — *to manufacture*.

**Angry** — *furious* — *enraged*.

**Fear** — *terror* — *horror*.

The dominant synonym expresses the notion common to all synonyms of the group in the most general way, without contributing any additional information as to the manner, intensity, duration or any attending feature of the referent. So, any dominant synonym is a typical basic-vocabulary word (see Ch. 2). Its meaning, which is broad and generalized, more or less "covers" the meanings of the rest of the synonyms, so that it may be substituted for any of them. It seems that here, at last, the idea of interchangeability of synonyms comes into its own. And yet, each such substitution would mean an irreparable



loss of the additional information supplied by connotative components of each synonym. So, using *to look* instead of *to glare*, *to stare*, *to peep*, *to peer* we preserve the general sense of the utterance but lose a great deal in precision, expressiveness and colour.

Summing up what has been said, the following characteristic features of the dominant synonym can be underlined:

I. High frequency of usage.

II. Broad combinability, i. e. ability to be used in combinations with various classes of words.

III. Broad general meaning.

IV. Lack of connotations. (This goes for stylistic connotations as well, so that neutrality as to style is also a typical feature of the dominant synonym.)

### Euphemisms

There are words in every language which people instinctively avoid because they are considered indecent, indelicate, rude, too direct or impolite. As the "offensive" referents, for which these words stand, must still be alluded to, they are often described in a round-about way, by using substitutes called *euphemisms*. This device is dictated by social conventions which are sometimes apt to be oversensitive, which see "indecent" where there is none and seek refinement in absurd avoidances and pretentiousness.

The word *lavatory* has, naturally, produced many euphemisms. Here are some of them: *powder room*, *washroom*, *restroom*, *retiring room*, (*public*) *comfort station*, *ladies' (room)*, *gentlemen's (room)*, *water-closet*, *w. c.* ([*'dʌblju: 'si:*]), *public conveniences* and even *windsor castle* (which is a comical phrase for "deciphering" *w. c.*).

Pregnancy is another topic for "delicate" references. Here are some of the euphemisms used as substitutes for the adjective *pregnant*: *in an interesting condition*, *in a delicate condition*, *in the family way*, *with a baby coming*, (*big*) *with child*.

The apparently innocent word *trousers*, not so long ago, had a great number of euphemistic equivalents, some of them quite funny: *unmentionables*, *inexpressibles*, *indescribables*, *unwhisperables*, *you-mustn't-mention 'ems*, *sit-upons*. Nowadays, however, nobody seems to regard this word as "indecent" any more, and so its euphemistic substitutes are no longer in use.

A landlady who refers to her lodgers as *paying guests*

is also using a euphemism, aiming at half-concealing the embarrassing fact that she lets rooms.

The love of affectation, which displays itself in the excessive use of euphemisms, has never been a sign of good taste or genuine refinement. Quite the opposite. Fiction writers have often ridiculed pretentious people for their weak attempts to express themselves in a delicate and refined way.

“... Mrs. Sunbury never went to bed, she *retired*, but Mr. Sunbury who was not quite so refined as his wife always said: “Me for Bedford” ...”

(From *The Kite* by W. S. Maugham)

*To retire* in this ironical passage is a euphemistic substitute for *to go to bed*.

Another lady, in *Rain* by the same author, easily surpasses Mrs. Sunbury in the delicacy of her speech. She says that there are so many mosquitoes on the island where the story is set that at the Governor's parties “all the ladies are given a pillow-slip to put their — their *lower extremities* in.”

The speaker considers the word *legs* to be “indelicate” and substitutes for it its formal synonym *lower extremities* (cf. with the R. *нижние конечности*). The substitution makes her speech pretentious and ridiculous.

Eating is also regarded as unrefined by some minds. Hence such substitutes as *to partake of food* (*of refreshment*), *to refresh oneself*, *to break bread*.

There are words which are easy targets for euphemistic substitution. These include words associated with drunkenness, which are very numerous.

The adjective *drunk*, for instance, has a great number of such substitutes, some of them “delicate”, but most comical. E. g. *intoxicated* (form.), *under the influence* (form.), *tipsy*, *mellow*, *fresh*, *high*, *merry*, *flustered*, *overcome*, *full* (coll.), *drunk as a lord* (coll.), *drunk as an owl* (coll.), *boiled* (sl.), *fried* (sl.), *tanked* (sl.), *tight* (sl.), *stiff* (sl.), *pickled* (sl.), *soaked* (sl.), *three sheets to the wind* (sl.), *high as a kite* (sl.), *half-seas-over* (sl.), etc.

The following brief quotation from P. G. Wodehouse gives two more examples of words belonging to the same group:

“Motty was *under the surface*. Completely *sozzled*.”

(From *Right-Ho, Jeeves* by P. G. Wodehouse)

In the following extracts from P. G. Wodehouse we find slang substitutes for two other "unpleasant" words: *prison* and *to imprison*.

"Oh, no, he isn't ill," I said; "and as regards accidents, it depends on what you call an accident. He's *in chokey*."

"In what?"

"In prison."

"... And now Mr. Sipperley is *in the jug* ... He couldn't come himself, because he was *jugged* for biffing a cop on Boat-Race Night."

(Ibid.)

Euphemisms may, of course, be used due to genuine concern not to hurt someone's feelings. For instance, a liar can be described as a person who *does not always strictly tell the truth* and a stupid man can be said to be *not exactly brilliant*.

All the euphemisms that have been described so far are used to avoid the so-called *social taboos*. Their use, as has already been said, is inspired by social convention.

Superstitious taboos gave rise to the use of other type of euphemisms. The reluctance to call things by their proper names is also typical of this type of euphemisms, but this time it is based on a deeply-rooted subconscious fear.

Superstitious taboos have their roots in the distant past of mankind when people believed that there was a supernatural link between a name and the object or creature it represented. Therefore, all the words denoting evil spirits, dangerous animals, or the powers of nature were taboo. If uttered, it was believed that unspeakable disasters would result not only for the speaker but also for those near him. That is why all creatures, objects and phenomena threatening danger were referred to in a round-about descriptive way. So, a dangerous animal might be described as *the one-lurking-in-the-wood* and a mortal disease as *the black death*. Euphemisms are probably the oldest type of synonyms, for it is reasonable to assume that superstitions which caused real fear called for the creation of euphemisms long before the need to describe things in their various aspects or subtle shades caused the appearance of other synonyms.

The Christian religion also made certain words taboo. The proverb *Speak of the devil and he will appear* must have been used and taken quite literally when it was first used, and the fear of *calling the devil by name* was certainly inherited from ancient superstitious beliefs. So, the word *devil* became taboo, and a number of euphemisms were substituted for it: *the Prince of Darkness*, *the black one*, *the evil one*, *dickens* (coll.), *deuce* (coll.), *(Old) Nick* (coll.).

The word *god*, due to other considerations, also had a great number of substitutes which can still be traced in such phrases as *Good Lord!*, *By Heavens!*, *Good Heavens!*, *(My) goodness!*, *(My) goodness gracious!*, *Gracious me!*.

Even in our modern emancipated times, old superstitious fears still lurk behind words associated with death and fatal diseases. People are not superstitious nowadays and yet they are surprisingly reluctant to use the verb *to die* which has a long chain of both solemn and humorous substitutes. E. g. *to pass away*, *to be taken*, *to breathe one's last*, *to depart this life*, *to close one's eyes*, *to yield (give) up the ghost*, *to go the way of all flesh*, *to go West* (sl.), *to kick off* (sl.), *to check out* (sl.), *to kick the bucket* (sl.), *to take a ride* (sl.), *to hop the twig* (sl.), *to join the majority* (sl.).

The slang substitutes seem to lack any proper respect, but the joke is a sort of cover for the same old fear: speak of death and who knows what may happen.

Mental diseases also cause the frequent use of euphemisms.

A mad person may be described as *insane*, *mentally unstable*, *unbalanced*, *unhinged*, *not (quite) right* (coll.), *not all there* (coll.), *off one's head* (coll.), *off one's rocker* (coll.), *wrong in the upper storey* (coll.), *having bats in one's belfry* (coll.), *crazy as a bedbug* (sl.), *cuckoo* (sl.), *nutty* (sl.), *off one's nut* (sl.), *loony* (sl.), *a mental case*, *a mental defective*, etc.

A clinic for such patients can also be discreetly referred to as, for instance, *an asylum*, *sanitarium*, *sanatorium*, *(mental) institution*, and, less discreetly, as *a nut house* (sl.), *booby hatch* (sl.), *loony bin* (sl.), etc.

In the story by Evelyn Waugh "Mr. Loveday's Little Outing" a clinic of this kind, treating only very rich patients, is described as *large private grounds suitable for the charge of nervous or difficult cases*. This is certainly the peak of euphemistic "delicacy".

The great number of humorous substitutes found in

such groups of words prove particularly tempting for writers who use them for comical purposes. The following extracts from a children's book by R. Dahl are, probably, not in the best of taste, but they demonstrate the range of colloquial and slang substitutes for the word *mad*.

"He's gone off his rocker!" shouted one of the fathers, aghast, and the other parents joined in the chorus of frightened shouting.

"He's crazy!" they shouted.

"He's balmy!"

"He's nutty!"

"He's screwy!"

"He's batty!"

"He's dippy!"

"He's dotty!"

"He's daffy!"

"He's goofy!"

"He's beany!"

"He's buggy!"

"He's wacky!"

"He's loony!"

"No, he is not!" said Grandpa Joe.

(From *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by R. Dahl)

... "What did I tell you!" — cried Grandma Georgina. "He's round the twist! He's bogged as a beetle! He's dotty as a dingbat! He's got rats in the roof! ..."

(Ibid.)

\* \* \*

All the above examples show that euphemisms are substitutes for their synonyms. Their use and very existence are caused either by social conventions or by certain psychological factors. Most of them have stylistic connotations in their semantic structures. One can also assume that there is a special euphemistic connotation that can be singled out in the semantic structure of each such word. Let us point out, too, that euphemistic connotations in formal euphemisms are different in "flavour" from those in slang euphemistic substitutes. In the first case they are solemn and delicately evasive, and in the second rough and somewhat cynical, reflecting an attempt to laugh off an unpleasant fact.

## Antonyms

We use the term *antonyms* to indicate words of the same category of parts of speech which have contrasting meanings, such as *hot* — *cold*, *light* — *dark*, *happiness* — *sorrow*, *to accept* — *to reject*, *up* — *down*.

If synonyms form whole, often numerous, groups, antonyms are usually believed to appear in pairs. Yet, this is not quite true in reality. For instance, the adjective *cold* may be said to have *warm* for its second antonym, and *sorrow* may be very well contrasted with *gaiety*.

On the other hand, a polysemantic word may have an antonym (or several antonyms) for each of its meanings. So, the adjective *dull* has the antonyms *interesting*, *amusing*, *entertaining* for its meaning of "deficient in interest", *clever*, *bright*, *capable* for its meaning of "deficient in intellect", and *active* for the meaning of "deficient in activity", etc.

Antonymy is not evenly distributed among the categories of parts of speech. Most antonyms are adjectives which is only natural because qualitative characteristics are easily compared and contrasted: *high* — *low*, *wide* — *narrow*, *strong* — *weak*, *old* — *young*, *friendly* — *hostile*.

Verbs take second place, so far as antonymy is concerned. Yet, verbal pairs of antonyms are fewer in number. Here are some of them: *to lose* — *to find*, *to live* — *to die*, *to open* — *to close*, *to weep* — *to laugh*.

Nouns are not rich in antonyms, but even so some examples can be given: *friend* — *enemy*, *joy* — *grief*, *good* — *evil*, *heaven* — *earth*, *love* — *hatred*.

Antonymic adverbs can be subdivided into two groups: a) adverbs derived from adjectives: *warmly* — *coldly*, *merri-ly* — *sadly*, *loudly* — *softly*; b) adverbs proper: *now* — *then*, *here* — *there*, *ever* — *never*, *up* — *down*, *in* — *out*.

\* \* \*

Not so many years ago antonymy was not universally accepted as a linguistic problem, and the opposition within antonymic pairs was regarded as purely logical and finding no reflection in the semantic structures of these words. The contrast between *heat* and *cold* or *big* and *small*, said most scholars, is the contrast of things opposed by their very nature.



In the previous chapter dealing with synonymy we saw that both the identity and differentiations in words called synonyms can be said to be encoded within their semantic structures. Can the same be said about antonyms? Modern research in the field of antonymy gives a positive answer to this question. Nowadays most scholars agree that in the semantic structures of all words, which regularly occur in antonymic pairs, a special antonymic connotation can be singled out. We are so used to coming across *hot* and *cold* together, in the same contexts, that even when we find *hot* alone, we cannot help subconsciously registering it as *not cold*, that is, contrast it to its missing antonym. The word possesses its full meaning for us not only due to its direct associations but also because we subconsciously oppose it to its antonym, with which it is regularly used, in this case to *hot*. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the semantic structure of *hot* can be said to include the antonymic connotation of "not cold", and the semantic structure of *enemy* the connotation of "not a friend".

It should be stressed once more that we are speaking only about those antonyms which are characterized by common occurrences, that is, which are regularly used in pairs. When two words frequently occur side by side in numerous contexts, subtle and complex associations between them are not at all unusual. These associations are naturally reflected in the words' semantic structures. Antonymic connotations are a special case of such "reflected associations".

\* \* \*

Together with synonyms, antonyms represent the language's important expressive means. The following quotations show how authors use antonyms as a stylistic device of contrast.

How far that little candle throws his beams!  
So shines a *good* deed in a *naughty*<sup>1</sup> world.

(From *Merchant of Venice*  
by W. Shakespeare. Act V, Sc. 1)

... My soul's imaginary sight  
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,

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<sup>1</sup> *naughty* – wicked, evil (*obs.*).

Which like a jewel hung in *ghastly* night,  
Makes black night *beauteous* and her *old* face *new*.

(From *Sonnet XXVII* by W. Shakespeare)

Welcome *joy*, and welcome *sorrow*,  
Lethe's weed and Hermes' feather;  
Come *to-day*, and come *to-morrow*,  
I do love you both together!  
I love to mark *sad* faces in fair weather;  
And hear a *merry* laughter amid the thunder;  
*Fair*, and *foul* I love together.

(From *A Song of Opposites* by J. Keats)

... The writer should seek his reward in the pleasure of his work and in release from the burden of his thought; and indifferent to aught else, care nothing for *praise or censure, failure or success*.

(From *The Moon and Sixpence* by W. S. Maugham)

They [the Victorians] were busy *erecting*, of course; and we have been busy *demolishing* for so long that now erection seems as ephemeral an activity as bubble-blowing.

(From *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by J. Fowles)

## EXERCISES

### I. Consider your answers to the following.

1. Which word in a synonymic group is considered to be the dominant synonym? What are its characteristic features?

2. Can the dominant synonym be substituted for certain other members of a group of synonyms? Is the criterion of interchangeability applicable in this case?

3. Which words are called euphemisms? What are their two main types? What function do they perform in speech? What is the effect of overusing euphemisms in speech?

4. Show that euphemisms may be regarded as a subtype of synonyms. Which type of connotation is characteristic for them?

5. Which words do we usually classify as antonyms? Give your own examples of such words.

6. To which parts of speech do most antonyms belong? How do you account for this?

7. Antonyms characterized by common occurrences may be said to possess certain "reflected associations". Explain what is meant by this phrase.

8. Explain why antonyms can be regarded as an important group of the language's expressive means. Illustrate your answer with your own examples.

II. Find the dominant synonym in the following groups of synonyms. Explain your choice.

1. to glimmer — to glisten — to blaze — to shine — to sparkle — to flash — to gleam. 2. to glare — to gaze — to peep — to look — to stare — to glance. 3. to astound — to surprise — to amaze — to puzzle — to astonish. 4. strange — quaint — odd — queer. 5. to saunter — to stroll — to wander — to walk — to roam. 6. scent — perfume — smell — odour — aroma. 7. to brood — to reflect — to meditate — to think. 8. to fabricate — to manufacture — to produce — to create — to make. 9. furious — enraged — angry. 10. to sob — to weep — to cry.

III. The following sentences and jokes contain members of groups of synonyms. Provide as many synonyms as you can for each, explaining the difference between them; single out their dominant synonyms giving reasons for your choice.

1. "Why is it, Bob," asked George of a very *stout* friend, "that you fat *fellows* are always good-natured?" "We have to be," answered Bob. "You see, we can't either *fight* or run." 2. Teacher was giving a lesson on the weather idiosyncrasies of March. "What is it," she asked, "that comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb?" And *little* Julia, in the back row, *replied*: "Father." 3. "Just why do you *want* a married *man* to work for you, rather than a bachelor?" asked the curious chap. "Well," sighed the boss, "the married men don't get so upset if I *yell* at them." 4. A kind-hearted English Vicar one day *observed* an *old* woman laboriously pushing a perambulator up a steep hill. He volunteered his *assistance* and when they reached the top of the hill, *said*, in *answer* to her thanks: "Oh, it's nothing at all. I'm *delighted* to do it. But as a little reward, may I kiss the *baby*?" "Baby? Lord bless you, sir, it ain't no baby, it's the old man's beer." 5. "The cheek of that red cap! He *glared* at me as if I hadn't my pass." "And what did you do?" "I *glared* back as if I had."

6. Comic Dictionary: ADULT — a person who has stopped growing at both ends and *started* growing in the middle. ADVERTISING — *makes* you think you've *longed* all your life for something you never even heard of before. BORE — one who insists upon *talking* about himself when you want to talk about yourself. FAME — chiefly a matter of *dying* at the right moment. PHILOSOPHER — one who instead of *crying* over spilt milk consoles himself with the thought that it was over four-fifths water.

IV. Find the dominant synonyms for the following italicized words and prove that they can be used as substitutes. Are they interchangeable? What is lost if we make the substitution?

1. Never for a moment did he interrupt or *glance* at his watch. 2. The girl looked *astonished* at my ignorance. 3. Sometimes perhaps a tramp will *wander* there, seeking shelter from a sudden shower of rain. 4. I am very different from that self who drove to Manderley for the first time filled with an intense *desire* to please. 5. The stony vineyards *shimmer* in the sun. 6. The restaurant was filled now with people who *chatted* and laughed. 7. I've got a sister and an *ancient* grandmother. 8. A bowl of roses in a drawing-room had a depth of colour and *scent* they had not possessed in the open. 9. He saw our newcomers, arms wound round each other, literally *staggering* from the bus. 10. Chicken-pox may be a mild children's *disease*. 11. In a funny way she wanted to reach out for that friendliness as if she needed it. Which was *odd*. 12. It could be a dream world. So *pretty*, yet so sad.

V. Reread Ch. 11 and find the euphemistic substitutes for the following words: *die, drunk, prison, mad, liar, devil, lavatory, god, eat, pregnant, stupid*. Write them out into two columns: A. Euphemistic substitutes for social taboos. B. Euphemistic substitutes for superstitious taboos.

VI. Find the euphemisms in the following sentences and jokes. Name the words for which they serve as euphemistic substitutes.

1. Policeman (*to intoxicated man who is trying to fit his key to a lamp-post*): I'm afraid there's nobody home there tonight. Man: Mus' be. Mus' be. Theresh a light upstairsh. 2. "Johnny, where do you think God is this morning?" asked the Sunday-school teacher. "In our bathroom," was the reply. "What on earth makes you say that?" asked the amazed teacher. "Because just before I left I heard pa say, "My Lord! How long

are you going to be in there?" 3. The doctor had an inveterate punster and wit among his patients. One day he was late in making his rounds, and explained to the incorrigible humourist that he had stopped to attend a man who had fallen down a well. With a groan of agony, the wit mustered up strength enough to murmur: "Did he kick the bucket, doctor?" 4. A girl was to visit her serviceman brother at a military hospital. While stopping at the desk of the officer of the day for directions to the patient's ward she asked: "Would you kindly tell me where the powder room is?" "Miss," the corpsman on duty replied with dignity, "this is a hospital, not an arsenal." 5. First Student: Great Scott! I've forgotten who wrote *Ivanhoe*. Second Ditto: I'll tell you if you tell me who the dickens wrote *The Tale of Two Cities*. 6. So, for the love of Mike, come across to our table and help things along. 7. He was high and didn't know what he was saying. 8. "You never know with lunatics," said the young man chattily. "They don't always look balmy, you know." 9. "But what I mean was, it sounds more like a rather idiotic kind of hoax. Perhaps some convivial idiot who had had one over the eight." "Nine? Nine what?" "Nothing — just an expression. I meant a fellow who was tight." 10. "Funny old thing," said Lily Marbury indulgently. "Looks half batty to my mind." 11. "I think the fellow's half a loony. He needs some one to look after him."

#### VII. Find antonyms for the words given below.

good, *adj.*; deep, *adj.*; narrow, *adj.*; clever, *adj.*; young, *adj.*; to love, *v.*; to reject, *v.*; to give, *v.*; strong, *adj.*; to laugh, *v.*; joy, *n.*; evil, *n.*; up, *adv.*; slowly, *adv.*; black, *adj.*; sad, *adj.*; to die, *v.*; to open, *v.*; clean, *adj.*; darkness, *n.*; big, *adj.*

#### VIII. Find antonyms in the following jokes and extracts and describe the resultant stylistic effect.

1. Policeman (*holding up his hand*): Stop!

Visitor: What's the matter?

P.: Why are you driving on the right side of the road?

V.: Do you want me to ride on the wrong side?

P.: You are driving on the wrong side.

V.: But you said that I was driving on the right side.

P.: That is right. You are on the right, and that's wrong.

V.: A strange country! If right is wrong, I'm right when I'm on the wrong side. So why did you stop me?

P.: My dear sir, you must keep to the left. The right side is the left.

V.: It's like a looking-glass! I'll try to remember. Well, I want to go to Bellwood. Will you kindly tell me the way?

P.: Certainly. At the end of this road, turn left.

V.: Now let me think. Turn left! In England left is right, and right is wrong. Am I right?

P.: You'll be right if you turn left. But if you turn right, you'll be wrong.

V.: Thank you. It's as clear as daylight.

(After G. C. Thornley)<sup>1</sup>

2. Flying instructors say that pilot trainees are divided into optimists and pessimists when reporting the amount of fuel during flights. Optimists report that their fuel tank is half full while pessimists say it's half empty. 3. The canvas homes, the caravans, the transportable timber frames — each had its light. Some moving, some still. 4. His words seemed to point out that sad, even tragic things could never be gay. 5. It was warm in the sun but cool under the shady trees. 6. He is my best friend and he is my bitter enemy. 7. Every man has feminine qualities and every woman has masculine ones. 8. He hated to be exposed to strangers, to be accepted or rejected.

## CHAPTER 12

### PHRASEOLOGY: WORD-GROUPS WITH TRANSFERRED MEANINGS

*Phraseological units*, or *idioms*, as they are called by most western scholars, represent what can probably be described as the most picturesque, colourful and expressive part of the language's vocabulary.

If synonyms can be figuratively referred to as the tints

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<sup>1</sup> The text is borrowed from *Look, Laugh and Learn to Speak* by I. B. Vasilyeva. I. A. Kitenko. D. V. Menyajlo. L., 1970.



and colours of the vocabulary, then phraseology is a kind of picture gallery in which are collected vivid and amusing sketches of the nation's customs, traditions and prejudices, recollections of its past history, scraps of folk songs and fairy-tales. Quotations from great poets are preserved here alongside the dubious pearls of philistine wisdom and crude slang witticisms, for phraseology is not only the most colourful but probably the most democratic area of vocabulary and draws its resources mostly from the very depths of popular speech.

And what a variety of odd and grotesque images, figures and personalities one finds in this amazing picture gallery: dark horses, white elephants, bulls in china shops and green-eyed monsters, cats escaping from bags or looking at kings, dogs barking up the wrong tree and men either wearing their hearts on their sleeves or having it in their mouths or even in their boots. Sometimes this parade of funny animals and quaint human beings looks more like a hilarious fancy-dress ball than a peaceful picture gallery and it is really a pity that the only interest some scholars seem to take in it is whether the leading component of the idiom is expressed by a verb or a noun.

The metaphor *fancy-dress ball* may seem far-fetched to skeptical minds, and yet it aptly reflects a very important feature of the linguistic phenomenon under discussion: most participants of the carnival, if we accept the metaphor, wear masks, are disguised as something or somebody else, or, dropping metaphors, word-groups known as phraseological units or idioms are characterized by a double sense: the current meanings of constituent words build up a certain picture, but the actual meaning of the whole unit has little or nothing to do with that picture in itself creating an entirely new image.

So, a *dark horse* mentioned above is actually not a horse but a person about whom no one knows anything definite, and so one is not sure what can be expected from him. The imagery of *a bull in a china shop* lies very much on the surface: the idiom describes a clumsy person (cf. with the R. *слон в посудной лавке*). A *white elephant*, however, is not even a person but a valuable object which involves great expense or trouble for its owner, out of all proportion to its usefulness or value, and which is also difficult to dispose of. The *green-eyed monster* is jealousy, the image being drawn from

*Othello*.<sup>1</sup> *To let the cat out of the bag* has actually nothing to do with cats, but means simply "to let some secret become known". In *to bark up the wrong tree* (Amer.), the current meanings of the constituents create a vivid and amusing picture of a foolish dog sitting under a tree and barking at it while the cat or the squirrel has long since escaped. But the actual meaning of the idiom is "to follow a false scent; to look for somebody or something in a wrong place; to expect from somebody what he is unlikely to do". The idiom is not infrequently used in detective stories: *The police are barking up the wrong tree as usual* (i. e. they suspect somebody who has nothing to do with the crime).

The ambiguousness of these interesting word-groups may lead to an amusing misunderstanding, especially for children who are apt to accept words at their face value.

Little Johnnie (crying): Mummy, mummy, my auntie Jane is dead.

Mother: Nonsense, child! She phoned me exactly five minutes ago.

Johnnie: But I heard Mrs. Brown say that her neighbours cut her dead.

(*To cut somebody dead* means "to rudely ignore somebody; to pretend not to know or recognize him".)

Puns are frequently based on the ambiguousness of idioms:

"Isn't our Kate a marvel! I wish you could have seen her at the Harrisons' party yesterday. If I'd collected the bricks she dropped all over the place, I could build a villa."

(*To drop a brick* means "to say unintentionally a quite indiscreet or tactless thing that shocks and offends people".)

So, together with synonymy and antonymy, phraseology represents expressive resources of vocabulary.

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<sup>1</sup> O, beware, my lord, of jealousy;  
It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock  
The meat it feeds on ...

(Iago's words from Act III, Sc. 3)

V. H. Collins writes in his *Book of English Idioms*: "In standard spoken and written English today idiom is an established and essential element that, used with care, ornaments and enriches the language." [18]

*Used with care* is an important warning because speech overloaded with idioms loses its freshness and originality. Idioms, after all, are ready-made speech units, and their continual repetition sometimes wears them out: they lose their colours and become trite clichés. Such idioms can hardly be said to "ornament" or "enrich the language".

On the other hand, oral or written speech lacking idioms loses much in expressiveness, colour and emotional force.

In modern linguistics, there is considerable confusion about the terminology associated with these word-groups. Most Soviet scholars use the term "phraseological unit" ("фразеологическая единица") which was first introduced by Academician V. V. Vinogradov whose contribution to the theory of Russian phraseology cannot be overestimated. The term "idiom" widely used by western scholars has comparatively recently found its way into Soviet phraseology but is applied mostly to only a certain type of phraseological unit as it will be clear from further explanations.

There are some other terms denoting more or less the same linguistic phenomenon: *set-expressions*, *set-phrases*, *phrases*, *fixed word-groups*, *collocations*.

The confusion in the terminology reflects insufficiency of positive or wholly reliable criteria by which phraseological units can be distinguished from "free" word-groups.

It should be pointed out at once that the "freedom" of free word-groups is relative and arbitrary. Nothing is entirely "free" in speech as its linear relationships are governed, restricted and regulated, on the one hand, by requirements of logic and common sense and, on the other, by the rules of grammar and combinability. One can speak of *a black-eyed girl* but not of *a black-eyed table* (unless in a piece of modernistic poetry where anything is possible). Also, to say *the child was glad* is quite correct, but *a glad child* is wrong because in Modern English *glad* is attributively used only with a very limited number of nouns (e. g. *glad news*), and names of persons are not among them.

Free word-groups are so called not because of any absolute freedom in using them but simply because they are each time built up anew in the speech process whereas idioms are used as ready-made units with fixed and constant structures.

## How to Distinguish Phraseological Units from Free Word-Groups

This is probably the most discussed — and the most controversial — problem in the field of phraseology. The task of distinguishing between free word-groups and phraseological units is further complicated by the existence of a great number of marginal cases, the so-called *semi-fixed* or *semi-free word-groups*, also called *non-phraseological word-groups* which share with phraseological units their structural stability but lack their semantic unity and figurativeness (e. g. *to go to school*, *to go by bus*, *to commit suicide*).

There are two major criteria for distinguishing between phraseological units and free word-groups: semantic and structural.

Compare the following examples:

A. Cambridge don: I'm told they're inviting more American professors to this university. Isn't it rather carrying coals to Newcastle?

(*To carry coals to Newcastle* means "to take something to a place where it is already plentiful and not needed". Cf. with the R. *Б Тулы со своим самоваром.*)

B. This cargo ship is carrying coal to Liverpool.

The first thing that captures the eye is the semantic difference of the two word-groups consisting of the same essential constituents. In the second sentence the free word-group *is carrying coal* is used in the direct sense, the word *coal* standing for real hard, black coal and *carry* for the plain process of taking something from one place to another. The first context quite obviously has nothing to do either with coal or with transporting it, and the meaning of the whole word-group is something entirely new and far removed from the current meanings of the constituents.

Academician V. V. Vinogradov spoke of the semantic change in phraseological units as "a meaning resulting from a peculiar chemical combination of words". This seems a very apt comparison because in both cases between which the parallel is drawn an entirely new quality comes into existence.

The semantic shift affecting phraseological units does not consist in a mere change of meanings of each separate constituent part of the unit. The meanings of the constituents merge to produce an entirely new meaning: e. g. *to have a bee in one's bonnet* means "to have an obsession about

something; to be eccentric or even a little mad". The humorous metaphoric comparison with a person who is distracted by a bee continually buzzing under his cap has become erased and half-forgotten, and the speakers using the expression hardly think of bees or bonnets but accept it in its transferred sense: "obsessed, eccentric".

That is what is meant when phraseological units are said to be characterized by semantic unity. In the traditional approach, phraseological units have been defined as word-groups conveying a single notion (whereas in free word-groups each meaningful component stands for a separate notion).

It is this feature that makes phraseological units similar to words: both words and phraseological units possess semantic unity (see Introduction). Yet, words are also characterized by structural unity which phraseological units very obviously lack being combinations of words.

Most Soviet scholars today accept the semantic criterion of distinguishing phraseological units from free word-groups as the major one and base their research work in the field of phraseology on the definition of a phraseological unit offered by Professor A. V. Koonin, the leading authority on problems of English phraseology in our country:

"A phraseological unit is a stable word-group characterized by a completely or partially transferred meaning." [10]

The definition clearly suggests that the degree of semantic change in a phraseological unit may vary ("completely or partially transferred meaning"). In actual fact the semantic change may affect either the whole word-group or only one of its components. The following phraseological units represent the first case: *to skate on thin ice* (~ to put oneself in a dangerous position; to take risks); *to wear one's heart on one's sleeve*<sup>1</sup> (~ to expose, so that everyone knows, one's most intimate feelings); *to have one's heart in one's boots* (~ to be deeply depressed, anxious about something); *to have one's heart in one's mouth* (~ to be greatly alarmed by what is expected to happen); *to have one's heart in the right place* (~ to be a good, honest and generous fellow); *a crow in borrowed plumes* (~ a person pretentiously and unsuitably dressed; cf. with the R. *ворона в павлиньих перьях*);

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<sup>1</sup> The origin of the phrase is in a passage in *Othello* where Iago says:

... 'tis not long after  
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve  
For daws to peck at. (Act I, sc. 1)

a wolf in a sheep's clothing<sup>1</sup> (~ a dangerous enemy who plausibly poses as a friend).

The second type is represented by phraseological units in which one of the components preserves its current meaning and the other is used in a transferred meaning: *to lose (keep) one's temper, to fly into a temper, to fall ill, to fall in love (out of love), to stick to one's word (promise), to arrive at a conclusion, bosom friends, shop talk* (also: *to talk shop*), *small talk*.

Here, though, we are on dangerous ground because the border-line dividing phraseological units with partially changed meanings from the so-called *semi-fixed* or *non-phraseological word-groups* (marginal cases) is uncertain and confusing.

The term "idiom", both in this country and abroad, is mostly applied to phraseological units with completely transferred meanings, that is, to the ones in which the meaning of the whole unit does not correspond to the current meanings of the components. There are many scholars who regard idioms as the essence of phraseology and the major focus of interest in phraseology research.

*The structural criterion* also brings forth pronounced distinctive features characterizing phraseological units and contrasting them to free word-groups.

Structural invariability is an essential feature of phraseological units, though, as we shall see, some of them possess it to a lesser degree than others. Structural invariability of phraseological units finds expression in a number of restrictions.

First of all, restriction in substitution. As a rule, no word can be substituted for any meaningful component of a phraseological unit without destroying its sense. \**To carry coals to Manchester* makes as little sense as \**В Харькове со своим самоваром*.

The idiom *to give somebody the cold shoulder* means "to treat somebody coldly, to ignore or cut him", but *a warm shoulder* or *a cold elbow* make no sense at all. The meaning of *a bee in smb's bonnet* was explained above, but *a bee in his hat or cap* would sound a silly error in one's choice of words, one of those absurd slips that people are apt to make when speaking a foreign language.

At the same time, in free word-groups substitution does not present any dangers and does not lead to any serious consequences. In *The cargo ship is carrying coal to Liverpool*

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<sup>1</sup> The allusion is to a fable of Aesop.



all the components can be varied: *The ship/vessel/boat carries/ transports/ takes/ brings coal to (any port).*—

The second type of restriction is the restriction in introducing any additional components into the structure of a phraseological unit.

In a free word-group such changes can be made without affecting the general meaning of the utterance: *This big ship is carrying a large cargo of coal to the port of Liverpool.*

In the phraseological unit *to carry coals to* Newcastle no additional components can be introduced. Nor can one speak about *\*the big white elephant* (when using *the white elephant* in its phraseological sense) or about somebody *\*having his heart in his brown boots*.

Yet, such restrictions are less regular. In *Vanity Fair* by W. M. Thackeray the idiom *to build a castle in the air* is used in this way:

“While dressing for dinner, she built for herself a most magnificent castle in the air of which she was the mistress ...”

In fiction such variations on idioms created for stylistic purposes are not a rare thing. In oral speech phraseological units mostly preserve their traditional structures and resist the introduction of additional components.

The third type of structural restrictions in phraseological units is grammatical invariability. A typical mistake with students of English is to use the plural form of *fault* in the phraseological unit *to find fault with somebody* (e. g. *\*The teacher always found faults with the boy*). Though the plural form in this context is logically well-founded, it is a mistake in terms of the grammatical invariability of phraseological units. A similar typical mistake often occurs in the unit *from head to foot* (e. g. *From head to foot he was immaculately dressed*). Students are apt to use the plural form of *foot* in this phrase thus erring once more against the rigidity of structure which is so characteristic of phraseological units.

Yet again, as in the case of restriction in introducing additional components, there are exceptions to the rule, and these are probably even more numerous.

One can *build a castle in the air*, but also *castles*. A shameful or dangerous family secret is picturesquely described as *a skeleton in the cupboard*, the first substantive component being frequently and easily used in the plural form, as in: *I'm sure they have skeletons in every cupboard!*

*A black sheep* is a disreputable member of a family who, in especially serious cases, may be described as *the blackest sheep of the family*.

## Proverbs

Consider the following examples of proverbs:

*We never know the value of water till the well is dry.*

*You can take the horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink.*

*Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.*

Even these few examples clearly show that proverbs are different from those phraseological units which have been discussed above. The first distinctive feature that strikes one is the obvious structural dissimilarity. Phraseological units, as we have seen, are a kind of ready-made blocks which fit into the structure of a sentence performing a certain syntactical function, more or less as words do. E. g. *George liked her for she never put on airs* (predicate). *Big bugs like him care nothing about small fry like ourselves* (a) subject, b) prepositional object).

Proverbs, if viewed in their structural aspect, are sentences, and so cannot be used in the way in which phraseological units are used in the above examples.

If one compares proverbs and phraseological units in the semantic aspect, the difference seems to become even more obvious. Proverbs could be best compared with minute fables for, like the latter, they sum up the collective experience of the community. They moralize (*Hell is paved with good intentions*), give advice (*Don't judge a tree by its bark*), give warning (*If you sing before breakfast, you will cry before night*), admonish (*Liars should have good memories*), criticize (*Everyone calls his own geese swans*).

No phraseological unit ever does any of these things. They do not stand for whole statements as proverbs do but for a single concept. Their function in speech is purely *nominative* (i. e. they denote an object, an act, etc.). The function of proverbs in speech, though, is *communicative* (i. e. they impart certain information).

The question of whether or not proverbs should be regarded as a subtype of phraseological units and studied together with the phraseology of a language is a controversial one.

Professor A. V. Koonin includes proverbs in his classification of phraseological units and labels them

*communicative phraseological units* (see Ch. 13). From his point of view, one of the main criteria of a phraseological unit is its stability. If the quotient of phraseological stability in a word-group is not below the minimum, it means that we are dealing with a phraseological unit. The structural type — that is, whether the unit is a combination of words or a sentence — is irrelevant.

The criterion of nomination and communication cannot be applied here either, says Professor A. V. Koonin, because there are a considerable number of verbal phraseological units which are word-groups (i. e. nominative units) when the verb is used in the Active Voice, and sentences (i. e. communicative units) when the verb is used in the Passive Voice. E. g. *to cross (pass) the Rubicon — the Rubicon is crossed (passed); to shed crocodile tears — crocodile tears are shed*. Hence, if one accepts nomination as a criterion of referring or not referring this or that unit to phraseology, one is faced with the absurd conclusion that such word-groups, when with verbs in the Active Voice, are phraseological units and belong to the system of the language, and when with verbs in the Passive Voice, are non-phraseological word-groups and do not belong to the system of the language. [10]

It may be added, as one more argument in support of this concept, that there does not seem to exist any rigid or permanent border-line between proverbs and phraseological units as the latter rather frequently originate from the former.

So, the phraseological unit *the last straw* originated from the proverb *The last straw breaks the camel's back*, the phraseological unit *birds of a feather* from the proverb *Birds of a feather flock together*, the phraseological unit *to catch at a straw (straws)* from *A drowning man catches at straws*.

What is more, some of the proverbs are easily transformed into phraseological units. E. g. *Don't put all your eggs in one basket* > *to put all one's eggs in one basket*; *don't cast pearls before swine* > *to cast pearls before swine*.

## EXERCISES

### I. Consider your answers to the following.

1. What do we mean when we say that an idiom has a "double" meaning?
2. Why is it very important to use idioms with care? Should

foreign-language students use them? Give reasons for your answer.

3. The term "phraseological unit" is used by most Soviet scholars. What other terms are used to describe the same word-groups?

4. How can you show that the "freedom" of free word-groups is relative and arbitrary?

5. What are the two major criteria for distinguishing between phraseological units and free word-groups?

6. How would you explain the term "grammatical invariability" of phraseological units?

7. How do proverbs differ from phraseological units?

8. Can proverbs be regarded as a subdivision of phraseological units? Give reasons for your answer.

II. What is the source of the following idioms? If in doubt consult your reference books.

the Trojan horse, Achilles heel, a labour of Hercules, an apple of discord, forbidden fruit, the serpent in the tree, an ugly duckling, the fifth column, to hide one's head in the sand

III. Substitute phraseological units with the noun "heart" for the italicized words. What is the difference between the two sentences?

1. He is not a man who *shows his feelings openly*. 2. She may seem cold but she *has true, kind feelings*. 3. I learned that piece of poetry *by memory*. 4. When I think about my examination tomorrow I *feel in despair*. 5. When I heard that strange cry in the darkness I *was terribly afraid*. 6. It was the job I *liked very much*. 7. I didn't win the prize but I'm *not discouraged*.

IV. Show that you understand the meaning of the following phraseological units by using each of them in a sentence.

1. between the devil and the deep sea; 2. to have one's heart in one's boots; 3. to have one's heart in the right place; 4. to wear one's heart on one's sleeve; 5. in the blues; 6. once in a blue moon; 7. to swear black is white; 8. out of the blue; 9. to talk till all is blue; 10. to talk oneself blue in the face

V. Substitute phraseological units incorporating the names of colours for the italicized words.

1. I'm *feeling* rather *miserable* today. 2. He spends all his time on *bureaucratic routine*. 3. A thing like that happens

very rarely. 4. You can *talk till you are tired of it* but I shan't believe you. 5. The news was a great shock to me. It came quite *unexpectedly*. 6. I won't believe it unless I see it *in writing*. 7. You can never believe what he says, he will *swear anything* if it suits his purpose.

VI. Read the following jokes. Why do little children often misunderstand phraseological units? Explain how the misunderstanding arises in each case.

1. "Now, my little boys and girls," said the teacher. "I want you to be very still — so still that you can hear a pin drop." For a minute all was still, and then a little boy shrieked out: "Let her drop."

2. "You must be pretty strong," said Willie, aged six to the young widow who had come to call on his mother.

"Strong? What makes you think so?"

"Daddy said you can wrap any man in town around your little finger."

3. Tom: What would you do if you were in my shoes?

Tim: Polish them!

4. Little Girl: Oh, Mr. Sprawler, do put on your skates and show me the funny figures you can make.

Mr. Sprawler: My dear child, I'm only a beginner. I can't make any figures.

Little Girl: But Mother said you were skating yesterday and cut a ridiculous figure.

VII. Read the following jokes. Explain why the italicized groups of words are not phraseological units.

#### Warning

The little boy whose father was *absorbed in reading a newspaper on the bench in the city park*, exclaimed:

"Daddy, look, a plane!"

His father, still reading the paper, said: "All right, but don't *touch it*."

#### Great Discovery

A scientist rushed into the ops room of the space mission control centre: "You know that new gigantic computer which was to be the brain of the project? We have just *made a great discovery!*"

"What discovery?"

"It doesn't work!"

VIII. Explain whether the semantic changes in the following phraseological units are complete or partial. Paraphrase them.

to wear one's heart on one's sleeve; a wolf in a sheep's clothing; to fly into a temper; to stick to one's word; bosom friend; small talk; to cast pearls before swine; to beat about the bush; to add fuel to the fire; to fall ill; to fall in love; to sail under false colours; to be at sea

IX. Say what structural variations are possible in the following phraseological units. If in doubt, consult your dictionaries.

to catch at a straw; a big bug; the last drop; to build a castle in the air; to weather the storm; to get the upper hand; to run for one's life; to do wonders; to run a risk; just the other way about

X. Read the following jokes. Identify the phraseological units using the two major criteria: structural and semantic. What are the jokes based on?

1. He: Don't you hate people who talk behind your back?  
She: Yes, especially at the movies.

2. "I'd hate to be in your shoes," said a woman yesterday, as she was quarrelling with a neighbour.

"You couldn't get in them," sarcastically remarked the neighbour.

3. Herbert: Arthur hasn't been out one night for three weeks.

Flora: Has he turned over a new leaf?

Herbert: No, he's turned over a new car.

4. Motorist: How far is it to the next town?

Native: Nigh to five miles as the crow flies.

Motorist: Well, how far is it if a damned crow has to walk and carry an empty gasoline can?

5. "So, she turned you down, eh?"

"Yes, I made the mistake of confessing that my heart was in my mouth when I proposed."

"What has it to do with it?"

"Oh, she said she couldn't think of marrying a man whose heart wasn't in the right place."

XI. Read the following proverbs. Give their Russian equivalents or explain their meanings.

A bargain is a bargain. A cat in gloves catches no mice. Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.



A good beginning is half the battle. A new broom sweeps clean. An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening. It never rains but it pours. Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Make hay while the sun shines.

XII. Give the English equivalents for the following Russian proverbs.

Нет худа без добра. В гостях хорошо, а дома лучше. С глаз долой, из сердца вон. Дуракам закон не писан. Он пороку не выдумает. Слезами горю не поможешь. Поспешишь — людей насмешишь. Взялся за гуж, не говори, что не дюж.

XIII. Give the proverbs from which the following phraseological units have developed.

birds of a feather; to catch at a straw; to put all one's eggs in one basket; to cast pearls before swine; the first blow; a bird in the bush; to cry over spilt milk; the last straw

XIV. Read the following joke. What proverb is paraphrased in it?

Dull and morose people, says a medical writer, seldom resist disease as easily as those with cheerful disposition. The surly bird catches the germ.

## CHAPTER 13

### PHRASEOLOGY: PRINCIPLES OF CLASSIFICATION

It would be interesting now to look at phraseological units from a different angle, namely: how are all these treasures of the language approached by the linguistic science? The very miscellaneous nature of these units suggests the first course of action: they must be sorted out and arranged in certain classes which possess identical characteristics.

But which characteristics should be chosen as the main criteria for such a classification system? The structural? The semantic? Those of degree of stability? Of origin?

It should be clear from the previous description that a phraseological unit is a complex phenomenon with a number of important features, which can therefore be approached from different points of view. Hence, there exist a considerable number of different classification systems devised by different scholars and based on different principles.

The traditional and oldest principle for classifying phraseological units is based on their original content and might be alluded to as "thematic" (although the term is not universally accepted). The approach is widely used in numerous English and American guides to idiom, phrase books, etc. (see, for instance, *English Idioms* by L. P. Smith, London, 1922<sup>1</sup>). On this principle, idioms are classified according to their sources of origin, "source" referring to the particular sphere of human activity, of life of nature, of natural phenomena, etc. So, L. P. Smith gives in his classification groups of idioms used by sailors, fishermen, soldiers, hunters and associated with the realia, phenomena and conditions of their occupations. In Smith's classification we also find groups of idioms associated with domestic and wild animals and birds, agriculture and cooking. There are also numerous idioms drawn from sports, arts, etc.

This principle of classification is sometimes called "etymological". The term does not seem appropriate since we usually mean something different when we speak of the etymology of a word or word-group: whether the word (or word-group) is native or borrowed, and, if the latter, what is the source of borrowing. It is true that Smith makes a special study of idioms borrowed from other languages, but that is only a relatively small part of his classification system. The general principle is not etymological.

Smith points out that word-groups associated with the sea and the life of seamen are especially numerous in English vocabulary. Most of them have long since developed metaphorical meanings which have no longer any association with the sea or sailors. Here are some examples.

*To be all at sea* — to be unable to understand; to be in a state of ignorance or bewilderment about something (e. g. *How can I be a judge in a situation in which I am all at sea? I'm afraid I'm all at sea in this problem*). V. H. Collins remarks that the metaphor is that of a boat tossed about, out of control, with its occupants not knowing where they are. [18]

*To sink or swim* — to fail or succeed (e. g. *It is a case of sink or swim. All depends on his own effort.*).

*In deep water* — in trouble or danger.

*In low water, on the rocks* — in strained financial circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1959 the book was published in a Russian translation.

*To be in the same boat with somebody* — to be in a situation in which people share the same difficulties and dangers (e. g. *I don't like you much, but seeing that we're in the same boat I'll back you all I can.*). The metaphor is that of passengers in the life-boat of a sunken ship.

*To sail under false colours* — to pretend to be what one is not; sometimes, to pose as a friend and, at the same time, have hostile intentions. The metaphor is that of an enemy ship that approaches its intended prey showing at the mast the flag ("colours") of a pretended friendly nation.

*To show one's colours* — to betray one's real character or intentions. The allusion is, once more, to a ship showing the flag of its country at the mast.

*To strike one's colours* — to surrender, give in, admit one is beaten. The metaphor refers to a ship's hauling down its flag (sign of surrender).

*To weather (to ride out) the storm* — to overcome difficulties; to have courageously stood against misfortunes.

*To bow to the storm* — to give in, to acknowledge one's defeat.

*Three sheets in(to) the wind* (sl.) — very drunk.

*Half seas over* (sl.) — drunk.

Though, as has been said, direct associations with seafaring in all these idioms have been severed, distant memories of the sea romance and adventure still linger in some of them. The faint sound of the surf can still be heard in such phrases as *to ride out the storm* or *breakers ahead!* (~ Take care! Danger!). Such idioms as *to sail under false colours*, *to nail one's colours to the mast* (~ to be true to one's convictions, to fight for them openly) bring to mind the distant past of pirate brigs, sea battles and great discoveries of new lands.

It is true, though, that a foreigner is more apt to be struck by the colourfulness of the direct meaning of an idiom where a native speaker sees only its transferred meaning, the original associations being almost fully forgotten. And yet, when we Russians use or hear the idiom *первая ласточка*, doesn't a dim image of the little bird flash before our mind, though, of course, we really mean something quite different? When we say *на воле шанка зорум*, are we entirely free from the picture built up by the direct meanings of the words? If it were really so and all the direct associations of the idioms had been entirely erased, phraseology would not constitute one of the language's main expressive resources. Its expressiveness and wealth of colour largely — if not

solely — depend on the ability of an idiom to create two images at once: that of a ship safely coming out of the storm — and that of a man overcoming his troubles and difficulties (*to weather/ride out the storm*); that of a ship's crew desperately fighting against a pirate brig — and that of a man courageously standing for his views and convictions (*to nail one's colours to the mast*).

The thematic principle of classifying phraseological units has real merit but it does not take into consideration the linguistic characteristic features of the phraseological units.

The considerable contribution made by Soviet scholars in phraseological research cannot be exaggerated. We have already mentioned the great contribution made by Academician V. V. Vinogradov to this branch of linguistic science.

The classification system of phraseological units devised by this prominent scholar is considered by some linguists of today to be outdated, and yet its value is beyond doubt because it was the first classification system which was based on *the semantic principle*. It goes without saying that semantic characteristics are of immense importance in phraseological units. It is also well known that in modern research they are often sadly ignored. That is why any attempt at studying the semantic aspect of phraseological units should be appreciated.

Vinogradov's classification system is founded on the degree of semantic cohesion between the components of a phraseological unit. Units with a partially transferred meaning show the weakest cohesion between their components. The more distant the meaning of a phraseological unit from the current meaning of its constituent parts, the greater is its degree of semantic cohesion. Accordingly, Vinogradov classifies phraseological units into three classes: *phraseological combinations, unities and fusions* (Р. фразеологические сочетания, единства и сращения). [8]

*Phraseological combinations* are word-groups with a partially changed meaning. They may be said to be clearly motivated, that is, the meaning of the unit can be easily deduced from the meanings of its constituents.

E. g. *to be at one's wits' end, to be good at something, to be a good hand at something, to have a bite, to come off a poor second, to come to a sticky end* (coll.), *to look a sight* (coll.), *to take something for granted, to stick to one's word, to stick at nothing, gospel truth, bosom friends*.

*Phraseological unities* are word-groups with a completely

changed meaning, that is, the meaning of the unit does not correspond to the meanings of its constituent parts. They are motivated units or, putting it another way, the meaning of the whole unit can be deduced from the meanings of the constituent parts; the metaphor, on which the shift of meaning is based, is clear and transparent.

E. g. *to stick to one's guns* (~ to be true to one's views or convictions. The image is that of a gunner or guncrew who do not desert their guns even if a battle seems lost); *to sit on the fence* (~ in discussion, politics, etc. refrain from committing oneself to either side); *to catch/clutch at a straw/straws* (~ when in extreme danger, avail oneself of even the slightest chance of rescue); *to lose one's head* (~ to be at a loss what to do; to be out of one's mind); *to lose one's heart to smb.* (~ to fall in love); *to lock the stable door after the horse is stolen* (~ to take precautions too late, when the mischief is done); *to look a gift horse in the mouth* (~ to examine a present too critically; to find fault with something one gained without effort); *to ride the high horse* (~ to behave in a superior, haughty, overbearing way. The image is that of a person mounted on a horse so high that he looks down on others); *the last drop/straw* (~ the final culminating circumstance that makes a situation unendurable); *a big bug/pot*, sl. (~ a person of importance); *a fish out of water* (~ a person situated uncomfortably outside his usual or proper environment).

*Phraseological fusions* are word-groups with a completely changed meaning but, in contrast to the unities, they are demotivated, that is, their meaning cannot be deduced from the meanings of the constituent parts; the metaphor, on which the shift of meaning was based, has lost its clarity and is obscure.

E. g. *to come a cropper* (~ to come to disaster); *neck and crop* (~ entirely, altogether, thoroughly, as in: *He was thrown out neck and crop. She severed all relations with them neck and crop.*); *at sixes and sevens* (~ in confusion or in disagreement); *to set one's cap at smb.* (~ to try and attract a man; spoken about girls and women. The image, which is now obscure, may have been either that of a child trying to catch a butterfly with his cap or of a girl putting on a pretty cap so as to attract a certain person. In *Vanity Fair*: "Be careful, Joe, that girl is setting her cap at you."); *to leave smb. in the lurch* (~ to abandon a friend when he is in trouble); *to show*

*the white feather* (~ to betray one's cowardice. The allusion was originally to cock fighting. A white feather in a cock's plumage denoted a bad fighter); *to dance attendance on smb.* (~ to try and please or attract smb.; to show exaggerated attention to smb.).

It is obvious that this classification system does not take into account the structural characteristics of phraseological units. On the other hand, the border-line separating unities from fusions is vague and even subjective. One and the same phraseological unit may appear motivated to one person (and therefore be labelled as a unity) and demotivated to another (and be regarded as a fusion). The more profound one's command of the language and one's knowledge of its history, the fewer fusions one is likely to discover in it.

The structural principle of classifying phraseological units is based on their ability to perform the same syntactical functions as words. In the traditional structural approach, the following principal groups of phraseological units are distinguishable.

A. *Verbal*. E. g. *to run for one's (dear) life, to get (win) the upper hand, to talk through one's hat, to make a song and dance about something, to sit pretty* (Amer. sl.).

B. *Substantive*. E. g. *dog's life, cat-and-dog life, calf love, white lie, tall order, birds of a feather, birds of passage, red tape, brown study*.

C. *Adjectival*. E. g. *high and mighty, spick and span, brand new, safe and sound*. In this group the so-called comparative word-groups are particularly expressive and sometimes amusing in their unanticipated and capricious associations: *(as) cool as a cucumber, (as) nervous as a cat, (as) weak as a kitten, (as) good as gold* (usu. spoken about children), *(as) pretty as a picture, as large as life, (as) slippery as an eel, (as) thick as thieves, (as) drunk as an owl* (sl.), *(as) mad as a hatter/a hare in March*.

D. *Adverbial*. E. g. *high and low* (as in *They searched for him high and low*), *by hook or by crook* (as in *She decided that, by hook or by crook, she must marry him*), *for love or money* (as in *He came to the conclusion that a really good job couldn't be found for love or money*), *in cold blood* (as in *The crime was said to have been committed in cold blood*), *in the dead of night, between the devil and the deep sea* (~ in a situation in which danger threatens whatever course of action one takes), *to the bitter end* (as in *to fight*



to the bitter end), by a long chalk (as in *It is not the same thing, by a long chalk*).

E. *Interjectional*. E. g. *my god! by Jove! by George! goodness gracious! good heavens! sakes alive!* (Amer.)

Professor Smirnitsky offered a classification system for English phraseological units which is interesting as an attempt to combine the structural and the semantic principles. [12] Phraseological units in this classification system are grouped according to the number and semantic significance of their constituent parts. Accordingly two large groups are established:

A. one-summit units, which have one meaningful constituent (e. g. *to give up, to make out, to pull out, to be tired, to be surprised*<sup>1</sup>);

B. two-summit and multi-summit units which have two or more meaningful constituents (e. g. *black art, first night, common sense, to fish in troubled waters*).

Within each of these large groups the phraseological units are classified according to the category of parts of speech of the summit constituent. So, one-summit units are subdivided into: a) verbal-adverbial units equivalent to verbs in which the semantic and the grammatical centres coincide in the first constituent (e. g. *to give up*); b) units equivalent to verbs which have their semantic centre in the second constituent and their grammatical centre in the first (e. g. *to be tired*); c) prepositional-substantive units equivalent either to adverbs or to copulas and having their semantic centre in the substantive constituent and no grammatical centre (e. g. *by heart, by means of*).

Two-summit and multi-summit phraseological units are classified into: a) attributive-substantive two-summit units equivalent to nouns (e. g. *black art*); b) verbal-substantive two-summit units equivalent to verbs (e. g. *to take the floor*); c) phraseological repetitions equivalent to adverbs (e. g. *now or never*); d) adverbial multi-summit units (e. g. *every other day*).

Professor Smirnitsky also distinguishes proper phraseological units which, in his classification system, are units with non-figurative meanings, and idioms, that is, units with transferred meanings based on a metaphor.

Professor Koonin, the leading Soviet authority on

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<sup>1</sup> It should be pointed out that most Soviet scholars do not regard these as phraseological units; so this is a controversial point.

English phraseology, pointed out certain inconsistencies in this classification system. First of all, the subdivision into phraseological units (as non-idiomatic units) and idioms contradicts the leading criterion of a phraseological unit suggested by Professor Smirnitsky: it should be idiomatic.

Professor Koonin also objects to the inclusion of such word-groups as *black art*, *best man*, *first night* in phraseology (in Professor Smirnitsky's classification system, the two-summit phraseological units) as all these word-groups are not characterized by a transferred meaning. It is also pointed out that verbs with post-positions (e. g. *give up*) are included in the classification but their status as phraseological units is not supported by any convincing argument.

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The classification system of phraseological units suggested by Professor A. V. Koonin is the latest outstanding achievement in the Soviet theory of phraseology. The classification is based on the combined structural-semantic principle and it also considers the quotient of stability of phraseological units.

Phraseological units are subdivided into the following four classes according to their function in communication determined by their structural-semantic characteristics.

1) Nominative phraseological units are represented by word-groups, including the ones with one meaningful word, and coordinative phrases of the type *wear and tear*, *well and good*.

The first class also includes word-groups with a predicative structure, such as *as the crow flies*, and, also, predicative phrases of the type *see how the land lies*, *ships that pass in the night*.

2) Nominative-communicative phraseological units include word-groups of the type *to break the ice* — *the ice is broken*, that is, verbal word-groups which are transformed into a sentence when the verb is used in the Passive Voice.

3) Phraseological units which are neither nominative nor communicative include interjectional word-groups.

4) Communicative phraseological units are represented by proverbs and sayings.

These four classes are divided into sub-groups according to the type of structure of the phraseological unit. The sub-groups include further rubrics representing types of structural-semantic meanings according to the kind of relations between the constituents and to either full or partial transference of meaning.

The classification system includes a considerable number of subtypes and gradations and objectively reflects the wealth of types of phraseological units existing in the language. It is based on truly scientific and modern criteria and represents an earnest attempt to take into account all the relevant aspects of phraseological units and combine them within the borders of one classification system.<sup>1</sup>

## EXERCISES

1. Consider your answers to the following.

1. What is the basis of the traditional and oldest principle for classifying phraseological units?

2. What other criteria can be used for the classification of phraseological units?

3. Do you share the opinion that in idioms the original associations are partly or wholly lost? Are we entirely free from the picture built up by the current meanings of the individual words in idioms? Illustrate your answer with different examples.

4. What are the merits and disadvantages of the thematic principle of classification for phraseological units?

5. Explain the semantic principle of classification for phraseological units.

6. What is the basis of the structural principle of classification for phraseological units?

7. Analyse Professor A. I. Smirnitsky's classification system for phraseological units. What is it based on? Do you see any controversial points in the classification system?

8. Discuss the merits of Professor A. V. Koonin's system for the classification of phraseological units. What is it based on? Do you find any points in the classification system which are open to question?

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<sup>1</sup> For details, see *Кунин А. В. Английская фразеология. Гл. VIII*, М., 1970.

II. a) Read the following text. Compile a list of the phraseological units used in it. Translate them into Russian by phraseological units (if possible) or by free word-groups. On what principle are all these idioms selected?

If you feel under the weather, you don't feel very well, and if you make heavy weather of something, you make it more difficult than it needs to be. Someone with a sunny disposition is always cheerful and happy, but a person with his head in the clouds does not pay much attention to what is going on around him. To have a place in the sun is to enjoy a favourable position, and to go everywhere under the sun is to travel all over the world. Someone who is under a cloud is in disgrace or under suspicion, and a person who is snowed under with work is overwhelmed with it.

When you break the ice, you get to know someone better, but if you cut no ice with someone, you have no effect on them. To keep something on ice or in cold storage is to reserve it for the future, and to skate on thin ice is to be in a dangerous or risky situation. If something is in the wind, it is being secretly planned, and if you have the wind up, you became frightened. To throw caution to the winds is to abandon it and act recklessly, but to see how the wind blows is to find out how people are thinking before you act. If you take the wind out of someone's sails, you gain the advantage over him or her by saying or doing something first. To save something for a rainy day is to put some money aside for when it is needed. To do something come rain or shine is to do it whatever the circumstances. Finally, everyone knows that it never rains but it pours, that problems and difficulties always come together. But every cloud has a silver lining — every misfortune has a good side.

(Журнал «Англия», 1973)

b) Give at least fifteen examples of your own to illustrate the phraseological units in your list.

III. a) Read the following text. Compile a list of the phraseological units used in it.<sup>1</sup> Classify them according to Academician Vinogradov's classification system for phraseological units.

English has many colloquial expressions to do with parts of the human body — from head to toe! Here are some of the commonest ones.

<sup>1</sup> Bear in mind that some of the examples explained in the text do not represent phraseology, but simply words with transferred meanings. So be careful in your choice.

To keep your head is to remain calm, but to lose it is to panic and do something foolish. If something is above or over your head, it is too difficult for you to understand. An egg-head is an intellectual, and someone who has their head screwed on, is very sensible.

If you split hairs, you are very pedantic, but if you don't turn a hair you are very calm.

To pay through the nose is to pay a very high price for something, but if you turn up your nose at something you despise it. If you are all ears, you listen very attentively, and if you keep your ear to the ground, you listen and watch out for signs of future events. To see eye to eye with someone is to agree with them, and if you don't bat an eyelid, you show no surprise or excitement. If you are down in the mouth, you're rather depressed. A stiff upper lip is the traditionally British quality of not showing any emotions in times of trouble.

To have your tongue in your cheek is to say one thing and mean something else. To have a sweet tooth is to have a taste for sweet food, and to do something by the skin of your teeth is to just manage to do it.

To stick your neck out is to do something risky or dangerous, and to keep someone at arm's length is to avoid getting too friendly with them. To be high-handed is to behave in a superior fashion, but to lend someone a hand is to help them. If you have a finger in every pie, you are involved in a lot of different projects, and if you have green fingers, you are very good at gardening. To be all fingers and thumbs is to be very clumsy, and to be under someone's thumb is to be under their influence. If you pull someone's leg, you tease them, and if you haven't a leg to stand on, you have no reason or justification for what you do. To put your foot down is to insist on something and to fall on your feet is to be very fortunate. To find your feet is to become used to a new situation, but to get cold feet is to become frightened or nervous about something. If you put your foot in it, you say or do something to upset or annoy someone else, and if you tread on someone's toes you do the same without meaning to.

(Журнал «Англия», 1972)

b) Give at least fifteen examples of your own to illustrate the phraseological units in your list.

IV. In the texts of exercises II and III find examples of phraseological synonyms and antonyms.

V. Complete the following sentences, using the phraseological units given in the list below. Translate them into Russian.

1. If I pay my rent, I won't have any money to buy food. I'm between ——. 2. It's no use grumbling about your problems — we're all ——. 3. He's sold his house and his business to go to Australia, so he's really ——. 4. She prefers not to rely on anyone else, she likes to ——. 5. They didn't know whether to get married or not, but they finally ——. 6. You can't expect everything to go right all the time, you must learn to ——.

to take the rough with the smooth; between the devil and the deep sea; to take the plunge; in the same boat; to paddle one's own canoe; to burn one's boats

VI. Complete the following similes. Translate the phraseological units into Russian. If necessary, use your dictionary.

A. as black as — —	B. — — as a lion
as green as — —	— — as a lamb
as cold as — —	— — as a mouse
as white as — —	— — as a cat
as old as — —	— — as a kitten
as changeable as — —	— — as an eel
as safe as — —	— — as an owl
as brown as — —	— — as a wolf
as clean as — —	— — as a cricket
as dull as — —	— — as a bee

VII. Complete the following sentences, using the words from the list below. Translate the phraseological units into Russian.

1. She was so embarrassed that she went as red as a ——. 2. I can carry the suitcase easily, it's as light as a ——. 3. The room is as warm as ——. 4. My sister does so many things that she's always as busy as a ——. 5. He is as proud as a — — of his new car. 6. It's as cold as — — in that office. 7. Once he's made up his mind, he'll never change it, he's as stubborn as a — —. 8. She was so frightened that her face went as white as a ——. 9. The postman always calls at 8 o'clock, he's as regular as a ——. 10. However much he eats, he's always as thin as a ——.



ice, beetroot, mule, feather, sheet, toast, clockwork, bee, rail, peacock

VIII. In the examples given below identify the phraseological units and classify them on the semantic principle.

1. The operation started badly and everyone was in a temper throughout. 2. I know a man who would love meeting you. The perfect nut for you to crack your teeth on. 3. I wish I had you for Maths (my favourite subject). But alas, we cannot have our cake and eat it too. 4. He said: "Well, never mind, Nurse. Don't make such heavy weather about it." 5. Did you know that 50% of the time I've been barking up all the wrong trees. 6. However, while appreciating that the best way to deal with a bully is to bully back, I never quite had the nerve. 7. What is it — First Aid? All you need know is how to treat shock and how to stop haemorrhage, which I've drummed into you till I'm blue in the face. 8. Don't let them (pupils) lead you by the nose. 9. But I thought he was afraid I might take him at his word. 10. Ruth made no bones about the time she was accustomed to have her dinner. 11. Poor Eleanor — what a mess she made of her life, marrying that man Grey! 12. There was a list of diets up in the kitchen, but Auntie had it all at her finger-tips. 13. "Bob, give me a hand with the screen." Diana said. "Now be very careful, won't you, sweetie?" 14. My common sense tells me that I'm making a mountain out of a molehill. 15. She thought, he's obviously a very sensitive man, he can read between the lines. 16. Oh, said Arthur, someone might've bought the things cheap at an auction and put them by for a rainy day. 17. "I played like a fool," said Guy, breaking a silence. "I'm feeling a bit under the weather."

IX. In the examples given below identify the phraseological units and classify them on the structural principle. Translate the phraseological units into Russian.

1. Ella Friedenberg thinks she's Freud, but actually she's Peeping Tom. 2. What it symbolized was a fact of banking-corporate life: You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. 3. There was a man I cared about, and this afternoon he told me out of a clear sky that he was poor as a churchmouse. 4. Finally he asked me out of the blue if I could drive a car. 5. But Nelson did not believe in letting the grass grow under his feet and applied for the headmastership of a Mission

School that was being started in New Guinea. 6. He took his ideas from "Daily Telegraph" and the books in prep-school library, and his guiding rule in life was to play safe. 7. By God! I may be old-fashioned in my ideas, but women run around too much these days to suit me. They meet all kinds of crazy fish. 8. Then I got a shock that stiffened me from head to toe.

X. Read the following jokes. Classify the italicized word-groups, using Professor Smirnitsky's classification system for phraseological units.

### Out of the Fire Into the Frying Pan

A fighter pilot bailed out of his aircraft which had suddenly *caught fire*. He safely landed in an orchard on an apple tree and *climbed down* without a scratch, but a few minutes later he was taken to hospital. The gardener's fierce and vigilant dog had been waiting for him under the tree.

### More Precise

Two aviation meteorologists were engaged in *shop talk*.

"No, I don't watch the TV weather commentary. I reckon you get better weather on the radio," said one of them thoughtfully.

XI. Group the following italicized phraseological units, using Professor Koonin's classification system. Translate them into Russian.

1. Margot brightened "*Now you are talking!* That would be a step up for women's lib (= liberation)." 2. Why was I more interested in the one *black sheep* than in all the *white lambs* in my care? 3. To the young, clichés seem freshly minted. *Hitch your wagon to the star!* 4. *Out of sight out of mind*. Anyway it'll do you good to have a rest from me. 5. In a sense it could be said that *the ice was broken* between us. 6. Rose Waterford smothered a giggle, but the others preserved a stony silence. Mrs. Forrester's smile froze on her lips. Albert had *dropped a brick*. 7. "The fact is that Albert Forrester has made you all look a lot of damned fools." "All," said Clifford Boyleston. "*We're all in the same boat*." 8. *It's no good crying over spilt milk*. 9. Like many serious patriots, in her inability to know for certain *which way the cat would jump* she held her political opinions in suspense. 10. "How long do you want

to go for? For always?" "Yes, for always." "Oh, *my God!*" 11. That also was a gentleman's paper, but it *had bees in its bonnet*. Bees in bonnets were respectable things, but personally Soames did not care for them.

## CHAPTER 14

### DO AMERICANS SPEAK ENGLISH OR AMERICAN?

In one of his stories Oscar Wilde said that the English "have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, language."

Bernard Shaw, on the contrary, seemed to hold a different opinion on the point, but he expressed it in such an ambiguous way that, if one gives it some thought, the idea is rather the same as that of Wilde. Shaw said that America and England are two great nations separated by the same language.

Of course, both these statements were meant as jokes, but the insistence on a certain difference of the language used in the United States of America to the language spoken in England is emphasized quite seriously.

Viewed linguistically, the problem may be put in this way: do the English and the Americans speak the same language or two different languages? Do the United States of America possess their own language?

The hypothesis of the so-called "American language" has had several champions and supporters, especially in the United States. One of the most popular books dealing with the problem is *The American Language* by H. L. Mencken published in New York in 1957.

Yet, there are also other points of view. There are scholars who regard American English as one of the dialects of the English language. This theory can hardly be accepted because a dialect is usually opposed to the literary variety of the language whereas American English possesses a literary variety of its own. Other scholars label American English "a regional variety" of the English language.

Before accepting this point of view, though, it is necessary to find out whether or not American English, in its modern stage of development, possesses those characteristics which would support its status as an independent language.

A language is supposed to possess a vocabulary and a grammar system of its own. Let us try and see if American English can boast such.

### Vocabulary of American English

It is quite true that the vocabulary used by American speakers, has distinctive features of its own. More than that: there are whole groups of words which belong to American vocabulary exclusively and constitute its specific feature. These words are called Americanisms.

The first group of such words may be described as *historical Americanisms*.

At the beginning of the 17th c. the first English migrants began arriving in America in search of new and better living conditions. It was then that English was first spoken on American soil, and it is but natural that it was spoken in its 17th-c. form. For instance, the noun *fall* was still used by the first migrants in its old meaning "autumn", the verb *to guess* in the old meaning "to think", the adjective *sick* in the meaning "ill, unwell". In American usage these words still retain their old meanings whereas in British English their meanings have changed.

These and similar words, though the Americans and the English use them in different meanings, are nevertheless found both in American and in British vocabularies.

The second group of Americanisms includes words which one is not likely to discover in British vocabulary. They are specifically American, and we shall therefore call them *proper Americanisms*. The oldest of these were formed by the first migrants to the American continent and reflected, to a great extent, their attempts to cope with their new environment.

It should be remembered that America was called "The New World" not only because the migrants severed all connections with their old life. America was for them a truly new world in which everything was strikingly and bewilderingly different from what it had been in the Old Country (as they called England): the landscape, climate, trees and plants, birds and animals.

Therefore, from the very first, they were faced with a serious lack of words in their vocabulary with which to describe all these new and strange things. Gradually such words were formed. Here are some of them.

*Backwoods* ("wooded, uninhabited districts"), *cold snap* ("a sudden frost"), *blue-grass* ("a sort of grass peculiar to North America"), *blue-jack* ("a small American oak"), *egg-plant* ("a plant with edible fruit"), *sweet potato* ("a plant with sweet edible roots"), *redbud* ("an American tree having small budlike pink flowers; the state tree of Oklahoma"), *red cedar* ("an American coniferous tree with reddish fragrant wood"), *cat-bird* ("a small North-American bird whose call resembles the mewling of a cat"), *cat-fish* ("called so because of spines likened to a cat's claws"), *bull-frog* ("a huge frog producing sounds not unlike a bull's roar"), *sun-fish* ("a fish with a round flat golden body").

If we consider all these words from the point of view of the "building materials" of which they are made we shall see that these are all familiarly English, even though the words themselves cannot be found in the vocabulary of British English. Yet, both the word-building pattern of composition (see Ch. 6) and the constituents of these compounds are easily recognized as essentially English.

Later proper Americanisms are represented by names of objects which are called differently in the United States and in England. E. g. the British *chemist's* is called *drug store* or *druggist's* in the United States, the American word for *sweets* (Br.) is *candy*, *luggage* (Br.) is called *baggage* (Amer.), *underground* (Br.) is called *subway* (Amer.), *lift* (Br.) is called *elevator* (Amer.), *railway* (Br.) is called *railroad* (Amer.), *carriage* (Br.) is called *car* (Amer.), *car* (Br.) is called *automobile* (Amer.).

If historical Americanisms have retained their 17th-c. meanings (e. g. *fall*, n., *mad*, adj., *sick*, adj.), there are also words which, though they can be found both in English and in American vocabulary, have developed meanings characteristic of American usage. The noun *date* is used both in British and American English in the meanings "the time of some event"; "the day of the week or month"; "the year". On the basis of these meanings, in American English only, another meaning developed: an appointment for a particular time (transference based on contiguity: the day and time of an appointment > appointment itself).

\* \* \*

American vocabulary is rich in borrowings. The principal groups of borrowed words are the same as were pointed

out for English vocabulary (see Ch. 3). Yet, there are groups of specifically American borrowings which reflect the historical contacts of the Americans with other nations on the American continent.

These are, for instance, Spanish borrowings (e. g. *ranch*, *sombrero*, *canyon*, *cinch*), Negro borrowings (e. g. *banjo*) and, especially, Indian borrowings. The latter are rather numerous and have a peculiar flavour of their own: *wigwam*, *squaw*, *canoe*, *moccasin*, *toboggan*, *caribou*, *tomahawk*. There are also some translation-loans of Indian origin: *pale-face* (the name of the Indians for all white people), *war path*, *war paint*, *pipe of peace*, *fire-water*.

These words are used metaphorically in both American and British modern communication. A woman who is too heavily made up may be said to wear *war paint*, and a person may be warned against an enemy by: *Take care: he is on the war path* (i. e. he has hostile intentions).

Many of the names of places, rivers, lakes, even of states, are of Indian origin, and hold, in their very sound, faint echoes of the distant past of the continent. Such names as, for instance, *Ohio* [ou'haɪou], *Michigan* ['mɪʃɪɡən], *Tennessee* [ˌtene'si:], *Illinois* [ˌɪlɪ'noɪ(s)], *Kentucky* [ken'tʌki] sound exotic and romantic. These names awake dim memories of those olden times when Indian tribes were free and the sole masters of the vast unspoiled beautiful lands. These words seem to have retained in their sound the free wind blowing over the prairie or across the great lakes, the smokes rising over wigwams, the soft speech of dark-skinned people. It seems that Longfellow's famous lines about Indian legends and tales could well be applied to words of Indian origin:

Should you ask me, whence the stories?  
Whence these legends and traditions,  
With the odour of the forest,  
With the dew and damp of meadows,  
With the curling smoke of wigwams,  
With the rushing of great rivers ...

(From *Hiawatha Song*)

\* \* \*

One more group of Americanisms is represented by *American shortenings*. It should be immediately pointed out that there is nothing specifically American about



shortening as a way of word-building (see Ch. 6). It is a productive way of word-building typical of both British and American English. Yet, this type of word structure seems to be especially characteristic for American word-building. The following shortenings were produced on American soil, yet most of them are used both in American English and British English: *movies*, *talkies*, *auto*, *gym* (for *gymnasium*), *dorm* (for *dormitory*), *perm* (for *permanent wave*, "a kind of hairdo"), *mo* (for *moment*, e. g. *Just a mo*), *circs* (for *circumstances*, e. g. *under the circs*), *cert* (for *certainty*, e. g. *That's a cert*), *n. g.* (for *no good*), *b. f.* (for *boy-friend*), *g. m.* (for *grand-mother*), *okay*. (All these words represent informal stylistic strata of the vocabulary.)

\* \* \*

More examples could be given in support of the statement that the vocabulary of American English includes certain groups of words that are specifically American and possesses certain distinctive characteristics. Yet, in all its essential features, it is the same vocabulary as that of British English, and, if in this chapter we made use of the terms "the vocabulary of American English" and "the vocabulary of British English", it was done only for the sake of argument. Actually, they are not two vocabularies but one. To begin with, the basic vocabulary, whose role in communication is of utmost importance, is the same in American and British English, with very few exceptions.

On the other hand, many Americanisms belong to colloquialisms and slang, that is to those shifting, changeable strata of the vocabulary which do not represent its stable or permanent bulk, the latter being the same in American and British speech.

Against the general extensive background of English vocabulary, all the groups of Americanisms look, in comparison, insignificant enough, and are not sufficiently weighty to support the hypothesis that there is an "American language".

Many Americanisms easily penetrate into British speech, and, as a result, some of the distinctive characteristics of American English become erased, so that the differentiations seem to have a tendency of getting levelled rather than otherwise.

## The Grammar System of American English

Here we are likely to find even fewer divergencies than in the vocabulary system.

The first distinctive feature is the use of the auxiliary verb *will* in the first person singular and plural of the Future Indefinite Tense, in contrast to the British normative *shall*. The American *I will go there* does not imply modality, as in the similar British utterance (where it will mean "I am willing to go there"), but pure futurity. Some scholars seem to think that the British-English Future Indefinite shows the same tendency of substituting *will* for *shall* in the first person singular and plural.

The second distinctive feature consists in a tendency to substitute the Past Indefinite Tense for the Present Perfect Tense, especially in oral communication. An American is likely to say *I saw this movie* where an Englishman will probably say *I've seen this film*, though, with the mutual penetration of both varieties, it is sometimes difficult to predict what Americanisms one is likely to hear on the British Isles. Even more so with the substitution of the Past Indefinite for the Present Perfect which is also rather typical of some English dialects.

Just as American usage has retained the old meanings of some English words (*fall, guess, sick*), it has also retained the old form of the Past Participle of the verb *to get*: *to get — got — gotten* (cf. the British *got*).

That is practically the whole story as far as divergencies in grammar of American English and British English are concerned.

The grammatical system of both varieties is actually the same, with very few exceptions.

\* \* \*

American English is marked by certain phonetic peculiarities. Yet, these consist in the way some words are pronounced and in the intonation patterns. The system of phonemes is the same as in British English, with the exception of the American retroflexive [r]-sound, and the labialized [h] in such words as *what, why, white, wheel*, etc.

\* \* \*

All this brings us to the inevitable conclusion that the language spoken in the United States of America is,

in all essential features, identical with that spoken in Great Britain. The grammar systems are fully identical. The American vocabulary is marked by certain peculiarities which are not sufficiently numerous or pronounced to justify the claims that there exists an independent American language. The language spoken in the United States can be regarded as a regional variety of English.

Canadian, Australian and Indian (that is, the English spoken in India) can also be considered regional varieties of English with their own peculiarities.

## EXERCISES

### I. Consider your answers to the following.

1. In what different ways might the language spoken in the USA be viewed linguistically?

2. What are the peculiarities of the vocabulary of English spoken in the USA?

3. Can we say that the vocabulary of the language spoken in the USA supports the hypothesis that there is an "American language"? Give a detailed answer.

4. What are the grammatical peculiarities of the American variety of English?

5. Describe some of the phonetic divergencies in both varieties of English.

6. What other regional varieties of English do you know?

### II. Read the following extract and give more examples illustrating the same group of Americanisms. What do we call this group?

M: — Well, now, *homely* is a very good word to illustrate Anglo-American misunderstanding. At any rate, many funny stories depend on it, like the one about the British lecturer visiting the United States; he faces his American audience and very innocently tells them how nice it is to see so many homely faces out in the audience.

*Homely* in Britain means, of course, something rather pleasant, but in American English 'not very good looking'. This older sense is preserved in some British dialects.

(From *A Common Language*  
by A. H. Marckwardt and R. Quirk<sup>1</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> In this book two prominent scholars, an American and an Englishman, discuss the differences between the American and British varieties of English.

III. Read the following extract. What are the three possible ways of creating names for new species of plants and animals and new features of the landscape? Give more examples of the same. What do we call this group of Americanisms?

Q: ... I think that this time we ought to give some attention to those parts of the language where the differences in the vocabulary are much more noticeable.

M: Yes, we should. First, there are what we might call the 'realia' — the real things — the actual things we refer to in the two varieties of the language. For example, the flora and fauna — that is to say the plants and animals of England and of the United States are by no means the same, nor is the landscape, the topography.

Q: All this must have created a big problem for those early settlers, mustn't it?

M: It surely did. From the very moment they set foot on American soil, they had to supply names for these new species of plants and animals, the new features of landscape that they encountered. At times they made up new words such as *mockingbird*, *rattlesnake*, *egg-plant*. And then occasionally they used perfectly familiar terms but to refer to different things. In the United States, for example, the *robin* is a rather large bird, a type of thrush.

Q: Yes, whereas with us it is a tiny little red-breasted bird.

M: And a warbler, isn't it?

Q: Yes.

M: It sings. *Corn* is what you call *maize*. We never use it for grain in general, or for wheat in particular.

Q: Or oats. Well, wouldn't foreign borrowings also be important in a situation like this?

M: Oh, they were indeed. A good many words, for example, were adopted from the American Indian languages — *hichory*, a kind of tree; *squash*, a vegetable; *moccasin*, a kind of footwear. We got *caribou* and *prairie* from the early French settlers. The Spanish gave us *canyon* and *bronco*.

(From *A Common Language*  
by A. H. Marckwardt and R. Quirk)

IV. Read the following passage. Draw up a list of terms denoting the University teaching staff in Great Britain and in the USA. What are the corresponding Russian terms?

Q: But speaking of universities, we've also got a different set of labels for the teaching staff, haven't we?

M: Yes, in the United States, for example, our full time *faculty*, which we call *staff* incidentally — is arranged in a series of steps which goes from *instructor* through ranks of *assistant professor*, *associate professor* to that of *professor*. But I wish you'd straighten me out on the English system. *Don* for example, is a completely mysterious word and I'm never sure of the difference, say, between a *lecturer* and a *reader*.

Q: Well, readers say that lecturers should lecture and readers should read! But seriously, I think there's more similarity here than one would imagine. Let me say, first of all, that this word *don* is a very informal word and that it is common really only in Oxford and Cambridge. But corresponding to your instructor we've got the rank of *assistant lecturer*, usually a beginner's post. The assistant lecturer who is successful is promoted, like your instructor and he becomes a lecturer and this lecturer grade is the main teaching grade throughout the university world. Above lecturer a man may be promoted to *senior lecturer* or *reader*, and both of these — there's little difference between them — correspond closely to your associate professor. And then finally he may get a chair, as we say — that is a professorship, or, as you would say, a full professorship. It's pretty much a difference of labels rather than of organization, it seems to me.

(From *A Common Language*  
by A. H. Marckwardt and R. Quirk)

V. Give the British equivalents for the following Americanisms.  
apartment, store, baggage, street car, full, truck, elevator,  
candy, corn

VI. Explain the differences in the meanings of the following words in American and British English.

corn, apartment, homely, guess, lunch

VII. Identify the etymology of the following words.

Ohio, ranch, squash, mosquito, banjo, toboggan, pickaninny, Mississippi, sombrero, prairie, wigwam

VIII. Comment on the formation of the following words.

rattlesnake, foxberry, auto, Americanism, Colonist, addressee, ad, copperhead, pipe of peace, fire-water

IX. Translate the following words giving both the British and American variants.

каникулы, бензин, осень, консервная банка, радио, трамвай

X. Give the synonyms for the following American shortenings. Describe the words from the stylistic point of view.

gym, mo, circs, auto, perm, cert, n. g., b. f., g. m., dorm

XI. In the following sentences find the examples of words which are characteristic of American English. State whether they belong to the group of a) historical Americanisms; b) proper Americanisms; c) American shortenings; d) American borrowings. Take note of their spelling peculiarities.

1. As the elevator carried Brett downward, Hank Kreisel closed and locked the apartment door from inside. 2. A raw fall wind swirled leaves and dust in small tornadoes and sent pedestrians scurrying for indoor warmth. 3. Over amid the bungalows a repair crew was coping with a leaky water main. 4. We have also built, ourselves, experimental trucks and cars which are electric powered. 5. In a plant bad news traveled like burning gasoline. 6. May Lou wasn't in; she had probably gone to a movie. 7. The bank was about equal in size to a neighbourhood drugstore, brightly lighted and pleasantly designed. 8. Nolan Wainwright walked towards the apartment building, a three-storey structure probably forty years old and showing signs of disrepair. He guessed it contained two dozen or so apartments. Inside a vestibule Nolan Wainwright could see an array of mail boxes and call buttons. 9. He's a barber and one of our bird dogs.<sup>1</sup> We had twenty or so regular bird dogs, Smokey revealed, including service station operators, a druggist, a beauty-parlor operator, and an undertaker. 10. Barbara put a hand to her hair — chestnut brown and luxuriant, like her Polish Mother's; it also grew annoyingly fast so she had to spend more time than she liked in beauty salons. 11. He hadn't had an engineering degree to start, having been a high school dropout before World War II. 12. Auto companies regularly invited design school students in, treating them like VIP's,<sup>2</sup> while the students saw for themselves the kind of aura they might work in later.

XII. Read the following joke and find examples of words which are characteristic of American English.

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<sup>1</sup> *bird dog* — person who helps to sell cars

<sup>2</sup> *VIP* — very important person



The Bishop of London, speaking at a meeting recently, said that when he was in America he had learned to say to his chauffeur, "Step on the gas, George," but so far he had not summoned sufficient courage to say to the Archbishop of Canterbury, "O. K., Chief."

XIII. Read the following extract. Explain the difference in the meanings of the italicized words in American and British English.

In America just as in English, you see the same shops with the same boards and windows in every town and village.

Shopping, however, is an art of its own and you have to learn slowly where to buy various things. If you are hungry, you go to the chemist's. A *chemist's* shop is called a drugstore in the United States. In the larger *drugstores* you may be able to get drugs, too, but their main business consists in selling stationery, *candy*, toys, braces, belts, fountain pens, furniture and imitation jewellery. You must be extremely careful concerning the names of certain articles. If you ask for *suspenders* in a man's shop, you receive a pair of *braces*, if you ask for a pair of *pants*, you receive a pair of *trousers* and should you ask for a pair of braces, you receive a queer look.

I should like to mention that although a *lift* is called an *elevator* in the United States, when hitch-hiking you do not ask for an elevator, you ask for a lift. There's some confusion about the word *flat*. A flat in America is called an *apartment*; what they call a flat is a puncture in your tyre (or as they spell it, tire). Consequently the notice: 'Flats Fixed' does not indicate an estate agent where they are going to fix you up with a flat, but a garage where they are equipped to mend a puncture.

(From *How to Scrape Skies* by G. Mikes)

XIV. Read the following passage. Do you share Professor Quirk's opinion about neutralizing the differences between the two forms of English? If so, give your own examples to prove it.

M: ... and finally I notice that although we used to think that *baggage* was somehow an American term and *luggage* an English term, we have now come to adopt *luggage* much more, especially in connection with air travel.

Q: Well, I think it is equally true that we in Britain have more and more to adopt the word *baggage*. I have

certainly noticed that on shipping lines, perhaps chiefly those that are connected with the American trade. But this blending of our usage in connection with the *luggage* and *baggage* would seem to me to be rather typical of this trend that we've got in the twentieth century towards neutralizing the differences between our two forms of English.

(From *A Common Language*  
by A. H. Marckwardt and R. Quirk)

XV. Look through the following list of words and state what spelling norms are accepted in the USA and Great Britain so far as the given words are concerned.

- |                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. favour — favor                | 2. defence — defense      |
| honour — honor                   | practice — practise       |
| colour — color                   | offence — offense         |
| 3. centre — center               | 4. marvellous — marvelous |
| metre — meter                    | woollen — woolen          |
| fibre — fiber                    | jewellery — jewelry       |
| 5. to enfold — to infold         | 6. cheque — check         |
| to encrust — to incrust          | catalogue — catalog       |
| to empanel — to impanel          | programme — program       |
| 7. judgement — judgment          |                           |
| abridgement — abridgment         |                           |
| acknowledgement — acknowledgment |                           |

XVI. Write the following words according to the British norms of spelling.

judgment, practise, instill, color, flavor, check, program, woolen, humor, theater

XVII. Write the following words according to the American norms of spelling.

honour, labour, centre, metre, defence, offence, catalogue, abridgement, gramm, enfold, marvellous

XVIII. Read the following passage. Give some more examples illustrating the differences in grammar between the two varieties of English.

Q: I thought Americans always said *gotten* when they used the verb *get* as a full verb. But you did say *I've got your point*, didn't you?

M: Yes, I did. You know, it's a common English belief — almost a superstition — about American usage, but it does turn out on examination, as many other things do,

that we are closer together than appears on the surface. Actually, we, Americans, use *gotten* only when our meaning is "to acquire" or "to obtain". *We've gotten a new car since you were here last.* Now, when we use *get* to mean "possess" or "to be obliged to" we have exactly the same forms as you do. *I've got a pen in my pocket. I've got to write a letter.*

(From *A Common Language*  
by A. H. Marckwardt and R. Quirk)

XIX. Read the following extract. What is a citizen of the USA called? Analyse the suggested variants of names from the point of view of word-building.

It is embarrassing that the citizens of the United States do not have a satisfactory name. In the Declaration of Independence the British colonists called their country the United States of America, thus creating a difficulty. What should the inhabitant of a country with such a long name be called?

For more than 150 years those living in the country have searched in vain for a suitable name for themselves. In 1803, a prominent American physician, Dr. Samuel Mitchill, suggested that the entire country should be called *Fredonia* or *Fredon*. He had taken the English word *freedom* and the Latin *colonia* and from them coined *Fredonia* or *Fredon*. Dr. Mitchill thought that with this word as the name for the country as a whole, the derivative *Fredish* would follow naturally, corresponding to British, etc. In the same way, he thought, *Frede*, would be a good name for the inhabitant of Fredonia. But his fellow-citizens laughed at the doctor's names.

Such citizen names as United Statesian, shortened to Unisian and United Statian were proposed but quickly forgotten. No better success has greeted Usona (United States of North America) as a name for the country and Usonian — for a citizen.

Usage overwhelmingly favours American, as a name for an inhabitant of the USA, though all Americans realize it covers far too much territory.

(From *American Words* by M. Mathews)

## From "GROWTH AND STRUCTURE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE"

by Otto Jespersen

### Ch. IV. The Scandinavians

(*Extract*)

It is true that the Scandinavians were, for a short time at least, the rulers of England, and we have found in the juridical loan-words linguistic corroboration of this fact; but the great majority of the settlers did not belong to the ruling class. Their social standing must have been, on the whole, slightly superior to the average of the English, but the difference cannot have been great, for the bulk of Scandinavian words are of a purely democratic character. This is clearly brought out by a comparison with the French words introduced in the following centuries, for here language confirms what history tells us, that the French represent the rich, the ruling, the refined, the aristocratic element in the English nation. How different is the impression made by the Scandinavian loan-words. They are homely expressions for things and actions of everyday importance; their character is utterly democratic. The difference is also shown by so many of the French words having never penetrated into the speech of the people, so that they have been known and used only by the 'upper ten', while the Scandinavian ones are used by high and low alike; their shortness too agrees with the monosyllabic character of the native stock of words, consequently they are far less felt as foreign elements than many French words; in fact, in many statistical calculations of the proportion of native to imported words in English, Scandinavian words have been more or less inadvertently included in the native elements. Just as it is impossible to speak or write in English about higher intellectual or emotional subjects or about fashionable mundane matters without drawing largely upon the French (and Latin) elements, in the same manner Scandinavian words will crop up together with the Anglo-Saxon ones in any conversation on the thousand

nothings of daily life or on the five or six things of paramount importance to high and low alike. An Englishman cannot *thrive* or be *ill* or *die* without Scandinavian words; they are to the language what *bread* and *eggs* are to the daily fare.

## Ch. V. The French

(*Extract*)

Many of the French words, such as *cry*, *claim*, *state*, *poor*, *change*, and, one might say, nearly all the words taken over before 1350 and not a few of those of later importation, have become part and parcel of the English language, so that they appear to us all just as English as the pre-Conquest stock of native words. But a great many others have never become so popular. There are a great many gradations between words of everyday use and such as are not at all understood by the common people, and to the latter class may sometimes belong words which literary people would think familiar to everybody.

From what precedes we are now in a position to understand some at least of the differences that have developed in course of time between two synonyms when both have survived, one of them native, the other French. The former is always nearer the nation's heart than the latter, it has the strongest associations with everything primitive, fundamental, popular, while the French word is often more formal, more polite, more refined and has a less strong hold on the emotional side of life. A *cottage* is finer than a *hut*, and fine people often live in a cottage, at any rate in summer.

The difference between *help* and *aid* is thus indicated in the Funk-Wagnalls Dictionary: '*Help* expresses greater dependence and deeper need than *aid*. In extremity we say "God *help* me!" rather than "God *aid* me!" In time of danger we cry "*help! help!*" rather than "*aid! aid!*" To *aid* is to second another's own exertions. We can speak of *helping* the helpless, but not of *aiding* them. *Help* includes *aid*, but *aid* may fall short of the meaning of *help*.' All this amounts to the same thing as saying that *help* is the natural expression, belonging to the indispensable stock of words, and therefore possess-

ing more copious and profounder associations than the more literary and accordingly colder word *aid*; cf. also *assist*. *Folk* has to a great extent been superseded by *people*, chiefly on account of the political and social employment of the word; Shakespeare rarely uses *folk* (four times) and *folks* (ten times), and the word is evidently a low-class word with him; it is rare in the Authorized Version, and Milton never uses it; but in recent usage *folk* has been gaining ground, partly, perhaps, from antiquarian and dialectal causes. *Hearty* and *cordial* made their appearance in the language at the same time (the oldest quotations 1380 and 1386, NED.), but their force is not the same, for 'a hearty welcome' is warmer than 'a cordial welcome', and *hearty* has many applications that *cordial* has not (heartfelt, sincere; vigorous: a hearty slap on the back; abundant: a hearty meal), etc.

To Chapter 8

From "ENGLISH WORDS AND THEIR BACK-  
GROUND"

by George McKnight

Tropes

(Extract)

In the development of language it is well established that the things first to receive names were the definite, tangible things coming most close in everyday experience.

The less tangible elements in life were named by means of figurative shifts of earlier names. Thus the concrete names of space relations, which were appreciable by sight and touch, were made to serve in expressing the relations of time, matters outside the direct range of fine senses.

Thus *long* and *short* applied to time, are words originally expressing spatial dimension. The adjective *brief*, now associated with time, comes from the Latin *brevis* originally applied to space ... Most of the names for divisions of time may be traced back to words expressing



physical facts: *minute* (Lat. *minutus*, "small"); *second* (Med. Lat. *secunda minuta*, "second minute", i. e. further subdivision); ... *month* (moon); *year* (underlying meaning "spring") ...

The verb *last*, "to endure", in earlier English applied to spatial continuance. *Endure* goes back to a physical meaning "to become hard". *Fast* in the sense of "rapid", is derived from an earlier meaning "firmly fixed". *Rapid*, in turn, goes back to an earlier physical meaning "snatching"; it is related in origin to such words as *rapacious* and *rapine*. *Quick*, a native English word, had an original meaning, "living", a meaning surviving in such combinations as *quicksilver*, *quickline*, *cut to the quick*, *the quick and the dead*.

In like manner moral conceptions have had to appropriate names from the physical world. Even the fundamental words, *right* and *wrong*, originally meant physically "straight" and "crooked", respectively (cf. *right angle*, *right away*, etc., and O. E. *wringan*, "to twist"), and it will be noted that in modern colloquial language the shift in meaning has been repeated in the case of the words, *straight* and *crooked*. The fundamental meaning of *good* is supposed to be "fitting" or "suitable"; that of *evil* is supposed to be "excessive". The word *bad*, which somewhat mysteriously makes its first appearance in the Middle English period, it is supposed, applied originally to a form of physical abnormality ... *True*, as it is pointed out elsewhere, in its remote origin, probably applied to the oak tree.

The way in which a simple set of words may be made to express a complex variety of meanings is illustrated further by the use made of names of such elemental conceptions as the parts of the body, the names of which are shifted to express a remarkably varied set of meanings in the inanimate world or in the world of thought. The name *head* appears in *bridgehead*, *head of a pin*, *head of an institution*, *head of a class*, *fountain head*, *head of a coin*, *head of cattle*, *headland*. The Latin *caput* "head", and its French derivative, *chief*, appear in a series of meanings equally varied, in such words as *captain*, *capital* (city), *capital* (property), *chief* (noun and adjective) and *chef* (of kitchen).

## From "SEMANTICS"

by F. R. Palmer

## Hyponymy

(Extract)

In the last section we discussed classes or sets of incompatible items. But there are also words, that refer to the class itself. This involves us in the notion of INCLUSION in the sense that *tulip* and *rose* are included in *flower*, and *lion* and *elephant* in *mammal* (or perhaps *animal* – see below). Similarly *scarlet* is included in *red*. Inclusion is thus a matter of class membership.

Lyons' term for the relation is HYPONOMY. The 'upper' term is the SUPERORDINATE and the 'lower' term the HYPONYM. In the previous section we were concerned with members of a class with, that is to say, co-hyponyms. Yet oddly there is not always a superordinate term. Lyons' own work led him to observe that in Classical Greek there is a superordinate term to cover a variety of professions and crafts, 'carpenter', 'doctor', 'flute player', 'helmsman', 'shoemaker', etc., but none in English. The nearest possible term is *craftsman*, but that would not include *doctor*, *flute player* or *helmsman*. Similarly, and rather strangely, there is no superordinate term for all colour words, *red*, *blue*, *green*, *white*, etc.; the term *coloured* usually excludes *black* and *white* (and *grey* too), or else (used to refer to race), means 'non-white'.

The same term may appear in several places in the hierarchy. This is, of course, possible only if it is polysemic; in one of its meanings it may actually be superordinate to itself in another meaning (though we should usually avoid using both terms in the same context). Thus *animal* may be used (i) in contrast with *vegetable* to include birds, fishes, insects as well as mammals, (ii) in the sense of 'mammals' to contrast with birds, fishes and insects, to include both humans and beasts, (iii) in the sense of 'beast' to contrast with *human*. Thus it occurs three times in the hierarchical classification of nature.

There is a similar situation with the word *dog*. The word *sheep* is used for all creatures of a certain species; it is the superordinate term of *ewe*, *lamb*, *ram*,

etc. There are similar terms *pig* for *sow*, *boar*, *piglet* and *horse* for *stallion*, *mare*, *colt*, etc. But the superordinate term for dogs is *dog*, though *dog* is also the hyponym as distinct from *bitch*. We can, of course, avoid the ambiguity of *dog* by using the term *male*; thus *male dog* would be hyponym to contrast with *bitch*. We can also form hyponymous sets where no single-word hyponyms exist in English in a similar way, e. g. *giraffe*, *male giraffe*, *female giraffe*, *baby giraffe*. The terms *cattle* and *poultry* are a little odd in that, though they are superordinate, they are used only for plural reference (though, of course, we need the superordinate term quite commonly for the plural). Thus, though we may say *Those are cattle* to include *Those are cows*, *Those are bulls*, we have no single term to put in the frame *That is a —*. The most likely term here would be *cow*. (I personally would find it difficult to say *That is a cow* of a bull, but would not be unhappy with the definition of a bull as *a male cow*.) With *poultry* the situation seems to vary according to interest and dialect. The terms *cock* (or *cockerel* and, in America, *rooster*), *hen* and *chick* are available, but many people use *hen* or *chicken* as the superordinate term, though would not, I suspect, ever wish to refer to the male bird as a *hen*. In my own 'native' dialect there is no problem — the superordinate term is *fowl*.

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Наталья Николаевна Морозова

## ЛЕКСИКОЛОГИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

(на английском языке)

Зав. редакцией И. Э. Волкова  
Редактор Л. И. Кравцова  
Младший редактор З. Ф. Юрескул  
Художник А. В. Алексеев  
Художественный редактор В. И. Пономаренко  
Технический редактор З. В. Нуждина  
Старший корректор Е. Б. Комарова

ИБ 5280

Изд. № А—917 (Ф—147). Сдано в набор 26.12.84. Подп. в печать 25.04.85  
Формат 84 × 108<sup>1</sup>/<sub>32</sub>. Бум. кн.-журн. Гарнитура «Таймс». Печать высокая  
Объем 11,76 усл. печ. л. 11,97 усл. кр.-отт. 13,19 уч.-изд. л. Тираж 23 000 экз  
Зак. № 1773. Цена 45 коп.

издательство «Высшая школа», 101430, Москва, ГСП-4, Неглинная ул.,  
д. 29/14.

Ордена Октябрьской Революции, ордена Трудового Красного Знамени Ленин-  
градское производственно-техническое объединение «Печатный Двор» имени  
А. М. Горького Союзполиграфпрома при Государственном комитете СССР  
по делам издательств, полиграфий и книжной торговли. 197136, Ленинград,  
П-136, Чкаловский пр., 15.