ING218
Lecture 3
The Dimension of
Meaning

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In this session we are going to discuss:
- Reference and denotation
- connotation
- sense relations
- lexical and grammatical meanings
- morphemes
- homonymy and polysemy
- lexical ambiguity
- sentence and meaning

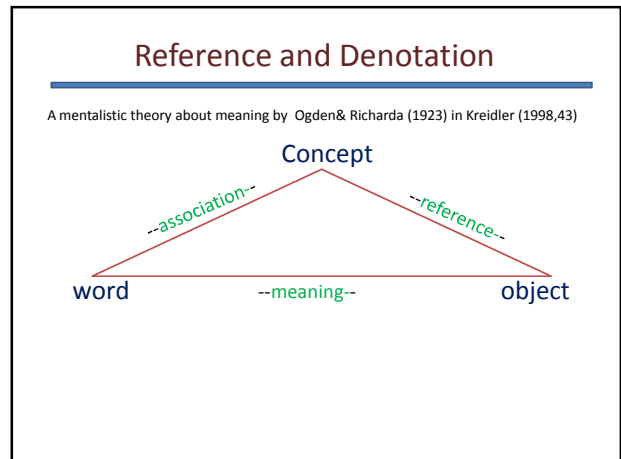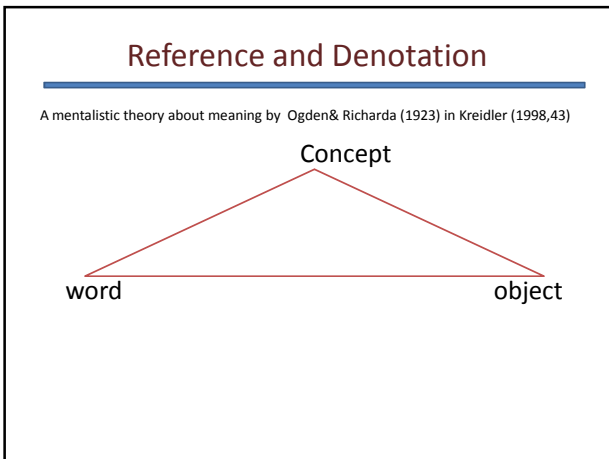A linguistics expression

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A linguistics expression

Anything meaningful
in a language

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Three units of meaning:

1. Morphemes (which may be less than a word
2. Lexemes (roughly, words and idioms)
3. And sentences

Reference and Denotation

People are likely to think that a language consists of a large number of words and each of these words has a direct correlation with something outside of language, which is its meaning. And since we communicate with one another through language, it must be that we all have the same 'idea' or 'concept' associated with each other.

Reference and Denotation

A mentalistic theory about meaning by Ogden& Richarda (1923) in Kreidler (1998,43)

Concept

word   object

Reference and Denotation

A mentalistic theory about meaning by Ogden& Richarda (1923) in Kreidler (1998,43)

Concept

--association--   --reference--

word   --meaning--   object

When we hear or read a word, we often form a mental picture of what the word represents, and so we are apt to equate 'concept' with a mental picture.

Dog Door **Vs** Ordinary Problem
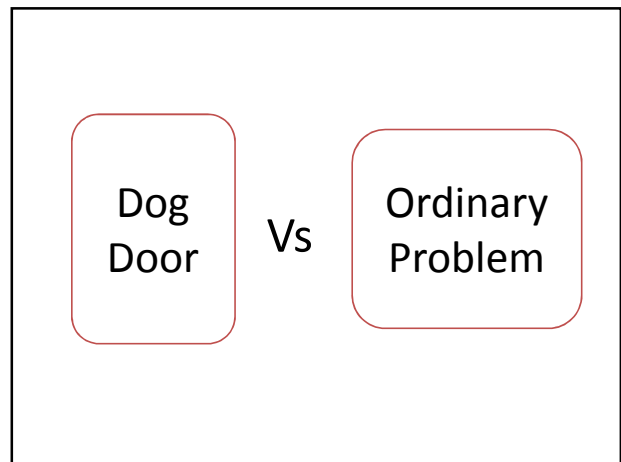
BUT the idea of a mental picture is MISLEADING

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What mental picture do you form for DOOR?

A revolving door?
A folding door?
A sliding door, moving horizontally?
An overhead door which moves vertically?
A door turning on hinges?
Is it in a wall, or on a cabinet, or part of a car?

You can picture all of these in sequence but not simultaneously.

Clearly the meaning of door is more than what is included in a single image, and your knowledge of these words is much more than the ability to relate them to single objects.

Reference Vs Denotation

Reference

❖ The relation between a language expression such as *this door, both doors* and whatever the expression pertains to in a particular situation of language use, including what a speaker may imagine.

❖ The way speakers and hearers use an expression successfully

Denotation

❖ The potential of a word like *door* to enter into such language expressions.

❖ The knowledge the speakers and hearers have that makes their use useful.

Problems with a mentalistic theory of meaning

1. Not all words can be associated with mental images and some words have a range of meaning greater than any single associations.
2. We have no access to other people's minds that we can't observe what mental pictures they form in their head whether they are similar to ours or not.
3. Words are not the only semantic units (see morphemes, sentences)
4. Meaning is more than denotation. People not only talk and write to describe things, events and characteristics but they also express opinions, favorable and unfavorable.

Connotations

It refers to the personal aspect of meaning, i.e. the affective or emotional associations that the words arouses.

A denotation identifies the central aspect of word meaning which everybody generally agrees about.

Think about these clusters of words:
1. thin, slender, svelte, skinny
2. Automobile, car
3. Handsome, good-looking
4. Assistant, maid, subordinate
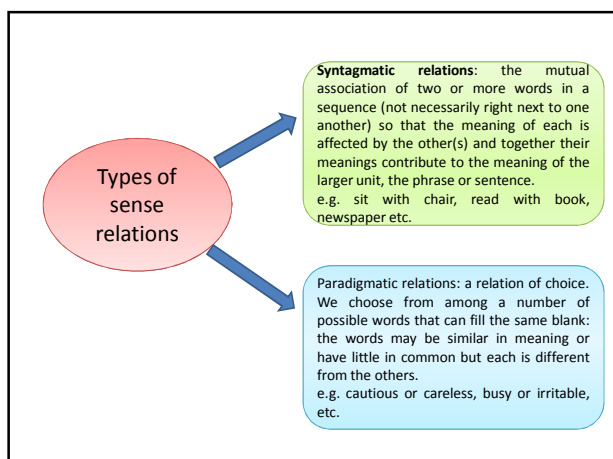5. etc

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Sense relations

Meaning is more than denotation and connotation. What a word means depends in part on its associations with other words, the relational aspect. Lexemes do not merely 'have' meanings; they contribute meanings to the utterances in which they occur, and what meanings they contribute depends on what other lexemes they are associated with in these utterances. The meaning that a lexeme has because of these relationships is the **sense** of that lexeme. Part of this relationship is seen in the way words do, or do not, go together meaningfully.

Sense relations

It makes sense

to say *John walked* and it makes sense to say *An hour elapsed*. It doesn't make sense to *say John elapsed* or *An hour walked*. Part of the meaning *of elapse* is that it goes with *hour, second, minute, day* but not with *John*, and part of the meaning of *hour, second* and so forth is that these words can co-occur with *elapse*.

Types of sense relations

Syntagmatic relations: the mutual association of two or more words in a sequence (not necessarily right next to one another) so that the meaning of each is affected by the other(s) and together their meanings contribute to the meaning of the larger unit, the phrase or sentence.
e.g. sit with chair, read with book, newspaper etc.

Paradigmatic relations: a relation of choice. We choose from among a number of possible words that can fill the same blank: the words may be similar in meaning or have little in common but each is different from the others.
e.g. cautious or careless, busy or irritable, etc.

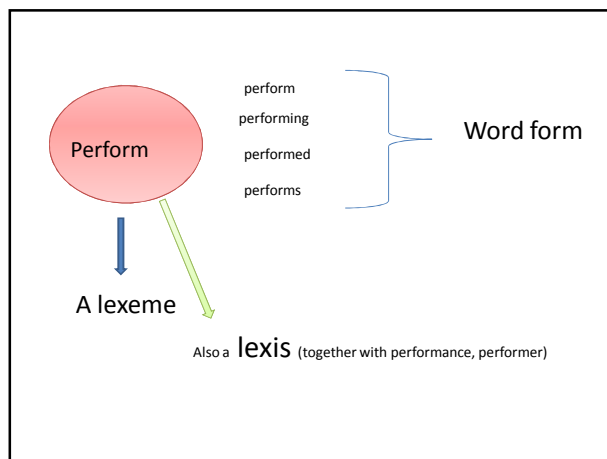## Lexical and grammatical meanings

Lexical meaning: meaning associated with lexis/lexicon/lexeme.

Grammatical meaning: meaning associated with a grammatical system.

What is **lexis/lexicon**?

What is **lexeme**?

What is **word form**?

Lexical item/lexis: Linguistic item whose meaning is unpredictable and which therefore needs to be listed in the lexicon or in dictionaries
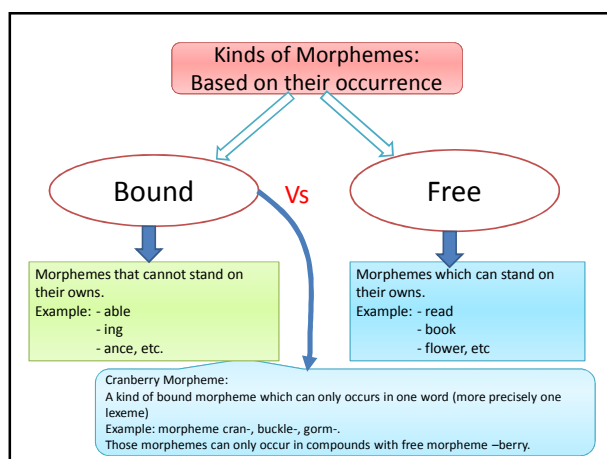
Lexeme: Word seen as an abstract grammatical entity, represented concretely by one or more different inflected word forms according to the grammatical context.

Word form: Word viewed as a pronounceable entity, representing concretely a lexeme in some grammatical context.

Perform

perform
performing
performed
performs

Word form

A lexeme

Also a **lexis** (together with performance, performer)

Morpheme

Morpheme is the smallest grammatical unit. Or the minimal meaningful unit of language.

Kinds of Morphemes: Based on their occurrence

Bound Vs **Free**

Morphemes that cannot stand on their owns.
Example: - able
- ing
- ance, etc.

Morphemes which can stand on their owns.
Example: - read
- book
- flower, etc

Cranberry Morpheme:
A kind of bound morpheme which can only occurs in one word (more precisely one lexeme)
Example: morpheme cran-, buckle-, gorm-.
Those morphemes can only occur in compounds with free morpheme –berry.

Homonymy

It is a state when two words or more share the same spelling *and* the same pronunciation but have different and unrelated meanings.

Examples:
stalk (part of a plant) and *stalk* (follow/harass a person)
left (past tense of leave) and *left* (opposite of right)

Polysemy

It is a state when one word used in two different ways as to indicate different sense of meanings.

Examples:
a. John was a good man. He donated a lot of money to charity.
b. Bill was a good painter. His drawings always were exciting to look at.

The word Good in the following two examples. In one case it's a moral judgment, in the other case it's a judgment of skill.

Homonyms and Polysemys are simultaneously homographs: words that share the same spelling, irrespective of their pronunciation, *and*
Homophones: words that share the same pronunciation, irrespective of their spelling.

The end and Thank you.