

Concepts in English Linguistics

Session 7: Semantics and Lexicology

Amelioration A shift of meaning to more favourable denotation or connotations, as when *minister* changed from meaning “servant” to “religious leader” and “head of a government office”

Bleaching A loss of semantic content or intensity, such as *will* losing the sense *wish*; often associated with grammaticalization, i.e. loss of referents outside language

Broadening A shift of meaning to a more inclusive denotation, as when *cupboard* came to refer to a more complex piece of furniture than just a shelf

Consociated lexicon A lexicon in which words that are related in sense are typically also related in form: *Gesetz* → *gesetzlich*

Dissociated lexicon A lexicon in which words that are related in sense are often unrelated in form: *law* → *legal*

Glossary A list of words, often alphabetically arranged, accompanied by translations or clarifications (as here)

Inkhorn term A word introduced into the language (e.g. by borrowing) but widely held to be unnecessary and pompous; subject of controversy in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English

Interlinear gloss A translation of a word or phrase, written between the lines of the source text (typically above the word being glossed)

Lemma Headword in a dictionary entry, given in a conventional, “unmarked” form such as the infinitive or the nominative singular of an agreed-upon gender (masculine, for some reason)

Lexeme Word, amounting to a lemma and its inflected forms

Lexicology The study of words

Lexicography The production of dictionaries

Metaphoric use The extension of a word to a nonliteral but structurally similar referent

Metonymy Using a word to refer to a different but associated concept

Narrowing A shift of meaning to a more restrictive denotation, as when *hound* came to mean a specific type of dog, *wife* a particular class of woman

Pars pro toto Using the word for a narrower concept to refer to the overarching concept, e.g. *glasses* to mean “spectacles”

Pejoration A shift of meaning to less favourable meaning or connotations, e.g. the shift of *mistress* from “woman in power” to “woman in an extramarital affair”

Register A vocabulary deemed appropriate in a certain (sociolinguistic) context; thus academic English is a different register from kindergarten English or urban slang

Semantics The study of the meaning of words

Synecdoche Using the whole to refer to a part, or using a part to refer to the whole. See **pars pro toto** and **totum pro parte**.

Totum pro parte Using the word for an overarching concept to refer to a narrower, contained concept, e.g. *England* to mean a national sports team