

КУРС «ЗАГАЛЬНА ТЕОРІЯ ДРУГОЇ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ»

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ЗРАЗОК ЛЕКЦІЇ

LECTURE 4

4.1. Homonymy: classification and sources of homonyms. Paronyms

4.2. Semantic groups of words. Synonyms and antonyms

4.3. Euphemisms. Neologisms

4.1. Homonymy: classification and sources of homonyms. Paronyms.

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.

The most widely accepted classification of homonyms is that recognizing **homonyms proper, homophones** and **homographs**.

Homonyms proper (or **perfect, absolute**) are words identical in pronunciation and spelling but different in meaning (e.g. *back* n. "part of the body" – *back* adv. "away from the front" – *back* v. "go back"; *bear* n. "animal" – *bear* v. "carry, tolerate").

Homophones are words of the same sound but of different spelling and meaning (e.g. *buy* v. – *by* prep.; *him* pr. – *hymn* n.; *piece* n. – *peace* n.; *rite* n. – *write* v. – *right* adj.).

The following joke is based on a pun which makes use of homophones:

"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."

Homographs are words different in sound and in meaning but accidentally identical in spelling (e.g. *bow* [bau], v. – to incline the head or body in salutation; *bow* [bou], n. – a flexible strip of wood for propelling arrows; *lead* [li:d], v. – to conduct on the way, go before to show the way; *lead* [led] n. – a heavy, rather soft metal).

Homofoms are words identical in some of their grammatical forms (e.g. *to bound* (jump, spring) – *bound* (past participle of the verb *bind*); *found* (establish) *found* (past participle of the verb *find*)).

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. Smimitsky classified homonyms into two large classes: **full homonyms** and **partial homonyms**.

Full lexical homonyms are words which represent the same category of parts of etch and have the same paradigm (e.g. *match*, n. – a game, a contest; *match*, n. – a short piece of wood used for producing fire; *wren*, n. – a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service; *wren*, n. – a bird).

Partial homonyms are subdivided into three subgroups:

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 (e.g. *found*, v. ↔ *found*, v. (Past Ind., Past Part, of *to find*); *lay*, v. ↔ *lay*, v. (Past Ind. of *to lie*)).

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. *rose*, n. ↔ *rose*, v. (Past Ind. of *to rise*); *left*, adj. ↔ *left*, v. (Past Ind., Past Part, of *to leave*); *bean*, n. ↔ *been*, v. (Past Part, of *to be*)).

c) **Partial lexical homonyms** are words of the same category of parts of speech which are identical only in their corresponding forms (e.g. *lie* (*lay, lain*), v. ↔ *lie* (*lied, lied*), v.; *hang* (*hung, hung*), v. ↔ *to hang* (*hanged, hanged*), v.)

Paronyms are words that are alike in form, but different in meaning and usage. They are liable to be mixed and sometimes mistakenly interchanged. The term paronym comes from the Greek *para* "beside" and *onoma* "name" (e.g. *precede* ↔ *proceed*; *preposition* ↔ *proposition*; *popular* ↔ *populous*; *grateful* ↔ *gracious*; *shit* ↔ *shoot*: *Oh, shoot, I forgot to buy milk* (Longman)).

I.V. Arnold distinguishes **patterned homonyms**, which, unlike other homonyms, possess a common component in their lexical meanings. These are homonyms formed either by means of conversion, or by leveling of their grammar inflexions. They are different in their grammar paradigms, but identical in their basic forms (e.g. *warm* – *to warm*; *to cut* – *cut*; *before* as an adverb, a conjunction and a preposition).

So, homonyms in English are very numerous. Oxford English Dictionary registers 2540 homonyms, of which 89 % are monosyllabic words and 9, 1 % are two-syllable words. The trend towards monosyllabism, greatly increased by the loss of inflections and shortening, must have contributed much toward increasing the number of homonyms in English.

Sources of homonyms

There are several sources of homonyms:

a) **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 (e.g. *night* and *knight* 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: OE. *kniht* (cf OE *nih*). A more complicated change of form brought together another pair of homonyms: *to knead* (OE *cnēdan*) and *to need* (OE *nēodian*);

b) **conversion** which serves the creating of grammatical homonyms (e.g. *iron* → *to iron*, *work* → *to work*, etc.);

c) **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" 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 has three homonyms made by shortening: *repertory* → *rep*, n., *representative* → *rep*, n., *reputation* → *rep*, n.);

d) **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 (e.g. *ritus* Lat. → *rite* n. – *write* v. – *right* adj.; *pais* OFr → *piece*, n. – *pettia* OFr → *peace* n.);

e) **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"; *mew*, n. "the sound a cat makes" – *mew*, n. "a sea gul" – *mew*, n. "a pen in which poultry is fattened" – *mews* "small terraced houses in Central London").

One of the most debatable points in semasiology is **the demarcation line between homonymy and polysemy**, i.e. between different meanings of one word and the meanings of two or more homonymous words. Scientists use different criteria to distinguish between polysemy and homonymy.

1. **Semantic criterion.** It is usually held that if a connection between various meanings is apprehended by the speaker, they are to be considered as making up the semantic structure of a polysemantic word, otherwise it is a case of homonymy. This traditional criterion implying that the difference is reduced to the difference between related and unrelated meanings is not reliable due to its subjectivity and to the fact that it cannot be applied to a large group of Modern English words made as a result of conversion.

2. **The criterion of distribution.** It is helpful in cases of lexico-grammatical homonyms (e.g. the homonymic pair *paper* n. – *paper* v.) but it fails in case of lexical polysemy.

3. **The criterion of spelling.** Homonyms differing in graphic forms such as *flower-flour* are easily perceived to be two different lexical units but there are numerous exceptions to the validity of the present criterion. That is why it is lexicographers' duty to define the boundaries of each word, i.e. to differentiate homonyms and to unite lexico-grammatical variants deciding on the nature of the object analyzed.

From the viewpoint of their origin homonyms are sometimes divided into **historical and etymological**.

Historical homonyms are those which result from the breaking up of polysemy; then one polysemantic word will split up into two or more separate

words (e.g. *to bear* (терпіти) – *to bear* (народити); *pupil* (учень) – *pupil* (зіниця)).

Etymological homonyms are words of different origin which come to be alike in sound or in spelling (and may be both written and pronounced alike).

4.2. Semantic groups of words. Synonyms and antonyms. Attempts to study the inner structure of the vocabulary have revealed that in spite of its heterogeneity the English word stock may be analyzed into numerous sub-systems whose members have some features in common, thus distinguishing them from the members of other subsystems.

Words can be classified in many ways. One way of semantic classifying is based on the semantic similarity (or polarity) of words or their component morphemes. The terms usually used to denote these two types of semantic relatedness are **synonymy** and **antonymy**.

Synonyms are traditionally described as words different in sound-form but identical or similar in meaning. This definition has been **severely criticized** on the following points: 1) it cannot be applied to polysemantic words (e.g. the verb *to look* is usually regarded as a synonym of *to watch*, *to observe*, etc. but in its other meanings it is not synonymous with this group but rather with the verbs *to seem*, *to appear*); 2) it is hardly possible to speak of similarity of lexical meaning as a whole as it is only the denotational component that may be described as similar (e.g. *to die* and *to pass away* are considered synonymous, but the stylistic reference is completely different); 3) it is impossible to speak of identity in meaning as a criterion of synonymity since identity of meaning is very rare even among monosemantic words.

In this connection there has appeared a **modified definition of synonyms by I.V. Arnold: synonyms are two or more words of the same language, belonging to the same part of speech and possessing one or more identical or nearly identical denotational meanings, interchangeable, at least in some contexts, without any considerable alteration in denotational meaning, but differing morphemic composition, phonemic shape, shades of meaning, connotations, affective value, valency and idiomatic use.**

The duality of synonyms is, probably, their most confusing feature: they are somewhat the same, and yet they are most obviously different. Synonyms add precision to each detail of description and the correct choice of a word from a group of synonyms may color the whole text. They are one of the language's most important expressive means. **The principal function of synonyms is to represent the same phenomenon in different aspects, shades and variations.** A carefully chosen word from a group of synonyms is a great asset both on the printed page and 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.

Thus, synonymy is the coincidence in the essential meaning of words which usually preserve their differences in connotations and stylistic characteristics.

The synonymic dominant is the most general term potentially containing the specific features rendered by all the other members of the group. The words *face*, *visage*, *countenance* have a common denotational meaning – the front of the head which makes them close synonyms. *Face* is the dominant, the most general word; *countenance* is the same part of the head with the reference to the expression it bears; *visage* is a formal word, chiefly literary, for *face* or *countenance*.

The semantic structure of a synonymic dominant 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 the entire synonymic group (e.g. 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*).

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. 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.

The characteristic features of the dominant synonym are the following: 1) high frequency of usage; 2) broad combinability (ability to be used in combinations with various classes of words); 3) broad general meaning; 4) lack of connotations.

In a great number of cases **the semantic difference between two or more synonyms is supported by the difference in valency** (e.g. the verbs *win* and *gain* – both may be used in combination with the noun *victory*: *to win a victory*, *to gain a victory* but with the word *war* only *win* is possible: *to win a war*).

Criteria of synonymy

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.**

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 analyzed comparatively. After that the definitions are subjected to transformational operations (**transitional analysis**). In this way, the semantic components of each analyzed word are singled out.

In the respect of 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. But this is possible only in some contexts, in others their meanings may not coincide (e.g. the comparison of the sentences *the rainfall in April was abnormal* and *the rainfall in April was exceptional* may give us grounds for assuming that *exceptional* and *abnormal* are synonyms. The same adjectives in a different context are by no means synonymous, as we may see by comparing *my*

son is exceptional and my son is abnormal). This criterion of interchangeability has been much criticised. 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, 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 examples are sufficient to show that each of the synonyms creates an entirely new situation so sharply differing from the rest that attempts at "interchanging" anything can destroy the utterance devoiding it of any sense at all.

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 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 should be applicable to all synonyms and not just to some of them. Otherwise it is not acceptable as a valid criterion.

Classification of synonyms

The only existing classification system for synonyms was established by Academician V. V. Vinogradov, the famous Russian scholar. In his classification system there are three types of synonyms: **ideographic** (which he defined as words conveying the same concept 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).

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, 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.

According to **the criterion of interchangeability in context** synonyms are classified into **total, relative** and **contextual**.

Total synonyms are those members of a synonymic group which can replace each other in any given context, without the slightest alteration in denotative meaning or emotional meaning and connotations. They are very rare. Examples can be found mostly in special literature among technical terms and others (*fatherland – motherland; suslik - gopher; noun — substantive; functional affix -, inflection; scarlet fever – scarlatina*).

Some authors class groups like *ask - beg - implore*, or *like - love ~ adore, gift - talent - genius, famous - celebrate - eminent* as **relative synonyms, as they**

denote different degree of the same notion or different shades of meanings and can be substituted only in some contexts.

Contextual or context-dependent synonyms are similar in meaning only under some specific distributional conditions. It may happen that the difference between the meanings of two words is contextually neutralized (*buy* and *get* would not generally be taken as synonymous, but they are synonyms in the following examples – *I'll go to the shop and buy some bread* and *I'll go to the shop and get some bread*).

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.

I. The connotation of degree or intensity can be traced in such groups of synonyms as *to surprise - to astonish - to amaze - to astound; 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.*

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 have **a connotation of duration** in their semantic structure. Other examples are: *to flash (brief) - to blaze (lasting); to shudder (brief) - to shiver.*

III. The synonyms *to stare - to glare - to gaze* are differentiated from the other words of the group by **emotive connotations**, and from each other by the nature of the emotion they imply. Here 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*).

IV. **The evaluative connotation** conveys the speaker's attitude towards the referent, labeling 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.*

V. **The causative connotation** can be illustrated by the examples *to sparkle* and *to glitter*: one's eyes *sparkle with positive emotions* and *glitter with negative emotions*. The causative connotation is also typical of the verbs *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. (also to blush from modesty, shame or embarrassment) and to redden (from anger or indignation)*

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.

VII. The verbs *to peep* and *to peer* are **connotations of duration and manner**. But there is some other curious peculiarity in their semantic structures. 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 thus demonstrating **the connotation of attendant circumstances**.

This connotation is also characteristic of *to peer*: one *peers* at smb./smth. in darkness, through the fog, through dimmed glasses or windows, from a great distance; a shortsighted 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* 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**, cf. (**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.

Or (**to leave**). *To be off, to clear out (coll.), to beat it, to hoof it, to take the air (si.), to depart, to retire, to withdraw (formal)*.

According to whether the difference is in denotational or connotational component synonyms are classified into **ideographic** and **stylistic**.

Ideographic synonyms denote different shades of meaning or different degrees of a given quality. They are nearly identical in one or more denotational meanings and interchangeable at least in some contexts, e.g. *beautiful - fine-handsome - pretty*. *Beautiful* conveys, for instance, the strongest meaning; it marks the possession of that quality in its fullest extent, while the other terms denote the possession of it in part only. Fineness, handsomeness and prettiness are to beauty as parts to a whole (also compare constituents of the synonymic group *choose, select, opt, elect, pick*).

Pictorial language often uses poetic words, archaisms as **stylistic alternatives** of neutral words (e.g. *bliss* for *happiness*, *steed* for *horse*, *quit* for *leave*).

In many cases a **stylistic synonym has an element of elevation in its meaning** (e.g. *face - visage, girl — maiden*).

Along with elevation of meaning **there is the reverse process of degradation** (e.g. *to begin- to fire away, to eat — to devour, to steal ~ to pinch, face — muzzle*).

Sources of synonymy

Scholars distinguish the following sources of synonymy:

1. Synonyms which originated from the native language (e.g. *fast-speedy-swift; handsome-pretty-lovely; bold-manful-steadfast*).
2. Synonyms created through the adoption of words from dialects (e.g. *mother – minny* (Scot.); *dark-murk* (O.N.); *charm – glamour* (Scot.); *long distance call* (AE) - *trunk call* (BE); *radio* (AE) - *wireless* (BE)).
3. Synonyms that owe their origin to foreign borrowings (e.g. *help-aid* (Fr); *heaven – sky* (Sc.); *freedom – liberty* (L.)). The peculiar feature of synonymy in English is the contrast between simple **native** words **stylistically neutral**, **literary** words **borrowed from French** and **learned** words of **Greco-Latin** origin.

<i>Native</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Latin borrowings</i>
<i>English</i>	<i>Borrowing</i>	
to ask	to question	to interrogate
to end	to finish	to complete
to rise	to mount	to ascend
teaching	guidance	instruction
belly	stomach	abdomen

4. Synonyms created by means of all word-forming processes productive in the language. It must be noted that synonyms may influence each other semantically in two opposite ways: one of them is **dissimilation** or **differentiation**, the other – the reverse process, i.e. **assimilation**.

Many words now marked in the dictionaries as "archaic" or "obsolete" have dropped out of the language in the competition of synonyms, others survived with a meaning more or less different from the original one. This process is called **synonymic differentiation** and is so current that is regarded as an inherent law of language development. Cf.: *soil* French borrowing - a strip of land. *eorpe, land, folde* OE synonyms – the upper layer of earth in which plants grow. → *soil, earth, ground* - the mould in which plants grow.

The assimilation of synonyms consists in parallel development. This law was discovered and described by G. Stern., H.A. Treble and O.H. Vallins. In their book *An ABC of English Usage*, Oxford, 1957, p. 173 they give as examples the pejorative meanings acquired by the nouns *wench, knave* and *churl* which originally meant "girl", "boy", and "laborer" respectively, and point out that this loss of old dignity became linguistically possible because there were so many synonymous words of similar meaning. As the result all the three words underwent

degradation in their meanings: *wench* → indecent girl; *knave* → rascal; *churl* → country man.

Synonyms connected with non-literary figurative use of words in pictorial language (e.g. *dreamer* – *star-gazer*; *profession* – *walk of life*).

Synonyms – euphemisms and vulgarisms employed for certain stylistic purposes (e.g. *to steal* – *to scoop*; *to lie* – *to distort facts*).

Some synonymic oppositions appeared due to shift of meaning, new combinations of verbs with postpositives and compound nouns formed from them (e.g. *to choose* – *to pick up*; *arrangement* – *layout*; *to enter* – *to come in*).

Quite often synonyms that are due to shortening (e.g. *examination* – *exam*; *doctor* – *doc*; *memorandum* – *memo*).

Antonyms may be defined as two or rarely more words of the same language belonging to the same part of speech identical in style and nearly identical in distribution, associated and used together so that their denotative meanings render contrary or contradictory notions

Antonymy is not evenly distributed among the categories of parts of speech. Most antonyms are adjectives, which seems to be 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: *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*, *merrily* - *sadly*, *loudly* - *softly*;
- b) adverbs proper: *now* - *then*, *here* - *there*, *ever* - *never*, *up* - *down*, *in* - *out*.

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"

A careful examination will reveal three kinds of oppositeness of meaning represented by the following pairs of antonyms. Consider: a) *narrow-wide*, *small-large*, *tall-short*; b) *alive-dead*, *male-female*, *open-shut*; c) *over-under*, *receive-give*, *wife-husband*.

The antonyms represented in the group a) are called **gradable antonyms**. They are adjectives which do not refer to absolute qualities, but which may be subject to comparison or qualification.

The antonyms represented in the group b) are called **complementary antonyms**. It means that the denial of one member of the pair implies the assertion of the other member

The antonyms represented in the pairs in c) are called **converses** or **relational opposites**. One member of the pair refers to the converse relation referred to by the other member (e.g. if the bathroom is over the hall, then the hall is under the bathroom). A relation exists between the antonyms such that one is the converse of the other: they represent two (opposite) perspectives on the same relation. This type of antonymy is quite distinct from the other two and there appears to be no overlap.

4.3. Euphemisms. Neologisms. 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 roundabout way, by using substitutes called **euphemisms**. This device is determined by social conventions which are sometimes apt to be over-sensitive, see "indecent" where there is none and seek refinement in absurd avoidances and pretentiousness.

Numerous euphemisms are used **to avoid the so-called social taboos** and are inspired by social convention. To illustrate, 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., 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/delicate condition, in the family way, with a baby coming, (big) with child, expecting*.

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-men-tion '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.

There are many words which are easy targets for euphemistic substitution. These include words associated with drunkenness (e.g. *intoxicated* (form.), *under the influence* (form.), *tipsy, mellow, fresh, high, merry, flustered, overcome, full* (coll.), *boiled*'(sl.), *fried*'(sl.), *tanked* (sl.), *tight* (sl.), *stiff* (sl.), *pickled* (sl.), *soaked*'(sl.), *sheets to the wind* (sl.), *high as a kite, half-seas-over* (sl.), *under the surface*, etc.); being in prison (*to be in chokey, to be in the jug; to be involved in correctional facilities*); unemployment (*redundancies, downsizing, rightsizing*); drugs (*grass, mushrooms, acid, snow, speed*); homelessness (*shopping bag people* – people who wander city streets with all their possessions in shopping bags (Collins)).

Euphemisms may, of course, be used **due to genuine concern not to hurt someone's feelings** (e.g. 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*; *parotitis* instead of *mumps*; *H1N1 virus* instead of *swine flu*; *deceased* instead of *dead*; *to make smb a widow/a widower* instead of *to kill smb*; *sanitary engineer* instead of *waste collector*).

Superstitious taboos have given rise to the use of another 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 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 substitutes 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 reluctant to use the verb *to die* which has a long chain of 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 join the majority*)

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* (coll.), *cuckoo* (si.), *nutty* (si.), *off one's nut* (si.), *loony* (si.), *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.

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)

To sum it up, the use of euphemisms and their very existence are caused either by social conventions or by certain psychological factors. Most of them have peculiar stylistic connotations in their semantic structures.

Talking about **neologisms**, it should be emphasized that the vocabulary is an adaptive system. To adapt means to undergo modifications in functions and structure so as to be fit for a new use, a new environment or a new situation. The concept of adaptive system permits us to study language as a constantly developing but systematic whole. The adaptive system approach gives a more adequate account of the systematic phenomena of a vocabulary by explaining more facts about the functioning of words and providing more relevant generalizations, because we can take into consideration the influence of extra-linguistic reality. The study of the vocabulary as an adaptive system reveals the pragmatic essence of the communication process, i.e. the way language is used to influence the addressee.

The adaptivity of the vocabulary can be observed by its results – by studying new words or neologisms. New notions come into being and require new words to name them. They are created irrespective of their scale of importance. They may concern some social relationships such as a new political form, or short-lived concepts, such as fashions in dancing, clothes, manners. In every case either the old words are appropriately changed in meaning or new words are borrowed, or more often coined out of the existing language material either according to the

patterns and ways already productive in the language at the given stage of its development or creating new ones.

Thus, **a neologism is a newly coined word or phrase or a new meaning for an existing word or a word borrowed from another language.**

The intense development of industry and science, social and cultural evolution have called forth the invention and introduction of a huge number of new words and changed the meaning of old ones (e.g. *aerobics, pulsar, software, hardware, black hole, feedback, hyper-market, isotope, chat show, generation Y, yuppie* (young upwardly mobile professional person), *thresholder, Webcast wedding* (a wedding broadcast by Internet), *stress puppy, hurry sickness, breatharianism, pescephobe, WMWM* (white married working mom), *wasband* (ex-husband), *ageful* (elderly), etc)

PRACTICE 4

Consider your answers to the following.

1. What do we call homonyms and what is one of the most crucial problems of semasiology in connection with the phenomenon of homonymy? In what respect does split polysemy stand apart from other sources of homonyms?

2. What are the distinctive features of the classification of homonyms suggested by Professor A. I. Smirnitsky?

3. What are the main sources of homonyms? Illustrate your answer with examples.

4. 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

5. 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. Classify the following italicized homonyms. Use Professor A. I. Smirnitsky's classification system.

5. 1. a) He should give the *ball* in your honor 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) Crockett's voice *rose* for the first time, b) I'll send you

roses, one *rose* for each year of your life. 4. a) He was *bound* to keep the peace for six months, b) You should *bound* your desires by reason. 5. a) The pain was almost more than he could *bear*, b) Catch the *bear* before you sell his skin.

7. 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) 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. 5. 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. Do the following italicized words represent homonyms or polysemantic words? Explain reasons for your answers.

1. 26 *letters* of the ABC; to receive *letters* regularly. 2. to propose a *toast*; an underdone *toast*. 3. a *hand* of the clock; to hold a pen in one's *hand*. 4. the *capital* of a country; to have a big *capital* (money). 5. to date back to year 1870; to have a *date* with somebody. 6. 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.

9. Comment on the phenomenon of synonymy and synonymic dominant. In the following groups of synonyms find the synonymic dominant. Give your reasons for the choice.

a) *Common, customary, frequent, habitual, ordinary, usual, vulgar.*

b) *Able, capable, clever, competent, fitted, powerful, qualified, skilful, vigorous.*

c) *Accept, admit, agree, approve, consent.*

d) *Dividend, division, part, portion, quantity, share.*

e) *Strange, quaint, odd, queer.*

f) *To saunter, to stroll, to wander, to walk, to roam.*

10. Arrange the following ideographic synonyms according to the degree of intensity.

a) *Affliction, despair, sadness;* b) *Excuse, forgive, pardon;* c) *Delight, happiness, pleasure;* d) *Decay, fade, wither;* e) *Annoy, irritate, vex;* f) *Desire, long, wish.*

11. Give synonyms to the italicized words and characterize them.

1. On the staircase, there lingered a great number of people, who came there, some because their rooms were *empty* and lonesome. 2. They *left* this disconsolate

apartment, and *went upstairs*. 3. Managing *to obtain* the addresses of two newspaper syndicates, he deluged them with storiottes. 4. That was a *cordial* greeting and a *warmest* smile. 5. His whole body was *shaking* and *shivering* dangerously.

12. From the following sentences pick out synonyms and antonyms and comment on them.

1. He threw open and shut the latticed windows with violence, as if alike impatient of the admission and exclusion of free air. 2. The general character of the conversation that evening, whether serious or sprightly, grave or gay, was as something untaught, unstudied, intuitive, fitful. 3. At this touch of warm feeling and cold iron, Mr. Dombey shivered all over. 4. Her heart melted, I suppose, at the notion that she should do anything unkind to any mortal, great or small. 5. But we are not mad. We are sane.

13. Comment on the following sentences in terms of antonyms. Define their types.

1. 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. 2. The canvas homes, the caravans, the transportable timber frames – each had its light. Some moving, some still. 3. His words seemed to point out that sad, even, tragic things could never be gay. 4. It was warm in the sun but cool under the shady trees. 5. He is my best friend and he is my bitter enemy. 6. Every man has feminine qualities and every woman has masculine ones. 7. He hated to be exposed to strangers, to be accepted or rejected.

14. Give antonymous word-combinations and substantiate your choice.

A light-blue dress, a light box; an old woman, and old house; to lose a book, to lose a battle; fresh bread, fresh flowers; wild birds, wild behavior; a rough surface, a rough person; a hard task, a hard bed.

15. Comment on the ways of formation of the following groups of neologisms.

a) *Acidhead, bad-mouth, low-life, microcomputer, pare-book, war-game, erotology, half-stuff, bioplasma, calendar-clock.*

b) *Z-car, V-agent.*

c) *Hot spot, air private, orbit line, dependency culture, food card, waterless cooker.*

d) *mouth-to-mouth, two-by-four.*

e) *accessorize, laseronic, sanforize, urbanologism, gadgeteer, vitaminize.*

16. Analyze the word-formative means the following colloquial neologisms are made by. Give their Ukrainian equivalents.

Aggro, buddy-buddy, job-hop, too-too, sourpass, pushinesds, hand-in-glove, goodwillnik, kiss off, congraters! trannie, G, at-risk kids, alpha earner, diff-abled, elderweds, hasbian, maffluent, mouse wrist, time0leakage, twentysomething, yuppify, Webjack, boomeranger, dot-comer, N-Gen.