

# **Semantics: Meaning of Language**

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## Fire Department

- The Department who starts the fire
- Extinguishing Department



## Wrinkle Cream

- Causes wrinkles
- Wrinkle free Cream

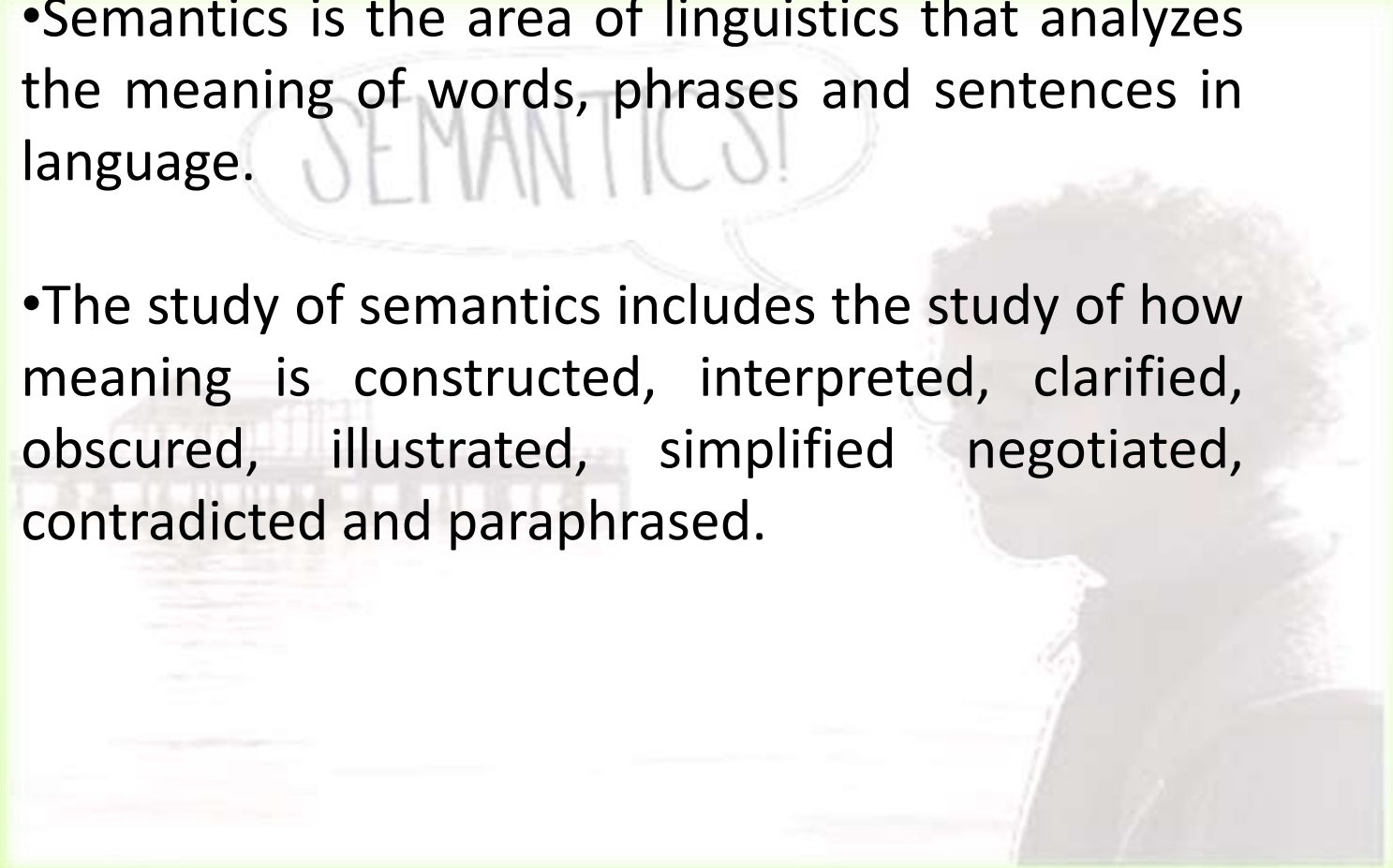


## Pain Pills

- Pain causing pills
- Relief Pills

# What is Semantics?

- Semantics is the area of linguistics that analyzes the meaning of words, phrases and sentences in language.
- The study of semantics includes the study of how meaning is constructed, interpreted, clarified, obscured, illustrated, simplified, negotiated, contradicted and paraphrased.



# Warm-up

- Look at these words. Read them and think what other words come to your mind in relationship to term provided.

Dog

sand

Sofa

kids

Pill

turkey

Coin

Water

Wheel

bathroom

Shoes

Pencil

Bed

Teacher

Baby

Yoga

Sugar

Hammer

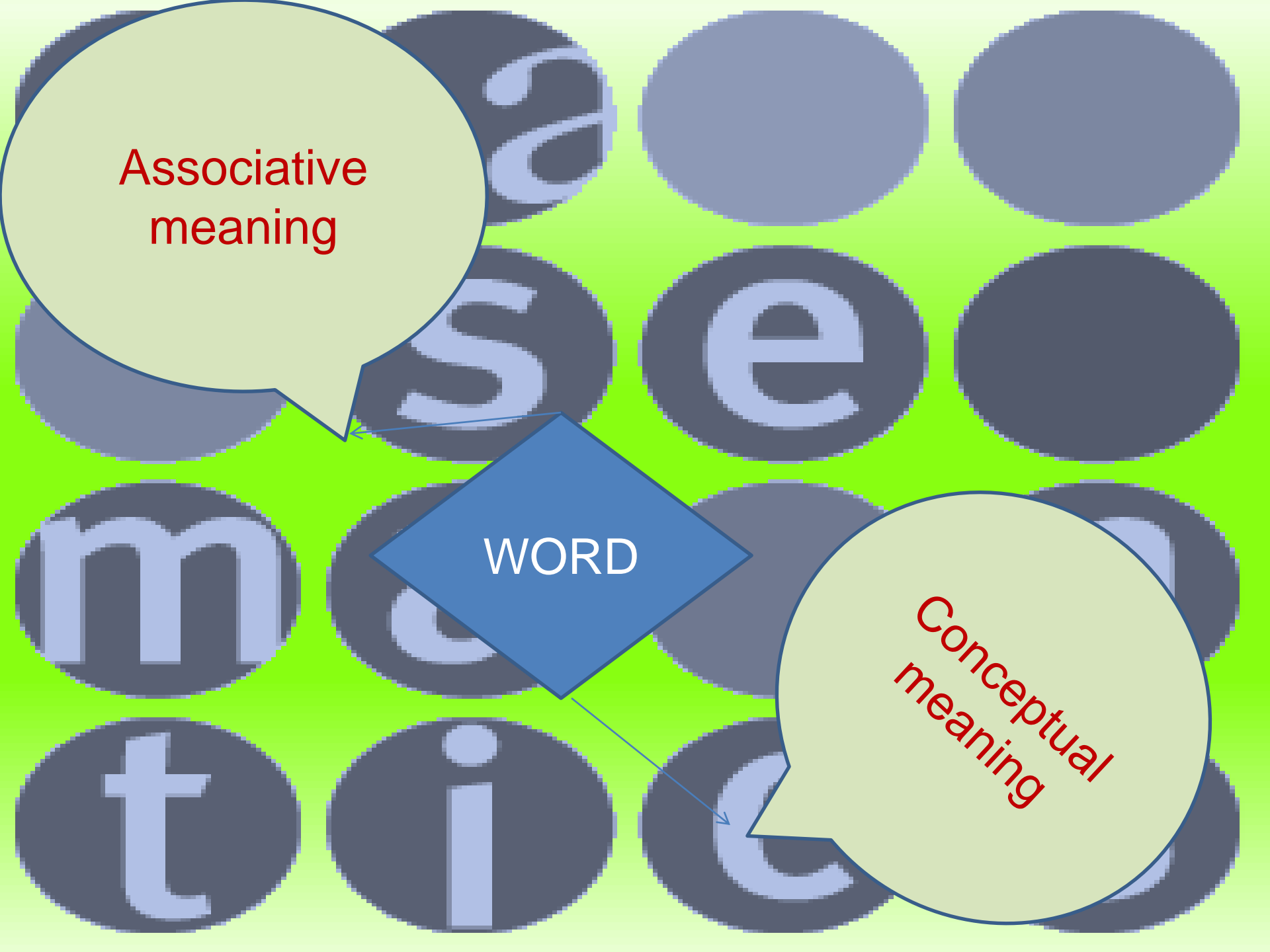
# Meaning

- All the words mentioned before and the concepts that we linked to them have a meaning
- Meaning: Conceptual & Associative
- Both these form of meaning are used in Subliminal marketing

Associative  
meaning

WORD

Conceptual  
meaning



# Conceptual and Associative Meaning

- **Conceptual meaning** refers to the linguist function of the word, that provides its meaning.
  - E.g. *Money*
    - **Money**: It's an object (or series of them) that allow people to buy goods
- **Associative meaning** deals with the concepts that we add to the original word
  - E.g. *Money*
    - **Money**: Rich, job, to work, tired, coin, poor, etc.

# Analyze:

What's the problem with these sentences. How can you explain what the problem is with each one

- *The hamburger ate the boy.*
- *The table listens to the radio.*
- *The horse is reading the newspaper.*
- *The wall talked*
- *These pigs are flying*
- *A hamburger asked for some cheese*



## Semantic Features

- The Semantic Features are 'categories' that allow us to classify the meaning of a word
- They are usually represented with a headword and using the symbols '+' and '-' to say if the word contains that feature.
- There is no list of semantic features. We need the context to create one.

# Semantic Features Analysis

|         | <i>table</i> | <i>horse</i> | <i>boy</i> | <i>man</i> | <i>girl</i> | <i>woman</i> |
|---------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| animate | –            | +            | +          | +          | +           | +            |
| human   | –            | –            | +          | +          | +           | +            |
| female  | –            | –            | –          | –          | +           | +            |
| adult   | –            | +            | –          | +          | –           | +            |

# Semantic Features Analysis

| features<br>insects | 6 legs | 3 body parts | has wings | lays eggs | bites | stings |
|---------------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-------|--------|
| bees                | +      | +            | +         | +         | -     | +      |
| ants                | +      | +            | -         | +         | ?     | -      |
| mosquitoes          | +      | +            | +         | +         | +     | -      |
| wasps               | +      | +            | +         | +         | -     | +      |
| cricket             | +      | +            | -         | +         | -     | -      |

# Semantic Roles

- The **semantic roles** are properties that the noun phrases have according to their meaning inside the sentence.
- The semantic roles are:
  - Agent
  - Theme
  - Instrument
  - Experiencer
  - Location
  - Source
  - Goal

# Agent & Theme

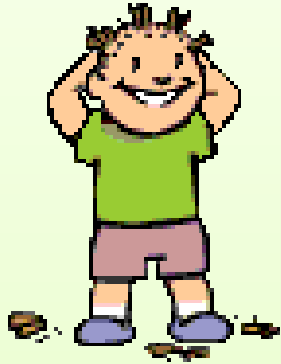
*The boy kicked a ball*

In that sentence, the person who executes the action is called **AGENT**. The agent in that sentence is the *the boy*

The **THEME** is the object or person that is directly affected or described by the action. In this case *a ball*



# Instrument & Experiencer



*The boy cut his hair with the scissors*

- In this example, we can notice that there is a tool that helps the Agent to perform the action. That is the semantic role of **INSTRUMENT**

He felt happy about cutting his hair

- When the action is related to a feeling, a state or perception, the agent takes the name of **EXPERIENCER**

# Location, Source and Goal

*The keys are **next to the vase**.*

*She brought some souvenirs **from France**.*

*Marco travels **to Merida** tomorrow.*

- In the first sentence the text in pink marks the semantic role of **Location**
- In the second, the semantic role of **Source**
- In the third one, the semantic role of **Goal**

# Semantic Roles or Thematic Roles

- roles of NPs in a sentence

a. **The boy kicked the ball**

**doer**      **V**      **entity affected  
by the action**

**1**

**2**

**Agent**

**theme/patient**

**thematic roles: Agent, Patient**



# Semantic Roles or Thematic Roles

**b. The boy hurt himself**  
**Agent theme**

**c. Johnny cut the rope**  
**Agent theme/patient**  
**1 2**

**with a knife.**  
**instrument**  
**3**

# Semantic Roles or Thematic Roles

d. The boy feels sad

**experiencer** : one who sees, knows or

4 enjoys something

e. Mary saw a fly on the wall

**experiencer**      **theme**      **location**

5

o **location** - the place of action

# Semantic Roles or Thematic Roles

f. **Mary borrowed a book from George**

*Agent*

*theme*

*source*

**6**

**- starting point  
of movement**

g. **She returned the book to George.**

*goal*

**7**

**- end point  
of movement**

# Lexical relations

**synonymy-  
antonymy**

**polysemy**

**metonymy**

**m  
e  
t  
a  
p  
h  
o  
r**

**homonymy/  
homographs**

**hyponymy**

**homophony**

**collocation**

# SYNONYMY

- Two or more words with very closely related meanings are called **synonyms**.
- They can often, though not always, be substituted for each other in sentences.
  - *almost/nearly*
  - *big/large*
  - *broad/wide*
  - *buy/purchase,*
  - *cab/taxi*
  - *car/automobile*
  - *couch/sofa*
  - *freedom/liberty*
- It is important to consider that the idea of 'sameness' of meaning used in discussing synonymy is not necessarily 'total sameness'

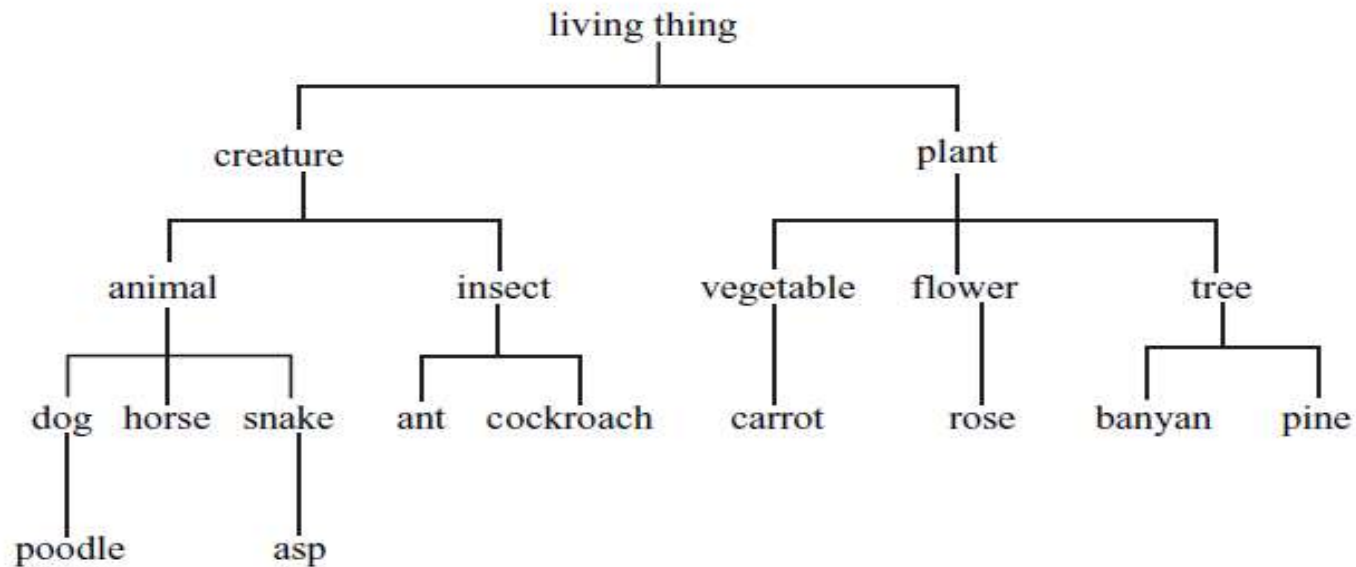
# ANTONYMY

- Two forms with opposite meanings are called **antonyms**.
  - *alive/dead*
  - *big/small*
  - *fast/slow*
  - *happy/sad,*
- There are two types of antonyms: **Gradable** and **Non-gradable**
- **Gradable antonyms** refer to contrary adjectives (Big, small) , while **Non-gradable antonyms** refer to those words that don't allow comparison; however, they have a complementary word (alive/dead)
- Reversives +++

# HYPONYMY

- When the meaning of one form is included in the meaning of another, the relationship is described as **hyponymy**.
- *animal/dog*
- *dog/poodle*
- *vegetable/carrot*
- *flower/rose*

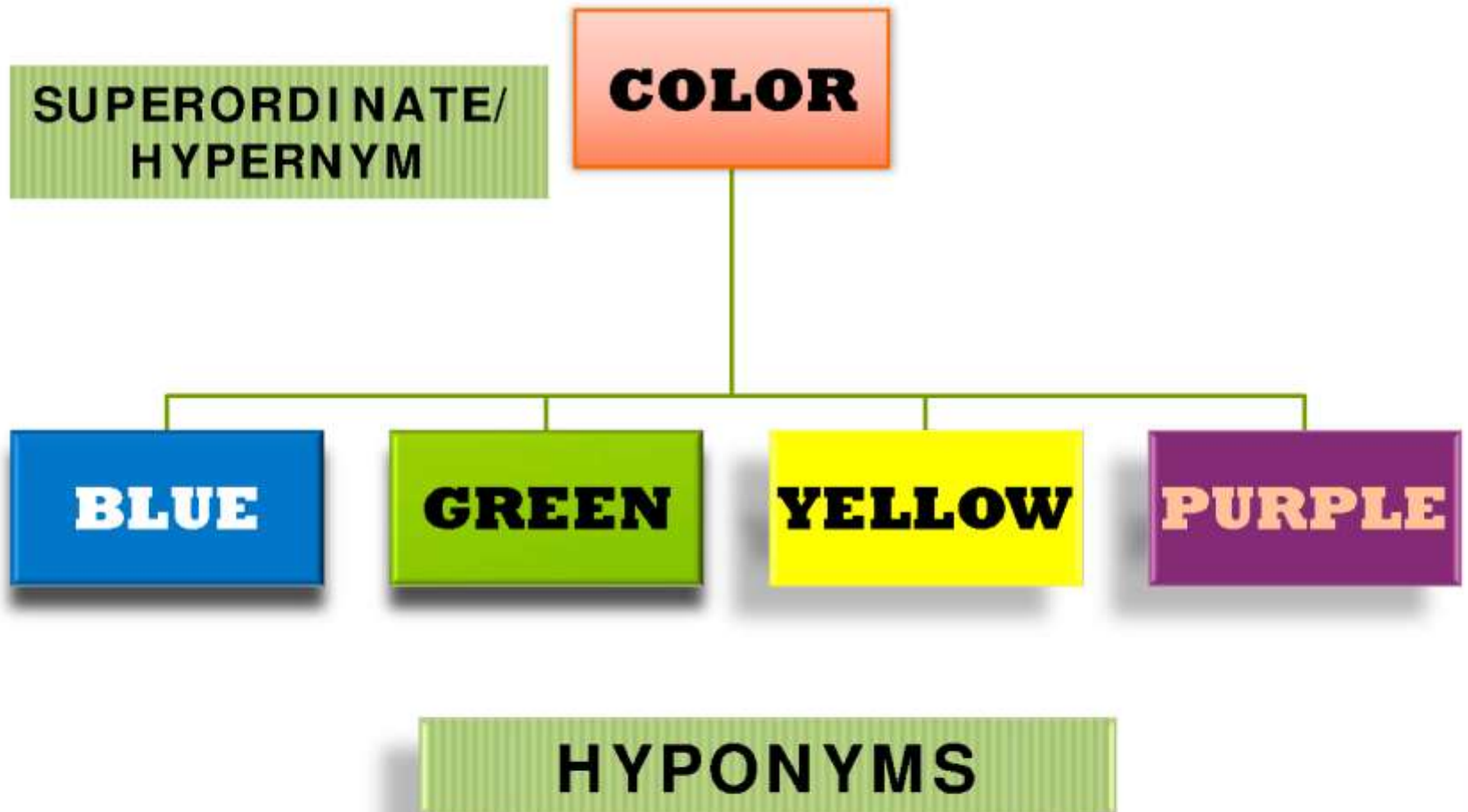
# HYPONYMY



We can also say that two or more words that share the same **superordinate** term are **co-hyponyms**



# Hyponymy – inclusion



# PROTOTYPE



The idea of 'the characteristic instance' of a category is known as the **prototype**. The concept of a prototype helps explain the meaning of certain words, like *bird*, not in terms of component features (e.g. 'has feathers', 'has wings'), but in terms of resemblance to the clearest example.

- Dog
- Three
- Table
- Chair

# HOMOPHONES

- When two or more different (written) forms have the same pronunciation, they are described as **homophones**.
  - *bare/bear*
  - *meat/meet*
  - *flour/flower*
  - *pail/pale*
  - *right/write*
  - *to/too/two.*

# HOMONYMS

- We use the term **homonyms** when one form (written or spoken) has two or more unrelated meanings, as in these examples:
  - *bank* (of a river) – *bank* (financial institution)
  - *bat* (flying creature) – *bat* (used in sports)
  - *mole* (on skin) – *mole* (small animal)
  - *pupil* (at school) – *pupil* (in the eye)
  - *race* (contest of speed) – *race* (ethnic group)

# homonyms/homographs

- one form, different meanings

**light**      **not heavy**  
**illumination**

**bank**      **financial institution**  
**small cliff at the river edge**

**pen**      **writing instrument**  
**cage**

**race**      **contest**  
**ethnic group**

# POLSEMY

## neck

2. Part of a hollow object which is at the top and is narrower than the part below it.



LOOK! The outline shows a similar  
NECK Structure!

- **Polysemy** can be defined as one form (written or spoken) having multiple meanings that are all related by extension
- Head: head as a part of body; mind, or mental ability; a person in charge.
- Foot- Of a person, of Mountain
- Date-Point in time, Arranged meeting

# Word Play

- These last three lexical relations are the basis of a lot of **word play**, usually for humorous effect.
- Why is 6 afraid of 7? Because 7-8-9
- Question:
  - If the plural of Hippopotamus is hippopotami, What is the plural of whatafoolamus?
- Answer:
  - Whatafoolami (what a fool am I)

# METONYMY

- It is a relationship between two words, that is based on daily life experience.
- That close connection can be based on a container- contents relation (bottle- coke; can- juice),
- a whole- part relation (car- wheels; house- roof)
- or a representative- symbol relationship (king- crown; The President- The White House).



# Metaphors

A metaphor is a phrase that does not carry the literal meanings of the words but is used to mean something different.

For example :

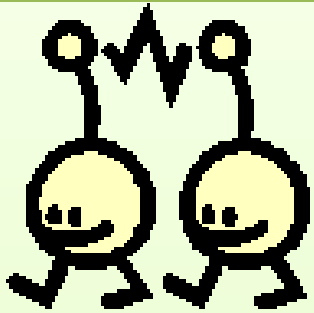
My car is a lemon

Works as a metaphor because the term lemon has a secondary meaning “a defective vehicle”

# metaphor

- understanding the concept in terms of another
- extension beyond the primary sense
  - ❖ eye of the needle; see the point
  - ❖ buying time; budget time; spend time
  - ❖ borrowed time
  - ❖ peak of health
  - ❖ fell into depression

# COLLOCATION



- Frequently occurring together is known as collocation. Words tend to occur with other words.
- Some collocations are joined pairs of words such as salt and pepper or husband and wife.

○ **h a m m e r – n a i l**

○ **n e e d l e – t h r e a d**

○ **b u t t e r – b r e a d**

○ **s a l t – p e p p e r**

# Reference

- **Yule,G . 2006. The study of language .Cambridge : CUP.**

Thank you 😊

