

USEFUL WAYS FOR CLASSIFYING HOMONYMS AND POLYSEMYS.

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Abstract: In this article the information is given about Some useful ways which can be helpful while classifying Homonyms and Polysemys in English lexicology with clear examples .

Key words: Homonym, Homophones, Homographs, Erymology, Semantic analysis.

A **homonym** is a word that has the same pronunciation or spelling as another word but has a different meaning. Homonyms can be divided into two categories: homophones and homographs.

1. Homophones: These are words that have the same pronunciation but different meanings and spellings. For example:

- "to," "too," and "two"
- "their," "there," and "they're"
- "flower" and "flour"

2. Homographs: These are words that have the same spelling but different meanings and pronunciations. For example:

- "bow" (a knot) and "bow" (a gesture of respect)
- "lead" (to guide) and "lead" (a heavy metal)
- "tear" (to rip) and "tear" (a drop of liquid from the eye)

Homonyms can sometimes create confusion or ambiguity in communication, especially in written form, as the intended meaning may not be clear without additional context.

Polysemy refers to a linguistic phenomenon in which a single word or phrase has multiple related meanings. In other words, a polysemous word has evolved to have different senses or interpretations that are conceptually connected. These various meanings often stem from a common origin or have developed over time through semantic shifts.

Unlike homonyms, which are distinct words with unrelated meanings, polysemous words have related meanings that can be connected through a shared concept or underlying semantic relationship. The different senses of a polysemous word are typically related in some way, and understanding the context or usage can help determine the intended meaning.

For example, consider the word "**bank.**" It can refer to:

1. A financial institution where people deposit and withdraw money.
2. The land alongside a body of water, such as a riverbank.

Both of these meanings are related to the concept of "bank," which involves a notion of accumulation or a raised edge. The context in which the word is used helps to disambiguate the intended meaning. Polysemy is a common feature of natural languages, and it allows for nuance, flexibility, and richness of expression. However, it can also lead to ambiguity and challenges in understanding, particularly when the context is unclear or when different interpretations are possible.

Determining whether a word is a homonym or exhibits polysemy involves a combination of linguistic analysis, contextual information, and the perspective of linguists and lexicographers. Here are some approaches we can use:

1. Etymology and historical analysis: Linguists and lexicographers often trace the historical development of words to understand their origins and how different meanings have emerged over time. By examining the etymology and historical usage of a word, they can identify whether the various meanings arose independently (homonyms) or share a common origin or concept (polysemy).

2. Semantic analysis: Linguists analyze the semantic relationships between different meanings of a word. They look for connections in terms of metaphorical extensions, conceptual associations, or shifts in meaning. If the different senses of a word are related through a common underlying concept or theme, it suggests polysemy. If the meanings appear unrelated and have distinct conceptual domains, it suggests homonymy.

3. Corpus analysis: Linguists and lexicographers study large collections of language data, known as corpora, to examine how words are used in different contexts. By analyzing the patterns of word usage and the associations between meanings, they can gain insights into whether a word is used as a homonym or exhibits polysemy. Corpus analysis helps identify the contexts in which different meanings are likely to occur and how they are related.

4. Native speaker intuition: Linguists and lexicographers often rely on the intuitions of native speakers, who have a deep understanding of the language and its nuances. They may conduct surveys, interviews, or collect judgments from native speakers to determine how they perceive the relationships between different word meanings. Native speaker intuitions can provide valuable insights into the polysemy or homonymy of words.

5. Consensus within the linguistic community: Determining whether a word is a homonym or exhibits polysemy can sometimes be subjective and debated among linguists. The consensus within the linguistic community plays an important role in defining and categorizing words. Through scholarly discussions, research papers, and publications, linguists establish conventions and classifications that help distinguish between homonyms and polysemous words.

It's worth noting that the distinction between homonymy and polysemy is not always clear-cut, and there can be cases that are open to interpretation. The categorization of words may vary depending on the linguistic framework or theoretical perspective employed.

In summary, homonyms are words with different meanings that may or may not share the same spelling or pronunciation, whereas polysemy refers to a single word having multiple related meanings that share the same spelling and pronunciation.

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