

knowledge of meanings: without this knowledge we could not ascertain the phonemic features.

The description of a language, then, begins with phonology, which defines each phoneme and states what combinations occur. Any combination of phonemes that occurs in a language, is *pronounceable* in this language, and is a *phonetic form*. The combination [manu], for instance is unpronounceable in English, but the combination [men] is pronounceable and is a phonetic form.

When the phonology of a language has been established, there remains the task of telling what meanings are attached to the several phonetic forms. This phase of the description is *semantics*. It is ordinarily divided into two parts, *grammar* and *lexicon*.

A phonetic form which has a meaning, is a *linguistic form*. Thus, any English sentence, phrase, or word is a linguistic form, and so is a meaningful syllable, such as, say, [mɛl] in *maltreat*, or [mɒn] in *Monday*; a meaningful form may even consist of a single phoneme, such as the [s] which means 'more than one' in plural-forms like *hats*, *caps*, *books*. In the following chapters we shall see how meanings are connected with linguistic forms.

## CHAPTER 9

### MEANING

9. 1. The study of speech-sounds without regard to meanings is an abstraction: in actual use, speech-sounds are uttered as signals. We have defined the *meaning* of a linguistic form as the situation in which the speaker utters it and the response which it calls forth in the hearer. The speaker's situation and the hearer's response are closely co-ordinated, thanks to the circumstance that every one of us learns to act indifferently as a speaker or as a hearer. In the causal sequence

speaker's situation  $\rightarrow$  speech  $\rightarrow$  hearer's response, the speaker's situation, as the earlier term, will usually present a simpler aspect than the hearer's response; therefore we usually discuss and define meanings in terms of a speaker's stimulus.

The situations which prompt people to utter speech, include every object and happening in their universe. In order to give a scientifically accurate definition of meaning for every form of a language, we should have to have a scientifically accurate knowledge of everything in the speakers' world. The actual extent of human knowledge is very small, compared to this. We can define the meaning of a speech-form accurately when this meaning has to do with some matter of which we possess scientific knowledge. We can define the names of minerals, for example, in terms of chemistry and mineralogy, as when we say that the ordinary meaning of the English word *salt* is 'sodium chloride (NaCl)'; and we can define the names of plants or animals by means of the technical terms of botany or zoölogy, but we have no precise way of defining words like *love* or *hate*, which concern situations that have not been accurately classified — and these latter are in the great majority.

Moreover, even where we have some scientific (that is, universally recognized and accurate) classification, we often find that the meanings of a language do not agree with this classification. The whale is in German called a 'fish': *Wal-fisch* [val-*fɪʃ*]

and the bat a 'mouse': *Fledermaus* ['fē:der-maws]. Physicists view the color-spectrum as a continuous scale of light-waves of different lengths, ranging from 40 to 72 hundred-thousandths of a millimetre, but languages mark off different parts of this scale quite arbitrarily and without precise limits, in the meanings of such color-names as *violet, blue, green, yellow, orange, red*, and the color-names of different languages do not embrace the same gradations. The kinship of persons seems a simple matter, but the terminologies of kinship that are used in various languages are extremely hard to analyze.

The statement of meanings is therefore the weak point in language-study, and will remain so until human knowledge advances very far beyond its present state. In practice, we define the meaning of a linguistic form, wherever we can, in terms of some other science. Where this is impossible, we resort to makeshift devices. One is *demonstration*. If someone did not know the meaning of the word *apple*, we could instruct him by handing him an apple or pointing at an apple, and continuing, as long as he made mistakes, to handle apples and point at them, until he used the word in the conventional way. This is essentially the process by which children learn the use of speech-forms. If a questioner understood enough of our language, we could define the word *apple* for him by *circumlocution* — that is, in the manner of our dictionaries, by a roundabout speech which fitted the same situations as does the word *apple*, saying, for instance: "The well-known, firm-fleshed, smooth-skinned, round or oblong pome fruit of the trees of the genus *Malus*, varying greatly in size, shape, color, and degree of acidity." Or else, if we knew enough of the questioner's language, we could answer him by *translation* — that is, by uttering a roughly equivalent form of his language; if he were a Frenchman, for instance, we could give  *pomme [pɔm]* as the meaning of *apple*. This method of definition appears in our bilingual dictionaries.

9. 2. The situations which prompt us to utter any one linguistic form, are quite varied; philosophers tell us, in fact, that no two situations are ever alike. Each one of us uses the word *apple*, in the course of a few months, of many individual pieces of fruit which differ in size, shape, color, odor, taste, and so on. In a favorable case, such as that of the word *apple*, all the members of the speech-community have been trained, from childhood, to use

the speech-form whenever the situation (in this case, the object) presents certain relatively definable characteristics. Even in cases like this, our usage is never quite uniform, and most speech-forms have less clear-cut meanings. Nevertheless, it is clear that we must discriminate between *non-distinctive* features of the situation, such as the size, shape, color, and so on of any one particular apple, and the *distinctive*, or *linguistic meaning* (the *semantic features*) which are common to all the situations that call forth the utterance of the linguistic form, such as the features which are common to all the objects of which English-speaking people use the word *apple*.

— Since our study ordinarily concerns only the distinctive features of form and meaning, I shall henceforth usually omit the qualification *linguistic or distinctive*, and speak simply of *forms and meanings*, ignoring the existence of non-distinctive features. A form is often said to *express* its meaning.

9. 3. Even if we had an accurate definition of the meaning that is attached to every one of the forms of a language, we should still face a difficulty of another sort. A very important part of every situation is the state of the speaker's body. This includes, of course, the predisposition of his nervous system, which results from all of his experiences, linguistic and other, up to this very moment — not to speak of hereditary and pre-natal factors. If we could keep an external situation ideally uniform, and put different speakers into it, we should still be unable to measure the equipment each speaker brought with him, and unable, therefore, to predict what speech-forms he would utter, or, for that matter, whether he would utter any speech at all.

If we had perfect definitions, we should still discover that during many utterances the speaker was not at all in the situation which we had defined. People very often utter a word like *apple* when no apple at all is present. We may call this *displaced speech*. The frequency and importance of displaced speech is obvious. We recall the infant "asking for" his doll (§ 2.5). Relayed speech embodies a very important use of language: speaker A sees some apples and mentions them to speaker B, who has not seen them; speaker B relays this news to C, C to D, D to E, and so on, and it may be that none of these persons has seen them, when finally speaker X goes and eats some. In other ways, too, we utter linguistic forms when the typical stimulus is absent. A starving beggar

at the door says *I'm hungry*, and the housewife gives him food: this incident, we say, embodies the *primary* or *dictionary meaning* of the speech-form *I'm hungry*. A petulant child, at bed-time, says *I'm hungry*, and his mother, who is up to his tricks, answers by packing him off to bed. This is an example of displaced speech. It is a remarkable fact that if a foreign observer asked for the meaning of the form *I'm hungry*, both mother and child would still, in most instances, define it for him in terms of the dictionary meaning. Lying, irony, jesting, poetry, narrative fiction, and the like, are probably as old and certainly as widespread as language. As soon as we know the dictionary meaning of a form, we are fully able to use it in displaced speech; our dictionaries and handbooks of foreign languages need tell us only the dictionary meaning. The displaced uses of speech are derived in fairly uniform ways from its primary value, and require no special discussion; nevertheless, they add to our uncertainty as to the forms that a given speaker will utter (if he speaks at all) in a given situation.

9.4. Adherents of mentalistic psychology believe that they can avoid the difficulty of defining meanings, because they believe that, prior to the utterance of a linguistic form, there occurs within the speaker a non-physical process, a *thought*, *concept*, *image*, *feeling*, *act of will*, or the like, and that the hearer, likewise, upon receiving the sound-waves, goes through an equivalent or correlated mental process. The mentalist, therefore, can define the meaning of a linguistic form as the characteristic mental event which occurs in every speaker and hearer in connection with the utterance or hearing of the linguistic form. The speaker who utters the word *apple* has had a mental image of an apple, and this word evokes a similar image in a hearer's mind. For the mentalist, language is *the expression of ideas, feelings, or volitions*.

The mechanist does not accept this solution. He believes that *mental images, feelings*, and the like are merely popular terms for various bodily movements, which, so far as they concern language, can be roughly divided into three types:

- (1) large-scale processes which are much the same in different people, and, having some social importance, are represented by conventional speech-forms, such as *I'm hungry* (*angry, frightened, sorry, glad, my head aches*, and so on);
- (2) obscure and highly variable small-scale muscular contractions and glandular secretions, which differ from person to person,

and, having no immediate social importance, are not represented by conventional speech-forms;

(3) soundless movements of the vocal organs, taking the place of speech-movements, but not perceptible to other people ("thinking in words," § 2.4).

The mechanist views the processes in (1) simply as events which the speaker can observe better than anyone else; the various problems of meaning, such as that of displaced speech (the naughty child saying *I'm hungry*), exist here no less than elsewhere. The mechanist believes that the processes in (2) are private habits left over, as traces, from the vicissitudes of education and other experience; the speaker reports them as *images, feelings*, and so on, and they differ not only for every speaker, but for every occasion of speech. The speaker who says, "I had the mental image of an apple," is really saying, "I was responding to some obscure internal stimuli of a type which was associated at some time in my past with the stimuli of an apple." The sub-vocal speech in (3) seems to the mechanist merely a derivative of the habit of actual speech-utterance; when we are assured that a speaker has inaudibly performed the speech-movements of a certain utterance ("thought it in words"), we face exactly the same problem as when he has audibly uttered the same speech-form. In sum, then, the "mental processes" seem to the mechanist to be merely traditional names for bodily processes which either (1) come within the definition of meaning as speaker's situation, or (2) are so distantly correlated with speech-utterance as to be negligible factors in the speaker's situation, or (3) are mere reproductions of the speech-utterance.

Although this difference of opinion plays a decisive part in our views about the fundamentals of language, as of other human activities, and although mentalists lean heavily upon their terminology in all discussion of meaning, the dispute has really very little to do with problems of linguistic meaning. The events which the mentalist designates as mental processes and the mechanist classifies otherwise, affect in every case only one person: every one of us responds to them when they occur within him, but has no way of responding to them when they occur in anyone else. The mental processes or internal bodily processes of other people are known to each one of us only from speech-utterances and other observable actions. Since these are all we have to work with, the mentalist in practice defines meanings exactly as does the mecha-

nist, in terms of actual situations; he defines *apple* not as "the image of the well-known, firm-fleshed, etc. . . . fruit," but, like the mechanist, omits the first three of these words, and, in fact, for all speakers except himself, merely infers that the image was present, either from the fact that the speaker used the word *apple*, or from some more definite utterance of the speaker's ("I had a mental image of an apple"). In practice, then, all linguists, both mentalists and mechanists, define meanings in terms of the speaker's situation and, whenever this seems to add anything, of the hearer's response.

§ 5. Linguistic meanings are more specific than the meanings of non-linguistic acts. A great deal of human co-operation is effected without language, by such means as gestures (for instance, pointing at something), the handling of objects (placing an object into someone's hand, dashing an object to the ground), contact (nudging, caressing), non-linguistic sounds, both non-vocal (snapping the fingers, applause) and vocal (laughing, crying), and so on. We must mention especially, in this last connection, the non-linguistic (non-distinctive) features of speech-sound, such as plaintive, angry, commanding, drawing "tones of voice"; the manner of speech, in fact, is, next to speech itself, our most effective method of signaling. Linguistic forms, however, result, for the most part, in far more accurate, specific, and delicate co-ordination than could be reached by non-linguistic means; to see this, one need only listen to a few chance speeches: *Four feet three and a half inches*. — *If you don't hear from me by eight o'clock, go without me*. — *Where's the small bottle of ammonia?* Apparent exceptions, such as elaborate systems of gesture, deaf-and-dumb language, signaling-codes, the use of writing, telegraphy, and so on, turn out, upon inspection, to be merely derivatives of language.

Since we have no way of defining most meanings and of demonstrating their constancy, we have to take the specific and stable character of language as a presupposition of linguistic study, just as we presuppose it in our everyday dealings with people. We may state this presupposition as the *fundamental assumption of linguistics* (§ 5.3), namely:

*In certain communities (speech-communities) some speech-utterances are alike as to form and meaning.*

This virtue of speech-forms is bought at the cost of rationality. The non-linguistic modes of communication are based directly

upon our bodily make-up, or else arise directly from simple social situations, but the connection of linguistic forms with their meanings is wholly arbitrary. What we call *horse*, the German calls *Pferd* [pfer:t], the Frenchman *cheval* [səval], the Cree Indian [misatim], and so on; one set of sounds is as unreasonable as any other.

Our fundamental assumption implies that each linguistic form has a constant and specific meaning. If the forms are phonemically different, we suppose that their meanings also are different — for instance, that each one of a set of forms like *quick*, *fast*, *swift*, *rapid*, *speedy*, differs from all the others in some constant and conventional feature of meaning. We suppose, in short, that there are no actual *synonyms*. On the other hand, our assumption implies also that if the forms are semantically different (that is, different as to linguistic meaning), they are not "the same," even though they may be alike as to phonetic form. Thus, in English, the phonetic form [beɪr] occurs with three different meanings: *bear* 'to carry; to give birth to,' *bear* 'ursus,' and *bare* 'uncovered.' Similarly, [peɪr] represents two nouns (*pear* and *pair*) and a verb (*pare*), and many other examples will occur to the reader. Different linguistic forms which have the same phonetic form (and differ, therefore, only as to meaning) are known as *homonyms*. Since we cannot with certainty define meanings, we cannot always decide whether a given phonetic form in its various uses has always the same meaning or represents a set of homonyms. For instance, the English verb *bear* in *bear a burden*, *bear troubles*, *bear fruit*, *bear offspring*, can be viewed as a single form or as a set of two or perhaps even more homonyms. Similarly, *charge*, in *charge the cannon with grapeshot*, *charge the man with larceny*, *charge the gloves to me*, *charge him a stiff price*, can be viewed in several ways; *the infantry will charge the fort* seems to be different. The quality *steth* and the animal *steth* probably represent a pair of homonyms to some speakers and a single meaning to others. All this shows, of course, that our basic assumption is true only within limits, even though its general truth is presupposed not only in linguistic study, but by all our actual use of language.

§ 6. Although the linguist cannot define meanings, but must appeal for this to students of other sciences or to common knowledge, yet, in many cases, having obtained definitions for some forms, he can define the meanings of other forms in terms of

these first ones. The mathematician, for instance, who is here acting as a linguist, cannot define such terms as *one* and *add*, but if we give him a definition of these, he can define *two* ('one added to one'), *three* ('one-added to two'), and so on, without end. What we see plainly in mathematical language, where the denotations are very precise, appears also in many ordinary speech-forms. If the meanings of the English past tense and of the word *go* are defined, the linguist can define *went* as 'the past of *go*.' If the difference *male* : *female* is defined for the linguist, he can assure us that this is the difference between *he* : *she*, *lion* : *lioness*, *gander* : *goose*, *ram* : *ewe*. The linguist has this assurance in very many cases, where a language, by some recognizable phonetic or grammatical feature, groups a number of its forms into *form-classes*: in any one form-class, every form contains an element, the *class-meaning*, which is the same for all forms of this form-class. Thus, all English substantives belong to a form-class, and each English substantive, accordingly, has a meaning, which, once it is defined for us (say, as 'object'), we can attribute to every substantive form in the language. English substantives, further, are subdivided into the two classes of singular and plural; granted a definition of the meanings of these two classes, we attribute one of these meanings to every substantive.

In every language we find certain forms, *substitutes*, whose meaning consists largely or entirely of class-meanings. In English, the pronouns are the largest group of substitutes. The pronouns show us a very interesting combination of meanings. The principal features are class-meanings; thus, *somebody*, *someone* have the class-meanings of substantives, singulars, personals; *he* has the class-meanings of substantives, singulars, personals, males; *it* has the class-meanings of substantives, singulars, non-personals; *they* has the class-meanings of substantives and plurals. In the second place, a pronoun may contain an element of meaning which makes the pronoun represent some particular substantive form of the language. Thus, the pronouns *some* and *none* tell us that the particular substantive is one which has been recently mentioned (*Here are apples* : *take some*); in contrast with this, *something*, *somebody*, *someone*, *nothing*, *nobody*, *no one* tell nothing about the species. Thirdly, some pronouns contain an element of meaning which tells us which particular objects in a species are concerned. Thus, *he*, *she*, *it*, *they* imply that not only the species (say, *policeman*) has

been mentioned, but also that the particular object of this species (say, *Officer Smith*, or *the one at this corner*) has been identified. This feature of meaning, once defined, will be found in various other forms of our language; it occurs, apparently without admixture, as the meaning of the article *the*, for this little word tells us only that the following substantive denotes an identified individual of a species.

In sum, then, we may say that certain meanings, once they are defined, can be recognized as recurring in whole series of forms. In particular, the last-named type, which has to do with the identification of individual objects of a species, in the way of selection, inclusion, exclusion, or numbering, elicits very uniform responses from different persons, and recurs with relative uniformity in different languages; these types of meaning, accordingly, give rise to the specially accurate form of speech which we call mathematics.

§ 7. Vocal gestures, serving an inferior type of communication, occur not only outside of speech, as in an inarticulate outcry, but also in combination with speech-forms, in the disposition of non-distinctive features of speech-sound, such as the "tone of voice." Some conventional speech-forms, in fact, seem to lie on the border-line; thus, we have seen that, in English, the exclamations *pst* [pst] and *sh* [ʃ], with which we demand silence, violate the phonetic pattern by the use as syllables of the relatively un-sonorous phonemes [s, ʃ]. Less striking deviations from the phonetic pattern sometimes occur in words whose meaning resembles that of a pointing gesture. In English the initial phoneme [ð] occurs only in words of demonstrative and related meanings, such as *this*, *that*, *the*, *then*, *there*, *though*; in Russian, the phoneme [e] occurs initially in none but demonstrative words, such as ['eto] 'this.'

Non-phonemic, gesture-like features may become fairly fixed. In Plains Cree the word [e:] 'yes' is ordinarily spoken with a diphthongal glide in the vowel and a final glottal stop, somewhat as [e:ʔ], although neither of these features is phonemic in the language. In our slang fashions, peculiar pitch-schemes occasionally become fixed for certain values; in the last years, *Yeah?* and *Is that so?* with a peculiar modification of the question-pitch, have been used as facetious vulgarisms, expressing disbelief.

The latter expression has also a form *Is zat so?* which illustrates another phase of unusual linguistic features, *facetious mispronun-*

*ciation*. To say *Please, excuse me*, for instance, is a form of tired wit. These distortions get their value from a resemblance to other linguistic forms (as in our example, the word *ox*) or to the speech-forms of foreigners, sub-standard speakers, and children, as in the facetious use of [ɔj] for [r] in words like *bird* (imitating the sub-standard speech of New York City), or in the use of baby-talk (*Atta boy! Atta dirt!*).

Certain expressions have slurred and shortened by-forms in which the phonetic pattern is lost; these are common formulas of social intercourse, such as greetings and terms of address. Thus, *How do you do?* is shortened in all manner of ways into forms which cannot be recorded in terms of English phonemes, but only suggested by such sketches as [ʔ'duw.ɔ] or [d'duw.ɔ]; *How are you?* is something like [hwajɔ hajɔ]; *madam* appears as [m] in *Yes'm*. These by-forms occur only in the formula; in asking *How do you do it?* [ʔ'haw ju 'duw it.ɔ] for example, we do not use the over-slurred form. These shortened forms occur in various languages; their relation to normal speech is obscure, but evidently they represent a kind of *sub-linguistic* communication, in which the ordinary meaning of the forms plays no part.

We can mention any sound by means of a rough imitation in terms of vocal sound, as when we tell the calls of animals, or when we report the noise of an engine. In this way we can also mention speech-sounds; talking about a person who lisps, for instance, someone may say, "I am tired of his eternal *yeth, yeth*." The commonest case is *hypostasis*, the mention of a phonetically normal speech-form, as when we say, "That is only an *if*," or "There is always a *but*," or when we talk about "the word *normalcy*" or "the name *Smith*." One may even speak of parts of words, as I shall speak in this book of "the suffix *-ish* in *boyish*." Hypostasis is closely related to *quotation*, the repetition of a speech.

9. 8. The peculiarities of the forms discussed in the last paragraph consist in deviations from the ordinary tie-up of phonetic form with dictionary meaning. When there is no such deviation, and only a normal phonetic form with a dictionary meaning is to be considered, the latter will still exhibit great complexity. We have already seen that present-day knowledge does not suffice to unravel all the entanglements of meaning, but there are two main features of the dictionary meaning of speech-forms which demand such comment as we are able to make.

Very many linguistic forms are used for more than one typical situation. In English, we speak of the *head* of an army, of a procession, of a household, or of a river, and of a *head* of cabbage; of the *mouth* of a bottle, cannon, or river; of the *eye* of a needle, and of hooks and *eyes* on a dress; of the *teeth* of a saw; of the *tongue* of a shoe or of a wagon; of the *neck* of a bottle and of a *neck* of the woods; of the *arms, legs, and back* of a chair; of the *foot* of a mountain; of *hearts* of celery. A man may be a *fox*, an *ass*, or a *dirty dog*; a woman, a *peach, lemon, cat, or goose*; people are *sharp and keen* or *dull*, or else *bright* or *foggy*, as to their wits; *warm* or *cold* in temperament; *crooked* or *straight* in conduct; a person may be *up in the air, at sea, off the handle, off his base*, or even *beside himself*, without actually moving from the spot. The reader will be able to add examples practically without limit; there is no greater bore than the enumeration and classification of these "metaphors."

The remarkable thing about these variant meanings is our assurance and our agreement in viewing one of the meanings as *normal* (or *central*) and the others as *marginal* (*metaphoric* or *transferred*). The central meaning is favored in the sense that we understand a form (that is, respond to it) in the central meaning unless some feature of the practical situation forces us to look to a transferred meaning. If we hear someone say *There goes a fox!* we look for a real fox, and if this is out of the question, we are likely to take the utterance as displaced speech (say, as make-believe or as part of a fairy-tale). Only if some situational feature forces us — say, if the speaker is pointing at a man — do we take the form in the transferred sense. Even if we heard someone say, *The fox promised to help her*, we should think of a fairy-tale rather than of *fox* 'unscrupulous and clever person.' Sometimes the practical feature that forces us to take a form in transferred meaning, has been given by speech: *Old Mr. Smith is a fox* is bound to be taken in transferred meaning, because we do not call real foxes "Mr." or give them family-names. *He married a lemon* forces us to the transferred meaning only because we know that men do not go through a marriage ceremony with a piece of fruit. On the other hand, special practical situations may change all this. People who lived close to the Fox Indians might, without special constraint, take *fox* in our examples in the transferred sense 'member of the Fox nation.'

In some cases a transferred meaning is linguistically determined by an accompanying form. The word *cat* always has a transferred meaning when it is accompanied by the suffix *-kin* (*catkin*), and the word *pussy* when it is compounded with *willow* (*pussy-willow*); similarly, the word *eye* when it has the suffix *-let* (*eyelid*). The words *dog*, *monkey*, *beard* when they appear with the marks of verb derivation (say, with a preceding *to*), always have transferred meaning (*to dog someone's footsteps*; *don't monkey with that*; *to beard a lion in his den*). These linguistic features may be purely negative: *give out*, used without an object (*his money gave out*; *our horses gave out*), always has a transferred meaning ('become exhausted'). In those cases the structure of the language recognizes the transferred meaning. Even a linguist who made no attempt to define meanings would have to specify that *give out*, intransitive, meant something different (was a different form) from *give out*, transitive (*he gave out tickets*).

In many cases we hesitate whether to view the form as a single form with several meanings or as a set of homonyms. Examples of this are *air* 'atmosphere; tune, melody; manner' (this last including *airs* 'haughty manners'), *key* 'instrument for locking and unlocking; set of tones in music,' *charge* 'attack; load; accuse; debit,' *sloth* 'name of an animal; laziness'.

We are likely to make the mistake of thinking that the transferred meanings of our language are natural and even inevitable in human speech — the more so, as they appear also in other European languages. This last, however, is merely a result of our common cultural traditions; while transferred meanings occur in all languages, the particular ones in any given language are by no means to be taken for granted. Neither in French nor in German can one speak of the *eye* of a needle or of an *ear* of grain. To speak of the *foot* of a mountain seems natural to any European, but it would be nonsense in Menomini and doubtless in many other languages. On the other hand, in Menomini [una: new] 'he places him in position' has also the transferred meaning 'he picks lice from him.' In Russian, [no'ga] 'leg' is not used of the leg of a chair or table; this transferred meaning appears only in the diminutive [noška] 'little leg; leg of a chair or table.' Accordingly, when the linguist tries to state meanings, he safely ignores the uses of displaced speech, but does his best to register all cases of transferred meaning.

All this applies also to another type of deviant meaning, the *narrowed* meaning, with this difference, that we are far more ready to accept a form in a narrowed meaning. The practical situation guides us at once to take *car* in different narrowed senses in *The diner is the second car forward* ('railroad-carriage'); *Does the car stop at this corner?* ('street-car'); *Bring the car close to the curb* ('motor-car'). When we hear the command *to call a doctor*, we take it at once to mean a *doctor of medicine*. A *burner* is primarily a person or instrument that burns things, but usually, in a narrowed sense, a gas-tap arranged to give a certain kind of flame. A *bulb* among gardeners is one thing and among electricians another. A *glass* is usually a drinking-glass or a looking-glass; *glasses* are usually eye-glasses. Narrowed meanings are hard to define, because, after all, every occurrence of a form is prompted by some one practical situation which need not contain all the possibilities of meaning: *apple* is used now of a green one, now of a red one, and so on.

The language itself, by formal characteristics, recognizes narrowed meanings in certain combinations. For instance, *blackbird* is not merely any 'black bird': in this combination the meaning of *black* is greatly narrowed; similarly *blueberry*, *whitefish*, and the like.

*Widened* meanings are less common. In general, *cat* is the domestic animal, but now and then we use the word to include lions, tigers, and so on; the word *dog*, however, is not similarly used to include wolves and foxes. On the other hand, *hound* is used poetically and facetiously of any kind of dog. Often, the widened meaning is recognized in the structure of the language, and appears only when certain accompanying forms are present. Thus *meat* is edible flesh, but in *meat and drink* and in *sweetmeats* it is food in general; *fowl* is an edible bird, but in *fish, flesh, or fowl* or *the fowl of the air* it is any bird.

Often enough the speakers of a language do not distinguish a central and a marginal meaning in cases where an outsider might see two situationally different values; thus, *day* in English means a period of twenty-four hours (Swedish *dag* [dy:n]) or the light part of this period (in contrast with *night*; Swedish *dag* [da:g]).

9. 9. The second important way in which meanings show instability, is the presence of supplementary values which we call *connotations*. The meaning of a form for any one speaker is nothing

more than a result of the situations in which he has heard this form. If he has not heard it very many times, or if he has heard it under very unusual circumstances, his use of the form may deviate from the conventional. We combat such personal deviations by giving explicit definitions of meaning; this is a chief use of our dictionaries. In the case of scientific terms, we manage to keep the meaning nearly free from connotative factors, though even here we may be unsuccessful; the number *thirteen*, for instance, has for many people a strong connotation.

The most important connotations arise from the social standing of the speakers who use a form. A form which is used by a less privileged class of speakers often strikes us as coarse, ugly, and vulgar. *I ain't got none, I seen it, I done it* sound nasty to the speaker of standard English. This may be offset by some special factor: the speech-forms of tramps or criminals may bear a connotation of devil-may-care wit, and those of a rustic type may strike us as homely but poetic. A form used by a more privileged class of speakers may strike us as over-formal or prettified and affected. Most speakers of Central-Western American English find this connotation in the use of [a] instead of [ɛ] in forms like *laugh, bath, can't* and of [juw] instead of [uw] in forms like *tune, sue, stupid*.

Connotations of local provenience are closely akin to these; a Scotch or an Irish locution has its own tang; so have, in America, certain real or supposed Anglicisms, such as *luggage* (for *baggage*) or *old chap, old dear* as terms of address.

Even in communities that have no writing, some forms are recognized (rightly or wrongly) as *archaisms*; in communities that have written records, these serve as additional sources of archaic forms. Examples are, in English, the old second-person singular forms (*thou hast*), the third-person forms in *-th* (*he hath*), the old present subjunctive (*if this be treason*), the pronoun *ye*, and many forms like *eve, e'en, e'er, morn, anent*, and so on. Sometimes fully current locutions may preserve some special *aphoristic form*; thus, an old sentence-construction survives in a few proverbs, such as *First come, first served* or *Old saint, young sinner*.

↘ The connotation of *technical* forms gets its flavor from the standing of the trade or craft from which they are taken. Sea-terms sound ready, honest, and devil-may-care: *aback, aloft, the cut of his jib, stand by*; legal terms precise and a bit tricky: *without let or*

*hindrance, in the premises, heirs and assigns; criminals' terms crass but to the point: a stickup, a shot (of whiskey), get pinched.*

The connotation of *learned* forms is vaguer but more frequent: almost any colloquial form has a parallel form with learned connotation.

## NORMAL

*He came too soon.*

*It's too bad.*

↘ *Where're you going?*

*now*

*if he comes*

## LEARNED

*He arrived prematurely.*

*It is regrettable.*

*What is your destination?*

*at present*

*in case (in case that, in the event that, in the contingency that) he comes; should he come, . . .*

*in order that you may not lose it, lest you lose it.*

As these examples show, the learned, elegant, and archaic types of connotation merge in many a form. In formal speech and in writing, we customarily prefer learned forms, up to a certain degree; he who uses too many learned forms is a stilted speaker or a tiresome writer.

*Foreign* speech-forms bear connotations of their own, which reflect our attitude toward foreign peoples. The foreign features of form may consist in peculiarities of sound or of phonetic pattern: *garage, mirage, rouge, a je ne sais quoi; olla podrida, chile con carne; dolce far niente, fortissimo; Zeitgeist, Wanderlust, intelligentia*. In other instances, the foreign feature lies in the construction, as in the French types *marriage of convenience* and *that goes without saying*. This flavor is turned to facetious use in *mock-foreign* forms, such as *nix come erouse* (mock-German), *ish gabibble* ('it's none of my concern,' supposedly Judeo-German). Schoolboys use mock-Latinisms, such as the nonsense-form *quid sidi quidit*, or *macaronic* verse: *Bojibus kissibus prita girtorum, giribus likibus, wanti somorum*.

Some languages, and most notably, perhaps, English, contain a great mass of *semi-foreign* or *foreign-learned* forms — a class of forms with a separate style of pattern and derivation. Our textbooks of rhetoric distinguish these forms, as the "Latin-French" part of our vocabulary, from the "native" or "Anglo-Saxon" forms. The connotation, however, does not depend directly upon the actual provenience of the forms. The word *chair*, for instance,

is Latin-French in origin, but does not belong to the foreign-learned part of our vocabulary. The chief formal characteristics of our foreign-learned forms is perhaps the use of certain accented suffixes and combinations of suffixes, such as [-iti:] *ability*; [-'ejšn] *education*. Another feature is the use of certain phonetic alternations, such as [sijv] in *receive*, but [sep] in *reception* and [sij] in *receipt*, or [vajd] in *provide*, but [vid] in *provident*, [viz] in *visible*, and [viž] in *provision*. These peculiarities suffice to mark certain words and constituents of words as foreign-learned, especially certain prefixes (*ab-, ad-, con-, de-, dis-, ex-, in-, per-, pre-, pro-, re-, trans-*); these prefixes themselves in part show peculiar phonetic alternations, as in *con-tain* but *collect, correct*, and *ab-jure* but *abs-tain*. Semantically, our foreign-learned forms are peculiar in the capricious and highly specialized meanings of the combinations; it seems impossible, for instance, to set up any consistent meaning for elements like [sijv] in *conceive, deceive, perceive, receive* or [tend] in *attend, contend, distend, pretend*, or [d(j)uws] in *adduce, conduce, deduce, induce, produce, reduce*. The connotative flavor of these forms lies in the learned direction: a speaker's ability to use these forms measures his education. Errors in their use (*malapropisms*) mark the semi-educated speaker. The less educated speaker fails to understand many of these forms, and is to this extent shut out from some types of communication; he may take vengeance by using *mock-learned* forms, such as *absquatulate, discombobulate, rambunctious, scrumptious*. Many languages contain a foreign-learned layer of this kind: the Romance languages have a Latin type, largely identical with ours; Russian, beside a fair sprinkling of this type, has learned forms from Old Bulgarian; Turkish has a stratum of Persian and Arabic words, and Persian of Arabic; the languages of India similarly use Sanskrit forms.

Opposed to the foreign-learned connotation, the *slangy* connotation is facetious and unrestrained: the users of slang forms are young persons, sportsmen, gamblers, vagrants, criminals, and, for that matter, most other speakers in their relaxed and unpretentious moods. Examples are familiar, such as *guy, gink, gazebo, gazook, bloke, bird* for 'man,' *rod or gat* for 'pistol,' and so on; the slang form may at the same time be foreign, as *loco* 'crazy,' *sabby* 'understand,' *vamoose* 'go away,' from Spanish. The value is largely facetious; when the slang form has been in use too long, it is likely to be replaced by some new witticism.

9. 10. The varieties of connotation are countless and indefinable and, as a whole, cannot be clearly distinguished from denotative meaning. In the last analysis, every speech-form has its own connotative flavor for the entire speech-community and this, in turn, is modified or even offset, in the case of each speaker, by the connotation which the form has acquired for him through his special experience. It may be well, however, to speak briefly of two more types of connotation which stand out with at least relative clearness.

In many speech-communities certain *improper* speech-forms are uttered only under restricted circumstances; a speaker who utters them outside the restriction is shamed or punished. The strictness of the prohibition ranges from a mild rule of *propriety* to a severe *tabu*. The improper forms belong for the most part to certain spheres of meaning, but often enough there exist by their side forms with the same denotation but without the improper connotation, as *prostitute* by the side of the improper form *whore*.

Some improper forms denote objects or persons that are not to be named in a casual way, or perhaps not to be named at all. In English, various terms of religion, such as *God, devil, heaven, hell, Christ, Jesus, damn* are proper only in serious speech. Violation of the rule exposes the speaker to reproof or avoidance; on the other hand, in certain groups or under certain conditions, the violation connotes vigor and freedom. In many communities the names of persons are tabu under some circumstances or to some people. The male Cree Indian, for example, does not speak the names of his sisters and of some other female relatives; he explains the avoidance by saying, "I respect her too much."

Another direction of impropriety is the tabu on so-called *obscene* forms. In English there is a severe tabu on some speech-forms whose meaning is connected with excretory functions, and on some that deal with reproduction.

A third type of improper connotation is less universal among us; the avoidance of *ominous* speech-forms, which name something painful or dangerous. One avoids the words *die* and *death* (*if anything should happen to me*) and the names of some diseases. Other peoples avoid mention of the left hand, or of thunderstorms.

In some communities one avoids the names of game animals, either during the hunt or more generally. Under special conditions

(as, on the war-path), many speech-forms may be avoided, or *inverted* speech, saying the opposite of what one means, may be in order.

9.11. The second more specialized type of connotation that here deserves to be pointed out, is *intensity*. The most characteristic intense forms are *exclamations*. For these we have in English not only a special secondary phoneme [!], but also certain special speech-forms, *interjections*, such as *oh! ah! ouch!* These forms all reflect a violent stimulus, but differ in connotation from an ordinary statement in which the speaker merely says that he is undergoing a strong stimulus.

Certain speech-forms have an *animated* flavor, akin to the exclamatory, as, for instance, the placing first of certain adverbs: *Away ran John; Away he ran*. In connected narrative a similar flavor appears in less violent transpositions: *Yesterday he came (and said . . .)* is more lively than *He came yesterday . . .* In English the *historical present*, in narrating past events, is either elegant, as in the summary of a play or story, or, in ordinary speech, slightly vulgar: *Then he comes back and says to me . . .*

English is especially rich in another type of intense forms, the *symbolic* forms. Symbolic forms have a connotation of somehow illustrating the meaning more immediately than do ordinary speech-forms. The explanation is a matter of grammatical structure and will concern us later; to the speaker it seems as if the sounds were especially suited to the meaning. Examples are *flip, flap, flop, flitter, flimmer, flicker, flutter, flush, flare, glare, glitter, glow, gloat, glimmer, bang, bump, lump, thump, thwack, whack, snuff, snuffle, snuff, sizzle, wheeze*. Languages that have symbolic forms show some agreement, but probably more disagreement as to the types of sounds and meanings which are associated. A special type of symbolic form, which is quite widely distributed, is the repetition of the form with some phonetic variation, as in *snip-snap, zig-zag, ruff-raff, jim-jams, fiddle-faddle, teeny-tiny, ship-shape, hodge-podge, higger-migger, honky-tonk*.

Closely akin to these are *imitative* or *onomatopoeic* intense forms, which denote a sound or an object which gives out a sound: the imitative speech-form resembles this sound: *cock-a-doodle-doo, meow, moo, baa*. Many bird names are of this sort: *cuckoo, bobwhite, whip-poor-will*. Doubled forms are common: *bow-wow, ding-dong, pee-wee, choo-choo, chug-chug*. These forms differ from

language to language: the French dog says *gnaf-gnaf* [naf naf]; the German bell says *bim-bam*.

Among the forms just cited, some have an *infantile* connotation; they are *nursery-forms*. The most familiar are *papa* and *mama*. In English almost any doubled syllable may be used, in almost any meaning, as a nursery-word; each family develops its private supply of the type [dɪdɪj, 'dɛɪdɛj, 'dɛɪdɛj, 'mɪmɪj, 'wɔwɔl]. This custom provides speech-forms which the infant can reproduce with relative ease, and it helps adults to turn the infant's utterances into conventional signals.

The *pet-name* or *hypocharistic* connotation largely merges with that of the nursery. In English, relatively few pet-names like *Lulu*, have the doubled nursery form; in French this type is common: *Mimi, Nana*, and so on. English pet-names are less uniform: *Tom, Will, Ed, Pat, Dan, Mike* can be described structurally as shortenings of the full name; this is not the case in *Bob* for *Robert*, *Ned* for *Edward*, *Bill* for *William*, *Dick* for *Richard*, *Jack* for *John*. Some have the diminutive suffix [-ij], as *Peggy*, *Maggie* for *Margaret*, *Fanny* for *Frances*, *Johnny*, *Willie*, *Billy*.

There is some intensity also in the connotation of *nonsense-forms*. Some of these, though conventional, have no denotation at all, as *tra-la-la*, *hey-diddle-diddle*, *tarara-boom-de-ay*; others have an explicitly vague denotation, as *fol-de-rol*, *gadget*, *conception fils*. Any speaker is free to invent nonsense-forms; in fact, any form he invents is a nonsense-form, unless he succeeds in the almost hopeless task of getting his fellow-speakers to accept it as a signal for some meaning.