

POLYSEMY

Origin and Definition

- The expression originally comes from Greek - πολυ (*poly-*) - "many" and σήμα (*sêma*) - "sign"
- Refers to a capacity of a ***sign*** (a word, a phrase) or ***group of signs*** that can have multiple and similar meanings
- A ***word*** can have two or more meanings

Monosemantic words

- Words which have only ***one*** meaning
- The group of monosemantic words are rare and typical especially for ***technical*** and ***scientific*** usage

linoleum (also BrE informal lino) noun [U] a type of strong material with a hard shiny surface, used for covering floors

Polysemantic words

- Words which have ***more*** than just ***one meaning***
- Typical for the system of a particular language (not limited only for scientific and technical usage)

Nut, bank, chain, etc.

Nut

- a small hard fruit with a very hard shell that grows on some trees - hazelnut
- a small piece of metal with a hole through the centre that is screwed onto a bolt to hold pieces of wood, machinery, etc. together:
to tighten a nut / a wheel nut
- (BrE, slang) a person's head or brain

Synchronic polysemy

- Is the *basic meaning* of the word, phrase, etc.
- The meaning which is representative, typical and clearly intelligible (1st place in the dictionary)

face – *obličej*, *book* – *kniha*, *hat* – *klobouk*

Diachronic polysemy

- Most polysemantic words have *primary* and *secondary meaning*

Table - a piece of furniture that consists of a flat top supported by legs (primary meaning)

a list of facts or numbers arranged in a special order (secondary meaning)

List of polysemes

- **Wood** – the hard material that the trunk and branches of a tree are made of / an area of trees, smaller than a forest / a heavy wooden ball used in the game of bowls
- Crane, man, book, bank, mole, nut, bear, string, etc.