Semantics and semantics

REALLY distinguishing between lexical and grammatical meaning
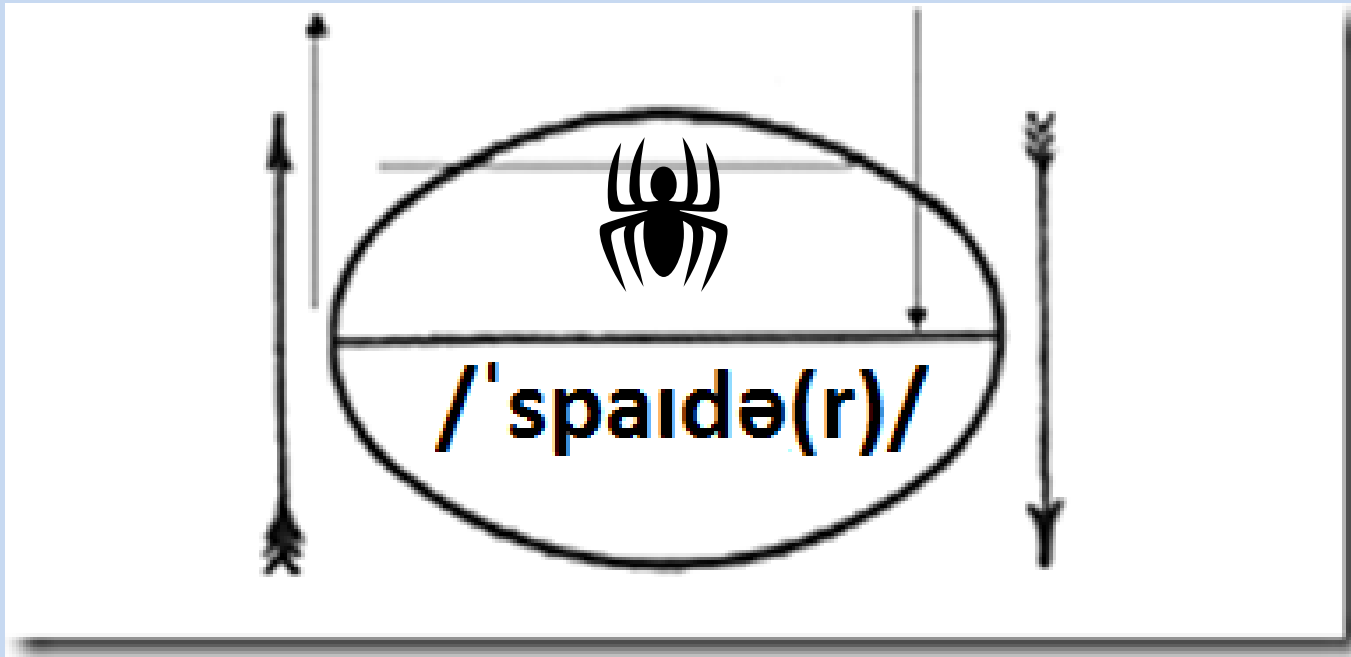
Tabea Reiner | May 11th, 2013

Outline

- Old news: There are different kinds of meanings.

- Problem: How can you REALLY tell the difference?

- Possible new answer: It's the criterion of self-reference!
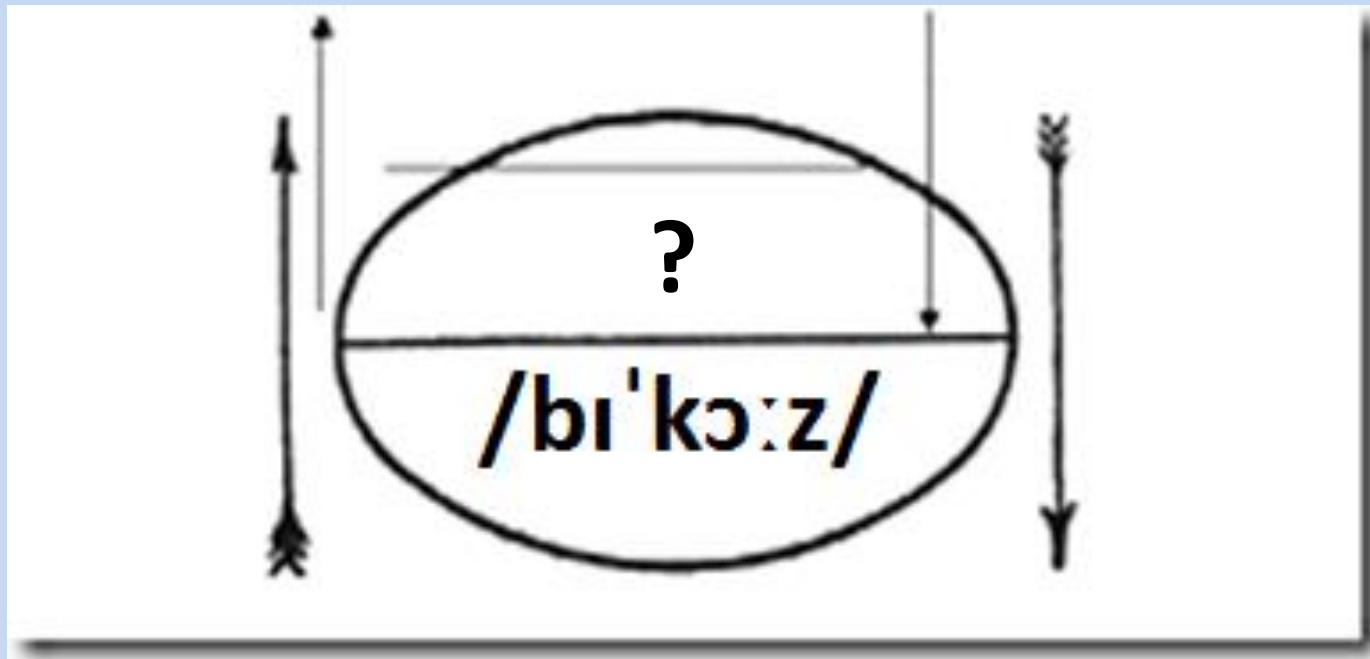
Different kinds of meanings, i.e. …

...so called lexical meaning, e.g.:

…so called grammatical meaning, e.g.:

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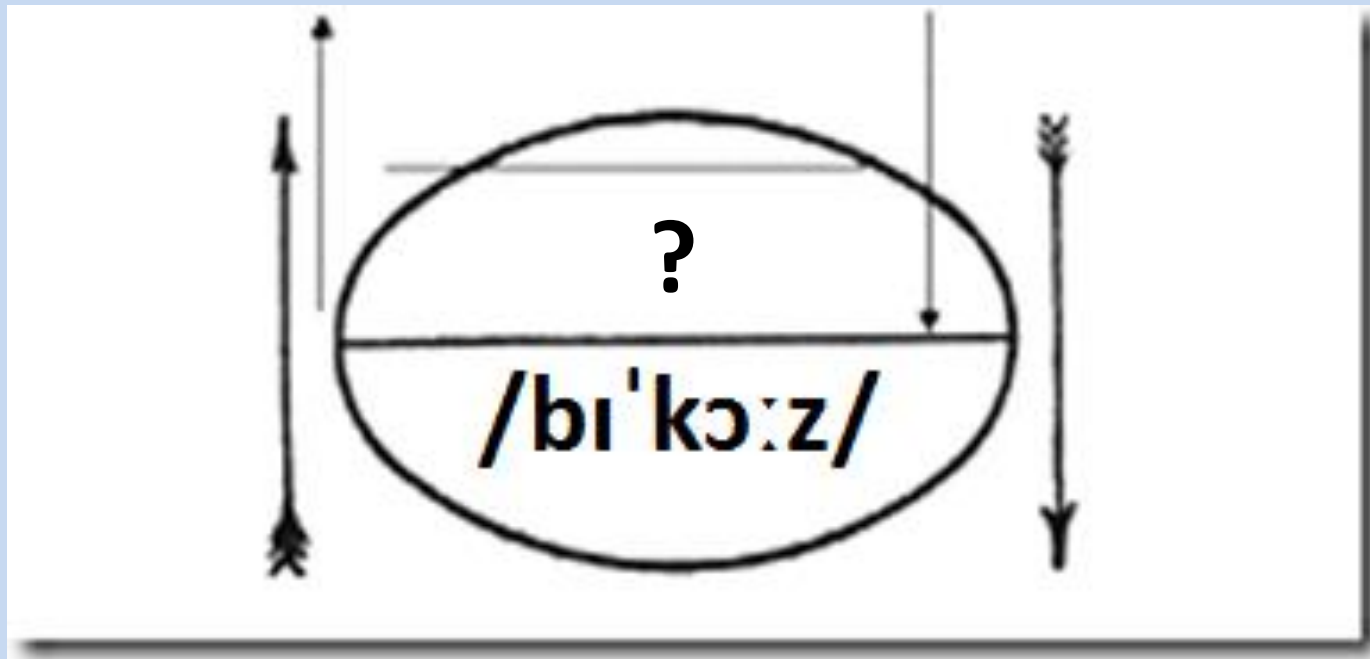
How to substitute the „**?**"?

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Answers from selected approaches

- Formal Semantics
- Cognitive Linguistics
- Modistic Theory

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Formal Semantics
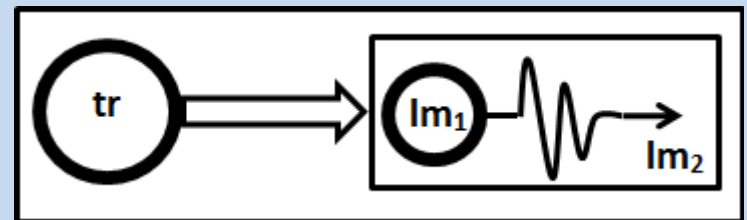
- Grammatical meanings are of a higher type than lexical meanings (e.g., Partee 1992: 125).

- E.g.

  /ˈspaɪdə(r)/   -   \<e\>

  /bɪˈkɔːz/   -   \<t,t\>

Cognitive Linguistics

- Grammatical meanings are more abstract than lexical meanings (e.g., Langacker 2010: 102, 106).

- E.g.

/ˈspaɪdə(r)/   -

/bɪˈkɔːz/   -

Modistic Theory

- There are absolute and respective modes of signifying (Bursill-Hall 1971: 20).
- E.g.

/ˈspaɪdə(r)/ – i.a. *species et figura*

/bɪˈkɔːz/ – 'relation of causation between the meanings of clauses'

Grammatical meaning, e.g.:

meaning of clause after *because* [$R_{sub,x}$] meaning of clause before *because*

/bɪˈkɔːz/

meaning of clause after *because* [$R_{sub,x}$] meaning of clause before *because*

Grammatical meaning is self-referential meaning.
More precisely: if any (partial) meaning of a given linguistic sign can<u>not</u> be described <u>without</u> recourse to the linguistic sign itself, namely to its relation to other linguistic signs in its environment, then call this (partial) meaning *grammatical meaning*.

Possible Extensions I

- Bound morphemes and ordering restrictions as linguistic signs with grammatical meaning – whatever one's preferred model of ordering restrictions may be (Merge, Concatenation, Constructions,…) (Lamb 1966; Lewis 1970, Montague 1970, 1973; Bartsch & Vennemann 1972; Bierwisch & Lang 1987;… but cf. also Collins 2007, 2011).

Possible Extensions II

- If any (partial) meaning of a given linguistic sign can<u>not</u> be described <u>without</u> recourse to the linguistic sign itself, namely to its relation to other parts of the same discourse, then call this (partial) meaning ***pragmatic meaning***.

- → Delimitation of pragmatics
This fits in well with the common intuition that there is something which is actually said and something which is merely inferred (Borg 2004: 58f).

Thank you for your attention!

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