**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

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**College of Arts & Humanities**

**Department of English Language**

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**Linguistics**

**The Study of Language**

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**Lesson Four**

**Prototypes**

**A prototype : is the most characteristic instance of a category . The words canary, cormorant, dove, duck, flamingo, parrot, pelican and robin are all equally co-hyponyms of the superordinate bird, they are not all considered to be equally good examples of the category "bird." According to some researchers, *the most characteristic instance of the category "bird" is robin*. 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.**

**Homophones : are two or more different (written ) words that have the same pronunciation.**

**Common examples are bare / bear , meat / meet. flour / flower, pail/pale, right/write , sew/so , and to/too/two.**

**Homonyms : are two or more words with the same written form that are unrelated in 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)**

**Polysemy**

**When we encounter two or more words with the same form and related meanings, we have what is technically known as polysemy. Polysemy : can be defined as one form (written or spoken) having multiple meanings that are all related by extension. For example, the word head,**

**used to refer to the object on top of your body,**

**froth on top of a glass of drink,**

**person at the top of a company or department,**

**and many other things.**

**Other examples of polysemy are foot (of person, of bed, of mountain) or run (person does, water does, colors do).**

**Metonymy : is a word used in place of another with which it is closely connected in everyday experience ( e.g. He drank the whole bottle = the liquid ) .**

**This type of relationship between words is based simply on a close connection in everyday experience. That close connection can be based on a container-contents relation (bottle/water, can/juice), a whole-part relation (car/wheels, house/roof) or a representative-symbol relationship (king/crown, the President/the White House). Using one of these words to refer to the other is an example of metonymy.**

**We accept ''The White House has announced protested ... without being puzzled that buildings appear to be talking.**

**Collocation is a relationship between words that frequently occur together ( e.g. salt and pepper )**

**One final aspect of our knowledge of words has nothing to do with any of the factors considered so far. We know which words tend to occur with other words. If you ask a thousand people what they think of when you say hammer, more than half will say nail. If you say table, they'll mostly say chair, and butter elicits bread, and salt elicits pepper. One way we seem to organize our knowledge of words is simply on the basis of collocation, or frequently occurring together.**