



**A
Dictionary
of
English
Sound**

Margaret Magnus

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of English
Sound**

**The
Consonants**

by
Margaret Magnus
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Introduction The Phenomenon of Phono-Semantics

There is a correspondence between the meaning of a word and the phonemes, or speech sounds, which make it up. (A phoneme is a significant speech sound. If English were pronounced the way it is spelled, every letter would be a phoneme.) In English, for example, words beginning with 'sp-' often refer to spewing or spitting (splash, spurt, splutter, spout...), and words in 'pl-' tend to be planar (plate, platter, plot, plateau, ...). Sounds or sound sequences and their associated meanings are called 'phonesthemes'. This work provides a listing of many English phonesthemes together with the common monosyllabic words which exemplify these phonesthemes. It is my hope that this dictionary will provide a useful reference for students of English, poets, writers, linguists, developers of natural language software, and others interested in the phenomenon of language.

This correlation between sound and meaning holds also on the level of each individual phoneme. A given phoneme contributes an element of meaning to every word which contains it, and this semantic contribution is based in its pronunciation. For example, the phoneme /k/ forms a container of the mouth. Consequently the words starting with /k/ often have implicit in them containers (cup, car, cabin, can,...), covers (cap, cloak, clothing,...), collection (cluster, come, clasp, cling,...) and closure (key, cut, kill, cap,...). However, the phonemes which make up a word do not in general reflect its referent. That is to say, if a word contains /k/, it is more likely to refer to a container. But the sound /k/ does not wholly determine what the word refers to. What the sound does directly affect is the feeling-tone of the word. For example, the phoneme /k/ does not in general have anything to say about whether the word refers to a shape, a sound, or motion. Rather, it makes the shape cornered, curved or crinkly; the sound crackly or clapping; and it causes the motion to involve contact. In other words, the sounds in a word reflect some more basic aspect of its meaning than does its referent.

This dictionary provides several kinds of classifications for all the common monosyllabic words in English. We find that words containing a given phoneme fall easily into a surprisingly narrow set of phonesthemes with one important exception. Concrete nouns do not in general fit a pronunciation-based classification nearly as well as other parts of the vocabulary. Concrete nouns can, however, be easily identified by another means. 98% of them fall cleanly into one of the following semantic classes: people, titles, body parts, clothing, cloth, periods of time, games, animals, plants, plant parts, foods, minerals, containers, vehicles, buildings, rooms, furniture, tools, weapons, musical instruments, colors, symbols, and units of measurement. For this reason, these classes are treated differently throughout the dictionary.

The field which studies the relationship between sound and meaning is fairly marginal within linguistics, and goes by many names, the most common of which is sound symbolism. However, since we suspect that symbolism – or a mapping from symbol to referent – does not lie at the root of the phenomenon, we will prefer to call the field phonosemantics, a name which is also not unprecedented in the linguistics literature. (See Stanislav Voronin in the bibliography)

Conflicting Data

It is in general supposed in the linguistics literature that the relationship between sound and meaning is arbitrary. The data provided in this dictionary suggests that this supposition is not true. Of course, the first objection that arises in the mind of a trained (or even a not-so trained) linguist to the phonosemantic claim is that it is in obvious conflict with such well established and fundamental phenomena as the existence of different languages. English 'book', French 'livre' and Russian 'kniga' mean the same thing but are pronounced completely differently. An Australian and a Californian speak essentially the same language but pronounce it differently. What's worse, dialectal differences are the result of completely regular sound changes which can happen in a relatively short period of time – seemingly much too short a time for the semantics of the entire language to reorganize itself. Moreover, sound changes are alive and well in running speech in every language of the world. A voiced /b/, /d/ or /g/ in final position in German or Russian is unvoiced to /p/, /t/ and /k/ respectively by a completely general rule. The German adjective 'gelb' means 'yellow' and is pronounced 'gelp'. Its plural or feminine nominative is 'gelbe' and is pronounced 'gelbe'. The voiced phoneme and its unvoiced counterpart are then neutralized in final position. In English, the color of a vowel can be changed by merely adding a suffix: Newton/Newtonian, ocean/oceanic, etc.. None of this makes sense if sound affects meaning.

How can we even consider the phonosemantic claim in the light of such overwhelming counterevidence? One answer to that is simply that if one spends a some time examining words with an eye to the relationship between sound and

meaning, as I do in this dictionary, one finds fairly readily that the relationship is not arbitrary. The phonosemanticist will argue that since the phonosemantic hypothesis can be verified in this way, the question is not really whether these phenomena can coexist, for they obviously do coexist, but how they coexist.

The solution to this mystery seems to lie largely in the recognition that we linguists have not been sufficiently precise as to what constitutes the 'meaning of a word'. Probably any linguist would admit that we still have a hopelessly insufficient understanding of 'meaning'. In this particular case, the sound affects a different aspect of meaning than that which is affected by these other apparently conflicting phenomena. Put another way, 'book' actually does not mean the same thing as 'kniga' or 'livre'. They function in analogous positions in their respective languages. But they are different words. Their predispositions are different.

The Meaning of a Word

This data implies that there are at least two aspects to what we have traditionally called the meaning of a word. One aspect of its meaning is determined by how it is pronounced. And another aspect of its meaning is what it refers to, its function in the language. In concrete nouns especially, reference is very powerful. By this I mean that there is very little disagreement as to what class of objects in the world constitute the referents of a concrete noun. We may argue over which things or situations in the world are 'funky' or 'interesting'. We can argue whether someone is 'sassing' or 'arguing' or just 'talking'. But we generally don't disagree as to whether a certain object is a 'screwdriver' or not. It either is or it isn't. The word 'screwdriver' seems to divide objects in the world fairly cleanly into two classes – those which are and those which aren't. It is this quality in a word which seems to obscure the effect of sound on the meaning of a word.

The topic of whether each word has a single or many related meanings has been debated throughout the history of linguistics. This work suggests that there is indeed a single underlying 'meaning' for each word which is determined by its sound. If this is true, then we might think of this underlying, single meaning as inherent, since it does not involve a mapping from sound to referent, but is determined essentially by the sound alone. That is, once the form is known, the meaning is also known. The many different senses of a word are a result of applying this single word in many different contexts. When a word is used to refer to something, the underlying sound colors the referent with a feeling-tone. This single underlying sound-meaning of a word therefore isn't confined to its lexical definition. It serves as a background which will give words a limited range of tones depending on their referents.

It should not be concluded, however, that inherent meaning is merely ornamental in nature. For example, the sound /b/ is heavier handed than its unvoiced counterpart /p/. Therefore verbs of physical contact are more violent if they start with /b/ (beat, bash, bonk, bat, brain,...), than if they start with /p/ (pat, prick, push, punch,...). Similarly, the people in /b/ are bawdier, braver and more brazen than the prim and proper people of /p/ (bitch, broad, brute, bully, etc. vs. prude, priest, prince, patron, etc.) If you don't know this about /b/, and /p/, you will be unable to feel the difference between 'boom' vs. 'pop' or 'bag' vs. 'pouch'. In order to use a language at all, you must have a feel for its inherent meaning.

Clustering of Concepts

I have just argued that the underlying meaning of a word affects the tone of the word rather than the referent. There is, however, an indirect way by which certain referents tend to fall into words containing a given phoneme. I will call this process 'clustering'. When a basic concept such as 'serpent' falls under a given phoneme, other related words congregate with it. Words related to 'serpent' are much more likely to begin with /s/ than one would expect on a purely random basis. It is clustering which is responsible for the phonesthemes. It is inherent meaning which is responsible for the feeling-tone which attends them.

Thus, a word does not begin with /s/ just because it bears some relationship to the 'serpent', whose meaning reflects the way /s/ is pronounced. (/s/ is pronounced by sending a stream of air through a narrow opening.) The words related to 'serpent' are themselves restricted to the range of feeling-tones available in /s/. For example, /s/ contains many words which spit and slip, or which are smooth and linear. As a result of this clustering, each word belongs in many more phonesthemes than it otherwise would. The network of semantic relations around the phoneme /s/ becomes very closely interconnected.

Organization

Section A1: Monosyllables, All Positions

This section is intended to give a very specific classification for all the consonants in the English monosyllables. This allows one to see very specifically what role each sound is playing in each position of the word.

Section A1 is divided into 24 subsections, one for each consonant. All of the common monosyllabic words which have at least one non-concrete sense are mentioned at least once for each consonant they contain. Each subsection for each phoneme is subdivided as follows:

- First according to a relatively small number (8-15) of supercategory headings which very broadly classify the phonesthemes for that consonant.
- The phonesthemes within that superclass are then listed together with the monosyllabic words exemplifying this phonestheme.

Example:

Relevant Phoneme:

/l/

Superclass:

L1. Lash/Kill

Phonestheme:

1. Maul (intentional)

Relevant Words:

C1: lance, land, lap, lash, lathe, leech, left, lick, light, lodge, lop, lunge

C2: blanch, blast, blaze, bleed, blind, blitz, blow, blunt, clap, cleave, clip, clop, clout, club, flail, flak, flank, flay, flick, flog, glance, plane, splash, ply, slam, slap, slash, slice, slit, slog, slop, slosh, slug

C3: splash, splat, splay

FC1: sculpt

FC2: belt, bolt, geld, jolt, scald, squelch, wield

FC3a: flail, maul, nail, shell, whale

Section B1: Concrete Nouns.

In this section all of the common English monosyllabic concrete nouns are listed and compared phonesthemically. This section contains a subsection for each major concrete noun class: people, titles, body parts, clothing, cloth, periods of time, games, animals, plants, plant parts, foods, minerals, containers, vehicles, buildings, rooms, furniture, tools, weapons, musical instruments, colors, symbols, and units of measurement. These words are then subdivided again phonosemantically.

Example:

Concrete Class:

A. People

Relevant Phoneme:

/g/

Unpleasant People

gawk, geek, gink, goof, gook, goon, goop, goose, goy, gull

Mythical

ghost, ghoul, god

Grumpy

grouch, grump

Goer

gad, gang, ghost, gimp, guide

Gracious

gal, girl, grace, groom, guest, guy

Direct

guard, guide, guild, gun

Groups

group, grange, guild

Index.

All the common monosyllabic words are listed in alphabetical order and cross referenced with all its appearances elsewhere in the dictionary.

Section A1
Phonesthetic Classification

Table of Contents

A1. Consonantal Phonesthemes

<hr/> / b / <hr/>				<hr/> / g / <hr/>			
A1	Bulging, Brushy	64	11.4 %	A1	The Gullet	27	7.2 %
A2	Big, Much, Many	109	19.4 %	B1	Sound and Talk	33	8.8 %
B1	Barriers, Interference	76	13.5 %	B2	Voice	14	3.7 %
C1	Emptiness	35	6.2 %	C1	Containers and Valleys	49	13.0 %
D1	Binding, Contact, Connection	33	5.9 %	C2	Quantity	50	13.3 %
E1	Foundations, Carrying and Balance	50	8.9 %	D1	Getting, Holding and Greed	77	20.4 %
F1	Explosion, Blowing and Breaking	35	6.2 %	D2	Blockage	38	10.1 %
F2	Departure	19	3.4 %	E1	Giving	6	1.6 %
F3	Hitting, Battling, Games	50	8.9 %	E2	Going	55	14.6 %
F4	Bizarre and Chaotic	8	1.4 %	E3	Growing	26	6.9 %
G1	Noises and Music	36	6.4 %	F1	Goodness	15	4.0 %
G2	Effusive Language and Writing	74	13.2 %	G1	Light (Generally Indirect)	18	4.8 %
G3	Bother and Bargain	19	3.4 %	H1	Understanding	23	6.1 %
H1	Birth and Beginnings	45	8.0 %	I1	Grids and Grains	12	3.2 %
I1	Badness	31	5.5 %	J1	Death and Gloom	30	8.0 %
I2	Pain	43	7.7 %	K1	Too Much Where It Doesn't Belong	112	29.7 %
I3	Error	22	3.9 %	K2	Not Enough Where It's Needed	106	28.1 %
J1	Water	68	12.1 %	L1	Hidden Source or Goal	117	31.0 %
J2	Alcohol	16	2.9 %	<hr/> / p / <hr/>			
J3	Boats	27	4.8 %	A1	Prongs, Peaks, Points	105	15.8 %
K1	Fire, Light	18	3.2 %	B1	Puffy and Plane	84	12.6 %
K2	Saturated Color	20	3.6 %	C1	Containers and Enclosed Areas	74	11.1 %
L1	Boards and Bricks	18	3.2 %	D1	Parts and Pictures	91	13.7 %
<hr/> / d / <hr/>				E1	Groups, Units, Levels, Size	94	14.1 %
A1	End, Death, Sleep, Drug	50	10.4 %	F1	Picking, Pulling	107	16.1 %
A2	Diminishment, Smallness	83	17.3 %	G1	Patrolling	20	3.0 %
A3	Breadth, Dragging On	41	8.5 %	H1	Pamper, Pester, Prepare	88	13.2 %
A4	Scarcity, Danger	60	12.5 %	I1	Pouring, Putting, Pushing and	183	27.5 %
A5	Confusion, Discord and Barriers	69	14.4 %	J1	Stepping and Paths	48	7.2 %
A6	Dark, Dirty and Dreary	97	20.2 %	K1	Endings, The Past	22	3.3 %
B1	Divisions, Groups, Amounts	130	27.1 %	L1	Talk	72	10.8 %
C1	Execution of Pending Process	91	19.0 %	L2	Noises and Music	30	4.5 %
C2	Motion	31	6.5 %	M1	The Problem	62	9.3 %
D1	Down	154	32.1 %	N1	Heat	2	0.3 %
E1	Good, Dear	33	6.9 %	<hr/> / t / <hr/>			
F1	Water	62	12.9 %	A1	Travel	125	15.0 %
G1	Light and Color	11	2.3 %	A2	Cast, Blow, Flow	60	7.2 %

Words Which Fit In Concrete B1 Classes, but not Phonesthetic A1 Classes

People

bach, bub, chef, dweeb, fop, gal, Jew, pa, senate, thane, vet, yid

Body Parts

beak, jowl, thigh

Clothing

drawers, jean, pants, tog

Games

craps, golf, whist

Animals

chimp, coon, cub, daw, deer, doe, drake, ewe, flea, foal, gnu, goat, hake, hare, hart, hen, loon, mare, moose, newt, pooch, prawn, pup, scrod, squid, stag, stork, swan, tern, thrush, tom, trout, wren

Plants

beet, chive, clove, cress, dill, kale, larch, maize, myrrh, pear, phlox, plum, quince, rice, rye, sedge, soy, tea, thyme, wheat, yam, yew

Plant Parts

bran

Food

beet, bran, chive, clove, coke, cress, dill, ghee, kale, kirsch, knish, lox, pear, plum, quiche, quince, rice, roe, rum, rye, schnapps, scone, scrod, slaw, soy, steak, tea, thyme, torte, trout, veal, wheat, wine, wurst, yam

Vehicles

surrey

Materials

jean, lye, quartz, teak, zinc

Time

June

Color

mauve, roan, taupe, taw, teal

Units

ton

Symbols

dah, five, four, pi, schwa, twenty

A1. Consonantal Phonesthemes

Total Words 3425

Classes/Word 6.18

Total Words in A1 3282

<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 10%;">10 Brazen, Bold</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;"><i>/r/</i></td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="6">bad, ball/s, bawd, bold, brash, brass, brave, brawn, breast, brute</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number of Words</td> <td>10</td> <td>9 %</td> <td>A1bA210: 1</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>11 Strong</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="6">beef, bench, box, brawn, brute</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number of Words</td> <td>5</td> <td>5 %</td> <td>A1bA211: 1</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>12 Beauty</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="6">beau, beaut, belle</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number of Words</td> <td>3</td> 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Section B1
Concrete Noun Classification

B1. Concrete Semantic Classes

Total Words 3425

TotClassPerWd 1.45

Total Words in B1 1668

A1 People	878	52.6 %
/ b /		
63		7.2 %
1 Beautiful, Handsome, Sexy People		
babe, bach, bawd, bean, beau, belle, bird, blade, block, bloke, blood, blue, boy, brave, brick, bride, broad, bruise/r, bub, buck, bud, butch		
Number of Words	22	34.9 % B1bA11: 1
2 Mean, Criminal People		
bawd, beast, bitch, blight, bluff, boob, boss, brag, brat, brute, bug		
Number of Words	11	17.5 % B1bA12: 1
3 Big, Loud People		
babe, bear, beast, bitch, blab, blight, blimp, block, boob, boor, bore, boss, brag, brat, brave, bruise/r, brute, bub, bug, bull, bum, butch		
Number of Words	22	34.9 % B1bA13: 1
4 Ugly, Stupid People		
babe, bag, bat, bear, beast, bird, blab, blimp, boob, boor, bore, boy, brute, bug, bum, butch, butt		
Number of Words	17	27.0 % B1bA14: 1
5 Professions		
back, bail, bard, bass, bawd, bone/s, boy, bull		
Number of Words	8	12.7 % B1bA15: 1
6 Children		
babe, bairn, boy, brat		
Number of Words	4	6.3 % B1bA16: 1
7 Smart, Enthusiastic People		
brain, buff, bug		
Number of Words	3	4.8 % B1bA17: 1
8 Other People		
black, blond		
Number of Words	2	3.2 % B1bA18: 1
9 Groups of People		
band, bar, batch, bench, bloc, blood, board, bond, both, brood, bunch, bund		
Number of Words	12	19.0 % B1bA19: 1

/ d /		
26		3.0 %
1 Dear People		
dad, dear, dove, duck		
Number of Words	4	15.4 % B1dA11: 1
2 Ladies, Gentlemen		
dame, date, dish, doll, don, drag, dude		
Number of Words	7	26.9 % B1dA12: 1
3 Titles		
dean, don, duke		
Number of Words	3	11.5 % B1dA13: 1
4 Dummies		
dolt, dope, drip, droll, drone, dud, dunce		
Number of Words	7	26.9 % B1dA14: 1
5 Negative Women		
dike, dog, drab		
Number of Words	3	11.5 % B1dA15: 1
6 Mythical Beings		
druid, dryad, dwarf		
Number of Words	3	11.5 % B1dA16: 1
7 Other People		
dead, dweeb		
Number of Words	2	7.7 % B1dA17: 1
/ g /		
29		3.3 %
1 Socially Inept People		
gawk, geek, gink, goof, gook, goon, goose, goy, gull		
Number of Words	9	31.0 % B1gA11: 1
2 Mythical Beings		
ghost, ghoul, god		
Number of Words	3	10.3 % B1gA12: 1
4 Grumpy People		
grouch, grump		
Number of Words	2	6.9 % B1gA14: 1
5 Going People		
gang, ghost, gimp, guide		
Number of Words	4	13.8 % B1gA15: 1
6 Gracious People		
gal, girl, grace, groom, guest, guy		
Number of Words	6	20.7 % B1gA16: 1

B1. Concrete Semantic Classes

Total Words 3425

TotClassPerWd 1.45

Total Words in B1 1668

7 Directing People guard, guide, guild, gun			
Number of Words	4	13.8 %	B1gA17: 1
8 Sexual People gay			
Number of Words	1	3.4 %	B1gA18: 1
9 Groups of People gang, group, grange, guard, guild			
Number of Words	5	17.2 %	B1gA19: 1
/ p /			
37		4.2 %	
2 Small People page, peon, plebe, poor, prey, punk			
Number of Words	6	16.2 %	B1pA12: 1
3 Mythic Beings Pan, Puck			
Number of Words	2	5.4 %	B1pA13: 1
4 Two People pal, peer			
Number of Words	2	5.4 %	B1pA14: 1
5 Substitutes pawn, plant			
Number of Words	2	5.4 %	B1pA15: 1
6 Endearing Terms for Women peach, pearl, pet, pie, piece, plum, puff			
Number of Words	7	18.9 %	B1pA16: 1
7 Powerful People pimp, prince, pro			
Number of Words	3	8.1 %	B1pA17: 1
8 Priests pope, priest			
Number of Words	2	5.4 %	B1pA18: 1
9 Papas pa, pap, paw, pop			
Number of Words	4	10.8 %	B1pA19: 1
10 Prudes prig, prude, prune			
Number of Words	3	8.1 %	B1pA110: 1
13 Unpleasant People pest, pig, pink, prick, prig, prude, prune, punk			
Number of Words	8	21.6 %	B1pA113: 1

15 Groups of People pack, press			
Number of Words	2	5.4 %	B1pA115: 1
16 Other People pimp, prof			
Number of Words	2	5.4 %	B1pA116: 1
/ t /			
26		3.0 %	
1 Teams team, tong, town, trade, tribe, trio, troop, troupe, trust, twain, twin, two			
Number of Words	12	46.2 %	B1tA11: 1
3 Tyrants troll			
Number of Words	1	3.8 %	B1tA13: 1
4 Young, Small People tad, teen, toots, tot, tyke			
Number of Words	5	19.2 %	B1tA14: 1
5 Groups of People team, tribe, troop, troupe			
Number of Words	4	15.4 %	B1tA15: 1
6 Two People twain, twin			
Number of Words	2	7.7 %	B1tA16: 1
7 Travellers tail, tar, tramp, tribe, troop, troupe			
Number of Words	6	23.1 %	B1tA17: 1
8 Sexually Appealing Women tail, tart, toots, tramp			
Number of Words	4	15.4 %	B1tA18: 1
9 Unpleasant People toad, trash, turd, twit, twerp			
Number of Words	5	19.2 %	B1tA19: 1
/ k /			
52		5.9 %	
1 Kin clone, ken, kin, kith			
Number of Words	4	7.7 %	B1kA11: 1



**A
Dictionary
of
English
Sound**

Margaret Magnus

**A Dictionary
of English
Sound**

**The
Consonants**

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Margaret Magnus
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Introduction

The Phenomenon of Phono-Semantics

There is a correspondence between the meaning of a word and the phonemes, or speech sounds, which make it up. (A phoneme is a significant speech sound. If English were pronounced the way it is spelled, every letter would be a phoneme.) In English, for example, words beginning with 'sp-' often refer to spewing or spitting (splash, spurt, splutter, spout...), and words in 'pl-' tend to be planar (plate, platter, plot, plateau, ...). Sounds or sound sequences and their associated meanings are called 'phonesthemes'. This work provides a listing of many English phonesthemes together with the common monosyllabic words which exemplify these phonesthemes. It is my hope that this dictionary will provide a useful reference for students of English, poets, writers, linguists, developers of natural language software, and others interested in the phenomenon of language.

This correlation between sound and meaning holds also on the level of each individual phoneme. A given phoneme contributes an element of meaning to every word which contains it, and this semantic contribution is based in its pronunciation. For example, the phoneme /k/ forms a container of the mouth. Consequently the words starting with /k/ often have implicit in them containers (cup, car, cabin, can,...), covers (cap, cloak, clothing,...), collection (cluster, come, clasp, cling,...) and closure (key, cut, kill, cap,...). However, the phonemes which make up a word do not in general reflect its referent. That is to say, if a word contains /k/, it is more likely to refer to a container. But the sound /k/ does not wholly determine what the word refers to. What the sound does directly affect is the feeling-tone of the word. For example, the phoneme /k/ does not in general have anything to say about whether the word refers to a shape, a sound, or motion. Rather, it makes the shape cornered, curved or crinkly; the sound crackly or clapping; and it causes the motion to involve contact. In other words, the sounds in a word reflect some more basic aspect of its meaning than does its referent.

This dictionary provides several kinds of classifications for all the common monosyllabic words in English. We find that words containing a given phoneme fall easily into a surprisingly narrow set of phonesthemes with one important exception. Concrete nouns do not in general fit a pronunciation-based classification nearly as well as other parts of the vocabulary. Concrete nouns can, however, be easily identified by another means. 98% of them fall cleanly into one of the following semantic classes: people, titles, body parts, clothing, cloth, periods of time, games, animals, plants, plant parts, foods, minerals, containers, vehicles, buildings, rooms, furniture, tools, weapons, musical instruments, colors, symbols, and units of measurement. For this reason, these classes are treated differently throughout the dictionary.

The field which studies the relationship between sound and meaning is fairly marginal within linguistics, and goes by many names, the most common of which is sound symbolism. However, since we suspect that symbolism – or a mapping from symbol to referent – does not lie at the root of the phenomenon, we will prefer to call the field phonosemantics, a name which is also not unprecedented in the linguistics literature. (See Stanislav Voronin in the bibliography)

Conflicting Data

It is in general supposed in the linguistics literature that the relationship between sound and meaning is arbitrary. The data provided in this dictionary suggests that this supposition is not true. Of course, the first objection that arises in the mind of a trained (or even a not-so trained) linguist to the phonosemantic claim is that it is in obvious conflict with such well established and fundamental phenomena as the existence of different languages. English 'book', French 'livre' and Russian 'kniga' mean the same thing but are pronounced completely differently. An Australian and a Californian speak essentially the same language but pronounce it differently. What's worse, dialectal differences are the result of completely regular sound changes which can happen in a relatively short period of time – seemingly much too short a time for the semantics of the entire language to reorganize itself. Moreover, sound changes are alive and well in running speech in every language of the world. A voiced /b/, /d/ or /g/ in final position in German or Russian is unvoiced to /p/, /t/ and /k/ respectively by a completely general rule. The German adjective 'gelb' means 'yellow' and is pronounced 'gelp'. Its plural or feminine nominative is 'gelbe' and is pronounced 'gelbe'. The voiced phoneme and its unvoiced counterpart are then neutralized in final position. In English, the color of a vowel can be changed by merely adding a suffix: Newton/Newtonian, ocean/oceanic, etc.. None of this makes sense if sound affects meaning.

How can we even consider the phonosemantic claim in the light of such overwhelming counterevidence? One answer to that is simply that if one spends a some time examining words with an eye to the relationship between sound and

meaning, as I do in this dictionary, one finds fairly readily that the relationship is not arbitrary. The phonosemanticist will argue that since the phonosemantic hypothesis can be verified in this way, the question is not really whether these phenomena can coexist, for they obviously do coexist, but how they coexist.

The solution to this mystery seems to lie largely in the recognition that we linguists have not been sufficiently precise as to what constitutes the 'meaning of a word'. Probably any linguist would admit that we still have a hopelessly insufficient understanding of 'meaning'. In this particular case, the sound affects a different aspect of meaning than that which is affected by these other apparently conflicting phenomena. Put another way, 'book' actually does not mean the same thing as 'kniga' or 'livre'. They function in analogous positions in their respective languages. But they are different words. Their predispositions are different.

The Meaning of a Word

This data implies that there are at least two aspects to what we have traditionally called the meaning of a word. One aspect of its meaning is determined by how it is pronounced. And another aspect of its meaning is what it refers to, its function in the language. In concrete nouns especially, reference is very powerful. By this I mean that there is very little disagreement as to what class of objects in the world constitute the referents of a concrete noun. We may argue over which things or situations in the world are 'funky' or 'interesting'. We can argue whether someone is 'sassing' or 'arguing' or just 'talking'. But we generally don't disagree as to whether a certain object is a 'screwdriver' or not. It either is or it isn't. The word 'screwdriver' seems to divide objects in the world fairly cleanly into two classes – those which are and those which aren't. It is this quality in a word which seems to obscure the effect of sound on the meaning of a word.

The topic of whether each word has a single or many related meanings has been debated throughout the history of linguistics. This work suggests that there is indeed a single underlying 'meaning' for each word which is determined by its sound. If this is true, then we might think of this underlying, single meaning as inherent, since it does not involve a mapping from sound to referent, but is determined essentially by the sound alone. That is, once the form is known, the meaning is also known. The many different senses of a word are a result of applying this single word in many different contexts. When a word is used to refer to something, the underlying sound colors the referent with a feeling-tone. This single underlying sound-meaning of a word therefore isn't confined to its lexical definition. It serves as a background which will give words a limited range of tones depending on their referents.

It should not be concluded, however, that inherent meaning is merely ornamental in nature. For example, the sound /b/ is heavier handed than its unvoiced counterpart /p/. Therefore verbs of physical contact are more violent if they start with /b/ (beat, bash, bonk, bat, brain,...), than if they start with /p/ (pat, prick, push, punch,...). Similarly, the people in /b/ are bawdier, braver and more brazen than the prim and proper people of /p/ (bitch, broad, brute, bully, etc. vs. prude, priest, prince, patron, etc.) If you don't know this about /b/, and /p/, you will be unable to feel the difference between 'boom' vs. 'pop' or 'bag' vs. 'pouch'. In order to use a language at all, you must have a feel for its inherent meaning.

Clustering of Concepts

I have just argued that the underlying meaning of a word affects the tone of the word rather than the referent. There is, however, an indirect way by which certain referents tend to fall into words containing a given phoneme. I will call this process 'clustering'. When a basic concept such as 'serpent' falls under a given phoneme, other related words congregate with it. Words related to 'serpent' are much more likely to begin with /s/ than one would expect on a purely random basis. It is clustering which is responsible for the phonesthemes. It is inherent meaning which is responsible for the feeling-tone which attends them.

Thus, a word does not begin with /s/ just because it bears some relationship to the 'serpent', whose meaning reflects the way /s/ is pronounced. (/s/ is pronounced by sending a stream of air through a narrow opening.) The words related to 'serpent' are themselves restricted to the range of feeling-tones available in /s/. For example, /s/ contains many words which spit and slip, or which are smooth and linear. As a result of this clustering, each word belongs in many more phonesthemes than it otherwise would. The network of semantic relations around the phoneme /s/ becomes very closely interconnected.

Organization

Section A1: Monosyllables, All Positions

This section is intended to give a very specific classification for all the consonants in the English monosyllables. This allows one to see very specifically what role each sound is playing in each position of the word.

Section A1 is divided into 24 subsections, one for each consonant. All of the common monosyllabic words which have at least one non-concrete sense are mentioned at least once for each consonant they contain. Each subsection for each phoneme is subdivided as follows:

- First according to a relatively small number (8-15) of supercategory headings which very broadly classify the phonesthemes for that consonant.
- The phonesthemes within that superclass are then listed together with the monosyllabic words exemplifying this phonestheme.

Example:

Relevant Phoneme:

/l/

Superclass:

L1. Lash/Kill

Phonestheme:

1. Maul (intentional)

Relevant Words:

Cl: lance, land, lap, lash, lathe, leech, left, lick, light, lodge, lop, lunge

C2: blanch, blast, blaze, bleed, blind, blitz, blow, blunt, clap, cleave, clip, clop, clout, club, flail, flak, flank, flay, flick, flog, glance, plane, splash, ply, slam, slap, slash, slice, slit, slog, slop, slosh, slug

C3: splash, splat, splay

FC1: sculpt

FC2: belt, bolt, geld, jolt, scald, squelch, wield

FC3a: flail, maul, nail, shell, whale

Section B1: Concrete Nouns.

In this section all of the common English monosyllabic concrete nouns are listed and compared phonesthemically. This section contains a subsection for each major concrete noun class: people, titles, body parts, clothing, cloth, periods of time, games, animals, plants, plant parts, foods, minerals, containers, vehicles, buildings, rooms, furniture, tools, weapons, musical instruments, colors, symbols, and units of measurement. These words are then subdivided again phonosemantically.

Example:

Concrete Class:

A. People

Relevant Phoneme:

/g/

Unpleasant People

gawk, geek, gink, goof, gook, goon, goop, goose, goy, gull

Mythical

ghost, ghoul, god

Grumpy

grouch, grump

Goer

gad, gang, ghost, gimp, guide

Gracious

gal, girl, grace, groom, guest, guy

Direct

guard, guide, guild, gun

Groups

group, grange, guild

Index.

All the common monosyllabic words are listed in alphabetical order and cross referenced with all its appearances elsewhere in the dictionary.

Section A1
Phonesthetic Classification

Table of Contents

A1. Consonantal Phonesthemes

/ b /				/ g /			
A1	Bulging, Brushy	64	11.4 %	A1	The Gullet	27	7.2 %
A2	Big, Much, Many	109	19.4 %	B1	Sound and Talk	33	8.8 %
B1	Barriers, Interference	76	13.5 %	B2	Voice	14	3.7 %
C1	Emptiness	35	6.2 %	C1	Containers and Valleys	49	13.0 %
D1	Binding, Contact, Connection	33	5.9 %	C2	Quantity	50	13.3 %
E1	Foundations, Carrying and Balance	50	8.9 %	D1	Getting, Holding and Greed	77	20.4 %
F1	Explosion, Blowing and Breaking	35	6.2 %	D2	Blockage	38	10.1 %
F2	Departure	19	3.4 %	E1	Giving	6	1.6 %
F3	Hitting, Battling, Games	50	8.9 %	E2	Going	55	14.6 %
F4	Bizarre and Chaotic	8	1.4 %	E3	Growing	26	6.9 %
G1	Noises and Music	36	6.4 %	F1	Goodness	15	4.0 %
G2	Effusive Language and Writing	74	13.2 %	G1	Light (Generally Indirect)	18	4.8 %
G3	Bother and Bargain	19	3.4 %	H1	Understanding	23	6.1 %
H1	Birth and Beginnings	45	8.0 %	I1	Grids and Grains	12	3.2 %
I1	Badness	31	5.5 %	J1	Death and Gloom	30	8.0 %
I2	Pain	43	7.7 %	K1	Too Much Where It Doesn't Belong	112	29.7 %
I3	Error	22	3.9 %	K2	Not Enough Where It's Needed	106	28.1 %
J1	Water	68	12.1 %	L1	Hidden Source or Goal	117	31.0 %
J2	Alcohol	16	2.9 %	/ p /			
J3	Boats	27	4.8 %	A1	Prongs, Peaks, Points	105	15.8 %
K1	Fire, Light	18	3.2 %	B1	Puffy and Plane	84	12.6 %
K2	Saturated Color	20	3.6 %	C1	Containers and Enclosed Areas	74	11.1 %
L1	Boards and Bricks	18	3.2 %	D1	Parts and Pictures	91	13.7 %
/ d /				E1	Groups, Units, Levels, Size	94	14.1 %
A1	End, Death, Sleep, Drug	50	10.4 %	F1	Picking, Pulling	107	16.1 %
A2	Diminishment, Smallness	83	17.3 %	G1	Patrolling	20	3.0 %
A3	Breadth, Dragging On	41	8.5 %	H1	Pamper, Pester, Prepare	88	13.2 %
A4	Scarcity, Danger	60	12.5 %	I1	Pouring, Putting, Pushing and	183	27.5 %
A5	Confusion, Discord and Barriers	69	14.4 %	J1	Stepping and Paths	48	7.2 %
A6	Dark, Dirty and Dreary	97	20.2 %	K1	Endings, The Past	22	3.3 %
B1	Divisions, Groups, Amounts	130	27.1 %	L1	Talk	72	10.8 %
C1	Execution of Pending Process	91	19.0 %	L2	Noises and Music	30	4.5 %
C2	Motion	31	6.5 %	M1	The Problem	62	9.3 %
D1	Down	154	32.1 %	N1	Heat	2	0.3 %
E1	Good, Dear	33	6.9 %	/ t /			
F1	Water	62	12.9 %	A1	Travel	125	15.0 %
G1	Light and Color	11	2.3 %	A2	Cast, Blow, Flow	60	7.2 %

Words Which Fit In Concrete B1 Classes, but not Phonesthemic A1 Classes

People

bach, bub, chef, dweeb, fop, gal, Jew, pa, senate, thane, vet, yid

Body Parts

beak, jowl, thigh

Clothing

drawers, jean, pants, tog

Games

craps, golf, whist

Animals

chimp, coon, cub, daw, deer, doe, drake, ewe, flea, foal, gnu, goat, hake, hare, hart, hen, loon, mare, moose, newt, pooch, prawn, pup, scrod, squid, stag, stork, swan, tern, thrush, tom, trout, wren

Plants

beet, chive, clove, cress, dill, kale, larch, maize, myrrh, pear, phlox, plum, quince, rice, rye, sedge, soy, tea, thyme, wheat, yam, yew

Plant Parts

bran

Food

beet, bran, chive, clove, coke, cress, dill, ghee, kale, kirsch, knish, lox, pear, plum, quiche, quince, rice, roe, rum, rye, schnapps, scone, scrod, slaw, soy, steak, tea, thyme, torte, trout, veal, wheat, wine, wurst, yam

Vehicles

surrey

Materials

jean, lye, quartz, teak, zinc

Time

June

Color

mauve, roan, taupe, taw, teal

Units

ton

Symbols

dah, five, four, pi, schwa, twenty

A1. Consonantal Phonesthemes

Total Words 3425

Classes/Word 6.18

Total Words in A1 3282

/ b /			
Total words	333	Classes/Wd	3.3
<hr/>			
A1 Bulging, Brushy	<i>[+liquid]</i>	64	11.4 %
<hr/>			
1 Bulging	<i>/l/, [V, +low, +back]</i>	1	
bag, bale, ball, belch, bell, bilge, blimp, bloat, blob, blouse, blow, boil, boob, bulge, bum, bun/s, burl, burst, bust			
Number of Words	19	30 %	A1bA11: 1
<hr/>			
1 Bulging			F3
blob, boob, flab, globe, gob, lob, lobe			
Number of Words	7	11 %	A1bA11: F3
<hr/>			
2 Bump	<i>/l/, [V, +low, +back]</i>	1	
ball/s, bay, bead, blip, bloat, blob, boil, boll, boob, breast, bud, bug(eye), bulb, bulge, bum, bump, bun, bunch, bun/s, burl, bust, butt, butte			
Number of Words	23	36 %	A1bA12: 1
<hr/>			
2 Bump			F3
blob, boob, glob, knob, lobe, neb, nib, nub, tab			
Number of Words	9	14 %	A1bA12: F3
<hr/>			
3 Round	<i>/l/, [V, +low, +back]</i>	1	
bale, ball, bead, bell, blimp, blip, bloat, blob, blotch, bowl, bulb, bulge			
Number of Words	12	19 %	A1bA13: 1
<hr/>			
3 Round			F3
blob, bulb, globe, knob, lob, lobe, orb			
Number of Words	7	11 %	A1bA13: F3
<hr/>			
4 Bend			1
bay, belt, bend, bight, bow			
Number of Words	5	8 %	A1bA14: 1
<hr/>			
4 Bend			F3
lob, lobe			
Number of Words	2	3 %	A1bA14: F3
<hr/>			
5 Brushy	<i>/r/</i>	1	
bang, barb, beard, bosk, braid, brake, branch, broom, brow, browse, brush, bur, burr, bush			
Number of Words	14	22 %	A1bA15: 1
<hr/>			
A2 Big, Much, Many	<i>[V, +low, +back]</i>	109	19.4 %
<hr/>			
1 General Bigness			1
bank, beaut, best, big, bis, blow, boon, boot, both, brisk, broad, bulk			
Number of Words	12	11 %	A1bA21: 1
<hr/>			
1 General Bigness			F3
flab, glob, globe, gob			
Number of Words	4	4 %	A1bA21: F3
<hr/>			
2 Groups			1
band, bar, batch, bench, bloc, block, blood, board, bond, brace, branch, brand, brood, bunch, bund			
Number of Words	15	14 %	A1bA22: 1
<hr/>			
2 Groups			F3
club, mob, tribe			
Number of Words	3	3 %	A1bA22: F3
<hr/>			
3 Classifiers			1
bale, bank, bar, batch, bed, bolt, book, bout, brood			
Number of Words	9	8 %	A1bA23: 1
<hr/>			
3 Classifiers			F3
dab, glob, gob			
Number of Words	3	3 %	A1bA23: F3
<hr/>			
4 Units			1
bar, baud, bit, byte			
Number of Words	4	4 %	A1bA24: 1
<hr/>			
5 Types	<i>/r/</i>		1
brace, branch, brand, breed			
Number of Words	4	4 %	A1bA25: 1
<hr/>			
6 Money			1
bail, bank, bar, bear, bet, bill, bit, bleed, blow, bob, bond, bourse, brass, bread, bribe, buck, bull, bunch, buy			
Number of Words	19	17 %	A1bA26: 1
<hr/>			
7 Growth	<i>/l/</i>		1
beef, best, blast, bloat, bloom, blow, boom, boost, breed, bud, build, bulge, bulk, bull, bush			
Number of Words	15	14 %	A1bA27: 1
<hr/>			
8 Bright	<i>/l/, /r/, /ij/</i>		1
bask, beam, blanch, blank, blaze, bleach, blink, blip, blitz, blond, blush, bold, bolt, brand, braze, bright, bulb, burn			
Number of Words	18	17 %	A1bA28: 1
<hr/>			
8 Bright			F3
bulb, strobe			
Number of Words	2	2 %	A1bA28: F3
<hr/>			
9 Immersion			1
bake, bask, baste, bathe, beam, binge, bliss, brew, brim, buff			
Number of Words	10	9 %	A1bA29: 1
<hr/>			
9 Immersion			F3
probe, web			
Number of Words	2	2 %	A1bA29: F3

Section B1
Concrete Noun Classification

B1. Concrete Semantic Classes

Total Words 3425

TotClassPerWd 1.45

Total Words in B1 1668

A1 People	878	52.6 %
/ b /		
63		7.2 %
1 Beautiful, Handsome, Sexy People		
babe, bach, bawd, bean, beau, belle, bird, blade, block, bloke, blood, blue, boy, brave, brick, bride, broad, bruise/r, bub, buck, bud, butch		
Number of Words	22	34.9 % B1bA11: 1
2 Mean, Criminal People		
bawd, beast, bitch, blight, bluff, boob, boss, brag, brat, brute, bug		
Number of Words	11	17.5 % B1bA12: 1
3 Big, Loud People		
babe, bear, beast, bitch, blab, blight, blimp, block, boob, boor, bore, boss, brag, brat, brave, bruise/r, brute, bub, bug, bull, bum, butch		
Number of Words	22	34.9 % B1bA13: 1
4 Ugly, Stupid People		
babe, bag, bat, bear, beast, bird, blab, blimp, boob, boor, bore, boy, brute, bug, bum, butch, butt		
Number of Words	17	27.0 % B1bA14: 1
5 Professions		
back, bail, bard, bass, bawd, bone/s, boy, bull		
Number of Words	8	12.7 % B1bA15: 1
6 Children		
babe, bairn, boy, brat		
Number of Words	4	6.3 % B1bA16: 1
7 Smart, Enthusiastic People		
brain, buff, bug		
Number of Words	3	4.8 % B1bA17: 1
8 Other People		
black, blond		
Number of Words	2	3.2 % B1bA18: 1
9 Groups of People		
band, bar, batch, bench, bloc, blood, board, bond, both, brood, bunch, bund		
Number of Words	12	19.0 % B1bA19: 1

/ d /		
26		3.0 %
1 Dear People		
dad, dear, dove, duck		
Number of Words	4	15.4 % B1dA11: 1
2 Ladies, Gentlemen		
dame, date, dish, doll, don, drag, dude		
Number of Words	7	26.9 % B1dA12: 1
3 Titles		
dean, don, duke		
Number of Words	3	11.5 % B1dA13: 1
4 Dummies		
dolt, dope, drip, droll, drone, dud, dunce		
Number of Words	7	26.9 % B1dA14: 1
5 Negative Women		
dike, dog, drab		
Number of Words	3	11.5 % B1dA15: 1
6 Mythical Beings		
druid, dryad, dwarf		
Number of Words	3	11.5 % B1dA16: 1
7 Other People		
dead, dweeb		
Number of Words	2	7.7 % B1dA17: 1
/ g /		
29		3.3 %
1 Socially Inept People		
gawk, geek, gink, goof, gook, goon, goose, goy, gull		
Number of Words	9	31.0 % B1gA11: 1
2 Mythical Beings		
ghost, ghoul, god		
Number of Words	3	10.3 % B1gA12: 1
4 Grumpy People		
grouch, grump		
Number of Words	2	6.9 % B1gA14: 1
5 Going People		
gang, ghost, gimp, guide		
Number of Words	4	13.8 % B1gA15: 1
6 Gracious People		
gal, girl, grace, groom, guest, guy		
Number of Words	6	20.7 % B1gA16: 1

B1. Concrete Semantic Classes

Total Words 3425

TotClassPerWd 1.45

Total Words in B1 1668

7 Directing People guard, guide, guild, gun	Number of Words 4	13.8 %	B1gA17: 1
8 Sexual People gay	Number of Words 1	3.4 %	B1gA18: 1
9 Groups of People gang, group, grange, guard, guild	Number of Words 5	17.2 %	B1gA19: 1
/ p /			
37	4.2 %		
2 Small People page, peon, plebe, poor, prey, punk	Number of Words 6	16.2 %	B1pA12: 1
3 Mythic Beings Pan, Puck	Number of Words 2	5.4 %	B1pA13: 1
4 Two People pal, peer	Number of Words 2	5.4 %	B1pA14: 1
5 Substitutes pawn, plant	Number of Words 2	5.4 %	B1pA15: 1
6 Endearing Terms for Women peach, pearl, pet, pie, piece, plum, puff	Number of Words 7	18.9 %	B1pA16: 1
7 Powerful People pimp, prince, pro	Number of Words 3	8.1 %	B1pA17: 1
8 Priests pope, priest	Number of Words 2	5.4 %	B1pA18: 1
9 Papas pa, pap, paw, pop	Number of Words 4	10.8 %	B1pA19: 1
10 Prudes prig, prude, prune	Number of Words 3	8.1 %	B1pA110: 1
13 Unpleasant People pest, pig, pink, prick, prig, prude, prune, punk	Number of Words 8	21.6 %	B1pA113: 1

15 Groups of People pack, press	Number of Words 2	5.4 %	B1pA115: 1
16 Other People pimp, prof	Number of Words 2	5.4 %	B1pA116: 1
/ t /			
26	3.0 %		
1 Teams team, tong, town, trade, tribe, trio, troop, troupe, trust, twain, twin, two	Number of Words 12	46.2 %	B1tA11: 1
3 Tyrants troll	Number of Words 1	3.8 %	B1tA13: 1
4 Young, Small People tad, teen, toots, tot, tyke	Number of Words 5	19.2 %	B1tA14: 1
5 Groups of People team, tribe, troop, troupe	Number of Words 4	15.4 %	B1tA15: 1
6 Two People twain, twin	Number of Words 2	7.7 %	B1tA16: 1
7 Travellers tail, tar, tramp, tribe, troop, troupe	Number of Words 6	23.1 %	B1tA17: 1
8 Sexually Appealing Women tail, tart, toots, tramp	Number of Words 4	15.4 %	B1tA18: 1
9 Unpleasant People toad, trash, turd, twit, twerp	Number of Words 5	19.2 %	B1tA19: 1
/ k /			
52	5.9 %		
1 Kin clone, ken, kin, kith	Number of Words 4	7.7 %	B1kA11: 1