other hand, utterances constitute the primary material. These circumstances lend a certain matter-of-factness to phonology, while semantic issues are often judged to be much more inscrutable due to the fact that referents may belong to imaginary worlds. Still, as argued in section 5, language treats imaginary referents and material referents in exactly the same way. As a consequence, linguistic informants are able to talk about these referents as if they were things.

In this connection, compare once again *Hǎo shū.* 'Good books.' with *Hǎo duō shū.* 'Very many books.' in (1.3) and (1.4). For *Hǎo shū.*, if speakers agree that the things which are *hǎo* 'good' are the very same things which are *shū* 'book', the linguist may record a shared referent, viz. the books in question, for the two meanings 'good' and 'book'. The idea is simply to ask "What entity is good?" and "What entity is a book?". If the answer is the same entity in both cases, the two meanings 'good' and 'book' share the same referent. Similarly for *Hǎo duō shū.* 'Very many books.', speakers are able to formulate, each in their own way, the notion that not the books, but their numerousness is *hǎo* 'good'. For the expression as a whole, there are accordingly two referents, viz. the books in a concrete world and their numerousness in an imaginary world. The books are shared as a referent by (a) the meaning 'book' correlating with *shū*; and (b) the meaning 'a good many' correlating with *hǎo duō*. The latter meaning can in turn be analyzed as two meanings, 'good' and 'numerous', correlating with *hǎo* and *duō*, respectively, and sharing the imaginary notion of numerousness as a referent.

As just illustrated, different meanings may be construed as sharing the same referent. I will make a terminological distinction between CONVERGENT meanings, which are syntactically construed so as to share a referent, and COREFERENTIAL meanings, which share a referent as a matter of interpretation. Both terms are Ebeling's.[2] In the following example, the meanings 'book' and 'good' are convergent.

(1.13) Zhè shū hǎo. Wó mǎi zhè běn.
          this book good 1.SG buy this volume
          'This book is nice. I'll buy this one.'

If the speaker wants to imply that he is going to buy the very book which he says is nice, the meanings 'book' and 'this volume' are coreferential. A non-coreferential interpretation of 'book' and 'this volume' might occur in the following situation. A

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2. Ebeling (p.c. 23 July 1993) proposes *convergent* to replace his earlier (1978: 29) term *parallel*. I have adopted *convergent* because the image of meanings 'coming together' in the same referent is more transparent than the 'never touching' image suggested by *parallel*. At the same time, the contrast with the opposite case of *divergent* meanings (*ibid.*) is made clear. See also Ebeling (1978: 226-231) on coreference.

speaker, talking to a friend while looking at books in a book shop, is holding a dictionary he has chosen to buy while looking at some more books. He points out to his friend a novel he likes while saying *Zhè shū hǎo.* 'This book is nice.' and adds *Wó mǎi zhè běn.* 'I'll buy this one.' while pointing at a dictionary he intends to buy.

7. The same form often seems to correlate with a number of different meanings. The meanings to be distinguished may be so vastly different that the use of the same form is felt to be accidental, as in English *date* 'day on which something happens' and *date* 'sweet fruit from a palm tree'. In other cases, various meanings of identical forms may seem to be related in one way or another, e.g. for English *date* 'specific time' and *date* 'social acquaintance met at a prearranged time, prospective partner in love'. The correlation of unrelated meanings with the same form is usually called HOMONYMY. When one form denotes related meanings, the term POLYSEMY is used. As John Lyons (1986: 552) observes, "relatedness of meaning appears to be a matter of degree", so that "the linguist might well decide that it is preferable to leave the theoretical status of the distinction between homonymy and polysemy unresolved". In this connection, note that the decision about the degree of relatedness rests with the speaker. Meanings may in some cases be homonymous for some speakers and polysemous for others. This appears to be the case for Dutch *ruit* 'rhombus, diamond' and *ruit* 'window pane'.

As regards relatedness as "a matter of degree", one factor complicating the semantic description is that polysemous meanings may be cognate in more than one way. Consider the English form *mouse* 'small furry rodent with a long tail'. Since the advent of personal computing, *mouse* is also widely used to designate a cursor-controlling interface. The use of the form *mouse* in a computing context was suggested by a number of aspects of its 'rodent' meaning:

(1.14) **mouse** [...]

      A computer peripheral consisting of a small plastic box with a number of buttons and a lead, which may be moved about on a desk or tablet to control the position of the cursor on a monitor, and used to enter commands.

      A metaphorical use of the animal name, arising from the appearance of the computer device, with its compact body and its trailing flex resembling a tail, as well as its effect of making the cursor 'scamper' across the screen. This is the latest in a long line of technical uses of *mouse* based on physical resemblance to the furry animal: these include a nautical term for a type of knot and a plumber's lead weight on a line.

                                             (Oxford: 202)

In addition to the physical aspects enumerated here, the use of the expression *mouse* may have been suggested by the initially standard gray color of computers and computer peripherals. Among later technical developments, the use of infra-red light for the transmission of signals has made the 'tail' an optional feature. An infra-red

mouse is still a mouse by virtue of its mobile, cursor-positioning, small and gray qualities, but the tail feature has been lost.

If one were to define 'mouse' in terms of the common denominator between the features of these three types of mouse, this would lead to the description 'something mobile, small and gray'. Such a semantic description falls short on two accounts. Firstly, it overlooks the fact that what speakers of English think of when they hear *mouse* is more than the notion thus delimited. Some may think of something that is additionally a rodent, and others may think of a small computer interface of one kind or other. Secondly, the fact that the cursor-positioning quality is shared between the two kinds of computer mouse is not represented in a description of the meaning of *mouse* as 'something mobile, small and gray'.

Hence polysemy does not necessarily lead to a reduction of meanings to a single invariant meaning. The relationships between meanings denoted by the same form may prove to be more meaningful than a common semantic denominator. In the case of *mouse*, consider two more meanings which render the notion of a denominator common to all meanings useless. First, *mouse* may be used to refer to a shy person. In addition, on a limited scale, passport and tax exiles have been observed to style themselves "mice" (Monitor 1993: *passim*), presumably because of the secretive qualities attributed to mice. Some characteristics of each 'mouse' are summarized below.

(1.15) *mouse*

'animal'	'cabled interface'	'infra-red interface'	'shy person'	'passport/ tax exile'
small	small	small		
with long tail	with long tail			
mobile	mobile	mobile		mobile
gray	gray	gray		
shy			shy	
secretive				secretive
furry				
rodent				
	controls cursor	controls cursor		
			human	human

The absence of a common semantic denominator does not necessitate a description in terms of homonymy as long as the various uses of a form can be plotted along a continuum in which adjacent uses share semantic properties. In other words, the meanings 'passport/tax exile' and 'infra-red interface' correlating with *mouse* have more in common than just being mobile, even though the lines of their semantic relationship are indirect. The fact that people using these meanings know

these things is relevant. Any meaningful connection between the different uses of a single form helps to complete the linguistic description.