**ABSTRACT**: From all the issues related to the phenomenon of polysemy, meaning differentiation is probably the hardest problem and also the one with greater theoretical and methodological implications. An attempt to solve the problem would be to discard the widespread reified conception of linguistic meaning and interpret the flexibility and contextuality of meaning correctly. It is necessary to push the meaning to the top, i.e. to the level of schematic meanings and of other factors of semantic coherence, but also to push it to the bottom, i.e. to the level of particular contextual uses. The verb *deixar* ‘to leave, to let’ and the discourse marker *pronto* ‘ready, quick’ illustrate these two semantic paths. This way, we can avoid both the myth of “essential meanings” and the myth of “purely contextual uses”.