

Course summary

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Themes covered

- How people use words to make meanings
- The nature of word meaning
- Syntagmatics: corpus pattern analysis
- Paradigmatics: lexical sets and ontologies
- Metaphors and similes
- The diachronic dimension
 - Lexicography and technology
 - Lexicography and the Renaissance
 - Lexicography and the Enlightenment

Word meaning

- Word meaning is unstable – a word may change its meaning suddenly and unpredictably
- Meaning is determined by context
- Normal contexts are discovered and classified by corpus analysis
- Meanings are associated with words in context
 - Not with words in isolation (*pace* dictionaries)
- Unusual uses are classed as “exploitations”
- Diachronically, today’s exploitation may become tomorrow’s norm

CPA: finding norms

- Syntagmatics: the verb is the pivot of the clause
- Analyse verb patterns in terms of:
 - Argument structure (OR “valency”)
 - Semantic types and roles of arguments
 - Lexical sets populating ontologies of semantic types
 - Subargumental cues
- Nouns (some nouns) fall into place around verbs
 - Picking out different meanings of the verb

Lexical sets and ontologies

- Ontologies are necessary ...
 - *canaries fly, hawks fly, swans fly*
 - *canaries sing, thrushes sing, blackbirds sing*
- ... but unreliable
 - *penguins don't fly, swans don't sing*
- The population (= the lexical set) of each semantic type in an ontology varies according to context

Metaphors and similes

- Conceptual metaphors vs. linguistic metaphors
- “GOOD is UP” vs. “My spirits rose”
- Linguistic metaphors: secondary conventions vs. dynamic, creative exploitations of norms

The diachronic dimension

- Dictionaries were made possible by C16 Renaissance printing technology
- Ontologies were a product of the C17 Enlightenment
- C21 computer science offers completely new technologies
- What future developments in lexical analysis and language tools may be expected as a result?