

Word Meaning- II

HUL 243

31st Aug 2024

- Last time: the difficulties of defining a word
- Challenge of multi-words, morphemes and words like *and*, *a*, *the*
- Discuss sense relations between words

Lexeme

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- Difference between a lemma and lexeme?
 - Lemma is usually used as an entry form in a dictionary
 - *A canonical form of a lexeme that is chosen to represent it* is a lemma (in the case of RUN it comes from the non-finite *to run*)
 - Similarly BE is the lemma form for *am, is, are, was, were*

Ambiguity

- A standard example of a word with two meanings associated with a single form is *bank*
 - ▶ *bank*: land at river edge
 - ▶ *bank*: financial institution
- Here the two meanings are quite distinct
- If two meanings associated with the same phonological form are distinct– the form is **ambiguous**

Vagueness

- We can take another case of two meanings associated with a single form
 - ▶ *aunt*: father's sister
 - ▶ *aunt*: mother's sister
- However, here the meanings are more intuitively *united* rather than separate as “parent's sister”
- If two meanings associated with the same phonological form are united, and non distinguished– the form is **vague**

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- I went to the bank and so did Bill
- I went to the bank (fin institution) and so did Bill (river's edge)
- The above sentence is unacceptable– and if used, usually in a humorous/comedic sense: ambiguous sentences won't pass the test

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- 1 He loved sitting by the bank
- 2 He loved sitting by the *embankment*
- 3 ??He loved sitting by the *moneylender*

- Given two words: *mole* and *publicist*, which one is vague and which is ambiguous ?

- Puns can be constructed with ambiguous but not vague structures
- *Soaring pork prices hog headlines and sow discontent*

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- 1 paint a portrait in oils on canvas
- 2 paint a landscape with watercolours on paper
- 3 paint a mural on the wall
- 4 paint a decorative border on a wall
- 5 paint the walls of a room
- 6 paint the exterior of a house/fence/wall
- 7 paint furniture
- 8 paint stripes on the parking lot
- 9 paint on a digital tablet using a pen

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- In this scenario, the senses seem very distinct, and the sentence less acceptable (or only humorously)
- Some senses of painting are closer to each other (more united in their senses) as compared to others

Polysemy

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- However, in this case the senses are related to each other (not distinct like ambiguity or unrelated like vagueness)
- A criteria of 'relatedness' is used to identify polysemy

hook n. **1.** a piece of material usually metal, curved or bent and used to suspend, catch, hold or pull something. **2.** short for fish-hook **3.** a trap or a snare. **4.** *Chiefly US* something that attracts or is intended to be an attraction

Polysemy

Ambiguity	Vagueness	Polysemy
bank	aunt	hook
2 lexemes	1 lexeme	1 lexeme
separate sense	united sense	'related senses'

- We can think of ambiguity, vagueness and polysemy along a cline

