Natural Language Processing 1

Lecture 5: Introduction to lexical semantics

Katia Shutova

ILLC
University of Amsterdam

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Semantics

Compositional semantics:

- studies how meanings of phrases are constructed out of the meaning of individual words
- principle of compositionality: meaning of each whole phrase derivable from meaning of its parts
- sentence structure conveys some meaning: obtained by syntactic representation

Lexical semantics:

- studies how the meanings of individual words can be represented and induced

What is lexical meaning?

- recent results in psychology and cognitive neuroscience give us some clues
- but we don't have the whole picture yet
- different representations proposed, e.g.
  - formal semantic representations based on logic,
  - *or* taxonomies relating words to each other,
  - *or* distributional representations in statistical NLP
- but none of the representations gives us a complete account of lexical meaning

How to approach lexical meaning?

- Formal semantics: set-theoretic approach
  e.g., cat$'$: the set of all cats; bird$'$: the set of all birds.
- meaning postulates, e.g.

$$\forall x[\text{bachelor}'(x) \rightarrow \text{man}'(x) \wedge \text{unmarried}'(x)]$$

- Limitations, e.g. *is the current Pope a bachelor?*
- Defining concepts through enumeration of all of their features in practice is highly problematic
- How would you define e.g. *chair, tomato, thought, democracy*? – impossible for most concepts
- Prototype theory offers an alternative to set-theoretic approaches

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Prototype theory

- introduced the notion of graded semantic categories
- no clear boundaries
- no requirement that a property or set of properties be shared by all members
- certain members of a category are more central or prototypical (i.e. instantiate the prototype)

furniture: chair is more prototypical than stool

Eleanor Rosch 1975. *Cognitive Representation of Semantic Categories* (J Experimental Psychology)

Prototype theory (continued)

- Categories form around prototypes; new members added on basis of resemblance to prototype
- Features/attributes generally graded
- Category membership a matter of degree
- Categories do not have clear boundaries

Semantic relations

Hyponymy: IS-A

dog is a hyponym of *animal*
animal is a hypernym of *dog*

- hyponymy relationships form a taxonomy
- works best for concrete nouns
- multiple inheritance: e.g., is *coin* a hyponym of both *metal* and *money*?

Other semantic relations

Meronymy: PART-OF e.g., *arm* is a meronym of *body*, *steering wheel* is a meronym of *car* (piece vs part)

Synonymy e.g., *aubergine*/*eggplant*.

Antonymy e.g., *big*/*little*

Also:

Near-synonymy/similarity e.g., *exciting*/*thrilling*
e.g., *slim*/*slender*/*thin*/*skinny*

WordNet

- large scale, open source resource for English
- hand-constructed
- wordnets being built for other languages
- organized into synsets: synonym sets (near-synonyms)
- synsets connected by semantic relations

```
S: (v) interpret, construe, see (make sense of;
 assign a meaning to) - "How do you interpret his
  behavior?"
S: (v) understand, read, interpret, translate (make
 sense of a language) "She understands French";
 "Can you read Greek?"
```

Polysemy and word senses

The children **ran** to the store
If you see this man, **run**!
Service **runs** all the way to Cranbury
She is **running** a relief operation in Sudan
the story or argument **runs** as follows
Does this old car still **run** well?
Interest rates **run** from 5 to 10 percent
Who's **running** for treasurer this year?
They **ran** the tapes over and over again
These dresses **run** small

Polysemy

- homonymy: unrelated word senses. *bank* (raised land) vs *bank* (financial institution)
- *bank* (financial institution) vs *bank* (in a casino): related but distinct senses.
- regular polysemy and sense extension
  - metaphorical senses, e.g. *swallow* [food], *swallow* [information], *swallow* [anger]
  - metonymy, e.g. he played *Bach*; he drank his *glass*.
  - zero-derivation, e.g. *tango* (N) vs *tango* (V)
- vagueness: *nurse, lecturer, driver*
- cultural stereotypes: *nurse, lecturer, driver*

No clearcut distinctions.

Word sense disambiguation

- Needed for many applications
- relies on context, e.g. *striped bass* (the fish) vs *bass guitar*.

Methods:

- supervised learning:
  - Assume a predefined set of word senses, e.g. WordNet
  - Need a large sense-tagged training corpus (difficult to construct)
- semi-supervised learning (Yarowsky, 1995)
  - bootstrap from a few examples
- unsupervised sense induction
  - e.g. cluster contexts in which a word occurs

WSD by semi-supervised learning

Yarowsky, David (1995) *Unsupervised word sense disambiguation rivalling supervised methods*

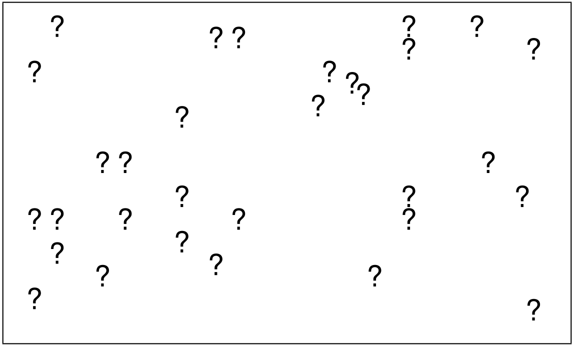
Disambiguating *plant* (factory vs vegetation senses):

1. Find contexts in training corpus:

sense	training example
?	company said that the *plant* is still operating
?	although thousands of *plant* and animal species
?	zonal distribution of *plant* life
?	company manufacturing *plant* is in Orlando
	etc

Yarowsky (1995): schematically

Initial state

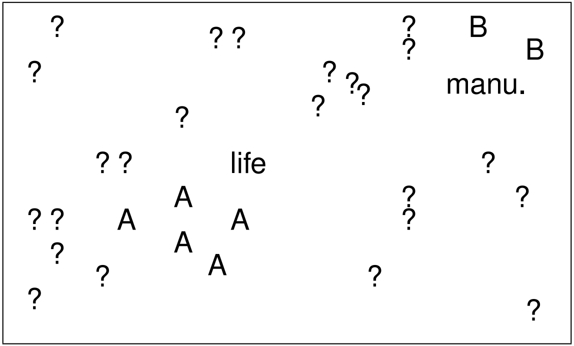


2. Identify some seeds to disambiguate a few uses:

'*plant* life' for vegetation use (A)
'manufacturing *plant*' for factory use (B)

sense	training example
?	company said that the *plant* is still operating
?	although thousands of *plant* and animal species
A	zonal distribution of *plant* life
B	company manufacturing *plant* is in Orlando
	etc

Seeds



3. Train a decision list classifier on Sense A/Sense B examples.

Rank features by log-likelihood ratio:

$$\log\left(\frac{P(\text{Sense}_A|f_i)}{P(\text{Sense}_B|f_i)}\right)$$

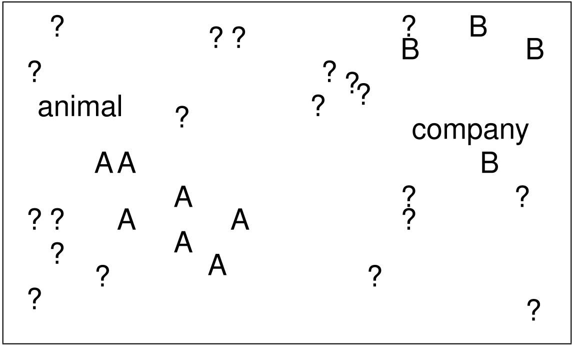
reliability	criterion	sense
8.10	*plant* life	A
7.58	manufacturing *plant*	B
6.27	*animal* within 10 words of *plant*	A
	etc	

4. Apply the classifier to the training set and add reliable examples to A and B sets.

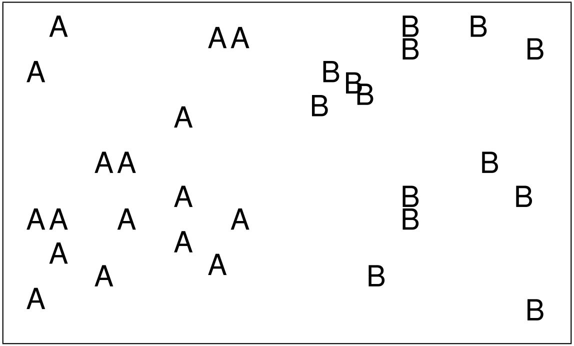
sense	training example
?	company said that the *plant* is still operating
A	although thousands of *plant* and animal species
A	zonal distribution of *plant* life
B	company manufacturing *plant* is in Orlando
	etc

5. Iterate the previous steps 3 and 4 until convergence

Iterating:



Final:



6. Apply the classifier to the unseen test data

- Accuracy of 95%, but...
- Yarowsky's experiments were nearly all on homonyms: these principles may not hold as well for sense extension.

Problems with WSD as supervised classification

- real performance around 75% (supervised)
- need to predefine word senses (not theoretically sound)
- need a very large training corpus (difficult to annotate, humans do not agree)
- learn a model for individual words — no real generalisation

Better way:

- unsupervised sense induction (but a very hard task)

Acknowledgement

Some slides were adapted from Ann Copestake