# DAS Semantics

# Word meaning and close reading

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Lecture 2

#### **Overview**

- Word Meaning
  - Definitions
  - > Translations/paraphrases
  - Semantic Relations
  - Components
  - Word Embeddings
- > Wordnet
- Close Reading and Word Sense Disambiguation

# The meanings of words

## Words carry different meanings: *leave*

- 10070 Nothing was <u>left</u> save a few acres of ground, and the two-hundred-year-old house, which is itself crushed under a heavy mortgage.
- 10079 The money which my mother had <u>left</u> was enough for all our wants, and there seemed to be no obstacle to our happiness."
- 10085 He had no friends at all save the wandering gipsies, and he would give these vagabonds <u>leave</u> to encamp upon the few acres of bramble- covered land which represent the family estate, and would accept in return the hospitality of their tents, wandering away with them sometimes for weeks on end.
- 10107 She <u>left</u> her room, therefore, and came into mine, where she sat for some time, chatting about her approaching wedding.
- 10108 At eleven o'clock she rose to <u>leave</u> me, but she paused at the door and looked back.

10439 "The rest you will leave in our hands . "

10449 And now, Miss Stoner, we must <u>leave</u> you for if Dr. Roylott returned and saw us our journey would be in vain.

10526 Then he turned down the lamp , and we were left in darkness .

How many different meanings?



## How can we represent the differences?

- > Definitions
- > Translations/paraphrases
- > Semantic Relations
- > Components
- Word Embeddings

## **Semantic Representations of Words**

- Divide meaning into
  - reference: the relation to the world/mental space
  - sense: the rest of the meaning
    - denotation the part that distinguishes the meaning from other meanings
    - \* connotation cultural or emotional associations
- > Introduce concepts
  - How can we represent concepts?
  - > How do we learn them?
    - Typically children start off by underextending or overextending concepts
- > Example: That dog
  - reference the animal over there
  - sense canine quadruped domesticated by man
  - connotation faithful, friendly (or dirty)

#### **Definitional Semantics**

Standard lexicographic approach to lexical semantics:

```
semantics = the study of language meaning
tailor = a person whose occupation is making and altering garments
```

- Definitions are conventionally made up of;
  - > genus: what class the lexical item belongs to
  - differentiae: what attributes distinguish it from other members of that class
- Often hard to understand if you don't already know the meaning!

#### **Definitional Semantics: pros and cons**

#### > Pros:

familiarity (we are taught to use dictionaries)

#### > Cons:

- subjectivity in sense granularity (splitters vs. lumpers) and definition specificity
- circularity in definitions
- > consistency, reproducibility, ...
- often focus on diachronic (historical) rather than synchronic (current) semantics

#### Entries for leave

- **02015598-v** (72) V1, V2 *get out, go out, leave, exit* "move out of or depart from"
- **02356230-v** (8) V3 *leave, entrust* "put into the care or protection of someone"
- **02009433-v** (149) V1 *leave, go away, go forth* "go away from a place"
- 02229055-v (7) V3 *leave, will, bequeath* "leave or give by will after one's death"
- 02729414-v (56) V2 *leave* "act or be so as to become in a specified state"
- **02730135-v** (5) V2 *leave* "have left or have as a remainder"
- **06690114-n** (1) *leave* "permission to do something"

Not to be confused with *left hand* and *the leaves fell*, ....

## Paraphrases and translation

- > Saying the same thing in different words
  - Same language = paraphrase
  - Different language = translation
- > We showed some paraphrases in the entries given above
- If you speak another language, then you can use that to disambiguate may things.
  - ➤ **leave**, **entrust** = 預ける azukeru
  - ➤ get out, go out, leave, exit = 去る saru
  - > leave, will, bequeath = 遺す nokosu
- Can you explain the ambiguity in The money which my mother had <u>left</u> was enough for all our wants?



#### Paraphrase cues

#### > that is to say

- ➤ I met him that night, and he called next day to ask if we had got home all safe, and after that we met him that is to say, Mr Holmes, I met him twice for walks, ... IDEN
- ➤ In three days, that is to say on Monday next ... FINA

#### > in other words

- > ...there is a possibility that these initials are those of the second person who was present in other words, of the murderer. ... BLAC
- > ...when they closed their League offices that was a sign that they cared no longer about Mr. Jabez Wilson's presence; in other words, that they had completed their tunnel. REDH

#### **Lexical Semantics**

- Lexical semantics is concerned with the identification and representation of the semantics of lexical items
- If we are to identify the semantics of lexical items, we have to be prepared for the eventuality of a given word having multiple interpretations
  - > Polysemy: having multiple meanings
  - Monosemy: having only one meaning
- > Homonyms are words with two unrelated meanings:
  - homographs: same spelling bow vs bow; keep vs keep
  - homophones: same pronunciation right vs write; keep vs keep

## **Distinguishing Polysemes**

Antagonism: can the word be used in a sentence with multiple competing interpretations that are incompatible?

Kim can't bear children

- Cannot have children
- Doesn't like children
- Zeugma: can the word be used in a context where multiple competing interpretations are simultaneously evoked?

Kim and her visa expired

- > died
- > ran out

Hitmen were quite expensive, so she decided to take out a loan and her husband.



Paraphrase/Translation: Is there more than one (clearly different) way to paraphrase/translate the word.

## **Necessary and Sufficient Conditions**

- > Can we define words in terms of conditions?
  - > zebra
    - \* quadruped
    - \* animal
    - \* black and white striped
    - \* herbivore
- These are intrinsic, generic properties ]
  - An albino zebra with three legs is still a zebra
- Can we use words even if we don't know their properties?
  - > Kway Teow
- > We seem to be ok with fairly vague definitions
  - > What is a *dog-cart*?
  - What is a swamp adder?



(redundant)

## Words/Concepts are related in many ways

We can also look at words (or more properly senses) in terms of their relations to other words.

- Hyponymy/Hypernymy
- > Synonymy
- Antonymy (Opposites)
- > Meronymy
  - > Member-Collection
  - > Portion-Mass
  - > Element-Substance
- Domain (lexical field)

## **Hypernymy and Hyponymy**

> Hyponymy: X is a hyponym of Y iff f(X) entails f(Y) but f(Y) does not entail f(X) (for all or most f):

```
Kim has a pet \underline{dog} \models Kim has a pet \underline{animal}
Kim has a pet \underline{animal} \not\models Kim has a pet dog
```

N.B. complications with universal quantifiers and negation:

```
Kim likes all \underline{animals} \models Kim likes all \underline{dogs}
Kim likes all \underline{dogs} \not\models Kim likes all \underline{animals}
```

- > Hypernymy: Y is a hypernym of X iff X is a hyponym of Y
- > Can a word have multiple hypernyms?
  - (1) tank₁ ⊂ military\_vehicle₁; ⊂ tracked\_vehicle₁; ⊂ armored\_vehicle₁;
     ? ⊂ weapon₁

#### What is entailment

**Entailment** ( $\vDash$ ): A sentence p entails a sentence q when the truth of the first (p) guarantees the truth of the second (q), and the falsity of the second (q) guarantees the falsity of the first (p).

## **Properties of hypernymy/hyponymy**

- Asymmetric; applies at the sense level
- > applies only to lexical items of the same word class
- ightharpoonup Transitive:  $dog_1 \subset mammal_1 \subset animal_1$
- > Not all nodes are lexicalized; can be multiple

neutral (Hyper)	male	female	child
sheep	ram	ewe	lamb
COW	bull	cow	calf
goose	gander	goose	gosling
horse	stallion	mare	foal:colt/filly
dog	dog	bitch	puppy
snake	snake	snake	snake

- > Can you do this for *pig*, *cat* or *chicken*?
- > Can you give an example of this in another language?



## **Language Change**

- > The meanings of words change over time
- guitar "a stringed instrument usually having six strings": originally these all used the body to make sound
- > We then get *electric guitar* "a guitar with a built-in pickup or pickups which convert string vibrations into electrical signals for amplification"
- ➤ To refer to non-electric guitars we get a new coining *acoustic guitar* "a guitar that does not require electrical amplification": which used to just be guitar
  - guitar is now a hypernym of them both and can refer to either

- Sometimes this practice becomes politically charged, although linguistically it is unremarkable
  - woman "an adult female person"
  - trans woman "a person who identifies as a woman but was assigned male at birth"
  - cis woman "a person who identifies as a woman and was assigned female at birth"
- > Can you give other examples of this in English or other languages?



## **Synonymy**

- > Propositional synonymy: X is a propositional synonym of Y if
  - ➤ (i) X and Y are syntactically identical,
  - (ii) substitution of Y for X in a declarative sentence doesn't change its truth conditions

e.g., *violin* and *fiddle* 

- > Why propositional synonymy is over-restrictive:
  - > syntactic identity (cf. *eat* and *devour*)
  - collocations (cf. cemetery and graveyard)
  - gradability (cf. sofa/settee vs. boundary/frontier)

## **Near Synonymy**

- Synonyms are substitutable in some/most rather than all contexts
- Synonymy via semantics: synonyms share "common traits" or attributional overlap, walking the fine line between "necessary resemblances" and "permissible differences":

grain vs. granule; green vs. purple; alsation vs. spaniel

> Permissible differentiation via **clarification**:

Here is a grain, or granule, of the substance.

\* The cover is green, {or, that is to say} purple.

#### and **contrast**:

Here is a <u>grain</u> or, more exactly, <u>granule</u>
\* He likes <u>alsations</u>, or more exactly, <u>spaniels</u>

## **Properties of synonymy**

- > Symmetric
- traditionally applies only to lexical items of the same word class but pairs like can vs be able to suggest otherwise
- applied at the sense level?
- >  $\approx$  converse of polysemy

## **Antonymy (opposites)**

- Simple antonyms: the negative of one implies the positive of the other.
  - (2) dead/alive
  - (3) pass/fail
- Gradable Antonyms: points along a scale
  - (4) boiling/hot/warm/tepid/cool/cold/freezing
  - (5) like this class/fascinating/interesting/dull/boring
- > Reverses: reverse the direction of a motion
  - (6) ascend/descend
  - (7) up/down; right/left

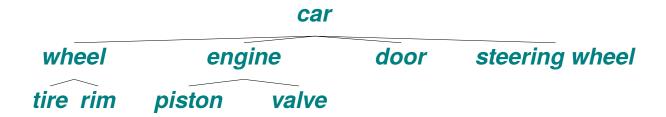
- Converses: the same act from different points of view
  - (8) above/below; right/left
  - (9) employer/employee

(Slightly non-standard usage by Saeed)

- > Taxonomic Sisters: children of the same (grand)parent
  - (10) Monday/Tuesday/.../Sunday in WordNet: day of the week ⊃ weekday, weekend
  - (11) LMS/English/Chinese/...
    Context dependent

## **Meronymy**

- Meronomy refers to the part-whole relation
  - > meronym is the part
  - > holonym is the whole



It is not always transitive shirt
button
button hole

But we don't normally say that a **button hole** is part of a **shirt**.

#### **Member-Collection**

- > The relation between a collection and one of the units that makes it up
  - (12) *tree–forest*
  - (13) sheep-flock
  - (14) fish-school
  - (15) book–library
  - (16) member-band
  - (17) musician-orchestra
  - (18) student-class

#### **Portion-Mass**

- > The relation between a mass noun and a typical unit of measurement
  - (19) drop-liquid
  - (20) grain-sand/salt/truth
  - (21) sheet/ream-paper
  - (22) *lump–coal (or just about anything)*
  - (23) strand-hair
  - (24) rasher-bacon
- > Similar to classifiers in many ways, e.g. in Malay
  - (25) ekor "tail"-animal
  - (26) *orang* "human"-person

## **Domain (lexical field)**

The domain in which a word is typically used with this meaning.

- (27) *driver*<sub>1</sub> the operator of a motor vehicle
- (28) *driver*<sub>2</sub> someone who drives animals that pull a vehicle
- (29) driver<sub>3</sub> a golfer who hits the golf ball with a driver [GOLF]
- (30)  $driver_4$  ( $\simeq$  device driver) a program that determines how a computer will communicate with a peripheral device [COMPUTER SCIENCE]
- (31)  $driver_5$  ( $\simeq$  number one wood) a golf club (a wood) with a near vertical face that is used for hitting long shots from the tee [GOLF]

Some GOLF terms: approach<sub>9</sub>, approach shot<sub>1</sub>, golf course<sub>1</sub>, links course<sub>1</sub>, wedge<sub>5</sub>, tee<sub>1</sub>, scratch<sub>9</sub>, putt<sub>1</sub>, slice<sub>1</sub>, hook<sub>1</sub>

#### **And More**

- There are many, many more lexical relations advocated by various theories including:
  - Troponymy/hypernymy (cf. walk vs. lollop) "way of doing something"
  - Entailment (cf. snore vs. sleep) "if you do one thing, you must be doing the other"
  - Operator (cf. question vs. ask) "the thing you do by doing something"
  - Magnifier (cf. wound vs. badly) "intensifier, diminisher"
  - Usage (cf. strong-willed vs. pig-headed "stubborn") pig-headed is pejorative

# Componential Analysis

## **Break word meaning into its components**

#### > For example:

```
[FEMALE]
                   [ADULT]
                            [HUMAN]
woman
spinster
         [FEMALE] [ADULT] [HUMAN] [UNMARRIED]
          [MALE] [ADULT] [HUMAN] [UNMARRIED]
bachelor
          [FEMALE] [ADULT] [HUMAN] [MARRIED]
wife
girl
          [FEMALE]
                   [CHILD]
                            [HUMAN]
                            [HUMAN]
          [MALE]
                    [CHILD]
boy
```

#### **semantic components/primitives** shown as [COMPONENT]

- components allow a compact description
- interact with morphology/syntax
- form part of our cognitive architecture

## **Defining Relations using Components**

#### > hyponymy

A lexical item P is a hyponym of Q if all the components of Q are also in P.

```
woman
[FEMALE] [ADULT] [HUMAN]
spinster
[FEMALE] [ADULT] [HUMAN] [UNMARRIED]
wife
[FEMALE] [ADULT] [HUMAN] [MARRIED]
```

spinster ⊂ woman; wife ⊂ woman

#### incompatibility

A lexical item P is incompatible with Q if they share some components but differ in one or more **contrasting** components

spinster  $\not\approx$  wife

## **Binary Features**

We can make things more economical (fewer components):

```
woman
[+FEMALE] [+ADULT] [+HUMAN]
spinster [+FEMALE] [+ADULT] [+HUMAN] [-MARRIED]
bachelor [-FEMALE] [+ADULT] [+HUMAN] [-MARRIED]
wife [+FEMALE] [+ADULT] [+HUMAN] [+MARRIED]
girl [+FEMALE] [-ADULT] [+HUMAN]
```

- ➤ Which should be +? [+FEMALE] or [-MALE]
- Presumably also [-ELECTRIC], [-CONICAL], ...
  Only show relevant features
- > antonyms differ in only one binary component

## **Redundancy Rules**

We can add relations between components:

> Which allows us to write:

```
woman
[+FEMALE] [+ADULT] [+HUMAN]
spinster [+FEMALE] [+ADULT] [+HUMAN] [-MARRIED]
bachelor [-FEMALE] [+ADULT] [+HUMAN] [-MARRIED]
wife [+FEMALE] [+MARRIED]
```

Can we say  $[-MARRIED] \rightarrow [+HUMAN]$ ?

# **More Complex Breakdowns**

We can add relations between components:

- > Assume [+PARENT](x,y) means "x is the parent of y"
- > There are various ways you can formalize such relationships
  - Many parts of language can be formalized in such a way
  - We did this for demonstratives this, that, these, those, what, here, there, where



These are great for many sub-systems of language, but it is hard to make components for everything, ...

# **Word Embeddings**

- Represent words as a vector of numbers (instead of a set of components)
- > Every word has a unique word embedding (or "vector"), which is just a list of numbers for each word.
- Embeddings start being useful from 50-500 dimensions LLMs typically are much larger
- > The embedding captures the "meaning" of the word.
- Similar words end up with similar embedding values
- Context based word embeddings give a different vector depending on the context

# **Word Embeddings**

In the simplest case, each word is a number

Vocabulary: Man, woman, boy, girl, prince, princess, queen, king, monarch



 man
 1
 2
 3
 4
 5
 6
 7
 8
 9

 man
 1
 0
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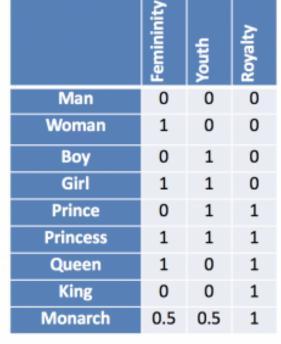
Each word gets a 1x9 vector representation

- > Two many dimensions
- No shared information
- Mainly zeros

> We want fewer, more meaningful, dimensions (like components!)

# Try to build a lower dimensional embedding

Vocabulary:
Man, woman, boy,
girl, prince,
princess, queen,
king, monarch



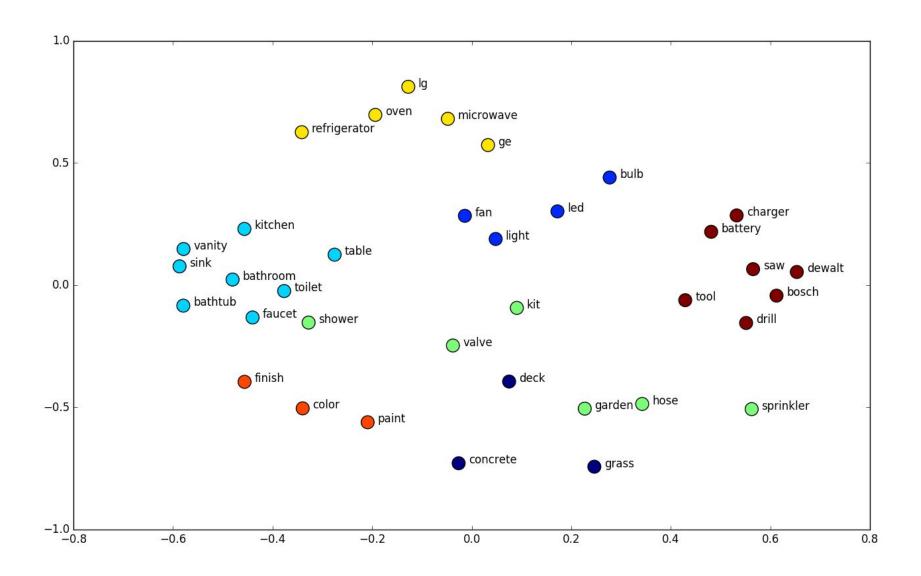
Each word gets a 1x3 vector

Similar words... similar vectors

@shane a lynn | @TeamEdgeTier

How would you add child? or emperor?

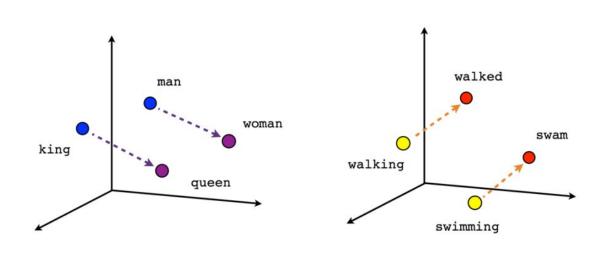
### Similar words should be close

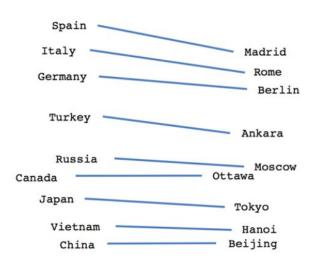


### We can learn these from raw text

- In LLMs, models are constructed to predict the context words from a centre word, or the centre word from a set of context words.
- By training on large amounts of text, embeddings that model human intuitions can be built.
- > By using multilingual text, we can link languages
- More about this in DAS/LTI: Language Technology and the Internet

### Semantic relations are also learned





Male-Female

Verb tense

Country-Capital

We can do arithmetic on the vectors

$$\vec{king} + \vec{woman} - \vec{man} \approx q\vec{ueen}$$

$$\vec{Paris} - \vec{France} + \vec{Germany} \approx \vec{Berlin}$$

# Corpora contain stereotypes, ML learns them!

ightharpoonup We can test if things are closer to  $\vec{he}$  or  $\vec{she}$ 

```
nu\vec{r}se.s\vec{h}e = 0.38

nu\vec{r}se.\vec{h}e = -0.12

progr\vec{a}mmer.\vec{h}e = 0.07

progr\vec{a}mmer.\vec{h}e = 0.28
```

- This is an accurate description of the state of the world described in the corpus
- > But may not be what we want to use as a basis for reasoning, ...

Bolukbasi et al. (2016)

# Wordnet

A graph-based approach 44

### **WordNet**

WordNet is an open-source electronic lexical database of English, developed at Princeton University

```
http://wordnet.princeton.edu/
```

- Made up of four separate semantic nets, for each of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs
- > WordNets exist for many languages, my group has worked on:
  - Japanese
  - Bahasa Malay/Indonesian
  - Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese)
  - The shared open multi-lingual wordnet (150+ languages)

```
https://omwn.org/
```

- Kristang
- Myanmar
- > Czech

### **Wordnet Structure**

ightharpoonup Lexical items are categorised into  $\sim$ 115K (and counting) glossed **synsets** (= synonym sets)

```
    enrichment -- (act of making fuller or more meaningful or rewarding)
    enrichment -- (a gift that significantly increases the recipient's wealth)
```

- Lexical relations at either the synset level or sense (= combination of lexical item and synset) level
- Strongly lexicalist (orginally):
  - synsets only where words exist
  - ightharpoonup but many multiword expressions ( $\approx 50\%$ )

# **Psycholinguistic Foundations of WordNet**

- > Strong foundation on hypo/hypernymy (lexical inheritance) based on
  - response times to sentences such as:

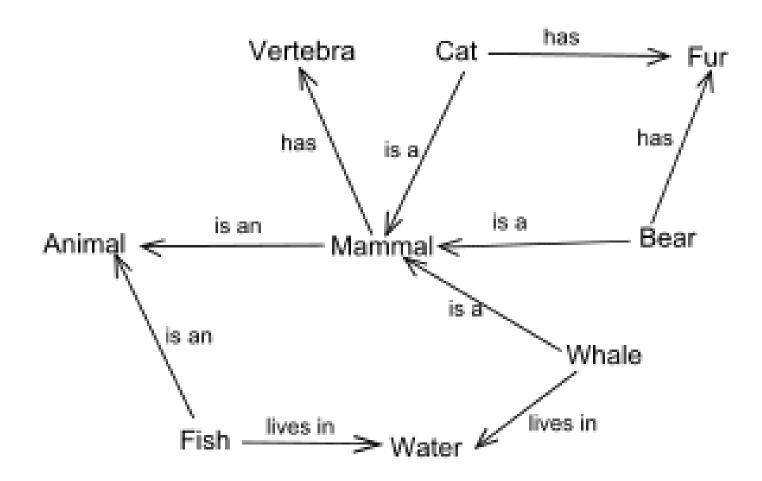
```
a canary {can sing/fly,has skin}
a bird {can sing/fly,has skin}
an animal {can sing/fly,has skin}
```

> analysis of anaphora:

```
I gave Kim a novel but the {book,?product,...} bored her Kim got a new car. It has shiny {wheels,?wheel nuts,...}
```

- selectional restrictions
- Is now often used to calculate semantic similarity
  - The shorter the path between two synsets the more similar they are
  - > Or the shorter the path to the nearest shared hypernym, ...

# Word Meaning as a Graph



> You need a very big graph to capture all meanings

### Wordnet in this course

- > We will use wordnet to test our skills in determining word meaning
  - > tag a short text from this year's story or stories
  - discuss differences with other annotators
- > As well as a source of examples and inspiration

# Word Sense Disambiguation for Close Reading

### **Close Reading**

- Reading (and often re-reading) a text to uncover multiple aspects of meaning that lead you to understand a text better
- Looking at what the text actually says, as well as the inferences you make from reading it
- After a close reading you should be able to support your conclusions with specific examples from the text
- You can consider many aspects of the text, such as
  - > The Title
  - Word Choice
  - The Tone and Style
  - Discerning Patterns
  - Point of View and Characterization
  - > Symbolism

### **Word Choice and Diction**

- What word(s) stand out? Why? (typically vivid words, unusual choices, or a contrast to what a reader expects)
- How do particular words get us to look at characters or events in a particular way? Do they evoke an emotion?
- Did the author use nonstandard language or words in another language? Why? What is the effect?
- Are there any words that could have more than one meaning? Why might the author have played with language in this way?
- Do some words have extra connotations?

We will focus on this 52

### **Word Sense Disambiguation**

- > Knowing what individual words mean is the first step towards understanding
- We will try to identify the sense of words
  - ➤ We use Wordnet (Fellbaum, 1998) as the sense inventory because it contains semantic relations as well as definitions and it is accessible: there are good interfaces to it
  - ➤ For every word we chose the most appropriate sense in wordnet or write a comment if we think there isn't one
  - Once we have identified a sense, it is then easy to look at synonyms and other closely related words
  - > We use the Czech wordnet (Pala and Smrž, 2004) for Czech
  - Both wordnets have been extended as part of the Natural Text Understanding Multilingual Corpus (ntu-mc)

### **WSD: Example**

Sherlock Holmes had been leaning back in his chair with his eyes closed and his head sunk in a cushion, but he half opened his <u>lids</u> now and glanced across at his visitor.

- 1. *hat, chapeau, lid* "headdress that protects the head from bad weather; has shaped crown and usually a brim"
- 2. *lid, eyelid, palpebra* "either of two folds of skin that can be moved to cover or open the eye"
- 3. *lid* "a movable top or cover (hinged or separate) for closing the opening at the top of a box, chest, jar, pan, etc."

# **WSD: A challenging task!**

### This is difficult for many reasons

- Meaning boundaries are not clear: the sense distinctions impose a structure on something that is actually fuzzy
- Dictionaries are imperfect
  - \* senses may be missing
  - \* senses may be too fine-grained
- Processing a text by computer is difficult
  - \* The computer may have misinterpreted
    - the part-of-speech
       Does that go "Female deer which go" "Is it the case that is goes?"
       The speckled band "the band that is speckled" "the band that someone speckled"
    - Or the sentence boundaries
    - Or the words boundaries
- People use language idiosyncratically
  - \* extending meanings metaphorically
  - \* sometimes so strangely that we might even say wrongly

### **WSD:** not impossible

- > Typically people agree around 72.5% of the time (Snyder and Palmer, 2004).
  - \* Verbs are hardest (67.8%), then nouns (74.9%) and adjectives (78.5%)
  - \* Disagreements tend to cluster around a relatively small group of difficult words.
  - \* For example *national* 
    - In six out of seven instances one annotator chose "limited to or in the interests of a particular nation" and the other annotator chose "concerned with or applicable to or belonging to an entire nation or country"
    - They are hard to distinguish!

# **Projects 1 and 2**

- 1 Identify and annotate word meaning for your own passage of one of the stories using wordnet as the sense inventory: 3 or 4 people do the same set of sentences.
  - For every word that needs to be tagged, either
    - \* Chose a sense in wordnet
    - \* Identify it as a named entity
    - Identify a problem in the corpus or wordnet and leave a comment saying what the it should be
  - ➤ Do this on your own the goal is to think about the words' meanings
- 2 Compare and contrast your annotations with other annotators; re-annotate based on your discussion and leave comments for at least five words.
  - > We expect you to disagree 30-40% of the time (more often than experts)
  - Sometimes you will have made a careless mistake
  - Sometimes you will have interpreted wordnet differently
  - Sometimes you will have interpreted the passage differently
  - Discussing meaning deepens your understanding of it

### **Conclusions**

- > We learned a little about word meaning, wordnet, close reading and your assignment
- > This is covered in more detail in Saeed (2015, Chapter 3)

# **Acknowledgments and References**

- Definitions from WordNet: http://wordnet.princeton.edu/
- Images from
  - > the Open Clip Art Library: http://openclipart.org/
  - Steven Bird, Ewan Klein, and Edward Loper (2009) Natural Language Processing with Python, O'Reilly Media www.nltk.org/book
- Video: Dead parrot sketch by Monty Python



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