

# Introduction to NLP

## Lexical Semantics<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thanks to Ann Copestake

# Outline of today's lecture

Lexical semantics: semantic relations

Polysemy

Word sense disambiguation

Grounding

# Lexical semantics

- ▶ Limited domain: mapping to some knowledge base term(s). Knowledge base constrains possible meanings.
- ▶ Issues for broad coverage systems:
  - ▶ Boundary between lexical meaning and world knowledge.
  - ▶ Representing lexical meaning.
  - ▶ Acquiring representations.
  - ▶ Polysemy and multiword expressions.

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But ...

- ▶ Ontological relationships: informal or formal (description logics): this lecture (informal approaches).
- ▶ Distributional approaches (word embeddings).

# Examples to think about

- ▶ tomato
- ▶ table
- ▶ thought
- ▶ democracy
- ▶ push
- ▶ sticky

# Hyponymy: IS-A

- ▶ (a sense of) *dog* is a **hyponym** of (a sense of) *animal*
- ▶ *animal* is a **hypernym** of *dog*
- ▶ hyponymy relationships form a **taxonomy**
- ▶ works best for concrete nouns

# Some issues concerning hyponymy

- ▶ not useful for all words: *thought*, *democracy*, *push*, *sticky*?
- ▶ individuation differences: is *table* a hyponym of *furniture*?
- ▶ multiple inheritance: e.g., is *coin* a hyponym of both *metal* and *money*?
- ▶ what does the top of the hierarchy look like?

# Other semantic relations

classical

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*

others

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

More at <https://globalwordnet.github.io/gwadoc/>

# WordNet

- ▶ large scale, open source resource for English
- ▶ hand-constructed
- ▶ wordnets being built for other languages
- ▶ organized into **synsets**: synonym sets (near-synonyms)
- ▶ Overview of `adj red` in `wn` command and Emacs Mode
- ▶ **boy**

# Hyponymy in WordNet

Sense 6

big cat, cat

=> leopard, *Panthera pardus*

=> leopardess

=> panther

=> snow leopard, ounce, *Panthera uncia*

=> jaguar, panther, *Panthera onca*,  
*Felis onca*

=> lion, king of beasts, *Panthera leo*

=> lioness

=> lionet

=> tiger, *Panthera tigris*

=> Bengal tiger

=> tigress



# Using hyponymy

- ▶ Semantic classification: e.g., for named entity recognition.  
e.g., **JJ Thomson Avenue** is a place.
- ▶ RTE style inference: **find/discover**
- ▶ Word sense disambiguation
- ▶ Query expansion in search

# Collocation

- ▶ two or more words that occur together more often than expected by chance (informal description — there are others)
- ▶ some collocations are **multiword expressions** (MWE), **green tea**
- ▶ non-MWEs: **heavy snow** or *young boy*?
- ▶ what about **geological fault**?

# Open Wordnet for Portuguese

- ▶ <http://openwordnet-pt.org/>
- ▶ coverage vs soundness
- ▶ can we find:
  - ▶ cargo – no sentido de posicao social,
  - ▶ pleito – no sentido de eleicao, nao de requisicao
  - ▶ posse – no sentido de dia da posse, cerimonia de inauguracao como deputado ou senador ou ministro
- ▶ glosstag corpus and its semantic representation
- ▶ corpus annotation

# Polysemy

- ▶ **homonymy**: unrelated word senses. *bank* (raised land) vs *bank* (financial institution)
- ▶ *bank* (financial institution) vs *bank* (in a casino): related but distinct senses.
- ▶ *bank* (N) (raised land) vs *bank* (V) (to create some raised land): **regular polysemy**. Compare *pile*, *heap* etc
- ▶ vagueness: *bank* (river vs snow vs cloud)? [see here](#)

No clearcut distinctions.  
Dictionaries are not consistent.

# Word sense disambiguation

Needed for many applications, problematic for large domains.  
Assumes that we have a standard set of word senses (e.g., WordNet)

- ▶ frequency: e.g., *diet*: the food sense (or senses) is much more frequent than the parliament sense (Diet of Wurms)
- ▶ collocations: e.g. *striped bass* (the fish) vs *bass guitar*: syntactically related or in a window of words (latter sometimes called 'cooccurrence'). Generally 'one sense per collocation'.
- ▶ selectional restrictions/preferences (e.g., *Kim eats bass*, must refer to fish)

# WSD techniques

- ▶ supervised learning: sense-tagged corpora are difficult to construct, algorithms need far more data than POS tagging. ([google](#), [datasets](#))
- ▶ unsupervised learning ([pywsd](#), [ukb](#))
- ▶ selectional preferences: don't work very well by themselves, useful in combination with other techniques

# Standalone WSD

Once a very common research topic, now less studied:

- ▶ Evaluation issues
- ▶ Lack of a good standard

# Grounding

- ▶ meaning isn't (just) about symbols: humans need to recognize and manipulate things in the world.
- ▶ 'grounding': relate symbols to the real world (often associated with Harnad, but other authors too).
- ▶ is grounding an essential part of meaning?
- ▶ preliminary/abstract discussion here



# Turing: 'Computing machinery and Intelligence'

- ▶ introduces what is usually called the 'Turing Test' to replace the question 'Can machines think?'
- ▶ Turing described 'The Imitation Game': a man (A), a woman (B) and an interrogator (C) who must decide whether X is A and Y is B or vice versa.
- ▶ questions put to both A and B: A is trying to persuade C to make a mistake, B is trying to help C.
- ▶ If we instead have A is machine, B is human, how often will C get the identification wrong (after 5 minutes)?

# Intelligence as ungrounded imitation?

- ▶ Turing described an abstract test (avoiding the complications of robotics, vision etc).
- ▶ But communication is central.
- ▶ Deception is key to the test: computer 'pretends' to be human.
- ▶ Sloman (e.g., p606–610 Cooper and van Leeuwen (eds), 2013) argues that Turing did NOT propose this as a test for intelligence.
- ▶ Searle 'Chinese Room': discussion of consciousness, criticism of Strong AI.

# Lexical meaning: what doesn't work

- ▶ meaning of **tomato** is tomato'?
- ▶ meaning postulates (lecture notes! What is a **chair**?)
- ▶ dictionary definition  
*tomato: mildly acid red or yellow pulpy fruit eaten as a vegetable*  
good dictionary definition allows reader with some familiarity with a concept to identify it

# Lexical meaning: unanswered questions

- ▶ how far does distributional semantics get us?
- ▶ grounding often claimed for systems combining vision and language: is this enough?
- ▶ are virtual worlds a possible basis for grounding?
- ▶ or do we really need robots?

More at

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/word-meaning/>