

# ENGL 306A



## Personal Notes

---

Marcus Chan

Taught by Randy Harris

UW CS '25



# Chapter 1: Cognitive Basis of Language

## NEUROCOGNITIVE AFFINITIES

💡 "Neurocognitive affinities" are patterns in language that we can recognize.

💡 Types:

① Identity:

② Resemblance / similarity (ie metaphors)

- comparing things to others because they are similar

③ Correlation (ie metonymy)

- when we associate 2 things because they happened together in time/space

- eg "the Kremlin invaded Ukraine"

④ Subsets (ie meronymy / synecdoche)

- "meronymy": subsets, wholes & parts;  
eg fingers are part of a hand

- "synecdoche": where a part is made to describe the whole or vice versa  
(eg "Toronto made it into the finals")

⑤ Opposition (ie antithesis)

- when something is used in place for another thing that contrasts it

- eg "that tall person is tiny"

⑥ Repetition (ie multiplicity)

- when something is repeated multiple times

- eg "Go, go, go!"

⑦ Sequence

- when we process things based on their order

- eg before/after, etc

## MODES OF MEANING

💡 We understand about the world through neurocognitive affinities, but communicate about them through modes of meaning.

💡 Types:

① "symbolicality": relation of convention

eg dog/pet/狗

② "indexicality": relation of association

- this can be causal or correlational  
eg the sound of dropping a book is associated with it hitting the floor

③ "iconicity": relation of resemblance

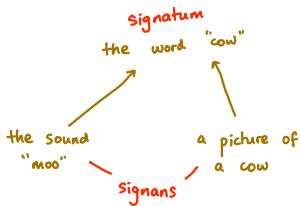
- we recognize things because they look/feel like other objects we are familiar with  
- eg we know everyone in class is a human

## SIGNS

Q "Signs" consist of two components:

- ① the "signans", which describe the physical/sensory component of the sign. & eg a sound/image
- ② the "signatum", which describes the concept or meaning the signans represent.

eg



Q<sub>2</sub> Types of signs / dimensions of meaning:

- ① "Indexicality": defined by causation/correlation

eg thought of a cow ~ recording of a cow mooing

- ② "Iconicity": defined by resemblance

eg thought of a cow ~ picture of a cow

- ③ "Symbolicity": defined by convention

eg thought of a cow ~ the word "cow" in English

## FIGURATION / TROPS

Q "Tropes" occur when something (the "source") carries the primary signification for something else (the "target") that ordinarily holds that signification.

Q<sub>2</sub> Types:

- ① Metaphors;
- ② Metonymy; &
- ③ Synecdoches.

## INDEXICALITY IN LANGUAGE

Q "Indexicality" occurs when one element of a set/relationship (the "source") is singled out to stand for other elements (the "target")

eg "the law is here", "Toronto wins at OT"

## ANALOGY IN LANGUAGE

Q "Analogies" occur when one element (the "source") represents another element (the "target") to which it is unrelated.

eg metaphors; ie "the sun is like an orange"

## POLYSEMY

Q "Polysemy" is when a word has multiple meanings.

eg "pussy" — sexual organ, cat, insult

## PHONAESTHemes

Q "Phonaesthemes" are units of sound that are thought to carry meaning, although there is no conventional basis for that meaning. eg "gl-" in glow, gleam, glistening connotes to "light/shine"

## STRUCTURAL PRINCIPLES IN LANGUAGE

Q All language is founded ultimately on "contiguity"; ie there must exist physical, temporal or conceptual relations between expressions & what they reference for a communicative code to exist.

Q<sub>2</sub> Thus, all language is symbolic in nature.

# INDEXICALITY

Recall indexicality is metonymic, as it is defined by correlation/causation.

## EGOCENTRICISM / ME-CENTRICISM

① "Egocentrism" refers to the tendency to use language to communicate one's own thoughts, feelings & experiences.

② This is achieved via "deixis" (pointing words), which point to specific individuals, objects & locations.

eg "this dog, that house"

③ We can use "proximals": ie

① Speaking location:

eg here, there, near, etc

② Speaking time; &

eg now, today, then, etc

③ Relative location to the speaker.

eg this, that, etc

④ We can also use "pronouns":

① ego = 1<sup>st</sup> person

② ego + others = 1<sup>st</sup> person plural

③ hearer of ego = 2<sup>nd</sup> person

④ hearer of ego + others = 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural

⑤ not ego or hearer of ego = 3<sup>rd</sup> person

⑥ not ego or hearer of ego + others =

3<sup>rd</sup> person plural

## ANTHROPOCENTRISM / HUMAN-CENTRISM

① "Anthropocentrism" refers to using language to name objects according to their relation to us; ie we project ourselves onto objects.

eg front/back of a car, since that is how we use cars

# ICONICITY

Recall iconicity is "metaphorical", as it is defined by similarity & resemblance.

## QUANTITY

"Quantity" refers to when the amount of language resembles the amount of events/concepts.

eg - "dinosaurs lived a long, long, long time ago"

- plurals are longer than singulars

## SEQUENTIAL ORDER

"Sequential order" refers to when the order of language resembles the order of events/concepts.

In particular, the order of words/sentences usually mirrors the order of events.

eg "don't drink and drive", "stop, drop & roll"

## DISTANCE

"Distance" refers to when the closeness of linguistic elements resembles the closeness of events/concepts.

eg "greenhouse" vs "green house",

"wetsuit" vs "wet suit"

## CONSTRUCTIONS

① "Constructions" are patterns/templates that are used to build larger units of language, like phrases or sentences.  
ie the building blocks of language

② Examples:

- ① Fossilized expressions;  
eg now and then, kick the bucket
- ② Partially-filled fossilized expressions;  
eg jog X's memory
- ③ Abstract syntactic patterns;  
eg NPVP (active), NP be V by NP (passive)
- ④ Words:
- ⑤ Morphemes;  
eg pre-, -er, -ed, etc
- ⑥ Phonemes, syllables & features;  
eg /p/, /b/, higher/lower voice

## ANALOGIC FRAMES / CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS

① "Analogic frames" are cognitive structures that allow us to understand complex or abstract concepts by mapping them onto concrete & familiar experiences.

eg "time is money", "she shot me down",  
"he attacked my point", etc

## CORRELATIONAL FRAMES / CONCEPTUAL METONYMY

① "Correlational frames" are cognitive structures that allow us to understand complex or abstract concepts by replacing them with related/associated concepts.

② Examples:

- ① Producer for product;  
eg "I only read Dr. Seuss"
- ② Container for contained;  
eg "that's a tasty dish"
- ③ Person for instrument;  
eg "I'm parked out back"
- ④ Place for institution;  
eg "Ottawa sent my rebate"

# Chapter 2: Words

## WORDS

Q<sub>1</sub> A "word" is the smallest unit of language that can be uttered in a context with objective or practical meaning.

Q<sub>2</sub> Note that words are arbitrary.

## LEXICALIZATION

Q "Lexicalization" is the process of turning a concept/idea into a word or set of words.

eg the ringing of a phone → "ring"

## WHERE WORDS COME FROM

Q Words can come from

① the imagination; or

eg hobbit, googol, quark, etc

② the world.

eg bang, crackle, spark

Q They can also come from other words; these can be distinguished via the following:

① "structural" (ie permutations of form)

- ie when a word comes from borrowing other words, combining words, or reducing words

② "onomasiological" (ie permutations of meaning)

- eg metaphors

## SIMPLE VS COMPLEX WORDS

Q "Simple words" are those with only one morpheme.

eg "Fred", "sane", "disc"

Q "Complex words" are those with ≥ 2 morphemes.

eg "quicker", "blackbird"

## SEMASILOGY VS ONOMASIOLOGY

Q "Semasiology" is concerned with the question "what does the word X mean?"

Q "Onomasiology" is concerned with the question "how do you express X?"

# SEMASIOLOGY

## POLYSEMY

① "Polysemy" refers to when a single word has multiple meanings.

Types:

- ① Specialization - correlates with narrower sense
- ② Generalization - correlates with wider sense
- ③ Metaphorization - correlates with resemblance
- ④ Metonymization - correlates with correlation/contiguity

## HOMONYMY

② "Homonymy" refers to when two or more words have the same form (spelling and/or pronunciation) but different meanings.

eg bank (of water) vs. bank (the financial institution)

## DERIVING WORDS FROM OTHERS

③ Words can be formed from others in several ways:

- ① "Metaphorical" - a new signatum from comparison  
eg broadcast (to cast out seeds → to send out a signal)  
mouse (rodent → computer device)
- ② "Metonymical" - a new signatum from physical/conceptual association  
eg horn (animal projection → instrument)
- ③ "Specialization" - narrowing of signatum  
eg pill (small unit of medication → birth control)  
school (learning institution → K-12)
- ④ "Generalization" - broadening of signatum  
eg - ship (send by boat → send by any means)  
- school (learning institution → an intellectual/creative group)

## WORD CLASSES

② Types:

- ① "Content words": carry the semantic burden & are less important syntactically
  - nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
- ② "Function words": carry the syntactic work, are relatively light semantically
  - prepositions, particles, qualifiers, determiners, etc.

## WORD CLASS DIAGNOSTICS

② Types:

- ① "Semantics": the type of signata the category invokes;
- ② "Morphological": the shape the signata possess; &
- ③ "Syntactic": the other words the class occurs with & the order in which they do.

## ENGLISH NOUNS

② Semantic: a person/place/thing.

② Morphological: takes plural & possessive abilities.

eg dogs, dog's

③ Syntactic: follows articles & adjectives.  
eg the green dog, a dog

## ENGLISH ADJECTIVES

② Semantic: a quality attribute/property.

② Morphological: takes comparative/superlative suffixes.

eg quickly, quickest

③ Syntactic: precedes nouns, follows degree words  
eg the very big boy

## ENGLISH VERBS

② Semantic: action or state.

② Morphological: takes 4 suffixes:

- ① past tense;  
eg nodded
- ② third person singular present;  
eg nods
- ③ past participle; &  
eg has nodded, had nodded
- ④ present participle.  
eg is nodding, was nodding.

③ Syntactic: can follow an auxiliary verb.

eg he can nod his head.

## ENGLISH ADVERBS

- 1 **Semantic:** modifies an action/state.
- 2 **Morphological:** none (although many end in -ly)
- 3 **Syntactic:** follows a verb  
eg he nods vigorously

## ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS

- 1 **Semantic:** establishes spatial locations, relations or directions.  
eg at, in, on, by, etc

## ONOMASIOLOGY

### SYNONYMY

- 1 "Synonymy" occurs when the signantia are different, but the signatum is the same.
  - neurocognitive affinity: resemblance/similarity
  - eg dog, doggo, doge, etc

### PLESIONYMY

- 1 "Plesionymy" occurs when the signantia are different, & the signata are similar but not the same.
  - neurocognitive affinity: resemblance/similarity
  - eg the n word, the p word

### ANTONYMY

- 1 "Antonymy" occurs when the signantia are different & the signata are opposite.
  - neurocognitive affinity: resemblance/similarity
  - eg black/white, up/down, etc

### MERONYMY

- 1 "Meronymy" occurs when the signantia are different & the signata are in a super/subset relation.
  - superset = hypernym, subset = hyponym
  - neurocognitive affinity: meronymy
  - eg for dog: hound, terrier

# WHERE WORDS COME FROM - STRUCTURAL PROCESSES

- Q: Words can arise from structural processes:
- ① Borrowing other words;
  - ② Combining other words/phrases; &  
eg through "blends"; eg smoke + fog → smog
  - ③ Reducing words.

## BORROWING

- Q: "Borrowing" occurs when the form inevitably changes (to accommodate the borrowing languages phonology), & the meaning also shifts in various ways.  
eg skunk, chocolate, etc

## COMPOUNDS

- Q: "Compounds" are words that consist of two words combined together.  
eg airplane, fire engine, etc
- Q: Types of combinations:
  - ① the words are glued together;
  - ② the words are hyphenated; or
  - ③ the words are just stressed.

## CLIPPING

- Q: "Clipping" occurs when words are shortened/spliced before being combined.  
eg professor → prof., hamburger, etc.
- Q: This is often jargon, which increases efficiency.

## ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

- Q: "Acronyms/abbreviations" are examples of combining & reducing.  
eg radar, scuba, etc;  
CBC, USA, etc
- Q: Note that with clipping, the linkages are more apparent, & so the original meaning is more easily recoverable by outsiders; but with jargon & acronyms, often secret information is needed.
- Q: Thus, jargon is more exclusive than clipping.

## CONVERSION (DOUBLE-DIPPING)

- Q: "Double-dipping" occurs when a word/phrase is borrowed from one language into another, and then re-borrowed back into the original language.  
The word usually also changes form or meaning.  
eg café, sushi, fiancé/fiancée, etc

# Chapter 3: Morphology

## INTRODUCTION

Q1 "Morphology" is the study of morphemes, which are the smallest units of language.

Q2 In particular, a morpheme is the smallest pairing of signans & a signatum.

## TYPES OF MORPHEMES

Q3 Types:

① Free morpheme: can stand alone as a word  
eg write, dog, cat

② Bound morpheme: cannot stand alone as a word.  
- "affixes" are a type of this  
- split into prefixes, suffixes, infixes & circumfixes  
- eg -er, -ez, pre-, etc.

Q4 Types of bound morphemes:

① Inflectional morphemes: added to a word to indicate grammatical information without significantly changing the meaning.  
- eg -s, -ed, -er, -est

② Derivational morphemes: added to a word to create a new word with a different meaning/category.

- eg -un, dis-, re-, -able, -ly  
- eg un-break-able, dis-associate, re-try

\* we often use the notation {x} or {x-y} to denote suffixes & prefixes.

## MORPHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIONS

Q1 "Morphological constructions" are patterns or structures that are formed by combining morphemes to create complex words.

Q2 We use the following syntax for our "building block":

[morpheme] word class

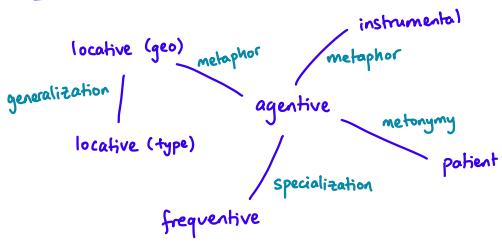
Q3 We can then combine these together.

eg [ [x] adj i ]\_N → "the property of x"  
[ [x] adj ness ]\_N → "the state of x"  
[ [x] adj dom ]\_N → "the domain of x"

Q4 Note morphemes may have different effects on the same or different base word.

eg {-er?} →  
agentive  
eg farmer, writer, etc  
locative (geographic)  
eg Londoner, etc  
locative (type)  
eg foreigner, villager, etc  
instrumental  
eg printer, toaster, etc  
patient  
eg page-turner, reader, etc  
frequentive  
eg chatter, mutter, etc  
other/misc  
eg triple-decker, parker, etc

As a radial network:



(paste diagram here from slides)

## ANTIMETABOLES

Q1 "Antimetaboles" involve repeating words/phrases in reverse order or in a mirrored pattern.

eg - all for one, one for all

- ask what you can do for your country, not what your country can do for you

Q2 This includes the "A out of B, not B out of A" construction.

(copy diagram from slides)

## "PRODUCTIVITY"

Q1 "Morphemes" often imply the underlying theme behind words.

eg petro-  $\Rightarrow$  petrol related

## ROOTS VS STEMS

Q1 "Roots" are the base elements of a word, that are usually irreducible units.

Q2 "Stems" are formed by combining a root with other morphemes (eg affixes/suffixes), and can serve as the base for successive word formation.

## PARISON

Q1 "Parison" refers to repeating a grammatical structure/pattern in successive clauses/sentences for effect.

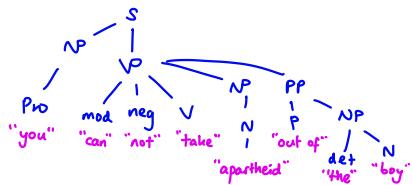
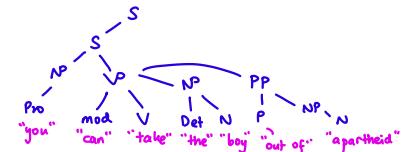
## SYNTAX TREES

Q1 "Syntax trees" are graphical representations used to analyze structure of words/phrases in a sentence.

Q2 We can explore parison via a syntax tree.

eg [take [the boy]NP [out of [apartheid]NP]PP]VP]

As a tree:



## FIGURATIVE DIMENSIONS

Q1 "Figurative dimensions" refer to aspects of meaning that go beyond literal/straightforward interpretation.

eg with antimetaboles, we exploit multiplicity, identity & sequence.

Q2 This helps increase productivity & memorability of sentences.