

# Lexical Semantics

## Assignment 1

Prerna Nadathur

October 15, 2019

**Due by:** 2pm on October 22, 2019.

You can submit your assignment by email to `prerna.nadathur@phil.hhu.de`, hand it in in class next week, or turn in a paper copy to the Lexical Semantics box in the Linguistics department office (24.53.00.86). Let me know in advance if you will need to complete assignments in German.

### Reminders:

- Typed assignments are strongly preferred, unless you have very neat handwriting
- You may work with one another or consult additional resources in completing the assignment, but remember to cite your sources, and to write up your answers alone.
- You will NOT be penalised for mistakes related to English grammar
- You may ask questions about the homework in class on October 22. You can also email me, or request a time for office hours.

To get credit for this assignment, you must attempt to answer both questions.

### Question 1: Senses or facets?

The English word *magazine* (*Magazin*, *Zeitschrift*) can refer to (a) a physical object, (b) its informational content (text), or (c) an institution or entity:

- (1) a. I left the magazine on the plane. [PHYSICAL OBJECT]  
b. This magazine has an interesting article on proposed new housing in San Francisco. [CONTENT]  
c. Last month the magazine was sued by an angry former employee. [INSTITUTION]
- (a) Show that these three notions of *magazine* are **discrete** (distinct or different). Give two pieces of evidence for the discreteness of each notion, and explain the relevance of your examples/evidence.

- (b) Do these three notions (PHYSICAL OBJECT, CONTENT, INSTITUTION) constitute three distinct **facets** of a single **sense** of *magazine*? Give some evidence for your answer. If you answer “no”, then discuss whether the three notions constitute three independent senses, or whether two of the three notions are facets of a single sense, with the third notion representing a distinct sense. Support your claims with additional evidence.

## Question 2: Polysemous adjectives?

Do you think that the uses of adjectives *long* and *short* in (2) represent distinct senses of each of these adjectives or a single sense?

- (2)   a. This class is long/short.  
      b. This dress is long/short.

Give arguments and evidence (examples) in support of your answer. You may focus on just one of the adjectives.

To argue that a word is polysemous, you need to:

- i. show that the two (or more) senses you identify are discrete
- ii. show that the senses cannot be identified as two facets of a single sense.

Note that, since the reading and class discussion focused on nouns, you might have to think a little about how to adapt or modify the diagnostics. You can also argue for different diagnostics, or look at other readings for some ideas (but remember to identify your sources). Your answer should explain the relevance of any evidence or new diagnostics you use.