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On Some Problems of Meaning – Polysemy Between Sense Enumeration and Core Meaning Paradigms

Abstract   *Polysemy is a semantic phenomenon which occurs when one lexical item has more meanings which can be seen as related to each other. It is to be distinguished from the other extreme pole of ambiguity, homonymy, which occurs when two or more unrelated meanings are by means of an etymological accident tied to the same orthographic and/or phonological form. Even though polysemy can be considered as a non-issue, since discourse easily solves all of the problems of possible ambiguity for use in everyday language use, accounting for it (in an systematic manner) in terms of how polysemy is represented in the mental lexicon and how to account for the criteria governing the meaning distinctions and the interaction of meanings, for example, is a challenge still not fully met. The paper first gives an overview of the existing theoretical accounts of polysemy which arose over the course of the last two centuries to meet one of the said challenges, namely how polysemy is represented in our minds. The discussion is followed up by a conclusion of the predominant and most plausible theoretical view on multiple meanings stemming from the presented philosophical, semantic, and cognitive frameworks and models.*

Keywords: *polysemy, ambiguity, cognition, language philosophy, semantics, prototypically, cognitive semantics, neostructuralism, generative semantics, lexical pragmatics*

1. Introduction

Polysemy is perhaps the most elusive semantic issue to account for and the following discussion seeks to outline, define it, and to place it within the acceptable theoretical framework of meaning. The task is made especially difficult by the fact that suggestions of how to deal with its unpredictable linguistic behavior vary from one theory to the other and even from one individual author to the next and have not yet come to a conclusion all agree upon. The first insight into the nature of polysemy, as is the case with most semantic issues, can be traced back to in Ancient Greece:

> *[...] all these terms we have selected are elements in the definable form; and nothing lacking, since any omission would have to be a genus or a differentia. [...] We must start by observing a set of similar-i.e. specifically identical-individuals, and consider what element they have in common. We must then apply the same process to another set of individuals which belong to one species and are generically but not specifically identical with the former set. When we have established what*

the common element is in all members of this second species, and likewise in members of further species, we should again consider whether the results established possess any identity, and persevere until we reach a single formula, since this will be the definition of the thing. But if we reach not one formula but two or more, evidently the definiendum cannot be one thing but must be more than one. Besides, every definition is always universal and commensurate: the physician does not prescribe what is healthy for a single eye, but for all eyes or for a determinate species of eye. It is also easier by this method to define the single species than the universal, and that is why our procedure should be from the several species to the universal genera-this for the further reason too that equivocation is less readily detected in genera than in infimae species. [...]
<div align="right">Aristotle (Posterior Analytics, II.13, XXX)</div>

Aristotle notes here that words can have more meanings and that such meanings have certain rules of denotation and reference, as well as a system of their appropriate distinction and description. Though this declaration can be considered as stating the obvious, the fact is, as is the case with most things we take for granted (such as breathing or standing upright), that accounting for multiplicity of meaning is not simple in either a theoretical or practical way.

This problem of multiple meanings was further pursued by other philosophers over the centuries and one of the most telling discussions can be seen in John Locke's *Defining Knowledge* (1975 [1689]) where he discusses the linking word *but* (Falkum 2011:11). The same word, or rather the critique of Locke's analysis of it, appeared in Gottfried Leibniz's *New Essays on Human Understanding* (1996 [1765]). Locke claimed that the lexeme *but* can be associated with different meanings and asserted that some of them seem wildly unrelated (consider the differences between e.g. 'on the contrary', 'except, save', and 'unless', to name only a few). Leibniz directly disagreed with Locke's assertions and taking a completely opposite stand argued that instead we should try boil down all of the uses of a lexeme (in this case *but*) to "a determinate number of significations" (Leibniz 1996 [1765]: III) and then offer up an all-encompassing paraphrase which would cover its entire semantic paradigm. Both of the standpoints expressed by the two philosophers are very significant as they worded what is, in the more contemporary discussion of polysemy[1], a major issue to date: the question should polysemy be seen as only a case of one very abstract and general meaning which is instantiated through specific communicative situations as various more specific but closely related extensions (Geeraerts

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1   Though multiplicity of meaning was yet not termed so, the actual term *polysemy* being coined by Bréal (1897) at the turn of the century.

1993). The discussion basically revolves around the issue of opposing views on organization of meaning. On the one hand there is the sense enumeration lexicon model of polysemy, which presupposes that a polysemous lexeme consists of different listed and stored meanings (the way words are usually presented in dictionaries). On the other hand we have the structure of the core meaning model which sees polysemous lexemes as being defined and driven by a one maximally general meaning which is constant and present in all of it extensions (illustrated here in Figure 1 below).
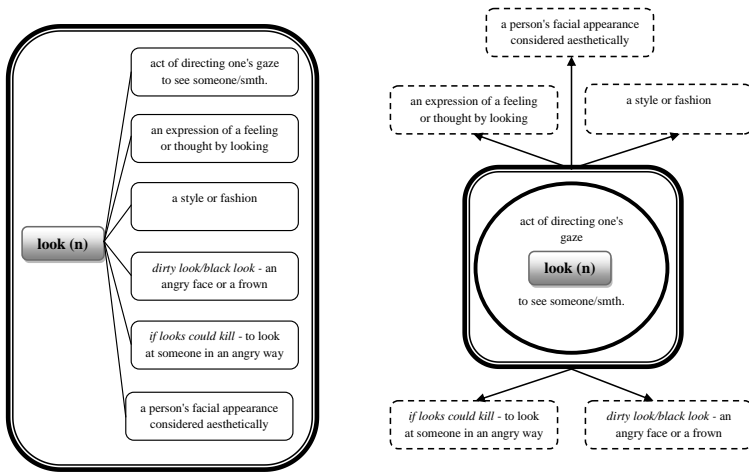
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Figure 1. A rough example of the two different representations of polysemy – sense enumeration lexicon (on the left) and the core meaning representation (on the right).

This original problem of the representational structure of polysemy carried over to more linguistic (semantic and cognitive) considerations – namely whether word meanings should be observed as all either stored and listed in the form of a mental dictionary, as proposed by the sense enumeration idea, or as contextually derived from one very general sense, as seen by the core meaning approaches. Different linguistic frameworks proposed their collective observations on this problem and each view has had consequences not only on our understanding of polysemy but on our understanding of what lexical meaning is as well.

2. Structuralist representation of polysemy

The general view of the structuralist paradigm is that a complex structure of formal and definable semantic representations must be invoked in order to capture the complexities of the relations between the senses

within a polysemous lexical item, as structuralism feels is necessary for meanings in general. The basis of the entire approach to structurally defining meanings basically stems in its original form from the definitional practice (originally outlined by Aristotle in *Posterior Analytics*) which revolves around a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for a lexical item to be seen as denoting an object in the 'real world' – for example a set of semantic primitives such as FOR SITTING, SEVERAL LEGS, BACK REST being conditions representing the denotate *chair*. This sort of an intuitive approach can be interpreted further in light of polysemy in two ways and we can start by first adopting the core meaning of one single general and abstract meaning from which all other meanings are seen as contextually derived (Ruhl 1989). One major problem that arises immediately is that is practically impossible to provide minimally sufficient definitions which can cover all of the remote senses of certain (very polysemous) lexemes. Consider the following examples:

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> [Example 1] Marina's *look* was scrutinizing him.
> [Example 2] Marina's *look* was very fashionable.
> [Example 3] Marina's *looks* were admired by everyone.
> [Example 4] Marina had a *look* of utter amazement.
> [Example 5] Marina gave him an angry *look*.

It would be quite difficult to come up with a minimally specific definition which would encompass the senses of 'directing an appraising gaze' in [Example 1], 'fashion or style' in [Example 2], 'physical appearance' in [Example 3], and 'expressing a feeling or thought' in [Example 5], for example. That is why the more common interpretation within all formalist decompositional approaches was to see polysemy through the sense enumeration lexicon model (imagining each meaning of a polysemous word as separately stored and associated with its own set of necessary and sufficient conditions).

The first application of such an enumerative perspective of meaning coupled with a strong formalist modeling of polysemy can be traced to generativist semantics and to Katz and Fodor (1963) and Katz (1972). They introduced two crucial semantic regulatory features in the early generativist account of lexical meaning – *markers* and *distinguishers* – functioning under the direction of *projection rules*. The given features were meant to represent the speaker's ability to decode sentential meanings on the basis of individual lexical meanings. *Markers* represent the semantic part of meaning (*bow* (noun) includes as a feature +PHYSICAL OBJECT as opposed to *bow* (verb) including –PHYSICAL OBJECT), and,

when applied to lexical ambiguity, are used to differentiate between homonymy and polysemy on the basis of semantic similarity expressed by the markers the given meanings have in common (Geeraerts 2010:102–103). However, the model did not function well because the *markers* cannot be seen as distinctive enough – for example, if we consider *bow* again and the two noun homographs it can be represented as: *bow* meaning 'flexible strip of wood, bent by a string, for shooting arrows' and meaning 'the forward end of a vessel or airship', we can see that both can share quite a number of *markers* such as for example +PHYSICAL OBJECT, +MADE OF WOOD, +BENT, +FLEXIBLE etc. Nonetheless Katz and Fodor's (1963) model incited a lot of debate and opened the door for further formalist research, as well as, ultimately, for the emergence of a more cognitive and yet still very much formalist view of meaning. The first descendant group of formalist approaches is includes some of the more prominent neo-compositional[2] methods: Wierzbicka's *Natural Semantic Metalanguage*, Jackendoff's *Conceptual Semantics*, Bierwisch's *Two-Level Semantics*, and Pustejovsky's *Generative Lexicon*.

First considering Wierzbicka's definitions of senses incorporated into her sense enumeration model, the most widely discussed example is perhaps her outline of the conceptually fuzzy category of *fruit* (1985:229). As Geeraerts (1993:240–241) points out, almost every step in the proposed definitional process fails the test of generality – for example the NSM-proposed necessary and sufficient condition of 'they have skin harder than the parts inside' for something being 'fruit' is easily toppled by the example of a *strawberry* (which has skin as soft as the insides) or 'they have a lot of juice' by the example of a *banana* (which does not). Clearly meanings cannot be stored in our lexicon in such a manner as handling the insufficiencies of the conditions that are supposed to drive them would be impractical in language use and in language description.

Jackendoff's neostructuralist approach to the sense enumeration lexicon modeling of polysemy has also been rejected as fully encompassing on similar grounds as Wierzbicka's. Perceptual 3D information that structures the window of the given conceptual structure within conceptual semantic reasoning fail to account for all of the extralinguistic information contained within that conceptual window and clearly used in production

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2   The term 'neostructuralist' was coined by Geeraerts (2010) and adopted here because it quite well describes the approaches encompassed by it – they are structuralist in a traditional sense but also bring novel aspects to their theoretical considerations. All other names of theoretical approaches are also broadly based on Geeraerts (2010).

and disambiguation of meaning. For instance, Geeraerts (2010:140) gives the example of Jackendoff's (1990:33–34) definition of *go*:

> [Example 6] Jackendoff's (1990) definition of *go*.
> [event]→[event go ([thing], [path])]
> [event]→[event stay ([thing], [place])]
> [event]→[event cause ([thing], [event])]

The argument is that for verbs such as *run* and *jog*, apart from the given conceptual features which are also shared with, for instance, *go*, *trot*, *walk* or *plod*, one also has to use 3D perceptual knowledge to disambiguate, recreating from experience the speed and the manner of the movement, for example. Since their conceptual representations are the same (or similar enough) only perceptual knowledge can account for the fuzziness of *go* and other movement verbs listed here. However, the objection is that a lot of the information contained within *jog*, for instance, cannot be deduced from just additional perceptual information alone: the image of a jogger (within Western society at least) is usually of someone belonging to the middle or upper class, jogging involves something done in leisure time for physical fitness, it also usually brings to mind certain clothes and equipment, certain place where it is usually done (a park perhaps), and similar information (Geeraerts 2010:140). None of these information are accessible from the conceptual and perceptual windows defined thus by Conceptual Semantics. This decompositional approach also fails to satisfy the issues of generality, since a conceptual feature such as +LONG NECK referring to a duck, for instance, cannot be seen as primitive and general enough since it might exclude certain unrepresentative members of a category, such as a duck with a short neck perhaps (Geeraerts 2010:141).

The *Zwei-Ebenen Semantik* (Bierwisch 1987) is a modular neostructuralist theory which observes that the linguistic system in itself is composed of distinct autonomous modules – morphology, phonology, syntax, semantics, and the lexicon. It also models polysemy within its own version of the sense enumeration approach, imagining the lexicon as including and determining a given lexical item by its phonological, morphosyntactic, and semantic features (Pethö 1999:19–21). According to this theory polysemy is basically seen as underspecification on both semantic and conceptual levels resulting in the disambiguation process which starts with a logical form which is extracted from the semantic information of the constituent lexical items (Pethö 1999:22). The logical form is then connected to the conceptual level of representation which tries to

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interpret the meanings by looking at a semi-determined family of concepts, being aided in that process by the extralinguistic context. This process of conceptual specification however fails to provide clear criteria of how appropriate readings are chosen both from the lexicon and from the conceptual system by the context.

One more notable sense enumeration neostructuralist methodology which actually stems from a close connection to computational linguistics is James Pustejovsky's (1998) *Generative Lexicon* which tries to modify the stored meanings conception of polysemy. The modification is to be found in a rich semantic structure constructed for each lexical entry. Out of several such rich semantic structures introduced within the approach semantically most relevant and unusual (due to the type of extralinguistic information propose as being part of the lexicon) is the *qualia structure* and the roles within it:

- the *constitutive role* provides information on what the denotate is made of, including any important parts of it – a *bicycle* is made of metal, has two wheels, etc.;

- the *formal role* distinguishes the denotate out of a larger domain – a *bicycle* is a vehicle, a means of transport;

- the *telic role* provides the denotate's function or purpose – a *bicycle* is used for transportation; and

- the *agentive role* outlines how was the denotate constructed or came into existence – a *bicycle* was constructed, made (Pustejovsky 1998).

The major issue with this approach is that the categories within the rich semantic structures are rather vague and very interpretative (lacking in solid criteria on how to select them) – for example, a *bicycle* can also be made of plastic or gold (*constitutive role*), and can also be used for exercise at home as well (*formal role*).

Casting a glance once more the formalist (atomistic) approaches to accounting for polysemy, several failures can be summarized. The first major drawback in the general view of polysemy which the given theoretical framework shows is in seeing meanings as all listed in an exclusively enumerative fashion (which is one of the major prerequisites of formalist models). This in fact is not a practically feasible option as we saw – first, it puts too much strain on the mental lexicon (being that meaning extensions of one lexeme can be seen as contextually infinite); and second, it reduces polysemy to pure accidental semantic arbitrariness

with apparently no links between the multiple senses tied to one lexeme. As we saw, various attempts to deal with this problem in a decompositional manner did not manage to arrive at a full account of polysemy. Among the insufficiencies the combined decompositional approaches display is the lack of any possibility to properly define lexical concepts, using any kind of proposed primitive semantic (necessary and sufficient) building-blocks. One more problem is here the inability of definitions to encompass the vagueness and the typicality effects of lexical concepts, thus failing to achieve general definitional adequacy in total. More flexible frameworks needed to emerge – those of cognitive semantics and lexical pragmatics (Falkum 2011).

3. Cognitive representation of polysemy

Cognitive semantics is a theoretical approach that tries to make peace between various extreme linguistic theories and semantic tenets (such as encyclopedic vs. linguistic knowledge, conceptual vs. lexical, etc.), and it does so in the case of polysemy as well (Dobrić 2010; Dobrić 2011). The approach takes what is the theoretical and practical middle ground and sees, in its later cutting-edge model, some senses as stored while others are understood as produced by the context and derived from other senses (Tyler and Evans 2003)[3]. It makes such an assumption by proposing a radically different view of word meaning than the decompositional approaches and is based in essence on the attested typicality effects (Evans and Green 2006:342–352). Prototype theory in cognitive sciences sees categories of knowledge organized around a prototypical representative of the given category, with members closer or further away from that center and a fuzzy border which in fact overlaps with other categories. Figure 2 gives us a simplified overview of the idea.

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This model of cognition can successfully be superimposed onto lexical concepts. By doing so the cognitive semantic paradigm denounces the long standing need (stemming in essence, as we saw, from Aristotle) for sufficient and necessary conditions in the procedure of meaning demarcation and makes a clear break with attempts at formalization of meaning. The early cognitive model of prototypicality in polysemy suggested that meanings of a polysemous lexical item are organized around a semantic prototype with meanings closer to it being more prototypical than the peripheral ones (Fillmore 1982) mimicking thus the proposed

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3   Though the early model actually represented a cognitive-based version of the sense enumeration lexicon (see for instance Lakoff (1987)).
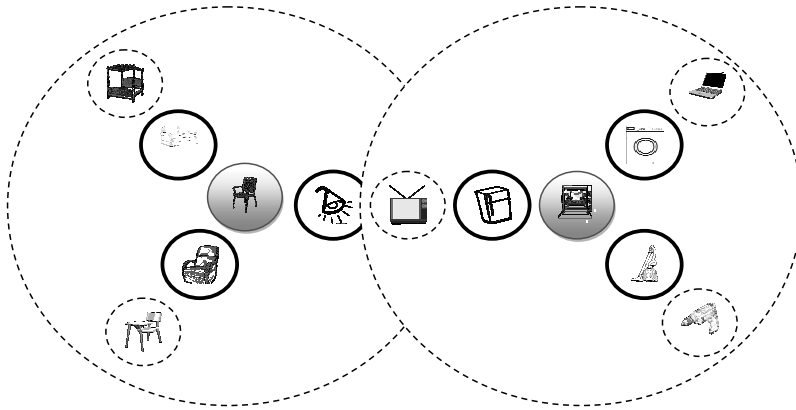
Figure 2. An example of overlapping categories of FURNITURE and APPLIANCES with the prototypes in the centers and fuzzy members at peripheries.

conceptual organization of our minds. One of the hurdles that this early model could not overcome was that it was unable to account for complex concepts – for example, a *budgerigar* can be considered a prototypical PET BIRD, but not a prototypical BIRD (being perhaps a *sparrow*) nor a prototypical PET (a *cat* or a *dog* sufficing in this case) (Fodor 1998:174). Another big theoretical insufficiency was the fact that many concepts lack a clearly attestable prototype, such as KNOWLEDGE or BELIEF. Furthermore, the fact is that people understand lexical concepts and their polysemous extensions without having to rely on prototypicality information, as, for instance, we can see with the example of the various meanings the abstract noun *knowledge* may have, all of which are easily disambiguated by as without having a clear idea of what a prototype of the category KNOWLEDGE would be.

The first alteration to this prototype model came from Lakoff (1987) and his claim that the real application of the family resemblance effects and prototypicality should be sought in the existence of more comprehensive and more complex patterns of general knowledge found in *idealized cognitive models* (ICMs). An ICM is a relatively well-entrenched system of experiences and knowledge that arises from them having to refer to a particular concept. There is no hierarchical gradation within the ICM and it is encyclopedic knowledge that highlights denotates as being more or less typical instances of a given category. Additional factors producing typicality effects are *cluster concepts* (Lakoff 1987:74) which are formed out of various different ICMs and the features that represent them, presence and absence of which characterizes one denotate as being closer to or

further from the totality of all ICMs in the cluster (Figure 3). This model of knowledge representation actually gave rise to the more contemporary cognitive semantic view of polysemy, though analyzed and presented in a myriad of variations and improvements – that of a *radial category* (Brugman 1988; Brugman and Lakoff 1988).
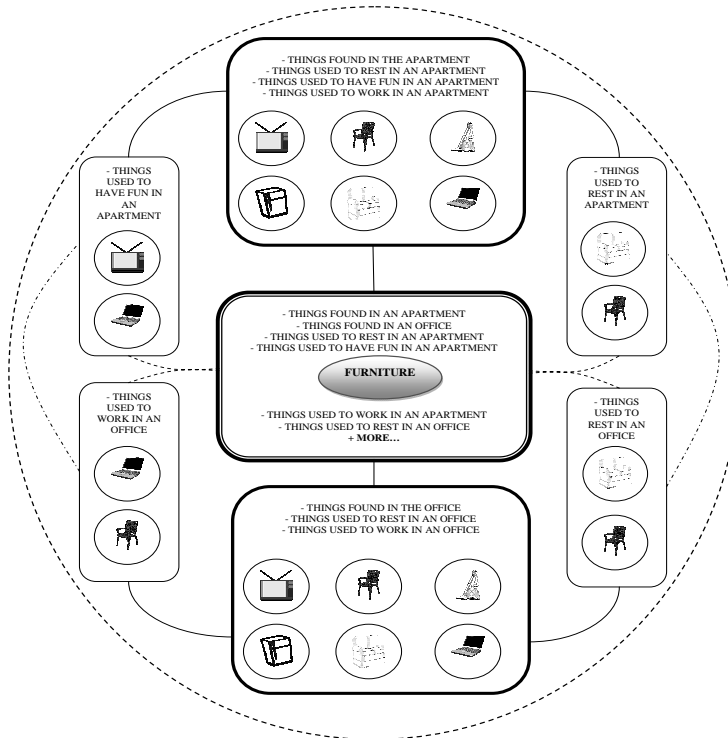
Figure 3. A simplified example of an ICM cluster of the concept FURNITURE.

Radial categories involve a central cluster concept which is combined with a number of extensions all representing certain variants of the given central ICM cluster. In this way lexical concepts could be seen as truly mirroring the conceptual organization of the mind and all word meanings are then to be understood as organized according to a prototypical central sense. Consider the following examples of the verb *look* as an illustration of radial categories in lexical meaning:

> [Example 7] Filip *looked* at the page.
> [Example 8] Filip *was looking* for the page.
> [Example 9] Filip *was looking* through the book.

[Example 10] Filip *looked* after his little sister.
[Example 11] Filip *looked* the stranger up and down.

The idea is that all of these different senses can be seen as stemming from one prototypical sense (Figure 4) – assuming here for the sake of the example the sense 'direct your gaze towards someone or something or in a specified direction' seen in [Example 7] as the central reading – and all exhibiting different degrees of typicality, all together creating a meaning chain of attribute-related senses (Lakoff and Brugman 1988). Less prototypical senses are derived from more prototypical ones through various mechanisms of meaning extensions (such as metaphorization and metonymization), leaving some marginally connected senses to have quite different and at first glance entirely unrelated meanings – for instance, the sense 'evaluate someone carefully' seen in [Example 11] can be interpreted as a conceptual metaphor OBSERVING IS JUDGING embodying an extension of the physical act of observing realized in the assumed prototypical instance in [Example 7]. The problem with the methodology at this stage was still assumed that all of the meanings are stored in the mental lexicon. This has been criticized as unfeasible because it would entail an endless mental storage capacity of different senses in order to cover the full range of possible lexical concepts, which could be assumed as virtually unlimited through novel meanings.

Another big problem of the model presented like this lies in the absence of any criteria that can be used to discern one meaning from another, apart from subjective intuition. Having in mind all the given inconsistencies, there were several lines of improvements of the original ICM-based sense-enumeration radial model put in place.

The first thing to be modified in the ICM and radial category approach was to soften its perspective on the extent of senses understood as stored in the mental lexicon. Such a softened approach, as seen for example in the *principled polysemy* model (Tyler and Evans 2001), involves seeing two types of senses in order to avoid problems of the polysemy fallacy: as previously stated, there are the senses entrenched and stored in the lexicon and there are the ones pragmatically derived by context. The main perspective of the cognitive framework is particularly important because of its mediatory view on the representational issue in polysemy – some are readings of a lexeme which are allowed to be seen as more central and are stored in the mental lexicon, while some are attestably less salient (including here idiomatic senses) and permitted to be only contextual extensions of the more entrenched senses.

have the appearance of being as old as you are

show likelihood of ← have the appearance of → appear your usual self

for a structure or a room to have a view or outlook in a specified direction

observe an event without being involved

quickly take notice

rely on someone or something

reminisce past events

suffer a setback

make future plans

bring an improvement to a situation

express a perceived air of superiority

eagerly await something or someone

view someone with superiority

pay a short visit

ignore wrongdoing

expect (hope) to do something

observe someone without displaying embarrassment or fear

take care of someone or something

express or show something to someone

ignore someone or something by pretending not to notice them

have respect for someone

direct your gaze towards someone or
look (v)
something or in a specified direction

think or regard in a particular manner

move round in order to investigate something ← examine and consider → evaluate someone or something with a quick glance

investigate in great detail

inspect something briefly

evaluate someone carefully

peruse a book or other written material

attempt to find

search for and find particular information in a piece of writing

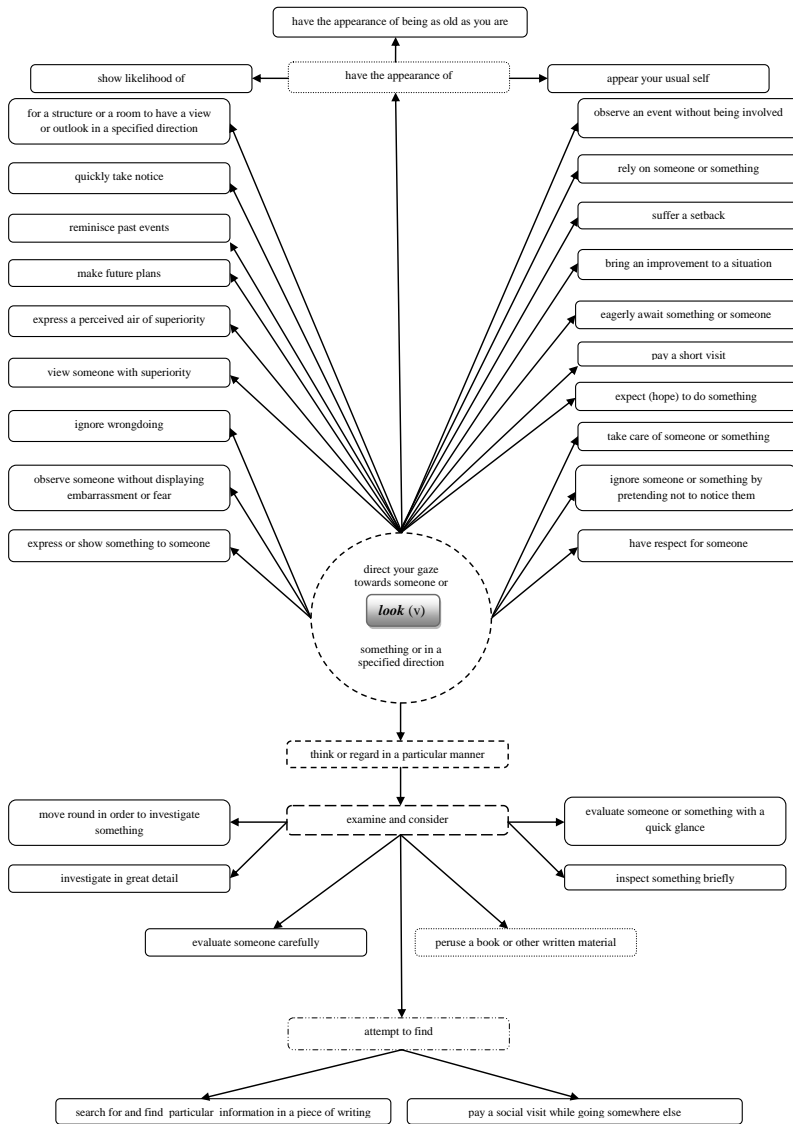pay a social visit while going somewhere else

Figure 4. A simplified example of a radial category of the verb *look* (the links between the senses are arbitrary and are given here just for exemplification purposes).

4. Lexical-pragmatic representation of polysemy

We have seen formalist approaches to polysemy, imagining lexical meanings as all stored and enumerated in the mental lexicon and the cognitive approaches seeing them in a mediatory manner as partly derived from

one core meaning and partly stored. The other end of the extreme, a complete opposite of the sense enumeration lexicon, is to see all meanings as just a problem of reference and clearly deducible from the pragmatic context alone (Nunberg 1979; 1996). The highlighting of senses works both through linguistic deixis, but also through a process of deferred reference, which entails referring indirectly to another entity in close relationship with the intended referent which is then successfully identified by employing common knowledge, following from the notion of cooperative principles of communication (Pethö 1999:24). Other pragmatically-based theories build on such a representational image. One improvement was achieved by adding the theory of conversational implicatures (Blutner 1998) to the original pragmatic-based conception. Another addition, stemming from *Relevance* theory (Sperber and Wilson 1995), can be seen in accounting for polysemy and contextual influence by referring to the underspecification of intended concepts in the produced lexical concept which needs to be resolved through pragmatic inference processing (Figure 5).
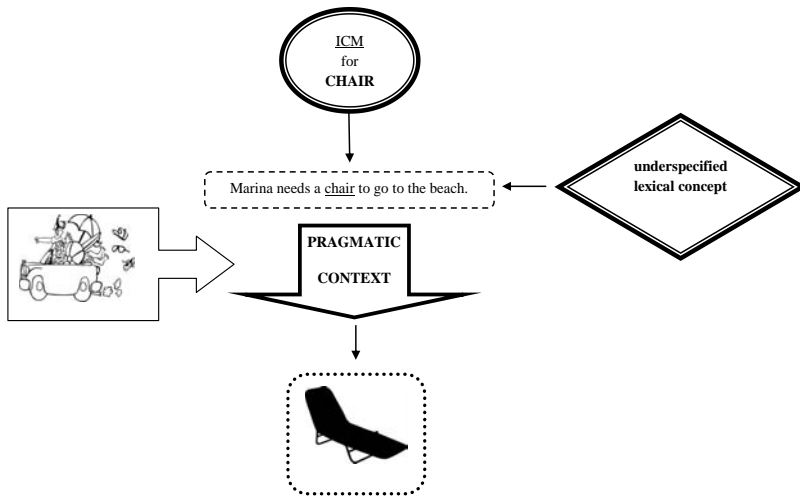
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Figure 5. Simplified process of pragmatic inference according to Sperber and Wilson (1995).

Following from the experience of cognitive and structuralist paradigms, any extreme model (be it entirely enumerative or entirely core meaning) ultimately proves unattainable. Hence, the later lexical-pragmatic model does in fact acknowledge some senses as stored – those belonging to conventional polysemy, which it sees as etymologically evident. This softened pragmatic approach is then in itself very close to the less radical

cognitive approaches and can perhaps successfully lead is towards a meaningful potential model.

5. Discussion – how to observe polysemy

As can be deduced from the problems raised by the various theoretical takes on polysemy, it is indeed a very complex semantic issue. However, but perhaps the models and their elaborations could be distilled into a most probable (or the most supported) account.

Looking at the more traditional formalist approaches (namely structuralist, generativist and neostructuralist paradigms) the conclusion is that they cannot sufficiently explain, through their componential methodology, the various vagaries of lexical meaning. They fail at the definitional level, not being able to provide fully encompassing definitions of senses within a polysemous item; they also, for the most part, fail to account for typicality effects; they fail at the criteria level, the criteria not being clearly presented in the definitional practice these approaches stand for; and ultimately they by default fail in their sense enumeration approach to polysemy as well. A more appropriate account of polysemy, as well as of meaning itself, is then perhaps to be found in the cognitive semantic theory and lexical pragmatics. A mediatory approach which will allow for some senses of a lexeme to be recognized as more 'important' than others (and stored), but which will also acknowledge the evident semantic links between the multiple senses and allow for these senses to be extendable from the more core meaning(s) seems to be suggesting itself. If we take it as the most plausible model, we can examine and specify it further through its several more focused and more discretely described individual instantiations.

One such variation, bordering on radical pragmatics, can be found in Geeraerts' (1993:288–262) conclusion on the inconsistencies of polysemy tests. He notes[4] that the distinction between polysemy and vagueness cannot be clearly maintained due to contextual flexibility. Linking his reasoning to the lexical pragmatic model, Geeraerts (1993) proposes that meaning should rather be seen as a process – the process of meaning construction through context[5]. The family resemblance effects within an

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4   Following Bosch's (1979) reasoning which suggests reinforcing the distinction between vagueness and ambiguity by first identifying a bridging context bringing together given meanings.
5   This kind of approach challenges then the very possibility of objective lexical semantics since there seems to be no space left for objective meanings but rather only for contextual interpretations.

existence of a core prototype are preserved within this account though (evoking the *Vantage Point* theory of semantics proposed by MacLaury (1991)), where the context highlights the meaning necessary for the given domain rather than having it fixed in advance (Geeraerts, 1993:260).

A similar version of the mediatory approach to polysemy, only outlined in more detail, can be seen in Tuggy (1993). The idea, stemming in essence from Langacker (1987), is that cognitive schemas, as elaborated in concepts, exist in the mental lexicon to the extent to which they become entrenched through repeated usage. The better entrenched they are the more salient they become, occurring more forcefully and being activated more easily by the context (Tuggy 1993) – these are the stored meanings. If a schema exists, but is not salient enough, the lexical item is then polysemous, existing between full ambiguity (homonymy) and vagueness – the derivable meanings. The influence of context in meaning selection comes as a given within this cognitive model, as it is one of the major factors enhancing entrenchment, frequency of occurrence in the discourse determining the strength of subsequent contextual activation (Tuggy 1993:285–286).

One more relevant cognitive semantic interpretation is seen in Dunbar's (2001) critique of Geeraerts' (1993) and Tuggy's (1993) elaborations on the nature of polysemy and meaning. The assertion is that a clear distinction between ambiguity and vagueness can be clearly marked and specified within a cognitive model. Lexical concepts are seen as using encyclopedic knowledge in the creation of conceptual representation outlined by the given discourse situation (Dunbar 2001:11). Parameters within lexical concepts are sometimes specified by the concepts and sometimes vague, the choice of reading coming from background knowledge. Some of these concepts are stored separately by learning, accounting for the attested individually different numbers and types of concepts elicited from different people (Langacker 1987) and the different subjective levels of awareness of the relatedness between concepts. Since this conceptual history of acquisition and origins of concepts is not available consciously, people only engage in metacognitive reflection on meaning with the context as a knowledge background (Dunbar 2001:12).

Deane's (1987; 1988) approach departs from the cognitive model towards a more pragmatically-orientated theory, but still retains some aspects of the cognitive semantic view on polysemy. The starting point for this theory is also extralinguistic knowledge and it also sees, such as Dunbar (2001), a clear division between homonymy, polysemy, and vagueness. The point of departure is that the approach does not recognize any prototype model

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within polysemy, which it sees as confusion between various aspects of meaning abstraction and a lack of certain semantic features stemming from encyclopedic knowledge (Deane 1987). Another later addition to this referential theory is the emphasis on the influence of context, stemming from *Relevance Theory* (Sperber and Wilson 1995) and notions of pragmatic attention (Deane 1987:148).

All of the outlined cognitively and pragmatically motivated models, they are (for the most part) centered around the view that a variety of meanings seen in polysemy are products of the context and disambiguated by looking at pragmatic reference (Dobrić 2013). They all, however, soften the contextual conditioning by the assertion that at core of the contextual extensions of meaning connected to one lexeme is a central prototypical meaning permeating in some (more or less opaque) manner through the entire polysemy spectrum of the lexeme. Polysemy and its place in accounting for meaning is then perhaps truly to be observed in a mediatory manner: some meanings are definitely more entrenched in our mental lexicon – they are acquired by children before any other members within a given semantic category; they are usually the ones that first come to mind and are produced first in psychological priming experiments; they are the earliest attested senses in etymological terms; they are also easiest to recognize and are hence perceptually most salient; and, since prototypes are products of earliest acquisition, they are also easiest to memorize (and hence fastest and easiest to elicit). These prototypical meanings are then surely stored and permanently and strongly linked to a given lexeme in our mental lexicons. Other meanings are less salient, some of them coming into being and disappearing regularly over time, some (an infinite number of them in fact) exiting in potentia, and all only retrievable through substantial contextual referencing. These are to be seen as not stored and only derivable (more or less concretely) from the mentioned more salient (prototypical) senses, though they do have an intrinsic possibility to, over time and sufficient use in the discourse, become efficiently entrenched and take their place as one of the stored ones.

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Nikola Dobrić

O nekim problemima značenja – polisemija između paradigme nabrajanja značenja i paradigme centralnog značenja

Apstrakt

Polisemija je semantički fenomen višeznačnosti gde su višestruka značenja jedne lekseme međusobno povezana. Razlikuje se od homonimije, drugog kraja semantičkog ambiguiteta, po tome što su u tom slučaju višestruka značenja jedne iste lekseme nepovezana i jedino produkt etimološke slučajnosti. Iako se polisemija može smatrati komunikacijski nevažnim fenomenom jer se rešenja za disambiguaciju leksema nalaze uvek lako dostupna u diskursu i kontekstu, sistematsko objašnjenje funkcionisanja višeznačnosti bazirano na jasnim kriterijumima nije jednostavno i još uvek predstavlja relativno otvoreno pitanje leksičke semantike. Rad prvo predstavlja pregled raznih teorijskih modela polisemije sa posebnim osvrtom na kognitivne aspekte višeznačnosti. Fokus rada je da predloži najutemeljeniji teorijski pogled na polisemiju koji se može zasnovati na postojećim filozofskim, semantičkim, i kognitivnim teorijama višeznačnosti.

Ključne reči: polisemija, ambiguitet, kognicija, filozofija jezika, semanitka, prototipikalnost, kognitivna semantika, neostrukturalizam, generativna semantika, leksička pragmatika