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Historical Semantics Historical Word-Formation

edited by

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Preface

The present volume contains a selection of papers prepared for the International Conference on Historical Semantics and Historical Word-Formation held at Błażejewko near Poznań from March 28 to 31, 1984. The papers discuss numerous problems in the vast areas of historical semantics and historical word-formation. Some of them are more central for the field, other could be considered more peripheral, perhaps more important for the analysis of particular languages than as contributions to the formation of general theories.

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The material contained in the volume and the discussion at the conference seem to reflect adequately the present state of the disciplines in question, i.e. a lot remains still to be done both as regards a general semantic theory as well as in historical semantics, and the area of historical word-formation requires more investigations in particular languages before some crucial issues could be explained more definitely.

The theoretical bias of the conference contributions was not restricted in any way and representatives of various linguistic persuasions have expressed their ideas. The languages analyzed include Korean, Bantu, and Chukchi next to Indo-European ones.

It is hoped that the conference and the present volume have contributed in some sense at least to the development of historical semantics and word-formation, if not by solving any issues, at least by posing numerous questions which have to be answered if any progress in the field is to be made.

Finally it is our duty to express our sincere thanks to all conference members for their active participation and in particular to all those whose contributions have been included in this volume. Special words of thanks go to the Vice Rector of Adam Mickiewicz University, Professor Stefan Paszyc, for providing the necessary funding. Last but not least thanks are due to the Conference Secretary, Ms. Barbara Płocińska whose devotion to the cause and skillful handling of administrative matters during and long before the conference has contributed to its success.

Poznań, August 1984

Jacek Fisiak

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List of participants

at the International Conference on Historical Semantics and Historical Word-Formation held at Błażejewko, Poland, March 28–31, 1984

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Inferential features in historical semantics

1.1. After a time of uncritical adoption and use of the concept of feature – during the heyday of Transformational Grammar – semantic features and componential analysis have recently come under attack, as witnessed in publications by Lyons (1977: 317–335), Leech ($^{2}1981$: 117–122), and summarized by Sprengel (1980). In the following I shall try to show that, in spite of all remaining problems and difficulties, a subclass of features, viz. inferential semantic features, may be applied profitably and successfully to historical semantics. For this purpose a number of examples from the history of English will be discussed.

1.2.1. Before coming to the actual illustration of my points, it is necessary to clarify a few basic issues. First of all I should like to point out that more than ten years ago I investigated the use and status of semantic features and the related question of semantic tests in my book on *Semantic structure and word-formation* (1972). Moreover, on the basis of this theoretical discussion, I carried out extensive empirical research in this monograph, establishing semantic features inherent in all contemporary verb-particle constructions with *out* and *up*. In a later article on semantic components of English verbs and nouns (Lipka 1979) the field of application was further extended, and the justification of metalinguistic elements was again treated explicitly. I considered three general methods of establishing underlying semantic elements:

- 1. morphological evidence from complex lexemes, i. e. compounds, prefixal and suffixal derivatives;
- 2. the extraction of semantic components on the basis of paraphrase relationships; and
- 3. the use of semantic tests including logical relations such as implication, tautology, and contradiction.

These procedures, however, are not applicable to the so-called inferential features.

1.2.2. In the article just mentioned I have set up a taxonomy of seven types of semantic features: denotative, connotative, inferential, relational, transfer, deictic, and distinctive features. I cannot go into details here. Suffice it to say that except for the very important class of inferential features, all others function as distinctive features. Only some of them are binary. Like connotative features such as [+ ARCHAIC] in *steed* and *smite*, inferential features are supplementary in nature. They differ, however, from the former in being optional, not obligatory and inherent, and they usually depend on context. In my definition the class of inferential features covers not only properties usually associated with a referent - such as slyness with a fox, clumsiness with an ox etc. - but also the influence of co-text and extralinguistic context.

1.2.3. In dictionaries inferential features in my use of the term are normally marked by labels such as "especially" or "usually", or simply brackets. Thus *beat* is often defined as 'hit (especially with a stick)' or 'not hard'. In the following I will use braces as a notational device for marking such optional features, a convention taken over from Lehrer (1974). There is a two-fold advantage in the recognition of optional semantic elements as opposed to strictly inherent features, based on yes/no-decisions and the principle of the all-or-none. First, they can be used to capture the fuzziness of meaning and linguistic variation in synchrony. Secondly – and more important here – they open a door for describing, formalizing, and explaining semantic change in historical linguistics.

2.1. A good example of the parallelism of regional and stylistic synchronic variation and language change is the case of *starve* discussed in Lyons (1968: 452), Pyles (²1971: 348), and Görlach (²1982: 124). All three authors also mention the genetically related German *sterben*, but do not explicitly draw any possible contrastive conclusions¹. Lyons makes the point that frequent syntagmatic modification (such as *starve of hunger*) may lead to incorporation of the sense 'hunger' into *starve*, and that in the English spoken in some areas of Northern England *starve* may incorporate 'with cold'. Görlach explains the semantic change in Norghern England and Middle English by restriction to certain contexts and the beginning opposition to the superordinate *die*. He uses a simplified feature notation which will be adapted in schema (1) together with Lyons' remarks and information from the *LDCE* and the *COD* 6:

(1)

```
OE steorfan [BECOME NOT ALIVE] >
NE starve [BECOME NOT ALIVE] + {of COLD}<sup>2</sup>
ModE starve [BECOME NOT ALIVE] + {of HUNGER}<sup>3</sup>
(OE = Old English; NE = Northern English; ModE = Modern English)
```

Since the Old English period the inferential features {of COLD} and {of HUNGER} have been added in Northern English and standard Modern English respectively, denoting the cause of the process. It was unspecified in Old English, as it still is in German sterben, but the result (death) seems to be an obligatory inherent feature in both languages. The Modern English collocation starve to death would have been tautological in Old English. This demonstrates that a complex semantic component [DIE] is not today a necessary element of starve as we will discuss presently. We could therefore postulate an inferential feature {to DEATH} in Modern English in some contexts. That the inferential feature {of HUNGER} has not been obligatory for a long time is proved by the possibility of syntagmatic modification in the formerly existing compound verb hunger-starve⁴. According to Lyons (1968: 452), the collocation starve with cold is still possible in Northern England, so that – with an incorporated inferential feature $\{of COLD\} - I'm$ starving is roughly equivalent to Standard English I'm freezing. Obviously, in the standard expression I'm starving, meaning 'I'm very hungry', the result to death is neither obligatory nor even possible. This also holds for other contexts where, in addition, the inferential feature {of HUNGER} is missing, e. g., She is starving for companionship. The engine was starved of petrol, He's completely sex-starved. They might be accounted for on the basis of a metaphorical relationship and explained with the help of transfer features. Leaving aside this problem here, I should like to illustrate some aspects of semantic change involving metaphorical shift from Old to Modern English in the following diagram:

(2)

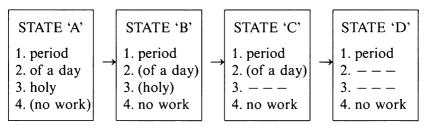
OE steorfan [DIE] + {SUFFER} > $\downarrow \qquad \downarrow \qquad \downarrow$ ModE starve ϕ [SUFFER] [from LACK] + {of FOOD} (met.) {of LOVE}

(OE = Old English, ModE = Modern English)

The component [DIE] has disappeared completely in these polysemous uses of starve. For Modern English die, the semantic equivalent of Old English steorfan, none of the standard dictionaries mention suffer in their definitions. It can therefore not be established as an inherent feature of *die* on the basis of paraphrase relationships, as discussed at the beginning. Suffer is defined in LDCE as 'experience pain'. This is certainly what happens normally when someone dies. We are consequently justified in postulating an inferential feature {SUFFER} for Old English steorfan. This changes into an obligatory inherent feature in all metaphorical uses of the polysemous Modern English verb starve, where the component [DIE] has disappeared. Further inferential features are added from cotext or situational context, such as {of FOOD} etc. The new inherent component [from LACK] might perhaps be related to the complex element [DIE], paraphrasable as 'stop living, no longer have life, lack life'. However, this is rather speculative.

2.2.1. Let us now turn to a more pleasant subject, viz., the example of the semantic change of *holiday*, which Leech (1974: 123–124) discusses in the first edition of this book on semantics only, in connection with the problem of the fuzziness of meaning. He uses the following diagram (3) for explaining the gradual transition from state 'A', where the expression had the meaning 'holy day, viz. Sunday or religious feast', to state 'D', the Modern English meaning 'a period when one is not required to work'.

(3)	holiday:	A 'holy day, viz. a Sunday or religious feast' >
		D 'a period when one is not required to work'



His main point is a distinction between what he calls "criterial components", i. e. obligatory semantic features, and "non-criterial" or "optional features", which are enclosed in brackets. These are identical with my inferential features, viz., {NO WORK}, {of a DAY}, and {HOLY}. They are intended to account for the fact that

the same word, at a given time, can have "two or more overlapping definitions" (Leech 1974: 123). Such inferential features may either become obligatory or disappear completely. In combination, the result of such a "step-by-step progression" may be "a complete shift in the reference of the expression" (Leech 1974: 124). According to Leech the inferential feature {NO WORK} was optional in the original meaning, corresponding to the Modern English collocation holy day.⁵ This would not be an adequate paraphrase for the lexicalized compound *holiday* today. Since the optional feature was frequently associated with the expression, it became gradually obligatory. On the other hand, the obligatory components 'of a day' and 'holy' are lost in Modern English, by transition through the states 'B' and 'C' in which they had become optional inferential features. Such a extension of meaning, can be termed 'semantic shift' (cf. Görlach ²1982: 119; Ullmann 1972: 227; Berndt 1982: 81, 87).

2.2.2. Leech's schematic representation looks very convincing. Nevertheless, it is tempting to follow up the actual linguistic development with the help of the *OED*. First of all it is not surprising to find that the dictionary registers considerable variation, both formally and semantically. Let us first consider the formal side (neglecting phonological developments) as summarized in simplified form in schema (4):

(4)	Old English (a) haligdæg	(b) halig dæg
	dat. pl.:	dat. pl.:
	haligdagum	halgum dagum
	from 15th century: hallidai, ha	lliday
	(and in northern dialects);	
	from 14th century: holidai, holi	idaie, holiday.

The *OED* makes a distinction between a "combined form" (4a) and an "uncombined form" (4b), in modern terminology 'compound' vs. 'syntactic group' or 'collocation'. The basis is a purely formal criterion, viz., inflection of the first constituent or its lack. Various spellings are given. As is well known, the Northern English form *halliday* survives in personal names.

Basically three different meanings are distinguished, as quoted in abbreviated form in (5), of which the first is the oldest and the other two have earliest recordings around 1300:

(5)	1. A consecrated day, a religious festival - c. 950
	 2. A day on which ordinary occupations are
	suspended;
	of exemption or cessation from work;
	of festivity, recreation, or amusement
	- a 1300
	3. A time or period of cessation from work
	(= collect. pl. or sing.) - 13

I have marked relevant semantic material by spacing. This shows that Leech's analysis is basically correct, and that meanings with or without the inferential feature {of a DAY} coexist from about 1300 onwards. State 'A' in diagram (3) is further justified by the remark in the dictionary that meaning 2 in (5) is "in early use not separable from 1". It is interesting to note that, according to the OED, form (4b) became more frequent "as the distinction in signification between sense 1 and sense 2 became more marked". In spite of some difficulties the following quotations (6) may illustrate how the inferential feature {NOW WORK} came in and {of a DAY} and {HOLY} went out:

- (6) For meaning 2:
 - a 1300 Iesus went him for to plai Wit childir on a halidai 1478 One for the halydays ... and a nothyr for the workyng days
 - 1601 Hence: home you idle Creatures, get you home: Is this a Holiday? (Shakespeare, Julius Caesar)

For meaning 3:

- 13.. Er be halidayez holly were halet out of toun
- 1667 The Christmas holidays giving more leave and licence to all kinds of people.

2.2.3. The *OED* also mentions two further subsidiary meanings of *holiday* which I shall now discuss. One is contained in the obsolete or extinct phrase *to speak holiday* defined as 'to use choice language, different from that of ordinary life'. This could lead us to introduce an additional inferential feature {EXTRAORDINARY} (cf. also meaning 2 in (5)), related to the feature {HOLY}. Such an inferential feature could be supposed to have been present already in state 'A'

of diagram (3), while all the other features of that stage must have disappeared in the phrase.

The second use of *holiday* is characterized as colloquial and nautical by the dictionary and defined as 'a spot carelessly left uncoated in tarring or painting'. The following diagram (7) may explain the semantic change and again illustrates the usefulness of an inferential feature {EXTRAORDINARY}:

(7)			
(a)	TIME	(b)	PLACE
	{of a DAY}		
	{HOLY}	\rightarrow	
	{EXTRAORDINARY}		EXTRAORDINARY
	NO WORK		NO WORK
	L	J	

Holiday in this specific nautical register can be defined as 'extraordinary place where no work has been done', which is crudely formalized in (7b). The starting-point of the semantic change, viz., (7a), can be compared to state 'B' in (3). I have replaced 'period' by [TIME] and added the inferential feature {EXTRA-ORDINARY}. This is converted into an obligatory component. The other inferential features have disappeared, while the feature [NO WORK] is retained in (7b).

The most radical semantic change from [TIME] to [PLACE] cannot be interpreted with the help of inferential features. In my opinion it must be regarded as an abrupt conversion or replacement rather than a gradual transition, or step-by-step progression for which Leech set up his model. Obviously, we here reach the limits of inferential features. Furthermore, the actual process of the shift of meaning of *holiday* may have been quite different from the reconstruction given in (7). Perhaps the situation of coining the new meaning was something like an officer saying: "Is this were you took a holiday?" to a lazy sailor, pointing to the spot in question.

It is well known that not all shifts of meaning are gradual, but some are rather sudden, accidental, and anecdotal. Possibly the best examples of unique changes are those of the history of ModE *mint* and *money* and F *croissant*, denoting a milk-roll, as explained by Ullmann (1972: 197). The four fundamental "types" of change: metaphor, metonymy, popular etymology, and ellipsis may all involve cases of sudden shift of meaning. On the other hand it is quite normal that a word gradually acquires a new sense, which then coexists with the old one for some time or even indefinitely.

2.2.4. If we now look at *holiday* from a strictly synchronic point of view, we can state that some inferential features are relevant for Modern English as well, not only for a historical approach. Thus the inferential feature {of a DAY}, postulated for the transition from meaning 2 to 3 in schema (5), is not at all obligatory in Modern English, but optional. This is evident in the following definition of *holiday* from the *LDCE*: 'time of rest from work, a day ... or longer' (cf. also (7a)). Another possible inferential feature is {RE-CREATION}, derived from sense 2 and 3 in (5) and the following definition in *COD* 6: 'day of festivity or recreation, when no work is done ... period of this'. Its optionality is supported by the fact that recreation is not mentioned in the *LDCE*.

2.3.1. Turning away from our holiday to serious work, it may not seem out of place, in the context of a conference on historical semantics and word-formation, to make a few remarks on lexicalization (cf. Lipka 1977; 1981). As I understand this term (cf. Lipka 1981: 120 f.) lexicalization is a multi-layered historical phenomenon, in which a complex lexical item, through frequent use, gradually loses the character of a syntagma and formally and semantically tends to become a single, specific, lexical unit. This process may involve graphemic and phonological changes, sometimes referred to as demotivation, but also morphological and syntactic alterations, and especially semantic modifications. The latter may be largely captured by the theoretical construct of loss or addition of semantic features, which describe the gradual process of idiomatization. In holiday both processes can be found, as well as phonological and morphological changes that isolate the lexicalized compound from its constituents and a parallel syntactic group (cf. 2.2.2. and Bloomfield 1933: 434). In other cases such as blackboard or watchmaker, which are perfectly analysable today, demotivation has been caused by developments in the extralinguistic world, something I have referred to (Lipka 1981: 124) as 'referential change' ("Referenzwandel").

2.3.2. I distinguish lexicalization from what may be called 'instantaneous' or 'individual coining', a phenomenon I once termed "Einzelprägung" (Lipka 1981: 122). This is tied up with the naming function of simple and complex lexical items and must be considered as a singular act, in which new concepts or concrete extralinguistic referents are given a name. This may lead to instanteneous idiomaticity - a fact already noted by Hermann Paul (cf. Lipka 1981: 122) - but does not necessarily do so. Examples for the former are *streaker* 'person running naked across a public place' and G *Geisterfahrer* 'car going in wrong direction on a motorway'. Examples of unidiomatic unique coinings may be *pedestrianization* or G *Windabweiser* 'part of car that keeps wind away'.

3.1. I will now turn — in less detail — to some other examples of semantic change that have been repeatedly used in the literature (cf. Bloomfield 1933: 426, 431–432, 440–441; Pyles ²1971: 347 ff.; Ullmann 1982: 227 ff.; Görlach ²1982: 118–119; Berndt 1982: 76 ff.; Nöth 1979: 27 ff.). As Pyles (²1971: 347) points out, many of them can already be found in a book by Greenough and Kittredge published in 1901, but have been adopted since "they make their point better than less familiar ones would do". I will here concentrate on two fundamental "categories" (cf. Ullmann 1972: 227) of semantic change, to which a feature approach is most amenable, and which are based on the result of change and the range of words, viz., extension and restriction of meaning as illustrated in schema (8):

- (8) (a) Restriction (features added): deer, fowl, hound, liquor, starve;
 - (b) Extension (features subtracted): barn, bird, dog, meat, mill, tail.

In the following, I shall distinguish two groups of authors who have dealt with these examples and will try to review the most important points they make. With all of them the analyses of specific items do not differ much.

3.2.1. Bloomfield, Pyles, and Ullmann belong together in that they do not draw on the concept of feature. Bloomfield surveys previous research, notably Paul, with his distinction between general and occasional meaning and Sperber, with his stress on the context of new meanings. In this connection Bloomfield uses the term "extension of meaning"; otherwise the speaks of "narrowing" and "widening". For him (Bloomfield 1933: 440 f.) finding the context or situation in which a linguistic form may be used with both the old

and new meanings is the key for explaining semantic extension. At the same time the paradigmatic and syntagmatic co-text - in modern terminology - must be considered, e. g., the competition of *meat* and *flesh*, and possible unfavourable connotations⁶.

3.2.2. Pyles distinguishes between "specialization" and "generalization" of meaning, a classification "based on scope". He treats some examples that are not discussed in the other books, viz., barn, mill, tail, and liquor, and also makes reference to regional semantic variation between British English and American English. Thus barn was originally a compound of OE bere 'barley' and ærn 'house'. We may therefore postulate an inferential feature {BARLEY} for the specific kind of cereal or grain that disappeared in the development to modern British English barn 'storehouse for grain'. In American English and some other varieties of English even the feature [GRAIN] is no longer obligatory, since barn may be defined as a 'building for storing hay, livestock, vehicles, etc.' (cf. COD 6). Finally, the feature [for STORING] may also be absent in some other uses of barn as in the definition of barn, in the LDCE as 'a big bare plain building'. On the synchronic level we can therefore postulate two inferential features {GRAIN} and {for STORING}.

Pyles (²1971: 347) further points out that a *mill* was formerly a place for making things by grinding, viz., *meal* (etymologically related), and that it is now only "a place for making things", because "the grinding has been eliminated"⁷. As evidence he cites the syntagmatic modifications in "woolen mill" (sic!), *steel mill*, and even *gin mill*. The situation is, however, more complicated and we might be induced to postulate inferential features such as {GRINDING}, {BUILDING}, and {GRAIN} both for diachronic and synchronic purposes.

The third item considered by Pyles alone is *tail*, from OE *tægl*, which he defines as probably having meant 'hairy caudal appendage, as of a horse'. According to him the "hairiness" and "horsiness" have been eliminated in the development to ModE *tail*, which could be represented by the inferential features {HAIR} and {HORSE}, or {EQUINE}, the latter found as inherent features in ModE *horse*, *stallion*, *mare*, *gelding*, *foal*, *filly*, *colt* etc. The semantics of *tail* are far more complex if we include metaphorical and metonymic extensions, as a glance at the dictionaries will show. Thus, for example, we probably need an inherent feature [BACK] to account for *tail* in the sense of 'reverse of coin'.

I therefore turn to the last item, *liquor*, which is also special in being a case of semantic restriction. Pyles (²1971: 348) claims that originally it simply meant 'fluid', but that "we have added 'alcohol'". This is not borne out if we look up *liquor* in the *COD* 6, where alcohol plays a very small role. On the other hand the *LDCE* is much more alcoholic, since the first definition is plainly 'alcoholic drink', and the second one, labelled American English, even reads 'strong alcoholic drink'. It is therefore probably not unwise to postulate an inferential feature {ALCOHOL} both synchronically and diachronically.

3.2.3. Ullmann (1972: 195) draws attention to the fact that many semantic changes arise in "ambiguous contexts" and notes (Ullmann 1972: 229) that "extension of meaning" is apparently "a less common process than restriction". He gives some very interesting examples for extension (Ullmann 1972: 231), viz. F *pigeon, dindon* 'turkey-cock', *hêtre* 'beech', and ModE *bird* from OE *brid* 'young bird'. In all these cases, which denote whole species, the original meaning was 'young animal or plant' (cf. also G Schößling 'young plant'). We can therefore postulate an inferential feature {YOUNG} that has disappeared. It was formerly an inherent distinctive feature, and still is in a number of Modern English lexical items, such as *boy, girl, foal* and its hyponyms, etc.⁸.

The reverse process, viz. restriction of meaning, is illustrated by Ullmann (1972: 229) with the help of the examples deer, earlier meaning 'beast', hound, formerly 'dog', fowl, once denoting 'bird' in general, and starve. He notes that G Tier, Hund, Vogel, and sterben have "retained the wider meaning". We might postulate the additional inferential feature {family CERVIDAE}⁹ added to the sense of OE *deor*, {for HUNTING} in *hound*, and {family GALLUS} incorporated in the sense of earlier OE fugol. It would seem that German always retains the original sense and is thus less susceptible to semantic change. However, Pyles (21971: 350, fn. 10), giving the further items G Knabe, selig, Knecht (to which we might add Korn and Mühle), had already warned against jumping to this conclusion, and argued that the impression would not be the same with a different choice of examples.¹⁰ To finish the review of this group of linguists, let me state that all three, viz. Bloomfield, Pyles, and Ullmann, draw on relevant German material and do not diverge much in their opinion on particular lexical items.

3.3.1. Görlach (1974: 118 f.) was to my knowledge the first to use a simplified feature notation for the explanation of semantic change in the history of English, if we disregard Leech's isolated schema for *holiday*. He illustrates extension of meaning by an inherent feature [+ jung], becoming optional in ModE *bird*, which corresponds to our inferential feature {YOUNG}. For restriction of sense Görlach uses [+ zur Jagd] and [+ fleischl.] in ModE *hound* and *meat* respectively, which were missing in OE *hund* and *mete*.

He gives detailed chronological tables (Görlach ²1982: 123) for the semantic development of ModE *sad*, *silly*, *nice*, and *stout*, where the overlap of particular senses at certain times is clearly shown. This could also be captured with the notion of inferential feature, something Görlach does not attempt to do. Finally, his approach is exceptional in that he does not confine himself to the investigation of single lexical items in isolation, but tries to analyse a whole wordfield in its semantic development (Görlach ²1982: 126 f.). Thus, the interdependence between ModE *farm*, *hamlet*, *village*, *town*, *city* and their earlier equivalents are studied on the basis of a text corpus. This field of 'a collection of dwellings', for which an archilexeme is missing, also includes, e. g., OE $w\bar{v}c$, *hām*, *castel*, *ceaster*, and *burg*, for which semantic continuations in Modern English do not exist.

3.3.2. Berndt (1982: 81-87) also takes into account paradigmatic lexical relationships in his discussion of semantic change, but in addition includes syntagmatic context by quoting extensive syntagmas or full sentences. He argues that "changes in the meaning of a word ... have to be seen from the point of view of their effects upon the relation of this word to other words in the same semantic field or the same subsystem" (Berndt 1982: 80), and therefore jointly investigates the history of fowl and bird (81-82), deer, beast, and animal (82-83), meat, flesh, and fodder (83-84), hound and dog (86), and the co-occurrence of ME sterven, swelten, and dien (85-86). In many cases he demonstrates overlap and even synonymy at some time during the Middle English period. He explicitly deals with meaning differences between "cognate words in English and German (partly) due to narrowing of the range of reference in the history of the English items" (86-87) Berndt (1982: 81) generally explains "specialization" and "generalization" as due to the "addition of certain structural components" and the "suppression or loss of certain structural components"11, with substitution combining the two processes (81). However, he never makes an attempt to isolate or formalize these components with a feature notation.

3.3.3. Our last author, Nöth, is exceptional because he applies such a notation to both diachronic and contrastive semantics at the same time. Using many of the English and German examples already treated here, and a considerable number of others, his aim is to find out the affinities and differences between the two branches of semantics. He argues for a more dynamic view of the interrelation between the two systems, which is quite compatible with my conception of inferential features.

4. This brings us back to my own proposal and the conclusions one can draw from it. I believe that the notion of the inferential feature is both necessary and inevitable, if one accepts the idea of semantic components at all. It is furthermore extremely useful for descriptive adequacy and possible generalization, as well as for descriptive and didactic purposes. In synchrony, it can account for fuzziness of meaning, for polysemy, and for regional, stylistic, and other variation (cf. 2.2.4.). On the diachronic scale, it can capture semantic restriction, extension, and shift and possibly other changes of meaning. A number of specific features have been established in the course of this paper, as summarized in (9), with (9a) and (9b) following the same order as (8a) and (8b), and (9c) containing the inferential features mentioned alsewhere in the order of appearance in the text:

- (9) (a) {family CERVIDAE}, {family GALLUS}, {for HUNTING}, {ALCOHOL}, {of HUNGER}
 - (b) {BARLEY}, {GRAIN}, {for STORING}; {YOUNG}; {particular BREED}; {FLESH}; {GRINDING}, {BUILDING}, {GRAIN}; {HAIR}, {HORSE} = {EQUINE}¹²
 - (c) {of COLD}, {CAUSE}, {of HUNGER}, {to DEATH}, {SUFFER}, {of FOOD}, {of LOVE}, {NO WORK}, {of a DAY}, {HOLY}, {EXTRAORDINARY}, {RECREATION}.

Obviously, the items discussed in section 3 and listed in schema (8) have not been treated in the same detailed way that was reserved for our crucial example *holiday*. Nevertheless, I am convinced that

if they were followed up in *OED* in the same manner, this would further support my argument and prove the value of inferential features for synchronic and historical semantics.

Notes

- * I should like to thank Elspeth Davidson and Helmut Gneuss for very helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. The term "inferential feature" ultimately derives from Nida (cf. Lipka 1979) and denotes non-obligatory meaning components which may be "inferred" from the use of an expression.
- 1. Berndt (1982: 86), however, states: "The semantic differences between ModE *starve* and its modern German cognates, HG *sterben* and Low German /*sta*:vn/, arose as a result of addition of further structural components to the underlying structure of the earlier meaning shared with ME *dien*." Cf. Lipka (1980: 102–103) for hyponyms of *sterben* and *die*, contrastive equivalents, and the problem of choosing between analytical paraphrases.
- Cold and hunger may be further analysed as 'absence or lack of heat/food', cf. LDCE starve₁ and starve₃ 'to (cause to) suffer from not having come stated thing'. For possible approaches to the optional causativity in all three meanings of starve cf. Lipka (1982). We might postulate an inferential feature {CAUSE}.
- 3. ME sterve(n), according to Görlach (²1982: 124), is already characterized by an obligatory feature [+ durch Hunger]. However, the six occurences of the verb in Chaucer's works (cf. Skeat 1912: 381, 431, 435, 479, 557, 653) all clearly show the lack of this feature. Although the editor in his glossary (Skeat 1912: 105) in one instance explicitly defines sterve as 'die of famine', a look at the passage immediately shows that this is not correct, since we find: sholde hir children sterve for famyne. We have a clear case of syntagmatic modification, which is the best test for non-incorporation of the meaning 'of famine' in sterve. Of the 50 entries in the Chaucer Concordance under starve not a single one justifies [of HUNGER]. The earliest date for the sense 'to die of hunger' in the OED is 1578.
- 4. Cf. Pyles (²1971: 348). The *OED* gives 1390 and 1879 as the earliest and latest dates respectively for this verb. For the general problem of the interrelation between syntagmatic modification and paradigmatic lexical structuring cf. Lipka (1981).
- 5. If we follow Liebermann (1903-1916; 1960: 399, 656 f., s. v. Feiertag 5), Sonntag
 3) and 4)) this is not correct, since there were strict laws that prohibited work on a holiday in the Anglo-Saxon world.
- 6. In another connection Bloomfield (1933: 432, 440) mentions meat and drink, sweetmeats, and counted one's bedes (more currently tell one's beads). The coexistence of the former cases with ModE meat 'flesh-food' could be accounted for by an inferential feature {FLESH} cf. also the Modern English saying one man's meat is another man's poison. In the expression tell one's beads the noun bead 'prayer' is synchronically unrelated to bead 'small object' and there is only an etymological connection.
- 7. Cf. the definitions in *SDCE*: 1. '(a building containing) a machine for crushing corn or grain into flour'; 2. 'a factory or workshop', and in *COD* 6: 1. 'Building fitted with machinery for grinding corn'; 2. 'Any mechanical apparatus for grinding corn ... any solid substance ...'; 3. 'Any machine, or building fitted with machinery, for manufacturing-processes etc.'. Nöth's (1979: 33) treatment

of the "metaphorical extension" of the meaning of *mill* is apparently based on the *COD* or *OED*. Cf. also the syntagmatic modification in: a) *flourmill, watermill, windmill, b) coffee-mill, pepper-mill, c) cotton-mill, paper-mill* as a test.

- 8. As a binary feature it is also relevant for the system of address in many languages, e. g., as one of the factors involved in the distinction between *tu*, *du* (for children) and *vous*, *Sie* (for adults).
- 9. Cf. COD 6 s. v. deer; Nöth (1979: 31); Pyles (²1971: 348), who points out that the feature was not yet present in Shakespeare's "Mice, and Rats, and such small Deare".
- 10. Cf. also Berndt (1982: 92–95) for boor and G Bauer; boy, knave, child and G Knabe; silly and G selig; and knight and G Knecht.
- 11. Pejoration and (a)melioration are accounted for by "gain or loss of evaluative meaning components" (Berndt 1982: 93 ff.). Thus e. g. knave, silly, and G Knecht are said to have acquired "negative evaluative components", while knight is a case of additional "positive evaluative components". For a semantic feature Negative Evaluation [+ NegEv] in G stinken and participial adjectives like choked up, snowed up, mixed up, glued up, inked up cf. Lipka (1972: 136–138, 208).
- 12. For ME dogge 'dog of a particular breed' cf. Bloomfield (1933: 426) and also G Dogge. This leads to an inferential feature {particular BREED}. For meat cf. Bloomfield (1933: 425-426, 431, 440-441), Pyles (²1971: 348).

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