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## LEONHARD LIPKA (München)

## THE STATE OF THE ART IN LEXICOLOGY

#### 1. Introduction

Twenty years ago, Charles F. Hockett published a little book - Hockett (1968) in my bibliography - with the simple title *The State of the Art*, meaning "the state of the art in linguistics generally". It contained a harsh critique of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) up to 1966. But times they are achanging: Today, linguists are no longer drunk or stoned (as a famous Swiss colleague of ours once put it) by generative theories. They remember their own roots and the work of earlier scholars without, however, neglecting the insights of new approaches to old problems (but cf. Lipka 1975).

In my paper, I shall try to do exactly this and to combine and integrate theoretical advances, on the one hand, with research findings of the past and present, on the other. The report on research in both areas will in turn focus on either the internal structure of words or the structure of the whole lexicon of a language, in particular the English language. Sometimes the two aspects cannot be neatly separated. My survey of empirical work on English in specific areas will be extremely brief. It will include "wordbooks" of English - a term frequently used in McArthur (1986) - either in alphabetical order, i.e. dictionaries, or organized differently, like Roget's Thesaurus or the Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English (LLCE). I will also touch the subject of corpora and computers, but, as we have seen in Tübingen, this needs much more time than I am alloted here. I will say nothing at all about lexicology in the future, i.e. the more or less urgent desiderata for research, but will leave the necessary conclusions for the discussion.

## 2. Advances in lexical theory

Starting out from the binary notion of the linguistic sign, as introduced by Saussure more than seventy years ago, we may say that the vocabulary of a language, viz. lexis or the lexicon (in more technical terms), may be seen from a

<sup>1</sup> I should like to thank Robert Gibson, Andrea Brosch-Heiler, and the participants of the discussion at the Anglistentag for very helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

primarily formal or semantic point of view. The morphological structure of words, or lexemes, is analysed and described by the discipline of word-formation, its content by lexical semantics.

In fact, two recent books relevant for English, which originally appeared the same year, viz. Hansen et al. (1985) and Kastovsky (1982), both name word-formation and semantics either in their title or subtitle. Two other books published in the same series (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics), Bauer (1983) and Cruse (1986), deal with word-formation and semantics separately. Both, Hansen et al.'s introduction to lexicology and Kastovsky's survey, which also includes the most pertinent generative work, are primarily based on Marchand's theory of word-formation and his practice. Kastovsky's book also further develops Coseriu's structural semantics (cf. Coseriu/Geckeler 1981).

Cruse (1986) is firmly rooted in the British tradition and almost exclusively expands and refines the paradigmatic sense-relations originally introduced by John Lyons in 1968, with some original contributions.

Both Cruse and Kastovsky, however, are limited to what I have called a language-immanent or language-intrinsic approach to semantics, as opposed to a referential or denotational theory. The latter, in contradistinction to Coseriu's views, was developed in Germany in Leisi's work, beginning with his Wortinhalt published in 1952, long before the re-discovery of semantics in TG (cf. Lipka 1975). His approach, which concentrates on the extralinguistic referent and the use of words, as evident in his notion of Gebrauchsbedingungen (conditions of use), is basically non-analytic and holistic and in agreement with gestalt psychology. For this reason it is closely akin to Cognitive Linguistics (CL) and Prototype Theory (PT) as demonstrated in Lipka (1988b).

My own views on word-formation and semantics, which will soon be presented to the public in my forthcoming Outline of English Lexicology, have been formed and heavily influenced by all scholars mentioned so far, in particular by Marchand, Coseriu, Leisi, and Lyons. In addition, they were developed and stimulated by American linguists, especially some of the so-called school of Generative Semantics (GS), notably by Charles Fillmore and George Lakoff. These linguists have now become leading figures in PT and CL, under the influence and in close cooperation with the psychologist Eleanor Rosch (cf. Rosch 1977) and the so-called Berkeley Cognitive Science Community. My original approach to lexicology was further modified by the interdisciplinary work in Aitchison (1987), Hörmann (1986), and in Labov (1978). In the following, for reasons of time, I will not say much about word-formation and the morphological structure of words, and nothing at all about word-formation rules (in the sense of Aronoff) and about the recent phonologically motivated word-structure theories.

#### 2.1. The internal structure of words and categories

Single words may not only have a morphological structure, i.e. may be analysed into morphemes, defined as the smallest linguistic signs, they may also be complex in other ways. If, in this paper, we concentrate on lexemes, defined as abstract units of the language system, the age-old question arises in many cases especially for the practicing lexicographer - whether we have a single item with several related meanings, i.e. polysemy, or two or more formally identical or similar items, i.e. homonymy. The most recent theoretical treatment of the subject, combined with an extensive computer-aided corpus study, is Schneider (1988). Clearly, as is obvious in his two books, polysemy is closely tied up with lexical vagueness, today called fuzziness, and with the variability of word meaning. The indeterminateness of words is also discussed revealingly, with reference to German, in Wolski (1980).

Fuzziness is one of the basic issues for PT and its alleged superiority to Feature Semantics (FS), a problem inherently related with the linguistic and psychological categorization of extralinguistic reality. The possible or necessary distinction between linguistic and extralinguistic or encyclopedic knowledge is another long-debated vexing question in lexicology. I shall return to it presently.

Categorization as a matter of language and our perception of the extralinguistic world is not only a fashionable subject for linguists, as evident in publications like Craig (1986) and Weigand (1987). One of the classic sources for the notion is the work of Rosch, perhaps best represented in Rosch (1977). It is also related to the ubiquitous topic of metaphor, long neglected but recently revived, especially by Lakoff/Johnson (1980). I have claimed elsewhere (in Lipka 1988a) that both metaphor and metonymy can be considered as secondary or dual categorization, in addition to the primary categorization of literal word meaning. Semantic Transfer (ST) in metaphor and metonymy is an extremely productive lexical process, both at present and in the past.

This brings us back to the matter of polysemy and the question of the unity of the lexical item or lexeme. The problem is treated at great length and depth, also from a historical point of view and with a wealth of material, in Tournier (1985). This introduction to what the author calls la lexicogénétique de l'anglais contemporain combines a highly original discussion of productive morphological and semantic processes in the lexicon of English. The latter are referred to as néologie sémantique (semantic neologism) and include conversion, metaphor, and metonymy. The two figurative processes of ST are treated under the common heading or category name métasémie, i.e. metasemic developments. Although the accessibility of Tournier's book is limited by the Anglo-French language barrier, I believe it would be a shame not to mention it in a report on the present state of lexicology.

## 2.2. Lexical units, lexemes, and sememes

An extremely important insight and at the same time a useful terminological proposal is to be found in Cruse (1986, 49, cf. also 76 f., 84). He claims that there are:

(1) [...] two kinds of element relevant to lexical semantics. The two types will be called lexical units and lexemes [...] lexical units are those form-meaning complexes with (relatively) stable and discrete semantic properties which stand in meaning relations such as antonymy [...] and hyponymy [...] and which interact syntagmatically with contexts [...]. The meaning aspect of lexical units will be termed a sense. Lexemes, on the other hand, are the items listed in the lexicon, or 'ideal dictionary', of a language [...]. A lexeme [...] may well be associated with indefinitely many senses.

Cruse further argues, I think convincingly, that the *lexeme* is the appropriate unit for the lexicographer and that it consists of a "family of lexical units". For him, dictionaries contain lists of lexemes. On the other hand, *lexical units* (in his and my terminology) combine a lexical form with a single sense or sememe. To my mind, the concept of sememe and the idea of its combination with a form, resulting in holistic *lexical units*, is especially prominent in Hansen et al. (1985) and Tournier (1985), who also uses sens as a synonym. In Schneider (1988: 101, 149 ff.) the definition of the Semem is far more complex. Some definitions are given in (2):

(2) Die ideelle Seite des Lexems, das Semem ist die lexikalische Bedeutung. Sie ist ein an das Formativ gebundenes bewußtseinsmäßiges Abbild der Realität. Hansen et al. (1985: 14)

Le sémème est l'ensemble de sèmes constituant le signifié du mot. Sèmes et sémème permettent une interprétation et une représentation ensemblistes du signifié.

Tournier (1985: 201)

Das Semem ist zweifellos die 'grundlegende operationelle Einheit der deskriptiven lexikologischen Semantik' (Schifko 1975: 34; vgl. Neubert 1977: 15) und als solches deutlich vom Lexem zu unterscheiden. Schneider (1988: 101)

It is between these lexical units that semantic relations exist, n o t between whole lexemes. Metaphor and metonymy is also a matter of lexical units in this sense. Cruse discusses such semantic relations as hyponymy, synonymy, and lexical opposites in great detail in chapters 4-12 of his book. Obviously, they are refined versions of the paradigmatic sense-relations established in Lyons (1968) and further subclassified in Lyons (1977), by adding directional opposition and various "non-binary contrasts". The latest contribution to research in this area, incidentally, is Mettinger (1988), a corpus-based study of binary meaningrelations. Cruse also relabels word-fields, or lexical fields, as lexical configurations and introduces novel categories like taxonomies and meronomies which capture part-whole relationships. What I consider as a serious shortcoming and limitation of his book on lexical semantics is the almost complete neglect of pragmatic considerations and his fixation on purely language-immanent testing procedures, which sometimes verge on the ridiculous (cf. Cruse 1986: 27, 54 ff.). For example one of the three possible indirect "tests of ambiguity" reads as follows:

(3) If there exists a synonym or one occurrence of a word form which is not a synonym of a second, syntactically identical occurrence of the same word form in a different context, then that word form is ambiguous, and the two occurrences exemplify different senses.

Cruse (1986: 55)

# 2.3. Componential analysis and prototypes

Before returning to pragmatics and the necessity of a referential approach to semantics, let me briefly look back to other language immanent theories which still contribute essential insights, in my opinion, to the internal structure of words. I am referring to componential analysis (CA) in the wider sense, which goes back to Louis Hjelmslev, including the lexical decomposition of GS and FS generally, which Fillmore derogatorily dubbed "checklist theories of meaning". Clearly, there does not exist a single, unified theory of SFs and there is also

variation within possible alternatives (cf. Lipka 1987), viz. there are various PTs (cf. Aitchison 1987: 51 ff.).

In my opinion, both the semantic theory of Eugenio Coseriu (cf. Coseriu/Geckeler 1981) and GS, with its postulation of abstract, underlying atomic predicates and the flood of research spawned by this, have contributed enormously to a better understanding of nouns, verbs, and other predicates (in the sense of logic) in many languages. This must be supplemented, however, by newer theoretical constructs, like prototype, scene, and frame, in certain areas, e.g. verb-like expressions describing linguistic action (cf. Verschueren 1981).

## 2.4. Linguistic vs. encyclopedic knowledge and categorization

For nouns, particularly in certain fields, the meaning elements called *content-figurae* had already been proposed by Hjelmslev in 1943. His structuralist method has been further rigorously developed - based on the principle of opposition - by Coseriu and his pupils, especially Geckeler. It has since become apparent, notably manifested at a conference on lexical semantics at Essen in 1987 (proceedings published as Hüllen/Schulze 1988), that cognitive aspects, encyclopedic knowledge, and interdisciplinary connections (above all with psychology) are indispensable for a full and profound understanding of the lexicon. This is especially true for nouns denoting concrete objects and living beings.

Let us look at a simple, non-prototypical, "non-birdy" example for illustrating the difficulty and basic inadequacy of separating linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge as well as the consequences for categorization. The distinction between the words and categories camel and dromedary (and the parallel German Kamel and Dromedar) is useful here. Many people remember that the property or attribute of having either one or two humps is relevant here, but are often at a loss to decide which is which. Turning to dictionaries for help, we find the following definition in the COD (Sykes 1982):

(4) Dromedary = Light fast-moving (esp. Arabian or one-humped) camel bred for riding...[...f.Gk dromas, -ados, runner...].

From this dictionary entry we can conclude either that the *dromedary* is a type or kind of the category *camel*, or that these are two closely connected categories, like the *slug* and *snail*, or the *sheep* and *goat*, which fall together in a single class in German *Schnecke* or in Chinese *yang*. The *COD* treats both "Arabian" and "one-humped" as non-criterial meaning elements, i.e. as inferential features (in

my terminology, cf. Lipka 1985). In the COLLINS DICTIONARY, dromedary is treated as polysemous, i.e. as the two lexical units in (5):

- 1. A type of Arabian camel bred for racing and riding having a single hump and long slender legs.
  - 2. Another name for Arabian camel. Urdang et al. (1986).

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDCE 2) also considers one meaning of dromedary as synonymous with camel, but treats both as different animals in the following (abbreviated) entry:

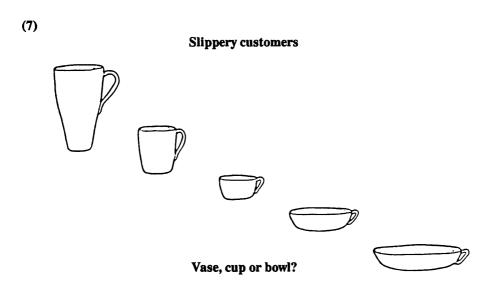
- (6) Camel = n either of two large long-necked animals used for riding...
  - a also *dromedary* the Arabian camel with one large HUMP...
  - b the *Bactrian camel* from Asia with two large HUMPs....

It is clear that even well-known higher animals may be classified or categorized in different ways and that the resulting structures of the animal kingdom will differ.

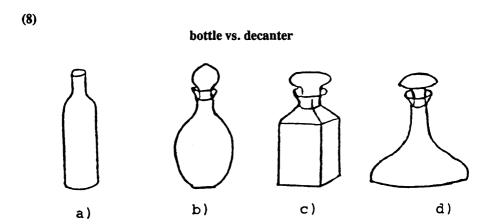
Another concrete example for the relevance of highly specific extralinguistic knowledge and expertise and for the culture-dependent nature of linguistic and extralinguistic categories is the distinction between barrister and solicitor in British English and British society. I do neither hint at a parallelism with the previous example nor can I go into further detail here. Let me only say that the structuralist method of using minimal pairs, originally developed in phonology and then transferred to lexical semantics, is clearly insufficient here, too.

## 2.5. The importance of visual images

Besides encyclopedic knowledge, the importance of visual images for the notion of prototype and for the mental lexicon in general has to be stressed here. Let me start demonstrating this by using a stock example that goes back to empirical, experimental work by Labov (cf. Labov 1978), in the form it is represented in Aitchison (1987: 47).



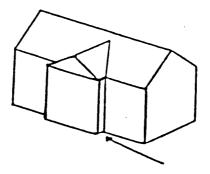
The pictures are used by Aitchison to show the difficulties of separating the categories vase, cup, or bowl and the importance of the notions "fuzzy edges" and "family resemblances". The additional function they have in my paper is to illustrate the importance of shapes for the mental lexicon and the categorization of extra-linguistic reality. Another example with the same purpose is given under (8) from Lipka (1987: 288).



It further shows that distinct but closely related categories, like bottle and decanter, which are clearly language- and culture-specific, may be further subcategorized according to their shapes. Thus (8c) and (8d) are prototypical spirit decanters and ship's decanters respectively. Speech communities and their individual members who possess such categories obviously match specific containers they encounter with such visual images, stored in their mind, when they have to name them.

I am convinced that for our perception and linguistic organization of reality, in many cases, we need both, a visual image and a name that goes with it. I have tried to demonstrate this in Lipka (1988b) for the German architectural technical term *Risalit*, with the help of the following picture:





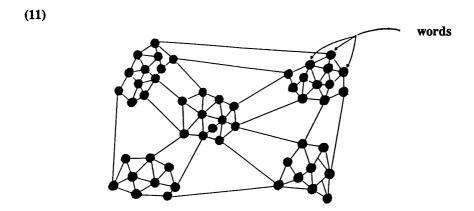
Risalit

The catagory apparently does not exist in English and French. Hörmann (1986: 159 f.), as a psychologist, argues for such an "imaginal representation" of meaning for many words, stating that e.g. car is stored and represented in the mind "as a visual image of a car". For abstracts, for example the mental verbs discussed in Schneider (1988), and most function words, this is obviously not an appropriate proposition. Therefore, Hörmann (1986: 160) offers as a solution the following so-called "dual-coding hypothesis":

(10) Concrete words and sentences are stored as images a n d as words, whereas abstract words and sentences are stored only in verbal form.

#### 3. The structure of the lexicon

Now to the structure of the whole vocabulary, or lexicon, of a language (cf. Carter 1987). What do linguists and psychologists tell us about that today? As shown convincingly by Aitchison (1986: 72 ff., 190 ff.) and Hörmann (1986: 147 ff.), network models have replaced the earlier dominant word-field theory. To my mind, the notion of fields has thereby not become useless, and many insights and methods developed by Trier, Coseriu, Geckeler, Lehrer, and myself are still important and relevant. The fundamental structuralist agreement in all this research remains valid, viz. that words do not exist in isolation and that they are used and stored in a complex arrangement. Of course, this also holds for the syntagmatic dimension, which I have not mentioned so far and which I cannot tackle at all here for reasons of time. Instead, I would only like to draw your attention to a possible visual representation of what Aitchison calls "word-webs". Together with a number of alternative schematic models, the following picture of lexical networks is given in her book (1987: 197):



Here, there are numerous links between words, which are lumped together, in addition, in certain clusters. The links are multi-dimensional and interwoven and the complexity of the whole network is further increased by the fact that the quality of the links, not only their location, is important.

On a simple scale, with reference to the lexicon of the English language, this type of organization is also at the basis of non-alphabetical "wordbooks" like the *LLCE* (McArthur 1981). There are many important developments in English lexicography, which I must also leave undiscussed here. On the whole, modern dictionaries all incorporate pragmatic information of various kinds, in one way or other, and give information on usage and collocations. The *COBUILD English Language Dictionary*, edited by John Sinclair and a large staff (Sinclair et al.

1987), although it has some disadvantages, which have been pointed out in reviews, is unique in its database approach and the use of an enormous computerized corpus of contemporary English. The computer was also indispensable for the second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) to be published soon. It integrates all the supplements in running alphabetical order, a feat which could never have been accomplished without the help of the computer.

## 4. Empirical Studies of the English Lexicon

Levi (1978: 50, 165).

I had also originally planned to give a somewhat datailed account of empirical work already done in specific areas of the English lexicon, including diachronic studies (cf. Lipka 1985). This would have meant, e.g. with regard to morphologically complex nouns, to refer to research carried out by Bauer, Warren, Reichl, and Levi, partly based on a corpus. The last author has extended the field beyond the word itself to whole syntagmas called *complex nominals* (CNs). These are derived on the basis of recoverably deletable predicates (RDPs). The approach is perhaps the last culmination point of GS. Levi's CNs stress the parallel between nominal compounds and adjective-noun combinations, e.g. atom bomb and atomic bomb.

(12)
Recoverably Deletable Predicates (RDPs):
CAUSE, HAVE, MAKE, BE, USE, FOR, IN, ABOUT, FROM

The subject has attracted other linguists, such as Boas, Warren, George, and most recently Leitzke (in print).

The adjective itself and syntagmas containing it seem to be an exceptionally fruitful area for lexical studies. Some of the persons who have worked on the topic, such as Stein, Neuhaus, König, Ljung, Warren, and Levi, are actually here today. A great deal of empirical work has also been done already on verbs and verbal constructions in English. Phrasal verbs, also called verb-particle constructions (VPCs), have been studied by Bolinger, Fraser, and myself around 1972 (cf. Lipka 1972), and, more recently, by Pelli and Lindner. To conclude this necessarily incomplete survey with a glance at semantically defined subclasses of English verbs, let me mention the contrastive study of verbs of visual perception by Roos, work on verbs of speaking by Lehmann, Verschueren, Dirven,

Goossens, Putseys, Vorlat, Ballmer, Brennenstuhl, and, finally, the corpus-based study by Schneider on so-called "mental verbs" like think, learn, remember, invent, know, believe, and assume.

#### 5. Conclusion

Where we stand today on the theoretical ground has been outlined above. I believe it is more than an assumption that pragmatic factors, encyclopedic and cultural knowledge, and various other aspects of extralinguistic referents including visual images - can no longer be excluded from linguistics as was the case during all the time of classic structuralism and in Coseriu's semantic theory. Without that, metaphor and metonymy, other productive processes, polysemy, and the various aspects of categorization can never be explained and described. Interdisciplinary co-operation is necessary, especially with psychologists, if the perceptual and further processing operations in which words are involved are to be fully understood. Insights in this area are of the utmost importance for language learning and teaching (cf. Carter 1987). As in the past, I again argue in this report on the state of the art in lexicology for an integration (in the wider sense) of competing theories and models, for complementary approaches, not for the exclusive dominance of a single orthodox view.

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