Outline of today's lecture

Lecture 6: Lexical semantics

- Words and concepts
- Semantic relations
- Polysemy
- Word sense disambiguation

Semantics

Compositional semantics:

- studies how meanings of phrases are constructed out of the meaning of individual words
- principle of compositionality: meaning of each whole phrase derivable from meaning of its parts
- sentence structure conveys some meaning: obtained by syntactic representation

Lexical semantics:

- studies how the meanings of individual words can be represented and induced

What is lexical meaning?

- recent results in psychology and cognitive neuroscience give us some clues
- but we don't have the whole picture yet
- different representations proposed, e.g.
  - formal semantic representations based on logic,
  - *or* taxonomies relating words to each other,
  - *or* distributional representations in statistical NLP
- but none of the representations gives us a complete account of lexical meaning

How to approach lexical meaning?

- Formal semantics: set-theoretic approach
  e.g., cat′: the set of all cats; bird′: the set of all birds.
- meaning postulates, e.g.

$$\forall x[\text{bachelor}'(x) \rightarrow \text{man}'(x) \land \text{unmarried}'(x)]$$

- Limitations, e.g. *is the current Pope a bachelor?*
- Defining concepts through enumeration of all of their features in practice is highly problematic
- How would you define e.g. *chair, tomato, thought, democracy*? – impossible for most concepts
- Prototype theory offers an alternative to set-theoretic approaches

How to approach lexical meaning?

- Formal semantics: set-theoretic approach
  e.g., cat′: the set of all cats; bird′: the set of all birds.
- meaning postulates, e.g.

$$\forall x[\text{bachelor}'(x) \rightarrow \text{man}'(x) \land \text{unmarried}'(x)]$$

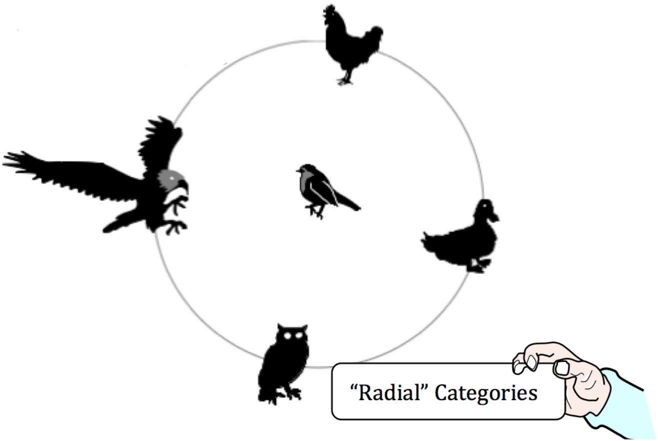
- Limitations, e.g. *is the current Pope a bachelor?*
- Defining concepts through enumeration of all of their features in practice is highly problematic
- How would you define e.g. *chair, tomato, thought, democracy*? – impossible for most concepts
- Prototype theory offers an alternative to set-theoretic approaches

Prototype theory

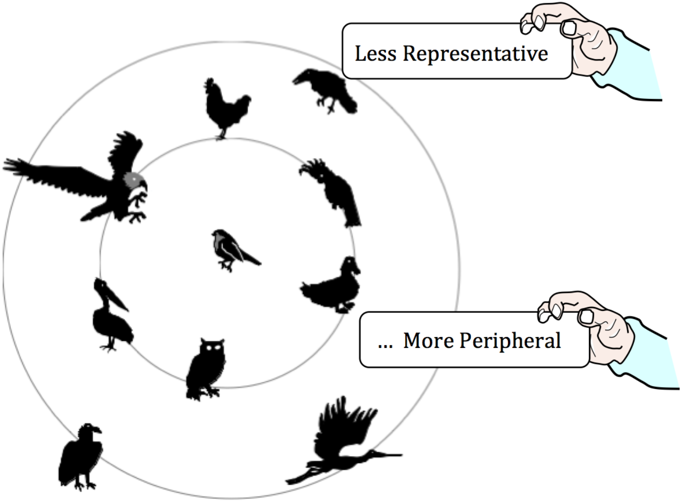
- introduced the notion of graded semantic categories
- no clear boundaries
- no requirement that a property or set of properties be shared by all members
- certain members of a category are prototypical – or instantiate the prototype

Eleanor Rosch 1975. *Cognitive Representation of Semantic Categories* (J Experimental Psychology)

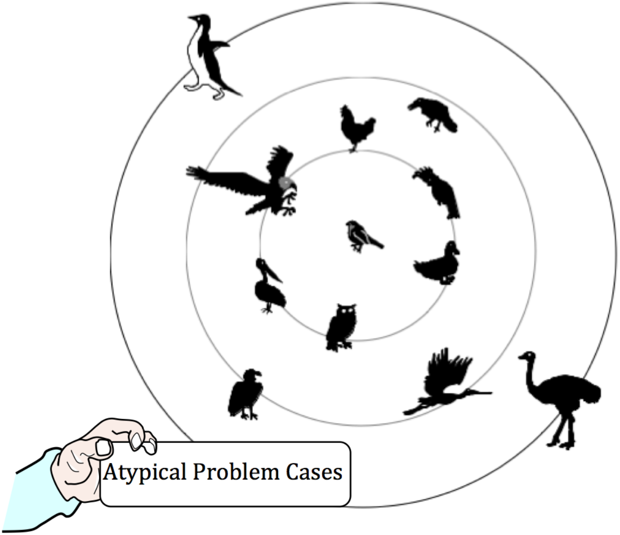
Prototype theory (continued)



Prototype theory (continued)



Prototype theory (continued)



Prototype theory (continued)

- Categories form around prototypes; new members added on basis of resemblance to prototype
- Features/attributes generally graded
- Category membership a matter of degree
- Categories do not have clear boundaries

Hyponymy: IS-A

- *dog* is a hyponym of *animal*
- *animal* is a hypernym of *dog*
- hyponymy relationships form a taxonomy
- works best for concrete nouns

Some issues concerning hyponymy

- not useful for all words: *thought*, *push*, *sticky*?
- individuation differences: is *table* a hyponym of *furniture*?
- multiple inheritance: e.g., is *coin* a hyponym of both *metal* and *money*?
- what does the top of the hierarchy look like?

Other semantic relations

Classical relations:

Meronymy: PART-OF e.g., *arm* is a meronym of *body*, *steering wheel* is a meronym of *car* (piece vs part)

Synonymy e.g., *aubergine*/*eggplant*.

Antonymy e.g., *big*/*little*

Also:

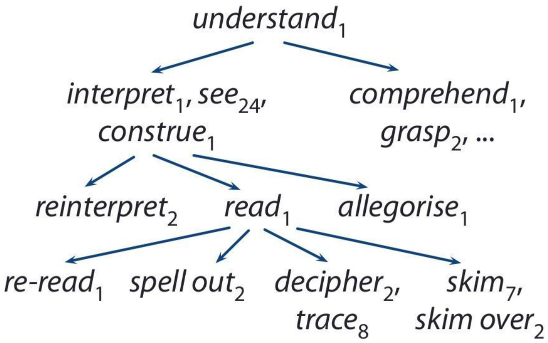
Near-synonymy/similarity e.g., *exciting*/*thrilling*
e.g., *slim*/*slender*/*thin*/*skinny*

WordNet

- large scale, open source resource for English
- hand-constructed
- wordnets being built for other languages
- organized into synsets: synonym sets (near-synonyms)

```
S: (v) interpret, construe, see (make sense of;
 assign a meaning to) "What message do you
  see in this letter?"; "How do you interpret his
  behavior?"
S: (v) understand, read, interpret, translate (make
 sense of a language) "She understands French";
 "Can you read Greek?"
```

WordNet tree for verbs



Polysemy and word senses

The children **ran** to the store
If you see this man, **run**!
Service **runs** all the way to Cranbury
She is **running** a relief operation in Sudan
the story or argument **runs** as follows
Does this old car still **run** well?
Interest rates **run** from 5 to 10 percent
Who’s **running** for treasurer this year?
They **ran** the tapes over and over again
These dresses **run** small

Polysemy

- homonymy: unrelated word senses. *bank* (raised land) vs *bank* (financial institution)
- *bank* (financial institution) vs *bank* (in a casino): related but distinct senses.
- regular polysemy and sense extension
  - zero-derivation, e.g. *tango* (N) vs *tango* (V), or *rabbit, turkey, halibut* (meat / animal)
  - metaphorical senses, e.g. *swallow* [food], *swallow* [information], *swallow* [anger]
  - metonymy, e.g. he played *Bach*; he drank his *glass*.
- vagueness: *nurse, lecturer, driver*
- cultural stereotypes: *nurse, lecturer, driver*

No clearcut distinctions.
Dictionaries are not consistent.

Word sense disambiguation

Needed for many applications, difficult for large domains.

- typically assumes that we have a standard set of word senses (e.g., WordNet)
- frequency: e.g., *diet*: the food sense (or senses) is much more frequent than the parliament sense (Diet of Wurms)
- collocations: e.g. *striped bass* (the fish) vs *bass guitar*: syntactically related or in a window of words (latter sometimes called 'cooccurrence'). Generally 'one sense per collocation'.

WSD techniques

- supervised learning: cf. POS tagging from lecture 3. Need a training corpus. But sense-tagged corpora are difficult to construct, algorithms need far more data than POS tagging
- minimally-supervised learning (Yarowsky, 1995)
- unsupervised sense induction (lecture 8)

WSD by minimally-supervised learning

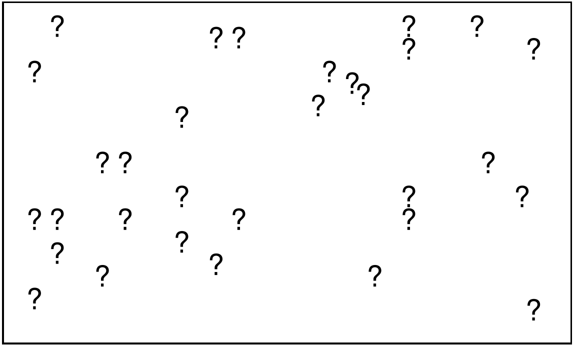
Yarowsky, David (1995) *Unsupervised word sense disambiguation rivalling supervised methods*

Disambiguating *plant* (factory vs vegetation senses):
1. Find contexts in training corpus:

sense	training example
?	company said that the *plant* is still operating
?	although thousands of *plant* and animal species
?	zonal distribution of *plant* life
?	company manufacturing *plant* is in Orlando
	etc

Yarowsky (1995): schematically

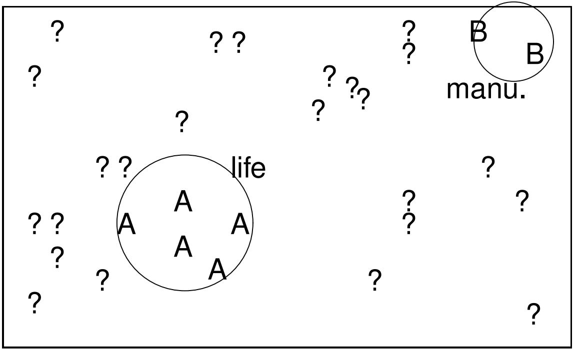
Initial state



2. Identify some seeds to disambiguate a few uses. e.g., ‘plant life’ for vegetation use (A) ‘manufacturing plant’ for factory use (B):

sense	training example
?	company said that the *plant* is still operating
?	although thousands of *plant* and animal species
A	zonal distribution of *plant* life
B	company manufacturing *plant* is in Orlando
	etc

Seeds



3. Train a decision list classifier on the Sense A/Sense B examples.

reliability	criterion	sense
8.10	*plant* life	A
7.58	manufacturing *plant*	B
6.27	*animal* within 10 words of *plant*	A
	etc	

Decision list classifier: automatically trained if/then statements.

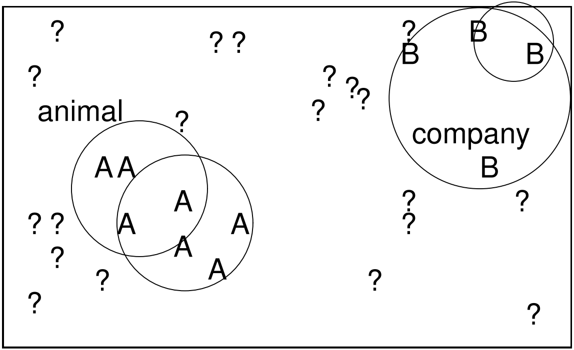
Experimenter decides on classes of test by providing definitions of features of interest: system builds specific tests and provides reliability metrics.

4. Apply the classifier to the training set and add reliable examples to A and B sets.

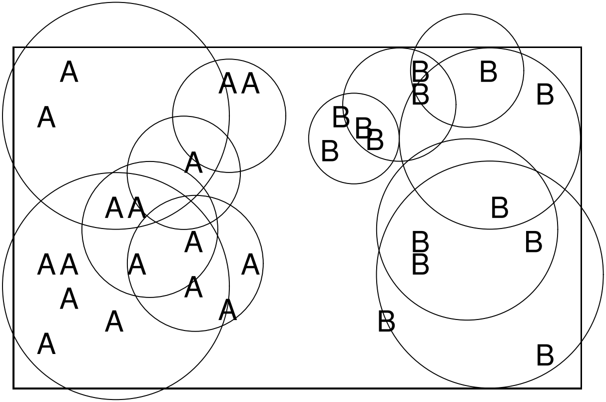
sense	training example
?	company said that the *plant* is still operating
A	although thousands of *plant* and animal species
A	zonal distribution of *plant* life
B	company manufacturing *plant* is in Orlando
	etc

5. Iterate the previous steps 3 and 4 until convergence

Iterating:



Final:



6. Apply the classifier to the unseen test data

- ‘one sense per discourse’: can be used as an additional refinement
- Yarowsky’s experiments were nearly all on homonyms: these principles may not hold as well for sense extension.

Evaluation of WSD

- Yarowsky reported an accuracy of 95%, but on 'easy' homonymous examples
- SENSEVAL competitions
- evaluate against WordNet
- baseline: pick most frequent sense — hard to beat (but don't always know most frequent sense)
- human ceiling varies with words
- MT task: more objective but sometimes doesn't correspond to polysemy in source language

Uses of WSD and lexical semantics in NLP

- any NLP application that needs access to semantics!
- e.g. sentiment analysis:
  feel drained vs *drain pasta*

Metaphor and sentiment examples

He **injected** new life into the performance.
He **added** new life into the performance.
inject hydrogen into the balloon

I cant **buy** this story.
I cant **believe** this story.
This sum will **buy** you a ride on the train

The speech **crowned** the meeting.
The speech **culminated** the meeting.
The prince was **crowned** in Westminster Abbey

The police **smashed** the drug ring after they were tipped off.
The police **arrested** the drug ring after they were tipped off.
She **smashed** her car against the guard rail

She **salts** her lectures with jokes.
She **complements** her lectures with jokes.
people used to **salt** meats on ships

Uses of WSD and lexical semantics in NLP

- any NLP application that needs access to semantics!
- e.g. sentiment analysis:
  feel drained vs *drain pasta*
- *or* information retrieval:
  query expansion by synonymy or hyponymy