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***Introduction***

 Language processing considerations have often been used to explain aspects of language structure and evolution. According to Bates and MacWhinney, this view "is a kind of linguistic Darwinism, an argument that languages look the way they do for functional or adaptive reasons". However, as in adaptationist accounts of biological structures and evolution, this approach can lead to the creation of "just so" stories. In order to avoid these problems, case-by-case analyses must be replaced by statistical investigations of linguistic corpora. In addition, independent evidence for the relative "adaptiveness" of certain linguistic structures must be obtained. We will use this approach to study a linguistic phenomenon – homonymy. That seems to be maladaptive both intuitively and empirically and has been frequently subjected to informal adaptationist arguments. A statistical analysis of English homonyms then uncovered a reliable bias against the usage of homonyms from the same grammatical class. A subsequent experiment provided independent evidence that such homonyms are in fact more confusing than those from different grammatical classes.

#####  In a simple code each sign has only one meaning, and each meaning is associated with only one sign. This one-to-one relationship is not realized in natural languages. When several related meanings are associated with the same group of sounds within one part of speech, the word is called polysemantic, when two or more unrelated meanings are associated with the same form – the words are homonyms.

 The intense development of homonymy in the English language is obviously due not to one single factor but to several interrelated causes, such as the monosyllabic character of English and its analytic structure.

 The abundance of homonyms is also closely connected with such a characteristic feature of the English language as the phonetic identity of word and stem or, in other words, the predominance of free forms among the most frequent roots. It is quite obvious that if the frequency of words stands in some inverse relationship to their length, the monosyllabic words will be the most frequent. Moreover, as the most frequent words are also highly polysemantic, it is only natural that they develop meanings, which in the coarse of time may deviate very far from the central one.

 In general, homonymy is intentionally sought to provoke positive, negative or awkward connotations. Concerning the selection of initials, homonymy with shortened words serves the purpose of manipulation. The demotivated process of a shortened word hereby leads to re-motivation. The form is homonymously identical with an already lexicalized linguistic unit, which makes it easier to pronounce or recall, thus standing out from the majority of acronyms. This homonymous unit has a secondary semantic relation to the linguistic unit.

 Homonymy of names functions as personified metaphor with the result that the homonymous name leads to abstraction. The resultant new word coincides in its phonological realization with an existing word in English. However, there is no logical connection between the meaning of the acronym and the meaning of the already existing word, which explains a great part of the humor it produces.

 In the coarse of time the number of homonyms on the whole increases, although occasionally the conflict of homonyms ends in word loss.

***1.Determination of Homonymy***

#  Two or more words identical in sound and spelling but different in meaning, distribution and in many cases origin are called *homonyms*. The term is derived from Greek “*homonymous”* (*homos* – “the same” and *onoma* – “name”) and thus expresses very well the sameness of name combined with the difference in meaning.1

 There is an obvious difference between the meanings of the symbol *fast* in such combinations as *run fast* ‘quickly’ and *stand* *fast* ‘firmly’. The difference is even more pronounced if we observe cases where *fast* is a noun or a verb as in the following proverbs:

*“A clean fast is better than a dirty breakfast;*

*Who feasts till he is sick, must fast till he is well.”*

 *Fast* as an isolated word, therefore, may be regarded as a variable that can assume several different values depending on the conditions of usage, or, in other words distribution. All the possible values of each linguistic sign are listed in the dictionaries. It is the duty of lexicographers to define the boundaries of each word, i.e. to differentiate homonyms and to unite variants deciding in each case whether the different meanings belong to the same polysemantic word or whether there are grounds to treat them as two or more separate words identical in form. In speech, however, as a rule only one of all the possible values is determined by the context, so that no ambiguity may normally arise. There is no danger, for instance, that the listener would wish to substitute the meaning ‘quick’ into the sentence: *It is absurd to have hard and fast rules about anything2*, or think that *fast rules* here are ‘rules of diet’. Combinations when two or more meanings are possible are either deliberate puns, or result from carelessness. Both meanings of *liver*, i.e. ‘a living person’ and ‘the organ that secretes bile’ are, for instance, intentionally present in the following play upon words:

*1. “Is life worth living?” ”It depends upon the liver.”*

*2. “What do you do with the fruit?” “We eat what we can, and what we can’t eat we can”*

 Very seldom can ambiguity of this kind interfere with understanding. The following example is unambiguous, although the words *back* and *part* have

1. Arnold “The English Word”
2. Oscar Wild “Two Society Comedies”

several homonyms, and maid and heart are polysemantic:

*“Maid of Athens, ere we part,*

*Give, oh give me back my heart”1*

 Homonymy exists in many languages, but in English it is particularly frequent, especially among monosyllabic words. In the list of 2540 homonyms given in the “Oxford English Dictionary” 89% are monosyllabic words and only 9.1% are words of two syllables. From the viewpoint of their morphological structure, they are mostly one-morpheme words.

***2. Classifications of Homonyms***

* + 1. ***The standard way of classification***

***(given by I.V. Arnold)***

 The most widely accepted classification is that recognizing homonyms proper, homophones and homographs.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | PRONUNCIATION | PRONUNCIATION |
| SPELLING | SAME | DIFFERENT |
| SAME | A. Homonym proper | C. Homograph (or heteronym) |
| DIFFERENT | B. Homophone (or heteronym) | D. Allonym |

 Most words differ from each other in both spelling and pronunciation – therefore they belong to the sell D in this table – I shall call them allonyms. Not so many linguists distinguish this category. But it must be admitted that Keith C. Ivey, in his discussion of homonyms, recognizes this fact and writes:

*These familiar with combinatorics may have noticed that there is a fourth possible category based on spelling and pronunciation: words that differ in spelling and pronunciation as well as meaning and origin (alligator/true). These pairs are technically known as* ***different words****.*

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1. G.G. Byron, Peter Washington “Poems of Lord Byron”

 Unfortunately, this seemingly neat solution doesn't work because all heteronyms are different words as Ivey's examples show. He illustrates homophones with board/bored, clearly two different words though pronounced alike, and his example of homographs (the verb desert/the noun desert) again shows, by their pronunciation, that they are different words. Even his example of a homonym -- words having both the same sound and spelling, as illustrated by "to quail and a quail" -- clearly shows they are different words. Lexicographers underline this point by writing separate entries for different words, whether or not they have the same spelling and pronunciation.

 One could stipulate a phrase, like uniquely different words to represent category D, but this expedient is cumbersome and not transparent. A simpler solution, I believe, can be found by means of a neologism. It is not difficult to think of a suitable term.

 An allonym is a word that differs in spelling and pronunciation from all other words, whereas both homonyms and heteronyms identify words that are the same, in some ways, as other words.

 No doubt in ordinary usage, we will have little need for this term, although it would simplify lexical explanation if one could start by making the claim that the most words in English are allonyms. The clear exceptions are other groups.

 Different words that are spelled and pronounced the same way are classed in cell A and are correctly called homonyms proper – but some writers, confusingly, call them heteronyms.

 When different words are spelled the same way but pronounced differently, they belong to category B. It is precise to call them homographs and they are sometimes misleadingly called heteronyms. By contrast, when different words are pronounced the same way but spelled differently, we may properly call them homophones – rarely, they have also been called heteronyms.

***Homonyms proper***

 Homonyms proper are words, as I have already mentioned, identical in pronunciation and spelling, like *fast* and *liver* above. Other examples are: *back* n ‘part of the body’ – *back* adv ‘away from the front’ – *back* v ‘go back’; *ball* n ‘a gathering of people for dancing’ – *ball* n ‘round object used in games’; *bark* n ‘the noise made by dog’ – *bark* v ‘to utter sharp explosive cries’ *– bark* n ‘the skin of a tree’ – *bark* n

‘a sailing ship’; *base* n ‘bottom’ – *base* v ‘build or place upon’ – *base* a ‘mean’; *bay* n ‘part of the sea or lake filling wide-mouth opening of land’ *– bay* n ‘recess in a house or room’ *– bay* v ‘bark’ – *bay* n ‘the European laurel’.

 The important point is that homonyms are distinct words: not different meanings within one word.

***Homophones***

 Homophones are words of the same sound but of different spelling and meaning:

*air – hair; arms – alms; buy – by; him – hymn; knight – night; not – knot; or – oar; piece – peace; rain – reign; scent – cent; steel – steal; storey – story; write – right* and many others.

 In the sentence *The play-wright on my right thinks it right that some conventional rite should symbolize the right of every man to write as he pleases* the sound complex [rait] is a noun, an adjective, an adverb and a verb, has four different spellings and six different meanings. The difference may be confined to the use of a capital letter as in bill and Bill, in the following example:

*“How much is my milk bill?”*

*“Excuse me, Madam, but my name is John.”*

 On the other hand, whole sentences may be homophonic: *The sons raise meat – The sun’s rays meet.* To understand these one needs a wider context. If you hear the second in the course of a lecture in optics, you will understand it without thinking of the possibility of the first.

***Homographs***

 Homographs are words different in sound and in meaning but accidentally identical in spelling: bow [bou] – bow [bau]; lead [li:d] – lead [led]; row [rou] – row [rau]; sewer [‘soue] – sewer [sjue]; tear [tie] – tear [tεe]; wind [wind] – wind [waind] and many more.

 It has been often argued that homographs constitute a phenomenon that should be kept apart from homonymy, as the object of linguistics is sound language. This viewpoint can hardly be accepted. Because of the effects of education and culture written English is a generalized national form of expression. An average speaker does not separate the written and oral form. On the contrary he is more likely to analyze the words in terms of letters than in terms of phonemes with which he is less familiar. That is why a linguist must take into consideration both the spelling and the pronunciation of words when analyzing cases of identity of form and diversity of content.

***B. Classification given by A.I. Smirnitsky***

 The classification, which I have mentioned above, is certainly not precise enough and does not reflect certain important features of these words, and, most important of all, their status as parts of speech. The examples given their show those homonyms may belong to both to the same and to different categories of parts of speech. Obviously, the classification of homonyms should reflect this distinctive feather. Also, the paradigm of each word should be considered, because it has been observed that the paradigms of some homonyms coincide completely, and of others only partially.

 Accordingly, Professor A.I. Smirnitsky classifieds homonyms into two large classes:

1. full homonyms
2. partial homonyms

***Full homonyms***

 Full lexical homonyms are words, which represent the same category of parts of speech and have the same paradigm.

*Match n –* a game, a contest

*Match n* – a short piece of wood used for producing fire

*Wren n* – a member of the Women’s Royal Naval Service

*Wren n* – a bird

***Partial homonyms***

 Partial homonyms are subdivided into three subgroups:

A. Simple lexico-grammatical partial homonyms are words, which belong to the same category of parts of speech. Their paradigms have only one identical form, but it is never the same form, as will be soon from the examples:

*(to) found v*

 *found v* (past indef., past part. of *to find*)

*(to) lay v*

 *lay v* (past indef. of *to lie*)

(*to) bound v*

 *bound v* (past indef., past part. of *to bind*)

B. Complex lexico-grammatical partial homonyms are words of different categories of parts of speech, which have identical form in their paradigms.

*Rose n*

*Rose v* (past indef. of *to ri*se)

*Maid n*

*Made v* (past indef., past part. of *to make*)

*Left adj*

*Left v* (past indef., past part. of *to leave*)

*Bean n*

*Been v* (past part. of *to be*)

*One num*

*Won v* (past indef., past part. of *to win*)

C. Partial lexical homonyms are words of the same category of parts of speech which are identical only in their corresponding forms.

*to lie (lay, lain) v*

*to lie (lied, lied) v*

*to hang (hung, hung) v*

*to hang (hanged, hanged) v*

*to can (canned, canned)*

 *(I) can (could)*

***C. Other aspects of classification***

 Various types of classification for homonyms have been suggested.

 A comprehensive system may be worked out if we are guided by the theory of oppositions and in classifying the homonyms take into consideration the difference or sameness in their lexical and grammatical meaning, paradigm and basic form.

 As both form and meaning can be further subdivided, the combination of distinctive features by which two words are compared becomes more complicated – there are four features: the form may be phonetical and graphical, the meaning – lexical and grammatical, a word may also have a paradigm of grammatical forms different from the basic form.

 The distinctive features shown in the table below are lexical meaning (different denoted by A, or nearly the same denoted by A1), grammatical meaning (different denoted by B, or same by B1), paradigm (different denoted by C, or same denoted by C1), and basic form (different denoted by D, and same denoted by D1).

 The term “nearly same lexical meaning” must not be taken too literally. It means only that the corresponding members of the opposition have some important invariant semantic components in common. “Same grammatical meaning” implies that both members belong to the same part of speech.

 Same paradigm comprises also cases when there is only one word form, i.e. when the words are unchangeable. Inconsistent combinations of features are crossed out in the table. It is, for instance, impossible for two words to be identical in all word forms and different in basic forms, or for two homonyms to show no difference either in lexical or grammatical meaning, because in this case they are not homonyms. That leaves twelve possible cases.

|  |
| --- |
| Difference and Identity in Words |
| A Different lexical meaning | A1 Nearly same lexical meaning |
|  B Different grammatical meaning | Partial Homonymy | Patterned Homonymy | D1 Same basic forms |
| *light, -s* n*light,-er,-est* a*flat, -s* n*flat,-er,-est* a | *for* prp*for* cj | *before* prp*before* adv*before* cj | *eye, -s* n*eye*, *-s, -ed,**-ing* v |
| *might* n*may-might* v |  |  | *thought* n*thought* v(Past Indef. Tense of *think*) | D Different basic form |
| B1 Same grammatical meaning | *axis, axes* n*axe – axes* n*but–butted* v*butt-butted* v |  |  | Synonyms | D Different basic form |
| *lie-lay-lain* v*lie-lied-lied* v | Full Homonymyspring,-s nspring,-s nspring,-s n | PolysemyVariants of the same polysemantic word |  |
|  | C Different paradigm | C1 Same paradigm or no changes | C Different paradigm |  |

 It goes without saying that this is a model that gives a general scheme. Actually a group of homonyms may contain members belonging to different groups in this classification. Take, for example, *fell*1 n ‘animal’s hide or skin with the hair’; *fell*2 n ‘hill’ and also ‘a stretch of North-English moorland’; *fell*3 a ‘fierce’ (poet.); *fell*4 v ‘to cut down trees’ and as a noun ‘amount of timber cut’; *fell*5 (the Past Indefinite Tense of the verb *fall*). This group may be broken into pairs, each of which will fit into one of the above describes divisions. Thus, *fell*1 - *fell*2  may be characterized as AB1C1D1,  *fell*1 – *fell*4 as ABCD1 and *fell*4 – *fell*5 as A1BCD.

***3. Sources of Homonyms***

 There are a lot of different sources of homonyms in English language, so let’s talk about some of them, which are the most important ones, due to my point of view.

 One source of homonyms is phonetic changes, which words undergo in the coarse of their historical development. As a result of such changes, two or more words, which were formally pronounced differently, may develop identical sound forms and thus become homonyms.

 *Night* and *knight,* for instance, were not homonyms in Old English as the initial *k* in the second word was pronounced, and not dropped as it is in its modern sound form: O.E. *kniht* (cf. O.E. *niht*). A more complicated change of form brought together another pair of homonyms: *to knead* (O.E. *cneadan*) and *to need* (O.E. *neodian*).

 In Old English the verb *to write* had the form *writan*, and the adjective *right* had the forms *reht, riht*. The noun *sea* descends from the Old English form *sae*, and the verb *to* *see* – from O.E. *seon*. The noun *work* and the verb *to work* also had different forms in Old English: *wyrkean* and *weork* respectively.

 Borrowing is another source of homonyms. A borrowed word may, in the final stage of its phonetic adaptation, duplicate in form either a native word or another borrowing. So, in the group of homonyms *rite*, n *– to write*, v *– right*, adj the second and the third words are of native origin whereas *rite* is a Latin borrowing (<Lat. *ritus*). In the pair *piece*, n – *peace*, n, the first originates from Old French *pais*, and the second from O.F. (<Gaulish) *pettia*. *Bank*, n ‘a shore’ is a native word, and *bank*, n ‘a financial institution’ is an Italian borrowing. *Fair*, adj ( as in *a fair deal, it’s not fair*) is native, and *fair*, n ‘a gathering of buyers and sellers’ is a French borrowing. *Match*, n ‘a game; a contest of skill, strength’ is native, and *match*, n ‘a slender short piece of wood used for producing fire’ is a French borrowing.

 Word building also contributes significantly to the growth of homonymy, and the most important type in this respect is undoubtedly conversion. Such pairs of words as *comb*, n – *to comb*, v; *pale*, adj – *to pale*, v; *to make*, v – *make*, n are numerous in the vocabulary. Homonyms of this type, which are the same in sound and spelling but refer to different categories of parts of speech, are called lexico-grammatical homonyms.

 Shortening is a further type of word building, which increases the number of homonyms. *Fan*, n in the sense of ‘enthusiastic admirer of some kind of sport or of an actor, singer, etc.’ is a shortening produced from *fanatic*. Its homonym is a Latin borrowing *fan*, n which denotes an implement for waving lightly to produce a cool current of air. The noun *rep*, n denoting a kind of fabric (cf. with the Rus. *penc*) has three homonyms made by shortening*: rep*, n (< *repertory*), *rep*, n (< *representative*), *rep*, n (< *reputation*); all the three are informal words.

 During World War II girls serving in the Women’s Royal Naval Service (an auxiliary of the British Royal Navy) were jokingly nicknamed *Wrens* (informal). This neologistic formation made by shortening has the homonym *wren*, n ‘a small bird with dark brown plumage barred with black’ (Rus. крапивник).

 Words made by sound-imitation can also form pairs of homonyms with other words: *bang*, n ‘a loud, sudden, explosive noise’ – *bang*, n ‘a fringe of hair combed over the forehead’. Also: *mew*, n ‘the sound the cat makes’ – *mew*, n ‘a sea gull’ – *mew*, n ‘a pen in which poultry is fattened’ *– mews* ‘small terraced houses in Central London’.

 The above-described sources of homonyms have one important feature common. In all the mentioned cases the homonyms developed from two or more different words, and their similarity is purely accidental. (In this respect, conversion certainly presents an exception for in pairs of homonyms formed by conversion one word of the pair is produced from the other: *a find < to find*.)

 Now we come to a further source of homonyms, which differs essentially from all the above cases. Two or more homonyms can originate from different meanings of the same word when, for some reason, the semantic structure of the word breaks into several parts. This type of formation of homonyms is called disintegration or split of polysemy.

 From what has been said above about polysemantic words, it should become clear that the semantic structure of a polysemantic word presents a system within which all its constituent meanings are held together by logical associations. In most cases, the function of the arrangement and the unity if determined by one of the meanings.

 **Fire, n:**

* 1. Flame
	2. An instance of destructive burning: a forest fire
	3. Burning material in a stove, fireplace: There is a fire in the next room. A camp fire.
	4. The shooting of guns: to open (cease) fire.
	5. Strong feeling, passion, and enthusiasm: a speech lacking fire.

 If this meaning happens to disappear from word’s semantic structure, associations between the rest of the meanings may be severed, the semantic structure loses its unity and fails into two or more parts which then become accepted as independent lexical units.

Let us consider the history of three homonyms:

*board*, n – a long and thin piece of timber

*board*, n – daily meals, esp. as provided for pay, e.g. *room and board*

*board*, n – an official group of persons who direct or supervise some activity, e.g. *a board of directors.*

 It is clear that the meanings of these three words are in no way associated with one another. Yet, most larger dictionaries still enter a meaning of *board* that once held together all these other meanings ‘a table’. It developed from the meaning ‘a piece of timber’ by transference based on contiguity (association of an object and the material from which it is made). The meanings ‘meals’ and ‘an official group of persons’ developed from the meaning ‘table’, also by transference based on contiguity: meals are easily associated with a table on which they are served; an official group of people in authority are also likely to discuss their business round a table.

 Nowadays, however, the item of the furniture, on which meals are served and round which boards of directors meet, is no longer denoted by the word *board* but by the French Norman borrowing *table*, and *board* in this meaning, though still registered by some dictionaries, can very well be marked as archaic as it is no longer used in common speech. That is why, with the intrusion of the borrowed *table*, the word *board* actually lost its corresponding meaning. But it was just that meaning which served as a link to hold together the rest of the constituent parts of the word’s semantic structure. With its diminished role as an element of communication, its role in the semantic structure was also weakened. The speakers almost forgot that *board* had ever been associated with any item of furniture, nor could they associate the notions of meals or of a responsible committee with a long thin piece of timber (which is the oldest meaning of *board*). Consequently, the semantic structure of board was split into three units.

 The following scheme illustrates the process:

Board, n (development of meanings)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A long, thin piece of timber |  | A piece of furniture |  | Meals provided for pay |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | An official group of persons |

Board I, II, III, n (split of the polysemy)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| I. | A long, thin piece of timber |  | A piece of furniture | II. | Meals provided for pay |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Seldom used: ousted by French borrowing *table* | III. | An official group of persons |

 Historically all three nouns originate from the same verb with the meaning of ‘to jump, to leap’ (O.E. *springan*), so that the meaning of the first homonym is the oldest. The meanings of the second and third homonyms were originally based on metaphor. At the head of a stream the water sometimes leaps up out of the earth, so that metaphorically such a place could well be described as *a leap*. On the other hand, the season of the year following winter could be poetically defined as *a leap* from the darkness and cold into sunlight and life. Such metaphors are typical enough of Old English and Middle English semantic transferences but not so characteristic of modern mental and linguistic processes. The poetic associations that lay in the basis of the semantic shifts described above have long since been forgotten, and an attempt to re-establish the lost links may well seem far-fetched. It is just the near-impossibility of establishing such links that seems to support the claim for homonymy and not for polysemy with these three words.

 It should be stressed, however, that split of the polysemy as a source of homonyms is not accepted by all scholars. It is really difficult sometimes to decide whether a certain word has or has not been subject to the split of the semantic structure and whether we are dealing with different meanings of the same word or with homonyms, for the criteria are subjective and imprecise. The imprecision is recorded in the data of different dictionaries, which often contradict each other on this very issue, so that *board* is represented as two homonyms in Professor V.K. Muller’s dictionary, as three homonyms in Professor V.D. Arakin’s and as one and the same word in Hornby’s dictionary.

 Spring also receives different treatment. V.K. Muller’s and Hornby’s dictionaries acknowledge but two homonyms:

1. a season of the year;
2. a) the act of springing, a leap,

b)a place where a stream of water comes up out of the earth;

and some other meanings, whereas V.D.Arakin’s dictionary presents the three homonyms as given above.

1. ***Problems of Homonymy.***

 The synchronic treatment of English homonyms brings to the forefront a set of problems of paramount importance for different branches of applied linguistics: lexicography, foreign language teaching and information retrieval. These problems are: the criteria distinguishing homonymy from polysemy, the formulation of rules for recognizing different meanings of the same homonym in terms of distribution, and the description of difference between patterned and non-patterned homonymy. It is necessary to emphasize that all these problems are connected with difficulties created by homonymy in understanding the message by the reader or listener, not with formulating one’s thoughts; they exist for the speaker though in so far as he must construct his speech in a way that would prevent all possible misunderstanding.

 All three problems are so closely interwoven that it is difficult to separate them. So we shall discuss them as they appear for various practical purposes. For a lexicographer it is a problem of establishing word boundaries. It is easy enough to see that *match*, as in *safety matches*, is a separate word from the verb *match* ‘to suit’. But he must know whether one is justified in taking into one entry *match*, as in *football match*, and *match* in *meet one’s match* ‘one’s equal’.

 On the synchronic level, when the difference in etymology is irrelevant, the problem of establishing the criterion for the distinction between different words identical in sound form, and different meanings of the same word becomes hard to solve. Nevertheless the problem cannot be dropped altogether as upon an efficient arrangement of dictionary entries depends the amount of time spent by readers in looking up a word: a lexicographer will either save or waste his readers’ time and effort.

 Actual solutions differ. It is a wildly spread practice in English lexicography to combine in one entry words of identical phonetic form showing similarity of lexical meaning or, in other words, revealing a lexical invariant, even if they belong to different parts of speech. In our country a different trend has settled. The Anglo-Russian dictionary edited by V.D. Arakin makes nine separate entries with the word right against four items given in the dictionary edited by A.S. Hornby.

 The truth is that there exists no universal criterion for distinction between polysemy and homonymy.

 Polysemy characterizes words that have more than one meaning -- any dictionary search will reveal that most words are polysemes -- *word* itself has 12 significant senses, according to **WordNet1**. This means that the word, word, is used in texts scanned by lexicographers to represent twelve different concepts.

The point is that words are not meanings, although they can have many meanings.

 Lexicographers make a clear distinction between different words by writing separate entries for each of them, whether or not they are spelled the same way. The dictionary ofFred W. Riggs has 5 entries for the form, *bow* -- this shows that lexicographers recognize this form (spelling) as a way of representing five different words. Three of them are pronounced bo and two bau, which identifies two homophones in this set of five homographs, each of which is a polyseme, capable of representing more than one concept. To summarize: bow is a word-form that stands for two different homophones and, as a homograph, represents five different words.

 Moreover, the form *bow* is polysemic and can represent more than 20 concepts (its various meanings or senses). By gratuitously putting meaning in its definition of a homograph, **WordNet** can mislead readers who might think that a word is a homonym because it has several meanings -- but having one word represent more than one concept is normal -- just consider term as an example: it can not only refer to the designator of a concept, but also the duration of something, like the school year or a politician's hold on office, a legal stipulation, one's standing in a relationship (on good terms) and many other notions -- more than 17 are identified in the dictionary edited be Fred W. Riggs. By contrast, homonyms are different words and each of them (as a polyseme) can have multiple meanings.

 To make their definitions precise, lexicographers need criteria to distinguish different words from each other even though they are spelled the same way. This usually hinges on etymology and, sometimes, parts of speech. One might, for example, think that that firm ‘steadfast’ and firm ‘business unit’ are two senses of one word (polyseme). Not so! Lexicographers class them as different words because the first evolved from a Latin stem meaning throne or chair, and the latter from a different root in Italian meaning signature.

 Dictionaries are not uniform in their treatment of the different grammatical forms of a word. In some of them, the adjective *firm* (securely) is handled as a different word from the noun *firm* (to settle) even though they have the same etymology. Fred W. Riggs isn’t persuaded such differences justify treating grammatical classes (adjectives, nouns, and verbs) of a word-form that belongs to a single lexeme as different words -- the precise meaning of lexeme is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_1. **WordNet** is a Lexical Database for English prepared by the Cognitive Science Laboratory at Princeton University.

explained below. The relevant point here is that deciding whether or not a form identifies one or more than one lexeme does not hinge on meanings. There is agreement that a word-form represents different words when they evolved from separate roots, and some lexicographers treat each grammatical use of a lexeme (noun, verb, adjective) as though it were a different word.

 The etymological criterion may lead to distortion of the present day situation. The English vocabulary of today is not a replica of the Old English vocabulary with some additions from borrowing. It is in many respects a different system, and this system will not be revealed if the lexicographers guided by etymological criteria only.

 A more or less simple, if not very rigorous, procedure based on purely synchronic data may be prompted by analysis of dictionary definitions. It may be called explanatory transformation. It is based on the assumption that if different senses rendered by the same phonetic complex can be defined with the help of an identical kernel word-group, they may be considered sufficiently near to be regarded as variants of the same word; if not, they are homonyms.

 Consider the following set of examples:

1. *A child’s voice is heard.1*
2. *His voice…was…annoyingly well-bred.2*
3. *The voice-voicelessness distinction…sets up some English consonants in opposed pairs…*
4. *In the voice contrast of active and passive…the active is the unmarked form.*

 The first variant (*voice1*) may be defined as ‘sound uttered in speaking or singing as characteristic of a particular person’, *voice2* as ‘mode of uttering sounds in speaking or singing’, *voice3* as ‘the vibration of the vocal chords in sounds uttered’. So far all the definitions contain one and the same kernel element rendering the invariant common basis of their meaning. It is, however, impossible to use the same kernel element for the meaning present in the fourth example. The corresponding definition is: “Voice – that form of the verb that expresses the relation of the subject to the action”. This failure to satisfy the same explanation formula sets the fourth meaning apart. It may then be considered a homonym to the polysemantic word embracing the first three variants. The procedure described may remain helpful when the items considered belong to different parts of speech; the verb *voice* may mean, for example, ‘to utter a sound by the aid of the vocal chords’. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Maugham W.S. “The Kite”
2. London J. “The Call of the Wild and White Fang”

 This brings us to the problem of patterned homonymy, i.e. of the invariant lexical meaning present in homonyms that have developed from one common source and belong to various parts of speech.

 Is a lexicographer justified in placing the verb *voice* with the above meaning into the same entry with the first three variants of the noun? The same question arises with respect to *after* or *before* – preposition, conjunction and adverb.

 English lexicographers think it quite possible for one and the same word to function as different parts of speech. Such pairs as *act* n – *act* v; *back* n - *back* v; *drive* n – *drive* v; the above mentioned *after* and *before* and the like, are all treated as one word functioning as different parts of speech. This point of view was severely criticized. It was argued that one and the same word could not belong to different parts of speech simultaneously, because this would contradict the definition of the word as a system of forms.

 This viewpoint is not faultless either; if one follows it consistently, one should regard as separate words all cases when words are countable nouns in one meaning and uncountable in another, when verbs can be used transitively and intransitively, etc. In this case *hair1* ‘all the hair that grows on a person’s head’ will be one word, an uncountable noun; whereas ‘a single thread of hair’ will be

denoted by another word (*hair2*) which, being countable, and thus different in paradigm, cannot be considered the same word. It would be tedious to enumerate all the absurdities that will result from choosing this path. A dictionary arranged on these lines would require very much space in printing and could occasion much wasted time in use. The conclusion therefore is that efficiency in lexicographic work is secured by a rigorous application of etymological criteria combined with formalized procedures of establishing a lexical invariant suggested by synchronic linguistic methods.

 As to those concerned with teaching of English as a foreign language, they are also keenly interested in patterned homonymy. The most frequently used words constitute the greatest amount of difficulty, as may be summed up by the following jocular example: I think that this “that” is a conjunction but that that “that” that that man used as pronoun.

 A correct understanding of this peculiarity of contemporary English should be instilled in the pupils from the very beginning, and they should be taught to find their way in sentences where several words have their homonyms in other parts of speech, as in Jespersen’s example: *Will change of air cure love?* To show the scope of the problem for the elementary stage a list of homonyms that should be classified as patterned is given below:

 *Above*, prp, adv, a; *act*, n, v; *after*, prp, adv, cj; *age*, n, v; *back*, n, adv, v; *ball*, n, v; *bank*, n, v; *before*, prp, adv, cj; *besides*, prp, adv; *bill*, n, v; *bloom*, n, v; *box*, n, v. The other examples are: *by, can, close, country, course, cross, direct, draw, drive, even, faint, flat, fly, for, game, general, hard, hide, hold, home, just, kind, last, leave, left, lie, light, like, little, lot, major, march, may, mean, might, mind, miss, part, plain, plane, plate, right, round, sharp, sound, spare, spell, spring, square, stage, stamp, try, type, volume, watch, well, will*.

 For the most part all these words are cases of patterned lexico-grammatical homonymy taken from the minimum vocabulary of the elementary stage: the above homonyms mostly differ within each group grammatically but possess some lexical invariant. That is to say, *act* v follows the standard four-part system of forms with a base form *act*, an s-form (*act-s*), a Past Indefinite Tense form (*acted*) and an ing-form (*acting*) and takes up all syntactic functions of verbs, whereas act n can have two forms, *act* (sing.) and *act* (pl.). Semantically both contain the most generalized component rendering the notion of doing something.

 Recent investigations have shown that it is quite possible to establish and to formalize the differences in environment, either syntactical or lexical, serving to signal which of the several inherent values is to be ascribed to the variable in a given context. An example of distributional analysis will help to make this point clear.

 The distribution of a lexico-semantic variant of a word may be represented as a list of structural patterns in which it occurs and the data on its combining power. Some of the most typical structural patterns for a verb are: N + V + N; N + V + Prp + N; N + V + A; N + V + adv; N + V + to + V and some others. Patterns for nouns are far less studied, but for the present case one very typical example will suffice. This is the structure: article + A + N.

 In the following extract from “A Taste of Honey” by Shelagh Delaney the morpheme *laugh* occurs three times: *I can’t stand people who laugh at other people. They’d get a bigger laugh, if they laughed at themselves.*

 We recognize *laugh* used first and last here as a verb, because the formula is N + *laugh* + prp + N and so the pattern is in both cases N + V + prp + N. In the beginning of the second sentence *laugh* is a noun and the pattern is article + A + N.

 This elementary example can give a very general idea of the procedure which can be used for solving more complicated problems.

 We may sum up our discussion by pointing out that whereas distinction between polysemy homonymy is relevant and important for lexicography it is not relevant for the practice of either human or machine translation. The reason for this is that different variants of a polysemantic word are not less conditioned by context then lexical homonyms. In both cases the identification of the necessary meaning is based on the corresponding distribution that can signal it and must be present in the memory either of the pupil or the machine. The distinction between patterned and non-patterned homonymy, greatly underrated until now, is of far greater importance. In non-patterned homonymy every unit is to be learned separately both from the lexical and grammatical points of view. In patterned homonymy when one knows the lexical meaning of a given word in one part of speech, one can accurately predict the meaning when the same sound complex occurs in some other part of speech, provided, of coarse, that there is sufficient context to guide one.

***Conclusion***

 An important issue that needs to be discussed is the generalizability of the results from written to spoken language. Although we cannot offer definitive arguments on this point, we can cite some reasons why the results might underestimate the difference between same and different class homonyms in speech. First, the disambiguating information provided by orthography would be absent. Second, homonyms from different grammatical classes would tend to have acoustic differences that could aid in disambiguation. In particular, because of the basic clause structure of English, nouns are more likely than verbs to appear at the ends of phrases and clauses and so should tend to be longer because of durational lengthening concomitant with those boundaries. Indeed, Sorenson and Cooper found that the noun versions of words were longer in duration than their verb homonyms, and that these differences were due solely to their different distributions in sentences. The distributional differences between same class homonyms are likely to be smaller than those for different class homonyms, which should make them less easily distinguishable through contextually-driven acoustic modifications.

 We will conclude by mentioning one implication of this work for another aspect of language use, namely linguistic humor. Puns and other jokes often rely on homonyms for their effects. The aesthetic impact of puns, in particular, requires that the audience make a temporary, but perceptible, misinterpretation of a sentence. The research of some linguists indicates that likelihood of misinterpretation will be greater with same class homonyms, and so these homonyms should be used more than different class homonyms in puns. Furthermore, the rated quality of same class homonyms should be higher than that for different class homonyms. More generally, whereas prior studies have treated homonyms equivalently in analysis and experimentation, our understanding of these words and how they are processed could be enriched by studying homonym subclasses that might differ on various dimensions such as lexical organization, language evolution, and language play.

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