An aerial view of Paris, France, featuring the Eiffel Tower on the left and the city skyline extending to the horizon. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Approaches to word meaning
(sense and reference, prototype theory,
componential analysis), lexical relations etc.

Weeks 15-16



THE
BUTTERFLY
EFFECT

*"Every single thing you do matters. You have been created
as one of a kind. You have been created in order to make a difference.
You have within you the power to change the world."*

ANDY ANDREWS

According to Ferdinand de Saussure

A (linguistic) sign as a combination of a concept and a sound image.



According to Ferdinand de Saussure

A (linguistic) sign as a combination of signified and Signifier.

A (linguistic) sign as a combination of signified and Signifier.

Signifier

Word or image
e.g Diamond



Signified

concept that is associated
with the signifier, eg wealth,
romance, class



Sign

The outcome/ meaning gained.
e.g if proposed with a diamond
because of wealth and romance.



Ambiguity would disappear if the three notions involved here were designated by three names, each suggesting and opposing the others. I propose to retain the word *sign* [*signe*] to designate the whole and to replace *concept* and *sound-image* respectively by *signified* [*signifié*] and *signifier* [*signifiant*]; the last two terms have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts. As regards *sign*, if I am satisfied with it, this is simply because I do not know of any word to replace it, the ordinary language suggesting no other.

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A (linguistic) sign as a combination of signified and Signifier.

According to Ferdinand de Saussure

2. Principle I: The Arbitrary Nature of the Sign

The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Since I mean by sign the whole that results from the associating of the signifier with the signified, I can simply say: *the linguistic sign is arbitrary.*

A (linguistic) sign as an arbitrary combination of the signified and the Signifier

According to Ferdinand de Saussure

3. *Principle II: The Linear Nature of the Signifier*

The signifier, being auditory, is unfolded solely in time from which it gets the following characteristics: (a) it represents a span, and (b) the span is measurable in a single dimension; it is a line.

The Signifier of (linguistic) sign is linear [lɪnɪə].

According to Ferdinand de Saussure

Ding-Dong



Hearing the ringing noise tells us that there is a bell nearby

Bell

Could equally as well use the word chime

Signs can be either:

1. Iconic = similar to the thing they stand in for
2. Indexical = caused by the thing they stand in for
3. Symbolic = stand in for something by conventional usage

Signs are made of two parts:

1. Signifiers = the marks, sounds or gestures that we read, hear or observe
2. Signifieds = the things that the signifier stands in for

The relationship between these parts is arbitrary



CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE

Peirce and De Saussure may have taken different approaches to signs but they both see something arbitrary and conventional in the way the work.



FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE

Lion

Leo =



Simba

A Sign can be interpreted in its relation to

to objects

"semantics"

to persons

"pragmatics"

to other symbols

"syntactics"

Syntactics refers to the study of the syntagmatic relations between signs in a text production chain. However syntagmatic and paradigmatic interpretation of the message are tightly interrelated (and interdependent).

Three definitions of semantics

[sɪ'mæntɪks]; [sə'mantɪks]

- is the branch of linguistics and logic concerned with **meaning**.
- is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences.
- Linguistic semantics deals with the conventional meaning conveyed by the use of words and sentences of a language

Бабушка из Норвегии

- Даны четыре норвежских слова:

farmor, farfar, mormor, morfar.

Первое из них можно перевести на русский язык как «бабушка», но в хороших норвежско-русских словарях обычно проводится более точное его значение.

Даны слова на древнеиндийском языке санскрит и их переводы на русский язык в перепутанном порядке:

MAKE

GOOD

MATCHES!

- a) yaḥ
- b) tathā
- c) sarvatra
- d) ekaḥ
- e) yadā
- f) tatra
- g) yatra
- h) sarvaḥ

- 1. везде
- 2. где
- 3. всякий
- 4. когда
- 5. который
- 6. так
- 7. там
- 8. тот же самый

Lord and Lady

Origin: Old English hlāford, from hlāfweard 'bread-keeper', from a Germanic base (see loaf I, ward).

loaf I noun (pl. loaves) a quantity of bread that is shaped and baked in one piece and usually sliced before being eaten a loaf of bread. - half a loaf is better than no bread - use one's loaf

Origin: Old English hlāf, of Germanic origin; related to German Laib

Origin: Old English hlǣfdige

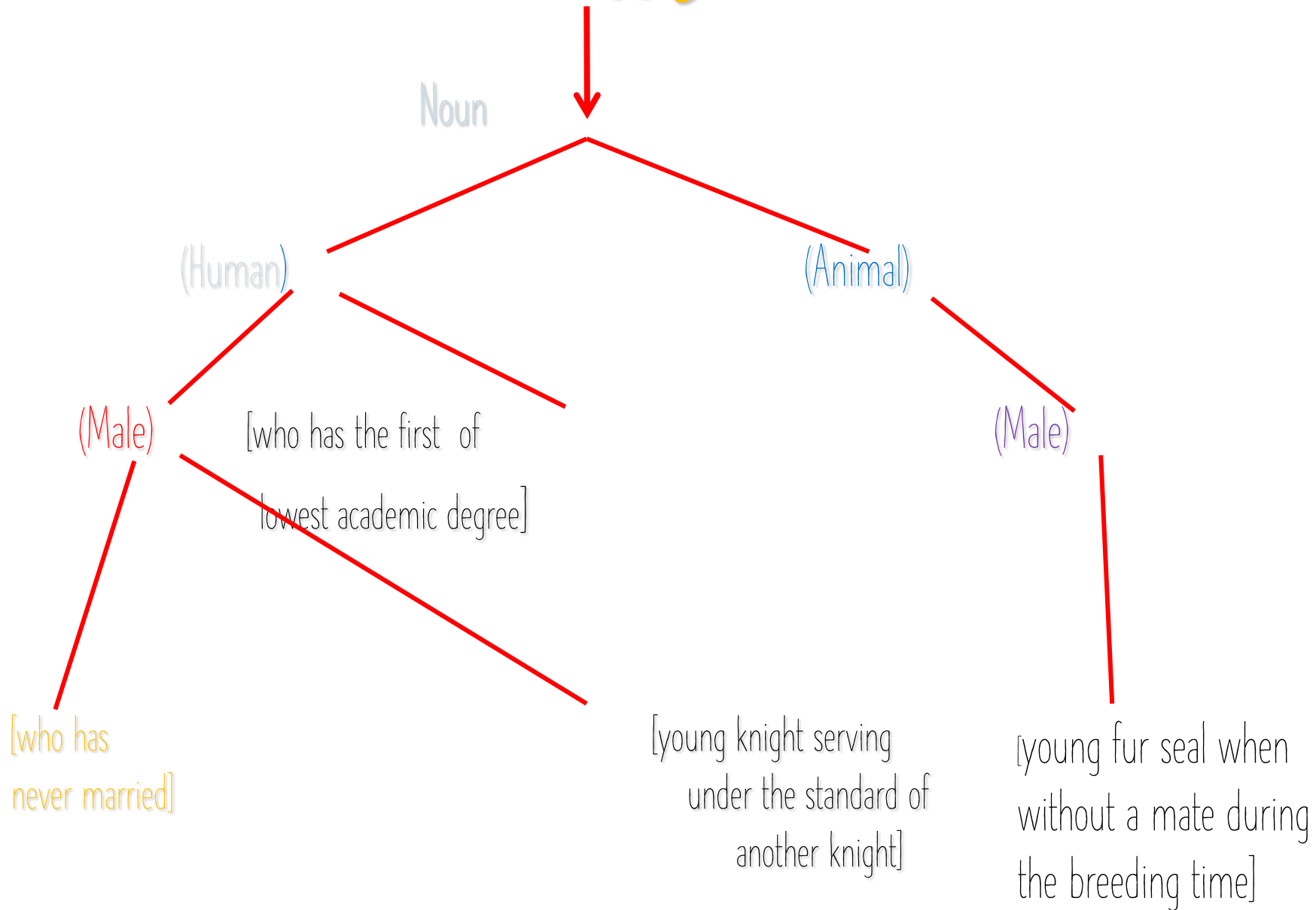
from hlāf 'loaf' + a Germanic base meaning 'knead', related to dough; compare with lord.

knead verb [with obj.] work (moistened flour or clay) into dough or paste with the hands

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| You are a husband | You are a wife |
| ?? father-in-law | Свекор ?? |
| ?? mother-in-law | Свекровь |
| Шурин | ?? brother-in-law |
| ?? sister-in-law | Золовка |
| Свояк brother-in-law | ?? (female) |
| | Ятровь |
| Кума | |

Bachelor

Noun



Prototypes

The Prototype Theory

- When people think of birds, they often think of flying. And yet there are birds that can't fly: **penguins and ostriches** for example.
- We also associate birds with wings.
- But **bats** have wings (and fly) and yet they are not birds.

The Prototype Theory

- Prototypicality is the other way round you can try to explain the meaning of words. It is linked, to some extent, to the difficulties people might have in constructing a definition of words which will describe their meaning exactly and precisely

The Prototype Theory

- Many speakers of English the most typical bird is the **robin**. In other words, we could talk about prototypical and less prototypical examples of a certain category.

The Prototype Theory

- Prototypicality can be a useful notion, in a way, when you discuss **colours** as well.

The Prototype Theory

- The starting-point of the prototypical conception of categorial structure is summarized in the statement that when describing categories analytically, most traditions of thought have treated category membership as a digital, all-or-none phenomenon. That is, much work in philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and anthropology assumes that categories are logical bounded entities, membership in which is defined by an item's possession of a simple set of criterial features, in which all instances possessing the criterial attributes have a full and equal degree of membership.
- In contrast, it has recently been argued ... that some natural categories are analog and must be represented logically in a manner which reflects their analog structure (Rosch and Mervis 1975: 573–574).

The Prototype Theory

- According to the prototype theory, certain features of a category have equal status, and thus, examples that represent all or most of those features become the prototype for that category. Items that do not share the majority of these features may still belong to that category, but do not represent the prototype. Consider a category such as furniture.
- Chairs may, to some individuals, be prototypical because these items of furniture have a majority of the common furniture features. A footstool, on the other hand, may not serve as a prototype because, while it has some common furniture features, it does not have a majority of those features. How each person applies prototype theory to categorizing concepts and language varies based on experience and cognitive development, although many individuals share similar categorizations.

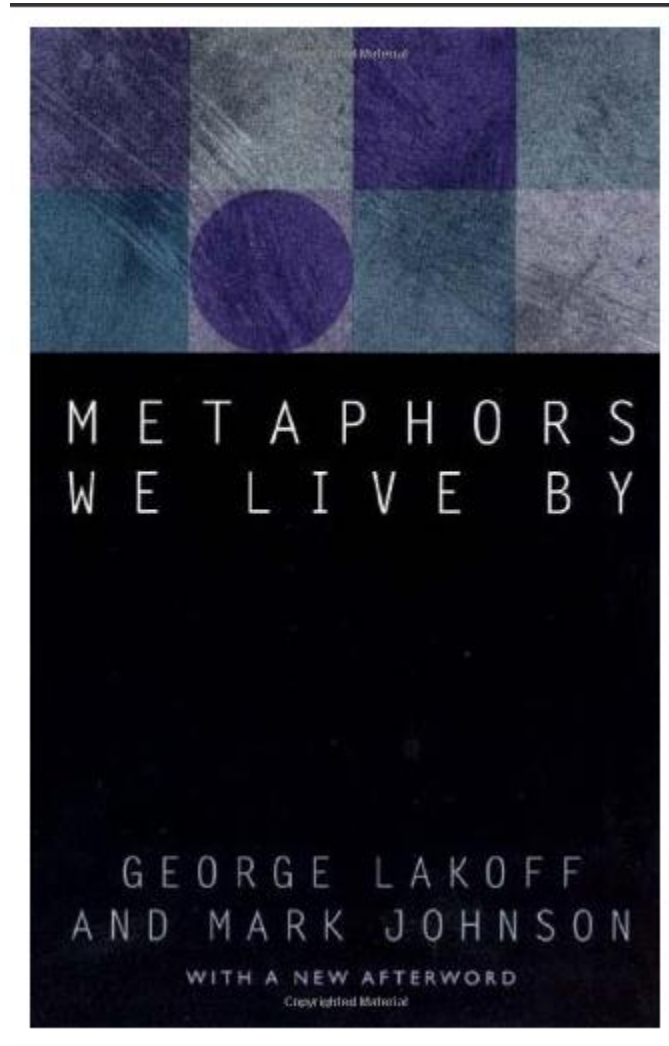
The Prototype Theory

- Primarily, the prototype theory deals with how individuals categorize and stereotype certain items in language. Such understandings help psychologists understand and study the acquisition of vocabulary, individual mental lexicons, and the development of linguistic skills in individuals. Teaching environments, such as primary schools, benefit from such research and understanding when developing curricula for students. Understanding how the mind categorizes and classifies information, as well as how that process is affected by cognitive development, culture, and early learning experiences, aids in helping students gain vocabulary and develop more advanced language skills.

The Prototype Theory

- Under prototype theory, experts believe that a person's first experience with a particular stimulus later defines the prototype associated with that category of stimuli. As experiences are gained and a person is more exposed to a particular category, the prototype evolves into a central representation for that category. To put it in simple terms, a child's first experience with a bird might be a robin, and thus the child's prototype for birds becomes a robin. Through experience and exposure to other birds, her prototype comes to represent creatures with feathers, beaks, and the ability to fly, and can begin to include more birds like bluejays, eagles, and robins. An ostrich or a penguin may still be categorized as a bird, but because these species do not fly, they are not a representative example when the child initially talks of birds.

George Lakoff, Mark Johnson 1980



George Lakoff, 1990

George Lakoff

Women,
Fire, and
Dangerous
Things

*What Categories Reveal
about the Mind*

Metaphors We Live By, by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson

(The University of Chicago Press, 1980)

Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination ... a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

Metaphors We Live By, by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson

(The University of Chicago Press, 1980)

The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.

Metaphors We Live By, by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson

(The University of Chicago Press, 1980)

But our conceptual system is not something we are normally aware of. In most of the little things we do every day, we simply think and act more or less automatically along certain lines. Just what these lines are is by no means obvious. One way to find out is by looking at language. Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what the system is like.

Metaphors We Live By, by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson

(The University of Chicago Press, 1980)

Primarily on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature. And we have found a way to begin to identify in detail just what the metaphors are that structure how we perceive, how we think, and what we do.

Metaphors We Live By, by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson

(The University of Chicago Press, 1980)

To give some idea of what it could mean for a concept to be metaphorical and for such a concept to structure an everyday activity, let us start with the concept ARGUMENT and the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. This metaphor is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions:

ARGUMENT IS WAR

Metaphors We Live By, by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson

(The University of Chicago Press, 1980)

[Notice how language has always used the masculine. Why was that? Women were banned from thinking and education. Traditionally, they've been considered unfit for rational thinking. Of course, this is not true. We should all be unfit now for exerting patriarchal reasoning and we should all be finding ways to think beyond the patriarchal frame of mind, so solidly based on violence and misogyny (considering women inferior in everything). We're developing Empathetic Rationality, reasoning which includes love or solidarity, a concern for life, and this is kinder, wiser, and better for our living together!]

Metaphors We Live By, by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson

Your claims are *indefensible*.

He *attacked* every *weak point* in my argument.

His criticisms were *right on target*.

I *demolished* his argument.

I've never *won* an argument with him.

You disagree? OK, *shoot*!

If you use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out*.

He *shot down* all of my arguments.

Metaphors We Live By, by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson

It is important to see that we do not just *talk* about arguments in terms of war. We can actually *win or lose* arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an *opponent*. We *attack* his [sic] positions and *defend* our own. We *gain and lose ground*. We *plan and use strategies*. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new *line of attack*. Many of the things we DO in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. Though there is no physical battle, there is a *verbal battle*, and the structure of an argument – attack, defend, counterattack, etc. – reflects this.

Metaphors We Live By, by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson

It is in this sense that the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is one that we live by in this culture; it structures the actions we perform in arguing.

Try to imagine a culture where arguments are not viewed in terms of war [but in terms of collaborating in joint thinking, or to learn, to know, to solve problems], **where no one wins or loses** [but everybody learns a bit more about itself, people and/or the world], where there is no sense of attacking or defending, gaining or losing ground [but a sense of contributing ideas for joint analyses, and contributing experience for joint reflection]. ...

Metaphors We Live By, by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson

... in the midst of a heated argument, when we are intent on attacking our opponent's position and defending our own, we may lose sight of the cooperative aspects of arguing. Someone who is arguing with you can be viewed as giving you his [sic] time, a valued commodity, in an effort at mutual understanding [or joint pursuing of more knowledge and wisdom, or at problem-solving].

Metaphors We Live By, by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson

But when we are preoccupied with the battle aspects, we often lose sight of the cooperative aspects [& knowledge building, problem-solving].

Well, I hope that you mull over all of these ideas, because we should really improve our way of viewing and performing discussions!

In the same way we should learn to stop connecting love to obligation, for the latter degrades and distorts love!

Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind

By George Lakoff, 1990

The book's title was inspired by the noun class system of the Dyirbal language, (that is an Australian Aboriginal language), in which the "feminine" category includes nouns for women, water, fire, violence, and certain animals.

Extension versus Intension versus Intention

Extension

- In philosophical semantics or the philosophy of language, the 'extension' of a concept or expression is the set of things it extends to, or applies to, if it is the sort of concept or expression that a single object by itself can satisfy. Concepts and expressions of this sort are monadic or "one-place" concepts and expressions.*

Extension versus Intension versus Intention

Intension

- In linguistics, logic, philosophy, and other fields, an intension is any property or quality connoted by a word, phrase, or another symbol. In the case of a word, the word's definition often implies an intension. For instance, the intensions of the word plant include properties such as "being composed of cellulose", "alive", and "organism", among others.

Extension versus Intension versus Intention

Intention

- Intention is a mental state that represents a commitment to carrying out a purposeful action or actions.

The meaning of a word can be thought of as the bond between the idea the word means and the physical form of the word. Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) contrasts **three concepts**:

- ✓ the signifier - the "sound image" or the string of letters on a page that one recognizes as the form of a sign
- ✓ the signified - the meaning, the concept or idea that a sign expresses or evokes
- ✓ the referent - the actual thing or set of things a sign refers to.



It is wiser to find out
than to suppose.

– Mark Twain.

An aerial view of Paris, France, during the golden hour of sunset. The Eiffel Tower stands prominently on the left side of the frame. The city's dense urban landscape, characterized by its uniform architecture and tree-lined boulevards, stretches across the middle ground. In the background, the modern skyscrapers of the La Défense district are visible against a sky filled with soft, golden clouds. The overall atmosphere is warm and nostalgic.

Thanks for coming!

Andrei Bogatyrev