

Neosemantisation as a discourse-guided polysemisation process

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The paper addresses the question of how to account for novel linguistic meanings emerging as a result of neosemantisation processes (polysemisation) in the user-determined discourse context.

One of the basic semantic processes involved in the “manufacturing” of novel expressions which designate concepts arising from the human cognitive experience of the world is no doubt the *neosemantisation* process. In the process, a language is said to “extend” its lexicon, thus contributing significantly to the development of polysemy. A case in point are, for instance, the English verbs *to shoe*, *to hyphenate*, and *to window* which in their newest senses mean ‘to get rid of somebody’, ‘to get married (especially for women)’ and ‘to look at someone as if looking right through them’ respectively.

In the case of neosemantisms, new meanings of a conventionalized lexeme are held to be linked to the word’s central meaning via extension processes involving *specialization*, *generalization*, *metaphorization* or *metonymization* (cf. Dirvén and Verspoor, 2004 and Blank, 2003) or may be perceived as instances of *augmented units* in the sense of Langacker (2005).

The paper argues, following Dirvén and Verspoor (2004), that the selection of a designation for a conceptual referent is determined by both semasiological and onomasiological salience. In particular, it seems, that one cannot satisfactorily account for the designation-conceptual referent relation unless (i) the *encyclopaedic view of semantics* in the sense of Langacker (1987, 1991), Taylor (2002, 2003) and Evans and Green (2006) is envisioned and (ii) Evans and Tyler’s (2003) *principled polysemy theory* is adopted. Ultimately, based on Langacker’s (2005, 2008) notion of the *Current Discourse Space (CDS)*, the paper claims that the actual meaning of newly coined neosemantisms emerges as a result of the speaker-hearer interaction and is actualised by a given usage event within the current discourse space.

References

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