MEANING, INTENTIONS, AND ARGUMENTATION
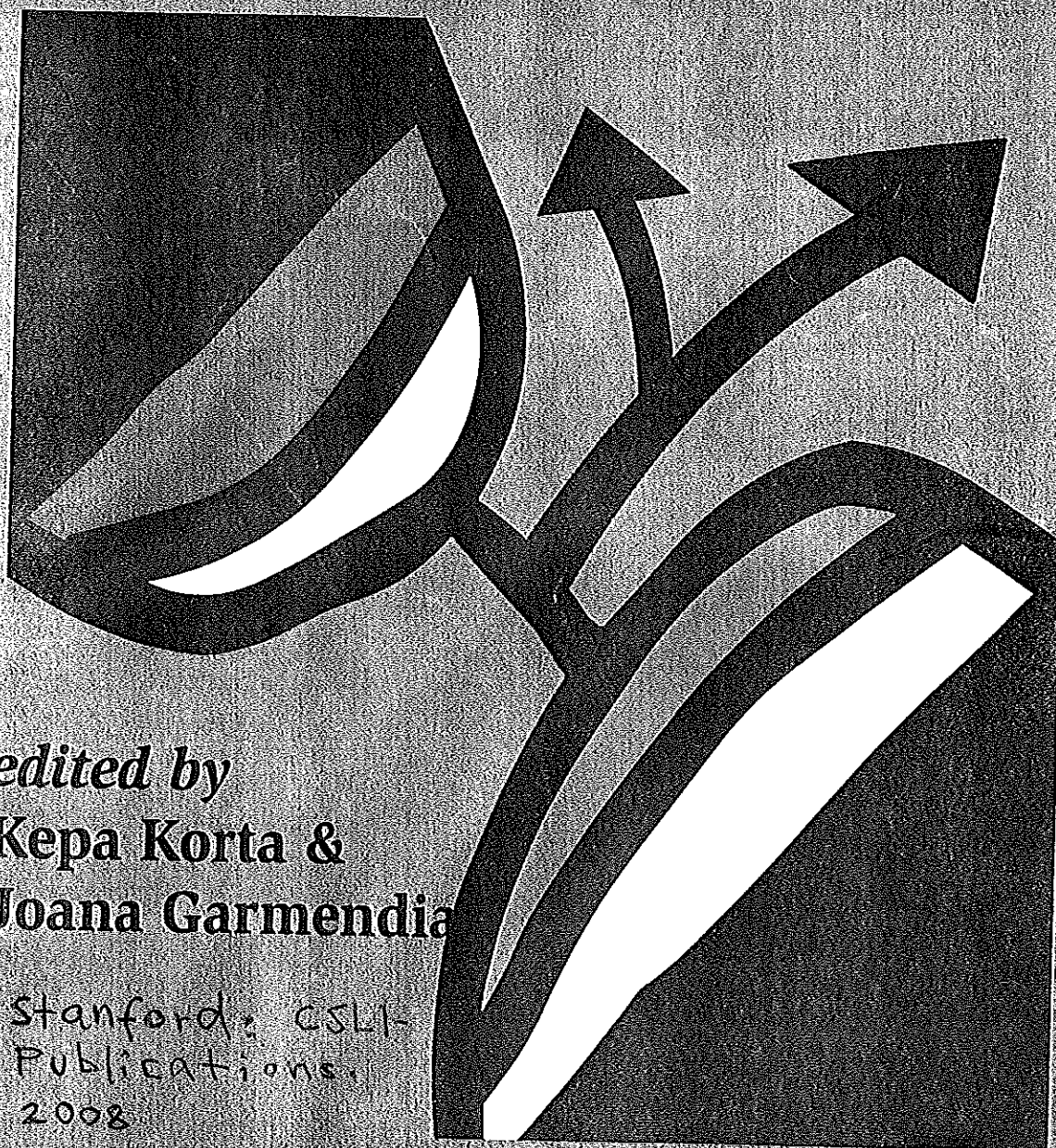
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6

The Case for Core Meaning

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6.1 Introduction

In this paper the assumption of a language-specific, context-independent core meaning of words and sentences will be defended. To justify this assumption, some old and some more recent arguments in favour of core meaning will be taken up. These arguments have been brought forward by representatives of European Structuralism (Jakobson, Coseriu, Pottier) or Generative Grammar (Katz, Jackendoff), but also in more recent treatises on semantics (Wierzbicka, Goddard). The more general theoretical background for my arguments is the theory of language developed by Coseriu (1958, 1973, 1988, 1990, 1994).

In the following sections, I will first discuss the relationship between core meaning and contextual meaning (cf. section 2), secondly, the relationship between literal meaning and core meaning (cf. section 3) and thirdly, some of the most important pro and counter arguments in relation to core meaning will be discussed (cf. section 4 and 5). But before doing that, I would like to briefly mention three issues I cannot treat in enough detail due to limits of time.

The first issue concerns the vexed problem of choosing an adequate metalanguage for semantic description. The second issue concerns the distinction between encoded and inferred aspects of meaning, or alternatively, between structuralist code models and Gricean inferential models of communication. The third issue concerns the problem of ambiguity of linguistic expressions. As far as these issues are concerned, I have to content myself with the following three remarks. The first remark is on metalanguage and somewhat longer.

Early semantic metalanguages like Katz' markerese (cf. Katz (1972, 1980, 1981)) have received strong and convincing criticism (cf. e.g. Eco (1975, pp. 140 ff.), Eco (1985, pp. 91 ff.); Lyons (1977, pp. 334 ff.); Lyons (1995, pp. 107 ff.); Heringer (1978, pp. 77 ff.); Lakoff (1987, p. 205); Blank (2001, pp. 23 ff.)). The meaning of lexemes and sentences cannot be described adequately with sets of 'universal' semantic markers and distinguishers. For example, the 'notorious' noun *bachelor* has been described as (cf. Katz (1980, p. 61)):

(1) Engl. *bachelor*: {(Physical object), (Human), (Adult), (Male), (Single)}

However, the bracketed meta-linguistic expressions are hard to interpret and cannot easily be distinguished from the corresponding expressions in natural languages. They also involve problems of infinite regress and hidden circularity. Therefore, some linguists have given up the postulates of universality, non-circularity and finiteness of markerese. They simply consider the semantic features as expressions of a particular natural language which are used metalinguistically. That is, semantic features can be seen as convenient abbreviations given in place of more adequate and/or more comprehensive descriptions of meaning (cf. Coseriu (1973, pp. 14 ff.); Lyons (1977, I, pp. 334 ff.)). More specifically, Pottier (1992, p. 73) characterizes the "sème" ("seme", "marker", "semantic feature") as a short periphrastic discourse. This discourse describes the meaning of an expression with as many words of a natural language as are necessary for the clear distinction of the relevant semantic features:

> De notre point de vue, le sème doit se dire avec autant de mots de la langue naturelle qu'il faut pour bien mettre en relief le trait distinctif relatif à l'ensemble considerée. La dénomination de sème est un discours périphrastique à vocation métalinguistique

Convenient as it is, this practice of simply using expressions of a particular natural language A as a semantic metalanguage increases the danger of a perspective which is biased as to the semantic structures of A.

To overcome these deficiencies of earlier semantic metalanguages, Wierzbicka has tried to construct a truly universal metalanguage (called NSM = Natural Semantic Metalanguage). Wierzbicka (1999, p. 36), Wierzbicka (2001, p. 239) restricts the number of metalinguistic expressions to about sixty elements, among them, for example, *I, you, person, thing, people, this, one, two, some, many, good, bad, big, small, think, feel, say, do, make, feel, believe, have, not, because, if, now, here, very, like,* etc. She explicitly excludes all more specific and/or technical lexical items which would make the semantic description incomprehensible for lay people, circular or biased towards one particular language. Moreover, and most interestingly, Wierzbicka formulates her semantic descriptions as full sentences, which together form a coherent text. This makes it possible to describe emotion terms of a language as a prototypical scenario. For example, with the help of NSM, Wierzbicka (1999, p. 88) describes the basic meaning of the English adjective *angry* as follows:

(2) X was angry (with Y)
   a. X felt something because X thought something
   b. sometimes a person thinks about someone:
   c. this person did something bad
   d. I don't want this person to do things like this
   e. I want to do something because of this
   f. when this person thinks this, this person feels something bad
   g. X felt something like this
   h. because X thought something like this

As far as the difficult problem of the universality of the semantic metalanguage is concerned, Wierzbicka's NSM seems to be an important step forward. However, there remain many theoretical and practical problems. One of the more practical problems is the fact that Wierzbicka's definitions are so long and cumbersome. But she is ready to admit that, for practical reasons, further expressions of a language beyond NSM could be used, as long as they are always conceptually simpler than the defined expressions. Further, these expressions ultimately have all to be defined via NSM (= the principle of "reductive analysis", cf. Wierzbicka (1985, p. 45)). As a practical and more realistic example of the reduction of meta-linguistic vocabulary, the Longman dictionary of contemporary English can be mentioned (cf. LDOCE (2003, p. xi)). In this dictionary, only 2000 words are used as a descriptive metalanguage. The definition of *angry* in the LDOCE (2003, p. 49) runs as follows:

(3) Engl. *angry* "feeling strong emotions which make you want to shout at someone or hurt them because they have behaved in an unfair, cruel, offensive etc. way, or because you think that a situation is unfair, unacceptable etc"

One of the theoretical problems of NSM is the status of the semantic primitives. It can be doubted whether "think" and "want" are indeed simple concepts which would not be in need of further explication and/or definition. Furthermore, the alleged universality of the semantic primitives remains controversial at our present state of rudimentary knowledge about the thousands of languages of the world (for a reply to critics of NSM cf. Goddard (1998)).
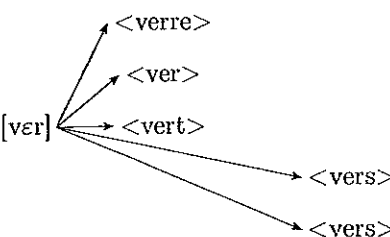
As to the second issue, I would like to content myself with the observation that code models and inferential models do not exclude each other and could be integrated into a comprehensive semantic theory. For example, Sperber and Wilson (1986), two distinguished scholars favouring an inferential model of communication, have no problem with the assumption that inferential processes of understanding take encoded meaning as their starting point (cf. Wilson and Sperber (2004, p. 607). Relying on the "Communicative Principle of Relevance", that is, "Every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance", and more specific communicative principles and strategies, listeners/readers can infer further information beyond the encoded literal meaning on the basis (cf. also Carston (1999)).

As to the third issue, the difficult problems of homonymy, polysemy and free contextual variation have to be dealt with (cf. Lyons (1995, pp. 54 ff.); Cruse (1997, pp. 50 ff.); Blank (2001, pp. 103 ff.)). It could be claimed that there are hardly any truly "monosemic" expressions (Gibbs (1994, p. 41); Recanati (2004, p. 135)) and that, therefore, it is not possible to define one core meaning or a small finite number of core meanings. This does not mean, however, that core meanings become infinite. The cases of homonymy, polysemy and free contextual variation pose differing challenges in this respect.

The easiest case for the defence of core meaning is homonymy (on different types of homonymy cf. Lyons (1995, p. 55)). In the case of homonymy, we are dealing with two or more formally identical, but semantically distinct lexemes, which belong to totally different semantic domains or fields (cf. English examples such as the homophones *knight*

vs. *night*, or the homographs *bank* vs. *bank*). This fact prevents the necessity of assuming two or more core meanings because we are actually dealing with two ore more different lexemes, each of them having one core meaning. This becomes especially evident if homonyms (homophones or homographs) belong to different word classes. The following slightly modified example (French *verre/ver/vert/vers*) is taken from Kallmeyer (1974, p. 117):

(4)

| Form	Homophones	Homographs (Homophones)	Word Class	Core meanings
	<verre>		Noun	"glass"
	<ver>		Noun	"worm"
[vɛr]	<vert>		Adjective	"green"
		<vers>	Preposition	"towards" / "around"
		<vers>	Noun	"verse"

In the case of polysemy, formally identical expressions have two or more meanings which are semantically similar and/or belong to the same semantic field. A similar, further criterion for distinguishing polysemy from homonymy is introduced by Blank (2001, p. 111): The meanings of polysemic lexemes are connected by semantic relations, while this is not the case with the meanings of homonymic lexemes (cf. also Lyons (1995, p. 58)). Hence, in the case of polysemy, one and the same lexeme has two or more meanings. However, the number of meanings can be restricted according to the number of lexemes connected by language-specific semantic relations with the polysemic lexeme (e.g. by being antonyms, hyponyms, cohyponyms etc. of the lexeme). According to this criterion, the polysemic Spanish noun *mujer* could be assigned the following three core meanings (cf. García Hernández (2003, pp. 123 ff.)): 1. *mujer* vs *hombre* ("female human being"), 2. *mujer* vs *niña* "adult woman", 3. *mujer* vs *marido* "married woman".

Both homonymy and polysemy have to be distinguished from free contextual variation of meanings (e.g. *woman* : "woman with a driving licence", "woman who knows four languages", "woman who has received the Nobel Prize" "woman living abroad" etc.etc.), which is indeed infinite. Only free contextual variation seriously challenges the assumption that there is a strictly limited number of core meanings and must be explained in a way that rescues core meaning (cf. below section 2). Similar arguments apply to the ambiguity of syntactic constructions (phrases, sentences) with clearly distinct meanings (cf. Chomsky's well-known examples *the shooting of the hunters, Flying planes can be dangerous* or *John is eager to please*).

6.2 Core Meaning and Contextual Meaning

How can free contextual variation of meanings be explained without giving up the idea of core meaning? Of course, they have to be derived somehow from core meaning. This must be done in a way that the core meanings either appear directly in texts or, if they do not manifest themselves directly, at least underlie the contextual meanings in a way that the latter can be derived from them. Coseriu (1988, pp. 188 ff.) distinguishes three types of relationships between core meanings and contextual meanings, which may have to be supplemented with further types. Here, I only discuss the two most important and frequent types.

The first and most frequent case is characterized by the fact that the core meaning is implied by all more specific contextual meanings (cf. Recanati's (2004, pp. 24 ff.) term "enrichment"). Thus the core meaning forms part of the meaning of the contextually specified expressions (cf. Figure 1):
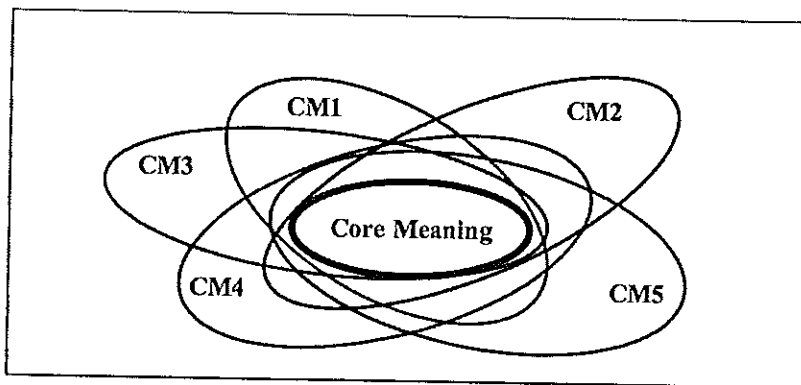
ABBREVIATIONS: CM1, CM2, ..., CM5=CONTEXTUAL MEANINGS 1-5

FIGURE 1

In other words, the core meaning partially 'contains' the contextual meanings, which are additionally specified by features of the context. The contextual meanings, in turn, entail the core meaning. This can be exemplified with the core meaning of grammatical morphemes. Coseriu (1988, p. 188) mentions the Spanish Imperfect Tense, which can refer to present, past or future events, to momentary or repeated activities and to real or fictitious events. All these contextual variants, however, imply a core meaning which can be defined as "inaktuelles Präsens", that is, "a present which is not actual" (ibid.).

Similar examples are provided by lexical morphemes such as English *love* or Latin *amor* and Greek *eros* (cf. Kienpointner (1996a, 1999, 2006)). The core meaning of the noun *love* could be approximately given as follows (cf. also Kövecses (1988, pp. 58 ff.), LDOCE (2003, pp. 962 ff.); OED (1992)):

(5) Engl. *love*: "A strong feeling of affection or liking for someone or something. If this feeling concerns a person, it is combined with sexual attraction and/or a strong feeling of caring about this person. If you experience love, you want to be close to the person you love and you want to be approved by him/her. If this feeling concerns a thing or activity, it is a strong feeling which you experience when you like something very much. This thing or activity gives you pleasure and

enjoyment."

This core meaning is implied by countless contextual variants such as "romantic love", "tender love", "passionate love", "altruistic love", "Platonic love", "love of nature", "love of music", "love of tennis", etc. In English, these variants are lexicalized, for example, in the following hyponyms of *love: affection* = "tender love"; *ardour* = "passionate love"; *charity/devotion* = "altruistic/dedicated love"; *lust, wantonness, lewdness, lasciviousness* = "sensual love".

A far more complicated case is the derivation of contextual meanings in cases where the core meaning is not part of the contextual meanings, but motivates them (cf. Recanati's (2004, p. 26) term "transfer") (cf. Figure 2):
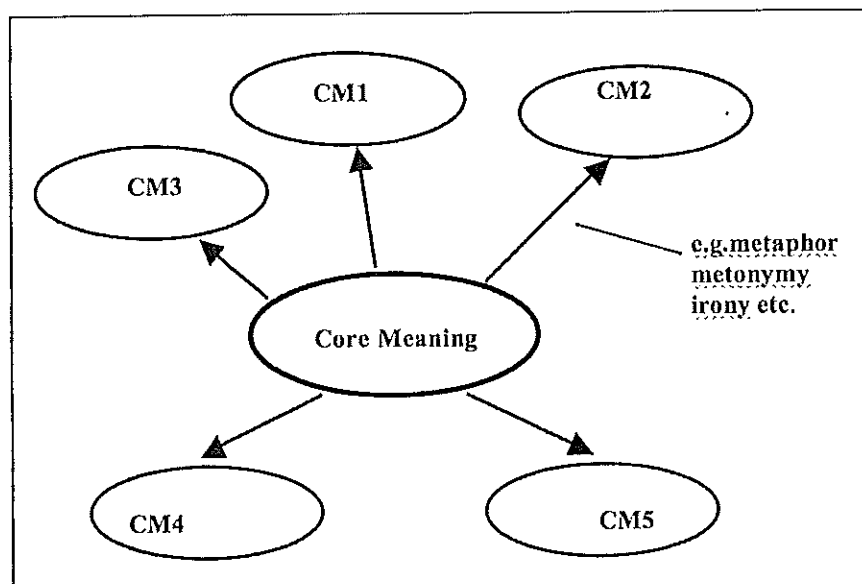

FIGURE 2

Again, Coseriu (1988, pp. 189 ff.) gives the example of a grammatical morpheme, namely, the diminutive suffix in Latin and several Roman languages. In this case, the contextual meanings of the suffix such as affection, tenderness, irony or sarcasm (cf. Spanish *amiguito, hombrecito, profesorcito*) can be motivated by the core meaning, that is, "(objective) diminishment (in size or quantity)") (cf. *casa* ("house") → *casita* ("small house")). The contextual meanings do not contain the core meaning as a part. The contextual meanings in this case can even occur in cases where the core meaning cannot apply at all, for example, when you ironically call a big house *casita* (*¡Qué casita!*). Similarly, mass nouns (*agüita* (lit. "little water"),*vinito* (lit. "little wine")) or pronouns, adjectives and adverbial phrases occur in the diminutive form (*todito, mismito, de rodillitas*). Differently from the contextual meanings, however, the core meaning can occur in all cases where the objects referred to can be small. In these cases the diminutive meaning appears independently from context. This differs from the emotional or ironic variants of the diminutive form, which are totally dependent on their respective contexts (Coseriu (1988, p. 190)):

(6) "Objective diminution": Independent of Context:

e.g. Span. *casita, bosquecito, arbolito, profesorcito, ratoncito, elefantito* etc. ("small house", "small wood", "small tree", "little professor", "small mouse", "small elephant" etc.)

"Emotional, ironic, evaluative diminution": Dependent on Context:

e.g. Span. *casita* ("irony", when used in relation to a huge palace); *profesorcito* ("affection" or "admiration", when used by his mother or close friends; "dislike" or "contempt", when used by colleagues who don't like the professor etc.)

Therefore, the core meaning "objective diminution" can motivate the various emotional meanings ("subjective diminution"): Small things tend to involve emotional judgements, either positively or negatively. In a similar way, Kiefer (2004, p. 341) explains the use of diminutives in Hungarian: "The semantic meaning of the diminutive suffix is in all cases 'small, a little'; that meaning can be modified or added to in various speech situations that are accounted for within pragmatics" (e.g. *újságocska* "little newspaper", that is, not a serious, well-known one; or *a szép szájacskádat* "your nice little mouth", used between lovers; cf. Kiefer (2004, p. 338 f.).

Note, however, that Dressler and Merlini-Barbaresi (1994, p. 396; 2001, pp. 43 ff.), while making a distinction between (morpho-)semantic and (morpho-)pragmatic aspects of diminutives in English, German and Italian, argue against the possibility of motivating the pragmatic meaning [non-serious] with the semantic meaning [small]): 1. Not all uses of diminutives can be motivated with the semantic meaning. 2. In first language acquisition, the pragmatic meaning is developed first. 3. Diachronic changes are better explained on basis of the pragmatic meaning. While these are strong arguments against the assumption of [small] as the core meaning of diminutives, the case for core meaning is not weakened by them: After all, a core meaning ([non-serious]) is assumed by Dressler/Merlini-Barbaresi, albeit a different one. As far as lexical items are concerned, the following example can illustrate how the use of metaphor and paradox can 'enrich' the core meaning of lexemes in a persuasive way. The French advertisement line

(7) French *Son silence est la plus belle des symphonies* (Le Figaro, 30.9.89, p. 51) ("Its silence is the most beautiful of all symphonies")

refers to the Opel Omega. The implied claim is that this car makes almost no noise (or else effectively protects the driver from exterior traffic noises). For the driver, always bothered by the ubiquitous noise of modern traffic, this silence becomes almost like a beautiful symphony, thus enhancing the attractiveness of the Opel Omega for potential purchasers. It is perfectly clear that the core meaning of the French *silence* ("silence") has not been permanently changed by this paradoxical/metaphorical contextual enrichment ("a combination of silence and beautiful music"). However, contextual metaphorical extensions of the core meaning can become permanent. For example, *mouse* as "a small object connected to a computer by a wire, which you move with your hand to give instructions to the computer" LDOCE (2003, p. 1074) or metonymical modifications of the core meaning such as *sails* standing for "sail boats" or *love* standing for the "loved person/object" have become conventionalized. By now, they are a second (third etc.) core meaning (for a description of the diachronic semantic processes leading to these

derived meanings, cf. Coseriu (1990, p. 270); Blank (2001, pp. 70 ff.)).

It could be argued that in all these cases the term "core meaning" is inadequate because there is no longer a common "core" which would be implied by all contextual meanings. However, the direction of motivation is always asymmetrical (cf. Recanati (2004, p. 28)): From the core meaning to the metaphorically (etc.) related contextual meanings, and not vice versa. This justifies the derivation of the metaphorical, metonymical, hyperbolic, ironic etc. meanings from the core meaning.

Moreover, the distinction between core meanings and metaphorically (or metonymically etc.) derived contextual meanings is not as hopeless a distinction as Gibbs (1994, p. 42) wants it to be. For instance, the difference between

(8) *The newspaper weighs five pounds (= "publication")* and

(9) *The newspaper fired John (= "publisher")*

clearly relies on a contextually given metonymical reading of *newspaper* in (9). This is also the reason why the core meaning underlying the use of *newspaper* in (8) is placed as the first entry in dictionaries (cf. LDOCE (2003, p. 1106)). Of course, contextual meanings can become conventionalized to a degree that they can develop into second, third etc. core meanings (cf. above). This does not in general prevent, however, the recognizability of core meanings. Nor does it prevent the existence of an asymmetric relation between primary, or core meanings, and secondary, or contextual meanings. Moreover, most of the time innovative metaphorical or metonymical specifications do not immediately change the core meanings of linguistic expressions (cf. Coseriu (1990, pp. 259 ff.), cf. also below, section 3).

Finally, from a methodological point of view, it is most important to stress that semantic features of core meaning have to be empirically verified as to their direct or indirect manifestation in texts, and not as to their appearance in reality, that is, as properties of extra-linguistic objects and states of affairs.

6.3 Literal Meaning and Core Meaning

Before turning to the arguments concerning core meaning, I have to add a few remarks to clarify the concept of "literal meaning", which is closely related to the notion of "core meaning" (cf. Gibbs (1994, pp. 27 ff.)). This concept can be understood in many different ways. Here it is understood as the purely language-specific meaning of words and sentences, without any contextually added, and hence more specific semantic properties. Literal meaning in this sense is equivalent to core meaning.

"Literal meaning" in this sense, however, is not to be confused with referential or truth-conditional meaning. The referential and truth-conditional aspects of meaning are also, and quite mistakenly, often called "literal meaning". But the reference of lexical items and the truth/falsity of sentences cannot be judged without presupposing some prototypical usage of the respective expressions. This prototypical usage inevitably involves some default assumptions and background knowledge about the context and the speech situation within which the linguistic expressions are used (cf. Recanati (2004, pp. 141 ff.)).

This is also the reason why Katz's (Katz (1980, p. 14)) attempt to find a criterion for isolating the literal meaning of sentences by imagining an "anonymous letter situation" is no real way out of this problem. In this situation, one receives an anonymous letter with only one sentence and "with no clue whatsoever about the motive, circumstances of transmission, or any factor relevant to understanding the sentence on the basis of its context of utterance" (ibid.). Eco (1985, pp. 122 ff.) has shown quite convincingly, however, that in this situation it would not only be important what is said or written, but also what is not conveyed. This also happens in similar, more realistic situations of oral communication, where only one speaker has access to some relevant information and utters only one sentence. The readers or listeners of 'contextless' sentences would immediately start to infer missing information starting from default assumptions about the intention and the identity of the anonymous writer or the speaker with privileged access to information. The problem is that literal meaning cannot be isolated by imagining a fictitious communicative use of linguistic expressions. Literal meaning can only be isolated by looking how the semantic structures of a language manifest themselves in texts and how these manifestations differ from one language to another.

Finally, "literal meaning" has often been opposed to "figurative meaning". The latter is the meaning appearing in figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, irony, understatement etc. However, in spite of the attempts of Dubois et al. (1970) to define it, there is no 'neutral' or 'zero' variety of a language. First of all, there is an extremely large number of conventionalized figures of speech appearing in all varieties of a natural language. As I have already stated above, a figurative usage can be conventionalized to the degree that the metaphorical, metonymical meaning is connected with the respective expressions irrespective of context and situation. This is the case in the following figurative use of the verb *to explode*, which is explicitly mentioned in dictionaries and has become another core meaning:

(10) Engl. *to explode* = "to suddenly express strong feelings such as anger" (cf. LDOCE (2003, p. 549))

Furthermore, it has been shown (cf. Gibbs (1994, pp. 75 ff.)) that judgments of ordinary speakers about the literality of linguistic expressions differ according to the definitions of literal meaning they are given before they are asked to judge certain words or sentences (e.g. "literal meaning" = "conventional meaning", "literal meaning" = "meaning normally expressed in relation to certain subject matters/situations/institutions", "literal meaning" = "non-metaphorical meaning", "literal meaning" = "truth-conditional meaning" etc.). These findings at the same time confirm, however, that speakers' judgments have to be dealt with very cautiously. The meta-linguistic intuitions of native speakers tend to be rather vague and confused (cf., however, Recanati's (2004, p. 79) methodological remarks on the "availability" of literal and derived meanings for ordinary native speakers).

6.4 Arguments against Core Meaning

In what follows, a survey of the most important arguments against (the assumption of the existence of) core meaning will be given. Most of these arguments are closely related, but they are separated here for practical purposes of presentation:

1. Argument: It is not possible to make a clear distinction between dictionary meaning and encyclopedic meaning, that is, between meaning exclusively known through linguistic competence and meaning which is accessible only through knowledge about the extra-linguistic world (cf. Eco (1975, pp. 70 ff.), Eco (1985, pp. 140 ff.), Haiman (1980)). As encyclopaedic knowledge is virtually endless, the existence of (a finite number of) core meaning(s) seems to become impossible. Furthermore, processing the meaning of words and sentences, we need to have access to general background knowledge about the world. Otherwise, the precise meaning of compounds like *typewriter table* could not be constructed (Gibbs (1994, p. 35); Recanati (2004, pp. 139 ff.)).

2. Argument: The meaning of words and sentences cannot be isolated from the influence of contextual factors. In isolation, words only have a "potential for reference", core meaning is a secondary phenomenon and only an abstraction deduced from textual meaning. The latter is the primary phenomenon both as far as language acquisition and discourse comprehension is concerned. This has often been claimed within text linguistics (cf. e.g. Kallmeyer (1974, pp. 119 ff.)) or other linguistic and philosophical theories of "contextualism" (cf. Recanati (2004, pp. 140 ff.)). Taking into account contextual factors seems to make it impossible to establish a core meaning (or, in the case of polysemic words or ambiguous sentences: a few core meanings) because the contextual meanings are virtually endless. Again, the existence of core meaning according to this view is impossible.

3. Argument: Some representatives of the reference theory of meaning and truth-functional semantics deny that language-specific meaning exists at all (cf. Russell (1949),Quine (1971)). In this perspective, lexical items refer to extra-linguistic objects and the meaning of declarative sentences is their truth-value rather than some language-specific core meaning. Variants of this perspective (cf. Putnam (1975)) assume that only the reference of linguistic expressions is stable and fixed by the best available expert knowledge (e.g. *water* = H_2O). As to the meaning of linguistic items, Putnam claims that it consists of a set of markers and stereotypes. Stereotypes are defined as a set of common sense assumptions about extra-linguistic objects held by lay people (e.g. *water* = "natural kind", "liquid", "colorless", "transparent", "tasteless", "thirst-quenching" etc.; cf. Putnam (1975, p. 269)):

(11) *water*

SYNTACTIC MARKERS	SEMANTIC MARKERS	STEREOTYPES	EXTENSION
mass noun; concrete	natural kind; liquid	colorless; transparent; tasteless; thirst-quenching; etc.	H_2O (give or take impurities)

Putnam assumes that in most cases the markers and stereotypes are defeasible, which makes the existence of a stable core meaning impossible.

4. Argument: This emphasis on reference and truth has been criticized by Wittgenstein (1975) and his followers (e.g. Heringer (1978, 1999); Recanati (2004, p. 146)), who replaced reference theory with a use theory of meaning. However, as a consequence of this replacement, a new criticism of core meaning arises: The complexities of the use of linguistic expressions can never be fully captured without taking into account the extra-linguistic contexts of linguistic usage, for example, the nonverbal activities and the institutions within which linguistic utterances are embedded. Again, core meaning seems to be impossible in this view.

5. Argument: Ordinary language philosophy, speech act theory and linguistic pragmatics have stressed that to use language means to perform actions, "to do things with words". The assumption of static or stable core meanings does not seem to fit into a pragmatic view of language as a dynamic process of interaction. In this view, meanings are created, reproduced, but also negotiated, modified and changed within dialogue. Therefore, they are not existing as abstract entities prior to and independent of discourse (cf. Verschueren (1981, 1999), Deppermann (1999)).

6. Argument: Prototype semantics, a more recent tradition within the study of meaning (cf. Rosch (1978)), has assumed that borderlines among many (though not all: Lakoff (1987, p. 150)) categories are fuzzy. In the case of fuzzy categories it is hard to draw a sharp line between members of neighbouring categories. The resulting semantic continuum between two categories seems to make a discrete description of core meanings impossible. Furthermore, it has been assumed that there is no minimal set of necessary and sufficient properties shared by all members of a category. Again, this makes it impossible to describe the core meaning of a category as a limited number of semantic properties. Moreover, according to the cognitive perspective, meaning is primarily organized according to cognitively relevant scenes/scripts or idealized cognitive models rather than language-internal structures (cf. Fillmore (1977b), Lakoff (1987)).

7. Argument: The cognitive theory of metaphor, as developed by Lakoff, Johnson, Kövecses and others, assumes that abstract concepts such as "love", "anger" or "theory" are basically understood metaphorically. Therefore, these concepts cannot be defined by non-metaphorical semantic properties (cf. Lakoff (1987, 1996, 2005), Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Kövecses (1988, 2000, 2002)). Hence, an independently defined core meaning does not seem to be possible in these cases.

There is no way to deny that these are important arguments which, taken together, make a very strong case against core meaning. Nevertheless I am convinced that 1. Some of these arguments can be refuted, 2. Others are right in some respect, but can be integrated into a comprehensive theory of meaning which still leaves a place for core meaning (cf. Lyons (1991, p. 23)), and 3. Still others arise out of misunderstandings and a failure to distinguish different layers and aspects of meaning.

To show this, I first need to introduce a threefold distinction between aspects of meaning developed by Coseriu. This threefold distinction is one of the main strengths of Coseriu's comprehensive theory of meaning, because it helps to avoid some of the problems and misunderstandings mentioned above (cf. the similar, but not identical threefold distinction made by Recanati (2004, p. 21)). Coseriu (1994, pp. 63 ff.); Coseriu and Geckeler (1981, p. 54) distinguishes between meaning in the narrow sense ("Bedeu-tung" = language-specific meaning), reference ("Bezeichnung" = meaning as reference to extra-linguistic objects and states of affairs) and sense ("Sinn" = context-specific meaning at the text or discourse or speech act level; note that this definition of "sense" clearly differs from the one established by Lyons (1995, p. 80): "the set, or network, of sense-relations that hold between it and other expressions of the same language"). As summarized in Figure 3, these three aspects of semantics relate to language, reality and discourse, respectively:

Linguistic Semantics:

Meaning	Reference	Sense
(Language)	(Reality)	(Discourse)

FIGURE 3

In this way, Coseriu does not claim that linguistic semantics has to deal primarily, let alone exclusively, with one of these three types of meaning. Both structural seman-tics (the description of language-specific meaning), reference theory (the description of various types of reference to extra-linguistic objects, for example, definite reference, in-definite reference, generic reference etc.) and text semantics/pragmatics find their place in this comprehensive theory of semantics (cf. also the arguments against reductionism in semantic theory advanced by Lyons (1991, p. 23)). The description of core mean-ing has to be complemented with descriptions of the many ways of referring to reality, including truth-conditional semantics, and descriptions of contextual meanings at the text or discourse level (cf. Asher (1999); Blutner (2002)). A similarly broad seman-tic theory, distinguishing both ("virtual", context-independent) meaning and ("actual", context-specific) sense, is established in Beaugrande and Dressler (1981, p. 88) and in Wunderlich (1991, p. 33).

Moreover, according to Coseriu, the language-specific meaning of an expression has to be described for one and the same "functional language". A functional language is a struc-turally homogeneous variety of a "historical language" such as English, German or Turk-ish. Historical languages are complex entities structured by an "architecture of language" comprising diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic varieties (i.e. dialects, sociolects, and stylis-

tic varieties). If this distinction is not taken into account, many pseudo-problems of semantics arise, such as the existence of synonyms having a different form but exactly the same core meaning. For example, it is impossible to find substantial semantic differences between pseudo-synonyms such as *piss* and *urine* or *rabbit* and *bunny*, apart from their differing connotations. However, these connotations do not arise from the semantics of the lexical items, but from their belonging to specific varieties of a language.

Now one could still ask critically: Why is it necessary to consider an independent level of core meaning at all, if language-specific meaning is only a small part of the whole story anyway and if it can hardly be separated from referential and contextual meaning? In the following, I would like to deal with the seven arguments against core meaning listed above in order to answer this critical question.

6.5 Arguments for Core Meaning

6.5.1 Dictionary and Encyclopaedia

As far as the first argument is concerned, the following two things have to be conceded: 1. In many cases it is indeed hard to draw a clear line between dictionary meaning and encyclopaedic meaning (cf. Wierzbicka (1985, p. 141); Pottier (1992, p. 75); Kleiber (1998, p. 49)). 2. In many cases is it not even possible to draw a line at all.

This does not mean, however, that the distinction between dictionaries and encyclopaedias has to be given up. Even critics of the distinction such as Haiman and Gibbs concede that the distinction has to be made somehow out of practical reasons:

> [...] the distinction between dictionaries and encyclopedias, while theoretically untenable, has the happy property of working very well in practice (cf. Haiman (1980, p. 355))

> On a practical level, it makes sense to keep the dictionary entry for *horse* rather brief and to put most of the remaining information about horses in an encyclopedia (cf. Gibbs (1994, p. 28))

There is no doubt that we cannot dispense of dictionaries. But there are also important theoretical arguments for maintaining the distinction between dictionary meaning and encyclopaedic meaning.

First of all, in spite of the many problems to draw a precise line between core meaning and encyclopaedic meaning, there are criteria for doing this in a principled way (pace Cruse (1997, pp. 19 ff.)). Wierzbicka (1985, pp. 113 ff.; 139 ff.) has suggested the following basic criterion: Core meaning is what adult speakers of a language have to know as a "concept minimum" to count as competent members of a speech community. Even as far as technological knowledge about the structure and function of cars and bicycles is concerned, "there is a limit to the technical ignorance compatible with linguistic competence" Wierzbicka (1985, p. 117). At the same time, competent speakers of a language do not need to be experts in some particular field: "[N]o specialized knowledge can be regarded as part of the meaning" Wierzbicka (1985, p. 41).

Furthermore, representatives of structural semantics such as Coseriu (1973, pp. 26 ff.); Coseriu (1990, pp. 252 ff.) and Lyons (1977, I, pp. 287 ff.); Lyons (1995, pp. 100 ff.) are willing to concede that large portions of the lexicon of everyday language are

accessible only via encyclopaedic knowledge. This is true, for example, for thousands of lexemes belonging to biological and mineralogical nomenclatures such as the following English terms

(12) Engl. *finch, robin...; bass, cod...; elm, ash...; larkspur, narcissus...; garnet, amethyst* etc.

or the corresponding German lexical items

(13) Germ. *Fink, Rotkehlchen...; Barsch, Kabeljau...; Ulme, Esche...; Rittersporn, Narzisse...; Granat, Amethyst* etc.

Therefore, some of the respective lexical items do not have a (full) dictionary meaning at all (cf. also similarly Jackendoff (1990) on the perceptual domain of vision).

But at least for some very well-known subsections of the biological nomenclature, purely semantic descriptions can be given, which do not contain expert knowledge. Wierzbicka has shown this for dozens of expressions of everyday vocabulary such as *cat, dog, horse, tiger, apple, pear,* etc. Wierzbicka (1985, p. 146 ff.). Moreover, there are many other parts of the lexicon which are definable by language-specific knowledge alone, for example, nouns from the semantic fields of family members, emotions or furniture, adjectives in the fields of age, space and temperature, verbs of motions, speech act verbs, space and time adverbials, prepositions, conjunctions, discourse particles etc. (cf. Coseriu (1973), Coseriu and Geckeler (1981), Wierzbicka (1985, 1991)). The same holds for grammatical morphemes (e.g. tense, aspect, case etc.; as to the core meanings of Russian case morphemes, cf. Jakobson (1974) and Wierzbicka (1980)).

Below, I will give one example. At the same time, I will try to solve the problem that the rather long descriptions in Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) could not be used for practical lexicographic purposes. Therefore, I try to modify and reduce Wierzbicka's (Wierzbicka (1985, p. 167)) description of *cat* in a way which makes the respective dictionary entry both semantically exhaustive and quantitatively more manageable. The ideal of reductive analysis can be maintained insofar as it would be possible to define all the lexemes I have used as 'shortcuts' of semantic description (e.g. "domestic", "whiskers" etc.) via NSM. Thus the inevitable length of descriptions relying exclusively on NSM can be avoided. The description in (14) is a compromise between the long and cumbersome description of *cat* in NSM (more than one printed page!) and the short description in LDOCE, which surely does not cover the conceptual minimum all native speakers have (cf. example (15)):

(14) Engl. *cat* : "a small domestic animal (male or female; the male cat is called *tomcat*) which is soft and furry, has a round head with whiskers and pointed ears, sharp teeth, four legs with sharp claws and a long tail [HABITAT, SIZE, APPEARANCE].

Cats like to be clean, licking their body to keep it clean. They chase little animals and birds whose meat they could eat. They move quickly, without noise and in an elegant way. They can see in the dark. Cats make characteristic sounds: They meow, they purr if they are happy, they spit if they are angry. They are rather independent animals, unlike dogs they do not do what people would tell them to do [BEHAVIOUR].

Most people like them as pets and consider cats to be useful and nice domestic animals. Cats are thought to be lazy and to like to be comfortable, but to fight for what they want to get [RELATION TO PEOPLE]"

(15) Engl. *cat* : "a small animal with four legs that people often keep as a pet. Cats sometimes kill small animals and birds" LDOCE (2003, pp. 230 ff.)

A few comments on (14) are in order to point out potential theoretical problems for semantic theory. Strictly spoken, only a small part of (14) is "core meaning" in the sense of purely language-specific meaning. This part probably includes

1. the features "small domestic animal";
2. the fact that in English, the general term *cat* is both used for male and female cats, whereas there is a specific term for the male cat, *tomcat* (cf. similarly German *Katze* vs *Kater*; in Roman languages such as Italian or French, it is the other way round: *gatto* vs *gatta*, *chat* vs *chatte*; on such "inclusive oppositions" cf. Coseriu and Geckeler (1981, p. 48)):

(16)

ENGLISH	GERMAN	FRENCH	ITALIAN
tomcat masc.	*Kater* masc.	*chatte* fem.	*gatta* fem.
cat	*Katze*	*chat*	*gatto*

3. the "lexical solidarity" (cf. Coseriu (1967), Coseriu and Geckeler (1981, p. 56)) between *cat* and *meow*, *purr* and *spit*. Here, language-specific syntagmatic semantic structures can be observed: *Cats meow, Dogs bark, Horses neigh, Ducks quack* etc.

The other parts of the semantic description in (14) can be justified as core meaning in a broader sense. However, they are not parts of the semantic system of the English language, but of the norm. The norm is the level of language which is mere traditionally fixed, statistically most frequent, but not necessarily functional, that is, distinctive in relation to other expressions of the language (cf. Coseriu and Geckeler (1981, p. 54)). Now what is usually said about cats, albeit not necessarily so, can be integrated into a description of the lexeme *cat* which tries to capture the norm. This includes the most frequent semantic variants and the most frequent uses of *cat* in sentences and discourse (cf. Coseriu (1990, p. 257)).

The inclusion of frequently used, "expected" Cruse (1997, pp. 18 ff.) but not necessary properties comes close to the suggestion of Verschueren (1981, p. 334), Lyons (1995, p. 116) and Kleiber (1998, p. 80) to take prototypical properties of lexical items into account (cf. below, section 5.6.). However, Coseriu's point of view in this respect is linguistic rather than cognitive.

6.5.2 Core Meaning and Context

The second argument can be countered with the following observations: It is true that there is no upper limit of free contextual variants of meaning. But not all senses (contextual meanings) found in texts have equal status. Most, if not all of them can be related to one or a few core meanings of lexical items or sentences. The contextual meanings

can be shown to be dependent on this core meaning or these few core meanings (cf. above, section 2 and Coseriu (1988, pp. 188 ff.)). Of course, it has to be shown with the help of authentic empirical material, that the potentially infinite contextual meanings can indeed be derived from one or a few core meaning(s). Core meanings are not Platonic "abstract objects" (pace Katz (1981)). For example, some central elements of the lexical field "age" in Classical Latin are the following six adjectives which are assigned their respective semantic features (cf. Coseriu (1990, p. 263)). The following overview is based on the revised description in Kienpointner (1996b):

(17) Lat. *vetus, novus, vetulus, novellus, senex, iuvenis*

senex [advanced age] [of human beings]	*invenis* [young age] [of human beings]
vetulus [advanced age] [of animals/plants]	*novellus* [young age] [of animals/plants]
vetus [advanced age] [of any entities]	*novus* [young age] [of any entities]

The empirical plausibility of these semantic structures can be shown by their direct manifestation in many Latin texts (for examples cf. Kienpointner (1996b)). Apparent exceptions like

(18) Lat. *homo novus, vetus gladiator, canis senex*

can be explained by the fact that *novus* in *homo novus* ("upstart", "parvenu") does not contain the semantic feature [young age], but [person who has very quickly acquired a highly prestigious position of political power]. Nor does *vetus* in the noun phrase *vetus gladiator* have the feature [advanced age], but rather: [experienced]. Finally, *canis senex* can be an anthropomorphic, metaphorical extension of *senex* to a domestic animal, whose faithfulness and loyalty is highlighted by this metaphor. Alternatively, *canis* and *senex* can be combined in certain text genres like fable, where animals are regularly assigned human properties.

   Interestingly enough, these attempts to explain contextual meanings by deriving them from core meanings plus additional (sometimes metaphorical) features provided by context, situation or text genre have clear parallels in cognitive linguistics. They come close to Lakoff's distinction between central subcategories of a category and non-central extensions of these central subcategories. Lakoff (1987, pp. 83 ff., 104 ff.) explains the differences between central and non-central cases of *mother* and the Japanese classifier *hon* as effects of a "radial structure":

(19) Engl. *mother* (central case: the woman who gave birth to the child, supplied her half of the child's genes, nurtured the child, is married to the father, is one

generation older than the child and its legal guardian) vs *stepmother* (who didn't give birth or supply the genes, but is currently married to the father), *adoptive mother* (who didn't give birth or supply the genes, but is the legal guardian and is obliged to provide nurture) as well as *birth mother, foster mother, biological mother* etc.

(20) Jap. classifier *hon* (central case: used for classifying rigid long, thin objects like sticks, canes, pencils, candles, trees, ropes, hair etc.) vs *hon* in non-central cases, that is, used for classifying the following entities: martial art contests (where long/thin staffs and swords are used), hits in baseball (due to the straight trajectories of the ball and the form of the baseball bat, which is long, thin and rigid), telephone calls (transmitted by wires, which are long, thin objects) etc. etc.)

The underlying categories are "radial categories" (cf. Lakoff (1987, p. 84)):

> The category of *mother* in this culture has what we will call a *radial structure*. A radial structure is one where there is a central case and conventionalized variations on it which cannot be predicted by general rules. [...] We are limiting radial structures only to cases where the variations are conventionalized and have to be learned.

Following Lakoff, Rainer (2003) uses the concept of radial structures to explain central and non-central types of derivation with the Spanish suffix *-azo*. The central type means "blow, stroke, etc. with an x", e.g. *acotazo* "blow with a whip" (*acote*), and "continues to be by far the most important and productive one" (Rainer (2003, p. 198)). From this type, metaphoric and metonymic extensions are derived, for example, *bogotazo* ("riot in Bogotá"), *cañonazo* "shot with a cannon" (*cañón*), *jeringazo* "injection with a syringe" (*jeringa*) etc.

Of course, the theoretical perspectives of Coseriu, Lakoff and Rainer are totally different. On the one hand, we have a language-specific perspective looking for contrasts between core meaning and contextual meanings (Coseriu), on the other hand, a cognitive perspective looking for cognitive mechanisms in human thought (Lakoff), or a perspective of word formation denying the possibility of a core meaning and explaining non-central cases of a word formation type as "semantic fragmentation" (Rainer (2003, p. 198)). However, we can observe a striking similarity in distinguishing and deriving non-central cases from central cases of a certain semantic type.

A further weakness of the second argument has to do with the fact that some specific examples of arguments using contextual variation against core meaning are potentially fallacious. These examples, which are given to refute an assumed core meaning, are based on a circular argument. First an alleged, but much too specific core meaning is given, then it is shown that certain semantic features of this core meaning can be absent in perfectly normal contextual uses. However, sometimes a more abstract or a more aptly formulated version of the core meaning would not be refuted by these examples.

Coseriu (1990, pp. 256 ff.) discusses Fillmore's example of the alleged core meaning of *to climb*: "to move", "upwards", "clambering". The non-prototypical counter examples of *The monkey is climbing down the flagpole* and *The snail is climbing up the flagpole* are intended to show that the assumed features "upwards" and "clambering" can be deleted. Using also Spanish examples, however, Coseriu (1990, p. 256) demon-

strates that differently from Spanish *trepar* (roughly, = "to climb upwards"), Engl. *to climb* could be defined in a more abstract way (cf. e.g. the definition of *to climb* "to move vertically usually upwards, usually with effort" in the FrameNet Database: http://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu; 4.11.2005). In this way, the alleged counter examples do not refute semantic features of core meaning.

For instance, if instead of "para arriba" (= "upwards") and "ayudándose con las manos y los pies o con las patas" (= "clambering", that is, "using hand and feet or paws") the features "sobre un plano vertical o inclinado" (= "along a vertical or slanting surface") and "agarrándose con las extremidades" (= "clinging to something with one's extremities"), not only the monkey's climbing down the flagpole, but also the snail's climbing up and the contextual uses of still other expressions, such as Spanish *plantas trepadoras* ("twiners", "climbers", that is, climbing plants) can be easily explained. Thus the core meaning is no longer 'refuted':

(21) *to climb* : [to move][along a vertical or slanting surface][clinging to something with one's extremities]
(Described in this way, the verb is applicable to the movement of human beings and animals such as monkeys, upwards and downwards, as well as to the movement of other animals, even snails, and plants)

Still other uses of *to climb* such as

(22) *The plane climbed to 30,000 feet*

could still be subsumed under the core meaning, while sentences such as

(23) *The temperature climbed into the 90s* or

(24) *The stock market climbed 50 points today*

could be explained as contextually derived metaphorical meanings. It is true that metaphorical meanings by definition cannot be subsumed under the core meaning "on the basis of a common semantic denominator" (Gibbs (1994, p. 44); cf. also Rainer (2003, pp. 206 ff.)). However, it remains quite clear that there is an asymmetry: The metaphorical meanings depend on the core meaning and can be derived from it or motivated by it, but not vice versa (cf. above, section 2).

This does not mean that the only way to 'rescue' core meanings is always to rely on more abstract definitions nor that these definitions necessarily become abstract to a degree that they are not falsifiable (contrary to what Gibbs (1994, p. 43) seems to believe; cf. also Recanati (2004, p. 140)). Sometimes, the contextual variants have even to be explained by making the core meaning more specific. The legendary definition of the noun *bachelor* is such a case. Fillmore (1977b, pp. 67 ff.) and Lakoff (1987, pp. 70 ff.) have argued that the current definition "male, adult, unmarried" does not hold (or only hold given idealizing assumptions). There are non-prototypical examples such as the Pope, Tarzan (before meeting Jane), unmarried homosexuals etc., who would not normally be called "bachelors". This may be true for the standard definition, but not for an improved one which replaces the feature "unmarried" by "who, being able to marry, has not done so or has ceased to do so". This is Coseriu's (Coseriu (1990, pp. 247, 255)) definition of the analogous Spanish example *soltero* (= *bachelor*):

(25) Span. *soltero* : [varón], [adulto], [que, pudiendo casarse, no lo ha hecho aún o ha dejado de hacerlo]("male, adult (person), who, being able to marry, has not done so or has ceased to do so")

Still another weakness of the second argument results from the fact that it would be hard to explain how we understand each other in everyday communication if we indeed had to deal with an infinite number of senses. To take one further example: It is true that there are many contextually specified variants of the meaning of *red*. Gibbs (1994, p. 39) (cf. also Recanati (2004, p. 138 f.)) lists five senses:

(26) Engl. *red*: "(a) tawny when predicated of a skin type, (b) pinkish red when predicated of potatoes, (c) orange when predicated of hair, (d) purply when predicated of wine, (e) pinkish red when predicated of wood" (Gibbs correctly adds "and so on")

This is intended as a counter argument against the assumption of a set of mentally stored 'literal' meanings, because such an assumption would run into problems with the limits of processability. But actually this is a counter argument against the assumption of an infinity of contextual meanings. These would hardly be processable without the assumption of a more central, relatively stable core meaning underlying and explaining the more peripheral or specific senses in certain verbal and situational contexts (cf. Beaugrande and Dressler (1981, pp. 89 ff.) on the relative stability of "virtual meaning"). In the case of the adjective *red*, the specific senses could all be derived from the core meaning "the color thought of as the color of blood" (cf. Wierzbicka (1985, p. 18)):

(27) Engl. *red*: "the color thought of as the color of blood" (cf. also LDOCE (2003, p. 1374): *red* "having the colour of blood")

The more specific shades of "red" can be derived from the additional semantic information provided by the colour of the object referred to in a specific context. Note that Coseriu (1990, p. 254) does not assume that basic colour terms are analysable within the framework of structural semantics. However, he acknowledges that at least some colour terms or the semantic field of colour terms as a whole could be partially analyzed.

The relevance of core meaning for speaking and understanding also explains that it plays a central role in Levelt's model of speech production (Levelt (1989, p. 9)). An adult speaker with a normal speech rate produces some 150 words per minute and normal educated speakers of English actively use about 30.000 words (Levelt (1989, p. 199)). In order to explain the enormous speed of access to lexical items Levelt postulates parallel processing, but also the existence of core meanings of "lemmas" (= the syntactic and semantic part of entries in the mental lexicon). The meaning of a lexical item is defined as "the set of conceptual conditions that must be fulfilled in the message for the item to become selected", for example "to ingest for nourishment or pleasure" in the case of the English verb *to eat* (Levelt (1989, p. 182)).

Furthermore, in order to explain "convergence", that is, our success in choosing the right lexical item for a concept, Levelt introduces three principles which all involve core meaning Levelt (1989, p. 213):

The uniqueness principle No two lexical items have the same core meaning. [...]

> *The core principle* A lexical item is retrieved only if its core condition is satisfied by the concept to be expressed. [...]
>
> *The principle of specificity* Of all the items whose core conditions are satisfied by the concept, the most specific one is retrieved.
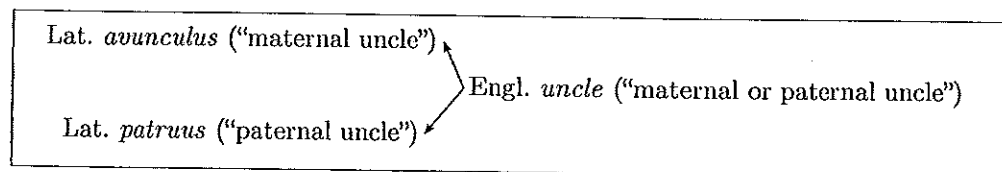
Of course, using the concept of core meaning, Levelt does not deny the huge theoretical problems connected with the description of core meaning: "[T]he problems about the precise structure of theses conceptual specifications are horrendous" Levelt (1989, p. 197). But it can be argued that core meaning and lexical fields play an important role in language processing (cf. also Lutzeier (1993, pp. 207 ff.)), although there are also psycholinguistic models denying the existence of a core meaning (cf. Recanati (2004, p. 147) on models supporting (core) "meaning eliminativism").

6.5.3 Core Meaning, Reference, and Truth

The third argument, namely, that meaning is equivalent to reference or truth, can be refuted by a comparison of semantic structures across or within languages. As core meaning is language-specific by definition, this comparison across languages is highly important as far as methodology is concerned. These structures can have the same reference, but nevertheless differ considerably as to their meaning. In the following: 1. semantic differences at the lexical level, 2. contrasting syntactic and semantic sentence structures, 3. differing semantic roles and finally, 4. differing entailments of sentences will be chosen as illustrative examples.

Lexemes in different languages can clearly differ semantically while the reference remains the same. For example, the meaning of a lexeme L1 in language A can be more specific than the meaning of the corresponding lexeme L2 in language B. Here are a few examples: Latin *avunculus/patruus* and English *uncle*, English *sky/heaven* and German *Himmel*, French *louer*, Engl. *rent (out)* and German *mieten/vermieten*, Latin *senex/vetulus/vetus* and English *old*/German *alt* (for further examples cf. Blank (2001, pp. 130 ff.)). These lexemes can be used to refer to the same objects, properties and activities in the real world, but they clearly differ in meaning:

(28)

> Lat. *avunculus* ("maternal uncle")
>
> Engl. *uncle* ("maternal or paternal uncle")
>
> Lat. *patruus* ("paternal uncle")

Furthermore, also within one and the same language, lexemes/sentences can differ semantically, but refer to the same object or state of affairs. This can be illustrated by Frege's (Frege (1975, p. 41)) well-known example of Germ. *Morgenstern/Abendstern* ("morning star/evening star"). Moreover, many lexical units or even whole word classes seem not to refer to anything specific in the real world or some possible world (cf. discourse particles, interjections, or greetings etc.), but still have language-specific meaning (cf. Wierzbicka (1985, p. 15)).

Similar arguments apply to the sentence level. Sentences having the same truth value

clearly differ in meaning across languages. This has been acknowledged also by philosophers who distinguish between "extension" (reference; Frege's "Bedeutung") in the real world or in possible worlds and "intension" (roughly equivalent to meaning; Frege's "Sinn") (cf. Frege (1975, p. 41); Carnap (1972, pp. 23 ff.), Lewis (1970, p. 23)).

More specifically, languages often express the same state of affairs in a (slightly) different perspective or conceptualize semantic roles in differing ways. For example, in the semantic domain of possession, syntactic constructions can foreground or background the possessor by assigning different syntactic functions to the possessor. These functions can be roughly ordered according to the following hierarchy (taken slightly simplified from Lehmann et al. (2000, p. 10)):

(29) Subject > Direct Object > Indirect Object > Adjunct > Adnominal function

This hierarchy and further semantic hierarchies (e.g. Human > Non Human Animate > Inanimate etc. or Agent > Patient) establish the difference between "person prominence" languages (e.g. many Indo-European Languages) and "relation prominence" languages (e.g. Turkish, Yucatec Maya) in the realm of possession (cf. Lehmann et al. (2000, p. 16)). The distinction can be illustrated with the following examples (The Yucatec example is quoted according to Lehmann et al. (2000, p. 52)):

(30) Engl. *I have money.*

(31) Germ. *Ich habe Geld.* ("I have money")

(32) Lat. *Habeo pecuniam.* ("Have-1.SG. money", that is, "I have money")

(33) Lat. *Mihi est pecunia.* (that is, "To me is money")

(34) Turk. *Param var.* ("Money-POSS.1.SG. exists", that is, "My money exists")

(35) Yuc. *Yàan teen tàak'in.*
     EXIST me money (that is, "Exists to me money")

(36) Yuc. *Yàan in tàak'in.*
     EXIST POSS.1.SG money (that is, "My money exists")

Abbreviations: POSS = Possessive; 1 = 1st person; SG = singular; EXIST = Existential

These examples show how languages differ in characterizing the possessor in a more or less person prominent or relation prominent way. Whereas English and German assign the highly person prominent syntactic function "subject" to the possessor, in Latin there is at least one other highly frequent construction, where the possessor is assigned the less person prominent function "indirect object". In Turkish, the possessor appears still less person prominent as adnominal function (a possessive suffix (-m) as an adnominal suffix of the possessed noun *para* "money") and in Yucatec Maya, as an indirect object or, alternatively, as an adnominal function (an attribute (*in*) to the possessed noun *tàak'in* "money"). At the same time, these examples show that the sentence meaning is language-specific because it ultimately is composed on the basis of the meanings of the constituents of the sentence (words, grammatical morphemes, phrases). As all example sentences basically refer to the same state of affairs and can have the same truth value, language-specific meaning cannot be equated with reference or truth value.

The difference between meaning and reference at the syntactic level can also be shown

as far as semantic roles or theta roles are concerned.

Semantic roles such as Agent, Patient, Benefactive, Instrument have often been equated with "reference roles". Reference roles refer to real world entities and relationships rather than to semantic roles in the narrow sense, namely, "language-specific roles" ("sprachlich-begriffliche Rollen", cf. Coseriu (1987, p. 189)). Coseriu does not deny the importance of dealing with reference roles within grammar. But he is right in stressing that we refer to extra-linguistic entities through language, that is, through the lexical and grammatical means of the conceptualization of reality within particular languages Coseriu (1987, p. 186). Not making this distinction at all would lead to the counter-intuitive result of claiming that the only "role differences" between languages concern formal expression. However, forms have functions, and neglecting or ignoring these language-specific functions would reduce linguistic semantics to some kind of reference theory or truth-conditional semantics, which already has been shown to be counter-intuitive by examples (30) to (36).

If we look at some early analyses of "semantic" roles within modern linguistics, it becomes quite clear that these contributions indeed reduce language-specific conceptualizations of reference roles to differences in material expressions within one language or several languages (cf. García Hernández (2003, p. 122)). In this respect, see examples (37-39), (40-41) and (42-43). Fillmore (1968, p. 25) classifies both *the key* and *with the key* in (37-39) as Instrument (= INSTR). Similarly, Helbig and Buscha (1991, p. 636) classify both *mit dem Messer* and *das Messer* in (40-41) as Instrument. Finally, Foley and Valin (1984, pp. 56 ff.) classify both *against the wall* and *the wall* in (42-43) as Locative (= LOC):

(37) *John opened the door* [$_{INSTR}$ *with the key*].

(38) [$_{INSTR}$ *The key*] *opened the door.*

(39) *John used* [$_{INSTR}$ *the key*] *to open the door.*

(40) Germ. [$_{INSTR}$ *Das Messer*] *schneidet das Brot.* ("The knife cuts the bread")

(41) Germ. *Er schneidet das Brot* [$_{INSTR}$ *mit dem Messer*]. ("He cuts the bread with the knife")

(42) *The man hits the cane* [$_{LOC}$ *against the wall*].

(43) *The man hits* [$_{LOC}$ *the wall*] *with the cane.*

Arguing against this oversimplification, Coseriu correctly stresses that different forms in individual languages usually encode differing semantic functions. For example, Latin ablative forms with or without the preposition *a(b)* can be used to distinguish the reference roles Agent (= AG) and Force (= FO) in passive clauses. In this way, the respective Latin ablative forms express non-animate causes of events in a less "agent-like" way. In German passive clauses, both Agent and Force can be encoded with the prepositional adjunct *von* + NP, although the prepositional adjunct *durch* + NP is more commonly used for Force (cf. Kühner and Stegmann (1962, p. 495); Helbig and Buscha (1991, p. 173 f.)):

(44) Lat. *Oppidum* [$_{PP Abl}$ AG *a Caesare deletum*] *est.* ("The city was destroyed by

Caesar")

(45) Lat. *Oppidum* [$_{NPAbl}$ FO *eruptione Vesuvii*] *deletum est.* ("The city was destroyed by the eruption of the Vesuvius")

(46) Germ. *Die Stadt wurde* [$_{PPDat}$ AG *von Caesar*] *zerstört.* ("The city was destroyed by Caesar")

(47) Germ. *Die Stadt wurde* [$_{PPAcc/Dat}$ AG *durch den/von dem Ausbruch des Vesuvs*] *zerstört.* ("The city was destroyed by the eruption of the Vesuvius")

Similarly, in the following sentences, the Latin perspective portrays the soldiers as Recipients (= REC; a noun phrase in the dative case) of the consul's arrangement of the cavalry, whereas in the German translation, the infantry is constructed as the local Direction (= DIR; a prepositional phrase in the accusative case) of the consul's positioning of the cavalry:

(48) Lat. *Consul equites revocatos circumdedit* [$_{NPDat}$ REC *peditibus*]. (Liv. 21.55.3) ("The consul positioned the re-called cavalry around the infantry")

(49) Germ. *Der Konsul stellte die zurückbeorderte Reiterei* [$_{PPAcc}$ DIR *rings um die Fußsoldaten*] *auf.* (*Der Konsul stellte die ... Reiterei den Fußsoldaten ringsum auf) ("The consul positioned the re-called cavalry around the infantry")

In the meantime, there is a widespread consensus (cf. Fillmore (1977a, pp. 74 ff.); Fillmore (2003, p. 462); Jackendoff (1990, pp. 135 ff.; 198 ff.; 297, note 4) that differences in sentence structure (within or across languages) have to be dealt with by assigning different semantic descriptions, for example, differing semantic roles, to the respective arguments. This is also the case in the following examples, where *hay* is portrayed more directly affected (as Theme or Patient) in (50) than in (51), where it is portrayed as Instrument. The same holds for *the students* in (52), where they are described as Patients of the teaching, while they are the Recipients of the teaching in (53):

(50) *Bill loaded hay on the truck.*

(51) *Bill loaded the truck with hay.*

(52) *Harry teaches the students French.*

(53) *Harry teaches French to the students.*

The examples given above have shown that meaning cannot be reduced to reference and/or truth: There is a level of language-specific meaning apart from reference and/or truth, which has to be described by linguistic semantics (cf. also the complex model of Blank (2001, p. 132)). Still, the following question remains: What are the precise limits of language-specific core meaning at the sentence level? If Katz's anonymous letter situation is not accepted as a criterion (cf. above, section 3) for separating literal meaning from contextual meaning, it is hard to see what a sentence means apart from context and situation. And how is the closely related difficulty of distinguishing between analytic and synthetic sentences to be solved? This distinction has been brilliantly and devastatingly criticized by Quine (1971, pp. 22 ff.). Finally, the definition of core meaning at the sentence level involves the difficulty of distinguishing between direct and indirect speech acts.

In this respect, I would like to concede that it is not possible to draw a sharp borderline between analytic and synthetic aspects of sentence meaning. However, as in the corresponding case of the distinction between dictionary and encyclopaedia, the concession that there are borderline cases needs not lead to the conclusion that the distinction between analytic and synthetic sentences has to be given up completely. Again, the comparison of languages shows that it would be counterintuitive not to acknowledge the clear difference between sentences which are true on the basis of their meaning alone, and others which can be true or false. It would be counterintuitive because the translation of the respective sentences reveals clear differences as to their status as analytic (contradictory) or synthetic sentences in different languages (cf. also Carnap (1972, p. 31)):

(54) Germ. *Diese Katze ist ein Männchen.* ("This cat is male") SYNTHETIC

(55) Germ. *Diese Katze ist ein Weibchen.* ("This cat is female") SYNTHETIC

(56) Ital. *Questa gatta è un maschio.* ("This cat is male") CONTRADICTORY

(57) Ital. *Questa gatta è una femmina.* ("This cat is female") ANALYTIC

I do not assume, however, that illocutionary types can be determined on the basis of core meaning alone (cf. Sökeland (1980, p. 41)). Only with the help of some background knowledge and a default context can we determine whether a declarative, an interrogative or an imperative sentence is a statement, a question or a request/command, respectively. Searle (1982, p. 142) still calls a sentence meaning, which has been enriched by a minimal extra-linguistic context, a "literal meaning", but this seems to be too broad a notion of literal or core meaning (cf. also Wilson and Sperber (2004) on "explicature" in Relevance Theory, Wunderlich (1991, pp. 37 ff.) on "Äußerungsbedeutung"/"utterance meaning", Blutner (2002, p. 52) on "pragmatic strengthening" and Recanati (2004, pp. 23 ff.) on "primary pragmatic processes" of saturation and enrichment). Speech acts belong to the level of discourse. According to the terminology of Coseriu (1994, pp. 63 ff.), they 'have sense' (or 'make sense'), which is established both by linguistic and extra-linguistic context. We are dealing with "utterance meaning" rather than with "sentence meaning" in the narrow sense, with "text sentences" rather than with "system sentences" (cf. Lyons (1995, p. 234 ff., 260 f.)).

On the other hand, some aspects of the propositional content of sentences seem to remain stable across different types of illocutionary types and can be derived from the core meaning of sentences alone. Hence, these aspects of the meaning of sentences, the "propositional structure" could be equated with their core meaning (cf. Wunderlich (1991, p. 33) similar notion of "Satzbedeutung"/"sentence meaning" and Recanati (2004, p. 6) on sentence meaning as a "semantic skeleton" underlying truth-conditional meaning and communicative meaning). What is the propositional structure of a sentence? The propositional structure is based on the predicate, the lexical items used as arguments and satellites of the predicate, their semantic roles and the global syntactic and semantic structure of the sentence. If these language-specific factors remain unchanged, some semantic entailments are valid across different types of speech acts. If we compare languages with differing propositional structures, the (in)validity of these semantic entailments can change drastically.

In this respect, I agree with Katz (1980, pp. 228 ff.) that the following entailments are semantically valid irrespective of context and across differing speech acts within one and the same language because they are based on the propositional structure of the sentences (but cf. the differences between English and Latin). However, I do not agree with his assumption that basic illocutionary types such as "assertion", "question" and "request" can be established out of context (cf. also Wunderlich (1991, pp. 46 ff.)):

(58) John is having a nightmare. ⇒ John is having a dream.

(59) Is John having a nightmare? ⇒ Is John having a dream?

(60) I request that you eat breakfast. ⇒ I request that you eat a meal.

(61) Peter loves his uncle ⇒ Peter loves the brother of his mother.

(62) Peter loves his uncle ⇒ Peter loves the brother of his father.

(63) Lat. Petrus avunculum suum amat. ⇒ Petrus fratrem matris suae amat.
("Peter loves his maternal uncle") ("Peter loves the brother of his mother")

(64) Lat. Petrus patruum suum amat. ⇒ Petrus fratrem patris sui amat.
("Peter loves his paternal uncle") ("Peter loves the brother of his father")

(65) Lat. Petrus avunculum suum amat. *⇒ Petrus fratrem patris sui amat.
("Peter loves his maternal uncle") ("Peter loves the brother of his father")

(66) Lat. Petrus patruum suum amat. *⇒ Petrus fratrem matris suae amat.
("Peter loves his paternal uncle") ("Peter loves the brother of his mother")

Explanations: "⇒" = "semantically entails"; "*⇒" = "does not semantically entail". Semantic entailment is not to be confused with material implication ("p → q") because of the paradoxes of material implication. These arise from the fact that in classical propositional logic "p → q" is only false if "p" is true and "q" is false, that is, any false proposition "p" materially implies any true proposition "q" and "p" and "q" need not be semantically related to each other.

I would like to conclude these rather long remarks on core meaning, reference and truth with some critical observations concerning the semantic theory of Putnam (1975). Language-specific semantic properties belonging to the core meaning are not defeasible stereotypes in the sense of Putnam. That is, to a certain degree core meaning is independent of reference (cf. García Hernández (2003, p. 128); and besides, reference itself is not independent of contextual reinterpretations; cf. Recanati (2004, p. 146)).

As far as language-specific meaning is concerned, it can remain stable for a while even if the common reference of linguistic expressions has been proven to be wrong. The thought experiments of Putnam (e.g. cats which display all stereotypes of normal cats, but actually are robots) concern reference and not meaning. Katz (1981, p. 145) adduces the counter example of *witch*, which still has strong and stable negative connotations, although it has become quite clear that the women accused, tortured and killed as witches have been the innocent victims of fundamentalist beliefs and sexist institutions. Compare Katz's definition of *witch* with the quite similar one in LDOCE (2003, p. 1895):

(67) *witch*: "woman possessing supernatural powers by virtue of a pact with an evil spirit"

(68) *witch*: "a woman who is supposed to have magic powers, especially to do bad things"

Similarly, it has become quite clear that the German word *Walfisch* (lit. "whale fish") refers to a species of the genus "mammal" and not to a kind of fish. Nevertheless, the word *Walfisch* is still used in contemporary German (beside the synonymic noun *Wal*), and sometimes is even anaphorically substituted by the noun *Fisch* ("fish"), as in the following text *Der Walfisch* (written 19.9.2001 by the Swiss author Franz Dodel, *1949):

(69) **Der Walfisch** *[...] Wale sind dem Menschen gegenüber äusserst friedlich und schon der antike Schriftsteller Plinius berichtet davon, dass Delphine (die ins Reich der Zahnwale gehören) einen Menschen vor dem Ertrinken zu retten vermögen, indem sie diesen —wie ihre Jungen— an die Wasseroberfläche drängen, was sie allerdings auch mit einer vollgesogenen Luftmatratze tun. Derselbe Autor berichtet von* **Pottwalen**, *die damals noch ins Mittelmeer schwammen. Von denen soll sich einer zur Regierungszeit des Kaisers Septimus Severus in den neuerstellten römischen Hafen von Ostia verirrt haben, was die Römer zur Simulation einer Seeschlacht animierte. Der riesige* **Fisch** *zertrümmerte mit seiner Schwanzflosse kurzerhand einige Militärboote und verschwand vor den Augen der konsternierten Armee ins offene Meer.*

At the sentence level, examples such as *The sun is rising/The sun is going down* are still perfectly normal, although by now we know that the earth moves around the sun and not vice versa.

This relative immunity of core meaning—as far as changes in reference are concerned—can also be shown with the help of several linguistic tests (cf. Cruse (1997, p. 17); Kleiber (1998, pp. 89 ff.)). These tests show that not all semantic features can be deleted without the result of producing unacceptable sentences (but cf. the criticism of Levelt (1989, p. 212) and Coseriu (1990, p. 164), who correctly argue that (some of) these tests sometimes do not work properly and are not able to distinguish language-specific semantic properties from those known by encyclopaedic knowledge):

(70) ?*This is a cat, but it isn't an animal.*

(71) ?*This is a cat, but it is an animal.*

(72) ?*This cat is an animal.*

6.5.4 Core Meaning and the Use Theory of Meaning

As to the fourth argument, it has to be conceded that the description of core meaning by no way exhausts the richness of usage of linguistic expressions, which always and inevitably involves verbal and nonverbal contexts (situations, cultural institutions, history etc.). Within use theory, the meaning of a word is defined as its use in a language (cf. Wittgenstein (1975, p. 41)). The use of an expression is fixed via the rules of usage within a speech community, also called a "language game" by Wittgenstein. A language game consists of verbal and non-verbal activities (cf. Wittgenstein (1975, p. 19)). Therefore, a comprehensive description of use involves more than a short semantic definition. It should be at least as long as a "short story", as Heringer (1999, p. 39) aptly remarks:

Ziel semantischer Theorien scheinen oft Definitionen...Aber eine Bedeutung ist eine lange Geschichte. Und um davon wenigstens etwas zu erfassen, braucht es wenigstens eine short story...Nur die detaillierte Darstellung des Gebrauchs offenbart die konstitutive Rolle eines Wortes für die Kultur, für die Weltansicht, für uns.

However, the description of core meaning within structural semantics and the comprehensive description of the use of linguistic expressions within a use theory of meaning do not exclude each other. The description of core meaning can be seen as the minimal set of usage rules, which is necessary, but not sufficient for producing and understanding linguistic expressions in everyday communication.

Furthermore, the use theory of meaning provides another argument against reference theories of meaning such as the one suggested by Putnam (1975), because even experts often disagree about the reference of linguistic expressions (cf. Kienpointner (1992, p. 97 ff.); Gibbs (1994, p. 37)). This becomes especially clear in the case of ideologically controversial lexical items where it is implausible to assume that there is one and only one 'objective' reference, for example lexemes like *freedom, justice, democracy*, etc. In these cases, we often engage in 'semantic fights' and/or argumentative discourse to justify our rules of usage (on the complex relationship between language, ideology and argumentation cf. Kienpointner (1996c, 2003)). However, while we often disagree on the ideological aspects and applications of these lexemes, we agree on their core meaning (cf. García Hernández (2003, p. 127 f.)). The following remarks by Wittgenstein (1975, p. 139) could be interpreted in this way, namely, as a distinction between the controversies concerning the reference or truth of linguistic expressions and the uncontroversial agreement as far as the core meaning or the system of language is concerned:

> "So sagst du also, dass die Übereinstimmung der Menschen entscheide, was richtig und was falsch ist?" —Richtig und falsch ist, was Menschen sagen; und in der Sprache stimmen die Menschen überein. Dies ist keine Übereinstimmung der Meinungen, sondern der Lebensform.

Therefore, meaning cannot be simply equated with 'objective' (expert) reference. Words are not 'labels' which are attached to objects: Rather, according to Wittgenstein, a language is the irreducible background, not only for the use of lexical items and their definition, but also for judgments about the truth or falsity of statements (Wittgenstein (1975, p. 139)). This basic assumption is summed up by Heringer (1978, p. 12):

> The use theory gives up the idea that words, like labels, are attached to objects given in the world. There is no need here to assume such a pre-established world. The description of speech acts can demonstrate, rather, that different social groups make different assumptions about the world by referring to different objects or by referring differently.

Finally, use theory has also rightly criticized the primary interest of philosophers in the truth of assertive sentences. The enormous number of different speech acts (questioning, requesting, ordering, reproaching, promising, excusing, advising, warning, threatening, arguing, greeting, etc.) necessitates a language theory which takes the multiplicity of "language games" into account (cf. Lyons (1995, p. 182)).

6.5.5 Core Meaning and Pragmatics

The fifth argument correctly insists that the meaning of lexemes and sentences is created, recreated and changed by speakers/listeners. It must not be 'reified' as existing independent of human actors. This argument is correct insofar as linguistic structuralism, as inspired by Ferdinand de Saussure, indeed had a far too static concept of meaning. Therefore, such structuralist approaches run into problems as far as the dynamics of communicative processes and semantic change is concerned (cf. Verschueren (1999, p. 147 ff.); Asher (1999)). Furthermore, it favoured a view of language which is somehow imposed on the individual speaker (cf. Saussure (1968, p. 30); I have to refrain from discussing the problems of reconstructing the 'original' Saussure):

> En séparant la langue de la parole, on sépare du même coup: 1° ce qui est social de ce qui est individuel; 2° ce qui est essentiel de ce qui est accessoire et plus ou moins accidentel. La langue n'est pas une fonction du sujet parlant, elle est le produit que l'individu enregistre passivement.

However, Coseriu holds a thoroughly dynamic view of language, claiming that dialogical interaction is the essence of language: "La esencia del lenguaje se da en el diálogo" (Coseriu (1958, p. 40); cf. Dressler (2004, p. 14)). The (semantic) system of a language in this perspective is not a static structure, but the result of the continuous realization of its structure by its speakers. It also becomes clear that Coseriu would not at all want to 'reify' the system as an entity which is independent of the speakers.

In this view, the (semantic) system of a language exists because "it is done" by the speakers and listeners of a speech community ("el sistema existe porque se hace"; Coseriu (1958, p. 154)). The relative stability of the structures of the language system is due to the fact that most of the time we "reproduce" the system. This is the reason why pragmaticians such as Jef Verschueren acknowledge that these semantic processes produce "relatively stable cores of meaning" (Verschueren (1999, p. 123)).

Quite often, however, we do not reproduce the system without modifications or even change it considerably. If these changes get conventionalized to a degree that the innovative context-specific uses are generalized all over a speech community (nowadays often through the influence of the mass media), the language system has been changed. More specifically, the core meaning can be changed when contextual (e.g. metaphorical, metonymical etc.) meanings become conventionalized.

In the long run, language is constantly "being created through change": "La lengua se hace mediante el cambio" (cf. Coseriu (1958, p. 160)). This insight leads to Coseriu's somewhat hyperbolic bon mot "Language change does not exist" (cf. Coseriu (1983, p. 53)), which has to be understood with this theoretical background in mind.

Linguistic pragmatics and structural semantics could agree, therefore, on a division of labour. Unlike structural semantics, pragmatics does not primarily deal with core meaning. Like text linguistics, pragmatics is dealing with context-specific "sense", that is, the richness of the use of language, the infinity of contextual meanings realized in speech acts and discourses of various genres.

6.5.6 Core Meaning and Prototype Semantics

Prototype semantics has been welcomed as a breakthrough in semantics, a new approach capable of solving many of the vexed problems of semantics discussed above. However, as Coseriu (1990) has shown in his thorough criticism of cognitive semantics in general, and prototype semantics in particular, the problem with this approach is that it actually does not deal with language-specific meaning, but with reference and/or discourse semantics. The fact that meaning and reference are confused weakens most of the criticism of cognitive semantics against "checklist views of meaning", "definition by a list of the necessary and sufficient properties of a concept" etc. This will be illustrated with the help of a few examples.

The fuzziness of categories and the enormous difficulties of justifying lists of necessary and sufficient properties, which together would define the essence of an entity, indeed pose serious problems. But these difficulties concern theories of reference, not the description of core meaning. It is indeed hard to discern the precise border line between day and night, cold and cool, red and pink, light blue and dark blue etc., but this does not apply to the clearly distinct meanings of the respective English and Russian lexemes. Even if we disagree about whether it is day or night or whether some object is red or pink, we presuppose the semantic distinctions created by the respective lexemes (vgl. Coseriu (1973, p. 30 f.); García Hernández (2003, p. 127)):

(73) Engl. *day* vs *night*

day	*night*
Referential Continuum	

(74) Engl. *red* vs *pink*

red	*pink*
Referential Continuum	

(75) Russ. *sinij* ("dark blue") vs *goluboj* ("light blue")

sinij	*goluboj*
Referential Continuum	

Furthermore, even the meaning of a referentially vague concept "can be portrayed in discrete terms" (Wierzbicka (1985, p. 17)). This includes particles used as hedges such as *rather*, for example, in the clause

(76) *Mary is rather tall.*

Wierzbicka (1985, p. 17) provides the following definition for the meaning of *rather* in this sentence:

> Mary is such that if I had to say either <u>Mary is tall</u> or <u>Mary is not tall</u> wanting to say what is true I would rather say (i.e. I would prefer to say) <u>Mary is tall</u>.

Nor is 'semantic necessity' the same as logical or referential necessity (cf. Katz (1972, pp. 182 ff.), Wierzbicka (1985, p. 60)). If in a particular language a semantic feature is part of the meaning of a lexeme (e.g. [animal] in the meaning of *cat*) or if a sentence is analytically true because the subject is a hyponym of the predicate (*Cats are animals*), these language-specific facts are not refuted by pointing out that there could be cases

in the real world where the feature is absent or that the sentence could be falsified (because cats actually are robots) (cf. also Kleiber (1998, p. 90)). In spite of Quine's (Quine (1971, p. 22)) elegant bon mot, core meaning and ontological essence are not to be confused (on Aristotle's relation to modern structural semantics cf. Wierzbicka (1985, pp. 84 ff.); Coseriu (1990, pp. 276 ff.); Kienpointner (1992, pp. 117 ff.)):

> The Aristotelian notion of essence was the forerunner, no doubt, of the modern notion of intension or meaning. [...] Meaning is what essence becomes when it is divorced from the object of reference and wedded to the word.

It is, however, one of the important achievements of prototype semantics to have experimentally demonstrated again and again that there are prototype effects: That is, not all members of a category are equally cognitively salient for informants. This insight, however, is an important insight concerning human cognition and categorization, not a fact which would concern language-specific core meaning. Cognitively, a sparrow or an eagle is more salient as a member of the category bird than a hen, let alone a penguin or an ostrich. Semantically, however, the nouns *sparrow, eagle, hen, penguin* and *ostrich* all belong equally to the semantic class of birds (cf. Coseriu (1990, p. 248)).

A further important insight of prototype semantics, namely, that there are pertinent, prototypical, though not necessary properties of lexical items, should be taken into account for practical lexicographic purposes. As I have tried to show above (cf. section 5.1), it could also be integrated in the framework of Coseriu's semantic theory. Prototypical properties, that is, pertinent, but not necessary semantic features could be integrated into semantic descriptions of core meaning because they belong to the set of properties most frequently and/or most typically ascribed to members of a category in everyday language. That is, these properties belong to the norm of a language system, though not to the semantic system itself.

A final remark is in order, however, to stress once more the necessity of the clear distinction of cognitive aspects of meaning described with concepts such as scenes and frames, scripts and idealized cognitive models, and purely language-specific aspects of meaning. The cognitively relevant aspects typically exceed the language-specific aspects. The typical "commercial event" as a scene involves more people, objects and transactions than are realized in a specific sentence structure of a natural language (cf. Fillmore (1977b, pp. 58 ff.); Fillmore et al. (2002); Lehrer (1993, pp. 152 ff.)). Hence it can be concluded that the meanings of all linguistic expressions imply the existence of corresponding concepts, while the converse is not true. Therefore, not all potentially relevant and cognitively important aspects of meaning are encoded within semantic structures, for example, lexical fields, of a language.

Furthermore, differences which are cognitively relevant are encoded in the lexical system of some languages, but not all languages. For example, in English, French and German, the concept "bird" is lexically realized with one item, *bird, oiseau* and *Vogel*, respectively. But in Spanish and Portuguese, there are two lexical items, *ave* ("big bird") and *pájaro/passaro* ("small bird") (cf. Coseriu (1990, p. 253); Blank (2001, p. 52)):

(77) Engl. *bird*/Germ. *Vogel*/French *oiseau* vs Span. *ave* ("big bird")/*pájaro* ("small bird")

Again, this makes a distinction between language-specific core meaning and elements within cognitive models indispensable.

6.5.7 Core Meaning and the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor

The cognitive theory of metaphor holds that human thought is deeply metaphoric: "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 3). To have recognized and described the enormous importance of metaphor for human thought is one of the major achievements of the cognitive theory of metaphor, although Lakoff and Johnson were not the first to have had this important insight (cf. Ricoeur (1975)). But more than this, representatives of the cognitive theory of metaphor have also argued that definitions of lexical items such as emotion terms cannot be given without taking into account and using metaphorical models within the definition. And indeed, Kövecses (1990, pp. 15 ff.) is correct when he criticizes the fact "that the core alone cannot capture the totality of our experiences in connection with given aspects of the world (like the emotions, for example)". Furthermore, it is true that many conventional metaphors have become lexicalized to a degree that it makes sense to consider them as part of the core meaning of lexical items (cf. the example already mentioned above, namely, *to explode*, which can also conventionally mean "to be very angry").

But this does not mean that abstract concepts cannot be defined or understood without metaphors. To deny this would mean that there are no essential semantic differences between abstract lexemes like *love, hate* and *anger* and the concrete lexemes or noun phrases used for defining them, such as *fire, wild animal, boiling liquid in a container* (cf. Stöckl (2004, p. 207)). Furthermore, the definitions of abstract concepts given by structural semanticists such as Coseriu and Geckeler, but also by Wierzbicka (2002) and Goddard (2004) have demonstrated that it is possible to define core meanings of emotions and other abstract entities in a non-metaphoric way (cf. above).

Even more important is the following criticism of the cognitive theory of metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), seeing metaphor almost exclusively as a phenomenon of thought, underestimate the important influence of language-specific meaning for the creation of metaphors. For example, the various degrees of anger encoded in the German lexemes *Ärger, Zorn, Wut* (from "slight anger" to "fury, rage") influence the way in which the metaphor ANGER IS MADNESS is (not) compatible with these abstract concepts (cf. German *Wutanfall* vs. **Ärgeranfall, *ärgerschäumend*):

(78) German *Ärger* ("slight anger"), *Zorn* ("strong anger"), *Wut* ("furious anger")

(79) German *Wutanfall* ("a fit of anger"), *wutschäumend* ("foaming with rage") vs ?*Zornanfall,* ?*zornschäumend* vs **Ärgeranfall, *ärgerschäumend*

Similarly, in Turkish, there are two lexemes for "love", namely, *sevgi* ("love in general"; Redhouse (2000, p. 660): "love, affection") and *aşk* ("passionate love"; Redhouse (2000, p. 54): "love, passion"). Differently from *sevgi, aşk* has ambivalent, sometimes clearly negative connotations and, consequently, is used for metaphoric conceptualizations such as LOVE IS MADNESS or for negative aspects of roads, paths etc. in the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY. The same lexeme *aşk* also appears in negatively

evaluated metonymic effects of passion, namely, blindness (cf. Yurtbaşi (1993); Redhouse (2000)):

(80) Turk. *Aşk başta karar etse, akıl firar eder.* ("If (passionate) love settles down in the head, reason flees")

(81) Turk. *Aşkın yolu dikenlidir.* ("The path of (passionate) love is thorny")

(82) Turk. *Aşk gözleri kör eder/Aşk kör yapar.* (lit. "(Passionate) Love makes (the eyes) blind")

One of my Turkish informants, asked to describe the noun *aşk*, wrote the following highly ambivalent description of *aşk*:

(83) *Aşkın her zaman güzel olduğuna da inanmiyorum. Bazen acı veriyor insana ama her şey yolundaysa, mükemmel bir şey. Aşk ve kıskançlık çok yakın kavramlar.* ("I don't believe that passionate love is nice all the time. Sometimes it hurts human beings, but if everything is all right it is an excellent thing. Passionate love and jealousy are concepts which are very close to each other")

However, there are also positive aspects of *aşk*, as can be seen in the following instance of the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A FLOWER:

(84) *Eğer hayat çicekse aşk kokusu.* ("If life is a flower, love is its scent")

These language-specific facts should be taken into account also by cognitive semanticists because they have clear effects on the selective use of conceptual models of metaphor such as ANGER IS MADNESS or LOVE IS MADNESS/LOVE IS A JOURNEY/LOVE IS A FLOWER (on language and culture-specific aspects of (active) metaphor cf. also Goddard (2004), Kienpointner (2004)).

This criticism directed against the cognitive theory of metaphor does not prevent theories of core meaning from assigning metaphoric language use a central place in the functioning of language. Coseriu even situates the creation of metaphors at the very heart of human language: There are no reasons for metaphoric creativity in language because metaphoric creativity is inherent in the definition of language (cf. Coseriu (1956, p. 26)):

> Pero ¿cuáles son las razones de la creación metafórica en el lenguaje? O mejor: ¿pueden investigarse las razones íntimas de la creación lingüística? Evidentemente no, puesto que la creación, la invención, es inherente al lenguaje por definición.

Wierzbicka (1985, p. 57) (cf. also Wierzbicka (2002)) states in a similar vein:

> [...] the word <u>hat</u> is extended to 'party hats' or [...] the word <u>mother</u> is extended to adoptive mothers, because natural language is economical, elastic and adaptable to new situations and new conceptualizations. The possibility of creative usage is inherent in its functioning.

6.6 Conclusion

To sum up, I would like to conclude that a strong case for core meaning can indeed be made, although this does not mean that the criticism of core meaning discussed above has been proven wrong in all respects. But more often than not, recent semantic

theories complement rather than replace a description of core meaning. The comprehensive theory of meaning developed by Coseriu seems to be able to integrate many of the frameworks mentioned above, while still assigning core meaning an important place within linguistic semantics. It does seem possible, at least in many cases, to assign a relatively stable core meaning to words, phrases and sentences, which either subsumes contextual variants or else can motivate them, serving as the point of departure from which contextual variants can be derived.

Any kind of reductionism in semantic theory should be avoided and a division of labour of different semantic approaches (e.g. structural semantics, reference theory, truth conditional semantics, use theory, pragmatic approaches, relevance theory, prototype semantics) should be developed.

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