Lign 104: Language and Conceptualization

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Part I: Attention, Reference, and Metonymy
Part II: Coherence and Metaphor
Part III: Attention, Coherence, and Lexical Semantics
Attention, Reference, and Metonymy

- Natural languages offer us many ways to refer to things – why?

- What are the differences between the alternatives, such as pronouns, demonstratives, and definite lexical NPs?

- Why do languages allow metonymy?

- The key cognitive factors involved the speaker’s beliefs about hearer’s beliefs about:
  - The world
  - The operative discourse state
  - Salience of referent
  - Perspective of speaker
  - Aspects about the referent to which the speaker is attempting to draw attention
Coherence and Metaphor

- What types of relations can hold between utterances in a coherent discourse?
- What types of inference do we employ to establish these relations?
- How does this reasoning affect salience?
- Why does language allow metaphor, and why is it so pervasive?
- In addition to those factors cited above, the key cognitive factors involved our ability to:
  - Establish cause-effect relationships
  - Recognize resemblances; reason by analogy
  - Identify contiguities among entities and events in accord with our experiences
Constructions and Lexical Semantics

- How can we these concepts to explain nonsyntactic phenomena traditionally addressed using syntactic means?
- Can word and construction meaning be specified without reference to the types of world knowledge used to establish coherence?
- How do the event relationships expressed in some word meanings mimic those used in establishing discourse coherence?
- Why does language offer us many syntactic means for expressing an idea? Under what contextual circumstances can these constructions be employed?
- Why do we have virtual change expressions in natural language?
- The key cognitive factors involved are the same ones required at the discourse level!
Remaining Mysteries

Yet there are still some remaining mysteries of language that we have not addressed

- Why is there no:
  - ham in hamburger?
  - egg in eggplant?
  - pine nor apple in pineapple?

- Why:
  - are sweetmeets candies, but sweetbreads, which aren’t sweet, meat?
  - does quicksand work slowly?
  - are boxing rings square?
  - is a Guinea pig neither from Guinea nor a pig?
• Why is it that:
  – writers write, but fingers don’t fing, grocers don’t groce, and hammers don’t ham?
  – the plural of tooth is teeth, but booth isn’t beeth?
  – the plural of goose is geese, but moose isn’t meese?
  – you can make amends but not one amend?
  – you can comb through the annals of history, but not a single annal?

• If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?
Remaining Mysteries

- If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

- If fire-fighters fight fire and crime-fighters fight crime, what do freedom-fighters fight?

- Why do we fall head over heels, and not heels over head?

- Why do they call them apartments when they’re all stuck together?

- Why do I do research when I’m looking for something new?

- When a lawyer writes a 12,000 word document, why do we call it a brief?
Remaining Mysteries

• Why do:
  – we recite at a play and play at a recital?
  – we ship by car/truck and send cargo by ship?
  – we park on a driveway and drive on a parkway?
  – we have noses that run and feet that smell?

• How can:
  – a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while
  – a wise man and a wise guy aren’t?

• How can:
  – ‘overlook’ and ‘oversee’ be opposites, while
  – ‘quite a lot’ and ‘quite a few’ are alike?
Have you ever:
- seen a horseful carriage?
- seen a strapful gown?
- met a sung hero?
- experienced requited love?

Have you ever run into someone who was:
- combobulated?
- gruntled?
- ruly?
- peccable?

And where are all those people who:
- are spring chickens,
- or would actually hurt a fly?
Remaining Mysteries

• You gotta love the fact that:
  – your house can burn up as it burns down
  – you fill in a form by filling it out
  – an alarm goes off by going on
  – we chop down a tree and then chop it up

• That must be why:
  – when the stars are out, they’re visible,
  – but when the lights are out, they’re invisible

• And finally,
  – when I wind up my watch, I start it,
  – but when I wind up this lecture, and hence this course, I end it