Towards a typology of associative relations in word-formation and beyond
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In this talk I will present an integrated model of associative relations in word-formation, metonymy and lexical semantics. I start by focusing on the unstated (or underspecified) semantic relation $\mathcal{R}$ that pertains between the elements of a noun-noun compound or other binominal lexeme (1).

(1)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. PRODUCTION</th>
<th>b. COMPOSITION</th>
<th>c. USE</th>
<th>d. RESEMBLANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles Creole</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>Slovak</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mous dimyel</td>
<td>mesil-at barzel</td>
<td>veter-ný mlyn</td>
<td>schlüssel-bein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fly honey</td>
<td>track-STC iron</td>
<td>wind-ADJZ mill</td>
<td>key-bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘bee’</td>
<td>‘railway’</td>
<td>‘windmill’</td>
<td>‘collarbone’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I discuss the history of research on this topic and various approaches that have been taken to understand the nature of $\mathcal{R}$. I then present a selection of classification schemes, focusing on those of Hatcher (1960) and Bourque (2014), which operate at different levels of granularity. Following Arnaud (2016), I show how these two systems can be mapped together into a two-tiered system (the “Hatcher-Bourque classification”) and describe the advantages of so doing.

In the second part of the talk I consider metonymic relations, taking my cue from Janda (2011) and Peirsman & Geeraerts (2006). My goal is to show how most, if not all, such relations correspond very closely to the semantic relations found in binominals. For example, the PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT metonymy in I’m reading Shakespeare (Kövecses 2002) corresponds (at some level of abstraction) to the PRODUCTION relation between honey and fly in (1a). I demonstrate how all but one of the 23 metonymic patterns catalogued by Peirsman and Geeraerts can be accommodated by the Hatcher-Bourque classification, with only very minor tweaks.

Finally, I turn to the seven-way system of “conceptual relations” developed by Andreas Blank and Peter Koch in various papers (e.g. Koch 2001; Blank 2003) and used to investigate polysemy, semantic shifts and other aspects of lexical semantics. According to Koch & Marzo (2007), all such cognitive relations ultimately go back to Aristotle’s three associative relations of ‘contiguity’, ‘similarity’ and ‘contrast’. I will show how they, too, can be accommodated within a slightly extended version of the Hatcher-Bourque classification. The result is a single, integrated, multilevel system of associative relations that can be applied across subfields of linguistics as diverse as word-formation, metonymy and lexical semantics. Moreover, such a system has the potential to reveal interesting facts about the associative nature of human thought, eloquently described by Vannevar Bush:

*The human mind does not work that way. It operates by association. With one item in its grasp, it snaps instantly to the next that is suggested by the association of thoughts, in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain. It has other characteristics, of course; trails that are not frequently followed are prone to fade, items are not fully permanent, memory is transitory. Yet the speed of action, the intricacy of trails, the detail of mental pictures, is awe-inspiring beyond all else in nature* (Bush 1945).
References


