

## BOOK REVIEWS

Głaz, Adam. 2002. *The Dynamics of Meaning. Explorations in the Conceptual Domain of EARTH*. Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press.

In the book, based on his PhD research, Adam Głaz attempts to construct a dynamic theory of lexical meaning and, I must admit, finds convincing arguments to support it. Before, however, he confronts this task, the author devotes two chapters to the presentation of the state of art in lexical semantics.

In Section One of Chapter One he introduces basic tenets of cognitive linguistics as the background of his study and, at the same time gives a balanced presentation of several schools of linguistic thought and their contribution to lexical semantics. The second section of Chapter One is devoted to sources of CL coming from disciplines other than linguistics, i.e. Gestalt psychology, system theory and holism. This overview is devoid of zealous ideologizing so characteristic of immature scholars. It starts with such major works as Trier (1931), Porzig (1934) and Saussure (1966) to continue with Lyons (1963, 1968), Ullman (1962), Apresjan (1974), Cruse (1990, 1992) and Lehrer (1990, 1992). Surprisingly though, seminal Lyons (1977) or Cruse (1986) are not referred to. The most valuable part of this chapter are the illuminating comments on the recurrent motifs in linguistics, or the connections between such seemingly disparate views as prestructuralism, generativism and cognitivism.

The author also touches upon such crucial issue as the relationship between language, cognition and the world. He believes that "Meanings are conceptualizations (Langacker 1991a: 2), and words serve as nodes of access to conceptual networks" (pp. 14–15). On p. 32–33 in footnote 24 he adds "it seems that there exist both categories of the mind and of the world, the two converging or diverging in multiple ways".

In footnote 6 p. 17 Głaz refers to Krzeszowski (p.c.) and repeats following him "that for linguistics to be truly cognitive, it must be concerned with the neurological processes of the brain". This idea raises a vital question. If such a postulate were to be fulfilled would linguistics, with language as its subject matter be still possible? Wouldn't it be reduced to natural sciences? Wouldn't it cease to exist and simply totally converge with neurophysiology?

Despite the above declaration, which could lead to so far-reaching consequences, perhaps even fatal for linguistics, Głaz concedes to the inherent limits of lexical semantic analysis and says: "In the present contextually-based lexical analysis, the textual meanings of *earth* are understood as values ultimately involving the whole of the network in semantic space, even though the full characterization of it in terms of all its uses is impossible" (p. 25).

Chapter One clearly places cognitivism as a continuation of a long philological tradition. The author does not fall prey to the alleged complete novelty claim. He expresses his

views explicitly on p. 46: "Cognitive Grammar cannot be viewed as a totally novel, still less a revolutionary approach to language investigation and description. It has, however, revived and reformulated many ideas in an original manner and constitutes a serious attempt to describe language in conceptually grounded terms".

Chapter II is devoted to cognitive approaches to meaning with special emphasis on Langacker's (1987, 1991a and b, 1997, 2000) network model. It is combined with and complemented by Fuchs's (1994) continuous dynamic approach in an attempt to create a model that would account for the processes triggered by contextual tension and its interaction with the meaning potential of words. Głaz develops his own usage based context dependent model in meticulous detail. For him "nodes [of the lexical network] are idealized, conventional usages and at the same time nodes are regions with fuzzy borders, although speakers can conceive of them as well-delimited" (p. 70). He notices potential weaknesses of the network model, such as "radical representational and methodological idiosyncrasies" (p. 73) of various authors and quotes Sandra and Rice's (1995) criticism of them. Soon and quite easily, however, he dismisses these reservations: "the sombre note need not be taken too seriously" (p. 74). Yet, he does make certain qualifications which he does not discard, i.e. lack of evaluation measures in Cognitive Grammar and the unknown psychological status of the lexical networks.

The major drawback of the theoretical part of the work are lengthy footnotes, which often obstruct reading, especially when the footnotes take over a larger part of the page or when they run onto the next page. When the text/footnotes ratio shows a preference for footnotes, it may indicate a certain difficulty on the part of the author in deciding what should and what should not be included in the main text. As if the author having scrutinized so broad a range of works could not dispense with any of them.

The second part of the book: "The dynamics of word meaning" consists of three chapters. Chapter III presents a lexical network of the senses of the word *earth*; Chapter IV discusses intercategorical tensions between *earth* and other words from the same domain, i.e. *world*, *soil*, *land*, *ground*; finally Chapter IV further supports the arguments presented in Chapters III and IV with data from Polish translational equivalents of the word in question.

To construct the lexical network of the word *earth* an analysis of a number of dictionary definitions is carried out with the view of identifying all potential senses of the word. Such dictionaries like *American Heritage Dictionary* (1994), *The Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (1993), Webster dictionaries (1981, 1988, 1992), *Collins Dictionary* (1992), *Longman Dictionary* (1995), *Cobuild Dictionary* (1987) and *OED* (1933) are used. Głaz comments critically on his own choice of dictionaries: "The selection I have proposed is obviously somewhat arbitrary, although care has been taken to include dictionaries of diverse formats, methodological backgrounds and publishing traditions" (p. 87). The fact that the author decided to use both British English and American English dictionaries, reasonable as it is in general, may appear rather unexpected in the view of the argument he gives in favour of his choice of the other sources of data (Kingsley Amis's six novels and the 1995 CD-ROM edition of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*). That means "both the literary and the journalistic prose are samples of the same variety of English, i.e. British English" (p.81). Why should this matter if the senses of the word are taken from both British and American varieties?

Another curious fact about dictionary use is the appearance of *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995) in footnote 2 p. 86, although it is not listed on p. 83 as the source for senses.

The analysis of dictionary definitions allowed Głaz to isolate 22 senses of *earth*, which he tried to represent in a lexical network (Fig. 3.1 p. 85). I understand that the figure is just

a representation of the hypothesised cognitive structure (of uncertain psychological reality – see p. 74), but it is unclear to me to what extent it is a useful representation if it raises so much criticism in the author himself: “For practical reasons, it is impossible to include all the details of the categorizing relationships in a single diagram. (...) Representing all these details on two-dimensional plane is an unrealistic task, although it is not impossible to envisage elaborations of these in the form of three dimensional, interactive computer simulations” (p. 85). This is an unfeasible solution for a printed book. Still, in the analysis of context based data Głaz employed a different strategy concentrating only on those nodes and links, which were essential for the textual analysis at hand (Fig. 3.3.–3.5., 3.7.). In this way he circumvents the problem of fine grained analysis. Figures 3.1. The lexical network of *earth* and 3.2., which is a textually supported 3.1. present an overview of the senses allowing the reader to navigate through the network and to focus on those areas (represented by the more detailed diagrams), where the processes of semantic extension or shift aptly identified and described by Głaz operate. It thus seems that the author is able to solve the problem he so haughtily formulates at the beginning. Unfortunately his own criticism seems to weaken the power of an otherwise efficient solution.

Before I turn to the discussion of the results of the analysis in Chapter III I would like to turn to the choice of contextualised data. As mentioned before, the sources for the analysis were the six novels by Kingsley Amis: *Success*, *Money*, *London Fields*, *Time's Arrow*, *The Information*, and *Night Train* and the 1995 edition of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* on CD-ROM. It is not clear from the text if Amis's novels were also in a computer-readable version or if their analysis consisted solely in a close reading of the text and was not computer assisted. In the novels Głaz identifies 86 different uses of *earth*. The data base offers over 2,000 occurrences of it. For unspecified reasons the author chooses to use the novels rather than the newspaper as the major source for the analysis of the senses (see his comment on p. 93), so that in Chapter III 27 examples come from the novels and 12 from the newspaper. In Chapter IV the situation is reversed so in the analysis of lexical pairs (*earth – world*, *earth – soil*, *earth – land*, *earth – ground*) there are 12 examples from Amis and 33 from the newspaper. This difference, though, should have no bearing on the results of the analysis, since its aim, as the author himself repeats several times, is not an exhaustive description of the word meaning but rather a specification of dynamic processes present in the construction of word meaning resulting from the interaction between the semantic potential of the word and the contextual forces affecting it.

The investigation of data conducted by Głaz allows him to take part in the discussion about the methods of sense disambiguation through context. He comes to a conclusion that “In texts ... we are dealing with activations of semantic regions. Within the regions, it is possible to recognize areas of greater salience, easier to identify and name than others, which can be represented in network nodes. Nodes also serve as convenient landmarks for identifying textual meanings of the relevant item, although in the majority of cases such meanings do not correspond to the nodes in a one-to-one fashion” (p. 101). Later he adds that senses of lexemes should be viewed not so much as network nodes but rather “as open regions in semantic space” (p. 107). Semanticists should therefore content themselves with approximate definitions (p. 107). In this way Głaz changes what was regarded as a weakness of lexical semantic studies into their strength. Approximate definitions are not incomplete, because of defective or imperfect lexical analyses, but are a result of, as Głaz convincingly proves, the dynamic nature of lexical meaning itself.

While examining the intercategorical tensions between *earth* and selected words, which could give an access to the same semantic network, in Chapter IV Głaz shows how contextu-

al factors modify the meaning of the respective lexemes. He also suggests how the co-occurrence of these words influences their meaning. The presentation would be more transparent to me had the lexical networks for *world* and *ground* been proposed, especially that such a network is given for *soil*, and a list of senses is provided for *land*<sup>1</sup>. In consequence we do learn, for example, what is the direction of contextual modification of both *earth* and *world*, but not knowing the semantic potential of *world* we cannot establish how its meaning is really conceptually modified (pp. 117–124). The explanation to this may be the fact that the focus of investigation is on the dynamic processes in the meaning construction in the domain of *earth*, and not a detailed examination of the meaning of *world*. Nonetheless, I believe that the whole line of reasoning would become even more explicit had the meaning of all investigated lexemes been discussed.

In Chapter IV the author shows that the meaning of lexical items may be influenced by the co-occurrence of related words (the idea going back to the semantic field theory) and suggests that these, in combination with other textual forces, and with the semantic potential of the word, all contribute to the lexical meaning.

In Chapter V Gład attempts to gain further insights into the dynamic meaning structures from an analysis of Polish translational equivalents of *earth*. The most important finding of this study is additional support for two claims: 1) of conceptual adjacency of lexical items and 2) that different lexical items may trigger activation of the same node in the conceptual network. Evidence showing how the same Polish word can be used to translate different English lexemes and how different Polish words can be used for the same English word corroborates these claims. It seems, however, that to postulate completely different lexeme – different meaning relationship may at times be far fetched. It would suggest that every lexical decision of a translator and for that matter also of an author (avoiding repetition for stylistic purposes see p. 118) is equally meaningful. I suppose that a reader, aware of the stylistic requirements present in a given culture, may not always decode the text in a different word – different meaning fashion. Let me illustrate it with an example. On pp. 156–157 Gład discusses the conceptual link between English *earth* and Polish *ziemia*. In his translation of an entry from a dictionary of the Polish language (*Słownik Języka Polskiego* 1978) he gives *bytowanie* as *state of being*. Then he posits a sense ACT OF BEING for the Polish word and uses this wording twice. Finally, in Figure 5.2. he glosses one of the network nodes as EXISTENCE, THE STATE OF BEING. Despite this use of ACT/STATE OF BEING I do not assign two different meanings to these two different lexical representations...

Out of a reviewer's duty I will mention that the work ends with an elegantly phrased conclusion; an Appendix, constituting a separate essay on the meaning of the determiner *the* and capitalisation of the word *earth*; an exhaustive bibliography; a summary in Polish; and an Index.

*The Dynamics of Meaning* by Gład is a book firmly based in a philological tradition of semantic investigations and has a strongly cognitive perspective. It aptly shows how a word can activate large portions, potentially all, of its lexical network. It also demonstrates that different lexemes can access the same conceptual network nodes. Finally, it proposes a new approach to word meaning. Within this approach word meaning is viewed not as a stable entity but a result of an ongoing interplay between three forces: a word's semantic potential, its relation to other similar words and contextual tension in a particular instance of usage.

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<sup>1</sup> I must admit that some of the senses of *ground* are discussed in passing at the beginning of section 2.4. devoted to *Earth* vs. *ground*.

It is a well-argued convincingly presented study which could be used in lexical semantic BA and MA seminars. Some parts of it may also be of interest for students of translation and of cognitive sciences.

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