

A unitary account of the semantics of affixes (and bound bases)

The aim of the presentation will be to provide a unitary account, as *interdependent* issues, of all main semantic issues involving affixes (or bound bases) as signs which have proved to be a challenge for semantics, for not having autonomous referential meanings.

It will first i) introduce recently developed techniques allowing to identify the semantic indications provided by a bound sign from the presuppositional layer of meaning of the word that includes it; ii) present the results of tests that allow to describe the stable polysemy of an affix; iii) provide an explanation of the way such differentiated meanings are related to the shared morphemic presupposition; iv) hence explain why the claim according to which polysemic bound signs should be considered as meaningless for not having a fixed meaning (Aronoff, since 1975) is not only a direct contradiction but is ignoring the fact that because a large part of semantic differentiation requires a shared semantic ground, polysemy cannot be ignored in the study of affixes (Lieber, 2004).

On such a base, it will then consider together the main types of constructions in which affixes are found, namely:

- [word+affix] constructions, as in a word such a *hero-ic*,
- [bound base+affix] constructions, in which the base is a recurring morpheme, as is the case in words such as *comi-ic/com-ed*, *trag-ic/trag-ed* and French verbs *re-spir-er/in-spir-er/ex-spir-er/a-spir-er*, all related to breathing;
- [cranberry base+affix] constructions, in which the basal segment is a non-recurring segment as in French/English *in-eff-able*;
- [affix+cranberry segment] constructions, as in French *microbe* \mikɔb\;
- [affix+affix] constructions, which can be derivations, as in French/English [[uple]-et], or not, as in *multiple*.

As for [word+affix] constructions, the fact for an affix to be associated with categorially distinct words will be discussed, notably by describing the semantics (and regularity) of exocentric constructions. Apparent semantic drift within such constructions will be explained, as will be explained why such drifts are semantically predictable and should not be considered as implying for the words to be listemes, as defined by Di Sciullo & Williams (1987).

The final part of the presentation will consider:

- the non-affixal uses of morphemes used as affixes, as in the relationship between suffix *-able* and the use of the same morpheme in the predicate *to be able to*;
- the use of morphemes indifferently in various bound positions, as the morpheme /vor/ in French *dé-vor-er* (devour), *vor-acious*, *carnivore* (carnivorous)
- form variation between bound forms and free forms of a sign, as in the *morph-/-morph/form* relationship, and its role in the identification of bound bases (e.g. *occl-* in *occlusion*).

To illustrate all these issues and to present the tests illustrating the stability of affixal polysemy, detailed descriptions of French prefixes will be provided, notably of French affixes *re-*, *en-* and bound bases *-spir-*, but also of «greek» archeoconstituents *end(o)- helio*.

A semantic and morphological model allowing a unitary account of all the issues discussed will be gradually introduced.

References

Aronoff, Mark (1975) *Word-formation in generative grammar*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Di Sciullo, Ana-Maria & Williams, Edwin (1987) *On the Definition of Word*. MIT Press.

Lieber, Rochelle (2004). *Morphology and lexical semantics*. Cambridge series in linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.