

## Practice Unit 6

1. Propose a semantic analysis of the following words based on the decomposition of word meanings into features.

*horse(s), stallion, mare, colt, filly, foal*  
*cattle, bull, cow, calf*  
*sheep, ram, ewe, lamb*  
*frog*

Which problems do you note?

2. A feature-based componential analysis of the word *mother* might take the following shape:

*mother* [+ human, + female, + adult, + "has given birth to at least one child"]

Is this analysis suitable to capture the many established metaphorical uses of the word *mother* in actual discourse, such as *Mother Earth, Mother Nature, mother tongue, mother land, motherboard*?

3. Consult the OED to find out whether the following words are homonyms or polysemous.

*lock; school; grade; lie*

4. Search for instances of the words *loneliness* and *solitude* in a corpus of your choice. In which ways do these two words differ in meaning?

The following is a short extract from a story by American writer Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) which uses a lot of synonyms (which are italicised).

### What the writers say

For my own part, I soon found a *dislike* to it [=the cat] arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated; but - I know not how or why it was - its evident fondness for myself rather *disgusted* and *annoyed* me. By slow degrees, these feelings of *disgust* and *annoyance* rose into the *bitterness of hatred* [...] gradually - very gradually - I came to look upon it with unutterable *loathing* [...].

Suggest ways of making explicit where the various synonyms differ in meaning.

5. The following table gives one linguist's intuition about the type of verb + adjective "resultative" constructions discussed in Unit 6.

Acceptability of V + Adj resultative constructions: a native speaking linguist's intuitions (Culicover 2004)

	become	get	fall	come	go	turn	grow
asleep			Yes				
awake	Yes			Yes			
aware	Yes						Yes
dead		(Yes)	Yes		Yes		Yes
alive	Yes			Yes			
nasty	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes
nice	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes
tall		Yes					Yes

Now consult a large corpus of your choice and find out which of the collocations assumed to be possible are actually attested in your material. Does your material contain any combinations **not** considered possible by Culicover?

## 6. Dictionaries

Dictionaries come in many kinds:

- monolingual, designed for native speakers
  - monolingual, designed for foreign learners
  - bilingual
  - historical
- etc.

Consult various dictionaries to find out whether they help you in finding an English equivalent for the German idiomatic collocations *schwacher Trost* and *fauler Kompromiss*.

Which of the dictionaries give you grammatical information in addition to semantic information - for example so that you can avoid

common learner errors such as writing \* *I suggested to have a break* (instead of correct *I suggested having a break*) or \* *no possibility to do something* (instead of correct *no possibility of doing something*)?

7. *Metaphors we live by* is the title of a classic of cognitive semantics written by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980). In this book the authors point out that metaphors, or verbal imagery, are not just an ornamental luxury but an essential feature of language. One of the more obvious conceptual metaphors which are said to be almost universally productive is "TIME IS SPACE." German and English instances of this guiding metaphors are *long time*, *lange Zeit*, *die Vergangenheit hinter sich lassen und der Zukunft ins Angesicht sehen* or *life is short*. Somewhat more striking is the "IDEAS ARE FOOD"-complex, which, however, is also attested cross-linguistically: *unausgegorene Ideen*, *half-baked ideas*; *ein Buch verschlingen*, *devour the book*; *that's food for thought*, *das muss ich erst verdauen*.

Would such ideas be at all useful to explicate the use of metaphor in the following text by Canadian writer Margaret Atwood (b. 1939)?

#### What the writers say

Giving Birth. But who gives it? And to whom is it given? Certainly it doesn't feel like giving, which implies a flow, a gentle handing over, no coercion. But there is scant gentleness here; it's too strenuous, the belly like a knotted fist, squeezing, the heavy trudge of the heart, every muscle in the body tight and moving, as in a slow-motion of a high-jump [...]

No one ever says *giving death*, although they are in some ways the same, events, not things. And delivering, that act the doctor is generally believed to perform: who delivers what? Is it the mother who is delivered, like a prisoner being released. Surely not; nor is the child delivered to the mother like a letter through a slot. How can you be both the sender and the receiver at once? Was someone in bondage, is someone made free? Thus language, muttering in its arcaic tongues of something, yet one more thing, that needs to be re-named.

It won't be by me, though. These are the only words I have, I'm stuck with them, stuck in them.