

Essential elements of any
corpus-attested definition of a
literary stylistic device

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Contextual Prosodic Theory

- semantic auras of language patterns are discovered through co-selection and wildcarding
- authorial text against reference corpora (possible deviation from language norm)
- bottom-up approach (no concepts)
- reference corpus reflects accumulated language experience
- reference corpus seen as a sample of the world
- context of situation, similar events (states of affairs)

Similarities of events

- semantic prosody ('bent on self-improvement')
relying on absent collocates (an aura of meaning surrounding a word or phrase provided by means of proximity or *collocation* (Sinclair, 1991).

- subtext of grammatical strings (not fully captured by dictionaries)

Russell's logical language: 'A language of that sort will be completely analytic and will show at a glance the logical structure of the facts asserted or denied [...] It is a language that has only syntax and *no vocabulary whatsoever* [...] *if you add a vocabulary*, [it] would be a logically perfect language' (emphasis added)

Carnap's recollection of similarity

- the quasi-propositional (lexical) variables will be frequent but invisible
- because they are frequent, they will be felt even if they are missing

Subtext – (a state of affairs, or a literary world) arrived at through the list of the most frequent content words within or around a grammatical string. Subtext is shared logical form.

'That is no country for old men': 'that is no * for' >> reason; excuse

The delexicalisation – relexicalisation continuum

Example of a delexical expression: 'bleak heart'

1 But in the sad lore of his bleak heart, the father read the meaning of (1918)
2 fair - it's not fair!' her bleak heart was crying out while she tried to (1916)
3 he troubled mind, O'er the bleak heart breathed with a spirit bland, Like (1888)
4 hath driven mad - in whose bleak heart All natural affections have died (1876)
5 light in time into her own bleak heart. But she said nothing to Isom, and (2012)
6 robbed her of the thing her bleak heart craved more than it could ever crave (1910)
7 She yielded to what, in her bleak heart of hearts, she had to do. She bowed (2014)
8 , from the Messiah. Many a bleak heart has been thawed by the simple ballad (1916)
9 what grudging spirit, what bleak heart conceived those mockeries of resting (1900)
10 myself if a desolate and bleak heart can ever find a place to start living(2011)

'bleak heart' relexicalised

Her hands // Are clinical expressions of a heart // Made bleak by sacrifice, her eyes //
Neutralise her therapeutic smile.

Relexicalisation is the process of a word regaining its
literal, fully lexical meaning, through the proximity
of another collocate.

Louw (2008): Towards a corpus-attested glossary of literary terms

‘All literary devices may be shown to share a common collocational trait: relexicalisation. [...] relexicalization can only be defined in relation to its continuum-based counterpart delexicalization. When Sinclair et al. (1987; 1993) was faced with the difficulty of describing, in a dictionary, the large number of meanings (in excess of 80!) occupied by highly *frequent* words such as *take*, he referred to them as delexical or ‘washed out’. For example, the phrase *take a look* may be replaced by *have a look* or simply *look*. Furthermore, the delexical forms were found to occupy positions that were more frequent than their fully lexicalised counterparts: the most frequent meaning of the term *see*, occupies the meaning ‘understand’ rather than any meaning that relates to ‘vision’.

A glorious shot at how things ought to be// Long fallen wide... (Philip Larkin, ‘Home’)

‘As the status of collocation as *instrumentation* becomes established, entries based upon *intuition* will gradually be banished, until all definitions contained in such a glossary are verifiable through the *replication*, using other or newer corpora, of the phenomena involved.’

Existent definitions of pun

- ‘a figure of speech which involves a play upon words’
(Cudden’s English Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory’)
- ‘a play on words that are either identical in sound (homonyms) or very similar in sound, but are sharply diverse in significance; an example is the last word in the title of Oscar Wilde’s comedy, The Importance of Being Earnest (1985).’
(‘A Glossary of Literary Terms’, A. H. Abrams)

John Donne, ‘Hymn to God the Father’:

And having done that, Thou hast done.

William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet:

Mercutio: [...] ‘Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man’.

John Donne

Hymn to God the Father

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
**When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.**

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
**When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.**

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
**And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.**

Mercutio: a grave man

ROMEO

Courage, man; the hurt cannot be much.

MERCUTIO

No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve. **Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man.** I am peppered, I warrant, for this world.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 3, Scene 1

Philip Larkin: leave the world alone

The rain falls still: bowing, the woods bemoan;
Dark night creeps in, and **leaves the world alone.**

Philip Larkin, 'Winter Nocturne'

'leave' + 'alone': 90% delexical usages

'I say, old boy, **where do you hang out?**'

Mr Pickwick replied that he was at present **suspended** at
the George and Vulture.

Hot tomato

Why did the tomato blush?

He saw the **salad dressing**.

'he * the * -ing'

QPVs in the first lexical slot are 'saw', 'heard'; 'sees', 'met', 'died'.

- religious contexts
- describing a dangerous turning point

the overall semantic aura clashes completely with the joke genre

Santa's helpers are called **subordinate clauses**.

Corpus-attested definition of pun

Thou hast done >>> Thou hast DONNE

a grave man >>> a GRAVE man

where do you hang out >>> he was at present suspended

leaves the world alone >>> leaves the world ALONE

he saw the salad dressing >>> he saw the salad DRESSING

Santa's helpers are known as subordinate clauses >>> subordinate CLAUSES

Pun is characterised by a double meaning of a lexical collocate which is part of a frequent and often delexical collocation, whether lexical or lexico-grammatical. The double meaning is composed of the meaning of the lexical item as part of the frequent and delexical collocation, as found in the reference corpora, and a provisional meaning, often literal, imposed on it by context clues, whether immediate, distant or extra-textual. Relexicalisation (reducing a more frequent and delexical meaning to a less frequent and literal one) may be absent in cases of homophony, or homonymy if the words are not connected etymologically.

Verification

- Why do you believe in second sight?
- Because I fell in love at first sight.

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Brothers in Law

A comic legal novel about an idealistic young lawyer.