

# FORMS OF ENCODED PRAGMATIC MEANING: SEMANTIC PROSODY A lexicographic perspective

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**Abstract** – The present paper focuses on ways in which the pragmatic (functional) meaning that arises from various contextual features, known in corpus linguistics as semantic prosody (Sinclair 1996, 2004; Louw 1993, etc.) can become an integral part of lexicographic descriptions. This is especially important for the treatment of phraseology and idiomatics. The workings of semantic prosody are a good example of the ways pragmatic meaning exploits linguistic means to be codified in the text. We thus investigate the meaning that can only be studied in context, as it is completely dependent on collocation, i.e., syntagmatic relations, and therefore cannot be attributed solely to a concrete word form. Corpus analysis has yielded significant results in areas such as the lexicographic treatment of semantic prosody. We believe that in order to improve teaching pragmatics in all its complexity, it is necessary to recognise and assess various aspects of pragmatic meaning both in written and spoken language. Second/foreign language teaching/learning in particular has been strongly dependent on the inclusion of relevant information in dictionaries, in which, traditionally, pragmatic aspects of meaning have been largely neglected. Language technologies have enabled us both to study the subtleties of pragmatic meaning and to design accurate and more user-friendly (pedagogical) dictionaries. We will attempt to demonstrate the value of explicit description of functional pragmatic meaning, i.e. semantic prosody, as implemented in the Slovene Lexical Database (2008-2012). A brief overview of the theoretical background is first provided, after which we describe the definition strategies employed to include pragmatics, as well as presenting a case study and arguing that explicating semantic prosody is crucial in developing pragmatic competence in (young/foreign) language learners.

**Keywords:** semantic prosody, pragmatics, lexicographic description, dictionary, lexical database.

## 1. Introduction

The present paper focuses on ways in which the pragmatic (functional) meaning that arises from various contextual features, known in corpus linguistics as semantic prosody, can become an integral part of lexicographic descriptions. Pragmatic meaning exploits linguistic means to be implemented and codified in the text. Of central concern to us is the meaning described by some as “peripheral” or “underspecified” (e.g., Philip 2009). This can only be studied in context, as it is completely dependent on collocation, i.e., syntagmatic relations, and therefore cannot be attributed solely to a concrete word form. The basic pattern of language use is represented by collocation based on the distributional features of words, while a more abstract type of pattern is derived from “inter-collocational” generalisations, which include semantic prosody (Ellis *et al.* 2009, pp. 89-90). In other words, we not only speak of lexico-grammatical patterns, but also of pragmatic patterns of language use. Pre-corpus lexicographic descriptions generally included little or no pragmatic information, but the methods of corpus analysis have shown that semantic prosody can be investigated systematically by observing recurring patterns of (contextual) meaning beyond the word level. Newly discovered connections between form and meaning originate in the recognition of the importance that the

frequency of co-occurrence of individual lexical items has for contextual meaning.

## 2. Pragmatic meaning between interpretation and convention

According to Levinson (1983, pp. 8-22; 2000 *passim*) and Stubbs (2001a), a key question for pragmatics is the extent to which meaning can be inferred on the basis of assumed general knowledge and how much is conventionally encoded in linguistic form. Inference theories since Grice (1975) and Sperber and Wilson (1996) have been very influential in this regard. However, Stubbs (2001a) sees a problem in the fact that these theories are largely based on invented data because they investigate what is possible rather than what is probable, as in corpus linguistics. Those who use attested data (e.g., Kay and Fillmore 1999) put forward an alternative argument, namely that pragmatic force is conventionalised. The pragmatic meaning of the so-called “semantic schema” *FAN/FUEL the flames*, for example, does not have to be inferred: it is encoded in the construction itself (Stubbs 2001a, p. 445). The meaning of this phrase is associated with the meaning of “social disapproval” by convention: it is not derivable from the words by processes of composition or inference. Schemas cannot be identified on the lexical level because they are abstract and semantic constructions: “These are data structures for representing stereotyped situations” (*ibidem*). Conventional pragmatic meaning forms part of the functional definition of semantic schemas. One of the important findings of corpus linguistics is “the pervasive routine of most language use” (Stubbs 2007, p. 146). We can recognise “illocutionary forces” because they are expressed in conventional linguistic forms shared by a linguistic community. Thus the phrase “it’s not the end of the world”, as an example of a phraseological unit, is described by Stubbs (*ibidem*) as “a conventional way of expressing a speech act”. The conventional content of this lexical unit is that “A has suffered some unpleasant setback, and B is expressing their concern, reassurance and sympathy, saying that it could be worse and that A should not be too disappointed.” This description establishes a direct link between a speech act and a form of encoded pragmatic meaning called semantic prosody.

## 3. Semantic prosody

A good example of conventionalised pragmatic force is the workings of semantic prosody. This is a form of pragmatic meaning, a way in which it is possible to understand (not exclusively but typically)<sup>1</sup> neutral words or expressions and their meanings (=lexical units) with their evaluative or attitudinal nuances of use as demonstrated in frequent co-occurrence with particular other words, usually from the same lexical set. Such meanings

<sup>1</sup> Theoretically, semantic prosody is not limited to neutral lexical items, however, these items seem to prevail in the existing analyses. Rare studies of non-neutral items have been listed by Stewart (2010), namely *fat*, *self-important* (Channell 2000), *rife* (Partington 1998), *reckless* (Stubbs 2001b) and *fickle* (Tognini-Bonelli 2001). There have been some attempts to study semantic prosody in interlingual perspective, mostly with English as one of the languages, e.g., Partington (1998), Tognini-Bonelli (2001) and Philip (2003) for Italian, Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1996) for Polish, Xiao and McEnery for Chinese (2006), Berber Sardinha for Portuguese (2000), Dam-Jensen and Zethsen (2007) for Danish, Munday (2011) for Spanish and Šorli (2012a, b) for Slovene.

can be empirically identified in lexical profiles of words, or their meanings. A number of cases have been studied, particularly for English, e.g., *build up* (trans./intrans.) (Louw 1993), *cause* and *happen* (Bublitz 1996), *happen*, *set in* and *the naked eye*, *true feelings* (Sinclair 1987, 1991, 2004), *break out* (Stubbs 1995), *regime*, *par for the course*, *off the beaten track* etc. (Channell 2000), *from bad to worse* (Stewart 2008), *caught red-handed*, *grass is always greener* Philip (2009), *situation*, *equate* etc. (Šorli 2012a, b). According to Sinclair (1991, 1996, p. 34), semantic prosody is one of the two obligatory components of the extended unit of meaning (in addition to the core item). It expresses attitudinal meaning and is on the pragmatic side of the semantics/pragmatics continuum: “But once noticed among the variety of expression, it is immediately clear that the semantic prosody has a leading role to play in the integration of an item with its surroundings. It expresses something close to the “function” of the item – it shows how the rest of the item is to be interpreted functionally.” The concept was first used and presented to the research community by J. Sinclair (1996, 2004) and B. Louw (1993), but was later broadly researched by some of their followers, corpus linguists (Bublitz 1996; Channell 2000; Dam-Jensen and Zethesen 2007; Hunston and Francis 2000; Hunston 2007; Partington 1998, 2004; Philip 2009; Stubbs 1995; Tognini-Bonelli 2001; Zheng 2009 etc.), and (corpus) critics (Stewart 2010; Whitsitt 2005, etc.) alike. Sporadic research has also been carried out by some cognitive linguists, e.g., Ellis *et al.* 2009; Guo 2010, etc. Some authors have described the phenomenon as “collocational”, “discourse”, or “pragmatic” prosody (e.g., Stubbs 1995, 2001b), or “semantic harmony” (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1996). Despite extensive research into the subject of semantic prosody in the past two decades, Sinclair’s description still seems unassailable: semantic prosody has to do with the pragmatic function of an extended lexical item: “without it, the string of words just ‘means’ – it is not put to use in a viable communication” (Sinclair 1996, p. 88).

In summary, according to Philip (2009), “[T]he semantic prosody associated with a lexical item communicates an attitudinal, evaluative or emotional stance with regard to a particular concept or scenario and its outcome (anticipated or actual),” not simply a vague and ill-defined “aura of meaning”, as ensuing from an ethereal, but more frequently cited, definition of semantic prosody by Louw (1993, p. 157): “a consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates.” The fact that semantic prosody is somewhat elusive and not always present has given some linguists, Whitsitt (2005) in particular, reason to discard it as “a figment of corpus linguists’ imaginations” (Philip 2009).

### **3.1. Corpus analysis as the only method of identifying semantic prosody?**

Stewart (2010, pp. 123-126) also questions the frequent claims that semantic prosody can only be investigated through corpus analysis of large amounts of data. However, based on his argumentation, it seems that he is highlighting the weaknesses of the methodology of discovering semantic prosody rather than criticising the concept itself or questioning the fact that it can be observed in texts and identified. In fact, Stewart (*ibidem*) claims that intuition plays an important part in identifying semantic prosody, as well as in any corpus search we choose to perform. Some authors, including Sinclair (2003, p. 8) and, for example, McEnery and Wilson (2001), believe that corpus-based and intuition-based approaches are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they are complementary. Semantic prosodies add meaning that goes beyond the meaning already expressed by word-semantics, requiring a close examination of contexts of use and components of meaning that are not always detectable in the immediate surroundings of the headword, or, as Philip

(2009) puts it, “[c]orpus texts facilitate the retrieval of recurrent patterns, but they do so at the expense of the context of situation in which the language under study was originally uttered. Semantic prosodies, therefore, have to be inferred by extracting information from the cotext which allows a picture of the context of situation to be built up.” Semantic prosody, like meaning on the whole, cannot be identified purely with introspection. As Louw (2000, p. 48) explicitly states: “[s]emantic prosodies are a collocational phenomenon and one which is preferably to be regarded as recoverable computationally from large language corpora rather than intuitively.” Their role is to connect the meanings expressed by particular wordings with the context of situation, linking them inseparably to the phrasing and spreading over the entire unit of meaning (which is why Sinclair referred to it as a “prosody” in the first place (Philip 2009, citing Sinclair 2003, p. 117).

### **3.2. Is semantic prosody simply a form of connotation?**

The view that semantic prosody is virtually synonymous with evaluative connotation or, at best, considered a subset of connotation (Stewart 2010, p. 27) is rather widespread (Berber-Sardinha 2000, p. 93; Partington 1998, p. 67, 2004, p. 131; Hunston 2002, p. 142; Stubbs 2001b, p. 106 etc.). The reason for this might reside in the fact that these authors have simply paid more attention to other aspects of semantic prosody rather than investing much effort into clearly marking off connotation from the functional meaning that Sinclair and Louw originally had in mind. Recent studies (e.g., Philip 2009) clearly demonstrate the value of distinguishing between secondary meanings, such as connotation and evaluation, and semantic prosody, which cannot be identified from introspection (*ibidem*). Connotation is located in the part of meaning that is not shared equally by all of the speakers of a language because it is intrinsically psychological. It is recorded in the mental lexicon of an individual speaker and is not conventionalised to the same extent as semantic prosody, which is inextricably linked to a concrete context of situation and grounded in real-life communication. Therefore, we subscribe to the view that semantic prosodies are not merely a type of connotative meaning (Hunston 2007; Louw 2000, p. 50; Philip 2009; Sinclair 1996). The distinction between the two types of pragmatic meaning has a significant bearing on the lexicographic treatment of items in question.

Levinson (1983, pp. 8-9) points out – as do Kay (1995, p. 172), Fillmore (1997), and Kay and Fillmore (1999) in their work on construction grammar –, that there are clear cases where pragmatic meaning is encoded in morphosyntax. In pairs of words such as rabbit and bunny, or dog and doggie, the first member of the pair is pragmatically neutral, but the second is pragmatically marked, in the sense of conveying information about speaker-hearer relations (Stubbs 2001a, p. 444). While it may be adequate to mark connotation in words (e.g., bunny, nigger, doggie) with appropriate labels (e.g., humorous, pejorative, in child speech), this can hardly work in lexical units that carry semantic prosodies. So-called underspecified, peripheral meanings cannot be identified introspectively; they are defined by their context and use. However, from the practical analysis of corpus data, it emerges that semantic prosodies are often difficult to describe “clearly and succinctly, and this may well explain the widespread tendency to speak loosely of positive/negative prosodies rather than attempt to articulate the semantic prosody more precisely” (Philip 2009). Just as definitions of semantic prosody have been somewhat extended in the literature to overlap considerably with connotation, so have definitions of (expressive) connotation perhaps been overly extended to mean semantic prosody. Partington (2004, p. 154), for example, conceives of connotation as a very “versatile” concept: “The term ‘connotation’ is made to do immense amount of work,

covering concepts as varied as social connotation (consider awfully clever and dead clever), cultural connotation (whisky in Glasgow or Riyadh) and expressive connotation, the latter being close to evaluative meaning.” To sum up, we are dealing with at least two forms of encoded pragmatic meaning, of which one is connotational, allowing for the use of appropriate labels, and the other functional, generally requiring a broader description of circumstances. The latter is an integral part of the unit of meaning and cannot be separated from its general lexicographic description.

#### **4. Pragmatic meaning in works of lexical and lexicographic relevance: the implications for language teaching and learning**

Linguistic and lexicographic advancement in the field of lexical analysis stems from the recognition that meaning cannot adequately be recorded in a dictionary without its co-text and outside the context of situation. In the present paper, we adopt the view that the function of a dictionary should not be limited to presenting the “basic”, “referential”, “denotative”, “acquired”, “cognitive”, “dictionary”, “semantic”, “objective”, etc. meaning, but should contain a comprehensive description of inherent semantic features of words, as well as the textual and pragmatic circumstances of their use. Lexicography, by definition, is focused on the investigation and recording of all aspects of lexical meaning. According to the Sinclairian line of thought, semantic prosody can be viewed as a link between the lexical and the textual or discourse level. By including in the dictionary information not only on collocations but also on extended lexical units, we could improve this practical tool equally serving teachers, language learners, translators and interpreters, as well as communicologists, copywriters, etc. Partington (1998, p. 72) claims that signals on semantic prosody are particularly important for second or foreign language learners, as they do not have the subconscious understanding of pragmatic meaning that, presumably, native speakers do. Research shows (e.g., Gabrovšek 2007; Hunston 2002; Šorli 2012a; Zethsen 2006; Zheng 2009, etc.) that semantic prosody is insufficiently represented and described in monolingual and especially bilingual dictionaries. Second/foreign language teaching/learning in particular is strongly dependent on the inclusion of relevant information in dictionaries and other reference works, in which, traditionally, pragmatic aspects of meaning have been largely neglected. We will attempt to demonstrate the value of the explicit description of functional pragmatic meaning, i.e. semantic prosody, as implemented in the Slovene Lexical Database (2008-2012),<sup>2</sup> by providing detailed descriptions of circumstances recoverable from corpus examples. The fact that this, as a rule, increases the length and complexity of the descriptions has not been considered a drawback at this stage of compilation.

#### **5. The Slovene Lexical Database (SLD)**

The SLD is a monolingual lexical resource that provides a corpus-driven account of part of the core vocabulary of the Slovene language, including semantic, syntactic,

<sup>2</sup> Slovene Lexical Database (2008-2012): The database’s operation was co-financed by the European Union, the European Social Fund, and the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia. It presently contains 2,500 entries (<http://www.slovenscina.eu/Vsebine/En/Aktivnosti/LeksikalnaBaza.aspx>).

collocational and phraseological information, supported by illustrative examples. It was designed primarily as a source of data for Natural Language Processing and for a new dictionary of Slovene. Data was drawn from the 621-million-word reference corpus of Slovene (FidaPLUS) and lexicographically treated with the SketchEngine corpus query tool. In the continuation, a brief overview of the theoretical background is first provided, after which we describe the definition strategies employed to include pragmatics, as well as presenting a case study and arguing that explicating semantic prosody is crucial in developing pragmatic competence in (young/foreign) language learners.

## 5.1. The theoretical background

### 5.1.1. Meaning as a mental representation or “schema”

Since the 1970s, various theories about “mental schemas” have been proposed – at first mainly in cognitive science – that have had a great influence on linguistic theories; a variety of models proposed units of meaning that relativised the traditional word-clause structural boundaries. Amongst these, particularly after the advent of text corpora, were semi-automated electronic databases, such as the Cobuild Project<sup>3</sup> (Sinclair 1987), FrameNet<sup>4</sup> (Fillmore et al. 2003) and Corpus Pattern Analysis (hereafter CPA)<sup>5</sup> (Hanks 2004), all of which influenced a number of decisions in the construction of the SLD. Many different terms were used to denote larger units of meaning, defining these “mental schemas” or “models” in quite different ways, albeit merely with a different emphasis. Amongst the alternative terms proposed were *frame* (in Fillmore’s frame semantics), *scenario*, *script*, *data structure*, *action stereotype*, etc. (Fillmore 1985). All of the theories share the notion that a schema is a structural mental representation of the typical features of a recurrent social event or situation. Such a schema contains features that can be inferred on the basis of our general knowledge, even if they have not been explicitly mentioned (Stubbs 2001a, p. 439). These schemas have associated conventional phrases (so-called “phrasal schemas”, or “idiom schemas” in Moon 1998), which suggests systems of shared social and cultural meanings. While the ways in which people share this knowledge are not directly observable, recurrent ways of using language are (*ibid.*, p. 442): in the large samples of data stored in text corpora. Corpus analysis was first to reveal that pragmatic meanings are often encoded in linguistic form, and to render salient the fact that some (extended) lexical units are habitually associated with evaluative meaning.

### 5.1.2. The extended unit of meaning

Yet another concept of extended lexical units was introduced and elaborated on by Sinclair and his followers within the framework of a theory that posited increasingly abstract relations of collocation, colligation, semantic preference and semantic or discourse prosody. In the analysis of a unit of meaning its collocational (lexical instantiations) and colligational (lexico-grammatical instantiations) profile is first determined. At times, it is possible to predict semantic prosody at the level of collocational co-selection and semantic preference, but more typically semantic prosody is contingent on colligational patterns and

<sup>3</sup> J. M. Sinclair 1987 – see References.

<sup>4</sup> <http://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://nlp.fi.muni.cz/projekty/cpa/>.

contextual features. In addition to semantic prosody, which according to Sinclair (1996) is the initial choice providing the point of the utterance that a speaker produces, we have:

#### 5.1.2.1. *Collocation*

Collocation is the habitual co-occurrence of a lexical item with other items within predictable grammatical patterns. According to Moon (1998, p. 26), this co-occurrence is not random but highly motivated by semantic links that are likely or probable in the material world. Due to the fact that collocations are word-forms, they are directly observable in the text and the probability of their occurrence can be stated (Stubbs 2001a, p. 449).

#### 5.1.2.2. *Colligation*

Colligation is the tendency of an item to be associated (or to avoid being associated) with a particular grammatical category, such as negation, plural, 3<sup>rd</sup> person, sentence-final position etc. It is an abstraction one level higher than collocation and requires analysis of much wider stretches of co-text.

#### 5.1.2.3. *Semantic preference*

Semantic preference is the abstracted preference of an item for a particular set of collocates sharing some semantic feature, which can be attributed a particular semantic type. It is not directly observable, but can be stated upon the examination of the preferred lexis.

The structural model consisting of levels of meaning spreading out elliptically from less to more abstract thus builds on: collocation, colligation, semantic preference and semantic or discourse prosody. The extended unit of meaning described by Sinclair (1996) has been further elaborated by Philip (2009), who posits an additional category between semantic preference and semantic prosody, namely semantic association. The term was first introduced by Hoey (2005, pp. 16ff, 22) as a substitute designation for semantic preference, but Philip (*ibidem*) advocates a new term rather than a substitute term, which can be distinguished from semantic preference in that it is linked to secondary meanings, including connotations, and from prosody in that it is not a functional meaning. The described model is the basis for identifying and describing semantic prosody as presented in the present paper.

#### 5.1.3. *Meaning as event vs. meaning as entity*

Within a wide range of reflection on the nature of meaning, there have been various attempts to define its complexities, motivated, among other things, by the need to explain language and the ways in which it is used to an average user. A second theoretical framework, with strong implications for the analysis of pragmatic meaning, can be traced back to Piotrowski's (1989, pp. 73-74) formulation: "Thus, on the one hand meaning can be seen as a sort of entity: concept, notion, prototype, stereotype, or fact of culture. On the other hand, meaning can be seen as a sort of activity: skill, knowledge of how to use a word." From this understanding, the so-called "use-mention" dichotomy was derived,

which is built on extensively by Sinclair *et al.* in the Cobuild project.<sup>6</sup> Hanks (1987, p. 20) adds complexity to the “use-mention” pair by claiming that “[d]ictionaries are much concerned with accounting for what it is that an utterer may expect a hearer to believe.”

#### 5.1.4. Use and meaning – the metalinguistic approach

The analysis of instances of natural text has long shown that some words are more literally “used” to produce a desired effect, such as to convey the intentions of the speaker, than others; or, as Sinclair (1991, p. 126) puts it, “[t]he statement may be about what people mean when they use a word or phrase, rather than what the word or phrase means.” A well known example employed by Sinclair to demonstrate how a restatement of meaning becomes a metalinguistic comment on the way the word is used in a context of situation is: “If you call a woman a bitch, you mean that she behaves in a very unpleasant way” vs. “derog. A woman, esp. when unkind or bad-tempered” (Barnbrook 2002, p. 178).

The if/(when)-sentence puts the description into a metalinguistic mode in which the natural usage of the headword is “encoded implicitly within the description text itself rather than explicitly as a separate, densely encoded abbreviation which the user may well ignore” (Barnbrook 2002, pp. 7-9). In principle, if/(when)-sentences make the description more explicit, thus facilitating the inclusion of pragmatic components of meaning. The if/when-sentence is also a typical definition type, particularly for verbs, in the SLD.

## 5.2. Pragmatics and definition strategies

Based in part on the Cobuild definition taxonomy – which was primarily designed to serve the purposes of computer processing and thus formalised accordingly – and on an analysis of early SLD entries, a definition taxonomy was built taking into account the specifics of the Slovene language.

The descriptions are formed as full-sentence definitions,<sup>7</sup> with a view to further lexicographic treatment for the purposes of general and, particularly, student monolingual dictionaries. The treatment of lexical data in the SLD sets out to describe individual lexical items, their meanings and usage by means of FrameNet-type “scenarios”, which includes defining the range of their semantic and syntactic combinatorial possibilities. Meaning descriptions in the SLD are schematically divided into two parts or levels:

- a) The participant structure: all of the identified participants and circumstances are assigned semantic types or semantic roles. Syntactic and semantic information is overtly marked in order to enable automatic retrieval of patterns of usage. The assumption is that each meaning is realised within a syntactic pattern consisting of all of the words, expressions and situations in the co-text that contribute decisively to the meaning of a lexical unit.

<sup>6</sup> The new corpus-based lexicographic approach promoted by and embodied in the COBUILD (1987) project led by John McH. Sinclair represented a milestone in lexicographic theory and practice. “The project was undertaken by a research team in the English Department of the University of Birmingham and is an example of co-operation between academic and industrial expertise” (Sinclair 1987, ff). The project in lexical computing led to the publication of the Collins COBUILD English Dictionary (1987, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1995, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), which in later editions was renamed as the Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary (e.g., Sinclair 2003, 4<sup>th</sup> edition), and had an enormous influence on dictionary making.

<sup>7</sup> Pioneered by the COBUILD 1 project (1987).



- b) “The scenario” is the level of description that states the general situation of meaning, the relationships between the participants and other sense-discriminating, particularly pragmatic, components of meaning (Gantar *et al.* 2009, p. 108).

### 5.3. Case study: EQUATE (*sth with sth*)

For the purposes of the present paper we will analyse the corresponding material drawn from two English corpora for the English verb “equate” rather than describing the Slovene “enačiti” that is actually included in the SLD. The results for both verbs demonstrate very similar lexical profiles, including semantic prosody. Upon the examination of 300 of 703 (6.3 per million) concordances for “equate” from the British National Corpus<sup>8</sup> and, additionally, of its “word sketch” from the uKwac (8,375 concordances, 5.4 per million – these are marked in the table below with an asterisk\*), we obtained the following data:

United States found out earlier this century. </p><p> Is it fair to	<b>equate</b>	alcohol with hard drugs? </p><p> Anti-alcohol campaigners deliber
s. </p><p> For society in general and young people in particular,	<b>equating</b>	alcohol with dangerous, illicit drugs is a high-risk <corr> strategy <
ce-meaning and utterance-meaning, and hope then to be able to	<b>equate</b>	semantics with the study of sentence-meaning and pragmatics with
tions include context conditions). So again, it makes no sense to	<b>equate</b>	semantics with the study of sentence-meaning. </p><p> There is a
of appropriateness. The most promising are the definitions that	<b>equate</b>	pragmatics with" meaning minus semantics", or with a theory of la
ly simplify the logical base of semantics - the word some can be	<b>equated</b>	directly with the existential quantifier in predicate logic (while th
priority' was read into the record by means of the assumption of	<b>equating</b>	evolutionary history with 'progress'. And even though the evoluti
is a poor relation. Sometimes the assumption is that information	<b>equates</b>	to 'filing', and 'filing' is low skill, low priority and about to be
st in the belief that the use of computers in the study of history	<b>equates</b>	solely to quantification are about as out of date as the dinosaur-lik
are so fundamental that, for the historian at least, they must be	<b>equated</b>	with the invention and spread of printing or perhaps even the init
put below Y 4 , the representative firm will be making a loss by	<b>equating</b>	price with marginal cost. Such a situation cannot persist for long si
s being equal, there will exist an absolute price level which will	<b>equate</b>	AD and AS at the full employment level of output, y *;. A sudden fi
n to take the Greater York Area out to to to ten miles would not	<b>equate</b>	with the the calculations and the level of provision which erm ha
r contracts, a purchaser may decide to investigate the contracts	<b>equating</b>	to a specified percentage of the turnover of the business plus one
de as follows: </p><p> Any such decision involves an attempt to	<b>equate</b>	the incommensurable. Such an equation is insoluble, and in the log
ill usually be redeemable to provide the institutions with an exit	<b>equating</b>	to repayment of a loan; (d) determining the amount of loan financ
t a series of deep discount securities redeemable at intervals to	<b>equate</b>	to the profile of ordinary loans will carry discount rather than inte
ing Newco's losses against its surplus franked investment income	<b>equates</b>	to tax relief of £20 for each £100 of interest payable, whereas grc

Figure 1

A sample of concordances to “equate” in the British National Corpus.

The majority of examples display negative circumstances of meaning, or more precisely, a critical attitude of the speaker towards the content of the extended units with “equate” as the node, the prevailing corpus pattern being “to equate sth with sth” or “sth is equated with sth”:

- Most people *equates* money with power, power with money.
- You cannot *equates* success in financial matters with greed.
- Of great significance has been the influence of ideologies of modernization, both liberal and Marxist, which essentially *equates* progress with Western conceptions of social, political and economic development.
- Is it reasonable, in the absence of unanimity, to *equates* the will of the people with the will of the majority, as is so often done in everyday politics?

<sup>8</sup> The current version of BNC integrated into the SketchEngine tool (the official website <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>).

- “But underneath the instituted violence and propaganda, a primitive syntax of value equations is always at work preparing the public mind for acquiescence. Freedom *is equated with* the free market,” and globalization is, in turn, *equated with* transnational corporate rights to all of the world’s resources.

Neutral prosody is identified in specialised texts or (semi-)terminological meanings, especially in financial and statistical contexts, a typical pattern in these instances being “sth equates to/with sth”:

- Cost of measures were £43,000 giving a 10 month payback. Carbon savings *equate to* around 670,000 kg CO<sub>2</sub>.
- The methodology which arrived at the conclusion that a 1 mph reduction in speed *equates with* a 5% reduction in accidents is also dubious.

The analysis of collocational and colligational patterns (summarised in the table below) has led us to posit a semantic prosody included in the following description or “scenario”:

SLD: if a HUMAN **equates** SOMETHING with a PHENOMENON, CONCEPT, or CHARACTERISTIC s/he thinks that they are the same things, *usually failing to see the difference either as a result of ignorance or intentionally*

[SI: če ČLOVEK **enači** KAJ s POJAVOM, POJMOM ali LASTNOSTJO, meni, da gre za enake stvari, pri tem pa *navadno spregleda bistvene razlike, bodisi zaradi nevednosti ali namerno* ]

- The methodology which arrived at the conclusion that a 1 mph reduction in speed *equates with* a 5% reduction in accidents is also dubious.
- Arab delegations insisted Tuesday that a U.N. document on racism criticize Israel’s treatment of Palestinians even if language *equating* Zionism *with* racism is dropped under pressure from Washington and the United Nations.
- Danish Foreign Minister Mogens Lykketoft denounced the incidents as attempts to incite violence against Muslims and *equate* terrorism *with* Islam.
- “There is a clear need to develop sustainable livelihoods which are not based on a culture of violence. This means alternative role models that do not *equate* masculinity *with* armed violence and femininity *with* passivity are needed”, said Judy Bassingthwaite, Director of Gun Free South Africa.

### 5.3.1 Circumstances of meaning

Pre-corpus lexicographic descriptions generally included little or no pragmatic information, which is often located in the circumstances of meaning. The examples show that – seemingly for reasons of the structure of natural discourse – the pragmatic background will often fit naturally into the end part of the description. The section introduced by “usually” typically contains information on cause, reason, intention, manner or other circumstances of meaning – this strategy is adopted analogously in many monolingual dictionaries, including COBUILD2, MEDAL2 and LDOCE4. Nonetheless, in their definitions, most contemporary dictionaries as yet fail to convey the complexities of semantic prosodies (or avoid them), but typically imply them in the examples of (typical) usage. This strategy works well on the assumption that implicit information is lexicographically sufficient:

- MEDAL2: to consider something to be the same as something else (These people seem to *equate* honesty *with* weakness.//Don’t make the mistake of *equating* high test scores *and* intelligence.).

- LDOCE4: to consider that two things are similar or connected (Most people *equate* wealth *with* success.).
- COBUILD2: If you *equate* one thing *with* another, or if you say that one thing *equates with* another, you believe that they are strongly connected.

Each of the examples listed contains either colligational or collocational information about the semantic prosody, i.e., “seem to equate”, “don’t make the mistake”, and “most people”. Collocationally, juxtapositions of “honesty” and “weakness”, and “wealth” and “success” also contribute to the construction of meaning, based on the conventional associations of these word patterns. These, of course, are subtle indicators that can only be identified as such in the context of the whole situation, and, particularly, when analysed against a vast collection of data.

### 5.3.2. Summary

“Equate”, in isolation seemingly devoid of any associative meanings, typically occurs in contexts expressing negative circumstances or speaker attitudes. Colligational patterns, in particular, build a prosody that could be summarised as: “(people) give equal importance to things that are not the same because they cannot, or will not, see the difference.” Amongst the various collocators are those denoting movements, phenomena, concepts, convictions and human features, as well as adverbs, especially of manner, e.g., *roughly*, *mistakenly*, *crudely*, *falsely*. In the concordance group featuring a semantic preference for quantities, amounts, figures, units of measure etc. semantic prosody is neutral.

Collocation	Colligation	Semantic preference	Semantic association	Semantic prosody	Extra-linguistic circumstances
<i>zionism</i> , <i>Zionism</i> *, <i>masculinity</i> *, <i>punishment</i> , <i>democracy</i> , <i>Roman</i> *, <i>socialism</i> *, <i>goodness</i> *; <i>roughly</i> , <i>mistakenly</i> *, <i>crudely</i> *, <i>necessarily</i> *, <i>falsely</i> *, <i>closely</i> , <i>directly</i> , <i>simply</i> , <i>often</i>	Equate sth with; Modification (adverbial complements of manner, frequency); sth is equated to sth	Social movements, phenomena, notions, beliefs and human features		Sb fails to see the differences between things, either due to ignorance or intentionally, and the related disapproval of the observer	
<i>stearns</i> *, <i>supply</i> ( <i>and demand</i> ), <i>cost</i> , <i>figure</i> , <i>rating</i> , <i>saving</i> , <i>rise</i> , <i>credit</i> , <i>reduction</i>	Passive: sth equates to/with sth	Expressions of quantity, figures, percentages, statistical and measuring units		Neutral	Finance, economics

Table 1

A summary of the extended unit of meaning with “equate” as the node.

#### 5.4. Case study: (THE) SILLY SEASON (Brit. Eng.)

The second lexical item, “silly season”, is a phraseological unit displaying a higher degree of idiomaticity than “equate sth with sth”. Again, we will present actual English examples rather than translating those listed in the SLD under “čas kislj kumaric” into English, although there are some language-specific differences. Upon the examination of 14 of 14 (0.1 per million) concordances for “silly season” from the British National Corpus and, additionally, 199 concordances from the uKwac (0.1 per million), we have obtained the following data:

and I guess a lot of people have smiled anyway and remembered its the `silly season`! </p><p> However, to be serious, while flexitime, ce  
start of the soaring weather we have what is sometimes known as the `silly season`. This is when the pilots who have been hibernating i  
onsumers want. </p><p> VIMER Silly season for meetings <p> Pre-harvest is the `silly season` for meetings in France, writes Tim Green, and we are  
his cousin Phelim O'Neill (Westminster MP for North Antrim) called `the `silly season`' meant nothing to him. Being a unionist meant being  
've been reared on Christmasses and New Years that deserve the label `silly season`, when news editors scabble among the Christmas m  
publications effectively took censorship in libraries well beyond the `silly season` in the Press; and whereas we could once afford to ha  
planation that could account for the Loch Ness monster, an overture to the `silly season`, though there was little evidence that there would b  
evidence that there would be one this year. Nobody applied the term `silly season` to the news that a man had got into Buckingham Pal  
cast doubt on the Hooligan panic, accusing newspapers of being in their `silly season` and of taking the matter up merely `as a suitable an  
some sections of the press that their competitors were indulging in `silly season` sensationalism. </p><p> Further controversy was pro  
round bays, are particularly vulnerable. </p><p> Late summer, which is the `silly season` for us general builders, with lots of odd decorating wa  
Those parliamentary gossips still in London enduring the boredom of the `silly season` waited in happy expectation for the scandal to break

Figure 2

A sample of concordances to “silly season” in the British National Corpus.

‘Summer’ and ‘story’ (in Slovene also ‘August’) are the statistically relevant collocates, while amongst colligational patterns there is a tendency to predicative position:

- Summer is of course the *silly season*, with light-hearted news items to the fore. One such concerned Ruddy Ducks, when their success in wooing White-headed Duck females was revealed: the possession of an eight-inch penis.
- July and August are called the *silly season* by the British media. This is because politicians are on holiday, so media people, unable to play their usual games with their usual partners, create news by cooking up some bizarre stories.
- Here is a lovely *silly season* story from the New Scientist that was picked up widely across the media, which illustrates one of the more common statistical fallacies. June babies have higher risk of anorexia.
- August saw a whole number of *silly season* articles in the posh papers bemoaning the tendency of some universities to take popular culture seriously.
- Maybe it’s the Summer, but there was a distinct lack of interest in the issue; a general feeling of “here we go again”; a few *silly season* headlines and it will all blow over again. All were agreed that the institutes will need to spell out what’s in it for their members if they want them to vote for it.

Metalinguistic use is not uncommon, including the occasional use of scare quotes:

- Although for journalists, the summer is allegedly the “*silly season*”, it has been busy time for MPs. Although many Conservatives MPs have been busy calculating how to vote in their leadership election so to advance their careers!
- By the time you read this report we will already be back in teaching mode. But I am writing it in the middle of what journalists are pleased to call “the *silly season*”.

and, somewhat more frequently than is the case in Slovene, an extension of meaning to situations other than the summer holiday period can be identified:

- Hot on the heels of the suggestion that Michael Schumacher could move to McLaren-

Mercedes, the German daily paper Bild has Kimi Raikkonen switching places with him to lead Ferrari in 2007. Welcome to Formula One's annual *silly season*. Schumacher pours scorn on rumours of McLaren move.

Based on the analysis of collocational and colligational patterns (summarised in the table below), the description containing the identified semantic prosody was as follows:

SLD: a period, especially during the summer holiday, marked by the absence of relevant daily news when journalists must do their best to produce light-hearted or sensationalist stories

[SI: obdobje, zlasti med poletnimi počitnicami, ko ni medijsko zanimivih tem in se morajo novinarji potruditi, da praznino zapolnijo z lahkotnejšimi ali senzacionalističnimi zgodbami]

#### 5.4.1. Summary

Despite the language-specific (grammatical) differences, the overall pragmatic meaning is shared by both languages. The semantic preference is for the media and journalism, with frequent specification of the time (summer) in which the phenomenon is observed. The expression is typically used in connection with (absent) events or happening, especially due to politicians and MPs being on holiday. From this can be drawn the association of boredom, a laid-back attitude, and a certain ambiguity arising from the good and bad aspects of the lack of news. The semantic prosody resulting from all of the above is one of difficulty, particularly for journalists, who still have to come up with some news, and the resulting negative attitudes. There is also an evaluative component conveying the bad effects of sensationalism.

Collocation	Colligation	Semantic preference	Semantic association	Semantic prosody
<i>summer, story</i>	Predicative position; Scare quotes; Metalinguistic use;	Media, journalism; Time of year; Events, happening	Boredom due to lack of (political) news; Gloating in sensationalism; Ambiguity arising from good and bad effects	Difficulty for journalists, negative attitudes – Opportunity for the promotion of unsuitable topics, leading to sensationalism (gloating)

Table 2  
Summary of the unit of meaning with *čas kislih kumaric* as node.

## 6. Conclusions

We believe that in order to improve teaching pragmatics in all of its complexity, it is necessary to recognise and assess various aspects of pragmatic meaning both in written and spoken language. On the one hand, corpus linguistics has made substantial progress in the analysis of spoken corpora; on the other hand, corpora transcribed – for example, for intonation patterns (see Cheng, Greaves and Warren 2005) – could be of great importance for further studies on semantic prosody, which, for obvious reasons, have so far been focused on written texts, as in the present paper. We have investigated the form of pragmatic meaning encoded in linguistic form called semantic (or discourse) prosody, and its relation with connotative meaning. Future studies might suggest how semantic prosody

can be related more explicitly to speech act theory and to the illocutionary force of utterances (Stubbs 2006, after Stewart 2010).

Semantic prosody builds along the semantics/pragmatics continuum and is not a pragmatic backdrop on which we could look for infinite implicit meanings; on the contrary, it is a result of empirically identifiable elements of the meaning structure, albeit on the furthest boundaries of a lexical unit of meaning. This has far-reaching implications for the analysis of corpus data and for the selection of the default span of concordance lines, as well as, and not least, for the way lexicographic descriptions of meaning are constructed. Pragmatic information is an integral part of an (extended) unit of meaning, identifiable only by examining its repeated occurrences in corpus data. Although in the present paper the focus is on pragmatic components that can be abstracted from contextual features, in the SLD we have also addressed the question of word connotation and emotive and attitudinal meaning that can be associated with words *per se*. In our view, in a lexical database it is vital to provide all of the information on the headword that is retrievable from the corpus data; semantic prosody, no doubt, is that kind of information.

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