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► **To cite this version:**

Olivier Simonin. Introduction: The lexicon and pragmatics. *Lexis. Journal in English Lexicology*, 2023, 21, 10.4000/lexis.7259 . hal-04648983

HAL Id: hal-04648983

<https://hal.science/hal-04648983>

Submitted on 4 Sep 2024

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Lexis
Journal in English Lexicology

21 | 2023
The lexicon and pragmatics

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/lexis/7259>

DOI: [10.4000/lexis.7259](https://doi.org/10.4000/lexis.7259)

ISSN: 1951-6215

Publisher

Université Jean Moulin - Lyon 3

Electronic reference

Olivier Simonin, "Introduction: The lexicon and pragmatics", *Lexis* [Online], 21 | 2023, Online since 13 November 2023, connection on 16 November 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lexis/7259> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/lexis.7259>

This text was automatically generated on November 16, 2023.



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Introduction: The lexicon and pragmatics

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Introduction

- 1 What pertains to the meaning of lexical units (whether simple or complex) and interpretative mechanisms to yield meaning in context is a crucial question in linguistic theory. It is exemplified by distinctions such as Oswald Ducrot's opposition between "signification" and "sense" (one of many). Firth [1935: 37] in fact already noted that "the complete meaning of a word is always contextual".
- 2 The present thematic issue of *Lexis* focuses on the lexicon and pragmatics, exploring connections between the fields of lexicology and linguistic pragmatics, which accounts for the role and influence of context (situational, linguistic contexts...) on the semantic interpretation of utterances. Its general purpose is to investigate how the lexicon interacts with pragmatic procedures and to question the classical conception of the lexicon, inherited from lexicography, which tends to view lexical units as stable building blocks from which utterance meaning is constructed afterwards.
- 3 The study of the articulation between lexical semantics and pragmatics has been to the forefront of debate within the literature for more than a decade (see, e.g., Zufferey *et al.* [2019], Carston [2019], Depraetere & Salkie [2017], etc.). The notion that there could be a strict separation between a rigid, abstract lexical meaning on the one hand, and pragmatic mechanisms operating afterwards on the other, has been shown to be highly problematic in a significant number of publications: post-Gricean, contextualist pragmatics (Sperber & Wilson [1995], Recanati [2004]) argues that the literal meaning of utterances is partly determined by pragmatic mechanisms and, more generally, many scholars have sought to include a pragmatic component to their account of some linguistic items, such as modals (Depraetere [2019]), or to suggest an instructional component to determine meaning (Col [2017]).

- 4 **Anouh Bourmayan** offers a lexico-pragmatic study of axiological connotation, demonstrating its status as presupposed content (it is not part of the content coded corresponding to the proposition expressed). After distinguishing between linguistically encoded axiological connotation and culturally encoded axiological connotation, she argues that the former pertains to (lexical) semantics, the latter to pragmatics, and potentially applies to the whole class of open-class words. She also extends the pragmatic notion of modulation to account for modifications to culturally encoded axiological connotation, and so to one kind of presupposed content.
- 5 **Sarah Bourse** and **Olivier Simonin** analyse the meaning of the polysemous adjective *real*. Starting with dictionary entry definitions and a review of the literature on polysemy, they propose a lexico-pragmatic account of the uses of the adjective in late 20th century British English from genuine occurrences found in the ICE-GB corpus (classifying all of them and explaining a strong bias for the attributive position). They distinguish two main families of meaning for *real*, and show how they are connected or interact with the pragmatic processes of modulation and disambiguation.
- 6 **José Antonio Sánchez Fajardo** undertakes an overall survey of [X-word] constructions, like the “f-word”, which can be euphemistically substituted to the word it stands for and neutralizes its offensive load. He shows that the initial euphemistic use for the construction has given way to a more productive dysphemistic (enhancing) use, as in “f-word” when meaning ‘feminism’. The morphological replicability of the construction is predicated on the evaluative meaning of the concept denoted, and the avoidance of taboo or forbidden words accounts for the new trend. Pragmatic motivations underlying the formation of new words of the [X-word] type are also explored.
- 7 **Amélie Josselin-Leray** assesses the usefulness of the large number of examples (mostly taken from corpora or from the Web) found in online monolingual learner’s English dictionaries – the additional example feature – for translators specifically, whose chief concern is to obtain contextual information within word entries. In her detailed study, she shows that having more examples is not necessarily better for translators, whose needs are not fully met by the additional example feature, for which she suggests several avenues for improvement.

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