Aspects of meaning

Jubayr zakariyya Aspects of meaning assignment 1 The experiment that has been conducted, and written about in the paper 'The representation of polysemous words', by Devorah Klein and Gregory Murphy, endeavours to uncover the degrees to which different senses of polysemous words use the same or diverse kind of representations. Whilst homonyms from a linguistic perspective, are groups of words that share the same orthographical and phonological characteristics, yet do not share the same semantic meaning.

There are a number of theoretical perspectives pertaining to the root cause of how two separate word meanings are able to converge on the same phonological representation, or how a single word is able to separate into diverse and separate semantic meanings. But the term 'polysemy' refers to something that is intrinsically more complex, and as Klein and Murphy have noted in their paper, more problematical in terms of defining its root source and in which ways are the senses related and represented.

What Klein and Murphy mean by this, and have studied in this paper, is the process in which words semantically relate to one another, through a process of extension. Yet unlike homonyms, polysemous words do not have lexically separate meanings, which leads to the questions of whether polysemous words have a single represented sense that can be accounted for every use of a word, how can they be linked in memory, and how are they co-ordinated in processing. Klein and Murphy aim to 'provide data that will constrain accounts of the representation and processing of polysemy'(Klein and Murphy (2001)).

The first experiment that was conducted entailed the use of memory performance in order to measure the representation of polysemous senses. it

was particularly looking at whether people were more familiar with a same sense or a different sense than the original presentation given. the results showed that same phrase items were the most precisely evaluated, which was followed by the consistent sense phrases. The inconsistent sense phrases were the most error prone. Klein and Murphy also suggest that words being seen in identical context was the most helpful in getting a correct evaluation.

The results here point out that the way in which a polysemous word is processed initially affects later memory access. After conducting a number of detailed experiments, Klein and Murphy conclude that polysemous senses are semantically related, yet they are not extremely similar, which consequently results in 'same-sense facilitation' and 'cross sense inhibition' (Klein and Murphy (2001)). If a polysemous word does not contain a core meaning, it is no longer a substantial semantic component thatis common to all senses in a given word. word count: 429