

Preface

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Pages v–viii of

Semiotic Principles in Semantic Theory

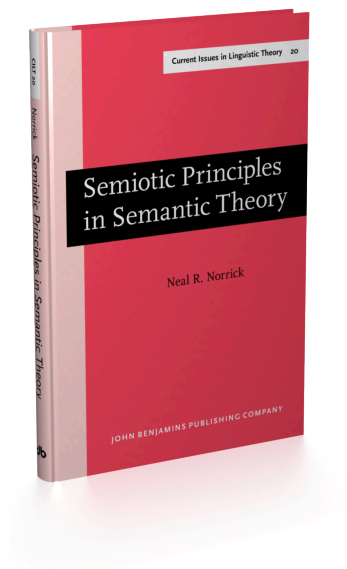
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PREFACE

*I am not yet so lost in
lexicography, as to forget
that words are the daughters
of earth, and that things
are the sons of heaven.*

Samuel A. Johnson (1755):
*Dictionary of the English
Language, Preface*

This investigation concerns regular semantic relations. I now believe, and hope to demonstrate convincingly, that regular semantic relations depend on general semiotic principles linking signs of all types and that they describe not only semantic relations between words, but motivation in morphologically complex units and creative meaning extensions and transfers as well. But originally my interest in regular semantic relations stemmed from my work on polysemy.

I wanted to clearly differentiate polysemy and homophony. For this I needed a principled basis for distinguishing regular and fortuitous semantic connections between phonetically identical forms. My search for regular semantic principles led me to studies of historical meaning changes, then to rhetorical treatments of standard tropes. Certain principles recurred in both past, documented cases, and in original meaning extensions and transfers in everyday language as well as in poetry. The same principles turned up in treatments of motivation in complex units such as compounds, idioms, proverbs etc. What is more, my concurrent research in semiotics revealed parallel principles relating signs of all kinds. It gradually dawned on me that a relatively small number of semiotic motivational principles suffice to describe

SEMIOTIC PRINCIPLES IN SEMANTIC THEORY

the regular types of relations in all the linguistic cases.

After (1) working out a set of general semiotic principles, I (2) derived specialized semantic principles from them, and (3) investigated the effects of including these principles in semantic theory. These three steps, their consequences and ramifications make up the body of this book.

Studies preparatory to this volume have been presented at conferences and/or appeared in journals or collections of papers. I develop aspects of the underlying semiotic theory in the papers: "Transfer-Ikone: Indirekt motivierte Zeichen" read at the 2nd Semiotics Colloquium in Regensburg, 1978 (1978c), and "Principles of Motivation" read at the 2nd Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies (IASS) in Vienna, 1979 (1979c). The preliminary outlines of the semantic theory were worked out in: "Regular Multiplicity of Meaning," in: H.-J. Diller et al., eds. *anglistik & englischunterricht 8: Semantik*. Trier: Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1979: 103-116 (1979a), and "Regular Meaning Multiplicity in Nouns," in T. Pettersson, ed. *Papers from the Fifth Scandinavian Conference of Linguistics, Frostavallen, Part 1: Section Papers*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1979: 221-232 (1979b). Special aspects of the semantic theory were discussed in: "The lexicalization of pragmatic functions," *Linguistics* 17: 671-685 (1979d), and "Semantic Relations and Motivation in Idioms" read at the 14th Linguistics Colloquium in Bochum, 1979, in: G. Tschauder and E. Weigand, eds. *Perspektive: textintern*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1980 (1980). I want to thank participants in the conferences mentioned for comments and suggestions incorporated in this final, consolidated version.

Many people have influenced the content and form of this study since its inception; my sincere thanks go out to all of them. John Odmark, whose untimely death deprived the world of a productive scholar and me of a close friend, acted as a critical audience and a reliable adviser from the start. Rolf Breuer and Volkmar Lehmann helped shape my thinking on metaphor at various stages in my work. Philip A. Luelsdorff read and discussed at length various drafts of preparatory studies, rough and final drafts of the whole manuscript. Winfried Nöth, Daniel C. O'Connell and W. Terrence Gordon read and commented extensively on the

PREFACE

final draft. I'm indebted to Konrad Koerner for his conscientious editorial work. Finally, I thank my wife, Petra, for her encouragement, advice and proof-reading.

I dedicate this book to my mom and dad, Rosemary and Robert Norrick, for instilling in me the love of language and the spirit of inquiry.

Würzburg, Germany

N. R. N.

February 1981

