

Associative relations in a semasiological perspective

Traditional onomasiological studies usually list metaphors and metonymies and distinguish between loanwords and semantic loans, but are less determined on other types of semantic change and usually are unaware of the semantic aspects of word formation and idioms. Yet, recent studies in lexicology have not only proved the existence of a broader range of types of semantic change, but have also emphasized the semantic aspect of word-formation, idioms and other types of lexical change. From an onomasiological point of view, the common denominator of the major processes of lexical innovation is the fact that a speaker tries to verbalize a given concept by associating one or more other concepts that have already been verbalized in the speaker's language.

All associative relations can be reduced to the three Aristotelian principles of remembering, i.e. *similarity*, *contrast* and *contiguity*. From these three principles, *similarity* shows by far the greatest diversity: The best known process based on similarity is that of metaphor which relates two concepts that exhibit a more or less peripheral perceptual or functional analogy or another common aspect.

Contrast as an associative principle is by far less important than its counterpart similarity. It figures in some cases of word formation and rarely in semantic change and idioms. As contrast of signifiers is the fundamental principle of every semiotic system, only conceptual contrast is relevant to lexicology and to cognitive onomasiology.

Completely different from similarity and contrast are associations by *contiguity*. While contrast and similarity are relations that demand a certain reflection upon the concepts involved and are sometimes purely 'academic', as the two concepts have nothing to do with each other, contiguity relations result from reality in so far as we have learned that there is a temporal or logical connection between the concepts or that we can presuppose such a connection. We call this type of relation *conceptual contiguity*.