

Session 1/2: Exercises

Relationship between perception, symbol and reality/realities

Are the following sentences unambiguous?

- (1) The man walked into the house.
- (2) The hikers came across the path in the forest.
- (3) The tractor travelled along the road.
- (4) The course assessments have gone up.
- (5) The middle-management is behind the striking workforce.

Constructions

Consider these idiomatic / metaphorical phrases. How far can they be changed to retain their meaning?

- a) *Can their word order be modified?*
- b) *Can you replace any lexical items?*
- c) *Can you add lexical items without fundamentally changing the meaning?*

- (6) The pugilist threw in the towel.
- (7) I'm behind you.
- (8) Let's not get ahead of ourselves here.
- (9) Janice was really put out by the news.
- (10) You are a sight for sore eyes.
- (11) I don't mind giving you a hand with this.
- (12) All our enquiries have hit a wall.
- (13) His life has taken a turn for the worse
- (14) He has hit rock bottom this time.

Everyday Language

How would you characterise what the following sentence express? What linguistic and conceptual means do they employ? Can you detect regularities?

- (15) Work in this seminar is a bit heavy-going.
- (16) Time to reach a settlement with the EU is running out.
- (17) 2008 saw the collapse of many a financial institute.
- (18) She is looking for closure so she can move on.
- (19) If you want to study, I won't stand in your way.
- (20) His might is increasing every day.
- (21) Jack is between jobs.
- (22) The cat is off her food.
- (23) No point in being down in the dumps.
- (24) You take things far too seriously.
- (25) This month was a bugger but we've come through it.
- (26) OK, so things haven't worked out. Get over it!
- (27) You've just risen in my estimation.

Sequences

Which of these sound more acceptable in your opinion?

- (28a) Narrow lanes surrounded the old market square.
- (28b) The old market square was surrounded with narrow lanes. (what about *present tense*?)

- (29a) The baby was on the sheepskin rug.
- (29b) The sheepskin rug was under the baby.

- (30a) The painting had been placed above the sideboard.
- (30b) The sideboard had been placed below the painting.
- (30c) The painting is above the sideboard.
- (30d) The sideboard is below the painting
- (30e) The sideboard is under the painting.

- (31a) The hot water bottle lay under the blanket.
- (31b) The blanket lay over the hot water bottle. (how about “was placed”?)

Think of pairs of friends that you usually perceive as “belonging” together. Which of the two do you name first when you refer to “x and y”? And do you have an explanation for why that should be the case?

Gerald Durrell’s childhood memoirs as a budding zoologist have these three words in the title, the last one being linked with and: relatives / beasts / birds. What do you think the title is (don’t google it!). Why? What about other things or concepts in threes? Any ideas what determines the sequences?