

## *Challenges to distributional methods in semantics*

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We focus on meaning modulation in composition as a challenge to distributional methods in semantics.

While largely sympathetic to the view that the meaning of a word is the set of contexts in which it occurs in texts (Harris, Charles and Miller, Firth, Wittgenstein...), we argue that lexical representations which are built from evidence of distributional behavior alone are unable to fully explain the rich variation in linguistic meaning in language. Lexical meaning, we claim, is modulated in context and contextual operations of adjustment have an impact on the behavior that words exhibit. This is why a context-sensitive approach to semantic composition is needed in addition to distributional analysis to make sense of corpus data.

We focus on coercion as a case study that shows how distributional analysis and theoretical modeling can interact.

There will be a first 3-hour module in which we will examine the notion of coercion in the theoretical literature, and a second 3-hour model in which the students will be presented with methods used for the acquisition of coercions from corpora.

### Preparatory references

Lauwers, P. and D. Willems 2011 Coercion: Definition and Challenges, current approaches and new trends in *Linguistics* 49, 6, 1219-1235.

Pustejovsky J. and E. Jezek 2008 Semantic Coercion in Language: Beyond Distributional Analysis. *Italian Journal of Linguistics* 20, 1, 181-214.