



Semantic Shifts

Fréjus - Destremau
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Semantic Shifts: From lexicon to grammar. Diachronic and typological perspectives

Workshops, Methods & Tools 2

Semantic typology in African languages using the RefLex database

Guillaume Segerer, (Llacan UMR 8135 CNRS)

Day 1 : RefLex - an introduction

In this first session the basic principles of RefLex will be presented. This database is unique in many respects. First, it provides lexical data from more than 1300 sources covering more than 900 distinct languages of Africa. Second, every record (there are more than 1,200,000 of them) is linked with a PDF file showing its original source. That makes it a real reference tool for anyone interested in lexicon and African languages. Third, a bunch of tools is provided online, which allow to perform various tasks, from the simple counting of symbols (vowels, consonants, tones) to refined statistics, not forgetting computer-aided reconstruction. All these tools will be briefly presented, with actual examples showing the wide range of their wide possibilities.

Day 2 : Semantic typology using RefLex

RefLex is a privileged place to study semantics, for which there is a newly developed dedicated tool. This tool shows all types of collocations for any given meaning, looking at the whole database. A particular collocation can be selected and the relevant data is then displayed. After a short introduction explaining the way the collocations are retrieved and how to use the tool, this session will give an opportunity for everyone to discover specific distributions of semantic features, with a special focus on how polysemic patterns shed light on the origin of semantic shifts.