Lexicographic representations of Anglo-Saxon and Latinate near-synonyms in English monolingual and English-Italian bilingual learners’ dictionaries

Daniele Franceschi
‘Roma Tre’ University, Italy
daniele.franceschi@uniroma3.it
Aim of the presentation

- Analysis & classification of the meaning relations between near-synonyms of Anglo-Saxon and Latinate origin in present-day English (synchronic approach):

  e.g. *speed/velocity, sweat/perspire, shy/timid, before/prior*, etc.

  - Do they differ only in terms of style, register and connotation?
  - To what extent does the semantics of Latinate borrowings overlap with/differ from that of the pre-existing Germanic word-stock?

- Initial proposal of metadata that may be used to better represent differences between near-synonyms in dictionaries.
Why Latinate near-synonyms?

- Latinate lexical component of English is the most significant (Minkova & Stockwell 2006).
- EFL learners often struggle with near-synonymous words (Chamizo-Domínguez 2008), e.g., *hug* or *embrace*, *brave* or *courageous*?
  - Tendency of Italian EFL learners to overuse Latinate words because they are similar in form to their Italian counterparts (*velocità*, *abbracciare*, *coraggioso/a*).
- Monolingual, bilingual and learners’ dictionaries/thesauri do not clearly distinguish between etymologically unrelated near-synonyms.
Some examples

embrace verb

/inˈbreɪs/

(formal)

Verb Forms

1 ★ B2 [intransitive, transitive] to put your arms around somebody as a sign of love or friendship

SYNONYM hug

- They hugged and promised to keep in touch.
- They embraced and promised to keep in touch.
- embrace somebody She embraced her son warmly.
- He rose from his chair and embraced her warmly.

TOPICS Family and relationships B2

They **hugged** and promised to keep in touch.
She **hugged** her son warmly.
He rose from his chair and **hugged** her warmly.
Some examples

2 [transitive] **embrace something** to accept an idea, a proposal, a set of beliefs, etc., especially when it is done with enthusiasm

- to embrace democracy/feminism/Islam
- It is unlikely that such countries will **hug** capitalist ideas.

*to hug democracy/feminism/Islam.*
*It is unlikely that such countries will hug capitalist ideas.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extra Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- the only party which fully embraces the concept of a united Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Soccer has become more widely embraced by Americans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- She embraced the feminist cause with enthusiasm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 [transitive] **embrace something** to include something

- The talks embraced a wide range of issues.
- The word ‘mankind’ embraces men, women and children.
- Decisions were made by reaching a consensus embracing all sectors of the financial community.

*The talks hugged a wide range of issues.*
*The word ‘mankind’ hugs men, women and children.*
*...a consensus all hugging sectors of the financial community.*
**Some examples**

**embrace** verb

1. put your arms round sb

**ADV.** tightly, warmly He rose from his chair and embraced her warmly.

2. accept sth

**ADV.** fully, genuinely the only party which fully embraces the concept of a united Europe | enthusiastically, wholeheartedly, with enthusiasm She embraced the feminist cause with enthusiasm.
Some examples

**hug** verb

- /hʌɡ/
- /hʌɡ/

**Verb Forms**

1. [transitive, intransitive] **hug (somebody)** (+ adv./prep.) to put your arms around somebody and hold them tightly, especially to show that you like or love them

   - They hugged each other.
   - She hugged him tightly.
   - He hugged Anna to him.
   - They put their arms around each other and hugged.

   **SYNONYM** embrace

**Examples**

- They **embraced** each other.
- She **embraced** him tightly.
- He **embraced** Anna to him.
- They put their arms around each other and **embraced**.
Some examples

2 ⭐ [transitive] **hug something** to put your arms around something and hold it close to your body

- *She sat in the chair, hugging her knees.*
- *He hugged the hot-water bottle to his chest.*

3 ⭐ [transitive] **hug something** (of a path, vehicle, etc.) to keep close to something for a distance

- *The track hugs the coast for a mile.*
- *We crept along, hugging the perimeter fence.*

4 ⭐ [transitive] **hug something** to fit tightly around something, especially a person’s body

- *figure-hugging jeans*
Some examples

**OXFORD Collocations** | dictionary for students of English

**hug** verb

**ADV.** close, tight/tightly *James went to his daughter and hugged her tightly. | gently | fiercely*

**PREP.** to *He reached out and hugged her to him.*

**PHRASES** hug and kiss sb
**Some examples**

**embrace verb**

1 put your arms round sb

ADV. **tightly, warmly** He rose from his chair and embraced her warmly.

2 accept sth

ADV. **fully, genuinely** wholeheartedly, with enthusiasm

**hug verb**

ADV. **close** tight/tightly James went to his daughter and hugged her tightly. | **gently** | **fiercely**  

PREP. to He reached out and hugged her to him.

**PHRASES** hug and kiss sb
In fact...

"and hugged her warmly"

About 1,410 results (0.64 seconds)

books.google.it › books

Key to Conspiracy
Talia Gryphon · 2008

FOUND INSIDE
Tanis was a bit taken aback but he caught her and hugged her warmly, clearly glad to see her. "We are glad you are safe, little warrior." Anubis’s smile was warm and reached his eyes. Maybe they all weren’t pissed off at her after all.
This dark eastern youth had captivated her heart and she had fallen for him and had embraced him to her. When she had given herself to him, it was she who had deprived him of his virginal innocence. She had removed him from a state...
In fact...

Google

"embraced and kissed"

Page 2 of about 160,000 results (0.46 seconds)

books.google.it › books

In His Love and Glorious Service: Season 3 Maturing in Your ...

Charlie Lusco · 2011

FOUND INSIDE – PAGE 108

When my wife and I embraced and kissed that day, we were not just embracing each other. We were embracing a relationship that we hoped would be forever. At that moment in time we hoped that our desires for each other would never end and ...
Some other examples

embrace

Thesaurus > to accept or continue in a situation that is difficult or unpleasant > embrace

These are words and phrases related to embrace. Click on any word or phrase to go to its thesaurus page. Or, go to the definition of embrace.

TO ACCEPT OR CONTINUE IN A SITUATION THAT IS DIFFICULT OR UNPLEASANT
• She embraced her hardships without complaint.

TO HOLD SOMEONE OR SOMETHING
• The sisters embraced.

Synonyms and examples

hold
Can you hold this for a moment?

clasp
He reached out to clasp her hand.

grasp
She grasped his hand in a gesture of sympathy.

hug
He hugged his girlfriend.

grip
The baby gripped my finger with her tiny hand.

clutch
Silent and pale, she clutched her mother’s hand.

cling
One little girl was clinging onto a cuddly toy.

hang on
The child was hanging on to her mother’s skirt.

grab
He grabbed the rope and pulled it hard.

cradle
She cradled him tenderly in her arms.
embrace²

/ɪmˈbreɪs/

I. vt

1. (hug) abbracciare
2. [fig.] (espouse, adopt) abbracciare [religion, ideology, cause]; sostenere [policy]; adottare [principle, technology, method]
   • to ~ the challenge of Europe | accettare la sfida dell’Europa
3. [fig.] (include) comprendere [subject areas]; abbracciare, contenere [cultures, opinions, beliefs]

II. intr

abbracciarsi
Some other examples

**hug**
\( /h^\prime g/ \)
vt

1. *(embrace)* [person] abbracciare; [bear, gorilla] abbrancare
   - to \~ one's knees | stringersi le ginocchia tra le braccia
2. *(keep close to)* [boat, vehicle] rasentare; [road, path] costeggiare
   - to \~ the coast | mar. bordeggia
e   - to \~ the walls | [person] rasentare i muri
3. *(fit tightly)*
   - figure-\~ing | attillato
   - the dress \~ged her around the hips | il vestito la fasciava sui fianchi
Room for lexicographic improvement

1. Further investigate and then classify the meaning relations between near-synonymous Anglo-Saxon and Latinate words.

2. Alongside traditional pragmatic labels, other metadata (i.e. tags, notes, cross-references) re semantic differences should be included in (digital) dictionaries to further assist users (learners, teachers, etc.) to better distinguish between related words of different origin.
**On synonymy**

- **Three main research orientations:**
  - Semanticists (Kempson 1977; Werner et al. 1980; Palmer 1981; Leech 1981; Jackson 1988; Burnley 1992; Church et al. 1994; Lyons 1995; Edmonds 1999; Geeraerts 2010; Durkin 2014, 2020; among others) investigate variation at the level of denotation, both diachronically and synchronically, and from different perspectives.
  - Pragmaticians (Hanks 2010, 2013; Murphy 2003 & references therein) “what actually counts as synonymous is constrained by the demands of communicative language use and the context in which this language use occurs” (Murphy 2003: 168).
  - Cognitive linguists (Cruse 1986, 2000; Cuyckens, Dirven & Taylor 2003; Croft & Cruse 2004; Geeraerts 2006; among others): a classification of synonymy cannot cover all the possible context-sensitive properties, but “construability is not infinitely flexible” Croft & Cruse 2004: 144).
On synonymy

- Absolute synonyms are extremely rare, because they need to satisfy the following three conditions (Lyons 1995: 61):
  1. all their meanings [must be] identical;
  2. they [must be] synonymous in all contexts;
  3. they [must be] semantically equivalent [...] on all dimensions of meaning, descriptive and non-descriptive.

- Synonymous words are not semantically equivalent in all contexts or at all levels (⇒ partial synonyms).
On synonymy

- **Main types of variation characterizing pairs and triplets of near-synonymous words (Edmonds & Hirst 2002: 109)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of variation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract dimension</td>
<td>seep:drip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>enemy:foe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denotational, indirect</td>
<td>error:mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denotational, fuzzy</td>
<td>wood:forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stylistic, formality</td>
<td>pissed:drunk:inebriated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stylistic, force</td>
<td>ruin:annihilate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressed attitude</td>
<td>skinny:thin:slim:slender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotive</td>
<td>daddy:dad:father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collocational</td>
<td>task:job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectional</td>
<td>pass away:die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcategorization</td>
<td>give:donate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My research


My approach & analysis

- Synonymy is a conceptual relation regulated by distinct, but interacting meaning-making processes.
- Nine main types of processes or relations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of relation</th>
<th>Tag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generic-specific</td>
<td>GEN&gt;SPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific-generic</td>
<td>SPE&gt;GEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal-figurative (metaphor)</td>
<td>LIT&gt;FIG (MTP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal-figurative (metonymy)</td>
<td>LIT&gt;FIG (MTN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figurative-literal</td>
<td>FIG&gt; LIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus shift</td>
<td>FOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicature shift</td>
<td>IMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause-effect</td>
<td>CAU-EFF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconicity</td>
<td>ICO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data & method of analysis

- Data: 165 pairs of Anglo-Saxon and Latinate ‘equivalents’ in English selected from the California State University Northridge website and Wikipedia:
  

# Germanic & Latinate Equivalents in the English Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Germanic</th>
<th>Latinate</th>
<th>Germanic</th>
<th>Latinate</th>
<th>Germanic</th>
<th>Latinate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anger</td>
<td>rage</td>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>amicable</td>
<td>old</td>
<td>ancient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask</td>
<td>inquire</td>
<td>give</td>
<td>provide</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baby</td>
<td>infant</td>
<td>gladness</td>
<td>joy</td>
<td>pleasure</td>
<td>seem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back</td>
<td>dorsum</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>depart</td>
<td>sheep</td>
<td>mutton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data

List of Germanic and Latinate equivalents in English

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

This list contains Germanic elements of the English language which have a close corresponding Latinate form. The correspondence is semantic—in most cases these words are not cognates, but in some cases they are doublets, i.e., ultimately derived from the same root, generally Proto-Indo-European, as in cow and boeuf, both ultimately from PIE *grous.

The meanings of these words do not always correspond to Germanic cognates, and occasionally the specific meaning in the list is unique to English.

Those Germanic words listed below with a French source mostly came into English through Anglo-Norman, and so despite ultimately deriving from Proto-Germanic, came to English through a Romance language (and many have cognates in modern Romance languages). This results in some Germanic doublets, such as yard and garden, through Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old English</th>
<th>answer</th>
<th>response</th>
<th>responsum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WGmc</strong> <em>aisskan</em></td>
<td>ask</td>
<td>inquire</td>
<td><em>in + quaerere</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PGmc</strong> <em>frigman</em></td>
<td>train</td>
<td>request</td>
<td>+ quaerere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PGmc</strong> <em>besokiyan</em></td>
<td>beseech</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Old English</strong> <em>bedecian</em></td>
<td>beg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PGmc</strong> <em>sokijan</em></td>
<td>seek</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contents [hide]

1. List of Germanic and Latinate equivalents in English
2. Noun/adjective doublets
3. See also
4. Sources
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>abbreviazione</th>
<th>abbr</th>
<th>abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aggettivo</td>
<td>adj</td>
<td>adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amministrazione</td>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avverbio</td>
<td>adv</td>
<td>adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aeronautica, trasporti aerei</td>
<td>Aer</td>
<td>aviation, aeronautics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aggettivo</td>
<td>agg</td>
<td>adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agricoltura</td>
<td>Agr</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>americano</td>
<td>Am</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amministrazione</td>
<td>Amm</td>
<td>administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anatomia</td>
<td>Anat</td>
<td>anatomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>origine anglosassone</td>
<td>AS orig</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abbreviazione</td>
<td>abbr</td>
<td>abbreviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>origine latina</td>
<td><em>Lt orig</em></td>
<td>Latinate origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>linguistica</td>
<td><em>Ling</em></td>
<td>linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>letterale</td>
<td><em>lit</em></td>
<td>literal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>letterario</td>
<td><em>liter</em></td>
<td>literary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Tags & labels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of relation</th>
<th>Tag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generic-specific</td>
<td>GEN&gt;SPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific-generic</td>
<td>SPE&gt;GEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal-figurative (metaphor)</td>
<td>LIT&gt;FIG (MTP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal-figurative (metonymy)</td>
<td>LIT&gt;FIG (MTN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figurative-literal</td>
<td>FIG&gt; LIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus shift</td>
<td>FOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicature shift</td>
<td>IMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause-effect</td>
<td>CAU-EFF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconicity</td>
<td>ICO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **SIZE**
- **DEGREE**
- **MERONYM**
- **OPPOSITION**
- ...
Tags & usage notes

**isle**

*noun* [ˈaɪl]  

**STYLE**  
sometimes literary/poetic  

**SYNONYM**  
*island* (*GEN*)  

**island** (*AS orig*) is generic

*an island, often used in the name of a particular island:*

- the British Isles

*Definition of isle from the Cambridge Learner’s Dictionary © Cambridge University Press*
Tags & usage notes

**island**

noun [C]

**STYLE** neutral

**SYNONYM** isle (SPE)

an *isle* (*Lt orig*) is specific (a type of ~, usu smaller)

**A2**

an area of land that has water around it:

- the Caribbean island of Grenada
- the Hawaiian Islands

- **More examples**
  - a Mediterranean island
  - a remote island.
  - an island off the coast of Spain
  - in the extreme south of the island
  - an island with clean, unspoiled beaches
Tags & usage notes

**vend** verb

/vend/

(v/formal)

- Verb Forms

- vend something to sell something

- + Word Origin

**sell** (AS orig) is generic

- STYLE
- SYNONYM: sell (GEN)

- formal
Tags & usage notes

**sell** verb

- **vend (Lt orig)** is more specific, i.e. ‘selling esp as a peddler or via a machine’

**SYNONYM** vend *(SPE)*

1. **[transitive, intransitive]** to give something to somebody in exchange for money
   - sell (something) I recently sold my bike.
   - His father went bankrupt and the family had to sell their home.
   - The board agreed to sell the company.
   - The shares were sold in the open market.
   - We offered them a good price but they wouldn’t sell.
   - sell something to somebody The council is planning to sell the land to developers for housing.
   - sell something to somebody for something I sold my car to James for £800.
   - sell somebody something (for something) I sold James my car for £800.
   - sell something at something They sold the business at a profit/loss (= they gained/lost money when they sold it).
   - sell at something They sold at a loss.
   - They never buy more than they can sell at a good price.
Some conclusions

- The differences between Anglo-Saxon and Latinate near-synonyms result also from semantic constraints and/or expectancies.

- This initial taxonomy is not exhaustive. There may be other types of unidentified meaning relations.

- Need to examine a wider data set and determine quantitatively the frequencies of the various types of relations. This may be a difficult task cases of word pairs whose relation can be described in terms of more than one of the categories described here (e.g. work vs labour):
  - Difference of implicature (labour suggests intense, difficult, painful, alienated or even exploited physical or mental exertion);
  - General-specific relation (labour is more specific in terms of degree of intensity associated with the basic concept of ‘working’);
  - Cause-effect relation: labour is ‘work considered as [...] necessary [...] for the execution of a particular task’. (OED)/Division of labour leads to the monotonicity of work (Google Books).
Some conclusions

- Expand the analysis to word triplets (why just doublets?), e.g. *ban*, *forbid* vs *prohibit*, and carefully observe the collocational behaviour of the various lexical items.

- Further develop and systematize an easily applicable coding system of meaning relations usable for lexicographic purposes.

- Propose the coding system to dictionary editors!
thank you

a message that is sent face to face of us...
References


References

References