Ontologies versus Lexical Semantics

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ABSTRACT
Ontologies and semantic lexicons enjoy a complex relationship. Although words denote concepts and concepts make up ontologies, a lexicon is at best an ersatz ontology, and an ontology is too impoverished to function as a semantic lexicon. There is no clear mapping from the word senses and sense relationships of a semantic lexicon to the concepts and concept relationships of an ontology.

The reasons for this include the following: Word senses overlap in complex ways; many concepts are not lexicalized in some or all languages; and languages make semantic distinctions that are not ontological, but which are nonetheless reflected in surface-form aspects such as classifier-words, diathesis alternations, and the count / mass distinction. Nonetheless, a lexicon can sometimes be the basis for the development of a practical ontology.

KEYWORDS: Ontologies, lexical-semantic resources, word senses, classifier-words, diathesis alternations.