CONCEPT ANALYSIS IN NURSING

A NEW APPROACH

John Paley

Concept Analysis in Nursing

Concept analysis is an established genre of inquiry in nursing, introduced in the 1970s. Currently, over 100 concept studies are published annually, yet the methods used within this field have rarely been questioned. In *Concept Analysis in Nursing: A New Approach*, Paley provides a critical analysis of the philosophical assumptions that underpin nursing's concept analysis methods. He argues, provocatively, that there are no such things as concepts, as traditionally conceived.

Drawing on Wittgenstein and Construction Grammar, the book first makes a case for dispensing with the traditional concept of a 'concept', and then provides two examples of a new approach, examining the use of 'hope' and 'moral distress'. Casting doubt on the assumption that 'hope' always stands for an 'inner' state of the person, the book shows that the word's function varies with the grammatical construction it appears in. Similarly, it argues that 'moral distress' is not the name of a mental state, but a normative classification used to bolster a narrative concerning nursing's identity.

Concept Analysis in Nursing is a fresh and challenging book written by a philosopher interested in nursing. It will appeal to researchers and postgraduate students in the areas of nursing, health, philosophy and linguistics. It will also interest those familiar with the author's previous book, *Phenomenology as Qualitative Research*.

John Paley was formerly a senior lecturer at the University of Stirling, and is now a visiting fellow at the University of Worcester, UK. He writes on topics related to philosophy and health care, including research methods, evidence, complexity, spirituality, the post-Francis debate about compassion and nursing ethics.

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Preface and acknowledgements

I first came across Hans-Jörg Schmid's book on 'shell nouns' in 2016. It got me wondering about the relation between two questions: 'What are concepts?' and 'What functions does the word "concept" have?' Ironically, shell nouns don't play a major role in the final version of this book – they appear briefly at the beginning of Chapter 9 – but they pushed open a door, and a lot of other stuff poured in.

Another irony. Some readers have suggested that I have not been as critical of the nursing literature on concept analysis as I could/should have been. However, I've come to recognise that, although Walker and Avant misunderstood the methods that philosophers use – the methods they used in the 1950s and 1960s, anyway – they and their successors share many of the assumptions made about concepts by philosophers and psychologists. This is true irrespective of whether those assumptions are right or wrong. In any case, this is not primarily a criticising-other-writers book. It's more about exploring a different line of thought, and experimenting with its practical implications.

I hope it's clear that the book is intended primarily for a nursing audience (given that 'concept analysis', as opposed to 'conceptual analysis', is a term found almost exclusively in the nursing literature). There is some discussion of technicalities in philosophy and psychology, but it's confined mainly to parts of Chapters 6, 7 and 11, plus the notes. Inevitably, there is rather more on certain aspects of linguistics; but none of it is desperately difficult even if some of it is unfamiliar.

A lot of people have helped me with this, more than I can remember. I would particularly like to thank Elisabeth Bergdahl, Martin Lipscomb, Trevor Hussey, Juan Diego González Sanz, Nancy Sharts-Hopko, Peter Allmark, Beverly Whelton and Cecilia Malabusini. Elisabeth, Martin and Trevor made extensive comments on the first draft. Elisabeth and Cecilia explained some of the ways in which English differs from, respectively, Swedish and Italian (which led to further reflection on the Anglo-centric nature of the discussion).

I did a workshop on ideas related to this book at the University of Worcester in February 2020. I'd like to thank all those who attended for their questions and comments, many of which confirmed that I hadn't yet worked out how to explain what I thought I was up to.

I'm grateful to Dr Kaye Herth for permission to quote several items from the Herth Hope Scale. Thanks also to Jabeen, who provided the artwork and figures.

The examples are peppered with the names of friends, colleagues and family members, purely because it amused me to think of Linden acquiring the concept of money, Frank climbing Everest, Martin chopping carrots, Rosie drinking Prosecco, Derek digging his way out of prison, Steph and Lewis shifting furniture around. Random names would have done just as well, but they wouldn't have been as entertaining.

Lynda has provided the laughs, the warmth, the help with the crossword, and all the comforts of home – figuratively and, during the lockdown, literally. This time round, she also provided hours of animated discussion, given that she finds the unexpected quirks of language more interesting (and considerably more intelligible) than phenomenology. My gratitude to her exceeds anything that I could conveniently express in a short paragraph.

None of these people are responsible for the mistakes, poor arguments and errors of judgement that occur in the following pages. I'm confident there are some, even if I'm not sure which ones they are.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic began during the writing of this book. As a result, I was unable to check the page numbers of some quoted extracts. This is a very minor inconvenience, compared to what large numbers of people have had to endure. However, I need to point out that, in such cases, I have cited the chapter number instead (books), or left the reference incomplete (articles). There aren't many of either.

Glossary

Anaphoric reference

The use of words to refer back to something previously mentioned, without having to mention it again. Pronouns are frequently used in this way 'Kath studied the article. It was, she thought, poorly written'. In the second sentence, both 'it' and 'she' are anaphoric, referring back, respectively, to the article and Kath. Contrast **Cataphoric reference**.

Attributive adjective

An adjective placed immediately before a noun. 'Leo was wearing brown shoes'. Contrast **Predicative adjective**.

Cartesian theatre

A picture of the mind (derived from Descartes) which compares it to an 'inner' theatre, where thoughts, emotions, sensations and perceptions are 'displayed' or 'enacted'.

Cataphoric reference

The use of words to refer ahead to something which has not yet been mentioned, but which is about to be. Pronouns are frequently used in this way. 'They've done it! Chelsea have won the cup!' In the first sentence, both 'they' and 'it' are cataphoric. Contrast **Anaphoric reference**.

COCA

The Corpus of Contemporary American English, a database of English sampled from American sources since 1990. COCA is freely available online, hosted at Brigham Young University, and can be analysed statistically. As of 2020, it contains one billion words. See **Corpus**.

Collocate

A term used in **corpus**-based linguistics. Collocates of a 'target' word are those which appear close to it in sampled texts. In searching the corpus, the degree of closeness can be specified. Collocates (4,2) of a target word would be those which are among the four words immediately preceding the target, and the two words immediately following it.

Compositionality

The idea that the meaning of a sentence is derived from the meaning of its individual constituents, and can *only* be so derived. 'The cat sat on the mat'. Contrast **Construction Grammar**.

Construction

In linguistics, a syntactic pattern which can be used with different permutations of words. 'He hit it out of the park'. 'They threw him into the river'. 'She drank him under the table'. These are all examples of the CAUSED MOTION construction.

Construction Grammar (CxG)

An approach to linguistics according to which the grammatical construction in which a word appears can 'coerce' the sense it has. Contrast **Compositionality**.

Corpus

The name given to large databases consisting of passages sampled from 'real world' text or speech. A corpus can be used to study groups of words occurring together regularly. **COCA** is one example.

Count noun

A noun used to refer to discrete items. 'Book', 'piano', 'day', 'proposal'. Count nouns have plurals, and can be preceded by numbers. 'Two books', 'three days'. They cannot be used to start a sentence, unless preceded by a **Determiner**. 'Cup was overflowing'…? Contrast **Mass noun**.

Derivative

A word derived from another by (usually in English) the addition of a prefix or a suffix, often changing the part of speech category the word belongs to. The adjectives 'hopeful' and 'hopeless' are derivatives of the noun 'hope'. Contrast **Inflection**, and see **Morphology**.

Determiner

A term used to refer to related classes of words: articles ('the', 'a'), demonstratives ('this', 'those'), cardinal numbers ('one', 'ten'), quantifiers ('all', 'most'), possessives ('your', 'its') and a few more. They are used to specify the reference of the noun that follows them, whereas adjectives are used purely to describe.

Dual-life noun

A noun that can be both a **count noun** and a **mass noun**. 'Would you like a coffee?' 'There's an awful lot of coffee in Brazil'.

Ellipsis

The omission from a statement of something that, in the context, is understood. 'As darkness fell, hope faded'. In a news story about a disaster, 'hope' would presumably refer to 'hope of finding survivors'. In context, however, this is understood and does not need to be made explicit.

Exophoric reference

The use of a word, often a pronoun or demonstrative, to refer to something not otherwise mentioned in the text. 'They're late again!' (where the people referred to by 'they' are never explicitly identified). Understanding this kind of reference requires relevant knowledge of the context. Compare **Anaphoric reference** and **Cataphoric reference**.

Grammaticalised

In some expressions, a word loses its normal lexical meaning, and comes to serve a purely grammatical function. 'He's going to finish it'. Here, the verb 'go' loses its sense of movement, and is used to construct a future tense. It is said to have been 'grammaticalised'.

Head noun

The noun which, in a **noun phrase**, is qualified by the other elements in the phrase. 'Water' in 'boiling water', or 'consultant' in 'the very tall management consultant'. 'Concept' in 'the concept of justice'.

Inflection

The use of (usually in English) a suffix to create a modified form of a root word, without changing its part of speech category. The verbal forms 'hopes', 'hoped' and 'hoping' are all inflections of the verb 'hope'. Contrast **Derivative**, and see **Morphology**.

Intensifier

A word, often an adverb, used to 'intensify' an adjective. 'She's really cool'. 'That's very odd'. 'He's enormously rich'.

Mass noun

A noun used to refer to non-discrete items, substances or aggregates. 'Mud', 'information', 'furniture', 'cutlery'. They don't have plurals, and can't be preceded by numbers: 'two muds', 'four furnitures'? They can be used, without a determiner, to start a sentence. Contrast **Count noun**.

Metonymy

A figure of speech in which an expression is used to refer to something associated with it. 'Buckingham Palace said that the Queen would no longer wear fur'. Here, 'Buckingham Palace' does not refer to the building, but to people staffing it.

Modal verbs

Verbs like 'can', 'could', 'may', 'might', 'will', 'would', 'must' and 'should'. They indicate likelihood, ability, permission or obligation. They are unusual in that they don't add 's' or 'es' for the third-person singular: 'I work, you work, she works', but not 'I can, you can, she cans'.

Morphology

The branch of linguistics which studies the structure of words, and how they are related by inflection and derivation. See **Derivative** and **Inflection**.

Natural language

A naturally occurring language, recognisable as such. Hopi, Swahili, English. Examples of languages which are not natural include computer languages, Esperanto and Klingon.

Nominal

In linguistics, a term used to refer to expressions which have the function of a noun. It includes **Noun phrases**, gerunds ('Walking is healthy'), and nouns themselves. They may involve other nouns ('A cup of tea'), or words which are usually adjectives ('The good').

Nominalism

The philosophical view that only particular objects exist, or 'really exist'. This rules out numbers, properties, relations, sets, meanings and other non-spatiotemporal 'entities'. Contrast **Platonism**.

Noun phrase

Any phrase which, as a unit, has the same function as a noun (i.e., it can be used as a subject or object of a verb). 'The tall management consultant with the spectacles wants to talk to you'. See **Head noun**.

Platonism

The philosophical view that there exist (and 'really exist') such things as abstract, non-spatiotemporal objects. This might include numbers and other mathematical objects, propositions, properties, possible worlds. Contrast **Nominalism**.

Polysemous

A polysemous word is one which means, or can be used to mean, different things. 'Get' can mean 'go' ('Get out'), 'acquire' ('She got the tickets'), 'become' ('Get real') or 'understand' ('He doesn't get it').

Predicative adjective

An adjective which is part of a predicate and does not precede a noun. 'The shoes Leo was wearing were brown'. Contrast **Attribute adjective**.

Propositional attitude

Verbs like 'believe', 'doubt' and 'hope' can all be followed by 'that', followed by a clause. 'I believe that Elvis is alive'. 'I doubt that Elvis is alive'. 'I hope that Elvis is alive'. Philosophers call the 'Elvis is alive' part a 'proposition', and the 'believe'/'doubt'/'hope' part a 'propositional attitude' (because these verbs signify different cognitive attitudes towards the proposition).

Reductio ad absurdum

A form of argument which begins with a certain premise, performs a series of logically valid steps, and ends with an absurd conclusion. When this happens, it is taken as a proof that there is something wrong with the premise.

Representation

A term used to refer to something that represents something else. In the philosophy of mind, a mental representation is a hypothetical inner state (or a process) which, in some symbolic sense, represents an aspect of reality.

Semantics

The branch of linguistics concerned with meaning.

Syntax

The branch of linguistics concerned with how individual words are combined to form sentences; or a term used to refer to the system of 'rules' underlying the way in which this combining is done.