



Philosophische Fakultät



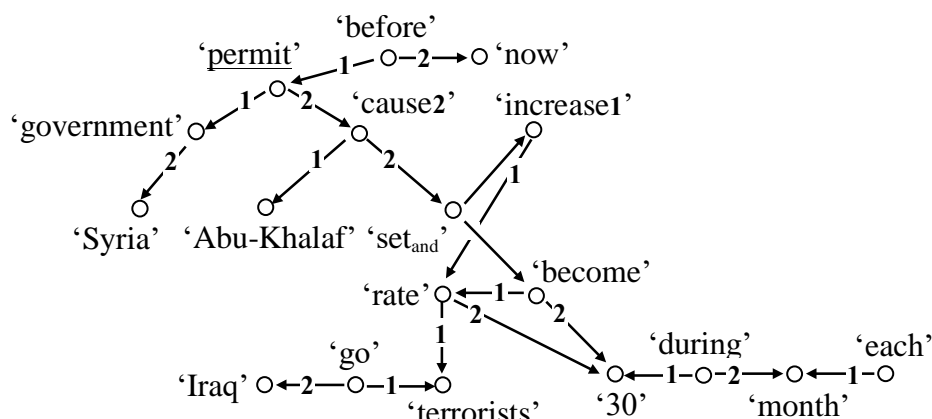
### CCLS: Igor Mel'čuk (Université de Montréal)

*Language: From Meaning to Text*

Monday, 8 November 2021, 6:00 p.m.

1. Two central points of the Meaning-Text Approach:
  - The language is to be studied in the direction from meaning to text—that is, in the synthesis direction (speech production rather than speech understanding).
  - The notional system used—that is, the system of rigorous formal definitions of all the notions involved—is of paramount importance: all linguistic items exist only in virtue of our definitions.
2. Illustrations of these two points:
  - The Spanish “semivowels” are not allophones of vowels in an unstressed position, but independent phonemes—the glides /j/ and /w/, opposed to the vowels /i/ ~ /u/ and to the consonants /j/ ~ /w/.
  - The “accusative” case in Maasai and the grammatical voices in this language (what is frequently called the “nominative” in Maasai is actually an oblique, and the “accusative” is a nominative; Maasai has an ergative construction).
3. The description of a language is done as a formal functional model—a system of rules that ensure the transition between the semantic representations and the phonetic representations of utterances.
4. Semantic decompositions: paradigmatic lexical choices.
5. Lexical functions: syntagmatic lexical choices.
6. An example:

A starting semantic representations and three of the corresponding sentences:



- a. Abu-Khalaf has been permitted by Damascus to step up the flow of terrorists into Iraq to 30 a month.
- b. The government of Syria let Abu-Khalaf increase the number of terrorists slipping into Iraq up to 30 per month.
- c. Abu-Khalaf has the permission of the Syrian government to raise the number of terrorists going to Iraq to 30 each month.