

## Semantic Features – A New Perspective

Although systematic analysis of meaning is one of the continuous and central concerns of linguistics, there is surprisingly little consensus about the basic elements to be assumed. Adopting the minimalist view, according to which arbitrarily complex linguistic expressions systematically merge lexical items, made up from sets of phonetic, morpho-syntactic, and semantic features, the talk will explore some of the requirements semantic features must meet on principled grounds. With respect to different conditions, three types of features are to be distinguished: *Systematic* features like FEMALE or CAUSE, directly related to morpho-syntactic distinctions, *idiosyncratic* features like BLACK or LIQUID depending on basic perceptual (or other cognitive) dimensions, and *complex* features or *dossiers* like DOG or CAR integrating different conceptual dimensions into a single semantic prime. The different nature of these types of features suggests a fairly abstract view on the status of features as part of the Faculty of Language FL and on their place in language acquisition. Universal Grammar UG, considered as the structure of FL, cannot reasonably be supposed to provide fixed repertoires of features, but rather dimensions and principles according to which repertoires of features will emerge. Some of the consequences of this view, notably with respect to innate concepts and semantic decomposition, will be considered.