



Synonymy, synonym dictionaries and thesauruses: Merriam Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms

Michael Brendel

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Seminar paper from the year 2008 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Linguistics, grade: 1,7, University of Regensburg (Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik), course: English Lexicography, 11 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: In the course of the semester, we have dealt with a number of linguistic problems and their relationship to lexicography. Since one main aim of dictionaries is to define words or, in other terms, to explain the meanings of lexical units, lexicography is very closely linked to the linguistic branch of semantics. On the one hand, dictionaries describe the semantic relation holding between words and the extra-linguistic world. This relationship is called reference or denotation. On the other hand, dictionaries deal with the semantic relations between the words of a particular language themselves. These relations are called lexical relations or sense relations. Both denotation and sense relations contribute to defining the meaning of a lexeme. The lexical relation which is probably the most important one with regard to lexicography is synonymy. On the following pages, I will therefore define the term synonymy, discriminate different types of synonymy and discuss some ways in which synonyms may be differentiated. Afterwards, I will try to show which role synonymy plays in general dictionaries. After discussing different types of specialized synonym dictionaries, I will finish with a brief survey of the history of synonym dictionaries.

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