10.2: Intensions in the Mind

This unit considers two possible ways that intensions might be organized in our minds. It's possible that some intensions are organized around sets of binary features (similar to phonetic features!) that divide up the world into clear categories. But binary features don’t leave room for exceptions. It’s also possible that our mind organizes word meanings around fuzzy categories, which have both prototypical members and peripheral members.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/linguistics/?p=214

Check Yourself

1. Thinking about the category animals for most speakers of Canadian English, giraffe is probably:
• More typical than cat.
• Less typical than dog.
• Less typical than wildebeest.

2. Thinking about the category pets for most speakers of Canadian English, tarantula is probably:

• Typical.
• More typical than goldfish.
• Peripheral.

3. Choose the set of features that best defines chair.

• [+furniture, +legs, +back, +seat, -blankets].
• [+furniture, +legs, +back, -seat, +blankets].
• [+furniture, -legs, -back, +seat, +blankets].
• [+furniture, -legs, -back, +seat, -blankets].

Answers