
UNIT-1 SEMANTICS

Structure

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1.0 OBJECTIVE

In this unit you will study the meaning, reference, or truth. The term can be used to refer to subfields of several distinct disciplines including linguistics, philosophy, and computer science.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Language may be divided into its components of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. First the number of phonemes and their allophones and the supra segmental features are determined, and then the morphemes and their organization into words are identified. The next step is to analyse the structure of sentences and find out how words are organized into phrases, phrases into clauses and clauses into sentences.

1.2 WHAT IS SEMANTIC?

Semantics is the study of meaning in language. The term is taken from the Greek *seme*, meaning *sign*. The word *meaning* can be defined in many ways, but the definition most pertinent to linguistics and the one we will use is that meaning is "*the function of signs in language.*" This understanding of meaning corresponds to German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's definition: '*the meaning of a word is its use in the language*' (in other words, the role a word plays in the language).

The term semantics was only invented in the 19th century, but the subject of meaning has interested philosophers for thousands of years. The Greek philosophers were the first people known to have debated the nature of meaning. They held two opposing views on the subject.

As semantics is the study of the meaning of linguistic expressions, the language can be a natural language, such as English or an artificial language, like a computer programming language. Linguists mainly study meaning in natural languages. In fact, semantics is one of the main branches of contemporary linguistics. Theoretical computer scientists and logicians think about artificial languages. In some areas of computer science, these divisions are crossed. In machine translation, for instance, computer scientists may want to relate natural language texts to abstract representations of their meanings; to do this, they have to design artificial languages for representing meanings.

There are strong connections to philosophy. Earlier in this century, philosophers did much work in semantics, and some important work is still done by philosophers.

1.2.1 Meaning and its Types:

Meaning has been a topic of interest for linguists as well as philosophers and conversation analysts. The term meaning can refer to several things, so it is important to note its implications in language sciences. In linguistics the term meaning can refer to implication, entailment, intention, etc. and it is arbitrary that is to say that there may not be an explanation for why a certain entity has got a certain name. Meaning can be of several kinds such as denotative, connotative, literal, figurative and idiomatic. The denotative meaning is the explicit or surface meaning whereas the connotative meaning refers to the extended meaning that may be figurative or idiomatic. The figurative meaning is somewhat different from the literal meaning. The literal meaning of the individual words in a figurative language use may indicate some concepts, but the overall interpretation requires additional links with entities not available in the lexical contents. Additionally, the term meaning can also refer to the dictionary meaning and encyclopaedic meaning. The dictionary meaning usually refers to the lexical meaning that the users may find in a dictionary. This meaning is often short and depends on the speakers for exactness. In contrast, the encyclopaedic meaning covers all the information available about the word. It is important to note that the site for storing, access and recall of all kinds of meaning is the mental lexicon. Mental lexicon is an abstract entity assumed to be present in the minds of the speakers.

Anyone who speaks a language has a truly amazing capacity to reason about the meanings of texts. Take, for instance, the sentence

(S) I can't untie that knot with one hand.

Even though you have probably never seen this sentence, you can easily see things like the following:

1. The sentence is about the abilities of whoever spoke or wrote it. (Call this person the speaker.)
2. It's also about a knot, maybe one that the speaker is pointing at.

3. The sentence denies that the speaker has a certain ability. (This is the contribution of the word 'can't'.)
4. Untying is a way of making something not tied.
5. The sentence doesn't mean that the knot has one hand; it has to do with how many hands are used to do the untying.

1.2.2 Arrangements of Meanings in contemporary Semantics:

Linguists who study semantics look for general rules that bring out the relationship between *form*, which is the observed arrangement of words in sentences, and meaning. This is interesting and challenging, because these relationships are so complex.

This idea that meaningful units combine systematically to form larger meaningful units, and understanding sentences is a way of working out these combinations, has probably been the **most important theme in contemporary semantics**. The meaning of a sentence is not just an unordered heap of the meanings of its words. If that were true, then 'Cowboys ride horses' and 'Horses ride cowboys' would mean the same thing. So we need to think about arrangements of meanings.

Here is an arrangement that seems to bring out the relationships of the meanings in sentence (S).

Not [I [Able [[[Make [Not [Tied]]] [That knot]] [With One Hand]]]]

The unit [Make [Not [Tied]] here corresponds to the act of untying; it contains a subunit corresponding to the state of being untied. Larger units correspond to the act of untying-that-knot and to the act to-untie-that-knot-with-one-hand. Then this act combines with Able to make a larger unit, corresponding to the state of being-able-to-untie-that-knot-with-one-hand. This unit combines with I to make the thought that I have this state -- that is, the thought that I-am-able-to-untie-that-knot-with-one-hand. Finally, this combines with Not and we get the denial of that thought.

A semantic rule for English might say that a simple sentence involving the word 'can't' always corresponds to a meaning arrangement like

Not [Able ...], but never to one like Able [Not ...].

For instance, 'I can't dance' means that I'm unable to dance; it doesn't mean that I'm able not to dance.

1.3 SEMANTICS OF SENTENCES

To assign meanings to the sentences of a language, you need to know what they are. It is the job of another area of linguistics, called *syntax*, to answer this question, by providing rules that show how sentences and other expressions are built up out of smaller parts, and eventually out of words. The meaning of a sentence depends not only on the words it contains, but on its syntactic makeup: the sentence

(S) *That can hurt you,*

for instance, is *ambiguous* -- it has two distinct meanings. These correspond to two distinct *syntactic structures*. In one structure ‘That’ is the subject and ‘can’ is an auxiliary verb (meaning “able”), and in the other ‘That can’ is the subject and ‘can’ is a noun (indicating a sort of container).

Because the meaning of a sentence depends so closely on its syntactic structure, linguists have given a lot of thought to the relations between syntactic structure and meaning; in fact, evidence about ambiguity is one way of testing ideas about syntactic structure.

1.4 NATURAL LANGUAGE vs. ARTIFICIAL LANGUAGES

Since sentences can be either true or false, the meanings of sentences usually involve the two truth-values true and false.

You can make up artificial languages for talking about these objects; some semanticists claim that these languages can be used to capture inner cognitive representations. Though "truth values" may seem artificial as components of meaning, they are very handy in talking about the meaning of things like negation; the semantic rule for negative sentences says that their meanings are like that of the corresponding positive sentences, except that the truth value is switched, **false** for **true** and **true** for **false**. ‘It isn't raining’ is true if ‘It is raining’ is false, and false if ‘It is raining’ is true. This interest in valid reasoning provides a strong connection to work in the semantics of artificial languages, since these languages are usually designed with some reasoning task in mind. Logical languages are designed to model theoretical reasoning such as mathematical proofs, while computer languages are intended to model a variety of general and special purpose reasoning tasks. Validity is useful in working with proofs because it gives us a criterion for correctness. It is useful in much the same way with computer programs, where it can sometimes be used to either prove a program correct, or (if the proof fails) to discover flaws in programs.

These ideas (which really come from logic) have proved to be very powerful in providing a theory of how the meanings of natural-language sentences depend on the meanings of the words they contain and their syntactic structure. Over the last forty years or so, there has been a lot of progress in working this out, not only for English, but for a wide variety of languages. This is made much easier by the fact that human languages are very similar in the kinds of rules that are needed for projecting meanings from words to sentences; they mainly differ in their words, and in the details of their syntactic rules.

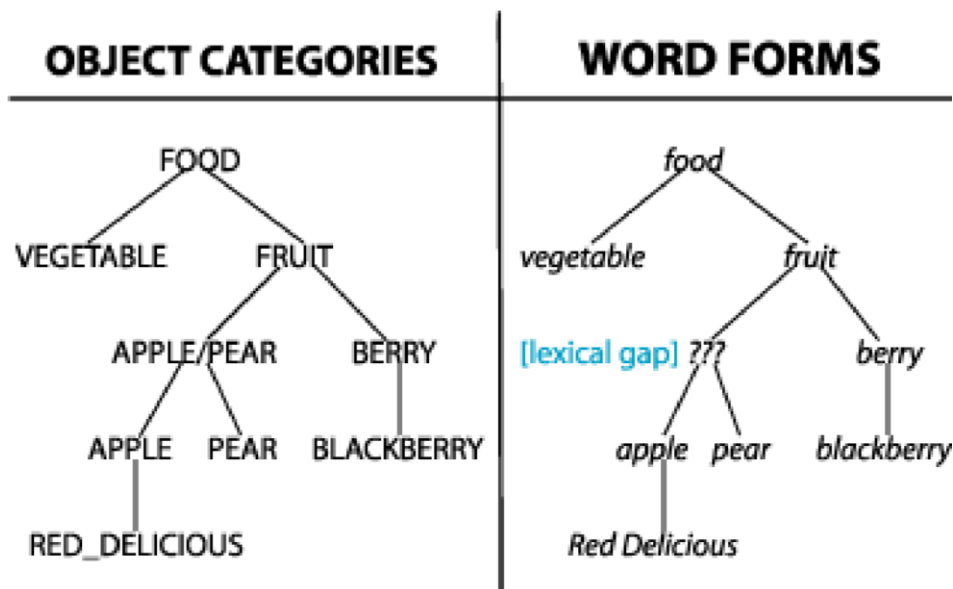
1.5 LEXICAL SEMANTICS OR SEMANTICS OF WORDS

Recently, there has been more interest in lexical semantics -- that is, in the semantics of words. **Lexical semantics** deals with a language's **lexicon**, or the collection of words in a language. It is concerned with individual words (unlike compositional semantics, which is concerned with meanings of sentences.) Lexical semantics focuses on meanings in isolation, that is, without attention to their contribution to reference or truth conditions. Lexical semantics is not so much a matter of trying to write an "ideal dictionary". (Dictionaries contain a lot of useful information, but don't really provide a theory of meaning or good representations of meanings.) Rather, lexical semantics is concerned with systematic relations in the meanings of words, and in recurring patterns among different meanings of the same word. It is no accident, for instance, that you can say 'Sam ate a grape' and 'Sam ate', the former saying what Sam ate and the latter merely saying that Sam ate something. This same pattern occurs with many verbs. The **naturalist** view, held by Plato and his followers, maintained that there was an intrinsic motivation between a word and its meaning. The meaning of a word flows directly from its sound. The Greek word *thalassa*, *sea*, in its classical pronunciation, supposedly sounded like the waves rushing up onto the beach. If the naturalist view were entirely correct for all words, we would be able to tell the meaning of any word just by hearing it. In reality only a few onomatopoeic words in each language actually sound something like what they mean: *swoosh*, *splash*, *bow wow*, *meow*. Poets can skillfully use words with sound features that heighten the meaning intended. But poetic sound imagery represents a rare, highly clever use of language, so the naturalist approach is applicable to only a tiny portion of any language.

Logic is help in lexical semantics, but lexical semantics is full of cases in which meanings depend subtly on context, and there are exceptions to many generalizations. (To undermine something is to mine under it; but to understand something is not to stand under it.) So logic doesn't carry us as far here as it seems to carry us in the semantics of sentences.

Linguists who study meaning (**semanticists**) often divide the meaning of a word into semantic components based on real world concepts, such as human/ live/ dead/ animal/ plant/ thing/ etc. Discussing the meaning of words by breaking it down into smaller semantic components such as is called **componential analysis**.

Semantics probably won't help you find out the meaning of a word you don't understand, though it does have a lot to say about the patterns of meaningfulness that you find in words. It certainly can't help you understand the meaning of one of Shakespeare's sonnets, since poetic meaning is so different from literal meaning. But as we learn more about semantics, we are finding out a lot about how the world's languages match forms to meanings. And in doing that, we are learning a lot about ourselves and how we think, as well as acquiring knowledge that is useful in many different fields and applications.



1.6 HOW MEANING AFFECTS WORD ASSOCIATIONS IN LANGUAGE

The purely linguistic side of meaning is equally evident when examining how words combine with one another to produce phrases. The set of restrictions on how a word may combine with other words of a single syntactic category is referred to as the word's **collocability**. Two words may have the same referent, and yet differ in their ability to combine with particular words.

In English, the word *flock* collocates with *sheep* ; and *school* with *fish*, although both *flock* and *school* mean *group*.

Also, *addled* combines only with *brains* or *eggs* (one must *steam rice* and *boil water*), *blond* collocates with *hair*, while *red* may collocate with hair as well as other objects.

Idiosyncratic restrictions on the collocability of words result in set phrases: *green with jealousy*; *white table* vs. *white lie*. One can *get or grow old*, but only *get drunk*, *get ready*, not **grow drunk*, **grow ready*.

Every language has its own peculiar stock of set phrases. In English we *face problems* and *interpret dreams*, but in Modern Hebrew we *stand in front of problems* and *solve dreams*. In English we *drink water* but *eat soup*. In Japanese the verb for *drink* collocates not only with *water* and *soup*, but also with *tablets* and *cigarettes*.

From the point of view of **etymology**, set phrases are of two types.

1. The first type of set phrase, the **collocation**, may be defined as "a set phrase which still makes sense": *make noise*, *make haste*. One simply doesn't say *to produce noise* or *make swiftness*, even though such phrases would be perfectly

understandable. Since collocations still may be taken literally, they can be paraphrased using regular syntactic transformations: *Haste was made by me, noise was made by the children.*

2. Phrases whose words no longer make sense when taken literally are called **idioms**. The semantic relations between words in idiomatic set phrases may be illogical to varying degrees: *white elephant sale, soap opera, to see red, break a leg, small voice, loud tie, wee hours of the night.*

Thus, meaning involves real-world concepts and logic but it is at the same time a linguistic category. The semantic structure of a language is the language's special system of conveying extra linguistic relations by idiosyncratic linguistic means.

1.7 SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN WORDS

Sense relations: All words in a language may not be discrete. They may show some kind of relationships at the level of meaning. These relationships are known as sense relations. Modern studies of semantics are interested in meaning primarily in terms of word and sentence relationships. Let's examine some semantic relationships between words.

Following are some commonly occurring relationships between words:

- a) Synonymy shows the relationship of sameness or similarity of meaning as in *big* and *large*.
- b) Antonymy shows the relationship of oppositeness of meaning as in *day* and *night*.
- c) Polysemy signifies the relationship of multiple related meanings of a word as in *house* and *home*.
- d) Homonymy refers to the multiple unrelated meanings of a word. For example, consider the word *bank*. It may refer to the monetary institution as well as the water body.
- e) Meronymy: The term meronymy signifies the part-whole relationship between concepts. For example, the concepts *finger* and *hand* share the relationship of meronymy. In this case, *finger* is a meronym of *hand* and *hand* is the holonym of *finger*. It is important to note that *finger* is part of the *hand*, not a type of *hand*.

There are a few other minor semantic relations that may pertain between words. The first involves the distinction between a category vs. a particular type or example of that category. For example, a tiger is a type of feline, so feline is a category containing lion, tiger, etc.; color is a category containing red, green, etc, red, green are types of colors. Thus, feline and color are hyponyms, or cover words, and red, green, lion, tiger are their taxonyms. The second involves a whole vs. part of the whole. For example, Similarly, family is the holonym of child, mother or father. Since words often originate from other words, a word very often has some historical reason for being the shape it is. Sometimes the origin (or **etymology**) of a word is completely transparent, as in the case of *unknown* from *known*, or *discomfort* from *comfort*. At other times the

origin of a word is less immediately obvious but nevertheless present in the form of a word, as in the case of *acorn* < oak + orn. The **conventionalist** view of Aristotle holds that the connection between sound and meaning is completely arbitrary. It is true that the form of most words is arbitrary from an extra-linguistic point of view.

Philologists (people who study language as well as anything created with language) often make a distinction between **meaning** and **concept**. It is possible to know the meaning of the word without knowing everything about the concept referred to by that meaning. For example, one can know the meaning of a word like *diamond* without knowing the chemical composition of the stone or that carbon and pencil lead are, chemically speaking, composed of the same substance.

Linguists have a second way of looking at the distinction between linguistic and real-world knowledge. They often discuss the difference between a word's **sense** and its **reference**. A word's sense is how the word relates to other words in a language (Wittgenstein's "meaning"); its reference is how it relates to real world concepts. The French word *mouton* refers to a sheep as well as to the meat of the animal as used for food (the sense of the word combines two references). In English we have two separate words for each extra-linguistic reference. The sense of the English word *sheep* is limited by the presence of the word *mutton* in English. Thus, the sense of a word concerns its linguistic boundaries in a particular language. The reference of a word concerns which concepts it refers to in the real world.

Noting how semantics is based on extra-linguistic categories, a group of linguists (including the Polish-born Australian linguist Anna **Wierzbicka**) have tried to reduce all meaning in language to a set of universal core concepts, such as *tall*, *short*, *male*, *female*, etc. These finite sets of concepts are then used universally, to describe the meanings of all words in all languages. This semantic approach to language structure has various problems, which are as follows:

- ❖ To decide which concepts are basic and which are derived.
- ❖ How to distinguish between sense and reference?
- ❖ Meaning is more than simply a reflection of real world categories.

1.8 LET US SUM UP

Idiosyncratic semantic constraints in the grammar result in reference being made using one form instead of another. **Logical constraints** result in reference not being made at all. Meaning is not merely a reference to concepts in the real world. It depends on linguistic factors in part unique to each individual language; meaning depends not only on the logical combination of real world concepts. The system of language cannot be described only in terms of extra-linguistic logic.

1.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What Is Semantic?

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2. What do you mean by **Sense relations**?

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3. What is Logical constraints?

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UNIT-2 SEMANTICS

Structure

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- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Definition of Semantics
- 2.3 Types of Semantic
 - 2.3.1 Connotative Semantic
 - 2.3.2 Denotative Semantic
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- 2.5 Study of Meaning
- 2.6 The seven types of meaning are as follows:
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 - 2.6.3 Stylistic Meaning
 - 2.6.4 Affective Meaning:
 - 2.6.5 Reflected Meaning:
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 - 2.7.3 Hyponymy
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 - 2.7.5 Polysemy
 - 2.7.6 Metonymy
 - 2.7.7 Collocation
- 2.8 Pragmatics
- 2.9 Several types of context:
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 - 2.9.3 Social context
- 2.10 Elements of pragmatics
 - 2.10.1 Entailment
 - 2.10.2 Presuppositions
 - 2.10.3 Implicature
- 2.11 Relationship between Semantics and Pragmatics
- 2.12 Comparison between Semantics and Pragmatics
- 2.13 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.14 Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVE

In this unit you will read semantics as the subfield, studies meaning. Semantics can address meaning at the levels of words, phrases, sentences, or larger units of discourse. One of the crucial questions which unites different approaches to linguistic semantics is that of the relationship between form and meaning.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with two important aspects of linguistics i.e. Semantics and Pragmatics. It covers various aspects and varieties of semantics and pragmatics. Language meaning can be analysed at several levels. It has a direct connection with semantics and pragmatics. The study has also presented the study of meaning in various contexts. The unit has tried to come up with the relationship between semantics and pragmatics and some basic differences between the two.

2.2 DEFINITION OF SEMANTICS

Semantics is one of the important branches of linguistics that deals with interpretation and meaning of the words, sentence structure and symbols, while determining the reading comprehension of the readers how they understand others and their interpretations. In addition, semantics construct a relation between adjoining words and clarifies the sense of a sentence whether the meanings of words are literal or figurative. Semantics is a branch of linguistics, which is the study of language; it is an area of study interacting with those of syntax and phonology. A person's linguistic abilities are based on knowledge that they have. One of the insights of modern linguistics is that speakers of a language have different types of linguistic knowledge, including how to pronounce words, how to construct sentences, and about the meaning of individual words and sentences. To reflect this, linguistic description has different levels of analysis. So - phonology is the study of what sounds combine to form words; syntax is the study of how words can be combined into sentences; and semantics is the study of the meanings of words and sentences. William Frawley defines linguistic semantics as "the study of literal, decontextualized, grammatical meaning". Semantics is concerned with the conceptual meaning related to words. Semantics does not focus on the context, rather it deals with the meaning according to grammar and vocabulary. The focus is only on the general rules used for a language.

2.3 TYPES OF SEMANTIC

There are two types of Semantics:

2.3.1 Connotative Semantic

When a word suggests a set of associations, or it is an imaginative or emotional suggestion connected with the words, while readers can relate to such associations.

Simply, it represents figurative meaning. Usually poets use this type of meaning in their poetry.

2.3.2 Denotative Semantic

It suggests the literal, explicit or dictionary meanings of the words without using associated meanings. It also uses symbols in writing that suggest expressions of writers such as an exclamation mark, quotation mark, apostrophe, colon, and quotation mark etc.

2.4 FUNCTION OF SEMANTIC

The purpose of semantic is to propose exact meanings of the words and phrases and remove confusion, which might lead the readers to believe a word has many possible meanings. It makes a relationship between a word and the sentence through their meanings. Besides, semantic enables the readers to explore a sense of the meaning, because if we remove or change the place of a single word from the sentence, it will change the entire meanings, or else the sentence will become anomalous. Hence, the sense relation inside a sentence is very important, as a single word does not carry any sense or meaning. Miriam Webster Dictionary defines Semantics as – “the study of meanings, the historical and psychological study and the classification of changes in the signification of words or forms viewed as factors in linguistic development.”

2.5 STUDY OF MEANING

A word is the smallest unit of spoken language which has meaning and can stand alone, it is a written representation of one or more sounds which can be spoken to represent an idea, object, action, etc. in order to be understood by the people, a word must have a meaning. Most words have more than one meaning, it is the characteristic of words that a single word may have several meaning, in fact, words may play an enormous part in our life. Words are used to express something and also convey feelings about we are describing. Words are used not in isolation but related to human situation. It is through our experience with them in situation that they take on meaning. If we talk about words, we cannot avoid talking about the study of meaning (semantics). The meaning of word is often complex, having such component as a picture, an idea, a quality, a relationship and personal feelings and association

2.6 THE SEVEN TYPES OF MEANING

2.6.1 Conceptual Meaning:

Conceptual meaning is sometimes called denotative meaning or cognitive meaning, it is widely assumed to be the central factor in linguistic communication. Larson noted that denotative meaning is also called as primary meaning, that is the meaning suggested by the word when it used alone. It is the first meaning or usage which a word will suggest to most people when the word is said in isolation. It is the meaning learned

early in life and likely to have reference to a physical situation (Larson, 1984: 100) It is said that the aim of denotative meaning is to provide, for any given interpretation of a sentence, a configuration of abstract symbols, which shows exactly what we need to know if we are to distinguish that meaning from all other possible sentence meaning in the language. It has a complex and sophisticated organization compared to those specific to syntactic or phonological levels of language. The principles of contrastiveness and constituent structure – paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes of linguistic structure- manifest at this level i. e. conceptual meaning can be studied in terms of contrastive features.

2.6.2 Connotative Meaning:

As we experience, words are human situations, they not only take on certain denotation, but also often acquire individual flavours. They have come to have emotive tone, the associations, and suggestiveness of the situation in which they have been a part. For example the words ‘brink’, this denotes on “edge”. However in the phrase “The brink of the cliff” or” the brink of disaster”, this word suggests danger and its emotive tone is that of fear. Connotative meaning is the communicative value with an expression of what it refers to. To a large extent, the notion of reference overlaps with conceptual meaning. The contrastive features become attributes of the referent, including not only physical characteristics, but also psychological and social properties, typical rather than invariable. Connotations are apt to vary from age to age, from society to society. Connotative meaning is peripheral compared to conceptual meaning, because connotations are relatively unstable. They vary according to cultural, historical period, experience of the individual. Connotative meaning is indeterminate and open- ended that is any characteristic of the referent, identified subjectively or objectively may contribute to the connotative meaning.

2.6.3 Stylistic Meaning:

Stylistic meaning is that which a piece of language conveys about the circumstances of its use. A recent account of English has recognized some main dimensions of stylistic variation. For instance:

1. They chucked a stone at the cops, and then did a bunk with the loot.
2. After casting a stone at the police, they absconded with the money. Sentence (1) could be said by the two criminals, talking casually about the crime afterwards; sentence (2) might be said by the chief of the police in making the official report; both could describe the same happening (Leech, 1974: 15)

2.6.4 Affective Meaning:

Affective meaning is a sort of meaning which affect the personal feeling of the speakers, including his/her attitude to the listener, or his/her attitude to something he/she talking about. For example- (1) “I’m terribly sorry to interrupt, but I wonder if you would be so kind as to lower your voice as a little” or (2) “Will you belt up”. Factors such as intonation and voice timbre are also important here. The impression of politeness in the sentence (1) can be reserved by tone of biting sarcasm; sentence (2)

can be turned into a playful remark between intimates if delivered with the intonation of a mild request. In considering the pragmatic dimension of meaning, we can distinguish between social and affective meaning. Social meaning is that which a piece of language conveys about the social circumstances of its use. In part, we ‘decode’ the social meaning of a text through our recognition of different dimensions and levels of style. One account (Crystal and Davy, *Investigating English Style*) has recognized several dimensions of socio-linguistic variation. There are variations according to: - dialect i. e. the language of a geographical region or of a social class; - time, for instance the language of the eighteenth century; - province/domain i. e. the language of law, science, etc.; - status i. e. polite/ colloquial language etc.; - modality i. e. the language of memoranda, lectures, jokes, etc.; - singularity, for instance the language of a writer. It’s not surprising that we rarely find words which have both the same conceptual and stylistic meaning, and this led to declare that there are no ‘true synonyms’. But there is much convenience in restricting the term ‘synonymy’ to equivalence of conceptual meaning. For example, *domicile* is very formal, official, *residence* is formal, *abode* is poetic, *home* is the most general term. The way language reflects the personal feelings of the speaker, his/ her attitude towards his/ her interlocutor or towards the topic of discussion, represents affective meaning. Scaling our remarks according to politeness, intonation and voice- timbre are essential factors in expressing affective meaning which is largely a parasitic category, because it relies on the mediation of conceptual, connotative or stylistic meanings. The exception is when we use interjections whose chief function is to express emotion.

2.6.5 Reflected Meaning:

Reflected meaning involves an interconnection on the lexical level of language, it is the meaning, which arises in case of multiple conceptual meaning, when one sense of word forms part of our response to another sense. For instance, on hearing the Church service, the synonymous expressions *The Comforter* and *The Holy Ghost* both refer to the Third Trinity, but the *Comforter* sounds warm and comforting, while the *Holy Ghost* sounds awesome.

2.6.6 Collocative Meaning

Collocative meaning consists of the associations a word acquires on account of the meanings of the words, which tends to occur in its environment. For instance the words *pretty* and *handsome* share common ground in the meaning of good looking. But may be distinguished by the range of noun in which they are like to occur or collocate; *Pretty woman* and *handsome man*. The ranges may well match although they suggest a different kind of attractiveness of the adjectives. Collocative meaning remains an idiosyncratic property of individual words and it shouldn’t be invoked to explain all differences of potential co- occurrence. Affective and social meaning, reflected and collocative meaning have more in common with connotative meaning than with conceptual meaning; they all have the same open- ended, variable character and lend themselves to analysis in terms of scales and ranges. They can be all brought together under the heading of associative meaning. Associative meaning needs employing an elementary ‘associationist’ theory of mental connections based upon contiguities of

experience in order to explain it. Whereas conceptual meaning requires the postulation of intricate mental structures specific to language and to humans, and is part of the ‘common system’ of language shared by members of a speech community, associative meaning is less stable and varies with the individual’s experience. Because of so many imponderable factors involved in it, associative meaning can be studied systematically only by approximative statistical techniques. Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (The Measurement of Meaning, 1957), proposed a method for a partial analysis of associative meaning. They devised a technique – involving a statistical measurement device, - The Semantic Differential -, for plotting meaning in terms of a multidimensional semantic space, using as data speaker’s judgements recorded in terms of seven point scales.

2.6.7 Thematic Meaning

This is the final category of meaning, thematic meaning is the meaning that is communicated by the way in which the speaker or writer organizes the message, in terms of ordering, focus, and emphasis. It is often felt an active sentence such as (1) below has a different meaning from its passive equivalent (2) although in conceptual content they seem to be the same (Leech. 1974: 19) 1. Mrs. Bessie Smith donated the first prize. 2. The first prize was donated by Mrs. Bessie Smith We can assume that the active sentence answers an implicit question “what did Mrs. Bessie Smith donate?”, while the passive sentence answer the implicit question “who donates the first prize?”, that in other words (1) in contrast to se (2) suggest that we know who Mrs. Bessie Smith.

2.7 LEXICAL RELATIONS AND SEMANTICS

This section would analyse the semantics in terms of lexical relations. It explains the meaning in terms of the relationship with other words and phrases. • Synonymy • Antonymy • Hyponymy • Prototype • Homophones and Homonyms • Polysemy

2.7.1 Synonymy

Here words that have the same meanings or that are closely related in meaning. Sameness‘ is not ‘total sameness‘- only one word would be appropriate in a sentence. – E.g. Sandy only had one answer correct on the test. (but NOT reply) Example- answer/reply - almost/nearly - broad/wide - buy/purchase - freedom/ liberty

2.7.2 Antonymy

Here words that are opposites in meaning, e.g. hot & cold Example- happy/sad - married/single - present/absent - fast/slow

2.7.3 Hyponymy

Words whose meanings are specific instances of a more general word, i.e. one thing is included (kind of) in another thing. Example. cats and dogs are the hyponyms of the word animal. - daffodil & flower - carrot & vegetable - ant & insect

2.7.4 Homonymy

A word which has two or more entirely distinct (unrelated) meanings, Example- bank: financial institution, or 'of a river'. – Bat: 'flying creature' or 'used in sports' – Race: 'contest of speed' or 'ethnic group' 26.7.5. Homophony Different words pronounced the same but spelled differently, Example- two, to and too. – Flour and flower – Meat and meet – Right and write

2.7.5 Polysemy

A word which has multiple meanings related by extension, Example- bright: shining ; intelligent – 'Head' of the body and the person at the top of a company. – 'Foot' of a body and of a mountain and of the bed or chair. – 'Run' a person runs, the water runs

2.7.6 Metonymy

Metonymy is "a figure of speech in which an attribute or commonly associated feature is used to name or designate something." A short definition is "part for whole." What do you think about these sentence? A word substituted for another word with which it is closely associated. – He drank the whole bottle. (container-content) – The White House announced. (king-crown) – I gave her a hand. (whole-part)

2.7.7 Collocation

Collocation happen when words tend to occur with other words. Example- table/chair - Butter/bread - Salt/pepper - Hammer/ nail

2.8 PRAGMATICS

Pragmatics is the study of how language is used and of the effect of context on language. Pragmatics makes uses of three major communication skills like using language, changing language and following rules. Using language in context to different purposes like for greeting one uses words like "hello". Changing language is all about the change in language which is based on the needs of a listener or situation. For example the way one tells an instruction to a child than to an elderly person. Following rules is about the rules of conversations or in storytelling like one rephrases if the listener is not able to grasp the orator. Pragmatics plays a major role in discourse. When the speaker and the hearer share knowledge about the world, therefore, both the speaker and the hearer will make assumptions according to the shared knowledge. "Pragmatics" refers to the strategies (exploitation of shared knowledge, assumptions about communicative intent, etc.), by which language users relate the dictionary/grammar meaning of utterances to their communicative value in context. "Pragmatics" generally refers to the encoding of particular communicative functions, especially those relevant to interpersonal exchanges, in specific grammatical and lexical elements of a given language.

2.9 SEVERAL TYPES OF CONTEXT

2.9.1 Physical context –

Objects surrounding the communication, place and time of the communication, what is going on around, etc. a. I want that book. accompanied by pointing b. Be here at 9:00 tonight. place/time reference

2.9.2 Linguistic context –

what has been said before in the conversation. a. Linda came home late yesterday. She thought nobody would notice. b. If my mom heard you talk like that,...

2.9.3 Social context - the social relationship of the people involved in communication. (3) a. To the President: #Mr. President, stop bugging me and go home.

2.10 ELEMENTS OF PRAGMATICS

Pragmatics includes a wide range of topics and elements that helps verifying the working process of all its elements which they are listed below:

2.10.1 Entailment

While defining pragmatics, it has been observed that interpreting utterances involves a considerable amount of in elegant guess work where the hearer draws Inference from the speaker's words to arrive at the speaker's meaning. In this section, we will look at Entailment a relationship between two sentences where the truth of one (A) requires the truth of the other (B). For example, the sentence (A) the president was assassinated. Entails (B) The president is dead. Notice also that if (B) is false, then (A) must necessarily be false. To show entailment, we must show that (A) true forces (B) to be true and (B) false forces (A) to be false. (ibid). We will look at another kind of inference below (presuppositions).

2.10.2 Presuppositions

We look at presupposition another kind of inference, which is very closely linked to the working of the utterance. A presupposition is a background belief, relating to an utterance, which must be mutually known or assumed by the speaker and hearer for the utterance to be considered appropriate in context will generally remain a necessary assumption whether the utterance is placed in the form of an assertion, denial, or question, and can be associated with a specific lexical item or grammatical feature (presupposition trigger) in the utterance. In pragmatics, a presupposition is an assumption about the world whose truth is taken for granted in discourse. Examples of presuppositions include: 1- Do you want to do it again? Presupposition: You have done it already, at least once. 2- My wife is pregnant. Presupposition: The speaker has a wife. Presuppositions are inferences that are very closely linked to the words and grammatical structures actually used in the utterance, but they come from our knowledge about the way language users conventionally interpret these words and

structures. After giving definition to presupposition and giving examples to illustrate the definition. We will look at another kind of inference, it is (Implicature).

2.10.3 Implicature

Another subject related to pragmatics is "Implicature" which is, anything that is concluded from an utterance, but that is not a condition for the truth of the utterance. It is a technical term in the linguistic branch of pragmatics coined by Paul Grice. It describes the relationship between two statements where the truth of one suggests the truth of the other, For example, the sentence "Mary had a baby and got married" strongly suggests that Mary had the baby before the wedding, but the sentence would still be strictly true if Mary had her baby after she got married. Further, if we add the qualification " not necessarily in that order" to the original sentence, then the implicature is cancelled even though the meaning of the original sentence is not altered. This can be contrasted with cases of entailment. For example, the statement "The president was assassinated" not only suggests that "The president is dead" is true, but requires that it should be true. The first sentence could not be true if the second were not true; if the president were not dead, then whatever it is that happened to him would not have counted as a (successful) assassination. Similarly, unlike implicatures, entailments cannot be cancelled; there is no qualification that one could add to "The president was assassinated" which would cause it to cease entailing "The president is dead" while also preserving the meaning of the first sentence".

2.11 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS

A comparison of semantics and pragmatics is a very large undertaking and a simple essay does not provide a sufficient venue for discussing all of the ideas and notions related to the many different views of semantics and pragmatics. The study presents the comparison of semantics and pragmatics from a linguist's point of view. The two branches of linguistics, i.e. semantics and pragmatics, deal with the meaning of language and link language to the world. Each branch deals with meaning differently; yet, many students of linguistics confuse the two terms. The only obvious similarity between the two branches is that they both deal with the meanings of words and sentences but in different ways.

- Semantics and Pragmatics are branches of Linguistics. Both of them deal with the study of meaning. Semantics deals with the study of meaning of word without the context. On the other hand, Pragmatics understands the language meaning but keeping the context in mind.
- Pragmatics is the study of the ability of natural language speakers to communicate more than that which is explicitly stated. The ability to understand another speaker's intended meaning is called pragmatic competence. An utterance describing pragmatic function is described as metapragmatics. Another perspective is that pragmatics deals with the ways we reach our goal in communication. Suppose, a person wanted to ask someone

else to stop smoking. This can be achieved by using several utterances. The person could simply say, 'Stop smoking, please!' which is direct and with clear semantic meaning; alternatively, the person could say, 'Whew, this room could use an air purifier' which implies a similar meaning but is indirect and therefore requires pragmatic inference to derive the intended meaning.

- While Semantics concentrates on the meaning that comes from linguistic knowledge, Pragmatics concentrates on those aspects of meaning that cannot be predicted by Linguistic knowledge alone and takes into account our knowledge about the physical and the social world. The focus of pragmatic analysis is on the meaning of speakers' utterances rather than on the meaning of words or sentences. Utterances need not consist of complete sentences. Each utterance is a unique physical event created at a particular point in time for a particular communicative purpose. In our point of view, pragmatics helps the translator or the interpreter in finding clues in the utterances the speakers make which leads him to find the appropriate equivalent in the target language.
- Semantics covers what expressions mean, while pragmatics covers what speakers mean in using the expressions.
- Pragmatics involves how speakers use language in contextualized social interactions, how they do things with words. Semantics invites a focus on meaning and truth conditions without regard to communication and context.
- The word Semantics is derived from the Greek word *semantikos* meaning to show or give signs. Semantics is the study of meaning. It covers a lot of study areas related to language. Semantics help in getting a sense of meaning in context to speakers, writers, readers of learners. It also helps in known that how the meanings got change over a period of time.
- Semantics is all about question of meaning, whereas Pragmatics is all about questions of use. It deals with that aspect of meaning which is dependent on the context. Semantics deals with the study of what signs denote. On the other hand, Pragmatics deals with the relation of signs to their users and interpreters.
- Semantics is limited to the relation of words to which they refer, whereas pragmatics covers the study of relationships between words, the interlocutors and also the context.

2.12 COMPARISON BETWEEN SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS

	Semantics	Pragmatics
Definition	Semantics is another important field related to theoretical linguistics. It is all about studying the meaning of linguistic expressions.	Pragmatics understands the language meaning but keeping the context in mind.
Focus	Meaning	Language
Scope	Narrow as it deals with only meaning	Broad as it deals with aspects beyond text
Meaning of an Utterance	Context independent	Context independent
Domain	Grammar	Rhetoric
Example	Semantics deals with the conditions under which the proposition expressed by a sentence is true. These are known as truth conditions. 'The red cup is on the table' is True if and only if the red cup is really on the table.	The sentence 'It is very cold' by the speaker may mean that temperature is low (semantic approach), or some other explanation. A Pragmatic may also like to consider that may be the speaker wants to switch on the blower and used the statement "it is very cold" as an associated sentence.

2.13 LET US SUM UP

The Unit has tried to analyse the basic concept of Semantics and Pragmatics. It has presented various types of semantics on the basis of the occurrence of the meaning. The unit has also tried to bring out various types of meaning in various context and the formation of meaning in the sentence. It has discussed the term Pragmatics and several types of contexts in which meaning is formed in regard to the pragmatics. It has also presented different elements of pragmatics such as Entailment, Presupposition and Implicature. The study has broadly come up with the study of relationship between Semantics and Pragmatics.

2.14 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is Semantics and Pragmatics?

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2. Define Implicature?

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3. What are the Elements of pragmatics?

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UNIT-3 PRINCIPLES OF SEMANTIC COMPOSITION

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Reference, Denotation
- 3.3 Reference and the Semantics of (Declarative) Sentences
- 3.4 Semantic Theory and Truth Conditions
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will read the problem of

- compositionality in semantics
- rules of semantic composition
- the structure of a semantic theory.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

There are three broad families of approaches to the systematic study of meaning in natural language. These are complementary to each other in that each focuses on somewhat different aspects of linguistic meaning. The first approach, called referential or denotational, concentrates on the informational significance of language. It takes as its starting point the “aboutness” of language, the fact that part of what we call linguistic meaning involves connections between symbols and objects external to the human organism, and way information is conveyed by a potentially infinite range of symbols obtained by combining simpler units. This family of approaches stems from work in philosophical logic, but also uses resources from modern linguistic theory: syntax in particular. The second family of approaches takes an internalist view, and is mainly concerned with the cognitive significance of language and how concepts are internally represented and combined to express a range of thoughts. This family of approaches underlies much work in psychology and artificial intelligence. A third family of approaches concerns itself with social aspects of meaning, and the role of social interaction in the expression of meaning. In this unit, we provide a brief outline of what a theory of the first type would look like.

3.2 REFERENCE & DENOTATION

To see what a compositional theory of semantics that deals with the “aboutness” of language would look like, we could first start with NPs that appear to be referring expressions in the sense that their chief semantic property is the connection they

establish between a linguistic expression and a thing being referred to. Referring expressions would include demonstrative pronouns and proper names, e.g. Suppose I point to a chair near me and utter (1):

(1) This chair is black.

The NP “this chair” refers to a thing. It’s chief semantic function is to establish a connection between the symbol itself and the thing (namely, the black chair) being referred to. Of course, it also has some independent content as well (which distinguishes, e.g. “this chair” from “that chair” and so on), but there is a clear sense in which it refers to a thing. Definite descriptions often have a similar function: while they have a descriptive content, they are often used to refer to things. This can be seen from the fact that singular definite descriptions in English, in order to be felicitous must be such that there is a unique object that satisfies its descriptive content, as seen in the following example:

(2) a. The present king of India is a scholar of classical languages.
b. The book that Arthur Conan Doyle wrote is about Sherlock Holmes.

What makes (2a) odd (if you know that India has no king at present) is that nothing satisfies the descriptive content *present king of India*. What makes (2b) odd, on the other hand (if you know that Arthur Conan Doyle wrote many books) is that more than one object satisfies the descriptive content *book that Arthur Conan Doyle wrote*. In this respect they are exactly like proper names in that they are used to refer to a thing, as in the following example

(3) a. Pavarotti is a corpulent tenor.
b. Utpal was born in Kolkata.

In (3), the proper names *Pavarotti* and *Utpal* can be taken to refer to things, namely, the persons being talked about. Referring expressions can refer to other kinds of objects, as in the following plural definite descriptions, where they arguably refer to classes of objects, as in the following examples:

(4) a. The students in my class are wearing green shirts today.
b. The students in this class outnumber the students in that class.

In (4a), one is making a statement about individual member of the set denoted by “the students in my class”; whereas in (4b), one is making a statement about the size of two sets. Similarly some NPs can refer other kind of objects that are not concrete:

(5) a. Platinum is an expensive metal.
b. Going to bed early is healthy.
c. Kindness is an admirable quality.

In (5), the referring expressions refer to substances, activities and abstract qualities, respectively. So in (5b), *platinum* refers, not to concrete pieces of a metal, but rather the substance *platinum*, and so on. NPs can also refer to fictional characters, as in

(6) Kumbhakarna is an idiot.

In fact, even in the apparently clear cases where proper names seem to refer to things, what exactly they refer to presents various philosophical puzzles that have semantic significance. To see this, consider the example (3b) above, where *Utpal* refers to a person (the author of this unit). Suppose you take (3b) to be true, and hear someone say the following:

(7) If Utpal were not born in India and came from Delhi instead, he wouldn't be speaking Bangla so well.

The sentence in (7) makes perfect sense, and could be taken to be true even in many circumstances in which (3) is true, and yet we have a sense that Utpal refers to the same object in both sentences. In other words, proper names cannot simply be taken to be a standby for definite descriptions that uniquely pick out a thing, since one may felicitously use a proper name in contexts where you are invited to consider the possibility that the thing being referred to doesn't satisfy those descriptions. (Would *Utpal* be the same person if he were born in Delhi instead?) This is particularly clear in place names, as in the city name *Baghdad*.

(8) Baghdad is the capital of Iraq.

Baghdad is a city that dates to ancient times, has been destroyed several times in history, and so clearly is not the same physical object over the entire course of history. But we seem to have no problem using the proper name *Baghdad* for something in all its incarnations.

Some philosophers and linguists have taken this to indicate that one could dispense with the notion of an individual or the notion of reference. This doesn't necessarily follow, however. For one, the notion of an individual or reference is needed to support a theory of entailment and the various semantic phenomena and the implication relations discussed in the previous units. Here we simply take note of the puzzles and note the possibility that these notions might simply link semantics to theories of how various objects are conceptualized. (This would also establish a link between the denotational theories discussed in this unit with more conceptualist or internalist approaches to semantics mentioned in the Introduction).

3.3 REFERENCE AND THE SEMANTICS OF (DECLARATIVE) SENTENCES

We saw examples before of NPs that can be taken to be referring expressions. Can other linguistic expressions have a reference? Consider the following sentence

(9) It snows in Kashmir.

We have an example in (9) of a declarative statement, i.e., a linguistic expression capable of being true or false. Can sentences be said to have a reference? It is not at all obvious what the notion of “reference” for a sentence might be. However, there is an argument implicit in the work of the philosopher Frege that says that *if* sentences can be taken to have (something like) reference, that something must be its truth value. An explicit version of this argument, called the “slingshot argument” is due to the philosopher John Perry, and goes as follows. Let us assume two principles that seem to be true necessarily.

- A. If two expressions A and B have the same content (i.e., they entail each other) they have the same reference.
- B. If an expression A contains an expression B and we replace B in A with another expression C which has the same reference as B, to get A', the reference of the resulting expression A' must be the same as that of A. (This principle is called Leibniz's Law, following some proposals of the philosopher and mathematician Leibniz)

The truth of these two principles can be illustrated by looking first at expressions that are clearly referring expressions, namely, definite descriptions. So *John's sister* and *the daughter of John's parents* are content-synonymous, as they say the same thing. (While the notion of entailment does not directly apply to NPs, we can extend the notion to NPs by saying that two NPs NP1 and NP2 entail each other if every statement containing NP1 entails the corresponding statement obtained by replacing NP1 with NP2 in it, and vice versa.) Clearly, the two NPs just mentioned have to have the same reference. To illustrate B, we simply note that, for example, the NP *the husband of John's sister* has the same reference as *the husband of the daughter of John's parents*. This means something like B has to be right.

To extend the discussion now to declarative sentences, let us consider two sentences that have nothing in common except that they are either both true or both false. I will illustrate the point by taking two sentences that one knows to be false: one can make the same point with two true statements. Consider:

- (10) a. Pavarotti is French.
- b. It never snows in Kashmir.

(10a,b) are both false and have not much else in common in terms of semantic relationships. Now consider the following statements:

- (11) a. Pavarotti is French.
- b. The truth value of "Pavarotti is French" = T
- c. The truth value of "It never snows in Kashmir" = T
- d. It never snows in Kashmir.

(We assume that there are two truth values, "T" for "true" and "F" for "false" and that $T \neq F$) Convince yourself first that (11a,b) entail each other, and (11c,d) do so as well. So any situation that makes (11a) true must also make (11b) true, and vice versa. Similarly for (11c,d). By principle A, then, (11a) has the same reference as (11b) and (11c) has the same reference as (11d). Moreover, the reference of the definite description *the truth value of "Pavarotti is French"* is the same as the reference of the definite description *the truth value of "It never snows in Kashmir"*, namely the truth value F. By Principle B, it follows then that (11b) and (11c) must have the same reference, since (11c) is simply obtained from (11b) by replacing the NP *the truth value of "Pavarotti is French"* with another NP with the same reference, namely the definite description *the truth value of "It never snows in Kashmir"*. It follows then that (11a) has the same reference as (11d).

Now, what might this reference be? We chose our examples by looking at two sentences that share no semantic property other than the fact that they are both false. The result would be same if they were both true. The only possible candidate for the reference of the two sentences would be whatever they have in common that is different from other sentences that don't have that property, namely, their truth value. It follows, then, that IF (declarative) sentences can be said to have a reference, the reference must be their truth value. This result is very counterintuitive at first, since it is clear that the content of a sentence is clearly not their truth value. The examples chosen above show that very clearly. There are two options one may follow at this point. The first option would be to give up the notion that principles A and B hold universally, but this doesn't seem right, as they seem to express true generalizations about meaning. The second option, proposed by Frege, was to say that reference is not all there is to meaning. Frege proposed that sentences (and by extension, all linguistic expressions) have a reference and what he called "sense". All linguistic expressions, on this view, have a reference ("Bedeutung"), but also a "sense" ("Sinn"), i.e., a manner in which the reference is presented. Frege illustrated this point by means of an example involving someone watching the moon through a telescope. One can distinguish the moon itself from the image of the moon that one sees through a telescope. This is further distinguished from the retinal image in the eye of the observer, i.e., something internal, subjective to the observer. Frege took senses to be "objective", but distinct from the reference of an expression. We may not choose to be radical objectivists about sense the way Frege was, but it is clear that Frege's notion of "sense" is closer to what in English we would call "content" or "meaning".

Frege also argued that there are examples in language where the reference of a linguistic expression was its sense rather than its customary reference. This is seen in examples like the following:

- (12) a. John believes that the evening star is the evening star.
b. John believes that the evening star is the morning star.

The English expression “the evening star” refers to the same object as “the morning star”, namely, the planet Venus. There are historical reasons for this: this derives from a time when people didn’t have a clear notion of planets and stars, and furthermore didn’t know that the shining celestial object they saw in the morning was the same as the shining object they saw in the evening. But replacing the second occurrence of *the evening star* in (12a) by a coreferring definite NP *the morning star* results in a sentence that doesn’t have the same meaning. It is possible to imagine a circumstance in which (12a) is true but (12b) is false, since (12a) attributes a trivial belief to John, whereas (12b) involves a belief that was the result of a significant astronomical discovery. On Frege’s account the sentences *the evening star is the evening star* and *the evening star is the morning star* have the same reference (both being true), but different senses. The difference between (12a) and (12b) comes about because the reference of the complement clause of the verb *believe* is the sense of the sentence rather than the reference (i.e., the truth value “true”).

3.4 SEMANTIC THEORY AND TRUTH CONDITIONS

We saw that if sentences can be said to have a reference, the reference must be the truth value. However, that is not the content of the sentence. Clearly a compositional semantic theory that aims to provide an account of the semantic knowledge of the native speakers of a language must be able to give a characterization of the content of a sentence. What must this knowledge consist of? To see the point, consider the following sentence of English:

- (13) Obama talked to the pope on September 25, 2015 by phone.

Clearly, understanding the meaning of this sentence doesn’t require knowing whether (13) is true or not, as the latter clearly involves knowing something about the facts over and above the semantic knowledge required to understand (13). Understanding the sentence of English requires, however, understanding the conditions under which (13) would be true. In other words, the knowledge of the meaning of (13) requires at the very least the knowledge of the *truth conditions* of (13). Some philosophers like Davidson have gone further and argued that that’s all that is needed for a compositional, denotational semantic theory. In other words, a semantic theory must provide rules of semantic composition that have as a consequence statements of the following type:

- (14) A sentence “S” is true in a circumstance \square iff p.

Something like (14) was first proposed by the philosopher and mathematician Tarski in his investigation of logical systems. In (14), the LHS consists of a truth predicate asserting the truth of a linguistic expression (a declarative statement) and the RHS consists of a condition describing a condition on objects that are “outside” the linguistic system under investigation. (Tarski called (14) the “convention T”.) On Davidson’s view, a compositional semantic theory must not only yield as theorems statements of the form (14), but must also do so in a manner that is insightful in that it makes clear the contribution made by the meanings of the parts to the meanings of the whole (which is why it is a compositional theory, something we are interested in as linguistic semanticists).

A theory of this type is clearly needed for the semantics of declarative statements. But not all utterances of a natural language are declarative sentences. We ask questions, issue commands, talk in fragments under the right discourse conditions, make interjections like “ouch” and “oops” and so on. Surely, a compositional theory of meaning must also account for these. As it turns out, a compositional semantic theory based on truth-conditions has plenty to say about these constructions as well. So consider questions.

(15) Which students came to the freshers’ party last Wednesday?

A question like (15) doesn’t have truth-conditions, but understanding the meaning of (15) requires, at a minimum, understanding what makes a statement an answer to (15). Thus, *it is snowing now* is not an answer to (15), but *Mary came to the party* could be, if Mary is a student. In other words, the meaning of a question like (15) involves understanding its *answerhood conditions*. (Note that answers have propositional content, so a truth-conditions based semantics already would work for them.) Similarly, the semantics of imperatives would involve knowledge of the conditions under which an order can be complied with: we call these the *compliance conditions*. So if I tell John:

(16) Jump out of the window!

John will have complied with my order if he jumps out of the window, and not if he doesn’t. Compliance conditions have a propositional semantics, however, which is given by a truth-conditions based semantics.

The same way, it is easy to show that fragments and interjections all involve propositional knowledge of some kind. So if a speaker says “oops!” they signal that they, or someone in the context, did something wrong, and so on. Fragments are usually understood as parts of bigger structures that are not uttered but whose meaning is somehow recoverable from the context, and these bigger structures have propositional content (again, with a truth-conditions based semantics).

3.5 LET US SUM UP

A linguistic theory that investigates word meaning. This theory understands that the meaning of a word is fully reflected by its context. Here, the meaning of a word is constituted by its contextual relations. Therefore, a distinction between degrees of participation as well as modes of participation are made. In order to accomplish this distinction any part of a sentence that bears a meaning and combines with the meanings of other constituents is labelled as a semantic constituent. Semantic constituents that cannot be broken down into more elementary constituents are labelled minimal semantic constituents.

3.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is Reference?

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2. What is denotation?

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