

English/ Sem.3/CC-14/ Semantics

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.

Function of Semantics

The purpose of semantics is to propose exact meanings of 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, semantics enable 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 meaning, 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.

Seven Types of Meaning

1. **Conceptual Meaning** = Logical, cognitive or connotative content.
2. **Connotative Meaning** = What is communicated by virtue of what language refers
3. **Social Meaning** = What is communicated of the social circumstances of Language
4. **Affective Meaning** = What is communicated of the feelings and attitudes of the Speaker through language.

5. **Reflected Meaning** = What is communicated through associations with another Sense of the same world.
6. **Collocative Meaning** = What is communicated through associations with words which co-occur with another word.
7. **Thematic Meaning** = What is communicated by the way in which the message is organized in terms of order and emphasis.

Lexical vs Grammatical Meaning

Lexical meaning is “the most outstanding individual of the word that makes it different from any other word”. The lexical meaning of a word may be thought of as the specific value it has in a particular language system, and the ‘personality’ it acquires through usage within that system.

The categories of English words that are lexical include nouns, adjectives, most verbs, and many adverbs.

Lexical meaning is dominant in content words, whereas grammatical meaning is dominant in function words, but in neither is grammatical meaning absent.

Grammatical words include prepositions, modals and auxiliary verbs, pronouns, articles, conjunctions, and some adverbs.

The difference between lexical words and grammatical words is straightforward. It is an important concept for linguists because the distinction seems to exist in all languages, not just English. Understanding these differences helps scholars figure out the relationship between the different languages, as well as the history of the English language. It may even give some insight into how human minds work. Understanding these types of words will help increase your comprehension of English.

Lexical words supply meaning to a sentence, whereas grammatical words relate the lexical words to one another.

Look at the following sentence that only shows the lexical words:

" ___ cat jumped ___ tree ___ dog ran ___."

This looks like nonsense. All you know is that it is about jumping cats, running dogs, and trees. It may be possible to guess the complete meaning of

the sentence, but you can't know for certain because cats, dogs, and trees can be related in different ways.

Now look at the sentence with the grammatical words re-inserted:

"The cat jumped into the tree as the dog ran forward."

The sentence makes sense. Notice, however, that if you put a different set of grammatical words in, you get a completely different meaning: "The cat jumped from the tree after the dog ran away." You can see that the grammatical words clarify the logical relations between the lexical words and define their function in the sentence.

Phrase Vs Sentence Meaning

PHRASE VERSUS SENTENCE	
A phrase is a group of that does not express a complete thought.	A sentence is a group of that expresses a complete thought.
A phrase does not have a subject or predicate or both.	A sentence has both subject and predicate.
A phrase does not give complete information about the subject or predicate.	A sentence gives complete information about the subject and the predicate.
A phrase does not begin with a capital letter and end with punctuation marks.	A sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question or exclamation mark.

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Phrases are groups of words that act as a part of speech but cannot stand alone as a **sentence**. The words in a **phrase** act together so that the **phrase** itself functions as a single part of speech. ... A **sentence** expresses a complete thought and contains a subject (a noun or pronoun) and a predicate (a verb or verb **phrase**). For examples

‘He moves faster than the speed of light’ (**sentence**),

‘faster than the speed of light!’ (**phrase**).

Phrase: the check in the mail

Sentence: I put the check in the mail. “I” is the subject. “Put” is the predicate.

- “This is a sentence.” is a **sentence**.
- “Things like this” and “a phrase” are **phrases**.

Utterance Meaning

An **utterance** is the smallest unit of speech. It is a continuous piece of speech beginning and ending with a clear pause. In the case of oral languages, it is generally, but not always, bounded by silence. **Utterances** do not exist in written language, however, only their representations do.

"We use the term '**utterance**' to refer to complete communicative units, which may consist of single words, phrases, clauses and clause combinations spoken in context. In contrast to the term 'sentence,' which we reserve for units consisting of at least one main clause and any accompanying subordinate clauses, and marked by punctuation (capital letters and full stops) in writing."

SENTENCE VERSUS UTTERANCE

SENTENCE	UTTERANCE
A group of words that convey a complete meaning	A natural unit of speech bounded by breaths or pauses, thus usually not conveying a complete meaning
Exists in both spoken and written form	Exists only in the spoken form
Basic structure in semantics	Smallest unit of speech
The semantic structure varies according to the language. However, a sentence basically has a subject, a verb, and an object	Does not have a specific semantic structure since even a burp, or a pause is categorized as an utterance
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The examples of Utterances:

how do I get a computer?

Where do I get a computer?

I want to get a computer, how do I go about it?

When can I have a computer?

The core term here is "computer." It is not varied. Use alternatives such as desktop computer, laptop, workstation, or even just machine. Language understanding (LUIS) can intelligently infer synonyms from context, but when you create utterances for training, it's always better to vary them.

Linguistically Utterances may be observed in this chatting :

1 A: I have a car

2 B: Sorry?

3 A: I have a car

4 B: You have a car

5 A: Yes.

1,3,4 = A has a car. 2 = B is sorry [presumably for misunderstanding A or something like that?] 5 = either same 1,3,4 or the same issue as identified in the philosophy account (is it a repetition or a claim with respect to the claim).

Apparently these terms are used in very different ways by linguists in different sub-disciplines.

Courtesy ; Dr. Md. Ejaz Alam