



## Analyzing the construction of meaning in language

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### Abstract

This study attempts to analyze the construction of meaning in language according to some semantic theories and opinions. It handles the two types of meaning: grammatical meaning, and lexical meaning. The main aim of this study is to find out how the meaning of word, phrase and sentence can be constructed in language. The problem of the study is the arguments about the nature of meaning and the misinterpretation of word, phrase and sentence meaning constructions. The main question this study tries to answer is extent to which meaning seems vague, unclear and complicated. The method used in this study is descriptive method. The discussion and analysis of this study concluded that meaning of word, phrase and sentence is cognitive content depends on syntactic structure and semantic feature.

**Keywords:** meaning, lexical meaning, semantics, cognitive content, sense relations

### Introduction

There have been many arguments about the meaning of meaning, but the theorists concluded that there are two types of meaning. Firstly, the grammatical meaning such as the structure of *boy* and *boys* differ in their grammatical meaning. Secondly, the lexical meaning, deals with the meaning that a lexeme holds in a language. To treat the notion of meaning, the discussion will be on these types of meanings in details.

### Aims of the Study

- To find out how the meaning of word, phrase and sentence can be constructed in language.
- To differentiate between possible meanings of word and sentence.
- To find out the relationship between words and sentences.
- To achieve communicative aims.

### Question of the study

The main question this study tries to answer is extent to which meaning seems vague, unclear and complicated.

### Literature Review

#### a) Definition of semantics

Semantics is a branch of theoretical linguistics. It studies the meanings of words, phrases and sentences in all languages. Hurford, Heasley, and Smith (2007:1) define semantics as "the study of meaning in language". This definition refers to all languages, but you can take particular language as an example and study its semantic meanings. Cruse (2006:136) draws distinction between semantics and pragmatics as; first, semantics deals with truth conditional aspects of meaning, while pragmatics deals with non-truth conditional aspects of meaning. Second, semantics is context-independent, while pragmatics is context-dependent. Third, semantics deals with form and meaning of word, phrase or sentence, whereas pragmatics deals with meanings that are worked out not looked up. Semantics deals with the description of meaning, whereas pragmatics deals with the uses made of those meaning.

#### b) Definition of meaning

Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:222) define the semantic term *meaning* linguistically as "what a language expresses about the world we live in or any possible or imaginary world". Also, they state that the study of meaning is called semantics and deals with the analysis of words, phrases, sentences, or a whole text. Moreover, it deals with the meaning of utterances. Similarly, Yule (2010:112) views semantics as "the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences". The term meaning involves grammatical meaning and lexical meaning; grammatical meaning deals with grammar aspects such as tense meaning, singular meaning, etc, while lexical meaning deals with meaning of word or lexeme that indicates thing, quality, state or action. So there is more interest to shed a light on lexical meaning more than grammatical meaning.

#### Types and components of lexical meaning

Lexical meaning is essential part in the study of semantics, and considers the main element in linguistic communication. It is descriptive meaning and includes (cognitive or propositional meaning). "Lexical meaning refers to the meaning of full lexical items such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives. It is richer and more complex than the meaning carried by grammatical elements such as affixes, prepositions, conjunctions, and so on" Cruse (2006:95). For Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:81) lexical meaning is the meaning of content words that refer to a thing, quality, state, or action and have lexical meaning when used alone. Highlighting on significance of words in sentence meaning, Alkhuli (2002:99) maintains that if a word is replaced by another non-synonymous one in a sentence, that means the sentence meaning will change. He asserts that "the more words are replaced in the sentence, the larger the change in sentence will be". Lexical meaning is invariant and composed of two types of meaning; Conceptual meaning, it is constant, stable and agreed upon all members of the same speech community. Yule (2010:113) asserts that Conceptual meaning is the meaning that described by dictionaries, it studies basic and essential components of words meaning

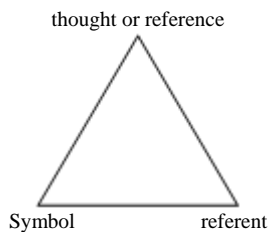
that are conveyed by literal use of a word. For example the word 'needle', its components include (*thin, sharp and steel* instrument). However, different people might associate it with (pain or illness or blood or....etc), these associations are not included in word's conceptual meaning. Generally, the associative meanings used more in poems, songs, novels, literary critics, advertisement and love writings. While in linguistic semantics, more concentration is given to conceptual meaning analysis.

Associative meaning is open-ended, unstable, and indeterminate, because it varies with culture, time, place, class and individual experiences. It is non-descriptive meaning and includes connotative, stylistic, affective and collocative meanings. According to, Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:24) the associative meaning of a word is "the total of all the meanings a person thinks of when they hear the word", for example the associative meaning for the word *puppy* could be *warm, young, furry, lively, kitten*.

**Concept**

Concept, in Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:74) point of view is "The general idea or meaning which is associated with a word or symbol in a person's mind. Concepts are the abstract meanings which words and other linguistic items represent". Furthermore, they assert that the language acquisition affect the forming of concepts in the human mind, and the use of concepts to form proposition is essential to human thought and communication.

Ogden and Richards (1923(1949:11)) cited in Palmer (1981:24) shows the relationship between symbol, referent, and thought or reference as a triangle:



The symbol is linguistic element refers to word, sentence, etc., and the referent is object etc, while thought or reference is concept. This theory shows that there is no direct relation between symbol and referent, it is clear that thought or referent on the top of the triangle makes link between them Palmer (1981:24).

**Connotation**

Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:78) believe connotation as the hidden meanings that a word or phrase has beyond its main meaning. Moreover, they indicate that these hidden meanings show speaker's emotions, ideas and attitudes towards what the word or phrase refers to (main meaning). For example the word '*child*' could be defined as young human being, but there are additional characteristics that the word '*child*' connotes and shared by different people, for example '*affectionate*', '*amusing*', '*lovable*', '*sweet*', '*mischievous*', '*noisy*', '*irritating*', '*grubby*'. Further, they argue that some connotations may be used within a group of people of the same culture, sex or age, while others may be limited to individuals depending on their experiences. Additionally, they state that "in a meaning system that part of the meaning which is covered by connotation is sometimes referred to as affective meaning, connotative

meaning, or emotive meaning". Cruse (2006:33-45) indicates that connotation is sometimes called '*intension*', and the word *dog* may be used to denote the class of dogs, but connote the property of dogness.

**Denotation, Reference, and Sense**

Lyons (1995:77-81) defines denotation as "a relation which hold primarily, or basically, between expressions and physical entities in the external world". For example, the lexeme '*trouser*' denotes a class of pieces of clothing worn on the lower part of the body; the lexeme '*woman*' denotes all the women in the world; the lexeme '*sad*' denotes the property of being sad. Further, he asserts that denotation is basically connected with the term reference.

Richards, Platt, Platt (1992: 101) perceives denotation as "the meaning of a word or phrase that relates it to phenomena in the real world or in a fictional or possible world", for instance the denotation of the English word '*bird*' is a two-legged, winged, egg-laying, warm-blooded creature with a beak. Elaborating on denotation term, they indicate that "in a meaning system, denotative meaning may be regarded as the 'central' meaning or 'core' meaning of lexical item. It is often equated with referential meaning and with cognitive meaning and conceptual meaning although some linguists and philosophers make a distinction between these concepts".

As for reference, Lyons (1995:294) sees it as "context-dependent aspect of utterance-meaning: it is a relation that holds between speakers (more generally, locutionary agents) and what they are talking about on particular occasions". For example, this book may refer to one book or another depending on who utters the expression. Consequently, reference is variable (variant – changeable) and utterance – dependent, another example, the word '*dog*' denotes the same class of animals(or alternatively, the defining property of the class), whereas the phrases '*the dog*' or '*my dog*' or '*the dog that bit the postman*' will refer to different members of the class on different occasions of utterance. In a nearly similar perspective, Richards, Platt, Heidi (1992:310-311) describe reference semantically as "the relationship between words and the things, actions, events and qualities they stand for". Further, they state that reference in its broader sense would be the relationship between a word or phrase and an entity in the external world. For example, the word *tree* refers to the object 'tree' (the referent). But in its narrower sense, reference is the relationship between a word or phrase and specific object, for example, '*Peter's tree*' or '*Peter's horse*', would refer to a horse that owned, ridden by, or in some way associated with Peter.

Many linguists argue that there is no distinction between the two terms, including both under the broader notion of reference, instead of dealing separately. Conversely, Lyons points to important difference between reference and denotation; the denotation of an expression is invariant, fixed and utterance – independent: it is part of the meaning which the expression has in the language – system, independently of its use on particular occasions of utterance. The term sense in Lyons (1995:80) point of view is "the set, or network, of sense-relations that hold between it and other expressions of the same language". Meanwhile, Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:330) consider sense to be "the place which a word or phrase (a lexeme) holds in the system of relationships with other words in the vocabulary of language". For example, the words *bachelor* and *married*

have the sense relationship that bachelor equals not married. Sense relation is of different types such as synonymy, polysemy, hyponymy, antonymy, homophone, homonymy, metonymy and prototypes, all will be handled in details later in this section. Moreover, Lyons raised an important distinction between sense and denotation; sense of a lexeme is the relations that hold between that lexeme and one or more other lexemes or expressions in the same language. First, sense is internal to language system, whereas denotation relates the expressions to classes of entities in the world. Secondly, both terms can apply to lexically simple and lexically composite expressions. That is to say, the sense and denotation of the composite expressions is a compositional function of the sense and denotation of its component parts. For example, the lexeme "trouser", apart from its denotation is also related, in various ways to other lexemes: *clothing, clothes, jeans*, etc.; and the composite expression 'blue trouser' has its denotation and sense, which combines the denotation and sense of 'blue' and 'trouser'. Thirdly, is that sense and denotation are related to each other and interdependent. That is one would not know one without having some knowledge about the other.

Semantic feature (also known as semantic component, semantic properties) is the basic unit of meaning in a word. And that the meanings of words are considered a combination of semantic features. For example the semantic feature (+ male) is part of the meaning of the word (*father*), also the feature (+ adult), in addition to other features that give the whole meaning of the word (*father*) Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:328).

### Semantic Features

To show how to analyze semantic features Yule (2010:114) provides the following example: *The hamburger ate the boy*, he states that this sentence is semantically odd but syntactically it's good. Since the sentence "the *boy ate the hamburger*", it is clear that the verb 'ate' is not one of the components of the conceptual meaning of the noun 'hamburger', but it's the one of the components of the conceptual meaning of the noun 'boy'. So the noun *boy* can stand as a subject of the verb 'ate' not the noun *hamburger* because it doesn't have the property of eating.

Additionally, he illustrates the feature of meaning that the subject of the verb 'ate' must carries the characteristics of animate being. If the subject have the features it takes the symbol (+), if not it takes the symbol (-). *Boy* (animate +), (human +), (female -), (adult -).

### Relationships of meanings (Sense Relations)

Yule (2010:116-117) maintains that words in addition to being used as a bulk of meanings or as fulfilling roles in events, they have relationships with each. This relationships represent in using other word that have the same or nearly the same meaning to hold the meaning, for example to give the meaning of word 'conceal' we can say the word 'hide', and to explain the meaning of word 'shallow' we can say it is the opposite of the word 'deep', or the meaning of the word 'daffodil' we can say it is a kind of flower. In using this approach, it is easy to find out the meaning of any word in terms of its relation with other words.

## 1. Similarity of Senses

### a) Synonymy

Yule (2010:117) defines synonymy as two or more words

with very closely related meanings. These words can replace each other in sentences, for example, *what was his answer?* Or *what was his reply?* here *answer* and *reply* are same meaning. Other examples for synonymy are *almost/nearly, big/large, broad/wide, buy/purchase, cab/tax i, car/automobile, couch/sofa, freedom/liberty*. Further, (ibid:117) indicates that it is worth mentioning that the sameness of meaning of words is not necessarily full sameness. In some sentences in particular context we use the suitable word which its other synonyms would be odd. For example, *Sandy had only one answer correct on the test*, here if we used 'reply' instead of answer it would be odd. Moreover, we had to use meanings according to context, formal or informal. Conversely,

Hurford, Heasley, and Smith (2007:106-107) consider synonymy as "the relationship between two predicates that have the same sense". They argue that the relationship is between predicates not between words (i.e. word-forms), considering that a word may have many different senses and each sense is a predicate. Palmer (1981:88) asserts that "Synonymy is used to mean sameness of meaning". But he maintains that there are no absolute synonyms between words, that is to say there are no two words have the same meaning in languages. So he refers differences between synonyms to many reasons; Firstly, some synonyms come from different dialects of language. For example the word 'fall' is used in USA, and in Britain they use the word 'autumn', both words are synonyms to mean the same season. Secondly, the difference is stylistic use, the two words carry the same meaning, one is formal and the other is colloquial. For instance, the synonyms a *nasty smell* (formal) and an *obnoxious effluvium* (colloquial), and the same way in *gentleman, man and chap, pass a way, die and pop off*. Thirdly, the meaning differences between words is only emotive or evaluative meaning, but their cognitive meaning remains same. For example, *political* and *statesman, hide and conceal liberty and freedom*. Fourthly, the differences came from the difference in collocation. The words used in combination with other words such as 'rancid' which is used with *bacon* and *butter*, and the word 'addled' which is used with *eggs* or *brains*. Fifthly, difference in near synonyms is that they are close in their meaning but not identical, for example, for the word 'amateur' possible synonyms are 'adult', 'ripe', 'perfect', 'due', for *govern*, synonyms are *direct, control, determine and require*.

As Palmer criticized the similarity of meaning in the idea of synonymy, Hurford, Heasley, and Smith go on to describe similarity of meaning in synonymy definition as vaguer and un accurate than theirs. But they agree that absolute synonymy is too difficult to find. Lyons (1995:60-61) states that "Expressions with the same meaning are synonymous". He agrees with Palmer in his view towards synonymy and argues that sameness of meaning in the description of synonymy is not accurate and comprehensive in all cases. So, in a critical way, he mentions two points about it. First, it does not restrict the relation of synonymy to lexemes: it allows for the possibility that lexically simple expressions may have the same meaning as lexically complex expressions. Second, it makes identity, not merely similarity, of meaning

the criterion of synonymy. Further, Lyons widens the notion of synonymy and classifies it in to three types; firstly, absolute synonymy, it is rare and its conditions can be represented in;

1- All their meanings are identical.  
 2- They are synonymous in all contexts.  
 3- They are semantically equivalent on all dimensions of meaning, descriptive and non-descriptive. Secondly, near synonyms, "expressions that are more or less similar but not identical in meaning", he cites as example with words *mist* and *fog*, *stream* and *brook*, *dive* and *plunge*. Thirdly, partial synonymy, it holds the same meaning but lacks, for some reason, the conditions of absolute synonymy. Accordingly, Cruse (2006:176) comments on absolute synonymy as "words would be absolute synonyms if there were no contexts in which substituting one for the other had any semantic effect". Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:368) share the same opinion with linguists previously mentioned and sees that synonymy is "a word has the same, or nearly the same, meaning as another word". They see that, although the words are similar or near similar in meaning, it is better to use particular word in particular situation in order to convey the meaning and reflect the event. They provide words in the examples below:

*He hides the money under the bed.*  
*He concealed the money under the bed.*

Here, the word 'conceal' is formal than the word 'hide'. The above discussion concludes that the general view among linguists is that it is too difficult to find true synonyms between words.

**b) Hyponymy**

When the meaning of word refers to the meaning of its class that it belongs to, this connection or relationship is called hyponymy. Example of hyponymous words are *animal/dog*, *dog/poodle*, *vegetable/carrot*, *flower/rose*, *tree/banyan*. Here the words *dog*, *poodle*, *carrot*, *rose*, *banyan* are called hyponyms, others are superordinates.

It is worth noting that verbs or words such as *punch*, *shoot* and *stab* can be used as hyponyms of the superordinate word *injure*, because they all describe actions. In the following diagram, Yule (2010:118-119) represents relationship between some words:

Living things				
Creature		Plant		
Animal	Insect	Vegetable	flower	tree
dog	Horse snake ant	Cockroach	Carrot rose	banyan pin

Moreover, Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:169-170) define hyponymy as a relationship between two words, in which the meaning of one of the words includes the meaning of the other word, as the relationship between dog and animal. That is to say, the relationship between two words is that dog is a kind of animal (superordinate) and it is known that animal comprises dog (hyponym) and many other kinds of animals, they provide the following diagram as an example:

superordinate:	Vehicle			
hyponyms:	Bus	Car	lorry	van
superordinate:	Move			
hyponyms	Walk	Run	Swim	fly

hyponymy concept can be considered in two different ways; thinking of classes of things in the world (extensional perspective), here for example, the class of animal includes the class of dogs, that means if something a dog it is

intuitively an animal. On the other side, to think of meanings of things (intensional perspective) means that the meaning of dog includes the meaning of animal Cruse (2006:81).

It is worth noting that a word may be a hyponym of one word and a hyperonym of another for example dog is a hyponym of animal and a hyperonym of collie (ibid:81). Palmer (1976:85) describes that the concept of hyponymy as the idea of involvement or class that have higher level (superordinate) and lower level (hyponym). For example *tulip* and *rose* are hyponyms for flower, and *lion* and *elephant* for animal. Lyons (1963) cited in Palmer (1976:85) noticed that classical Greek use one superordinate word to include number of professions and crafts as hyponyms such as carpenter, doctor, flute player, helmsman,...etc.

Hurford, Heasley, and Smith (2007:111) note that there are closely relationship between synonymy and hyponymy in special case. They provide two synonyms as example, *mercury* and *quicksilver*, and consider these as hyponymy relationship. Consequently, *mercury* and *quicksilver* are hyponyms of each other. They build this relationship according to the following rule: if x is a hyponym of y and if y is a hyponym of x, then x and y are synonymous.

**c) Metonymy**

The relationship in metonymy not refers to the similarity between words, but it based on a close link between them. That is to say, the two words are inseparable. Moreover, it is the using of one of these words to represents or stands for the other. This type of relation between words is called "metonymy". For example, *car/wheel*, *house/ roof*, *king/crown*. We use metonymy in our every day experience such as *he drank the whole bottle* (the liquid in the bottle), *filling up the car* (the tank), *answer the door* (person who is at the door), *giving someone a hand*(help). Usually many examples of metonymy are easy to understand, however, others depend on the context and ability of language to understand the speaker Yule(2010:121). Cruse (2006:108) describes metonymy as "a variety of figurative use of language". Moreover, he states that in metonymic expression, there is a relationship (associative relation) between its figurative meaning and its literal meaning for example, *England were beaten 4-3 by Germany*. It's known that England and Germany are names of European countries, but here they used to refer to their sporting teams. The associative relation in metonymy represents in many types such as:

- Whole via part (synecdoche): *I noticed several new faces tonight.*
- Representing entity via represented Entity: *England collapse.*
- Possessed entity via possessor: *He's not in the phone book.*
- Contained entity via container: *The kettle's boiling.*

Metonymy is used widely in journalistic language for the term of summarizing or to save time and spaces in newspapers such as *Khartoum refuses UN sanctions* (the government of Khartoum).

**d) Prototype**

Prototype is the word that carries the exact characteristics of the category. For example the words canary, *cormorant*, *dove*, *duck*, *flamingo*, *parrot*, *pelican* and *robin* are all belongs to the category ' *bird* ', by other words, this means

that they are all kinds of birds, but some researchers see that the most one that carry the 'bird' characteristics is *robin*. The concept of prototype explains the nearest and closest example of thing or word to the category or superordinate Yule (2010:119). For Richards, Platt, and Platt (298-299), the term prototype means "a person or object which is considered (by many people) to be a typical of its class or group". Further, they state that people often define concept referring to typical example of group such as a prototype of a *bird* would be a small one that flies and carries the all characteristics of bird, than, for example, a big one that is flightless and does not carry the all characteristics of bird class like an *emu*. Moreover, they indicate that prototype theory is essential point to communicate with people appropriately using typical words and phrases that they use. Hurford, Heasley, and Smith (2007:87-88) argue that "the prototype of a predicate can be thought of as the most typical member of the extension of a predicate". For example, in certain areas of the world, a prototype of a *man* is of a medium height and an average build, between 30 and 50 years old, with brownish hair, with no particularly distinctive characteristics or defects, rather than of a dwarf or a hugely muscular body-builder. "Why are we in doubt whether *bush* comes under the extension of the tree? It is because we do not know the accurate qualities or features of the tree or bush. Do the features of tree allow bush in the membership of tree?". In a way to illustrate the notion of prototype, Alkhuli (2006:39-40) introduces these questions. He concludes that prototype is a typical member in the extension (class) of a certain predicate. For example, *ostrich* is a bird with wings, but it is not a prototype of birds, instead *falcon* is a prototype of birds because it has the real characteristics of bird.

According to the above theories, it is obvious that affiliating things to class or category refer to the degree of similarity to the prototype. This degree is measured by the number of characteristics that the item shares with the prototype. In some versions there are some features consider more important than others. Some theorists view degree of item similarity to prototype as degree of membership in the category. On this view, *an ostrich* would not be a full member an exact member of the category *bird*, because it cannot fly, and flying consider one of the most important features of bird Cruse (2006:146-147).

The notion of prototype is a problematic area between English speaking communities in different areas of the world because of social and cultural differences between them. For example something and object in particular areas could not consider as prototype for the class or category of that thing and object in other areas.

## 2. Dissimilarity of senses

### a) Antonymy

Yule (2010:117-118) states that antonymy simply means the oppositeness of meaning of words such as *alive/dead*, *big/small*, *fast/slow*, *happy/sad*. The negative form of some antonym words does not mean the other antonym, for example *my car isn't old*, here the negative form of *old* doesn't mean that the car is new. On the other side, the negative form of some antonym words denotes the other member, for example, *my grandparents aren't alive* does definitely means my grandparents are dead. Similarly, Palmer (1976:94) asserts that antonymy is used for "oppositeness of meaning, words that are opposite are

antonyms", he cites with examples *wide/narrow*, *old/young*, *big/small*. Also compares antonymy with synonymy and states that it seems as opposite of synonymy which its true existence is doubtful. Moreover, antonymy is considered as one feature of language. To find the opposite of the word, it is essential to note that whether the word is gradable or not. For example the word *male* is ungradable, so that the person who is not male must be female. So they are called complementaries or ungradable antonyms. But the words *big* and *small* are called gradable antonyms or gradable pair, because something which is not big is not necessarily small, it may be somewhere between the two sizes Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:18). This point refers to comparative form of adjectives those end with (er) or (more, est, most) such as *bigger/biggest*, *smaller/smallest*. Hurford, Heasley, and Smith (2007:121-126) mention four basic types of antonyms; first, binary antonyms, are predicates which come in pairs and between them exhaust all the relevant possibilities, for example *true/false*. Secondly, converses, if a predicate describes a relationship between two things (or people) and some other predicate describe the same relationship when the two things (or people) are mentioned in the opposite order, for example parent and child. Thirdly, gradable antonyms, if two predicates at opposite ends of a continuous scale of values (a scale which typically varies according to the context of use), for example *hot* and *cold*. Fourthly, contradictory, a proposition is a contradictory of another proposition if it is impossible for them both to be true at the same time and of the same circumstances, for example, *this beetle is alive* is a contradictory of *this beetle is dead*.

## 3. Ambiguity of Senses

### a) Polysemy

Polysemy is that concept of one word that have a set of meanings, all related to each other in meaning, for example the word *head*, head on top of body, head of department or company, ...etc. also the word *foot*, foot of person, foot of bed, foot of mountain, and the word *run* with ( person, water, color) Yule (2010:120). Defining polysemy Palmer (1976:100) indicates that "not only do different have different meanings; it is also the case that the same word may have a set of different meanings". He cites the example of the word *flight*, the dictionary can define it as 'passing through the air', 'power of flying', 'air journey', 'unit of the air force', 'volley', 'digression', 'series of steps'. Similarly, Linguists Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:282) exemplifies with word *foot* as in: *he hurt his foot*, and *she stood at the foot of the stairs*. Accordingly they indicate to the ambiguity that found in deciding whether the word is polysemous or homonyms.

In this problematic area, Palmer goes on to consider the verb *eat* as example, he states that the dictionary will distinguish the literal sense of taking food and the derived meanings of *use up* and *corrode* and we should, perhaps treat these as three different meanings. We can also distinguish between eating meat and eating soup. Moreover, we can talk about drinking soup as well as eating it. In one of its senses, then, *eat* corresponds to *drink*. The problem, however, is to decide whether this represents a distinct meaning of *eat*; for an alternative solution is that the meaning of *eat* merely overlaps that of *drink*, but that each covers a wide semantic 'area' (a great deal of which does not overlap).

Based on the above discussions, polysemy seems complicated and confused to the news readers. They may face difficult to determine the intended meaning that the journalist used in the text. So, journalists, to interact with readers should select the words that common and precise in conveying the information.

### b) Homonymy

Homonymy is the word that has more than one unrelated meaning such as the words *pupil* (at school) and *pupil* (in the eye), and the words *race* (contest of speed) and *race* (ethnic group).

Lyons (1995:54-55) mentions that homonyms traditionally are defined as different words with the same form and provides the traditional example '*bank*' (financial institution) and '*bank*' (sloping side of river). Moreover, to improve this definition, Lyons substitutes 'lexeme' for 'word', but he notices that the definition is still not accurate because in many languages, lexemes have more than one form. Furthermore, the definition avoided grammatical equivalence between words. Therefore, Lyons widens the notion of homonymy and adds absolute homonymy. In this type homonyms restricted with three conditions:

- 1- They will be unrelated in meaning.
- 2- All their forms will be identical
- 3- Their identical form will be grammatically equivalent.

Example for this type are '*bank1*' (financial institution borrowed from Italian '*banca*' and '*bank2*' comes from German source of the Italian '*banca*' but differs from it in its historical development), '*sole1*' (bottom of foot or shoe) and '*sole2*' (kind of fish). Another example could be '*lie*' and '*lie*' as in:

- you have to lie down.
- don't lie tell the truth!

The other type according to Lyons is called partial homonymy. This type carries only one or two conditions that exist in absolute homonymy. Example for this type are the verbs

'*find*' and '*found*', both share the form found, but not finds, finding, or founds, founding, etc and found as a form of '*find*' is not grammatically equivalent to found as a form of '*found*'.

Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:168) point to the similarity that exists between the terms, homonymy and polysemy, and indicate that this similarity causes problem and ambiguity in how to deal with such words. Cruse (2006:134) argues that although the distinction between homonymy and polysemy is clear in some cases, there is no clear boundary between the two terms. Lyons (1995:58-59) in traditional point of view, compares between homonymy and polysemy stating that homonymy depends on a relation that built between two or more distinct lexemes, whereas polysemy (a set of meaning) is a characteristic of one single lexemes.

Although this distinction is generally traditional, Lyon sees that it is not clear-cut distinction in all instances. Furthermore, Lyons states that the etymology and relatedness of meaning help the native speakers to determine whether the lexemes is polysem or homonym, but this is not always the case. For example English native speakers are probably capable to distinguish between 'bat' (bird) and 'bat' (of game), the first one comes from the

Middle English word 'bakke', and the second comes from the old English word 'batt'(club). Then referring to historical origin of two lexemes, they are totally different and of unrelated meanings. (Yule :120), moreover, states that homonymy sometimes distinguishes between two words, while one of two homonyms can be used to have various polysems, for example the words *date* (fruit) and *date*(time) are homonyms. The word *date* (time) is polysemous having various meanings such as in a particular day and month (on a letter), an arranged meeting time(an appointment), a social meeting( with someone).So, the question ' how was your date ' includes many different interpretations.

It is worth noting that, there are many examples of homonymy from historical point of view being changed to polysemy by later generations of speakers.

### c) Homophone

Yule (2010:120) defines homophones as any two or more words that have different spelling and same pronunciation for example, *meat/meet*, *right/write*, to/too/two. Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:168) adds that the two words often have different meanings as in the English words '*no*' and '*know*'. If two meanings have same pronunciation, but have different written forms, they are called homophones, for example '*lead*' (metal) and '*led*' (past tense of lead) Cruse (2006:80).

### d) Collocation

Words in sentences or texts should be consistent and connected together. This connection gives the text sense relation that holds the meaning. This regulation semantically is called collocation or syntagmatic relation Yule (2010:122) states that "one way we seem to organize our knowledge of words is simply on the basis of collocation, or frequently occurring together." Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992:62) perceive that collocation is "the way in which words are used together regularly". It can be occurred when, for example particular prepositions are used with particular verbs, or which verbs and nouns are used together. They give example of the English verb *perform*, *the doctor performed the operation*, and *the committee performed a discussion*, here, *perform* used with (collocates with) operation not with discussion, instead we say *the committee hold/have a discussion*.

Some linguist discussed on the collocation concept such as Parizg (1934) cited in Palmer (1976:75) argued for the recognition of the importance between words to hold meaning, for example *bite* and *teeth*, *bark* and *dog*, *bloud* and *hair*. Also, Firth cited in Palmer (1976:75) indicates that ' you shall know a word by the company it keeps'. Equally, Nida (1964:98) cited in Palmer (1976:76) explains syntagmatic relation in the use of chair as following:

- 1- *sat in a chair*
- 2- *the baby's high chair*
- 3- *has accepted a university chair*
- 4- *the chairman of the meeting*
- 5- *will chair the meeting*
- 6- *the electric chair*
- 7- *condemned to the chair*.

The above examples in pairs give different two meanings. The linguistic context enables to distinguish between different meanings of words Palmer (1976:76). He goes further to elaborate this area and states that collocation is

not simply a matter of association of ideas, and that although milk is white, they do not collocate each other, so white paint is widely used and common. Also *pretty girl* not *pretty woman*, *buxom woman*, not *buxom man*.

This area is very essential for journalists who are seeking to convey the information and draw a complete picture to the readers. So they have to select proper words.

### Conclusion

This study has been adopted with the aim of finding out the nature of word, phrase and sentence meanings. The study presented many definitions about the terms "meaning, semantics". Then it handled the different types of meanings explained with examples. Moreover, meaning elements and components have been discussed broadly based on different theories and opinions. The relationship between words (sense relations) also has been discussed and explained according to the similarities, dissimilarities and ambiguities of senses. The discussions and analysis taken in earlier pages showed that the nature of word meaning is cognitive content depends on a set of semantic features work together to give the full meaning of a word, in addition to the sense relations between words meanings. As for the phrase and sentence meaning construction, the discussion showed that it depends on the syntactic structure of the components and context.

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