



## The study of linguistic meaning

<sup>1</sup> R Umagandhi, <sup>2</sup> P Pavithra

<sup>1</sup> M.Phil, Nadar Saraswathi College of Arts and Science, Theni, Tamil Nadu, India

<sup>2</sup> M.A., Nadar Saraswathi College of Arts and Science, Theni, Tamil Nadu, India

### Abstract

Linguistics or linguistic science can, broadly speaking be defined as a branch of knowledge consisting of a scientific study of language. Semantics is the study of meaning and its manifestation in language. The study of linguistics units and their principles of combination would not be complete without an account of what these units mean, what they are used to talk about and what they are used to communicate.

**Keywords:** linguistic, meaning, semantics, language

### Introduction

The meaning was always a central concern with thinkers. In Vedas, meaning has been treated as the essence of language and the speech without meaning has been called 'the tree without fruits and flowers'. This has been the root of many divergent opinions and definitions of meaning. Ancient Indian scholars such as Katyayana, Patanjali, Vyadi, vyas, etc. regard the relationship of word and meaning as eternal. According to Patanjali, words naturally express meaning. Were the words perpetual, one word would have intended one the similar thing in all the languages; there would have been no semantic change, and men would not have felt any necessity of learning words.

Semantics then does not set itself the goal to get and grab that elusive entity called 'meaning'; it rather seeks to understand how words and sentences 'mean', how, that is, they can be meaningful. If we are talking of 'having' meaning, it is rather like talking about 'having length'. Having length is not something over and above this. Likewise, sense is not some unit that words or any other linguistic entities have, in any factual sagacity of having.

### The scope of a semantic theory

Meaning properties of words that play an important role in the description of human languages. Another important semantic property of words is ambiguity. This theory owes its origin to de Saussure's distinction between Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic relations. The metaphor used to illustrate the point is that of a constellation at the center is the linguistic item on which converge other items. The whole range of associations builds up the field of meaning.

### Sense and Reference

The distinction between sense and reference relates to two aspects of semantic relationship; one within the language and other outside it. The relationships that hold amongst elements of language are known as sense relationships.

The reference- sense dichotomy is based on the perception

that there are two aspects of semantics, one that relates meaning to the world of experience and the other that identifies meaning in terms of intra- linguistic relationships. Ambiguous, paradoxical and anomalous sentences pose particular problem and it is argued that a semantic theory must be able to provide proper explanation. The sense- reference distinction is a difficult one.

### Semantic Structure

Words from certain kinds of relations these are called sense relations that are paradigmatic and Syntagmatic

- Hyponymy
- Synonymy
- Antonymy
- Polysemy
- Homonymy

### Hyponymy

Hyponymous sets be able to seen in such combinations denoting guy- feminine- kid in dog- bitch- puppy; ram- ewe- lamb; when such terms do not exist, they are formed: female giraffe, baby giraffe. The connection of completeness rests on the perception of reference. Words that are members of a category are called hyponyms.

### Synonymy

Synonymy refers to similarity or sameness of meaning. Thus, we say that automobile is synonymous with car, plane is synonymous with aircraft, and kid is synonymous with child. This is a useful perception for the word list makers, who need words for one word which have superior extent of parallel. To an extent this is acceptable, it is acceptable, and it is a working concept. They denote the same thing but in connotation they differ significantly. This kind of meaning is also known as conceptual or cognitive meaning.

### Antonymy

The notion of antonymy implies oppositeness of connotation where the appreciation and claim of one implies the denial of

the other. Typical examples of word antonymy include the following:

Small and large share the notion “size” but differ in degree  
Cold and hot share the notion “temperature” but differ in degree

These words can be handled in terms of the degree of quality involved. The comparative forms of the adjectives are graded: wide- wider; happy- happier; old- older. These are also implicit graded in that these words are understood only in terms of their comparative forms.

### **Polysemy**

A word is identified as possessing two or more meanings it is known as polysemy. Polysemy is the result of ordinary contextual shifts in application. These different meanings are derived from one basic idea or concept.

### **Homonymy**

Homonymous terms are definite as sounding identical but possessing diverse meanings. Homophonous terms may be spelled and printed identically or in unusual customs. The problem of identifying homonym is a practical one and often it is difficult to determine exactly what is what.

### **Conclusion**

A semanticist would akin to locate how a man is able to interpret, change, and distinguish ambiguities and why the surrounding words sometimes force him to choose one interpretation rather than another. The term semantics was first used in the seventeenth century in the phrase semantick philosophy. The semantic component has never occupied the central place in linguistic science, ‘all linguists have explicitly or implicitly, accepted a linguistic model in which semantics is at one and phonetics at the other, with grammar somewhere in the middle

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