

WEEK 4

COURSE TITLE: SEMANTICS
AND PRAGMATICS

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SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS

- Last week, we looked at the theories of meaning.
- We looked at how semantics has been studied.
- This week, we are going to look at the types of meaning.
- This means that meaning can be expressed in different ways.

TYPES OF MEANING

- Expected learning outcomes
- By the end of this lesson, you should be able to :
 - i. Discuss the types of meaning
 - ii. Distinguish between denotations and connotations
 - iii. Assess language use with regard to meaning.

TYPES OF MEANING

Leech (1985) gives these 7 types of meaning

- a) Denotative/conceptual meaning
- b) Connotative meaning
- c) Affective meaning
- d) Stylistic/social meaning
- e) Reflective meaning
- f) Collocative meaning
- g) Thematic meaning ‘

Leech, G. (1985). *Semantics: The study of meaning*. GB: Chaucer Press.pg. 22.

DENOTATIVE/CONCEPTUAL MEANING

- Conceptual meaning is synonymous with primary, central, logical, cognitive or denotative meaning of a word.
- The first ordinary meaning listed in dictionaries, which is not affected by the context, or emotional overtones associated with the act of communication.
- There is an assumed shared conceptual meaning of every word of a language.
- Remember Naming as a scope of Semantics?

DENOTATIVE/ CONCEPTUAL MEANING

- There is a universal implication of the conceptual meaning.
- It is possible to express the conceptual meaning of a word using contrastive semantic features.
- Such features indicate the attributes present and those that are absent.
- If a feature is present, it is specified as (+); if absent, it is (-)
- These contrastive features specifying the attributes of the words provide the necessary criteria for the correct use of words.

DENOTATIVE/CONCEPTUAL MEANING

| Man | Woman |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| + male + adult | - Male + adult |

This method is called componential analysis.

The feature specifications for the words man and woman are as shown in the table above.

DENOTATIVE/ CONCEPTUAL MEANING

- The conceptual meaning of a word constitutes a major part of the shared system of a language for all speakers.
- It is a criteria element of human communication since it is a major factor in language.
- The use of this process has been described as componential analysis. It is a major process in structural semantics.

DENOTATIVE MEANING

- The other principle that is based on structural semantics is the view that larger linguistic units are built up out of smaller units
- (i.e, a sentence is made of constituents)
- In analyzing the sentence, we move from its immediate constituents through a hierarchy of subdivision to its ultimate constituents.
- This analysis can be represented in a tree diagram. (Provide a diagram of the sentence 'That man is a teacher').

DENOTATIVE MEANING

- The two principles of contastiveness and structure represent the way language is organized:
- paradigmatic (or selectional) and,
- The young man is admirable.
- The old man is admirable.
- ‘young’ and ‘old’ are in a paradigmatic relationship.
- syntagmatic (or combinatory).
- The old man is admirable. (All these words relate syntagmatically)

CONNOTATIVE MEANING

- This is the communicative value an expression has by virtue of what it refers to, over and above its purely conceptual content.
- To a large extent, the notion of reference overlaps with conceptual meaning.
- For example, the word 'woman'- can be defined by conceptual features such as:
- (+ adult -male +human).
- These three properties must provide a criterion for correct use of that word.
- They become attributes of the referent.

CONNOTATIVE MEANING

- There are many non-criterion properties that we have learnt to expect a referent 'woman' to possess.
- physical characteristics 'having a womb'
- psychological and
- social properties: gregarious, capable of speech, experienced in cookery, skirt or dress wearing (Leech, 1985)

Leech, Geoffrey. (1985). *Semantics: The study of meaning*. GB: Chaucer Press. pg.24.

CONNOTATIVE MEANING

- Connotative meaning further can embrace assumed properties of the referent.
- This is due to the viewpoints adopted by an individual or a group of people or a whole society.
- For example, in the past, 'woman' : (frail, prone to tears, cowardly, emotional, irrational, inconstant)
- Other positive qualities:gentle, compassionate, sensitive, hard-working.
- What are the connotations you have heard about women? How about men?

CONNOTATIVE MEANING

- Note that connotations vary from age to age and from society to society.
- Like 'non-trouser wearing' must have been a definitive connotation at a certain age, but now it is not relevant.
- Connotations are therefore unstable as compared to conceptual meanings;
- They vary -culture to culture, historical period and individual experiences
- It is also indeterminate and open ended just as our knowledge and beliefs about the universe are open ended: hence UNSTABLE

CONNOTATIONS FROM SKELL

| adjectives with woman | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. | pregnant | women who are pregnant |
| 2. | likely | women are more likely |
| 3. | aged | of women aged |
| 4. | vulnerable | women are more vulnerable |
| 5. | religious | women religious |
| 6. | inferior | women are inferior |
| 7. | young | women younger than |
| 8. | beautiful | women are beautiful |
| 9. | equal | and women are equal |
| 10. | capable | women are capable |
| 11. | susceptible | women are more susceptible to |
| 12. | prone | women are more prone |
| 13. | attractive | women attractive |
| 14. | willing | women willing |
| 15. | overweight | women who are overweight |

Source:

Skell.sketchengine.eu (Accessed on 16//04/2024)

CONNOTATIVE VS CONCEPTUAL VIEWS

- The conceptual meaning is given weight as:
- Speakers of the same language share the same conceptual framework just as they share the same syntax.
- Some semanticists have suggested that the same conceptual framework is common to all languages, and is a universal property of the human kind.

STYLISTIC (SOCIAL) MEANING

- Stylistic meaning is that which a piece of language conveys about the social circumstances of its use.
- We decode the stylistic meaning of a text through our recognition of different dimensions and levels of usage within the same language.
- We recognize some words as being dialectical
- (i.e telling us something of the geographical or social origin of the speaker)

STYLISTIC (SOCIAL) MEANING

- Other features of language tell us something of the social relationship between the speaker and the hearer.
- We have a scale of 'status' usage.
- For example, descending from formal and literary at one end to colloquial, familiar and eventually slang English at the other end.
- Crystal and Davy in Leech (1985) have organized the following main dimensions of stylistic variation:

Leech, Geoffrey. (1985). *Semantics: The study of meaning*. GB: Chaucer Press. Pg. 27.

STYLISTIC (SOCIAL) MEANING

| STYLISTIC DIMENSION | EXAMPLE |
|---------------------|--|
| DIALECT | language of geographical or social class |
| TIME | language of 18 th century, 19 th , 20 th , 21 st |
| MEDIUM | speech and writing |
| PARTICIPATION | monologue, dialogue. |
| PROVINCE | language of law, of science, of advertising |
| STATUS | polite, colloquial, slang |
| MODALITY | language of memoranda, lectures, jokes |
| SINGULARITY | (the language of Dickens, the language of Shakespeare) |

STYLISTIC (SOCIAL) MEANING- Formal vs informal

Example 1

Domicile- very formal, official

Residence- formal

Abode- poetic

Home- general

Example 2

Diminutive- very formal

Tiny- colloquial

Wee- colloquial, dialectal

Example 3

Cast- literary

Throw- general

Chunk- casual, slang

STYLISTIC (SOCIAL) MEANING

- The style dimension of ‘status’ is particularly important in distinguishing synonymous expressions.
- Consider these:
 - 1. They chucked a stone at the cops, and then did a bunk with the loot.
 - . After casting a stone at the police, they absconded with the money.

Source: Leech, Geoffrey. (1985). *Semantics: The study of meaning*. GB: Chaucer Press. Pg. 28.

STYLISTIC (SOCIAL) MEANING

- In a more local sense, social meaning can include illocutionary force of an utterance.
- That's whether it is going to be interpreted as a request, an assertion, an apology, a threat.
- The function an utterance performs in this respect may be related to its conceptual meaning.
- 'I don't wear earrings' what would it mean?

AFFECTIVE MEANING

- This is concerned with how language reflects the personal feelings of the speaker, including his/her attitude to the listener, or to something being talked about.
- Often conveyed through the conceptual or connotative content of the words used.
- Consider these statements:

AFFECTIVE MEANING

- Affective meaning is related to the feelings and attitudes of the speaker towards the subject or the audience.
- Often, affective meaning is explicitly conveyed through conceptual and connotative content of words.
- This meaning is achieved by the choice of words.
- Certain words suggest positive feelings - *love, attraction, happiness, exciting* etc.

AFFECTIVE MEANING

- 1. You are disgusting!
- 2. I am terribly sorry to interrupt, but I wonder if you would be so kind as to lower your voices a little.
- 3. Will you shut up!
- 4. Kindly, allow me to give my report.
- Here are various levels of impoliteness and politeness and they signify different attitudes of the speakers towards their addressees.

AFFECTIVE MEANING

- Some others stir up negative reactions - *disgusting, nauseating, disappointing, etc.*
- Interjections like ah!, oh!, uh!, mmn!, often suggest the emotional state of the mind.
- Other words like darling, daddy, mummy, and so on, give an impression of endearment.

AFFECTIVE MEANING

- Factors such as intonation and voice, tone and stress are important here.
- Affective meaning is largely considered a parasitic category in the sense that to express our emotions'
- we rely upon the mediation of other categories of meaning-
conceptual, connotative, stylistic.

REFLECTED MEANING

- Arises in cases of multiple conceptual meanings where one sense of a word forms part of our response to another sense.
- One sense seems to ‘rub-off’ on another sense especially when it has a dominant suggestive power,
 - either through frequency and familiarity or through the strength of its associations.
- Relates to expressions with multiple meanings.

REFLECTED MEANING

- Words with several meanings (polysemous words), have many meanings.
- There is, however, a dominant meaning among these several meanings.
- As a particular sense of a word begins to assume prominence;
- all other senses begin to be de-emphasised and with time, these other senses disappear.

REFLECTED MEANING

- The case where reflected meaning intrudes through the sheer strength of emotive suggestion can be illustrated by words which have a taboo meaning.
- it is increasingly difficult to use terms like *intercourse*, *ejaculation*, and *erection* in innocent senses without conjuring up their sexual associations.
- This is known as taboo contamination- which has accounted in the past dying out of the non-taboo sense of a word.
- See examples in concordance:

intercourse

5.65 hits per million



1. Sexual **intercourse** burns approximately 150 calories per half hour.
2. They were having **intercourse** twenty hours too late!
3. Sexual **intercourse** is depicted through simple graphic outlines.
4. This condition may cause pain during sexual **intercourse** .
5. Men may find some sensitivity loss during **intercourse** .
6. The prevalence of sexual **intercourse** before marriage is clearly indicated.
7. The human reproductive system usually involves internal fertilization by sexual **intercourse** .
8. Sexual **intercourse** between the pair was strictly forbidden.
9. No evidence of recent sexual **intercourse** present.
10. Reference has been made above to unlawful sexual **intercourse** .
11. Your behavior is far from sexual **intercourse** .
12. This odour may be more prominent following sexual **intercourse** .

Source:

Skell.sketchengine.eu (Accessed on 16//04/2024)

erect 16.43 hits per million

Examples Word sketch Similar words

1. The current building was **erected** in 1816.
2. The new product storage building has steel being **erected** .
3. Their bearing is often **erect** and military.
4. Very black eyes dark complexion—thin and **erect** .
5. You should avoid **erecting** these fences beneath overhead power cables.
6. These dwellings were **erected** in 2 days.
7. A school building was **erected** in 1917.
8. A monument **erected** here commemorates this event.
9. Streets were laid down and various wooden buildings were **erected** .
10. The factory **erected** in 1821 still stands.
11. The violence escalated and barricades were **erected** .
12. Seven light standards were **erected** around the stadium.
13. The commemorative monuments are traditionally **erected** at collection points elsewhere.
14. The present school was **erected** in 1885.

Source:
Skell.sketchengine.eu (Accessed on 16//04/2024)

ejaculate

Examples Word sketch Similar words

ejaculate 0.66 hits per million

1. I had not fully reached puberty yet and had never **ejaculated** .
2. The prostate gland contributes additional fluid to the **ejaculate** .
3. This could be generated unless approach is **ejaculated** .
4. He has an erection and **ejaculates** sperm.
5. Can a 5 year old boy **ejaculate** ?
6. It has been suggested that females receive benefit from the **ejaculate** .
7. The male must be able to produce and **ejaculate** functional sperm.
8. Your **ejaculate** is an index within which women maneuver your manhood.
9. Medium term abstinence are optimal for the study of **ejaculate** .
10. After you have peaked several times without **ejaculating** , stop.
11. This pounding makes the transsexual **ejaculate** all over herself.
12. PC exercises to increase the amount of **ejaculate** produced.
13. We were only **ejaculated** twice as I recall!

Source:
Skell.sketchengine.eu (Accessed on 16//04/2024)

REFLECTED MEANING

- It seems then, that ‘intercourse’ and ‘ejaculate’ have been affected more by taboo contamination than ‘erect’.
- Perhaps, in a short time, the taboo meaning of erect will dominate the meaning of ‘to build’ or ‘to be straight’ .
- I now remember other terms like ‘gay’ and ‘straight’ which have other senses. They will almost suffer the same fate of taboo contamination.

COLLOCATIVE MEANING

- This consists of associations a word acquires on account of the meanings of words which tend to occur in its environment.
- ‘Pretty’ and ‘handsome’ share common ground in the meaning ‘good looking’
- But,
- may be distinguished by the range of nouns which they are likely to co-occur or collocate.

COLLOCATIVE MEANING

- Pretty girls, women, garden.
- Handsome man, boy, vessel, car, airline
- Quasi-synonymous verbs such as ‘wander’ and ‘quiver’ are other examples:
- *Cows wander* collocate; *cows stroll* do not collocate
- *Tremble with fear*, collocate; *tremble with excitement* , not correct
- *Quiver with excitement* , is okay; *quiver with fear* , is not okay

COLLOCATIONS

- If you replace collocations with synonyms, that language will sound unnatural.
- They help us to learn a language easily.
- The company's success was taken by surprise.
- 'taken by surprise' is a common collocation.
- If one says 'taken by shock', it will be unnatural.
- collocation/cooccurrence is the basis of idioms or fixed expressions in languages.

put

verb ▾

✓ Show context



| subject of put | object of put | phrasal | phrasal with object |
|---|---|--|---|
| 1. estimate estimates put the | 1. pressure put pressure on | 1. aside put aside | 1. down put down |
| 2. someone someone put | 2. end put an end to the | 2. down put down | 2. aside put aside |
| 3. God God put | 3. emphasis put more emphasis | 3. off put off by | 3. on put it on |
| 4. argument the arguments put forward | 4. money put money | 4. up put up with | 4. out put out |
| 5. proposal proposals put forward by | 5. effort effort put | 5. away put away | 5. up put up |
| 6. government government put | 6. stop to put a stop to | 6. in have put in | 6. away put away |
| 7. people people put | 7. strain put a strain | 7. on put on . | 7. in put it in |
| 8. man men put | 8. thing put things | 8. out put out | 8. off put off |
| 9. i i put | 9. lot put a lot of | 9. through put through | 9. through put me through |
| 10. company company put | 10. people put people | 10. across to put across | 10. over put it over |
| 11. guy guys put | 11. plan plans were put | 11. upon put upon | 11. across put it across |
| 12. doctor doctor put | 12. ball put the ball | 12. over to put over | 12. around put around the |
| 13. shot in the shot put | 13. everything put everything | 13. around to put around | 13. upon |

Source:
Skell.sketchengine.eu (Accessed on 16//04/2024)

ASSOCIATIVE MEANING: A SUMMARY TERM

- Reflective, collocative, affective, and social meanings are common due to the connotative sense as opposed to the conceptual sense.
- They all have the same open-ended, variable character, and lend themselves to analysis in terms of scales and ranges, rather than in discrete either-this-or- that terms.
- They can all be brought together under the heading of ASSOCIATIVE MEANING.

THEMATIC MEANING

- Thematic meaning is communicated by the way in which a speaker or writer organizes the message, in terms of ordering, focus, and emphasis.
- The president visited the donor agencies.
- The donor agencies were visited by the president.
- These sentences have different communicative values as they suggest different contexts:

THEMATIC MEANING

- Thematic meaning is mainly a matter of choice between alternative grammatical constructions:

A man is waiting in the hall.

There is a man waiting in the hall.

They stopped at the end of the corridor.

At the end of the corridor, they stopped.

I like cheese.

It is cheese that I like.

Summary

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| | 1. CONCEPTUAL MEANING <i>or Sense</i> | Logical, cognitive, or denotative content. |
| ASSOCIATIVE MEANING | 2. CONNOTATIVE MEANING | What is communicated by virtue of what language refers to. |
| | 3. SOCIAL MEANING | What is communicated of the social circumstances of language use. |
| | 4. AFFECTIVE MEANING | What is communicated of the feelings and attitudes of the speaker/writer. |
| | 5. REFLECTED MEANING | What is communicated through association with another sense of the same expression. |
| | 6. COLLOCATIVE MEANING | What is communicated through association with words which tend to occur in the environment of another word. |
| | 7. THEMATIC MEANING | What is communicated by the way in which the message is organized in terms of order and emphasis. |

Leech, Geoffrey. (1985). *Semantics: The study of meaning*. GB: Chaucer Press.

REFERENCES

- Leech, Geoffrey. (1985). *Semantics: The study of meaning*. GB: Chaucer Press.
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NEXT LESSON: LESSON 5

- We shall look at Sense relations.