



# SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS

## WEEK 5 – SENSE RELATIONS

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# SENSE RELATIONS

- ▶ Words and phrases can enter into a variety of semantic relations with each other.
- ▶ Because these relations help identify those aspects of meaning relevant to linguistic analysis.
- ▶ Remember when we talked about sense and reference as key concepts in Semantics, we talked about sense relations like synonymy and antonymy.
- ▶ These fall under lexical semantics.

# SENSE RELATIONS

- ▶ We shall discuss the following:
- ▶ SYNONYMY
- ▶ ANTONYMY
- ▶ HOMONYMY
- ▶ POLYSEMY
- ▶ HOMOPHONY
- ▶ MERONYMY

# SYNONYMY

- ▶ Synonyms are words that have the same meaning in some or all contexts.

vacation - holidays

youth - adolescent

Automobile- car

remember - recall

purchase - buy

big - large

# SYNONYMY

- ▶ Various scholars have observed that there are no perfect or true synonyms.'
- ▶ For example, O'Gardy & Archibald (2016) observe that because it would be inefficient for a language to have two words or phrases with absolutely identical meanings, perfect synonymy is rare, if not impossible.
- ▶ Words such as *vacation* and *holidays* may be interchangeable in particular contexts
- ▶ (*I spent my vacation/holidays in the Maritimes*) , but their meanings are not always identical.

O'Gardy, W. & Archibald, J. (2016). *Contemporary linguistics analysis*. Toronto: Pearson.

# SYNONYMY

- ▶ For example, Christmas and Easter Monday are holidays, but they are not necessarily part of one's vacation.
- ▶ Similarly, although *youth* and *adolescent* both refer to people of about the same age,
- ▶ only the latter word can be used to imply immaturity—as in *What adolescent behaviour!*

# SYNONYMY

- ▶ Palmer (1976) also makes a similar observation as by maintaining that 'there are no real synonyms; that no words have exactly the same meaning.
- ▶ There are different ways to support this assertion:
  1. Some sets of synonyms belong to different dialects of the language:

Fall is used in The USA while autumn is used in Britain

Tap (British)- faucet or spigot (USA).

Here, the difference is a matter of having different vocabulary items

Palmer, F.R. (1976). Semantics: A new outline. UK: Cambridge University Press. Pg.16

# SYNONYMY

- ▶ 2. Synonyms often belong to different registers or styles of language such as formal, literary or colloquial.
- ▶ *Bond concealed the automobile under a tarpaulin* is more formal than *Bond hid the car under the tarp.*
- ▶ Nasty smell- obnoxious effluvium- 'orrible stink
- ▶ Gentleman-man-chap
- ▶ Pass away- die-pop off.
- ▶ Assassinate – execute- murder- kill- massacre

- ▶ Sometimes the connotations of synonymous words are associated with their language of origin, as in:

▶ English	French	Latin
▶ <i>fire</i>	<i>flame</i>	<i>conflagration</i>
▶ <i>fear</i>	<i>terror</i>	<i>trepidation</i>
▶ <i>rise</i>	<i>mount</i>	<i>ascend</i>
▶ <i>ask</i>	<i>question</i>	<i>interrogate</i>

- ▶ These words differ in their register, or level of formality. The English words are most colloquial or informal, the French words are more literary, and the Latin words are most technical or formal.

# SYNONYMY

- ▶ Words have literal or referential meanings (denotations) but also evoke feelings, attitudes or opinions (connotations).
- ▶ The following words, whose denotations are similar, if not identical, carry different connotations either good or bad:
- ▶ *soldier – warrior*
- ▶ *relax – loaf*
- ▶ *insect – bug*
- ▶ *hound – dog*
- ▶ *illness – disease – ailment – condition*
- ▶ *generous – extravagant – wasteful*
- ▶ *fat – obese – plump – portly – stout – substantial*
- ▶ *plan – trick – ruse -stratagem*

# SYNONYMY

3. Synonyms also differ in the company they keep (i.e in the collocations they enter into).

- ▶ 'Strong' and 'powerful' are synonyms, and share common contexts.
- ▶ He has strong arms
- ▶ He has powerful arms.
- ▶ But we speak of 'The strong arm of the law' not 'A powerful arm of the law'.

# ANTONYMY

- ▶ **Antonymy** is the relation of opposite in meaning, e.g *big* and *small*, *long* and *short*, *up* and *down*, *dead* and *alive*, *boy* and *girl*, *come* and *go*.
- ▶ In each of these pairs, the two words contrast with respect to at least one aspect of their meaning.
- ▶ For instance, the meanings of *boy* and *girl* are opposites with respect to gender, although they are alike in other respects (both are human).
- ▶ Similarly, *come* and *go* are opposites with respect to direction, although both involve the concept of movement.

# GRADABLE ANTONYMS

- ▶ They allow intermediate degrees between the two opposite extremes, like *big* and *small*, *fast* and *slow* and *rich* and *poor*.
- ▶ Thus, can be used in comparative constructions, like *richer than* and *poorer than*.
- ▶ the negative of one does not necessarily imply the positive of the other: *not fast* does not necessarily mean *slow*.

# NON-GRADABLE ANTONYMS

- ▶ Also called complementary antonyms
- ▶ These are polar opposites, and allow no intermediate degrees.
- ▶ Examples are *dead* and *alive*, *pass* and *fail*, *male* and *female*, and *true* and *false*.
- ▶ For these, the negative of one does imply the positive of the other: *not true* implies *false*, *not dead* implies *alive*.
- ▶ Non-gradable antonyms do not normally enter into the comparative construction.

# REVERSE ANTONYMS

These are words which contrast in direction of movement. Pairs like *push* and *pull*, *come* and *go*, and *rise* and *fall*,

They can also be interpreted as being opposite in meaning.

Other examples:

*tie* and *untie*,

*pack* and *unpack*, and

*inflate* and *deflate* where there is a reversal of the action sequence.

# CONVERSE/RELATIONAL ANTONYMS

- ▶ **Converses** describe the same relation from contrasting viewpoints, as in *own* and *belong to* (*he owns it, it belongs to him*),
- ▶ *like* and *please* (*I like it, it pleases me*), *give* and *receive*
- ▶ (*I gave money to the beggar, the beggar received money from me*),
- ▶ and *above* and *below* (*the red block is above the blue block, the blue block is below the red block*).
- ▶ Husband and wife
- ▶ Doctor and patient

# POLYSEMY

This sense relation occurs where a word has more than one meaning out of context; the meanings are related to one another, e.g.:

- ▶ *court*: 'enclosed area', 'retinue of a sovereign', 'judicial tribunal';
- ▶ *mouth*: 'opening through which an animate being takes food', 'the part of a river which empties into a lake or sea';
- ▶ *bug*: 'insect', 'enthusiast', 'electronic device for eavesdropping', 'design defect in a computer';
- ▶ *fire*: 'to burn or ignite', 'to shoot a gun', 'to discharge from one's employment'

# POLYSEMY

- ▶ It results from a natural economic tendency of language.
- ▶ Rather than inventing new expressions for new objects, activities, experiences, etc. to be denoted, language communities usually opt for applying existing terms to new objects, terms hitherto used for similar things.
- ▶ Scientific terminology is one source contributing to polysemy on a greater scale.
- ▶ Some scientific terms are newly coined, but most of them will be derived from ordinary language use.
- ▶ Among the terms introduced here, *lexeme*, *homonymy*, *polysemy* are original scientific terms, while others, such
- ▶ as *meaning*, *reference* or *composition*, are ordinary expressions for which an additional technical meaning variant was introduced.

# HOMONYMY

- ▶ Two words sound and are written the same but are different in meaning, e.g
- ▶ *bark1* 'outer covering of wood'
- ▶ *bark2* 'harsh sound, uttered by a dog'
  
- ▶ *sound1* 'noise'
- ▶ *sound2* 'body of water'
- ▶ *sound3* 'free from defect'

# HOMONYMY

- ▶ *band1* ‘group of people’
- ▶ *band2* ‘thin strip for encircling an object’
- ▶ *swallow1* ‘to ingest’
- ▶ *swallow2* ‘a type of bird’

# HOMONYMY

- ▶ Homonyms represent different entries in a dictionary, while the different meanings of a polysemous word are listed under a single entry.
- ▶ Without consulting a dictionary, it is difficult to distinguish between polysemy and homonymy,
- ▶ When one is dealing with two meanings for a single word or two different words.
- ▶ In general, different meanings are assigned to different lexemes if they have different historical sources.
- ▶ The idea is that, as long as their meanings remain distinct,
- ▶ different words do not develop into one, even if their sound forms and/or spellings happen to coincide.

# HOMONYMY

- ▶ The adjective *light* can be used with two meanings.
- ▶ Let us talk of *lightA1* if the adjective is taken as the opposite of *dark*, and of *lightA2* if it is the opposite of *heavy* or *difficult*.
- ▶ However, *lightA1* and *lightA2* have not always had the same form; *lightA1* derives from a historical source which in German developed into the present-day adjective *licht*
- ▶ (meaning, in one of its meaning variants, approximately the same as *lightA1*).
- ▶ Words with the same historical origin are called **cognates**.
- ▶ Due to their different origins, *lightA1* and *lightA2* are considered two different lexemes by most linguists (Lobner,2023).

# TOTAL HOMONYMY

- ▶ The two adjectives *light*A1 and *light*A2 are an instance of what is called **total homonymy**:
- ▶ two lexemes that share all distinctive properties (grammatical category and grammatical properties,
- ▶ the set of grammatical
- ▶ forms, sound form and spelling)
- ▶ yet have unrelated different meanings

# PARTIAL HOMONYMY

**partial homonymy occurs** if two lexemes with different unrelated meanings coincide in some but not all of their grammatical forms,

- ▶ e.g. the verbs *lie*<sub>1</sub> (*lay, lain*) and
- ▶ *lie*<sub>2</sub> (*lied, lied*).
- ▶ Partial homonyms can give rise to ambiguity in some contexts
- ▶ (*don't lie in bed!*) but can be distinguished in others
- ▶ (*he lay/lied in bed*).

# HOMOGRAPHS AND HOMOPHONES

Homonymy can be related either to the sound forms of the lexemes or to their spellings:

with respect to the written form it is **homography**;

if two lexemes with unrelated meanings have the same sound form, they constitute a case of **homophony**.

- ▶ The nouns *bow1*, *bow2*, *bow3* are all homographs,
- ▶ But, only *bow2* and *bow3* are also homophones.

# HOMOGRAPHS AND HOMOPHONES

- ▶ Examples for words that are total homophones but not homographs would be the noun pairs *tail/tale*, *story/storey* or *cue/queue*.
- ▶ Partial homophones are numerous: *threw/through*, *write/right*, *there/their*,
- ▶ *whole/hole*, *to/two/too* and so on.

# HYPONYMY

- ▶ **Hyponymy** is a relation of inclusion or entailment.
- ▶ The set of terms *red, scarlet, crimson, vermilion, pink, maroon*, and so on, *red* ( the **superordinate term**, and *scarlet*, etc. are what he call **cohyponyms**
- ▶ The meaning of the hyponym includes the meaning of the superordinate term (*red* includes *scarlet, crimson*, etc.)
- ▶ *Dog* and *cat* are co-hyponyms of *animal*; *slap* and *punch* are co-hyponyms of *hit*; and *carrot* is a hyponym of *vegetable*.

# HYPONYMY

- ▶ Hyponymy is a 'kind of ' relation:
- ▶ hyponyms are 'kinds of ' the superordinate category, which in turn indicates the general type of the hyponym.
- ▶ Thus, relations of hyponymy associate meanings on taxonomic hierarchies
- ▶ Certain semantic domains lend themselves well to this sort of analysis, including colour terms, kinship terms and terms for animals and plants.

# MERONYMY

- ▶ Many objects in the world are conceived as a whole consisting of different parts.
- ▶ Example:
- ▶ the human body with its various parts, their subparts, and so on.
- ▶ The head - eyes, ears, nose and tongue; it contains the brain, etc.
- ▶ The face -the eyes, the nose and the mouth.

# MERONYMY

- ▶ The technical term for the constituting meaning relation is **meronymy**
- ▶ (from ancient Greek *meron* part; the term *partonomy* is also used),
- ▶ a system based on meronymies is called a mereological system, or mereology.
- ▶ If A is a **meronym** of B, then B is a **holonym** of A (from ancient Greek *holos* whole).

# MERONYMY

- ▶ Meronymies involving nouns can be spelt out with the help of sentences of the form 'an A has a B',
- ▶ (e.g. *a head has a face, a face has a mouth, a mouth has a tongue, a tongue has a tip, etc.*)
- ▶ This is, however, not a reliable test for meronymy.
- ▶ Every person has a mother, a weight, an age, and so on, but these are not parts of the person.

# SUMMARY

- ▶ We have evaluated sense relations:
  - Synonymy
  - Antonymy
  - Homonymy
  - Polysemy
  - Hyponymy
  - meronymy

# REREFERENCES

- ▶ Lobner, S. (2013 ). *Understanding semantics*. NY: Routledge.
- ▶ O'Gardy, W. &Archibald, J. (2016).*Contemporary linguistics analysis*. Toronto: Pearson.
- ▶ Palmer, F.R. (1976). *Semantics: A new outline*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

# LESSON 6

- ▶ Functions of meaning in society