

ФИЛОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ НАУКИ

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LEXICAL SEMANTICS

Semantics is the study of linguistic meaning. We can study meaning on a number of different levels: lexical semantics is the study of the meaning of individual words (lexical items) in isolation; sentence semantics is the study of the meaning of a sentence, of the semantic relationships holding among the parts of sentence; and text (discourse) semantics is the study of the meaning of extended discourse (spoken or written), of the semantic relationship holding among utterances.

As speakers of English, we know the meaning of words; even when they occur in isolation from any context or situation, we recognize that the words have, or may have, particular meanings that are different from the meanings of other words. Thus, while man in isolation could mean either 'adult male person' or simply 'person', we still know that it does not refer to a kind of plant. Feather more, we understand certain semantic relationships among the words: all four refer to human beings; boy and girl are related through the concept of youth (or absence of physical maturity); man and woman are words for older, more mature individuals; boy and man are male; girl and woman are female. These elements of meaning may serve as the basis for definitions; that is, we may use the concept 'human', 'young', 'old', 'male', and 'female' as semantic features.

Key words: *lexical meaning, morphologically, derivation, inflection, linguistic meaning.*

Aims

To know the formalization and the operation of a number of English transformations, to observe the lexicon of a grammar that contains a list of morphemes. And clarifying the meaning of words that are different from the meaning of other words.

Introduction

The semantics of derivation, looking at a group of derivational operations in English, some of which are semantically very particular, such as -ism, and others of which are very abstract. Our point

has been to show that the meanings of morphologically complex words are partially predictable from the meanings of their parts. It is only through use in context that they acquire particular meanings. Over time, a single word may acquire a number of distinct lexicalized meanings and, as a result, a complex lexical entry.

We pursue the theme of derivation and semantics further by examining some verbal derivational suffixes. These express causative, reflexive, and reciprocal meaning, as well as the fact that an action begins away from the speaker. We begin with a necessary overview of verbal inflection and derivation, but the former will be treated in fuller next essay.

If we add to the stock of semantic features, other words may be defined. For example, the general feature (animal), along with a more specific feature such as (equine), when combined with (young), (old), (male), and (female), permits the definition of the lexical items.

This chapter shows in detail how lexical morphology successfully deals with a number of analytical problems in English word-formation. The next chapter goes on to highlight recalcitrant problems that still defy this theory.

Sentence semantics

The linguistic meaning of a sentence consists of more than just the sum of lexical meanings involved. In the following examples, the (a) and (b) sentences have different meanings although each pair contains the same words.

- A. Tarry chased the dog.
- B. The dog chased Terry.
- A. Janice can swim.
- B. Can Janice swim?

Interpretive semantics first developed in the early 1960s as an attempt to include an account of sentence meaning in descriptive grammars of the form illustrated in figure 16.7. Over the fifteen years, linguists have proposed several different hypotheses regarding the type of syntactic structures to which rules of semantic interpretation should be applied. Each proposal succeeds in accounting for certain aspects of sentence semantics but fails to account for other aspects. The arguments and evidence are complex and cannot be described here. We will merely present the basic issues and briefly identify the most well-known hypotheses. "Further Exploration" provides direction to more detailed accounts of sentence semantics.

The standard theory of interpretive semantics hypothesizes that semantic interpretation should take place at the level of deep structure. In this approach, sentence pairs such as those in (13) and (14) will be assigned the same meaning since they have same deep structure and it is at the level of deep structure that meaning is assigned.

- A. Read the book!
- B. You will read the book!
- A. That the elves dug those craters surprised the scientists.
- B. It surprised the scientists that the elves dug those craters [3].

Lexical Semantics

Preview

This chapter first considers some common assumptions about word meaning. The technical terms that linguists use in naming various relationships holding between words and sentences are introduced. The chapter then examines one way of approaching the problem of lexical meaning called *structural semantics*. The inherent meaning of nouns, verbs, and modal auxiliaries is next analyzed, breaking down their meaning using a given set of lexical features. Weaknesses with the notion of lexical features are briefly considered, as well as an alternative approach based on prototypes. Semantic restrictions on the combinations of words and the concept of semantic anomaly are then discussed. The

chapter ends with an enumeration of the different types of figurative language, focusing on how metaphors are recognized and interpreted.

Basic Semantic Relationships

As speakers of the language, we all have an implicit understanding of a number of semantic relationships that hold between either words or sentences in the language. Let’s examine briefly the technical terms that linguists use to describe the different types of relationships.

1. Paraphrase: one statement is a paraphrase of another when it has the same meaning as another, as Philip purchased an automobile is a paraphrase of Philip bought a car (we will look at synonymy – sameness of meaning between words – below).

2. Entailment, or implication: one statement entails another when the second is a logically necessary consequence of the first, as Alan lives in Toronto entails Alan lives in Canada. Note that the relationship of entailment, unlike that of paraphrase, is one-way: it is not the case that Alan lives in Canada entails Alan lives in Toronto.

3. Inclusion: one statement includes another, as I like fruit includes I like apples. Again, this relationship is unidirectional: I like apples does not include I like (all) fruit.

4. Contradiction: a statement or sequence of statements is logically contradictory; that is, if one is true, the other must be false, as He is an orphan contradicts My parents are living or I spit out the beer I swallowed is internally contradictory.

Structural Semantics

One description of the meaning relationships of words in a language is that of the British linguist John Lyons and is called structural semantics. Lyons recognizes three major types of relationship: synonymy, hyponymy, and oppositeness.

The concept of synonymy is, of course, well-known and intuitively obvious; it denotes sameness in meaning, or sense, as with the words:

unhappy/sad correct/right prisoner/convict flourish/thrive	huge/enormous casual/informal present/gift donate/contribute
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Synonymy is context-dependent: pedigree refers only to animals, while ancestry, genealogy, and lineage refer only to human beings, and descent may refer to either; carcass refers only to animals, corpse only to human beings. Two words may have the same meaning in a particular context, but not necessarily in all contexts; for example, pale/light and peel/skin are synonymous in The shirt is {pale/light} in color or the {peel, skin} of the orange is thick but not in The book is {light, *pale} in weight or the girl’s {skin, *peel} is sunburned. Synonymy ignores the connotations of words and recognizes only their denotations. In fact, many synonyms differ only in respect to their connotations, as in horse/stead/nag [2].

Words and meanings: an introduction to lexical semantics

Words and Meanings

Semantics is the study of meaning. The study of meaning encompasses units of language which vary in size, from parts of words and sounds right up to whole clauses and sentences. The basic unit of analysis in semantics is the same and this term is often appended as a suffix to other structural terms to indicate which precise unit is being described. Morpheme, grapheme and phoneme, as we saw in the previous chapter, are units which are thus derived. The term in the previous chapter, are units

which are thus derived. The term lexical semantics is specifically reserved for the study of word meaning, while the term for a unit of meaning in lexical semantics is lexeme.

Even though bucket and kick would constitute two lexemes in most contexts, their individual meanings are nullified within the restricted semantic domain of this idiom. In other words, it is not the individual component words of (1) but the entire sequence 'kicked the bucket' which corresponds roughly to the single unit of meaning 'died'. The same principle is at work in this next set of idioms:

- 1) a red herring;
- 2) it's raining cats and dogs;
- 3) to go for a song [6].

Introduction to Word-Structure

What is a word?

The assumption that languages contain words is taken for granted by most people. Even illiterate speakers know that there are words in their language. True, sometimes there are differences of opinion as to what units are to be treated as words, for instance, English speakers might not agree whether all right is one word or two and as a result disputes may arise as to whether alright be the correct way of writing all right. But, by and large, people can easily recognize a word of their language when they see or hear one. And normally their judgments as to what is or is not a word do coincide. English speakers agree, for example, that the form stodgy in the sentence the stodgy cat on the mat is not an English word – but all the other forms are.

The lexeme However, closer examination of the nature of the 'word' reveals a somewhat more complex picture than painted above. What we mean by 'word' is not always clear. As we shall see in the next few paragraphs, difficulties in clarifying the nature of the word are largely due to the fact the term 'word' is used in a variety of senses that usually are not clearly distinguished. In taking the existence of words for granted, we tend to overlook the complexity of what it is we are taking for granted.

What would you do if you were reading a book and you encountered the 'word' pickled for the first item in this context?

He went to the pub for a pint and then pickled off.

Insights from Lexical Morphology

Lexical morphology provides us with the means of describing a number of morphological phenomena in an illuminating manner, with the word rather than the morpheme playing a pivotal role. This contrasts with the morphological models of the American structuralisms in which the morpheme rather than the word enjoyed pride of place (see Bloomfield, 1933; Harris, 1942; Noida, 1949; Hockett, 1954, 1958). As already mentioned, in giving the word a key role, lexical morphology is more in morphology and modern word-and paradigm morphology.

The effect of this requirement can be seen, for example, in the constraints on segment sequences that apply to words qua words and not to morphemes or combinations of morphemes that will eventually be realized as words. In many Bantu languages, for instance, all words must end in a vowel, but morphemes need not so. Most Bantu verb roots and verbal suffixes end in a consonant. So, because of the requirement that words must end in a vowel, there is a visually meaningless vowel (usually it is a, but in a few tenses and in the subjunctive it is e) that is found at the end of every verb. This vowel is called by grammarians the basic verbal suffix (BVS). It can be seen in the following Luganda example:

A. Ba- lab- a 'they see'.

They see BVS.

B. Ba- lab- agan- a 'they see each other'.

We cause so, whereas morphemes such as -lab-, -again- and -is- which end in a consonant are permitted, words ending in a consonant are outlawed.

The word is also a key unit for another reason: there are morphological processes whose input is normally a word and not just a morpheme. These processes include the following:

- (i) Compounding, where words like school and teacher are the input to the rule that produces schoolteacher.
- (ii) Affixation processes that have fully formed words as their input, such as the rules that attach prefix *re-* (meaning 'again') and suffix *y*:
 Open --- re-open quick --- quickly
 Write --- re-write nice --- nicely
- (iii) Conversion. Which changes the word-class of a pre-existing word without any overt change in the shape of the input:
 Staff --- staff narrow --- narrow
 Walk --- walk col --- cool

Lexical Morphology: An Appraisal

The crucial data involves the behavior of suffix -able -ible meaning 'capable of X, worthy to or suitable for X'.

DE 'cipher	de'cipherable
Re'pair	re'pairable
De'bate	de'batable
In'flate	in'flatable [5].

Paraphrases

Does he wear a turban, a fez or hat?
 Does he sleep on a mattress, a bed or a mat, or a Cot,
 The Akon of Swat?
 Can he write a letter concisely clear?
 Without a speck or a smudge or smear or Blot
 The Akon of Swat?

Edward Lear, "The Akon of Swat"

There are not only words that sound the same but have different meanings; there are also words that sound different but have the same or nearly the same meaning. Such words are called synonyms. There are dictionaries of synonyms that contain many hundreds of entries, such as:

Apathetic / phlegmatic / passive / sluggish / indifferent [4].

Derivation and Semantics

The Tune Reader quoted the following Bucharest sign in its March-April.

1996 issue: The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable. Unbearable is a perfectly good English word derived from the verb bear 'carry', or is it? Why is this sign so funny? First of all, unbearable already exists in English with the meaning 'difficult to tolerate', and this is the meaning we first think of when we read the sign. But this isn't the whole story. If we replace unbearable with a similar but unambiguous word, like transportable, the sentence is no longer humorous, but it still sounds less than native. It's because words like unbearable, untransportable, and uneatable describe inherent qualities of people or things [7].

Semantics as Part of a Grammar

The study of linguistic 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. The study of communication is a part of pragmatics.

In this chapter we will take up the first two topics, which constitute a major portion of semantics. Semantics has not always enjoyed a prominent role in modern linguistics. From World War I to the early 1960s semantics was viewed, especially in the United States, as not quite respectable: its inclusion in a grammar (as linguists sometimes call a scientific description of a language) was considered by many as either a sort of methodological impurity or an objective to be reached only in the distant future. But there is as much reason to consider semantics as a part of grammar as syntax, morphology, or phonology [1].

Conclusion

In this article suggested two more semantic features, (B) and (Ci) that appear to play a role in characterizing quantitative aspects of the simplex lexicon. We have further tried to show that these features are also exploited by the derivational system of English and indeed by a certain part of the inflectional system, that of inherent inflection. The features (B) and (C) complete the inventory of semantic features intend to introduce in this work.

Certainly, the inventory of semantic features necessary to characterize the simplex lexicon and the derivational system of English – much less of other languages – is not yet complete. To arrive at a complete system, indeed even to approach one, will require a great deal more work. What we hope to have done so far is merely to present enough of a fragment to suggest the utility of this approach both in describing lexical semantics and in explaining the major issues in the semantics of word formation: polysemy, the multiple-affix question, the issue of zero derivation. In the next chapter we will turn to the one major question we poses at the outset that we have not yet broached, that of semantic mismatches.

Although terminological differences about in the technical literature, most attempts to describe the linguistic meaning of words (and morphemes) have involved the use of semantic features. These features are individual elements of meaning which, that combine to result in a sound. As an example, consider the words.

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ЛЕКСИЧЕСКАЯ СЕМАНТИКА

Семантика – наука, изучающая значение единиц языка. Мы можем изучать значение на нескольких различных уровнях: лексическая семантика – это изучение значения отдельных слов (лексических элементов) изолированно; семантика предложения – это изучение смысла предложения, семантических отношений между частями предложения; семантика текста (дискурса) – это исследование значения расширенного дискурса (устного или письменного), семантических отношений, существующих между высказываниями.

Как носители английского языка мы знаем значение слов; даже когда они возникают изолированно от какого-либо контекста или ситуации, мы понимаем, что слова имеют или могут иметь определенные значения, которые отличаются от значений других слов. Таким образом, хотя слово «человек» в отдельности может означать либо «взрослый мужчина», либо просто «личность», мы все же знаем, что это не относится к виду растений. Более того, мы понимаем определенные семантические отношения между словами: все они относятся к людям; мальчик и девочка связаны концепцией молодости (или отсутствия физической зрелости); мужчина и женщина – слова для более зрелых людей; мальчик и мужчина – мужчины; девушка и женщина – женского пола. Эти элементы значения могут служить основой для определений; то есть мы можем использовать понятия 'человек', 'молодой', 'старый', 'мужчина' и 'женщина' в качестве семантических признаков.

Ключевые слова: лексическое значение, морфологический, словообразование, словоизменение, языковое значение.