

Semantics: A Coursebook

Chapter 3: ...to sense

Unit 9: Sense Properties and Stereotypes

In order to converse meaningfully, it is necessary to agree on the meanings of the words involved.

An *analytic* sentence is one that is necessarily true.

A *synthetic* sentence is one which is not analytic, which may or may not be true.

A *contradiction* is a sentence that is necessarily false.

The above characterisations are *sense properties* of sentences.

A *necessary condition* on the sense of a predicate is a condition which a thing must meet in order to qualify as being correctly described by that predicate.

A *sufficient condition* on the sense of a predicate is a condition which, if met by an object, is enough by itself to guarantee that the predicate correctly describes that object.

Predicates can be defined by specifying sets of necessary and sufficient conditions.

The *stereotype* of a predicate is a list of typical characteristics or features of things to which the predicate may be applied.

Unit 10: Sense Relations (1) – Identity and Similarity of Sense

Synonymy is the relationship between two predicates that have the same sense. A sentence which expresses the same proposition as another sentence is called a *paraphrase* of it.

Hyponymy is a sense relation between predicates such that the meaning of one is included in the meaning of the other.

If X is a hyponym of Y and vice versa, then X and Y are synonyms.

A proposition X *entails* a proposition Y if the truth of Y follows necessarily from the truth of X. The definition of entailment in the case of sentences is analogous.

Two sentences are paraphrases of each other iff they have the same set of entailments (or iff they entail each other).

The *Basic Rule of Sense Inclusion* states that if sentence A contains a word X where a sentence B contains X's hyponym Y (and A and B are otherwise identical), then A is entailed by B.

Systematic exceptions to this rule occur in sentences that are negated, and sentences which contain the word *all* (in which cases the entailment is reversed).

Unit 11: Sense Relations (2) – Oppositeness and Dissimilarity of Sense and Ambiguity

Binary antonyms are predicates which come in pairs and between them exhaust all the relevant possibilities. Binary antonyms entail each other's negations.

Converses are predicates which describe the same relationship between two things in opposite orders.

Predicates describing the multiple fields that a semantic system is divided into are called *multiple incompatibles*.

Two predicates are *gradable antonyms* if they are opposite ends of a continuous scale of values (which may vary according to context).

A proposition is *contradictory* of another if it is impossible for them to be true at the same time and of the same circumstances. The definition for contradictoriness of sentences is analogous.

A word or sentence is *ambiguous* when it has more than one sense, *i.e.*, it has two (or more) paraphrases which are not paraphrases of each other.

Similarly, a word or phrase is *ambiguous* if it has two (or more) synonyms that are not synonyms of each other.

Homonymy is exhibited by ambiguous words whose senses are not obviously related to each other. *Polysemy* is exhibited by ambiguous words with several very closely related senses.

A sentence which is ambiguous because its words relate to each other in different ways is *structurally* or *grammatically ambiguous*. Ambiguity resulting from the ambiguity of a word is *lexical ambiguity*.

A phrase is *referentially versatile* if it can be used to refer to a wide range of things. Referential vagueness, on the other hand, is when there is no clear line between two predicates (but it is not the same as ambiguity).