

Action sensitivity in grammar

IntenTional vs. IntenSional

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IntenTional, intenTional

(as opposed to ‘physical’)

These terms refer to mental phenomena: mental acts (such as believe, desire, intend), mental objects (objects of thought). They are usually used in philosophy to talk about mental (as opposed to physical), mind (as opposed to body).

IntenTions, intenTional, intenTional

(as opposed to ‘accidental’)

Intending is part of mental phenomena, but in this sense ‘intentions’, ‘intentional’, and ‘intentionality’ describe an action. We are interested in this sense of ‘intentional’.

IntenSions, intenSional, intenSional

(as opposed to ‘extensions’)

Think of these expressions as technical terms to refer to meanings (as opposed to referents), properties (as opposed to sets of objects).

- (1) $A = \{ \text{Washington, Adams, } \dots, \text{Trump, Biden} \}$ (extensional description)
 $B = \{ x : x \text{ has been a US President} \}$ (intensional description)

Today, A and B are extensionally equivalent (they have the same members). But let us say that we time-travel to 2024 where Lady Gaga becomes the next President of USA. In 2024, A and B are not extensionally equivalent. A no longer describes the set of US Presidents, whereas B still picks out all and only US Presidents.