

LING2006 Semantics

Tutorial: Introduction

Yige Chen

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Based on tutorial handouts by Dr. Zhuo Chen

January 17, 2024





Before We Start...

- This is the tutorial session of **LING2006 Semantics, Group 2**
- You are now at **Li Dak Sum Building 218**
- Make sure you are in the right tutorial session (we've got 2)



About Me

- Yige Chen
- Second-year PhD student in Linguistics at CUHK
- Research interests: Natural language processing
 - Information extraction in economics, finance and business
 - Incorporating linguistic knowledge into NLP models and tasks
 - Effects of languages and NLP on economic decision-making



About Me

- Education

- M.S., Computational Linguistics, University of Washington
- M.Phil., Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, University of Cambridge
- B.S., Economics, Linguistics, Mathematics, Asian Studies & Cert., Computer Sciences, University of Wisconsin–Madison

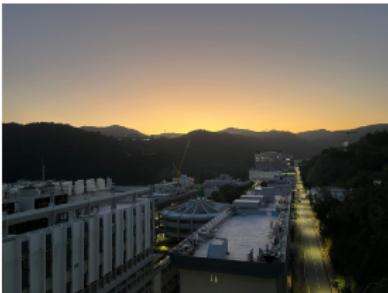
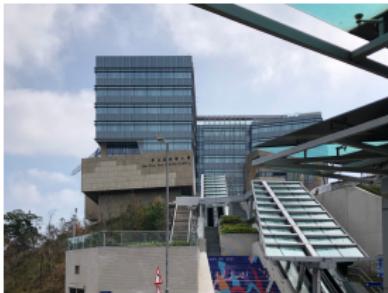


UW-Madison, Cambridge, and UW Seattle; I took those photos



About Me

- Experience
 - Teaching Assistant, at Chinese University of Hong Kong
 - Research Assistant, at HKUST Business School
 - Financial NLP Intern, at China Merchants Bank
- Languages: Wu Chinese, English, Mandarin Chinese, Korean
 - My Cantonese is very poor. If you have to talk to me in the language, please speak as slowly as possible. Thanks for your understanding.



CMB Shanghai, HKUST Business School, and CUHK; I took those photos



Contact

- Email: yigechen@link.cuhk.edu.hk
- Office hours
 - Time: Wednesday 14:00 – 16:00
 - Location: G19, Leung Kau Kui Bldg. or via Zoom
 - Meeting on Zoom is feasible if you let me know beforehand, i.e., send me an email and I'll set up the Zoom meeting
 - If you visit G19 and do not find me there during my office hours, please shoot me an email, and I'll be back in 5 minutes
 - If the time slot above does not fit in your schedule...
 - ① Send me an email and (hopefully) we can schedule a meeting then
 - ② You may also want to attend the office hours of the other TA or Prof. Chen
- Website: <https://yigechen.com>



Course Materials

- Blackboard: <https://blackboard.cuhk.edu.hk/>
- I may prepare additional slides for tutorials, if needed, at
<https://yigechen.com/teaching/ling2006/sp24>
- Textbook: *Semantics (Forth Edition)*, John I. Saeed. Wiley Blackwell. 2016.



Academic Honesty

- Any kind of plagiarism is prohibited
- Please refer to
<https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/> or ask us if you are unsure



Academic Accommodations

- Please contact Special Educational Needs (SEN) Service if you need special accommodations, facilities or arrangements due to physical or mental illnesses
- Please refer to <https://www2.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/sens/en-GB/>



Snacks

- Guys, make sure that you eat something in the morning before attending classes
- For those who don't have time to have breakfast, I hope the snacks help
- I'd recommend that you take them only if you need those – apparently they are limited



Review Questions

Please select all answers that apply

- The relationship between the form of a word and its meaning is
 - A Arbitrary
 - B Compositional
 - C Both arbitrary and compositional
 - D Neither arbitrary nor compositional



Review Questions

Please select all answers that apply

- The relationship between the form of a sentence and its meaning is
 - A Arbitrary
 - B Compositional
 - C Both arbitrary and compositional
 - D Neither arbitrary nor compositional



Review Questions

Please select all answers that apply

- The principle of compositionality says that the meaning of an expression is predictable from
 - A The meaning of the words it contains.
 - B The way these words care combined together.
 - C The way this expression is uttered.
 - D The meaning intended by the speaker.



Review Questions

Please select all answers that apply

- When a speaker uses a sentence in a specific context, the meaning of his/her utterance is
 - A Never the same as the meaning of the sentence.
 - B Dependent on the specific way in which the sentence is used.
 - C Related to both the semantic meaning and the pragmatic meaning associated with the sentence.
 - D Whatever the hearer assumes the speaker intends.



Idioms: Exceptions to The Principle of Compositionality

- Idiomatic phrases are by definition non-compositional: the meaning of the phrase is not predictable from the meanings of the individual words. The meaning of the whole phrase must be learned as a unit.
- Nevertheless, most idioms also have possible, though maybe less likely and less commonly, literal compositional interpretations along with their idiomatic senses.
 - Which meaning is intended usually depends on the context in which the expression is used.

(1) 吃 醋
chi cu
eat vinegar
'feel jealous'



- (A friend of mine is visiting HK from the US. She wanted to taste some authentic dim sum. So I told her that certain dim sum needs to be eaten with particular sauce for a richer flavor. For instance, jiaozi dumplings and Shanghainese xiaolongbao are typically served with black rice vinegar. Yesterday, she went out on her own to a local restaurant and had some dim sum. To figure out whether she followed my suggestion, I ask her, when she was eating dumplings …)

(2) 你 吃 醋 了 嗎?
ni chi cu le ma
2SG eat vinegar PERF SFP

‘Did you eat vinegar?’ NOT ‘Did you feel jealous?’



Idioms

- Group discussion (4-5 students per group)
- Please find an idiom in a language other than English, give a word-for-word gloss/translation in the form of the Mandarin example, state what the compositional meaning is, and what the idiomatic meaning is, and provide one context where this idiom can be used with its compositional meaning and another context where it can be used with its idiomatic meaning.



Sentence vs. Utterance

- Sentences: A linguistic expression which consists of a well-formed string of words.
- A sentence is a string of words put together by the grammatical rules of a language.
- Practice: Are (a) and (b) the same sentence or different sentences?
What about (c) and (d)? **Ans: Different**
 - a John kissed Mary.
 - b Mary was kissed by John.
 - c Susan rolled up the carpet.
 - d Susan rolled the carpet up.



Sentence vs. Utterance

- Utterances: When a speaker uses a sentence in a specific context, s/he produces an utterance.
 - An utterance is the use by a particular speaker, on a particular occasion, of a piece of language, such as a (sequence of) sentence(s), or a single phrase, or even a single word. Before and after an utterance there is silence on the part of that speaker.
- ① Between a sentence and **an utterance**, which one can be associated with a particular time and place?
 - ② Between a sentence and **an utterance**, which one can be described as “loud”?



Sentence vs. Utterance

- A follow-up question we may ask: When a sentence is used in a specific context by a speaker, an utterance is produced. But, does every utterance necessarily involve a (complete) sentence? — We can check the following conversation
 - a A: Do you know who won a gold medal for Hong Kong at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo?
 - b B: Yeah! Cheung Ka Long.
 - c A: Really? In which sport?
 - d B: Individual Men's Foil Fencing!



Sentence vs. Utterance

- Observation: Non-sentences, e.g. short phrases, or single words, are used by people in communication all the time. People do not always converse wholly in (tokens of) well-formed sentences.



Sentence meaning vs. Utterance meaning

- Sentence meaning refers to the semantic content of the sentence: the meaning which derives from the words themselves, regardless of context.
- Utterance meaning (sometimes, “speaker meaning”) refers to the semantic content plus any pragmatic meaning created by the specific way in which the sentence gets used, hence, “the totality of what the speaker intends to convey by making an utterance.”
- The distinction is useful in analyzing the various kinds of communication between people made possible by language.



Sentence meaning vs. Utterance meaning

- (The following conversation takes between two speakers, A and B, at the campus bus stop outside the University Station one morning).
 - a A: 'Sunny day'
 - b B: 'Yes, hotter than yesterday, isn't it?'
 - c A: 'That's right – one day fine, the next hotter'
 - d B: 'I expect it might get cooler tomorrow'
 - e A: 'Maybe – you never know until it happens for real, do you?'
 - f B: 'That's very true.'
 - g A: 'So do you have classes today?'
 - h B: 'I've got two in the afternoon.'
 - i A: 'Do you? I've got one in the morning.'



Sentence meaning vs. Utterance meaning

- a A: 'Sunny day'
 - b B: 'Yes, hotter than yesterday, isn't it?'
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 - g A: 'So do you have classes today?'
 - h B: 'I've got two in the afternoon.'
 - i A: 'Do you? I've got one in the morning.'
- ① Does speaker A tell speaker B anything that s/he doesn't already know in (a), (c), and (e)? **No**
 - ② Does speaker B's statement in (h) give A any new information? **Yes**
 - ③ When speaker A says 'do you' in (i), is s/he really asking B to tell him/her whether it is true that B's got two classes in the afternoon?
No



Sentence meaning vs. Utterance meaning

- The sentence meanings of (a), (c), and (e) are not informative to the addressee. But their utterance meaning reassures both two speakers that a friendly courteous relationship exists between them.
- Similarly, the sentence meaning of 'do you?' in (e) and (i) is not what speaker A intends, i.e., s/he does not expect a yes or no answer from speaker B when s/he utters it. Speaker A is just trying to keep the social wheels turning smoothly.
- In such case, speaker B nevertheless effectively answers in (f). Again, the sentence meaning of (f) does not tell speaker A anything s/he doesn't already know. Agreeing with the other conversational participant is itself an act of courtesy, performed to strengthen social relationships, which is (part of) the intended utterance meaning.



Miscellaneous

- Final Exam: April 23, 4:00 – 6:00 pm; please check your schedule
- Please do not hesitate to ask questions
- We enjoy feedback from you, so please let us know if you feel there's anything we could have done better
- This will very likely be the last course I'll be teaching here at CUHK. So from time to time, if you happen to have taken photos of me during the tutorial, I'd appreciate it if you could share them with me at the end of the term