

E-Content

Introduction to Semantics

Semester: III

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**GALGOTIAS
UNIVERSITY**

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COURSE CONTENT UNIT-I

Is this view tenable?

It seems clear that some grammatical facts must take meaning into account.

Julie opened the door.

The door opened.

The girl knew Shyam.

? Shyam knew.

Open is a change of state verb.

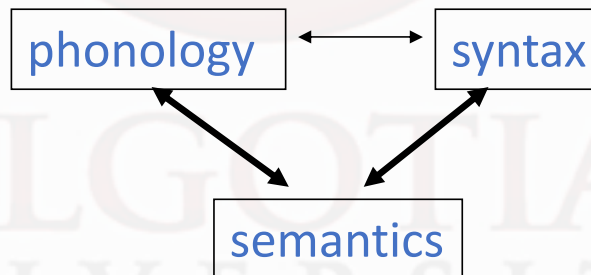
Know is not a change of state verb.

It looks like the meaning of the verbs affects their syntactic behaviour!

COURSE CONTENT UNIT-I

Meaning and grammar-II

- An alternative view, found for example in Cognitive Grammar, argues that **meaning is inseparable from the other components**.
- In this framework, people often argue also that linguistic knowledge and encyclopaedic knowledge cannot be separated.



COURSE CONTENT UNIT-I

Semantic Relations

➤ Semantic relations that exist among words

- **Synonymy** (words that are synonyms) - words that have the same meaning in some or all contexts
- **Antonymy** (words that are antonyms) - words that have the opposite meaning of each other (with regard to some component of their meaning)
- **Polysemy** - when a word has 2 or more **related** meanings
- **Homophony** - when 2 words (same pronunciation) has 2 or more **entirely distinct** meanings (sound the same but don't have to have same spelling)
 - **LEXICAL AMBIGUITY** = when a single form has 2 or more meanings (polysemy and homophony)

COURSE CONTENT UNIT-I

Semantic Relations

➤ Semantic relations that exist among phrases and sentences

➤ **Paraphrase** (like synonyms) - 2 sentences that can have the same meaning

➤ a. The cat chased the squirrel.

➤ b. The squirrel was chased by the cat.

➤ The relationship between the above sentences is that if one is true, then the other must be true as well. They are said to have the same **truth condition**

➤ When the truth of one sentence guarantees the truth of another, we say that there is a relation of **entailment** - the above example is mutual in that either sentence entails the other

➤ Relation can be asymmetrical:

➤ a. The cat killed the squirrel.

➤ b. The squirrel is dead

➤ If *a* is true, then *b* must be true, but not vice versa

COURSE CONTENT UNIT-I

Semantic Relations

- **Contradiction** - if one sentence is true, than the other must be false
 - a. Kittu is an only child.
 - b. Kittu has an older sister.
 - Both sentences cannot both be true, then one contradicts the other

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COURSE CONTENT UNIT-I

Semantics Practice

steal (to rob) steel (metal)	homophones
I saw Craig at the party. It was Craig I saw at the party.	paraphrase
grass (cows eat) grass (marijuana)	polysemes
Jeff is an only child. Jeff's sister is Julie.	contradiction
The cat killed the mouse. The mouse is dead.	entailment

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COURSE CONTENT UNIT-I

Meaning

- What exactly is meaning?
- As native speakers of a language, we all know the meaning of a great many words in our language. If we don't know the meaning, we look it up in the dictionary. But to understand the definition, we have to know the meaning of *those* words...
- It is easier to determine the semantic relation between words than the precise meaning of a word. There are attempts at some theories of meaning...

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COURSE CONTENT UNIT-I

Meaning

- **What exactly is meaning? Theories of meaning**
- **Connotation** - according to this theory, a word's meaning is simply the set of associations that the word evokes - *desert* evokes hot, dry, sandy
- **Denotation** - according to this theory, a word's meaning is not the set of associations it evokes, but rather the entity to which it refers = its denotation or referent in the real world - *desert* would refer to that set of regions in the world characterized by barrenness and lack of rain
- Problems with these theories? A desert with no sand, unicorn, the President of the United States AND the leader of the free world OR Michelle Obama's husband

COURSE CONTENT UNIT-I

Meaning

- **What exactly is meaning?**
- **Extension/Intensions** - combines denotation and connotation - extension refers to the referents in the real world and intension is the associations that a word evokes. *desert* = extension = a barren, dry region in the world such as the Gobi or Sahara. intension = having to do with barrenness and dryness, not a specific region
- **Extension is the referent while intension is the mental image** - in this case, *unicorn* or *ogre* have no extension, only intension - but what about Shrek?

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COURSE CONTENT UNIT-I

Meaning

- What exactly is meaning? Theories of meaning
- **Componential Analysis** - this theory is based on the idea that meaning can be decomposed into smaller semantic units (like features in phonology).
- [+living, +human, -adult] gives us the category child

<p>बालकः</p> <p>[+HUMAN] +MALE +ADULT</p>	<p>बालिका</p> <p>[-HUMAN] -MALE -ADULT</p>
<p>बालकः</p> <p>[+HUMAN] -MALE +ADULT</p>	<p>बालिका</p> <p>[-HUMAN] -MALE -ADULT</p>