

Semantic structure of English words

Jurayeva Zarnigor Bo‘stonovna
Student, Tashkent State Pedagogical University,
Uzbekistan

E-mail: zarnigorjurayeva6@gmail.com

Abstract

The meaning of words is essential to communicating information in language, which is a complicated system of communication. Words in the English language have a semantic framework that helps us decipher their meaning in relation to other words. This article examines the English language's semantic structure, illuminating the several elements that go into a word's overall meaning.

Key words: specialization, generalization, denotative, connotative, polysenmantic

Word Meaning:

A word's meaning is derived from its context and relationships with other words, rather than existing in a vacuum. Semantics is the study of how words carry meaning and how speakers perceive meaning. The study of word meaning falls under this category. There are other classifications of word meaning, such as literal (denotative) and associated (connotative) meanings. A word's meaning is subject to alter throughout time. It is possible to demonstrate lexical meaning changes by contrasting settings from various eras. We refer to this process of meaning transfer as lexico-semantic word-building. In these situations, a word's outside remains unchanged.

Lexical semantics is concerned with the meaning of individual words and how they fit into the overall structure of sentences. Words are categorized according to their semantic qualities and are linked to concepts within this framework. Words, for example, can be categorized as verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and so forth. Each of these word classes has unique semantic characteristics that aid in communicating particular meanings.

The fundamental components of word meaning are its semantic properties. They are the distinguishing qualities or features that establish a word's meaning and set it apart from other words. For example, attributes like animate, mammal, domesticated, and loyal can be applied to the word “dog”. These characteristics help us comprehend what a dog is and how it varies from other animals.

Terms are defined not only by their inherent qualities but also by the connections they have with other words. The relationships between words and how they add to the overall meaning of a sentence or discourse are referred to as semantic relations. Words with comparable meanings, words with opposite meanings, more specific or general words, and part-whole relationships, or hyponymy, are examples of common semantic relations.

The term “polysemy” describes words with several related meanings. For instance, the term “bank” can designate both the side of a river and a financial institution.

Semantic Structure of Polysemantic Words

The word **table**, e.g., has at least nine meanings in Modern English:

1. a piece of furniture;
2. the persons seated at a table;
3. *sing.* the food put on a table, meals;
4. a thin flat piece of stone, metal, wood, etc.;
5. *pi.* slabs of stone;
6. words cut into them or written on them (the ten tables);
7. an orderly arrangement of facts, figures, etc.;
8. part of a machine-tool on which the work is put to be operated on;
9. a level area, a plateau.

The various meanings that were previously addressed can be used to characterize each distinct meaning. We may break down the eighth meaning of the word table, for example, into its part-of-speech meaning, which is the noun's (which assumes the grammatical meanings of number and case) and its lexical meaning, which is divided into two parts. The connotational semantic component, which can be understood as a special stylistic reference of this particular meaning of the word table (technical terminology), and the denotational semantic component, which can be understood as

the dictionary definition (a component of a machine-tool on which the work is put). See also the Russian term планшайба, стол станка.

However, with polysemantic words, the main issue is not the examination of individual meanings but rather the relationship and interdependence of the several meanings inside the semantic structure of a single word.

A defining trait of any language's vocabulary is the presence of synonyms, which is intimately related to the word meaning issue. The definition of the word “synonyms” is the trickiest issue. There are numerous definitions of the term, but none that are agreed upon by everyone. Synonyms are traditionally described as words with different phonemes but the same or a similar meaning. However, there have been very serious criticisms of this definition.

The concept of “synonymy” is defined here, along with various synonymy criteria (identity of meaning, interchangeability), examples of differences in connotation, emotive coloring, style, etc. However, the primary flaw in this descriptive definition, as well as many others, is that there are no objective standards for “identity,” “similarity,” or semantic consistency. They are all predicated on the scholars' language intuitions.

According to the definition, words used to convey the common denotational meaning of members of a synonymic group in a dictionary should be the same; however, there may be variations in idiomatic usage, shades of meaning, implied connotation, and other aspects. Because hope, expectation, and anticipation all refer to “having smth in mind which is likely to happen,” they are all regarded as equivalent. However, expectations can be either positive or bad. Generally speaking, anticipation is the hope of something positive. Hope is a want for something to happen as well as a belief. There is also a noticeable stylistic difference. While native monosyllabic hope is stylistically neutral, the Romance words anticipation and expectation are formal literary terms used solely by educated speakers. Additionally, their idiomatic usage varies. In such rigid statements as to hope against hope, to lose hope, or to place one's hopes on something, only hope is feasible. The following passage from T. Eliot cannot be replaced with anticipation or expectation: “You don't know what hope is until you have lost it”.

SPECIALIZATION

When a term transitions from one area of communication to another, it does so gradually. For example, the word “case” has the generic meaning “circumstances in which a person or a thing is.” When employed in grammar (a form in the paradigm of a word), in law (a law suit), or in medicine (a patient, a disease), its meaning is specific. The context makes clear how these meanings differ from one another.

When a word is still used widely, its meaning can become more specific. When two absolute synonyms clash, one of them must retain its original meaning in order to continue using the language. For example, the native word “meat” originally meant “food,” and the compound “sweetmeats” retains this meaning. When the word “food,” which is its absolute synonym, prevailed in a battle of absolute synonyms (both terms are native), the meaning “edible flesh” was born. After the English verb “die” was imported from Scandinavia, the meaning of the English verb “starve” became more specific. Because the English language has both the noun “death” and the adjective “dead,” the verb “die” developed to have this wide meaning. The word “starve” originally meant “to die of hunger.”

The creation of proper names from common nouns is the third method of specialization; examples include the City, which is the business district of London, Oxford, which is an English university town, and the Tower, which was once a stronghold and palace before becoming a jail and now a museum.

Ellipsis is the fourth method of specialization. Typically, in these situations, we have a word group of the form “attribute + noun,” which is employed consistently in a certain circumstance. Because of this, the attribute can be removed and the noun can still have the meaning of the entire word group. For example, the adjective “roomy” and the word combinations “no room for,” “to take room,” and “to take no room” preserve the original meaning of “room,” which was originally intended to signify “space.” Because the words “dining room” and “sleeping room,” which respectively meant “space for dining” and “space for sleeping,” were frequently used together, the meaning of the word “room” became specialized.

GENERALIZATION

It is a process that goes against specialization; in certain situations, a word's meaning gradually expands.

Most often, a word will change from a concrete to an abstract meaning. For example, the word “ready,” which comes from the verb “ridan,” which means “ride,” used to signify “prepared for a ride,” but it now means “prepared for anything.” Originally meaning “one day trip,” the word “journey” was taken from French and now refers to “a trip of any duration.”

The auxiliary verbs “have”, “be”, “do”, “shall”, and “will” lose their lexical meaning when used as auxiliary verbs; for example, consider the sentences “I have several books by this writer” and “I have read some books by this author.” All auxiliary verbs are examples of their lexical meaning being generalized because they developed a grammatical meaning. The verb “have” in the first sentence means “possess,” while in the second, it has no lexical meaning and only forms the Present Perfect.

Understanding the meaning of words is crucial for effective communication in language. The study of semantics explores how words carry meaning and how speakers perceive that meaning. Word meaning is not static but can change over time, and this process is known as lexico-semantic word-building. Lexical semantics examines the meaning of individual words and their integration into the structure of sentences. Words are categorized based on their semantic qualities and are connected to concepts within this framework. The semantic properties of a word are its distinguishing features that define its meaning and differentiate it from other words.

References:

1. Cruse, D. A. (2004). *Meaning in language: An introduction to semantics and pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
2. Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics (Vol. 1)*. Cambridge University Press.
3. Jackendoff, R. (1990). *Semantic structures*. MIT Press.
4. Pustejovsky, J. (1995). *The generative lexicon*. MIT Press.
5. Miller, G. A., & Johnson-Laird, P. N. (1976). *Language and perception*. Harvard University Press.