

SEMANTICS

Department of English
(First Semester)

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Introduction

What is semantics?

- ▣ **The study of meaning and its manifestation in language is normally referred to as semantics.**
- ▣ **Semantics is the area of linguistics that analyzes the meaning of words, phrases and sentences in language.**

Derivation

- ▣ Semantics is derived from the Greek noun seema 'sign', signal: and
- ▣ the verb semains 'signal, mean, signify'.

Definition

▣ Semantics is referred to as:

“ Relating to significance or meaning”.

(The Shorter Oxford Dictionary)

Scope Of Semantics

- ▣ **Broadly speaking, semantics is that aspect of linguistics which deals with the relations between:**
 - **Referents (names)**
 - and**
 - **Referends (things)**
- ▣ **That is:**
 - **Linguistic levels (words, expressions, phrases)**
 - **Objects or concepts or ideas to which they refer**
 - **With the history and changes in the meaning of words.**

Types Of Semantics

- ▣ **There are two types of Semantics:**

Diachronic Semantics	Synchronic Semantics
Diachronic semantics studies the semantic change.	Synchronic semantics accounts for semantic relationship, simple or multiple.

Semantic Analysis

- ▣ **To understand the meaning of a sentence and its semantic relations to other expressions, one must know not only the meaning of its lexical elements but also how they inter-relate.**
- ▣ **For Example: semantic analysis of English must also explain antonyms, synonyms, homonyms, polysemy etc.**

Semantic Theory

- ▣ **Semantic theory must:**
 - **Make reference to the syntactic structure in a precise way.**
 - **Systematically represent the meaning of the single words.**
 - **Show how the structure of the meaning of words and syntactic relations interact.**
 - **It must indicate how these interpretations are related to the things spoken about.**

(Manfred Bierwisch)

Importance of Meaning

- ▣ **Although the Structuralists tried to study language without meaning, the importance of meaning has been recognized since time immemorial.**
- ▣ **Some western scholars too have started talking about semantic universals nowadays, that meaning is the soul of language.**

Difficulties In The Study Of Meaning

- ▣ A well known structuralist made the astonishing statement that linguistic system of a language does not include the semantics due to its difficult nature.**
- ▣ Semantics is being studied not only by the linguists but also by philosophers, psychologist, scientists, anthropologists and sociologists.**

Lexical And Grammatical Meaning

Lexical Meaning	Grammatical Meaning
1. Lexical meaning refer to objects, actions and qualities that can be identified in the external world.	1. Grammatical meaning refers mainly to the meaning of grammatical items.
2. Have full words	2. Have empty words.
3. Full words have some intrinsic meaning.	3. Empty words have little or no intrinsic meaning.
4. They are easy to study.	4. They are difficult to study.
5. For example : table, banana, sleep, eat, red etc.	For example : did. Which, ed.

Semantic Structure

- ▣ **The vocabulary of a language contains a number of lexical systems, which can be divided into five categories:**
 - **Synonymy**
 - **Hyponymy and incompatibility**
 - **Antonymy, Complementary and Converseness**
 - **Polysemy**
 - **Homonymy**

- ▣ **Synonymy:** words which have the same meaning and can replace each other in all contexts of occurrence;
For example :
 - **big, large ; little, small etc.**

- ▣ **Hyponymy:** words with a particular meaning that is included in the meaning of a more general word. For example:
 - **‘rose’ and ‘lily’ are included in more general item “flower”.**
 - **‘table’, ‘chair’ and ‘sofa’ are included in “furniture”.**

- ▣ **Antonymy:** lexical items having opposite meanings, which differ either in forms or pronunciations. For example:
 - **Above-below ; accept-reject etc.**

▣ **Polysemy: same lexical item having different meanings. For example:**

- **Bank=bank of river, a financial institution**
- **Face=front part of head, expression of face.**

▣ **Homonymy: It consists of different items with same phonetic form. They differ only in meaning. For example:**

- **The item 'bank' means either the financial institution or the bank of a river.**

▣ **Homonymy is classified as :**

- **Homography**
- **Homophony**

▣ **Homography**: phenomenon of two or more words having same spellings but different pronunciation or meanings .

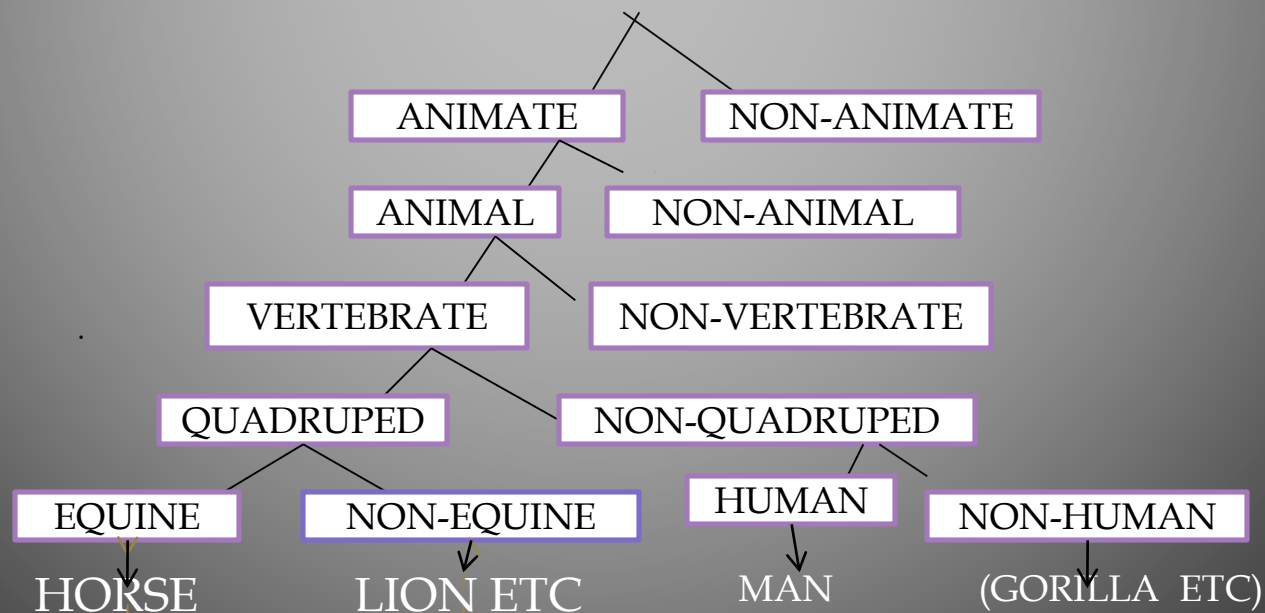
➤ **For example: lead/led/ means metal;**
lead /li:d/ means to show the way

▣ **Homophony**: case of two or more words having the same pronunciation but different meanings or spellings.

➤ **For example: accept/ak'sept/ means take;**
Except /ik'sept/ means leaving out

Hierarchical Structure of Semantic Features

- Several attempts have been made recently to classify the features in certain fields into a hierarchy, in which more general features appear near the top and more specific ones lower down. The following diagram is widely used to illustrate this point in linguistic circles:



THANK YOU 😊

(JAZAK ALLAH)