

LING1000 Final exam Revision

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Semantics

Lexicon

- Collection of lexical items (words)
- According to some estimates, an educated adult speaker of English has between 50,000 and 135,000 words in their lexicon
- Grammar alone is not enough, the vast majority of grammatical sentences make no sense
- Grammar and lexicon combine compositionally to allow us to understand an unlimited number of sentences
- A novel sentence is a sentence you encounter for the first time but still understand, provided you know the words

* = ungrammatical

= semantically unacceptable

Reference, denotation and connotation

Reference

- One use of language to refer to an object in the world (real or imagined)
- Only NPs have reference
- Referring = specific
- Non-referring = generic
- Variable depending on context, user etc. and many expressions are specific/generic ambiguous

Referent

- The object picked out by a particular word

Denotation

- The class of possible objects, situations etc. to which an expression can refer
- Different expressions can refer to the same referent and the same expression can refer to different referents or may only be a single object eg. Queen vs Queen Cleopatra
- The hearer must be able to 'recover' the intended referent (have heard of it/them) so recovery may be more complicated

Connotation

- Refers to aspects of meaning that do not affect a word's reference or denotation
- Also applies to non-referring content words incl. verbs, adjectives and adverbs
- Connotation is unstable: it can vary between speakers and change over time as it often involves emotional or register distinctions

Similar denotations but different connotations:

Neutral/positive	vs.	Negative
Child		Brat
Inexpensive		Cheap
New		Unproven
Doctor		Quack

Homonymy, polysemy and synonymy

Synonymy

- Two words have the same meanings
- True synonymy is rare
- Candidates for near-synonymy include comparable terms in different dialects eg. togs, cozzies, swimmers etc.

Homonymy

- A word has multiple, unrelated meanings eg. bank, lap, stalk etc.
- Used in puns
- Some go through zero-derivation but don't always change grammatical category

Polysemy

- A word has multiple, related meanings eg. chicken (bird/food), book (read/make appointment) etc.
- Metaphor is a major source of polysemy
- There is no well defined division between homonymy and polysemy

Etymology

- The origin of a word
- Often at odds with speaker intuition
- Folk-etymology: an alternative etymology created by users of a word to explain the origin that may not align with the actual etymology of the word

Metaphor, image metaphor, and metonymy

Metaphor

- The use of concrete concepts to assist in the understanding of abstract concepts
- Relates two very different domains of experience
- Metaphors are unidirectional (cannot be reversed to use the abstract to understand the concrete)
- Knowing is seeing eg. 'I see what you're saying'
- More is up, less is down eg. 'Prices went up', 'Stock prices plummeted'
- Affection is warmth eg. 'A warm welcome' vs. 'A chill reception'
- Time is a resource eg. 'Don't waste time' vs. 'Save time'

Image metaphor

- Simpler than normal metaphor
- Maps from one sensory impression to another eg. 'her teeth are pearls', 'Italy is a boot', 'Your voice is music', 'The dog's fur is velvet' etc.
- Reversible/multi-directional

Metonymy

- Allows one thing to stand for another
- May seem less 'figurative' than metaphor and more frequent in everyday communication
- The relationship between the word/element and the thing it stands for can be of several types
- Part for whole (traditionally 'synecdoche') eg. 'A roof over my head'. 'She's just a pretty face'
- Whole for part eg. 'I'm going to wash the car', 'He ate a whole chicken'
- Container for contents eg. 'He bought a jug (of beer)', 'I want a cup (of tea)'
- Producer for product eg. 'I'll have a XXXX', 'He bought a Ford'
- Author/artist for works eg. 'I don't like Tolkien', 'She bid on a Picasso'
- Place for institution eg. 'Canberra says leaders are still concerned...', 'Wall Street is euphoric'
- Place for the event eg. 'Chernobyl was an example of the dangers of atomic power', 'Manus Island is a disgrace'
- Object used for user eg. 'The sax has the flu', 'The buses are on strike'
- Controller for controlled eg. 'Napoleon lost at Waterloo'
- Institution for people responsible eg. 'Optus has spent a lot of money', 'The government says the economy is fine'