



**COURSE GUIDE**

# **B.ED IN LANGUAGES**

## **LNG 231 – LINGUISTIC THEORY-SEMANTICS**

**University of Education, Winneba  
Department of Applied Linguistics**



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## Acknowledgements

The course instructor of LNG 231: Linguistic Theory-Semantics, wishes to thank the personalities below for their contribution to this COURSE GUIDE

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## About this Course Guide

LNG 231 has been produced by The University of Education, Winneba. All Course Guides as produced by University of Education, Winneba are structured in the same way, as outlined below.

This course is basically an introduction to the study of meaning. It introduces students to the analysis of meaning. It discusses different kinds of meaning, theories of meaning, as well as meaning relationships as in lexical items as well as in ambiguity and idiomaticity. It finally touches on the issue of semantic change. It is hoped that by the end of this course students would better be able to appraise the complexity of meaning in discourse.

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## How this Course Guide is structured

### The course guide overview

This course gives you insight into the basics of meaning.

The course overview gives you a general introduction to the course. Information contained in the course overview will help you determine:

- If the course is suitable for you, register online with the Department's officer
- What you will already need to know. You will be required to pass all basic LNG courses
- How much time you will need to invest to complete the course.
- The overview also provides guidance on:

What you can expect from the course.

- Study skills.
- Where to get help.



- Course assignments and assessments.
- Lessons

We strongly recommend that you read the overview *carefully* before starting your study.

## The course content

The course is broken down into lessons. Each lesson comprises:

- An introduction to the lesson content.
- Lesson Objectives or outcomes .
- New terminologies.
- Core content of the lesson with a variety of learning activities.
- A lesson summary.
- Assignments and/or assessments, as applicable.

More specifically, you will cover the following lessons

What Semantics is about

Semantics as science

### **Cognition**

- Componential analysis
- Prototype Theory
- Semantic Space Theory
- Meaning as concept/sense, reference & intension, extension
- Denotation and Connotation
- Associative meanings

### **Meaning Categories**

- Word meaning & Lexicon
- Sentence meaning, collocation
- Utterance meaning

Meaning as Presupposition, implicature, entailment.

Context, meaning and pragmatics

### **Sense Relations**

Synonymy



Antonymy

Polysemy

Homonymy

Meronymy

Hyponymy

### **Ambiguity & Acceptability**

Ambiguity and Vaguity/Vagueness

Ambiguity in discourse

Types of ambiguity

Sources of ambiguity

Acceptability

## **Recommended Text**

Lyons, John. (1977). Semantics, Vols 1 & 2 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cruse, D. A. (2000). Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leech, Geoffrey. (1974). Semantics. Hamondsworth: Penguin Books.

Austin, J. L. (1962). How to Do Things with Words. Oxford: Clarendon.

Palmer, F. R. (1996). Semantics: An Introduction. Low Price Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. \_

Dillon, G. L. (1977). Introduction to Contemporary Linguistic Semantics. Englewood Cliffs.

Breal Michel. (1990). Semantics: Studies in the Science of Meaning. London: Heinemann.

Sekyi-Baidoo, J. Y. (2002). Semantics: An Introduction. Kumasi: Willas





Press.

## Course Requirements

- A minimum of Two and a maximum of Three quizzes
- End of Semester Exams

## Resources

For those interested in learning more on this subject, we provide you with a list of additional resources at the end of this Course Guide. These may be books, articles or web sites.

## Your comments

After completing this course, we would appreciate it if you would take a few moments to give us your feedback on any aspect of this course. Your feedback might include comments on:

- Course content and structure.
- Course reading materials and resources.
- Course assignments.
- Course assessments.
- Course duration.
- Course support (assigned tutors, technical help, etc.)

Your constructive feedback will help us to improve and enhance this course.



## Course overview

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### Welcome to LNG 231: Linguistic Theory-Semantics

This is a course that is to help students to better be able to appraise the complexity of meaning in discourse.

Course outcomes

Upon completion of this course you will be able to discuss:

- different kinds of meaning,
- theories of meaning,
- meaning relationships as in lexical items
- ambiguity



Outcomes

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### Timeframe



How long?

Fourteen weeks



## Lesson 1 –What is Semantics

Upon completion of this lesson you will be able to:



### Outcomes

- Identify and explain what Semantics is
- Explain meaning
- Identify and explain the types of meaning.

<b>TERMINOLOGIES</b>	<b>EXPLANATION</b>
Semantics	The scientific study of meaning
Meaning	A linguistic property that involves the relationship between words and their significance.
Linguistic meaning	All that a speaker intends to convey to his listeners
Designative meaning	The meaning of a word or an object as it stands in the society.
Implicative meaning	All the other kinds of meaning that are associated with a word.



**Semantics** is the scientific study of meaning. This means that:

- It concerns itself with meaning and
- It is a science.

**Semantics** therefore is systematic. It is not restricted to just one language, but rather, to all the languages of the world.

If **Semantics** concerns itself with **meaning**, then what is meaning itself?

- An intrinsic property-This means that it is something that one feels or has in him.
- A unique unanalyzable relation to other things-That is how the meaning of one object is related to the meaning of another. For eg.
- The other words annexed to a word in the dictionary- This means that inside the dictionary, certain words are also used to explain the meaning of another word.
- The connotation of a word-That is the different meaning that are given to a word.
- E.t.c

These definitions or explanations of what meaning is bring us to the realization of the following:

- The relationship between the word or symbol and the idea or object it calls up.
- The practical consequences or implications of speech



- Speaker meaning
- Listener or hearer meaning
- Intended or unintended meaning.

**Meaning** then involves the relationship between words and their significance.

**Meaning** is associated with the intension and significance of linguistic structures in the context of speech.

After all these have been considered, then an explanation of meaning can be given as:

- ✚ **Linguistic meaning** is all that a speaker intends to convey to his listeners. This is done through the use of stress, intonation, words and the context in which the utterance is made.
- ✚ It can also be the total information that a listener is able to gather from a speaker when he speaks.
- ✚ All things being equal, **speaker** meaning should be equal to **hearer** meaning. This is because as humans, we belong to one linguistic society or the other. And as such, meaning is a shared property in every society.
- ✚ **Meaning** can be put into two main broad groups: These are **designative** and **implicative** meaning.



By **designative** meaning, we mean the direct non-contextual meaning. This means that the meaning of a word or an object as it stands in the society. The meaning has not come as a result of any occurrences or any associations with any event, but what is being referred.

By **implicative** meaning, we are looking at all the other kinds of meaning that are associated to a word. This may include an event that took place, the context of the meaning of that word or object, etc.

For eg.        **I have never washed my clothes**

This means that I am not the one who washes my clothes. Somebody has been doing it since I was born.

This is the designative meaning. But by implicative meaning it may be because of one or all of the reasons below:

- ❖ The clothes are never washed; I wake up and wear them (may be doing recycling).
- ❖ I pack my clothes or throw them away anytime they are dirty
- ❖ My clothes never get dirty
- ❖ I am lazy to wash my clothes
- ❖ Machines or servants do the washing for me.
- ❖ Etc



We thus realise that implicative meaning is the level at which speaker meaning is different from hearer meaning. A speaker may mean something he did not intend to say. Other issues like humour, sarcasm, irony or others operate at this level.

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## Unit summary



### Summary

Semantics is the scientific study of meaning. Meaning can be either designative or implicative.

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## Assignment



### Assignment

Read on the next lesson on the course outline. We will look at that lesson at our next meeting.

*HAVE A NICE WEEK*