



LESSON TWO

B.ED IN LANGUAGES

LNG 231 – LINGUISTIC THEORY-SEMANTICS

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Department of Applied Linguistics**

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Lesson 2 – Semantics and other Disciplines

-Semantics as a science

Upon completion of this lesson you will be able to explain the relationship between:



Outcomes

Semantics and Phonology

Semantics and Syntax

Semantics and Discourse Analysis/Stylistics

Semantics and Morphology



TERMINOLOGIES	EXPLANATION
Phonology	How sounds are patterned in a language.
Syntax	The stringing or the combination of words to form phrases, clauses and sentences.
Discourse Analysis/Stylistics	The structure of any organized speech or text
Morphology	How words are formed and the componential or the semantic structure of words.
Observation	Taking note of the speech behaviour of speakers and in their response to speech behaviour.
Formulation of hypothesis	A statement of direction of research which will help to establish specific truths.
Experimentation	Putting your hypothesis or initial findings to test.
Generalization.	A valid conclusion for a specific population or community.

Semantics is not isolated in terms of the relations it has with the other aspects of linguistics. It has to be related with these other areas of linguistics to make meaning complete.

Semantics and Phonology

Phonology scientifically studies how sounds are patterned in a language. Sounds make up a word before its meaning can be looked at. Meaning is also achieved through the use of stress, pitch, intonation, speed, length, etc. All these are studied in the phonology of any language. As a result, Semantics and Phonology have a relationship.

Semantics and Syntax

Syntax studies the stringing or the combination of words to form phrases, clauses and sentences. If one is studying the meaning of these phrases, clauses and sentences, then one has to concern itself not only on the meaning alone, but also, on the arrangement of these words in them. The roles or functions the words are performing in a sentence, and their relationships are pertinent to achieving their meanings.

For e.g. (a) **Loan book** as opposed to



(b) **Book loan**

In (a), *loan* is the pre-modifier for book while in (b), *book* is the

Pre-modifier for loan. Though the two sentences contain the same constituents, they are performing different roles in the two sentences and as such, have different semantically.

This shows that the arrangement of words in a sentence normally bring different meanings to similar structures.

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- Both semantics and syntax describe relationships and so each of them can be the basis for further analysis of the other.
- Grammatical categories such as tense, aspect, class add to the meaning of words.
- Syntax concerns itself with how words or phrases are combined to form longer structures, semantics looks at the deeper or longer ideas or meanings that these structures convey.
- Syntax provides different grammatical manifestations through transformational processes

and others. These transformations are of interest to both the syntacist and semanticist they both syntactic choices come with semantic choices.

For e.g. God Almighty

Or Almighty God

Have different implications on our perception of God.

Similarly,

The tall handsome boy

The boy, tall and handsome

The boy is tall and handsome.

These different descriptions of the boy communicate different things about the handsome boy.

Similarly, the choice between the active

The girl has eaten the food

And the passive

The food has been eaten by the girl.

Communicate different ideas about our focus and concern.



Semantics and Discourse Analysis/Stylistics

These are concerned with the structure of any organized speech or text. They are also concerned about the role which each identified linguistic form plays in terms of its significance, its contribution to the other structures and texts as well as its contribution to the overall purpose and effects of speech. All these actually contribute to the meaning of these structures.

Semantics and Morphology

Morphology concerns itself with

- How words are formed
- The componential or the semantic structure of words.

A morpheme is the smallest grammatical unit that has meaning. This means that a structure is seen as a morpheme only when it has meaning. Meaning is also, the concern of semantics.

If these happen, then semantics really has a relationship with morphology.

SEMANTICS AS A SCIENCE

We have already said that semantics is the scientific study of meaning. Just like all other sciences, semantics is also considered a science. Science lends itself to certain basic steps. **Semanticists** deal with meaning. These meanings are the data or materials. A certain procedure or method must also be followed in order to draw valid conclusion on the data. The procedure or methodology in any science investigation must be

- ▶ **Explicit**
- ▶ **Systematic**
- ▶ **Objective.**

Various stages and activities include

- ▶ **Observation**
- ▶ **Formulation of hypothesis**
- ▶ **Experimentation**
- ▶ **Generalization.**

At the **observation** stage, we look at data collection. This data is what has been obtained from speakers in their speech behaviour and in their response to speech behaviour.



The **hypothesis** is a statement of direction of research which will help to establish specific truths. It contains the following:

- Topic of investigation
- Population within whom the investigation will take place and context
- A tentative statement of the relationship between the topic and other topics, or between topic and the population or context.

Apart from hypothesis, **research questions** can also be used to establish these truths.

Experimenting means you are putting your hypothesis or initial findings to test. Here, we establish the real nature of the relationships as described. For e.g. we can just experiment to find out how the different pronunciations of a word come with different meanings.

When we talk of **generalization**, we are talking about a valid conclusion for a specific population or community. We need a speech community and not an individual to effect interaction. As such, semantics, and for that matter science, dwells on the general and not the specific to establish facts.

When all these have been undertaken, then we can establish the scientific nature of semantics.



Unit summary



Summary

Thus far, we have looked at what **Semantics** is all about. We have also considered the meaning of meaning by looking at some concrete examples. Additionally, we have looked at the two main divisions of meaning. Also, we have looked at the different domains of semantics. We also looked at the interrelationship of semantics with the other aspects or areas of linguistics. Finally, we have looked at the **scientific** nature of semantics.

Assignment



Assignment

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

GOOD LUCK