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lecture 1

both semantics and pragmatics are concerned with people's ability to use language meaningfully .
While semantics is mainly concerned with speakers competence to use the language system, the chief focus of pragmatics is a person's Ability to derive meaning from specific kinds of speech situations.

(I.E., to recognize what the speaker is referring to, fill in information that the speaker takes for granted and doesn't bother to say)

I'm hungry

Said by a beggar who has not eaten all day
Said by a child who hopes to put off going to bed
Said by a man who wants to have lunch with his coworker

The three events obviously have something in common and yet, they indicate different intentions and are liable to be interpreted differently because the situations and the participants are different.

utterance vs. sentence :
an utterance is an event that happens just once , a sentence is a construction of words in a particular meaningful sequence

the meaning of a sentence is determined by the meanings of the individual words and the syntactics construction in which they occur

the meaning of an utterance is the meaning of the sentence plus the meaning of the circumstances ;the time and place,the people involved ,(the physical-social context) **e.g.,our visit to the factory was wonderful**

implicature

An additional meaning, of bridge constructed by the hearer to relate one utterance to some previous utterance (unconsciously)

1) Barbara ;how did you do on the examination?
   Adam; I think I'll just drop this course.

2) Jim; would you like to go shopping tomorrow night?
   Laura; we have guests coming from out of town.

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prosody:a spoken utterance consists of more than just words .
in speech, meanings are communicated not only by **what** is said but also **how** it is said .for example

A; Has the winston street bus come yet?
B; sorry i didn't understand . **what** did you say?

C; I'm afraid fred didn't like the remark i made
D; oh? what did you **say**?

E; some of my partners said they wouldn't accept these terms
F; and you? what did **you** say?

G; you're misquoting me. I didn't say anything like that
H: oh? what **did** you say?

Non-verbal communication

there are some ways of using the voice including e.g.,laughing ,giggling , and crying that are vocal but not verbal.These are called **paralanguage**

similarly , there are visible signs, **gestures** ,body language-which possibly create an effect on the interoperation of a spoken message

consider these visual signs:

nodding the head in response to an utterance

pretending to yawn ,with finger tips in front of mouth

holding up a thumb from a closed fist

pinching one's nose closed with thumb and forefinger

shoulders are moved upward and down again ,possibly repeated (shrugging shoulders)

the palm of one hand is brought up and slaps smartly against the forehead

the hand ,slightly cupped ,is pulled across the forehead as if wiping something away .

lecture 2

semantic relations among words

In every day talk, we frequently give the meanings of words, not in terms of their component features, but in terms of their relationships

E.g. the meaning of <u>shallow</u> is the opposite of <u>deep</u> the word <u>conceal</u> is the same as <u>hide</u> and <u>tulip</u> is a kind of flower

Examples of the lexical relations types are : synonymy , antonymy , hyponymy, homophony, homonymy, ane polysemy

Synonyms :are two or more forms with the very closely related meanings, which are often, but not always, interchangeable in sentences .e.g. broad /wide, almost /nearly, cab/ taxi, youth /adolescents, purchase /buy.

There is no 'total sameness'. one word could be appropriate in a sentence, but it synonym would be odd ; Kathy had only one **answer** correct on the test

synonym differ informality **my father purchased a large automobile** versus my dad bought a big car

Two forms with opposite meanings are called **antonyms**, quick/slow, Rich/poor, old/young, alive /dead, true/false

gradable antonyms can be used in comparative constructions, e.g. bigger them/smaller than.the negative of one member of the pair does not imply the other he is not old does not imply he is young

With **non-degradable antonyms**, the negative of one does indeed imply the other; he is not dead means he is alive

reversives mean not negative but to do the reverse, e.g., tie/untie, enter/exit, pack/ unpack, lengthen/shorten, raise/lower, dress/undress.

hyponymy means the meaning of form is included in the meaning of another, e.g., tulip is a hyponymy of flour, dog/animal, chihuahua/dog, carrot/vegetable

Not only words that can be hyponyms , verbs to e.g., cut, punch, shoot, and stab are **co-hyponyms** of the **superordinate** ''injure''

injure

cut

punch

shoot

stab

homophony, homonymy, and polysemy;

1,when two or more different written forms have the same pronunciation, they are **homophones** , e.g. meet/meat, flower/flour, pail /pale, so / sew , see/sea , bare /bear

2. when one form has two or more unrelated meanings, they are **homonyms** , e.g., bank (of a river) – bank (financial institute),bat (flying creature) - bat (used in sports), race (contest of speed)– race (ethnic group), mole (on skin) - mole (animal)

3. when one form has multiple meanings that are all related by extension, it is **polysemy** , e.g.,head (the top of your body/the top of the company) ,foot (of a person, of bed, of mountain), run (person does, water does, color does)

How do you distinguish between homonymy and Polysemy ?
Via dictionary

Date (a point in time)
Date (fleshy fruit)
So they are **homonyms**

Date on the letter

Date and appointment

Date a social meeting with someone

So they are **polysems**

lecture 3

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Semantic features

One helpful approach to study meaning could be by the means of accounting for the "oddness" we experience when we read sentences:

NP   V   NP

The hamburger ate the boy.

The table listens to the radio.

The horse is reading the newspaper.

The oddness of these sentences does not derive from their syntactic structure. According to the syntactic rules, we have well-formed structures.

These sentences are syntactically good, but semantically odd.

The hamburger ate the boy

Since the sentence **The boy ate the hamburger** is acceptable.

What's the problem?

The components of the noun **hamburger** must be significantly different from those of the noun **boy**, so only one can be used as the subject of the verb ate.

The kind of noun that can be the subject of the verb **ate** must denote an entity that is capable of "eating."

We need to determine the crucial semantic features that any noun must have in order to be used as the subject of the verb **ate**. Such an element may be as general as "animate being."

We can then use this idea to describe part of the meaning of words as either having (+) or not having (−) that particular feature.

So, the feature that the noun boy has is **"+animate"** and the feature that the noun hamburger has is **"−animate"**

Componenntial Analysis

The term componenntial analysis is a semantic approach which assumes that word meaning can be described in terms of distinct components, many of which are binary.

semantics and pragmatics

Components are qualities embedded in any word's meaning, like the ones seen in dictionary definitions.

E.g., Dog refers to a mammal. Also, it refers to domesticated and carnivore.

Dog [+mammal] [+domesticated] [+ carnivore]

Wolf [+mammal] [- domesticated] [+ carnivore]

One typical example assumes the features **ANIMATE**, **HUMAN**, **MALE** and **ADULT**

That is known as componential analysis. This approach is used to analyze the

	table	horse	boy	man	girl	woman
animate	-	+	+	+	+	+
human	-	-	+	+	+	+
female	-	-	-	-	+	+
adult	-	+	-	+	-	+

meaning of certain types of nouns in terms of semantic features.

analyzing meaning in terms of semantic features

We can also characterize the semantic features that is required in a noun in order for it to appear as the subject of a particular verb.

The _____ is reading the newspaper.

N [+human]

This approach would help predict which nouns make this sentence semantically odd. (table, horse and hamburger)

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semantics and pragmatics

The approach is only a start on analyzing the conceptual components of word meaning, but it is not without problems.

For many words in a language, it may not be as easy to come up with neat components of meaning.

Nouns, such as advice, threat and warning

lecture 4

Semantic/Thematic roles

The "roles" words fulfill within the situation described by sentence.

The boy kicked to the ball

The verb describes an action (kick)

The noun phrase (NP) in the sentence describes the roles of entities, such as people and things, involved in the action.

We can identify a small number of semantic roles (also called "thematic roles " for these noun phrases)

Agent and theme

The boy kicked the ball

One role is taken by NP **the boy** and "the entity that performs the action" known as the **agent.**

Another role is taken by **the ball** of "the entity that is affected by the action" which is called the **theme** .

The theme can also be an entity (**the ball**) that is simply being **described**(I.e. not performing action), as in **The ball was red**

Agents and themes are the most common semantic roles

Although **agents** are typically human (the boy(they can also be non-human entities that cause action, as a natural force (the wind),a machine (A car), or creature (The dog), all of which affect the ball as theme

The boy kicks of the ball

The wind blew the ball away

A car ran over the ball

The dog caught the ball

Instrument and experiencer

If an **agent** uses another entity in order to perform an action, that other entity fills the role of <u>instrument</u>.

The boy cut the rope with <u>a razor</u>

He drew the picture with <u>a piece of chalk</u>

When a noun phrase is used to designate an entity as the person who has a feeling, perception or state, it fills the semantic role of **experiencer**

If we see, know or enjoy something, we are not really performing an action (hence we are not agents).we are in the role of **experiencer.**

In the sentence: **The boy** feel sad, the experiencer (the boy) is the only semantic role.

In the question, Did you hear **that noise**?, the experiencer is you and the theme is that noise.

Location, source and goal

A number of other semantic roles designate where an entity is in the description of an event.

Where an entity is (on the table, in the room) fills the role of **location**.

Where the entity moves from is the **source** (from Jeddah) and where it moves to is the **goal** (to Abha), as in **We drove from Jeddah to Abha.**

All **semantic rolls** are illustrated in the following scenario

Latifah **saw** a fly on the wall

Experiencer/theme/location

Latifa **borrowed** a magazine from Ahmad

agent/theme/source

She **squashed** the fly with the magazine

Agent/theme/instrument

semantics and pragmatics

She **handed** the magazine back to Ahmed
Agent/theme/goal

Ooh, thanks, **said** ahmed
Agent

Determining the role that the NP's play in the situations:

Agent: the entity that performs an action

theme: the entity undergoing an action or movement

Instrument: the entity used to perform an action

Experiencer:the entity that has a feeling, perception, or state

Location: the place where an action occurs

Source: the starting point for movement

Goal: the endpoint for movement

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lecture 5

One fact about concepts expressed by words is that their members can be **graded** in terms of their typicality.

A good example of this involves the concept **BIRD**.

Even assuming that we all think of a bird is an animal that lays eggs, has feathers and can fly, we still feel that some of these creatures are more birdlike then others.

While the words **canary, dove, duck, flamingo, parrot and robin** are all equally co-hyponyms of the superordinate **bird**,they are not all considered to be equally good examples of the category bird
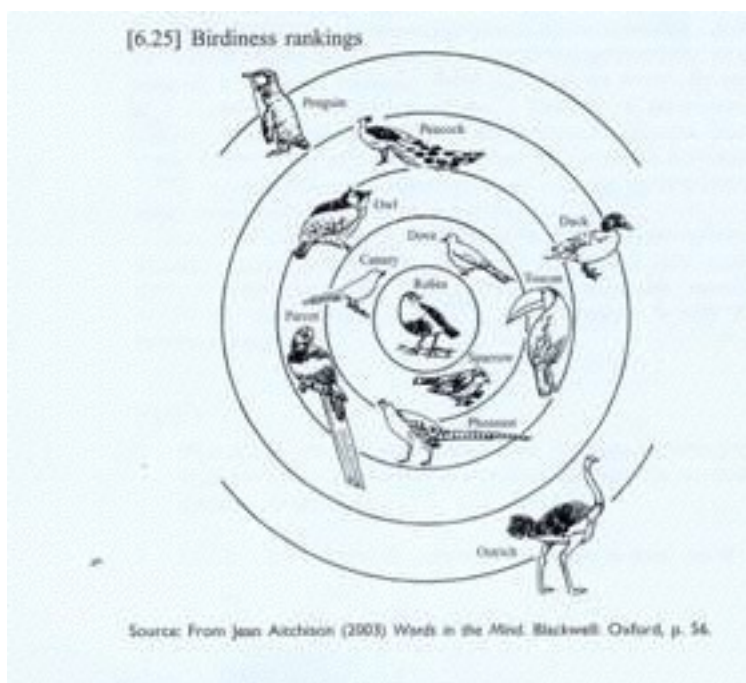
According to some researchers, the most characteristic instance of the category "bird" is robin.this idea is known as the **prototype**.

The concept of prototype helps explain the meaning of certain words, like **bird,** not in terms of semantic features (e.g. "has feathers", "has wings"), but in terms of resemblance to the clearest example.

Thus, even native speakers of English might wonder if **ostrich** or **penguin** should be hyponyms of bird, but have no trouble deciding about **sparrow** or **pigeon**.

These last two are much closer to the Prototype

The following is a chart showing the Prototype of a bird based on the judgment of California undergraduate (Katamba 2005)

[6.25] Birdiness rankings

Source: From Jean Aitchison (2003) Words in the Mind. Blackwell. Oxford, p. 56.

What is a Prototype then?

Prototype is about mental representation of meaning or categorization

Let's define a **bird**: has feathers, grown from an egg, can fly, makes sounds and so on.

If I asked you now, if an ostrich or a penguin is a bird, chances are high that you would say yes, while they don't fit the definition.and this is where prototypes come into play.

What we are dealing with is a gradual categorization of meaning with an instance of representation.

A **Prototype** is an object or referent that is considered typical for the whole set.

Thus, if you encounter the concept **door** in isolation and immediately think of **a door swinging on hinges** rather than one that **slides** or **rotates**.

that kind of door is, for you, the prototype for all doors.

But not everybody is likely to have the same Prototype for a particular set.

Given the category label **furniture** ,we are quick to recognize **chair** as a better example than **bench** or **stool**.

Given **clothing**, people recognize **shirts** quicker than **shoes**,and given **vegetables** ,they accept **carrot** before **potato** or **tomato**.

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