Meaning as an Aspect of Semantics in Language Curriculum

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Abstract

Semantics is one of the main branch of linguistics which deals with meaning and interpretation of the words, symbols and sentence structure, while determining the reading comprehension of the learners how they understand language, ideas and their interpretations. It deals with a relationship between the adjoining words that helps in understanding the sense of sentence structure whether the meanings of words are lexical or grammatical and so on. Semantics is subfield that is dedicated to the study of meaning of the words, phrases and running discourse both texts and narratives. It is also closely related to the subjects of representation, denotation and reference. The basic aim of this article is to propose the real and exact meaning of words, phrase and help learners to explore the sense of meaning. It is generally observed that single word does not give the sense of meaning so the sense relationship inside the sentence is very significant to know the complete meaning of the sentence.

Key Words: Meaning, Lexical, Grammatical, Denotative, Connotative, Emotive, Contextual, Figurative, Idiomatic, etc.

Introduction

The word semantics has been taken from the Greek word 'seme' which means 'sign'. Semantics deals with the meaning in language. It is very much clear that semantics is the essential part of linguistics which deals with meaning and its interpretation of the words, symbol and structure of the sentence, while determining the reading comprehension of the learners how they understand others. Semantics constructs a relationship between adjoining words and makes easier to understand the sense of a sentence whether the meanings of words are lexical or grammatical and so on. Semantics is dedicated to the study of meaning of words, phrases, sentences and running discourse both texts and narratives. It is closely related to the subjects of representation, denotation and reference. The basic study of semantics in language curriculum is aimed to examine the meaning of signs and the study of meaning relationship. In the present article, only the meaning as an aspect of semantics has been focused. The

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term 'meaning' is defined in many ways but the definition, most pertinent in linguistics is the way words acquire meaning and the processes through which the speakers of a language are able to give suitable interpretations to words.

Objective of the Study

The aim of this study is to propose exact meanings of the word and phrase and enable the learners to explore a sense of the meaning and make them to believe that a word has many possible meanings. For instance, if we replace or remove a single word from the sentence, it may change the entire meanings. Therefore, the sense relation inside the sentence has been taken care of while explaining the terms.

Definition of Meaning

Meaning is a component of word through which the concept is communicated to the listeners and readers. It conveys the sense that a word possesses. According to some of the scholars it often makes some distinction between lexical meaning and grammatical meaning. Lexical meaning is the sense a speaker attaches to linguistic elements as symbols of actual objects and events and grammatical meaning is the relationships that may exist between linguistic elements such as the words within a sentence. For an example, Ball, Boy, Hit, these words have lexical words and they are found in the dictionary. Unless these words are not put together in a special way which indicates the formal relationship between them, they do not have grammatical or functional meaning. When these words are properly arranged in a special way, then only they give the meaning. For instance, 'The boy hits the ball'. In this way there is a definite reference relation between a word and object or idea which it signifies, the word is said to have referential meaning, while the relation between an utterance and the situation in which it is used is called contextual or situational meaning. (Lobner, Sebastian: 2002).

A distinction is often made between extended or widened meaning, e.g. when the word 'boy' is used to refer to 'any immature man' rather than 'non adult male', and specialized or narrowed meaning, e.g. when the word ball is used to refer to 'round object used in particular game' rather than to 'any circular shape'. Other distinctions sometimes made are between intensional and extensional meaning depending on whether the emphasis is on what the speaker 'implies' or on how many things to which the word may be applied and between connotative and denotative meaning depending on whether the word carries emotional 'overtones' or is conventionalised by its similar reference points. (Hartmann, R.R.K& Stork, F.C:1977). Hence, the various kinds of the meaning have been discussed below.

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1. The Lexical and Grammatical Meaning   لغوی و قواعدی معنی

Semantics is linked with the meaning of words and how they arrange to form sentence. The lexical meaning is meaning of word found in the relation to the physical world or to abstract concepts, without giving reference to any sentence in which word occurs. Generally, it is the meaning of root or base word in isolation, without considering the suffix or prefix. For instance, the meanings of want in wants, wanted and wanting. Similarly, the grammatical meaning is the meaning of a word by reference to its function within a sentence rather than to a word beyond the sentence. In other words, the grammatical meaning is defined as the part of meaning which shows the grammatical functions or relationships with the words, as number, gender, tense, etc. For example, 'wants' refers to the grammatical functions or relationships as singular tense meaning.

It is very helpful in distinguishing between the lexical and grammatical meanings, the former is to do with the meanings of words, and the later is to do with the meanings of phrases, including sentences. Further, the lexical meaning is seen the open class items like nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, and the grammatical meaning is the close class items like determiners, conjunctions and prepositions, etc. The open class items have independent meanings, which can be seen in the dictionary. It is the meaning of individual lexical items. The close items can give meaning only in contact with other words in a sentence, depends upon the structure of the sentence and its relation with other sentences. For example, 'the cat killed the rat'. There are three open class items as 'cat', 'kill', and 'rat', out of these two are nouns and one is a verb. There is one close item as 'the' which occurs before each noun, which has no independent reference of its own and can give meaning only when put before the nouns. In another example:

1. The fat dog chased all the cats in the house.
2. In our house there are one dog and four cats.

According to Balasubramanian K (2015) there are two categories of morphemes (or words) (1) fat, dog, house, our, are, one, and, four, the, all, in, and, there & (2) chased, cats. The first category (1) of morphemes are numerous in language and directly refers to the objects, actions and ideas, qualities, institutions, etc, of the world. To this category of morphemes new morphemes can be added easily either by borrowing from others or by coining new words. Similarly, this category of morphemes goes out of use from the language easily. In other words, these morphemes belong to an 'open' set.

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Therefore, these morphemes are called lexical words or lexemes and their meaning is referred to as lexical meaning.

Balasubramanian K (2015) further opines that the other category (2) of morphemes show a different type of meaning. They normally speak about or refer to some aspect of the first category of morphemes. For example in English, morpheme -s refers to 'more than oneness' of the objects etc referred in by the first category of morphemes are very limited in number or finite in any language. New morphemes of these types cannot be easily added to the language and they take long time to go out of use also. They constitute 'close' set. This category of morphemes is called grammatical words or function words and their meaning is called as grammatical meaning.

اردو زبان میں مثال کے طور پر مندرجہ ذیل جملے میں ' پر' اور 'سے' کا استعمال لغوی معنوں میں ہوا ہے-

1. میز پر کتاب رکھی ہوئی ہے-

2. دہلی سے آگرہ دو سو کیلو میٹر دور ہے-

اسی طرح درج ذیل جملے میں ' پر' اور 'سے' کا استعمال قواعدی معنوں میں ہوا ہے-

1. باضابطہ طور پر اس نے مجھے بلایا-

2. عابدی روزہ سے ہے-

2. The Denotative Meaning   حوالہ جاتی یا دلالتی معنی

The Denotative meaning is also known as Referential or Designative meaning. It is considered as the literal meaning of a word indicating the concept or idea to which it refers. The concept is a smallest unit of meaning which is called a *'sememe'* in the same way as the unit of sound in phonology is called a *'phoneme'* and is like the *'morpheme'* in its structure and organization as in the morphology. Thus, the word 'man' may be defined as a concept consisting of a structure of meaning like 'animate + human + male + adult'. It can also be described through the basic morphological unit as '/m/+ /æ/ + /n/'. Hence, these qualities are the logical attributes of the concept 'man'. If the minimal qualities of the concept changes, the concept too changes. Therefore 'animate + human + female +adult' may not be the concept referred to by the word 'man', because it is a different concept. (Yule, George : 1997). Further, he has also illustrated this in the following diagram: -

	table	cow	girl	woman	boy	man
animate	-	+	+	+	+	+
human	-	-	+	+	+	+

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male	-	-	-	-	+	+
adult	-	-	-	+	-	+

Further, the denotation of a word is the actual definition of the word rather than the nuances of its meaning or the feelings it implies. The denotation of a word does not carry the associations, emotions, or attitudes that the word might have. The opposite concept is called connotation which refers to those associations and nuances that a word carries. For example, the words 'house' and 'home' are synonyms in English and have the same denotation, i.e., a place where one lives. The denotation of a word is its primary signification or reference; its connotation is the range of secondary or associated significations and feelings which it commonly suggests or implies. Thus, 'home' denotes the house where one lives, but connotes privacy, intimacy, and comfort.

مثال: " پورے شہر میں گرم ہوا چل رہی ہے"- یہاں 'گرم ہوا' سے مراد 'فساد ' ہے اور اس کا استعمال حوالہ جاتی معنی میں ہوا ہے-

3. The Connotative Meaning   تعبیری معنی

The connotative meaning of a word is related to the feeling that a word invokes. The connotative meaning of a word differs from its dictionary meaning. The two words may have similar denotations but different connotations. The connotative meanings in addition to their literal meanings i,e. denotations, have cultural and emotional meaning too. For instance, the literally meaning of 'Wall Street' is a street situated in New York, but connotatively it refers to 'power' and 'wealth'.

Further, in addition to its logical or essential attributes, there is also a meaning linked to a word, which comes through reference to other things in the real world. Such a word may be associated with some other features or attributes. For example, the logical or denotative meaning of the word 'woman' is the concept, '+animate + human + female + adult'. But in real world situation, it may be added the concept of 'frailty' or 'weaker sex'. These are the example of connotations or values associated with the concept of 'woman'. Therefore, the connotative meaning consists of the attributes associated with a concept. As we study, these associations of concepts come through in use over a period of time in a particular culture and may be changed according to the change in time. Whereas denotative meaning remains unchanged because it is based on the essential attributes of a concept. The connotative meaning changes on the basis of associations to the concept and these associations may change time to time. (Jindal, D.V & Syal, Pushpinder:1998).

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As we discussed above the connotative meaning also depends upon the social, cultural and individual experiences of a person and it may be positive or negative. For instance, the words childlike, childish and youthful have the same denotative meaning but give different connotative meanings. Therefore, childlike and childish have a negative connotation as they refer to rather innocent behavior of a person and youthful indicates that a person is active and responsible.

مثال کےطورپرایک لفظ عورت کے دلالتی معنی ' ذی + انسان+بالغ +لڑکی ' ہے، جس کو صنف نازک بھی کہا جاتاہے۔ اس لیے یہ عورت کے لیے تعبیری معنی ہوا۔ (Md،Rizwan:2017)

4. The Emotive Meaning   جذباتی معنی

The emotive meaning refers to someone or something that have the ability to express emotions. An artist feelings in the painting that inspires emotion in its viewers is an example to describe as emotive. In another words, we say 'this music is emotional' or 'this is emotive music' but it depends on what motivation or response is desired from the viewer or listener, which can be either negative or positive. (Dash, Niladri Sekhar: 2011).

Further, the term *emotive* looks similar to the term *emotional*, but these two are not interchangeable. According to the vocabulary.com/dictionary, the emotive meaning is used in the sense that something or someone that makes us have intense feelings and not just have intense feelings. Similarly, the emotive meaning is considered as the emotional expression of a word or group of words that is used instead of having a similar meaning but having a less affective quality. For instance, the word 'drunk' is used as emotive instead of 'inebriated' and 'murder' for 'homicide'.

However, the purpose of emotive meaning is the use of emotionally charged words to create an emotional subtext that is stronger than and potentially different from the literal meaning of the words. Emotive language intends to manipulate the reader or listener to adopt a certain feeling or to act as desired. There are some examples used in newspapers, political speeches, advertising copy, literature and conversations to create a desired emotional response in the listener or reader. For instance, the use of 'scholarly' instead of 'studious', 'bureaucrat' for government official instead of 'public servant', 'censorship' instead of 'screening obscene language from children's programming' and 'ghetto' instead of 'poor economic zone'.(www.dictionary.reference.com)

مثال: 1. شیر کی ایک دن کی زندگی ، گیڈر کی طرح سو سال جینے سےبہتر ہے۔ (ٹیپو سلطان)

2. تم مجھے خون دو،   میں تمہیں آزادی دونگا۔ (سبھاش چندر بوس)

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5. The Contextual Meaning   سیاقی معنی

The contextual meaning deals with the meaning of words and sentences not as isolated entities but as related to situations of occurrence and use. It explains the vocabulary or lexicon of a language as a system of interrelated networks or semantic field. Words that are interrelated may belong to the same semantic field e.g. 'flower', 'bloom', 'blossom', 'bud', belong to the same field. There may be the basis of the idea of collocation. Since collocated items are those which habitually co-occur with certain other items e.g. 'flowers' collocate with 'bloom', 'letters' with 'writing'. The networks and collocations are built on sense relations in a language. The other meanings deal with the context of use of words and sentences by the speaker of a language. It is a 'context of situation', in which meaning is related on the one hand to the external word or situation and on the other two levels of language such as the sounds, syntax and words. When we try to analyze the meaning of a word or sentence, the set of features from the external world or the 'context of situation' becomes relevant, i.e. who is the speaker, what is the role of each and the relationship of the two, what situation they are in. (Jindal, D.V& Syal, Pushpinder:1998).

مثال : الفاظ 'مندر' مسجد' اور گرجاگھر 'کے معنی ' عبادت گاه ' کے ہے۔ لیکن ان تینوں کا الگ الگ معنی مذھب کی بنا پر طےکیا جاناسیاقی معنی کی مثال ہے۔

6. The Figurative Meaning   مرصع معنی

The figurative meaning is different from the basic meaning and expresses an idea in a very interesting way by using a language that meaning describes something else other than literal. In art, '*figure'* means 'thing or human or animal' form. A painting or a drawing represents something as it really looks, rather than in an abstract way. Therefore, a figurative drawing might show a horse is running across the ground. (Dash, Niladri Sekhar : 2011).

The word 'figurative' has come from the Old French word '*figuratif'*, that means 'metaphorical'. So any figure of speech either a statement or phrase if it is not intended to be understood literally is figurative. For example if someone says 'our hands are frozen' and 'we are so hungry we could eat a horse' are figurative usage and their meanings are not literal. Further, the figurative meaning is a metaphorical, hyperbolic, idiomatic, or ironic sense of a word or expression, in contrast to its literal meaning. It is very common in poetry, but is also used in prose and non-fictional writing as well.

مثال: "اسدی نے امتحان میں قلم تور ڈالا"۔   اس جملہ میں لفظ 'قلم ' کااستعمال مرصع معنی میں ہواہے۔

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7. The Idiomatic Meaning   محاوراتی معنی

The idiomatic meaning is containing and consisting of an idiom. 'Bite the bullet' is an idiomatic expression that means to accept something unpleasant without   complaining.   It   is containing expressions that are natural and correct. According to O'brien Elizabeth the idiomatic expressions are the type of informal meaning different from the meaning of the words in the expression. For example, '*Hold your tongue*'.

This does not mean that someone will hold his or her own tongue. It is the situation, where someone wants to talk, but it would be better if he or she does not.

Anything idiomatic relates to idioms are phrases like 'It's raining cats and dogs'. An idiom is a turn of phrase that is not literal, like saying 'a restaurant has gone to the dogs', which has nothing to do with dogs but means the restaurant has seen better days. When we say an idiom is an idiomatic expression. We could say an idea like how politics is like a horserace is idiomatic. Further, the idiomatic meaning is an expression whose meaning cannot be worked out from the meanings of its constituent's words. Even if we know the meanings of all the words in the phrase like, 'Let the cat out of the bag', we can not guess the idiomatic meaning of the whole expression, this we must learn separately. It means, of course, to reveal something publicly which is supposed to be a secret. However, it somehow undergoes through the ordinary syntactic processes of the language. For instance, 'let the cat out of the bag', can appear in sentences like, 'The cat has been well and truly let out of the bag', in which the idiom has been broken up and its parts scattered about the sentence and yet the idiomatic sense is still present. Such findings in syntactic expression always pose an investigation in language. (Trask, R.L: 1999).

مثال: کریم ہر خواص و عام کی بے لوث خدمت کرتاہے-   یہاں 'بے لوث' کامحاوراتی اسـتعمال ' پرخلوص ' کے معنی میں کیا گیاہے-

Conclusion

Apart from these, there are also some minor types of meaning, which includes unusual constructions or combinations of words that provide a new perspective to the meaning. It is worth mentioning to some of them. Personification: When something that is not human is given human like qualities, this is known as personification. For example, 'The flower is dancing in the wind'. Onomatopoeia refers to words whose pronunciations imitate the sounds they describe. A dog's bark sounds like "woof" so "woof", "woof" is an example of onomatopoeia. Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. Synecdoche is a

word or phrase that refers to a part of something that is substituted to stand in for the whole, or vice versa. For example the word 'coke' refers to a common synecdoche for all carbonated drinks. Cliche is an expression which has been overused to the extent that it loses its original meaning. For example, 'a matter of time' which means 'to happen sooner or later'. Assonance: When two or more words close to one another repeat the same vowel sound but start with different consonant sounds is known as assonance.

We have seen that there is a lot to say about meaning of the words, phrases and sentences. There may be different ways to think about meanings. In this article the concepts of meaning in the language has been broadly explained and the models of meaning as an aspect of semantics has been examined. It is the fact that the meaning of semantics is as complex and as broad as the range of concepts which depends on the specific nature of the meaning involved as well as the way that meaning is mapped into linguistic forms. However, the concern of this article has been the conceptual consideration of meaning apart from the traditional conception of what meaning in semantics talk about.

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