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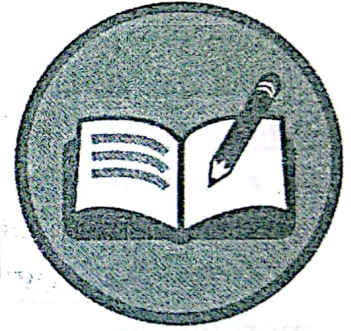
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1 + 2



Semantics

& Syntax

20.05.2023

27.05.2023

مؤسسة العائدي للخدمات الطلابية

Semantics & Syntax 3.1+2



AYDI© 2023

LECTURE NO.1

20.05.2023

HELLO EVERYONE!

I am Iyad al-Omar, and I will be teaching you semantics and syntax.

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Language is a system of sounds. Later on, these sounds were represented graphically in *letters*. Combining these sounds with certain rules gives us *words*. Combining words with a certain set of rules gives us *sentences*. These rules are finite but the words and the sentences that we can combine with them are infinite.

The meaning of these words and sentences is *conventionalized*. For example, if you ask anybody who speaks English about a marker, he/she will tell you that this is a marker. But if we here as a group decided to call it a barker, then we would get out of the conventionalized meaning of the word marker.

Morphology علم الصرف

- The smallest unit that can be analyzed in a language is called the phoneme.
- Combining phonemes gives us morphemes. This is where Morphology comes from.
- Morphology is the science that is concerned with the study of morphemes.
- Morphemes are combinations of sounds that have meaning. A sound on its own doesn't have meaning but a morpheme has a meaning.
- ❖ Types of morphemes:
 - There are two types of morphemes: free and bound. We symbolize free morphemes with (f) and bound morphemes with (b).
 - Free morphemes are morphemes that can stand on their own and convey a meaning.
 - Bound morphemes cannot stand on their own. They have a certain aspect of meaning but they don't stand on their own as independent words.
 - These bound morphemes are called suffixes and prefixes in English. In other languages, we have infixes and circumfixes.
 - Infixes are morphemes that occur in the middle of the word.
 - Circumfixes are morphemes that come in different parts of the words.
 - In English, we have only suffixes and prefixes:

- Suffixes come at the end of the morphemes.
- Prefixes come at the beginning of other morphemes.

Note: in the case of nouns like *mother-in-law*, we don't have an infix because this is a compound noun and this is related to Semantics not to Morphology.

❖ Another division of morphemes:

- **Content morphemes:** they refer to the content of the sentence such as: fan, run, street, etc. They carry the message and the meaning of the sentence.

- Content morphemes are nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives.

- **Functional morphemes:** they help cement the content words together such as: in, the, a, etc. The functional morphemes help convey the tense. They also give the recipient of the message a sense of tone.

- Functional morphemes are prepositions, articles, etc.

- Content morphemes and functional morphemes are always free morphemes.

- Bound morphemes are divided into other two categories which are:

- Derivational morphemes: you can derive a new word from another word by adding a certain morpheme. Possible => impossible => possibility

- Inflectional morphemes: they help with the tense and with the grammatical aspect of a word. Book => books, play => played => playing, tall => taller => tallest. So the inflectional morphemes help with making past and present, comparative and superlative, etc.

If we count the inflectional morphemes, we find:

1. -ing

2. -ed

3. Plural -s

4. Third person singular -s

5. Possessive -s

6. -er

7. -est

8. Some linguists consider that the "en" in (take => taken) to be an inflectional morpheme. The same applies to similar verbs such as go => gone, write => written, etc.

Let's take the word *possible*. We can't divide this word into morphemes, so we call it a root or a stem.

We can add to it the morphemes -im, -ity, -ly. We can add the

morpheme -ly to the stem possible. The result is possibly. Usually, we consider this new morpheme “possibly” to be a new stem to which we can add a new morpheme such as -im and the result is impossibility. This is what is called the hierarchy of the morphology of the word.

Other examples:

- Comfort (stem 1), comfortable (stem 2), uncomfortable (stem 3).
- Legal, illegal, illegally

Semantics علم المعاني

• **Semantics** is a field of study that is concerned with the meaning of words.

We have a certain aspect of meaning that depends on the connotation of a word to a certain person. For example, if I mention the words “needle” and “red”, these words would provoke different ideas in your minds. These aspects of meaning are different from person to person depending on their experiences with these objects and adjectives. So every person has different connotations of meaning. This is NOT the scope of Semantics.

The scope of Semantics is the surface meaning and the exact meaning.

Let us take the words: table, man, apple, dog, boy. The meanings of those words have elements that are called *semantic features*.

For example:

- The apple ate the boy.

This sentence is correct syntactically. But semantically it is not OK because the word or morpheme “apple” has certain features and it cannot be in this position.

	Can animate	Human	Adult	Male
Table	✗	✗	✗	✗
Man	✓	✓	✓	✓
Boy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Apple	✗	✗	✗	✗
Dog	✓	✗	✓	✓

The semantic features are infinite so they cannot be listed. That’s why we know these features by our experience. In dictionaries, you don’t find all these connotations. In dictionaries, we find abstract meanings. Dictionaries compare the word with other words that you might know. Dictionaries give relative meanings of words. They describe something in comparison and contrast to something else. They also list examples for you to fully understand the meaning.

Thank You

HELLO EVERYONE!

Our book is entitled The Study of Language by George Yule.

Last lecture, we talked about Morphology and Semantics. We talked about the scope of Semantics and the elements of meaning. There are semantic relationships between words.

❖ Semantic Features:**1. Synonymy**

Synonyms have similar meanings but they are not exactly the same. Synonymous words share a lot of the semantic features but those words are not identical. If two words are identical, one of them will absolutely diminish.

2. Antonymy

Antonymy means the opposite meaning. It is also not exactly the opposite. We have something called gradable antonymy and something called absolute antonymy. Gradable antonymy means it is relative. Gradable means that we can assign grades to a feature or a quality.

- Gradable antonyms are mostly led to superlative and comparative adjectives.

- Absolute antonyms are like black and white.

Keep in mind that the absence of a certain feature doesn't imply the opposite. For example, a person who is not happy is not necessarily sad.

3. Hyponymy

Hyponymy means that we can categorize words or lexical items into categories.

Examples:

In automobiles we have trucks, cars, buses, etc. A car is a hyponym of an automobile. A car and a bus are co-hyponyms of an automobile.

4. Homophones and homonyms

- Homophone means same sound but different meaning (red, read) (write, right).

- Homonyms are spelled the same, sound the same, but have different meanings. (bank)

5. Collocations:

Words that come together such as (pros and cons)

Idioms are an example of collocations. An idiom is a group of words that come together but have a different meaning from the literal meanings of the individual words.

Example: A piece of cake.

Proverbs are also a type of collocations.

• *The difference between an idiom and a proverb:*

- Idioms are usually not complete sentences, while proverbs are complete sentences.

- You cannot guess the meaning of an idiom from the meaning of its constituent words, but you can guess the meaning of a proverb from its constituent words.

- Proverbs are more related to cultures than idioms.

❖ **Semantic Roles**

The sentence “the apple ate the boy” cannot be semantically sound because an apple has certain semantic elements. We said earlier that an apple cannot animate and so it cannot assume the role of an agent in this context. In the semantic roles, we have agents and themes.

• The semantic roles are:

- Agents

- Themes

- Experiencers

- Instruments

- Locations

- Goals

- Sources

1. Agents and Themes:

An agent is something that can take action on its own. For example, as a teacher, I'm an agent of Damascus University because I'm teaching on behalf of this entity. When I read a novel at home, I am an agent of myself because I'm doing something out of my own will. This is the concept of agency.

- In Semantics, words can be either agents or themes.

- Agents are the entities that can take action or do an action.

- A theme is the entity that is influenced by the action of the agent.

- Agents and themes appear in sentences where you have action verbs.

2. Experiencers:

If we don't have an action verb, the agent becomes an experiencer because we no longer have an entity doing something or taking an action, rather this entity is experiencing something.

Example:

I am happy.

The verb is "am".

The experiencer is "I". I am experiencing the theme of happiness.

3. Instruments:

The instrument is something that an agent uses to perform an action on a theme.

Example: I'm writing on the board with a marker. "A marker" is the instrument.

Before we continue with the semantic roles, let me summarize the previous ideas:

☞ Agent: an entity that takes an action. The agents are usually linked with action verbs.

☞ Themes are the entities that are influenced or affected by the actions taken by agents.

☞ Experiencers are linked with state verbs.

☞ Instruments are the entities used by the agents to perform actions on themes.

☞ Instruments, locations, goals, and sources are always linked with prepositions. You can find them in prepositional phrases.

4. Locations

Locations are the place where an action happens.

Example: I am teaching on campus. Campus is the location where the action is taking place.

5. Goals and sources

Goals and sources are always linked with prepositions when there is a movement from a place to another.

Example: I took the bus from home to work.

I: the agent

Took: the action

The bus: the theme

Home: the source

Grammar

Just like almost all European languages, English is a mixture of Latin, Greek, and Germanic languages, in addition to the language spoken by the native inhabitants of the British lands.

The first people to study the grammar of their language were the Greeks and the Romans who spoke Latin. When English emerged, grammarians tried to follow the same methodologies followed by the Greek and Latin grammarians. So they applied the concept of grammatical categories to English. Grammatical categories are classifications of words or the parts of speech. They also tried to make English look grammatically just like Greek or Latin. From here, we have something called the prescriptive grammar.

☞ The prescriptive grammatical approach is an approach to grammar that tries to tell people how they should speak a language. It doesn't describe how the language is spoken.

☞ The opposing view to the prescriptive grammar is the descriptive grammar which describes the language and how natives speak the language.

When they started studying the grammar of English, most of the English speaking populations were illiterate. Those who could read and write were mainly elites and upper classes. Those people were greatly affected by and fluent in Greek and Latin. It was considered a mental exercise to study Greek and Latin. When they tried to study English, they tried to apply that to it. The common people didn't know that so they spoke the language as they heard it from the people around them.

In prescriptive and descriptive grammar we have certain things that are considered grammatically correct here but not grammatically correct there.

For example: if I say: *you and me are in this classroom.*

- From the point of view of descriptive grammar, it is perfectly fine.
- From the point of view of prescriptive grammar, I should say: you and I are in this classroom.
- On the other hand, the sentence "you and I are in this classroom" might not be considered grammatically correct from the point of view of descriptive grammar because not many would know about that.

Now we come to Syntax and the application of the theoretical knowledge we have gathered so far.

Syntax

Syntax is the field of study that studies the structure of a language at the level of a sentence.

In Syntax, we have phrases and clauses.

Syntax cannot be separated from Semantics or Morphology.

- ☞ A phrase is a group of words that cannot stand alone.
- ☞ A phrase lacks the subject-predicate element.
- ☞ In any sentence in English we have a subject and a predicate.
- ☞ The subject is the doer of the action.
- ☞ The predicate consists of the verb and anything else in the sentence.

There is no sentence in English without a subject and a predicate. A phrase lacks this feature because it might not have a predicate or a subject.

❖ **Types of clauses:**

Clauses are of two types:

Dependent clauses

Independent clauses

- An independent clause is a syntactic entity that has the subject-predicate feature and can stand meaningfully on its own.
- A dependent clause has the subject-predicate feature but cannot stand alone and convey a complete meaningful unit.

❖ **Types of phrases:**

Based on this, we have different types of phrases. The first type is the noun phrase.

1. The noun phrase:

A noun phrase is any phrase that has a noun or an equivalent of a noun. There might be words added to the noun phrase after the noun and before the noun. Those words might be adjectives and articles. We can also have modifiers before the noun.

The functions of a noun phrase:

A noun phrase can be:

- **A subject in a sentence**
- **A direct object of a verb**

- An indirect object of a verb
- The object of a preposition
- The complement of a subject
- The complement of an object

We symbolize the noun phrase as (NP).

In the exam, I might give you a sentence and ask you what the semantic role of the underlined word (or phrase) is.

Example:

We shall be looking at some relations between words.

- "Shall be looking" is the verb of the sentence. It is an action verb.
- We: agent
- "Some relations" is a noun phrase. It is the theme.
- "Between" is a preposition.
- Words: theme.

Example:

I gave my mother a gift on her birthday.

- I: agent
- My mother: theme (noun phrase)
- A gift: theme (noun phrase)
- On her birthday: location

Noun phrases:

- I: subject
- My mother: object
- A gift: object
- Her birthday: object of a preposition

Example:

I was happy because I graduated.

- I: experiencer
- Happy: theme
- I: agent

Example:

I heard myself.

- I: agent
- Myself: theme

Example:

I was annoyed by the fly on the wall so I hit it with a magazine.

- I: experiencer
- Was annoyed: theme
- By the fly: agent
- On the wall: location
- I: agent
- It: theme
- Magazine: instrument

Noun phrases:

- I: object
- The fly: subject
- The wall: object of a preposition
- I: subject
- It: object
- A magazine: object of a preposition

Sometimes two noun phrases explain each other: *Mr. John my dentist is in his office.*

☞ The noun phrase can be a complement of a subject.

☞ In a sentence where there is no action verb, if the noun phrase gives additional information about the subject, it is a complement to the subject.

☞ When the noun phrase gives additional information about an object, it is a complement to an object.

Example:

He found a very nice apartment downtown. The word “downtown” is a complement to the object.

We have covered from page 63 until page 68.

Noun phrases are from page 118 to page 127.

We discussed Semantics from page 112 to page 121.

Thank You

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