Semantics

1. Semantics:

- <u>It is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences.</u>

- It is concerned with what words conventionally mean *not* what speakers want them to mean on a particular occasion.

- Semantics is concerned with *the general or objective meaning* rather than the *subjective or local meaning*.

2.Conceptual & Associative Meaning:

- *Conceptual meaning:* is the basic components of meaning conveyed by the literal use of words.

  e.g. Needle ➡ *' thin, sharp, steel instrument'*

- *Associative meaning:* the type of meaning that people associate with the use of words.

  e.g. Needle ➡ *'pain' 'drugs' 'blood' 'illness'*

- Semantics is concerned with the *conceptual meaning* rather than the *associative meaning* of words.

3. Semantic Features:

- Decide whether the following are well or ill - formed sentences:

The hamburger ate the boy.

The table listens to the radio.

The horse is reading a newspaper.

- Syntactically ➡ well-formed.

   The horse   is reading   a newspaper.

     NP   V   NP

3. Semantic Features:

- Semantically ➡ odd. Why?

The subject of 'read' denotes an entity capable of 'reading'.

- We need to determine the features of meaning that any noun must have in order to be used as a subject of the verb 'read'.

_____ is reading a newspaper.

N [+ human]

- These features are called *semantic features*.

- *Semantic Features:* refer to the basic elements such as ' human', included as plus or minus [+ human], used in the analysis of the components of the word meaning.

3. Semantic Features:

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

4. Semantic / Thematic Roles:

- Semantics deals with words *features* as well as the *roles* they play in sentences.

- <u>*Semantic Roles:* describe the role played by a NP in the event described by a sentence.</u>

- Semantic roles of NP:

  a- agent   b- theme/patient

  c- instrument   d- experiencer

  e-location   f-source

  g- goal

4.1.Agent and Theme/ Patient:

■ *The boy* kicked *the ball.*
The dog caught *the ball.*
A car ran over *the ball.*
The wind blew *the ball* away.

' *The boy' 'The dog' 'A car' ' the wind'* = agent

'*the ball'* = theme/patient

■ <u>*Agent:* is the semantic role of NP identifying the entity that performs the action.</u>

■ <u>*Theme/Patient:* is the semantic role of NP identifying the entity involved or affected by the action.</u>

4.2. Instrument and Experiencer:

- *She sliced the bread with a sharp knife.*

  She draw the picture with a crayon.

'knife' 'crayon' = instrument.

- *Instrument:* is the semantic role of NP identifying the entity used to perform an action.

- *The boy feels sad.*

  Mothers love their children.

'The boy' 'Mothers' = experiencer.

- *Experiencer:* is the semantic role of NP identifying the entity that has a feeling, perception, or state described by the verb.

4.3. Location, Source, and Goal:

- *The book is on the table.*

On the table = location.

- *Location:* is the semantic role of NP identifying where an entity is.

- *He traveled from Riyadh to Jeddah.*

from Riyadh =source.   *to Jeddah* =goal.

- *Source:* is the semantic role of NP identifying where an entity moves from.
- *Goal:* is the semantic role of NP identifying where an entity moves to.

Semantic / Thematic Roles:

1. *Agent*   the entity that performs the action.
2. *Theme/Patient*   the entity involved or affected by the action.
3. *Instrument*   the entity used to perform an action.
4. *Experiencer*   the entity that has a feeling, perception, or state
5. *Location*   where an entity is.
6. *Source*   where an entity moves from.
7. *Goal*   where an entity moves to.

Semantic / Thematic Roles:

Mary	*saw*	*a fly*	*on the wall.*
EXPERIENCER		THEME	LOCATION
She	*borrowed*	*a magazine*	*from George.*
AGENT		THEME	SOURCE
She	*squashed*	*the bug*	*with the magazine.*
AGENT		THEME	INSTRUMENT.
She	*handed*	*the magazine*	*back to George.*
AGENT		THEME	GOAL
"Gee thanks," said	*George.*		
	AGENT		

Identify the semantic roles of the following underlined NPs:

- <u>Ali</u> found <u>the box</u>.

- It rains <u>in Spain</u>.

- Put the book <u>on the desk</u>.

- He flew <u>from Dammam</u> <u>to Jeddah.</u>

- <u>Layla</u> cuts <u>her daughter's hair</u> <u>with a razor.</u>

- <u>Nora</u> heard Mona reciting the Holy Quran.

5. Lexical Relations:

- Words can not only be treated as 'containers' of meaning, or fulfilling 'roles' in events, they can also have 'relationships' with each other. How?

- By describing the meaning of a word in terms of its relation to other words.

e.g. big=large   big# small   rose = a kind of flower

- This approach is used in semantic description and treated as the analysis of *'lexical relation'*.

e.g. 1- (big, large) synonymy

2- (big, small) antonymy

3- (rose, flower) hyponymy

5.1.Synonymy:

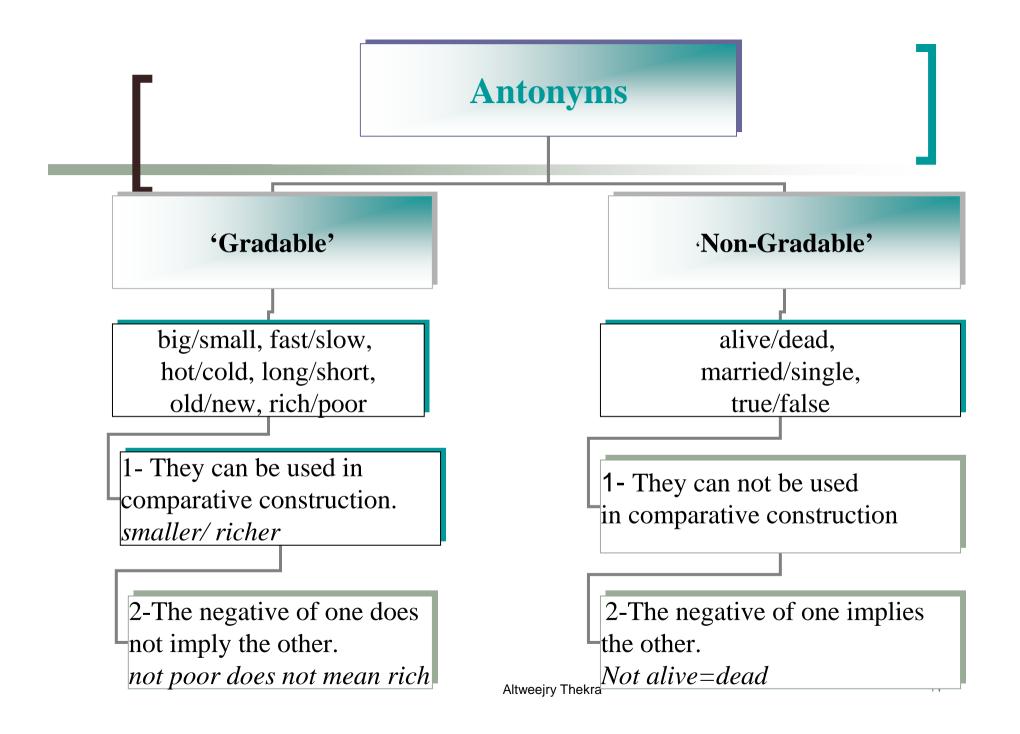*My father purchased a large automobile.*

My dad bought a big car.

(father/ dad, purchase/ buy, large/ big, automobile/car)

- The meaning of these words is closely related.

- They are *synonyms*.

- *Synonymy:* is the lexical relation in which two or more words have closely related meanings.

- The idea of 'sameness' of meaning is not necessarily total 'sameness''

    Answer/ Replay the following questions:

- Synonyms may differ in terms of formal and informal use.

5.2.Antonymy:

- Look at the following pairs:

  alive/dead, big/small, fast/slow, happy/sad,

  hot/cold, long/short, male/female, married/single,

  old/new, rich/poor, true/false.

- The members of the pair have opposite meaning.

- They are *antonyms.*

- <u>*Antonymy:* is the lexical relation in which two or more words have opposite meaning.</u>

Antonyms

'Gradable'

big/small, fast/slow,
hot/cold, long/short,
old/new, rich/poor

1- They can be used in
comparative construction.
smaller/ richer

2-The negative of one does
not imply the other.
not poor does not mean rich

'Non-Gradable'

alive/dead,
married/single,
true/false

1- They can not be used
in comparative construction

2-The negative of one implies
the other.
Not alive=dead

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5.3.Hyponymy:

- Look at the following pairs:
  rose/flower, dog/animal, carrot/vegetable,
  apple/fruit, ant/ insect, skirt/clothes
- The meaning of the 1st word is included in the meaning of the 2nd word.

rose is a kind of flower ⟶ *rose is a hyponym of flower*

dog is an animal ⟶ *dog is a hyponym of animal*

carrot is a kind of vegetable → *carrot is a hyponym of vegetable.*

- *Hyponymy:* is the lexical relation in which the meaning of one word is included in the meaning of another.

5.4. Homophones:

- Look at the following pairs:

bare/bear , meat/meet , flour /flower,

Pale/ pail , right/write , sew/so

- These words have different written forms but the same pronunciation.

- They are *homophones*.

- <u>*Homophones:* two or more words with different forms and the same pronunciation.</u>

5.5. Homonyms:

- Look at the following examples:

  bank (of a river) – *bank* (financial institution)
  pupil (at school) – *pupil* (in the eye)
  race (contest of speed) – *race* (ethnic group)

- These words have the same form but different meanings.

- These words are *homonyms*.

- *Homonyms*: two words with the same form that are unrelated in meaning.

- Homonyms are words that have *separate histories and meanings*, but have *accidentally* come to have exactly the same form.

5.6. Polysemy:

- Look at the following examples:

Head (of the body / of the company / of the department)

Feet (of person / of bed / of chair)

- Each word has the same form and related meanings.

- It is *polysemy*.

- *Polysemy:* is the lexical relation in which a word have two or more related meanings.

Homonymy and Polysemy:

- **How can you differentiate between homonymy and polysemy?**
- **Decide whether the following are examples of polysemy or homonymy:**

date (=a thing we can eat)

date (=a point in time)

date (=a particular day and month/on a letter)

date(= an appointment)

date(= with someone we like)

What is the lexical relation between the following pairs:

1-(lion/animal)

2- (courageous/brave)

3-(too/to)

4- (deep/profound)

5-(orange/fruit)

6-(easy/difficult)

7-(teacher/instructor)

8- (near/far)

9-(brother/relative)

10-(beautiful/ugly)

11- (sell/buy)

12-(see/sea)

Next

First Language Acquisition