المحاضرة الثانية

المادة: لغويات

الفرقة: الثالثة انجليزي – عام

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A COURSE IN LINGUISTICS

SEMANTICS

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➢ Semantics is the study of meaning in language.

➢ It is the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and entities in the world.

(how words literally connect to things)

➢ **Semantic analysis attempts to establish the relationship between verbal descriptions and states of affairs in the world as accurate (true) or not, regardless of who produces that description**

➢ **Language is used to express meanings which can be understood by others.**

➢ **Meanings exist in our minds and we can express what is in our minds through the spoken and written forms of language (as well as through gestures, action etc.).**

➢ Sound patterns of a language are studied at the level of phonology

➢ The organization of words and sentences is studied at the level of morphology and syntax.

➢ These are in turn organized in such a way that we can convey meaningful messages or receive and understand messages.

➢ "How is language organized in order to be meaningful?" This is the question we ask and attempt to answer at the level of semantics

➢ "Semantics" is the most abstract level of linguistic analysis, since we cannot see or observe meaning as we can observe and record sounds.

➢ Meaning is related to the human capacity to think logically and to understand.

➢ So when we try to analyze meaning, we are trying to analyze our own capacity to think and understand our own ability to create meaning.

"WHAT IS MEANING"?

What is the relationship between words and the objects which words represent?

➢ For example, What is the meaning of the word "cow"?

➢ One possible answer is that it refers to an animal who has certain properties, that distinguish it from other animals who are called by other names.

➢ "Where do these names come from?" and "why does the word "cow" mean only that particular animal and none other?"

➢ Some thinkers say that there is no essential connection between the word "cow" and the animal indicated by the word, but we have established this connection by convention and thus it continues to be so.

➢ Others would say that there are some essential attributes of that animal which we perceive in our minds and our concept of that animal is created for which we create a corresponding word.

➢ According to this idea, there is an essential correspondence between the sounds of words and their meanings,

➢ e.g., the word "buzz" reproduces the sound made by a bee.

➢ It is easy to understand this, but not so easy to understand how "cow" can mean "a four-edged bovine" – there is nothing in the sound of the word "cow" to indicate that.

- Children often invent words that illustrate the correspondence between sound and meaning: they may call a cow "moo-moo" because they hear it making that kind of sound).
- However, this idea applies only to some words and not to others, for example, words that do not refer to objects, e.g. "love", "hate".
- This fact gives rise to the view held by later thinkers, that the meaning of a word is not the object it refers to, but the concept of the object that exists in the mind.

➢ Moreover, as de Saussure pointed out, the relation between the word (signifier) and the concept (signified) is an arbitrary one

➢ the word does not resemble the concept.

➢ Also, when we try to define the meaning of a word we do so by using other words.

➢ So, if we try to explain the meaning of "table" we need to use other words such as "four", "legs", and "wood" and these words in turn can be explained only by means of other words.

Meaning can be any of the following:

1. An intrinsic property of something

2. Other words related to that word in a dictionary

3. The connotations of a word

4. The thing to which the speaker of that word refers

5. The thing to which the speaker of that word should refer

6. The thing to which the speaker of that word believes himself to be referring

7. The thing to which the hearer of that word believes is being referred to.