

المحاضرة الرابعة

المادة: اللغويات العامة

الفرقة الثالثة – لغة انجليزية – عام

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TYPES OF MEANING

A. WORD MEANING

1. Denotative / Descriptive / Referential meaning

The denotative meaning of a word is the central meaning of the word found in a dictionary. It is the meaning that may be described in terms of a set of semantic features that serve to identify the particular concept associated with the word.

It is also called descriptive because it describes an object, an event, a state or an affair, and referential meaning as it refers us to something in the world.

Ex: A pig: a domestic animal, 4 legs, hairy, usually raised for meat

A father: a male adult, married, having children ...

2. Connotative / Social / Affective meaning

The connotative meaning of a word is the implied, additional meaning that the word has beyond its denotative meaning. It shows people's emotions and / or attitudes towards what the word refers to.

This meaning may vary from individual to individual, and community to community. That's why connotative meaning is also called social or affective meaning.

Ex: + The word *pig* in “He is a pig” may means connotatively: He is a pig => - Lazy

Greedy

Stupid

Dirty

+ As connotative meaning, the word *woman* may mean positively devotion, patience, generosity ..., and negatively frailty, inconstancy, irrationality ...

B. SENTENCE MEANING

1. Linguistic / literal meaning

The linguistic meaning of a sentence depends on:

- The sum of meanings of constituent words**
- The syntactic function (subject, object,...)**
 - The semantic role**

Compare the following sentences:

(1) *The lion bit the hunter.*

(2) *The hunter bit the lion.*

(3) *The hunter was bitten by the lion*

To understand the meaning of the sentences, we must know the meanings of the words ‘lion, bite, hunter’. However, we can use exactly the same words to form different sentences with the same or different meanings.

(1) *The lion bit the hunter* # (2) *The hunter bit the lion*

S O S O

The two sentences (1) & (2) have different meanings because the words have different syntactic functions.

(2) *The hunter bit the lion* # (3) *The hunter was bitten by the lion.*

S O S O

The sentences (2) & (3) have different meanings although the words have the same syntactic functions.

(1) *The lion bit the hunter* = (3) *The hunter was bitten by the lion.*

S O S O

The sentences (1) & (3) have the same meaning although the words have different syntactic functions. What makes the meaning of the two sentences similar or different? It is what is called *semantic roles*, the third factor making up the meaning of a sentence.

SEMANTIC ROLES

a. Definition

A semantic role is the role performed by a noun phrase in relation to the verb.

b. Types

- **Agent**: the one that initiates an action (person/ animal + action verb)

Ex: Paul opened the door

- **Patient**: the one that is affected by the action

Ex: Paul opens the door

The door opened at the first blow of wind

Paul is boiling water

Water boils at 1000° C

- **Experiencer: the one that experiences a feeling/ sensation/
perception ...**

(person / animal + non-action verb)

Ex: Paul loves Mary

I recognize that I'm wrong

The boy wants a candy

The teacher remembers meeting me somewhere

- Stimulus: the one that causes a feeling / sensation

Ex: Paul loves Mary

I'm afraid of ghost

The book of the teacher makes me very happy

The film interests me a lot

- Recipient (the receiver): the one that receives a physical object

Ex: He gave me a book last night

- Benefactive (the benefactor): the one that benefits from an action

Ex: I do all this for you

I sent him a gift for his son

- Instrument: the one that is used to perform an action (implying a user)

Ex: I open the door with a hammer

Paul used a key to open the door

- Cause: the one that causes an action to happen (not implying a user)

Ex: The door opened suddenly at the blow of the wind

Paul was hurt *with* a knife (implying someone used a knife to hurt him)

Paul was hurt *by* a knife (not implying a user of the knife)

- Locative: the place where an action happens

Ex: I was born in New York

HCM city is a good place to live

- Temporal: the time when an action happens

Ex: Yesterday, I saw you at the supermarket

Coming back to the 3 previous examples, we see:

(1) *The lion bit the hunter* # (2) *The hunter bit the lion*

(2) *The hunter bit the lion* # (3) *The hunter was bitten by the lion.*

The above sentences have different meanings because they have different semantic roles although they may have the same syntactic functions (2) & (3).

(1) *The lion bit the hunter* = (3) *The hunter was bitten by the lion.*

The two sentences have the same meaning because they have the same semantic roles although the syntactic functions are different.

Semantic meaning & pragmatic meaning

- a. **Semantic meaning:** the meaning of a sentence out of context / context-free. It is the linguistic meaning of a sentence.
- b. **Pragmatic meaning:** the meaning of an utterance in a particular situation. Pragmatic meaning is context-dependent.

Ex 1: A: Would you like to go out with me?

B: I have a lot of homework to do.

I have a lot of homework to do

=> semantic meaning: the teacher gave me a lot of assignments to do at home.

=> pragmatic meaning: I'm sorry. I'm very busy. I'm afraid that I have to refuse your invitation.

Ex 2: *Oh! It's too noisy*

=> semantic meaning: there is a lot of noise here.

=> pragmatic meaning: Please, keep silent!

3. Figures of speech / non-literal meaning / figurative meaning

A figure of speech is ‘*a word or phrase which is used for special effect, and which doesn’t have its usual or literal meaning*’.

Types of figures of speech

Simile. direct / explicit comparison using comparison words (like, as) or comparison form.

Ex:

He eats *like* a tiger (he eats as much as a tiger does.)

He is *as* poor *as* a church mouse (he is very poor)

Metaphor. indirect / implied comparison (no comparison words)

Dead metaphor: a metaphor which has lost its metaphoric characteristic and become *a fixed expression or idiom.* Ex: the eye of

a needle; the head quarter; the foot of the mountain; the leg of the table; the mouth of the river; the face of the table; the back of the chair; the childhood of the earth etc.

A dead metaphor is used *naturally and unconsciously* by a native speaker of a language.

• Live metaphor: a metaphor used *consciously, intentionally* by a speaker with *various figurative meanings*. Ex: 'He is a pig' may be interpreted as he is fat; he is lazy; he is stupid; he is dirty etc. depending on the situation in which it is used.

Usually there is a metaphor when one:

- Puts 2 different species on the same rank.

Ex:

He is an old fox (a person = an animal) (he is very wicked)

He is a rock in storm (a person = a thing) (he is a strong-minded person)

- Applies a feature of one species for another.

Ex:

+ Have you *digested* the lesson yet? '*digest*' is a term usually used for food, now is used for study => the speaker compares the process of

eating and digesting food with that of learning and understanding lessons. (Have you carefully understood the lesson yet?)

+ He *apes* your betters. '*ape*', a term used for animal is here used for a person => the speaker compares a person who usually imitates others with an ape whose characteristic is to imitate. (He imitates your betters.)

+ He *bottled up* his feelings. '*bottle*' a term usually used for the process of making different kinds of drink or wine etc. is used here for feelings. (He hid / concealed his feelings.)

Irony. Saying the opposite of one's thought for emphasis, for fun or mocking.

Ex:

+ He is so *kind* that he let all the housework for me to do. (he is not kind at all)

+ He is so *intelligent* that no examiner has agreed to pass him so far. (he is rather stupid.)

Sarcasm. bitter irony; sneeringly ironical remarks to hurt somebody's feelings.

Ex:

+ “The more I know about human beings, the more I want to be an animal” (Jungle Boy) (Human beings are worse than animal!)

+ “ Oh yes, we know how clever you are!” “Well, Mr. Know-it-all, What’s the answer this time?”

Synecdoche. substitution of the whole for the part & vice versa

Ex:

+ *Vietnam* won the football match (VN is used to refer to VN football team; whole for part)

- + I don't want you to come under *my roof* (= my house) (part for whole)
- + This work requires an intelligent *brain* (= person)
- + The war has robbed 2,000 *souls* of the village (= people)

Metonymy. substitution of related words

Ex:

The kettle is boiling. (= the water)

The disease has cut off *his breath*. (= his life)

Ways to identify a metonymy:

Container – Contained (vật chứa và vật được chứa):

Ex:

- **Very thirsty, he gulped down the whole *bottle* (= water in the bottle)**
- **As the teacher entered the room, *the whole class* stand up (all the students in the class)**

Author – Works

Ex:

Have you read *Naguib Mahfouz* yet? (= the novels of Naguib Mahfouz)

This is not *a Picasso* (= a painting by Picasso)

Profession

Ex:

- I live on *my pen* (= by writing)
- My Tyson lives on *his gloves* (= by boxing)

Symbol - Reality

Ex:

- He tries his best to win *her heart* (= her love)
- He succeeded to *the crown*. (= the royal office, ...)

- He has *the tongue* of king. (= the talent of tasting food) - She has *an ear* for music. (= the talent for learning, appreciating... music)

Material – Object made of it

- All our *glass* is kept in the cupboard. (= vessels and objects made of glass)
- You can get our *gold* in the upper drawer. (= jewelry made of gold)

Personification. Endowing an inanimate object with human qualities.

Ex:

- The leaves are *dancing* in the morning wind. (= moving)

- The waves *tore* the ship into pieces. (= destroyed completely)

Hyperbole -overstatement or exaggeration

Ex:

- I'm so hungry that I can *swallow a cow* (= extremely hungry)
- I've invited *millions of* people to my party (= a lot of)
- I haven't seen you for *ages*. (= a long time)

Euphemism. the use of pleasant, mild, comforting, or indirect expression for one that is taboo, negative, offensive or too direct.

Ex:

- **Could you tell me where the *restroom* is? (= toilet)**
- **His father has just *passed away* (= died)**
- **Caught by a cold, he *went to the fathers*. (= died)**