



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE: ENG 331

COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO SEMANTICS

COURSE GUIDE

ENG 331 INTRODUCTION TO SEMANTICS

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INTRODUCTION

ENG 331 Introduction to English Semantics is a three-credit unit course. It is presented in five modules with emphasis on the meaning and mechanisms of the English semantics. We note that communication is impossible without meaning shared between the speaker/writer and the audience. Apart from dealing on theoretical perspectives of semantics, we shall explore in some detail the application of semantics to everyday interactions and literary communication. We shall also examine the connection between semantics and logic.

COURSE AIM

The aim of this course is to present you with the essentials of English semantics and complex analysis of issues of communication. The course will also be a logical link to the contemporary thought on web-based and computer related communication systems.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Besides the specific objectives of each unit, the general objectives of this course are presented below. It is expected that at the end of this course, you should be able to:

- trace the development of linguistic semantics
- highlight the scope and concepts of linguistic semantics
- explore the nature and meaning of English semantics
- identify different types of meaning
- explain the different theories of meaning
- highlight the major thrust in the various approaches to the study of semantics
- discuss the sense relations in the study of words
- identify practical manifestations of semantic principles in literary and non-literary communication
- highlight some semantic problems of Nigerian English.

WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE

To succeed in this course, you will be expected to study the units thoroughly, refer to the recommended texts and complete all the assignments. You will also need to attempt the self-assessment exercises. This course will take about 16 weeks to complete. You will discover that the units have been presented in simple and logical forms to enable you benefit maximally from them.

COURSE MATERIALS

You have been provided in this course with the following items:

Course Guide
 Study Units
 Textbooks and References
 Assignment File

STUDY UNITS

The units in this course are presented in the following modules.

Module 1 Definition and Scope of Semantics

Unit 1 Definition and Brief History of Semantics
 Unit 2 The Scope of Semantics
 Unit 3 Approaches to the Study of Semantics

Module 2 The Study of Meaning

Unit 1 The Nature of Meaning
 Unit 2 Theories of Meaning

Module 3 Word and Sentence Meaning

Unit 1 Semantics and the Study of the Word: Sense Relations
 Unit 2 Semantics and the Nature of the Lexicon
 Unit 3 Aspects of Sentential Meaning
 Unit 4 Pragmatics: Conversational Implicative and Speech Acts Theories

Module 4 Logic and Fallacies

Unit 1 Basic Aspects of Linguistics Fallacies
 Unit 2 Aspects of Material Fallacies Relevant to Semantics
 Unit 3 Elements of Logic in Semantics

Module 5 Semantics and the Practice of Literary Communication

Unit 1 The Application of Semantics to Literary Communication
 Unit 2 The Application of Semantics to Everyday Communication
 Unit 3 Semantic Problems in Nigerian English

TEXTBOOKS AND REFERENCES

There is a list of references at the end of every unit. You are encouraged to search for these sources and consult them for further information. It will also be very profitable to consult other standard textbooks on each of the topics discussed.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

There are two types of assessment for this course. These are the tutor-marked assignments and the end of semester examination. At the end of each unit, there is the TMA, which you will be expected to attempt, applying the information, knowledge, and techniques you have acquired in the unit. As the university is now largely automated in its operations, the tutor marked assignments are now done and graded online. This has largely helped in reducing the burden of slowness in accessing results by students. Make sure you keep up with the dates for submission of your TMAs on the University web site and your Study Centre. TMAs constitute 30 per cent of your final assessment.

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The final examination constitutes 70 per cent of your final grading score. Moreover, the University as noted above now conducts the examination on the electronic platform. Questions will be drawn from all areas of the course. You will be required to read the course material very well before the examination. You are also required to improve your computer skills for your own good.

COURSE MARKING SCHEME

The total score for the course is 100 per cent - comprising 30 per cent TMAs and 70 per cent for the examination. It is advisable that you do all you can to pass both your TMAs and the examination to give you good standing in your final grade.

COURSE OVERVIEW AND PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

S/N	Title of Work	Weeks of Activity	Assessment
Module 1 Definition and Scope of Semantics			
1	Unit 1 Definition and Brief History of Semantics	1	
2	Unit 2 The Scope of Semantics	2	
3	Unit 3 Approaches to the Study of Semantics	3	TMA 1

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6	Unit 1 Semantics and the Study	6	
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Module 4 Logic and Fallacies			
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11	Unit 2 Aspects of Material Fallacies Relevant to Semantics	11	TMA 3
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Module 5 Semantics and the Practice of Literary Communication			
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14	Unit 2 The Application of Semantics to Everyday Communication	14	
15	Unit 3 Semantic Problems in Nigerian English	15	TMA 4
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16	Revision	18-19	
17	Revision		
18	Examination		

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE

The units are intended to guide you just as a teacher would. You will be required to read each unit very carefully. You will also need to attempt all the exercises. Each unit has been presented in a similar structure – introduction, objectives and the main content. The objectives highlight

what you are expected to achieve, while the introduction provides a short overview. The details are presented in the main text.

FACILITATORS/TUTORS AND TUTORIALS

The University will provide tutors at your different study centres for tutorials on areas of the course that may be difficult. Tutors are expected to have contacts with you on specific periods. Your tutors will also assess your progress and comment on your TMAs.

SUMMARY

The central function of language is communication. Without the sharing of meaning, there is no communication. Since semantics concentrates on the study of meaning, the course is critical to success in English and indeed, any other language. The course is also relevant to law, mass communication and all other branches of liberal studies. It is advisable to pay attention to this course.

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MODULE 1 DEFINITION AND SCOPE OF SEMANTICS

Unit 1	Definition and Brief History of Semantics
Unit 2	The Scope of Semantics
Unit 3	Approaches to the Study of Semantics

UNIT 1 DEFINITION AND BRIEF HISTORY OF SEMANTICS

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1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
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3.2	The Definition of Semantics
3.3	The Brief History of Semantics
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Semantics simply implies the study of how meaning in language is produced or created. Semantics encompasses how words, phrases and sentences come together to make meaning in language. The term semantics simply means the study of meanings. It has been the subject of discourse for many years by philosophers and other scholars but later was introduced formally in literature in the late 1800s. Hence, we have philosophical semantics, linguistic semantics among other varieties of semantics.

For the purpose of the present discourse, we shall be focusing on the development and nature of semantics. Hence, we shall be learning the definition and beginnings of linguistic semantics.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define and explain the meaning of semantics
- trace the beginnings of linguistic semantics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Concept of Semantics

Semantics is the area of linguistics dealing with the meaning of words or the meaning attached to words or symbols. This view places semantics at the core of communication in language. Indeed, there is no communication without the sharing of meaning.

3.2 The Definition of Semantics

Semantics as a term was first formally used by Breal in 1897. Hence, we can deduce that Breal was the first to bring to the fore in a formally acceptable way, the nature of meaning in language. Though the quest for the understanding of meaning has always been of interest to scholars, semantics was not mentioned as a term and did not come up in literature until 1897 when it was first used by Breal. This first attempt to study meanings by philosophers brought about the area of semantics called philosophical semantics, which examines the relationship between linguistic expressions and the phenomena they refer to in the external world. Philosophical semantics focuses on examining the conditions under which such linguistic expressions and the phenomena they refer to are true or false. This can be traced to as far back as Plato and Aristotle's works.

However, contemporary philosophical semantics can be traced to the works of the following authors: Rudolf Carnap (1891 - 1970), Alfred Tarski (Born 1902) and Charles Peirce (1839 - 1914). According to Peirce, philosophical semantics developed as Semiotics in America while with the influence of Saussure in France, the term "semiology" was used. However, the idea of truth-based semantics was Tarski's major contribution.

Linguistic semantics emphasises the properties of natural languages while pure or logical semantics is the study of the meaning of expressions using logical systems or calculi. Examining semantics in this dimension makes it more mathematically related than linguistic in nature. It is important to note that the discussion of semantics as a branch of linguistics began recently and this shall be our next focus.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What do you understand by the word "semantics?"

3.3 Brief History of Semantics

Alfred Korzybski was the first person to attempt studying semantics as a distinct discipline, separate from the discipline of philosophy. Incidentally, Korzybski was a non-linguist who was passionate about introducing a generally acceptable science of communication. Prior to the work of Korzybski, semantics has been looked at from a non-scientific perspective but Korzybski's work was the first formal attempt at bringing in a scientific model to the study of semantics.

Korzybski started by describing all entities and realities by assigning labels to them. He went further to group the names into three. He had names for common objects such as chair, stone, cow and so on. He also had labels for groups and collections like nations, animals, people and so on. Korzybski's third group of labels do not have identifiable referents in the outside world.

These labels are highly abstract and do not readily lend themselves to the assignment of concrete reality. These labels are only assignable to concrete realities by imagination. Such labels include but are not limited to freedom, love, and democracy among others. They feature in aesthetics, philosophy and politics. However, this is not the same with common objects since there seems to be a direct correspondence between items and linguistic expressions. It is interesting to also know that a serious difficulty tends to be posed by labels for groups as a result of the wide range of items within the group. The main challenge with abstract labels stems from the fact that meaning does not have an objective reference in reality because different people will react to different words differently. For instance, the word "love" would be viewed differently by different people as a result of their circumstance or present reality. One person who probably is in a loving relationship will view it positively while another in an unfulfilled relationship will view it negatively. Hence, their reactions will be different and will therefore evoke different emotions from them.

Two other scholars, Ogden and Richards came very close to the analysis of meaning by combining philosophical processes and linguistic methodologies. How did they do this? They introduced the concept "referent" to describe the physical object or situation which the word identifies in the real world. They pointed out that the representation or situation should be seen as a referent while the actual pronunciation or orthographic representation will constitute the symbol. For example, the figure or silhouette of an adult female human being will be the referent while the word used to describe the referent will constitute the symbol. The symbol is similar to Korzybski's concept of label.

Since the world is dynamic, the study of semantics has not been left out. One of such areas that have remained dynamic among others is the concept of change in meaning. Semantics has been at the fore in the study of change in meaning. As early as 1933, Bloomfield observed a system of change in the meaning of words. Instances of change in meaning of words overtime:

1. Meat used to represent all types of food
2. Bitter derives from the metaphor of biting
3. The meaning of astound derives from the weakened meaning of thunder
4. The meaning of knight has been an elevation of the concept of boy
5. The word “money” relates to the Latin word *moneo* (warn) or admonish because money was made in Rome at the temple of the goddess, Junto Moneta
6. Tanks in modern warfare derived their names from the 1914 – 1918 war in which the Germans were deceived into believing that the structures being moved around were just water tanks
7. The modern word “car” originated from the word “chariot”

Etymology, which focuses on the discovery of the origin and earlier meanings of words, also played an important role in earlier studies in semantics. However, it should be noted that there is a challenge with etymological studies. The major one being that no one can state with certainty the origin of the meaning of any word.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Mention five scholars who have been associated with the development of semantics.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have tried to explain the concept of semantics as the study of how words, phrases and sentences come together to create meaning in language. We have also tried to examine the history of semantics from its first appearance in literature and the contributions of scholars like Breal, Bloomfield and Korzybski among others.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt:

- the definition and explanation of the word semantics
- the history of semantics
- how scholars contributed and what they contributed to the history of linguistic semantics.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Trace the development of linguistic semantics.
- ii. Briefly describe with appropriate examples how change in meaning overtime has occurred in linguistic semantics.
- iii. What are the contributions of Alfred Korzybski to the development of semantics?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Ogbulogo, C. U. (2005). *Concepts in Semantics*. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.

Microsoft Encarta. (2009). "Semantics." Microsoft® Student 2008 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2007.

UNIT 2 THE SCOPE OF SEMANTICS

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Nature of Semantics
 - 3.2 Semantics and Other Disciplines
 - 3.3 Major Concerns of Semantics
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We have noted that semantics has its origin in philosophy. Earlier scholars in philosophical semantics were interested in pointing out the relationship between linguistic expressions and identified phenomena in the external world. In the contemporary world, especially in the United States (US), philosophical semantics has led to the development of semiotics. In some other parts of the world, and especially, France, the term “semiology” has been favoured. The reliance on logical calculations in issues of meaning has led to the development of logical semantics. However, for our purpose in this course, emphasis is on linguistic semantics – with our interest on the properties of natural languages. We shall see how this study relates to other disciplines. We shall also examine the real issues in linguistic semantics.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain how semantics relates to other discipline
- discuss the main areas of focus in semantics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Nature of Semantics

In semantics, we study the meaning of words and sentences of languages. Linguistic semantics studies meaning in a systematic and objective way. Since meaning as a concept is not static, a great deal of

the idea of meaning still depends on the context and participants in the act of communication.

There is a strong connection between meaning and communication. Communication as used here is the exchange or relay of information, message, attitude, feelings or values from one person to another. This is done mainly by the use of language. It is often expressed that language is a system, which uses a set of symbols agreed upon by a group. These symbols can be spoken or written, expressed as gestures or drawings.

The symbols employed in language must be patterned in a systematic way. Indeed language is organised at four principal levels – sounds (that is phonetics/phonology), words (that is phonology), sentences (that is syntax) and meaning (that is semantics). Indeed, phonology and syntax are concerned with the expressive power of language while semantics studies the meaning of what has been expressed. Knowledge of grammar is an aspect of the innate cognitive ability of human beings. The power of interpretation complements that innate ability. Interpretation is an aspect of semantics. Therefore, language acquisition or learning includes not only the knowledge of the organisation of sounds and structures, but also how to associate meaning to the structures. Semantics can, therefore, be characterised as the scientific study of meaning in language.

3.2 Semantics and other Related Disciplines

We recall that philosophy has been linked to the earliest postulation about meaning. There are still other disciplines that are relevant to semantics. A very strong ally of semantics is logic- a branch of philosophy. Logical systems are known to exhibit coherent and consistent models for evaluating thought. Thus, logical postulations are the ideal but may not always reflect the real world in matters of language.

Semantics is also related to sociology and anthropology because of the connection between language and culture. The whole essence of cultural relevance in language justified the reliance on context for the meaning of expressions. Of particular interest to semantics is the intricate system of kinship terms and colour expressions.

By relying on the distinction between deep and surface meaning and the power of the human brain to generate many paraphrases of a single structure, semantics is related to psychology. Indeed, the mentalistic approach to meaning and language use in the tradition of generative grammar is a psychological issue. Furthermore, the approaches adopted

by behavioural semantics in the stimulus – response connection in meaning are a purely psychological affair.

Semantics is also related to communication theory. Information is carried and processed in the communication system passing through the channel and the medium. The minimalisation of noise and the processing of feedback are aspects of the communication system. These are achieved by ensuring logical thinking.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List other disciplines related to semantics.

3.3 Major Concerns of Semantics

Semantics is associated with different issues related to meaning including naming, concept, sense and reference. Naming as a semantic process derives from the understanding that words are names or labels for things. The major problem with this naming view of semantics is that, it is only nouns and nominal expressions that can be analysed semantically. In addition, abstract nouns like love, hatred, truth will be difficult to explain since they are not living things.

(i) There is a red bull in the park

This will have meaning, only if there is a red bull in a particular park. Thus, sentences that are lies may not be interpreted.

Concepts mediate between the mind constructs and objects in the real world. Saussure's sign theory and Ogden and Richards, semantic triangle derives from the conceptual approach to semantics. The approach emphasises the power of the mind to make images and to associate these images to objects and ideas. The approach is highly mentalistic, relying on the ability to associate one thing with another. This ability of association may not yield universal understanding. That explains why language experts develop dictionaries to aggregate meaning on a universal basis. Interestingly, the production of dictionaries relies heavily on denotations and connotations, two major angles to the study of meaning.

Reference relates to things, people and events in the world. It is the object or entity to which a linguistic expression relates. Thus, the referent of the word "boy" is a human being called boy. If meaning were restricted to reference, many words without obvious referents will

be left out. It will be difficult to explain the meaning of prepositions, conjunctions and other grammatical unit.

Again, several linguistic expressions may relate to single referents. To avoid these limitations, semanticists use the words denotation and connotation to distinguish between meaning based on ostensiveness (that is, pointing) or reference and extension.

Another interesting area of concern for semantics is sense. Sense explains the system of linguistic relationships, which a lexical item contracts with others. If that relationship is paradigmatic, we have synonymy, antonymic, and so on. However, if the relationship is syntagmatic, we have collocation.

The scope of semantics covers a wide range of issues related to meaning. These issues are discussed in the different segments of this book.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are the main areas of the concern of semantics?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Semantics has been found to be related to a wide range of disciplines because of the general interest in meaning. In specific terms, semantics has been formed to be relevant to naming, reference and sense. It is also concerned with the interpretation of sentences.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the following:

- the place of linguistic semantics in the study of meaning
- semantics and other related disciplines
- the major concerns of semantics.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss how semantics relates to other disciplines.
- ii. Identify the major areas of emphasis in the study of semantics.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Lech, G. (1981). *Semantics*. London: Penguin Books.

Ndimele, O. M. (1998). *Semantics and Frontiers of Communication*. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.

Ogbulogo, C. (2004). *Concepts in Semantics*. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.

Palner, F.R. (1996). *Semantics*. London: Cambridge University Press.

UNIT 3 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF SEMANTICS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Transitional Semantics
 - 3.2 Behavioural Semantics
 - 3.3 Structural Semantics
 - 3.4 Generative Semantics
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

You have learnt that the study of meaning in language has been of interest to both the linguist and the philosopher. It has also interested the general communicator. Since meaning has occupied a central position in communication, there have been different perspectives to the study of meaning. That means over the ages, different approaches to the study of semantics have emerged. In this unit, we shall focus on some of the time-tested approaches to the study of semantics.

The study of semantics has developed from the earliest times to the modern period, giving it a historical view. That way, we can focus on four major approaches – traditional, behavioural, structural and generative perspectives.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- highlight different approaches to the study of semantics
- point out the merits and demerits of each of the approaches.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Transitional Semantics

Traditional semantics is associated with the works of such great philosophers as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as well as many others who

came after them. Their focus was on the nature of human language itself. Based on their views of the nature of human language, these early philosophers were into two – the naturalists and the nurturists.

To the naturalists, language was God-given such that there was hardly anything anybody could do to understand language. Man was not expected to make alterations, but should concern himself with merely observing and describing the rules of language. The Greek language was perceived to be the chosen language upon which all other languages should be based. Later, Latin became the focus of philosophical analysis.

The nurturists on the other hand viewed language as a social property common to a speech community. Language was therefore perceived to be man's creation for the convenience of communication. Thus, in spite of difference in languages, the uniting point is that they are all for communication.

Traditional semantics was also concerned with the relationship between form and meaning. Following Carnap (1927), Firth (1957) and Ayer (1936), the meaning of a word is actually what it refers to. Ogden and Richards (1933) have also shared this view. There have also been later scholars – Grice (1957) and Katz (1972) who believed that the image of a word takes shape in the speaker's or hearer's mind. Another major view of traditional semantics is that the meaning of a word can be decoded from its shape or sound. Words in this category are onomatopoeic. The major ideas in traditional semantics are reference, concepts, truth conditions, and so on.

3.2 Behavioural Semantics

This approach has been influenced by the works of Watson Bloomfield and Skinner. Idealism or mentalism in traditional semantics looks at meaning as something established in the hearer's or speaker's mind. There is usually a non-physical process of thought, concept or feeling generating a mental experience. On the other hand, behaviourism relies on observables and records of utterances. These observables and records are linked to their relationships with the immediate situations that produce them.

To the behaviourist, there is no belief in such mentalistic constructs as mind, concept and ideas. As a result, there is no room for introspection as a means of obtaining valid information since thoughts and feelings are usually personal. As a result of the highly psychological dimension of this theory, human and animal behaviour is identical. Experiences

coming through the senses are the major sources of knowledge. There is determinism in the affairs of the world. There are universal laws governing every situation. As a result of this reliance on determinism, there is no predictability in evaluating human behaviour. The external environment is perceived to be the major stimulus to all human utterances. The stimulus-response scenario is synonymous with the cause and effect connection in most natural situations.

Those who favour the behavioural approach to semantics have argued that by reducing meaning to observable entities, language, as an aspect of human favour can lend itself to examination. They also argue that meaning is influenced by reinforcement. The theory stresses nurture rather than nature. Thus, the physical environment is perceived to contribute to meaning rather than the internal thought processes.

Though behaviourism tends to lend meaning to experimental explanation, it has been criticised for its rejection of introspection, concepts and ideas. It is not everything in language that can be observed physically. The over-reliance on reinforcement tends to present animal and human behaviour as identical.

3.3 Structural Semantics

The father of structuralism is Ferdinand de Saussure. Structuralism as a linguistic theory considers the structures and systems in language. Emphasis is on the process of segmenting and classifying the features of utterances.

Under structuralism, emphasis is on the analysis of sense relations that connect words and meaning. Sense is an expression of the system of semantic relationships a given word keeps with other expressions in a given language. This relationship is usually paradigmatic in terms of similarity and dissimilarity. The relationship of similarity occurs as synonymy, while the relationship of dissimilarity is referred to as antonymy. Structural processes are useful in lexical relations in the study of words.

3.4 Generative Semantics

Noam Chomsky is the father of generative grammar. According to the theory of transformational generative grammar, knowledge of language is generated in the mind. A language user has a finite set of rules from which he can generate an infinite number of sentences. This power of generations is facilitated by the power of transformational rules, which convert deep structure sentence types into other various forms via

transformations. At the beginning of Chomsky's generative grammar, there was the assertion that syntax was autonomous and independent of semantics. It was only later in *Aspects of the theory of Syntax* (1965) that Chomsky pointed out that the semantic component specifies the rules necessary for the interpretation of deep structures. This observation enhanced the semantic representation of sentences. Deep structures specify the original meaning of sentences before the application of transformations.

There was the immediate problem of explaining the meaning of multiple paraphrases from a single deep structure. Thus, generative semantics would be concerned with sentence meaning and interpretation. This will require the interpretation of functional roles in sentences. This interpretation has been explained by the Case theory as propounded by Charles Fillmore, and further elaborated in Chomsky's case theory and thematic theory.

The semantic component has been presented as being partially dependent on syntax and at the same time distinct. This produces a composite relationship between grammar and meaning. The deep structure is deemed to determine how sentence parts combine to make meaning for the whole. The syntactic component is the generative source of grammar. Thus, the output of syntax forms the input to the semantic component. The semantic component is perceived to operate on the structural description of sentences to provide a representation of the meaning of sentences. Grammar as used here is the totality of the mechanism and rules of language organisation including meaning. As a result of the complexity of this theory, we shall have a more elaborate discussion of its implication in another unit. Perhaps the philosophical postulations of Aristotle provided impetus to critical thinking in semantics. Based on the major areas of concern, there have been traditional semantics, behavioural semantics, structural semantics and generative semantics.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. List the different approaches to the study of semantics.
- ii. State the contribution of the naturalists and the nurturists.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have observed the progression in the development of semantic thought. We have noted the positive relationship between semantics and other components of the language system. We can safely conclude that while syntax, for instance provides the basis for the structure of the

sentence, it is semantics that holds the key to meaning. This means that semantics is critical to communication.

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the approaches of the traditionalists, the behaviourists, the structuralists and the generativists to the study of semantics. You learnt that the traditionalists were related to the early philosophers, while the behaviourists were more concerned with psychology, with the object of study being what is observed. Structuralists emphasised the sense relations between words while the generativists depended on the deep structures of sentences for meaning. It would be possible to identify the essential ingredients of these approaches to the study of semantics.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss the contributions of the traditionalists to the development of semantics.
- ii. Explore how generative grammar has featured in the study of semantics.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Barnwell, K. (1980). *Introduction to semantics and translation..* Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax.* Cambridge: M.I.T Press.
- Ogbulogo, C. (2005). *Concepts in Semantics.* Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.

MODULE 2 THE STUDY OF MEANING

Unit 1	The Nature of Meaning
Unit 2	Theories of Meaning

UNIT 1 THE NATURE OF MEANING

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

We have observed that semantics is the linguistic study of meaning. We have also noted that meaning is central to the process of communication. Interestingly, there is usually the controversy about the nature of meaning. Meaning is at the centre of the study of semantics – for both the philosopher and the linguist. However, there are differences in opinion based on approaches and methods. We shall explore meaning from the perspectives of the different schools of thought.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain different schools of thought in the study of meaning
- describe the different types of meaning.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Schools of Thought in Meaning

Both linguists and philosophers agree that meaning is central to semantics. However, there is considerable disparity among different scholars on the exact conception of meaning. Based on their

understanding of the meaning of meaning and procedures, there are different schools of thought in relation to meaning. These are the naturalists, the conventionalists and the contextualists. According to the naturalists with Plato as the chief proponent, the meaning of a word is the entity or thing it represents. There is an intrinsic relationship between sound and meaning. The major criticism of this view is that there exist very many words in natural languages without physical entities.

To the conventionalists, words and their meaning do not necessarily have any direct link. Whatever connection existing between a word and meaning is through a concept formed in the minds of the users of the language. Conventionalism derived from the works of Aristotle.

According to J. Firth and other contextualists, the meaning of a word derives from its usage. Each of these approaches has had a profound impact on the practice of linguistics. Their contributions shall become apparent as the text progresses. Apart from focusing on the three principal approaches to the study of meaning, there are thematic, conceptual and associative types of meaning.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Mention the different schools of thought in the study of meaning.

3.2 Types of Meaning: Thematic and Conceptual

There are three basic types of meaning, these are thematic, conceptual and associative. Associative meaning can further be divided into connotative, collocative, affective, reflected and stylistic meanings. We shall for this section concentrate on thematic and conceptual meaning.

Thematic Meaning

Thematic meaning derives from the organisation of the message presented in a language. It is the arrangement of the components of communication that determine the point of emphasis. This arrangement may take the form of passivisation, topicalisation or focus. In the sentences that follow, different items have been made more prominent by merely re-ordering them.

1. Jane bought the house – normal SVO order
2. It was Jane that bought the house – topicalised
3. The house was bought by Jane – passivised.
4. The house, Jane painted – focused

In sentence (1), the sentence is in the normal subject verb object order without any special meaning. Sentences (2) and (4) tend to lay emphasis on Jane, the doer of the action being referred to. In sentence (3), emphasis is on the house, which was bought.

Indeed, focused and topicalised elements in a structure are given prominence within an information structure. A component of the bit of information can also be made more prominent by stressing it. Consider the following:

5. She **BOUGHT** my newspaper (She did not **STEAL** it)
6. She bought my **NEWSPAPER** (not my textbook)
7. **SHE** bought my newspaper (not any other person)

Conceptual Meaning

Conceptual meaning is synonymous with primary, central, logical, cognitive or denotative meaning of a word. It is the first ordinary meaning listed in dictionaries, which is not affected by the context, or emotional overtones associated with the act of communication. There is an assumed shared conceptual meaning of every word of a language. There is a universal implication of the conceptual meaning.

It is possible to express the conceptual meaning of a word using contrastive semantic features. Such features indicate the attributes present and those that are absent. If a feature is present, it is specified as (+); if absent, it is (-). These contrastive features specifying the attributes of the words provide the necessary criteria for the correct use of words. The feature specifications for the words man and woman are as follows.

Man	Woman
+ HUMAN	+ HUMAN
+ MALE	- MALE
+ ADULT	+ ADULT

The conceptual meaning of a word constitutes a major part of the shared system of a language for all speakers. It is a criteria element of human communication since it is a major factor in language. The use of this process has been described as componential analysis. It is a major process in structural semantics.

3.3 Associative Meaning

The meaning of a word is affected by the context, background, time and the cultural realities of the users of language. This type of meaning is not static. It is variable and open ended.

Certain words, structures and styles are usually employed to arouse some emotional reactions in the hearer. Certain attitudes and forms of behaviour are elicited by the associative meaning of the words used in communication. These different reactions are derived from the associations which the words create in the minds of language users.

As a result of the great variation in associative meaning, it is not always easy to express that form of meaning in terms of contrastive semantic features. Indeed, associative meaning reflects individual differences. There are individualised intentions and interpretations. There is therefore, the need for all participants in communication to share common reference points, symbols and background for there to be any meaningful interaction.

Most of the problems of communication arise when associative meaning is assumed to be shared by all concerned. There must be a way of ensuring actual sharing of background. For second language learners, this problem is profound. This explains the enormous difficulty second language learners' encounter with decoding the meaning of idioms and figurative expressions. They also find it difficult to apply appropriate idioms to diverse situations.

Associative meaning can be any of the following.

- Connotative Meaning
- Collocative Meaning
- Reflected Meaning
- Stylistic or Social Meaning

Connotative Meaning

Connotative meaning contains elements of the conceptual meaning of a word and the individual's personal interpretation of what is communicated. That interpretation is based on the personal experience of the hearer. This means that connotative meaning varies with the experience of people in communication. It may also vary from society to society.

There are additional semantic features that are associated with connotative meaning. Thus, a great deal of the meaning of idioms and figurative expressions derive from connotation. There are symbols in literature, which have different connotations in different cultures. For instance, among the Hausa in Nigeria, the cricket is associated with the tricks, whereas among the Igbo and the Yoruba, it is the tortoise that has that attribute.

In the Western world, it is the fox is considered very cunning.

Collocative Meaning

Collocation is the natural association and sequence of words in longer structures. Collocative meaning is therefore the meaning of a lexical item deriving from other lexical items with which it is associated in a longer structure. The collocative meaning of lexical items in a language is based on related semantic fields. For instance, job, employment, engagement, and work are all related. There are also associations that are perceived to be more natural. Consider the following examples:

- August visitor
- Auspicious occasion
- Sympathise with
- Nutritious food

Some of the structures are restricted to certain circumstances as in

Stroll	vs	wander
For people		for animals
Tremble		quiver

Affective Meaning

Affective meaning is related to the feelings and attitudes of the speaker towards the subject or the audience. This meaning is achieved by the choice of words. Certain words suggest positive feelings – *love, attraction, happiness, exciting* etc. Some others stir up negative reactions – *disgusting, nauseating, disappointing*, etc. Interjections like *ah!, oh!, uh!, mmn!*, often suggest the emotional state of the mind. Other words like *darling, daddy, mummy*, and so on, give an impression of endearment.

Reflected Meaning

Reflected meaning relates to expressions with multiple meanings. Words with several meanings (polysemous words), have reflected meaning. There is, however, a dominant meaning among these several meanings. As a particular sense of a word begins to assume prominence, all other senses begin to be de-emphasised and with time, these other senses disappear. Meat used to refer to all forms of food and flesh for nourishment. The later meaning seems to have caught on.

Stylistic (or Social) Meaning

When a particular pattern of speech, language variety or speech form is associated with a specific social context, stylistic or social meaning is achieved. It is common knowledge that a speaker's choice of words and structures reveals his or her social, regional, geographical or even economic background. The choices can also reveal the level of familiarity between the speaker and the hearer.

Emphasis is usually on the different stylistic variations open to language users. Based on the level of familiarity, users have the following possibilities in making requests.

- (1) I wonder if I could see you later today (indirect question) used for extreme politeness
- (2) May I see you later today (very formal)
- (3) Can I see you later today (causal and less formal)

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List the different types of meaning discussed in the unit.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Meaning has been presented to be at the centre of semantics. Meaning can be thematic, conceptual, associative, connotative, collocative, affective, reflected or stylistic.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have studied the:

- different schools of thought in the study of meaning
- different types of meaning – thematic, conceptual, and associative

- range of associated meanings – connotative, collocative and stylistic meaning.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss how the naturalists and nurturists approach the concept of meaning.
- ii. Write short notes on thematic, conceptual associative, connotative and reflected forms of meaning.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Ndimele, O. M. (1998). *Semantics and Frontiers of Communication*. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.

Ogbulogo, C. (2005). *Concepts in Semantics*. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publication.

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UNIT 2 THEORIES OF MEANING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 The Main Content
 - 3.1 The Nature of Semantic Theories
 - 3.1.1 The Ideational Theory of Meaning
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

We have learnt that semantics deals with meaning in language. Just like every other discipline, there are theories to explain in detail the nature of meaning in a principled way. The most enduring semantic theories will be presented in this unit. It will be recalled that language as a system is organised along the structures of sound, words, sentences and meaning. Each of these levels can be studied in some details, following specified formulations or theories. For the purpose of a detailed study of semantics, the theories we shall explore are expected to explain the nature of word and sentence meaning, among several other things.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- state the functions of semantic theories
- identify specific theories in semantic
- explain the ideational, referential and usage theories of meaning.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Nature of Semantic Theories

Semantic theories explain the nature of meaning by utilising a finite set of rules to explain a variety of semantic phenomena. Any theory of semantics should provide statements that explain meaning relationship – such as ambiguity, anomaly, contradiction, tautology, paraphrase, entailment, synonymy, hyponymy. This means that such a theory

should be able to explain the inherent meaning characteristics of words and sentences.

Any reliable theory of semantics should relate meaning to syntax, highlighting the relationship between them. This means that the rules of sentence construction and those of word meaning should relate to explain in full the meaning of the sentence.

A viable semantic theory should also relate meaning to the contexts and situations of word and sentence usage for appropriate interpretation. There should also be a record of facts of meaning, linguistic reference and truth conditions. These requirements suggest that such a theory should be a part of the general linguistic theory. That means that semantic rules must have universal applications. Such rules must give clues to the nature of semantic features, which distinguish lexical items of different languages of the world. Since the theory should account for meaning properties on all languages, it helps to explain the structure of human languages.

These expectations have been met at different levels by different theories of meaning, including:

- the Ideational Theory
- the Referential Theory
- the Usage Theory

3. 1.1 The Ideational Theory of Meaning

This theory was developed by the British empiricist philosopher, John Locke. The theory explains that the meaning attached to words can be separated from the word themselves. This means that meaning originates in the mind in the form of ideas. Words are just sensible signs for the convenience of communication. Language is therefore, a mechanism for expressing thoughts and thought is viewed as a succession of conscious ideas. The ideational theory is mentalistic. Thus, the meaning of a word is the mental image or idea of the word or the expression generated in the mind of the speaker or hearer.

There is no attempt to define words and expressions using physical associations. Rather, the range of possible meanings ascribed to a given word is that set of available feelings, images, ideas, concepts, thoughts and inferences that can be produced as soon as a word is heard.

The ideational theory is perceived to be abstract or imprecise because of dependence on mental images for decoding the meaning of words. Ideas

may be too vague to comprehend. There are also many words (especially the abstract ones) that do not have specific physical realities, let alone mental manifestations. It is unthinkable that the mind can create an image of what the senses cannot perceive.

The theory may not be able to account for synonymous expressions. It may also be difficult to use the theory to explain the mental image conjured by sentences. Indeed, sentences derive their meaning more from the word order.

3.1.2 The Referential Theory of Meaning

This theory is associated with Ogden and Richards (1922). According to the referential theory, the meaning of a word is the object it refers to in the external world. That actual object is the referent. The connection between the words or expressions and their referents is through the process of thought. The words or expressions are just symbols.

One major criticism of this theory is that there are many words without physical objects they refer to. Such words as intelligent, ugly, rich, poor, and so on, which do not have the concrete qualities of nouns may not have referents. Again, polysemous words (words with more than one meaning) may have the additional problem of having more than one referent. Items that belong to groups may not have physical objects that are identical. Every sub-group has specific feature. Individual members of the smallest sub-groups also have their identities. Therefore, we cannot talk about absolute identification for referents. The referential theory may not have a way to explain the meaning of words in the categories of adjectives, adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions.

3.2 The Usage Theory of Meaning

The German scholar, Wittgenstein (1953) developed this theory. It has been elaborated upon by J. Firth and M. A. Halliday. The usage theory is also referred to as the contextual or operational theory of meaning. The major motivation was fear that the meaning of certain classes of words could be lost if meaning were treated as just entities. According to the theory, the meaning of a word or an expression is determined by the context of its use. It is the effect created by a linguistic unit within a given context that expresses its full meaning.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. List any three theories of semantics.
- ii. State any three characteristics of semantic theories.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have observed that theories provided a concise framework of analysis in semantics. There are a number of theories in semantics, each with its own merits and shortfalls. We have discussed the ideational, referential and usage theories of meaning.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the:

- nature of semantic theories
- origin and features of the ideational referential and usage theories
- criticisms against these theories, as well as their major areas of application.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss the nature of theories in semantics.
- ii. Provide a critique of the ideational and referential theories of meaning.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Kempson, R. (1977). *Semantic Theory*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Leech, G. (1981). *Semantic*. London: Penguin Books.

MODULE 3 WORD AND SENTENCE MEANING

Unit 1	Semantics and the Study of the Word: Sense Relations
Unit 2	Semantics and the Nature of the Lexicon
Unit 3	Aspects of Sentential Meaning
Unit 4	Pragmatics and the Speech Acts Theory

UNIT 1 SEMANTICS AND THE STUDY OF THE WORD: SENSE RELATIONS

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1.0	Introduction
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3.1	Sense/Lexical Relations Used in Explaining Meaning of English Word
3.1.1	Synonymy
3.1.2	Antonymy
3.1.3	Hyponymy
3.1.4	Homonymy
3.1.5	Polysemy
4.0	Conclusion
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In our study of semantic theories, we noted that viable theories of meaning should be able to explain the nature of the meaning of words as well as that of sentences. You have learnt that the meaning of a word may not always be realised from its referential or denotational characteristics. Indeed, there are many words whose basic characteristics may not be easily analysed. Such words are best studied by focusing on the kind of relationship they create with other words. These relationships are based on the sense of the words. Therefore, we study words from their sense relations or lexical relations. At this level, we shall study sense relations along the following lines:

- Synonymy
- Antonymy
- Hyponymy
- Polysemy, and
- Homophony

In this unit, we shall explore the meaning of words, using principally the principle of sense relations.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain sense/lexical relations
- discuss key concepts in sense/lexical relations
- apply sense relations in explaining the meaning of English words.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Sense/Lexical Relations Used in Explaining Meaning of English Word

We shall examine different sense/lexical relations used in explaining the meaning of English words.

3.1.1 Synonymy

When reference is made to lexical relation or close relatedness in the meaning of words, we deal with synonymy. We can therefore, describe pairs of words that have very close similarities in meaning as synonyms. For example, we can have the following pairs of words as synonyms.

Friend/ally; boss/master; amiable/friendly

It has often been observed that words may not always have exact substitutes in all contexts. This observation means that we may have absolute, complete and total synonyms when there are exact substitutes as in:

- Everybody/Everyone
- *Bandit/Brigand*

There are also broad or near synonyms as in:

- rich / sumptuous
- mature / ripe

3.1.2 Antonymy

The relationship of oppositeness is referred to as antonymy. You will observe that in public and professional examinations in which knowledge of English is tested, there are sections on words and opposites. Antonymy occurs in two forms – gradable and non-gradable antonyms.

For adjectives and adverbs, gradable antonyms show degrees and can be compared with suffixes -er, and -est as well as with the words, more and most – as in:

- Tall Taller Tallest
- intelligent more intelligent most intelligent
- dangerously more dangerously most dangerously

On the other hand, non-gradable antonyms do not occur as comparative constructions. Words in this category are expressed as complementary pairs – such that their exact opposites are the only options. For example, someone can be male or female, father or mother, dead or alive, married or single. Other examples of non-gradable antonyms are – close or open, found or lost. There are also relational opposites, which convey the meaning of reciprocal, bilateral or social relationships. Such meanings are interdependent such that membership of one of the pairs suggests the other. The following are common examples.

Teacher – student
 Parent – child
 Brother – sister
 Buy – sell
 Servant – master
 Wife – husband
 Employer - employee

3.1.3 Hyponymy

When the meaning of one form is included in the meaning of another, we have hyponymy. For instance, included in animals are dogs, elephants, goat, and so on. We can also relate hyponymy to professions to include law, medicine, teaching, banking, and so on. There is always a hierarchical relationship drawing from the general to samples.

3.1.4 Homonymy

Homonymy explains a situation of identical spelling or pronunciation but with different unrelated meanings. Such words usually create problems of ambiguity. Consider the following examples.

- Bank (of a river)
- Bank (financial institution)
- Fly (an insect)
- Fly (to move in the air)
- Lead (verb to guide)
- Lead (an element used in making pencil)

When homonymy is partial, we have heteronymy. It is possible to have a situation of homonymy at one medium of language – such as in writing – but pronounced differently as in

Lead - /li:d/ and
Lead - /led/.

This situation is referred to as homography. With this distinction, it has become more common to reserve the term “homophony” – when reference is made to identical pronunciation as in:

Key and quay /ki:/
Been and bean /bi:n/
Court and caught /k :t/

3.1.5 Polysemy

A situation of polysemy arises when one form of a word has multiple meanings, which are related by extension. Words that are polysemous have single entries in the dictionary. However, there are numbers that suggest the list of possible meanings – as shown below.

Foot¹ - of a person

2 – of a bed

3 – of a mountain

It should be noted that homonyms are listed as different lexical items in the dictionary.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. List different sense/lexical relations, which English words attract.
- ii. Provide two examples each for antonyms and synonyms.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have observed that words may not be profitably analysed through their reference or comportments. This observation has favoured the relevance on the sense relations holding among words.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have studied the meaning of words from the perspective of sense relations with emphasis on synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, homophony and polysemy. We have also illustrated each of these concepts with examples from English.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Describe the different types of antonyms.
- ii. Describe the relationship of hyponymy.

7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING

Ndimele, O.M. (1998). *Semantics and Frontiers of Communication*. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.

Ogbulogo, C. (2005). *Concepts in Semantics*. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publication.

Palmer, F.R. (1996). *Semantics*. London: Cambridge University Press.

UNIT 2 SEMANTICS AND THE NATURE OF THE LEXICON

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Nature of the Lexicon and the Feature of Words
 - 3.2 Subcategorising English Words
 - 3.3 Role Relations of Lexical Items
 - 3.4 The Nature of Empty Categories
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Recall that we have discussed semantics in relation to word and sentence meaning. It is even more profitable to examine how semantics relates to the structure of the sentence. This requires some understanding of the characteristics of words. We have consistently noted that semantics deals with the study of meaning in natural language. Meaning is conveyed by words and their combination. There are usually deep structure forms of the meaning of sentences from which many surface forms can derive via transformation. The combinations that are permissible for words are based on the features of specific words. At the personal level, information about words constitutes the lexicon. Interestingly, when the lexicon has been externalised and organised, we have the dictionary. Indeed, the richer and the more comprehensive the dictionary of a language, the more it has the capacity to express meaning. This study is connected with syntax and we shall, for the purpose of this unit, discuss aspects of semantics relevant to the study of syntax.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the nature of the lexicon
- explain the features of words
- explore the sub categorisation of English words
- identify role relations of lexical items
- examine the nature of empty categories.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Nature of the Lexicon and the Feature of Words

The lexicon presents an ordered mental list of words available to a language user. As we have observed earlier, when the lexicon is externalised and generalised, it becomes the dictionary. The information provided in the lexicon or the dictionary covers the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic characteristics of the lexical items.

Phonological information guides us in pronunciation; morphological information refers to the formation of the word while syntactic information focuses on the categorical features as well as the distributional possibilities of the word. Semantic information relates to the meaning of the word. When we focus on the features of words, we deal on the specific groups such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, and so on. It is possible to classify words as content and form words. Content words have independent meaning, even in isolation. Content words have an open class system as they can accept new entries. For instance, in the age of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such new words as laptop, facebook (an example of social media), and disc drive have been added to the dictionary of English. Form words also called function or grammatical words do not have independent meaning when they occur in isolation. Such words are used to signal syntactic or grammatical relationship within larger structures. Form words belong to a closed system because they cannot be expanded. They are also very few in number. They include-pronouns, auxiliaries, conjunctions, prepositions, determines and particles.

Another way to classify words is to describe them as transparent or opaque. The meaning of transparent words can be deduced from the meaning of their constituent parts – for example:

Prefix	Stem	Suffix
un -	god	- liness
dis -	satisfy(y)	action

The meaning of opaque words cannot be determined from their constituent parts. Most opaque words are also structural, grammatical or form words.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

3.2 Subcategorising English Words

We have noted that words of any language can be grouped into specific categories – nouns, verbs, adjectives – and so on. Apart from these groups, often referred to as parts of speech, we can highlight the properties of individual words. The process of highlighting the properties of individual words is referred to as subcategorisation. For instance, a noun can be subcategorised as proper or common, concrete, or abstract, count or mass, human or non-human.

When the rules of subcategorisation relate to all words in a class- for example, nouns, as we have observed above, we describe the rule as context-free. When there are conditions specifying how the rules will operate, we have context – sensitive conditions. For instance, it is possible to have a verb – (such as discuss) that must take an obligatory object. There are certain nouns that may not select indefinite determiner for example, information and news.

We should be able to provide some generalisations about context-sensitive characteristics of some words. For example, the verb “discuss” must take an object, which is a noun or a noun phrase. The adjective “fond” must be followed by a preposition. The information can be represented in a systematic way.

Discuss	V	-	(NP)
Fond	Adj	-	(of NP)

Every lexical item establishes some constraints on syntactic categories with which it associates. Context-sensitive generalisations are part of what we describe as strict subcategorisation.

Words are further constrained by semantic considerations. These restrictions are referred to as selectional restriction. The rule of selectional restriction shows the semantic properties of lexical items – in terms of + concrete + abstract + human. Words like tree and stone are (-ANIMATE), while fox, man are (+ANIMATE). Some abstract words *like love, eat, run* will be marked as (+ANIMATE + HUMAN).

It will therefore be anomalous to present the following sentences

- (i) The tree loves them
- (ii) The stone ate rice

Meaning is therefore predictable from observing the nature of the complete semantic environment as well as from an assessment of syntactic well-formedness.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Identify the different ways we can classify English words.

3.3 Role Relations of Lexical Items

It may not be enough to limit our knowledge of words to their basic characteristics. It is necessary to examine the functions of lexical items in a systematic way. This can be achieved by focusing on the role relations of lexical items. Indeed, role relations provide information on semantic relationships among lexical items. In doing so, role relationships help to highlight functions of lexical items. The functions of lexical items are referred to as arguments – such as agent, instrument, experience, source, goal, path, location, possessor, patient, and so on.

Nouns and noun phrases are described as arguments in relation to the verbs in the sentence. Verbs are central in determining semantic roles. These roles relate to processes, events and state of affairs associated with participants in the sentence.

The agent is usually a noun phrase marked as (+ANIMATE), and which instigate an action or an event as shown below.

(i) *John* boiled eggs (John as agent)

When entities designated as (-ANIMATE) initiate some action, we describe the entities as *force* For example:

(ii) *Radiation* caused some damage (Radiation as force)

That entity that is affected by the action of the *agent* or *force* is referred to as *patient* e.g.

(iii) John boiled *eggs* (eggs as patient)

The entity that undergoes some psychological state is the experience

(iv) *Juliet* became happy (Juliet as experience)

The instrument is the semantic role for what is used to carry out a piece of action

(v) She cleaned the chair with *a brush* (brush as instrument)

Source indicates the origin or direction from which an entity comes. The source is usually a location.

- (vi) The teacher took out the duster from *the cupboard*. (the cupboard as source)

We can, however refer to the place an entity is situated. That is usually the location as a thematic role.

The semantic role *goal* shows the direction towards which an entity goes.

- (vii) The mango rolled *into a basket*.

The path shows the route along which an entity moves e.g.

- (viii) They reached the town *through the unused road*.

We also have the possessor or the beneficiary, describing the entity benefiting from an action. The beneficiary is always (+ANIMATE)

3.4 The Nature of Empty Categories

Sentence varieties are achieved by transformations some of which involve rearrangement, deletion, additional and replacement of linguistic items. These transformations involve the movement of items. When these items are moved, spaces are left. These spaces are referred to as empty categories. In order to realise the full meaning of any sentence that has undergone transformation, there is the need to explain the nature of these empty categories.

Empty categories are of the following types:

- (i) The non-anaphoric null pronominal (PRO)
- (ii) Anaphors
- (iii) Traces

PRO – This empty category occurs as the subject of the infinitive clause as shown below:

- (i) Peter promised (PRO to return)
- (ii) Anaphors such as *themselves*, *each other* and *one another*.
- (iii) NP Trace

In transformations involving passive structures, we always have traces as shown below.

- (i) The men were promoted -t. Note that the space after the verb *promoted* has been left empty

Wh Trace- when we have WH-Questions and relative clauses, among other structures, WH- traces occur:

- (i) What did the lady cook -t-?
- (ii) You said the man who I described -t-?

4.0 CONCLUSION

I have observed that our knowledge of semantics will be more fulfilling with a more detailed analysis of words in their combination in sentences. This demand has been pursued in this unit as we have explored the nature of the lexicon, the features of words, the sub categorisation of words, role relations of lexical items and the place of empty categories in interpreting the meaning of sentences.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the place of the structure of words in the study of semantics. We have discussed:

- the nature of the lexicon
- the features of words
- the process of sub categorisation
- role relations of lexical items
- some empty categories.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss the essential features of English words.
- ii. Highlight the basic role relations of English lexical items.

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UNIT 3 ASPECTS OF SENTENTIAL MEANING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Paraphrase
 - 3.2 Ambiguity
 - 3.3 Vagueness
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sense or lexical relations are concerned with the meaning of individual words. However, as we observed in the unit on semantic theories, the function of theories of meaning includes the explication of sentences. A great deal of the problems of communication derives from the confusion at the level of sentences. It is, therefore, important that you explore sources of these problems. We do not communicate with isolated words. Indeed, knowledge of language and the art of communication depend on our ability to combine words in a systematic way. When words are confined, we achieve sentential meaning. The study of semantics is also expected to explore meaning at this level. This is the purpose of this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify different issues related to the meaning of the sentence
- explain major concepts in the meaning of English sentences
- demonstrate the ability to apply these concepts in real language situation.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Paraphrase

In the study of meaning processes in the sentence, we shall discuss these concepts in the sections that follow.

Paraphrase is to the sentence what synonymy is to words. This means that the paraphrase explains a situation in which two or more sentences have one meaning. Indeed, a sentence can have many paraphrases. There are two types of paraphrases: lexical and structural paraphrases.

In lexical paraphrases, we have two or more sentences giving the same interpretation as a result of the replacement of one word or phrase by another. The following are examples.

- (i) The chef hired *a bachelor*
- (ii) The chef hired *an unmarried man*

In the two sentences above, the change in their structure is as a result of the substitution of a bachelor for *an unmarried man*. Both *a bachelor* and *unmarried man* are phrases. Consider further the following sentences.

- (i) The man was *agitated*
- (ii) The man was *anxious*

We have achieved the paraphrase by the substitution of the word “agitated” for another, “anxious.”

Structural paraphrase is achieved when we alter the arrangements of the sentences through transformations. The following are examples:

- (i) They bought a new apartment (Basic –subject + Verb+ object)
- (ii) It was a new apartment that they bought (Cleft)
- (iii) What they bought was a new apartment (Pseudo cleft)
- (iv) A new apartment was what they bought (topicalised)

3.2 Ambiguity

When an expression can be given more than one interpretation ambiguity arises. Therefore, why polysemy relates to words, ambiguity is concerned with sentences. We have two types of ambiguity – lexical and structural.

Lexical ambiguity occurs when the presence of just a specific word leads to multiple interpretations. Consider the following examples.

- (i) The team has many *goals*
- (ii) She prepared *tables*

It should be noted that “goals” and “tables” can be interpreted in different ways based on the contexts.

Structural ambiguity is achieved by the organisation of the elements of the sentence. It is possible to interpret these elements in different ways. Consider these examples.

- (i) They promoted all English teachers
- (ii) Boiling water can be dangerous

The ambiguity in the second sentence derives from the possibility of reading the sentence as:

- (i) Water that is boiling (i.e. hot) can be dangerous
- (ii) The act of boiling water can be dangerous

The first interpretation makes *boiling water* as the subject noun phrase whereas in the second interpretation, *boiling water* is the complement.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

State the two types of ambiguity that can occur in a sentence.

3.3 Vagueness

A sentence is vague when it has no definite meaning. This lack of meaning may derive from the incompatibility of the semantic properties of some of the words. Sometimes, a vague expression may be grammatically well formed, yet its meaning may be farfetched. Consider the following classical example taken from Chomsky (1965).

- (i) Colourless green ideas sleep furiously together

It should be noted that many of what we describe as literary language would have been vague except that we understand the background as literary. Consider further the following example.

- (ii) The stones consoled her

This expression is clearly a personification since *stones* which are inanimate have been endowed with the characteristics of *consoling*.

3.4 Tautology

A situation of tautology arises when we have unnecessary repetition of elements in communication. There is undue emphasis without necessarily making meaning any clearer. Tautology is closely associated with redundancy, which is the introduction of linguistic units, which do not affect the status, or meaning of the larger construction. The following are examples of tautology.

- (i) This bachelor has not been married
- (ii) The congregation are members of a church

Other instances of tautology are:

- circumnavigate *around*
- *unlawful* theft
- *can* be able

3.5 Presupposition

In presupposition, there is usually a piece of information, which the speaker assumes the hearer already knows. This assumption is based on some shared background knowledge between the speaker and the hearers. An outsider in the circle of communication may be at a loss. Let us illustrate this situation with the following sentences.

- (i) John: Are you able to bring Harry along?
- (ii) Peter: That will be splendid. On our way, we shall pick up the drinks.

The presupposition in this conversation is that both John and Peter know who Harry is. They both have an idea of the drinks, and the source from where to bring them.

3.6 Entailment

In entailment, there is usually a pair of sentences and the truth of one derives from the truth of other. Consider the following sentences.

- (i) Tracy is a spinster
- (ii) Tracy is a female

Sentence (i) derives from the meaning of sentence (ii). This means that if sentence (i) entails sentence (ii) then, sentence (ii) is necessarily the implication of sentence (i).

3.7 Anomaly

Anomaly results from the combination of two semantic features that are not compatible in describing a phenomenon. Words attract specific selectional restrictions. For instance, trees are vertical while rulers, ropes and snakes are horizontal. For vertical items, we describe them in terms of tall, while for the horizontal ones we talk of long. Thus, we can have tall trees, tall buildings, tall people, but long ropes, long snakes, long rulers, and so on. It will therefore be anomalous to have:

- a long man
- a tall snake

3.8 Contradiction

Contradictory expressions present two opposing proposition at the same time. Thus, a person cannot be dead and alive at the same time. Other examples of anomaly are:

- (i) That circular house is rectangular
- (ii) The drains are flooded because there are no rains

3.9 Analyticity

We talk about analyticity when we have sentences in the grammatical forms and lexical meanings of their proposition, which make them necessarily true. Consider the following examples.

- (i) Churches are usually attended by Christians
- (ii) Unmarried ladies are spinsters

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List the different areas of interest in the study of the meaning of the sentence.

4.0 CONCLUSION

A great deal of the problems of communication derives from the misinterpretation of the meaning of the sentence. It is always profitable to explore the full range of meaning, potentials in the sentence.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have studied in this unit, different area of emphasis in the mechanisms for deriving the meaning of sentences. We have focused attention on paraphrase, ambiguity, vagueness, tautology, presupposition, entailment, anomaly, and analyticity.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Describe lexical and structural paraphrases.
- ii. Distinguish between ambiguity and vagueness.
- iii. Discuss the nature of presupposition and entailment.

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UNIT 4 PRAGMATICS: CONVENTIONAL IMPLICATURE AND SPEECH ACTS THEORIES

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Speech Acts Theory and Types of Acts in Language
 - 3.2 Levels of Speech Acts
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics is concerned with the range of choices and constraints available to users, and based on the context. In pragmatics, emphasis is on the pairing of sentences and their appropriate contexts. The choices made in language have been found to affect the listeners and their responses. It is possible to observe norms of politeness, appropriateness, formality and respect in the way language is used. It is believed that pragmatics determines the appropriate interpretation of sentences since there could be differences between literal and implied meanings. Differences in meaning are at the instance of the situation, the shared background and the linguistics context of the expression. It will be most inconceivable to limit the study of semantics to the abstract study of meaning. Indeed, a dependable theory of meaning should explore language use. The relationship between semantics and language use is referred to as pragmatics. We shall explore this relationship in the course of this unit.

Pragmatics, according to Kempson (1986) is the study of the general principles necessary for retrieving information from a specific utterance based on the context. Emphasis is not necessarily on the grammatical or structural properties of the sentence. Indeed, a great deal of what we do in human communication is determined from the context. This means that the meaning of any stretch of communication is based on the interpretation of the listener. We also lay emphasis on the message, the participants, the deductions to be made from the utterance, the implications of what is said or assumed and the impact of the non-verbal aspects of the interaction on the meaning.

In terms of objectives, pragmatics deals with the totality of the processes through which utterances convey meaning, bearing in mind the context and how participants respond to the meanings intended. It will therefore be easy to say that the common tie between pragmatics and semantics is language. However, while semantics is concerned with language meaning, pragmatics is concerned with language use. This will necessarily mean that the contextual approach to meaning will be relevant to pragmatics. Since the full manifestation of language from the point of use deals on the implied processes, we shall explore the nature of implicature.

It is always common to hear people argue over what is meant, and what is implied. This means that there could be differences between what a speaker says and how the listener interprets it. However, success in communication depends on how well the meaning intended by the speaker and how the implicature of the listener converge. This is usually possible when participants in communication obey principles of conversational implicature. Implicature, a term coined by H.P. Grice, refers to what is suggested in an utterance and which may not have been *expressed*.

The speaker deliberately breaks the rules of a conversational maxim to convey additional meaning. For instance, it is possible to respond to the question:

1. Do you really believe Betty?

The answer could be

2. She was speaking grammar.

The answer implies, among other things that Betty was not telling the whole story.

It is expected of people in communication to obey certain co-operative principles.

These principles have been presented as maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner

Quantity – provide the right quantity of information; that is:

- i. Make your contribution information enough
- ii. Do not make your contribution more informal than necessary.

Quality – make your contribution true; that is:

- i. Do not say what you believe is not true
- ii. Do not say that for which you lack evidence.

Relation – Be relevant

Manner – be perspicuous, that is:

- i. Avoid obscurity of expression;
- ii. Avoid ambiguity

There are also conventional implicatures used for communicating non-truth-conditional meaning for specific linguistic expressions.

For example:

1. Ade is an Ibadan businessman, he is very rich

This will have the conventional implicature that all Ibadan businessmen are rich; however, this is not always the case.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you shall be able to

- define pragmatics
- relate pragmatics to the meaning of sentences
- explain the three levels of speech acts.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Speech Acts Theory and Types of Acts in Language

Austin (1962) describes the Speech Acts theory as an approach that explains the roles of utterances in shaping the attitudes of participants in interpersonal communication. Speech acts reveal the intentions of speakers and the effects the speaker's utterances and expressions have on the hearers. The implication of speech acts is that every utterance has a purpose, which derives from the specific context. It has been observed that language use depends on such contextual factors as social and physical conditions, attitudes, abilities, beliefs and the relationship existing between the speaker and the listener.

There are different types of speech acts, the most common being the following.

- (a) Representative Acts;
- (b) Declarative Acts
- (c) Directive Acts
- (d) Expressive Acts; and
- (e) Commissive Acts.

Representative Acts – These acts describe events, processes and states.

Usually, the speaker is committed to the truth of the assertion, claim, report, suggestion, prediction, description, hypothesis or conclusion.

Declarative Acts – These are acts that immediately change the state of affairs to which they apply. These acts are used in arresting, christening, marriage, sentencing, acquittal. and so on. Consider the following.

- (i) I discharge and acquit the accused
- (ii) I hereby name this baby Amanda

Directive Acts – In directive acts, the addressee is instructed to carry out some instruction by responding verbally to an utterance or by performing some physical actions. The acts can be questions, commands, requests, pleas or invitation. For example:

- (i) Kindly lend me some money!
- (ii) Please, be my guest!
- (iii) What is your name!

Expressive Acts - Expressive acts show the psychological states – feelings and attitudes towards some events and affairs. These usually occur in greetings, scolding, condoling, appreciating, thanking, congratulating, apologising, and so on. For example:

- (i) We congratulate you on your success
- (ii) I apologise for my mistakes

Commissive Acts - In commissive acts, the speaker is committed to some future action as in challenging, betting, promising, offering, threatening, vowing, warning, etc.

- (i) I pledge a hundred thousand Naira
- (ii) We promise to build them a house

It should be noted that commissive acts carry specific performative verbs – promise, swear, name, pledge, warn, advise, declare, bet.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List the types of speech acts.

3.2 Levels of Speech Acts

There may be some confusion regarding types and levels of speech acts.

We have already discussed types of speech acts – representative, declarative, directive, expressive and commissive. For levels of speech acts, emphasis is on the different stages of interaction between the speaker and the listener using speech acts. Three distinct levels are usually observed – locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

Locutionary Acts – These are observed as the processes of producing grammatical and meaningful utterances, which can be recognised by the hearer.

Illocutionary Acts – Illocutionary acts are the force behind the utterances. Indeed, the speaker performs these acts to achieve the purpose of communication as a statement, a question, a command, an invitation, a threat, a request, an apology, and so on. It is possible, for instance, to use a sentence that has the structure of a statement for the purpose of a warning – e.g.

- (i) You will lose all your deposits – (from a financial adviser to a client)

This sentence may be a *warning* or a piece of advice.

Therefore, it is possible to use identical utterance types for different tokens based on the intentions of the speaker and the context.

Perlocutionary Acts – These are the effects of the speaker's utterance on the behaviour of the hearer. They are the acts performed by the hearer as a result of the effect of the speaker's utterances. It is assumed, for instance, that the hearer will respond to a question of the speaker in a specific way, or behave in accordance with the demands of the context.

It should be noted that the illocutionary force is the intended effect of an utterance on the hearer from the point of view of the speaker. The perlocutionary effect is the actual effect of the speaker's utterance on the action, behaviour, attitude or belief of the hearer.

Maximum communication is achieved when there is illocutionary *uptake*. This situation arises when the listener understands the intended

effect of the speaker. This demand is at the core of semantics since meaning must be shared.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Identify the levels of speech acts.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have explored meaning beyond the abstract level of deep structure sentences. Indeed, we have examined language in use. This is the core of pragmatics. Our focus in this unit has been on speech acts.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have explored different dimensions of the speech acts theory. In specific terms, we have discussed:

- the concept of pragmatics
- types and levels of speech acts
- the place of illocutionary uptake in achieving maximum communication.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss the different types of speech acts.
- ii. Explain the different levels of speech acts.

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MODULE 4 LOGIC AND FALLACIES

Unit 1	Basic Aspects of Linguistic Fallacies
Unit 2	Aspects of Material Fallacies Relevant to Semantics
Unit 3	Elements of Logic in Semantics

UNIT 1 BASIC ASPECTS OF LINGUISTICS FALLACIES

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	The Nature and Forms of Fallacies Relevant to Semantics
3.2	Fallacies of Misinterpretation
3.3	Fallacies of Misunderstanding of Language
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A major thrust of semantics is to ensure that the meaning of linguistics units is maximally accessible. One way to achieve this is to ensure that we have logical arguments in our presentations. Logic deals with the process of evaluating the truth and falsity of arguments. What is logical is deemed to have the right reasoning. There are, however, times when the strength of an argument is weakened by fallacies.

A fallacy, from its original Latin origin, *fallor* is any error of reasoning, which can lead to deception. Quite a number of fallacies are derived from language use.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- state the forms of fallacy relevant to semantics
- describe these fallacies,
- illustrate their manifestation in language with good examples.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Nature and Forms of Fallacies Relevant to Semantics

Fallacies can be formal, material or linguistic/verbal. Formal fallacies occur when conclusions assert what have not been included in the premises. Therefore, the structural validity of the expression is weakened. It also means that the deductive argument presented cannot hold. Material fallacies derive from irrelevance. Such fallacies cannot prove the material truth of the arguments or propositions. The appeal of material fallacies depends on some mistakes related to the truth of the premises or the possibility of such truth being known. Therefore, material fallacies often fail to prove the material truth of their arguments. Thus, the conclusions drawn are usually not true.

Linguistics or verbal fallacies derive mainly from ambiguity as a result of the change or shift created by the formulation of the meaning of words and phrases used in the proposition. There are two main forms of the verbal or linguistics fallacy, which are of interest to semantics. We shall examine them briefly.

3.2 Fallacies of Misinterpretation

Under these general fallacies are:

- Amphiboly
- Accent
- Figure of speech
- Hypostatisation.

Amphiboly

In amphiboly, there is ambiguity arising from a loose or inappropriate grouping of words in a structure. There is usually the potential for multiple interpretations. Consider the following.

- (i) Nigerian educated men are weak

The confusion derives from the interpretations below.

- a) Men educated in Nigeria
- b) Nigerian men who are educated
- c) They are physically weak
- d) They are morally weak.

Accent

The fallacy of accent arises as a result of misplaced emphasis. There is usually the misinterpretation of the original meaning of the sentence as a result of the wrong emphasis or the challenge of quoting one out of context. Emphasis can be achieved in the print media by the use of font types and sizes, both of which can mislead the reader.

For instance, during the screening for ministerial appointment in Nigeria, some newspapers carried a screaming headline such as:

- (i) “Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala Missing” (whereas what they meant was that her name was not on the list of nominees presented to the senate)
- (ii) Another example was noted in another newspaper-“UNILAG Vice-Chancellor in Police Net” (a fake Vice-Chancellor apprehended)

Most readers would be carried away by the capital letters, whereas the real message is in the small letters.

Figures of Speech (Figure Dictions)

In a specialised way, figures of speech derive from the confusion over words, which are perceived to be similar in sound or structure – as in

- Accent - assent
- Council - counsel
- Eligible - illegible
- Illicit - elicit

Greater import of the figure of speech occurs in the literal interpretation of metaphorical expressions, including the following.

- (i) John kicked the bucket
- (ii) He swallowed his pride

Hypostatisation

Wherever abstract concepts are presented as if they have the capacity to produce empirical evidence, we have hypostalization. Consider the following example.

- (i) Experience taught him great lessons

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List the different forms of the fallacy of misinterpretation.

3.3 Fallacies of the Misuse or Misunderstanding of Language

We shall explore the following four fallacies under this category.

- Equivocation
- Composition
- Division, and
- Bifurcation

Equivocation – double talk or equal voice (*aeques vox* in Latin) described the possibility of using the same term for different senses in the same discourse. Consider the following example.

Rich men enjoy *rich* meals

The use of the word “rich” in the two instances will definitely cause confusion if “rich” means related to involving enormous wealth. The illustration will be clearer with this example taken from Ogbulogo (2005).

- (i) People should obey every good law
- (ii) The law of identity of reference is a good one
- (iii) Therefore, people should obey the law of identity of reference.

The fallacy of the conclusion derives from the variation in the meaning of law in the two preceding sentences.

The fallacy of composition derives from the assumption that what applies to a part of an element applies to the totality of that element. If we assume that since players in a team are skilful, the entire team would be harmonious and visionary. It will be fallacious to argue that since those who provide instructions at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education are all teachers, they should all be equally remunerated. This fallacy arises principally from neglect of the collective and distributive uses of such general terms as all and every. Collective terms relate to the whole while distributive terms make reference to each and separate members.

The fallacy of division arises when it is believed that the elements of a whole should be shared by all its constituent part. It will be fallacious to assume that since Judith comes from a family of beautiful ladies, she should also be beautiful. It is easy to observe that the fallacy of division is the converse of composition.

The fallacy of bifurcation (false dilemma) manifests when the full range of possible options to a question is erroneously reduced to just two alternatives. This reality is evident in the choice of many words occurring in pairs, suggesting just opposites. Consider the following.

- (i) If she is not wise, then she must be foolish.
- (ii) The members will be either rich or poor.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Highlight some fallacies of misunderstanding of language.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have explored basic fallacies associated with meaning in language use. We noted that fallacies occur as errors in reasoning, which can lead to deception. Indeed fallacies weaken the force of an argument. Therefore, our study of semantics is found more profitable if we devise ways of maximising access to the intended meaning.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have studied the nature of fallacies related to semantics. We have also examined fallacies associated with the misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Dwelling centrally on semantics, we have discussed formal, material and linguistic fallacies. In all this, we noted that it is the irrelevance of the material in a structure that creates fallacies. However, linguistic or verbal fallacies derive from ambiguity or shift of emphasis. Fallacies of misinterpretation find expression as amphiboly, accent, figures of speech and hypostatisation. Fallacies of misunderstanding of language occur as equivocation, composition, division and trifurcation.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Describe the nature of fallacies in language.
- ii. Explain any four fallacies of misinterpretation of language
- iii. Discuss any four fallacies of misunderstanding of language.

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UNIT 2 ASPECTS OF MATERIAL FALLACIES RELEVANT TO SEMANTICS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Fallacies of Accident
 - 3.2 Question Begging Fallacies
 - 3.3 The Complex Question
 - 3.4 False Causal Relationship
 - 3.5 Attacking the Straw Man
 - 3.6 The Bandwagon
 - 3.7 Fallacies of Appeals
 - 3.8 Irrelevant Conclusion
 - 3.9 Argumentative Leap
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It will be recalled that on our discussion of linguistic fallacies, we made reference to material fallacies. In this unit, we shall explore in some detail different manifestations of material fallacy.

The study of meaning will not be complete if we focus mainly on linguistic fallacies. There are indeed other forms of fallacies, which derive from a compromise in the truth of the premises of the arguments.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss fallacies of accident
- explain question begging fallacies
- give examples of fallacies of accident and fallacy of converse accident
- discuss fallacies associated with the bandwagon and attracting the straw man
- explain how fallacies of appeals weaken the logic of argument.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

A premise is the basic idea on which other ideas and conclusions are based. If the premise of an argument is false, the conclusion cannot be valid. Material fallacies are classified based on their structures. Presented below are the common examples.

3.1 Fallacies of Accident

Fallacies in this category are of two forms – fallacy of accident and fallacy of converse accident.

Fallacy of accident occurs when a general rule is applied to a specific case – where such a rule would not be applicable. This form of fallacy is common in political and legal arguments. For instance, while most constitutions will provide for the protection of personal freedom, there may be the tendency to argue that even offenders and criminals should not have their freedom curtailed by terms of imprisonment.

The fallacy of converse accident is also referred to as the fallacy of hasty generalisation. It occurs when we take specific incidents to be the basis of universal conclusions. Thus, the evidence of that specific event is always restricted, thus making whatever generalisation hasty and invalid. Consider the following generalisation.

- (i) All great footballers are charming
- (ii) Single women cannot be good leaders

3.2 Question Begging Fallacies

We shall consider under this heading, Fallacies of begging the question and fallacies of question begging epithets. The fallacy of begging the question arises when what is intended to be proved as the conclusion is assumed the premise. The fallacy may also occur if one of the truth of the premises cannot be established without the conclusion being found to be true. There may also be a situation where an issue perceived to be true under particular circumstances inferred from a universal premise. Usually that universal premise is also inferred from a specific case. Thus, a universal proposition is assumed to derive from a case that is only true in certain circumstances. Consider the following examples.

- (i) That utterance comes from men ruled by their wives, because only a man ruled by his wife can say such things.
- (ii) You know he is the wealthiest man in the village because he is the strongest.

Question begging epithets are expressed as adjectives, which carry with them, value judgements. In each of these judgements, there are conclusions that are yet to be proved. Most forms of propaganda exhibit instances of question begging epithets. Consider further, these examples:

These *shameless* university teachers will always line their pockets with ill-gotten wealth from unholy sales of handouts.

3.2 The Complex Question

There is a complex question when we assume a yes or no as the answer to a question that has far greater implications. In many instances of questions, there is the assumption that the basic fact has been established in a yes – no scenario. This situation is apparent in the following questions.

- (i) Why are Blacks interested in self-perpetuation in office? (Has it been proved?)
- (ii) Why do academics turn out to be poor leaders? (Is it always the case?)

It is a common knowledge that questions elicit answers. The real meaning of a question derives from the assumptions it makes. When people are unwary of the full implications of questions, they fall into the trap of creative and crafty users of language, like lawyers.

3.4 False Causal Relationship

There is a false causal relationship when what is assumed the cause of an action is actually not. It may also be a situation when what follows an event is assumed to be caused by that event. In medical circles, this fallacy may link a symptom to an ailment when in fact something else may be happening. Consider this situation:

They became successful after they left the scene of war. Therefore, their success is linked to their new location.

3.5 Attacking the Straw Man

This fallacy also referred to as the smear technique is the practice of attacking the personality or circumstances of the opponent in an argument rather than focusing on the issues. This attack may manifest in the use of offensive language, insults and abuse, rather than proving or disproving the logic of the argument.

There are three variants of this fallacy – the genetic, relational and the well poisoning fallacies. The object of attack in the genetic fallacy is the source or the origin of an argument. There is usually the assumption that good ideas can only come from the good mind-often associated with members of a special group. Often, politicians and administrators who are interested in discrediting opposition deploy this fallacy.

At the relational level, there is the assumption that one's ideas, opinions or arguments are related to one's circumstances. People who have some substance in society are usually perceived to have brighter ideas. For fallacies that poison the well, there is a deliberate attempt to discredit the source of a supporting piece of evidence. This makes the evidence unaccepted.

The following are examples of fallacies that attack the straw man.

- (i) Who would believe the self-imposed leader who is a drunkard and a brute?
- (ii) It will be inconceivable for people to follow the opinions of Mr. Banda, where parents could hardly train beyond the primary school.
- (iii) I am sure you are not expecting us to follow the logic of this argument since we know that the data have been compromised all through.

3.6 The Bandwagon

The fallacy of the bandwagon, also described as the snob appeal or the appeal to the people involves the play on the emotions of the people instead of addressing the issues at stake. Emphasis is on appealing to the fears, prejudices, passions and problems of the people even to the detriment of the logic. Politicians, propagandists, lawyers and marketers use this appeal to sway public opinions. Consider the following.

- (i) “Come out of poverty in a grand style; subscribe to be a distributor of our products.”
- (ii) “Enjoy the secrets of longevity with our New Life products.”
- (iii) “Join the team of high fliers in your examinations, enrol in our tutorial centre.”

3.7 Fallacy of Appeals

Apart from the fallacy of the bandwagon, there are a number of fallacies that appeal to pity, authority and ignorance. The fallacy of appeal to pity is intended to arouse emotions of pity and sympathy. The aim is to

achieve favourable conclusions or desired actions, even when the facts of the arguments may have been left out. Particular appeal is common in situation that will require dire consequences. Thus, defence counsels resort to it to whip up sentiments. Consider this example.

The accused is the only surviving son of a widow. He has suffered a great deal of deprivation as a youth. If he is convicted and imprisoned, his poor mother will not survive the shock.

The fallacy of the appeal to authority draws its strength by referring to a respected authority or a group of people whose opinions count. Often, such a reference is not relevant, unlike what we have in academic circles when experts build their arguments on the strength of existing authorities.

Consider these arguments.

- (i) Even Bill Gates would envy this computer.
- (ii) Shakespeare would even have endorsed this pen

Note that both Bill Gates and Shakespeare have become names noted in computing and writing respectively.

There is the fallacy of the appeal to ignorance when we assume that every proposition without immediate supporting evidence must be false. It may also occur when a proposition is assumed true if there is no evidence to disprove it. Therefore, the only point of proof is one's ignorance. Consider this example:

If you do not believe in witches, you must bring evidence that they do not exist.

There is also the fallacy of the appeal to force. It is also referred to as the fallacy of swinging the big stick, which occurs when one uses intimidation or threats to force the acceptance of a conclusion. This technique manifests when rational arguments have failed- for example:

If you don't sign to break the strike, you must vacate your accommodation

3.8 The Fallacy of Irrelevant Conclusion

In this fallacy, there is usually the evasion of the real issues. The conclusion to be proved or disproved is ignored and an entirely new conclusion is introduced. Consider the following illustration.

Mr. A: How can you prove the case of sexual harassment against the accused?

Mr. B: How can he be ignorant while he had in the past been charged with aiding and abetting examination misconduct?

Note the two issues being raised.

3.9 The Fallacy of the Argumentative Leap

The fallacy of the argumentative leap occurs when the conclusion drawn from the premises of an argument is not relevant to that conclusion. Indeed, the argument fails to establish the conclusion.

That lady is morally sound, that is why her neighbours suspect her.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It has been observed that the strength of an argument is weakened not only by the nature of the structure of the language. The weakness in an argument can also be introduced by extraneous elements brought in. These elements are referred to as material fallacies.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. List any five material fallacies.
- ii. Give two examples for each of fallacy of accident and fallacy of converse accident.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt how the introduction of irrelevant material can weaken the logic of an argument. You have considered the fallacies of accident, converse accident, begging the question, the complex question, false causal relationship, attacking the straw man, the bandwagon and appeals. You have also noted examples of each of them.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss fallacies associated with the bandwagon and attacking the straw man.
- ii. Explain how fallacies of appeals weaken the logic of arguments.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 ELEMENTS OF LOGIC IN SEMANTICS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Simple Proposition
 - 3.2 Conjunction and Disjunction
 - 3.3 Implication
 - 3.4 Negation or Denial (Not) (\sim)
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

There is always a sense of logic in any language system. This places logic as a component of the meaning processes of natural language. This connection makes logic a point of interest in semantics. It should be noted, however that the emphasis of logic in semantics is on the relations involved in complex sentences, rather than with the abstract mathematical formulations. We shall explore in this unit the structure of the sentence and how this structure contributes to meaning.

Propositional logic is that aspect of logic studied in semantics. It is also referred to as propositional calculus or sentential calculus. The whole essence of logic is to examine the validity or correctness of arguments. We take an argument to be valid if both the premises and the conclusion are true. This means that the conclusion of a valid argument must drive from its premises. There are usually logical words or connectives establishing the link between premises and their conclusions. Examples of connectives are – *not, and, or, if ... then*, and so on. We can also establish this link with qualifiers such as *all, some, many*, etc. It is possible for different words to occupy similar positions in presenting valid arguments. Expressions in arguments, which are not logical words, are described in symbols. The common symbols for sentences are p , q and n logical connectives are represented as follow:

\sim
 \vee
 \equiv

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- establish the link between logic and semantics
- identify simple logical connectives relevant to semantics
- write simple propositions
- create complex propositions using logical connectives.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Simple Propositions

A proposition is simple if it has just one predicator. A proposition is that unit that makes up the subject matter of a statement, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and so on of the hearer. A predicator is the verbal element in a proposition and it is represented in capital letters. The argument, which is usually the subject, is represented in small letters.

The usual practice is to place the subject before the predicator and other arguments following. Arguments are subjects and objects, which are also described as referring expressions. It is the usual practice to omit whatever is not a predicator or a referring expression when writing in logical form. Thus, we can have the following example:

- (i) Ben cried _____ b CRY
- (ii) James advised Henrietta – j ADVISE h

It should be noted that only names and predicators are presented, leaving out tense markers, determiners and certain prepositions consider further the following example.

- (iii) Ada was waiting for Tom _____ a look -for- t

3.2 Combing Simple Propositions

To combine simple propositions into more complex ones, we use logical connectives. As the simple propositions are joined, the complex propositions so formed are affected in some form – which can be conjunction or disjunction.

Conjunction

In English grammar, we establish conjunction with the word – and – represented by the symbol \wedge . In logic, we can combine any number of individual well-formed structures as illustrated below.

- (i) Peter left the city p LEAVE c
- (ii) James painted pictures J paints P

Sentences (i) and (ii) can be conjoined to form (iii)

- (iii) Peter left the city and James painted pictures p LEAVE c \wedge j PAINT p

Disjunction

In disjunction, we present alternatives in propositions, using the word “or” which is represented with \vee (from the Latin word Vel – or). Just as we have shown in conjunction, we can derive complex structures by combining a number of simple propositions with the symbol \vee . Consider further the following examples.

- (i) Thomas paid
- (ii) Ben defaulted

From (i) and (ii), we have

Thomas paid or Ben defaulted \vee PAY \vee b default.

There is always the rule of the commutativity of conjunction and disjunction. This rule implied that the conjunction of two propositions is assured even in the opposite order. This reality is reflected in the following presentations.

q - premise	$p \vee q$ premise
p \wedge q conclusion	q \vee p conclusion

There are differences between conjunction and disjunction. For example, from the proposition:

- (i) Ben or Thomas came; cannot yield the conclusions:
- (ii) Ben came
- (iii) Thomas came.

There is apparent ambiguity involved. A straight forward way to resolve this ambiguity is to use the expression – either ... or

- (iv) Either Ben or Thomas came

3.3 Implication

It is possible to build compound propositions that are hypothetical, conditional or implicational with the phrase *if... then*. The first simple proposition coming between *if ...* and *then* is the antecedent (that is, the protasis, the implicant or the hypothesis) of the conditional while the second component after the word “then” is the consequent (the apodasis, the implicate or the thesis). It is logical to argue that if the antecedent in a conditional proposition is true, then the *consequent* is also true. Indeed, the truth of the antecedent implies the truth of the consequent.

The relationship of *if ... then* is represented using a horseshoe (\supset) or an arrow (\Rightarrow) consider the following illustrations:

- (i) If children eat, then they will grow
 c EAT c will grow

Equivalence or Biconditional Proposition (if and only if)

The biconditional or equivalent proposition is expressed with a double arrow (\Leftrightarrow) or the three bar (\equiv). The expression “if and only if,” also represented as (if) are placed between the antecedent and the consequent. However, neither the antecedent nor the consequent is asserted. The basic assumption is that if the antecedent is true, the consequent is also true. The converse is also true. Thus, if the antecedent is asserted, the consequent is also asserted. Witness these examples.

- (i) Jake will eat if and only if Alice will

This is represented as:

- (ii) Jake will eat \equiv Mary will

This means that either they will both eat or neither will.

3.4 Negation or Denial (Not) (\sim)

Operations of negation or denial do not produce combinations in propositions. Negations expand single proposition to produce new ones. Thus, when a proposition that is true is denied, a false proposition emerges. Let us examine the following examples.

- (i) Dan is rich (positive)
- (ii) Dan is not rich (negative)

This is expressed, as \sim Dan is rich.

The most common way of expressing negation in English is to introduce the word not to the sentence, as shown above. The negation of a disjunction is expressed using neither... nor. Witness further (iii) and (iv).

- (iii) Either the boys or the girls will win the game. Negation:
- (iv) Neither the boys nor the girls will win the game

4.0 CONCLUSION

Symbols used in logic represent linguistic entities. That means that logical issues can be studied within semantics. It is always the case that what is not logical can always be misunderstood. We have featured aspect of logic that can be studied within a course of study in semantics. This branch of logic is propositional logic.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. State the condition under which an argument is valid.
- ii. List five connectives used in propositional logic.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have learnt, in this unit, the link between logic and semantics, bearing in mind that logic examines the validity or correctness of arguments. To formalize the essence of logic, special symbols are used to represent simple and complex propositions. Simple propositions occur as simple statements while complex propositions are achieved with conjunction, disjunction, implication and negation.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (i) Explain the nature of logic in semantic.
- (ii) Describe simple propositions and provide good examples.
- (iii) Discuss complex propositions.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Copi, M. (1978). *Introduction to Logic*. London: Macmillan

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MODULE 5 SEMANTICS AND THE PRACTICE OF LITERARY COMMUNICATION

- Unit 1 The Application of Semantics to Literary Communication
- Unit 2 The Application of Semantics to Everyday Communication
- Unit 3 Semantic Problems in Nigerian English

UNIT 1 THE APPLICATION OF SEMANTICS TO LITERARY COMMUNICATION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Nature of Literary Language
 - 3.2 Aspects of Figures of Structural Arrangements
 - 3.3 Meaning from Sound Effects
 - 3.4 Figures of Similarity
 - 3.5 Meaning from Other Figures of Speech
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The primary function of language is communication. Whatever is communicated is expected to be meaningful. Therefore, literary communication should be of interest to the study of semantics. In this unit, we shall examine how literary communication manifests in semantics.

In a typical department of languages – there are courses in literature and linguistics, which enrich the knowledge base of the student. It has also been observed that a number of theories in language find expression in literature. It is, therefore, expected that semantics will also be reflected in literary communication.

Literary communication occurs in the different genres of literature- poetry prose and drama. The uniqueness of this brand of communication is in the creative use of language to achieve specific

purposes. Language is used in a variety of ways, some of which may be different from the normal everyday form.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the nature of literary communication
- highlight the different strategies deployed in literary communication
- provide illustration of the special semantic manifestations of literary language.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Nature of Literary Language

Literature as an art form derives from the creative use of language. This creativity may be based in the semantic extension of words and structures beyond the typical cognitive interpretation. There is usually the transfer of sense, to produce what has been characterised as the metaphoric. It will be possible to admit as literary language some structures that are not necessarily semantically well formed. In this connection, and following in the lead provided by Platt (1977), figures of speech depart from the linguistic norms of everyday language, syntactically or semantically.

It is not always that the deviation will occur in the form of rule breaking. This deviation may be in the form of over-regularity of structures to produce repetition. It may also be in the form of re-ordering certain structures to achieve pre-determined goals. The goals of figurative language may include the stirring of the emotions of the audience in a specific direction. It has been observed that figures of speech are derived from structural construction, sound effects, similarity, contrast, association, indirectness and analogy.

3.2 Aspects of Figures of Structural Arrangements

English like any other language has rules that govern the combination of units to form larger structures, such as the sentence. The normal point of analysis of the syntax of any language is the simple sentence. This sentence carries one positive proposition, and which is composed of a subject noun phrase and a finite verb. The finite verb may attract other elements that can make up the complete predicate.

It is possible to manipulate the basic rules that generate the simple sentence to achieve a wide variety of sentences. These new sentence varieties may be rhetorical questions, exclamations, inversion, the climax and the anticlimax.

Rhetorical Questions

These are questions asked to strengthen the speaker's or writer's belief in what is being presented. They also help to elicit the participation of the audience in reaffirming the speaker's or writer's standpoint.

For example: Do we give thieves public funds to keep?

Exclamation

In an ordinary sense, an exclamation is a sudden outburst of emotion which may show pity, love, anger or passion. It is often engaged in literary communication to elicit the involvement of the audience.

For example: O! What a waste of human lives as the slave masters invaded the hinterland!

Inversion

There is a change in the natural order of words with the aim of achieving emphasis. The meaning achieved this way is thematic. It is possible to place the complement of the sentence in the place of the subject as we have below.

Sweet are the lessons of discipline.

Climax

We achieve climax by placing information in the order of importance, starting with the least to the most profound. That way, suspense is created. Consider the following.

He graduated by stealing pencils, pens, books, laptops and ultimately vaults of the company.

Anticlimax

This is the opposite of climax. It involves the placement of items in the reverse order of magnitude – with the most profound to the least consequential – for example:

He earned a doctorate, having made a distinction at the master's degree and a first class honours as an undergraduate.

3.3 Meaning from Sound Effects

We had noted in the previous sections of this course that meaning could be studied at the level of words or the sentence. It is also easy to note that the basic level of linguistic organisation is the sound system. This system comprises vowels and consonants, which in English are forty-four (twenty vowels and twenty-four consonants). The arrangement of sounds to create syllables and words follows the rule of phonotactics. Incidentally, the language user may make a definite selection of these sounds to achieve specific realisation like alliteration; assonance, onomatopoeia, pun and rhyme.

Alliteration is achieved when the same consonant sound is repeated in a sequence – the crusty crowns cap their heads.

Assonance – is that figure of speech achieved by repeating the same vowel sounds in a sequence

- Greedy leaders steal from their helpless constituents

In onomatopoeia, we use words to suggest meaning – for example:

Ibadan,

Running splash of rust and gold

“Ibadan” – JP. Clark

Pun or paronomasia is a conscious play on the meaning of words that have identical spellings or sounds, but with different meanings. Ambiguity is often achieved through the use of pun. Consider the following:

(i) His *grave* misdeeds pushed him to his early *grave*

In rhyme, similar vowel sounds are meant to occur in the final syllables of poetic lines and they help to achieve a special sense of musical quality. Consider this example from Lenrie Peters' "The Fire had Gone out"

- the fire has gone *out*
- the last flicker gone
- nothing but aching *gout*

3.4 Figures of Similarity

There is always the possibility of comparing the attributes of things, persons or situations present with those of others that are not present. The major objective is to stir the imagination of the audience. The two dominant ways of drawing out this similarity is through simile and metaphor.

In simile, the comparison between two entities or events, which may not be related, is established with the words as or like. Consider this example from J.P. Clark's "Abiku"

- We know the knife scars//Serrating down your back and front//like the beak of the sword fish

The metaphor expresses the comparison between entities and events, without establishing the link with the words – as or like. Rather, the speaker or writer calls one entity the name of another – to imply their similarity. Consider further, this example from Soyinka's *Abiku*-

I am the squirrel teeth.

Another figure of similarity is the allegory, which is an extended comparison in which one subject is described in detail and the other assumed to be understood. Many great works of literature, including Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Milton's "Paradise Lost" could be described as allegories.

3.5 Meaning from other Figures of Speech

There are quite a number of other forms of literary language. However, for the purpose of this unit, we shall discuss oxymoron, paradox, allusion, euphemism, irony and personification.

The oxymoron is a figure of contrast in which two contradictory words are juxtaposed for the sake of emphasis. Ordinarily, and in line with the principles of sentential semantics, such expressions would be anomalous. The following is an example of oxymoron.

"...there was painful laughter"
David Diop – "The Vultures"

In the paradox, which is also an example of contrast, a statement that sounds absurd or even false at the first thought is noted to be true on a

closer examination. Consider this famous quote from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar:

“Cowards die many times before their death”

An allusion is a figure of association in which an expression is associated with a well-established point of reference – a person, place or an event. Consider this example taken from the Holy Bible.

A Daniel has come to judgement

Euphemism is a figure of indirectness in which soft and agreeable terms and expressions are employed to present unpleasant situations – for example:

He has a basket mouth (that is, he cannot keep a secret)

Another figure of indirectness is the irony. It expresses the opposite of its literal meaning – for the purpose of humour or sarcasm. Consider this example:

- (i) Those politicians that embezzle public fund are indeed great patriots.

Personification as a figure of analogy occurs when we attribute qualities of life to inanimate objects and abstract ideas. This is evident in David Diop's “The Vultures”

“...when civilisation kicked us in the face”

4.0 CONCLUSION

The language of literary communication derives from the associative meaning of the structures involved. These expressions draw from the imagination of the speakers/writers and the audience. To appreciate the full range of meanings in language, elements of literary communication must be examined. We have discussed a selection of elements of this branch of communication.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. List the three ways in which literary communication occurs.
- ii. List three sources of literary language.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the nature of literary communication. We have identified poetry, prose and drama as the three ways in which literature communicates. We have also explored the different strategies through which literary language is made manifest. These include structural arrangement, sound effects, similarity, contrast and analogy. We have also illustrated examples from each of these.

7.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (i) Discuss the nature of literary communication.
- (ii) Explain how structural construction can be deployed in the semantics of literary communication.
- (iii) Identify any three figures of speech and explain how they enhance meaning in literary communication.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 THE APPLICATION OF SEMANTICS TO EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Semantics and Lexis
 - 3.2 Dealing with Synonymy and Antonymy
 - 3.3 Dealing with Technical Vocabulary
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Semantics has remained a complicated aspect of language study for the Nigerian learner because of a number of factors. One of these factors is the non-availability of learning resources produced by our local writers. Another reason, which forms the basis for this unit, is perception that the subject does not find application in everyday life. This situation is made more complicated by the absence of a visible component of the test of semantics in public examinations. What is usually tested is *lexis*. There is still the problem of semantics being appropriated by different disciplines like logic, law and philosophy, with the result that semantic postulations are usually abstract. In this unit, we shall explore how knowledge of semantics enhances everyday communication.

It is necessary that users of English, for instance, get familiar with the semantic properties of lexical items, along with the specific expressions used in different fields. Users of language would also need to be familiar with what is appropriate in different contexts. There is the added need for skills in identifying what may not be point of semantics. These demands provide the motivation for this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify how the study of semantics enhances everyday communication
- explain how the knowledge of semantics enhances the use of lexis and registers

- establish the link between semantics and appropriateness in language use.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Semantics and Lexis

Lexis refers to the full range of all meaningful words of a language. The essence of this range is to present the language user choices when communicating. The choices to be made are expected to satisfy such criteria as collocation, selectional, restrictions and subcategorisation as already pointed out in Unit 7. We shall explore in this section how collocation manifests in the semantics of English.

Collocation expresses the natural co-occurrence of individual lexical items to form longer structures. There is usually reference to the sense associations, which build the expected relationship. It is expected that good users of English will identify collocates in normal communication. It will be absurd to have a tall stick, as against a long stick; powerful computers as against strong computers; strong tea as against powerful tea.

With training and regular practice, users of English become familiar with the following collocate:

Nutritious	food
Nutritive	
Auspicious	occasion
August	visitor, guest, gathering
Conceited	personality
Bloated	ego, opinion
Enigmatic	personality
Endangered	species, population
Epic	battle, occurrence
Eligible	bachelor
Illegible	writing
Luxuriant	vegetation, grass
Luxurious	life styles, apartments
Comprehensive	information (detailed)
Comprehensible	statements (easy to understand)
Accent	of a speaker
Ascent	of a climber
Assent	as approval
Adapt	to a situation
Adopt	a strategy

Amicable	settlement (of a case)
Amiable	character (likeable)
Broach	an issue
Brooch	to be worn
Genteel	in deception
Gentle	in character

3.2 Dealing with Synonymy and Antonymy

Another perspective in the study of the lexis of English is to focus on the similarity and contrast holding between words. It is a mark of excellence in language to identify with ease chains of words that are similar in meaning and those that are opposites. The ability to command a wide range of lexical items in this regard has been associated with great orators and writers. It will be recalled that, as we observed in Unit 6, words that have the same meaning are synonyms while those that have opposite meanings are antonyms. You will note the presentation of the following synonyms.

Abdicate	–	abandon, cede, desert
Cancel	–	abrogate, annul, abolish
Devisory	–	absurd, anomalous, illogical
Exacerbate	–	aggravate, exasperate, intate
Assail	–	abuse, assault, attack, berate, bombard, impugn
Dependable	–	accurate, actual authentic, authoritative, bona fide, original
Aggressive	–	belligerent, antagonistic, bellicose, militant, pugnacious, quarrelsome
Chauvinist	–	fanatic, zealot, bigot, dogmatist, sectarian
Apogee	–	attractive, beautiful, good-looking
Affable	–	courteous, courtly, civil, debonair, polite, refined, urbane, respectful
Casual	–	cursory, desultory, fleeting, perfunctory, superficial
Doleful	–	dejected, depressed, disconsolate, dispirited, downcast, gloomy, hopeless, melancholy
Denigrate	–	disparage, ridicule, scorn, slander, deprecate, deride, malign, defame, degrade.
Duplicity	–	artifice, chichenary, deceit, dishonesty, falsehood, hypocrisy

The major semantic challenge of synonyms is that no two words will have exactly the same meaning. Users are expected to identify the very fine lines of distinction in the meaning of words for appropriate use. This reality is because some alternatives carry slightly different connotations. The connotation, which may be context-determined, may

affect the style of a piece of communication. Consider the different rendition of the popular nursery rhyme:

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are.

Scintillate, scintillate, diminutive asteroid
How I speculate as to your identity.

Jacobs and Rosenbaum (1985)

3.3 Dealing with Technical Vocabulary

It has been argued that English has about 615,000 non-technical words and a total of about two million words including slang and technical expressions. It has also been argued that most Americans use between 800 and 1,000 words in everyday communication. Yet, there is the need for a higher degree of comprehension expected of the present day expert who has to deal with a wide range of vocabulary items in such areas as education, linguistics, computer science, ICT, banking and finance, transportation, governance, agriculture. This will demand an improved reading skill with enhanced comprehension.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Knowledge of semantics will improve our understanding of the world around us. It will also enhance our appropriate use of language. We have pointed out essential areas in which semantics can be applied to everyday communication.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Identify the specific areas in which knowledge of semantics can enhance everyday communication

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt how semantics applied to lexis, synonyms, antonyms, collocation and registers.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the concept of collocation and explain how knowledge of semantics manifests in the appropriateness of language use.

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UNIT 3 SEMANTICS PROBLEM IN NIGERIAN ENGLISH

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Concept of Nigerian English
 - 3.2 Problems of Semantic Extension
 - 3.3 Problems of Wrong Choice of Lexis
 - 3.4 Problems of Lexical Reduplication
 - 3.5 Problems of Semantic Reduplication
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The reality of English as a global language is the introduction of regional, national and cultural varieties. Each of these varieties has implications for international intelligibility. It has been pointed out that lexis and semantics have the greater potential for Nigerian English to contribute to the global corpus of English. This optimism has implications for the theory of meaning in the language. In this unit, we shall explore aspects of these implications.

It was observed in the earlier units of this pack that semantics deals with the meaning of words and sentences. This meaning is central to the practice of communication. Apart from the problems of ambiguity, there could be the problems of misinterpretation, wrong choice, over extension and absolute loss of meaning. We shall explore these problem areas in the course of this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify some semantic characteristics of Nigerian English
- explain how aspects of the features of Nigerian English can create semantic problems
- discuss ways of maximising communication bearing in mind issues of semantics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Concept of Nigerian English

The Standard British English is the ideal variety used in official business, the mass media and for instruction in English public schools. This variety has also been very widely studied and analysed. It has been found to share a great deal of similarities with institutionalized regional and national varieties of English. This variety has been made popular by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

In Nigeria, the prestige variety is the Educated Variety of Nigerian English. This variety relates to the Standard British English in many respects. It is the variety recommended by experts for use in the Nigerian school systems. It is also the variety used in media houses, the judiciary, the civil service, the organised private sector and at the top levels of the military. There is usually mutual intelligibility between speakers of this variety and speakers of other world-standard varieties.

There are, however, other varieties of Nigerian English, which are used by speakers with lower levels of educational attainment and limited exposure to the language. These lower varieties have problems at the different levels of linguistic organization – phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics.

It should be noted that experts in Nigerian English have recognised three main segments of users of the language based on the sophistication of their performance. In the first group are users of the Educated Nigerian English, who as we have observed, use the language in much the same way as the educated English speaker. The second group consists of those whose use of English is quite high, but not as high as that of those in the first group. The third group comprises all others whose use of English is full of mistakes of pronunciation, choice of words and grammar. It has also been observed that users of English at this third level have a number of semantic problems. We shall examine the most common semantic problems in the sections that follow

3.2 Problems of Semantic Extension

It has been noted by Kujore (1985) that the extension of the meaning of English words in a second language situation occurs because of the partial similarity in form of meaning between pairs of words. We have also noted in Unit 6 that no two words can be perfect synonyms. Presented below are samples of words and structures whose meanings have been extended.

<i>An academician</i>	for	an <i>academic</i>
<i>Deliver a baby</i>	for	<i>to give birth to a baby</i>
<i>Dowry</i>	for	<i>bride price</i>
<i>Escort</i>	for	accompany
Horn (to sound the horn of a car)	for	to hoot
Hot (drinks)	for	hard (drinks)
Junior (brother)	for	younger brother
Senior (brother)	for	elder
Poverty (of signals)	for	poorness (of signals)
Severally (suggesting repeated times)	for	(on several occasions)
Step (down)	for	stand (down) for election
To be in (stock)	for	to be in (store)

If the aim of semantics is to ensure that communication is maximised, it will be easy to note that any undue extension of meaning will create problem of mutual intelligibility.

The cultural reality of rural Nigeria may not distinguish different shades of colour and multiple layers of kinship relationships common to the Western world. It is almost impossible for such people to distinguish such hues of colours as violet, pink, purple and red. They may probably describe all such shades as red. Colour like ash, silver, milk, and white may just be described as white. It is the same sense of overextension that makes every relation; both close and distant to be described as brother or sister. There was the case of a woman married to a Yoruba man who felt very embarrassed as other women referred to her as “our wife.” This story formed the theme of a collection of short stories written by Professor Karen King–*Aribisala* – “Our wife and other stories.”

3.3 Problems of Wrong Choice of Lexis

Related to the problem of over extension is the challenge of inadequate mastery of the vocabulary of English. This inadequate mastery often leads to the wrong choice of lexical items. Consider the following pairs of words, which have different meanings.

Compliment/complement
 Nutritious/nutritive
 Masterful/masterly
 Conclusively/in conclusion
 Patent/patience
 Illusion/allusion
 Capital/capitol

Elicit/illicit
 Eligible/illegible
 Respectively/respectfully
 Comprehensive/comprehensible
 Advisory/adversary
 Altitude/attitude
 Aptitude/amplitude
 Each other/one another/themselves

Success in communication is related to the extent to which users of English are able to appreciate the meaning of different words.

3.4 Problems of Lexical Reduplication

In an extensive study carried out by Okoro (2000), reduplication was identified as an aspect of the markers of Nigerian English. He pointed out phonological, grammatical and semantic reduplication in line with the works of Gleitman (1969), and Crystal (1987). For our purpose, we shall dwell on lexical and semantic reduplication.

Lexical reduplication occurs as the compounding of elements or those that are identical with them. The following are examples in Nigerian English.

- (i) The early buyers have selected all the *big big* parcels
- (ii) Everywhere in his compound are *new new* cars
- (iii) The priest spoke to those *fine fine* ladies with *long long* hair.
- (iv) The manager wants to see you *now now*.

It should be noted that each of the examples presented is ungrammatical. The main reason for the reduplication is to lay emphasis on the sizes (of the parcels), newness (of the cars), the beauty (of the ladies), the length of their hair, and the urgency (of the message).

3.5 Problems of Semantic Reduplication

In semantic reduplication, there is the redundant repetition of the same idea, but in different words. This phenomenon has been described as tautology in our discussion of semantics at the sentential level in Unit 9.

Semantic reduplication is very common in Nigerian English and has been found to be a major challenge of this variety. Let us examine common examples.

- (i) There is a *general consensus of opinion* among researchers
- (ii) I knew he was sad because he *frowned his face*
- (iii) The poor man was *strangled to death*
- (iv) You should have *gesticulated with your hands*
- (v) The expert went through the patient's *past history*
- (vi) This will go into the *annals* of our *history*
- (vii) The twins are *exactly identical*
- (viii) Members of senate were *completely unanimous* in supporting the motion.
- (ix) The *actual fact* is that he has not worked hard
- (x) The bomb *exploded violently*.

What has created the problem in each case is the unnecessary repetition of the items that carry the same meaning.

A consensus implies a general agreement; it is only the *face* that is frowned; to strangle someone is to kill by suffocation. We are also aware gestures are made with hands and that history is about the past, just as annals relate to history. To be identical is to be exactly alike just as unanimity expresses complete agreement. Facts are things that are actual or real and explosions are violent.

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). We also observed that the lower levels of Nigerian English have problems of semantic extension, wrong choice of lexis as well as lexical and semantic reduplication. We noted examples of these characteristics.

Consider further the following instances of semantic reduplication-pulled out from the research by Okoro (2006)

- Fellow colleagues
- Final conclusion
- Extend outwards
- Pool together
- Outstanding balance
- Ordinary laymen
- Future plans
- Revert back
- Final ultimatum
- Close scrutiny
- Chief protagonist
- Opening gambit
- A natural flair
- Total annihilation

4.0 CONCLUSION

As English has become a global language, there is need to explore the characteristics of its different varieties. A critical domain of inquiry, which will enhance international intelligibility, is the semantic component. This inquiry will highlight the different areas of problems.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. Identify the prestige variety of Nigerian English.
- ii. List three semantic characteristics of the lower levels of Nigerian English.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined some of the semantic problems of Nigerian English. We observed that the educated variety of Nigerian English, which is the prestige variety, shares a lot of similarities with the standard British English. The standard British English has been made popular by the British Broadcasting Corporation – BBC.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss how semantic extension manifests in Nigerian English.
- ii. Explore in some detail lexical and semantic reduplication in Nigerian English.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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