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SEMANTICS AND THE DICTIONARY

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1. Introduction

Dictionaries contain seas of lexical entries. The contain the necessary information of these lexical items, from phonological to syntactic, from stylistic to semantics, and also the way in which these lexical items are fit into the language system. Semantics is defined as the study of meaning of which most linguists will cast no doubts on and therefore in the following essay, the word 'definition 'and 'meaning' as well as the phrase ' lexical entry' and' lexical items' will be used interchangeable which refer to semantics aspect of words that will be the primary focus and it will be discussed in relation to how lexical items are defined by the dictionary.

Dictionaries found by and large on paradigmatic sense relation, namely hyponymy, and synonym, in suggestion their definition.

2 practical and theoretical dictionaries

2.1 practical dictionaries:

A dictionary can be defined as a reference book on the living-room or library shelf or it is the inbuilt dictionary 'which every one of us carries around as part of his mental equipment as speaker of a language such as oxford dictionary.

why we need such practical dictionaries?

the answer for such a question will be;

1. Dictionaries naturally a great deal of thinking about meaning and language.

2. the lexicon is open-ended in a way that grammar is not or consult.

3. the provide us with information on words, (for example, their history and origin).

4. the usage of words or the knowledge which enables one to use it in linguistic communication or in every day contexts. (leech,205)

2.2 The lexicon (or 'theoretical' dictionary)

The lexicon will be considered as an unordered list or a set of lexicon entries.

A lexical entry will be considered as a combination of three specifications;(morphological, syntactic, and semantics).

A. Morphological specification

is a kind of specification breaks the ward down into a structure of morphemes (stems and affixes), as the stem 'play', for instance occurs in the words (play, player, and players). Our lexicon (play) can be represented by means of an arbitrary subscript as (play 'stem'). Affixes can similarly by given arbitrary subscripts.

The morphological specification might be:

Play—stem Player---stem(play)+suffix(er).

Stem + suffix

bookish----steam(book)+suffix (ish). (ibid, 207)

B. Syntactic specification

is a kind of specification consists of a set of features which classify the item in terms of primary categories within these categories such as,

'noun', 'verb', 'adjectives',I.e. parts of speech and second categories within categories such as 'countable', (noun), 'predicate', (adjective),and so on.

c. **Semantics specification**

definition of a word a representation of its meaning in terms of componential or predicational analysis.

A, b, q. etc., represents unspecified set of features.

This will be illustrated through;

Nouns:

type, A**:** person a ≤**the→** p. b]

I.e. (roughly) 'a person who bears a certain active relationship)

(p) to somebody\ something else (b)'
(bookseller, king, teacher, actor, etc.).
The kind of example represents definitions of (agent) nouns

(denoting the person who has some active rule in a who sells books [for a living], etc.].

Type B: person a ≤the. ←p. b≥
Pupil, subject, employee, etc.
Type B represents definitions of (passive nouns) which are the converse of nouns of type A (e.g. pupil is the converse of teacher)

Adjectives:

Type A: ≤the. p. a≥

(literate, pitiful, wealthy, etc).

Type A shows the definition of adjectives by means of a single downgraded predication

For example, (wealthy, who has much) ;(literate, who can read). These seems to be a basic difference between nouns and adjectives.

Verbs:

Type A: (a. Do (the: event)] ex, **john** left/ walked.

A. [a. Do (the: event. b] ex, **john** looked at the **clock.**

The verb is both 'action verbs' in A and B but different in that the principle predication is one place in A and two – place in B.(ibid,210)

3 Graded acceptability:

Lexical rules are rules that allow us to form new words. We have to distinguish, with reference to lexical rules,

A. The actual acceptability of lexical

entries (word, items) which have attained as a graded concept, if for example we take a list of English nouns and add to them the suffix-less: a) hapless, b) friendless.

And a **second notion** of graded acceptability lies in the rules themselves, (noun+less) is more procedure than (noun+some) and the second (noun+ some) is more procedure than the last one(noun+en).

B. The potential acceptability

of any lexical entry that be generated by a lexical rule for example

C. The unacceptability of a lexical

entry not allowed for the lexical rules at all. For example, *sheepable (the suffix –able is added to the steam sheep). (ibid, 213)

4.Types of lexical Rules

The terms of a lexical rule in which the morphological and syntactic specification of the item remain the same, and only the semantic specification changes. Both morphological derivation and semantic transfer.

For example, he **netted** the bal. (he put the ball into the **net)**. (ibid, 215)

1. The form of lexical

A. a rule of morphological derivation involves a change in the morphological specification for example:

General form of rule: example

P1→P2   base→ base +suffix _less

Q1→Q2   noun →adjective

E.g. Friend→ friendless

B. a rule of conversion which involves 'change of syntactic function without a change in morphological specification,

P1→P2   base →base

Q1→Q2   verb transitive →noun concrete countable

R1→r2   →p→Θ≤the .←p. Θ≥

E.g. catch (verb)→catch(noun) = (that which is caught)

- The fisherman had a large **caught**(n).

- p, is morphological,

- q is a syntactic,

- r is a semantics specification.

C. a rule of semantics transfer which brings about a major change in the semantics specification only.

P1→P2   base→base

Q1→Q2   noun→noun

R1→R2   a→Θ≤the. ↔similar a.)

"A" means (something similar to a)

for example, (doughnut) in the phrase (a doughnut of mud), requires us to imaginatively fill in the details of the way in which a piece of mud may be seen like a doughnut), (ibid, 217)

There are other types of semantics transfer which are designed as (metonymy) for example,

- (the neighborhood objected to his plans).

(Neighborhood=people in the neighborhood)

-the whole town turned out to welcome us.

(whole town =all the people living in the town)

In some cases, we can use nouns which originally personal nouns in contexts appropriate to nouns of non-human reference.

For example,

I have been reading some **dickens.**

John knows his **great authors** off by hearts

6.The Properties of Lexical Rules

6.1 Diversity

The first point to notice that the diversity of lexical rules is such as to allow the possibility of applying a large number of different rules to the same lexical entry. Morphological affixation considers the range of complex words derived from the noun

For example, (man, manly, manlike, manhood, unman unmanly, etc.).

But it is less noticeable in rules of semantics transfer because it may lead to many ambiguous in the meaning of a single item for example,

Human voice   (voice of human)

Human race   (race consisting human)

Human elephant   (elephant like a human).

6.2 open-enddness

lexical rules are in some case semantically open-ended allowing the language-user freedom to read into a new lexical entry whatever information he finds necessary to the understanding of it.

For example, in the book (romantic image) the character James is described as (ironical, adverbial James), this will have different independent a-James who likes adverb or b-who uses marry adverbs) so this will lead to

produce the open-ended definition (James who has some connection –or – other. (ibid,220)

6.3 Excursiveness

It is the ability of lexical entry which is the output of one lexical rule to be also input to another lexical rules.

An example of recursiveness in rules of conversion is the noun bag (in the sense of a catch that which is caught or bagged).

This is derivable from the verb bag (=to put a bag, to catch), which in turn is derived from the noun bag (=a limp receptacle).

{bag-(noun) 'limp receptacle'}

→{bag(verb) 'to put in a limp receptacle)

→{bag(noun) 'that which is put in a limp receptacle}

And the same reclusiveness of the derivation process can be observed in semantic transfer:

1. topless dress, (dress) which has no tap.

2. topless dancer, (dancer)wearing a dress which has no top.

6.4 Bi- directionality:

The process of lexical derivation is represented by;

A- Uni-directional

For example,

When a lexical entry is derived from another lexical entry (kingly is derived from king because king it is morphologically part of kingly).

B- Bi- directional:

It is represented in the process of back- foratid,

For example, the word "edit from editor or in verb to noun conversion

For example, knife(noun) -knife(verb) (= 'to stab with a knife')

Pin(noun-pin(verb) (= 'to fasten with a pin')

6.5 Petrification of lexical meaning

The term petrification will suggest both the solidifying: in the overall form of a lexical entry and the shrinkage of denotation which often accompanies this process.

For example,

- wheel- chair (chair which has wheels)

The definition narrow down the reference of the term).

- the verb (bag and corner) is interpreted according to rules (to put into a bag), (to put into a corner), and it can be explained as:

To put someone into a corner.

- (Dead metaphor) the process by which a metaphor can be dead or is one which has gone all the way towards complete assimilation as a separate definition of the word

For example (hit   successful pop song).