English 0120713: Semantics

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FIRST EXAMINATION

Tuesday , May 8,2007

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Pages 1 – 9
Student's Full Name
In Arabic : _____
In English : _____
Student's ID (Registration number) : -

Tutors's Name (in Arabic) :

EXAM QUESTIONS, GRADES AND TIME ALLOCATION FOR EACH QUESTION:

QUESTION	MINUTES	TOTAL POINTS	POINTS EARNED*
questions 1-5	20 each	4 each	
questions 6-7	20 each	5 each	
Total number of questions you must answer : 7			

- **To be filled out by tutor**

Time Allowed : 150 minutes

There are **7** questions in this paper : you are required to answer all questions.

You are expected to divide your time as follows:

a. 10 minutes for reading through the whole paper.
b. 20 minutes for answering each question.

This examination carries 30 marks allocated as follow:
- questions 1-5:   4 marks each.
- Question 6 & 7 : 5 marks each.

You can answer the questions in any order . You should write only in the space provided after each question . Cross out any rough notes you make which you do not wish to be considered

At the end of the examination

Check that you have written your personal identifier and examination number .
Failure to do so will mean that your work cannot be identified .

Question 1 (4 marks) (20 minutes)

State and illustrate the difference between **semantics** and **pragmatics.**

1. Semantics is concerned with sentence meaning, while pragmatics is concerned with speaker meaning.
2. Semantics studies only language expressions and their designata (meaning is abstracted away from users (speakers and listeners). Pragmatics is concerned with meaning described in relation to speakers.
3. Illustrative examples:
   The sentence <u>The place is closing</u> has a meaning that is common to a large number of meanings determined by the context. This common meaning is its semantic meaning. The context – sensitive meanings are in the realm of pragmatics.
4. context – sensitive meaning of <u>The place is closing</u>.
   - sorry, you must leave.
   - Don't come in , we're closed.
   - Let's go to another restaurant.
   -
   -
   - Etc ..

Question 2 (4 marks) (20 minutes)

Saeed defines categories by necessary and sufficient conditions. Give an example of each condition for two categories

1. Necessary conditions are obligatory for an item to belong to a specific category. The conditions of being ⌠ + human ⌡ are necessary for X to be a man. X is a man if and only if the
+ adult
+ male

previous conditions are satisfied.

2. A sufficient condition, on the other hand, is not always a must. A zebra is identified by having the features + animal, +four-legged, + striped, + herbivore, but not all zebras will belong to this category. Unfortunately, zebras with 3 legs, zebras that are pure white or black, and zebras that eat insects would not belong to this category. Therefore, the features + four – legged, + striped, + herbivore are sufficient but not necessary.

3. In the sentence if it rains, we will go to the cinema, the if clause is sufficient for us to go to the cinema. It is not a necessary condition as other things (snow for example) might make us go to the cinema.

Question 3 (4 marks) (20 minutes)

When talking about the world, we can follow/use two theories of meaning: the referential theory, and the representational theory. Define, and compare/contrast the two theories. Make sure you give illustrative examples.

Referential theory

1. meaning is putting words into relationship with the world, i. e. meaning derives from language being attached to reality.
2. we give the meaning of words and sentences by showing how they relate to situations. Words denote entities in the real world. The fact that sentences (a) and (b) have different meanings is because they describe two different situation:

   a. there is a post office on campus
   b. there isn't a post office on campus.

Representational theory

1. our ability to talk about the world depends on our models of it (i.e. our conceptual structure of the world as conventionalized in our language). Language is a reflection of our conceptual structure.
2. Having a cold is viewed differently by speakers of different languages.
   In English, the person possesses the cold: *I have a cold*.
   In Somali, the person is possessed by the cold: *Hargab ba ku haya*.
   In Irish, the person is the location of the cold : *Ta' slaghda'n ort*.

Question 4 (4 marks) (20 minutes)

What evidence does Saeed give against Whorf's notion of linguistic relativity in the context of his support for the language of thought hypothesis.

- The major tenet of linguistic relativity is that language structure conditions our perception of the world (different languages might reflect different perceptions of the world).
- The strict identification of thought and language is a fallacy because:
1. There is evidence of thinking, remembering, and reasoning in human babies and in primates.
2. Pinker also reports that artists and scientists creativity sometimes derives from ideas that are non- linguistic images. Subjects are able to manipulate images mentally (visual thinking)
3. Pinker also casts doubt on the claim that people from different linguistic communities perform reasoning and cognitive tasks differently.
4. language under-specifies meaning. Meaning is richer than language. Speakers often imply rather than state explicitly what they mean, while hearers fill out their own version of the intended meaning from language presented to them.

Question 5 (4 marks) (20 minutes)

Argue that context pulls word meaning in two opposing directions, and give three examples for each direction.

1. contexts does pull word meaning in two opposing directions : a restricting direction, and a direction towards creativity and semantic shift.
2. illustrative examples
2.1 Restricting direction.

Collocation: Strong tea   * powerful tea
        powerful car   * strong car
        a pack of dogs * a herd of dogs
        husband and wife * wife and husband

2.2 Direction towards creativity and semantic shift
- Duffy discovered a mole (a long dormant spy)
- We are here for the salmon run.
- She built a new run for her chickens.

Question 6 (5 marks) (20 minutes)

Define and illustrate (by drawing diagrams) the lexical relations of hyponymy and meronymy. What is the major difference between them as regards transitivity?

Hyponymy is a transitive relation of inclusion. It consists of hyponyms and hypernyms. A hyponym includes the meaning of the hypernym

Illustrative example :

Bird

Eagle	hen	duck	hawk	etc

Bald eagle	golden eagle etc	kestrel	sparrow hawk etc
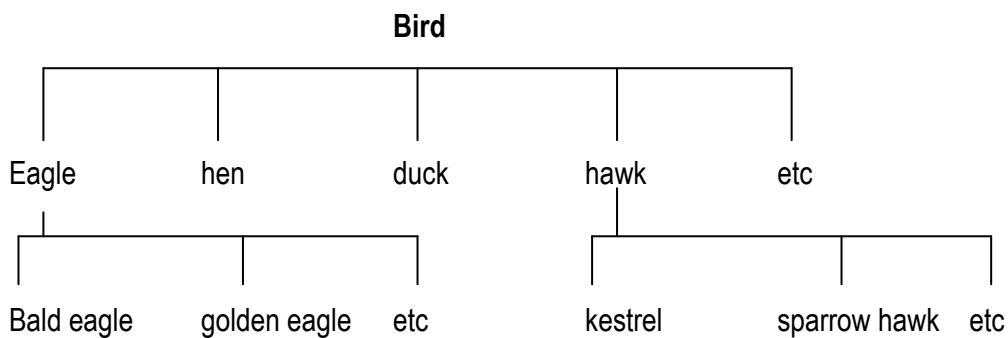
A bald eagle is an eagle and an eagle is a bird. Therefore a bald eagle is a bird. A kestrel is a hawk, and a hawk is a bird. Therefore a kestrel is a bird.

Meronymy is a non-transitive part – whole relationship between lexical items.
Illustrative diagram

Shirt

Sleeves   collar
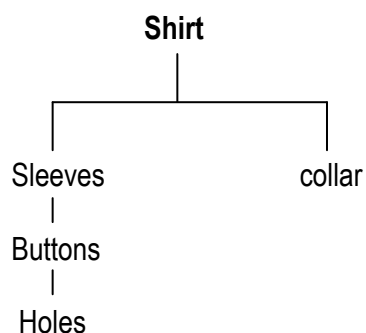
Buttons

Holes

Holes are meronyms of buttons, and buttons are meronyms of sleeves, and sleeves are meronyms of shirt because we can say : buttons have holes, sleeves have buttons, and a shirt has sleeves. Holes, however, are not a meronym of shirt because we do not say a shirt has holes.

Question 7 (5 marks) (20 minutes)

Draw truth tables for exclusive *or*, and the biconditional. Also give an illustrative example of each.

1. Truth table for exclusive *or*

p	q	pve q
T	T	F
T	F	T
F	T	T
F	F	F

You will pay the fine or you will go to jail

2. truth table for the biconditional

p	q	p ~ q
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	F
F	F	T

We will leave if and only if we are forced to