



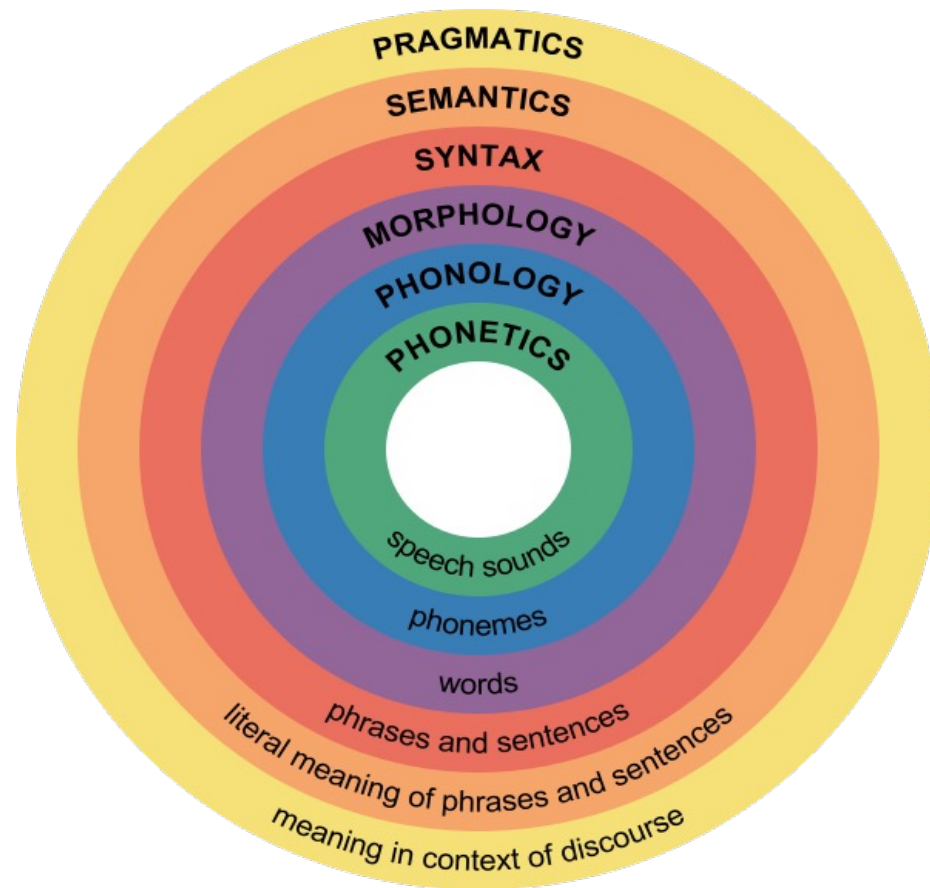
INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS II

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A-KAP, Π-Ω

SPRING 2025 - INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE



THIS COURSE

Semantics

Pragmatics

Discourse analysis

Sociolinguistics



Semantics

- The meaning of words and sentences

Pragmatics

- Meaning in context



Discourse analysis

- Meaning beyond the sentence level

Sociolinguistics

- Social and regional factors in language

AIM OF THE COURSE


- To become familiar with issues relating to:
 - the study of linguistic meaning, comprising **semantic, pragmatic and textual** parameters in the production and understanding of language
 - *semantics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis*
 - the study of language in its **regional and social** dimensions
 - *sociolinguistics*

The Study of Language

Fourth Edition

George Yule

COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS in PRACTICE



Cognitive Exploration of Language and Linguistics

Second Revised Edition

RENÉ DIRVEN and
MARJOLIJN VERSPOOR

John Benjamins Publishing Company

COURSE MATERIAL (AVAILABLE ON E-CLASS)

1. Readings:

- Yule, G. (2006). *The Study of Language* (4th edition). Cambridge: Cambridge Press.
Chapters 10, 11, 12, 18 and 19.
- Dirven, R. & Verspoor, M. (1998). *Cognitive Exploration of Language and Linguistics*.
Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
Chapters 2, 7 and 8.

2. Handouts: for every class, you need to have a copy (printed or electronic) with you.
3. Self-assessment tests (at the end of each course unit).



AN OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

SEMANTICS, PRAGMATICS, DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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SEMANTICS

- Semantics studies the meaning(s) of **words, phrases and sentences**, regardless of specific contexts of use.
 - It is distinguished between **lexical semantics** (= the meaning of words) **vs** **compositional semantics** (= the meaning of phrases and sentences).
- Specifically, lexical semantics studies the nature of **lexical meaning**, which is stored in the mind and is combined with grammar and syntax to produce well-formed grammatical structures, as well as the **semantic relations** that hold between lexical items.

THE STUDY OF LEXICAL MEANING



- Defining the meaning of *apple*.
- *apple* – *malus domestica*
- synonymy
- *apple* – *orange* – *grape* – *fruit*
- hyponymy – hyperonymy
- *apple* as a fruit vs the *apple* of my cheeks
- polysemy
- *apple tree*, *apple juice*, *apple pie*, etc.
- collocations

TOPICS IN SEMANTICS

- **Defining words** (semantic features and semantic roles)
 - *boy vs man*
 - *boy vs. happiness*
- **Lexical relations**
 - synonymy (*ship-boat*) & antonymy (*tall-short, present-absent*)
 - hyponymy (*rose-flower, carrot-vegetable*)
 - homonymy (*bank* “financial institution” vs. *bank* “the side of a river”)
 - polysemy (*head* as a body-part and *head* of the Department)
- **Metaphor and metonymy**
 - e.g., “*His heart was broken*”, “*Please give me a hand with this task*”
- **Collocations**
 - e.g., *black coffee*, *σκέτος καφές* (**μαύρος καφές*), *διαπράττω* _____

MEANING IN USE



John: “*Would you like an apple?*”

Mary: “*I love apples!*”

- What is Mary saying here?
 - That she loves apples.
- What does Mary communicate to John by saying this?
 - That she will gladly have the apple John is offering to her.

→ What Mary communicates is *not part* of the literal meaning of the sentence.

PRAGMATICS

- Pragmatics studies the meaning of **utterances**, that is, the use of language in context, with respect to specific speakers and hearers and circumstances of speech.
 - In other words, utterance meaning is **context-bound** and **speaker-intended**.
- In pragmatics, we are interested in explaining meaning that is **additional to, and different from**, the literal meaning of a sentence (= sentence meaning), and also in how language is used in order to perform actions and establish (or challenge) rapport.

MEANING IN USE



John: “Would you like an apple?”

Mary: “I love apples!”

- In Mary’s reply, meaning is *implicated*.
- “you” and “I” have to be understood with respect to the *speech participants* (John, Mary) in this context.
- John’s utterance serves to make an *offer*, and Mary’s to *accept* this offer.
- John and Mary interact in way that ensures *politeness*.
- For this dialogue to make sense, it is *presupposed* that there is an apple!

TOPICS IN PRAGMATICS

- **Deixis**
 - *“Meet me here tomorrow”*
- **Presupposition**
 - *“My sister is a doctor”*
- **Conversational implicature**
 - *“Sally is such a fine friend! I won’t invite her again”*
- **Speech acts**
 - *“Sorry for being late”*
- **Politeness and face management**
 - *“Would you mind opening the window?”*

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

- Discourse analysis/text linguistics studies **larger chunks of discourse** such as conversations and (written or spoken) texts, aiming to uncover their structure and patterns of use.
 - It is distinguished between **text linguistics** and **conversation analysis**.
- In other words, discourse analysts study language use beyond the sentence level, and analyze **naturally occurring language data**, rather than invented examples.

TOPICS IN TEXT LINGUISTICS

- Compare the following:
 - *My father once bought a Lincoln convertible. He did it by saving every penny he could. That car would be worth a fortune nowadays. However, he sold it to help pay for my college education. Sometimes I think I'd rather have the convertible.*
 - *My father bought a Lincoln convertible. The car driven by the police was red. That color doesn't suit her. She consists of three letters. However, a letter isn't as fast as a telephone call.*
- **Coherence vs. cohesion**
 - Cohesion refers to the many ways (grammatical, lexical, semantic etc.) in which the elements of a text are linked together. However, a text can be internally cohesive but be incoherent – that is, make no sense.

TOPICS IN CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

- **Turns, turn-taking and adjacency pairs:**

A: Could you mail this letter for me?

B: Does it have a stamp on it?

A: Yeah.

B: Okay.

SOCIOLINGUISTICS

- Sociolinguistics is the branch of linguistics that deals with the study of language in relation to **society**.
 - It specifically studies how language **varies** depending on regional and social parameters.
- In other words, our choice of speech sounds, grammatical structures, and vocabulary items may be influenced by **extralinguistic factors** as age, gender, education, occupation, ethnicity, and peer-group identification, among others.

TOPICS IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

■ **Regional variation**

- regional dialects (e.g., Northern Greek, Cypriot Greek, etc.) vs the standard language
- dialect boundaries (isoglosses) and the dialect continuum
- diglossia vs bilingualism
- language contact: pidgins and creoles

■ **Social variation**

- social dialects (gender, age, education, ethnic background), style and style-shifting
- prestige (high vs low)
- register/jargon (e.g., legal register, associated with legal jargon, i.e. specialized technical vocabulary)
- slang (used by non-prestige groups for purpose of solidarity)
- vernacular language (e.g., African American Vernacular English)



SEMANTICS

DEFINING MEANING

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WHAT IS SEMANTICS?

- Semantics is the study of the meaning of expressions *in natural languages* (that is, languages that have developed naturally in use as opposed to artificial languages).
 - Such expressions include *words, phrases, and sentences*.
- For the purposes of this course, we will focus on the meaning of words, which is the object of study in lexical semantics.

LEXICAL SEMANTICS: UNIT OF ANALYSIS

- In lexical semantics, the basic unit of analysis is the **lexeme**.
- But for our purposes we will assume that **a word is a lexeme**.
- Please notice that there are also **multi-word expressions** that qualify as single lexemes, such as *ice cream*, *high school*, *first aid*, *παιδική χαρά*, *hors d'oeuvre*, etc.
- Other examples include idioms (e.g., *kick the bucket*, *hit the ceiling*, *δάγκωσα τη λαμαρίνα*) and of course all phrasal verbs in English (e.g. *take over*, *put off*, *grow up*).

LEXICAL SEMANTICS: MAIN QUESTIONS

- What is word meaning? In other words, how can we define word meaning?
- What do we know when we know the meaning of a word?
- What (kind of) information must a speaker associate to the words of a language in order to be a competent user of its lexicon?

TOPICS IN SEMANTICS – PART I

- Defining meaning.
 - Conceptual and associative meaning (→ today's class).
 - Semantic features & semantic/thematic roles (→ next class).
- You can study these topics in Yule, Chapter 10.

WHAT IS MEANING?

- Define the meaning of *apple*.



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THE DICTIONARY VIEW OF LEXICAL MEANING

- We may define *apple* in the following way: “*a round fruit with a firm white flesh and a red, green or yellow skin*”.
- This is called the **dictionary** definition of word meaning.

PROBLEMS WITH DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS

- Such a definition rather relies on **the meaning of other words**, which also must be defined.
 - To understand the definition, we need to understand the meaning of all the words included in it, which in its turn would mean understanding the definitions of those other words included in the second definitions, and so on so forth.
- In linguistics, this is called the **problem of circularity**.

PROBLEMS WITH DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS

- How can we make sure that our definitions of a word's meaning are exact?
- Consider the following example: “*I love tomatoes.*”
 - Whether one classifies tomatoes as fruits or vegetables does not impede understanding the meaning of the sentence.
- More generally, it is unclear to what extent the knowledge of the meaning of words (**linguistic knowledge**) differs from our knowledge of the world around us (**encyclopaedic knowledge**).

PROBLEMS WITH DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS

- Meaning may vary depending on **context**.
- *“This is a perfect day for a picnic!”*
 - Uttered on a sunny or a rainy day, this can be interpreted either literally or ironically.
- *“I’ll be back!”*
 - This may mean one thing when the intention is to promise and another when the intention is to warn our interlocutor(s).
- The **boundary** between semantics and pragmatics is far from being clear.

IN SUM

- Circularity, linguistic vs. encyclopaedic knowledge and how context contributes to meaning suggest that our semantic theory needs to be **more complex** than simple definitions.
- Therefore, we need to find a way of defining meaning **independent of language**.



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WHAT IS MEANING?

- Is meaning the entity a word points to in the world, that is, its **referent**?
- Consider the words *apple* and *malus domestica*, which have the same referent – is their meaning identical?
- Consider also the *apple* as a fruit and the *apple* on my cheeks – the same word can be used to refer to two different entities in the world and thus carry different meanings (which, also, are somehow related to one another).
- Consider, also, function words like *with* or *not*, which clearly lack a referent.
- Consider, finally, the meaning of *unicorn* or *ghost* – these are only imaginary creatures with no referent in the world!

WHAT IS MEANING?

- Is meaning the **mental image** conjured up by a word?
- This can have straightforward applicability to only a limited set of examples (e.g., *Parthenon*).
- Think about apples again: our mental image of apples is likely to be of one particular color (in this case, red) while our semantic knowledge of *apple* contains other colors too.
- Now consider:
 - abstract concepts like *peace* and *pride*;
 - expressive adjectives like *damn* and *blasted*, and
 - jargon (e.g., *morpheme*, *molecule*), to name a few.

WHAT IS MEANING?

- Meaning is something that speakers of a language know.
 - But speakers have both **linguistic** and **encyclopedic** knowledge.
- Linguistic knowledge refers to the knowledge of the *meaning of words* while encyclopedic knowledge to our *knowledge of the world*.
- To what extent is our knowledge of the language different from our knowledge of the world?

CONCEPTUAL VS ASSOCIATIVE MEANING

- **Conceptual meaning** (also known as propositional or referential meaning):
 - the core elements conveyed by the literal meaning of a word, the essential meaning components that determine its reference.
- **Associative meaning, or connotation** (also known as non-propositional or affective meaning):
 - the associations (emotional or otherwise) a word evokes.
- Consider, e.g., the meaning of *needle*: what is its conceptual meaning?
 - “*thin, sharp, steel instrument mostly used for sewing*”
- But this may carry over connotations, related to knitting, injury, surgery, drugs, etc.

CONCEPTUAL VS ASSOCIATIVE MEANING

- Compare, e.g., *cheap* vs *affordable*
 - “*This dress is affordable*”.
 - “*This dress is cheap*”.
- Conceptual meaning refers to descriptive or dictionary meaning and it covers the **essential, basic components of meaning** that are conveyed by the literal use of a word.
- Associative meaning refers to the different **associations or connotations** attached to individual words by different people.

EXERCISE I

- What is the conceptual and the associative meanings of the following words?
 - *apple*
 - *organic*
 - *low-calorie*

EXERCISE II

- Compare the meaning of the following pairs of words:
 - *bachelor* and *single*.
 - *woman* and *chick*.
- Conceptual and associative meaning are **not always easy to separate**, especially in the case of pejorative terms and slurs.
- Associative meaning is important for research related to **power relations and social inequality** (i.e., critical discourse analysis).

IN SUM

- Semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences.
 - In this course, we will focus on word meaning.
- When discussing word meaning some linguists are interested mainly in conceptual meaning, others in both conceptual and associative meaning.
 - In this course, we will focus on conceptual meaning, since in standard semantic theory associative meaning is considered as not being encoded (i.e., part of the speakers' mental lexicon; see our next lecture).