

SENSE RELATIONS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Studying a language cannot be separated from studying the meaning of that language because when one is learning a language he/she is also learning the meaning of the language. The meaning of a language can be seen from its relation between words, i.e. the sense of one word is related to the sense of another. In this case there are two major groups of sense relations. The first group is the sense relations with regard to the sameness as synonymy. The second one is the sense relations of oppositeness as antonymy. This paper is to discuss both kinds of sense relations since they are important in semantics.

Keywords: *sense relations, synonymy, antonymy*

ABSTRAK

Mempelajari sebuah bahasa tidak dapat terlepas dari mempelajari makna bahasa itu karena ketika seseorang sedang belajar suatu bahasa, dia juga belajar maknanya. Makna sebuah bahasa dapat dilihat dari segi hubungan makna antar kata, yaitu makna sebuah kata dihubungkan dengan makna kata yang lain. Dalam hal ini ada dua kelompok besar berkenaan dengan hubungan makna. Yang pertama adalah hubungan kesamaan makna seperti sinonim. Yang kedua adalah hubungan pertentangan makna seperti antonim. Makalah ini membahas kedua hubungan makna tersebut karena hal itu penting dalam studi semantik.

Kata kunci: *hubungan makna, sinonim, antonim*

INTRODUCTION

The meaning of languages is always interested to study, since when we learn or use the language it deals with its meaning. The meaning of a language is often seen from the relation of a word with other word. Hurford et. al. (2007, p. 29) states that the *sense* of an expression is a semantic relationship of an expression with other expressions in the language. This paper is to discuss the notions of sense relations between words, i.e. sense relations of inclusion and sense relations of exclusion.

RESEARCH METHODS

This article was based on library research. Some of experts' concepts and researches were analyzed and compiled in this article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sense Relations

Kreidler (1998, p.303) defines sense relations as “the relations of meaning between words, as expressed in synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy.” Thus, sense relations can be seen from the similarity of meaning as in synonymy, the inclusion of meaning as in hyponymy, and the oppositeness of meaning as in antonymy. Whereas Cruse (2004, p.148) classifies sense relations into two classes, i.e. those that express identity and inclusion between word meanings and those that express opposition and exclusion. The first class discusses the sense relations between words whose meanings are similar or included in other ones. The second class discusses the sense relations between words whose meaning are opposite or excluded from other words.

Sense Relations of Inclusion and Identity

The discussion in this part includes the notions of synonymy, homonymy, polysemy, and hyponymy.

Synonymy

Richards and Schmidt (2002, p.533) define synonymy as “a word which has the same sense, or nearly the same as another word.” Take a look at these sentences.

The street is very <i>wide/broad</i>	1
You have my <i>deep/profound</i> sympathy	2

In these examples, each pair of the italic words is synonymous. In (1) *wide* and *broad* are replaceable each other and the meaning of the sentence remains the same. Similarly, *deep* and *profound* in (2) can replace each other and the meaning of the sentence does not change. However, there are words that synonymous in one context but not in the other one, as in the following:

The student speaks with a <i>broad</i> British accent	3
* The student speaks with a <i>wide</i> British accent.	
The scouts are crossing a very <i>deep</i> river	4
* The scouts are crossing a very <i>profound</i> river.	

The pair of *wide* and *broad* in (3) is not synonymous since *wide* cannot substitute *broad* in that context. Similarly, *deep* and *profound* are not synonymous since *profound* cannot be used in that context to replace *deep*.

To conclude, a pair of words can be synonymous in one context but may be not synonymous in other contexts.

Homonymy and Polysemy

Richards and Schmidt (2002, p.241) define homonymy as “words which are written in the same way and sound alike but which have different meanings.”

Our house is on the west <i>bank</i> of the river	5
I want to save my first salary in the <i>bank</i>	6

Bank in (5) and (6) are homonyms. They are written in the same way and sound alike, but their meanings are different. In (5) *bank* refers to ‘the side of a river and the land near it’, while in (6) it is ‘an organization that provides various financial services’.

In the <i>ball</i> the prince invites Cinderella to dance	7
The boys like to play with the <i>ball</i>	8

In (7) and (8) *ball* are homonyms. They are spelled and pronounced in the same way but have different meanings. *Ball* in (7) means ‘a large formal party with dancing’, whereas in (8) it refers to ‘a round object used for throwing, hitting or kicking in games and sports’.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish homonymy from polysemy because the later also deals with a pair of words which are written and pronounced in the same way. Richards and Schmidt (2002, p.406) define **Polysemy** as “word having two or more closely related meanings.”

The sun is very <i>bright</i> today	9
She is a very <i>bright</i> student	10

In (9) *bright* means ‘shining’ and in (10) it means ‘intelligent’. The related meanings are that the sense of *bright student* brings the sense of shine in that a bright student usually shines his/her intelligence.

The same case occurs in sentence (11) and (12). Each of the sentences contains *earth* which refers to our planet as in (11) and in (12) it means soil. Both contain the sense of land, i.e. earth as land, not sky and earth as soil, not water.

Let us save our <i>earth</i>	11
The children filled the hole with soft <i>earth</i>	12

Then a question comes up as the notion of homonymy and polysemy may look similar. What is the difference between homonymy and polysemy? According to Hurford et.al. (2007, p. 130) the distinction between homonymy and polysemy deals with the closeness or relatedness of the senses of between words. Thus, homonymy deals with different meanings, whereas polysemy deals with related meanings.

Hyponymy

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002, p.243), hyponymy is “a relationship between two words, in which the meaning of one of the words includes the meaning of the other word.” It can be

seen in the relation between *cat* and *animal*, *pigeon* and *bird*, *orchid* and *flower*. *Cat* is said to be a hyponym of *animal*, *pigeon* a hyponym of *bird*, and *orchid* a hyponym of *flower*. On the other hand, *animal* is said to be the **superordinate** (also called **hyperonym**) of *cat*, *bird* the superordinate of *pigeon*, and *flower* the superordinate of *orchid*. Such relation is often described as one of **inclusion**. “From the extensional point of view, the class denoted by the superordinate term includes the class denoted by the hyponym as a sub-class.” (Cruse, 2004, p. 148). Hence, the class of *flower* includes the class of *orchid* as one of its subclasses. Additionally, *flower* is the general term that includes *orchid* and other types of flowers such as *rose* and *tulip*. The relations among *orchid*, *rose*, and *tulip* are called **co-hyponyms**.

The sense relations of inclusion, in this case hyponymy, can be seen in the following diagram:

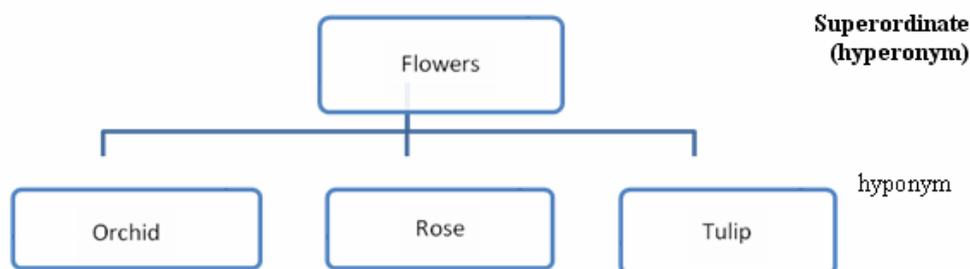


Figure 1 Hyponymy

Taxonymy

Cruse (2004, p. 150) states that “taxonymy is a sub-type of hyponymy.” In his other book (1995, p.137) he states, “A useful diagnostic frame for taxonymy is: *An X is a kind/type of Y*”. Take a look at these pairs:

X	Y	
Poodle	: dog	<i>A poodle is a type of dog</i> 13
Orchid	: flower	<i>An orchid is a type of flower</i> 14
Banana	: fruit	<i>A banana is a type of fruit</i> 15

In these examples, ‘each of X is a hyponym of Y’. But what distinguishes taxonymy from hyponymy? Cruse (2004, p. 150) states that “. . . a taxonym must engage with the meaning of its superordinate in a particular way, by further specifying what is distinctive about it.”

? <i>A puppy is a type of dog.</i>	16
? <i>A teenager is a type of person</i>	17

The key distinctive characteristics of a *poodle* is being ‘small and having thick curling hair’, and *poodle* makes it more defined as compared to other types of dog as *dalmatian* and *bulldog*. On the contrary, *puppy* does not specify the characteristics of dog as compared to several types of dog as *poodle*, *dalmatian*, and *bulldog*. The key distinctive characteristics of puppy in the class of dog is that it only indicates a ‘young dog’. Therefore, puppy cannot be said to be a ‘type’ of dog.

Similarly, *teenager* in sentence (17) is not a type of *person* since it refers to a person who is between 13 and 19 years old.

Sense Relations of Exclusions and Opposition

The relations of senses between words can be seen from their oppositeness or that the sense of a word is excluded from the sense of another. The discussion includes antonymy, complementaries, reversives, converses, and incompatibility.

Antonymy

According to Cruse (1995, p.204), antonymy is “exemplified by such pairs as *long: short, fast: slow, easy: difficult, good: bad, hot: cold.*” There are three types of antonyms (Cruse, 2004, p.164-5; 1995, p.204-5):

- Polar Antonyms

This type of oppositeness can be easily modified with degree modifiers such as *very, rather, quite, slightly, extremely*, and the like. Example:

The essay is <i>very long</i>	18
The test is <i>quite easy</i>	19
His performance is not <i>extremely bad</i>	20

They can also be applied in the comparative or superlative degree as in *easy – easier – easiest; bad – worse – worst*. Other characteristic of this antonym is that a normal *how*-question can be applied only to one member of a pair. Example:

<i>How long</i> is your essay?	21
But not: <i>?How short</i> is your essay?	

- Equipollent Antonyms

This type of antonym refer to subjective sensations as *hot: cold, bitter: sweet, painful: pleasurable*, or emotions as *happy: sad, proud of: ashamed of*. Other characteristics is that normal *how*-question can be applied to both terms of the pair as in (22) and (23).

<i>How hot</i> is the weather?	22
<i>How cold</i> is the weather?	23

- Overlapping Antonyms

Cruse (2004, p.166) states that “All overlapping antonym pairs have an evaluative polarity as part of their meaning as *good: bad, kind: cruel, clever: dull, pretty: plain, polite: rude.*” In this case *how*-question can be applied to both terms of the pairs, but one term yields a neutral question and the other one a committed question. Example:

<i>How good</i> is the performance?	24
<i>How bad</i> is your test score?	25

Other semanticists as Hurford et. al. (2007) and Saeed (2005) name this classification of antonyms as one single notion: ‘**gradable antonyms**’.

Complementaries

Cruse (2004, p. 163) states, “Complementaries constitute a very basic form of oppositeness and display inherent binarity in perhaps its purest form.” In his other book (1995, p. 198-9) he points out that “The essence of a pair of complementaries is that between them exhaustively divide some conceptual domain into two mutually exclusive compartments, so that what does not fall into one of the compartments must necessarily fall into the other.” The pairs of *true: false, dead: alive, open: shut,*

hit: miss (a target), *pass: fail* (an examination) are all complementaries. Ordinarily, the complementary adjectives cannot be used with the degree modifiers as in gradable antonyms. Therefore, it is odd to say *very true, rather dead, and extremely shut*. Moreover, they are not applied in the comparative and superlative degrees. Hence it is odd to say *truer, truest; deader, dearest*. In addition, “Complementarity can be given a strict logical definition: $F(X)$ entails and is entailed by not – $F(Y)$.” (Cruse, 2004, p.164). Correspondingly, Saeed (2005, p. 66) states, “the negative of one implies the positive of the other.” Take a look at the following sentences:

<i>The door is open</i>	27
<i>The door is <u>not</u> shut</i>	28
<i>John is dead</i>	29
<i>John is <u>not</u> alive</i>	30

The pairs of *open – shut* and *dead – alive* are complementaries. The sense of sentence (27) entails and is entailed by the sense of sentence (28). Likewise, the sense of (29) entails and is entailed by the sense of (30).

There is another notion to refer to complementaries. Hurford et. al. (2007), Saeed (2005) and Kreidler (1998) call it **binary antonyms**.

Reversives

“Reversives belong to a broader category of directional opposites which include straight forward directions such as *up: down, forwards: backwards, into: out of, north: south*, and extremes along some axis, *top: bottom. . .*” (Cruse, 2004, p. 166) Reversives also denote movement in opposite directions, such as *come: go, go: return, rise: fall*. In addition, Saeed (2005, p.67) who call it **reverses**, the notion can also describe any process that can be reversed as *inflate: deflate, expand: contract, fill: empty, and knit: unravel*.

Converses

Cruse (2004, p. 167) suggests that “Converses are also often considered to be a subtype of directional opposite.” *Above: below, own: belong to, in front of: behind, before: after* are pairs of converses. Hence, if *A is above B*, then *B is below A*. The similar cases happen to the pair of sentence (31) and (32), and the pair of sentence (33) and (34).

The new car <i>belongs</i> to me	31
I <i>own</i> the new car	32
President election is held <i>after</i> legislative election	33
Legislative election is held <i>before</i> president election	34

Incompatibility

“Incompatibles are terms which denote classes which are disjunct, i.e. they have no members in common. Hence, if something is a mouse, then it is not a dog, horse, or elephant: nothing in the world can belong simultaneously to the class of mice and the class of dogs.” (Cruse, 2004, p. 161) Incompatibility occurs in the case of co-hyponyms. Some sub-classes belong to one superordinate but their relation is incompatible.

Superordinate

Flower
Sports
Sibling

Incompatible Hyponyms

rose, tulip, orchid
football, tennis, basketball
sister, brother

From the set of terms denoting kinds of flower, it can be said that if it is a rose, then it is not an orchid or tulip. If it is a football, then it is not a tennis or basketball. Likewise, if it is a sister, it is not a brother.

CONCLUSION

Sense relations are one of important elements with regard to learning semantics, the study of language meaning. The sense of a word can be understood from its similarity with other words. On the other hand, it can also be learned from its oppositeness with other words.

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