



Today

- Semantics
- Anomaly
- Compositionality of meaning
- Arbitrariness, reference vs. sense
- Synonymy / antonymy
- Hypernyms / hyponyms



Semantics

- (the study of) meaning in language

Semantics

- isn't language *all* about communicating meaning?
- meaning okay, structure bad:
 - you many books .. reading... yes?
- meaning okay, no structure:
 - ☠ ∃ + @ 📺 🙋 💰 Ⓟ ⊗
- structure, but no meaning (anomaly)



Anomaly

I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together.

Sitting on a cornflake, waiting for the van to come.

Corporation tee-shirt, stupid bloody tuesday.

Man, you been a naughty boy, you let your face grow long.

I am the eggman, they are the eggmen. I am the walrus, goo goo
g'joob. ...

Semolina pilchard, climbing up the eiffel tower.

Elementary penguin singing hari krishna.

Man, you should have seen them kicking Edgar Allan Poe. ...



Anomaly

Phrases that are structurally/syntactically well-formed, but that semantically “make no sense”

“Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.”

— *Noam Chomsky*

- demonstrates the ‘independence’ of meaning and structure
- we perceive/know structure regardless of the meaning[lessness] of the words
- Structure exists



Compositionality

- Principle of compositionality
- the meaning of a sentence/phrase is determined by the meaning of its component parts (the words) and the structures they occur in (the relationships between the words based on the syntax –such as subject, object; complement).
- Exception: idioms
 - *bite off more than you can chew*
 - *spill the beans*
 - *to be on the same page*



Arbitrariness

- the relation between the sound and **referent** is arbitrary
- referent — set of real-world objects referred to



Reference vs. sense


- Concept of “reference” isn't sufficient
 - e.g. “queen of America”
 - sense, but no reference



Gradable meaning



- **blue?**
- **more blue / less blue / bluish**
- ***happy vs. sad***



Synonymy / antonymy

- synonyms
 - words or phrases with the same meaning
- antonyms
 - words or phrases with opposite meaning
- **gradable antonymy** (new/old, light/dark)
- **complementary antonyms** (alive/dead, whole/partial)
- **relational opposites** (doctor/patient, teacher/student)




Homophony vs. Polysemy

□ Homophony

- **different morphemes** sound the same (spelling may or may not be the same), but have different, unrelated meaning
- *bank* (storing money) / *bank* (of a river)

□ Polysemy

- **one morpheme** with different but related meanings/uses
- *cool* (chilled) / *cool* (mellow) / *cool* (awesome)



Hypernyms & Hyponyms

hypernym

cat

clothing

dance

blue

walk

hyponym

tabby

jeans, dress, shirt

tango, waltz

indigo, cerulean

shuffle, trod, stride