Meaning and External Context in Linguistics

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Abstract

The research is based on the linguistic expression with real- world context. I differentiated between what a word inherently means and it can be used to mean in a particular context. The theories of different theorists were presented. In the first theory, meaning distinguished three aspects of a word's total semantic effect. 'Force, tone and sense.' In the second theory, the sentence could be assigned a value as true or false. The third theory was based on the reference, speakers and hearers. Some theorists believed that language could not work without reference to the context of situation in which it occurred.Behaviorism played a vital role in enhancing the knowledge about language in particular contexts. The theorist of this theory gave the meaning of a linguistic form as the situation in which the speaker uttered it and responsed it, called forth in the hearer. According to the behaviorists, meaning contained between speech and the practical events that followed it. There was another point which described that the reactions were physical events. The theorist presented the contrast between the mechanistic theory and the mentalist theory. The social, cultural, personal and psychological aspects were interwoven. The difference between dictionary and encyclopedic knowledge were shown. The limits of meaning and the external context were provided. For this, a random sample of five people was taken to know the contexts of different words. Their opinions were collected through interviews. These interviews were of three types like life history interview, present condition interview and the third one was about the meaning in the light of their experiences. The opinions were collected through interviews. The collected data was analyzed through Likert scale. The results were presented the meanings of a single word.

Keywords: behaviorism; context; linguistic expression; semantic effect; mechanistic; mentalist.

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1. Introduction

Semantic is an important field of linguistics. Language without meaning would be meaningless and semantics is the study of meaning. Therefore, it is said that

What is the meaning of meaning?

In linguistics, meaning is what the source expresses, communicates or conveys in its message to the observer or receiver and what the receiverinfers from the current context [9,10].

Semantics and pragmatics are closely related. Pragmatics cannot study language use without a prior conception of meaning: without knowing what words mean, one cannot decide how speakers modify and manipulate these meanings in actual situations of language use. Similarly, semantics cannot arrive at any description of what words mean without looking at the ways, they are used in different contexts. This interrelation between meaning and use means that pragmatics and semantics exist in a close symbiosis [4].

Ambiguity means confusion about what is conveyed. Many words in many languages have multiple definitions. For example, the sender may be physically absent, and the contexts explicitly different such as will be the case when the receptor is a reader and the sender was a writer [1,3].

Linguistic context is how meaning understood without relying on intent and assumptions. In applied pragmatics, for example, meaning is formed through sensory stimulus cannot be easily articulated in language or signs. Pragmatics, then, reveals that meaning is both something affected by and affecting the world. Meaning is something contextual with respect to language and the world, and is also something active towards other meanings and the world. Linguistic context becomes important when looking at particular linguistic problems such as that of pronouns [1,5,6,9].

Situation context refers to every one—linguistic factor that affects the meaning of a phrase. An example of situation context can be seen in the phrase. It's cold in here", which can either be a simple statement of fact or a request to turn up the heat, depending on, among other things, whether or not it is believed to be in the listener's power to affect the temperature [1,5,6,9].

Ferdinand de Saussure gave example of language in terms of signs, which he divided into signified and signifiers. The signifier is the perspective side of a sign, thus the sound form in case of oral language. The signified is the signification side, the mental construction or image associated with the sound, by both a speaker and hearer. A sign, then, is essentially a relationship between signified and signifier [1,5,6,9,10].

2. Literature Review

Philosophers have debated the question with particular reference to language for well over 2000 years. No one has yet produced a satisfactory answer to it. The term "semantics" is of relatively recent origin, being coined in the late 19th century from a Greek verb meaning "to signify". From the earliest times down to the present day

grammarians have been interested in the meaning of words, and frequently more interested in what words mean than in their syntactic function. A practical manifestation of man's interest in meaning can be seen in the innumerable dictionaries that have been produced throughout the ages, not only in the west but in all parts of the world. However, modern approach to semantics is that instead of asking: 'What is meaning?' We should ask rather a different question. 'What is the meaning of meaning?' We often say that sentences or phrases are, or are not;'meaningful' we do not normally say that words are meaningless. So, there is a distinction between 'being meaningful' and 'having a meaning'. As there are context in which meaning can be translated [1,5,6,9,10].

Semantics refers to meaning and meaning, is so intangible that one group of linguists, the structuralists, preferred, not to deal with it or rely on it at all. For example, if we think of words such as: 'beauty', 'goodness', 'love', 'friendship', 'trust' etc. it would be hard to find people who agree absolutely on what each of these words implies. A person may seem 'good' to one and 'hypocrite' to another. Meaning is something variable and should not be taken for granted. Moreover, semantics as an area of linguistics study has not yet presented a comprehensive theory of meaning. But this does not mean that semantic field holds no importance. In fact, very important investigations and discoveries have been made in semantics. One obvious distinction should be made between the meanings of the words more precisely of lexemes and meaning of sentences. It is now generally recognized that meaning of a sentence depends on the meaning of constituent lexemes and meaning of some if not all lexemes depends upon the meaning of sentences in which they occur. But the grammatical structure of the sentences as is intuitively obvious is also relevant to the determination of their meaning. So, we must also consider, grammatical meaning, as a further component of sentence making,. In so far as linguistics is concerned primarily with the description of language system, lexical meaning, grammatical meaning and sentence meaning all fall within the scope of linguistics semantics. In short, semantics as a significant field of linguistics is not to be derived [1,6,9,10].

2.1 Different theories about the meaning and context

According to authors [5,6], No utterance can be considered as a self-standing whole: words only exist within particular contexts, and we will not be able to achieve an adequate description of meaning if we don't take these contexts into account. Three things are kept in mind, when the meaning and the external context are seen.

(1)   Scope of an expression's meaning

(2)   Total effect of an expression

(3)   Context in which it occurs

For example, consider the meaning of the English possessive morpheme (-s) in (1a) and (1b):

(1)A. Denise's teacher got burnt.

(1) b. Denise's brioche got burnt.

(1a) It denotes a relationship like that of the verb teach to its object: (1a) means the person who teaches Denise got burnt'.

In (1b), on the other hand, it denotes a relation of ownership or possession: Denise's brioche got burnt means 'the brioche belonging to Denise burnt'.

But does this difference result from a difference in the meaning of the possessive case, or is it a product of the context in which it is used? In order to interpret an expression correctly, it would seem that a hearer must perform a number of related tasks which involve these two different types of context. For example, consider someone interested in learning to play golf, who receives the advice all golfers need to find some good clubs. In order to understand what the speaker means, the hearer must have disambiguate, assigned referents, determined the quantity referred to, realization which the expression is intended as part of the context of advice and extract the implications.

2.2 External context: Sense & Reference

Expression's referent (the object to which it refers) and its sense (its general meaning, abstracted from its use to refer).

Now, I talk about Fregean distinction in semantics. Frege had no single term for 'meaning', in the sense of the knowledge needed to understand a word. Instead, he distinguished three aspects of a word's total semantic effect:

- It's 'force' which covered whether it was a statement or a question;
- It's 'tone' or 'coloring', which refers to differences of register and connotation;
- And it's sense.

The notions of force and tone are reasonably self-explanatory. But what is sense?

a. The morning star is the morning.

b. The morning star is the evening star.

If meaning is simply reference, there should be no difference between each pair of sentences!!!.

2.3 Sense – Mode of presentation

If meaning is no more than what a term refers to, the two pairs of sentences should not differ at all in their cognitive effect.

Frege's solution to this puzzle was that an expression's reference is not, after all, the only part of its meaning: there is something else, which he called its sense.

An expression's sense is the way in which we grasp or understand its referent.

It is sense which gives an expression its cognitive value or significance.

2.4 Sense of proper names

2.4.1 Causal- Historical Theory

Names are linked to their referents by a chain of actual naming events: in the first instance, a referent is given a name, and the name is passed down through the speech community.

2.4.2 Sense Determines Reference

Amber   Fossilizes tree resin

Amber   Golden yellow semiprecious stone

Senses not referents, form parts of our thoughts.

2.5 Truth- Value in Frege's semantic theory

To know the sense of a sentence, or to have the thought expressed by the sentence is, for Frege, to know how the sentence could be assigned a value as true or false: to know what the conditions are that would make it true or false. These conditions are known as the sentence's truth conditions.

2.5.1 Truth- Value

Your father wants to recite a poem.

If you were told that your father would like to recite a poem, you would be able to determine whether this was true by finding your father and seeing whether he wanted to recite a poem. It is the fact that you know how to go about determining the truth of a statement that therefore, constitutes your knowledge of the statement's sense.

2.5.2 Lyons on Truth Value

There are many occasions in which it is not the truth of a linguistic expression which seems to be the most important factor governing its use:

Successful reference does not depend upon the truth of the description contained in the referring expression. The speaker (and perhaps also the hearer) may mistakenly believe that some person is the postman, when he is, in fact, a professor or a scientist.

2.5.3 Sense & Psychology

Even though senses are things which we grasp mentally, they are not private ideas or mental images. The sense of an expression is a part of a thought; and it is this objective character which guarantees that people may talk about the same thing.

Sense is shared objective, non- private modes of presentation donot differ from one person to another .

2.5.4 Sense/ Reference Distinction & Linguistic Description

Sense seems clearly to be a property of linguistic expressions: it is words and sentences which have senses. Even though we grasp senses with our minds, the question of what sense gives expression possesses is not, for Frege, under the speaker's control. Reference, however, is quite different. Unlike sense, reference is under the speaker's control. It is not words which refer, but speakers.

2.5.5 Codes are

perhaps the most obvious example of the fact that it is the speaker, not the expression itself, which refers.

A code is a speech-style in which speaker and hearer have agreed to reassign conventional referents (and senses).

Searle's conditions for accomplishing an act of reference

Reference, speaker and hearers

(1)   There must exist one and only one object to which the speaker's utterance of the expression applies.
(2)   The hearer must be given sufficient means to identify the object from the speaker's utterance of the expression.

2.5.6 Variability to refer

If I reflect on real discourse, which along with 'literal' uses of languages also contains metaphors, ironical statements, exaggerations and many other types of non- standard reference, to say nothing of simple mistakes, it will soon become obvious that the referential scope of words is extremely large--- that, given the right conditions, any word can be used to refer to any referent.

2.5.7 Limits of sense and reference

Reference is usually accomplished at the phrasal, not the lexical level. Thus, in English, it is noun phrases which refer and not the individual nouns which make them up.

Verbs, for example, are typically predicative: the inherent role of a verb is to give information about some already identified entity, rather than to refer to that entity directly. Nevertheless, it will often be useful to think of verbs as referring to actions, and of sentences as referring to situations.

A linguistic expression refers if it picks out an entity or set of entities in some world—either the real world, or some possible or imagined world.

Marion is a professional harpist.

The first noun phrase, the name Marion, identifies a particular individual as the entity about whom the information is a professional harpist is given. The second noun phrase, however, a professional harpist, would usually be said not to refer in this context. This is because; it does not pick out a particular entity or set of entities as its object in the same way as expression like Marion. Instead, a professional harpist has a predicative function: it is part of the information given about Marion. Similarly, the phrases high in fiber, low in fat and cholesterol free are predicative and thus non-referring. The importance of predication shows that reference is not always a relevant aspect of the meaning of a linguistic term. Languages, in other words, often don't seem to care whether an expression refers or not. As a result, the question of whether a given noun phrase refers may sometimes be ambiguous.

Example:

- (a)If you see the man with the green hat, tell him….
- (b) If you see a man with a green hat, tell him….
- (i) Referential: I have such a man in mind, and if you see him
- (ii) Non-referential: I don't have any particular man in mind, so if you see one….[5,6,7]

2.5.8 Deixis

- Deictic expressions have the peculiarity that their reference is relative to the situation in which they are used.
- They lack any independently paraphrase able sense: what they mean cannot be given any general description other than describing a procedure for isolating the intended referent.

This is my old chess coach.

The meaning of this sentence, in this example cannot be described except by saying that it refers to some entity in the speaker's context of utterance--- probably a person, but also perhaps an electronic chess board, a computer, or an introductory book about chess.

2.5.9 Types of Deixis

- **Person deixis:** by which speaker (I), hearer (you) and other entities relevant to the discourse (he/she/it/they) are referred to.
- **Temporal deixis** (now, then, tomorrow)
- **Discourse deixis,** which refers to other elements of the discourse in which the deictic expression occurs (A: You stole the cash. B: That's a lie).

2.5.10 Deictically contrastive demonstratives

- All languages have at least two deictically contrastive demonstratives:
- The demonstrative is usually called a proximal.
- The demonstrative is called a distal.
- Sometimes these demonstratives are uninflected particles; in other languages, demonstratives are marked for gender, number and/or case and may combine with derivational affixes or with other free forms (Diessel 1999:13).

Other features expressed by demonstratives

- Distance is not the only feature expressed by demonstratives: they may also indicate such variables as whether the referent is in or out of sight, at a higher or lower elevation, up- or downstream, moving towards oraway from the deictic centre, and others [3,5,6].
- Demonstratives usually also provide some qualitative information about the referent: 'they may indicate whether the referent is a location, object or person, whether it is animate or inanimate, human or non-human, female or male, a single entity or a set, or conceptualized as a restricted or extended entity' [3,5,6].

Behaviorism plays a vital role in enhancing their knowledge about language in particular contexts. The theorists Malinowski and Firth had strong belief that context gives the meaning of a linguistic form as the situation in which the speaker uttered it and responded it called forth in the hearer. Bloomfield gave the example in his book 'Semantics' by F.R.Palmer**.** He describes the story of Jack and Jill. Jill is hungry who sees an apple and with the help of language says to take it for her. If she would remain alone at that place. She would have a Stimulus which would have reaction. There is a diagram of this sentence

$$S \longrightarrow R$$

(stimulus)   **(reference)**

 There is a linguistic reaction which I see in this theory. According to the behaviorist, meaning contains between speech and the practical events that follow it. There is another point which describes that the reactions are physical events. The theorist presents the contrast between the mechanistic theory and the mentalist theory. These theories describe nonphysical processes such as thoughts, concepts, images, feelings etc. with personal experiences. The social, cultural, personal and psychological aspects are seen in the context of meanings [1].

 Dictionary and Encyclopedia

- Since reference is an important part of the meaning of many words, many linguists have wanted to distinguish knowledge; we have of a word's meaning? (Sense) from knowledge we might have about its denotation-the set of things, it refers to.
- Most powerful reason is that it is firmly present in our pre- theoretical intuitions.

Knowledge of Meaning and Knowledge of facts.

There is a distinction between knowledge of a word's meaning (dictionary knowledge), which would be conceived of as something fairly concise, perhaps like a dictionary definition, and encyclopedic knowledge of facts about the objects to which the word refers.

2.5.11 Knowledge of meaning and knowledge of facts

Dictionary knowledge   Encyclopedia knowledge

Essential meaning of a word   not essential to the meaning of a word

Linguistic in nature   not linguistic in nature

                                        Pragmatic principles involved

2.5.12 Problems with the dictionary – encyclopedia distinction

- If all of the encyclopedic information associated with a word were part of its meaning, this would surely be too much for the brain to process.
- As any comparison of dictionaries will reveal, it is very hard to determine where information stops being part of a word's dictionary meaning and become part of the encyclopedic knowledge, we have of its denotation. Which of the pieces of information, for example, should be considered dictionary information about the meaning of the word cow, and which as fats cows which form part of the encyclopedic knowledge, we have about them?
- The distinction enables an economical description of word meanings, but is often criticized: the boundary between dictionary and encyclopedia seems to be so highly permeable as to be non-existent [5].

3. Methodology

The method was qualitative and the interviews were taken and conducted for knowing the meaning and the external context. The interviews would be based on three types like history, the details of experience and the reflection on the meaning [2].

The sample of five people was taken and interview questions were ten in numbers.The results were shown through Likert scale [8].

In the first interview which was based on participant's experience in context in the light of   topic. The data was taken from families, school, friends, neighbors and the work place.

In the second interview, the present conditions were seen and said to the participant to construct their experience in the light of present situation about their relationships with students, teachers, parents, managers of their schools and the community.

In the third interview, the participant shows the meaning in the light of their experience that is not satisfactory or

reward. These things address the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants' work and life. The part of the word and events in which it occurs. The third interview is creative because the previous twos make the foundations of the third one. These three interviews are intermingled and bases of the first interview.

4. Limitations of the study

Due to the vast area with fixed period of time as well limited financial resources, I cannot cover the whole population of the country. I will, therefore, be restricted to my city, Sialkot. I could not go far off places because of gender constraint.

5. Results First interview

Focused on life history

1. Background of expression of meaning

Yes	No
80%	20%

2. Utterance

Yes	No
60%	40%

3. without a prior conception

Yes	No
40%	60%

4. Expression's referent

Yes	No
80%	20%

5. General meaning

Yes	No
40%	60%

6. Frege's single term

Yes	No

40%	60%

7. Inclusion of force, tone and sense

Yes	No
80%	20%

8. Expression's sense

Yes	No
60%	40%

9. Cognitive value

Yes	No
80%	20%

10. Actual naming events

Yes	No
60%	40%

Second interview

Present situation

1. Speaker and hearer's learning

Yes	No
80%	20%

2.Truth of the description

Yes	No
80%	20%

3. Shared objectives

Yes	No
100%	Zero%

4. Code is a speech style

Yes	No
100%	**Zero%**

5. Real discourse

Yes	No
60%	**40%**

6. Entity in some world

Yes	No
80%	**20%**

7. Reference accomplishment

Yes	No
60%	**40%**

8. Relevant aspect of the meaning

Yes	No
100%	**zero**

9. Noun phrase ambigious

Yes	No
100%	**zero**

10. Diectic expression

Yes	No
80%	**20%**

Third interview
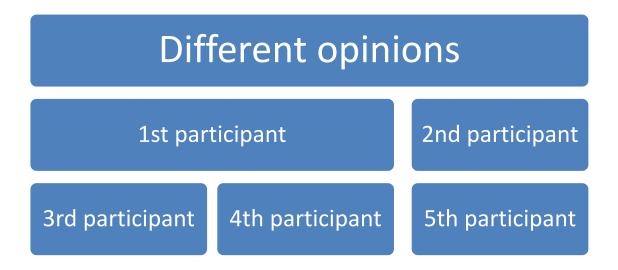
In the light of life experiences

6. Findings

The results show that different words have different meanings in various cultures, societies, personalities and psychological aspects. Every point is discussed very keenly but sense, reference and force are, main in the comprehension of meaning of word. Therefore, three theories of different writers show that these have significant importance in Semantics. The results show that every participant knows the meaning with his

context. That's why' different cultures have various meanings which have different words. The Likert scale's description shows that how the meanings are important in everyday life.

7. Discussion

In the 19th century, this discipline started to work. This has very little time of existence but we have a lot of knowledge to know about this discipline because we are searching a lot of new ways to explore the meanings of the words. I had selected this topic 'Meaning and the external context' because I wanted to explore why the words have different meanings in various cultures. This point had increased my interest and I started to search about it. I read a lot of other works which based on Semantics and Pragmatics. These enhance the knowledge about the meaning of words.

Different opinions		
1st participant		2nd participant
3rd participant	4th participant	5th participant

8. Recommendations

- When a person talks about anything, he must know about the background of the concerned thing.

- The speaker and hearer must be in the same existing situation.
- The speaker and hearer should know the objectives for which the talk is done.
- The meanings should know with their truth of the description of the words.
- Opinions of different people should be kept in mind when the meaning of a specific word is described.

9. Conclusion

In short, I can say that the whole paper is based on 'Meaning and the external context. I tried to know the context of the word, its reference and sense as well. I have explained the different theories about the meaning and its context. Then, I reached a conclusion that different aspects are involved in the word comprehension which works together. Then, a word is understood with the context. Therefore, three theories and behaviorism played a vital role in the semantics.

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