

LING2006 Semantics

Tutorial: Lexical meaning I

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Based on tutorial handouts by Dr. Zhuo Chen

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Please select all answers that apply

- A definite noun phrase involving a definite determiner like *the*
 - ☐ A is typically referring to a particular individual/entity
 - ☐ B can sometimes be interpreted as non-referring
 - ☐ C always has an invariant referent
 - ☐ D is constantly ambiguous between a referring and a non-referring interpretation



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 - Ⓒ always has an invariant referent
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Please select all answers that apply

- An indefinite noun phrase involving an indefinite determiner like *a/an*
 - ☐ A can never refer to a particular individual/entity
 - ☐ B can be interpreted as non-referring
 - ☐ C always has an invariant referent
 - ☐ D may be ambiguous between a referring and a non-referring interpretation



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- Regarding sense and denotation,
 - Ⓐ The denotation of a proper name is its referent.
 - Ⓑ Sentences and phrases only have senses and they do not have denotations.
 - Ⓒ It is possible that a linguistic expression has no denotation but does have sense.
 - Ⓓ The sense of a linguistic expression is context-dependent.



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- Quantifier phrases are not referring expressions and they behave distinctively from referring expression regarding
 - Interactions with reflexives like *self*
 - The existence/lack of contradiction in *X is Y and X is not Y*.



- Group discussion: Please use the tests to determine whether *half of the class* is a quantifier phrase.



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- Since “Half of the class believe in themselves” does not have the exact same meaning as “Half of the class believe in half of the class”, “half of the class” does not show similar behaviors like a referring expression, despite that “Half of the class are from the Linguistics Department, and Half of the class are not from the Linguistics Department” do not necessarily lead to a contradiction.
(Note that we mentioned in class that not all quantifiers will lead to a contradiction in *X is Y and X is not Y*, but they consistently behave differently from referring expressions in the reflexive test)



- They may be used to refer to a specific individual, hence referring.
- They may be non-specific and not used to refer to a specific individual, hence non-referring.
- They may be ambiguous between a referring (specific) vs. a non-referring (non-specific) interpretation.



- Group discussion: For each of the above cases, please give one example.



- Group discussion: Based on the given data and judgments, please discuss whether the word in bold is vague or indeterminate.
- ① STRONG: having or marked by great physical power
 - a Mary's three-year-old son must be very **strong** as he can carry two pineapples.
 - b Carrying two pineapples is **strong** for a three-year-old, but it is not for an adult.
- ② WASH: to remove (something, such as dirt) by rubbing or drenching with clean water
 - a John usually **washes** dishes and clothes after dinner.
 - b #When a three-year-old is cleaning dishes under a kitchen tap, she is helping her parent by **washing** the dishes. But when a teenager girl is cleaning dishes under a kitchen tap, she is not helping her parent by **washing** the dishes.



- (1b) shows that whether one action is within the denotation set of the adjective “strong” is dependent on the context concerning who is performing the action, whereas (1b) shows that whether an action is within the denotation set of the verb “wash” is independent of the context concerning who is performing the action. This contrast suggests that “strong” is a vague word while “wash” is indeterminate.



- Final Exam: April 23, 4:00 – 6:00 pm; please check your schedule
- Please scan the QR code and complete the attendance form