

MEANING RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Hubungan makna antarunit linguistik menunjukkan hubungan arti antara satu bentuk linguistik (berupa morfem, kata, frase, klausa, atau paragraph) dengan unit linguistik lain. Hubungan ini terbagi ke dalam dua kategori, yakni hubungan vertikal yang disebut hubungan paradigmatis dan hubungan horizontal yang disebut hubungan sintagmatik. Hubungan ini membentuk ikatan antara satu unit linguistik dengan unit lain, yang merupakan unsur penting dalam teks. Keterkaitan dalam teks ini disebut kohesi (*cohesion*). Makalah ini menguraikan kedua hubungan ini dengan fokus pada hubungan antarkata.

KEY WORDS: relation, meaning, semantics

INTRODUCTION

Meaning relation refers to semantic links that hold between or among linguistic units of forms. Butt, Fahey, Spinks and Yallop 1995: 28) divide linguistic units in terms of their rank scales into (from the highest to the lowest level) the categories of clause complex, clause, group or phrase, word and morpheme. Thus, meaning relations form between or among the units.

Meaning relation roughly divides into reference and sense. The relation of reference indicates external meaning relation and the relationship between a word and the entity that it 'refers to' in the physical world, in our mental world or in the world of experience. In this understanding the reference of *tree* is a particular *plant* which has a *trunk, branches, twig and leaves*. Differently, a sense is an internal meaning relation in the linguistic system of a language. Thus, sense relation typically holds between words within the vocabulary. There are two types of most obvious sense relation; they are that of 'sameness' called synonymy and that of 'oppositeness', termed antonym respectively. The word *depart* is synonymous to *leave* and *hostility* has a relation of synonymy with *antagonism*. The word *alive* is antonymous to *dead* and *enmity* has a relation of antonym with *friendliness*. Meaning relations between or among words broadly divide into paradigmatic and syntagmatic categories. Paradigmatic category of meaning relation indicates a choice in where a slot for a word is potentially filled by another or others. Paradigmatic meaning relations include synonymy, antonym, hyponymy and meronymy. In a different manner, a syntagmatic

another word. The meaning relations form unity between or among texts, thus creating cohesion (Halliday 1994: 333; Martin 1992: 300—301).

PARADIGMATIC RELATIONS

SYNONYM

Synonymy refers to a relationship of 'sameness of meaning' that holds between two words. The term 'synonymy' derives from Greek word (*sunonumon*) meaning 'having the same name' (Jackson and Ze Amvela 2000). For example the words *glitter*, *havoc*, *intricate*, *lazy*, *native*, and *near* are respectively synonymous with *sparkle*, *devastation*, *involved*, *indolent*, *indigenous* and *close*.

Further, synonymy divides into strict or absolute and loose synonym. Strict or absolute synonymy indicates that the meaning of a word is identical with that of another. This implies that in any given context of use a word can be substituted by another word and the word does not effect on the meaning, connotation and context of use. Theoretically a strict synonymy may occur in a language. In reality, such a meaning relation is almost unavailable or impossible. Historically in English the word *sky* and *heaven* are strictly synonymous. However, as time lapses, the meanings of the two words gain differences. In modern English use the meaning of word *sky* is closely associated to physical entity whereas that of *heaven* indicates spiritual side. Similarly, the word *spirit* is used for general meaning whereas *ghost* points to 'the disembodied spirit' such as the *Holy Ghost*.

Synonymy may occur in the contexts of dialectal uses in the sense that a word is synonymous to another in terms of national, regional and formal varieties. In addition two words may be synonymous but differ with respect to connotative meaning. A word is synonymous with another in terms of national standard dialect such as one in British in comparison to another in American, Australian or Canadian English. The words of *bonnet* (car), *caravan*, *farm*, *lawyer*, *lift*, *pavement*, *rubbish*, *tap* and *windscreen* in British English are respectively synonymous with their counterparts of *hood*, *trailer*, *ranch*, *attorney*, *elevator*, *sidewalk*, *garbage*, *faucet*, and *windshield* in American English.

Synonymy in terms of regional dialects shows that a word is synonymous to another due to variations of regional dialects such as Tyneside, West Midlands, and South-West dialects of British English. To exemplify, the following pairs of words in standard British English are synonymous with those in northern British English: *anyway*—*anyroad*, *armpit*—*oxter*, *brew* (*tea*)—*mash*, *child*—*bairn*, *frightening*—*fleysome*, *money*—*nowt*, *sandwich*—*butty*.

Synonymous meaning relations may occur in terms of style or formality of the context where the word may be used. The following examples indicate synonymous words in informal context use and their counterparts in more formal in use: *archer*—*taxophile*, *argument*—*disputation*, *cross*, *traverse*, *die*—

decease, give up—renounce, letter—missive, warning—caveat—western—occidental, beauty—pulchritude, praise—eulogy.

Words may be synonymous because of slang use; i. e. a word in standard use may have a synonym in the slang use. The following words in standard use are synonymous with their slang counterparts: *astonished—gobsmacked, crash—prang, destroy—zap, drunk—sloshed, face—phizog, heart—ticker, money—rhino, prison—clink, steal—nick.*

However, two obviously synonymous words appear to be different with respect to connotative meaning. Thus, no two words are identical in meanings when they are seen in the actual use in social contexts. The following pairs of words are synonymous in their denotative meaning but they have different connotative meaning (being stated in brackets) *push—shove* (roughness or hate), *ambiguous—equivocal* (deliberately), *famous—notorious* (disreputably), *case—scandal* (negative sense), *aggressive—pushy* (insisting), *hate—loathe* (with repugnance or disgust), *misuse—abuse* (of privilege or power), *proud—haughty* (with disdain), *recollection—reminiscence* (with pleasure). This confirms that although two words may share almost all aspects of usages and uses they can not be identical in all their occurrences.

ANTONYM

Antonym is meaning relation which is based on oppositeness. Antonym divides into gradable antonym, contradictory or complementary antonym and converses or relational antonym. Gradable antonym refers to opposite meanings in terms a more/less relation. Thus, the antonym of *hot* is more/less *cold*. This means that *hot* is not the only antonym of *cold* since the opposite meaning may be *cool*, or *freezing*. The word *hot* is one point in a gradient or continuum of *freezing—cool—cold—warm—hot—boiling—evaporating*. Typically gradable antonym covers adjectives which have degrees of comparison and can be intensified by adverbs of *very, extremely* or *extraordinarily*. Thus, it is acceptable to say *very cold, extremely expensive* or *extraordinarily fat*. The following pairs of words are examples of gradable antonyms: *beautiful—ugly, expensive—cheap, fast—slow, increase—decrease, long—short, love—hate, rich—poor, sweet—sour, wide—narrow.*

Contradictory antonym is based on an either/or relation of oppositeness. A pair of word is contradictorily antonymous to another when an assertion of one implies the denial of the other. Such words are also called categorically or binary antonymous. The following pairs of words are contradictorily antonymous: *alive—dead, lose—win, permit—forbid, on—off, remember—forget, shut—open, true—false, present—absent, empty—full.*

Converses or relational antonyms refer to pairs words in which one word is the converse or reversibility of another. In other words, one word implies oppositeness to the other. The following pairs of words are converses: *buy—sell, husband—wife, above—below, before—after, behind—in front of, give—receive, parent—child, speak—listen.*

HYPONYMY

Hyponymy refers to a hierarchical 'group—member' relation. Words holding a hyponym relation indicate that one is the cover or superordinate term whereas the others are its subordinate ones. In other words, one word in a hierarchy is the group name and the others are its members as shown in the meaning relation of the word *plant* with its hyponyms *fungus*, *lichen*, *shrub*, *creeper*, and *tree*.

With respect to its immediate membership, a word may have its hyponyms in the next hierarchy. In other words, a word as a hyponym of its superordinate term may act as the cover term or superordinate term in the next hierarchy or delicacy. For example, *fungus* may further has subordinates of *mushroom*, *toad stool*, *creeper* with its subordinates of *ivy*, *bindweed*, and *tree* with its members of *conifer* and *deciduous*. Each of the last two words of *conifer* and *deciduous* is still further be superordinate to a number of words such as *conifer* with its subordinates of *pine* and *spruce* and *deciduous* wit its members of *oak* and *ash*.

Hyponym does not necessarily cover classification of natural phenomena only. Its coverage may involve taxonomies human artifacts as shown in the hyponym relation of *container* to its subordinates of *pot*, *barrel*, *box*, *tin* and *bag*.

MERONYMY

Meronymy refers to a semantic relation of 'whole—part' in which one word constitutes or holds all meanings of its parts. To exemplify, the word *plant* has a meronymy relation to *root*, *trunk*, *branch*, *twig*, *bud*, *shoot*, *stem*, *leaf*, and *flower*. Like hyponymy, meronymy may be subdivided into details in the next immediate hierarchy. For example, *leaf* has meronymy of *stalk* and *blade*, *root* with its *cap* and *hair* and *flower* with *petal* and *stamen*. Other examples of meronymy are *knife* with its meronymy of *blade*, *handle* and *fountain pen* with its *cap*, *barrel*, *nib*, and *reservoir*.

LEXICAL GAP

As a means of meaning relation, both hyponymy and meronymy offers weaknesses since the two meaning relation cannot accommodate delicate or fine relations systematically and unambiguously as scholars and scientists try to categorize natural and social phenomena. In other words, there is a lexical gap in meaning relations based on hyponymy and meronymy. To exemplify, in common English the parts of human finger divide into three whereas English has only *knuckle* leaving 'lexical gaps' for the other two potential meronyms. To refer to the two parts a periphrastic expression is used such as the *middle joint* or *the joint nearest to nail*. In the same manner hyponymy is full of lexical gaps where the taxonomies do not cover all inventories of words. For example, a vehicle covers *bus*, *bicycle*, *tram*, *motorbike*. However, a *cart* is also a means of carrying (which is also a vehicle). How is this *cart* fitted in the hyponymy?

ANALYZING MEANING

To overcome the weaknesses of lexical gaps as indicated in hyponymy and meronymy, semanticists and lexicologists try to use componential analysis, semantic primitives and semantic fields. Componential analysis is one where semantic components are typically represented as binary features with + indicating that the feature applies or present whereas - indicating that the feature does not apply or absent. The features are enclosed in square brackets; thus, [+animate] means that the feature of animate applies to a word whereas [-animate] indicates that the feature of animate to a word does not apply. By using the features as components or elements of meaning, meanings of two words or more are differentiated by referring to the distinctive features. For example, the difference in meaning between *man* and *boy* is that *man* has features of [+human; +male; adult] whereas *boy* has [+human; +male; -adult].

In a different manner, semantic primitives refer to basic innate human concepts by which the meaning of semantically complex words can be expressed. The pioneer of semantic primitives is Anna Wierzbicka who lists 55 semantic primitives comprised of 37 'old' primitives, which are deemed well-established and 18 'new' primitives, which are less certain because they have yet to be tested across a wide range of languages. The primitive words are *I, you, someone, something, people, this, the same, other, some, on, two, many (much), all, more, think, know, want, feel, see, hear, say, do, happen, move, there, is (BE), alive, good, bad, big, small, where, under, above, far, near, side, inside, ere, when, before, after, a long time, a short time, now, part (off), kind (of), not, can, very, if, because, like, if... would, maybe, and word.*

Semantic field analysis indicates that words are grouped together into 'fields' on the basis of an element of shared meaning. There is no set of agreed criteria for establishing semantic fields, though a 'common component' of meaning is often used. The very broad categories of words are drinking, vessels, verbs of communication, abstract relation, space, matter, intellect, volition, entertainment, affections. Each of these categories can be subdivided into sections.

COLLOCATIONS

Collocation refers to structural or syntagmatic meaning relation where a word contracts with other words occurring in the same sentence or text. Unlike substitutionary or paradigmatic meaning relation of alternative occurring in some context, collocation involves meaning arising with respect to predictable co-occurrence. For example in English the occurrence of *kettle* is likely followed by *boil* in text such as *the kettle is not boiling yet* or *I'll just boil water in the kettle*. The word *settle* is in collocation with *dispute, argument, claim, and stomach nerve*.

Collocation forms a relation of mutual expectancy, that is, when a word occurs it is most probably followed by a certain word than another one. Thus, the probability level of a word occurrence can be statistically computed. To

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achieve a measure of statistical accuracy empirical study based on a corpus of text is required. For example, a statistical computation based on corpora of a hundred million words in computer program such as *Collins COBUILD English Collocation on CD-ROM* indicates that the word *who* occurs 12 times to the left and to the right *aged* occurs 6 times. By using this technique the frequency of co-occurrence or collocation can be accounted for.

TEXTURE

Meaning relation functions to link one linguistic unit to another. Thus, it can link one clause to another to create unity or 'oneness' as Halliday (1985, 1994) terms it. Linking of meaning is the main feature of texture. In other words, there is no text without unity of meaning, which is also called cohesion. This clearly points that meaning relation is the basis for cohesion. To exemplify the text in *Ali went to the zoo. He saw an elephant. The animal is huge* is much more cohesive than *Ali went to the zoo. Ali saw an elephant. An elephant is a huge animal*. This is because meaning relation in the previous text link or 'glue' the meaning in the linguistic units.

CONCLUSIONS

Meaning relations between or among linguistic units can be described in paradigmatic and syntagmatic ways. Paradigmatically meaning relations include synonymy, antonym, hyponymy and meronymy. The first two (synonymy and antonym) are based on 'sameness' and 'oppositeness' of meaning and the last two involve hierarchical relations: 'group—member or the kind of' relation of hyponymy and 'part-whole or the part of relation of meronymy. In the paradigmatic relation, a word is a choice or a choice which is potentially substituted by another word. Syntagmatic relation refers to collocation, which is based on mutual expectancy. The occurrence of a word contacts another one. To overcome weaknesses of paradigmatic and syntagmatic meaning relations componential analysis, lexical primitives and lexical fields are proposed. One of the fundamental functions of meaning relation is to create unity or 'oneness' in text which is also term cohesion.

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