

11 Semantics: A theory of Meaning II

11.1 Componential Analysis

(1) Componential analysis: breaking down words into semantic features/components.

a. man

$$\begin{bmatrix} +human \\ +male \\ +adult \end{bmatrix}$$

(2) Classifier languages: words/entities are matched into semantic categories based on their semantic components.

a. Hmong, Thai, Mandarin, etc.

(3) Hmong nouns:

man 'neeg'	horse 'nees'	ball 'pov'	paper 'ntawv'	pen 'npiv'
+human	-human			
+male				
+animate	+animate	-animate	-animate	-animate
+adult	+adult			
		3-dimension	2-dimension	1-dimension

(4) Hmong classifiers:

leej	tus	lub	daim	tus
+human				
+animate	+animate	-animate	-animate	-animate
		3-dimension	2-dimension	1-dimension

(5) Decomposition: verbs can be composed of smaller events/predicates.

a. to kill: X causes Y to become not alive.

b. John kills the bull:

$John(x) \ \& \ bull(y) \ \& \ CAUSE(BECOME(NEG(Alive(y))))(x)$

c. Teeb tua tus nyuj tuag.

Deng kills CLF bull dead

'Deng killed the bull.'

(6) Subcategorization: Syntactic/semantic relations that hold between predicates and arguments and events.

a. Syntactically the subject(x) is external from the VP (i.e. it is in Spec-IP).

b. Predicates map onto events: $P \rightarrow Event(e)$

c. Intransitive: $P(x) \rightarrow V$ 'She laughs.'

d. Transitive: $P(y)(x) \rightarrow V[NP]$ 'We ate pizza.'

e. Ditransitive: $P(y, z)(x) \rightarrow V[NP PP_{to}]$ 'He gave the book to Sally.'

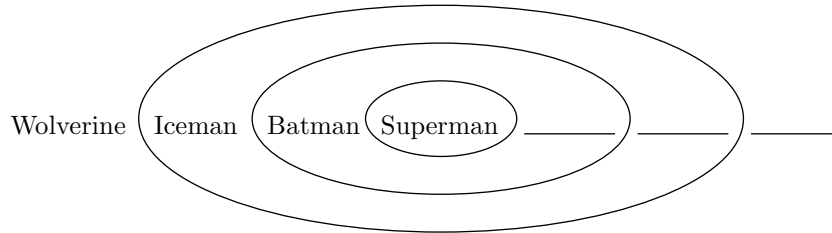
(7) Subcategorization of some special events:

a. Passives: $PASS(P(y)) \rightarrow NP_i \text{ be}[V, +pass] V[t_i]$ 'She was helped.'

b. Unaccusative: $P(y) \rightarrow NP_i V[t_i]$ 'The vase fell.'

11.2 Fuzzy Concepts

- (8) Concepts: The mental image that an entity, or event relate to.
- Prototypical member: the common mental image. (Sparrow or Robin are prototypical for the concept BIRD.)
 - Non-prototypical: the least common mental image. (Ostrich and penguin are least prototypical for BIRD.)
- (9) Internal Structure for SUPERHERO:



- (10) Metaphor: properties attributed to a concept that are inherent in that concept.
- Time can be considered a concrete object.
 - wasting time, save some time, buy some time, etc.
 - Time doesn't have concrete properties such as these, so these phrases are metaphoric.

11.3 Lexicalization and Grammaticization

- (11) Lexicalization: Adding new words to our lexicon/language.
- These are the morphological word formation processes: coinage, blending, etc.
- (12) Grammaticization: adding new functional words to the morphosyntactic structure of our language.
- Auxiliary/future modal in English.
 - I will [you][to go to bed.] (somewhat archaic)
 - I want you to go to bed.
 - You will go to bed.

11.4 Ambiguity

- (13) Structural
- I saw the man with the telescope.
 - I saw the man which had a telescope.
 - I saw the man through the telescope.
 - Does the man own the telescope, or is it an instrument used to see him?
- (14) Lexical
- We drove to the bank.
 - He imitated a duck.
 - (If only uttered) He saw her bear.
 - More than one meaning for these words.
- (15) Semantic
- Everyone helped somebody move.

- b. It's the case that an individual moved and everyone helped that individual move. (Narrow scope)
- c. It's the case that everyone helped those individuals that moved. (Wide scope)
- d. Scopal ambiguity for quantifiers.