

Degree iii, (English Honours)

Paper – VIII

Section – 4

Subject- Linguistics

Lecture- 1

Meaning and Concept of Semantics

The study of meaning and its manifestation in language is normally referred to as semantics from the Greek noun *sema* ‘sign’, signal and the verb *semains* ‘signal mean, signify’. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary glosses the term semantics as relating to signification or meaning. Broadly speaking, semantics is that aspect of linguistics which deals with the relations between referents (name) and referends (things)--- that is linguistics levels (words, expressions, phrases) and the objects or concepts or ideas to which they refer—and with the history and changes in the meaning of words. Diachronic (historical) semantics studies semantic change, whereas synchronic semantics accounts for semantic relationship, simple or multitude. A semanticist would like to find how a man is able to paraphrase, transform and detect ambiguities and why the surrounding words sometimes force him to choose one interpretation rather than another. A semantic analysis, for example in English. Must also explain antonyms, synonyms.

Homonyms, polysemy, anomalies, contradictions, paraphrase, relations, ambiguities, implications and transformations of the language. It should give and account of semantic properties and relations. Hence to understand the meaning of a sentence and its semantics relation to other expressions, one must know not only the meaning of its lexical elements but also how they inter-relate.

According to Manfred Bierwisch. A semantic theory must : (a) make reference to the syntactic structure in a precise way; (b) systematically represent the meaning of the single words; (c) show how the structure of the meaning of words and the syntactic relations interact, in order to constitute the interpretation of sentences; and (d) indicate how these interperptatun are related to the things spoken about.

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