

Ambiguity :

the relationship between words and meanings is complex. This implies that meaning is not fixed or straightforward. The meaning of the same word, sentence or phrase can shift according to its use, the speaker's or writer's intended message and purpose, and the specific context of use.

- The use of homonyms creates ambiguity.
- Homonyms are two words that are spelled the same and sound the same but have different meanings.
- meanings are different owing to the context and the speaker's or writer's intention to communicate a particular message that s/he has in mind.
- to interpret the content of the message that the speaker or writer aims to convey, it is important to understand the function of the **word** as it used in each sentence

1. She opened the windows because the room was **hot**.

This sentence refers to the temperature in the room.

2. The students were involved in a **hot** debate.

This means that nature of the debate was engaging, thoughtful and issues raised were topical.

3. What a **hot** curry she cooked!

This sentence suggests that the food was very spicy.

4. Strike while the iron is **hot**.

This is an English idiomatic expression that implies that it is better to do something or to take action immediately while you have a good chance of success.

5. Police are **hot** on the trail of the bank robbers.

This means that the police are close to a successful solution and possible arrests are imminent.

6. She is a **hot** girl.

It is an informal way (colloquial usage) of indicating that the particular girl being referred to is good-looking, dazzling and sexually attractive

Linguistic Meaning and Speaker's Meaning

The concepts of linguistic meaning and speaker's meaning are important characteristics of communication because they distinguish between what is said.

Linguistic meaning:

- refers to the literal linguistic meaning of words, sentences or phrases and its denotation or dictionary meaning.

Speaker's meaning:

- has to do with the speaker's intended meaning
- is context-dependent because in order to comprehend what the speaker means and intends to convey the listener would need to know about the purpose and context in which something is said
- This process is called Implicature
 - Implicature: the action of implying a meaning beyond the literal sense of what is explicitly stated, for example saying the frame is nice and implying I don't like the picture in it.

Context:

There are two types of linguistic context Physical and Linguistic.

Linguistic context:

- Has to do with the meaning of individual words in relation to other words within a sentence.

Physical context:

- refers to the circumstances under which words are spoken or written. In other words, it is necessary to know who is speaking, to whom, as well as the situation in which that communication takes place.

'Tom has been to prison'

1 He had visited the prison or went there for some business, meeting or a gathering of some sort. (Meeting)

2 Tom may have a tendency toward criminal behaviour hence he was locked up or detained before. (Behaviour or attitude)

3 The sentence could imply that Tom is not home or where they thought they will find him but instead he has already left for prison. (Place).

4 Tom knows a lot or something about this place called prison. If you would like to know something or want some information regarding prison he may be able to assist. (Knowledge or information about something)

5 Tom went to prison in the morning and now he is back. (Time)

6 Tom is familiar with prison life or is interested in activities that take place there. (Perhaps he has conducted research in prison.)

Without such knowledge we are unsure whether what is suggested in the sentence is the actual meaning of what the speaker or writer intended to convey. This is so because the information that can be drawn from the utterances used is not always sufficient to determine the content and exact meaning

Speech Acts

- Speech acts or communicative acts generally refer to those actions that are performed when something is said for the purpose of accomplishing some communicative goal.
- Speech acts are taken to include acts such as greeting, inviting, warning, requesting, promising, ordering or congratulating.
- Speech acts illustrate the fact that language can be used to perform an action rather than merely to convey information.

Examples:

- Giving orders: Be quiet!
- Making requests: Please pass me the salt.
- Giving information: Thabo went to school.
- Making promises: I promise to take you dancing.
- Giving warning: Do not drink and drive.
- Giving advice: You ought to start taking your health seriously.

Sentence type **speech act**

Declaratives ~ **Assertion** ~ These are statements that are mainly used to convey information.

Interrogatives ~ **Question** ~ These are questions and used to elicit or request certain information.

Imperatives ~ **Orders and Requests** ~ Imperative sentences are directives used mainly to ask for something or tell someone to do something.

Exclamatives **Command** ~ **Exclamations** ~ are used to express an opinion about a situation or a strong feeling about something.

Speech acts can be categorised as either **direct** or **indirect**.

Direct:

A direct speech act is where the meaning of the utterance is literal and matches action or function that it is intended to perform. Put differently, the content of the speaker's utterance is neither vague nor ambiguous and links directly with the intended message of communication. Eg: 'What is your name?'

Indirect:

An indirect speech act is where the meaning of an utterance is dependent on the physical context in which it is spoken or written. Unlike direct speech acts, the speaker may utter a sentence with a different propositional content.

Example 1. 'Can you reach the salt?' This could be meant as a request (imperative sentence) for someone to pass salt to him/her, or a question (interrogative sentence) that may require a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Example 2. 'It is getting cold in here.' The speaker may be using this sentence to indirectly

ask someone to close the window or door that is open. In this way this utterance will be intended as an order or request (imperative sentence) rather than as an assertion (declarative sentence) to convey information about the temperature in the room.

Sense and Reference:

Sense and reference are important components of meaning as they both form part of the foundation of every facet of study in semantics

Denotation:

Has to do with the explicit or literal meaning of linguistic expressions.

Connotation: refers to the subjective cultural or emotional association that a specific word, phrase, or sign carries.

Sense:

A word's sense is how the word relates to other words in a language. le house – building – structure

Reference:

it's reference is how it relates to real world concepts. le the reference would make us think of a particular house such as a cottage, a mansion or a cabin.

Conceptual and Associative Meaning:

Conceptual meaning:

Refers to the meanings are definitions that we often find in dictionaries. Ie: Alcohol: *a colourless volatile flammable liquid which is produced by the natural fermentation of sugars and is the intoxicating constituent of wine, beer, spirits, and other drinks, and is also used as an industrial solvent and as fuel*

Associative meaning:

relates to the fact that different people might have different associations, ideas, feelings or connotations attached to the two words. Ie: Alcohol: unhealthy, addictive, a good time