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SEMANTICS

Volume I

JOHN LYONS

Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge



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Contents to Volume I

Typographical conventions x *Preface* xi

| | | |
|---|---|-----|
| 1 | <i>Introduction: some basic terms and concepts</i> | I |
| | 1.1. The meaning of 'meaning' | I |
| | 1.2. Use and mention | 5 |
| | 1.3. Object-language and metalanguage | 10 |
| | 1.4. Type and token | 13 |
| | 1.5. Forms, lexemes and expressions | 18 |
| | 1.6. Theories, models and data | 25 |
| 2 | <i>Communication and information</i> | 32 |
| | 2.1. What is communication? | 32 |
| | 2.2. A simple model of communication | 36 |
| | 2.3. The quantification of information | 43 |
| | 2.4. Descriptive, social and expressive information | 50 |
| 3 | <i>Language as a semiotic system</i> | 57 |
| | 3.1. Verbal and non-verbal signalling | 57 |
| | 3.2. Paralinguistic phenomena | 63 |
| | 3.3. Language and medium | 67 |
| | 3.4. The design features of language | 74 |
| | 3.5. The origin of language | 85 |
| 4 | <i>Semiotics</i> | 96 |
| | 4.1. Signification | 96 |
| | 4.2. Symbols, icons, indices and symptoms | 99 |
| | 4.3. Nominalism, realism and conceptualism | 109 |
| | 4.4. Syntactics, semantics and pragmatics | 114 |
| 5 | <i>Behaviourist semantics</i> | 120 |
| | 5.1. General attitudes | 120 |
| | 5.2. More particular features of behaviourism | 123 |

Contents to Volume I

| | |
|--|-----|
| 5.3. Behaviourist theories of meaning | 125 |
| 5.4. Evaluation of behaviourist semantics | 133 |
| 6 <i>Logical semantics</i> | 138 |
| 6.1. The formalization of semantics | 138 |
| 6.2. Propositional calculus | 141 |
| 6.3. Predicate calculus | 147 |
| 6.4. The logic of classes | 154 |
| 6.5. Time, modality and possible worlds | 161 |
| 6.6. Model-theoretic and truth-conditional semantics | 167 |
| 7 <i>Reference, sense and denotation</i> | 174 |
| 7.1. Introductory | 174 |
| 7.2. Reference | 177 |
| 7.3. Sense | 197 |
| 7.4. Denotation | 206 |
| 7.5. Naming | 215 |
| 7.6. Reference, sense and denotation in language-acquisition | 224 |
| 8 <i>Structural semantics I: semantic fields</i> | 230 |
| 8.1. Structuralism | 230 |
| 8.2. The Saussurean dichotomies | 239 |
| 8.3. Relativism and functionalism | 245 |
| 8.4. Semantic fields | 250 |
| 8.5. Syntagmatic lexical relations | 261 |
| 8.6. General evaluation of the theory of semantic fields | 267 |
| 9 <i>Structural semantics II: sense relations</i> | 270 |
| 9.1. Opposition and contrast | 270 |
| 9.2. Directional, orthogonal and antipodal opposition | 281 |
| 9.3. Non-binary contrasts | 287 |
| 9.4. Hyponymy | 291 |
| 9.5. Hierarchical structure in the vocabulary | 295 |
| 9.6. Lexical gaps | 301 |
| 9.7. Marked and unmarked terms | 305 |
| 9.8. Part-whole relations | 311 |
| 9.9. Componential analysis | 317 |
| Bibliography | 336 |
| Index | 357 |

Contents to Volume 2

Typographical conventions Preface

- 10 *Semantics and grammar I*
 - 10.1. Levels of analysis
 - 10.2. Grammaticality
 - 10.3. Generative grammar
 - 10.4. Grammatical ambiguity
 - 10.5. Generative semantics

- 11 *Semantics and grammar II*
 - 11.1. Parts-of-speech, form-classes and expression-classes
 - 11.2. Subjects, predicates and predicators
 - 11.3. The ontological basis: entities, qualities and actions
 - 11.4. Determiners, quantifiers and classifiers

- 12 *Semantics and grammar III*
 - 12.1. Kernel-sentences and sentence-nuclei
 - 12.2. Predicative structures
 - 12.3. Locative subjects
 - 12.4. Valency
 - 12.5. Causativity and transivity
 - 12.6. Participant-roles and circumstantial roles
 - 12.7. Theme, rheme and focus

- 13 *The Lexicon*
 - 13.1. Lexical entries
 - 13.2. Complex lexemes

Contents to Volume 2

- 13.3. Compound lexemes
- 13.4. Homonymy and polysemy
- 14 *Context, style and culture*
 - 14.1. The context-of-utterance
 - 14.2. Communicative competence
 - 14.3. Conversational implicatures and presupposition
 - 14.4. The contextual theory of meaning
 - 14.5. Stylistic, dialectal and diachronic variation
 - 14.6. Sentences and texts
- 15 *Deixis, space and time*
 - 15.1. Person-deixis
 - 15.2. Demonstratives and the definite article
 - 15.3. Deixis, anaphora and the universe-of-discourse
 - 15.4. Tense and deictic temporal reference
 - 15.5. Spatial expressions
 - 15.6. Aspect
 - 15.7. Localism
- 16 *Mood and illocutionary force*
 - 16.1. Speech-acts
 - 16.2. Commands, requests and demands
 - 16.3. Questions
 - 16.4. Negation
 - 16.5. The performative analysis of sentences
- 17 *Modality*
 - 17.1. Necessity and possibility
 - 17.2. Epistemic modality and factivity
 - 17.3. Tense as a modality
 - 17.4. Deontic modality
 - 17.5. Obligation, permission, prohibition and exemption
 - 17.6. A tentative synthesis
- Bibliography
- Index

Figures

VOLUME I

| | |
|--|----------------|
| 1. A model of communication | <i>page</i> 36 |
| 2. The triangle of signification | 96 |
| 3. Truth-table for the one-place negation connective | 143 |
| 4. Truth-tables for the two-place connectives | 144 |
| 5. Venn diagrams illustrating the union and intersection of classes | 158 |
| 6. Various kinds of diachronic change | 256 |
| 7. A model of a hierarchically organized vocabulary | 295 |

VOLUME 2

| | |
|--|--|
| 8. A sample phrase-marker | |
| 9. The so-called standard theory | |
| 10. The so-called generative semantics theory | |
| 11. Schematic representation of a lexical entry | |

Typographical conventions

SMALL CAPITALS

For sense-components and other more abstract elements, or correlates, of meaning (cf. 9.9).

Italics

1. For forms (as distinct from lexemes or expressions: cf. 1.5) in their orthographic representation.
2. For certain mathematical and logical symbols, according to standard conventions.

Single quotation-marks

1. For lexemes and expressions (cf. 1.5).
2. For the citation of sentences (i.e. system-sentences: cf. 1.6).
3. For titles of articles.

Double quotation-marks

1. For meanings (cf. 1.5).
2. For propositions (cf. 6.2).
3. For quotations from other authors.

Asterisk

For technical terms when first introduced and occasionally thereafter to remind the reader of their technical sense.

Notes

1. When a term has been furnished with an asterisk, single quotation-marks are not used.
2. Single quotation-marks are omitted when a sentence, expression or lexeme is numbered and set on a different line; but italics and double quotation-marks are still used in such circumstances.
3. In quotations from other authors, the original typographical conventions have usually been preserved. Occasionally adjustments have been made in order to avoid confusion or ambiguity.

Preface

When I began writing this book six years ago, it was my intention to produce a fairly short one-volume introduction to semantics which might serve the needs of students in several disciplines and might be of interest to the general reader. The work that I have in fact produced is far longer, though in certain respects it is less comprehensive, than I originally anticipated; and for that reason it is being published in two volumes.

Volume 1 is, for the most part, more general than volume 2; and it is relatively self-contained. In the first seven chapters, I have done my best, within the limitations of the space available, to set semantics within the more general framework of semiotics (here defined as the investigation of both human and non-human signalling-systems); and I have tried to extract from what ethologists, psychologists, philosophers, anthropologists and linguists have had to say about meaning and communication something that amounts to a consistent, if rather eclectic, approach to semantics. One of the biggest problems that I have had in writing this section of the book has been terminological. It is frequently the case in the literature of semantics and semiotics that the same terms are employed in quite different senses by different authors or that there are several alternatives for what is essentially the same phenomenon. All I can say is that I have been as careful as possible in selecting between alternative terms or alternative interpretations of the same terms and, within the limits of my own knowledge of the field, in drawing the reader's attention to certain terminological pitfalls. At one time, I had hoped to be able to follow the practice of never using non-technically any word that was also employed anywhere in the book in some technical sense or other. I soon had to abandon this rather quixotic ambition! Some of the most ordinary words of English (e.g., 'case', 'feature', 'aspect') are employed in a highly specialized sense in linguistics and related disciplines; and, however hard I tried, I found it impossible to

get by without them. I trust that the context (and the device of using asterisks for introducing technical terms) will reduce, if it does not entirely eliminate, ambiguity and the possibility of misunderstanding.

The last two chapters of volume 1 are devoted to structural semantics (or, more precisely, to structural lexicology). This is a topic that I have been concerned with, on and off, for the best part of 20 years; and, although the so-called structuralist approach to semantics is no longer as fashionable among linguists as it once was, I still believe that it has much to contribute to the analysis of language.

Volume 2 may be read, independently of volume 1, by anyone who is already familiar with, or is prepared to take on trust, notions and distinctions explained in volume 1. In volume 2, which (apart from the chapter on Context, Style and Culture) is concerned with semantics from a fairly narrowly linguistic point of view, I have been tempted to do something more than merely clarify and systematize the work of others; and this accounts for the fact that the book, as a whole, has taken me far longer to write than I had expected. Five of the eight chapters in volume 2 – two of the three chapters on Semantics and Grammar, the chapter on Deixis, Space and Time, the chapter on Mood and Illocutionary Force, and the chapter on Modality – contain sections in which, unless I am mistaken, there are a few ideas of my own. *Caveat lector!*

As I have said, the book is, in certain respects, less comprehensive than I intended. There is nothing on etymology and historical semantics, or on synonymy; and there is very little on the structure of texts (or so-called text-linguistics), or on metaphor and style. If I had dealt with these topics, I should have had to make my book even longer. Sometimes one must stop even if one has not finished!

As I write this Preface, I am all too conscious of having just moved from Edinburgh where I have now spent twelve years, in one of the finest Departments of Linguistics in the world. Throughout this time I have benefited, in my writing and in my teaching, from the advice and criticisms of my colleagues in several Departments. Many of them have helped me, as far as the present book is concerned, by reading sections of it for me in draft and commenting upon them or by discussing (and in some instances originating) the ideas that have found their way into my text: John Anderson, R. E. Asher, Martin Atkinson, Gillian Brown, Keith Brown, John Christie, Kit Fine, Patrick Griffiths, Stephen Isard, W. E. Jones, John Laver, Christopher Longuet-Higgins, J. E. Miller, Keith Mitchell, Barry Richards, and James Thorne. Ron Asher and

Preface

xiii

Bill Jones have been especially helpful: each of them has read the whole typescript; and Bill Jones has undertaken to do the index for me. Apart from these Edinburgh and ex-Edinburgh colleagues, there are many others to whom I am indebted for their comments on drafts of parts of the book: Harry Bracken, Simon Dik, R. M. Dixon, Françoise Dubois-Charlier, Newton Garver, Gerald Gazdar, Arnold Glass, F. W. Householder, Rodney Huddleston, R. A. Hudson, Ruth Kempson, Geoffrey Leech, Adrienne Lehrer, David Makinson, P. H. Matthews, G. A. Miller, R. H. Robins, Geoffrey Sampson, the late Stephen Ullmann, Anthony Warner. There are doubtless many errors and inadequacies that remain but without the aid of so many friends, whose specialized knowledge in many of the relevant fields is far greater than my own, I should have gone astray more often than I have done.

Like all teachers, I have learned more from my students over the years than they have learned from me. It has been my privilege to conduct several research seminars and to supervise a fair number of Ph.D. dissertations on semantics during the period when I was writing this book. Two of my students I must mention by name, since I am very conscious of having derived directly from them some of the points that appear in the book: Marilyn Jessen and Claudia Guimãraes de Lemos. I have no doubt, however, that others of my students are also responsible for much of what I think of as being original in the second volume.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Rena Somerville who, as my secretary in the last few years (the best secretary that I have ever had), has typed so many versions of certain sections of my manuscript that she could probably reproduce at least the gist of them from memory! Much of this work she has done at home in the evenings and at the weekend: I trust that her family will forgive me for the time that I have stolen from them in this way.

Finally, I must record my gratitude to my wife and children for their willingness to put up with my frequent bouts of depression, ill-temper or sheer absent-mindedness while I was writing the book and the postponement of so many promised outings and holidays. More particularly I wish to thank my wife for the love and support that she has always given me, in my writing as in everything.

J. L.

Falmer, Sussex
November 1976