ĐẠI HỌC QUỐC GIA THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC KHOA HỌC XÃ HỘI VÀ NHÂN VĂN

Tô Minh Thanh

GIÁO TRÌNH

Ngữ nghĩa học Tiếng Anh

English Semantics

NHÀ XUẤT BẢN ĐẠI HỌC QUỐC GIA
TP HỒ CHÍ MINH — 2007

LỜI NÓI ĐẦU

Giáo trình ***Ngữ nghĩa học tiếng Anh*** được biên soạn một cách có hệ thống, dựa trên cơ sở tham khảo có chọn lọc những tư liệu của nước ngoài, kết hợp với kinh nghiệm giảng dạy nhiều năm về môn học này của tác giả và tập thể giảng viên trong Bộ môn Ngữ học Anh. Đây là tập giáo trình được biên soạn dùng để giảng dạy môn học *Ngữ nghĩa học tiếng Anh* (*English Semantics*) cho sinh viên năm thứ tư Khoa Ngữ văn Anh, Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn, Đại học Quốc gia Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.

Giáo trình gồm bốn phần:

1. Introduction (phần dẫn nhập)
2. Word meaning (nghĩa của từ);
3. Sentence meaning (nghĩa của câu);
4. Utterance meaning (nghĩa của phát ngôn)

Lần đầu tiên biên soạn giáo trình này, chúng tôi không tránh khỏi những sai sót, những khuyết điểm. Rất mong nhận được nhiều ý kiến đóng góp của bạn đọc và của bạn bè đồng nghiệp để giáo trình ngày càng hoàn thiện hơn, phục vụ giảng dạy sinh viên đạt chất lượng tốt hơn. Ý kiến đóng góp về tập giáo trình này xin gửi về Hội đồng Khoa học Khoa Ngữ văn Anh, Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn, Đại học Quốc gia Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, số 10-12 Đinh Tiên Hoàng Quận 1, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. Điện thoại: (08)8243328.

Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, ngày 14 tháng 12 năm 2006

Tô Minh Thanh

CONTENTS

Preface iii
Contents v
Notational symbols vii

1 INTRODUCTION 9
1.1 What is semantics? 9
1.2 Semantics and its possible included aspects 10

2 WORD MEANING 12
2.1 Semantic features 12
2.2 Componential analysis 20
2.3 Semantic fields 21
2.4 Lexical gaps 25
2.5 Referent, reference and sense 26
2.6 Denotation and connotation 30
2.7 Multiple senses of lexical items 34
2.8 Figures of speech 36
2.9 Hyponymy 57
2.10 Synonymy 63
2.11 Antonymy 67
2.12 Homonymy 72
2.13 Polysemy 78

2.14 Ambiguity 81
2.15 Anomaly 87

3 SENTENCE MEANING 91
3.1 Proposition, utterance and sentence 91
3.2 Sentence types (classified according to **truth value**) 96
3.3 Paraphrase 99
3.4 Entailment 104

4 UTTERANCE MEANING 109
4.1 Presupposition 109
4.2 Conversational implicature 128
4.3 Conventional implicature 145
4.4 Speech acts 146
4.5 Performatives and constatives 165
4.6 Politeness, co-operation and indirectness 171
4.7 Deixis 173

Answer keys 177
List of English-Vietnamese equivalent linguistic terms 227
Bibliography 252

NOTATIONAL SYMBOLS

Most of the symbols used in this text follow conventions, but since conventions vary, the following list indicates the meanings assigned to them here.

A: adjunct

AdjP: adjective phrase

AdvP: adverb phrase

C: countable

dO: direct object

Ex: example

mono-trans: mono-transitive verb

n: noun

NP: noun phrase

op: optional

opA of Means: optional adjunct of means

Pro: pronoun

PP: prepositional phrase

RP: Received Pronunciation

S: sentence

Vgrp: verb group

VP: verb phrase

* : unaccepted form

-- : related in some way

[ ] : embedded unit

/ : or

⇒ : one-way dependence

⇔ : two-way dependence

= : be equivalent to

+ : with the semantic feature specified

– : without the semantic feature specified

± : with or without the semantic feature specified

Section

1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is semantics?

Semantics is a branch of linguistics which deals with meaning. In order to understand this definition, we need to know what meaning is. However, before we discuss the "meaning" of *meaning*, it is necessary to talk about the main branches of linguistics.

Linguistics has three main branches: syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Syntax is the study of grammar (consisting of phonology, morphology, syntax, and textual grammar) whereas semantics and pragmatics deal with meaning. Semantics is the study of *meaning in language* (i.e. what language means) while pragmatics is concerned with meaning in context (i.e. what people mean by the language they use). Although this is a semantics course, part of what we are going to discuss is concerned with pragmatics, for semantics and pragmatics are closely related.

Take the distinction between semantic meaning and pragmatic meaning as an illustration of how semantics is different from but, at the same time, closely related to pragmatics.

Semantic meaning is context-free whereas ***pragmatic meaning*** is context-dependent.

(1) A: 'Would you like a piece of cake?'

B: 'I'm on a diet.'

The semantic meaning of **'**I'm on a diet**'** in (1) is **'**I want to lose weight by eating the food which is not rich in fat, sugar, etc.**'**

The pragmatic meaning of **'**I'm on a diet**'** in (1) is **'**I don't want any piece of cake**'** or **'***I'm afraid that* I have to *refuse* your invitation.**'**

(2) Tom: 'Do you like the wine I picked out?'

Gina: 'It's Italian, isn't it?'

The semantic meaning of **'**It's Italian, isn't it?**'** in (2) is **'**Is it right that the wine is made in Italy?**'**

The pragmatic meaning of **'**It's Italian, isn't it?**'** in (2) is **'**I don't like the wine you picked out.**'**

1.2 Semantics and its possible included aspects

"**Semantics** is a technical term used to refer to **the study of meaning**, and since **meaning** is **part of language**, **semantics** is part of **linguistics**. Unfortunately, **'meaning'** covers a variety of aspects of language, there is no general agreement about **the nature of meaning**, **what aspects of it may properly be included in semantics**, or **the way in which it should be described**." [Palmer, 1981: 1] This little textbook will try to show three main aspects that are commonly considered as included in **semantics**: **word meaning** (or, to be more precise, **lexical meaning**) [Lyons, 1995: 33], **sentence meaning** and **utterance meaning**.[1]

---

[1] In semantics it is necessary to make a careful distinction between **utterances** and **sentences**. In particular we need some way of making it clear when we are discussing **sentences** and when **utterances**. We adopt the convention that **anything**

The meaning of *remarried*, for example, can be analysed in the three different levels.

At the **word** level, *remarried* may be regarded a set of the four following semantic features: [+human], [±male], [+used to be married], and [+married again].

At the **sentence** level when *remarried* occurs in *She is not remarried*, only the fourth semantic feature of the word, namely [+married again], is informative, i.e. it is part of the statement.

At the **utterance** level within the particular context of the following conversation when *remarried* occurs in B's response, it is *the word* that helps the utterance presuppose that *pastors are allowed by rule to get married* and implicate that *the pastor was once married*.

A: 'How is the pastor?'

B: 'He is remarried.'

Because of the nature of the subject and the variety of views on semantics and its possible included aspects, the little textbook cannot hope to be more than an introductory survey.

---

written between single quotation marks represents 'an utterance', and *anything italicized* represents *a sentence* or (similarly abstract) *part of a sentence*, such as *a phrase* or *a word*:

'She is not remarried' represents an utterance.
She is not remarried represents a sentence.
Married represents a word conceived as part of a sentence.

Section

2

WORD MEANING

WORD MEANING is what a word means, i.e. "what counts as the equivalent in the language concerned." [Hurford and Heasley, 1984: 3]

2.1 Semantic features

2.1.1 Definition

Semantic features[2] are "the smallest units of meaning in a word." [Richards *et al*, 1987: 254]

We identify the meaning of a word by its semantic features. For example, *father* may have the following semantic features: [+human], [+male], [+mature], [+parental] and [+paternal]. And *hen* may be described as a set of the following semantic features: [+animate], [+bird], [+fowl], [+fully grown] and [+female].

2.1.2 Characteristics

2.1.2.1 Some semantic features need not be specifically mentioned. For example, if a word is [+human] it is "automatically" [+animate]. This generalization can be expressed as ***a redundancy rule***:

---

[2] ***Semantic features*** are also referred to as ***semantic components*** or ***semantic properties***.