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Applied Linguistics

Higher Studies- M.A.

Language Description in Applied Linguistics: Part 2

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SYNTAX:

Is a branch of linguistics study that deals with how to put words together to form sentences which mean what we want .

Word classes:

Word classes: also known “part of speech” are the different categories of words used grammar (collection of words)

Types of verbs

1– **intransitive verbs:** These verbs do not need any objects to complete their meaning for example: He sleeps.

2– **Transitive verbs:** These verbs require one object to complete meaning for example: She reads a book

3– **Ditransitive Verbs:** These verbs require two objects to complete the meaning for example: He gave her a gift.

>Verbs have a different set of features which are often associated with them.

These features include:

-**Tense** : the marking of when something happened relative to now.

-**Aspect** : roughly speaking, whether an event is viewed, for example, as completed or on-going.

-**Modality** : expressing something about the reality or otherwise of an event, for example indicative and subjunctive verb forms in languages like French and Spanish).

Constituent structure:

– **Q/ Constituent structure can be represented in Two different ways what are they ?**

– Two common ways are through phrase structure trees and phrase structure rules.

1 –(Phrase structure trees): show the constituent structure of a particular sentence/ with all the intermediate constituents .

2–phrase structure rules : are more general representations of possible sentences we have seen that a noun phrase can consist of determiner and adjectives being optional .

We can represent this formally as :

S-NP V (NP)

(THE BOY SAW THE GIRL).

Semantic roles and grammatical relations:

In a sentence like “The farmer is killing the ducklings”, there is a difference in the relationship between the two noun phrases and the verb we know that the farmer did the killing, and the ducklings ended up dead and we could talk about them as

the killer and the “thing -killed”,but we know that these are quite similar semantically to the hitter and the “thing-hit”

in The farmer is hitting the ducklings. For this reason, more general terms are used to express the semantic role (also called the theta role) which a noun phrase plays in a sentence,

Q/ What are Different systems of semantic roles are used, they are more common-terms ?

1- Agent : (the one to who performs something)as the farmer as we said above.

2- patient : (the one to whom things happen)

(ducklings above)

3- experiencer and theme: I and him respectively in saw him, where I do not anything, and nothing actually happens to him) 4-recipient, and source and goal:

(where something comes from or goes to respectively, as house shops in she left the house for the shops .

Q/What are they three types of subordinate clause ?

subordination complementation, relative clauses, and adverbial subordination.

Complement clauses are:

those clauses which substitute for a noun phrase in a sentence.

what are Relative clauses?

It's information about a noun phrase in a sentence) and in English often begin with who, which or that the man who gave me the book left contains the relative clause who gave me the book (which corresponds to a main clause the man gave me the book); this has been added into the sentence the man left to specify which man.

The third type of subordination:

adverbial subordination, covers those sub- ordinate clauses which are similar in use to adverbs - there are a wide variety of possible constructions in languages, corresponding to English clauses such as because I went, after he came, while working, and so on.

types of Sentence

There are three basic types of sentence they are : declarative, interrogative, and imperative.

For example, in English we have a declarative sentence: He opened the window, the itrerrogative : “Did he open the window?

, and the imperative Open the window!

* While these sentence types broadly correspond to statements, questions, and commands or suggestions, this correspondence is not complete for example you could issue a command or suggestion with an interrogative utterance (Could you open the window?), or ask a question using declarative word order with questioning intonation (He opened the window?

•Different languages have different ways of forming these three sentence types, by changes in word order, special verb forms, intonation, or special particles.

1.6 Information Structure

One of the functions of syntax is to structure the ways in which information is presented in sentences and this structure is dependent on the **context** in which the information is presented. As such, the study of language needs to go beyond the level of isolated sentences and treat sequences of sentences, or texts.

1.6.1 Encoding given and new information

Syntax is often sensitive to whether or not information being conveyed can be expected to be known or not by the addressee (Ward & Birner, 2001).

Cultural context has a role here our knowledge of the world tells us that restaurants have waiters and food, so these things are in a sense given information in the light of other knowledge we have from outside the discourse: that is, while the information is new to the discourse it is not new to the hearer (Prince, 1992; Ward & Birner, 2001). Such information can be easily recovered from context and as such speakers can expect addressees to have such information readily available. Therefore it can be treated as given information in such contexts.

1.6.2 Topic-comment structure

Topic and comment often overlap with given and new information, however the two sets of terminology involve quite different concepts.

Consider the exchange in (10):

(10) A: What did Mary do?

B: She took the book.

In B, the topic of the sentence is 'Mary' (she) and the comment, the thing said about Mary, is **took the book**. In this case the topic is given information and the comment is new information.

1.7 Semantics

Semantics, that part of linguistic description which deals with meaning, is often divided into lexical semantics, and grammatical semantics.

1.7.1 Lexical semantics

In lexical semantics, defining words is complex, and theories vary on what definitions should accomplish. Some believe definitions should be precise, either through natural language paraphrasing (e.g., Wierzbicka, 1996) or a specialized metalanguage (e.g., Jackendoff, 1983). Others see the lexicon as a web of prototypes (e.g., Langacker, 1990) or highly metaphorical (e.g., Lakoff, 1987).

Another debate is whether dictionary knowledge (core meaning) should be separated from encyclopedic knowledge (extra information known by speakers). For example, knowing *salt* as sodium chloride might be extra knowledge rather than part of its core meaning (Haiman, 1980; Wierzbicka, 1995).

A general theory of lexical semantics must also address language-specific meanings, as different languages often structure meanings uniquely. For example, *nezumi* in Japanese includes animals divided into *rats* and *mice* in English. Spanish uses *dedos* for both *fingers* and *toes*, and Japanese *ashi* covers both *leg* and *foot*.

As well as looking at the meanings of words, lexical semantics also examines the meaning relations between words.

1.7.2 Grammatical semantics

Some work in grammatical semantics is focused on the meaning of grammatical morphemes, and how systems of grammatical meaning differ across languages.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter provides a general overview of language description. While it cannot cover all details, it aims to introduce applied linguists to the key topics and core concepts in language description. Understanding language structure is essential in applied linguistics research and practice, as it establishes a well-informed foundation for applied work without imposing linguistic theory as a controlling factor. Instead, linguistics supports applied linguistics. Additionally, the practical challenges addressed by applied linguistics can contribute to the development of linguistic theory.

In Alan Davies and Catherine Elder 2004 Alan Davies and Catherine Elder 2004 “**The Handbook of Applied Linguistics**”