

# Lecture 3

## LCD 306: Semantics & Pragmatics

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# Outline

- 1 Administrativa
  - Miscellany
  - Group Project
  - Recap
  
- 2 Meaning
  - What is “meaning?”
  - Working Definition

# Table of Contents

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# Important Dates

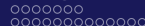
- Recall that there will be **NO** class next Thursday

# Textbook

- The textbook will be posted online
- The course website will be password protected
- You will need to read the first two chapters of the Semantics textbook by next lecture

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# Group Project

- We are going to start to build towards the group project
- Lots of scaffolding which will be assigned as homework
- Very important to do the work as assigned
- We will not pick groups just yet



# Homework No. 2

## Group Project

- For homework, you will need to find one semantics or pragmatics experimental paper and bring it with you to class
- Answer the following questions:
  - What language exactly are they studying?
  - What is their research question?
  - What did they do for their experiment? Outline the experimental design.

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# Recap

- Take out a blank sheet of paper and freewrite for 5 minutes
  - What is **langauge**?
- Turn to the person next to you and share your answer

## Homework No. 2

- Answer the following question:
  - Reflecting on all of the ways that language is operationalized in this class. Address whether something is missing from this definition, and whether you agree or disagree with parts of the definition. If you agree with this view of language, be sure to state why, and if you disagree, state your reasons and how you might change/improve this operational definition. Be sure to address all five (5) of the subdefinitions.
- It is ok to disagree with me as long as you justify why.
- This is a freewrite so you do not need to have scholarly citations, but please refrain from using “gut” feelings as a evidence.

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# What is “meaning”?

- Meaning can be thought of in a number of ways
  - Dictionary definition
    - Often inaccurate
    - Highly prescriptive
    - Conservative
  - Features
    - decomposable into features
    - man = human + male
  - Other ways. . .



What is "meaning?"

# Types of Meaning

- Social Meaning
- Affective Meaning
- Linguistic Meaning



What is “meaning?”

# Recap

- Take out a blank sheet of paper and freewrite for 5 minutes
  - What is **Social Meaning**? Give at least two examples.
- Turn to the person next to you (not the same was as before) and share your answer

# Types of Meaning

- Social Meaning
  - information about the social nature of the speaker or context of utterance
    - social class
    - formality
    - gender
    - geographic location
    - education level
    - sexual orientation
    - race/ethnicity
    - various other subcultures (e.g. goths, work environment, drug culture, D&D)

# Types of Meaning

## Affective Meaning

- Affective Meaning
  - information conveyed about the speaker’s attitude/feelings about content or context of utterance
    - positive or negative connotation
    - “happy” words
    - the “feelings” a word evokes

What is “meaning”?

# Types of Meaning

## Linguistic Meaning

- Linguistic Meaning
  - The “technical” definition
  - This will be our **operational** definition

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# Lingusitic Meaning

- We will *operationalize* “meaning” as a term which encompass two distinct, but related notions
  - **referential** meaning
  - **sense** meaning

# Linguistic Meaning

## Sense

- What the word “means”
- “literal” meaning
- **The president of the United States** = An over 45 years old American by birth who is elected to a single 4 year term no more than twice by a simple majority by the Electoral College whose votes take into consideration a national, universal plebiscite scheduled every 4 years on the second Thursday of November to serve as the military commander-in-chief, head of state, head of government, enforcer of law, and head of the federal branch of government who takes the oath of office in late January following the casting of ballots by State Senate designated Electoral College members administered by the appointed head of the ultimate court of the national judiciary in accordance with the 1820 Constitution of the United States of America.

# Linguistic Meaning

## Sense

- What the word “means”
- “literal” meaning
- **The president of the United States** = An over 45 years old American by birth who is serves as the military commander-in-chief, head of state, head of government, enforcer of law, and head of the federal branch of government after taking the oath of office administered by the appointed head of the ultimate court of the national judiciary in accordance with the 1820 Constitution of the United States of America.



# Linguistic Meaning

## Reference

- The real thing in the world the word represents
- The physical object
- If talking about a group: **reference**
- If talking about a specific entity: **referent**
- *The president of the United States* = The physical man himself, Barack Obama

# Practice

- What is *denoted* by the following phrases?
- What is the *reference* of the following phrases?
  - Yankees Stadium
  - The author of Twilight
  - The morning star
  - The evening star
  - Christen's sister-in-law

# Sense and Reference

- This is more complicated than a one-to-one relationship between sense and reference
- More variety than there being one sense per reference and vice versa
- Some of the relations are:
  - Different sense, same reference
  - Same sense, different reference
  - A sense with only sort of a reference
  - A sense without a reference
  - Multiple senses but still no reference

# Different Senses Same Referent

- Different *senses* can pick out the same *referent*
- What is an example of this? Write it down and share with a classmate.
  - The morning star ↔ The evening star
  - The author of *Twilight* ↔ Stephanie Meyers
  - Francois Hollande ↔ the President of France
  - Beijing ↔ the capital of China
  - The Big Apple ↔ New York City ↔ The Demonstrably Best City Ever

## Different Senses Same Referent

- Why would it be the case that the same reference has multiple senses?
- While the reference is constant, each sense conveys different information
- Thinking about the different senses that we mentioned for the same reference earlier, why might you use one sense over the other? What information is being conveyed by using a different sense?

# Same Sense Different Referent

- Sometimes a sense remains constant while its referent changes
- What is an example of this? Write it down and share with a classmate.
  - The President of the USA (in 1983? in 1999? in 2013?)
- Sometimes a sense has a different referent for different people
- What is an example of this? Write it down and share with a classmate.
  - Dad
  - the most beautiful actress

## Sense but only sort of a Referent

- Some senses do not exactly have a definite reference
- Kind of like “known unknowns”
- What is an example of this? Write it down and share with a classmate.
  - The point in the center of the universe
  - The smallest possible particle
  - All the people in the world who ever lived

# Sense but **no** Referent

- Some senses do not have a reference
- What is an example of this? Write it down and share with a classmate.
  - Pink unicorns from Mars
  - A literal five-headed dragon
  - The Easter Bunny
  - Der Krampus



# Multiple Senses **no** Referent

- Some related senses pick out the same non-existent referent
- What is an example of this? Write it down and share with a classmate.
  - Peter Parker ↔ Spiderman
  - Superman ↔ Clark Kent
  - Dr. Jekyll ↔ Mr. Hyde
  - James Bond ↔ 007