

Titel: Semantics. Scope, Definitions, Methods, [Nice1951] 046-0610

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of aspects (referential or, and attitudinal). Except for special cases in each separate speech situation only some of its elements or aspects are functioning as a clue for the hearer. In some situations or combinations even none of them. An example is obligatory rection of a definite grammatical category by a proposition, a noun, or a verb, or any other word, e.g. the ablative case in ab urbe, de urbe, ex urbe, or gender, number and case of bonarum in bonarum feminarum, or the ablative in uti gladio in Latin. Here the grammatical categories, which certainly have meanings of their own, are functioning as mere indicators of syntactic rank, as marks of determiners.

So it would be an illusioning to assume that the study of meaning is just a matter of summing up a large number of situations. On the other hand it would be unscientific to avoid the study of meanings either because of its complexity and difficulty, or because meanings are not perceivable, but thinkable.

6. Consequently, the study of the meaning of a significant : a word, a morpheme, a combination of words, a sentence intonation, or part of a sentence intonation, is much more delicate than making a comprehensive inventory of situations. Among other problems we have carefully to distinguish independent and combinatory meanings of the same word or other significant; correct and incorrect use which are not identical with effective and not effective use in a given situation; reference to the significant itself, and to something else present in the situation (suppositio materialis, and non materialis); cases where the meaning of the significant actually covers the something referred to, or the speaker's attitude expressed, and where it does not (individual and bold so-called metaphores), and where there even is contradiction between meaning and actually meant (e.g. in case of lying, or irony); cases of ambiguity, and others where there is no ambiguity.

For each of these distinctions the method of distinguishing and the criteria to be applied may be determined and formulated. There may be other such distinctions to be made prior to the actual analysis of a meaning, in order to eliminate cases where nothing or little can be inferred from the situation as to the meaning itself. This priority, of course, is more theoretical than practical. In practice, the question whether the meaning discussed is independent or combinatory; whether in a given situation the use of the word or other significant is correct, or not; whether the significant refers to itself, or not; whether there is mataphore, irony, or ambiguity, usually cannot be answered till one has pretty well established its meaning, or, at least, has conceived a very probable working hypothesis about it.

However, the only way to study a meaning is to start from situations in which the significant seems to be used correctly and effectively. In case of a language which is one's own mother-tongue, or of which one has a very good speaking and hearing knowledge, the linguist may apply the method of introspection, or, better, use himself as a test person. This procedure is valuable especially when dealing with one's own mother tongue. The results, however, should be checked by using other test persons having the same language for their mother tongue. In case of a foreign language other informants are indispensable.

7. A meaning of a significant is just what it has in common with the meaning of one or more other significant of the same language, plus in what it differs from them. So the definition of a meaning of a word necessarily is done by means of words or word groups having the same or opposite meanings. The only alternative is an extensive definition, i.e. an illustrative collection of sentences (or parts of sentences) with indication of the situations in which they may be used correctly and effectively.