

What is Semantics?

Semantics is the part of linguistics that studies meaning in language:

- I. The meaning(s) of a word.
 - (1) a. *I **can** drive them to the party tomorrow.*
 - b. *I **can** tuna for a living.*
 - c. *Pass me a **can** of Coke, please.*
 - (2) a. *He **holds** an important office.*
 - b. *He **holds** a beer in his hand.*
 - c. *He **holds** on to the seat belt.*
 - d. *They **hold** an election.*
- II. How the meaning of a sentence is obtained from the meaning of the words.

Semantics and Pragmatics

Semantics is closely related to pragmatics.

- Semantics deals with **literal meaning**.
- Pragmatics deals with the **use of language**, what it means in context.

The Meaning of Meaning

The words *mean/meaning* are used in different ways:

<i>John means to write</i>	'intends'
<i>A green light means go.</i>	'indicates'
<i>Health means everything</i>	'has importance'
<i>His look was full of meaning</i>	'special import'
<i>What does capitalist mean to you?</i>	'subjective feeling about'
<i>What does 'cornea' mean?</i>	

The last kind of use is the kind of meaning studied in linguistic semantics.

How can one define what a word's meaning is?

Ideas:

- Dictionary Definitions
- Mental Images
- Reference

Group work (15 minutes):

- You are assigned to one of the three ideas.
- Reread the relevant passage in section 7.2 of the language files.
- Discuss in your group
 - what the particular idea consists of
 - what the advantages of the idea are
 - what the problems of the idea areThink of some examples for idea, advantages, and problems.
- Think about how to present this idea clearly to class, including illustrating examples and write a couple of overheads for that purpose.
- Present the idea to class in 3-5 minutes.