SEMANTICS
BASIC IDEAS

• Semantics is the scientific study of meaning.

Sentence & Utterance & Proposition

John likes Mary ➔ Sentence
(Grammatically complete string of the words with a thought)

A: John likes Mary ➔ Utterance
B: John likes Mary ➔ Utterance
(When a sentence is uttered by a person in real language context, it turns into an utterance)

like (Mary, John) ➔ Proposition
(The core meaning of a declarative sentence)
SEMANTICS AS PART OF LINGUISTICS

1 ‘... that shows that there are three hundred and sixty-four days when you might get un-birthday presents.’
   ‘Certainly,’ said Alice.
   ‘And only one for birthday presents, you know. There’s glory for 5 you!’
   ‘I don’t know what you mean by “glory,”’ Alice said.
   Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. ‘Of course you don’t – till I tell you. I meant “there’s a nice knockdown argument for you.”’
   ‘But “glory” doesn’t mean ‘a nice knockdown argument,’ Alice objected.

   ‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.
   ‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things.’

15 ‘The question is,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master – that’s all.’
SEMANTICS AS PART OF LINGUISTICS

• Speaker’s Meaning vs. Sentence Meaning

**SPEAKER’S MEANING**: what a speaker means (i.e. intends to convey) when he uses a piece of language.

**SENTENCE MEANING (or WORD MEANING)**: what a sentence (or word) means, i.e. what it counts as the equivalent of in the language concerned.
TRUTH-CONDITIONS

• “Jack swims.”
• “Jack killed Laura.”

You do not need to actually know whether a sentence is true or false to know its meaning, knowing the meaning is to know how to determine the truth value of the sentence.

Knowing the meaning of a sentence is knowing its **truth conditions**.

Every sentence has a **truth value**, which indicates whether a sentence is true or false in a given situation.
TRUTH VALUES: TAUTOLOGIES, CONTRADICTIONS, CONTINGENCIES

- Certain sentences are always true, no matter which situation you utter them.

- A TAUTOLOGY (ANALYTIC sentence) is one that is necessarily TRUE, as a result of the senses of the words in it. An analytic sentence, therefore, reflects a tacit (unspoken) agreement by speakers of the language about the senses of the words in it.

- A CONTINGENCY (SYNTHETIC sentence) is one which is NOT analytic, but may be either true or false, depending on the way the world is.
(1) Label the following sentences either $T$ for true, $F$ for false, or $D$ for don’t know, as appropriate.

(a)  *Cats are animals* $\quad T/F/D$

(b)  *Bachelors are unmarried* $\quad T/F/D$

(c)  *Cats never live more than 20 years* $\quad T/F/D$

(d)  *Bachelors cannot form lasting relationships* $\quad T/F/D$

(e)  *Cats are not vegetables* $\quad T/F/D$

(f)  *Bachelors are male* $\quad T/F/D$

(g)  *No cat likes to bathe* $\quad T/F/D$

(h)  *Bachelors are lonely* $\quad T/F/D$

(2) Were you able to assign $T$ or $F$ to all the above sentences?  Yes / No

(3) Which of the above sentences do you think ANY speaker of English could assign $T$ or $F$ to?


(4) Which of the sentences in (a)–(h) above would you say are true by virtue of the senses of the words in them?


(5) Which of the sentences above would you say might be true or false as a matter of fact about the world?
TRUTH VALUES:
TAUTOLOGIES, CONTRADICTIONS, CONTINGENCIES

• A CONTRADICTION is a sentence that is necessarily FALSE, as a result of the senses of the words in it. Thus a contradiction is in a way the opposite of a tautology.

• This animal is a vegetable is a contradiction.
• This must be false because of the senses of animal and vegetable.
• Both of John’s parents are married to aunts of mine is a contradiction.
• This must be false because of the senses of both parents, married, and aunt.
TRUTH VALUES: TAUTOLOGIES, CONTRADICTIONS, CONTINGENCIES

Circle the following sentences A for analytic, S for synthetic or C for contradiction, as appropriate. For some you will have to imagine relevant situations.

1) That girl is her own mother’s mother \(A/S/C\)
2) The boy is his own father’s son \(A/S/C\)
3) Alice is Ken’s sister \(A/S/C\)
4) Some typewriters are dusty \(A/S/C\)
5) If it breaks, it breaks \(A/S/C\)
6) John killed Bill, who remained alive for many years after \(A/S/C\)
TRUTH VALUES: ENTAILMENT *and* PARAPHRASE

Practice Look at the following and circle the statements of entailment as correct (C) or incorrect (I).

(1) *John cooked an egg* entails *John boiled an egg.*  \( C / I \)
(2) *John boiled an egg* entails *John cooked an egg.*  \( C / I \)
(3) *I saw a boy* entails *I saw a person.*  \( C / I \)
(4) *John stole a car* entails *John took a car.*  \( C / I \)
(5) *His speech disturbed me* entails *His speech deeply disturbed me.*  \( C / I \)
TRUTH VALUES: ENTAILMENT and PARAPHRASE

• A sentence X entails a sentence Y if the truth of Y follows necessarily from the truth of X.

  *John ate all the kippers (X) entails Someone ate something (Y).*
  *John killed Bill (X) entails Bill died (Y).*

• It is not possible to think of any circumstances in which sentence X is true and sentence Y false.

• entailment is one directional
TRUTH VALUES: ENTAILMENT and PARAPHRASE

• Two sentences may be said to be PARAPHRASES of each other if and only if they have exactly the same set of ENTAILMENTS; or, which comes to the same thing, if and only if they mutually entail each other so that whenever one is true the other must also be true.

• John and Mary are twins entails Mary and John are twins;
• Mary and John are twins entails John and Mary are twins.
• Therefore,
• John and Mary are twins is a paraphrase of Mary and John are twins.

• X Y paraphrase is two directional
TRUTH VALUES: ENTAILMENT and PARAPHRASE

Practice Look at the following pairs of sentences and see if they have the same set of entailments (Yes) or not (No) (i.e. see if they are paraphrases of each other).

(1) No one has led a perfect life
    Someone has led a perfect life  Yes / No

(2) We’ve just bought a dog
    We’ve just bought something  Yes / No

(3) The house was concealed by the trees
    The house was hidden by the trees  Yes / No

(4) I ran to the house
    I went to the house  Yes / No

(5) It is hard to lasso elephants
    Elephants are hard to lasso  Yes / No
AMBIGUITY

• Syntactic Ambiguity:
  (The man saw the boy with the telescope)
  The two meanings depend on how the phrases are combined.

• Lexical Ambiguity:
  (This will make you smart)
  The two meanings depend on the meaning of the expression “smart”
Principle of Compositionality

• Also called *Frege’s Principle*  
  (after German mathematician and philosopher Gottlob Frege (1892))

• The meaning of an expression is the meaning of its parts and the way they are combined together.

• When we combine the meanings of the constituents of the sentence and it is equal with the meaning of whole sentence, it means that this sentence is compositional.
When Compositionality Breaks Down

Anomaly

• There are interesting cases in which compositionality breaks down, either because there is a problem with words or with the semantic rules.

• If one or more words in a sentence do not have a meaning, then obviously we will not be able to compute a meaning for the entire sentence.

• Moreover, even if the individual words have meaning but cannot be combined together as required by the syntactic structure and related semantic rules, we will also not get to a meaning.

• We refer to these situations as semantic anomaly.

• “Colorless green ideas sleep furiously”
1. METAPHOR

• The principle of compositionality is very “elastic” and when it fails to produce an acceptable literal meaning, listeners try to accommodate and stretch the meaning.

• This accommodation is based on semantic properties that are inferred or that provide some kind of resemblance or comparison that can end up as a meaningful concept.

• *Our doubts are traitors*

• *Time is money*

• We “save time,” “waste time,” “manage time,” push things “back in time,” live on “borrowed time,” and suffer the “ravages of time” as the “sands of time” drift away. In effect, the metaphors take the abstract concept of time and treat it as a concrete object of value.
2. IDIOMS

• Languages also contain many phrases whose meanings are not predictable on the basis of the meanings of the individual words.

• Sell down the river “to disappoint someone who trusted you”
• Rake over the coal “to give someone a severe scolding”
• drop the ball ”to fail”

• Here is where the usual semantic rules for combining meanings do not apply.

• The principle of compositionality is superseded by expressions that act very much like individual morphemes in that they are not decomposable, but have a fixed meaning that must be learned.
3. METONYMY

**Definition**  METONYMY is a kind of non-literal language in which one entity is used to refer to another entity that is associated with it in some way. In other words, metonymic concepts ‘allow us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relation to something else’ (LJ 1980: 39).

**Example**  The following example of metonymy is frequently cited in the literature to illustrate this concept:

*The ham sandwich in the next booth is waiting for his bill*

**Practice**  Explain the metonymy in each sentence below.

1. *We enjoy watching Hitchcock more than Spielberg*
2. *The Times asked a pertinent question at the news conference*
3. *The White House refused to answer the question*
THEORIES OF MEANING: REFERENCE

• What is the meaning of a word?

• One proposal is that the meaning of a word or expression is its reference, its association with the object it refers to. This real world object is called the referent.

Definition  By means of reference, a speaker indicates which things in the world (including persons) are being talked about.

Example  ‘My son is in the beech tree’

identifies
person

identifies
thing
THEORIES OF MEANING: REFERENCE

Practice  Before answering these questions you should carry out the following simple instruction:

touch your left ear.

(1) Write down the last three words in the above instruction.

(2) Is the thing you touched a part of the world or a part of the language?

(3) Is your answer to (1) a part of the language? Yes / No

(4) If you say to your mother ‘There’s a wasp on your left ear’, does ‘your left ear’ here refer to the thing you touched in response to a previous question? Yes / No
Comment  In the present circumstances, *your left ear* refers to the thing you touched in response to (1) above. We say that your left ear is the referent of the phrase *your left ear*: reference is a relationship between parts of a language and things outside the language (in the world).

The same expression can, in some cases, be used to refer to different things. There are as many potential referents for the phrase *your left ear* as there are people in the world with left ears. Likewise there are as many potential referents for the phrase *this page* as there are pages in the world. Thus some (in fact very many) expressions in a language can have variable reference.
THEORIES OF MEANING: SENSE

- If meaning were reference alone, then the meaning of words and expressions would be entirely dependent on the objects pointed out in the real world.

- Not every NP refers to an individual.
  
  *No baby swims.*

- Speakers know many words that have no real-world referents. (e.g., *hobbits, unicorns, and Harry Potter*). Yet speakers do know the meanings of these expressions.

- What real-world entities would function words like *of and by*, or *modal verbs* such as *will* or *may* refer to?

- Two words may have the same reference, but not same meaning.
  
  *Jack – the happy swimmer*

  *the happy swimmer is happy* : a tautology
  *Jack is happy* : not a tautology
THEORIES OF MEANING: SENSE

To turn from reference to sense, the SENSE of an expression is its place in a system of semantic relationships with other expressions in the language. The first of these semantic relationships that we will mention is sameness of meaning, an intuitive concept which we will illustrate by example. We will deal first with the senses of words in context.

Practice: Say whether the pairs of words in the curly brackets in the sentences below have approximately the same meaning (S) or a different meaning (D).

1. I \{almost nearly\} fell over
   \textit{S / D}

2. It is \{likely probable\} that Raymond will be here tomorrow
   \textit{S / D}

3. Your gatepost doesn’t seem to be quite \{vertical upright\}
   \textit{S / D}

4. He painted the fireplace \{aquamarine vermilion\}
   \textit{S / D}

5. I’ll see you on \{Wednesday Thursday\}
   \textit{S / D}
THEORIES OF MEANING: SENSE

Comment  We can talk about the sense, not only of words, but also of longer expressions such as phrases and sentences.

Practice  Intuitively, do the following pairs mean the same or nearly the same thing?

(1) Rupert took off his jacket
    Rupert took his jacket off

(2) Harriet wrote the answer down
    Harriet wrote down the answer

(3) Bachelors prefer redheads
    Girls with red hair are preferred by unmarried men

Comment  In some cases, the same word can have more than one sense.

Practice  Does the word bank have the same meaning in the following sentence pairs?

(1) I have an account at the Bank of Scotland
    We steered the raft to the other bank of the river

(2) The DC-10 banked sharply to avoid a crash
    I banked the furnace up with coke last night
On the relationship between sense and reference: the referent of an expression is often a thing or a person in the world; whereas the sense of an expression is not a thing at all. In fact, it is difficult to say what sort of entity the sense of an expression is. Intuitively, it is sometimes useful to think of sense as that part of the meaning of an expression that is left over when reference is factored out. It is much easier to say whether or not two expressions have the same sense. (Like being able to say that two people are in the same place without being able to say where they are.) The sense of an expression is an abstraction, but it is helpful to note that it is an abstraction that can be entertained in the mind of a language user. When a person understands fully what is said to him, it is reasonable to say that he grasps the sense of the expressions he hears.
Theories of Meaning: Sense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Every expression that has meaning has sense, but not every expression has reference.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Do the following words refer to things in the world?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>almost</td>
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<td>(2)</td>
<td>probable</td>
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<td>(3)</td>
<td>and</td>
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<td>(4)</td>
<td>if</td>
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<td>(5)</td>
<td>above</td>
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Yes / No
THEORIES OF MEANING: SENSE

Practice

(1) When you look up the meaning of a word in a dictionary, what do you find there, its referent, or an expression with the same sense?

(2) Is a dictionary full of words or full of things, like a box or a sack?

(3) Could a foreigner learn the meanings of his very first words of English by having their typical referents pointed out to him? Yes / No

(4) Could a foreigner learn the meanings of his very first words of English by looking them up in an English dictionary? Yes / No
SENSE RELATIONS (LEXICAL RELATIONS)

1. SYNONYMY

Definition (partial) SYNONYMY is the relationship between two predicates that have the same sense.

Example In most dialects of English, stubborn and obstinate are synonyms. In many dialects, brigand and bandit are synonyms. In many dialects, mercury and quicksilver are synonyms.

Practice In the following sentences, do the capitalized pairs of words have the same (or very nearly the same) sense in the ways they are used here?

(1) The thief tried to CONCEAL/HIDE the evidence Yes / No
(2) I’m going to PURCHASE/BUY a new coat Yes / No
(3) These tomatoes are LARGE/RIPE Yes / No
(4) This is a very LOOSE/SHORT definition Yes / No
(5) You have my PROFOUND/DEEP sympathy Yes / No
(6) It is a very WIDE/BROAD street Yes / No
SENSE RELATIONS (LEXICAL RELATIONS)

Practice The following pairs of words share at least one sense in common, but do not share all their senses (i.e. they are like hide and conceal). For each pair: (a) give a sentence in which the two words could be used interchangeably without altering the sense of the sentence – use a slash notation, as we have done in practice above; (b) give another sentence using one of the words where a different sense is involved. As a guide, we have done the first one for you.

(1) deep/profound

(a) You have my deep/profound sympathy

(b) This river is very deep (This river is very profound is unacceptable.)
SENSE RELATIONS (LEXICAL RELATIONS)

2. HYponymy

Definition  HYponymy is a sense relation between predicates (or sometimes longer phrases) such that the meaning of one predicate (or phrase) is included in the meaning of the other.

Example  The meaning of *red* is included in the meaning of *scarlet*. *Red* is the superordinate term; *scarlet* is a hyponym of *red* (*scarlet* is a kind of *red*).

Practice  Look at the following, and fill in some missing hyponyms.

(3)  

\[ \text{virtue} \]

\[ \text{honesty} \]

\[ \text{emotion} \]

\[ \text{fear} \]

\[ \text{strike} \] (transitive verb)

\[ \text{[ ]} \]
3. ANTONYMY

A traditional view of antonymy is that it is simply ‘oppositeness of meaning’. This view is not adequate, as words may be opposite in meaning in different ways, and some words have no real opposites.

Practice  Quickly, what would you say are the opposites of the following words?

(1)  *hot* ____________
(2)  *thick* ____________
(3)  *buy* ____________
(4)  *lend* ____________
(5)  *male* ____________
(6)  *dead* ____________
(7)  *lunch* ____________
(8)  *liquid* ____________
Comment  *Hot* is not the opposite of *cold* in the same way as *borrow* is the opposite of *lend*. *Thick* is not the opposite of *thin* in the same way as *dead* is the opposite of *alive*. 

We will not talk of simple ‘oppositeness of meaning’, but will define four basic types of antonymy (or semantic incompatibility). The first we define is binary antonymy (sometimes also called complementarity).

### a. Binary Antonyms

**Definition**  BINARY ANTONYMS are predicates which come in pairs and between them exhaust all the relevant possibilities. If the one predicate is applicable, then the other cannot be, and vice versa. Another way to view this is to say that a predicate is a binary antonym of another predicate if it entails the negative of the other predicate.

**Example**  *true* and *false* are binary antonyms.

If a sentence is true, it cannot be false. If it is false, it cannot be true. Alternatively, if something is true, this entails that it is not false. If it is false, this entails it is not true.
Practice: Are the following pairs of predicates binary antonyms?

(1) chalk – cheese  
(2) same – different  
(3) copper – tin  
(4) dead – alive  
(5) married – unmarried  
(6) love – hate
Practice  Are the following pairs of predicates binary antonyms?

(1) *chalk* – *cheese*  
(2) *same* – *different*  
(3) *copper* – *tin*  
(4) *dead* – *alive*  
(5) *married* – *unmarried*  
(6) *love* – *hate*  

Yes / No

1. no 2. yes 3. no 4. yes 5. yes 6. no
b. Convereses

**Definition**  If a predicate describes a relationship between two things (or people) and some other predicate describes the same relationship when the two things (or people) are mentioned in the opposite order, then the two predicates are CONVERSES of each other.

**Example**  *Parent* and *child* are converses, because *X is the parent of Y* (one order) describes the same situation (relationship) as *Y is the child of X* (opposite order).

**Practice**  Are the following pairs of expressions converses?

1. *below* – *above*  
   Yes / No
2. *grandparent* – *grandchild*  
   Yes / No
3. *love* – *hate*  
   Yes / No
4. *conceal* – *reveal*  
   Yes / No
5. *greater than* – *less than*  
   Yes / No
6. *own* – *belong to*  
   Yes / No
b. Converses

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Example *Parent* and *child* are converses, because *X is the parent of Y* (one order) describes the same situation (relationship) as *Y is the child of X* (opposite order).

Practice Are the following pairs of expressions converses?

1. *below* – *above*  
   Yes / No
2. *grandparent* – *grandchild*  
   Yes / No
3. *love* – *hate*  
   Yes / No
4. *conceal* – *reveal*  
   Yes / No
5. *greater than* – *less than*  
   Yes / No
6. *own* – *belong to*  
   Yes / No

1. yes 2. yes 3. no 4. no 5. yes 6. yes
Practice
(1) If John bought a car from Fred, is it the case that Fred sold a car to John?  
(2) Are buy and sell converses?  
(3) Are borrow and lend converses?  
(4) Are give and take converses?  
(5) Are come and go converses?
Practice
(1) If John bought a car from Fred, is it the case that Fred sold a car to John? Yes / No
(2) Are buy and sell converses? Yes / No
(3) Are borrow and lend converses? Yes / No
(4) Are give and take converses? Yes / No
(5) Are come and go converses? Yes / No

1. yes 2. yes 3. yes 4. no 5. no
c. Gradable Antonyms

Definition  Two predicates are GRADABLE antonyms if they are at opposite ends of a continuous scale of values (a scale which typically varies according to the context of use).

Example  *Hot* and *cold* are gradable antonyms.

   Between *hot* and *cold* is a continuous scale of values, which may be given names such as *warm*, *cool*, or *tepid*. What is called *hot* in one context (e.g. of oven temperatures in a recipe book) could well be classed as *cold* in another context (e.g. the temperatures of stars).

Practice  Are the following pairs gradable antonyms?

   (1)  *tall* – *short*  
   (2)  *long* – *short*  
   (3)  *clever* – *stupid*  
   (4)  *top* – *bottom*  
   (5)  *love* – *hate*  

   Yes / No
Comment: A good test for gradability, i.e. having a value on some continuous scale, as gradable antonyms do, is to see whether a word can combine with *very*, or *very much*, or *how?* or *how much?* For example, *How tall is he?* is acceptable, but *How top is that shelf?* is not generally acceptable.

Practice: Apply this test to the following words to decide whether they are gradable (G) or not (NG).

1. *near*  
2. *cheap*  
3. *beautiful*  
4. *electrical*  
5. *triangular*
d. Multiple Incompatibles

In both types of antonymy discussed so far, binary antonymy and converseness, the antonyms come in pairs. Between them, the members of a pair of binary antonyms fully fill the area to which they can be applied. Such areas can be thought of as miniature semantic systems. Such semantic systems are sometimes known as ‘semantic fields’.

Practice

1. What would you call the system of oppositions to which the words *Spring* and *Summer* both belong?

2. How many members does this system have altogether?

3. What would you call the system to which *solid* and *gas* belong?

4. How many members does this system have?

5. Can you think of an example of a seven-member system? (Hint: you use it every day of the week.)

6. Four-member systems are quite common. How many can you think of?
d. Multiple Incompatibles

What these systems have in common is that (a) all the terms in a given system are mutually incompatible, and (b) together, the members of a system cover all the relevant area. For instance, a playing card cannot belong to both the hearts suit and the spades suit. And besides hearts, clubs, diamonds, and spades, there are no other suits. Systems such as these are called systems of multiple incompatibility. There are large numbers of open-ended systems of multiple incompatibility.
Practice To sum up these exercises in antonymy and incompatibility, classify the following pairs as binary antonyms (B), multiple incompatibles (M), converses (C), or gradable antonyms (G).

(1) cat – dog
(2) easy – difficult
(3) good – bad
(4) better than – worse than
(5) deciduous – evergreen
(6) pass – fail
(7) urban – rural

B / M / C / G
4. HOMONYMY AND POLYSEMY

**Definition**  A case of HOMONYMY is one of an ambiguous word whose different senses are far apart from each other and not obviously related to each other in any way with respect to a native speaker’s intuition. Cases of homonymy seem very definitely to be matters of mere accident or coincidence.

**Examples**  *Mug* (drinking vessel vs gullible person) would be a clear case of homonymy.  
*Bank* (financial institution vs the side of a river or stream) is another clear case of homonymy.  
There is no obvious conceptual connection between the two meanings of either word.

**Definition**  A case of POLYSEMY is one where a word has several very closely related senses. In other words, a native speaker of the language has clear intuitions that the different senses are related to each other in some way.

**Example**  *Mouth* (of a river vs of an animal) is a case of polysemy.  
The two senses are clearly related by the concepts of an opening from the interior of some solid mass to the outside, and of a place of issue at the end of some long narrow channel.
Practice  Decide whether the following words are examples of homonymy (H) or polysemy (P).

(1) bark (of a dog vs of a tree)  \( H / P \)
(2) fork (in a road vs instrument for eating)  \( H / P \)
(3) tail (of a coat vs of an animal)  \( H / P \)
(4) steer (to guide vs young bull)  \( H / P \)
(5) lip (of a jug vs of a person)  \( H / P \)
(6) punch (blow with a fist vs kind of fruity alcoholic drink)  \( H / P \)
Practice  Decide whether the following words are examples of homonymy (H) or polysemy (P).

(1) bark (of a dog vs of a tree)          H / P
(2) fork (in a road vs instrument for eating)  H / P
(3) tail (of a coat vs of an animal)      H / P
(4) steer (to guide vs young bull)       H / P
(5) lip (of a jug vs of a person)        H / P
(6) punch (blow with a fist vs kind of fruity alcoholic drink) H / P

Feedback  (1) H (2) P (3) P (4) H (5) P (6) H
5. PROTOTYPE

Definition  A PROTOTYPE of a predicate is an object which is held to be very TYPICAL of the kind of object which can be referred to by an expression containing the predicate. In other words, the prototype of a predicate can be thought of as the most typical member of the extension of a predicate.

Example  A man of medium height and average build, between 30 and 50 years old, with brownish hair, with no particularly distinctive characteristics or defects, could be a prototype of the predicate man in certain areas of the world.
Practice For each of the drawings (1)–(7), say whether the object shown could be a prototype of the predicate given below it for an average person living in Europe or North America.

(1) bird
(2) bird
(3) bird
(4) house
(5) house
(6) tree
(7) tree
ARGUMENT STRUCTURE AND THEMATIC ROLES

• Argument structure refers to semantic relation between the predicate (verb) and the arguments.

• On the basis of the predicate of the sentence, the semantic roles of the arguments can be “agent, patient, experiencer, instrument, goal, source, theme, recipient, location and beneficiary”.

Thematic Roles

Agent: initiator of the action, capable of volition

Brad hit Andrew

Experiencer: the argument that experiences or perceives the event

Becki saw the Eclipse

Syntax frightens Jim

Susanna loves cookies

A falling rock hit Terry.
Thematic Roles

Theme (also patient and percept) the entity that undergo actions, are moved, experienced or perceived

- Susanna loves cookies
- A falling rock hit Terry.
- The syntactician bought a phonology textbook.
Thematic Roles

Goal: The entity towards which motion takes place. Goals may involve abstract motion.

- A falling rock hit Terry.
- The syntactician bought a phonology textbook.
- Millie went to Chicago.
- Travis was given a semantics article.
Thematic Roles

**Recipient:** A special kind of goal that involves a change of possession

- Julie gave Jessica the book
- Roy received a scolding from Sherilyn.

**Source:** The opposite of goal, entity from which movement occurs.

- Bob gave Steve the Syntax assignment
- Stacy came directly from Sociolinguistics class.
Thematic Roles

Location: Place where action occurs
- Andrew is in Tucson's finest apartment
- We're all at school.

Instrument: The entity with which action occurs.
- Patrick hacked the computer apart with an axe
- This key will open the door to the Douglass building.
Thematic Roles

Beneficiary: The entity for whom the action occurs

- He bought these flowers for Jason
- She cooked Matt dinner.
THANKS FOR LISTENING😊😊

[[Semantics]]
of a structure

By Tom 7

[[/]] = carrot

[[ ] ] = bowling pin