

Semantics and pragmatics assignment

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SEMANTICS & PRAGMATICS Analysis of Two Texts, 1500 WORD Linguistics is the science of a language. Linguists depend on the use of certain aspects in order to analyse, describe and explain a human language; these aspects include semantics and pragmatics. Semantics can be defined as the study of “ meaning” of lexical words and expressions independently of context.

Where pragmatics is the process of recognising the “ invisible meaning” of lexical items and expressions; taking into account the speaker’s/ addressee’s intention, the status of hearer/ receiver and the actual situation.

This paper will explain the process we, as humans usually follow to understand a certain text or utterance. This explanation would be achieved through the analysis of two journal articles from semantics and pragmatics perspective, taking into account a range of techniques associated with each of the two concepts including: Semantics Aspects: Synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, prototypes, homophones and homonyms, polysemy and ambiguity.

Pragmatics Aspects: Deixis and Distance, reference and inference, conversational implicature, anaphoric and cataphoric reference, presupposition, entailment, direct and indirect speech acts and speech events, cultural context and cross cultural pragmatics, conversational analysis and background knowledge, denotation and connotation meaning, the four maxims and hedges. Analysing Article One We will begin by observing the semantic and pragmatic features in article 1 being “ Men are sulks say surveys” .

This article is taken from the hot topics section of the popular msn website. The main topic of this article is a medical concept being flu/cold, where the unspecified writer of this article discusses the reaction of men, compared to women when it comes to having flu. The article also lists a number of readers' comments on the subject topic. As a whole, article one is rich with lexical items that belong to the medical lexical field, such as cold, flu, Panadol, tablets, sick, suffer, diseases, chicken pox, depression, doctor, coughs, headache etc.

The extensive use of these terms throughout the article was a necessity since the main topic is about a medical condition. Another lexical field was elaborated in this article being the family relationships such as mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, children etc. Antonymy or the use of two lexical items that represent the opposite meaning appear in this article such as men and women, males and females, wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, vent and defend etc. The use of these terms in this article is more likely for the purpose of comparison.

Most of these antonyms are relational opposites; these opposites indicate two ends of a relationship between persons. Also there were synonymous sense relations between few lexical items in the text for example, husband and hubby, males and men, females and women. These lexical items have the " same" meaning, however they are not absolute synonyms because the terms males and females are more general than the terms men and women because the first set could refer to a larger group of people, being all males/females.

Another non-absolute synonyms are the terms hubby and husband, where the word hubby is the more colloquial term for husband. Homonymy also occurs in this article through the use of the term “ food” in the phrase “ here is a little food for thought” shown in comment 1. The term food here even though it has the same phonological and written form of the term food which means “ the nutrients eaten by human or animals for the purpose of staying alive”.

However, in this context “ food “ for thought can be expressed as a positive idea or piece of information given from the writer to the reader to enhance the knowledge of the reader. In comment 2 the expression “ wouldn’t lift a finger” has a homonymous sense relation because such expression could be interpreted literally as not lifting a finger, where in this context this expression means that the writer’s husband failed to help her with the housework even by doing little things.

Pragmatically speaking, verbs like “ love” in comment 1 “ love the way everyone gets emotive about men” forms an expressive speech act because the writer or the addressee is expressing his feelings. There is also a referential relationship between some expressions, for example in comment 2 in the first phrase being “ Last week, hubby came home with flu. I also had “ it”. The expression “ It” in this context is an example of anaphora meaning that the “ It” here refers back to an already introduced entity, being the “ flu” in this case.

Also based on the pragmatic analysis of article 1, the lexeme “ sympathy” which occurred in the first paragraph of the actual article “ to seek sympathy

for their ailment from their partners” has a different denotative meaning than that of the writer’s intention because the most direct meaning of the this lexeme is associated with the feelings and emotions of the sympathy that needs to be paid when someone passes away. Where in this context the term “ sympathy” means “ the need to be looked after”.

Another pragmatic expression is used in comment 5 where the writer said “ a man that would rather chew his arms then complain”, the writer used this expressions in order to convey the idea that her dad has the ability to put up with the discomfort associated with flu/cold. Analysing Article Two Article two is called “ Choosing Baby’s Gender”, it is originated from the same website as article one and most properly written by the same author, however the commentators are different.

This article discusses the controversial issue of gender detection of baby’s and the selective termination. The writer then asks the question “ Do you think parents should be able to choose their baby’s gender? ” then it lists few comments of the readers, answering that question, some agreeing and others disagreeing with the subject process. The expression “ turning their back” in comment 2 has a pragmatic meaning in this context meaning “ giving up on, or rejecting something or someone”. This expression has a negative connotation.

Where the expression in comment 1 being “ I do understand where you are all coming from” can pragmatically interpreted as “ I understand your point of view” and not as the semantic meaning being “ I know the place where you all come from”. The terms children, babies, boy, girl, child, all belong to

the same semantic field of young humans. The words “ boy and girl” form an absolute antonyms because they express absolute oppositeness; where the terms “ parent and child” are relational opposites because its oppositeness indicates two ends of a relationship between persons.

Also the gradable pairs “ healthy and disabled” in comment 3 have an antonymous sense relationship because their oppositeness is a question of degree. The lexical items abortion and termination have a synonymous sense relationship because both terms have the “ same” meaning; however the term abortion is the more specialised term for such process. The denotative meaning of the expression “ so coldly” used in comment 2, is usually associated with temperature degree “ cold”, however in this context it means “ in a uncaring manner” or “ not giving the subject topic the concern it deserves”.

Semantically speaking the term “ sad” in the title of comment 3 poses an ambiguity because sad could have two meanings one is “ distressing or heartbreaking”, the second meaning is the adjective meaning “ upset or unhappy”. In this context, the term “ sad” means distressing or heartbreaking. Through the analysis of the two texts, it became quite clear that they share many similarities as they both are medical articles. In terms of language use, they both include many terms of the slang English particularly, in the comments section.

The use of this everyday/colloquial language in both texts contributed in making the articles more objectives and convincing to the reader. Overall both articles were rich in terms and expressions that could be analysed

semantically and pragmatically; however, we observed only a number of them due the limitation of word number of this essay. On a different subject, the two articles did not tell us much about the author/s, because the writer/s of both texts were mainly providing facts and asking questions about the subject topic.

However, the author of article one seem to have a humorous and sarcastic personality because of the word choice in some sentences for example “mighty men”. The use of this term here with its connotative meaning indicates that the writer is being sarcastic Even though article one had more terms and expressions that could be analysed from the semantic and pragmatic perspective, article two on the other hand is considered to be of a greater importance due to the issues raised in it, as the topic of “ choosing baby gender and deciding on abortion” seems to be of more importance and interest than “ men’s reaction to flu”.

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