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Research in Semantical Development

Allen Eaton

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RESEARCH IN SEMANTICAL DEVELOPMENT

A Term Paper

Presented to

Dr. James Berryman

Ouachita Baptist University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for

Honors Special Studies H491

by

Allen Eaton

May 19, 1969



OUTLINE

- I. Introduction
 - A. Definition
 - B. Exposition
- II. Semantic Environment
 - A. Pre-semantic
 - B. Influence on Culture
 - C. Companionship Perspective
- III. Child's Semantic Growth
 - A. Limited
 - B. Growth
 - C. Environment's Role
 - D. Probability of Selection
- IV. Language
 - A. Importance
 - B. Relation Through Communication
- V. Search for Meaning
 - A. Definition of Meaning
 - B. Relation's Part
 - C. Three Types of Meaning
 - D. Ambiguity
 - E. Three Areas of Linguistic Ambiguity
 - F. Matrix
 - G. Semantic Growth
 - H. Three Laws of Reason for Semantic Growth
- VI. Linguistic Interpretation
 - A. Universe of Discourse
 - B. Metaphor
 - C. Re-evaluation of Matrix
 - D. Consciousness
- VII. Definition
 - A. Two Types of Things Defined
 - B. Two Types of Static Definition
 - C. Three Classes of Process Definition
 - D. Practical Definition
 - E. Problem-solving
 - F. Scientific Understanding
- VIII. Two Basic Principles of Semantics
 - A. Law of Matrix
 - B. Essential Ambiguity

IX. Creative Analysis

- A. Outline
- B. Explanation
- C. Purpose

X. Religious Literature and Language

- A. Abstract
- B. Morpheme
- C. Synthetic Language
- D. Analytical Language
- E. Problem of English Interpretation
- F. Contrast of Hebrew to Greek
- G. Etymology
- H. Personal Terms
- I. Triangular Reference
- J. Etymology and Matrix of Biblical Language.

XI. Conclusion

- A. Attempt of Paper
- B. Failure of Communication
- C. Four most Important Elements in Semantics

Any study of semantics must begin with a definition of the area of interest. "Semantics may be defined as (1) in modern logic, the study of the laws and conditions under which signs and symbols, including words, may be said to be meaningful; semiotic; and (2) the study of the relation between words and things, later extended into the study of the relations between language, thought, and behavior, that is, how human action is influenced by words, whether spoken by others or to oneself in thought; signifies. The word was originally used to mean (3) in philology, the historical study of changes in the meaning of words, semasiology."¹

As Hayakawa's definition implies, semantics is a highly complex science. It is as ageless as communication. Language and its meaning is a unifying agent of culture. Hayakawa states, "Where the basic orientation of a culture makes few semantically critical demands, it will not be surprising if men are isolated from each other by their very modes of communication."²

Semantics plays a critical role in the environment of man. Included in the semantic environment of man is the individual's environment of attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, institutions, etc. Several linguists hold that the semantic environment and its ability to be communicated is the basis for man's superiority in the biological kingdom.

The pre-semantic condition of man is difficult to define. The accepted doctrine of semantic environment holds that man is man only through the semantic environment, with its symbolic faculty. "The symbolic faculty was brought into existence by the natural process of organic evolution. The exercise of the symbolic faculty brought culture into existence, thus making mankind human."³

Semantics then is the study of language, custom, thought, communication, and life in general. This statement shows the complexity of the field of semantics. Here is the basis for all fashions of communication. Here is a striving for human companionship through sharing of life's pleasures, pains, and periods of gray. Wheelwright states, "The essential excuse for writing, then, is to unveil as best one can some perspective that has not already become ordered into a public map."⁴ This is the basic reason for the whole semantical perspective.

A child is born into a world of strange forms. His semantic environment is limited, and he begins a program of semantical growth. He begins to identify with his environment. His biological growth is paralleled by his semantical growth. He begins to be influenced by his semantical environment. This cycle is a progressive state of change with both environments playing equal importance.

The child's environment forces him to see himself. He feels the need for communication with his environment, thus he becomes a creative institution. He aspects parts of his environment and rebels against other parts of it. With each attempt at selection, he becomes more dependent on his environment. He uses his total perspective of semantics expression to "become."

The importance of language is seen in this development. Yet; "We are able to have language because of our mental capacity to compare, or to see similarities, we need language because of our capacity to contrast, or to see differences."⁵ He begins to use language to relate his personality to others.

The child begins his search for meaning. Upton has called a unit of meaning, "made of a thing and the relation which connects it to another thing."⁶ The child has thus begun his never-ending journey for meaning. The rest of the story is mere application of the semantical apparatus at work.

The key to this procedure is found in the term relation. Upton claims that all relations are bodiless, spiritual, mental things that inhabit the world of consciousness. This adds to the semantical complexity, for meaning is bound to relations.

Meanings can be classified in three categories. The first class of meaning is from simple sign. "A sign is anything which has meaning. There are three sorts of signs: signs, representations, and symbols. Signs, in the more specific sense of the word, are things which have meaning because they have natural relations with other things."⁷ This class of meaning is obtained from ..."the fixed, natural, or necessary relation between things in the world, or from two events which happen together or in an inevitable sequence."⁸

The second class of meaning is from projection. The type of sign used in this class is representations. "... representations are things which bring other things to mind because they resemble them in some way."⁹

In the meaning from projection one is "...able to imagine or construct one object by considering another because there is a point-for-point relation between them."¹⁰

The third class of meaning is from symbol. "...symbols are things which stand for other things because of human convention."¹¹ In the meaning from symbol, one progresses "...from a sign whose significant relation is not fixed in nature but is established in accordance with the conscious interests of human beings."¹²

All meaning stands on the threshold of ambiguity. The general fault in the process of meaning is in the area of the human. The human is defined as any cultural evaluation of the habitual man. The correcting particles can be mistaken for general propositions. The three areas of linguistic ambiguity follow along these lines. The first major area for ambiguity is in the discrepancy of the meaning of familiar terms. Each area of life can produce a different meaning for each set term.

The second area of ambiguity follows from the interpretation according to matrix. All discourse has two matrixes, that of the speaker and that of the listener.

The third area of ambiguity is the refusal to follow the law of parsemony. "The Law of Parsemony, called Occan's Razor, states that entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity; not to make unnecessary assumptions regarding the hypothetical matrix of a sign."¹³

Semantical growth follows the basic laws of reason. The first law is Aristotle's dictum stating that a species has the qualities of its genus. The second law states that a structure is a system of related parts in space; or in common terminology, a part belongs to the whole.

The third law states that an event is a system of movements in time and space. This simply holds that a moment belongs to its event, or a stage to its operation.

Using these laws, the first step in the direction of semantical growth is forming a basic, logical operation of classification. The next step is to generalize, and subsequently to specialize. The third step is to represent the structures in process of change. As pointed out earlier, the child goes through a similar adjustment cycle before he reaches the linguistic capability.

The problem here is to break from the natural process of classification, and develop a scientific procedure for classification.

This moves semantic growth to the area of linguistic interpretation. The significant term at this point is universe of discourse. Upton states that the "universe of discourse is a world of thought with its vocabulary, grammar, and syntax-that is, its stock of words, the rules for changing their forms, and for arranging them in relation to one another."¹⁴

With this definition, the term metaphor can be explained. "A metaphor is the transfer of one word from one universe of discourse to another."¹⁵ Wheelwright tells us that the grammarian's familiar distinction between metaphor and simile should be ignored. Semantically speaking, metaphor and simile are basically equal.

A metaphor can be used two ways. The first way is under the classification of epiphor. This is from a concrete image over on to what is vague. The second way is under the classification of diaphor,

which is a movement through certain particulars of experience in a fresh way producing new meaning. The art of poetry uses the metaphor to its highest potential. Metaphor is used to relate reality with abstractness. Any time a metaphor is used, there must follow a necessary degree of ambiguity; for no object is like another object in the total perspective.

Another consideration is the idea of matrix. Matrix has two principal aspects, i.e., the aspect of environment, and the aspect of heredity. "Consciousness exists when some symbol is being actively employed to relate the present movement to the past history of that individual."¹⁶ This is matrix seen in its most desired function.

The human brain is the ultimate achievement of the evolutionary process. Language behavior is the crowning achievement of that brain. The third factor in this chain of assumptions is that individual is the greatest value which language behavior can produce.

To support this proposition, the term definition needs to be studied. Two radically different sets of objects require defining. The first set is words. The second set is objects.

There are two types of static definition, definition by conceptual naming or identification. The first type is definition by identification. The second type is definition by comparison. These two types of definitions are used in the analysis process of definition.

The first class of definitional analysis is definition by classification. "This is a deliberate selection of an appropriate genus term and careful differentiation of the species in the genus. The formula is: (1) statement of genus; (2) differentiation from other species."¹⁷

The second class of definitional analysis is definition by structural analysis. "The term is related to a structure, adequate definition will deal with the basic structural relations."¹⁸

The third class of definitional analysis is definition by operational analysis. "The terms that have to do with structures in action."¹⁹

The practice of definition should follow Upton's quotation: "Perhaps the essential logical qualification that we somewhat casually call "objective" is simply a special sort of subjective behavior called corroboration. To be objective is simply to test and select your original observations."²⁰

The power of definition is seen in its use in the problem-solving process. "Problem-solving is an operation. The changing structure involved is made up of the problem-solver, his apparatus, and his environment."²¹ The task of the problem-solver is to make a tentative statement of the problem. After this comes a multiple definition, followed by a working definition. On completion of the definition, comes the classification or general plan. With each new piece of datum added to the definition, there arrives a closer ability to grasp the subject of study.

This statement of Upton is significant: "The most important function of language in the development of scientific understanding and control of the world about us is the use of a kind of assumption called hypothesis at first, theory in a more developed state, and law when its implications have been extensively corroborated."²² Language

provides a meaningful channel of expression, and thus allows the organization of the senses and feelings. "The noblest function of language is the establishment of a moment of free-fear ecstasy."²³

The two basic principles of semantics are the law of matrix, and the doctrine of essential ambiguity. The former is also called the law of signs, while the latter is called the law of symbols.

To tie this together, Upton and Samson have written a graded exercise text called Creative Analysis. This text was reconstructed to parallel Upton's Design for Thinking. A student can work through this text and better obtain the true implications of the semantic process. The following is the outline for the text:

- I. Qualification
 - A. Things and Qualities
 - B. Modes of Consciousness
 - C. The Naming of Qualities
 - D. The Relationship Between Qualification and Classification
 - E. Levels of abstraction
- II. Signs
 - A. Signs, Representations, and Symbols
 - B. Symbols
 1. Ambiguity
 2. Symbols and Things
 3. Symbols and Their Matrices
- III. Analysis
 - A. Introduction to Analysis
 - B. Classification
 - C. Structure Analysis
 - D. Operation Analysis
- IV. Semantic Growth
- V. Analogies
 - A. Artificial Analogies
 - B. Functional Analogies
- VI. Definition
 - A. Facts of Definition
 - B. Definition of Words Used in Single
 - C. Multiple Definition

VII. Problem-solving

- A. Simplified Theory of Problem-solving
- B. Operational Theory of Problem-solving

This revised outline is intended to show the gradual development of the semantic process. It is intended to verify the text of my written research.

Keeping the above in mind, a study of religious literature, or language can be made. This area is bound in the abstract. This area is one in which man seeks the noblest function of language, free-fear ecstasy. All the above information is included plus the extended use of the two laws of semantics.

A few statements need to be made concerning language. A morpheme is the use of a one syllable word in the basic breakdown of language. A synthetic language uses combinations of morphemes to produce its vocabulary. An analytical language sticks to the use of a simple morpheme in its vocabulary. From this is derived that an analytical language is informal, while a synthetic language is formal.

This produces a problem when considering the English language. English is built upon the Greek and Latin languages. Both Greek and Latin are synthetic languages, while English is an analytical language. This is one reason for the many idiomatic constructions found in English.

This language situation creates a problem to the translation of the Biblical doctrines. In Western theological language, the text is built upon synthetic languages. The translation into English becomes vague. This opens up the importance of Biblical translation.

Another problem confronts the Western mind. This problem arises in the contrast of the Old Testament language of Hebrew, and the New Testament language of Greek.

Hebrew is an analytical language. It is informal stressing action. Hebrew language requires each term to be one complete unit. This is seen in the problem of the division of the soul and body of man. Hebrew language holds that the soul and flesh are one.

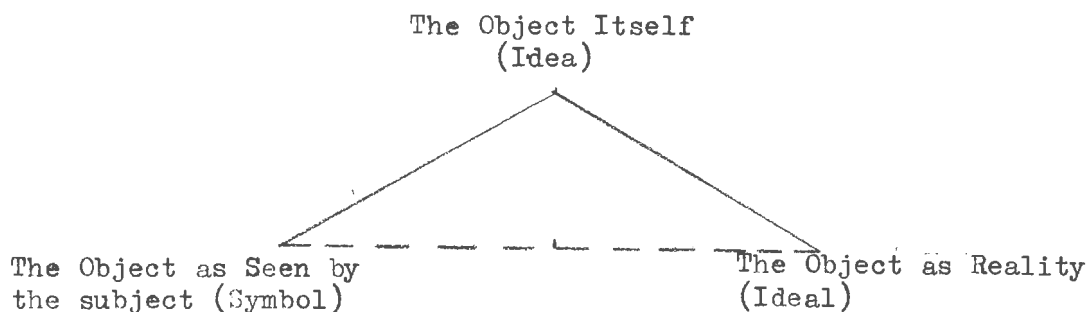
The Greek language is a synthetic language. It is very formal and contemplative in nature. The more synthetic a language becomes, the more abstract the language becomes. This shows reason for the Greek concept of duality of the soul and flesh. The soul was seen trapped in the body. The body was seen as the tomb of the soul. The soul was in continual struggle for release.

The major tool in translation of the Biblical passages is through etymological study. Barr holds that, "We must also note that etymological interest plays a notable part in the minds of many religious people, so much so that it may be said to have a fascination for them."²⁴

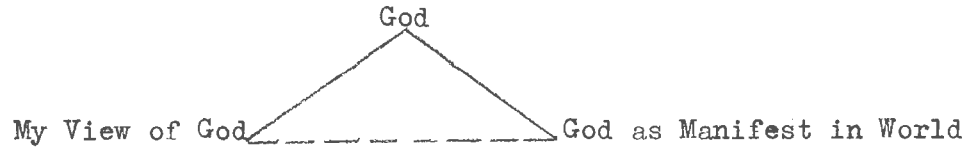
Religion presents one of the most interesting points-of-departure in semantics. Religion is a highly personal diversion. It is an experience of the spirit, or bodiless counterpart of man. It uses all the semantical devices to relate the personal perspective.

Etymologies play a fascinating role in this communication. Etymologies relate the abstract to the personal. The personal perspective is the most difficult to communicate.

Upton's triangular reference is needed to show this relationship. The triangle can be symbolized as follows:

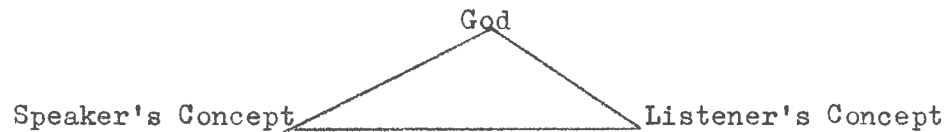


This can be illustrated by the doctrine of God.



All parts of the triangle must agree. This is the first step in the problem.

The second step in the problem can be illustrated by another triangle. This step is my ability to communicate my doctrine.



All parts of the triangle must agree if there is to be communication.

This stresses the importance of the etymology of vocabulary, and the matrix each vocabulary relies upon. Barr states that, "The point we have made, namely that the real communication of religious and theological patterns is by the larger word combinations and not by lexical units or words, is of real importance for one of the problems which I mentioned in the beginning, namely the problem of the translation of the Bible..."²⁵

Each culture has its matrix secured in the heredity of the culture, and the environment of that culture. Religious matrix spans the gap of cultures, and takes heritage in each culture. The problem arises of which religious matrix is correct. Going back to the noblest function of language, all religious matrix tends to fulfill this function. Each matrix tends to aid in the humanization process of man. Therefore, all religious language tends to accomplish the same result.

This paper has attempted to show the importance of semantics in the lives of man and the part of the complexity of the semantical growth. Each person should attempt to remember the semantic process of problem-solving, and use it in the fight for a peaceful world.

In the motion picture "Cool Hand Luke," the warden is heard to say, "What we have here is a failure to communicate." With the problems of the world facing man, let men not be guilty of the same pronouncement. Lines of communication must be opened. Man must learn to evaluate all statements by the semantic procedure.

"The most important ideas in semantics are:

1. Propositional Function
2. Operational Definition
3. Predictive Value as the Criterion of Truth
4. Theory of Types."²⁶

FOOTNOTES

¹S. I. Hayakawa, Language, Meaning, and Maturity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 19.

²Ibid., p. 52.

³Ibid., p. 260.

⁴Philip Wheelwright, Metaphor and Reality (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 16.

⁵Albert Upton, Design for Thinking (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 3.

⁶Ibid., p. 31.

⁷Albert Upton and Richard W. Samson, Creative Analysis (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1961), p. 29.

⁸Upton, op. cit., p. 35.

⁹Upton and Samson, loc. cit.

¹⁰Upton, loc. cit.

¹¹Upton and Samson, loc. cit.

¹²Upton, loc. cit.

¹³Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 121.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., p. 131.

²¹Ibid., p. 174.

²²Ibid., p. 153.

²³Ibid., p. 219.

²⁴James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language
(Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 109.

²⁵Ibid., p. 264.

²⁶Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 7.

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- Upton, Albert. Design for Thinking. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961.
- Upton, Albert, and Richard W. Samson. Creative Analysis. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1961.
- Wheelwright, Philip. Metaphor and Reality. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962.

General:

1. Some general terms are not defined such as "semantic growth," "ambiguity," "linguistics," and "etymology."

2. The paper reflects a good understanding of the materials without reference to technical data.

3. The paper could be strengthened with an extension into the investigation of various universes of discourse and the application of semantic principles. The section on religious language is good but brief.

Specific:

p. 1, line 18--"etc." is too indefinite--the other areas referred to are not commonly understood.

p. 2, line 18--This sentence is redundant.

p. 2, line 23--"Institution" is hardly an appropriate term when referring to a person.

p. 3, line 24--semi-colon after "representations."

p. 4, line 18--"matrices" is correct plural.

p. 4, line 21--"parsimony" is correct spelling.

"Occam's" is correct spelling.

p. 6, line 18--Better, "static definitions include..."