

What is meaning

How are items of the world stored in memory?

encoded in words, sentences
(linguistic)

encoded non-linguistically (signs of various nature)

What makes a good definition? A central problem of lexicography

Reference and naming

Philosophy of language
(referential/denotational) accounts

√Frege (reference and meaning)

sense- the way we perceive the referent.

Russell (names and definite descriptions)

Kripke (proper names)

Psychological/cognitive/empirical accounts

Data from the senses and knowledge of the world determine how meaning is structured in the mind.

Interested in
Child development evidence:

Is the mind of the child *tabula rasa*?

Frege

-Ideas of an object may vary from individual to individual.

-Proper names include all descriptive noun phrases:

Proper names denoting the same individual:

Aristotle

Plato's pupil

The teacher of Alexander the Great

-The object/individual is identified by means of one particular property

Real proper names (such as Aristotle):

denote individuals by means of some identifying property which for another person might be different.

'Variations in sense' also for proper names.

Use-mention distinction:

"words between quotation marks"(compare: signifier)

He said 'cat'.

Frege (cont)

Propositional attitudes (belief, hoping, fearing, wishing) affect the way we use names:

P. believes that the author of Great Expectations is a genius.

P. believes that Charles Dickens is a genius.

What counts as the sense of a name can vary from one speaker to another.

Often, in semantic literature the terms **intension and extension** are used in order to differentiate between the actual object/meaning and its (linguistic) representation in the mind:

They correspond to **Sence and reference** (Frege); **Connotation and denotation** (Mill)

Extension :the entities picked out or referred to (used in formal semantics)

Intension: the particular way this is done
Consider the descriptions below:
1.All female presidents of the United states
2. All dogs that can write

Extension: the same: \emptyset (the empty set)
Intension: very different!

Russell

Definite descriptions: defining description of an individual which conveys the idea that there is only one such individual
Definite article: the evening star
Indefinite descriptions: only the 'concept' is introduced
Indefinite article: *a*, no article for plural nouns (generics)

*Please note the distinction we made between **specific** and **non-specific** descriptions. Definite descriptions are always specific by definition, while indefinite descriptions can be used either to refer to a specific object (=specific, refer directly), or they are used in a more general way (=non-specific, do not refer directly).

Yesterday, I saw a dog.(specific, indefinite)
I want to have a dog (non-specific, indefinite)

Russell (cont):

Proper names:

- refer directly only when the individual is in front of the speaker
- do not refer directly when they are used *in absentia*.
In this case they are "abbreviated definite descriptions":
John (instead of 'my brother')
Mr. Jones (instead of 'the dentist')
Evelyn (my colleague)

Kripke's causation theory

'Naming and necessity'. 1977- about proper names but this theory can be extended to natural kinds.

Names **directly denote individuals** at all times without the need for a description (compare with Russell)
They are the same for all speakers, regardless of point of view or attitudes. This approach allows for speakers ignorance (we can use a name without exactly knowing its exact meaning)
Kripke's causation theory (how is the name used by a community of speakers?)

- Initial baptism
- The name is passed on within a community by referring to Individual
- Even without producing a description one can use the name appropriately.

Representational theories (cognitive psychology)

What is the relation between names and concepts?

Images stored in the brain are abstract.

Abstract nouns: love, democracy
(non-visual)

Simple concepts (directly related to perceptual stimuli)
water, sun, chair
Complex concepts: terrorism, abduction

Question: why are certain concepts not lexicalized?

What is a concept?
How do we define a concept?

Theory of necessary and sufficient conditions

X is a student, iff P.(p=conditions, characteristics, attributes)

P1=..... necessary
P2=..... necessary
P3=.....necessary?
P4=..... necessary?

Necessary: without them the object would not be defined
Sufficient: how many conditions (necessary conditions) do we need?

Qualia roles

What criteria do we use?
'Horse'

Four legged, grazing, hoof ... (from the perspective of the vet)

Related to zebras and donkeys (evolutionary)

Used as a draft animal (farmer, jockey)

An adult mammal grown from a foal born of a mare, fathered by a stallion, dying at 25-30 years of age (biologist)

James Pustejovsky

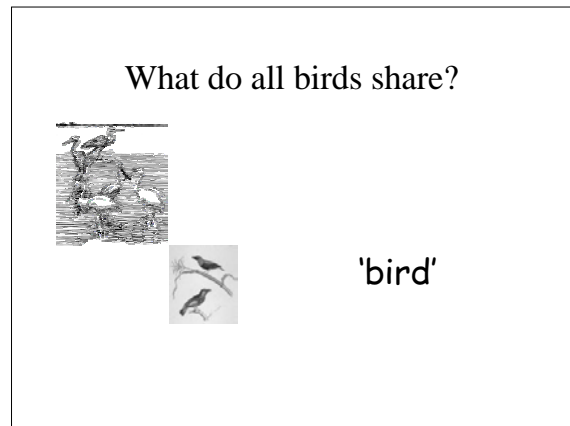
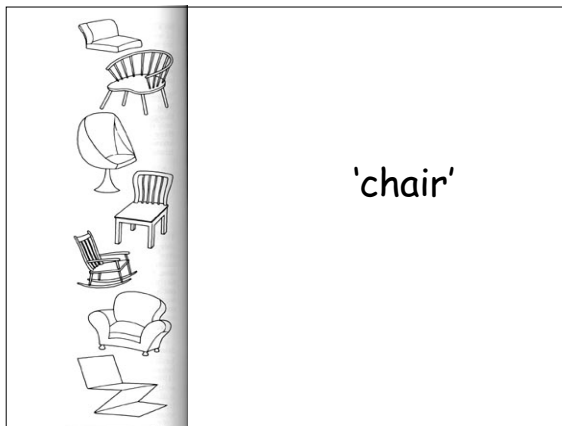
4 qualia roles for 'chair'

Constitutive (what it's made of)
Wood, plastic etc

Formal (what it's like and unlike)
Like other pieces of furniture

Telic (what it's for, its purpose)
It is used to sit on

Agentive (how it's made)
Artifact (made by humans)



Problems with qualia roles and related accounts:

Putnam: speakers often use names without knowing the identifying characteristics of the referent

No encyclopedic knowledge is required in order to use a word

Example:

Tree names: *beech, elm*

Theory of Prototypes

Rosch. 1973 'Natural categories'

We can identify CENTRAL or TYPICAL members representing the concept.

Conceptual hierarchies (networks): p. 39

Evidence (experimental):
they come to mind easier

2. Are prototypes memories/exemplars stored in the memory?

Ostensive definition: A concept is acquired when a child is given an example.

3. Are they Idealized Cognitive Models (Lakoff)-e.g., collections of cultural views

4. Are we born with certain basic concepts? (Fodor 1980)

Thinking and speaking: concepts and words

1. Linguistic relativity: thinking is constrained by words
2. Thinking and speaking are distinct cognitive processes. (cognitive science)

Linguistic relativity (Sapir):

Words vary from language to language and do not define exactly the same notion/concept (*snow* words in Eskimo). They are also culturally constraint.

Sapir: 'language is a guide to social reality'

Cognitive science (Pinker):

Many mental processes do not involve language.

Telepathic communication

Evidence against Sapir's argumentation (see textbook)

'Language of thought' (**mentalese**) - Fodor

It might be the case that the language of thought is richer than language *proper*.