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# Semantic Theory

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*Semantic Theory*

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**ZAYDEN CULLEN**

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Semantic Theory John Benjamins  
Publishing

This book discusses the two main construals of the explanatory goals of semantic theories. The first, externalist conception, understands semantic theories in terms of a hermeneutic and interpretive explanatory project. The second, internalist conception,

understands semantic theories in terms of the psychological mechanisms in virtue of which meanings are generated. It is argued that a fruitful scientific explanation is one that aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms in virtue of which the observable phenomena are made possible, and that a scientific semantics should be doing just that. If this is the case, then a scientific semantics is unlikely to be externalist, for reasons having to do with the subject matter and form of externalist theories. It is argued that semantics construed hermeneutically is nevertheless

a valuable explanatory project. *Significance in Language* Clarendon Press  
A novel cognitive theory of semantics that proposes that the meanings of words can be described in terms of geometric structures. In *The Geometry of Meaning*, Peter Gärdenfors proposes a theory of semantics that bridges cognitive science and linguistics and shows how theories of cognitive processes, in particular concept formation, can be exploited in a general semantic model. He argues that our minds organize the information involved in communicative acts in a format that can

be modeled in geometric or topological terms—in what he terms conceptual spaces, extending the theory he presented in an earlier book by that name. Many semantic theories consider the meanings of words as relatively stable and independent of the communicative context. Gärdenfors focuses instead on how various forms of communication establish a system of meanings that becomes shared between interlocutors. He argues that these “meetings of mind” depend on the underlying geometric structures, and that these structures facilitate language learning. Turning to lexical semantics, Gärdenfors argues that a unified theory of word meaning can be developed by using conceptual spaces. He shows that the meaning of different word classes can be given a cognitive grounding, and offers semantic analyses of nouns, adjectives, verbs, and prepositions. He also presents models of how the meanings of words are composed to form new meanings and of the basic semantic role of sentences. Finally, he considers the future implications of his theory for robot semantics and the Semantic Web.

*Semantics* Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co

KG

This critical edition of *The Meaning of Meaning* is based on the first edition of 1923. It restores the version of the Word Magic chapter eliminated from all subsequent editions and illuminates the text by collating it with earlier serial publications, the holograph manuscript predating Ogden's collaboration with Richards, subsequent publications and Ogden's private correspondence.

*Semantic Theory* Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG

This volume contains selected contributions to the interdisciplinary symposium on 'Models of Meaning' held in Varna, September 25-28, 1988, under the auspices of the Institute of the Bulgarian Language of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The aim of the meeting was to broaden the horizons of meaning research and the modeling of linguistic semantics, with contributions centering on the appropriate modeling of lexical, syntactic, and textual-semantic representations. The papers challenge some basic notions of semantics and reveal two main avenues of development in contemporary investigations. One is toward broadening

the scope of investigativeness, the second is toward a greater domain-specificity as expressed in a greater sensitivity to pragmatics and meta-pragmatic concerns.

### **Semantic and Lexical Universals**

Cambridge University Press

Originally published in 1985, *The Semantic Theory of Evolution* addresses the notion that life is not shaped by the single law of natural selection, but instead by a plurality of laws that resemble grammatical rules in language. This remarkable work presents a semantic theory centering on the concept of the ribotype. Supported by both sound facts and logical arguments, this analysis reaches beyond the established cadre of biological thought to unravel many of life's mysteries and paradoxes, including the origin of the cell and the nucleus and the evolution of ribosomes.

*Theories of Lexical Semantics* Modernity in Question

Now in paperback for the first time since its original publication, the material gathered here is perfect for anyone who needs a detailed and accessible introduction to the important semantic theories. Designed for a wide audience, it

will be of great value to linguists, cognitive scientists, philosophers, and computer scientists working on natural language. The book covers theories of lexical semantics, cognitively oriented approaches to semantics, compositional theories of sentence semantics, and discourse semantics. This clear, elegant explanation of the key theories in semantics research is essential reading for anyone working in the area.

**A Semantic Theory of the English Auxiliary System** MIT Press

An introductory linguistics textbook that takes a novel approach: studying linguistic semantics as an exercise in scientific theory construction. This introductory linguistics text takes a novel approach, one that offers educational value to both linguistics majors and nonmajors. Aiming to help students not only grasp the fundamentals of the subject but also engage with broad intellectual issues and develop general intellectual skills, *Semantics as Science* studies linguistic semantics as an exercise in scientific theory construction. *Semantics* offers an excellent medium through which to acquaint students with the notion of a

formal, axiomatic system—that is, a system that derives results from a precisely articulated set of assumptions according to a precisely articulated set of rules. The book develops semantic theory through the device of axiomatic T-theories, first proposed by Alfred Tarski more than eighty years ago, introducing technical elaboration only when required. It adopts Japanese as its core object of study, allowing students to explore and investigate the real empirical issues arising in the context of non-English structures, a non-English lexicon and non-English meanings. The book is structured as a laboratory science text that poses specific empirical questions, with 25 short units, each of which can be covered in one class session. The layout is engagingly visual, designed to help students understand and retain the material, with lively illustrations, examples, and quotations from famous scholars.

**Semantics** Oxford Linguistics  
Uriel Weinreich was of the innovative and creative thinkers in the field of semantics in the twentieth century. This volume contains all of Weinreich's writings on semantics, including a number of papers

that were not published in his lifetime. It includes the first paper on the universals of semantic theory, an analysis of the fundamental concepts of semantics and semiotics, and a critique of lexicography. *The Semantics of Metaphor* Bloomsbury Continuum  
Seminar paper from the year 2000 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Linguistics, grade: 1,7 (A-), University of Glasgow (Department of English Language), course: Semantics of English., language: English, abstract: "Classical" approaches to categorisation, as called by Taylor (1989, 21 ff.) and Lakoff (1987, 6 ff.), can be characterised by an understanding of linguistic categories as clearly bounded sets of members which have certain essential features in common. These categories are taken to reflect existing categories in the world which are defined by, as Aristotle called it, necessary and sufficient features. These features are binary, i.e. they determine or rule out membership and thereby establish clear boundaries. This understanding of categorisation is manifested in traditional philosophical and scientific thought as well as in "common

sense” theories about language and the world. Lakoff calls this approach “objectivism” and identifies the following assumptions: ‘OBJECTIVIST METAPHYSICS: All of reality consists of entities, which have fixed properties and relations holding among them at any instant. [...] OBJECTIVIST ESSENTIALISM: Among the properties that things have, some are essential; that is, they are those properties that make a thing what it is, and without which it would not be that kind of thing. Other properties are accidental - that is, they are properties that things happen to have, not properties that capture the essence of the thing. [...] THE DOCTRINE OF OBJECTIVE CATEGORIES: The entities in the world form objectively existing categories based on their shared objective properties.’ (Lakoff 1987, 158-161; emphasis in the original) Cognitive scientists have set out to prove these assumptions wrong. Categorisation, in their view, is an operation of human cognition which is determined by experiences of physiological and physical characteristics of the human body and bodily interactions with the environment. Categorisations and their realisations,

however, can provide the basis for human experience once they are firmly established, so that conceptual categories can work back upon human perception. Language categories, they maintain, are reflections of conceptual categories. Thus, they disclaim the autonomy of language which is presupposed by most formalist and generative linguistic theories (cf. Lakoff 1987, ch. 9), as well as a metaphysical notion of reality which is reflected in human perception and categorisation. Rather, reality is made meaning of through these cognitive processes, which in turn are predominantly structured by bodily experiences and interactions.

**Minimal Semantics** MIT Press (MA)

This text provides an introduction to the history and current state of theories of word meanings.

*Semantics - Foundations, History and Methods* Routledge

Structuring Events presents a novel semantic theory of lexical aspect for anyone interested in the study of verb meanings. Provides an introduction to aspectual classes and aspectual distinctions. Utilizes case studies to

present a novel semantic theory of lexical aspect and compare it with alternative theories. Useful for students and scholars in semantics and syntax as well as the neighboring fields of pragmatics and philosophy of language.

[A theory of structural semantics](#) John Benjamins Publishing

What is the nature of communicative competence? Carol A. Kates addresses this crucial linguistic question, examining and finally rejecting the rationalistic theory proposed by Noam Chomsky and elaborated by Jerrold J. Katz, among others. She sets forth three reasons why the rationalistic model should be rejected: (1) it has not been supported by empirical tests; (2) it cannot accommodate the pragmatic relation between speaker and sign; and (3) the theory of universal grammar carries with it unacceptable metaphysical implications unless it is interpreted in light of empiricism. Kates proposes an empiricist model in place of the rationalistic theory—a model that, in her view, is more consistent with recent findings in linguistics and psycholinguistics. In attempting to clarify the nature of utterance meaning, Kates

develops theoretical perspectives on phenomenological empiricism and produces an account of reference and intentionality directly relevant to empirically based theories of speaking and understanding. Among the major topics addressed in the book are transformational-generative and universal grammar, cognitive theories of language acquisition, pragmatic structure, predication and topic-comment structure, and empiricism and the philosophical problem of universals. An innovative and probing work, *Pragmatics and Semantics: An Empiricist Theory* will be welcomed by philosophers, linguists, and psycholinguists.

*Outline of a semantic theory of Kernel sentences* GRIN Verlag

This set of papers represents a unique collection; it is the first attempt ever to empirically test a hypothetical set of semantic and lexical universals across a number of genetically and typologically diverse languages. In fact the word 'collection' is not fully appropriate in this case, since the papers report research undertaken specifically for the present volume, and shaped by the same

guidelines. They constitute parallel and strictly comparable answers to the same set of questions, coordinated effort with a common aim, and a common methodology. The goal of identifying the universal human concepts found in all languages, is of fundamental importance, both from a theoretical and a practical point of view, since these concepts provide the basis of the psychic unity of mankind, underlying the clearly visible diversity of human cultures. They also allow us to better understand that diversity itself, because they provide a common measure, without which no precise and meaningful comparisons are possible at all. A set of truly universal (or even near-universal) concepts can provide us with an invaluable tool for interpreting, and explaining all the culture-specific meanings encoded in the language-and-culture systems of the world. It can also provide us with a tool for explaining meanings across cultures in education, business, trade, international relations, and so on. The book contains 13 chapters on individual languages including Japanese (by Masayuki Onishi), Chinese (by Hilary Chappel), Thai (by Anthony Diller), Ewe

(Africa, by Felix Ameka), Miskitu languages of South America (by Kenneth Hall), Australian Aboriginal languages Aranda, Yankunytjatjara and Kayardild (by Jean Harkins & David Wilkins, Cliff Goddard, and Nicholas Evans), the Austronesian languages Samoan, Longgu, Acehnese and Mangap-Mbula (by Ulrike Mosel, Deborah Hill, Mark Durie and Robert Bugenhagen), the Papuan language Kalam (by Andrew Pawley), and, last but not least French (by Bert Peters). In addition to the chapters on individual languages the book includes three theoretical chapters; Semantic theory and semantic universals (by Goddard), Introducing lexical primitives (by Goddard and Wierzbicka), and Semantic primitives across languages: a critical review (by Wierzbicka).

*New Directions in Semantics* John Benjamins Publishing

Minimal Semantics asks what a theory of literal linguistic meaning is for - if you were to be given a working theory of meaning for a language right now, what would you be able to do with it? Emma Borg sets out to defend a formal approach to semantic theorizing from a powerful contemporary opponent - advocates of

what she call 'dual pragmatics'. According to dual pragmatists, rich pragmatic processes play two distinct roles in linguistic comprehension: as well as operating in a post-semantic capacity to determine the implicatures of an utterance, they also operate prior to the determination of truth-conditional content for a sentence. That is to say, they have an integral role to play within what is usually thought of as the semantic realm. Borg believes dual pragmatic accounts constitute the strongest challenge to standard formal approaches to semantics since they challenge the formal theorist to show not merely that there is some role for formal processes on route to determination of semantic content, but that such processes are alone sufficient for determining content. *Minimal Semantics* provides a detailed examination of this dual pragmatic position, introducing readers who are unfamiliar with the topic to key ideas like relevance theory and contextualism, and looking in detail at where these accounts diverge from the formal approach. Borg's defence of formal semantics has two main parts: first, she argues that the formal approach is most

naturally compatible with an important and well-grounded psychological theory, namely the Fodorian modular picture of the mind. Then she argues that the main arguments adduced by dual pragmatists against formal semantics - concerning apparent contextual intrusions into semantic content - can in fact be countered by a formal theory. The defence holds, however, only if we are sensitive to the proper conditions of success for a semantic theory. Specifically, we should reject a range of onerous constraints on semantic theorizing (e.g., that it resolve epistemic or metaphysical questions, or that it explain our communicative skills). So Borg's answer to the question of what a semantic theory is for has a particular, minimal slant.

*The Handbook of Contemporary Semantic Theory* John Wiley & Sons

This book offers a unique perspective on meaning in language, broadening the scope of existing understanding of meaning by introducing a comprehensive and cohesive account of meaning that draws on a wide range of linguistic approaches. The volume seeks to build up a complete picture of what meaning is,

different types of meaning, and different ways of structuring the same meaning across myriad forms and varieties of language across such domains, such as everyday speech, advertising, humour, and academic writing. Supported by data from psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic research, the book combines different approaches from scholarship in semantics, including formalist, structuralist, cognitive, functionalist, and semiotics to demonstrate the ways in which meaning is expressed in words but also in word order and intonation. The book argues for a revised conceptualisation of meaning toward presenting a new perspective on semantics and its wider study in language and linguistic research. This book will appeal to scholars interested in meaning in language in such fields as linguistics, semantics, and semiotics. The Open Access version of this book, available at <http://www.taylorfrancis.com> has been made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 license.

**A Cognitive Theory of Language. Semantic Theory and Analysis.** JHU Press

An introduction to the central topics of linguistic semantics and the philosophy of language, assuming no special knowledge of philosophy or logic.

Explorations in Semantic Theory

Psychology Press

This study represents a contribution to the theory of meaning in natural language. It proposes a semantic theory containing a set of regular relational principles. These principles enable semantic theory to describe connections from the lexical reading of a word to its figurative contextual reading, from one variant reading of a polysemous lexical item to another, from the idiomatic to its literal reading or to the literal reading(s) of one or more of its component lexical items. Semiotic theory provides a foundation by supplying principles defining motivated expression-content relations for signs generally. The author argues that regular semantic relational principles must derive from such semiotic principles, to ensure the psychological reality and generality of the semantic principles.

Semantic Theory National Geographic Books

I see semantics as one branch of

linguistics, which is the study of language: as an area of study parallel to, and interacting with, those syntax and phonology, which deal respectively with the formal patterns of language, and the way in which these are translated into sounds. While syntax and phonology study the structure of expressive possibilities in language, semantics study the meanings that can be expressed. It may convincingly be claimed that viewing semantics as a component discipline of linguistics is the most fruitful and exciting point of departure at the present time. The book of this kind cannot attempt an overall survey of the field of semantics or at least, if it does, it will end up as a superficial compendium of what others have thought about meaning. The only sensible course is to give evidence that linguistics does exist in our life and it is hypocritical not to acknowledge that linguistics is difficult to understand due to its scientificity. Semantics is a non-fiction science through its unique approach to find the meaning of language not by guessing or judging something subjectively. The strength of the integrated view is that it makes possible a transfer to semantics of

techniques of analysis which have proved successful with other aspects of language. It has to be conceded that the primary appeal of semantics is an intellectual one, similar in some respects to that of mathematics or any pure science. Only after seeking understanding for understanding's sake can one acquire the wisdom which consists in using that understanding for good ends.

*On Semantics* Oxford University Press

Originally published in 1977. The

*Semantics of Metaphor* presents a theory for the metaphoric construal of deviant sentences. The theory has two aspects. The first relates to metaphor considered as a productive process of language and describes the mechanisms that operate in its semantic interpretation. This part of the theory is presented in chapters III and IV. The second aspect bears on metaphor considered in the context of poetry and develops a conception of metaphoric truth. This part of the theory is presented in chapters VI and VII. The study is semantic in the sense of dealing with both meaning and truth as these properties pertain to metaphor. Of the remaining chapters, the first isolates certain problems of a



pragmatic nature from the central semantic concern, chapter II follows with a survey of recent scholarship on the question of semantic deviance, and chapter V compares the theory expounded in chapters III and IV with three other accounts of metaphor.

**The Handbook of Contemporary Semantic Theory** Routledge

Get to grips with the fundamentals of semantics research. Written by a team of world-class experts, this book introduces the subject for a broad audience of linguists, cognitive scientists, philosophers, and computer scientists. It explores the core concepts of sentential semantics and includes sections on questions, imperatives, copular clauses,

and existential sentences. It also features essential research on sentence types, and explains central concepts in the theory of information structure and discourse structure. Now in paperback for the first time since its original publication, the material in this modern classic is an ideal resource for anyone involved in semantics research.

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