

# Guidelines for the external examiner ENG 2157 – fall 2018

Part I (20%)

## a. polysemy vs. vagueness

a polysemous word is a word that has multiple senses. The senses are related. Related senses with the same origin.. (eg *crown*). They differ from homonymous words, which are different words/lexemes with the same form, yet unrelated meanings/senses.

Words with vague meanings are words that get different shades of meaning depending on other words they collocate with. Very often adjectives are mentioned in discussions of vagueness (eg the extension of *red* differs in the following collocates: *red wine, red apple, red pen*)

Examples.

## b. achievements vs. semelfactives

two situation types : both dynamic, punctual and with a temporal boundary (telic) – yet differ in that use of the progressive aspect with achievements yields the meaning of some goal/purpose-directed action up to the point of whatever the achievement predicate denotes, whereas semelfactives get an iterative reading when used with the progressive. + Examples.

## c. locution, illocution and perlocution

locution: the expression of the utterance itself,

illocution: what the utterance is meant to do (expression of a promise, a joke, a request etc. The form of the utterance and its illocutionary force may not be the same: eg question used as a request/order etc)

perlocution: the intended effect of the utterance (beyond speaker uptake of locution and illocution): (eg for a request: the intention that the request be acted upon)

d. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: the idea that the language we speak affects the way we think.

3 versions:

**The Strong version:** the only conceptual distinctions we can make are those in our language; and the reason is that our language imposes those distinctions on our sense data (and we have no other source for such distinctions).

**The Restricted version:** There are some topics such that the only conceptual distinctions we can make regarding them are those encoded in our language, and the reason for this is that our language imposes those distinctions on the relevant sense data (and we have no other source for such distinctions).

**The Watered-down version:** There are some topics such that the way we habitually or stereotypically think about them is influenced by the language we speak.

(Elbourne, 2011)

- Experiments demonstrating that the weak/watered-down version is true. (Grammatical gender and associated adjectives (Brücke (f)/ puente(m))...

e. **entailment vs. implicature** entailment is a logical relation (eg hyponymic relation (birch/tree), converse relations (sell/buy), while implicature is a default inference that may be wrong (cancellable). Details of these + an example of each are expected.

f. **the reference of pronouns** (pronouns: indexicals– anaphoric use: receive their interpretation through the extension of their antecedents; deictic use: situational reference.

Part II (40%)

### **EITHER**

1. a. How do lexicographers distinguish between different kinds of word meaning and meaning relations? Account for your answer with reference to the following words (at least): *plot*, *mine*, *sweet*.

Here we expect a presentation of lexical properties and relations like synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, polysemes, hyponyms and meronyms and vagueness (Saeed ch 3). Including: paraphrase/definition of lexical items, derivational and grammatical affixation.

The candidates can have an English-English dictionary during the exam. This means that they can get important information from the dictionary when they discuss the lexical items listed.

However, we expect them to be able to account for the kind of relation between the verb and the noun 'plot' as well as a discussion of their view of any relation between the meanings of the noun *plot* (in fiction, a piece of ground, a (devious?) plan )

*Mine*: the noun or the pronoun (homonymy) (eg *coal mine*, vs the house is *mine*)

*Sweet*: adjective or noun. As adjective: vague: sweet chocolate/ sweet girl/sweet cottage. As noun: I found only one sweet on the menu. Homonymy – although related in meaning.

b. What is meant by linguistic under-determinacy? Explain how the following examples illustrate it:

i) Move the small table over here. (vagueness (how small is small) and contextual specification, indexicals.)

ii) He is just treading water! (tread water in the literal sense and in the metaphorical sense. Contextual disambiguation)

**OR**

2. Discuss the relationship between the words in bold in the examples below. Group together the examples that you consider similar or identical in sense. Take care to define the terms you use and give reasons for your classifications. Include an argument for why we need to be more specific in linguistics about what we mean by a "word". Finally, discuss whether it makes sense to ask for the antonym or synonym of *fly*, and why we often talk about near synonyms rather than simply synonyms.

- i) The disease is carried by a black **fly** which breeds in the rivers.
- ii) He wouldn't hurt a **fly**.
- iii) He's one who knows how to make time **fly**.
- iv) Who would want to **fly** in a jet with us?
- v) He's **flown** from Los Angeles to New York.
- vi) I was determined to land a **fly** on that trout's nose.
- vii) "Well, got 'ta **fly** - see you later!"
- viii) You had better not **fly** in the face of the committee.
- ix) You can't run for President with your **fly** open.
- x) Oh, I would not like to be a **fly** on the wall when you tell her the latest!
- xi) The blouse has short, dolman sleeves, a **fly** front fastening and a mock pocket flap on the left breast.
- xii) Our gateways are so convenient you literally **fly** through customs and immigration.
- xiii) Whack, whack, whack, she used to go and clouds of dust would **fly** all about.
- xiv) It takes only minutes to create an eye-catching **flyer**.

Here the candidates should group senses: the verb examples vs the noun examples.

Further division of **nouns** :

Fly: 1): an insect (i)

also used in the idiom in (ii), where the meaning is broader (including the encoded meaning): 'not even a fly'

and in the metaphor (x) 'be a fly on the wall', where the meaning is looser than the encoded meaning. (disguised/hidden listener overhearing the conversation)

2): a bait in fly fishing (vi)

3) a fold covering a zipper or a set of buttons on a piece of garment,  
like a blouse or a pair of jeans (ix, xi)

Homonyms or polysemes? Discussion.

4) flyer: an 'actor' derivation of the verb 'fly' (on analogy of eg interpret – interpreter). The meaning is fossilized to refer to sheets of paper with some information that are spread to people all about. Its relation to the verb 'fly' is almost lost.

#### **Verb senses:**

*Fly* in an airplane (iv and v). The same lexeme, but different forms (conjugation)

*Fly* in (xiii) is related to the meaning in iv and v in that it retains the idea of moving in the air, but gets a somewhat different sense (move about in all directions, not goal-directed), since it takes a non-agentive subject.

*Fly* in iii is used in a variant of the idiom 'time flies', and carries the non-literal meaning of moving fast. 'move fast' would also be a synonym for the meaning of *fly* in xii.

(vii), *got 'ta fly* : also in the non-literal sense of move fast, although 'hurry' would be a closer synonym here.

(viii) *fly in the face of someone* – an idiom, yet transparent enough to be considered a metaphorical interpretation of the action of flying.

Verb meanings vs noun meanings: homonymy

Verb meanings: Even if the various uses are close in meaning, the same word can not be used as a synonym in all the cases. 'Hurry' would be a near synonym of 'fly' in (vii), but would not be a synonym for 'fly' in iv and v, and would not be a very clear synonym for the closely related use of 'fly' in xiii. And even if 'move fast' is a possible synonym for 'fly' in iii as well as xiii, the extension of 'fly' is very different in the two examples.

Relationship of Verb meanings: vagueness, collocationally distinguished senses, metaphorical meaning. Discussion.

What we mean by a word:

Different words (written forms or sound units) but the same lexeme (entry in the dictionary, based on morphological class and closeness in extension): *fly – flown*

The same word but different lexemes (homonymy) : a fly (insect), a fly (on a garment)

The same lexeme, but different although related extensions/senses: a) polysemy, b) vagueness

Part III (40%)

**EITHER**

**3. Answer a. AND b.**

**a)** Give a brief account of the Relevance theorists' response to Grice's concept of 'What is said'.

Here we expect the candidate to demonstrate that what is expressed is under-determined: pronoun resolution (and other indexicals). A presentation of the concept of explicature is expected (saturation)

**b)** Give an account of how the Relevance theoretic approach differs from Grice's approach to the interpretation of metaphor and hyperbole. You may use the two examples below to illustrate your points, but you are free to supply your own examples.

i) Life is a rollercoaster.

ii) My grammar teacher is older than the hills.

Gricean interpretation of metaphor: Flouting of the maxim of quality. Cooperative principle in force – so look for another interpretation. Result: rollercoaster: an ups and downs movement – on a psychological plane. According to Grice metaphor implies its related simile: 'Life is like a rollercoaster.'

Hyperbole: flouting of the maxim of quality, relation and manner. Result: Hills are VERY old (old for a hill) – although my teacher cannot possibly be that old, she is still VERY old (relevant meaning of old: old for a human being)

RT account: like the ad hoc interpretation of lexical meaning: broadening in both cases.

*Old* as a relative term – to be considered 'loose use' .

**OR**

**4. Answer a. AND b.**

**a)** Give an account of Grice's theory of conversational implicature, and show how Grice's maxims may be applied to the examples below. Consider to what extent the maxims can be unequivocally applied in each case.

i) {To a neighbor playing loud music}: I can't hear myself think!

ANSWER: Violation of the maxim of manner + specification of implicated meaning

ii) John: What did you have to eat?

Mary: Something masquerading as chicken tikka masala.

ANSWER: Flouting of the maxim of manner + specification of implicated meaning

iii) Teenager: I'm going out.

Parent Where are you heading?

Teenager: Out.

Violation of the maxim of quantity + specification of implicated meaning

**b)** What are the implicatures of the utterance 'How old are you?' in each of the examples below? Give an account of how implicatures can be calculated.

iv) [ A young boy is talking to a colleague of his mother]:

Boy: It's my birthday today.

Colleague: Many happy returns. How old are you?

Boy: I'm five.

The meaning is literal. The explicature: I am five years old today.

v) [Father to son]:

Father: How old are you, George?

Son: I'm eighteen, Father.

Father: I know how old you are, you fool!

The father knows the son's age, so for his question to be relevant it must have an implicated meaning, such as 'At your age, you cannot behave the way you have behaved'. An implicated (default) premise for this interpretation is that whatever the son has done, his action is that of a child. The contrast between his age and the age of the child leads to the implicated conclusion.

vi) [A psychiatrist is talking to a woman patient]:

Ps: What do you do?

W: I'm a nurse, but my husband won't let me work.

Ps: How old are you?

W: I'm thirty-nine.

The psychiatrist certainly knows that the patient is a grown up, so for the question to be relevant in the situation, s/he must have some implicated meaning in mind. A premise is also that the patient knows that the psychiatrist knows her age. The question can be seen as a response to the patients' information that her husband won't let her work (contextually triggered, in order to understand the psychiatrist to act in accordance with the CP). An implicated premise is that a grown-up person can decide for herself, and the implicated interpretation is that the psychiatrist is of the opinion that the woman should not let her husband control/decide in this matter.

The same utterance in different conversational contexts: In order for an utterance to be relevant (have some cognitive effect at low cost in RT terms) it must be interpreted in light of the context of the conversation.