

Lexical And Gramatical Meaning: a Comparative Approach in Semantic Studies

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Abstrak

Perbedaan antara makna leksikal dan gramatikal tetap menjadi aspek penting namun sering disalahpahami dalam analisis linguistik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengklarifikasi interaksi antara kedua dimensi makna ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan deskriptif. Tinjauan pustaka sistematis dilakukan dengan fokus pada karya ilmiah yang diterbitkan dalam dekade terakhir yang mengkaji semantik leksikal dan gramatikal. Sumber dipilih berdasarkan ketelitian metodologis, relevansi, dan keragaman perspektif teoretis. Melalui analisis isi tematik, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi pola-pola yang menyoroti bagaimana makna leksikal berfungsi secara independen, sementara makna gramatikal memberikan isyarat struktural dan kontekstual yang esensial. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa komponen-komponen ini pada dasarnya saling terkait dan harus dianalisis secara simultan untuk memahami sepenuhnya nuansa interpretasi semantik. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada bidang teori linguistik yang lebih luas dan menawarkan implikasi berharga bagi pendidikan bahasa dengan mendorong pemahaman makna yang lebih terintegrasi dalam struktur linguistik.

Kata Kunci: *Makna Gramatikal, Makna Leksikal, Analisis Semantik, Pendidikan Bahasa*

Abstract

The distinction between lexical and grammatical meaning remains a critical yet often misunderstood aspect of linguistic analysis. This study aims to clarify the interplay between these two dimensions of meaning by employing a qualitative and descriptive approach. A systematic literature review was conducted, focusing on scholarly works published within the last decade that examine lexical and grammatical semantics. Sources were selected based on methodological rigor, relevance, and diversity of theoretical perspectives. Through thematic content analysis, the study identifies patterns that highlight how lexical meanings function independently while grammatical meanings provide essential structural and contextual cues. The findings reveal that these components are fundamentally interconnected and must be analyzed in tandem to fully grasp the nuances of semantic interpretation. This research contributes to the broader field of linguistic theory and offers valuable implications for language education by promoting a more integrated understanding of meaning in linguistic structures.

Keywords: *Grammatical Meaning, Lexical Meaning, Semantic Analysis, Language Education*

INTRODUCTION

The study of semantics has undergone significant development, encompassing various aspects of language meaning. Two fundamental components within semantics are lexical meaning and grammatical meaning. Lexical meaning pertains to the meanings of individual words, their contextual functions, and semantic relations such as synonymy and polysemy, while grammatical meaning involves the syntactic and morphological roles that words play within sentences, shaping how meaning is structured and interpreted.

According to Cruse (2000), lexical meaning forms the core of vocabulary knowledge, influencing how speakers interpret and generate meaning through words and their semantic networks. Meanwhile, grammatical meaning provides the framework that organizes lexical items into coherent sentences, facilitating communication beyond isolated words (Lyons, 1995). Saeed

(2003) further highlights that understanding grammatical meaning is essential to grasp the rules that govern sentence formation and to differentiate between possible and impossible constructions in a language.

Deyne et al. (2012) demonstrate that lexical cognition is closely linked to semantic associations, showing how the depth and network of word meanings influence cognitive processes. Paradis (2012) elaborates that grammatical meaning is crucial for establishing syntactic relationships, thereby shaping the interpretation of entire sentences rather than isolated lexical items. This aligns with Halliday's (1994) systemic functional linguistics view that language's meaning potential expands when lexical items are combined through grammatical structures, enabling speakers to convey complex and nuanced ideas.

The objectives of this study are to clarify the distinctions and interactions between lexical and grammatical meanings, enhancing our understanding of how language conveys meaning effectively. Setianingrum et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of analyzing lexical relations such as synonymy and antonymy to uncover underlying semantic structures in discourse. Concurrently, Lindasari et al. (2022) stress that grammatical cohesion plays a pivotal role in connecting parts of discourse, ensuring coherence and fluency in communication.

Understanding both lexical and grammatical meanings is vital, as they operate interdependently to shape language use. Tokaeva et al. (2022) note that context significantly influences the interpretation of these meanings, reflecting social and cognitive factors. Wilk (2017) argues that lexical constructions often reveal implicit grammatical patterns that mirror cultural and cognitive frameworks.

By investigating lexical and grammatical semantics comparatively, this study contributes to the broader field of semantic theory, offering insights into how language encodes meaning within various social contexts. This understanding is essential not only for linguistic theory but also for practical applications in language education, translation, and natural language processing.

The study of semantics spans a diverse array of theoretical frameworks and analytical approaches aimed at uncovering how language conveys meaning. This literature review synthesizes key contributions in semantic theory, with a particular focus on the definitions and theoretical perspectives surrounding lexical and grammatical meaning. Understanding the distinction and interaction between these two semantic domains is essential for capturing the complexity of linguistic meaning-making.

Contemporary semantic theory demonstrates varied methodologies in conceptualizing meaning. Diessel (2020) proposes a dynamic network approach to syntax, wherein linguistic structures emerge from recurrent usage patterns and are represented as networks of interrelated elements. This aligns with usage-based linguistics, which views meaning as arising through context-dependent patterns of communication. In a complementary vein, Lange et al. (2017) provide psycholinguistic evidence suggesting that lexical and grammatical items are processed at distinct stages in sentence production. This sequential processing model highlights how these two meaning types operate in tandem during language use, contributing to the layered construction of meaning in discourse.

Lexical meaning remains a central concern in semantic theory, particularly within lexical semantics. Geeraerts (2017) defines lexical semantics as the study of word meaning, emphasizing phenomena such as polysemy and metonymy to explain the internal semantic structure of words and the relations among them. Cooper and Retoré (2017) advance this discussion by applying type theory to lexical semantics, offering a compositional model that systematically accounts for how word meanings combine in context. These perspectives demonstrate that lexical meaning extends beyond static definitions, reflecting a dynamic interplay of usage, context, and cognitive processing.

Grammatical meaning, while distinct from lexical meaning, is deeply interconnected with it and plays a crucial role in sentence structure and interpretation. Martínez-Ferreiro et al. (2019) argue that understanding the boundary between grammatical and lexical elements is essential for analyzing complex linguistic forms. Their findings further show that frequency of exposure influences the ease with which grammatical forms are retrieved and understood. Additionally, Sorace's (2011) interface hypothesis which posits that structures at the interface of syntax and

other domains (e.g., pragmatics) are particularly vulnerable in bilingual contexts highlights the context-sensitive nature of grammatical meaning. These models collectively indicate that grammatical meaning is structurally embedded and shaped by both cognitive and communicative factors.

In conclusion, the interplay between lexical and grammatical meaning is a foundational concern in semantics. The literature reviewed offers a spectrum of insights into how meaning is constructed, processed, and understood in language. From usage-based and psycholinguistic models to formal semantic frameworks, these studies underscore the necessity of examining lexical and grammatical semantics not in isolation, but as mutually reinforcing components. Future research should continue to explore their integration, aiming to deepen our understanding of how language encodes and conveys meaning across contexts.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative and descriptive approach to examine the intricate relationship between lexical and grammatical semantics. This method enables an in-depth analysis of existing scholarly literature, which is essential for understanding how these two dimensions of meaning interact. As noted by Eddington and Tokowicz (2014), qualitative methods offer valuable insights into the complexities of language, making them suitable for exploring semantic structures. The literature reviewed includes peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, and academic books published in the past decade, selected for their relevance to the topic. The use of recent literature is particularly important, as it reflects the development of semantic theories and current academic perspectives. Wong (2016) emphasizes the need to integrate contemporary findings that account for contextual factors influencing semantic frameworks.

The selection process followed specific criteria: methodological rigor, theoretical contribution, and diversity of viewpoints. Sources were screened for research quality, following the idea by Scott et al. (2016) that strong methodologies enhance the reliability and broader applicability of findings, even though their work focuses on healthcare contexts. Only literature offering significant contributions to the discussion of lexical and grammatical meaning was considered. A systematic search was conducted through academic databases such as JSTOR and Google Scholar using keywords like "lexical semantics" and "grammatical meaning." The collected materials were then analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify recurring patterns and concepts. A thematic synthesis was subsequently conducted to integrate insights from different sources, leading to a deeper understanding of current trends in lexical and grammatical semantics and contributing to ongoing discussions in linguistic research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The exploration of lexical and grammatical meaning highlights critical distinctions that are foundational to understanding linguistic structure and function. Lexical meaning refers to the intrinsic content of words their definitions, semantic associations, and the concepts they evoke in context. In contrast, grammatical meaning concerns the structural roles that words play within a sentence, encompassing aspects of syntax and morphology, such as tense, number, and case. Although Risso's contributions are centered on research methodology in library and information science, the broader implication that the differentiation of meaning types is essential applies across disciplines, including linguistics. As Deyne et al. (2012) suggest, examining the dynamic interaction between lexical and grammatical elements is fundamental for decoding how meaning is constructed and conveyed. This interplay not only enriches semantic interpretation but also facilitates coherent and effective communication, underscoring its importance in linguistic inquiry.

Comparative Case Studies

To effectively highlight the distinction between lexical and grammatical meaning, comparative case studies offer valuable insight. A common example involves the analysis of polysemous words terms with multiple meanings that can shift depending on grammatical context. For instance, the word "*bank*" may refer to either a financial institution or the edge of a river. While the lexical meaning encompasses these multiple interpretations, it is often the surrounding grammatical structure that guides the correct reading in context. This illustrates how grammatical

cues contribute to resolving semantic ambiguity. Although Dolan et al. provide a comprehensive overview of qualitative methodologies across languages, their work does not directly engage with semantic variation or context-driven interpretation, making it less relevant to this specific analysis (Paradis, 2012). In contrast, comparative linguistic studies, such as those by Paradis, are instrumental in illustrating how different grammatical frameworks can influence and clarify lexical meaning, thereby emphasizing the intricate relationship between the two.

Applications in Linguistic Research

Exploring the implications of lexical and grammatical meanings in linguistic research has broad applications. Understanding these distinctions is critical for fields such as language education, computational linguistics, and translation studies. For instance, in second language education, recognizing the interplay between lexical and grammatical meaning can aid in better curriculum design that addresses these nuances, enhancing learners' comprehension and communication skills. Moreover, Bowker emphasizes that corpus linguistics methodologies support qualitative and quantitative analyses of language, which is relevant to understanding both lexical and grammatical structures (Setianingrum et al., 2021). Applications extend to areas such as natural language processing, where algorithms must navigate the complexities of both lexical and grammatical structures to accurately understand human language.

In conclusion, the discussion of lexical and grammatical meanings highlights the foundational differences between these concepts and frames ongoing contributions of contemporary studies and methodological tools in advancing our understanding of language. These insights collectively emphasize the importance of a nuanced approach to semantic analysis in linguistic research, fostering deeper explorations into how meaning is constructed and conveyed across diverse contexts.

Discussion

The investigation into lexical and grammatical meaning showcases distinct characteristics that are pivotal for understanding language. Lexical meaning pertains to the specific definitions and possible associations of individual words, while grammatical meaning relates to the roles and relationships of words within sentence structures. Linguists emphasize that these two dimensions operate distinctly but interdependently, influencing how messages are conveyed and understood in different contexts. For instance, Halliday asserts that "the meaning of a sentence is not simply the sum of the meanings of its words, but also encompasses the grammatical relationships between them" To (2018). This articulation emphasizes the importance of both forms of meaning in linguistic analysis.

The following table summarizes the differences between lexical and grammatical meanings for better clarity.

No.	Feature	Lexical meaning	Grammatical meaning
1	Definition	Meaning derived from specific words	Meaning derived from word structure and relationships
2	Focus	Individual word meanings	Sentence structure and grammatical roles
3	Components	Includes synonyms, antonyms, and polysemy	Includes tense, number, and aspect
4	Example	The word "bank" as a financial institution	The use of "is" versus "are" to indicate singular versus plural
5	Relevance	Affects word choice and vocabulary	Affects sentence interpretation and coherence
6	More Sample Sentences	1. "The bank of the river was a perfect spot for picnicking." 2. "He has a strong affinity for classical music."	1. "The committee is meeting today." vs. "The members are arriving." 2. "She goes to the gym every day." compared to "She went to the

gym yesterday."	
3. "A 'mouse' is a device used for a computer."	3. "Their proposal was accepted unanimously." vs. "Her recommendations were reviewed thoroughly."
4. "The 'bat' can mean a flying mammal or a sports equipment."	4. "The dogs bark loudly at night." vs. "The dog barks when it is scared."

Explanations for Sample Sentences:

1. Sampel 1:

Lexical Meaning: "The bank of the river was a perfect spot for picnicking."

In this sentence, "bank" refers specifically to the land alongside a river, reflecting a lexical meaning dependent on context.

Grammatical Meaning: "The committee is meeting today." vs. "The members are arriving."

The grammatical structures in these sentences (singular "is" and plural "are") indicate how grammatical meaning correlates with noun number.

2. Sample 2

Lexical Meaning: "He has a strong affinity for classical music."

"Affinity" demonstrates a specific, contextual relationship, emphasizing lexical meaning derived from the word directly.

Grammatical Meaning: "She goes to the gym every day." vs. "She went to the gym yesterday."

The different verb forms illustrate how grammatical meaning provides temporal clarity about actions.

3. Sample 3

Lexical Meaning: "A 'mouse' is a device used for a computer."

Here, "mouse" serves as a specific term within technology, emphasizing its lexical meaning.

Grammatical Meaning: "Their proposal was accepted unanimously." vs. "Her recommendations were reviewed thoroughly."

The attention on verb forms illustrates grammatical meaning related to the subject's number and voice.

4. Sample 4

Lexical Meaning: "The 'bat' can mean a flying mammal or a sports equipment."

"Bat" highlights polysemy, revealing lexical variety and the multiple meanings of a single word based on context.

Grammatical Meaning: "The dogs bark loudly at night." vs. "The dog barks when it is scared."

These sentences demonstrate how subject-verb agreement (plural vs. singular) contributes to grammatical meaning.

Comparative case studies offer valuable insights into the relationship between lexical and grammatical meanings, especially in applied linguistic contexts. One illustrative example is the study by Naderi and Barani (2020), which investigated the effects of reading narrative texts on incidental learning of lexical and grammatical collocations among Iranian EFL learners. Their findings demonstrated that repeated exposure to specific word combinations in story-based contexts led to significantly higher acquisition of lexical collocations compared to grammatical ones. This outcome underscores the pivotal role of contextual embedding in facilitating both lexical and grammatical learning and highlights how grammatical constructions can scaffold vocabulary acquisition.

A further case is presented in the work of Mulyanti and Soeharto (2020), who adopted a systemic functional linguistic framework to analyze the progression of text complexity in English textbooks across educational levels. Their research revealed a consistent increase in lexical density and grammatical complexity with higher grade levels, suggesting that students are

gradually exposed to more linguistically demanding content. These findings have practical implications for curriculum development, indicating the necessity of aligning instructional materials with students' evolving competence in both lexical and grammatical domains.

The analysis of lexical and grammatical meanings has far-reaching implications in linguistic research, particularly in applied fields. Understanding their interaction can inform language pedagogy, enhance second language acquisition strategies, and refine assessment tools. For instance, Yang et al. (2021) demonstrated how linguistic styles including the use of specific grammatical forms affect task performance in professional contexts such as project management and language evaluation, emphasizing the practical relevance of grammatical structures beyond academic settings.

Moreover, advancements in corpus linguistics have allowed researchers to analyze language use across large datasets, deepening the understanding of how lexical items function in various syntactic contexts. As shown by Skoufaki and Petrić (2021) in their work on polysemy, such corpus-based approaches reveal patterns in how meaning is constructed and interpreted, contributing to both lexical semantics and grammatical theory. These insights are particularly beneficial for fields such as language documentation, curriculum design, and natural language processing.

In conclusion, a comprehensive investigation into the distinctions and interactions between lexical and grammatical meanings not only enriches theoretical understanding but also supports applied practices in education and computational linguistics. The comparative case studies examined here demonstrate the significance of contextual and structural factors in language learning, while broader applications reinforce the importance of integrating both semantic dimensions in linguistic analysis.

CONCLUSION

This study has clarified the differences and connections between lexical and grammatical meanings, enhancing our understanding of semantics in linguistics. Lexical meanings, which pertain to the definitions and associations of individual words, contrast with grammatical meanings that provide structure and context in sentences. These insights have practical applications in language education, particularly in designing curricula that improve language learning by addressing these complexities. Understanding these meanings is also crucial for advancements in computational linguistics, where algorithms must effectively process both lexical and grammatical elements. Future research should build on these findings by examining these meanings in multilingual contexts and different dialects, while also exploring how context influences their interpretation. This research underscores the importance of considering both lexical and grammatical meanings to enhance semantic analysis and its applications across various linguistic contexts.

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