

Grammar 25: Meaningful-vs-meaningless-words

Gert Webelhuth

University of Frankfurt

Up to now, our signs have only contained information about phonology and syntax, but no information about semantics

<i>word</i>				
PHONOLOGY	⟨Robin⟩			
		HEAD	<i>noun</i> PRONOUN CASE NOUN-AGREEMENT	<i>minus</i> <i>nominative</i> <i>third-singular</i>
SYNTAX		VALENCE	SPECIFIER COMPLEMENTS	⟨⟩ ⟨⟩

<i>word</i>				
PHONOLOGY	⟨you⟩			
		HEAD	<i>noun</i> PRONOUN CASE NOUN-AGREEMENT	<i>plus</i> <i>nominative</i> <i>second-singular</i>
SYNTAX		VALENCE	SPECIFIER COMPLEMENTS	⟨⟩ ⟨⟩

There are a number of contexts where only meaningless or meaningful expressions can occur

Only meaningless expressions:

- (1) a. It_{expl} was raining.
 - b. * The student was raining.
 - c. * She was raining.
 - d. * It was raining.
- (2) a. There_{expl} is a fly in my soup.
 - b. * The student is a fly in my soup.
 - c. * She is a fly in my soup.
 - d. * It is a fly in my soup.

There are a number of contexts where only meaningless or meaningful expressions can occur

Only meaningful expressions:

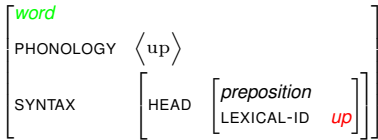
- (3) a. Kim smoked.
b. The student smoked.
c. She smoked.
d. It smoked.
e. * It_{expl} smoked.
f. * There_{expl} smoked.
- (4) a. Robin likes Kim.
b. Robin likes the student.
c. Robin likes her.
d. Robin likes it.
e. * Robin likes it_{expl}.
f. * Robin likes there_{expl}.
- (5) a. Robin is fond of Kim.
b. Robin is fond of the student.
c. Robin is fond of her.
d. Robin is fond of it.
e. * Robin is fond of it_{expl}.

Examples: depend on

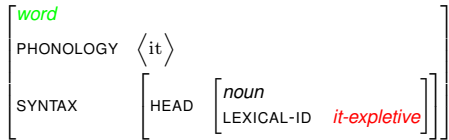
<i>word</i>	
PHONOLOGY	$\langle \text{it} \rangle$
SYNTAX	$\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{HEAD} \\ \left[\begin{array}{c} \textit{noun} \\ \text{CASE} \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$

<i>lexeme</i>	
PHONOLOGY	$\langle \text{depend} \rangle$
SYNTAX	$\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{HEAD} \\ \text{VALENCE} \end{array} \left[\begin{array}{c} \left[\begin{array}{c} \textit{verb} \\ \text{LEXICAL-ID} \textit{ non-selectable} \end{array} \right] \\ \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{SPR} \quad \langle \text{NOUN} \rangle \\ \text{COMPS} \quad \left\langle \left[\begin{array}{c} \textit{preposition} \\ \text{LEXICAL-ID} \textit{ on} \end{array} \right] \right\rangle \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$

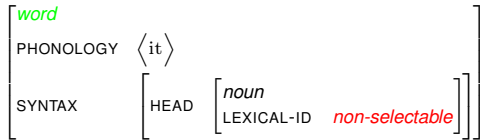
Examples: look the word up



Examples: It rains.



Examples: It smokes.



- 1 Parse the words “on”, “up”, and “in” and inspect the results. Note the different values of the new head feature LEXICAL-ID!
- 2 Now check what kind of complement the two words “depend” and “look” require. Again, note the value of the complement’s head feature LEXICAL-ID!
- 3 Parse the word “rain”! What is noteworthy about it?
- 4 Parse the word “it”! Why do you get so many solutions?
- 5 Parse test items (275)-(294) and explain why you get the results you get and their number!