

BBI 5209 SEMANTICS

Assignment 1 (30%)

Answer all questions

1. What is the difference between a representational theory of meaning and a referential theory of meaning? Discuss. (10 marks)
2. Read the following quote from the philosopher David Lewis. Would you say that Lewis subscribes to a representational theory of meaning or a referential one? Explain. (5 marks)

My proposals will [...] not conform to the expectations of those who, in analyzing meaning, turn immediately to the psychology and sociology of language users: to intentions, sense-experience, and mental ideas, or to social rules, conventions and regularities. I distinguish two topics: first, the description of possible languages or grammars as abstract semantic systems whereby symbols are associated with aspects of the world; and second, the description of the psychological and sociological facts whereby a particular one of these abstract semantic systems is the one used by a person or population. Only confusion comes of mixing these two topics. —David Lewis, “General Semantics” (1972)

3. The noun *bank* is said to be ambiguous with respect to its two primary meanings, ‘savings institution’ and ‘side of a river’. Show that that this word is in fact ambiguous by using the **identity** test and the **sense relations** test. (10 marks)
4. It is said that if two words are **complementary antonyms** something has to have one property or the other, but that if two words are **gradable antonyms** something can have NEITHER property. Show that this is true using one pair of complementary antonyms and one pair of gradable antonyms.

(5 marks)