Section 3
Sentence meaning

3.1. Proposition, utterance and sentence

- A **PROPOSITION** is that part of the meaning of the utterance of a declarative sentence which describes some state of affairs.

Ex1. The following pair of sentences expresses the **same proposition:**

1(a) Harry took out the garbage.

1(b) Harry took the garbage out.

3(a) John gave Mary a book.

3(b) Mary was given a book by John.

Ex2. The following pair of sentences expresses different propositions:

2(a) Jane loves Tony.

2(b) Tony loves Jane.

4(a) George danced with Anna.

4(b) George didn't dance with Anna.

Distinction between a proposition and a sentence

- **Propositions**, unlike **sentences**, cannot be said to belong to any particular language. **Sentences** in different languages can correspond to the same **proposition**, if the two sentences are perfect translations of each other.

- For example:

English: I am cold.

French: J'ai froid.

German: Mir ist kalt.

Vietnamese: Tôi lạnh.

→ They are perfect translations of each other, be said to correspond to the same proposition.

- Sound/phone   table /'tei bl/

Letters (spelling)   a b c k h t

Sound (pronunciation) /a b k h /t/ ~~/c/~~

- Phoneme tea /ti:/ see /si:/

/i:/ long, close, front, spread, tense

/t/ alveolar, plosive, voiceless

- Syllable

- Morpheme: teacher

- Word

- Phrase

- Sentence – Utterance

- Paragraph

- Text

Distinction between a sentence & an utterance

- A SENTENCE is neither a physical event nor a physical object. It is conceived abstractly, **a string of words put together by the grammatical rules of a language**. A sentence can be thought of as **the IDEAL string of words** behind various realizations in utterances and inscriptions.

- An UTTERANCE is the USE by a **particular** speaker, on a **particular** occasion, for a **particular** purpose, of **a piece of language**, such as **a sequence of sentences**, or **a single phrase**, or even **a single word**.

Distinction between an utterance and a sentence

|		
Jane: 'Coffee?'	←	*Would you like some <u>coffee</u>?*
Steve: 'Sure!'	←	*I'm <u>sure</u> to love it.*
Jane: 'White?'	←	*Would you like (black coffee or) <u>white</u> coffee?*
Steve: 'Black.'	←	*I'd like <u>black</u> coffee, please.*

(One-word utterances)   (*Well-formed sentences*)

- a sentence is an abstract theoretical entity defined within a theory of grammar

- an utterance is the issuance of a sentence

Distinction between a proposition, a sentence and an utterance
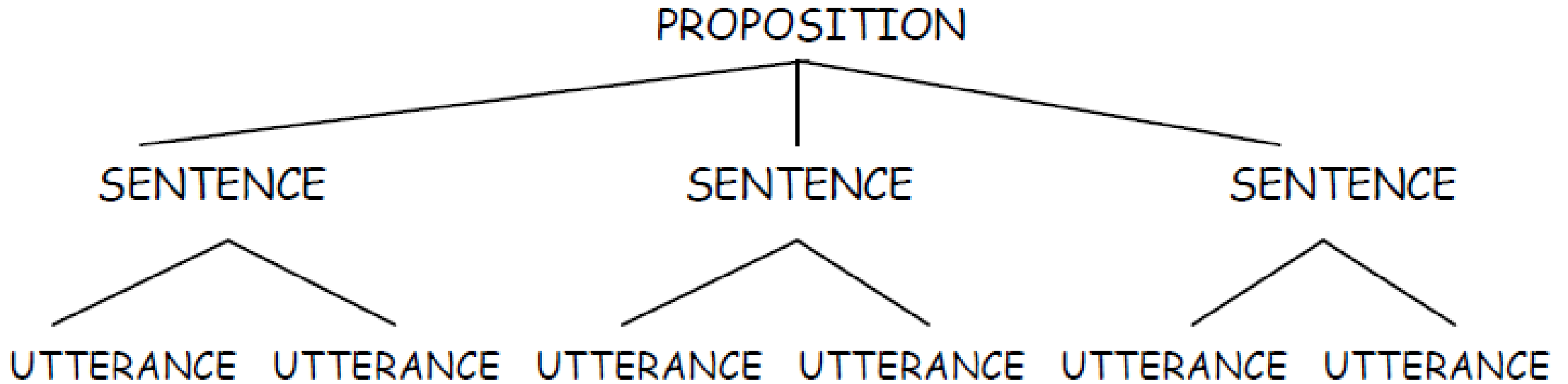
It is interesting to note that the same proposition can be expressed by different sentences and that the same sentence can be realized by different utterances on particular occasions.

3.2 Sentence types (classified according to truth value)

- An ANALYTIC sentence is one that is necessarily TRUE, as a result of the senses of the words in it.

Example:

- *All elephants are animals.*

- *Sam's wife is married.*

- A CONTRADICTION/contradictory sentence, is a sentence that is necessarily FALSE, as a result of the senses of the words in it. Thus a contradiction is in a way the opposite of an analytic sentence.

Example:

- *This animal is a vegetable.*

- *Sam is older than himself.*

3.2 Sentence types (classified according to truth value)

• A SYNTHETIC sentence is one which is NOT analytic, but may be either true or false, depending on the way the world is.

Example:

1. *John is from Ireland.*

→ There is nothing in the senses of John, Ireland or from which makes the sentence necessarily true or false.

2. *Sam's wife is German.*

→ There is nothing in the senses of Sam's, wife or German which makes the sentence necessarily true or false.

3.3. Paraphrase - Definition

- Paraphrase is the relationship between a word and a combination of other words with the same meaning.

- When asked what a sentence means, people usually provide another sentence that has virtually the same meaning, a paraphrase.

- A sentence which expresses the same proposition as another sentence is a paraphrase of that sentence.

- Sentences are paraphrases if they have the same meaning (except possibly for minor differences in emphases).

Possible ways to paraphrase a sentence

1. Change individual words:

a. *using synonyms*:

• <u>Cats</u> DRINK <u>cream</u>.

⇔ <u>Domestic felines</u> CONSUME <u>the liquid fat of milk</u>.

b. *using relational antonyms* (also called converses):

• I LENT that book <u>to</u> Jim.

⇔ Jim BORROWED that book <u>from</u> me.

Possible ways to paraphrase a sentence

2. Change the structure

• <u>Cats</u> DRINK <u>cream</u>.

⇔ <u>Cream</u> IS DRUNK by <u>cats</u>.

3. Change both individual words and sentence structure:

• <u>Cats</u> DRINK <u>cream</u>.

⇔ <u>The liquid fat of milk</u> IS DRUNK by <u>domestic felines</u>.

3.4. Entailment – Definition

➢ Entailment is a relationship that applies between two sentences, where the truth of one <u>implies</u> the truth of the other because of the meanings of the words involved.

➢ An entailment is something that logically follows from what is asserted in the utterance.

➢ Entailments are inferences that can be drawn solely from our knowledge about the semantic relationships in a language. This knowledge allows us to communicate much more than we actually 'say'.

3.4. Entailment – Characteristics

Entailment applies cumulatively. Thus if X entails Y and Y entails Z, then X entails Z.

- X, Some **boys ran** down the street entails Y, Some **kids ran** down the street.

- Y, Some **kids ran** down the street entails Z, Some **kids went** down the street. Therefore

- X, Some **boys ran** down the street entails Z, Some **kids went** down the street.

3.4. Entailment – Characteristics

Hyponymy involves entailment.

Example:

This is a tulip **entails** *This is a flower*

This is scarlet **entails** *This is red*

→ The relation between tulip and flower and between scarlet and red brings out the HIERARCHICAL CLASSIFICATION involved in hyponymy

Types of entailment

1. One-way entailment: The entailments of this first type come about because of **hyponymic relations between words**:

Example: *Alfred saw a bear* **entails** *Alfred saw an animal.*

But *Alfred saw an animal* **does not entail** *Alfred saw a bear.*

2. Two-way entailment: The entailments between **a pair of sentences are mutual** since the truth of either sentence guarantees the truth of the other.

Example: *Paul borrowed a car from Sue*

entails *Sue lent a car to Paul.*

The police chased the burglar

entails *The burglar was chased by the police.*