Language, Representation and Meaning

- Meaning is representational

  – Meaning is related to words and thoughts
  – The representational structure in which meaning is stated

Theory of meaning

- **Understanding meaning is, broadly speaking understanding of language.**
  - **Structure of language**
- **Language and meaning belong to same logical space as do logic and logical form.**

Nature of Representation

- **Linguistic Representation**
  – The logico-grammatical structures formally analyzable

- **Mental Representation**
  – The functional computational character
  – Ability to be represented in a formal computational machine

Linguistic Representation

– Meaning is the essence of linguistic structures that represent the world

– The birth of meaning is the birth of linguistic representation.

Representation

– **The sense in which language is about the world**

  • Language speaks about the world.
  • Being about the world – is a **pre-lingusitc** concept

– The sense in which language represents the world

– Status of language – *speaks   about itself*.

Language and World

– **Built into each other; constitute a single reality**

– **Representation is central to Frege and Wittgenstein Semantic Tradition**

  • **Logical relationship between language and the world**

  • **Later Wittgenstein's communicative approach of language**

Linguistic field

"Language is largely a field in which the representations of the world take place. It takes care of the various activities that take place in language. That is to say that nothing of language is excluded from the linguistic field."

(Pradhan 1996: X)

Meaning and Truth

"Language being inherently about the world, realism is inevitable and so is representationalism. That is the reason why meaning must make room for truth which is at once impersonal and also linked to the human world. Meaning balances objectivity of truth with human interests." (Pradhan 1996: xi)

Mental Representation

– Language has a role to play in the constitution of experience, understanding, meaning and truth.

– **Structure of mental representation exhibits the complexity of mental states**

– Linguistic activities and conscious activities. Ontology of language can be traced from ontology of consciousness.

Searle On language

– **Language from evolutionary point of view**

"From evolutionary point of view there is an order of priority in the development of biological processes, so there is an order of priority in the development of intentional phenomena. In the development of language and meaning comes very late." (Searle 1983)

Analysis

- **Biological development of language in association with mental life**

- **Linguistic activities are characterized as mental activities.**
  - **Experience & understanding**

Intentionality

– **Embedded in the structure of thoughts**

  • **Representational Intention**

– **Embedded in the structure of language**

  • **Communicative intention**

Two aspects of meaning intention

"Communicating is a matter of producing effect on one's hearers but one can intend to represent something without caring at all about the effects of the hearer" **(Searle 1983: 166)**

Searle on language and intentionality

- "We define speaker's meaning in terms of forms of intentionality that are not intrinsically linguistic. If, for example, we can define meaning in terms of intentions we will be defined a linguistic notion, even though many perhaps most human intentions are linguistically realized." (Searle 1983: 160)

Mind and language

– **"On this approach the philosophy of language is a branch of philosophy of mind. And in its most general form it amounts to the view that certain fundamental notions such as meaning are analyzable in terms of more psychological notion such as beliefs, desires, and intentions." (Searle 1983: 161)**

Structure of Intention and Expression

– **Intentional states expressed in the performance**

– **Intention to perform the act**

Structural symmetry

"The fact that condition of satisfaction of the expressed intentional states and the condition of speech act are identical suggests that the key of the problem of meaning is to see that in the performance of speech act the mind intentionally imposes the condition of satisfaction of mental states as the production of physical phenomena." **(Searle 1983: 164)**

Self-referentiality

– **Self referentiality of Intentionality**

- **Linguistic activities are conscious activities**

– **Linguistic structure of intention and social structure of intention**

Social structure of Meaning

– **Social meaning structure signifies the social institution of intentionality**

- **Prelinguistic form of intentionality refers the background**

– **Linguistic rules are *unconsciously* followed**

References

"Linguistic references is a special case of **intentional reference,** and intentional reference is by way of relation fitting or satisfaction. It is not necessary to **postulate any special metaphysical realms** in order to account for communication and shared intentionality. The possibility of shared intentional content does not require any **metaphysical apparatus** any more than the possibility of shared walks**."** **(Searle 1983: 198)**

Intentional Content

– **"If we are unable to account for the relation of reference in terms of internal intentional contents, either the content of individual speaker or the content of linguistic community of which he is a part, then the entire philosophical tradition since Frege is mistaken and we need to start over some external causal account of reference in particular and relation of words to the world in general." (Searle 1983: 192)**