

## CONCEPTS OF GRAMMATICAL MEANING AND GRAMMATICAL FORM

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**Abstract:** Grammatical meaning and grammatical form are fundamental concepts in linguistics. Understanding these concepts is essential for studying and analyzing languages. This article will explore the nature of grammatical meaning and the relationship between form and meaning in language.

**Introduction:** Grammatical meaning and grammatical form are two essential concepts in the study of language and grammar. They are interconnected and work together to convey and understand meaning within a sentence. Grammatical meaning refers to the meaning that is conveyed through the arrangement and use of words, phrases, and sentences within a language.

It is concerned with how language structures and patterns allow us to express and interpret different ideas, actions, relationships, and concepts. Grammatical meaning includes things like tense, aspect, mood, number, case, and so on. Grammatical form, on the other hand, refers to the specific structure and arrangement of words, phrases, and sentences that convey the grammatical meaning.

It involves the rules and patterns that govern how words and structures are organized to create meaningful sentences. Grammatical form includes things like word order, verb conjugation, noun declension, agreement, and so on. In simpler terms, grammatical meaning is what we intend to communicate, while grammatical form is the specific way we structure our sentences to convey that meaning.

For example, let's consider the sentence "She is eating an apple." Grammatical meaning tells us that this sentence expresses an ongoing action in the present, which involves a female subject and the act of consuming an apple. Grammatical form, on the other hand, shows us how the words are organized in a specific order and how the verb "to be" is conjugated for the present tense and the present participle form "eating."

Understanding both grammatical meaning and grammatical form is crucial for effective communication and comprehension in any language. By combining both aspects, we can create meaningful and grammatically correct sentences that effectively convey our intended message.

What is Grammatical Meaning?

Grammatical meaning refers to the specific meaning conveyed by grammatical structures in a language. Unlike lexical meaning, which is associated with individual words, grammatical meaning is related to the way words are combined and organized within a sentence. It encompasses the relationships between different elements of a sentence and the functions they serve.

Types of Grammatical Meaning

Grammatical meaning can be categorized into several types:

**Morphological Meaning:** This refers to the meaning conveyed by the internal structure of words, including prefixes, suffixes, and inflections. For example, the plural form of a noun in English, such as "cats," indicates more than one cat.

**Syntactic Meaning:** This pertains to the meaning conveyed by the arrangement and combination of words in a sentence. It includes word order, sentence structure, and grammatical roles. For instance,

in the sentence "The cat chased the mouse," the subject-verb-object order indicates the roles of each element in the sentence.

**Semantic Meaning:** This involves the meaning conveyed by the overall context and interpretation of a sentence. It encompasses reference, tense, aspect, mood, and other semantic categories. For example, the sentence "I am going to the beach tomorrow" indicates future time due to the use of the word "tomorrow."

### Grammatical Form and Meaning

Grammatical form refers to the structural representation of grammatical elements in a language. It includes word order, inflections, syntax, and other grammatical features. The form used in a sentence determines the grammatical meaning conveyed.

### Relationship between Grammatical Form and Meaning

The relationship between grammatical form and meaning is highly intricate. The choice of a particular grammatical form can significantly influence the meaning of a sentence. Different forms can express nuances in tense, mood, aspect, and other grammatical categories.

### Flexibility in Grammatical Form

Languages vary in the degree of flexibility they afford in terms of grammatical form. Some languages have strict word orders and extensive inflectional systems, while others rely more on context and fewer inflections.

### Importance in Language Analysis

Studying the concepts of grammatical meaning and form is crucial for comprehending language structures and conducting detailed linguistic analysis. It enables linguists to identify patterns, categorize languages, and compare different language systems.

### Analyzing Language Change

By examining shifts in grammatical meaning and form over time, linguists can trace language change and its sociocultural implications. The study of grammatical meaning and form provides insights into the evolution and development of languages.

### Cross-linguistic Comparison

Comparative analysis of grammatical structures across different languages allows linguists to explore commonalities and differences among language families. Understanding grammatical meaning and form aids in uncovering universal linguistic principles.

The grammatical meaning depends on the lexical meaning and is connected with objective reality indirectly, through the lexical meaning<sup>1</sup>.

The grammatical meaning is relative, it is revealed in relations of word forms: *speak* — *speaks*.

The grammatical meaning is obligatory. Grammatical meaning must be expressed if the speaker wants to be understood.

<sup>1</sup> <https://studfile.net/preview/2377046/page:2/>

The grammatical meaning must have a grammatical form of expression (inflexions, analytical forms, word-order, etc.). Compare the word forms *walks*, *is writing*. Both forms denote process, but only the second form expresses it grammatically.

The term, form \_ may be used in a wide sense to denote all means of expressing grammatical meanings. It may be also used in a narrow sense to denote means of expressing a particular grammatical meaning (plural, number, present tense, etc.).

Grammatical elements are unities of meaning and form, content and expression. In the language system there is no direct correspondence of meaning and form. Two or more units of the plane of content may correspond to one unit of the plane of expression (polysemy; homonymy). Two or more units of the plane of expression may correspond to one unit of the plane of content (synonymy).

Grammatical meaning is the meaning conveyed in a sentence by word order and other grammatical signals. Also called structural meaning. Linguists distinguish grammatical meaning from lexical meaning (or denotation)--that is, the dictionary meaning of an individual word. Walter Hirtle notes that "a word expressing the same idea can fulfill different syntactic functions.

The grammatical difference between the throw in to throw a ball and that in a good throw has long been attributed to a difference of meaning not of the lexical type described in dictionaries, but of the more abstract, formal type described in grammars" (Making Sense out of Meaning, 2013).

#### Grammatical Meaning and Structure

"Words grouped together randomly have little meaning on their own, unless it occurs accidentally. For example, each of the following words has lexical meaning at the word level, as is shown in a dictionary, but they convey no grammatical meaning as a group:

a. [without grammatical meaning]

Lights the leap him before the down hill purple.

However when a special order is given to these words, grammatical meaning is created because of the relationships they have to one another.

b. [with grammatical meaning]

"The purple lights leap down the hill before him." (Bernard O'Dwyer, *Modern English Structures: Form, Function and Position*. Broadview Press, 2006)

#### Number and Tense

"Different forms of the same lexeme will generally, though not necessarily, differ in meaning: they will share the same lexical meaning (or meanings) but differ in respect of their grammatical meaning, in that one is the singular form (of a noun of a particular subclass) and the other is the plural form (of a noun of a particular subclass); and the difference between singular and plural forms, or--to take

another example--the difference between the past, present and future forms of verbs, is semantically relevant: it affects sentence-meaning.

The meaning of a sentence . . . is determined partly by the meaning of the words (i.e., lexemes) of which it is composed and partly by its grammatical meaning." (John Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 1996)

### Word Class and Grammatical Meaning

"Note . . . how word class can make a difference to meaning. Consider the following:

He brushed his muddy shoes. [verb]

He gave his muddy shoes a brush. [noun]

Changing from the construction with a verb to one with a noun involves more than just a change of word class in these sentences. There is also a modification of meaning. The verb emphasizes the activity and there is a greater implication that the shoes will end up clean, but the noun suggests that the activity was much shorter, more cursory and performed with little interest, so the shoes were not cleaned properly.

"Now compare the following:

Next summer I am going to Spain for my holidays. [adverb]

Next summer will be wonderful. [noun]

According to traditional grammar, next summer in the first sentence is an adverbial phrase, while in the second it is a noun phrase. Once again, the change of grammatical category also entails some change of meaning. The adverbial phrase is an adjunct, a component bolted on to the rest of the sentence, and merely provides the temporal context for the whole utterance.

On the other hand, use of the phrase as a noun in subject position renders it less circumstantial and less abstract; it is now the theme of the utterance and a more sharply delimited period in time." (Brian Mott, *Introductory Semantics and Pragmatics for Spanish Learners of English*. Edicions Universitat Barcelona, 2009)<sup>2</sup>.

**In Conclusion**, understanding grammatical meaning and form is essential for comprehending the construction and interpretation of language. Grammatical meaning encompasses the specific meanings conveyed by different elements and their relationships within a sentence.

Grammatical form refers to the structural representation of these elements. The relationship between form and meaning in language is intricate, and the analysis of grammatical meaning and form enables linguistic research, language change analysis, and cross-linguistic comparisons.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-grammatical-meaning-1690907>

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