

What is semantics and what is it for (announcement)

Jacek Juliusz Jadacki, Warsaw University

Let us consider the sentence:

(1) The name “Sagarmāthā” designates the highest mountain on Earth.

In the sentence (1), the predicate “designates” occurs, and this predicate is commonly considered as a semantic predicate. Let us recognize the sentence (1) as a sentence concerning a semantic relation or, shortly speaking, as a semantic sentence.

Now, let us consider the sentence:

(2) The name “Sagarmāthā” designates the same as the name “the highest mountain on Earth”.

The predicate “designates” occurs also in the sentence (2). In connection with this fact, shall we recognize also the sentence (2) as a semantic sentence? When we shall assume (as sometimes it is assumed) that stating occurrence of relations between expressions is a matter of syntax, the sentence (2) will be rather a syntactic sentence.

Let us notice, however, that the necessary condition of determining the truth-value of the sentence (2) is knowing *what* is designated by the names “Sagarmāthā” and “the highest mountain on Earth”. Such a knowledge is also a necessary condition of determining the truth-value of the sentence (1).

On the other hand, the sentence (2) can be treated as a sentence concerning the method of translating one name into another name. Thus, I have an impression that the task “Construct a semantics for the language L_1 !” can be interpreted as a task “Translate the language L_1 into the language L_2 !” or “Determine the rules of translating expressions of the language L_1 into the language L_2 !”.

When is it worth taking on the realization of such a task?

In my paper, I want to find answers for this question and for some other questions similar to it. My answer for *this* question is rather naïve: the language L_1 must be defective in some respects, whereas the language L_2 is free from the defects of the language L_1 . In the simplest circumstances, we translate expressions of one language into expressions of the other language with a view of a person who understands the first language and does not understand the second. Of course, we – being the translators *or* the constructors of semantics – ought to understand both the languages...

I trust that if this answer and my answers to the other questions of that type will appear wrong, the participators of the meeting will correct them.