

Lecture 4

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Types of definitions. *There are THREE main types of definitions.*

1. **Reportive definition.** This is the dictionary, standard meaning of a word.
Ex: "serendipity" means making a lucky discovery by accident.
2. **Essentialist definition.** Essentialist definitions have to be understood as compressed theories. They refer to more abstract words or concepts such as good, love, philosophy, etc.
Ex: "justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought." (John Rawls)
3. **Stipulative definitions.** These definitions aim at more specific meaning of words. Also, when we invent new words, we stipulate their meaning.
Ex: "Crash" is understood here as a total loss of computer programs and data.
Ex: "BASIC" stands for "Beginner's All-purpose symbolic Instruction Code"
Ex: "Mojo" stands for the sexual charm of Austin Powers.

Methods of definitions. *There are FIVE general methods of defining a word.*

1. **By genus-species.** We specify the class of which the word/ concept is a member of and then we distinguish it from the other members of the same class.
Ex: A "curette" is a spoon-shaped surgical instrument used to remove tissue from a body cavity.
Ex: "Howitzer" is a cannon with a barrel longer than a mortar that delivers shells with medium velocities against targets that cannot be reached by flat trajectories.
2. **By ostentation, that is, by pointing to the object.**
Ex: the woman to the left of your father wears blue pullover. This is what we call Turkish blue.
3. **By synonym.**
Ex: "flat" means the same thing as "apartment"
Ex: "Heliocentric" means sun-centered.
4. **By operation.** When we specify when exactly a word is applied and when it is not.
Ex: A "genius" is everyone that scores more than 140 on a standard IQ test.

5. **By context.** When we specify the meaning of a word other than its standard meaning.
Ex: "sound" argument in logic means that the premises which are true support the conclusion which as a result is also true.

Assessing definitions. Main flaws

1. Reportive definitions can be too broad, too narrow and both too broad and too narrow.
- Too broad** reportive definitions is when the defining phrase includes more than it should.
Ex: chair is a four-legged piece of furniture.
- Too narrow** reportive definitions is when the defining phrase fails to refer to some things that are included in the reference (class) of the term.
Ex: of a too narrow definition: triangle is a closed three-sided plane figure which has equal angles.
- Too broad and too narrow** definitions.
Ex: triangle is a geometrical figure with equal sides and equal angles.

Reportive, essentialist and stipulative definitions can also be circular. A circular definition is when the defining phrase includes the term that is being defined.
Ex: A neonatologist is someone who specializes in caring for neonates.
Ex: Something is harmful if it is capable of causing harm.

Reportive, stipulative and essentialist definitions can also be obscure. It happens when the defining phrase uses metaphorical or ambiguous language.
Ex: informal logic is best defined as a travel guide to the world of correct reasoning.
Ex: Truth is the shadow that existence casts across the realm of essences. (George Santayana, from skepticism and animal faith.)
Ex: Money is the root of all evil.
Ex: Ensign is a standard of a military unit.

Descriptive and evaluative meaning of words.

- Terrorists - freedom fighters
- Well-known - renowned/ distinguished/ notorious
- Deaf/ crippled - disabled
- Poor-economically challenged

Analytic, synthetic and contradictory statements.

Analytic statements are true by definition, they are self-evident truths, tautologies, also called necessary truths.

Ex: all squares have four sides.

Ex: $2=2=4$

Ex: A rose is a flower.

Contradictory statements are analytically false statements, they are false by definition.

Ex: This girl is a male

Ex: triangles have four sides

Ex: it is at this very moment six o'clock and seven o'clock in Ottawa, Ontario.

Synthetic statements are dependent upon the meaning of the word used. They might be true or false, but they are not true by definition.

Ex: the computer screen behind me is white.

Talk to here about different langue's. Secretary