CHAPTER II

SEMANTICS THEORY

2.1. The Definition of Semantics

Semantics is generally defined as the study of meaning. It deals with all linguistics aspects from words, phrases, and sentences in language. However, this definition has led us to question about what is the nature of the meaning itself. How is the best way to describe what meaning is comes to be the problem here. It can be relevant when it is studied on where it has own contextual meaning.

Semantics was introduced in English at the end of 19 century. The term semantics in English adopted from French term *semantique*, which was coined from Greek. Before it was introduced in 1890’s, the semantics was once used in phrase *Semantick Philosophy* to mean ‘Divination’. This term is not refers to meaning but refers to its development, which is later known as ‘Historical Semantics’.

The term semantics was treated as the study of meaning until M. Breal released a book entitled Semantics: Studies in the Science of meaning in 1990. In the book, Semantics was not only concerned with historical change of the meaning, but also treated as the science of meaning.

Meaning becomes the problem discussed in the Semantics. To define about the meaning, it is necessary to define Semantics into more specific definition. These more specific definitions have led us to an important basic assumption that meaning it part of speaker knowledge about their language.

There are other terms that have been used to refer to the semantics. They are semasiology, semology, semiotics and semics. Scholar has often used some of
these terms to suit their own interest and orientation. These terms are used referring to other things beyond the semantics proper. To make a clear definition, it is necessary to redefine semantics into a more specific definition. We could limit semantics into the study of more specific types of meaning only. We also need to make a clear limit of the study of meaning into linguistics proper. Then we may say that semantics is the study of meaning of words, phrases, or sentences in language.

For more clear understanding on Semantics, let us see some definition of Semantics given by some linguists below:

1) Semantics is the branch of linguistics concerned with studying the meaning of words and sentences. (Hornby, 1972: 789)

2) Semantics is the study of meaning. It concerned with what sentences and other linguistics objects express, not with the arrangement of their syntactic parts or their pronunciation. (J.J. Katz, 1972: 1)

3) Semantics is the technical term used to refer to the study of meaning. (F.R. Palmer, 1976: 1)

4) Semantics is generally defined as the study of meaning. (Lyons, 1977:1)

All the definitions above are different in some respect but principally Semantics is a division of linguistics dealing with meaning of words, its study concerned with meaning of linguistics string. It means that we must focus our attention to what sentences or other linguistic objects express not to arrangement of their syntactic part of their grammatical form.
2.2 The Scope of Semantics

Although the study of meaning becomes more significant at the early twentieth century, many linguists study language without reference to meaning. There is no very general agreement about the nature of meaning or in which it should be described and no one knows which facts are relevant to Semantics. However, the linguists have investigated the way of structuring meaning in language. There are at least two major approaches to the way in which meaning in language is studied. Each of these is often influential in determining which facts of meaning are relevant for semantics. The first is linguistics approach. This approach investigated semantics structure of the sentence. The second is philosophical approach. Philosophers have investigated the relation between linguistics expression such as the words of language, person, things and events in the world to which these words refers.

Although there maybe various approach to semantics, three basic terms have been widely mentioned in each of these approaches, namely Meaning, Sense, and Reference.

2.2.1 Meaning

Meaning of words absolutely plays a role in communication since without meaning; there will be no good desired interaction. According to Advanced English Learner’s Dictionary, meaning is defined as the thing or idea that a sound, word, sign, etc, represented. There are some definitions which are given by semanticists about what meaning is. They are:
1) The aim of semantics is to explain and describe meaning in the natural language. (Leech, 1969: 5)

2) The meaning can be distinguished by the technique of substituting others word in the same context and enquiry whether the resulting sentence are equivalent. (Lyons, 1997: 2)

Meaning is described as the message that is intended or expressed or signified and the idea that is intended. It is bound up in language use, while in daily communications we use language. It means that meaning plays an important role in our language. Since there are different meaning components in a word, an analysis about words is needed, such as our analysis because in any situations of speech acts, meaning plays a very important role. There would be no language without meaning.

The term meaning is derived from the word mean. It is facts that the verb to mean and the noun meaning have many distinguishable meaning. In every day English, we use the word mean in a number of different ways:

1) That was no mean (insignificant) accomplishment
2) They are so mean (cruel) to me
3) This will mean (result in) the end of the second class citizenship
4) Without ice cream, life wouldn’t mean anything (have any purpose)
5) I mean (intend) to help if I can
6) Keep off the grass, this means (refers to) you
7) His loosing his job means (implies) that he will have to look for another job.
8) Lucky Strike means (indicates) fine tobacco
9) Those clouds *mean* (are a sign of) rain

10) She doesn’t *mean* (believe) what she said

11) Procrastinate *means* (?) “to put this thing off”

12) In saying that, he *meant* (?) that we would leave,

The word *mean* in (1) to (10) has their “equivalence” in another word, while in the same word in (11) or (12) does not. The last two sentences, in fact, exemplify two importantly different sorts of meaning, i.e. linguistics meaning and speaker meaning. In (11) procrastinate has a linguistics meaning of *to put thing off* while in (12) meant refers to speaker intention or what message the speaker intends to say in his word.

In general, the linguistic meaning of an expression is simply the meaning or meanings of that expression in some form of language. For example, in one form of language known as Standard Language, the word *run* could have different meaning in each of these sentences;

1) I like to *run*

2) The engines *run* well

3) They *run* a mail order house

From the examples above, we can see that the word *run* has more than one linguistic meaning. In the first sentence, the word *run* means *walk fast*. In the second sentence, it means *work*, and in the third sentence, it means ‘manage or organize’.
2.2.2 Sense and Reference

Words and phrases both normally have sense and reference. In order to have a better understanding of a word and references, there should be a distinction between its sense and reference.

The German philosopher and mathematician Gonlob Frege proposed a distinction between the reference and the sense of a word. The sense of a word is the additional meaning attached to the word, while reference of the word is the object designated by that words. Other linguists who contributed the meaning of sense in his book is Lyons (1979: 197) says “sense is the term used by a number of philosopher for what others would describe simply as their meaning or perhaps more narrowly as their cognitive or descriptive meaning”. When people speak of the meaning of a word, they are usually speaking about one of its senses; usually what they believe is the primary or the central sense. For example, consider whether asks has different sense when used with a human subject from the sense when used with inhuman subject as follow:

1) The teacher asks me a question.

2) The table asks me a question.

The two sentences above have a very different sense, because the second sentence actually does not make a sense, for the word asks is always used for human.

F.R. Palmer (1976: 30) has defined the reference and the sense as follow;

“Reference deals with the relationship between the linguistics elements, words, sentences, etc, and the nonlinguistic world experience. Sense related to the complex system of relationships that hold between the
linguistics elements themselves (mostly the word); it is concerned only with intra linguistics relations.”

Based on the Palmer’s idea, we can say that the reference of word is the object designated by the word. For example, the reference of the word chair is the object designated by the word, which can be pictured as an upside down number four.

According to Lyons (1979: 177);

“To say the sentence contains a referring expression is to say that it contains and expression is to say that it contains and expression which on some occasions of the utterance of the sentences may be used to refer”.

Based on the Lyon’s idea, reference can be said as a link of signifier and signified by words. The signifier is a word in the language and the signified is the object in the world that stands for, refers to or denotes. It is an obvious fact that the reference is the centre of symbol and object. Through reference, the language being mentioned is associated to the world.

Phrases like words; both normally have sense and can be used to refer. Thus the phrase the woman who is my mother refers to a certain individual and has a certain sense which could be different from the woman who married my father, although both expressions usually have the same reference; they both refer to ‘My father’s wife’. Nevertheless, the senses of those phrases are different. The first phrase refers to the person who is my (biological) mother, while the second one refers to the person who is not necessarily my mother.
2.3 Varieties of Meaning

There are two important kinds of meaning in semantics. They are linguistics meaning and speaker’s meaning. Linguistics meaning is simply the meaning or meanings of that expression in some form of a language. For example: table. In linguistics, it means a piece of furniture consisting of a flat top supported on one or more legs. Speaker’s meaning is what a speaker means in producing an utterance.

In speaker meaning, speaker can speaks literal or non-literal meaning. Literal meaning is when the speaker words really mean. While non-literal meaning is the meaning of what the speaker has in producing an utterance different from the meaning from what is uttered. The speaker means something different from the lexical word. The sentence in non-literal meaning has hidden meaning. In order to understand what the speaker means in uttering a sentence or conversation, we should know the context or the situation. In other word, the meaning sometimes depends on the context or situation. Look at the examples below;

1) The doctor saves her life.
2) He saves his money at the bank.
3) The goalkeeper makes some amazing saves.

The meaning of saves is different in each sentence. In (1), saves means to rescue, the situation of this sentence is in a hospital. In (2), saves means related to the bank, therefore saves means to keep. In (3), the situation is in a football game, saves means an act of preventing a goal from being scored.
2.3.1 Literal Meaning

Literal meaning is the meaning without any other meaning besides the lexical meaning. When a speaker speaks literally the meaning of the utterance is the literal meaning or the lexical meaning. When we say something, our word or sentence is suitable with the word mean that we uttered. There is no hidden meaning besides what we say.

In literal meaning, there is no misinterpretation between the speaker and the hearer. For more clear understanding about this literal meaning, look at these examples below:

1) I am watching the television
2) They are my friends
3) He is my teacher
4) Do you see my book?
5) She is in the class

All the sentences above are literal in meaning as long as the speaker speaks literally or there is no other meaning in every sentence. Those sentences are easy to understand because we do not have to have specific or special knowledge to comprehend the real meaning of the sentences.

2.3.2 Non-Literal Meaning

Non-literal meaning is the meaning when the speaker means something different from what the words, phrases or sentences really mean. Speaker implies different meaning in non-literal meaning. The words, phrases, and the sentences have another different meaning besides the lexical meaning.
To express an idea in abstract or imaginative way, speaker usually uses non-literal meaning. The hearer may find some difficulties to understand the meaning of the speaker. Therefore it really needs the ability of the hearer to give attention of the speaker. It is important for everyone to understand the non-literal meaning or figurative expression to avoid misunderstanding in daily conversation.

In the case of non-literal meaning, there are many ways to speak non-literally. Tarigan (1995: 14) has classified non-literal meaning into four groups. They are as below:

1) **Majas perbandingan terdiri dari perumpamaan, kiasan, penginsanan, sindiran dan antithesis.**

Comparison consists of simile, metaphor, personification, allegory and antithesis.

2) **Majas pertentangan terdiri dari hiperbola, litotes, ironi, oksimoron, paronomasia, paralipsis dan zeugma.**

Contrast consists of hyperbole, litotes, irony, oxymoron, paronomasia, paralipsis and zeugma.

3) **Majas pertautan terdiri dari metonimia, sinekdoke, alusi, eufedimisme, ellipsis, inversi dan gradasi.**

Linkage consists of metonymy, synecdoche, allusion, euphemism, ellipsis, inversion and gradation.

4) **Majas perulangan terdiri dari aliterasi, autanaklasis, kiasmus dan repetisi.**

Repetition consists of alliteration, autanaklasis, chiasmus and repetition.
In this thesis, I analyze non-literal meaning that is based on Tarigan’s theory. They are personification, metaphor, hyperbole, simile, oxymoron, euphemism and synecdoche that exist in Emily Dickinson poems.

2.3.2.1. Personification

The word personification derives from Latin words; ‘persona’ means *person*, *actor*, or *mask* used in the theatre and ‘fic’ means *to make*. Therefore, personification is a kind of non-literal meaning in which an inanimate object given a human quality.

Personification closely related to metaphor, is a figure of speech that gives human form, powers, or feeling to animals, objects or ideas. It makes inhuman things appeared like a person. According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s (1995: 863), “Personification is the action of treating something as a human being or of representing it in human form”.

In personification, inanimate objects seem alive and act like human beings. Personification gives human characteristics to things, objects, or events. Consider the following example;

1) Her pen is dancing on the book
2) His motorcycle runs on the road

Both of these sentences are personification. In the first sentence, *pen* can not *dance*. This sentence literally means that *she is writing*. The second sentence, *motorcycle* can not *run*. It means that *he is riding his motorcycle*. Both of these sentences show a figure of speech. So, things like *pen* and *motorcycle* are seem to be alive like human beings.
2.3.2.2 Hyperbole

The word hyperbole derives from Greek words; ‘hyper’ means over and ‘ballien’ means to throw. So, hyperbole means an exaggerated form that is used to achieve an effect.

Tarigan (1995: 129) says that hiperbola adalah sejenis majas yang mengandung pernyataan yang berlebih-lebihan, jumlahnya, ukurannya, atau sifatnya dengan maksud memberi penekanan pada suatu pernyataan atau situasi untuk memperhebat, meningkatkan kesan dan pengaruhnya. (Hyperbole is a kind of figurative expressions that containing a statement that is exaggerates the qualities, size, or number of something, sometimes for a fantastic degree in order to emphasize the point more). Consider the example below;

1) Everything is right when you are beside me

The hyperbole of the sentence is everything is right. It is impossible everything become right if there is someone always beside us. It shows an exaggerated which means that I want you always beside me because you are special.

2.3.2.3 Metaphor

Metaphor is derived from Greek word ‘metaphora’. It consists of ‘meta’ means over and ‘phrein’ means to carry. Metaphora simply means carrying from one place to another. Metaphor is a kind of figurative expressions which a comparison is made between two things by identifying one with the other.

Tarigan (1995:121) says,

“Metapora adalah sejenis majas perbandingan yang paling singkat, padat, dan tersusun rapi. Di dalamnya terlibat dua ide; yang satu
adalah suatu kenyataan, sesuatu yang dipikirkan, yang menjadi objek, dan yang satu lagi merupakan perbandingan terhadap kenyataan tadi, dan kita menggantikan yang belakang ini menjadi yang terdahulu tadi”.

(Metaphor is the most concise, condensed, well-ordered kind of comparative figurative expression. Two ideas are involved inside; the one is the reality or the object, something thought, and the other is comparison to the reality, we substitute the latter with the former).

According to Oxford advanced Learner’s (1995: 734) Metaphor is the imaginative use a word or a phrase to describe somebody or something as another object in order to show that they have the same qualities and to make the description more forceful.

From the definition above, we can conclude that metaphor is the comparison between two things unlike. Look at the examples below;

1) Obama is a star

2) Rooney is a goal machine

In the both sentences above, first sentence states that Obama is directly compared with a star. Second sentence states that Rooney is compared with a goal machine. Star and goal machine are used to describe human characteristics.

2.3.2.4 Euphemism

According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s (1995: 394), Euphemism is an expression that is gentler or less direct than the one normally used to refer to something unpleasant or embarrassing. In the simply word, it can be said that euphemism is the using of pleasanter, less direct name for something thought to be unpleasant.
For example the word *pass away* is used better than *died*.

### 2.3.2.5 Simile

The word simile derives from Latin word; ‘similes’ which means *like*. Simile is a figure of speech in which there are two different things compared because they appear to be similar in at least one character. Tarigan (1995: 118) says that *simile adalah perbandingan dua hal yang pada hakekatnya berlainan dan yang sengaja kita anggap sama*. (Simile is a comparison between two unlike objects that are regarded similar or almost similar).

Simile is introduced by the word *like* or *as*. A simile is not just an ordinary comparison. If you say “Your pen is like my pen” or “I cook as a girl cook”, you are not making simile because the things that are being compared is basically the same. A simile must compare two basic things that are found to be alike in an aspect. Consider the examples below;

1) My love will go like a bird
2) You run like a car

In the first sentence, there two different things are compared; my love and a bird. *My love* is compared with *a bird* that can fly fast and high in the sky. The sentence means that my love will go fast. The second sentence compares you and a car. *You* is compared with *a car* that can running fast on the road. The second sentence means that you run fast.

Simile resembles metaphor. Both of them compare two different things. The difference is that the use of words *like* and *as* in simile, while metaphor does not use it.
2.3.2.6 Synecdoche

The word synecdoche derives from Greek word ‘synekdechesthai’, consists of the word ‘syn’ means with, ‘ex’ means out and ‘dechesthai’ means to take or to receive. Synecdoche means taking or giving something what has been mentioned. Look at the example below;

1) France against England in a football game this evening.

2) USU is the best in national English debating this year.

In this sentence, as we know that in a football game there are only twenty two players are playing in a field. It does not means that all of the France people play against all of the England people, but only the team of France that consist of eleven people against eleven people of England team. The second sentence does not mean that all the students of USU are the best, but only the team.

2.3.2.7 Oxymoron

Oxymoron is a kind of figurative expression that uses two words are contradictory in meaning to produce a rhetorical effect by means of a concise paradox. According to Oxford English Learner’s, Oxymoron is a phrase that combines two words that seems to be opposite of each other.

Look at the example below;

1) You are a diligent lazy boy

2) You have a black white skin
Both of the examples are oxymoron. In the first sentence, the word diligent is opposite in meaning with lazy. The second sentence, the word black and white is contradictory in meaning.