

Philosophy of Language Vocabulary:

Underlined words within entries have their own entries. When a subscript is present, it indicates which definition in the entry is relevant (if it matters).

Ambiguity: A term (and derivatively, its containing sentence) is ambiguous iff the term has more than one non-polysemous meaning in the language. Two stock examples are ‘bat’ (flying rodent vs. baseball bat) and ‘bank’ (river bank vs. financial institution). Importantly, however, deictic terms are not ambiguous, since their meaning consists in a “character” which is unequivocal across contexts.

Artificial Language: A language whose expressions have been specified and defined *ad hoc* for some technical purpose. Thus, computer languages count as artificial (e.g., C++, HTML). Mathematical languages such as the language of sets also count as artificial. The most familiar example to philosophers is the language of the predicate calculus. Such languages are also called “formal” languages, though the language of the predicate calculus is also characteristic of a “regimented language.”

Atomic Expression: (Also called “primitive” expression.) Intuitively, these are individual words of a spoken or written language, though it is notoriously hard to define ‘word’ syntactically for any language. (A semantic definition would be useless, because you need to know what strings are words of a language, before you can start describing their meanings.) Usually, semantics just gives a *list* of the atomic expressions for a given language. The list at least includes the proper names and the non-composed predicates.

Attributive vs. Referential use (of a def. description): (a.k.a. “Donnellan’s distinction”) Donnellan observed that a definite description such as ‘the U.S. president’ can be used to refer to whatever *x* is the U.S. president (= an attributive or Russellian use), and also to refer to the thing that is *believed* to satisfy the description, even if that thing doesn’t actually satisfy the description (= a referential or Strawsonian use). It is often confused with the rigid/non-rigid uses of definite descriptions, and also the de dicto/de re distinction, though Kripke demonstrated that these distinctions are different.

Common Noun: See Kind Term

Composed Expression: (Also called a “compound” or “molecular” or “complex” expression.) This is a sequence of atomic expressions (often separated by spaces), composed according to the syntax for the language. Intuitively, they are the sentences and sub-sentential “phrases” of the language.

Content: A content is either the proposition expressed by a declarative sentence or the meaning of a term (where the latter is understood as an intension with an ‘s’). Thus, functors do not have a content, though they have a meaning. (A few philosophers might also add that empty terms lack a content.)

Conversational Implicature: A proposition is said to be “conversationally implicated” by a speech-act iff the speech-act communicates the proposition to an audience in virtue of

violating one of Grice's conversational maxims. (Normally, what is conversationally implicated will be different from what is semantically entailed.) Stock example: If I'm writing a recommendation letter for a questionable student, I might try to communicate his questionable worth by saying it "indirectly." In particular, if the letter is for graduate school in philosophy, I might go on and on about how nice the student's handwriting is, which is irrelevant to a person's philosophical abilities. My letter thus does not strictly *entail* that the student is of questionable worth—but it does conversationally implicate that. (In particular, Grice would say that I am violating the conversational maxim to say only what is relevant...but I do so in hopes that the audience will recognize my intention to communicate the questionable abilities of the student.)

Count noun: This is a kind term whose extension is a set of individual things or particulars. 'Rocks' and 'people' would be examples. The contrast is with mass noun.

Declarative sentence The only sentences that are true or false, a declarative sentence represents a state-of-affairs which either obtains (whence it is true), or does not (whence it is false). Thus, the relevant state-of-affairs is often called the condition on which the sentence is true, i.e., a truth-condition₁. It is enormously common for philosophers just to talk of "sentences" when they mean declarative sentences, since philosophers are particularly fixated on declaratives (given their interests in knowing the truth and avoiding falsity). Concordantly, there has been relatively little done on the semantics of interrogatives and imperatives.

De dicto/de re: A vexed distinction, sometimes this is (1) the distinction between sentences occurring in intensional contexts (*de dicto*) versus extensional contexts (*de re*). (2) Othertimes, it refers to the first two of Russell's scope distinctions for the existential quantifier: Thus, 'Possibly, the butler is a spy' can be read *de re* as "there is this guy who is a butler, and possibly he is a spy," or *de dicto* as "possibly, there is exactly one butler and he is a spy (whomever he may be)." (Kripke shows, however, that there are ultimately more than two scope distinctions.) Also, (3) it is sometimes the distinction between the rigid and flaccid readings of 'The butler is a spy'. (See Boër & Lycan (1986), Chapter 5, for further (mis)uses of the *de dicto/de re* distinction.)

"Deep" structure (or "deep" grammar). This notion was introduced by Chomsky, in light of the observation that composed expressions in speech or writing often exhibit syntactic ambiguity (a.k.a. "amphiboly"). Consider: 'No food is better than our food'. The ambiguity arises because 'is better than' can either be composed with *noun phrases*, as in "our food is better than other food," or it can be composed with *gerund clauses*, as in "Eating no food is better than eating our food." Thus, the ambiguity is a syntactic one, rather than semantic (where semantic ambiguity applies to 'bat' or 'bank'). Normally, the speaker only intends to express one of these ideas—and the "deep" structure of the sentence picks out which syntactic structure would be appropriate to the speaker's idea. Chomsky also holds that the rules of "deep" structure constitute a "universal grammar" since this helps to explain how any child can acquire any language with the same amount of ease, without knowing in advance which language this is (French vs. Urdu vs. Japanese, etc.)

Definite descriptions: This is any descriptor which is satisfied by at most one individual. In English, phrases starting with the word ‘the’ are paradigm examples, e.g., ‘the current U.S. President’, ‘the first man on the moon’, etc. But sometimes, other English phrases are counted as “definite descriptions,” e.g., ‘Obama’s wife’, or ‘what $7 + 5$ is.’ Bertrand Russell famously showed how to translate definite descriptions into logical form₂, though logicians sometimes abbreviate his rather lengthy translation by using ‘ $(\exists!x)$ ’, which is read “the unique x such that...” Definite descriptions are usually contrasted with proper names and with “indefinite descriptions,” the latter of which are paradigmatically phrases that begin with the article ‘a’ (in English), as in ‘a liar’, or ‘a torrid affair’.

Deixis: The denotation of a deictic term changes from context to context, though it is not ambiguous, since it is governed by a single rule for use. Thus, ‘I’ unambiguously refers to the speaker in a context (though in different contexts, it will denote different speakers). Following Kaplan, the rule which governs a deictic term is standardly called the “character” of the term, and constitutes the term’s context-invariant, unambiguous meaning. However, the character of the term assigns a content to it, and the content is what changes across contexts. (Nonetheless, in a given context the content of the deictic term normally renders the term rigid.) Deictic terms include the *demonstratives* (‘this’, ‘that’, ‘these’, and ‘those’), and also *indexicals* like ‘I’, ‘now’, ‘here’, etc.

Denotation: (1) The actual referent of a term. (2) The referent of a term in an arbitrary possible world. Thus, ‘The current U.S. president’ denotes₁ Obama, but it denotes₂ whatever is the current U.S. president (if any) in an arbitrary world. Denotation contrasts with meaning, since only terms denote though any expression has a meaning. (Yet the meaning of a term is what determines its denotation. See intension (with an ‘s’).) When used in either sense (1) or (2), *sometimes* ‘denotation’ is interchangeable with ‘referent’ (which also has those two senses). However, it is more often the case that ‘referent’ is not used vis-à-vis predicates. (Although, only predicates are said to be “satisfied” by objects.) Since ‘denotation’ always signifies the object of *any* term, use ‘denotation’ if you’re ever in doubt, in lieu of ‘referent’ or ‘satisfier’. In addition, note that we use ‘denotation’ differently than traditional grammarians, who contrast it with ‘connotation’. (For grammarians, ‘denotation’ picks out the strict dictionary *meaning* of the term, and ‘connotation’ picks out common “associations” or “associated ideas” with the term.) Finally: Sometimes folks talk about a term denoting its extension, but they should really say that the term denotes *members* of its extension. (Otherwise, every term would refer to a certain kind of mathematical object, a set.)

Dialect: The normal use of a language’s expressions among a sub-group of speakers, which deviates in some way from how speakers generally use the language. Examples would include Standard American English (vs. Standard British English), and Jamaican Creole. N.B., a regional accent does not suffice for a distinct dialect, since that is merely a phonological deviation. The rule-of-thumb is that a group speaks a dialect of a language iff the deviant uses in the group are not normally understood by other speakers of the language, even though the group reliably understands the other speakers.

Distributive vs. Collective use (of a count noun): A count noun (or derivatively, its containing sentence) is read distributively when the count noun is “distributed” over members of its extension, i.e., it is interpreted so that *each member* of the extension is denoted by the noun. Otherwise, the count noun (/containing sentence) is read collectively, meaning that members of the noun’s extension do not satisfy the term individually, but only as a collective. To illustrate, ‘Mammals have hair’ uses ‘Mammals’ distributively, since each individual mammal has hair. However, ‘Mammals are a large species’ uses ‘Mammals’ collectively, since only the whole group of mammals counts as a species (and not each individual mammal).

Empty term: This is a term which does not denote anything actual, e.g., ‘Pegasus’, ‘phlogiston’, ‘Obama’s third wife’, etc. Some philosophers (even if they are not Meinongians) will say that an empty term denotes a non-actual object. Though many philosophers prefer to say that an empty term simply does not denote (though it has a meaning).

Expression: Defined recursively by listing the atomic expressions, and then giving the syntactic rules for composing other expressions (incl. sentences) from the atomic ones.

Extension: (1) This is a mathematical set, whose members are precisely those things that a term denotes in the actual world. (2) The set of things that a term denotes in an arbitrary possible world. Thus, the extension₁ of ‘the current U.S. president’ is the set {Obama}, though in an arbitrary possible world, the extension₂ of ‘the current U.S. president’ is a singleton containing whatever is the current U.S. president in a given world. A term’s intension (with an ‘s’) determines its extension in both senses.

Formal Language: See Artificial Language

Functor: This is any expression which lacks a content, though it will have a meaning. Examples include ‘of’, ‘than’, the auxiliary verbs, and logical connectives. (Functors are more commonly known as “function words,” yet I find this misleading since they do not *denote* a function, though the meaning of a logical connective is *defined* as a function.)

Grammar: See Syntax.

Idiolect: This is defined by an individual’s *de facto* use of expressions in a natural language. Any given speaker will have her own idiolect (it is safe to assume) since her usage will deviate from communal usage in some way or other. Thus, an English speaker might use a term with a meaning that is different than its conventional meaning (either intentionally₁ or unintentionally). Or she might compose expressions in a novel manner, suggesting idiosyncratic rules of syntax. Nonetheless, she still counts as a speaker of English if her idiosyncracies are not too deviant—i.e., if other English speakers can normally understand her deviant uses.

Indexicals: See Deixis

Informative: This is an epistemic feature of a sentence; for instance, ‘Cicero = Tully’ and ‘‘Cicero’ denotes Tully’ are informative in English—whereas ‘Cicero = Cicero’ and ‘‘Cicero’ denotes Cicero’ are not (if Cicero’s existence is already known). It is tempting to view uninformative sentences as analytic, a priori, and/or necessary, but all three labels are at least controversial. ‘‘Cicero’ denotes Cicero’ is patently not necessary, since the expression ‘Cicero’ could have been used to denote some other person. (Also, ever since Quine, the existence of analyticities is controversial, since an analytic statement would be true independently of how the world is. But the truth of ‘Cicero = Cicero’ may indeed depend on some fact about the world, viz., that Cicero is self-identical.) Note that even though ‘informative’ concerns an *epistemic* feature of a sentence, Frege and his followers posit the *semantic* notion of sense to explain the different “informative values” of ‘Cicero = Cicero’ and ‘Cicero = Tully’. (See also mode of presentation)

Intension (with an ‘s’): (Often approximated as Fregean “sense”) Following Carnap, the intension (with an ‘s’) of a term is construed as a *mathematical function* from possible worlds into extensions. That is, given any possible world as input, the intension spits out the set of things that the term denotes in that world. It is often confused with intention (with a ‘t’). What’s also confusing is that some writers (e.g. Russell) use the term ‘meaning’ to mean “intension” (with an ‘s’), though ‘meaning’ can also be used to talk about “intention” (with a ‘t’) in *any* sense of ‘intention’. Ugh. Thus, I often talk instead of Fregean “sense” when I can—the difference is that, unlike Carnapian intensions, Fregean senses contain a mode of presentation. See also intensional contexts.

Intensional Context: (A.k.a “opaque” context) A term occurs in an intensional context iff replacing the term with another denoting the same thing (a “co-referring” term) results in an invalid or non-deductive inference. Philosophers also describe this as a case where the term occurs “obliquely,” or where “substitution *salve veritate*” fails (i.e., substituting a co-referring term does not “save the truth.”) The most well-known intensional contexts occur when a term follows a “propositional attitude verb,” such as ‘believes’, ‘knows’, ‘wants’, ‘wishes’, etc. A stock example would be where ‘Bob believes Cicero = Cicero’ is true, though ‘Bob believes Cicero = Tully’ is false (where ‘Cicero’ and ‘Tully’ co-refer). Other intensional contexts occur within quotation-marks: Thus ‘‘Bachelor’ has seven words’ is true but ‘‘Unmarried man’ has seven words’ is false—even though ‘bachelor’ and ‘unmarried man’ co-refer. Another example is when a term occurs in the scope of the idiom ‘so called’ or ‘so named’. Quine’s famous example: ‘Giorgione was so called because of his size’ is true, yet ‘Barbarella was so called because of his size’ is false—even though ‘Giorgione’ and ‘Barbarella’ refer to the same guy. Most follow Quine’s diagnosis that ‘Giorgione’ is both used and mentioned when composed with ‘so called’, despite how things appear in the surface grammar. Note: When a context is not intensional, it is often called an *extensional* or *transparent* context. (Sometimes you also hear folks speak of a *term* being used “transparently” as well.)

Intention (with a ‘t’) (1) An intention in the first sense is a “plan” to do something; this sense of ‘intention’ is actually much more common in philosophy of language than is usually recognized. Thus, if we say that a speaker’s intentions constitute the meaning of a term, this apparently says that what the speaker “plans” to mean by the term *just is* what

it means. We also sometimes say that the speaker intended₁ to say ‘God’ instead of ‘dog’ (as in a Spoonerism). But naturally, any of a speakers’ “plans” will be intentional in the second sense as well. (2) A linguistic or (more commonly) a mental item is “intentional” in the second sense iff it is “about” something. This is also the sense of ‘intentional’ used when we talk about phenomenon of “intentionality,” i.e., that mental states and linguistic items (unlike anything else in nature) sometimes *represent* things. (3) Sometimes ‘intention’ is left *ambiguous* between the first and second senses: Compare ‘He meant Obama when he said ‘Carter’ ’ vs. ‘He intended Obama when he said ‘Carter’’. We can read both sentences as saying either that the speaker “planned” to denote Obama when he mistakenly said ‘Carter’, or that his use of ‘Carter’ indeed denoted Obama, contra linguistic convention (cf. Grices notion of “speaker-meaning”).

Interrogative sentence: A sentence that expresses a question; in English, such sentences end with a question-mark ‘?’ instead of the usual period.

Imperative sentence: Intuitively, any sentence that expresses a command. However, this may not include sentences like ‘You should go to the store’ or ‘We must support the revolution’. At least in the surface grammar, these examples are declaratives (even though a command may be con conversationally implicated by their use).

Kind term (a.k.a. common noun): This is any term which is not a proper name. Kind terms include predicates and names for types of things; examples are ‘mammal’, ‘mammals’, ‘sofa’, ‘sofa or mammal’, etc. It is common to distinguish between *natural* kind terms and *artificial* kind terms, the former denoting a type of thing recognized by natural science (e.g., ‘mammal’), the latter denoting other things (e.g., ‘sofa’, ‘sofa or mammal’).

Language: (1) This is defined by a set of expressions and the syntax governing them. Since this makes no mention of meaning, a language in this first sense can be (though is not necessarily) an “uninterpreted language.” Hence, it is possible to have a meaningless language (if the language is artificial). (2) In contrast, any language in the second sense *must* be meaningful. That is, a language₂ is a natural or artificial language₁ where the expressions have meanings. Notably, then, an artificial language₁ might breed two different languages₂ if the language₁ is given two distinct interpretations. Among natural languages, it is standard to assume that you have two different languages iff mutual incomprehension is the norm between two groups of speakers. (Contrast with dialect.) (N.B., There is a third use of ‘language’ where *thought itself* also counts as a language. However, I usually do not use ‘language’ in this sense, unless I specify that explicitly.)

Logical Form: (1) The analogue of “deep” structure for semantics: Some expressions have more than one interpretation due to some ambiguous or deictic term, such as ‘I own a bat.’ Normally the speaker has only one interpretation in mind; thus, the logical form of the sentence is a structure which specifies the intended interpretation, and is posited as cognitively real. (2) The translation of a natural language expression into logical notation.

Mass noun: A kind term whose extension is not a set of individuals but rather a “mass” where it is ill-defined when you have one versus two tokens of that kind. Thus, ‘water’ is an example, since it is unclear when you have one versus two “waters” (even though “glasses of water” are easily distinguishable). Other examples would be ‘gold’, ‘phlogiston’, ‘dirt’, etc.

Mode of Presentation (of an object): (abbr. “MOP”). This is a Fregean notion which was once commonly thought to be the same thing as a Fregean sense. Yet Burge’s “Sinning against Frege” showed that they could not be the same. And indeed, in “On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*,” Frege merely says that the sense of a term *contains* the MOP, not that they are identical. (Still, it remains true that a difference in MOP implies a difference in sense.) The main difference between sense and “mode of presentation” is that the former is primarily a semantic notion and the latter is epistemic—it concerns how the object “appears” to the mind. Though if a sense “contains” a MOP, that explains why Frege uses this primarily *semantic* notion to explain the different *epistemic* “informativeness” of ‘Cicero = Cicero’ and ‘Cicero = Tully’.

Meaning: Ha ha, as if. Although, *one* sense of ‘meaning’ is content.

Molecular expression: See Compound expression.

Morpheme: the smallest strings of a spoken or written language that are meaningful, and are either atomic expressions of the language (such as ‘I’ or ‘of’), or are parts of expressions (prefixes and suffixes such as ‘pre-’, ‘un-’, ‘-s’, and ‘-ed’.) Thus, a term like ‘postmodernism’ has three morphemes: ‘post-’, ‘modern’, and ‘-ism’.

Name: See Proper Name.

Natural Language: Any language₂ which occurs naturally, “in the wild.” The contrast is with artificial languages. Examples of natural languages include what you ordinarily think of as languages, e.g., French, English, Urdu, Japanese, etc.

Oblique: See Intensional context

Polysemy: This occurs when a term (or derivatively, its containing sentence) has more than one meaning (similar to ambiguity), yet its meanings are highly related in a way that suggests the word has a single etymology. (Note: Some strictly ambiguous words have a single etymology as well, although in those cases, the single etymology is unexpected.) Some examples of polysemes: ‘milk’ can mean either the act of milking or the result of milking; ‘head’ means the part of the body above the neck, and also a person in charge of an organization; ‘psychology’ can mean the study of mental states/behaviors, or the mental states themselves. (This study/object polysemy is had by most ‘-ology’ words.)

Pragmatics: This is the branch of linguistics which deals with how context conditions what is communicated. Thus, part of pragmatics (which Lycan calls “semantic pragmatics”) is concerned with the semantics of deictics, ambiguity/polysemy, and

vagueness, since the content of these terms is determined partly by the context. The other part of pragmatics is concerned with Grice's conversational maxims and the notion of implicature in communication (Lycan: "pragmatic pragmatics").

Predicate: Any atomic or composed expression which expresses a property or relation. Examples would be 'is a bastard,' 'is a lying bastard,' 'is more of a lying bastard than,' etc. Sometimes 'is' (copula) and other functors get dropped when mentioning a predicate, so that we would instead talk of the predicate 'red' in lieu of 'is red'. (Though in that case, the predicate has the potential to get confused with a name for the property, like the name 'redness'.) Sometimes it is better to say that a predicate expresses an attribute or feature—since 'property' is often taken to be ontologically committing to natural kinds or Platonic Forms. Yet even among property Realists, it can be objectionable to say that 'is a fish or a Prime Minister' expresses a *bona fide* property (since the two properties expressed by the disjuncts seem too unrelated). Quine also objects to "properties" because they are intensional: Being trilateral is intuitively a different property from being triangular, even though all and only trilaterals are triangles.

(Proper) Name: As a first pass, this is any atomic expression which refers to a unique, individual thing, e.g., 'Ted', 'London', 'Earth', etc. It mainly contrasts with a kind term among referring expressions. BUT: Some proper names in natural language do not seem to be atomic, e.g., 'Alpha Centauri', 'Lady Gaga' (Still, these may be *idiomatic* atomic terms, like 'The Big Apple' which counts as a name even though it has the form of a definite description.) Usually, a proper name will be a rigid designator (though there are exceptions). *Important Note*: Philosophers overwhelmingly refer to proper names as just "names"—even though for grammarians, "names" include both proper names and any (atomic or composed) kind terms.

Phone: the individual sounds which are used in speaking, e.g., the long 'a' sound, the short 'a' sound, the rolled 'r' (in French), etc. The written counterpart would be a single character like 'g' or 'β'. (Not to be confused with phonemes).

Phoneme: These are the sounds used in speech, construed abstractly or independently from regional accents. Thus, 'out' uses the same 'ou' phoneme regardless of whether 'out' is spoken by a Minnesotan or a Tennessean—even though such speakers use different phones when announcing the word.

Proposition: In the first instance, a proposition is the content of a declarative sentence. Thus, 'Il neige' and 'It's snowing' are declaratives in different languages which express the same proposition, namely, *that it is snowing*. There are many views on the metaphysics of propositions; some say that they are abstract objects (akin to numbers) which have a "sentence-like" structure. Others hold that they are possible states-of-affairs. N.B., since talk of "propositions" is often ontologically controversial, sometimes 'statement' is used in its place, which is deliberately polysemous between a sentence and a proposition.

Quantifier: This is any expression which specifies a *quantity* of whatever it is applied to. Some examples from English are ‘every’, ‘some’, ‘most’, and number-terms. In logic, the expressions ‘ $(\forall x)$ ’ and ‘ $(\exists x)$ ’ are quantifiers, which can translate respectively as “all” and “at least one.” ‘ $(\exists x)$ ’ is also sometimes translated as the ontologically loaded phrase “there exists,” but this is misleading in my view. (We unhesitatingly use ‘ $(\exists x)$ ’ in relation to numbers, even though the existence of numbers is controversial.) However, the ontologically loaded translation is standard—hence, in natural language, terms such as ‘there is’ and ‘exist’ are often counted as quantifiers as well.

Quotation-marks (a.k.a “quotes”). These can be double-quotes, such as those appearing in the parentheses above. Or they can be single-quotes, like those flanking the last word of this sentence, ‘here’. In contemporary usage, single-quotes are used to mention any string appearing inside the quotes. Double-quotes are used as “shudder” or “scare” quotes, to indicate some unease with the writer’s own use of an expression. (However, British English has this inverted: Scare quotes are single; mentioning quotes are double.) Double-quotes are also used as “verbatim quotes,” where the expression(s) appearing inside the quotes are both used *and mentioned*, thus signaling a verbatim report of what is said. (However: If the quoted passage itself employs double quotes, those quotes are usually changed to single-quotes, so as to keep clear where the passage begins and ends.) You may have noticed that I put punctuation *outside* of single-quotes, e.g., “ ‘every’, ‘some’, ‘most’, ” which is contrary to what the MLA prescribes. That’s because on my usage, ‘every,’ denotes not the term ‘every’ but the *composition* of ‘every’ *with a comma*. In general, I go by the rule that anything appearing inside the single-quotes is part of what is mentioned. (Is it too anal of me to care about this? Perhaps, but this IS “anal-ytic” philosophy, har har.)

Rigid Designator: This is a term that denotes the same object across possible worlds. Following Kripke, the attributive definite descriptor ‘the greatest student of Plato’ is not rigid (i.e, it is “flaccid”) because it describes different objects in different possible worlds. After all, it is not metaphysically necessary that Aristotle was a student of Plato—and in a world where Aristotle never became a Plato’s student, this will pick out someone else (if anyone). Nonetheless, ‘Aristotle’ *is* rigid, for it denotes Aristotle in any possible world. Consider that if we’re talking about a world where Aristotle is not a philosopher, for instance, we’re still talking about the same guy, *Aristotle*. Normally, proper names are rigid designators, and attributive definite descriptions are not. BUT: ‘the greatest student of Plato’ *can* be used rigidly, e.g. if it is elliptical for ‘the greatest student of Plato in the actual world.’ ALSO: Some proper names are flaccid, e.g., ‘Chummy’ is used by Scotland Yard to denote whoever perpetrated the crime.

Sense: (a.k.a. “Fregean sense”) Cf. Intension (with an ‘s’)

Sentence: Any composition of expressions in a language which expresses a thought, question, and/or command. Sometimes we classify sentences as “atomic” and “composed” like terms, according to whether they contain logical connectives or not.

String: Any written character or phone, or unbroken sequence thereof, such as the written marks ‘al\$;nf_knv’, and the sound [ɪntəˈnæʃənəl].

Subject-term: Intuitively, this kind of term denotes the main topic of a sentence. Any term can act as a subject-term, but not every occurrence of a term does so. A subject-term contrasts with the predicate of its containing sentence. In surface grammar, the subject-term is simply called the “subject,” though this encourages a use/mention confusion. (Thus, philosophers only use ‘subject’ to denote the *object* of the subject-term—and sometimes, of course, to denote persons more specifically (as psychological entities).)

Substitution *Salve Veritate*: See Intensional Context

Surface Grammar: This is the kind of grammar you learned about in elementary school. Surface grammar categorizes the words in a sentence (using the taxonomy of ‘noun’, ‘verb’, ‘adjective’, ‘adverb’, etc.), and gives the rules for generating composed expressions from these words. An example would be the English rule of grammar “declarative sentences must have the subject-term precede the main verb.” It is called “surface” grammar since it concerns the order of words as they are in fact spoken or written, i.e., as they appear “on the surface.” The contrast is with “deep” grammar.

Surface Semantics: This is the analogue of surface structure for semantics; it concerns an expression’s meaning as it appears “on the surface.” Thus, even though ‘I own a bat’ may be disambiguated in logical form₁, its surface semantics is ambiguous.

Syntax. (Sometimes called “grammar.”) These are the rules that govern the expressions of a language. In particular, syntax determines which strings are expressions of the language. Thus, what we call an “ungrammatical” sentence is a sentence which is *not* an expression of the language, according to the rules of syntax. Note: Mostly (but not exclusively), ‘syntax’ is used to denote the rules of “deep” structure, whereas ‘grammar’ is used mostly to denote the rules of surface grammar. Still, I prefer the term ‘syntax’ in both cases, since some people follow Wittgenstein in (mis)using ‘grammar’ to talk about how an expression is *used* by speakers (as in the “grammar” of the word ‘game’).

Term: This is any sub-sentential expression which has a content, including names, indefinite/definite descriptions, deictic terms, and predicates. Quantifiers in natural language are also terms, though in logic, it sounds awkward to my ear to call ‘ $(\forall x)$ ’ and ‘ $(\exists x)$ ’ “terms.” The expressions which are not terms are functor words.

Truth-condition: (1) A possible state-of-affairs or “condition” which makes a declarative true. Thus, a state-of-affairs where snow is white (as opposed to green) is a condition which makes true the sentence ‘La neige est blanche.’ (2) In intensional logic, a truth-condition is a *function* assigned to a sentence which takes in a world, and outputs the truth-value of the sentence in that world.

Universal Grammar: Cf. “Deep” Structure

Use vs. Mention: Using an expression is the familiar process of speaking/writing the expression to communicate. To mention an expression is to use a *term* for the expression. Thus, the sentence ‘The word ‘cat’ sounds weird to me’ mentions the word ‘cat’ instead of *using* the term to refer to felines. Putting single-quotes around an expression is one way to mention an expression, though you can also construct a definite description for the expression or stipulate a name for it (“Let’s give the following sentence the name ‘Bob’”). A further way is to offset the expression in the type; thus, the following is a mentioning of the sentence, rather than a use of it:

She sells sea shells by the run-down crack house.

Hence the offsetting of type acts like quotation marks, where the expression mentioned is the expression offset.

Vagueness: A term (or derivatively, its containing sentence) is vague iff there are “borderline” cases, where it is unclear if an object satisfies the term or not. The usual example is ‘bald’: Some things clearly satisfy ‘bald’ (like Yule Brenner); some things clearly do not satisfy ‘bald’ (like Beyoncé), but some things are neither clearly bald nor clearly not bald (such as myself). Note that a vague term is not *ipso facto* ambiguous or polysemous. As used above, ‘bald’ does not admit of different meanings in the way that ‘bat’ or ‘head’ does. (Ignore metaphorical uses, e.g. where ‘bald’ describes a tire having little tread.) In different contexts, the “standards” for being bald may be different—hence, in some contexts, I might be a clear case of “bald”...whereas in others, I might be a clear case of not “bald.” Still, the context-sensitivity of ‘bald’ would probably not be like the context-sensitivity of a deictic element, since there seems to be no ostension in the case of ‘bald’. There are many different proposals for how to understand the semantics of vague terms. Some see the extension of a vague term as a fuzzy set (in a language with an *n*-valued logic). Others like superevaluationists and epistemicists think a vague term has a precise extension in each context. The latter, however, think it is unknowable what that extension is. Finally, Williamson has the view that vague terms denote vague objects *in the world*.