

# A CORRELATION STUDY: Understanding and Ability to Appreciate Proverbs in Semantics Class

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to investigate the correlation between students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs at the seventh semester of English department students in Lancang Kuning University, Pekanbaru. Based on the findings and discussion in chapter IV, the result was in line with the researcher's hypothesis that there was significant correlation between students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English at the Seventh Semester of English Education Department Faculty of Education and Teachers Training University of Lancang Kuning. The result of semantics test could be categorized "very good" because the percentage of the students who got very good category was 75%. Whereas, the result of English proverbs test could be categorized "very good" because of the percentage of the students who got very good category was 72%. It was found that the more increases semantics score, the more increases also English proverbs score. So, it was strong influence for variable X which was semantics to influence variable Y which was English proverbs and vice versa. The data reveals that the correlation coefficient was 0.846 which was close to +1.00, it meant that there was positive correlation between students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs.

**Key words:** Correlation, Semantic, Proverbs

## 1. Brief Overview of Semantic

Semantics is the study of meaning in language, it focused on the relation between signifiers, like words, phrases, signs, and symbols. As one the branch of linguistics and study the meaning. There were a number of branches and sub branches of semantics, including formal semantics, which studied the logical aspects of meaning, such as sense, reference, implication, and logical form, lexical semantics, which studied word meanings and word relations, and conceptual semantics, which studied the cognitive structure of meaning. Here are some of expert theories that define what semantics was.

Semantics is the systematic study of meaning, and linguistic semantics is the study of how languages organize and express meanings. So, semantics deals with meaning which is organized and express meaning. It refers how language is formed and produces meaning which will bring us to meaning concept. Roughly speaking, semantics deals with meanings which are encoded into linguistic forms. Even more roughly, semantics deals with words and sentences (Goddard, 1998: 15). Then, according to Baker & Hengeveld (2011:196) states that semantics is the subfield of linguistics that is concerned with the study of meaning.

In addition, Hurford et al (2007:1) defines that semantics is the study of meaning in language. Learning and expressing the meaning of the words is what

languages are all about. Language without meaning is useless. When a person hears someone speaking without knowing the meaning of the utterances, for him those utterances are not a language. Linguists generally agree that, when people communicate, they do more than just attend to what actually being said by way of words and grammatical constructions. Both speakers and listeners should get same concept what is said from the language in order to attain the communication.

Although dictionaries are filled with words and their meaning of thousands of words, meaning is not an easy thing to get, it is more likely to be abstract. Therefore, the goal of semantic study is to explain how sequences of languages are matched with their proper meanings and placed in certain environments by speakers of the language. It means that semantics is not just how to build words or sentences and produces language but also how to interpret the language itself. Moreover, Baker (1991:23) states that semantics is the subfield of linguistics that is concerned with the rules for assigning meaning. Semantics tries to assign the meaning and interpret it. After getting the meaning, the speakers or hearers should be able to put the language precisely in appropriate discussion goal. Here, the researcher would like to apply English proverbs through semantics points of view in standard Gricean theory

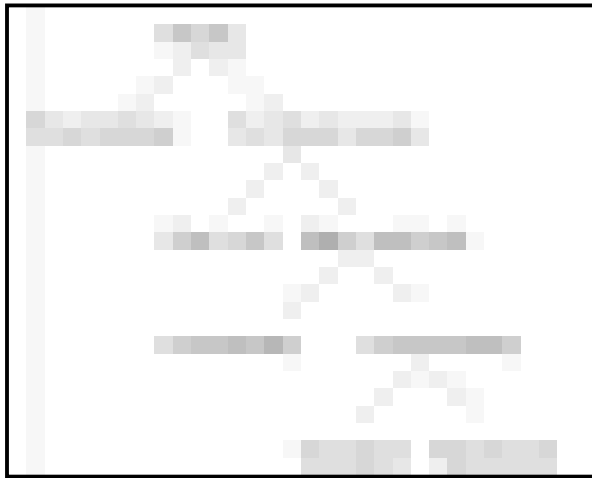


Fig: Taxonomy of meaning in standard Gricean theory

Proverbs were short message of good advice. Some told us how to act, while others made a general statement from which we could learn something. Moreover, Proverbs were short expressions of popular wisdom. Proverbs were short and pithy sayings that express some traditionally held truth. They were usually metaphorical and often, for the sake of alliterative. And, as so many proverbs offer advice and uplift, many of them were religious in origin. Proverbs was one of the interesting studies to apply through semantics view. Thus, the researcher would like to conduct the correlation research on correlating students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs.

Researching the students' ability toward English proverbs was really excited as well as challenging. It seems that the students less familiar with the terms also all things beyond English proverbs. Thus, the researcher would like to research the students' ability in appreciating English proverbs surely after they have proverbs meeting in semantic class.

## 2. What is Proverbs?

Proverbs were popular sayings which contain advice or state a generally accepted truth. Proverbs are popularly defined as short expressions of popular wisdom. Proverbs are short and pithy sayings that express some traditionally held truth. Meider in Mohamadi and Nabifar (2004) defines proverbs as short, generally known sentence of the folk which contain wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form, which are handed down from generation to generation and since they belong to the common knowledge of basically all native speakers they are indeed very effective devices to communicate wisdom and knowledge about human nature and the world at large.

Proverbs are short well-known phrases or sentences, which are usually the reflection of life. Proverbs are a part of language and a kind of idiom. They are phrases or sentences that spread among the forks with popular image and rich significance; they are also a form of folk literature; they have a long history recording experience of labors in different times; they stem from a wide origin: from literary works to folk stories, from religious beliefs to natural phenomenon, from realizations to experiences and wisdom of people in different times and different social classes; they include oral ones and written ones; they are accumulation and summary of people's experience and are handed down from generation and generation; they bring about deep effects on social concepts (Wang Shifeng 2012:151).

Unlike idioms, however, fixed expression and proverbs often have fairly transparent meaning. But, in spite of its transparency, the meaning of a fixed expression or proverbs is somewhat more than the sum meanings of its words; the expression has to be taken as one unit to establish meaning (Baker Mona, 1991:64)

Therefore, these expressions of human mind could be considered as not only a written monument of a nation, but they also carried practical value, which will be analyzed further in the present research. In fact, these specific utterances, as well as English proverbs, represent wisdom, experience and commonplace beliefs, moral and social values that are basically the same in many nations. They had strong connection with people's philosophy on life and contain general observations of practical knowledge, situations and other various aspects of life. Here listed some alternative from examples of proverb definitions:

- Proverbs are short and witty traditional expressions that arise as part of everyday discourse as well as in the more highly structured situations of education and judicial proceedings. Each proverb is a full statement of an approach to a recurrent problem. (Abrahams 1982:119 in Valiulytė)
- Proverbs are brief statements showing in condensed form the accumulated life experience of the community and serving as conventional practical symbols for abstract ideas. (Galperin 1977:181 in Valiulytė)
- A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation. (Mieder 1985:119; 1993:24, quoted by Mieder 2004:3 in Valiulytė)

- Proverbs are brief (sentence-length) entextualized utterances which derive a sense of wisdom, wit and authority from explicit and intentional intertextual reference to a tradition of previous similar wisdom utterances. (Winick 2003:595, quoted by Mieder 2004:5 in Valiulytė)

Furthermore, according to Rayevsky & Hurwitz defines that proverbs are short messages of good advice. Some tell us how to act, while others make a general statement from which we can learn something. They are meant to pass on wisdom and teach us how to behave toward one another.

### 3. The Method

This research was designed as correlation study which in quantitative research that intends to look for relationships between variables.

#### 3.1 Population

The population of this research would be all of the students in semantics class at class A, B and C of the seventh semester in Lancang Kuning University. The students at class A were 21 students, while at class B consisted of 31 students and there were 20 students at class C. So, the population in this research was 72 students. The population of this research could be seen in the following table:

#### 3.2 Sample

Creswell (2005:146) defines that sampling is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for generalizing about the target population. Regarding to the population number, the researcher would take sample because the total of population was in large number. The researcher would use simple random sampling to collect the data. According to Creswell (2005:147), in simple random sampling the researcher select participants (or unit, such as school) for the example that any individual has an equal probability of being selected from the population. . Because of the population in this research under 100 exactly 72 students, the researcher would take sample 50 %. Thus, the sample in this research was 36 students.

#### 3.3 Instruments

This research use test for both of the variables. Firstly, to know students' understanding in semantics, the researcher would use test to measure students' understanding in semantics. Also, to know whether the students had ability to appreciate English proverbs or no, the researcher would use test. Test was used to measure students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs.

### 3.4 Data Collection Technique

The technique of collecting data played an important role in conducting a research. Test was the instrument which used by the researcher to collect the data. The analyzing was going to find out the correlation between students understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs. In this research, the researcher would take students' score through test in term of semantics.

Then, the researcher would give test to the students in order to measure students' ability in appreciating English proverbs. The test was in the form of essay with 10 questions. If the students answered all questions correctly, the score would be 100. Each question would be given 10 score. So, the total score was 100.

### 3.5 Technique of Analyzing the Data

The data would be collected by using test. The researcher would analyze the data to identify there was correlation between students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs or no. Hence, validity was necessary characteristic of any good test in order to find the validity of the test. The researcher would use correlation table which was compared to calculated correlation in order to know the numbers of item were valid or no.

The researcher would use Cronbach Alpha to know the reliable of the instrument as seen below:

$$r_{11} = \left( \frac{k}{k-1} \right) \left( 1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_b^2}{\sigma_t^2} \right)$$

Where:

$r_{11}$  = Reliability of the instrument

$k$  = Number of items

$\sigma_t^2$  = Total variant

$\sum \sigma_b^2$  = Number of item variant

To find the variant for the formulation, the formula as seen below:

$$\sigma = \frac{\sum X^2 - \frac{(\sum X)^2}{n}}{n}$$

Where:

$n$  = Number of sample

$X$  = The score chosen

To know in what classification the instrument reliability was, the researcher would refer to following table:

**Table 3.1**  
Classification the Instrument Reliability

0.90 - 1.00	Very High Reliability
0.80 - 0.90	High Reliability
0.70 - 0.80	Medium Reliability
0.60 - 0.70	Low Reliability
0.50 - 0.60	Very Low Reliability

After getting the result of validity and reliability of the data, the researcher was still needed to get the correlation of the two variables. It would be measured by using product moment correlation in SPSS 16.00, because it was correlation research, automatically the technique analyzed data used was quantitative data, for correlational. Product moment was certainly applicable to know the correlation variables stated in the research. The formulation of the correlation based on Sudijono (2011: 206) was as follow:

To know the degrees of freedom, the researcher used formula from Sudijono (2011: 206):

$$df : N - nr$$

Where:

df: Degrees of freedom

N : Number of cases

nr: Number of variables

After getting the correlation coefficient (r), the researcher would search the determination coefficient (R) to show how much the influence between two variables. The formulation as follow:

$$R = r^2 \times 100 \%$$

Where:

R = Determination coefficient

r = Correlation coefficient

If:

R = 0, the influence of variable X toward variable Y is low

R = 1, the influence of variable X toward variable Y is strong

The guiding of the influence for high or low of the determination coefficient in Supranto (2001:227) was seen below:

**Table 3.2**  
Interpretation Guiding of Determination Coefficient

0.90 - 1.00	Very High
0.80 - 0.90	High
0.70 - 0.80	Medium
0.60 - 0.70	Low
0.50 - 0.60	Very Low

#### 4. Findings: The Correlation

In this section this researcher presents the data in order to investigate the correlation between students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs as well as how significant the correlation between two variables was. Here this research used Pearson Product Moment in SPSS verse 16 to analyze the score using technique simple random sampling.

In this research, there were two variables which were semantics and English proverbs. Semantics was variable X. The sample of this research was 36 students. The kind of semantics test was in form of essay and consisted of 10 questions. In doing correction, the researcher should ensure the answer would be correct or incorrect according to assessment indicator. If the students answered with a true or complete answer, the score would be 10 for each item. If the students answered with a lack of expert definition or no example, the score would be 7.5 for each item. If the students answered with a short answer or less targeting, the score would be 5 for each

item. If the students answered with a wrong answer, the score would be 2.5 for each item.

If there was no answer, the score would be 0. After interpreting data of the finding, the researcher would interpret more details the result of semantics test.

After calculating the students' scores of semantics test, the researcher found that the mean score of students' semantics test was 84.9, the median score of students' semantics test was 85, the mode score of students' semantics test was 72.5, the standard deviation score of students' semantics test was 8.73, and the sum score of students' semantics test was 3057.5. The finding of semantics test could be categorized into "very good". It because of 75% of the students was very good while 25% of the students were good. It meant that the students' score of semantics test was categorized to very good because there were 75% students got score in the range from 80-100. Based on the category above, the students could prove that they were able to understand semantics and they were success had been taught by the lecturer of semantics.

Moreover, English proverbs was variable Y. The kind of proverbs test was in the form of essay and consisted of 10 questions. To assess the answers, the researcher should ensure that the answer would be correct or incorrect according to assessment indicator. Different with semantics assessment indicators, in proverbs test, if the students were just able to answer in translation level toward the English proverbs, the score would be 5. If the students could give meaning beyond the English proverbs, the score would be 7.5. And if the students could give the value or application toward the English proverbs, the score would be 10 for each item. After interpreting data of the finding, the researcher would interpret more details the result of proverbs test.

After calculating the students' scores of proverbs test, the researcher found that the mean score of students' proverbs test was 83.75, the median score of students' proverbs test was 82.5, the mode score of students' proverbs test was 82.5, the standard deviation score of students' proverbs test was 7.87, and the sum score of students' proverbs test was 3015. The finding of proverbs test could be categorized into "very good". It because of 72% of the students was very good while 28% of the students were good. It meant that the students' score of proverbs test was categorized to very good because there were 72% students got score in the range from 80-100. Based on the category above, the students proved that they were able to appreciate English proverbs even took the moral value from the English proverbs that could influence their life.

On the other hand, the significant correlation also could be seen from the result of correlation coefficient

which was 0.846, with the critical value in significant 5% which was 0.339 and critical value 1% which was 0.436. It could be concluded that Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted and Null Hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) was rejected. Based on the table of product moment by Sudijono (2012:193), if the result of correlation coefficient was in the range from 0.70-0.90, it meant that there was high correlation between students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs at the seventh semester students of English Education Department in Lancang Kuning University.

If we interpreted ( $r$ ) correlation into ( $R$ ) (correlation determination) with the formulation,  $R = r^2$ , so ( $R = 0.846^2 = 0.715$ ). If we change ( $R$ ) 0.715 into percentage, it would be 71%. In conclusion, the more increases semantics score, the more increases also English proverbs score. The percentage of semantics influenced English proverbs was 71%. So, it was strong influence for variable X which was semantics to influence variable Y which was English proverbs. Furthermore, a correlation coefficient close to +1.00 indicates a strong positive correlation. Because of the correlation coefficient was 0.846 which was close to +1.00, it meant that there was positive correlation between students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs at the seventh semester students of English Education Department in Lancang Kuning University.

Based on the discussion above, both of variable were important to be learnt by the students in English Education Department of Lancang Kuning University. It because of semantics was one of linguistics branches that the students at university level should know as well as semantics was not only a subject for assigning meaning but more interpretations for the language itself which would give deep meaning that would create social communication would be better and more advance while proverbs was one of semantics discipline which was really interesting even would give moral value about life to the students and contained good advice that could teach the students how to act and behave each other. In conclusion, semantics and proverbs should be taught continuously by the lecturer and would be useful for the students.

## 5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented the conclusion of the research finding and research discussion on concerning the students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs.

Based on the findings and discussion in chapter IV, the result was in line with the researcher's hypothesis that there was significant correlation

between students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English at the Seventh Semester of English Education Department Faculty of Education and Teachers Training University of Lancang Kuning. The result of semantics test could be categorized **"very good"** because the percentage of the students who got very good category was 75%. Whereas, the result of English proverbs test could be categorized **"very good"** because of the percentage of the students who got very good category was 72%.

Moreover, the correlation between students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs was figure out to the value of degrees of freedom (df) which was 34. In the table of significant degree 5%, the r table was 0.339 and if the significant degree 1%, the r table was 0.436. The calculation result showed that the correlation coefficient was 0.846. The probability was read  $0.846 > 0.436 > 0.339$ . Because of the correlation coefficient was 0.846, the determination correlation was 0.715. So, the percentage of semantics influenced English proverbs and English proverbs was influenced by semantics was 71%. In conclusion, the more increases semantics score, the more increases also English proverbs score. So, it was strong influence for variable X which was semantics to influence variable Y which was English proverbs and vice versa. Furthermore, a correlation coefficient close to +1.00 indicates a strong positive correlation. Because of the correlation coefficient was 0.846 which was close to +1.00, it meant that there was positive correlation between students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs.

That was why Alternative Hypothesis (Ha) was accepted and Null Hypothesis (Ho) was rejected. It meant that there was significant correlation between students' understanding in semantics and their ability to appreciate English proverbs at the seventh semester students of English Department in Lancang Kuning University.

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