Chapter 3: Language and Meaning

True/False Questions

14. Syntax refers to the rules by which we arrange words.

15. Encoding means assigning meanings of words into thoughts of our own.

16. When we say that “words are arbitrary,” we mean that words have a meaning in and of themselves, a meaning that is the same for everyone using that language.

17. When we say that “the word is not the thing,” we mean that the word is an abstraction, a simplification, a symbol of that for which it stands.

18. Semantics is the science of meaning in language.

19. Denotative meaning refers to the individualized, personalized meaning that we give to a word.

20. Connotative meaning refers to the individualized, personalized meaning that we give to a word.

21. When you say that you need “to use the rest room” instead of saying, “I have to go to the toilet,” you are using slang.

22. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that our perception of reality is shaped by our language.

23. Paraphrasing is the repetition of a message in the same words.

24. When a professor says that in order to avoid being counted absent you must come to scheduled classes, come to class before the bell, stay the entire class period, and leave only when dismissed, she is using an operational definition.

25. Dating is a term in general semantics that means communication is improved if you always specify how your observation was made.

26. To say that “fraternity guys are rich” is a violation of the general semanticist’s notion of indexing.

Multiple Choice Questions

27. The term that refers to the arrangement of words is
   a. grammar.
   b. code.
   c. encoding.
   d. syntax.

28. Which of the following is an example of indexing?
   a. Fords get great gas mileage.
   b. My Shih Tzu chews on everything. Does yours do that as well?
   c. Everyone in the Midwest farms.
   d. All landlords are unhelpful.

29. Which of the following does not mean that “words are arbitrary”?
   a. Words have inherent meaning.
   b. Words are created by people.
   c. The meaning of words is decided by listeners.
   d. Things are named by people.

30. Technical language that has been developed by a professional group is known as
   a. irony.
   b. paraphrase.
   c. colloquialisms.
   d. jargon.

31. Semantics can be defined as the
   a. science of meaning in language.
   b. study of transformational grammar.
   c. discipline devoted to creating words.
   d. systematic examination of spelling and syntax.
32. Which of the following does not accurately describe what we mean when we say that language is personal?
   a. We each have different vocabularies.
   b. We develop our own expressions to describe our own reality.
   c. We have different levels of experience that limit or expand our capacity to communicate ideas and things.
   d. We each have developed language without the influence of our age, gender, or personality.

33. Which of the following examples best depicts the denotative meaning of a word?
   a. Abortion is the murder of a fetus.
   b. Abortion is the termination of a pregnancy in the first trimester.
   c. Abortion is the last ditch birth control.
   d. Abortion is the death of a human soul.

34. Which of the following statements about language is false?
   a. Words have only meanings which people give them.
   b. Words also have connotative meanings.
   c. The context in which a word occurs helps us determine which of the possible meanings is intended.
   d. The meaning of a word does not change once it is included in the dictionary.

35. Which of these statements is an example of euphemism?
   a. toilet
   b. can
   c. head
   d. rest room

36. Which of the following is not a true statement about slang and jargon?
   a. Jargon is likely to be used by technical/professional people.
   b. Slang is likely to be used in the neighborhood and on the streets.
   c. Jargon is most likely to be used in the workplace.
   d. Slang is not understood or used by most people.

37. Which of the following is not an example of a cliché?
   a. “You only get out of it what you put in it.”
   b. “Our country is more of a banquet than a melting pot.”
   c. “The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.”
   d. “No pain, no gain.”

38. Language that puts down people for being young or old is
   a. sexist language.
   b. racist language.
   c. heterosexist language.
   d. ageist language.

39. The same bottom-feeding fish known as bullheads in Minnesota are called catfish in Ohio. This language phenomenon is classified as
   a. slang.
   b. regionalism.
   c. euphemism.
   d. colloquialism.

40. Which of the following best typifies the meaning of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis?
   a. The thought is the father to the deed.
   b. If you can’t say it, you can’t think it.
   c. Your language shapes your perception.
   d. Your perceptions shape your language.

41. Paraphrasing is the act of
   a. repeating what you think you heard.
   b. repeating what you think you heard in your own words.
   c. reporting what you think you heard in the same words that you think you heard.
   d. responding to what you think you heard with a creative interpretation of what you think you heard.

42. Which of the following statements is descriptive as opposed to evaluative?
   a. That test was the toughest torture I’ve experienced.
   b. The test made my hair stand on end.
   c. I counted twenty questions of which I was uncertain.
   d. I think I flunked the test because it was unfair.
43. Which of the following is an operational definition?
   a. A friend is someone who likes to be with you, who stands by you in time of trouble, and who listens to you when you need an ear.
   b. Love is a mystery, a feeling of euphoria inspired by the thought of being together.
   c. Chemistry is the study of everything since everything consists of chemical elements.
   d. A book is a companion that provides you with a pleasing diversion during your quiet times.

44. Justin, who is majoring in political science, is giving a speech in class about the Electoral College. During his speech, he often talks very intimately about the legal functions and rules of the Electoral College. Justin ultimately bores his audience and does not get a very strong grade. What error might Justin have committed with his language usage?
   a. irony
   b. paraphrase
   c. colloquialisms
   d. jargon

45. Which of the following is the best example of concreteness?
   a. I’m from the States.
   b. My hometown is Isle, Minnesota, population 409.
   c. Sure, I’m from the Midwest.
   d. The place where I’m from is the friendliest town in America.