

Fuzziness, making sense of the world, the meaning of sentences

Fuzziness

In cognitive approaches to categorization, categories are argued to be blurred at the edges. Thus their boundaries display what has become known as **fuzziness**. While cognitive linguists agree on the fuzziness of category boundaries, there are several theories as to the exact nature of the fuzziness.

Fuzziness occurs when the boundary of a piece of information is not clear-cut. For example, words such as *young*, *tall*, *good*, or *high* are fuzzy. There is no single quantitative value which defines the term young when describing a fuzzy concept (or fuzzy variable) such as age. For some people, age 25 is young, and for others, age 35 is young. The concept young has no clean boundary. Age 1 is definitely young and age 100 is definitely not young; however, age 35 has some possibility of being young and usually depends on the context in which it is being considered. In fact an age can have some possibility of being young and also some possibility of being old at the same time (note that these are NOT probabilities and the sum of all the possibilities does not need to sum to 1.0). The representation of this kind of information is based on the concept of fuzzy set theory [[Zadeh](#), [Cox](#), [Tsoukalas and Uhrig](#), [Kosko](#)]. Unlike classical set theory where one deals with objects whose membership to a set can be clearly described, in fuzzy set theory, membership of an element in a set can be partial, i.e., an element belongs to a set with a certain grade (possibility) of membership.

It is tended to think that the concepts expressed by words and phrases of our language have precise definitions with clear-cut boundaries that distinguish the words from other concepts. But not all concepts are so straightforward. Some notions do not have clear-cut boundaries; it is what we call a fuzzy concept. Many linguists believe that this type of fuzziness pervades the human conceptual system.

Meaning of Sentences

We have learned that sentences are divided according to their meaning into four kinds: the declarative, the interrogative, the imperative, and the exclamatory; but we now wish to study their meaning more fully.

1. The declarative sentence states a fact in its most direct form. Whether the subject or the predicate or both are simple or modified, the declarative sentence is the most direct form of statement.

1. Birds sing.
2. Birds sing sweetly.
3. Happy birds sing sweetly.
4. Happy birds sing sweetly in the early morning.
5. The happy birds of the forest sing sweetly in the early morning.
6. The happy birds, that live in the forest, sing sweetly, when the first flush of dawn appears in the east.
7. The birds that live in the forest are happy; they sing sweetly when the first flush of dawn appears in the east.

All the above sentences are declarative because they state facts in the most direct form.

2. The interrogative sentence asks a question. Whether the question is simple or direct, or complex and involved, every sentence that asks a question is an interrogative sentence.

1. Who are you?
2. Where is he?
3. Which way did she go?
4. Did it ever seem possible that the United States would carry war into the Philippines?
5. Did you notice that the audience was restless, and that the speaker seemed confused?

The above sentences are interrogative because of their meaning or purpose. Each asks a question.

3. The imperative sentence expresses a command, a request, or an entreaty.

However much the form of a sentence may vary, if a command, a request, or an entreaty is expressed by the sentence, it must be classed as imperative.

1. Close the door. .
2. Come to-morrow.

3. Grant us thy peace.
4. Be just, though the heavens fall.
5. Capture that redoubt, if you would save the army.
6. Be honest in all your dealings; be just before God and man; but above all, be true to yourself.
7. To thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.

These sentences are imperative, as the meaning expressed by each can be classed as a command, a request, or an entreaty.

Note:

The subject of an imperative sentence is usually omitted. In the sentence, John, close the door, John is independent of the sentence, and you, not expressed, is the subject of the verb close. Expressed in full, the sentence would read, John, you close the door.

4. The exclamatory sentence expresses some strong feeling or emotion.

1. Leave me at once!
2. Touch me not!
3. Drive on! we are pursued!
4. Come to me, O ye children!
5. Rest, soldier, rest!
6. How beautiful the long mild twilight, which like a silver clasp, unites to-day with yesterday!
7. How can we expect the fabric of government to stand if vicious materials are daily wrought into its framework!

Although some grammarians would classify such sentences under the declarative, the interrogative, or the imperative, the fact that each clearly expresses strong feeling, that would seem less forceful if placed in either of the above classes, is a sufficient reason for giving them a separate classification.