

What is Synonymy and Semantic Nuance?

Worksheet

Synonymy is the similarity of meaning between words; semantic nuance describes the subtle differences in connotation, register, tone, and usage context that distinguish near-synonyms like happy/joyful or happy/content.

Questions

1. What is semantic nuance?
 - A) Exact sameness of meaning
 - B) Subtle differences in meaning, tone, or context
 - C) Different spellings
 - D) Opposite meanings
2. Which pair shows the strongest nuance difference?
 - A) bright and shiny
 - B) old and ancient
 - C) bold and courageous
 - D) stubborn and pig-headed
3. Which word has a positive connotation?
 - A) thrifty (careful with money)
 - B) cheap (low quality)
 - C) stingy (unwilling to spend)
 - D) miserly (overly frugal)
4. Can true perfect synonyms exist?
 - A) Yes, always
 - B) No, they differ in nuance
 - C) Only in formal writing
 - D) Only in colloquial speech
5. Compare the nuance of 'happy' vs 'delighted'.
6. How do 'thin' and 'slender' differ in connotation?
7. What is the semantic difference between 'stubborn' and 'determined'?
8. Define: What is synonymy?
9. Define: What is semantic nuance?
10. Define: Can two words be perfect synonyms?

Answer Key

1. B) Subtle differences in meaning, tone, or context — Semantic nuance refers to subtle differences in how synonyms are used, their formality, or connotation.
2. D) stubborn and pig-headed — 'Pig-headed' has a negative nuance while 'stubborn' is more neutral; the largest emotional gap.
3. A) thrifty (careful with money) — 'Thrifty' suggests wisdom and good judgment; the others imply negative traits.
4. B) No, they differ in nuance — No true perfect synonyms exist; nuance, connotation, or register always differs.
5. Happy: general positive feeling (neutral, everyday) Delighted: intense, specific joy (more formal, excited) Nuance: 'delighted' suggests stronger emotion and more formal tone
6. Thin: neutral, factual, sometimes negative (looking thin) Slender: positive, attractive, literary Nuance: 'slender' has favorable connotation while 'thin' is factual
7. Stubborn: negative connotation, inflexible Determined: positive connotation, resolute Nuance: same behavior, different evaluation (negative vs. positive)
8. The relationship between words that share similar meanings.
9. Subtle differences in connotation, register, tone, and usage among near-synonyms.
10. Rarely; most synonyms differ in register, connotation, or context.

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