

Semantic Unity Rating Guidelines

You will be asked to decide whether a given word sequence forms a semantic unit or not. Here is an explanation of what is meant by semantic unit:

The type of unit of meaning which is characteristic of words or phrases

Examples:

(A) semantic unit:
at home / fact to face / even though / for example / of course / went to school

(B) **no** semantic unit:
know that it / of small / more to / with the smallest / did several

Something is missing from sequences in (B). Meaning is present in parts, but forms no unit. Here are a few more examples of semantic units:

(C) in this way

(D) if only

(E) such that

The last two are semantic units despite the fact that they are not complete structural units, so structural unity is no definite guide.

Grammatical case, tense, mood or voice should not be decisive in rating. All of (F) to (J) are semantic units, even though this seems clearer in (F) and (H) than (G) and (I). Note that a subject is not always necessary for the semantic unit to be complete even if there is a verb, as (H) and (I) show. (J) is a semantic unit because it parallels the semantic unity of the verb 'do' – it is simply a different form of the verb 'do'.

(F) the central committee (H) injure oneself (J) would have done

(G) of the central committee (I) injured himself

There is one additional point to consider: word sequences must be rated as semantic units if, by adding a single element to either their right or left edge, they can be made into semantic units. In the examples below, this element is marked with an 'X' (though in the examples you will be asked to rate, no Xs will be shown):

(K) a choice of X

(N) fear of X

(L) the disagreement with X

(O) X years old

(M) his former X

(P) to worry that X

Note that X might be a single word or a unit larger than a word as in (P). The following restrictions on the use of Xs apply:

1) An X must only be added if we have a reasonable idea of what sort of thing X typically is. For example, in (L), X is restricted structurally to a noun phrase and semantically typically to a person with whom a difference in opinion exists. If it is completely open or unclear, such as in the sequences in (Q) or (R), the sequence is **not** a semantic unit. When deciding this, it is sometimes useful to think about where the main meaning, or the weight of meaning lies. If too much of it lies or depends on the X, and we have very little meaning without knowing X, we do **not** have a semantic unit.

(Q) a blue X

(R) which is used X

In (Q), X could be almost anything at all, including 'and bright yellow shirt' or 'collar worker' or any noun at all. Compare this with the structurally similar (M), where we nevertheless know that X is typically a

person (or organization) with which the 'he' used to have a relationship of sorts (e.g. his former boss/company/colleague/mate/residence, etc.). This is why (M) is a semantic unit, but (Q) is **not**.

2) Only a single X is allowed per word sequence. If more than one X is necessary to establish a semantic unit, such a sequence is **not** to be rated a semantic unit.

3) If the X is a particular word (rather than a **type** of word or other unit), it is **not** classed as a semantic unit. An example is given in (S), where the X has to be the particular word 'later' rather than a type of word or other unit as in (K) to (P).

(S) sooner or X

In general, rating word sequences for semantic unity requires the use your linguistic intuition. There are many clear cases, but there may also be some cases that are not clear cut and there may not be a correct answer in all instances: it is a judgment call. Do not think for too long when making decisions – no longer than about two seconds. There is no need to consult dictionaries or other resources, the decision should be made on the basis of the sequences as presented.

Finally, the following needs to be considered:

- 1) The word sequences do not contain commas – do not let this distract you.
i.e. no not at all → no, not at all
- 2) NUM always stands for a number (cardinal or ordinal)
i.e. NUM cups of tea → five cups of tea / NUM game → first game
- 3) MONTH stands for any month
i.e. NUM MONTH NUM → 21 April 1974