

# Semantics & Pragmatics

Comprehensive study guide cross-referenced from your textbook (pp. 235–242), Module 5 notes, Register PPTX, and Exam Reviewer PDF.

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Coverage: Semantics · Pragmatics · Speech Acts · Implicature · Figures of Speech · Language Register

## SECTION 1: SEMANTICS — Making Meaning with Words

### CORE DEFINITION

**Semantics** is the branch of linguistics concerned with *literal* meaning — how words, phrases, and sentences encode and decode meaning. It studies **timeless, context-free** meaning. Sub-branches include formal semantics (logic/sense/reference), lexical semantics (word meanings & relations), and conceptual semantics (cognitive structure of meaning).

### Semantics vs. Pragmatics

Dimension	Semantics	Pragmatics
<b>Object of study</b>	Words & their literal meanings	Words & meaning in context
<b>Focus</b>	Literal (encoded) meaning	Intended / inferred meaning
<b>Scope</b>	Timeless, context-independent	Language in USE — in context
<b>Key figure</b>	Charles Morris (founded field)	H.P. Grice (1975) — cooperative principle
<b>Goal</b>	Explain how meaning is encoded & decoded	Explain how context shapes meaning

### Semantic Features & Deviance

Words carry **semantic features** expressed as binary properties: [+/-human], [+/-animate], [+/-young], [+/-married]. When a sentence violates these, it becomes **semantically deviant** (anomalous).

#	Sentence	Violated Feature	Why It's Deviant
1	The bachelor is married.	[-married]	Bachelor is by definition unmarried
2	The baby drove to town.	[+young]	Driving requires an adult; babies are [+young]
3	The rock combed its hair.	[-human]	Combing hair is a [+human] action
4	"Colorless green ideas sleep furiously."	Multiple	Syntactically correct; semantically impossible

### Meaning Relationships — The NYMs

<p><b>Polysemy</b></p> <p>One word form, multiple RELATED meanings.</p> <p><i>"lip" → part of mouth / edge of cup / edge of cliff. "bank" → riverbank / financial bank</i></p>	<p><b>Homonymy</b></p> <p>Same sound &amp; spelling, UNRELATED meanings.</p> <p><i>"saw" → past tense of see / a carpentry tool. "bat" → animal / sports equipment</i></p>
<p><b>Homophones</b></p> <p>Same sound, different spelling &amp; meaning.</p> <p><i>sole / soul. gorilla / guerilla</i></p>	<p><b>Homographs</b></p> <p>Same spelling, different pronunciation &amp; meaning.</p> <p><i>bow (weapon) vs. bow (front of ship). wind, wound, abuse</i></p>
<p><b>Synonyms</b></p> <p>Different forms, similar meanings. Vary by dialect, register, or style.</p> <p><i>humorous / funny. slim / slender. couch / sofa / chesterfield / divan</i></p>	<p><b>Antonyms</b></p> <p>Words with opposite meanings. Three subtypes: gradable, relational, complementary.</p> <p><i>Gradable: rich/poor. Relational: teacher/student. Complementary: dead/alive</i></p>
<p><b>Hyponymy</b></p> <p>Specific word whose meaning is included in a more general word (hypernym).</p> <p><i>emerald, ruby, sapphire are hyponyms of "gemstone". American novel ⊂ book</i></p>	<p><b>Meronymy</b></p> <p>Part-whole relationship. A meronym names a part of a larger whole.</p> <p><i>wheel, pedal → bicycle. hand, foot → body</i></p>

## Entailment & Semantic Fields

<p><b>Entailment</b></p> <p>The meaning of one word includes the meaning of another. Bachelor [+human, +male, +adult, –married] entails man [+human, +male, +adult]. Also: Markedness — the opposition between a typical (unmarked) and its opposite (marked) form.</p> <p><i>right/left · white/black · rich/poor (right, white, rich are "unmarked")</i></p>
<p><b>Semantic Fields</b></p> <p>Basic classification categories under which words are stored in our mental dictionaries (e.g., FARM ANIMAL, CLOTHING, EMOTIONS). Words may belong to more than one field.</p> <p><i>The word "pig" in the field FARM ANIMAL overlaps with MEAT and even PETS.</i></p>

## Semantic Shift — Meaning Change Over Time

Type	Definition	Example
Substitution	One meaning fully replaces another	Car = automobile (not cart)

Type	Definition	Example
<b>Analogy</b>	Meaning extended through conceptual association	Fast: firmly → quickly
<b>Narrowing</b>	Meaning becomes more specific over time	Meat = all food → only animal flesh
<b>Broadening</b>	Meaning becomes more general / inclusive	Dog = specific breed → all dogs
<b>Amelioration</b>	Shift from neutral/negative → positive	Knight = boy servant → noble warrior
<b>Pejoration</b>	Shift from neutral/positive → negative	Villain = farm laborer → evil person
<b>Nomination</b>	A new word/name is created for a concept	New inventions receive names
<b>Shortening</b>	A word's form is reduced	advertisement → ad

## SECTION 2: FIGURES OF SPEECH — Figurative Language

### KEY CONCEPT

**Figurative language** expresses nonliteral meanings — meanings that do not conform to the primary meaning of a word. Though associated with literature, most everyday speech is actually nonliteral.

### Metaphor

Direct comparison WITHOUT "like" or "as". Nonliteral meaning of a word/phrase describing another.

*"Age is a state of mind." / "Life is what we made it." / "My car is a house."*

### Simile

Comparison USING "like" or "as".

*"She is as brave as a lion." / "He ran like the wind."*

### Personification

Giving human qualities or actions to non-human things.

*"The job ad is enticing me to apply." / "The sun smiled down on us."*

### Hyperbole

An extreme exaggeration used for emphasis.

*"I've told you a million times!" / "I bet a thousand pesos that we will win."*

### Irony

A situation or statement where the meaning is opposite to what is expected.

*"The police station was burglarized." (place meant to stop crime was robbed)*

### Oxymoron

Two contradictory terms placed together.

*"The new kittens enjoy being alone together." / "Bittersweet" / "Deafening silence"*

### Synecdoche

A part is used to represent the whole, or vice versa.

*"The boots on the ground are marching." (boots = soldiers) / "All hands on deck"*

### Onomatopoeia

A word that phonetically imitates the sound it describes.

*"Anna could feel her heart pounding." / buzz / hiss / crash / sizzle*

### Dead Metaphors vs. Mixed Metaphors

Dead metaphors are so conventional we no longer notice them as metaphors: "I see your point" (see = understand), "He is blind to new ideas." Mixed metaphors combine parts of different metaphors in one utterance.

## SECTION 3: PRAGMATICS — Meaning in Context

### CORE DEFINITION

**Pragmatics** studies how meaning is inferred in relation to context and semiotics. It goes beyond literal meaning to include implied and contextual meaning. Where semantics asks "what does this sentence mean?", pragmatics asks "**what did the speaker mean?**" Pragmatics studies language in USE — language IN CONTEXT.

### DAVID CRYSTAL (IN MOORE 2001)

"Pragmatics studies the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others."

### The Classic Example — Semantics vs. Pragmatics

#### Situation

Someone at dinner says: "May I have some salt, please?"

Reading	Interpretation	Response
<b>Semantic (literal)</b>	Asking permission to have some salt	"Of course you may." — then keep eating
<b>Pragmatic (intended)</b>	Politely requesting someone pass the salt	Pass the salt to the person

### The "Baby Sale" Example (Steve Campsall in Moore 2001)

#### "Baby Sale — lots of bargains."

We know without asking that no babies are for sale — what is for sale are items used for babies. Pragmatics investigates how this "meaning beyond the words" is understood without ambiguity. The extra meaning is there not because of the words themselves, but because we share contextual knowledge with the writer or speaker.

### Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975)

H.P. Grice proposed that conversation is a cooperative activity. Implicatures can be "calculated" by knowing three things:

#	Element
1	The usual linguistic meaning of what is said

#	Element
2	Contextual information (shared or general knowledge)
3	The assumption that the speaker is obeying the cooperative principle

## SECTION 4: SPEECH ACTS — Utterances as Actions

### KEY THEORISTS

J.L. Austin (1975, first proposed 1962) and J.R. Searle (1975). Speech act theory proposes that utterances are **equivalent to actions** — words do not just report information; they carry out actions. Every utterance is an attempt to accomplish something.

### Three Simultaneous Acts (Austin & Searle)

Every time speakers say something, three acts are performed at once:

Act	Definition	Example (from textbook)
<b>Locutionary</b>	The actual words spoken	"I don't have money for the entrance fee."
<b>Illocutionary</b>	The intention / force of the words — what we actually mean	Asking for a loan to pay the entrance fee
<b>Perlocutionary</b>	The effect or impact on the listener	Listener understands and hands over money

### Direct vs. Indirect Speech Acts

	Direct Speech Act	Indirect Speech Act
<b>Definition</b>	Locutionary and illocutionary acts COINCIDE. Intention expressed plainly.	Locutionary and illocutionary acts DO NOT coincide. Intent must be INFERRED.
<b>How performed</b>	Using a performative verb ("I assert...", "I ask...") or a direct literal utterance	Formulated as a question, assertion, or request evoking a felicity condition
<b>Example</b>	"I'm so cold." → speaker is literally stating they feel cold	"I'm so cold." → actually requesting: close the door / turn off the AC / lend a sweater

### Searle's 5 Types of Illocutionary Acts

Type	Definition & Verbs	Examples
<b>Expressive</b>	Speaker expresses attitude about a state of affairs. Verbs: appreciate, thank, congratulate, apologize, deplore, regret, welcome	"You look so beautiful." "I'm so sorry I missed the performance."
<b>Representative</b>	Speaker asserts a proposition to be true. Verbs: believe, hypothesize, affirm, conclude, report, deny	"I think he's telling the truth." "This is what happened."

Type	Definition & Verbs	Examples
<b>Declarative</b>	Speaker alters external state simply by making the utterance. ONLY usable in certain conditions by AUTHORIZED persons.	"I now pronounce you husband and wife." "I sentence you to be hanged." "I hereby dub thee Sir Knight."
<b>Directive</b>	Speaker tries to influence hearer into doing something. Verbs: ask, command, beg, challenge, dare, insist, request, invite	"Please walk the dog." "I request that you walk the dog."
<b>Commissive</b>	Speaker commits to a future course of action. Verbs: guarantee, pledge, promise, swear, vow, undertake	"I promise to pass my assignments on time."

Memory aid: E · R · D · D · C — Expressive, Representative, Declarative, Directive, Commissive

## Performative Speech Acts — Contexts

The social act is accomplished when the right words are said by the right person in the right situation.

Context	Examples
<b>Universities &amp; schools</b>	Conferring degrees, suspending, expelling students
<b>The Church</b>	Baptizing, marrying, giving communion, excommunication
<b>Governance &amp; civic life</b>	Crowning royals, passing legislation, awarding honors
<b>The law</b>	Enacting judgements, passing sentence, swearing oaths
<b>The Army</b>	Signing on, orders to attack / retreat / open fire
<b>Sports</b>	Cautioning or removing players, declaring a goal or foul
<b>Business</b>	Hiring, terminating, establishing verbal contracts, naming a ship
<b>Gaming</b>	Placing a bet, raising the stakes

## Felicity Conditions

### DEFINITION

**Felicity conditions** are those that need to occur or be satisfied so that the speech act is correctly and honestly performed. They include: preparatory conditions, conditions for execution, and sincerity conditions.

Condition	Explanation
<b>Preparatory conditions</b>	Include the speaker's authority to produce the utterance. Only an employer / authorized superior can hire or fire. Only legislators can pass laws.
<b>Sincerity conditions</b>	The speaker must really intend what they say. Needed in apologies and promises. More easily measured in legal contexts — e.g., taking a solemn oath in the presence of witnesses.
<b>Conditions on execution</b>	Ritual actions that accompany the speech act. Example: raising the right hand when taking an oath; laying a sword blade on a knighted person's shoulders.

**FAILURE EXAMPLE (TEXTBOOK P. 241)**

A lover saying "With this ring I thee wed" while holding plastic basketball hoops in a toy store fails BOTH preparatory conditions (wrong situation/authority) AND sincerity conditions (obviously a joke, not meant to perform the act of marrying).

**Direct → Indirect Speech Act Table (textbook p. 241)**

Direct Speech Act	Felicity Condition That Must Be True	Indirect Speech Act (Inferred)
"Please walk the dog." / "I request that you walk the dog."	Speaker believes the dog has not been walked	"The dog has not been walked."
	Speaker believes hearer is ABLE to walk the dog	"Could you please walk the dog?"
	Speaker believes hearer is WILLING to walk the dog	"Would you mind walking the dog?"
	Speaker WANTS the dog to be walked	"I would like you to walk the dog."

## SECTION 5: IMPLICATURE — Meaning Beyond the Words

### DEFINITION

**Implicature** is a technical linguistic term referring to what is *suggested* in an utterance, even if it is not expressed directly and not even obviously implied. Proposed by H.P. Grice (1975) to address how hearers figure out the complete message when speakers do not literally say everything they mean.

### Two Types of Implicature

	Conventional Implicature	Conversational Implicature
<b>Source</b>	Part of a word's or expression's meaning — derived from the WORD ITSELF, not from context.	A message intended by the speaker NOT found literally in the utterance. Implied; inferred by the hearer.
<b>How inferred</b>	Through knowledge of word meaning and conventional social associations	By studying context, reading between the lines, and assuming the speaker follows the cooperative principle
<b>Example</b>	"My family is poor BUT we are happy." The word "but" implies poverty and happiness are incompatible — a socialized assumption. This is the conventional implicature.	A: "Do you like our Linguistics class?" B: "Let's just say I would rather be somewhere else." Implication: "No, I don't like the class."

### Examples from the Textbook (pp. 242–243)

#### The "Oh no..." example

"Oh, no... I saw our friend's husband with a woman at the mall this morning."

*Implied (not stated): The woman is not his mother, not his sister — most likely someone he is cheating with. Inferred through shared social knowledge and context.*

#### Teacher / Student exchange

Teacher: "Is Gladys attending our class today?" Student: "Her grandmother died last night."

*Implied: Gladys will not attend because she is grieving. The hearer applies contextual knowledge and the cooperative principle to arrive at this inference.*

## SECTION 6: LANGUAGE REGISTER — Levels of Formality

### DEFINITION

**Register** is the level of formality of written and spoken English. It varies depending on who you are speaking to, the context, and the purpose of communication.

#### Familiar

Used between people who know each other very well. Shows LACK of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Usually contains slang and jargon.

*"Hey, will come soon, atm (at the moment)" / Nicknames / Inside jokes*

#### Informal

Used in journalism, casual academic writing, and close relationships. More care with grammar than familiar but still relaxed. Topics show casualness.

*"She got out of the office late." / "Went to Tagaytay last weekend!" / "You got to get going!"*

#### Formal

Neither personal nor colloquial. Mostly used in academic writing. Does not break grammar rules. Complete sentences, standard grammar, no slang.

*"This research is instructive and insightful." / "Do submit your report ASAP." / "A pleasant afternoon, Sir."*

#### Ceremonial

Rarely used in academic writing. Used in ritualistic, solemn, or formal public occasions. Often follows a set structure. May appear in transcripts.

*"I stand before this audience with a deep sense of humility and great pride." / Graduation speeches*

### Register Identification — Exam Practice

Statement	Register	Why
"This research is instructive and insightful."	Formal	Academic register, complete sentence
"Do submit your report as soon as possible."	Formal	Professional instructional tone
"Good morning, Ms. Mai. How are you?"	Ceremonial	Ritualistic greeting with title/honorific
"She got out of the office late."	Informal	Casual everyday language
"Hey, will arrive late, stuck in the traffic."	Familiar / Informal	Abbreviated, text-style message
"I stand before this audience with a deep sense of humility and great pride."	Ceremonial	Oratorical speech before an audience
"You got to get going if you want to win!"	Informal	Casual motivational phrasing

Statement	Register	Why
"A pleasant afternoon, Sir. May I help you?"	Formal	Polite, professional, respectful
UP, ADMU, DLSU in UAAP championship	Formal	Official institutional names in context
"This good book is worth reading."	Formal	Standard neutral written register

## SECTION 7: QUICK REFERENCE CHEAT SHEET

### Semantics Terms

Term	Quick Definition	Key Example
<b>Semantics</b>	Study of literal, encoded meaning	Encoding / decoding word meaning
<b>Pragmatics</b>	Study of meaning in context / use	"Can you pass the salt?" = a request
<b>Polysemy</b>	One word, related meanings	"bank" = riverbank / financial bank
<b>Homonymy</b>	Same sound/spell, UNRELATED meanings	"bat" = animal / sports equipment
<b>Homophones</b>	Same sound, different spelling	sole / soul
<b>Homographs</b>	Same spelling, different pronunciation	"bow" — weapon vs. ship front
<b>Synonyms</b>	Same meaning, different form	funny = humorous
<b>Antonyms</b>	Opposite meaning (3 subtypes)	hot/cold, teacher/student, dead/alive
<b>Hyponymy</b>	Specific word $\subset$ general word	emerald $\subset$ gemstone
<b>Meronymy</b>	Part-whole relationship	wheel/pedal $\rightarrow$ bicycle
<b>Entailment</b>	Meaning of one word includes another	bachelor entails man
<b>Substitution</b>	Old meaning fully replaced	car = automobile (not cart)
<b>Analogy</b>	Meaning extended through association	fast: firmly $\rightarrow$ quickly
<b>Narrowing</b>	Meaning becomes more specific	meat = all food $\rightarrow$ animal flesh only
<b>Broadening</b>	Meaning becomes more general	dog = specific breed $\rightarrow$ all dogs
<b>Amelioration</b>	Neutral/negative $\rightarrow$ positive shift	knight = servant $\rightarrow$ noble warrior
<b>Pejoration</b>	Positive/neutral $\rightarrow$ negative shift	villain = farmer $\rightarrow$ evil person

### Pragmatics & Speech Acts

Term	Quick Definition	Key Example
<b>Locutionary act</b>	The actual words spoken	"I don't have money for the entrance fee."
<b>Illocutionary act</b>	The intent / force of the words	Asking for a loan
<b>Perlocutionary act</b>	Effect on the listener	Listener hands over money
<b>Expressive</b>	Expresses attitude — apology, thanks	"I'm so sorry."
<b>Representative</b>	Asserts a proposition — believe, report	"This is what happened."
<b>Declarative</b>	Changes reality by speaking (authorized persons only)	"I now pronounce you husband and wife."
<b>Directive</b>	Influences hearer — ask, command, request	"Please walk the dog."
<b>Commissive</b>	Commits to future action — promise, vow	"I promise to pass my assignments."
<b>Felicity conditions</b>	Must be satisfied for speech act to be valid	Preparatory, sincerity, execution
<b>Conventional impl.</b>	Meaning from the word itself	"but" implies contrast / incompatibility
<b>Conversational impl.</b>	Meaning inferred from context, not literal words	"I'd rather be somewhere else." = "No"

## Figures of Speech

Figure	Quick Definition	Example
<b>Metaphor</b>	Direct comparison — NO like/as	"Age is a state of mind."
<b>Simile</b>	Comparison WITH like/as	"As brave as a lion."
<b>Personification</b>	Human quality to non-human	"The job ad is enticing me."
<b>Hyperbole</b>	Extreme exaggeration	"Told you a million times!"
<b>Irony</b>	Opposite of what is expected	Police station burglarized
<b>Oxymoron</b>	Contradictory terms together	"Alone together" / "Bittersweet"
<b>Synecdoche</b>	Part represents the whole	"Boots" = soldiers
<b>Onomatopoeia</b>	Word imitates a sound	"Pounding" / buzz / hiss

## Language Register

Register	Key Features	Example
<b>Familiar</b>	Slang, jargon, missing grammar/punctuation, very casual	"Hey, will come soon, atm"
<b>Informal</b>	Colloquial, casual, contractions, everyday topics	"She got out of the office late."
<b>Formal</b>	Academic / professional, complete sentences, no slang	"Do submit your report as soon as possible."
<b>Ceremonial</b>	Ritualistic, solemn, public occasions, set structure	"I stand before this audience with a deep sense of humility and great pride."

### EXAM TIPS

**1. Figures of speech:** Does the comparison use "like/as"? → Simile. No? → Metaphor. Two contradictory words together? → Oxymoron. Part stands for the whole? → Synecdoche. Word imitates a sound? → Onomatopoeia.

**2. Speech acts:** Remember **ERDDC**. Declarative acts are the **ONLY** ones that change reality and can **ONLY** be performed by authorized persons in the right context.

**3. Register:** Ceremonial ≠ Formal. Ceremonial = solemn/public/ritualistic occasions. Formal = academic/professional writing.

**4. Semantic shift:** Substitution = complete replacement. Analogy = extended by association. Narrowing/Broadening = scope changes. Amelioration/Pejoration = positive/negative shifts.

**Good luck on your finals!**