

Semantics, Pragmatics, Philosophy

Semantics and pragmatics – the study of meaning, and meaning in context, respectively – are two fundamental areas of linguistics, and as such are crucial to our understanding of how meaning is created. However, their theoretical ideas are often introduced without making clear connections between views, theories, and problems. This pioneering volume is both a textbook and a research guide, taking the reader on a journey through language in progressively ordered stages and ultimately enabling them to think about meaning as linguists and philosophers would. Assuming no prior knowledge of linguistics, it introduces semantics, pragmatics, and the philosophy of language, showing how all three fields can address the ‘big questions’ that run through the study of meaning. It covers key theories and approaches, while also enabling increasingly more sophisticated questions about the interconnected aspects of meaning, with the end goal of preparing the reader to make their own, original contributions to ideas about meaning.

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Semantics, Pragmatics, Philosophy

A Journey through Meaning

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To all past, present, and future meaning hunters

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Preface and Tips on How to Read This Book

This is a journey through *thinking about meaning like a linguist and a philosopher*. It provides introductions to ideas and approaches, like a textbook should, but it is not merely a conventional textbook. Conventional textbooks tend to contain lots of pieces of information ready to be picked up. But one can't pick them up without first knowing what one wants to do with them. Instead, this is a structured journey through meaning that aims to prepare the reader for their own journey. It reaches to advanced readers too, in that they can follow my voyage assessing the choices of landmarks and perhaps pause at what is marked as 'food for thought'. As such, it can also serve as a guide to how one can conduct research on meaning – a guide that spans semantics, pragmatics, and philosophy, sometimes with their other interfaces. Read this preface, the table of contents, and the final, short stage of the journey (Stage 9) to see if you want to join in.

In 2002 I published *Semantics and Pragmatics: Meaning in Language and Discourse* for the Longman Linguistics Library – seventeen chapters, a comprehensive, wide-scope introduction, but still a conventional textbook. In spite of my initial plan that what follows would be a new edition of that book, I couldn't bring myself to do so. I don't really like conventional textbooks. I like a hands-on approach to what authors of theories themselves really thought and wrote. But guidebooks of some sort are necessary: starting with primary sources without help can be a daunting task. Moreover, we all need tips on how to arrange all these bits of knowledge and ideas from brilliant linguists and philosophers into a full picture. We need to know which theories have become timeless landmarks, which views are controversial and how, and we need suggestions on which ideas might be adaptable for specific purposes. There is no need always to agree with such suggestions but they provide a start for thinking about meaning like a linguist and a philosopher.

So, after three decades of experience of teaching semantics, pragmatics, and philosophy of language to many bright and enthusiastic students (most of the time at the University of Cambridge), it was time to write up a focused journey in which pieces of information are arranged in search of an answer to such questions as what meaning in language is, how it works, and how to represent it. Hence, what follows is a *journey through meaning*. I hope that it will not only inform but also invoke thoughts, judgements, and emotions about this whimsical beast: Meaning in Language and Meaning in Language Use. The views in the journey are, of course, opinionated, like any honest and authentic assessment must be. But textbook information is not. It is given in a way that allows the reader to make a choice between continuing to travel

with me or picking up the textbook material (the introductions to theories, approaches, and methods included here) at any stage and starting their own journey alongside mine. It is always possible to adopt some views but reject others, carrying along some of the toys (building blocks and tools that make up meaning) but leaving others behind. The whole excitement and fun about inquiring into meaning in language is finding one's own way through it from the very beginning, rather than leaving it to ageing scholars. But this can only be done when their old ways are well understood, appreciated, and thought through. Then they are not shackles but wings for new ideas. And this was the rationale behind this 'textbook +' project.

Each of the nine chapters, called *stages* of the journey, has to be taken slowly rather than read in one go – they are not lecture-length units (unlike those of my 'textbooky' textbook of twenty years ago). They organize the journey into stages in thinking about meaning and they get longer as the journey progresses. But they get *easier to read* as the journey progresses: Stage 1 may still be daunting because it lays out what it means to think about meaning. But from Stage 2, it should be a pleasant, informative, and rewarding run (if it isn't, let me know!). Less ephemerally, this is what I mean: before embarking on any journey, one must decide where one wants to go and how to get there. In what follows, we start with the desiderata that we want to end the journey with understanding (i) cognitively real meaning, meaning that speakers intend, addressees recover, but also meaning that they partly jointly construct and agree on in the process of conversation. We also want to travel there using (ii) reliable, precise, formal tools. We will carry along with us whatever brilliant, ground-breaking ideas and theories can help achieve that. It will soon appear that semantics, pragmatics, and philosophy of language are full of such exciting ideas, on all sides of what is often seen as disputes or even insurmountable divisions. The field is rife with such treasures, and instead of asking who is right, we will often be asking *what* they are *right* about and *what* they may be *wrong* about in order to learn from them all, as long as they can help with our desiderata (i) and (ii). We will also point backward and forward to different stages in the journey, showing how a different path could have been taken and how different roadmaps can result in different meaning experiences.

We will be quite greedy for getting to the bottom of meaning in language, so we cover a lot in this journey. We start with words and concepts, move to sentences, utterances, and then to what 'lurks under the surface' – dynamically emerging meanings, non-literal meanings – and go further into practical effects and consequences that acts of speech produce, focusing on accountability, lying and misleading, politeness, and use of bad and offensive language. So, the journey covers what is usually split into different textbooks: in Semantics, Pragmatics, and Philosophy of Language. As such, it has to be taken at one's own pace: stop where you wish and go to the sources recommended in the footnotes if you wish. I kept the text free from bibliographical references (apart from referencing quotations), putting them all in the footnotes. But this is all that the footnotes contain: additional pointers and references. So, they can be ignored outright if one wants a more introductory, flowing, evenly paced journey. Or they can be inspected as you go along, dipping into them whenever the particular topic grips you. As such, **the book can be read in many different ways:** (i) as

a free-flowing discussion of various phenomena and approaches in the study of meaning; (ii) as a journey towards a comprehensive theory of cognitively real meaning that picks up different views and approaches on the way and makes use of them; or as (iii) a shopper's guide to whatever interests you – stop and follow the select references as you see fit, creating your own roadmap. And there are probably some other ways of reading it too.

By necessity, a journey through meaning leads along a meandering path. It is also a path with many crossroads, so there will still be many facets and types of meaning that this book is *not* about. Some examples of this are animal communication, non-linguistic communication, such as the semantics of gestures, or particular theories of meaning in language and discourse that would fit with the topics covered here but had to be left out. We will also largely leave out meaning in artificial intelligence (AI) and cross-cultural communication, although we will have recourse to these areas from time to time. As I said, every journey is a selective and somewhat opinionated journey, or else it becomes a list of meaningless filing cards. Since it is a progressing journey, a flow of ideas, divided into stages rather than disconnected chapters, there are ample cross-references to earlier sections and a detailed index to make travelling as comfortable as possible. For example, the discussion of semantic ambiguity will unavoidably crop up again and again, but with ample pointers. To reiterate, the flow of argumentation is based on two foundational desiderata: cognitive reality and formalizability. And, of course, the assumption that they are compatible: that it is possible to get to the bottom, to the very blueprints of how meaning really works.

In short, the aim is to encourage thinking about meaning in ways that will enable the reader to make informed judgements about views, theories, and methods, to acquire confidence to agree or disagree with the authorities, and, most importantly, *to feel empowered to pursue semantics and pragmatics in a new, different way*. In short, by the end, *my* journey will not be *your* journey. But I hope this journey will inform, inspire, and encourage.

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First and foremost, I owe gratitude to all my mentors, teachers, colleagues, as well as my students who, throughout the decades, shared with me their thoughts and enthusiasm for semantic, pragmatic, and philosophical questions about meaning. Thinking about the subject and discussing it is not a job, it is a passion. I have to start here with Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, my first teacher of semantics, who opened my mind and heart to big questions about meaning in language at the tender age of nineteen, and to whom I owe my personal lifetime journey through meaning. What follows are merely highlights from a long list of those to whom I owe thanks for helping me shape my views on various aspects of what follows: Keith Allan, Jay Atlas, Johan van der Auwera, Paul Dekker, Michael Dummett, Chi-Hé Elder, Thorstein Fretheim, Michael Haugh, Larry Horn, Hans Kamp, Eleni Kapogianni, Sławoj Olczyk, Louis de Saussure, Stephen Schiffer, Roberto Sileo, Jiranthara Srioutai, Barbara Tuchańska, Deirdre Wilson, Maciej Witek, Henk Zeevat, and many, many others – there is no obvious cut-off point.

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Abbreviations and Symbols

$\wedge, \&$	truth-functional conjunction
\vee	truth-functional disjunction
\rightarrow	truth-functional implication (material implication)
\leftrightarrow	truth-functional equivalence
\neg	truth-functional negation
\vdash	‘it is the case that’
\forall	universal quantifier (<i>all, every</i>)
\exists	existential quantifier (<i>some, a</i>)
$\langle \rangle$	ordered n -tuple (ordered pair, triple ...)
$\{ \dots \}$	set; extension
$\{x \mid f(x)\}$	set of elements on the left (here: x) satisfy properties on the right (here: $f(x)$)
\Rightarrow	implication (consequence, inferential link, as distinguished from material implication)
$ \dots $	cardinality of a set
\in	membership of a set (‘belongs to’, ‘is a member of’)
\cap	intersection (common part) of sets
$-$	difference between sets
\emptyset	1. empty set; 2. truth-value gap
\geq	greater than or equal to
$>$	1. greater than; 2. temporal sequence (‘later than’); 3. sequence of categories in any principled ordering
$<$	1. smaller than; 2. temporal precedence (‘earlier than’)
\supset	temporal contiguity
$e \supset s$	‘ s starts at the moment e ends’
\subseteq	1. set inclusion (‘is a subset of’); 2. temporal inclusion
$e \subseteq t$	‘event e is temporally included within time t ’
\circ	temporal overlap
$s \circ t$	‘state s overlaps with time t ’
$[\dots]$	intension
\square	necessity operator
\diamond	possibility operator
λ	abstraction operator (lambda operator)

*	ungrammatical
?	awkward/pragmatically ill-formed
≫	communicates
=	1. equals; 2. clitic boundary
≠	does not equal
[. . .] _f	material in focus position
ϕ, φ	metalinguistic sentential variables
Φ	metalinguistic predicate variable
Φ^*m	type of mode of presentation
Δ	degree of acceptability (in ACC Δ)
Σ	summation of information
1/2/3 Sg/Pl	1st/2nd/3rd person singular/plural number
$a, b, c \dots$	individual constants in predicate logic
A, B, C	sets
ACC	acceptability operator
ANCH	anchor
Att	attitude
Bel	belief operator
c	context
CA	Conversation Analysis
CD	cognitive default
<i>Class</i>	classifier
CMT	Conceptual Metaphor Theory
CPI	conscious pragmatic inference
DET	determiner
DPL	Dynamic Predicate Logic
DRS	discourse representation structure
DRT	Discourse Representation Theory
DS	Default Semantics
E	event point (Reichenbach)
e	nominal category ('entity') in intensional (t/e) semantics
e	event
epp	epistemic possibility past
f	truth value 'false'
f	function
F	1. future-tense operator; 2. illocutionary force
F	feminine gender
FTA	face-threatening act
g	1. assignment function; 2. a variable defined for a specific discussion
GCI	generalized conversational implicature
Gen	grammatical gender
<i>Gen</i>	genitive case
GIIN	generalized invited inference

HWAM	Hey, wait a minute!
I	I-principle/heuristic
<i>I</i>	interpretation
ICE-GB	International Corpus of English, British component
ICM	Idealized Cognitive Model
IEM	immunity to error through misidentification
iff	if and only if
<i>Imperf</i>	imperfective aspect
<i>Ind</i>	indicative mood
IS	properties of the human inferential system
ISA	indirect speech act
m	mode of presentation
M	M-principle/heuristic
<i>M</i>	1. model; 2. masculine gender
<i>mod</i>	modulation
mon _↑	monotone increasing
mon _↓	monotone decreasing
N	1. noun; 2. nominal category (bearer of reference) in categorial grammar
<i>Nom</i>	nominative case
NP	noun phrase
<i>p</i>	proposition (in semi-formal representations)
P	past-tense operator
<i>p, q, r</i>	sentential variables
<i>P, Q</i>	predicate variables
<i>Past</i>	past tense
PCI	particularized conversational implicature
PE	proposition expressed
<i>Perf</i>	perfective aspect
PIIN	particularized invited inference
PM	proposition meant
PN	proper noun
<i>Poss</i>	possessive
<i>Pres</i>	present tense
<i>Pron</i>	pronoun
<i>Prosp</i>	prospective marker
Q	1. quantifier; 2. Q-principle/heuristic
QUD	question under discussion
R	1. relation; 2. R-principle/heuristic; 3. reference point (Reichenbach); 4. restrictor (alternative semantics)
<i>Refl</i>	reflexive marker
rf	regular future (in ACC _Δ ^{rf})
rn	regular present ('now')
rp	regular past (in ACC _Δ ^{rp})

s	intension
<i>s</i>	state
S	1. sentence; 2. sentential category (bearer of truth value) in categorial grammar; 3. ‘since’ operator (DRT); 4. speech point (Reichenbach); 5. scope (alternative semantics)
SAT	Speech Act Theory
SC	stereotypes and presumptions about society and culture
SCWD	social, cultural, or world-knowledge default
SD	situation of discourse
SDRT	Segmented Discourse Representation Theory
<i>Seq</i>	sequential marker
SG	speaker’s grounds
<i>Sg</i>	singular
SM	semantic meaning
<i>Subj</i>	subjunctive mood
t	1. truth value ‘true’; 2. proposition (‘truth-evaluable category’) in intensional (t/e) semantics
<i>t</i>	time
U	‘until’ operator (DRT)
V	verb
VP	verb phrase
<i>W</i>	possible world
WK	world knowledge
WS	word meaning and sentence structure
<i>x, y, z</i>	individual variables in predicate logic

SMALL CAPITALS stand for concepts (e.g. DOG)

LARGE CAPITALS in examples stand for intonational focus