



原版现代语言学丛书

SEMANTICS (Second Edition)

语义学 (第二版)

Kate Kearns



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## 出版说明

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为了帮助广大语言学初学者更好地掌握语言学的最新成果和研究热点，外教社特从 Palgrave 出版社遴选引进了这套权威、实用的“原版现代语言学丛书”，其中不少分册都是几经修订的最新版。

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相信本套丛书的引进将进一步满足广大语言学专业师生对权威、实用的语言学教材及课外阅读资料的需求，推动我国语言学教学和科研事业的长远发展。

# **Semantics**

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**Second Edition**

**Kate Kearns**

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I am grateful to the University of Canterbury for study leave during the first semester of 2009, during which this edition was written.

I also wish to thank all the students and teachers around the world who have emailed me with queries and comments on the first edition. These messages have been very helpful in deciding what to change, and it has been a pleasure to hear from people who are using the book. Students in my own classes have provided lively and interesting feedback over the last few years, and I have enjoyed and valued their discussions.

Finally, I thank the anonymous reviewers who first gave very helpful comments on a rather cursory outline of the proposed new edition, which greatly clarified my thinking on what was needed, and then gave invaluable feedback on the first full draft.

# Preface to the First Edition

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This book grew out of a semantics course taught at the second-year level in the general Arts or Sciences bachelor's degree at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Most of the students are studying linguistics or philosophy as a major subject, but they also come from a number of other fields in the humanities, physical sciences or professional studies. They generally have taken an introductory course in either linguistics or philosophy.

A mixed undergraduate class in semantics presents the dilemma of deciding what to do about the conceptual and notational complexity of formal theories. A detailed formalization procedure is not of the greatest interest to many of the students, and if the full formal apparatus is used, it isn't possible to introduce more than a limited range of data. If a very limited range of data is covered, this leaves a gap in the linguistics programme, particularly for the teaching of syntax, where some acquaintance with semantic issues is increasingly useful and important. The aim of this book is to introduce a wider range of topics in formal semantics with a limited formal apparatus.

Chapters 1–4 are introductory to the rest of the book, but a selection can be made from the remaining chapters. There are several themes that could be followed: Chapters 4–6 cover NP interpretation and Chapters 8–10 cover events and thematic roles. Verbal and nominal aspect is covered in sections of Chapters 6 and 7 and Chapter 9.

The text is intended to be used as a coursebook, accompanied by lectures on the topics covered and by discussion of the exercises. This book is not a 'teach yourself' text for private, unassisted study. The exercises included are of varying difficulty – some are for basic review and are suitable for private revision, but the more demanding of exercises may best be used as the basis of class discussion sessions.

As always, students are urged to also read other introductions to semantics which take a different approach.



# Preface to the Second Edition

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All the chapters in this edition have been revised, some extensively.

The main new content is a new chapter introducing formal composition, including type theory and the lambda calculus, at a genuinely introductory level suitable for beginners. A simpler set of rules using first-order functions only (with one small exception) is covered up to and including Section 4.5, with Exercises (5) and (6) based on this material. This can be used as a more basic unit. Section 4.6 introduces second-order functions, with Exercises (7)–(10). However, I have decided not to use the compositional approach as the main framework throughout the book, for two main reasons. First, there is always a tension between concentrating on formalization skills and introducing a wide range of semantic issues and phenomena. This text aims to introduce a wide range of issues, and accordingly, I have retained a simplified presentation of formalization. Second, this text generally assumes little or no background in syntactic theory, but the syntactic structures associated with the binary composition of, for example, tense, modality and quantifier NPs is fairly advanced. A simplified transformational account of quantifier NPs in object position is outlined, but in general I have omitted semantic composition associated with advanced syntactic structures. Where compositionality is discussed, I have included exemplar tree diagrams for students to follow in doing the exercises.

Along with a greater focus on formal theory, I have removed the short section on lexical semantics and reduced the discussion of pragmatics, which is now discussed in Chapter 1 on a ‘need to know’ basis. That is, I have introduced the main kinds of pragmatic inference, such as scalar implicature, which can be intuitively hard to separate from a literal truth condition. I have also added a descriptive section on presupposition, and brief coverage of indexicality and anaphoricity.

The chapter on thematic roles has been updated and clarified, including a new, fairly comprehensive section on the motivation for and formalisms of lexical conceptual structure (LCS), with particular focus on thematic roles in LCS. The chapter on tense and aspect is also fairly extensively revised, with a full discussion of the analysis of reference to times in a narrative in Discourse Representation Theory.

There are new exercises throughout the book, and many existing exercises have been revised. The exercises are now marked with an indication of level of difficulty: \* for basic, \*\* for intermediate, \*\*\* for advanced, and one or

two with \*\*\*\* for very advanced. Some of the exercises are also marked as recommended for discussion.

Overall, I intend the book to be useful for true beginners, including those with very little background in linguistics or philosophy. However, the phenomena and analyses are intrinsically of different levels of complexity – in particular, analysis of generalized quantifiers as lambda functions and the section on lexical conceptual structure may be more suitable for intermediate and advanced students.

Feedback from readers has shown that the book is used for a wide range of teaching situations, and many instructors are using selected topics only – indeed, it would be impractical to attempt to cover everything in a semester. I have increased cross-referencing and briefly repeated information in some places in order to make it easier to use certain parts of the book independently. For example, it should be possible to use the chapter on tense and aspect without previously reading the chapter on *aktionsarten* if you wish, or to use the chapter on referential opacity without reading the material on generalized quantifiers.

Thank you for flying with us – I hope you have an interesting and enjoyable trip.

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# Introduction

# 1

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## 1.1 Semantics and pragmatics

The study of linguistic meaning is generally divided in practice into two main fields, semantics and pragmatics. **Semantics** deals with the literal meaning of words and the meaning of the way they are combined, which taken together form the core of meaning, or the starting point from which the whole meaning of a particular utterance is constructed. **Pragmatics** deals with all the ways in which literal meaning must be refined, enriched or extended to arrive at an understanding of what a speaker meant in uttering a particular expression. This division can be roughly illustrated with (1) below:

- (1) I forgot the paper.

Semantics provides the literal meaning of the elements *I*, *forget*, past tense, *the* and *paper*, and the meaning drawn from the order of the words, giving very approximately 'The person who is speaking at some time before the time of speaking forgot a particular item which is a paper'. Pragmatic considerations flesh this out to a more complete communication.

Suppose that it is Sunday morning. Anna, the speaker, has just returned to her flat from the local shops where she went to buy croissants and the Sunday newspaper. In this context her flatmate Frances understands Anna to say that she forgot to buy a copy of the Sunday newspaper for that morning, and the time of her forgetting was while she was at the shops – she presumably remembered her intention to buy a paper when she set out and has obviously remembered it on returning. If the shops are nearby, Anna might also intend Frances to infer that Anna will go back for the paper.

Suppose, alternatively, that a man has been found murdered in the fields near a farmhouse. Two nights before the body was found the farmhouse was broken into, although nothing was reported missing. The owners of the house are renovating a small upstairs room, and the floor of this room is currently littered with sticky scraps of stripped wallpaper. The dead man was found with a scrap of the wallpaper on the sole of his shoe. Two detectives are discussing the



case. One has just finished speculating that the murder is connected to another set of recent events in the nearby town, and is not related to the break-in at the farmhouse. She then stops and says ‘I forgot the paper’. In this context her colleague understands her to mean that while she was working through her alternative scenario she forgot the wallpaper scrap on the dead man’s shoe. Given the background assumption that the scrap of paper proves the man’s presence upstairs in the farmhouse at some stage, her utterance is also understood to mean that she withdraws her speculative alternative scenario, which is probably not correct.

Examples like these demonstrate the enormous contribution of pragmatic information to communication. On the other hand, the starting point from which we arrive at both fleshed-out meanings is the constant contribution of the literal meaning of *I forgot the paper*.

This book will mainly concentrate on literal meaning, the content of words and expressions which is fairly constant from one occasion of use to another. The next part of this chapter will review some of the main issues in the analysis of literal meaning. After that, we will consider some important kinds of pragmatic meaning which may be difficult to distinguish from literal meaning.

## 1.2 Kinds of meaning

### 1.2.1 Denotation and Sense

There are two most basic ways of giving the meaning of words or longer expressions. The first and most simple way is to present examples of what the word **denotes**. For example, the word *cow* can be defined by pointing to a cow and saying ‘That is a cow’, or the word *blue* can be defined by pointing to a blue object and saying ‘That colour is blue’. Definition by pointing to an object of the kind in question, called **ostensive definition**, appeals directly to the **denotations** of the words defined. The word *blue* denotes the colour blue, or blue objects in the world, and the word *cow* denotes cows. The general point is that linguistic expressions are linked in virtue of their meaning to parts of the world around us, which is the basis of our use of language to convey information about reality. The denotation of an expression is the part of reality the expression is linked to.

The second way of giving the meaning of a word, commonly used in dictionaries, is to paraphrase it, as illustrated in (2):

- (2) *forensic* ‘pertaining to courts of law and court procedures’  
*export* ‘to send out from one country to another, usually of commodities’

This kind of definition attempts to match the expression to be defined with another expression having the same **sense**, or content. The clearest kind of sense-for-sense matching is translation from one language to another. To say