

Purpose/Use	Pragmatics	<i>Most social</i>
Meaning	Semantics	<i>Lexical, logical</i>
Word external	Syntax	<i>English Grammar</i>
Word-Internal	Morphology	<i>Derivation/Inflection</i>
Phonemes	Phonology	<i>Vary for each language</i>
Speech sounds	Phonetics	<i>Most physical, universal</i>

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**Mere semantics:** *Null-A*, Korzybski, Chase, [Hayakawa](#), and “[General Semantics](#)”

The whole story is in Dwight Bolinger’s book [Language, the Loaded Weapon](#). ([LOOK INSIDE!™](#))

**Semantics** is the study of meaning. In linguistics, semantics is mostly about [denotations](#); [connotations](#), by contrast, are more the business of [pragmatics](#).

The standard example of the relation between Syntax (considered as all grammar), Semantics, and Pragmatics is the various aspects of a Stop sign in use. A stop sign, being physical, has morphology, and, like all signs, has semantics, syntax, and pragmatics



The actual shape of the sign (red, 8 sides, on-a-stick, etc.) is its **morphology**.

Its **semantics** is what it’s supposed to mean (Drivers must come to a complete stop here).

Its **syntax** is all the arrangements that are necessary for it to mean anything conventional at all. (For instance, two of the pictures above represent ungrammatical arrangements of a stop sign, which therefore do not have the conventional semantics in use.)

Its **pragmatics** is what actually occurs when people interact with a stop sign, which varies widely with individuals, driving habits, time, place, and many other things.

[Charles Sanders Pierce](#) was a pioneer pragmaticist; see [Charles Pyle](#) for something more modern.

[Ludwig Wittgenstein](#) is the philosopher most associated with modern semantics. Other prominent semanticists and pragmaticists include [James McCawley](#), [George Lakoff](#), [Charles Fillmore](#), [Stephen Levinson](#), and [Anna Wierzbicka](#).

The [Logic Study Guide](#) in the coursepack deals with the semantics of clauses (“propositions”).

There is also Lexical Semantics, which deals with the meanings of words, or “lexical entries”.

This is [becoming very important](#) in Computational Linguistics/Natural Language Processing (CL/NLP).

Topics in semantics (and pragmatics\*) include:

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|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Metaphor</a>        | <a href="#">Politeness</a> *     | <a href="#">Deixis</a>           | <a href="#">Entailment</a> *   | <a href="#">Speech Acts</a> *   |
| <a href="#">(Co-)Reference</a>  | <a href="#">Rhetoric</a> *       | <a href="#">Classifiers</a>      | Inference*                     | <a href="#">Generics</a>        |
| Synonymy                        | <a href="#">Bullshit</a> *       | <a href="#">Entities</a> (nouns) | <a href="#">Indirectness</a> * | <a href="#">Sound Symbolism</a> |
| <a href="#">Performatives</a> * | <a href="#">Presupposition</a> * | Events (verbs)                   | <a href="#">Causation</a>      | <a href="#">Implicature</a> *   |