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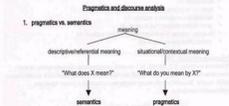
# What is the difference between semantics and pragmatics with examples

Semantics and pragmatics are two important branches of linguistics (the study of language). While they both study meaning, there are a few important differences between them! Semantics vs. pragmatics meaning semantics studies the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, and larger chunks of discourse. It also examines how smaller parts of discourse interact to form the meaning of larger expressions. Pragmatics Studies the same words and meanings but places an emphasis on social context.



In simple terms, semantics looks at the literal meaning of words and the meanings that are created by the relationships between linguistic expressions. Pragmatics is similar to semantics in that it examines how meaning is created; however, it pays more attention to context. Pragmatics recognizes how important context can be when interpreting the meaning of discourse and also considers things such as irony, metaphors, idioms, and implied meanings. «I'm so hungry I could eat a horse!» semantics = We would observe the literal meaning created by these words and would assume that this person wants to eat a horse. Meaning with pragmatics = If we examine this sentence from a pragmatics perspective, we also consider the context and what the speaker is trying to imply. Do you think they actually want to eat a horse? Or are they just saying they are very hungry?

Or do you think they are dropping a hint that they want to be fed? From a pragmatics perspective, the phrase «hungry as a horse» just means «really hungry». - Study Smarter Originals Here's a handy table for you to see the key differences between semantics and pragmatics. semanticsPragmaticsThe study of words and their meanings within language.The study of words and their meanings within language placed within context.Looks at the literal meanings of words.Looks at the intended meaning of words.Limited to the relationship between words.Covers the relationships between words, interlocutors (people engaged in the conversation), and contexts. Now you have a basic understanding of the main differences between semantics and pragmatics, let's delve a little deeper into what each term means. What is semantics? Semantics is the study of meaning within language. We can apply semantics to singular words, phrases, sentences, or larger chunks of discourse. Semantics examines the relationship between words and how different people can draw different meanings from those words. For example, the word 'crash' can mean an accident, a drop in the stock market, or attending a party without an invitation.



How we derive meaning from the word is all in semantics! There are two important terms that we associate with semantics: connotation and denotation. Connotation refers to all the possible meanings we associate with a word beyond the dictionary definition. In contrast, denotation refers to the literal meaning of the word. For example, the word 'blue' is a color (denotation) but can also be associated with feelings of sadness (connotation). The term semantics (derived from the Greek word for sign) was coined by the French linguist Michel Bréal, who is considered the founder of modern semantics. Semantics is important as it helps us add meaning to our words and understand each other better. After all, what is the point of language without meaning? There are two main categories of semantics: Lexical semantics and phrasal semantics . Lexical semantics = The study of the individual meaning of words. compositional semantics = Examines how smaller parts of discourse, ie words, combine to form the meaning of larger linguistic expressions, ie sentences. Semantics examples – idioms Let's take a look at some examples of semantics in action. Semantics is what gives idioms their meanings. Idioms are phrases or words that have predetermined connotative meanings that can't be deduced from their literal meaning. Example. The literal meaning of the word 'white' is a color without a hue. However, look at the following idiomatic phrases: Neither of these uses of the word white refers to colour, but we all know what they mean! Example. Take a look at this icon. What does it mean to you? # If you asked someone over a certain age, they would probably recognize this symbol (the hash) as the number sign. However, younger people would probably call this a hashtag- a symbol used to group topics on social media. In both of these examples, the meaning is all in the semantics! Semantics is limited in its scope. It examines the literal interpretations of words and sentences within a context and ignores things such as irony, metaphors, and implied meaning. What is pragmatics? Pragmatics helps us look beyond the literal meaning of words and utterances and focuses on how meaning is constructed within context. When we communicate with other people, there is a constant negotiation of meaning between the listener and the speaker. Pragmatics looks at this negotiation and aims to understand what people mean when they use a language and how they communicate with each other.

Pragmatics looks at the difference between the literal meaning of words and their intended meaning within social contexts and takes things such as irony, metaphors and intended meanings into account. The Oxford Companion to Philosophy (1995) defines pragmatics as: The study of language which focuses attention on the users and the context of language use rather than on reference, truth, or grammar. The philosopher and psychologist Charles W. Morris coined the term Pragmatics in the 1930s, and the term was further developed as a subfield of linguistics in the 1970s.

	Focus	Scope / Range	Meaning of an Utterance	Domain
Semantics	Meaning	Narrows as it deals with only meaning	Context independent	Grammar
Pragmatics	Language use	Broad as it deals with aspects beyond text	Context dependent	Rhetoric

Pragmatics is important as it is key to understanding language use in context and acts as the basis for all language interactions. Pragmatics takes a more practical approach to understanding the construction of meaning within language. What is an example of pragmatics? Let's take a look at some examples of pragmatics in action. Example. You're late to work, and your boss says, 'What time do you call this?!' in an angry voice. By examining the context and your boss's tone of voice, you can infer that your boss does not want to know the time but actually wants to know why you are late. The implied meaning of «what time do you call this» is often inferred as «why are you so late?» - Study Smarter Originals Example. It's date night for you and your partner. You ask your partner where you are going for dinner, and they say, 'Oh, I don't know, McDonald's?'. You respond, 'How romantic!' From a pragmatic perspective, it can be inferred that you don't actually think a date to McDonalds is romantic - you are being ironic. Semantics vs. pragmatics examples Now that you have a better understanding of semantics and pragmatics let's look at some practical examples highlighting the differences between the two. Example. Picture this: You pick up the phone and call your favorite restaurant. You: «Hi, do you have any tables free this Saturday?» « Restaurant manager: «Yes, we do. »

They put down the phone. What happened? Semantically, you asked if they had any tables, and they gave you a literal answer. However, when we engage pragmatics, it can be inferred that you wanted to reserve a table for this Saturday. Example. «It's cold in here, isn't it?» (looks towards the open window) The speaker hasn't asked for anything to be done, but as the window is wide open, it would be safe to assume they would like it closed. In this case, the utterance is an example of implicature because the speaker never explicitly asked for the window to be closed; it was implied instead. Both semantics and pragmatics are important branches of linguistics that look at meaning within language. Semantics studies the meaning of words and sentences. Pragmatics studies the same words and meaning but within context. Semantics is limited to the relationship between words, whereas pragmatics covers the relationships between words, people, and contexts. Semantics and pragmatics are two fields of linguistics.

Both of them concern with study of meaning of humans speech signs. However, each of which tackles meaning from a different angle. Semantics pays attention to the literal meaning of words ( dictionary meaning), whereas pragmatics concerns with the intended meaning of an utterance ( what does the speaker mean?). For instance, when someone says " it is cold here", semanticist will explain the meaning of each lexeme as it is in a dictionary; pragmatist will explain it by saying the speaker wants you to turn on the heater. Although the difference between the two disciplines sounds easy, it is very complicated practically. Due to the overlapping between them , there is no clear cut boundaries separate the two areas. In this article , we will pin point the main differences between semantics and pragmatics. " I see semantics as one branch of linguistics, which is the study of language: as an area of study parallel to , and interacting with, those of syntax and phonology, which deal respectively with the formal patterns of language, and the way which these are translated into sounds.

While syntax and phonology study the structure of expressive possibilities in language, semantics studies the meaning can be expressed" (Leach,1981). A major branch of linguistics devoted to the study of meaning in language (Crystal, 2008). According to Crystal (1985) "Pragmatics is the study of the aspects of meaning and language use that are dependent on the speaker, the addressee and other features of the context of utterance". It is hard to find a satisfactory definition of the term pragmatics because of its, somehow, modernity and ramifications. Therefor, Levinson, in his book Pragmatics, mentioned more than eight definitions of pragmatics. Borderline between semantics and pragmatics Actually, the distinctions between semantics and pragmatics are streaks or thin lines; we can set out these lines by tracing the historical origin, components, theory, and methodology of each of them. Traditionally, before pragmatics , the study of " semiotics" , the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation, was a job of semantics and syntax. However, they failed in some explanation of meaning or they could not find suitable interpretations for some utterances.

	Focus	Scope / Range	Meaning of an Utterance	Regulated by	Domain
Semantics	Meaning	Narrows as it deals with only meaning	Context independent	General Rules	Grammar
Pragmatics	Language use	Broad as it deals with aspects beyond text	Context dependent	Principles	Rhetoric

Therefore, there were some data without scientific descriptions.

## SEMANTICS vs PRAGMATICS

- **Semantics:**
  - meaning **abstracted** away from users
- **Pragmatics:**
  - *Pragmatics* is a systematic way of explaining language use **in context**.
  - It seeks to explain aspects of meaning which cannot be found in the plain sense of words or structures, as explained by semantics.
    - Ex: "*It is cold in here*"
    - (*Implicature*: request to close the window)

➤ *Semantics/pragmatics distinction: not always easy to draw*

In 1938, Morris distinguished three distinct branches of inquiry: syntactics (or syntax), being the study of "the formal relation of signs to one another", semantics, the study of "the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable", and pragmatics, the study of "the relation of signs to interpreters". After Morris' distinction, the abandoned data were belonged to pragmatics. Thus, the first line to differentiate semantics from pragmatics is that all those data which do not capture by semantics theory go to pragmatics. Under a component view, semantics and pragmatics are complementary to one another in the study of meaning. However, semantics, due to its dealing with truth-conditional aspect of language, is less comprehensive than pragmatics. Therefore, pragmatics has been defined as meaning minus truth-conditions. Thus, aspects of an utterance that can be described either true or false will be under the tent of semantics, others will be belonged to pragmatics. For example, the following sentences describe a 25 years old male: - He is a man. It is true, thus it belongs to semantics but if we say - He is a child. It is false, thus it belongs to pragmatics. Therefore, the second line between semantics and pragmatics is the truth- conditions. Semantics is always restricted to decontextualized analyses of words or sentences meaning. Whereas pragmatics takes into account the impact of the context on the analyses of utterance meaning. For example, I am hungry, semantically means that feeling when someone does not eat for a certain period of time; pragmatically, depending on the context, means can we postpone the meeting?, let's go to a restaurant, or I could not understand your speech...etc. Accordingly, we can describe pragmatics as a functional linguistic area i.e, it describes the language use ( performance ), while semantics is a formal linguistic area ( competence). The verb to mean, in semantics, is interpreted as what does X mean? Whereas, in pragmatics, is interpreted as what do you mean by X?