

Summary Notebook: Class 9 – Linguistics & Semantics

1. Syntax & Constituency Tests

Coordination Test

Definition: A group of words is a constituent if it can be coordinated with another of the same type.

Key Takeaway:

Coordination reveals phrase boundaries—valid coordination suggests a shared syntactic structure.

2. Semantic Derivation

Functional Composition

Sentences are interpreted via lambda calculus:

e.g., $S = \lambda x.T$ iff x runs

Syntax-semantics interface:

Nouns \rightarrow entities (x)

Verbs \rightarrow predicates/functions over entities

3. Pragmatics & Logical Structure

Development of Theories

Historical trajectory:

Philosophy & Logic: Aristotle \rightarrow Frege

Linguistics: Saussure \rightarrow Chomsky

Semantics/Pragmatics split: Formal vs. cognitive traditions

Type	Concerned With
Propositional Logic	Truth-value relations
Formal Semantics	Compositional meaning
Pragmatics	Meaning in context

4. Logical Relations vs. Real-world Inference

Three Key Issues in Pragmatics:

Presupposition

Indexicality

Implicature

5. Presupposition

Definition:

Background assumptions required for an utterance to be meaningful.

Characteristics:

Survive negation: “The king of France is not bald” still presupposes his existence.

Testable: Determine if meaning is maintained under various transformations.

6. Holes & Plugs (Presupposition Projection)

Holes:

Contexts that allow presuppositions to pass through.

Plugs:

Contexts that block presuppositions.

7. Cognitive Semantics

Core Ideas:

Emphasis on mental representations.

Meaning is conceptual, not purely truth-conditional.

Key Concepts:

Image Schemas: Spatial structures (e.g., CONTAINER, PATH)

Base & Profile: Focused vs. background meaning.

Metaphor & Metonymy:

Metaphor: "Time is money"

Metonymy: "The White House announced..."

8. Formal Semantics

Focus:

Truth-conditional semantics using predicate logic.

Lambda calculus used to derive sentence meanings compositionally.

Predicate Logic:

Sentences interpreted as sets of truth conditions.

Functions applied to arguments

9. Interim Summaries

Semantics is about sentence-internal, compositional meaning.

Pragmatics is about interaction with context and speaker intention.

Cognitive and formal semantics offer complementary lenses.

Summary Notebook: Class 10 – Advanced Pragmatics and Speech Acts

1. Recap of Last Session

Reviewed the distinction between logical relations (formal semantics) and pragmatic inferences.

Identified three key pragmatic issues:

Presupposition

Indexicality

Implicature

2. Presupposition: Semantics vs. Pragmatics

What is Presupposition?

A presupposition is background information assumed to be true for a sentence to be meaningful.

Two Layers of Meaning:

Layer	Description
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Presupposition	Backgrounded, taken-for-granted content
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At-issue meaning	The main propositional content to evaluate as true/false
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3. Presupposition Triggers

Expressions that introduce presuppositions:

Definite NPs

→ "the boy from Osaka"

→ Presupposes the boy exists.

Factive Verbs

→ "I regret visiting..."

→ Presupposes: I visited.

Additive Particles

→ "again," "too,"

→ Presuppose repetition or similarity.

4.Holes vs. Plugs

What happens when a presupposition is embedded?

Type Description

Hole Allows presupposition to project (e.g., "He knows...")

Plug Blocks presupposition projection (e.g., "He thinks...")

5.Presupposition Accommodation

What if presupposition is new to the listener?

Accommodation: Listener adds new presupposition to the common ground to make sense of the utterance.

Structured Discourse Context:

Common Ground: Shared background assumptions

Presupposition Sets:

prs: speaker's presuppositions

pra: addressee's presuppositions

6.Speech Act Theory

Key Idea:

Language doesn't just describe the world—it acts upon it.

Three Types of Speech Acts:

Type	Description	Example
Locutionary	The act of saying words	"I will help."

Type	Description	Example
Illocutionary	The intended force	A promise
Perlocutionary	The actual effect	Listener feels reassured

7. Constatives vs. Performatives

Type	Effect
Constative	Describes reality → can be true or false
Performative	Does something by saying it

8. ✓ Felicity Conditions

Conditions for a performative sentence to be valid:

Right context (e.g., courtroom, wedding)

Right speaker role (judge, priest)

Right timing and authority

9. Possible Worlds & Dynamic Semantics

Traditional View:

Sentences have truth conditions about a static world.

Updated View:

Sentences update the world (context).

Language use is dynamic—especially in dialogue.

Summary Notebook: Class 11 – Advanced Pragmatics, Presupposition & Speech Acts

1. Review of Prior Topics

Main Themes Recapped:

Presupposition: Implicit assumptions embedded in utterances.

Speech Act Theory: Language as action, not just information.

Contextual Updates: Utterances modify discourse, not just describe reality.

2. Presupposition

Two Layers of Meaning:

Type	Example
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Presupposition	"There was a boy from Osaka."
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At-issue Meaning	"I met the boy from Osaka."
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Common Presupposition Triggers:

Trigger Type	Example	Presupposition
Definite NPs	"I met the boy."	"There was a boy."
Factive Verbs	"He regretted it."	"He did it."
Cleft Sentences	"It was Aki who sneezed."	"Someone sneezed."
Counterfactuals	"If I were a bird..."	"I am not a bird."
Iterative Adverbs	"He came again ."	"He came before."

3. Holes vs. Plugs

Term	Definition
Hole	A context where a presupposition passes through (e.g., "He knows that...")
Plug	A context that blocks presupposition projection (e.g., "He thinks that...")

4.Presupposition Accommodation

Problem:

If a presupposition isn't known to the listener (e.g., "Alice has a boyfriend"), the utterance may fail.

Solution:

Accommodation – The listener updates their mental model to accept the assumption.

5.Speech Act Theory

Language as Action

Speech doesn't just describe — it acts.

Three Levels of Speech Acts:

Level	Description	Example
Locutionary	Literal utterance (form, grammar)	Saying "I can help."
Illocutionary	Communicative intent or function	Requesting, asserting, promising
Perlocutionary	Effect on listener (often unintended)	Persuading, intimidating, surprising

6.Constatives vs. Performatives

Type	Description	Example
Constative	Describes a state of affairs; can be true or false	"She promised to come."
Performative	Does something by saying it	"I hereby name this ship the Queen Elizabeth."

Key Idea:

A performative sentence updates the world just by being uttered—if felicity conditions are met.

7. Felicity Conditions

Conditions for a performative to be effective:

Proper speaker authority (e.g., a judge)

Correct context (e.g., courtroom, ceremony)

Appropriately framed sentence

8. Constatives Also Update Context

Even “descriptive” sentences like “The sun’s not out” update shared knowledge.

Contextual Updates:

Each utterance helps build a discourse model:

Shared information grows with each turn.

Sentences define what kind of world we now assume we are in.

9. Discourse Model Toolkit

Concept	Description
Possible World	A complete way the world might be
Context Set	The set of possible worlds compatible with what’s known
Common Ground	Shared assumptions/propositions between speakers
Proposition	Set of worlds where a statement is true