

MODULE DESCRIPTOR

MODULE TITLE	SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS		
MODULE CODE	LG2104 (L5)	CREDIT VALUE	20 UK / 10 ECTS
SCHOOL	SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT		

MODULE AIMS

This module aims to:

- Explore the nature of linguistic meaning, both semantic and pragmatic meaning;
- Familiarise students with the basic concepts and approaches in semantics (historical, lexical, cognitive semantics) and with the main theories of sense and reference;
- Familiarize students with a range of pragmatic approaches and theories (speech acts, conversational implicature, politeness theory);
- Investigate the Semantics-Pragmatics interface, as well as relations between the fields of Semantics, Pragmatics and other disciplines, i.e. philosophy, anthropology, psychology, artificial intelligence, cognitive science;
- Teach students to apply pragmatic/semantic theory to linguistic data and produce original analyses of linguistic data, based on the critical assessment and thorough understanding of a range of relevant literature.

MODULE CONTENT

This module will explore different dimensions of and different approaches to ‘meaning’, examining what it means for a word or sentence to ‘mean’ something or to ‘have’ meaning, and what it means for a speaker to ‘mean’ something. Half of the module will be devoted to semantic theory (exploring the relation between linguistic expressions and objects/situations in the world, or linguistic expressions and their mental representations) and half to pragmatic theory (exploring the relation between linguistic expressions, objects, language users and contexts).

The first half of the module will be devoted to semantic theory:

- Theories of sense and reference
- Historical semantics: lexical and semantic change
- Lexical semantics: Componential Analysis, Lexical Relations (antonymy, complementarity, synonymy, etc.)
- Cognitive semantics: the Mental Lexicon, Semantic Fields and Frames, Mental Models, Prototype Theory; Metaphor

The second half will deal with pragmatic theory:

- Speech Act Theory: constative vs. performative, direct vs. indirect speech acts
- Conversational Implicature and Conversational Maxims
- Presupposition
- Politeness/Impoliteness Theory
- Theories of Irony, Parody and Humour.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of this module a student will be able to:

1.	Contrast semantic and pragmatic meaning, on the basis of a clear understanding of the semantics-pragmatics interface and of the main concepts and theories of these two areas of linguistics;
2.	Use a range of semantic concepts relevantly and accurately in order to analyze language data;

3.	Use a range of pragmatic concepts relevantly and accurately in order to analyze language data;
4.	Critically evaluate and synthesize existing academic literature on specific topics in semantics/pragmatics, demonstrating sound understanding of the subject matter;
5.	Produce writing of acceptable standard (as detailed in the English Language and Linguistics study skills handbook).

TEACHING METHODS

The module will employ both formal lectures and seminars which will include discussion, question/answer sequences, problem-solving activities, as well as theoretical engagement with, and critical application of the ideas introduced. Students will learn through practical engagement with various tasks, as well as by discussing relevant approaches in the literature. Teaching and learning on this module may also comprise class and group discussions, class-based group work and face-to-face feedback with the tutor. There is an expectation that students will engage interactively with the tutor and their peers during the sessions, and undertake additional reading and preparatory work outside of the lecture and seminar sessions.

Weekly seminars are designed to maximize opportunities for in-class discussion of concepts and theories that form the object of module assessment, as well as introduce some of the relevant academic literature in both fields. A wide range of audio-visual material will be used to illustrate theory and help students apply theoretical frameworks to real-life situations. Students will also be required to prepare certain topics by reading relevant literature in order to summarize, discuss and evaluate existing semantic and pragmatic research in class. A number of hours are scheduled for drop-in sessions in preparation for assignment submission, in-class test and feedback on assessment. Independent work includes library work, doing research for assignments and writing them up, as well as self-managed group-work, in preparation of joint presentations on various topics in class.

In common with other English modules, this module is designed to foster an active, participatory, independent approach to learning, to develop critical faculties and to consolidate and develop written and oral communication skills. By taking part in classroom discussion, students will gain the ability to engage in critical debate and will develop their argumentative and presentation skills. They will also develop problem-solving skills, the ability manage their time and work to deadlines, and will be encouraged to adopt reflective practices.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

This module is assessed through an essay (50%) and an in-class test (50%).