

CHART OF NSM SEMANTIC PRIMES [v19, 12 April 2017]

Semantic primes are the vocabulary of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage. The chart displays the English words for the primes and some of their combinatorial possibilities, according to NSM grammar. More complex combinations are also possible. In some languages, two primes e.g. FEEL and HEAR, SOMETHING and PART, may be expressed by the same word. In some languages a prime can have two or more exponents (allolexes), e.g. English *other* and *else*. Sometimes a combination of two or more primes, e.g. LIKE THIS, can be expressed by a single portmanteau word. [c.goddard@griffith.edu.au]

I~ME I want to do/know/say something I want this, I don't want this I don't know something bad can happen to me someone like me	YOU I want you to do/know/say something something bad can happen to you you are someone like me	SOMEONE this someone, the same someone, someone else, this other someone someone does/says something	WANT I want this someone wants something someone wants to do/know/say something someone wants someone else to do/ know/say something someone wants something to happen I want it very much	DON'T WANT I don't want this someone doesn't want this someone doesn't want to do something someone doesn't want something to happen	FEEL someone feels something (good/bad) someone feels something (good/bad) in part of the body someone feels something good/bad towards someone else/ something	NOT~DON'T not good, not bad not like this I don't know someone can't do this	CAN someone can do something someone can't do something someone can't not do something something (good/bad) can happen it can be like this: ...	BECAUSE because of this it happened because this someone did something before ... not because of anything else
SOMETHING ~THING this something~thing, the same something~thing, something else~another something something big, something small something of one kind	BODY someone's body, people's bodies part of someone's body a body of one kind, bodies of two kinds something bad happens inside someone's body someone feels something in the body	PEOPLE these people, many people, some people, few people many people think like this: ... people can say ... people of one kind	DO someone does something (to someone else) someone does something with something else/part of the body someone does something with someone else someone does something good (for someone else)/bad (to someone else)	SAY I say: ... someone says something (good/bad) (to someone) someone says something (good/bad) (about someone/something) someone says something like this: "-." someone says something with words someone says a word to someone	KNOW I know this someone knows it this someone knows something (a lot) about someone/something people can know this [I know that ... = it is like this: ..., I know it]	IF if it happens like this for some time, ... if you do this, ... if someone does something like this, ...	MAYBE maybe it is like this, maybe it is not like this maybe someone else can do it	LIKE~AS~WAY it happens like this: ... it is like this: ... someone thinks like this: "-." someone like me this someone does it like this it happens as this someone wants ... do/say it in this way, not in another way
KIND this kind, the same kind, another kind, this other kind something/someone of one kind people of one/two/many kinds	PART part of someone's body this part, the same part, another part, this other part this something has two/many parts	WORDS many words, other words, one word words of one kind say something with (not with) words, say something in other words say these words these words say something	SEE someone sees someone/something (in a place) people can/can't see well in this place someone/people can/can't see this something	HEAR someone hears something people can feel something bad when they hear this word	THINK someone thinks about someone else/ something someone thinks something good/bad about someone else/something someone thinks like this: "-." many people think like this: "-."	VERY very big, very small, very good, very bad, very far, very near, a very short time, a very long time I want it very much (=very) very very big, very very good, very very far, etc.	MORE~ANYMORE someone wants more, someone does more someone wants to know/say/think more about it one more, two more, many more, not more not living anymore not like this anymore	
THIS this someone (something), these people, this kind, this part at this time, in this place because of this it is like this: ...	THE SAME the same someone, the same thing, the same part, the same kind at the same time, in the same place someone says/does/thinks/knows/ wants/feels the same	OTHER~ELSE someone else, something else, at another time, somewhere else other parts, other kinds this other part, this other kind, this other someone, this other thing	HAPPEN something happens something happens to someone something happens to something something happens somewhere (in a place) something happens inside someone/something	BE (SOMEWHERE) someone is somewhere (in a place) something is somewhere (in a place) someone is with someone else	LIVE someone lives for a long time many people live in this place this someone lives with someone else it is good if someone lives like this	DIE someone dies at this time all people die at some time	SMALL something small a small place very small	BIG something big a big place very big
ONE one someone, one thing, one part, one kind in one place, at one time one of these things/people something of one kind one more thing	TWO two things, two parts, two kinds two of these things/people two more things	MUCH~MANY many people, many things, many parts, many kinds at many times, in many places much of this something (e.g. water) much more, many more	THERE IS there is something in this place there is someone in this place there are two/many kinds of ...	BE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING) this someone is someone like me this is something of one kind this is something big/small I know who this someone is	(IS) MINE this thing (knife, shirt, etc.) is mine [this thing is someone else's = someone else can say about this thing: "it is mine"]	BAD something bad, someone bad something bad something bad happens do something bad (to someone) feel something bad this is bad it is bad if ...	GOOD something good, someone good something good something good happens do something good (for someone) feel something good this is good it is good if ...	TRUE this is true this is not true
ALL all people, all things, all parts, all kinds at all times, in all places all of this something (e.g. water)	SOME some people, some things, some parts, some kinds at some times, in some places some of these things/people some of this something (e.g. water)	LITTLE~FEW few people, few things a little of this something (e.g. water) very little, very few	MOVE someone moves (in this place) something moves in this place parts of this someone's body move as this someone wants	TOUCH something touches something else (somewhere) something touches part of someone's body someone/people can/can't touch this something	INSIDE inside this something inside this someone inside part of this someone's body	TIME~WHEN (at) this time, (at) the same time, at another time, at this other time, at some times, at many times at the time when ...	NOW something is happening here now when I say this now, ...	MOMENT it happens in one moment a moment before, a moment after at this moment
(FOR) SOME TIME some time before, some time after it happens like this for some time someone does this for some time [during this time = at this time, for some time]	A LONG TIME a long time before, a long time after a very long time for a long time [= for some time, a long time]	A SHORT TIME a short time before, a short time after a very short time for a short time [= for some time, a short time]	PLACE~WHERE~ SOMEWHERE (in) this place, (in) the same place, somewhere else, (in) this other place in some places, in many places in the place where ...	HERE something is happening here now	ABOVE above this place far above this place someone above other people	BELOW below this place far below this place	ON ONE SIDE on this side, on the same side, on one side, on two sides, on all sides	
BEFORE before this, some time before, a short time before, a long time before	AFTER after this, some time after, a short time after, a long time after	NEAR near this place near someone	FAR far from this place					

Using NSM in explications

- Don't include any complex English-specific words, no matter how common and seemingly basic; e.g. *and*, *or*, *make*.
- Ensure that you use semantic primes only in allowable syntactic frames. Do not resort to non-NSM syntax even if English grammar allows it. For example, avoid 'do something about it' and 'feel good/bad about something'; semantic primes DO and FEEL do not have any "about" valency.
- Avoid the following non-universal constructions: relative clauses (e.g. *someone who did this*), comparative (e.g. *better than*, *more than*), indirect speech (e.g. *this someone said that ...*).
- Whenever possible, explications should be composed entirely in semantic primes; but some explications require use of semantic molecules in addition to primes. Semantic molecules are a well-defined set of non-primitive meanings that function as units in the meanings of more complex concepts.

Key references

- Goddard, C. & Wierzbicka, A. 2014. *Words and Meanings*. OUP.
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- Peeters, B. Ed. 2006. *Semantic Primes and Universal Grammar*. Benjamins.
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- Goddard, C. 2011. *Semantic Analysis* [2nd ed.]. OUP.
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NSM Homepage: www.griffith.edu.au/humanities-languages/school-humanities-languages-social-science/research/natural-semantic-metalanguage-homepage [short URL bit.ly/1XUoRRV]