

NSM SEMANTIC PRIMES

I, YOU I don't know, I want you to do/know something, something bad can happen to me/you, someone like me	HERE something is happening here now	NOW something is happening here now	HAPPEN something happens something happens to someone something happens to something something happens in a place	DO someone does something (to someone else) someone does something to something (with something else) someone does something with someone else someone does something good for someone else	SAY someone says something (to someone) someone says something (good/bad) (about someone/something) someone says something like this: "-" someone says something (not) with words	NOT~DON'T I don't know, I don't want this, someone can't do this, it is not like this, not good, not bad, not because of anything else	CAN someone can (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, it happened because this someone did something before
SOMEONE this someone, the same someone, someone else, this other someone	PLACE~WHERE (in) this place, (in) the same place, somewhere else, (in) this other place, in some places, in many places, in the place where ...	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 ...	WANT someone wants something, someone wants to do/know/say something, someone wants someone else to do/know something someone wants something to happen	FEEL someone feels something (good/bad) (in part of the body) someone feels like this someone feels something good/bad towards someone else	THINK someone thinks (something good/bad) about someone/something someone thinks like this: "-" many people think like this: "-" (at this time) someone thinks that ...	LIKE~WAY do it like this, move like this, happen like this, do it in this way think like this: "-" like/as this someone wants someone like me	MAYBE maybe it is like this, maybe it is not like this, maybe someone else can do it	IF if it happens like this for some time, ..., if you do this, ..., if someone does something like this, ...
SOMETHING~THING this thing, the same thing, something else, this other something	PART this part, the same part, another part, this other part, part of something, part of someone's body, part of a place, this thing has two/many parts	KIND this kind, the same kind, another kind, this other kind, something/someone of one/two/many kinds, people of one/two/many kinds	SEE someone sees someone/something (in a place)	HEAR someone hears something	KNOW someone knows something (about someone/something) someone knows when/where/who ... someone knows that ... people can know this someone knows someone else (well)	BEFORE before this, some time before, a short time before, a long time before	A SHORT TIME for a short time, a short time before, a short time after	FOR SOME TIME it happens for some time, someone does this for some time
PEOPLE many people, some people, people think like this, people can say	BODY part of someone's body, two kinds of bodies, body of one kind	WORDS many words, other words, one word, say something with (not with) words, say these words, these words say something	BE (specificational) this someone is someone like me this is something of one kind this is something big/small someone can say who this someone is someone can say what kind of thing this is ...	THERE IS there is something in this place there is someone in this place there are two/many kinds of ...	MOVE someone moves (in this place) something moves in this place parts of this someone's body move	AFTER after this, some time after, a short time after, a long time after	A LONG TIME for a long time, a long time before, a long time after	MOMENT it happens in one moment
THIS~IT this someone (something), these people, at this time, in this place, this kind, this part, 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	BE (locational) someone is in a place something is in a place someone is with someone else	HAVE someone has something (many things) someone has something of this kind	TOUCH something touches something else (in a place) something touches someone (part of this someone's body) someone touches someone else (part of this other someone's body)	ABOVE above this place	NEAR near this place, near someone	INSIDE inside this something, inside part of someone's body
ALL all people, all things, all parts, all kinds, at all times, in all places	ONE one someone, one thing, one part, one kind, one of these things/people, something of one kind, at one time, in one place, one more thing	MUCH~MANY many people, many things, many parts, many kinds, at many times, in many places much something of this kind (e.g. water), much/many more	LIVE someone lives for a long time someone lives in this place many people live in this place someone lives with someone else	DIE someone dies at this time all people die at some time	MORE~ANYMORE someone wants more, someone does more, someone wants to know/say more about it, one more, two more, many more not living anymore, not like this anymore	BELOW below this place	FAR far from this place	ON ONE SIDE on this side, on the same side, on one side, on two sides, on all sides
SOME some people, some things, some parts, some kinds, at some times, in some places, some of these things/people	TWO two things, two parts, two kinds, two of these things/people, two more things	LITTLE~FEW few people, few things a little something of this kind (e.g. water)	<p>Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM)</p> <p>Semantic primes are the vocabulary of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage. NSM grammar specifies how primes can be combined in ways that make sense and appear to be possible in all languages. This table displays the English exponents of the primes and some of their basic combinatorial possibilities. Many other, more complex combinations are possible, especially using operators and connectives like NOT, CAN, MAYBE, IF, and BECAUSE, and drawing on the complement-taking properties of KNOW, WANT and THINK. Primes can have two or more exponents (allolexes) in a given language, e.g. <i>other</i> and <i>else</i> in English. In some languages certain combinations of primes are expressed by a portmanteau, e.g. in Polish the combination 'like this' is expressed by a single word <i>tak</i>.</p>					
GOOD something good, someone good, good people, something good happens, do something good (for someone), feel something good, this is good, it is good if ...	BAD something bad, bad people, something bad happens, do something bad (to someone), feel something bad, this is bad, it is bad if ...	TRUE this is true, this is not true						
BIG something big, a big place, a big part	SMALL something small, a small place, a small part	VERY very big, very small, very good, very bad, very far, very near, a very short time, a very long time	<p>Using NSM in explications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whenever possible, compose explications entirely in semantic primes. Don't include any complex English-specific words, no matter how common and seemingly basic; e.g. <i>and</i>, <i>or</i>, <i>make</i>. Ensure that you use semantic primes only in allowable syntactic frames. Don't 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. Likewise, avoid 'for a moment'; semantic prime MOMENT is incompatible with duration. Avoid the following non-universal constructions: relative clauses (e.g. <i>someone who I know well</i>), comparative (e.g. <i>better than</i>, <i>more than</i>), indirect speech (e.g. <i>this someone said that ...</i>). Words of a similar semantic type tend to follow a common semantic template. 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. 					
<p>Key References</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wierzbicka, A. 1996. <i>Semantics: Primes and Universals</i>. OUP. Goddard, C. & Wierzbicka, A. Eds. 2002. <i>Meaning and Universal Grammar</i>. Vols I and II. Benjamins. Peeters, B. Ed. 2006. <i>Semantic Primes and Universal Grammar: Evidence from the Romance Languages</i>. Benjamins. Goddard, C. Ed. 2008. <i>Cross-Linguistic Semantics</i>. Benjamins. Goddard, C. 2011. <i>Semantic Analysis</i> [2nd edn]. OUP. Goddard, C. & Wierzbicka, A. In press. <i>Words & Meanings</i>. OUP. NSM Homepage: www.une.edu.au/bcss/linguistics/nsm 								