

**Open Learning**  
**Translation Department**

**Third Year**  
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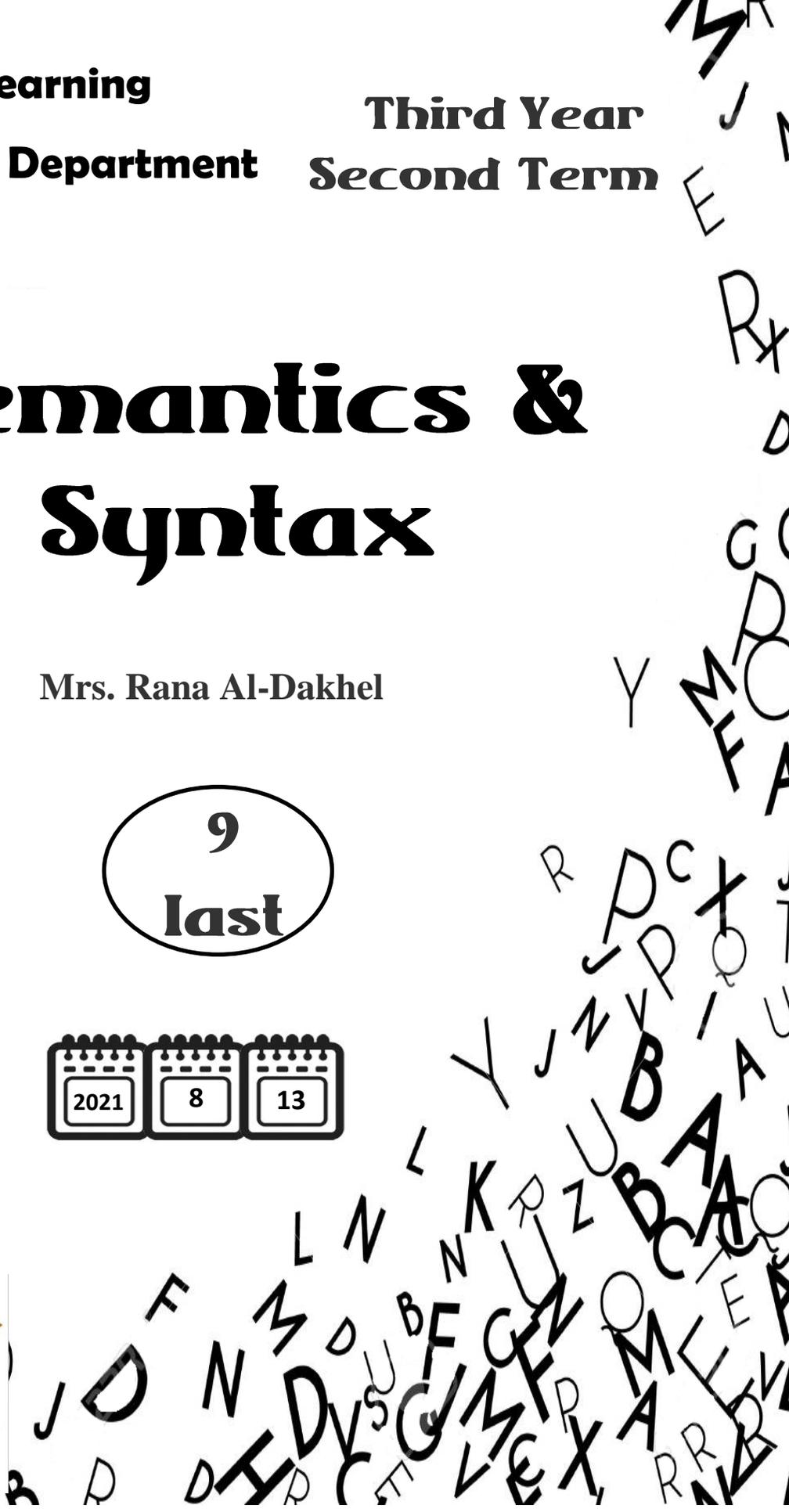
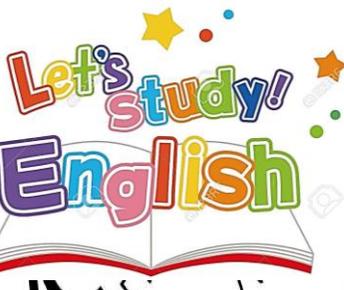
# **Semantics & Syntax**

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## GOOD MORNING EVERYONE!

Last time, we talked about face threatening acts, and we discussed some strategies to save our face. Let us talk more about them.

Talking about face, it is related to our prestige. The word *face* is defined by Goffman as the public self-image that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced.

We have two types of face:

1. Negative face: the freedom of imposition; the freedom of being imposed by others.

2. Positive face: It is related to your self-image or personality. It is about the desire that this self-image is being praised, respected, appreciated, and approved of by others, and claimed by interactants (speakers and addressees).

Brown and Levinson distinguished between those FTAs (face threatening acts) that threatened the speaker or the addressee. So, we have strategies for speaker and strategies for the hearer.

### Acts that threaten the face of the hearer

#### Hearer's negative face:

Orders, requests, suggestions, advices, reminders, threats, warnings, dares, offers, promises, and compliments (expressions of admiration).

**Student:** why do compliments threaten negative face?

**Professor:** sometimes, compliments are not good, like when they are just kind of hypocrisy.

#### Hearer's positive face:

Disapproval, criticism, disagreement, satire, irony, complains, accusation, insults, contradictions, challenges, expressions of violent emotions, mentioning taboo topics, and bringing bad news.

For example, if someone came to you and told you that you failed in the exam, he will be threatening your positive face because he brought bad news that you do not like to hear.

### **Acts that threaten the face of the speaker**

#### Speaker's negative face:

To thank others, to accept hearer's thanks, to give an apology, to give excuses, accepting offers, responding to hearer's faux pas<sup>1</sup>, and unwilling promises and offers.

#### Speaker's positive face:

Acceptance of a compliment, break down of physical control over body (e.g. we cannot control our tears), self-humiliation (being too modest and underestimating yourself), acting stupidly, self-contradiction, confessions, having no control over laughter or tears.

### **Saving face strategies**

The strategies that Brown and Levinson have put to mitigate this threatening and to maintain our face are off-record strategy, on-record strategy (without redress/redressive action), and on-record strategy (with redress/redressive action), including positive politeness and negative politeness.

**Student:** are those strategies for speakers or hearers?

**Professor:** for both

➤ Off-record strategy: to say something indirectly and to be polite.

E.g. *I am out of cash. I forgot to go to the bank today.*

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<sup>1</sup> Faux pas is an action or a remark that causes embarrassment because it is not socially correct.

It means “lend me some money.”

E.g. *the soup is a little bland.*

“Bland” means that it has no taste; it needs salt. So, the sentence means “pass me the salt.”

Sometimes, I want to talk about a specific person, and I use **overgeneralization** to try to mitigate threatening this person’s face.

E.g. *people who love in glass houses should not throw stones.*

Maybe one of my neighbors threw stones, and I do not want to threaten his/her face, so I overgeneralize this sentence to all people in general. This is related to off-record strategy.

➤ **On-record strategy (without redress):** I talk to you directly without caring about your feelings.

- Here, we have something relate to **social distance**:

This strategy is mostly used by people who have a high social distance. For example, professors just say directly to their students, “Do your homework.”

- Sometimes, we use this strategy for **urgent** situations.

E.g. *watch out!*

- If you understand my intention directly, this means I am using this strategy.

E.g. *I promise to come tomorrow.*

Here, I am talking to you directly and impose something for the future that I will come tomorrow. The hearer understands that I expressed my intention of committing myself to a future act.

- This strategy is used all the time for **imperatives, offers, suggestions, requests** that do not threaten the hearer’s face.

E.g. *tell me how the meeting goes.*

This is an imperative sentence, but it does not threaten the hearer's face. I am just asking directly to tell me about the meeting. This depends on the relationship with others.

**Students:** how can I save the face if I used this strategy?

**Professor:** here, there is no saving; just talking directly.

➤ **On-record strategy (with redress):**

It is divided into:

➤ **Positive politeness:** we said that positive face means that I would like to be appreciated by others.

We have some strategies for saving positive face:

- Caring about others' want or need: when I satisfy your need, I am saving your positive face.

- Exaggerating interest in others: I exaggerate talking about you and showing you concern.

- Showing sympathy to others.

- Avoiding disagreements: agreeing with what other people say or suggest.

- Asserting speaker's knowledge: saying to them that they are right and correct.

- Cooperation: when you cooperate with others, this means you are saving their positive face.

➤ **Negative politeness:**

E.g. *I need you to work with me, Mr. Ahmed.*

Here, I am trying to impose things on him but politely. So, I am saving his negative face.

Of course, there are strategies we should use:

- To show deference.

- To emphasize the importance of the other's time and concerns.

Important things to focus on in the book:

Chapter 4:

Read quickly the first 7 pages just to understand what the meaning of syntax is.

Focus on heads and complements, deep and surface structures, S-selection and C-selection, transformational rules, recursive rule on page 134, the 14 phrase structure rules on page 147, ambiguous sentence, embedded sentences (like when we have a complementiser), and the terms we have on page 128.

Possessives on page 138 and x-bar are **deleted**. Also, pages 131, 132, and 133 are **not required**.

Chapter 5:

It is required till page 206.

Compositional semantics (pages 178, 179, and 180), lexical semantics (pages 186, 187, and 188), semantic features (pages 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, and half of 199), and speech act are **all deleted**.

Regarding semantics, you will face practical or theoretical questions related to lexical relations, metonymy and synonyms.

Regarding semantics, you will face questions about maxims. There will be a dialogue, and you will tell what the kind of maxim is and if the sentence obeys the maxim or violates it.

Also, there will be a dialogue for FTAs, and you will tell if it threatens the positive face or the negative face, or what the strategies that are used.

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Examples about maxims:

*Speaker (a): what did you have for breakfast this morning?*

*Speaker (b): I had breakfast before you yoga class.*

Is the speaker violating or obeying the maxims? This is a violation.

What maxims does the speaker violate? It violates the **maxim of quantity**.

**Student:** why not the maxim of relevance.

**Professor:** because the speaker said that he had breakfast, so it is related to the question, but he should have been more informative.

*Speaker (a): do you have your watch?*

*Speaker (b): yes, I do.*

Here, speaker (a) is asking about time. So, this is also a violation of the **maxim of quantity** because he is giving less information.

*Speaker (a): how do you like this book?*

*Speaker (b): I like its blue cover.*

This is a violation of the **maxim of quality**. The speaker (b) means that he does not like this book, and even he does not like its cover, he is just lying and trying to distort the truth.

It is more related to the maxim of quality than the maxim of relevance because both are talking about books, so they are related.

*Speaker (a): should I buy my son this new car?*

*Speaker (b): no, he seems like he would be a bad driver.*

This is a violation of the **maxim of quality** because there is no evidence that he would be a bad driver.

*Speaker (a): how are you doing in school?*

*Speaker (b): not too well, actually I am failing in my classes.*

Here, the speaker obeys the maxims of Grice.

*Speaker (a): how are you doing in school?*

*Speaker (b): what a bad weather we are having lately.*

This is a violation of the **maxim of relevance**.

*Speaker (a): what did you think of that movie?*

*Speaker (b): I like the creative storyline. The ending was really a surprise.*

The speaker obeys the maxims of Grice.

*Speaker (a): what did you think of that movie?*

*Speaker (b): it was interestingly done.*

This is a violation of the **maxim of manner** because there is ambiguity. “Done” could refer to the movie, the direction, or the acting.

**Wish you the best of luck!**

