Ways of Breaking out of Normal Interpretation and Meaning

**English Sentences**
Compare these two sentences:

- Say your name out loud.
- Say "your name" out loud.

By wrapping those two words in quotes they are broken out of their normal meaning. In the second sentence the quoted words mean themselves, rather than being a reference to the name of whoever is speaking.

This illustrates the **use**/mention distinction in natural language semantics. The unquoted is **used**, the quoted is **mentioned**. For more about this, see [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/quotation/](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/quotation/).

**XML Markup**
Compare these:

- `<Book>`
- `<Book>`

By escaping the less-than symbol it is broken out of its normal meaning. An XML parser will no longer treat it as signifying the start of an element; it will simply treat it as a meaningless character, along with the following characters.

**Regular Expressions**
XML Schema, XSLT 2.0, Schematron, and HTML5 use regular expressions.

In the regular expression language, the asterisk (*) symbol is a special character that means zero or more occurrences. The following regular expression says zero or more occurrences of the letter a:

```
a*
```

By preceding the asterisk with a backslash:

```
a\*
```

we have broken the asterisk out of its normal meaning and it just becomes a meaningless character. The regex now says the letter a then the letter *.
Recurring Pattern
Above are three examples of breaking out of normal interpretation/meaning. This suggests that breaking out of normal interpretation/meaning is a recurring pattern.

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