

Quiz 2

Brief Introduction to Pragmatics

What is pragmatics?

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies the relation between language and its users and context

Today we will focus on an essential part of pragmatics — speech act, felicity condition, and cooperative principle.

A dialogue without pragmatics

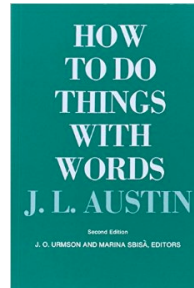
A: *Can you open the window?*

B: *Yes, I can. Bye.*

Speech act

Traditionally, philosophers of language are interested in how to determine whether a statement is true or not.

But a language is not (just) for stating truth. *We do things with words.*



John Searle's felicity conditions

In order for an utterance to be *appropriate* (rather than just true), the following conditions must be met:

Propositional content condition

Preparatory condition

Sincerity condition

Essential condition

John Searle's felicity conditions

Searle's felicity conditions for requesting (A: action, S: speaker, H: hearer, e: linguistic expression)

Propositional content: future act A of H

Preparatory: (a) S believes H can do A (b) It is not obvious that H would do A without being asked

Sincerity: S wants H to do A

Essential: the utterance of e counts as an attempt to get H to do A

Too abstract :(

John Searle's felicity conditions

(×Propositional content) *Please visit us yesterday.*

(×Preparatory) (speaking to a 3-month-old baby) *Pass me the salt.*

John Searle's felicity conditions

By asking/stating if the felicity conditions are met, you can indirectly achieve your goal, instead of directly using imperatives

John Searle's felicity conditions

Instead of saying "pass me the salt", you can:

(Ask the propositional content condition)
Would you pass me the salt?

(Ask the preparatory condition) *Can you pass me the salt?*

(State the sincerity condition) *I would like you to pass me the salt.*

But real conversations are far more flexible

A: Aren't you coming to the party tonight?

B: I have an eight o'clock class.

Grice's cooperative principle

People obey certain maxims (or rules) when they are having cooperative conversation.

Grice's maxims

Don't say more than required. / Don't say less than required. (*The maxim of quantity*)

Don't say what is false. / Don't say what lacks evidence (*The maxim of quality*)

Be relevant. (*The maxim of relation*)

Avoid obscurity. / Avoid ambiguity. / Be brief. / Be orderly. (*The maxim of manner*)

(simplified version by Huang 2000)

Grice's maxims

Grice doesn't claim that people always obey maxims, nor that we should obey these maxims.

Rather, it is possible to violate principles on purpose e.g. tell a lie.

Grice's maxims

You can also opt out of maxim:

As far as I know, .. (hedge about quality)

As you probably know, .. (hedge about quantity)

By the way, .. / I'm not sure if this is relevant, ..
(hedge about relation)

I'm not sure if this makes sense, .. (hedge about manner)

Grice's maxims

When the speaker apparently violates a maxim, You have two options:

Assume that the speaker is not cooperative (e.g. the speaker is trying to deceive you)

Assume that the speaker is still cooperative, and try to guess what the speaker means.

2 is very common — and the speaker can exploit it (the speaker can say something indirect, assuming that you can take this option)

Irony

(As you step into an obviously messy room)
What a clean room!

Apparently against the maxim of quality

It's not that I don't like it.

Apparently against the maxim of manner.

A: *Aren't you coming to the party tonight?*

B: *I have an eight o'clock class.*

Apparently against the maxim of relation.

A: *Susan is such a ***.*

B: *What a lovely day today!*

Apparently against the maxim of relation.

Tautology

War is war. / Boys will be boys.

仕事は仕事だ。(A job is a job (?).)

Which maxim does this apparently violate?

How can you make sense of it?

Reaction paper

A: Where's Mary?

B: The light in her office is on.

Which maxim does this apparently violate?

How can A make sense of it?