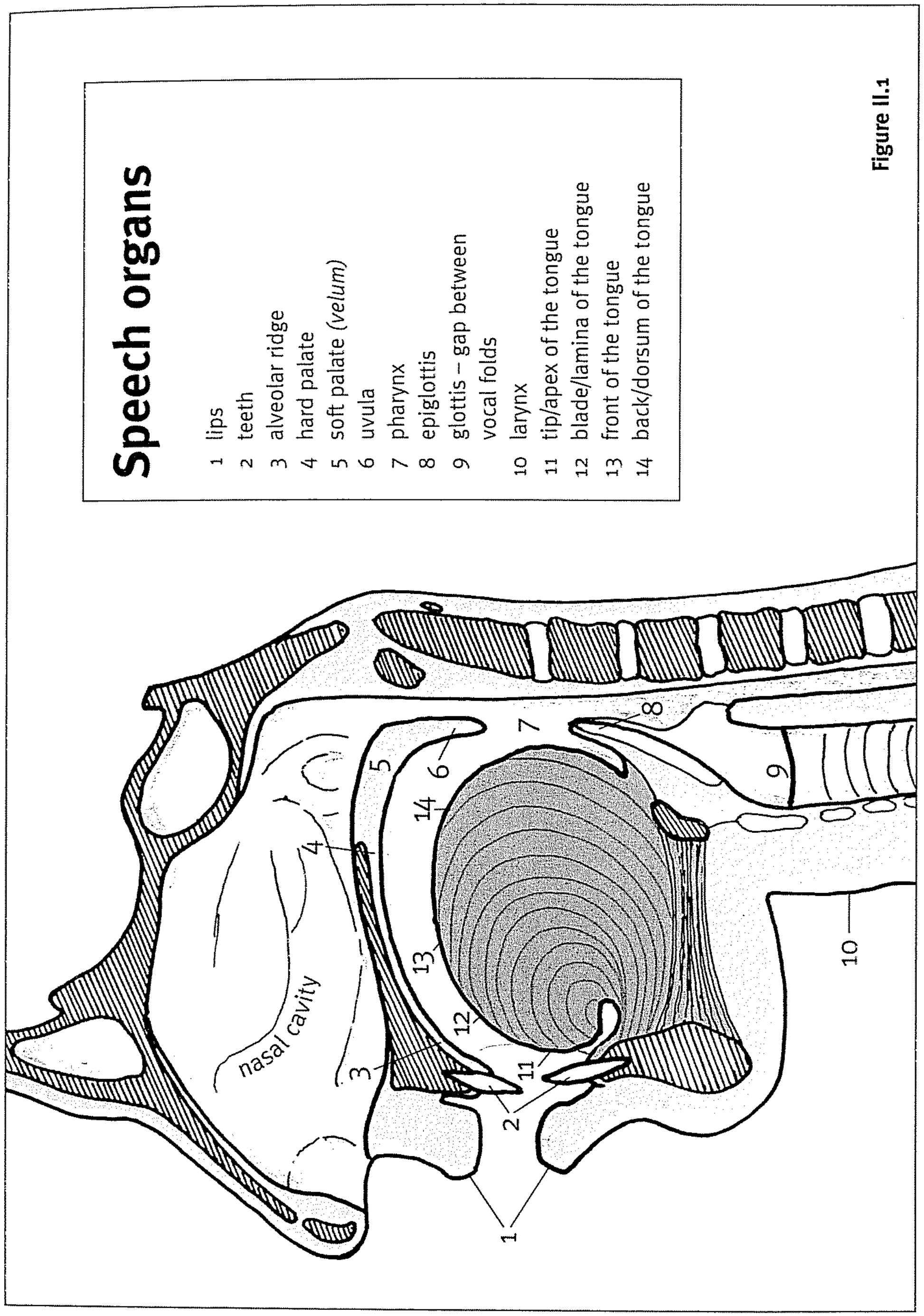

Figure II.1

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VII Pragmatics: The study of meaning in context

Introduction

Pragmatics (from Greek *pragma* = deed, act) is the newcomer among the major branches of linguistics. Its precise definition and status within linguistic theory is still being debated, however: Is it a linguistic subdiscipline like, for example, phonology, morphology and syntax, or is it a new, interdisciplinary approach which is concerned with all kinds of linguistic structures?

VII.1 Competing definitions: Perspective or component?

We can roughly distinguish between a broad and a narrow definition of pragmatics. In semiotics, pragmatics is traditionally defined as a subdiscipline of semiotics which is concerned with the relationship between signs and their users (cf. chapter I). The roots of pragmatics as the study of language use or linguistic performance lie in this (primarily) European tradition of research in semiotics. The pragmatic approach is usually contrasted with the structuralist approach, which is solely concerned with language systems in a vacuum, as it were (i. e. with the *langue* or the linguistic competence of a member of a certain

broad definition

speech community), independent of concrete communicative situations. The 1970s saw an upsurge of interest in pragmatics (the so-called "pragmatic turn"), as a reaction to the neglect of language users and functions in Chomsky's generative grammar, which was influenced by structuralism. The new pragmatic approach focused on the process of communication which results from the interaction between speakers and hearers in actual linguistic contexts. Its major goal was to investigate the prerequisites for successful communication. If we define pragmatics this way, it can hardly be regarded as just another branch of linguistics (along with phonology, syntax or semantics). Rather, pragmatics provides a new perspective on the various aspects of linguistic structure. The fact that, under this broad conception, virtually all aspects of language can be the object of research in pragmatics (although the focus has always been on language use) has naturally led to dismissive characterizations of pragmatics as the "wastebasket" of linguistics or "a useless catch-all term".

narrow definition

In the past few years, a more narrow definition of pragmatics has emerged, which is adopted by most linguists working in an Anglo-American tradition. According to this definition, pragmatics represents a linguistic subdiscipline which complements semantics. This line of research focuses on concepts such as utterance meaning, intention and inference. Communication is primarily seen as the negotiation of meaning between interlocutors (or between authors and readers). Since in everyday communication many things remain implicit, the hearer's central goal is to recognize the speaker's communicative intention. Hearers achieve this aim with the help of inferences based on what has been literally said, knowledge about the utterance context, and general background knowledge shared by speakers and hearers. In many cases, such inferences are necessary for establishing coherence (i.e. an underlying link) between different utterances in a conversation. In the brief dialogue in (1), for example, much more is going on than a mere exchange of statements about the world:

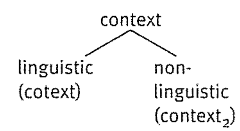
(1) The telephone is ringing.
A: That's the telephone. // B: I'm in the bath. // A: OK.

Speaker A does not simply tell B that the phone is ringing, and B does not simply mention that he/she is in the bath. A's statement obviously functions as a request directed at B to pick up the phone; B's response indicates that (or why) he/she cannot comply with this request. A clearly grasps the actual message conveyed by B's

micropragmatics

utterance and acknowledges it by saying "OK"; so A is likely to pick up the phone himself/herself. The main focus of such a pragmatic approach, sometimes also called "conversational pragmatics" or "micropragmatics", is on principles which allow us to bridge the gap between the descriptive meaning of a sentence, i.e. its proposition or what is said, and the meaning it has in a specific context (i.e. what is meant, the so-called "utterance meaning)". ("What is) said" and ("what is) meant" are two technical terms introduced by the philosopher Herbert Paul Grice (cf. section VII.4 below). In general, micropragmatics is concerned with all aspects of meaning anchored in actual conversational contexts, especially with utterance meaning (cf. sections VII.3 and VII.4), but also with word meaning (cf. section VII.2). This view of pragmatics lies at the heart of an over-simplified definition of the term, as encountered in the familiar equation "Pragmatics = meaning minus semantics". The following list of differences between semantics and pragmatics offers a somewhat more fine-grained and accurate picture, which will be further elaborated in the following sections (cf. especially section VII.4.2):

semantics	**pragmatics**
context-invariant, speaker-independent meaning	context-sensitive, speaker-dependent meaning
meaning potential	concrete meaning in a given context
What does X mean? (conventional meaning, what is said)	What does the speaker mean by uttering X? (non-conventional meaning, what is meant)
principles for describing meaning, meaning relations and meaning combinations	principles for bridging the gap between what is said and what is meant



In some publications the notion of "context" is defined in a narrow sense, relating exclusively to the situational context, which covers aspects such as time and place of the utterance, the interlocutors' social and cultural background, the level of formality, topic and overall aim of the conversation. Thus defined, context is opposed to "cotext", the purely linguistic or textual context of an utterance. In this book, "context" will be used in a broader sense, referring to both the linguistic and the non-linguistic (situational) context of an utterance.

VII.2 Deixis

The main focus of pragmatics as the study of meaning in context are utterances rather than single words. Thus, the two most influential pragmatic theories, speech act theory (cf. section VII.3) and the theory of conversational implicatures (cf. section VII.4), investigate language on the utterance level. Nevertheless, we shouldn't overlook the importance of context as far as word meaning is concerned. After all, it is on the word level that the necessity of drawing a boundary between semantics and pragmatics is particularly prominent. There are, in fact, numerous expressions (primarily personal, possessive and demonstrative pronouns, and adverbs of time and place) which have a context-independent, invariant meaning as well as a context-dependent meaning which varies with the circumstances in which they are used.

semiotic hybrids: symbol and index

From a semiotic point of view, such terms are hybrids, combining aspects of two different types of signs (cf. chapter I): symbols (which express arbitrary and conventional relationships between *signifiant* and *signifié*) and indexes (which typically indicate physical and causal relationships between signs and what they refer to).

Let us imagine that we are on a train and find a note containing the following request:

(2) Meet me here same time tomorrow with a book about this size.

It would not be difficult for us to understand this sentence – but only up to a certain point. We know that "me" refers to the writer, but who is that person? We know that "here" refers either to the place where the note was written or (less likely) to the place where the note is being read, but only the latter place is known to us. We will encounter similar difficulties with all other expressions underlined above: What point in time is referred to by means of the phrase "same time", what date is referred to by means of "tomorrow", and how big is "this size"? Therefore, the proposition in (2) is underspecified. A complete understanding of (2) is possible only if we know the context-dependent meaning of the underlined expressions. Pointer words like *here* or *this* are called "deictic (or: indexical) expressions" or "deictics" (from Greek *deiknynai* = to prove, point out), because they point to a certain entity or aspect of the utterance context.

deictic centre

The speaker and certain features of the utterance context (primarily time and place) represent the central point of reference (*origo* or deictic centre) for context-dependent meaning. The deictic centre naturally shifts as soon as another speaker starts talking, but it can also be deliberately projected onto the hearer/reader, resulting among

other things in a shift in the time and place coordinates. Take the following example:

(3) a. When you read these lines today, I'll be no longer in the country.
b. This programme was recorded last December to be relayed today. (delayed radio broadcast)

It is therefore no coincidence that in indirect (or: reported) speech the deictic expressions used in the original utterance have to be replaced:

(4) a. I won't be here next Monday.
b. He said he wouldn't be there the next/following Monday.

deictic dimensions

The three major deictic dimensions (i. e. reference dimensions in a certain context) are person, place, and time. Person deixis encodes the different persons involved in a communicative event. In English, personal and possessive pronouns are used for this purpose (e. g. *I/we* – speaker(s), *you* - addressee(s), *he/she/it/they* – persons not involved in the communicative event). Examples of place and time deixis are given in (5) and (6):

(5) Place deixis
a. here – there, hither – thither, near – far, left – right, this – that (in the sense of 'this here – that there')
b. come – go, bring – take, borrow – lend

(6) Time deixis
a. now, soon, then, ago, today, yesterday, tomorrow
b. present, actual, current, former, future, next, last

In the pairs of opposites illustrating place deixis (5), the relevant expressions differ with regard to the parameter "near vs. far from the speaker" (proximal vs. distal) in (5a), and "movement towards or away from the speaker" in (5b). The usual reference point for time deixis is the moment of utterance (or: coding time; the examples in (3) are therefore exceptions). For this reason, absolute tenses (i. e. present, past and future; cf. chapter IV.3.1) are also considered to be deictic categories. Deixis, then, is not only found in the lexicon, but also in grammar.

There are further types of deictic expressions, the most important being social deictics. This deictic dimension relates to the (absolute or relative) social status of the persons directly or indirectly involved in a communicative event (directly involved: speaker, addressee; indirectly involved: the persons talked about and bystanders. In English, expressions like *Sir, Madam, Your Honour, Mr President* or titles (*Doctor, Professor*) are used to indicate social status; in German and French the distinction between *Du – Sie* and *tu – vous* is highly important. In certain languages (like Japanese and Korean), such honorifics are far more grammaticalized. These languages indicate social differences and varying degrees of intimacy between the interlocutors by different types of personal pronouns and inflectional morphemes on verbs. Social deixis is clearly more important in these linguistic communities than e. g. in European societies.

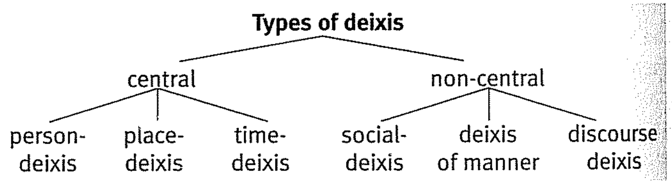
Two further deictic dimensions, which are usually considered much less important than those mentioned above, are discourse deixis and manner and degree deixis. The latter is always accompanied by gestures:

(7) a. The book was this thick.
b. The fish was so big.
c. Why don't you do it like so/this.
d. Du sollst den Deckel nicht so rum drehen, sondern so rum.

Discourse deictics provide a means of increasing text coherence by explicitly referring to specific parts of the discourse which follow or precede the deictic expression:

(8) a. I bet you haven't heard this story.
b. in the last chapter, in the next paragraph, as mentioned above, in what follows
c. in conclusion, all in all, anyway, however, besides, therefore, so, etc.

Figure VII.1



(ana)phoric meaning

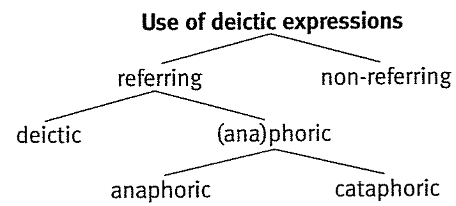
It is important to draw a distinction between discourse deixis and the non-deictic, more exactly (ana)phoric use of deictic expressions, i.e. the use of deictics (especially pronouns) to refer to an entity which has already been introduced (9a,b) or which will be introduced later in the conversation or text (9c):

(9) a. In 1998 Fiona worked as a part-time teacher. She was married then and had three children. They were two, four and eight years old.
b. Mandy wants to go to the theatre, but doesn't know how to get there.
c. He is a kind man who gives a million dollars to the poor.

The concept of "coreferentiality" is crucial to explaining how anaphoric terms work. The expressions underlined in (9) do not directly refer to extra-linguistic entities; they rather refer to them indirectly by referring to linguistic expressions which follow or precede. If a deictic expression is coreferential with an expression introduced in the preceding context (or better: cotext), the so-called "antecedent", it is used anaphorically (*anaphora*). Much less frequently, deictics are coreferential with expressions introduced later in the text, in which case we speak of a cataphoric use (*cataphora*). The term "anaphora" (or "phoric word") often serves as a cover term for both cataphoric and anaphoric uses (in the narrow sense of anaphora) which deictic expressions may have in a text. But there are also cases where deictics are used neither deictically nor phorically, as illustrated in (10):

(10) a. There we go. Well done, lad!
b. There is a story I'd like to tell you.
c. These days you can never be sure what sex they are.
d. What I did yesterday? Oh, I did this and that.
e. Mary lives opposite Bill. (versus Mary lives opposite.)

Figure VII.2



deixis in semantics and pragmatics

What is particularly fascinating about deictics is that they straddle the fence, as it were, between semantics and pragmatics, with one foot in semantics (their invariant or symbolic meaning), and the other in pragmatics (their context-dependent or indexical meaning). Both meaning components are necessary to turn a deictic into a referential expression – which may either have its own, direct referent (when used deictically) or an indirect (co-)referent (when used phorically) – thus completing the proposition expressed by a certain utterance. It is therefore hardly surprising that deictic expressions are investigated both in pragmatics and in semantics (especially referential semantics).

VII.3 Speech acts

origin of pragmatics

Pragmatics was not put on the agenda of linguistics by linguists. Defined as the study of meaning in context, it has developed from a branch of philosophy which offers a critical perspective on attempts at applying principles of formal logic to the analysis of natural language. Concepts that are crucial to logic include truth conditions and truth values (i.e. true or false). Truth conditions relate to the conditions that have to be fulfilled for a statement to be true in a certain context. Truth values are assigned to sentences by determining, among other things, the referent(s) of the deictic expressions they contain (cf. the last paragraph in VII.2). The fact that the meanings of some expressions are at least to some extent context-dependent was not ignored in truth-conditional semantics.

ordinary language philosophy

But the true origins of pragmatics lie in ordinary language philosophy, as represented in the writings of the late Ludwig Wittgenstein and the work of John L. Austin, John R. Searle and Herbert Paul Grice. This school of thought saw itself as a countermovement to traditional logic, which due to its focus on truth conditions ignored central aspects of natural language and ordinary communication. Ordinary language philosophers developed the two most important pragmatic theories: speech act theory (Austin and Searle) and the theory of conversational implicatures (Grice). These approaches will be explained below and in section VII.4.

speech act theory

Speech act theory, which was pioneered by Austin and further developed by Searle, proceeds from the observation that everyday communication is more than just an exchange of statements about the world which are assessed in terms of truth or falsity. For one reason, there are many utterances which are not used for describing some state of affairs, and hence cannot be assessed in terms of truth conditions (see 11a-c); for another, truth conditions are often not very useful if we want to understand the speaker's intention, i.e. what is really meant by an utterance (11d):

(11) a. Happy birthday!
b. Merry Christmas!
c. I hereby declare the meeting closed.
d. A: Will you come to my party tonight?
B: I'm still fighting this flu.

Examples (11a-c) cannot be assessed in terms of truth-conditions. What is relevant is rather whether the respective utterances are appropriate and therefore successful in conveying the intended message: is it really the addressee's birthday at the time of utterance (11a), is it really Christmas (11b), and does the speaker in (11c) really have the authority to close the meeting? In (11d), B's utterance can be assigned a truth value, but this is not crucial. The relevant information is not that B is still fighting the flu, but that B intends to give a negative answer to the question asked by A. B does so indirectly by mentioning the fact that he or she has the flu, which is a good reason for not going to a party. The actual message contained in this answer is not explicit but must be inferred by A. Therefore, those aspects of meaning which are relevant to truth-conditional semantics underspecify the message conveyed (11d).

key assumptions and concepts

The examples above enable us to illustrate some further basic tenets and concepts associated with speech act theory: Communication is a dynamic process, to communicate is to act, and communication is successful if the hearer grasps the speaker's intention(s). The basic unit of verbal interaction is defined as a speech act. A speech act is an utterance made by a certain speaker/author to a hearer/reader in a certain context. It is not their structural (phonological/syntactic) or semantic properties (proposition) which are crucial to speech acts, nor their possible effect on the addressee (perlocution). The most important aspect of speech acts is rather the speaker's/author's communicative intention (the illocution). For example, is the utterance in (12) intended as a simple statement (made by tourists: "Look! I've never seen a bobby before."), as a request (made by a foreigner: "Go and ask him for directions."), as a warning (uttered by criminals: "Watch out, be careful.") or even as a threat (in a heated argument: "If you don't stop I'll scream.")?

speech act

illocution

(12) There is a policeman at the corner.

Since the illocution or illocutionary force (role, point) of a speech act is its most important aspect, the term "speech act" is often used in a narrow sense referring to illocutionary acts. Speech act theory in general has become a theory of illocutionary forces focusing on the following questions: What kinds of communicative intentions can be expressed by utterances? What kinds of devices are used to signal these intentions? What kinds of conditions have to be met in order to successfully convey these communicative intentions, i.e. in order to successfully perform a request, warning, threat or promise?

3.1 Classification of illocutionary acts

Searle distinguishes five basic types of speech acts, i.e. communicative intentions expressed in utterances. These types are held to be universal:

- **Assertives** or **representatives** are used to describe the world (e.g. state, express, claim, tell, describe, assert, admit something).
- **Directives** are attempts to get people to do things, to change the world in the way specified by the speaker (e.g. give an order, ask something or ask somebody to do something).
- By means of **commissives** speakers commit themselves to a future action which will change the world in some way (e.g. by promising, threatening or committing oneself to something).
- We use **expressives** to express our feelings and opinions; expressives offer a glimpse of the hearer's psychological state (e.g. thank, greet, congratulate, apologize, complain).
- **Declarations** essentially serve to bring about a new external situation; they show that the world can indeed be changed by language (e.g. baptisms, marriages, divorces, declarations of war). This type of speech acts is clearly different from the other four types in that it requires specific extra-linguistic institutions or legal settings.

speech act verbs

As can be gleaned from the above examples of different types of speech acts, there are certain verbs (so-called "speech act verbs") which can be used to render illocutionary roles explicit. Speech act verbs are used, for example, in indirect speech to express someone's communicative intention:

(13) a. Read my paper, please.
b. He <u>urged</u> his professor to read his paper.

(14) a. What a great performance!
b. He <u>congratulated</u> her on her great performance.

(15) a. There is a policeman at the corner.
b. He <u>warned</u> his friend that there was a policeman at the corner.

performative utterances

Of course, the speech act verbs in the (b) examples are not used to perform the speech acts they name. These verbs merely spell out what types of speech acts have been performed. They thus differ from utterances such as *Thank you*, *I promise*, *I forgive you*, or *I warn you*, where the speaker performs the relevant illocutionary act by using a speech act verb. The latter types of utterances are called "performative utterances". Such utterances can fulfil their function only if they display a certain form, the so-called "performative formula". Performative utterances have the form of declarative sentences in the first person singular, present tense, indicative and active; they may also contain an adverb such as *hereby*. However, the mere fact that a certain utterance follows this pattern does not guarantee that the primary communicative intention motivating the utterance is made explicit. (16a), for example, primarily functions as a directive rather than as an expressive (it does not really express gratitude, but rather represents a request); the commissive speech act in (16b) is obviously not a promise but a threat:

(16) a. Thank you for not smoking. b. I'll kill you, I promise.

illocutionary force indicating devices

In addition to speech act verbs there are further devices indicating illocutionary force, for example particles such as *please* ("Will you leave, please?" – which functions as a request rather than as a question), the three major sentence types (declarative, interrogative, imperative), and intonation. In general, such devices do not determine illocutionary force, however; the (primary) illocution of an utterance may well be at odds with the illocution indicated by the relevant devices (cf. also VII.3.3 below).

3.2 Felicity conditions

Speech acts have to meet certain conditions to be successful (as has already been illustrated above for (11a)). These so-called "felicity conditions" provide a grid for analyzing particular speech acts and comparing them with others. Searle proposes the following four types of felicity conditions:

- propositional content conditions represent restrictions on what can be said about the world by means of a certain speech act. For example, we cannot promise something or warn against something that has already happened.

- preparatory conditions specify real-world prerequisites for the successful performance of a speech act. For example, is the speaker able to keep his or her promise? And does the hearer wish for the promise to be kept?
- sincerity conditions are restrictions on the speaker's psychological state, on his attitude towards the propositional content expressed. Does the speaker, for example, really intend to keep his or her promise?
- the essential condition is constitutive of speech acts; it provides the most important criterion for classifying speech acts. For example, the use of a speech act verb can count as the performance of a particular speech act (the utterance *I promise* counts as a promise, the utterance *I warn you* counts as a warning).

From these types of felicity conditions follow the rules for the appropriate use of speech acts. Of course, speech acts may be successful even if the relevant preparatory or sincerity conditions are not fulfilled. In this case, speakers simply violate the rules. Violating such rules is comparable to violating traffic regulations: A driver may 'successfully' overtake the car ahead of him, even if he violates traffic regulations in doing so. All rules for the appropriate use of speech acts, except for those based on the essential condition, are merely regulative, i. e. they are rules for pre-existing activities which can also take place without these rules. The rule based on the essential condition is different. It is a constitutive rule, i. e. utterances which do not follow the constitutive rule associated with a particular speech act cannot in principle be used to perform that speech act. The essential condition determines all other felicity conditions for a given speech act, and thus the rules for its felicitous use.

regulative versus constitutive rules

3.3 Indirect speech acts

speech act

direct (explicit, secondary) — indirect (implicit, primary)

As illustrated in (11d), (12) and (16), the primary communicative intention of an utterance is often – maybe even in most cases – different from what it may seem to be at first sight. Some sentences which look like neutral statements ("It's freezing in here.") can be used as requests ("Please shut the window."), others which look like announcements ("Soon I'll come and get you.") may function as warnings or threats. Such examples are cases of indirect speech acts. In indirect speech acts, speakers perform a speech act (the primary speech act)

via another (secondary) speech act. In some cases, then, two speech acts are realized at once, one of them being explicit, the other implicit. As far as the speaker's communicative intention is concerned, the implicit speech act is the more important one.

degrees of standardization

Indirect speech acts are standardized to varying degrees. Some of them are strongly conventionalized. For example, the appropriate response to a yes-no question like *Could you tell me the time?* is to tell the time, rather than to mumble *yes* and walk away. But many indirect speech acts require the hearer to infer the speaker's real intention (what he or she wants to communicate) by means of a more or less complex reasoning process. The hearer can infer the speaker's intention only if he/she takes into consideration both the literal meaning of the utterance and various other factors, including his/her knowledge about the speaker/hearer, the knowledge shared by speaker and hearer about the utterance context, as well as their shared world knowledge (including their knowledge of the importance of politeness in the respective culture; cf. also section VII.4.2). Even more essential to the inferential process required to arrive at the speaker's intended meaning is knowledge of general principles of cooperative behaviour. When investigating the inferential processes necessary to identify indirect speech acts, speech act theory thus ties in with, and indeed needs to draw upon, another pragmatic approach, the so-called theory of conversational implicatures.

VII.4 Conversational implicatures

4.1 The original theory by Grice

Conversational implicatures are the most important link between sentence meaning and utterance meaning, between what is said and what is actually meant. They are a special type of pragmatic inferences and must be distinguished from semantic inferences.

semantic inferences

Semantic (or: logical) inferences are inferences which are exclusively based on the conventional meaning of words, phrases and sentences. Two typical examples are semantic implications (or: entailments) and presuppositions. A proposition X entails a proposition Y if the truth of Y follows necessarily from the truth of X, i. e. if, every time sentence X is true (*There is a bobtail*), sentence Y is also true (*There is a dog*). In cases of entailment, it is impossible to claim X and deny Y. The concept of entailment is very useful for defining sense relations such as hyponymy. Presuppositions (also known as "conventional implicatures") are predications that are taken for granted when a sentence is uttered, i. e. expectations which are naturally associated

presuppositions
conventional implicatures

with particular linguistic expressions (including sentences). Verbs such as *manage* or *fail* in (17a), for example, presuppose an attempt (17b); the sentence in (18a) presupposes (18b):

(17) a. John managed/failed to repair his computer.
b. presupposition 1: John tried to repair his computer.
c. presupposition 2: John has a computer.

(18) a. Christine has the noisiest children one can imagine.
b. Christine has children.

Unlike semantic entailments, presuppositions hold under negation, i.e. the presuppositions (17b,c) and (18b) remain valid if we negate (17a) and (18a).

pragmatic inferences

Pragmatic inferences are different from the semantic inferences encountered above: they are not merely based on the conventional meaning of utterances, but additionally require some contextual knowledge, i.e. the type of knowledge outlined at the end of chapter VII.3. In different contexts, the very same utterance may lead to completely different pragmatic inferences. By contrast, the semantic inferences associated with utterances are context-independent. In (19), B's remark is a valid answer to A's question – B of course assumes that both A and B have some background knowledge concerning the time when the evening news usually starts. In (20), B's answer is exactly the same, but here it is supposed to indicate that B wants to watch the evening news first (and maybe go for a walk at a later time). B does not reject A's suggestion directly but his/her utterance allows A to draw the inference *Not now*, [but maybe] *after the evening news*:

(19) A: What's the time?
B: The evening news just started.

(20) A: Let's go for a walk.
B: The evening news just started.

pragmatic principles

Usually, interlocutors tacitly adopt certain basic principles of human interaction. Different types of pragmatic inferences are distinguished according to the kind of principle they are based on. Politeness is one of these principles (cf. VII.4.2). Another one is the pragmatic principle of cooperative behaviour. This principle lies at the heart of Herbert Paul Grice's theory of conversational implicatures.

the Cooperative Principle with its conversational maxims

The basic idea which underlies Grice's Cooperative Principle is that communicating is cooperative behaviour, and that therefore every communicative event proceeds on the assumption that speaker and hearer (or author and reader) want to cooperate – even if at first sight this might not seem to be the case. For example, B's remark in (19) does not specify the time, but A will nevertheless regard it as a valid answer. If the context was the same but the question was asked by a different person, e.g. a tourist who does not know what time the evening news starts in, say, England, B's answer would be uncooperative. As far as the hearer or reader is concerned, cooperative communication primarily consists in asking oneself: What does the speaker/author mean? What is the intention behind his/her utterance? (How) is his/her utterance connected to what has been said earlier in the discourse? In other words, we generally assume that the speaker/author wants to communicate something, which may either be obvious or which needs to be inferred from his or her utterance. There seems to be no other possibility: we always look for the (deeper) meaning of utterances (effort after meaning).

levels of cooperation

Now, in what sense precisely do we cooperate in communication? Grice distinguishes four different types of cooperative behavior, three of which relate to the content and one of which relates to the form of utterances. These four types of cooperative behaviour are captured by the four maxims given in Table VII.3. The Cooperative Principle itself Grice formulates as follows: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged."

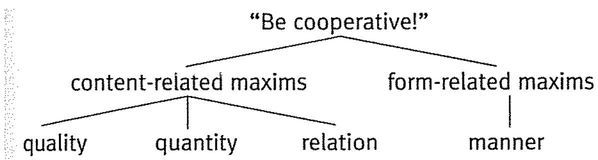


Figure VII.3 Grice's Cooperative Principle

Quality: Make your contribution one that is true. Do not say what you believe to be false (Quality_1). Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (Quality_2).
Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange (Quantity_1) and not more informative as required (Quantity_2).
Relation: Be relevant. Do not change the topic.
Manner: Be perspicuous: Avoid obscurity of expression (Manner_1), avoid ambiguity (Manner_2), be brief (Manner_3) and orderly (Manner_4).

Cooperative Principle: descriptive, not prescriptive

One might be inclined to think that these principles are merely a convenient theoretical construct unrelated to the real world, no more than wishful thinking of a philosopher. However, quite a few facts argue in favour of Grice's theory. First, there are a great number of meta-linguistic expressions, so-called "hedges", which we use to pre-assess what we are going to say in terms of the maxims of conversation, especially when risking to violate one or even several of them. Just think of remarks like *I'm not sure whether it's true but ...* ($Quality_1$), *as far as I know* ($Quality_2$), *to make a long story short* ($Quantity_2$, Manner), *by the way* (Relation) or *this may be irrelevant but ...* (Relation). Even more important are the following facts:

- The maxims of the Cooperative Principle are neither arbitrary conventions nor do they constitute norms or rules of conduct. They simply reflect our everyday behaviour in a purely descriptive way. Grice's maxims represent the basis for negotiating all kinds of human interaction, including not only linguistic communication, but also actions such as helping someone to change a tyre or to park his or her car.
- Grice was aware of the fact that expectations concerning whether the maxims will be obeyed depend on the type of verbal interaction involved. A police officer will hardly expect a suspect to tell the (whole) truth, and persons at a party are unlikely to regard the umpteenth remark on the weather (or the delicious food) as highly informative. This emerges clearly from the way the Cooperative Principle has been formulated: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." According to Grice, cooperation is therefore a relative concept which has to be adapted to each individual context; co-operative behaviour is the kind of behaviour which is appropriate in a particular communicative situation.
- Possibly the most remarkable property of conversational maxims is their robustness. The assumption that the maxims apply is not easily given up, not even when an utterance seems to violate them in form, content, or both. This aspect has been mentioned above (effort after meaning): we always assume that the person we are talking to is cooperative and observes the maxims, at least to a certain extent. The central maxim in this context is certainly the maxim of Relation: as long as we consider an utterance to be relevant in a given context, we will try to understand it.

- The Cooperative Principle has never been considered the only pragmatic principle. Other principles (such as politeness or face saving) can also motivate pragmatic inferences (cf. section VII.4.2). Such inferences are not examples of conversational implicatures, however; this technical term is exclusively used for pragmatic inferences based on the Cooperative Principle.

types of conversational implicatures

Conversational implicatures can be classified according to two different criteria: (a) whether they are based on the fact that speakers follow the maxims or whether they are based on the fact that speakers violate them – at least at first sight; (b) whether or not they are confined to a certain context. As far as the first aspect is concerned, we distinguish standard and non-standard implicatures. Examples of non-standard implicatures are presented in (21), where the maxims of $Quantity_1$ and Relation seem to be violated, and (22), where the maxim of Manner seems to be violated.

(21) A: Would you like some dessert?
B: Do they eat rice in Japan?
(conversational implicature: "Yes, of course")

(22) A: Let's get the kids something. B: But no I-C-E-C-R-E-A-M.
(conversational implicature: "Don't mention *ice cream*. As soon as the kids hear the word, they will ask for it")

In these two examples, the speakers violate the maxims deliberately and ostentatiously, which qualifies as what Grice called *flouting* the maxims. However, non-standard implicatures can also result from a maxim clash. In the brief dialogue in (23), for example, B has to violate $Quantity_1$ in order to obey $Quality_2$. B simply does not know where exactly John spends his holidays.

(23) A: Where does John spend his holidays?
B: Somewhere in Germany.

The prototypical conversational implicatures are dependent on a particular context and called "particularized implicatures". Most non-standard implicatures belong to this group, but we have also encountered some standard implicatures of this type (19 and 20). Particularized implicatures are commonly contrasted with generalized implicatures, which are not restricted to a particular context. Generalized implicatures are especially relevant to the division of tasks between semantics and pragmatics. Of particular interest are a subscalar implicatures

group of generalized implicatures, the so-called "scalar implicatures", which are based on the first maxim of Quantity. Scalar implicatures can be characterized as follows: the hearer assumes that a given utterance presents the strongest possible statement which can be made in a given context, so that there is no need to read 'more' into it. Scalar implicatures are thus essentially negative inferences from the statement of one position to the negation of a stronger one. They always involve lexical items that are gradable or can be arranged on a scale; these items must be of roughly the same length, and lexicalized to the same degree:

(24) a. ‹all, most, many, some› c. ‹excellent, good›
b. ‹always, often, sometimes› d. ‹love, like›

If one of the expressions on such a scale is used in a given utterance, hearers will typically derive the scalar implicature that none of the stronger expressions on the same scale could have been used in the context at issue. Consider the examples of scalar implicatures illustrated in (25). The first maxim of Quantity ("Make your contribution as informative as is required") allows us to draw the negative inference in (25a) that the biscuits were not eaten by all children. In a similar vein, this maxim explains why (25b) implies that John does not always lie.

(25) a. Many kids ate biscuits. b. John often lies.

The different expressions on such scales are characterized by a pragmatic inferential relationship from right to left (scalar implicature: no stronger interpretation possible) and a semantic inferential relationship from left to right (entailment: if it is true that many kids ate biscuits, it is also true that some kids ate biscuits). Scalar implicatures enable us keep the number of senses of a word down to a minimum.

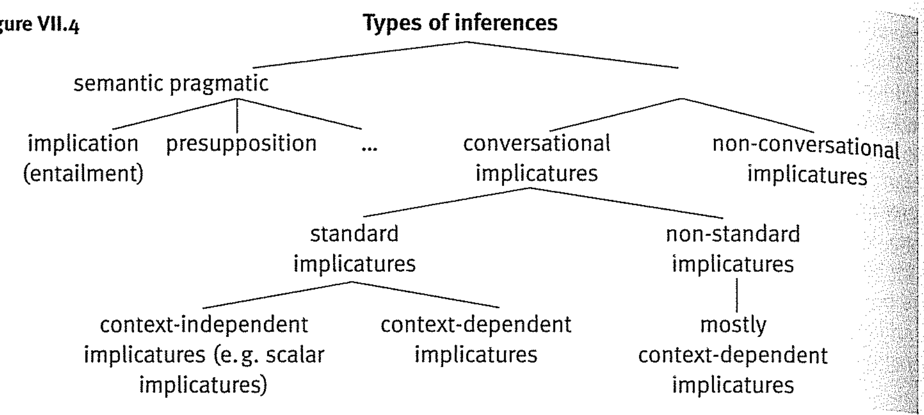
'saving' semantics by reducing the number of meanings

Consider, for example, the coordinating conjunction *or* and corresponding expressions in other languages. These conjunctions can be used in two different ways (exclusive *or* and inclusive *or*). If only one of the two alternatives conjoined by *or* applies, the term exclusive *or* is used (as in *On the $5 lunch you may take a soup or a salad* [... but not both]). On the other hand, we speak of inclusive *or* if both alternatives may apply: for example, *or* in *We will listen to the tape today or tomorrow* is used in an inclusive sense: the sentence is true if either *We will listen to the tape today* is true or if *We will listen to the tape tomorrow* is true, or if both are true. The sentence is false only if none of these possibilities apply. Despite these different uses of *or*, we do not have to posit different *senses* of the word (an exclusive versus an inclusive sense). The different uses can rather be explained by scalar implicatures: There is a scale ‹*and, or*› such that if a speaker says "p *or* q", he or she implies that he or she is not in a position to make the stronger claim "p *and* q". In this way, the exclusive interpretation "p or q, but not both" can be derived by means of the scalar implicature that "p *and* q" does not apply. Thus, the only sense of *or* which has to be posited in a semantic account is the inclusive interpretation, the exclusive use can be attributed to scalar implicatures. In this way, pragmatics simplifies semantic analysis.

(26) I need someone who speaks Russian or Polish.

One might be tempted to argue that due to the scalar implicature discussed above, the speaker in (26) must be looking for someone who speaks either Russian or Polish, but not both. Such an interpretation is absurd; it ignores what is probably the most important property of conversational implicatures, viz. their cancellability: Conversational implicatures may be cancelled without a sense of contradiction. In (26), for example, the speaker could add "Of course, anyone speaking both languages will be most welcome". This would not be a contradiction. The fact that conversational implicatures can be cancelled makes them even more attractive; it is always possible to add "... but I didn't mean to say/suggest that ...". Further important characteristics of conversational implicatures include calculability and non-conventionality. Conversational implicatures are calculable in the sense that it is generally possible to reconstruct the inferential process which leads to a conversational implicature. Of course, no complex inferential process is involved in the highly standardized indirect speech acts mentioned above (e.g. *Could you tell me the time?*) (cf. VII.3.3). Non-conventionality relates to the fact that conversational implicatures are not part of the conventional meaning of particular words or utterances, and that knowing the conventional meaning of expressions is not sufficient for grasping such implicatures. As already noted, scalar implicatures, for example, can only be inferred on the basis of the first maxim of Quality.

Figure VII.4



4.2 Post-Gricean models

During the 1980s, several models of implicature were developed, which will only be sketched in outline here. In general, two types of approaches can be distinguished: reductionist models that contain fewer maxims or principles than Grice's original theory, and expansionist models which add further maxims to those posited by Grice. Despite the various modifications of Grice's account suggested in these models, there is only one model that criticizes the basic ideas of Grice's theory of conversational implicatures and has explicitly been developed as an alternative to it (see the remarks on Sperber & Wilson below). All other models still subscribe to Grice's model and the basic assumptions underlying it, but simply offer attempts at improving or complementing it.

Horn: Quantity principle versus Relevance principle

Almost all recent approaches are reductionist. The two most interesting reductionist models have been proposed by Horn and Sperber & Wilson. Horn, who developed the concept of scalar implicatures, does not so much reduce as rearrange Grice's conversational maxims. His model includes a maxim of Quality (essentially the same as Grice's), a Quantity principle (which covers Grice's first maxim of Quantity as well as the first two maxims of Manner), and an R(elation)-Principle (which covers Grice's second maxim of Quantity, his maxim of Relation and the third maxim of Manner). Horn's rearrangement of the maxims explains an important fact about Grice's conversational maxims: They give rise to two entirely distinct types of conversational implicatures. On the one hand, there are implicatures leading to enriched, stronger, interpretations (e.g. indirect speech acts which seem to be based on the following principle: "Hearer, read as much

into the utterance as is compatible with your world knowledge and the situational context".) On the other hand, there are "negative" implicatures which do not allow for a "stronger" interpretation (e.g. scalar implicatures which seem to be based on the following principle: "Hearer, the speaker said everything he could. Don't try to read more into his utterance.") The examples in (27) clearly illustrate this paradox:

(27) a. I broke a finger last night.
b. I slept on a boat last night.

language economy

(27a) carries the implicature "it was my finger", i.e. invites a stronger interpretation, whereas (27b) conveys the implicature "it was not my boat", i.e. a negative inference. Horn offers a solution to this paradox (which Grice had noticed but did not explain): The R-Principle motivates conversational implicatures that lead to stronger interpretations (so-called "R-based implicatures"), and the Q-Principle motivates "negative" implicatures. According to Horn, these two pragmatic principles as well as the Gricean maxims can ultimately be traced to a more general principle of linguistic economy, the Principle of Least Effort (or simply human laziness). The R-Principle follows from speaker economy (minimization of linguistic output: "Say no more than you must"; "Hearer, infer as much as possible."), whereas the Q-Principle follows from hearer economy (maximization of informational content: "Speaker, say as much as you can and say it as clearly as possible.").

Sperber & Wilson: Relevance Theory

Unlike Horn, Sperber & Wilson ([1986] 1996[2]) heavily criticize Grice's model. In their view, the set of maxims put forward by Grice can be replaced by a single principle, the Principle of Relevance. However, the notion of relevance has a different status in Sperber & Wilson's theory than it has in Grice's and Horn's models. According to Sperber & Wilson, relevance is a psychological principle that involves a kind of cost-benefit analysis. Relevance is a function of an utterance's contextual effects (to be understood in psychological terms, i.e. as cognitive effects) and the processing effort involved in achieving these effects: The greater the contextual effects, the greater the relevance; and the smaller the processing effort required to obtain these effects, the greater the relevance. Thus:

relevance = contextual effects : processing effort

According to the Principle of Relevance, utterances create the expectation that they are optimally relevant. Hearers/readers may thus assume that everything speakers/authors say is optimally relevant, i.e. that their utterances yield the greatest possible contextual effects in return for the smallest possible processing effort.

contextual effects

There are different types of "contextual effects". The term covers cases where new assumptions (contextual implications) are derived in a specific context, cases where the hearer's assumptions are eliminated or revised (e.g. because new evidence contradicts or weakens the original assumptions), and cases where existing assumptions are strengthened due to further evidence in favour of them. Language users have to invest processing effort in deriving such contextual effects and accessing that context which, according to the Principle of Relevance, is the optimal one for processing a certain utterance.

(28) A: Bet no one's understood today's pragmatics lecture.
B_1: Well, there are several students of philosophy in the class.
B_2: Well, there are several mountaineers in the class. (???)

If A is to infer from B's reply that there are indeed students who understood the pragmatics lecture, the first of the two possible remarks made by B (B_1) is certainly more relevant than the second (B_2). To derive the same conclusion from the second answer, A would have to make a much greater processing effort, and try to construct a context in which mountaineering can in some way be related to understanding a pragmatics lecture. Much as the notion of relevance, the term *context* has a different meaning in Relevance Theory than in other accounts: it is primarily a psychological concept which refers to the world and to the interlocutors' background knowledge. In many cases, the context is not there right from the beginning but has to be constructed during the inferential process.

(29) Mary: Have you read *The Revenge of the Black Forest*?
Peter: I never read books that win awards.

In this brief dialogue, for example, it is absolutely possible for Mary to correctly infer that Peter has not read the book without knowing beforehand that it won an award. She would have to construct the necessary context before being able to make the inference, which inevitably means that Mary has to make a greater processing effort. Nevertheless, this would not diminish the relevance of Peter's answer, because his utterance enables Mary to gain new information. Peter's answer thus yields an additional contextual effect, redressing the balance between cost and benefit. Of course, Mary could also respond to Peter's remark by saying: "But *The Revenge of the Black Forest* has never won an award". In this case, Mary would also have to construct an appropriate context for Peter's answer, for example that Peter obviously believes (i.e. presupposes) that the book has won an award. In this scenario, however, Peter's answer would be clearly less relevant than in the former one: Mary would have to make a greater processing effort (asking herself (a) whether the book might have won an award despite her assumptions to the contrary, and especially (b) how Peter's answer relates to her question); nevertheless, she would be able to derive fewer contextual effects from Peter's answer.

what is said ≠ semantics

Sperber & Wilson's Relevance Theory, which they consider a cognitive and psychological theory rather than a pragmatic one, is certainly the most widely discussed model among those presented in this chapter. It is also the most controversial of these theories, far more controversial than, e.g. Grice's 'standard theory'. Relevance Theory has been criticized, for example, for failing to explain how processing effort is to be calculated. As a result, it remains unclear how relevant a certain utterance really is. Also, the Relevance Principle cannot do without at least some Gricean maxims. The Cooperative Principle is more plausible and offers a more fine-grained analysis of the mechanisms underlying the processing of utterances in ordinary communication. But in one respect Relevance Theory has managed to spell out and show more clearly what Grice had already recognized but not further elaborated in his theory: Sperber & Wilson give a convincing account of why Grice's distinction between what is said and what is meant cannot be equated with the distinction between semantics and pragmatics. Pragmatics (the context of an utterance or pragmatic inferences) is crucial not only to what is meant, but also to what is said (i.e. we need pragmatic inferences and the context to complete the proposition conveyed by a certain utterance; such pragmatic inferences which complete a proposition are called *explicatures* by Sperber & Wilson). Semantics on its own underspecifies what is said. Thus, as already noted, it is often impossible to assign reference to referential expressions in the absence of information about the situational context (e.g. *the boy* in (30)). Contextual information is also required for disambiguating ambiguous expressions (e.g. are the boy's *trainers* in (30) persons or shoes?).

explicatures

(30) The boy was looking for his trainers.

Such examples demonstrate that familiar accounts of the distinction between semantics and pragmatics (including the division of tasks sketched at the end of chapter VII.1) are simplified and have to be revised: pragmatic processes already play a role in establishing what is said. Again, pragmatics is claiming part of the territory formerly occupied by semantics.

Leech: Politeness Principle

Having discussed two reductionist models, we will now take a brief look at a well-known expansionist account. Leech (1983) adds another pragmatic principle to Grice's framework, the Politeness Principle ("Be polite, make the addressee feel good."). Its most important maxim – especially in English-speaking countries – is the tact maxim ("Minimize the hearer's processing effort and maximize the hearer's benefit."). This principle is not designed to explain how we can infer the communicative intention of speakers/authors; it rather helps us understand why we use indirect speech acts so frequently. The key idea underlying this principle is the assumption that many speech acts are spontaneously felt to be either polite (e.g. offers, promises) or impolite (requests, orders). Depending on such factors as, for example, how much authority the speaker has over the hearer (or vice versa) or how close the relationship between the speaker and the hearer is, the speaker has to choose the appropriate speech act. For Leech, the Politeness Principle is ultimately more crucial than the Cooperative Principle, because it is only by observing the Politeness Principle that a good and friendly social relationship between interlocutors can be established and maintained, which in turn is a precondition for their willingness to cooperate.

macro-pragmatics

Leech's socio-pragmatic theory represents a transition from micro-pragmatics to macro-pragmatics, i.e. from an approach which focuses on the meaning conveyed by utterances to a much broader approach which places particular emphasis on the social and cultural factors affecting the way we use language. Macro-pragmatics includes the study of politeness (especially Leech and Brown & Levinson 2002), and both conversation and discourse analysis (e.g. Schiffrin 1994). Another branch of macro-pragmatics is cross-cultural pragmatics. Scholars working in this field have alerted linguists to the danger of basing theoretical considerations in linguistics largely on a single language and culture, and have warned especially against an anglocentrism in pragmatic theory (e.g. Wierzbicka 2003). It is, for example, not possible to make unrestricted generalizations about the importance of politeness in communication or about the evaluation of speech acts as inherently polite or impolite on the basis of our knowledge of Anglo-American culture and Western societies. Macro-pragmatics is no longer close to philosophy and semantics. It rather borders and draws upon the concepts, methods and insights in text linguistics, on the one hand, and sociology and anthropology, on the other hand.

Checklist Pragmatics – key terms and concepts

(ana)phoric use (anaphora ↔ cataphora)
antecedent
coherence
context ↔ cotext
contextual effect
conversational implicatures
conversational maxim (quality; quantity; relation; manner)
Cooperative Principle
coreference
deictic dimensions
deixis (person, place, time, social, discourse, manner and degree)
explicature
felicity conditions
hedges
honorifics
illocution
illocutionary force
implicature (standard ↔ non-standard; scalar; generalized ↔ particularized)
index (ical expression)
inference (semantic ↔ pragmatic)
intention
linguistic economy
micro-pragmatics ↔ macro-pragmatics
ordinary language philosophy
origo
performative formula
performative utterance
Politeness Principle
presupposition (conventional implicature)
Principle of Relevance
properties of conversational implicatures (cancellability; calculability; non-conventionality)
proposition
Q- and R-Principle
robustness of maxims
rules (regulative ↔ constitutive)
semantic implication
speech act (direct ↔ indirect)
speech act theory
speech act verb
symbol
truth condition
truth-conditional semantics
types of illocutionary speech acts (assertive / representative; directive; commissive; expressive; declarative speech acts)
utterance meaning