Pragmatics

11-12-2020

Communicative situation; frames, scripts and scenarios; the gives and takes of the Speaker's communicative initiative. Felicities Conditions. Linguistic fingerprint.

Stages of utterance production and processing: Invention; censorship; elocution; locution; illocution; per-locution.

Language in context; cultural values; shared knowledges; dialogue; negotiating meaning.

Geoffrey Leech Politeness principle:
1 The tact maxim;
2 The generosity maxim;
3 The approbation maxim;
4 The modesty maxim;
5 The agreement maxim;
6 The sympathy maxim.
Politeness; indirectness; Speech tactics; FTA; Positive and negative politeness etc.

Gricean Cooperative Principle; Speakers statuses and roles; Algorithms of Conversation; small talk; turn-taking; strategic approach; speech rituals.

Presupposition; implication; Inference; Implicature; Deduction rules; Rhetoric structure; logical operations; knowledges; expectations; settings;

“The limits of my language are the limits of my world.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein

www.b www.bilingualkidspot.com

WORD MEANING = WORD IN USE

WHEREOF ONE CANNOT SPEAK, THEREOF ONE MUST BE SILENT

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

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PICTUREQUOTES

IF WE SPOKE A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE, WE WOULD PERCEIVE A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT WORLD.

BECAUSE THE LIMITS OF MY LANGUAGE MEAN THE LIMITS OF MY WORLD.

~LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

Words of wisdom chosen by linguistblog

http://linguistblog.com

Wittgenstein, Ludwig Josef Johann (1889–1951)

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus

Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung

/By Ludwig Wittgenstein/

https://people.umass.edu/klement/tlp/tlp.pdf

Wittgenstein, Ludwig Josef Johann (1889–1951)

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 1921

Wittgenstein, Ludwig Josef Johann (1889–1951)

Wittgenstein came up with the idea of "don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use," showing language as a new vehicle for social activity. Speech act theory hails from Wittgenstein's philosophical theories. Wittgenstein believed meaning derives from **pragmatic tradition**, demonstrating the importance of how language is used to accomplish objectives within specific situations. By following rules to accomplish a goal, communication becomes a set of language games. Thus, utterances do more than reflect a meaning, they are words designed to get things done.

Émile Benveniste

Émile Benveniste [bɛ̃venist](1902 –1976), a disciple of Meillet, a former student of Saussure. The two volumes of his *Problèmes de linguistique générale / Problems in General Linguistics/*, appeared in 1966 and 1974 respectively.

Émile Benveniste

The I–you polarity

The **third person** acts under the conditions of possibility of this polarity between the first and second persons.

Narration and description illustrate this:

Émile Benveniste

"I signifies "the person who is uttering the present instance of the discourse containing I."

This instance is unique by definition and has validity only in its uniqueness ... I can only be identified by the instance of discourse that contains it and by that alone.

.

Émile Benveniste

"You, on the other hand, is defined in this way:

"by introducing the situation of "address," we obtain a symmetrical definition for you as "the individual spoken to in the present instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance of you." These definitions refer to I and you as a category of language and are related to their position in language." /from Problems in General Linguistics/

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Émile Benveniste

A pivotal concept in Benveniste's work is the distinction between the énoncé and the énonciation, which grew out of his study on pronouns. The énoncé is the statement independent of context, whereas the énonciation is the act of stating as tied to context.

Émile Benveniste

This distinction moved Benveniste to see language itself as a "discursive instance", i.e., fundamentally as discourse. This discourse is, in turn, the actual utilisation, the very enactment, of language.

What is discourse?

Discourse (non-count) vs. 'discourses'
= Saying, Doing, Thinking, Behaving, Believing, Valuing, and Interacting combinations that show who we are

(Gee 1996)

What is Pragmatics??

- Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that looks at what you actually say:
  - *your utterances*.
- Linguists study how what you say relates to the **communicative situation** or **context** you're in and how the context can be changed by what you say — all in order to find the rules that you, as a speaker, use when talking to other people.

What is Pragmatics??

- Pragmatics comes from Greek pragmatikos. The word stem pragmat- means ‘deed’.
- Pragmatics looks at the deeds of language: utterances.
- Linguists who study pragmatics are called **pragmaticists**.

What is Pragmatics??

- Pragmatics in the large sense can be traced to two sources.
- The work of the philosophers Paul Grice (on the logic of conversation) together with J. L. Austin and John Searle (on speech acts) is the basis of formal pragmatics.
- The work of sociologist Harvey Sacks (on talking as social interaction) is the basis of conversation analysis.

Pragmatics [prægmæ̱tɪks]

Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effect their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.

/ David Krystal (1985)

Pragmatics [prægmæt̲ɪks]

is the branch of linguistics dealing with language in use and the contexts in which it is used, including such matters as deixis, taking turns in conversation, text organization, presupposition, and implicature

Pragmatics [prægmæ̱tɪks]

is the branch of linguistics that deals with the meanings and effects

which come from

the use of language

in particular situations.

Pragmatics [prægmæ̱tıks]

1) is the study of those aspects of language that cannot be considered in isolation from its use;

2) is the study of the relation between symbols and those who use them.

Pragmatics: flashback

The **early pragmatics** was just a branch of semiology that was under the philosophers' studies, which means that pragmatics originates from the philosophers' studies on language.

Pragmatics: flashback

In Western tradition, pragmatics originates from the following aspects:
(1) the studies of semiology;
(2) the studies of linguistic philosophy in the 20th century and (3) the studies of function linguistics on language forms.

Pragmatics: flashback

American philosopher and semiotician Charles William Morris (1901 – 1979) in 1938 had divided semiology into **three parts:** syntactics, semantics and pragmatics.

Pragmatics: flashback

Charles Morris's famous definition of pragmatics was "the study of the relation of signs to interpreters".

Pragmatics: flashback

The term ‘pragmatics’ was introduced by Charles Morris, a philosopher.

Morris contrasts *pragmatics* with *semantics* and *syntax*.

Pragmatics: flashback

He claims that syntax is the study of the grammatical relations of linguistic units to one another and the grammatical structures of phrases and sentences that result from these grammatical relation;

Pragmatics: flashback

- semantics is the study of the relation of linguistic units to the objects they denote,
- pragmatics is the study of the relation of linguistic units to people who communicate.

Pragmatics: flashback

The famous philosopher Carnap had very similar ideas with Morris:

Pragmatics: flashback

Morris held an opinion that the studies of pragmatics must involve the aspects of society, of psychology, of nerve, of culture and of other things that affected the **symbols** and their **meanings**.

Pragmatics: flashback

1. Carnap made the aims of pragmatics studies more specific, that is the relationship between language users and words and the reference relationship.

Pragmatics: flashback

1. Carnap thought that the studies of pragmatics should be on the relationship between users and words as well as the reference of words.

Pragmatics: flashback

2. Carnap divided studies into pure theoretic ones and descriptive ones.

Pragmatics: flashback

Bar-Hiller, the student of Carnap, suggested that the studies of pragmatics should have definite aims and he claimed that the definite aims should be on deicitics such as “I”, “Here”, “Now”.

Pragmatics: flashback

The idea of speech acts has its roots in the Philosophy of Language. J. A. Austin wanted to capture the fact that there is more in the function of language than semantics.

Pragmatics: flashback

Traditionally, mapping of entities of a proposition onto referents and defining the truth value of a proposition was the major area of interest in language semantics.

Pragmatics: flashback

Austin and Searle put forward the **Speech Act Theory**, which was the most influent topic in the studies of pragmatics during the **second stage**.

Pragmatics: flashback

Austin and Searle put forward the **Speech Act Theory**, which was the most influent topic in the studies of pragmatics during the second stage.

The three Stages in the Development of Pragmatics

- **The first stage** is from the late 1930s to late 1940s, during this period, some philosophers such as Pierce, Morris and Carnap considered pragmatics to be a branch of semiology within the domain of philosophy.
- **The second stage** is from the beginning of 1950s to late 1960s. During this period, Austin, Searle and Grice made studies on *speech act* and *implicature theory*, and their achievements sustained the basic theory of pragmatics.
- **The third stage** starts after 1970s, when pragmatics became an independent discipline.

Pragmatics: flashback

Levinson's consideration of pragmatics was "the study of those **relations between language and context** that is grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a language.".

Pragmatics: flashback

Mey's definition was
"Pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society.".

Pragmatics: flashback

Ran Yongping expressed his idea in his book A Survey of Pragmatics :

Pragmatics: flashback

: “Pragmatics is a discipline not only concerning the sense, but also concerning the derivation of sense and the understanding of underlying meaning as its objects.

Pragmatics: more definitions

1.“Pragmatics

is the study of speaker meaning”

Pragmatics: more definitions

2.“Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning”

Pragmatics: more definitions

3.“Pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said”.

Pragmatics: more definitions

4.“ Pragmatics is the study of the expression of relative distance.”

(Yule:2008).

Pragmatics: more definitions

1.“Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning.”2: “ Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning”3:“ Pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said”4:“ Pragmatics is the study of the expression of relative distance.” (Yule:2008).

Four Key Aspects of Signification

According to American semiotician [ˌsɛmɪə'tɪʃən]
Charles William Morris (1901 – 1979), symbols have three types of relations, meanwhile Roman Jackobson and Georg Klaus add another one.

Four Key Aspects of Signification

to objects	"Semantics“
to persons	"Pragmatics"
to other symbols (on the axis of combination)	"Syntactics"
to other symbols (on the axis of selection)	“Sigmatics”

Well, once again…	
to objects	[səˈmæntiks]
to persons	[præg'mætɪks]
to other symbols (on the axis of combination)	[sɪn'tæktɪks]
to other symbols (on the axis of selection)	[sɪg'mætɪks]

Syntax addresses the formal relations of signs to one another, **semantics** deals with the relation of signs to what they denote, and **pragmatics** has a big deal with the relation of signs to their users and interpreters.

Pragmatics

- Speaker's **intention** is based on description of language and analysis of texts and communicative event.

Communicative event constituents

Context

Message

Addresser----------Addressee

or Sender [kən'saɪnə]-------[ˌædre'siː]

Contact

Code

Communicative functions of Language

Referential

Poetic

Emotive ---------- Conative

[or Expressive] ------- Manipulative

Phatic

Metalingual

Pragmatics

- Context based speech / discourse analysis;

Pragmatics

- Conversational analysis;

Pragmatics

- **Illocutive power** of speaker's expressions;
- **Perlocutive effect** of speech;

Pragmatics

- Speech acts theory;

Pragmatics

- Performatives;

Pragmatics

- Personal deixis in conversation and interpersonal interaction;

Pragmatics

- Oblique ways of conveying meaning in conversation and text construction.

Pragmatics studies

Implicit meanings of the text:

- presuppositions,
- implications,
- inferences.

Pragmatics

- **A language-game** (German: *Sprachspiel*) is a philosophical **concept** developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein, referring to simple examples of language use and the actions into which the language is woven.

Pragmatics pays attention to:

- The roles, statuses and repertories of the communicator in conversation or dialogue.

Pragmatics pays attention to acts:

- "You're fired!" expresses both the employment status of the individual in question, as well as the action by which said person's employment is ended.
- "I hereby appoint you as chairman" expresses both the status of the individual as chairman, and is the action which promotes the individual to this position.

Speech Acts :

What is a Speech Act?
An action performed in saying something. We perform speech acts when we offer an apology, greeting, request, complaint, invitation, compliment, or refusal. A speech act is an utterance that serves a function in communication.
A speech act might contain just one word, as in "Sorry!" to perform an apology (???).

Theory of Speech Acts

A speech act has 3 aspects:

- **locution** = physical utterance by the speaker
- **illocution** = the intended meaning of the utterance by the speaker (performative)
- **prelocution** = the action that results from the locution

Alice told Tom Would you please close the door

J. Austin - How to do things with words, 1962.
J. Searle - Speech acts, 1969.

illocution
[ˌɪləˈkjuːʃ(ə)n]

is an act of speaking or writing which in itself effects or constitutes the intended action,

e.g. ordering, warning, or promising.

illocution
[ˌɪləˈkjuːʃ(ə)n]

Is an act **performed** by a speaker by virtue of uttering certain words, as for example the acts of promising or of threatening

Also called: illocutionary act.

Illocution

The illocutionary act is not in one-to-one correspondence with the locution from which it is derived.

There are different locutions that express the same illocution and vice-versa.

Illocution

For example, there are *indirect speech* acts, that is acts with a different force than the obviously deducible one.

A typical example is the locution of the utterance ***"Could you pass the salt?"*** uttered at a dinner table.

Illocution

For a speaker of English in the particular situation this means *''Pass the salt, please"* and no one would assume that the speaker is indeed interested in whether the addressee would be able to pass the salt.

perlocution
[ˌpɜːlɒˈkjuːʃən]

is an act of speaking or writing which has an action as its aim but which in itself does not effect or constitute the action, for example persuading or convincing

Compare with illocution

perlocution
[ˌpɜːlɒˈkjuːʃən]

is the effect that someone has by uttering certain words, such as frightening a person

Also called: perlocutionary act

performative
[pə'fɔ:mətɪv]

is relating to or denoting an utterance by means of which the speaker performs a particular act

e.g., ‘I bet’, ‘I apologize’, ‘I promise’.

Often contrasted with constative

performative [pəˈfɔːmətɪv]

Verbs that name the speech act that they intend to effect are called ***Performatives*** .

constative

[ˈkɒnstətɪv, kənˈsteɪtɪv]

is an adjective denoting a speech act or sentence that is a statement declaring something to be the case.

E.g. ‘It’s been raining since early morning’.

Often contrasted with performative

For example, ‘I confess that I was there’ is itself a confession, and so is performative in the narrower sense.

a performative verb, sentence, or utterance

1. a. denoting an utterance that constitutes some act, esp the act described by the verb.

a performative verb, sentence, or utterance

For example, ‘I confess that I was there’ is itself a confession, and so is performative in the narrower sense, while *‘I'd like you to meet …’* (effecting an introduction)

is performative only in the looser sense

a performative verb, sentence, or utterance

2) a) denoting a *verb* that may be used as the main verb in such an utterance

b) (as *noun*) "promise" is a performative.

a performative verb, sentence, or utterance

A performative uttered by the right person under the right circumstances has as a result a change in the world.

a performative verb, sentence, or utterance

Performative utterances are those uses of language, often involving some **ritual** **['rɪtjuəl], [-ʧuə-] aspect**, which are themselves a kind of action and whose very utterance brings about some result.

a performative verb, sentence, or utterance

For example, ``***I pronounce you husband and wife"*** uttered by a priest, in the church with all the legal and traditional aspects being settled, will have the **actual effect** of the couple referred to being husband and wife after the performative has taken place

Exercise: Performance Sentences?

a) I testify that she met the agent.
b) I know that she met the agent.
c) I suppose the Yankees will win.
d) I bet her $2500 that Clinton would lose the election.
e) I teach the class.
f) We promise to leave early.
g) We owe Revenue Canada 1, 000, 000.
h) I bequeath $ 100, 000 to ABU.
i) I swore I didn't do it.
j) I swear I didn't do it.
k) I hereby sentence you for life after all the charges against you have been proven true…

a performative verb, sentence, or utterance

- ✓ I bet you five dollars that the Canadians win.
- ✓ I challenge you to a match.
- ✓ I nominate John for president.
- ✓ I promise to improve.
- ✓ I resign!
- ✓ I hereby ….

More examples of performatives

- ✓ I divorce thee, I divorce thee, I divorce thee.
- ✓ I congratulate you.
- ✓ I challenge you to a duel.
- ✓ The United States does hereby declare war on Japan.
- ✓ I urge you to vote yes on the reform bill.
- ✓ We the jury do hereby find the defendant guilty of murder.
- ✓ I'm sorry.

a performative verb, sentence, or utterance

- ☞ *The word hereby shows that the speaker intends to accomplish something in virtue of saying something*

I hereby … Illocutionary Acts Performative Verbs

a performative verb, sentence, or utterance

- ✓ The earth is round.
- ✓ I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow…..
- ✓ I promise to pay you five bucks tomorrow.
- ✓ India won independence in 1947.
- ✓ I name this ship Queen Elizabeth.

Explicit vs. Primary Performatives

Explicit performance:

I apologize. I approve. (All in favor say Aye…) Aye. Welcome (I bid you).

Half performance, half description:

I am sorry. I approve of that decision. I welcome you.

Descriptive statement:

I am disgusted by your behavior.

I feel approval for that idea. I wish to welcome you.

Later Criticism of Performatives

Problems with this simple distinction.

You can draw up a list of performative verbs:

- I promise, I order, I declare
- but you can't limit performative language to only those verbs.

Later Criticism of Performatives

There are some implicit performatives:

"I will pay you tomorrow." Can become a promise to pay.

"Stop!" Can be "short" for "I order you to stop."

"There is a cat on the mat."

Can be come the performative "I affirm that there is a cat on the mat."

Constative utterances also perform actions – they state, affirm, describe.

Theory of Speech Acts

Austin modified his theory during his lectures considerably.

At the end of his lectures, he replaces his performative/constative distinction with a more general theory of speech acts, stating that "the traditional 'statement' is an abstraction, an ideal" (Austin 1962: 148).

Theory of Speech Acts

Performative verbs as criteria for classifying speech acts are replaced by types of illocutionary force which are associated with an utterance. The notion of 'performative', which was based on the performative/constative distinction, has thus been replaced with more general families of related and overlapping speech-acts (Austin 1962: 150). Austin distinguishes five general classes of utterances which are classified according to their illocutionary force:

Austin's Performatives

Verdictives	I state my judgement
Exercitives:	I exercise my power.
Comissives:	I take on an obligation.
Behabitives	I express my reaction to other's doing.
Expositives:	I am expounding my views, clarifying.

J. R Searle Speech Act Classification

Commissive	Declarative	Directive	Expressive	Representative
a speech act that commits the speaker to doing something in the future, such as a promise or a threat.	a speech act which changes the state of affairs in the world.	a speech act that has the function of getting the listener to do something, such as a suggestion, a request, or a command.	a speech act in which the speaker expresses feelings and attitudes about something, such as an apology, a complaint, or to thank someone, to congratulate someone.	a speech act which describes states or events in the world, such as an assertion, a claim, a report.
Ex.: If you don't stop fighting I'll call the police, (threat) I'll take you to the movies tomorrow. (promise)	Ex.: During the wedding ceremony the act of marriage is performed when the phrase I now pronounce you man and wife is uttered.	Ex.: Please sit down. Why don't you close the window?	Ex.: The meal was delicious.	Ex.: This is a German car. (the assertion)

Indirect Speech Acts

Indirect speech acts

When a sentence characterized by formal features of some pragmatic type in speech acquires illocutionary power of sentences of another type.

Indirect Speech Acts

Indirect speech acts are commonly used to reject proposals and to make requests.

Ex.:

A speaker asks, "Would you like to meet me for coffee?" and another replies, “I have class.” The second speaker used an *indirect speech act* to reject the proposal. This is indirect because the *literal meaning* of "/ have class" does not entail any sort of rejection.

Indirect Speech Acts

We may always deny that a particular perlocutionary act was intended by saying things like:

Didn't mean to embarrass you.
I was simply stating a fact.

implicature
[ˈɪmplɪˌkətʃə, -ˌkeɪtʃə]

The English philosopher H. Paul Grice (1913-1988) introduced the notion of 'conversational implicatures' which are implications deduced by speakers during conversations.

implicature
[ˈɪmplɪˌkətʃə, -ˌkeɪtʃə]

generates inferences beyond the semantic content of the sentences uttered.

Implicature:“Implicature” refers to what is suggested in an utterance, even though not expressed nor strictly implied by the utterance.

Speech Act Theory

- Speech acts serve their function once they are said or communicated.
- These are commonly taken to include acts such as apologizing, promising, ordering, answering, requesting, complaining, warning, inviting, refusing, and congratulating.

Speech Act Theory

- Speech act theory (John L. Austin) broadly explains that
- utterances (or speech acts) have three parts or aspects:

1) Locutionary act /loʊkyuʃənɛri/
2) Illocutionary act /ɪləkyuʃənɛri/
3) Perlocutionary act /pɜrləkyuʃənɛri/

- The key word here is act! We do “things” when we speak!

Speech Act Theory

Austin identified three different uses of any speech act:

- Locutionary ☞The utterance conveys a **proposition** with ordinary meaning. The proposition has a **truth-value** (i.e. is either true or false).
- Illocutionary ☞Informing, ordering, warning : The utterance has a certain conventional force.
- Perlocutionary ☞The utterance brings about or achieves a state of affairs in virtue of the saying of it.

Speech Act Theory

- Locutionary acts:

simply the speech that has taken place

- Illocutionary force:

  are the real actions which are performed by the utterance.

In other words : where saying equals doing.

E.g.: betting, pleading, declaration, welcoming, warning, etc.

- Perlocutionary force:

are the effects of the utterance on the listener:

I hereby …

/John L. Austin/

Speech Act Theory

- According to Kent Bach, "almost any speech act is really the performance of several acts at once, distinguished by different aspects of the speaker's intention:

I. There is the act of saying something,
II. what one does in saying it, such as requesting or promising,
III. and how one is trying to affect one's audience".

Three Speech Act Phases

Speech acts can be analysed on three levels:

- A locutionary act: the performance of an utterance: the actual utterance and its apparent meaning, comprising any and all of its verbal, social, and rhetorical meanings, all of which correspond to the verbal, syntactic and semantic aspects of any meaningful utterance;

Three Speech Act Phases

- an illocutionary act: the active result of the implied request or meaning presented by the locutionary act. For example, if the locutionary act in an interaction is the question "Is there any salt?" the implied illocutionary request is "Can someone pass the salt to me?";

Three Speech Act Phases

and in certain cases

a further perlocutionary act:

- the actual effect of the locutionary and illocutionary acts, such as persuading, convincing, scaring, enlightening, inspiring, or otherwise getting someone to do or realize something, whether intended or not.

Pre-Speech Act Theory

- Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (1889 – 1951)/ˈvɪtgənʃtaɪn, -staɪn/;Austria, - Cambridge
- Wittgenstein came up with the idea of "don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use," showing *language as a new vehicle for social activity*.

Pre-Speech Act Theory

- Wittgenstein believed meaning derives from pragmatic tradition, demonstrating the importance of how language is used to accomplish objectives within specific situations.
- By following **rules** to accomplish a goal, communication becomes a set of language games.
- Thus, utterances do more than reflect a meaning, they are words designed to get things done.

Pre-Speech Act Theory

- The term 'social act' and some of the theory of this sui generis type of linguistic action are to be found in the fifth of Thomas Reid's Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind (1788, chapter VI, Of the Nature of a Contract).
- https://archive.org/details/essaysontheintel007938mbp/page/n69/mode/2up
- The term "Speech Act" had also been already used by Karl Bühler.

Speech Act Theory

- John Langshaw Austin (1911 – 1960) was a British philosopher of language, who wrote and published the famous book ‘How to do things with words’ (1962, Lectures of 1955, 169 p.).
- Why wouldn’t you try to read it?

Speech Act Theory

- **Speech act theory** is a subfield of pragmatics that studies how words are used not only to present information but also to carry out actions.

Speech Act Theory

- John Langshaw Austin (1911 – 1960) was a British philosopher of language, who wrote and published the famous book
- Austin J. L. How to do things with words. Cambridge, 1962., 169 p.).

Speech Act Theory

- Austin noted that not only were sentences used to report of statements but some sentences must be treated as the performance of an act.

Speech Act Theory

- In 1955 John L. Austin gave lectures at Harvard University (William James Lectures) which were published in 1962 as 'How to Do Things with Words and Speech Acts'.
- Though Austin is said to the founder of Speech Act Theory it is John R. Searle's book, incorporating Austin's work published in 1969 entitled 'An Essay in the Philosophy of Language' which has been the more influential in development of a Speech Act Theory.

Speech Act Theory

- There is a significant difference between the two conceptions: whereas Austin emphasized the *conventional* interpretation of speech acts,
- Searle emphasized a *psychological* interpretation (based on beliefs, intentions, etc.).

Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory

John Langshaw Austin

John Rogers Searle
/sɜ:rl/

Speech Act Theory

- Vanderveken (1981 and 1983) with J. Searle (1985) furthered Austin's Speech Act Theory with the proposition that the three main components of sentence meaning are the illocutionary forces, senses, and denotations. (Vanderveken p.195). Searle deals with illocutionary acts in the context of philosophy of language (Crosby, 1990). His social action of speech acts can be reduced to one of promising. Promising as in intent is an act of sincerity. In a chatroom sincerity is the smallest equation of meaning exchange.

Felicity Conditions

- In J. L. Austin's formulation of speech act theory, a performative utterance is neither true nor false, but can instead be deemed "felicitous" or "infelicitous" according to a set of conditions whose interpretation differs depending on whether the utterance in question is
- a *declaration* ("I sentence you to death"),
- a *request* ("I ask that you stop doing that") or
- a *warning* ("I warn you not to jump off the roof").

“Conditions for happy performatives”

Felicity Conditions

In his second lecture “Conditions for happy performatives” (1976:12-24), Austin identifies a set of rules which govern the felicitous or ‘successful’ use of performative utterances. These ‘felicity conditions’ apply especially to performatives associated with specific rituals or other types of formal events (cf. Thomas 1997:37). According to Austin (1976: 14f), the following conditions must be met for a performative sentence to be successful:

Felicity Conditions

Felicity Conditions for the speech act of promising are:

- ✓ I say I will perform an action in the future.
- ✓ I intend to do it.
- ✓ I believe I can do it.
- ✓ I think I would not do it anyway in the normal course of my actions.
- ✓ I think the other person wants me to do it.
- ✓ I intend to place myself under an obligation by the act of promising.
- ✓ We both understand what I am saying.
- ✓ We are both normal, conscious human beings.
- ✓ Both of us are in normal circumstances (e.g. not performing in a play).The utterance contains some illocutionary force indicating device which is only uttered if all the appropriate conditions hold.

“Conditions for happy performatives”

A.1 “There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
A.2 the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.
B.1 The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and
B.2 Completely.

“Conditions for happy performatives”

Felicity Conditions

C.1 Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts of feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further C.2 must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.” (Austin 1976: 14f)

Felicity Conditions Violations

Misfires

The conditions under A and B are essential to the first group of infelicities which Austin calls **"Misfires."** (Austin: 1976: 16) Not observing these rules makes the act invalid, so that it does not take effect. For example, if a husband says to his wife 'I divorce you', this is an infelicitous speech act because one cannot get divorced by oneself, so the utterance does not have a conventional effect. Another example occurs if speaker A says: 'I bet you sixpence' but speaker B doesn't say 'I take you on.'

Felicity Conditions Violations

Abuses

The conditions listed under C – when violated – make the professed act an abuse of the procedure. Austin states that such performances are not void but **“unhappy.”** (Austin 1976: 15, 43) For example, when the speaker says "I congratulate you", although the speaker does not have the requisite feelings. (Austin 1976: 41)

Felicity Conditions

- **Felicity conditions** are conditions necessary to the success of a speech act.
- They are conditions needed for success or achievement of a performative.
- Loosely speaking, felicity conditions are of the kinds:
  a) preparatory conditions,
  b) conditions for execution,
  c) sincerity conditions,
  d) essential conditions.

  (J. Searle, Speech Acts, pp. 60 ff.).

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Felicity Conditions

FC are the circumstances under which it would be appropriate to interpret something as a particular type of speech act.

1. General conditions
2. Content conditions
3. Preparatory condition
4. Sincerity condition
5. Essential condition

Felicity Conditions

- When I promise to mow your lawn, the preparatory conditions are that you want me to mow your lawn and that I believe that this is the case and that neither of us believes that I would in any case mow your lawn as part of the normal course of events;
- the propositional conditions are that my utterance 'I promise to mow your lawn' predicates the right sort of act on my part;
- the sincerity condition is that I truly do intend to mow your lawn;
- and the essential condition is that my utterance counts as an undertaking on my part to perform this action.

Felicity Conditions

- **Conventionality of procedure:** the procedure (e.g. an oath) follows its conventional form.
- **Appropriate participants and circumstances:** the participants are able to perform a *felicitous speech act* under the circumstances (e.g. a judge can sentence a criminal in court, but not on the street).
- **Complete execution:** the speaker completes the speech act without errors or interruptions.

Felicity Conditions

"I promise to see you tomorrow'.

- General conditions:

The utterance is understood.

- Content conditions:

The content of the utterance is about a future event and the speaker is committed to the act.

- Preparatory conditions:

The event does not happen by itself. The event will have a beneficial effect.

- Sincerity conditions:

The speaker does have a genuine intention to carry out the future act.

- Essential conditions: The utterance changes the speaker's state from non-obligation to obligation.

Felicity Conditions

Possible Causes of Infelicity in a Speech Act

a. misfire act – purported but void;

b. abuse act – professed but hollow;

c. misinvocation act – disallowed;

d. misexecution act – has flaws or hitches.

Felicity Conditions

Austin distinguished three broad categories of infelicities:

A. Misinvocations, which disallow a purported act.

For example, a random individual saying the words of the marriage ceremony is disallowed from performing it. Similarly, no purported speech act of banishment can succeed in our society because such an act is not allowed within it.

B. Misexecutions, in which the act is vitiated by errors or omissions, including examples in which an appropriate authority pronounces a couple man and wife, but uses the wrong names or fails to complete the ceremony by signing the legal documents. Here, as in the case of misinvocations, the purported act does not take place.

C. Abuses, where the act succeeds, but the participants do not have the ordinary and expected thoughts and feelings associated with the happy performance of such an act. Insincere promises, mendacious findings of fact, unfelt congratulations, apologies, etc. come under this rubric. .

Felicity Conditions

Propositions and Entailments vs. Speech Acts and Implicatures

A: The cat is on the mat.

B: Do you really think so? I thought I saw the cat on the couch!

A: Well, I just said that the cat is on the mat. It is really on the couch.

- B draws the implicature that A believes the proposition that the cat is on the mat because A has uttered the sentence 'The cat is on the mat'.

But the proposition is not in fact entailed merely by A's speech act.

- A then cancels the implicature that he believes the proposition..

Searle: Constitutive Rules

"Speaking a language is performing acts according to rules" (Searle 1969:36-7),

By "rule" Searle he means a conventional association between a certain kind of act and its socially determined consequences. These are **CONSTITUTIVE RULES**, he said, in the same sense that the rules of

chess are constitutive of the game itself.

Pre-condtions:	Assert	Thank (for)	Warn
1.Propositional content	Any proposition p	Past act A done by H	Future event or state etc. E=EVENT
2.Preparatory	1. S has evidence (reasons, etc.) for the truth of p. 2. It is not obvious to both S and H that H knows (does not need to be reminded of, etc.)	A benefits S and S believes A benefits S.	1. H has reason to believe E will occur and is not in H's interest. 2. It is not obvious to both S and H that E will occur.
2.Sincerity	S believes p .	S feels grateful or appreciative for A.	S believes E is not in H's best interest.
4. Essential	Counts as an undertaking that p represents an actual state of affairs.	Counts as an expression of gratitude or appreciation.	Counts as an undertaking to the effect that E is not in H's best interest.

Note that violations of Searle's preparatory conditions produce infelicities of Austin's type A, misinvocations. Violations of the sincerity conditions correspond more or less directly to Austin's

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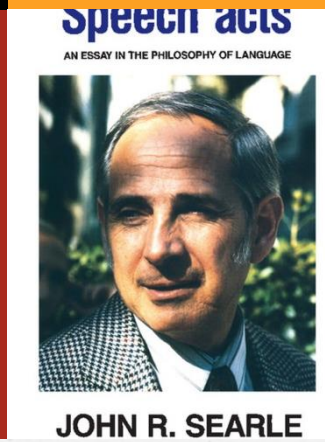

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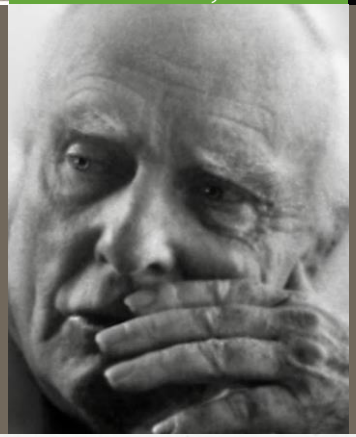

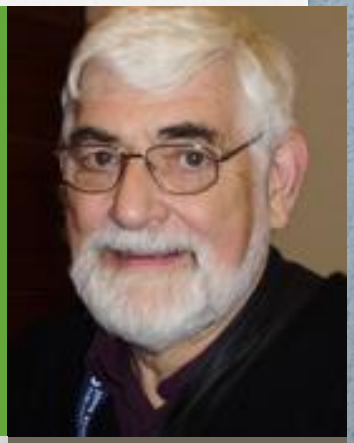

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