

## Quiz 2

## Brief Introduction to Pragmatics

### What is pragmatics?

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

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

### A dialogue without pragmatics

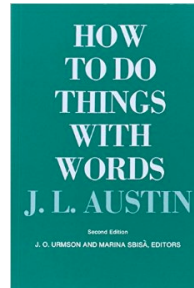
A: *Can you open the window?*

B: *Yes, I can. Bye.*

# Speech act

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

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



# John Searle's felicity conditions

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

Propositional content condition

Preparatory condition

Sincerity condition

Essential condition

# John Searle's felicity conditions

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

Propositional content: future act A of H

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

Sincerity: S wants H to do A

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

Too abstract :(

# John Searle's felicity conditions

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

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

## John Searle's felicity conditions

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

## John Searle's felicity conditions

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

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

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

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

## But real conversations are far more flexible

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

B: I have an eight o'clock class.

## Grice's cooperative principle

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

## Grice's maxims

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

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

Be relevant. (*The maxim of relation*)

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

Huang (2000) *Anaphora: A Cross-Linguistic Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (simplified version by Huang 2000)

## Grice's maxims

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

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

## Grice's maxims

You can also opt out of maxim:

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

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

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

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

## Grice's maxims

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

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

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

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

# Irony

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

Apparently against the maxim of quality

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

Apparently against the maxim of manner.

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

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

Apparently against the maxim of relation.

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

B: *What a lovely day today!*

Apparently against the maxim of relation.

# Tautology

War is war. / Boys will be boys.

仕事は仕事だ。(A job is a job (?).)

Which maxim does this apparently violate?

How can you make sense of it?

# Reaction paper

A: Where's Mary?

B: The light in her office is on.

Which maxim does this apparently violate?

How can A make sense of it?