Pragmatics

Interpersonal function
Austinian Speech Acts
Gricean Conversational Principles

Functions

Ideational function:
What does “The cat is on the mat” mean as an expression in the system of English?
How?
Denotation, truth conditions, event schemata, semantic roles, ...

Interpersonal function:
What does “The cat is on the mat” mean to hearer X, when said by speaker Y, in context Z?
How?
Speech acts, conversational maxims, face principles, deixis, ...

Speech Acts
Conversational maxims

Sam-I-Am’s been here.
I can’t find any whisky!

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Speech acts, conversational maxims, face principles, deixis, ...
Meaning

Semantics
- Propositions
- Truth/falsity
- Context-free
- Language-in-vitro

Pragmatics
- Utterances
- Appropriateness
- Context-dependent
- Language-in-vivo

Ideational function

What we’ve been studying to this point:
Language from the perspective of encoding ideas, and the mechanics of transmitting those ideas, within the system of a language.

Interpersonal function

Language from the perspective of making and maintaining human contact, so we can cooperate, negotiate, decide, get along, build bridges, and generally function as social animals.

Interpersonal function

A supplement to the ideational function—not a substitute—but a crucial supplement.
The ideational function is necessary, but not sufficient.
**Interpersonal function**

Phatic communion
social contact
Communicative mental contact

**Phatic**
Utterances whose chief function is to establish or maintain contact; much like canine gluteus-maximus reciprocal olfactory analysis.

- Hi, Hello, yo, ...
- How are you, How’s it going, How’s it hanging, ...
- Live long and prosper, Keep on truckin, Keep it real, ...
- Nice weather, Cold enough for you?, Hope the rain don’t hurt the rhubarb, ...

**Interpersonal function**

Phatic

The use of language to establish or maintain social relations

**Communicative**

The use of language to encode and transmit intentions

I will try them. You will see.
Interpersonal function

Communicative

The use of language to encode and transmit intentions

Wait! Hold the presses. That sounds like the ideational function! What gives?

Interpersonal function

Communicative

The use of language to encode and transmit intentions

Not quite. Notice the word is "intentions," not "ideas".

Communicative

Utterances whose chief function is to share mental contents

Information
Attitudes
Worldviews

The cat is on the mat.
Homer eats crap.
Huh?
Try them, try them, and you may, I say.
My kingdom for a horse.
Please put the lid back down.
Put the F^K#ing lid down!
e = mc²
Phatic and Communicative

Every utterance has both phatic and communicative dimensions.

Sam!
If you will let me be, I will try them.
You will see.

Speech Acts & Conversational Maxims

J. L. Austin
People do things with words beyond asserting truth. We act through speech.

H. P. Grice
The way people coordinate their speech is very intricate. We follow maxims.
Speech acts

Locution
the utterance of a sentence with specific denotation

Illocution
the making of a statement, offer, promise, ...

Perlocution
the bringing about of effects on the audience by means of uttering a sentence (persuading, entertaining, scaring, ...)

Speech acts

Locution
the utterance of a sentence with specific denotation

Illocution
the speech act

Perlocution
the bringing about of effects on the audience by means of uttering a sentence (persuading, entertaining, scaring, ...)

Speech acts

Locution
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Illocutions/
Speech Acts

statement

confirmation

despisement

statement

statement

I hereby despise this ground!

I do believe a cat nap walked along here.

Yes, I'm sure of it.
Acts through speech
Offer, decline, accept, promise, bet, warn, threaten, suggest, advise, declare, marry, christen, compliment, insult, joke, …

Try them! Try them! Try them and you may I say!
Sam! If you will let me be, I will try them. You will see.

Performative verbs
Verbs which describe the action speakers perform with the corresponding sentences. They do not need to be present; diagnostics.

Performative verbs
ask, tell, describe, state, …
promise, advise, request, …
pronounce, christen, sentence, …

Performative verbs
ask, tell, describe, state, …
promise, advise, request, …
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Informative
Obligative
Constitutive
Performative verbs—informative
ask, tell, describe, assert, ...

I ask you: is the cat on the mat?
I’m telling you, the cat is on the mat.
I assert: the cat is on the mat.

Performative verbs—obligative
promise, advise, request, ...

I promise you: the cat is on the mat.
I advise you: the cat is on the mat.
I request of you: put the cat on the mat.

Performative verbs—constitutive
pronounce, christen, sentence, ...

I pronounce you husband and wife.
I christen this vessel the Good Ship Lollipop.
I sentence you to thirty days in the hole.

Performative acts without performative verbs
Speech acts without performative verbs

I ask you, is the cat on the mat?
OR
Is the cat on the mat?
OR
The cat is on the mat?

Speech acts without performative verbs

I’m sorry.
vs.
I apologize.

I’m sorry for The Cat.
vs.
I apologize for The Cat.

Categories of speech acts
(Dirven and Verspoor, Table 1, chapter 7)

| Constitutive          | Expressive | thanking, apologizing, ...
|                       | Declarative | sentencing, pronouncing, ...
| Informative           | Assertive   | asserting, describing, ...
|                       | Interrogative | asking
| Obligative            | Directive   | requesting, ordering, ...
|                       | Commissive  | promising, offering, ...

Categories of speech acts
(Dirven and Verspoor, Table 1, chapter 7)

Ritualized social circumstances (thank someone when something has been exchanged, sentence at termination of trial, pronunciation of marriage,…); utterance primarily constitutes act.

Communicate, or request communication of information (assert facts, question truth of facts, solicit the completion of an assertion,…); utterance primarily engages in trafficking information.

Commit self or solicit others to do something (offer assistance, request favour, make a bet,…); utterance primarily concerns future conduct.
Speech Act?
Would you? Could you?
In a box?
Could you? Would you?
With a fox?

Speech Act?
Would you? Could you?
In a box?
Could you? Would you?
With a fox?

Speech Act?
Would you? Could you?
In a box?
Could you? Would you?
With a fox?

Speech Act?
Not in a box.
Not with a fox. ...
I would not eat green eggs and ham.
I do not like them, Sam-I-am.
Speech Act?
Not in a box.
Not with a fox ...
I would not eat green eggs and ham.
I do not like them, Sam-I-am.

Obligative (Commissive)
Declining

Speech Act?
Not in a box.
Not with a fox ...
I would not eat green eggs and ham.
I do not like them, Sam-I-am.

Informative (Assertive)
Warranting

H. P. Grice

STUDIES IN THE WAY OF WORDS
PAUL GRICE

How to talk
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.

(Grice 1975: 45)
How to talk

Coöperate.

How to talk, more specifically
Grice’s Maxims

Relation
Be relevant.

Quality
Be truthful.

Quantity
Be sufficient (but not prolix).

Manner
Be perspicacious.

How to talk and interpret; conversational implicature
Grice’s Maxims

Not moral or social injunctions
Empirically derived principles
Maxims that people naturally follow, and generally expect others to follow
To speak
To understand (conversational implicature)
Observable mostly in violation

Maxim of relation
Is there a gas station around here?
(=Tell me where I can get gas. I need it and I’m a stranger.)

Be relevant.
A1: Yep, there’s a gas station at King and Weber. [closed]
A2: Nope, you’ll have to go all the way to Erb Street; everything’s closed around here because of the anthrax scare.
Maxim of quality
Is there a gas station around here?
(=Tell me where I can get gas. I need it and I'm a stranger.)

Be truthful
Say what you believe to be true.
Don't say what you believe to be false.

A1: Nope. [omitting that there is gas bar at the Canadian Tire.]
A2: Well, there's a gas bar, if you just need some gas.
Maxim(s) of manner
Is there a gas station around here?
(=Tell me where I can get gas. I need it and I'm a stranger.)

Be clear
Don't be obscure
Don't be ambiguous
Be brief
Be orderly

Maxim(s) of manner
Is there a gas station around here?
(=Tell me where I can get gas. I need it and I'm a stranger.)

Be clear
Yes. Somewhere near the theatre.
Don't be obscure
Don't be ambiguous
Be brief
Be orderly

Maxim(s) of manner
Is there a gas station around here?
(=Do you know where I can get some gas? I'm a stranger)

Be clear
Don't be obscure
Yep. Next to the old Smith place.
Don't be ambiguous
Be brief
Be orderly

Maxim(s) of manner
Is there a gas station around here?
(=Do you know where I can get some gas? I'm a stranger)

Be clear
Don't be obscure
Don't be ambiguous
Maybe there is, maybe there isn't.
Be brief
Be orderly
Maxim(s) of manner
Is there a gas station around here? (=Do you know where I can get some gas? I'm a stranger)

Be clear
Don’t be obscure
Don’t be ambiguous
Be brief
Sure quite a few. I know where every gas station built in the KW area since the Great War was located. First, there was the Ollie Petrie Service Station at the corner of...
Be orderly

Maxim(s) of manner
Is there a gas station around here? (=Do you know where I can get some gas? I'm a stranger)

Be clear
Don’t be obscure
Don’t be ambiguous
Be brief
Be orderly
Sure. At Erb, turn right off King. To get to King, take Westmount, and turn left when you get there. Before that, go three lights down University and turn left at Westmount. First, however...

How to listen
(Conversational implicature)

[T]hough some maxim is violated at the level of what is said, the hearer is entitled to assume that that maxim, or at least the overall cooperative principle, is observed at the level of what is implicated.

Grice’s Maxims

The important point:
Grice charted the many, many ways we coordinate our speech to each other’s needs and expectations.
Intention: figuration

All language dialogic (conversational).
Grice’s maxims form a baseline of expectations.
Figures of thought (tropes) function by violating maxims, deviating from baseline.
The ‘first reading’ doesn’t make sense, so hearers figure out the speaker’s intention—not what the utterance means, but what the speaker means by that utterance.

Metonymy

Violates quality
Satisfies relation, quantity, manner

Metaphor

My love is red, red rose.

Repetitio

My love is red, red rose.

Violates manner (brevity)
Satisfies relation, quantity, quality
Polyptoton

Violates manner (brevity)
Satisfies relation, quantity, quality

Irony

Violates quality
Satisfies relation, quantity, manner

Paronomasia

Violates manner (clarity)
Satisfies relation, quantity, quality

Now, for the high-brow stuff

Polonius:
What do you read, my lord?

Words, words, words.

Violates quantity and relation
(Satisfies quality and mostly manner)
Now, for the high-brow stuff

Polonius:
What is the matter, my lord?

Between whom?

Violates relation
(satisfies quantity, manner, ... quality?)

Hamlet

Slanders, sir; for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plumtree gum, and that they have plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams; all of which though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have set it thus down, for yourself, sir, shall grow old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

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Now, for the high-brow stuff

Polonius:
I mean the matter that you read, my lord.

Violates manner (clarity, brevity, orderliness)

Quality?

I ask to be, or not to be. That is the question, I ask of me. This sullied life, it makes me shudder. My uncle’s boffing dear, sweet mother. Would I, could I take my life? Could I, should I, end this strife? Should I jump out of a plane? Or throw myself before a train? Should I from a cliff just leap? Could I put myself to sleep? To sleep, to dream, now there’s the rub. I could drop a toaster in my tub.
Pragmatics

Interpersonal function
  Phatic and Communicative
Speech acts
  Informative, Constitutive, and Obligative
Grice’s Maxims
  The coöperative principle (and its ramifications)
  Speaking and understanding (conversational implicature)