Pragmatics

Interpersonal function
Austinian Speech Acts
Gricean Conversational Maxims

Speech acts

Conversational maxims

I can’t find any whisky!

Sam-I-Am’s been here.

Meaning

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

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

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
Interpersonal function  
**Phatic**

The use of language to establish or maintain social relations

**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
Communicative

The use of language to encode and transmit intentions

I will try them. You will see.

Translate, for instance, the utterance, If you will let me be, I will try them. You will see.
Ideationally, it's just a pair of propositions.
Communicatively, it's a surrender, a capitulation, a collapse of my resolve, and a prediction that I won't like your damn viridescent chow!

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&^#ing lid down!
e = mc²
Phatic and Communicative

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

Phatic and Communicative

Every utterance has both phatic and communicative dimensions.

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

Illocution = the speech act

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

Illocutions/Speech Acts

Felicity Conditions

The physical and social conditions under which a speech act can be performed
Felicity Conditions
The physical and social conditions under which a speech act can be performed

I christen thee "The Good Ship Lollypop!"

Acts through speech
Offer, decline, accept, promise, bet, warn, threaten, suggest, advise, declare, marry, christen, compliment, insult, joke, ...
Felicity conditions: appropriate intentions; appropriate circumstances; appropriate actions.

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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constitutive</th>
<th>Ritualized social circumstances (thank someone when something has been exchanged, sentence at termination of trial, pronunciation of marriage, ...); utterance primarily constitutes act.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>Communicate, or request communication of information (assert facts, question truth of facts, solicit the completion of an assertion, ...); utterance primarily engages in trafficking information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obligative</td>
<td>Commit self or solicit others to do something (offer assistance, request favour, make a bet, ...); utterance primarily concerns future conduct.</td>
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**Categories of speech acts**  
(Dirven and Verspoor, Table 1, chapter 7)

| Constitutive | Expressive | thanking, apologizing, ...
|--------------|------------|-----------------------------
| Declarative  | sentencing, pronouncing, ...

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**Final Exam**

7:30 - 10:00 PM!

Thursday

16 December

RCH 305
Your 306A Grade

Greater of (M1 + M2 + F) OR F
i.e., 100% Final, if it helps

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, ...

Acts through speech

Speech acts: offer, decline, accept, promise, bet, warn, threaten, suggest, advise, declare, marry, christen, compliment, insult, joke, ...

Felicity conditions: appropriate intentions; appropriate circumstances; appropriate actions.
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.

Coöperate.
How we do, in fact, talk

Coöperate.

And how we listen, too

Coöperate.

How to talk, more specifically

Grice's Maxims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation</th>
<th>Be relevant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Be truthful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Be sufficient (but not prolix)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manner</td>
<td>Be perspicacious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.
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 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. (false; there is one)
A2: Yep, two lights up on the left, there’s a new Petrosaurus Station.

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

Provide enough information
But not too much
A3: Yep, King and Erb. They have a sale on gumboots at the hardware store across the street from it, too.
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
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)

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 brief

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)

Though 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.

Violates quality

Satisfies relation, quantity, manner
**Repetitio**

My love is red, red rose.

Violates manner (brevity)
Satisfies relation, quantity, quality

---

**Polyptoton**

Violates manner (brevity)
Satisfies relation, quantity, quality

---

**Polyptoton**

Violates manner (brevity)
Satisfies relation, quantity, quality
Ironic expression: "Lovely day!" - Violates quality but 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?)
Now, for the high-brow stuff

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

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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Hamlet

Violates
quantity

Violates
relation
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Now, for the high-brow stuff

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 biffing 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.

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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)