
SPEECH ACT AND PRAGMATICS

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Abstract: This article describes a language from variety of directions, using pragmatics and expression which serves to identify any thing, process, event, action.

Key words: Pragmatics, conversation, speech act, utterance, illocutionary act, communication, speaker, listener. expression, reference, language.

Pragmatics is language use in context. Language cannot exist outside of its sociocultural context. Language situations rely heavily on the context involved with each utterance whether it is written or spoken. A working definition of pragmatics is the study of language meaning as it is used in context (Huang, 2014). With this definition in mind, there are two parts of pragmatics, the linguistic or language portion and the context. The linguistic aspect during a discourse event is the actual utterances that occur—the words and their semantic meanings along with grammar or syntax—while the context is the related environment, including any consequential factors at play during the discourse event, such as the people, place, culture, and time.

What are the theoretical components most often considered when studying pragmatics or language use in context? According to Huang (2014), “The central topics of inquiry of pragmatics include implicature, presupposition, speech acts, deixis, and reference (p. 2).” For the purposes of this project, the main focus will be on speech acts which will be covered more in-depth further on in this review. In order to create a more comprehensive understanding of pragmatics, a brief discussion on the other four topics of inquiry is also required.

Like pragmatic contradictions, pragmatic phenomena in general involve information that is generated by, or at least made relevant by, acts of using language. It is not to be confused with semantic information, which is carried by linguistic items themselves.

This distinction should be kept in mind as we examine the nature of speech acts (including Austin's explicit performatives), the intentions involved in communicating, and the ways in which what a speaker means can differ from what his words mean. Later we will return to the semantic-pragmatic distinction and survey its philosophical applications.

RSA is a descendant of a series of related models from game theory. The idea that a speaker chooses a message to maximize its expected utility in circumstances

requiring coordination for an effective strategy, and that such strategies require the development of a conventional language, can be traced back to the signaling systems .

Most following work that has featured the sort of back-and-forth reasoning that RSA proposes has assumed that players choose among the highest expected-utility actions, and assume others do the same. These postulate a distribution over the number of recursions players do, but assumes each player only chooses an action if it maximizes expected utility. Iterated best response models consider the limit of this maximizing behavior as the number of recursions goes to infinity. This model is often poorly predictive of people's behavior, owing partly to the perfect maximization assumption. Instead, it is better to assume some probability that the other player will perform suboptimally; the iterated cautious response model computes all strategies that respond optimally to any probability distribution over the other player's strategies. Both of these models sometimes have problems with unrealistically broad sets of best actions that can result after convergence.

Any expression which serves to identify any thing, process, event, action, or any other kind of "individual" or "particular" is a referring expression. Referring expressions point to particular things, answering the questions "Who?", "What?", "Which?"

Reference is a speech act, and speech acts are performed by speakers in uttering words, not by words. Examples of singular definite referring expressions are: "you", "the battle of Waterloo", "our copy of yesterday's newspaper", "the constellation of Orion". It is characteristic of each of these expressions that their utterance serves to pick out or identify one "object" or "entity" or "particular" apart from other objects, about which the speaker then goes on to say something or ask some questions.

Let us make some distinctions which naturally suggest themselves to us as soon as we shall begin to reflect on simple speech situations. Imagine a speaker and a hearer and suppose that in appropriate circumstances the speaker utters one of the following sentences:

Sam smokes habitually.

Does Sam smoke habitually?

Sam, smoke habitually.

Would that Sam smoked habitually.

Now let us ask how we might describe the speaker's utterance of one of these. What shall we say the speaker is doing when he utters one of these?

In uttering sentence 1 a speaker is making an assertion, in 2 asking a question, in 3 giving an order and in 4 (a somewhat archaic form) expressing a wish or desire. And in the performance of each of these four different acts the speaker performs certain other acts which are common to all four: in uttering any of these the speaker refers to or mentions, or designates a certain object Sam, and he predicates the expression

“*smokes habitually*” of the object referred to. Thus, we shall say that in the utterance of all four the reference and predication are the same though in each case the same reference and predication occur as part of a complete speech act which is different from any of the other three. We thus detach the notions of referring and predicating from the notions of such complete speech acts as asserting, questioning, commanding, etc., and the justification for the separation lies in the fact that the same reference and predication can occur in the performance of different complete speech acts. Austin baptized these complete speech acts with the name “illocutionary acts”. Some of the English verbs denoting illocutionary acts are: *state, describe, assert, warn, remark, comment, command, order, request, criticize, apologize, censure, approve, welcome, promise, object, demand and argue*, etc.

To sum up: the speech act of referring is to be explained by giving examples of paradigmatic referring expressions, by explaining the function which the utterance of these expressions serves in the complete speech act (the illocutionary act) and by contrasting the use of these expressions with other ones. Paradigmatic referring expressions in English fall into three classes as far as the surface structure of English sentences is concerned: proper names, nouns beginning with the definite article or a possessive pronoun or noun and followed by a singular noun or pronouns. The uttering of a referring expression characteristically serves to pick out or identify a particular object apart from other objects.

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