

Introduction

Pragmatics: Investigating Meaning

Language's meaning-making potential distinguishes it from the range of human behavior, but this aspect of language is perhaps the most elusive Meaning

What does "meaning" mean?

Semantics

Pragmatics



Dog: cole matt/iStock/Thinkstock; Sidewalk: University of Waterloo; Guru: Klibbor/iStock/Getty Images

Pragmatics: Investigating Meaning

Language's meaning-making potential distinguishes it from the range of human behavior, but this aspect of language is perhaps the most elusive

Meaning

What does "meaning" mean?

Semantics

Pragmatics



Dog: cole matt/iStock/Thinkstock; Sidewalk: University of Waterloo; Guru: Klibbor/iStock/Getty Images

Taking Context into Consideration

Semantics

- context-free

Pragmatics

- takes context into account



Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

Taking Context into Consideration

Talk show host

- aired Saturday after the game
- taped Friday



"How about them Leafs tonight?
I couldn't believe what they were
doing on the ice."

Hockey Player: University of Waterloo

Taking Context into Consideration

Semantics

- context-free
- deals with propositions
- concerned with truth and falsity
- language in-vitro

Pragmatics

- takes context into account
- deals with utterances
- concerned with appropriateness
- language-in-vivo



Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

Taking Context into Consideration

Context

Physical



Social/Cultural

#)*%, I loathe blue

Personal



Blue shirt: University of Waterloo; Cowboy hat, comb: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Football: Jupiterimages/liquidlibrary/Thinkstock

The Unit of Pragmatics?

The ~~Unit~~ Perspective

For the utterance to be well-defined, a contexticentric perspective is required



Lexicology
(the Word)



Morphology
(the Morpheme)



Phonology
(the Phoneme)



Phonetics
(the Phone)



Syntax
(the Sentence)



Semantics
(the Proposition)

Icons: University of Waterloo

The Interpersonal Function in Language

Two Dimensions of the Interpersonal Function

Micro-linguistics
Ideational function

~~The Unit~~ Perspective



Lexicology
(the Word)



Morphology
(the Morpheme)



Phonology
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Phonetics
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Syntax
(the Sentence)



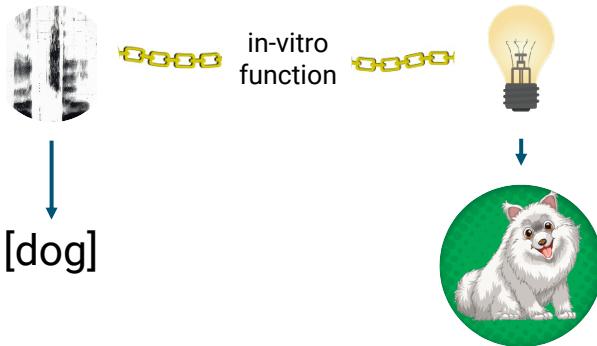
Semantics
(the Proposition)

Icons: University of Waterloo

Two Dimensions of the Interpersonal Function

Ideational function

Language from the perspective of encoding and transmitting ideas



Waveform: Randy Harris; Dog: cole matt/iStock/Thinkstock; Lightbulb: University of Waterloo

Two Dimensions of the Interpersonal Function

[dog]



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Two Dimensions of the Interpersonal Function

Pragmatics
Interpersonal function

The ~~Unit~~ Perspective



Context:
(the Word)



Context:
(the Morpheme)



Context:
(the Phoneme)



Context:
(the Phone)



Context:
(the Sentence)



Context:
(the Proposition)

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Two Dimensions of the Interpersonal Function

Pragmatics

Micro-linguistics

Macro-linguistics
(Sociolinguistics)

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Small wooden bridge: Laralova/iStock/Getty Images Plus

Two Dimensions of the Interpersonal Function

Interpersonal function

Language from the perspective of making and maintaining human contact.

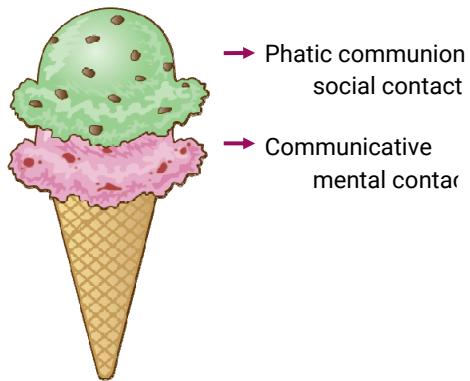


Green Eggs and Ham: Dr. Seuss (1988). *Green Eggs and Ham*. Random House. p.35; Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock

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Green Eggs and Ham: Dr. Seuss (1988). *Green Eggs and Ham*. Random House. p.35; Ice cream: Jamie Jay/iStock/Getty Images Plus; Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock

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Two Dimensions of the Interpersonal Function

Interpersonal function

Language from the perspective of making and maintaining human contact.



→ Phatic communion

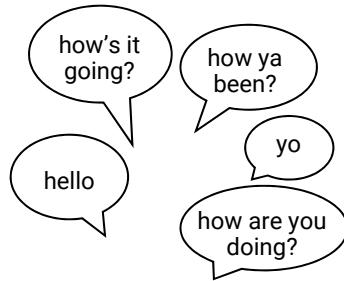


Green Eggs and Ham: Dr. Seuss (1988). *Green Eggs and Ham*. Random House. p.35; Ice cream: Jamie Jay/iStock/Getty Images Plus; Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock

Phatic Communion

Phatic communion

- The use of language to establish or maintain social relations
- Greetings



Dogs: colematt/iStock/Thinkstock; Men: Kharlamova/iStock/Thinkstock

Phatic Communion

Phatic communion

- The use of language to establish or maintain social relations
- Greetings
- Saying someone's name
- Utterances whose chief function is to establish or maintain contact; much like canine gluteus-maximus reciprocal olfactory analysis



Dogs: colematt/iStock/Thinkstock; Men: Kharlamova/iStock/Thinkstock

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Dogs: colematt/iStock/Thinkstock; Men: Kharlamova/iStock/Thinkstock

Communicative Function

Communicative

The use of language to encode and transmit intentions



Green eggs and ham: Dr. Seuss (1988). *Green Eggs and Ham*. Random House. p. 54-55.

Two Dimensions of the Interpersonal Function

Communicative

- The use of language to encode and transmit intentions
- Utterances whose chief function is to share mental contents
 - information
 - attitudes
 - worldviews



Homer eats crap.

Assertions:

Homer eats things I designate crap.

It says something about my attitude.

It also encodes a world view.

Homer: Fox Flash (2006) "Homer Simpson". Wikimedia Commons.

Two Dimensions of the Interpersonal Function

Phatic and Communicative

Every utterance has both phatic and communicative dimensions.

- phatic = talk
 - the very act of talking is social
- communicative = to make common
 - communication is sharing by making socially known



Two Approaches to Pragmatics

Speech Acts

People do things with words beyond asserting truth:

promise, warn, request,
offer, threaten

They act through speech



J.L. Austin

John Austin: Gustafsson, M., Sorli, R (Ed.) (2012). "The Philosophy of John Austin". Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Amazon.com; Paul Grice: The British Academy (2001). "Paul Grice". Used under Fair Dealing.

Two Approaches to Pragmatics

Speech Acts

People do things with words beyond asserting truth:

promise, warn, request,
offer, threaten

They act through speech



H.P. Grice

Conversational Maxims

The way people coordinate their speech is very intricate.

Maxims

John Austin: Gustafsson, M., Sorli, R (Ed.) (2012). "The Philosophy of John Austin". Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Amazon.com; Paul Grice: The British Academy (2001). "Paul Grice". Used under Fair Dealing.

Speech Acts

Austin's Speech Acts

Locution

- The utterance
- The cat is on the mat

Ilocution

The action

- naming
- requesting
- threatening
- commanding
- asserting



Austin: Gustafsson, M., Sorli, R (Ed.) (2012). "The Philosophy of John Austin". Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Amazon.com.; Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

The Illocutionary Canon

Yes/No Question

A request for confirmation or disconfirmation of a proposition.

Constituent Question

a word or a phrase



Is the cat on the mat?

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

The Illocutionary Canon

Yes/No Question

A request for confirmation or disconfirmation of a proposition.

Constituent Question

- A.K.A. “wh-question”
- A request for a constituent in order to complete a proposition.



Which cat is on the mat?

Which mat is the cat on?

What is on the mat?

What is the cat on?

How is the cat on the mat?

Why is the cat on the mat?

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

The Illocutionary Canon

Command

- A.K.A. an imperative
- A command to perform an action that will satisfy a proposition (satisfy its truth conditions).



Get on the mat!
Get off the mat!

Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

Syntactic and Lexical Cues

Subject/(aux) verb inversion

Constituent question

- Question word
- Wh-phrase fronted
- Subject/(aux) verb inversion

Command

Implicit subject



subject
↓
The cat is on the mat.
↑
verb
Is the cat on the mat?

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

Syntactic and Lexical Cues

Subject/(aux) verb inversion

Constituent question

- Question word
- Wh-phrase fronted
- Subject/(aux) verb inversion

Command

Implicit subject



The cat is on the mat.

Is the cat on the mat?

- Phonology (up-pitch)
- Orthography (question mark)

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

Syntactic and Lexical Cues

Yes/no question

Subject/(aux) verb inversion

- Question word
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Command

Implicit subject



The cat is on the mat.

Which mat is the cat on?

- Phonology (up-pitch)
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Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

Syntactic and Lexical Cues

Yes/no question

Subject/(aux) verb inversion

Constituent question

- Question word
- Wh-phrase fronted
- Subject/(aux) verb inversion



Implicit subject

(You) get on the mat!

↑
implied subject

- Phonology (sharp down-pitch)
- Orthography (exclamation mark)

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

Performative Verbs

Informative

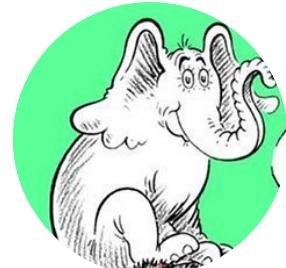
ask, tell, describe, assert, ...

Obligative

promise, advise, request, ...

Constitutive

pronounce, christen, sentence, ...



I'm sorry for Horton.

vs.

I apologize for Horton.

Horton: Dr. Seuss. *Horton Hatches the Egg*. Wikimedia Commons.

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.

Obligative (promise, advise, request, ...)

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



Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo; Groom: mocoo/iStock/Thinkstock; Bride: mocoo/iStock/Getty Images Plus

Performative Verbs

Informative (ask, tell, describe, assert, ...)

- I ask you: is the cat on the mat?
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Obligative (promise, advise, request, ...)

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

Constitutive (pronounce, christen, sentence, ...)

- I pronounce you man and wife.
- I christen this vessel *The Good Ship Lollipop*.
- I sentence you to thirty days in the hole.



Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo; Groom: mocoo/iStock/Thinkstock; Bride: mocoo/iStock/Getty Images Plus

Performative Acts without Performative Verbs



I'm **warning** you,
the cat is on the mat.

vs.

The cat is on the mat.
(under the appropriate conditions)

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

Performative Acts without Performative Verbs



I **promise** you,
the cat is on the mat.

vs.

The cat is on the mat.
(under the appropriate conditions)

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

Performative Acts without Performative Verbs



Is the cat on the mat?

vs.

I ask you,
is the cat on the mat?

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

Performative Acts without Performative Verbs

Indirect Speech Acts

- The cat is on the mat.
- Homer eats crap.
- Marge really makes the best gelatin towers.
- Patty and Selma have a secret undergarment.



Speech Act Axiom

If an utterance is not a (direct) speech act, then it is an indirect speech act.

- All utterances are speech acts.
- All language is functional.

Homer: Fox Flash (2006) "Homer Simpson". Wikimedia Commons.; Marge: Brooks, J. L., Groening, M., & Simon, S. (Executive Producers). (2012, April 17). Q: What is Marge's shoe size? A: 13AA. [Facebook, Timeline Photos] Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/TheSimpsons/photos/a.473850413696.246070.29534858696/10150696582228697>; Patty & Selma: Brooks, J. L., Groening, M., & Simon, S. (Executive Producers). (2013, September 10). Patty and Selma crash back into Springfield at Level 35 with Disco Stu burning up dance floors in their wake. Play The Simpsons: Tapped Out today! [Facebook, Timeline Photos] Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/TheSimpsons/photos/a.473850413696.246070.29534858696/10151666167153697>

Felicity Conditions

Propositions

Truth Conditions

Existence statements

Locative statements

etc.

Speech Acts

Felicity Conditions

Truth conditions presumed.

Topic relevant.

Participants share context.

For example:

There exists a cat.

There exists a mat.

The cat is located on the mat.



Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo

Felicity Conditions

Warning

Felicity Conditions

Truth conditions presumed.

Some specific cat on some mat manifests danger.



Christening

Felicity Conditions

Truth conditions presumed.

Context is "a christening".

Speaker has authority to christen.

Rituals observed.



Cat: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock; Mat: University of Waterloo; Christen: Valeriy Kachaev/iStock/Getty Images

Categories of Speech Acts

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

*Dirven and Verspoor, *Cognitive exploration of language and linguistics*, Table 1, Chapter 7

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock

Categories of Speech Acts

Obligative
Commissive
Offering



Sam I am: Dr. Seuss (1988). *Green Eggs and Ham*. Random House. p. 19.; Unnamed character: Dr. Seuss (1988). *Green Eggs and Ham*. Random House. p. 25.

Categories of Speech Acts

Obligative ✓

Commissive ✓

Offering ✗

Declining ✓

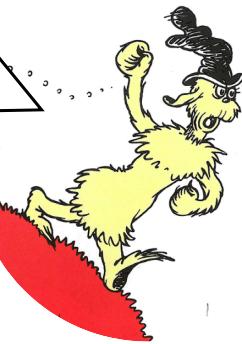
Not in a box.

Not with a fox.

...

I would not eat
green eggs and ham.

I do not like them, Sam-I-am.



Sam I am: Dr. Seuss (1988). *Green Eggs and Ham*. Random House. p. 19.; Unnamed character: Dr. Seuss (1988). *Green Eggs and Ham*. Random House. p. 25.

Grice's Conversational Maxims

The Cooperative Principle

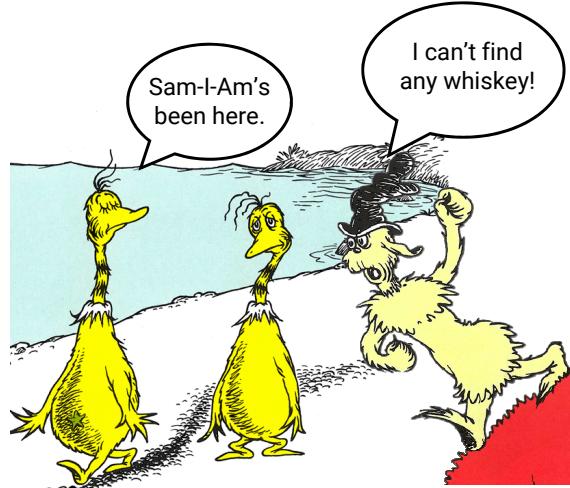
STUDIES
IN THE
WAY OF
WORDS
PAUL GRICE

HOW
TO DO
THINGS
WITH
WORDS
J. L. AUSTIN

Second Edition
J. O. URMSON AND MARINA SBISÀ, EDITORS

Dr. Seuss (1989). *The Sneetches and Other Stories*. Random House. p.3; Unnamed character: Dr. Seuss (1988). *Green Eggs and Ham*. Random House. p. 25.; Austin, J.L. (1975). "How to Do Things with Words". Harvard University Press. Cambridge, MA.; Grice, P. (1991). "Studies in the Way of Words". Harvard University Press. Cambridge, MA.

The Cooperative Principle



Man: Kharlamova/Stock/Thinkstock; Unnamed character: Dr. Seuss (1988). *Green Eggs and Ham*. Random House. p. 25; Austin, J.L. (1975). "How to Do Things with Words". Harvard University Press. Cambridge, MA.; Grice, P. (1991). "Studies in the Way of Words". Harvard University Press. Cambridge, MA.

The Cooperative Principle

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."

"That is, cooperate."

(Grice 1975: 45)



The British Academy (2001). "Paul Grice". Used under Fair Dealing.

Four Categories of Gricean Maxims

How to talk, more specifically

- Relation
Be relevant.
- Quality
Be truthful.
- Quantity
Be sufficient
(but not prolix).
- Manner
Be perspicacious.



Dr. Seuss (1989), *The Sneetches and Other Stories*. Random House. p.3.; Unnamed character: Dr. Seuss (1988). *Green Eggs and Ham*. Random House. p. 25.; Hand: Noedelhap/Stock/Thinkstock

Conversational Implicature

How to talk and interpret

- 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

Conversational Implicature

Maxim of relation

Be relevant.



A1: There's a gas station at King and Weber. [closed]

A2: You'll have to go all the way to Erb Street; everything's closed around here because of the anthrax scare.

Do you know where I can get some gas?

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; Car: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock

Conversational Implicature

Maxim of quality

Be truthful

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



Do you know where I can get some gas?

Car: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock

Conversational Implicature

Maxim of quantity

Be sufficient (but not prolix).

- Provide enough information
- But not too much

A1: Yes.

A2: Sure, King and Erb.

A3: Yep, King and Erb. They have a sale on gumboots at the hardware store across the street from it, too...



Do you know where I can get some gas?

Car: wenchiawang/iStock/Thinkstock

Conversational Implicature

Maxim(s) of manner

• Be clear

Q: Do you know where can I get some gas?

A: Yes. Somewhere near the theatre.

• Don't be obscure

A: Yep. Next to the old Smith place.

• Don't be ambiguous

A: Maybe I do, maybe I don't.

• Be brief

A: Of course. I know where every gas station build in the KW area since the Great War was located. First, there was the Ollie Petrie Service Station at the corner of...

• Be orderly

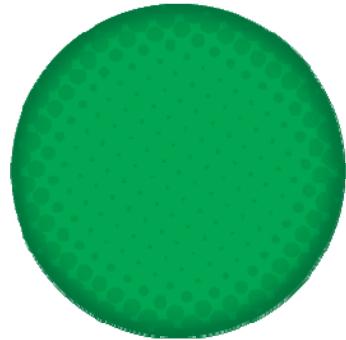
A: Sure. At Erb, turn right off King. To get to King, take Westmount, and turn left when you get there. Before that, go three lights down University and turn left at Westmount. First, however, ...

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock

Conversational Implicature

The important point:

- Grice charted the many, many ways we coordinate our speech to each other's needs and expectations.
- people cooperate



Groom: mocoo/iStock/Thinkstock; Bride: mocoo/iStock/Getty Images Plus

Review

Review

Interpersonal function

Phatic and Communicative

Speech acts

- Informative, Constitutive, and Obligative
- Felicity conditions

Grice's Maxims

- The coöoperative principle (and its ramifications)
- Speaking and understanding (conversational implicature)

some word

some concept

~~Ideational
function~~

Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; chicken: wenchiawang/iStock/GettyImages

Review

Interpersonal function

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Grice's Maxims

- The coöperative principle (and its ramifications)
- Speaking and understanding (conversational implicature)

Note that from a top-down (functional) view of linguistic performance, **context is everything**; however, a bottom-up nuts-and-bolts approach is necessary to gain maximum insight into language



Hand: Noedelhap/iStock/Thinkstock; chicken: wenchiawang/iStock/GettyImages