

Linguistics 111

Pragmatics III

Review: Speech Act Theory  
locution  
illocution  
perlocution

How do we manage to communicate  
successfully?

Felicity conditions for illocutionary acts:

these must be satisfied if the speech act is to be  
correctly performed

## Felicity conditions(Austin)

Context and roles of participants have to be recognized by all parties

Action must be carried out completely

Participants must have the right intentions

## Felicity conditions(Searle)

Hearer must hear and understand the language  
The speaker must not pretend or playact.

Declarations and directives: Speaker must believe  
that it is possible to carry out the action they are  
performing

They must believe that they act in the hearers  
best interests  
They are sincere about it

Types of felicity conditions:

propositional content conditions

preparatory preconditions

sincerity conditions

essential condition

## Felicity conditions for requests

Prop: Future act A of H

Prep: (1) S believes H can do A; (2) it is not obvious that H would do A without being asked

Sinc: S wants H to do A

Ess: Counts as an attempt to get H to do A



# Felicity conditions for warnings

Prop: Future event E

Prep: (1) S thinks E will occur and is not in H's interest; (2) S thinks it is not obvious to H that E will occur

Sinc: S believes E is not in H's best interest

Ess: Counts as an undertaking that E is not in H's best interest

Your turn:

Can you think of the  
propositional content condition,  
the preparatory precondition,  
the sincerity condition,  
and the essential condition

for thanking?

# Implicature and Grice's Maxims

The Cooperative Principle: "Make your 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."

Conversational maxims: rational means for  
conducting cooperative exchanges

maxims of  
quality  
quantity  
relevance  
manner

## Maxim of Quality: Truth

- \* Do not say what you believe to be false.
- \* Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

## Maxim of Quantity: Information

- \* Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.
- \* Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of Relation: Relevance

- \* Be relevant.



## Maxim of Manner: Clarity

- \* Avoid obscurity of expression. ("Eschew obfuscation")
  - \* Avoid ambiguity.
- \* Be brief ("avoid unnecessary prolixity").
  - \* Be orderly.

Observing and flouting the maxims

Quality (truth, sufficient evidence)

Flouted: Unh-hunh, and I'm the queen of Bulgaria.

Flouted:

A: What if Russia blockades the Gulf and all the oil?

B: Oh come now, Britain rules the seas!

Quantity (informative enough, not too informative)

The flag is white

A: How did Harry fare in court?

B: Oh, he got a fine.

Flouted:

War is war.

Either John will come or he won't.

## Relevance

A: Can you tell me the time?

B: Well, the mail has come.

Flouted: Lovely weather we're having today.

Manner (avoiding obscurity, ambiguity, verbosity,  
and sloppiness)

Flouted: A: Let's get the kids something.  
B: OK, but I veto I-C-E C-R-E-A-M.

Miss Singer produced a series of sounds  
corresponding closely to the score of an aria from  
Rigoletto.

# Implicature

Flouting of maxims requires the audience to make inferences beyond the semantic content of the sentences uttered: implicatures.





# The Context

## Situational context

What speakers know about what they can see  
around them

background-knowledge context

what speakers know about each other and the  
world

the co-textual context

what speakers know about what they have been  
saying in the conversation

Referring to the context

exophoric references

There is a huge house on the hill.

endophoric references.

The house belongs to John Miller.

Cohesion

Anaphora

Cataphora

Substitution

Ellipsis

Repetition