Summary Assignment Notebook(Pragmatics

What is pragmatics?

- the study of how meaning is derived from context.

- goes beyond the literal meaning(semantics) of a sentence.

- concerned with how sentences interact with discourse, assumptions, and inference.

difference between semantics and pragmatics

	semantics	pragmatics
Focus	literal meaning	contextual meaning
Deals with	truth conditions	assumed or implied meanings
Example	"The boy ran." → Literal meaning of 'ran'	Presupposing "There is a boy"

Presupposition

- information a speaker assumes(or acts as if they assume) to make an utterance meaningful in context.

- example:

    - "I met the boy from Osaka."
       presupposition: there was a boy from Osaka.

    - "The king of France is bald."
      there is a king of France.

    - "He stopped smoking."
      He used to smoke.

    - "She realizes it's late."
      It's late.

Presupposition triggers

Type	Example	Presupposition
Definite NPs	I met *the* boy from Osaka.	There was a boy from Osaka.
Factive verbs	I regret visiting the museum.	I visited the museum.
Additive particles	I visited the museum *again*.	I visited it before.

Holes vs. Plugs

- Holes: let presuppositions "pass through"

    - ex: "I know [that the king of France is bald]."
      Presupposes there is a king of France.

- Plugs: blocks presuppositions

    - ex: "He thinks [that the king of France is bald]."
      Does not presuppose a king exists.

Presupposition Accommodation

- sometimes a speaker introduces new information as if it's already known.

- so the listener fills in missing assumptions to keep the conversation smooth.

- ex: "My boyfriend is a vet."
  The listener accommodates: She has a boyfriend.

Speech Act Theory

Three layers of speech acts:

	Description	Example
Locutionary	Actual words spoken	"I promise"
Illocutionary	Speaker's intent	Making a promise
Perlocutionary	Effect on listener	Listener feels reassured

Performative vs. Constative

	Description	Example

Performative	The act of saying = doing	"I apologize."
Constative	Describes a state of the world	"I apologized yesterday."

Felicity Conditions

- for a performative sentence to work:

    1. Proper context

    2. Correct speaker identity

    3. Appropriate intent and structure

Relationship between terms

In the study of pragmatics,
presupposition refers to background information that a speaker assumes to be true for an utterance to be meaningful. This contrasts with the **at-issue meaning**, which is the main point being asserted and evaluated for truth. Certain expressions, known as **presupposition triggers**—such as definite noun phrases, factive verbs, or cleft constructions—signal the presence of a presupposition. However, the projection of presuppositions can vary depending on the linguistic context: **holes** are semantic environments that allow presuppositions to pass through (e.g., "know"), whereas **plugs** block them (e.g., "think"). When a listener accepts and integrates a new presupposition not previously part of the shared knowledge, this is called **accommodation**, which helps maintain conversational coherence. To explain how language interacts with context, **speech act theory** divides communication into **locutionary acts** (the actual utterance), **illocutionary acts** (the speaker's intended function, like asserting or promising), and **perlocutionary acts** (the effects on the listener). In particular, **performative sentences** are utterances that enact what they state— such as "I promise..."—while **constative sentences** describe a state of affairs and are judged by their truth conditions. Crucially, both types can contribute to dynamically updating the **common ground**—the shared knowledge between participants—thus illustrating how meaning in pragmatics is not only about logical truth but also about context, intention, and mutual understanding.