

Lexical Semantic: Optional assignments

◆ On this page, I would like to summarize the definitions and meanings of technical terms that I learned for the first time, as well as words that I was unfamiliar with.

○ **Speech act theory:** A theory associated with the work of the British philosopher J. L. Austin, in his 1962 book *How to do things with words*, which distinguishes between three facets of a speech act: **the locutionary act**, which has to do with the simple act of a speaker saying something; **the illocutionary act**, which has to do with the intention behind a speaker's saying something; and **the perlocutionary act**, which has to do with the actual effect produced by a speaker saying something. The *illocutionary force* of a speech act is the effect that a speech act is intended to have by the speaker.

cf) **Illocutionary act:** The concept of illocutionary act was introduced into linguistics by the philosopher J. L. Austin in his investigation of the various aspects of speech acts. In his framework, locution refers to what was said and meant, illocution refers to what was done, and perlocution refers to what happened as a result. When somebody says "Is there any salt?" at the dinner table, the illocutionary act is a request: "Please give me some salt," even though the locutionary act (the literal sentence) was to ask a question about the presence of salt. The perlocutionary act (the actual effect) might be to cause somebody to pass the salt.

cf) In Speech Act Theory, a **locutionary act** refers to the basic act of producing a meaningful utterance, which includes the act of saying something and the meaning of what is said. It's essentially the act of uttering a sentence with a certain meaning, focusing on the linguistic form and propositional content.

○ **interim:** temporary and intended to be used or accepted until something permanent exists:

○ **constative** and **performative:** In the philosophy of language, constative utterances are statements that describe a state of affairs and can be evaluated as true or false. Performative utterances, on the other hand, are utterances that perform an action in the act of being said and are not evaluated as true or false.

cf) Examples to further clarify:

Constative: "The car is red." (This can be true or false depending on the car's color)

Performative: "I apologize." (This action of apologizing is performed by the utterance itself)

In essence, constatives describe, while performatives do.

○ **presupposition:** a thing tacitly assumed beforehand at the beginning of a line of argument or course of action.

cf) **Presupposition triggers** are linguistic expressions that signal the existence of presuppositions, which are implicit assumptions about the world or context that speakers take to be true when making an utterance.

○ **addressee:** a person whose name or address is written on a letter or parcel

○ **posterior:** positioned at or towards the back

○ **Discourse structure** refers to how a text or spoken piece of communication is organized and how its parts relate to each other to create a unified whole. It's about understanding how sentences, paragraphs, and larger sections of text fit together to convey meaning and achieve a specific purpose.

○Pragmatics:

- **Focus:**
- The study of how context influences meaning in communication.
- **Emphasis:**
- Speaker's intended meaning, context, social factors, and how language is used in social interactions.
- **Examples:**
 - If someone asks, "Can you pass the salt?", the pragmatic meaning might be a request to pass the salt, even though the literal meaning is a question about ability.
 - Pragmatics would consider the context and the speaker's intention to understand why a seemingly simple statement like "It's cold in here" might be a request to close a window.

cf) Semantics and pragmatics are both branches of linguistics that study meaning, but they focus on different aspects. Semantics deals with the literal, dictionary-based meaning of words and sentences, while pragmatics examines how context contributes to meaning in communication. Essentially, semantics focuses on what words mean, and pragmatics focuses on what speakers mean by using those words in a particular situation.

○Maxim: a short statement of a general truth, principle, or rule for behaviour

cf) The maxim of quantity is a conversational principle stating that speakers should be as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange, but not more informative than is required. Essentially, it means giving the right amount of information, not too little, not too much. The maxim of quantity is part of Grice's Cooperative Principle, which aims to explain how effective communication is achieved through cooperation and shared understanding between speakers and listeners.

cf) The cooperative principle is a concept in linguistics that describes how people cooperate in conversations to make them successful. It suggests that participants in a conversation generally try to be informative, truthful, relevant, and clear. This principle, introduced by Paul Grice, is crucial for understanding how we interpret meaning in communication beyond the literal words spoken.

Grice's Conversational Maxims:

To explain how the cooperative principle works, Grice proposed four conversational maxims:

1. **Maxim of Quantity:** Be as informative as required, but not more informative than necessary.
2. **Maxim of Quality:** Try to be truthful and avoid making claims you don't have evidence for.
3. **Maxim of Relation (Relevance):** Be relevant to the topic of conversation.
4. **Maxim of Manner:** Be clear, brief, and orderly; avoid ambiguity and obscurity.

cf) Conversational implicature refers to the implied meaning in a conversation that goes beyond the literal words spoken. It's a way of communicating more than what is explicitly stated, relying on context, shared knowledge, and the cooperative principle. Essentially, it's about understanding what a speaker means rather than just what they say.