
INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS II

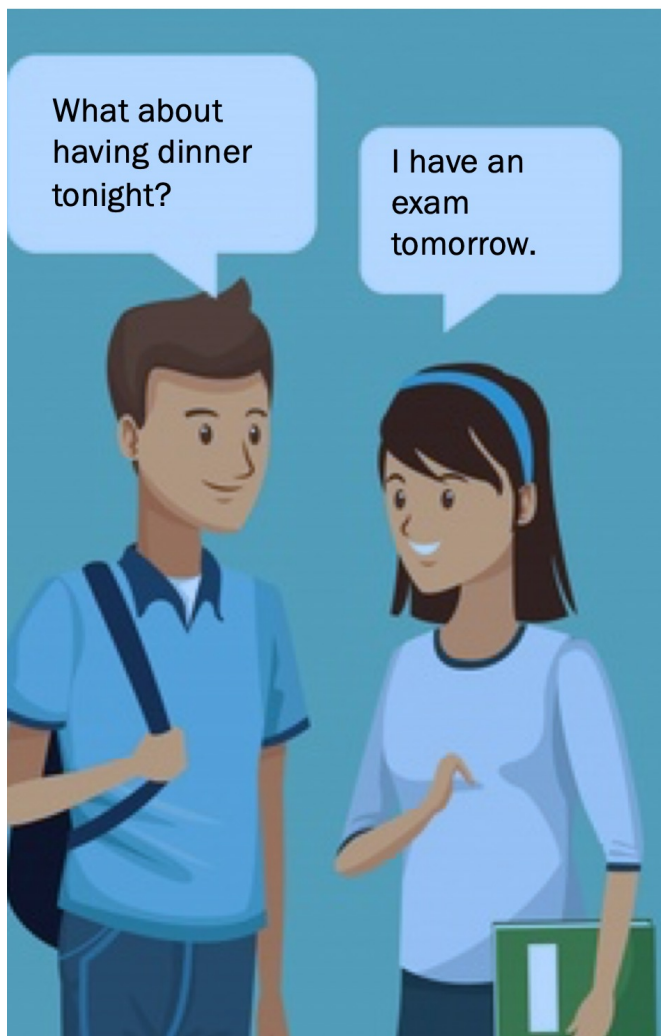
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A-KAP, Π-Ω

SO FAR

- Pragmatics is concerned with meaning that depends on:
 - the **context** of the communicative event,
 - the **speaker's intentions** in uttering a specific utterance.
- This type of meaning corresponds to so-called **speaker meaning**, also known as utterance meaning, or pragmatic meanings.
 - In this respect we have already examined **deixis** and **presupposition**.



- We use language not only to make statements about the world but also to perform certain acts, known as **speech acts**.
 - Here, the question is not aimed to elicit information (as is typically the case with the use of the interrogative form) but to **perform** an invitation.
- The meaning of these utterances belongs to the realm of **pragmatics**, because it does not make a statement that can be true or false.
 - Compare “*It is raining in Athens*” and “*Happy Easter!*”.

TODAY'S TOPICS

- Speech acts.
- Reading: Yule, ch. 10: p. 133-136.



PRAGMATICS

SPEECH ACTS

EXAMPLES OF SPEECH ACTS

- *Could you lend me some money?* (request by the speaker for the hearer to do something)
- *I promise I'll help you out.* (promising – commitment of the speaker for a future action)
- *I appreciate your help.* (thanking – expression of the speaker's gratitude)
- *I'm telling you my laptop got stolen.* (conveying of information – an assertion)
- *I order you to leave!* (command of the speaker over the hearer)
- *I now pronounce you husband and wife.* (act of marrying – an institutional act)
- Other examples of speech acts **include**: apologizing, inviting, accepting, refusing, congratulating, condolences, wishing, threatening, warning, offers, complaints, insults, complimenting, admonition, firing, resigning, vows, christening, declaring war, sentencing, etc.

HOW TO DO THINGS WITH WORDS

J. L. AUSTIN

Second Edition

J. O. URMSON AND MARINA SBISÀ, EDITORS

SPEECH ACT THEORY

- The philosopher **John Austin** was one of the first to argue that we use language not simply to make statements but also to ‘do things’, such as orders, requests, apologies, etc.
 - His work was later developed and refined by one of his students, **John Searle**.
- Austin’s book “*How to do things with words*” (1952) greatly **influenced** pragmatics and philosophy of language.
 - At the time, meaning was studied solely in terms of **truth conditions**, namely which conditions need to hold in the world for a sentence to be true (“*It is raining*” is true if and only if it is raining).

WHAT IS A SPEECH ACT?

- We can define a speech act as the **action performed by a speaker** with an utterance.
 - They are like all other kinds of acts (walking, eating, playing, etc.), but they only **require language** to be performed.
- Speech acts are often expressed with a verb that indicates the type of the speech act; so-called **performative verbs**, which typically appear in the first-person singular, present tense.
 - *I congratulate you on your promotion.*
 - *I order you to surrender.*
- But a speech act can be expressed also **without** a performative verb, e.g. “Well done!”, “You have to surrender now!”.
 - In this case the hearer needs to recognize the **speaker’s intention** when uttering this utterance.

ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE

- Successful communication depends on being able to recognize the particular force an utterance has, its **illocutionary force**, which may vary even for the same linguistic expression.
 - What can be the illocutionary force of the utterance “*I will be there*”?
- The illocutionary force of the above utterance can be that of a threat, a warning, a promise, reassuring, inviting, or simply an assertion.
 - Thus, illocutionary force **depends** on the meaning intended by the speaker, and the context in which it occurs.
- In sum, the illocutionary force of an utterance corresponds to the **speaker's intention** in producing that utterance.
 - It refers to the particular **function and meaning** of an utterance depending on the speaker's intention.

FELICITY CONDITIONS

- As already mentioned, it makes no sense to call a performative **true or false**.
 - Nevertheless, a speech act can be **successful or not successful**; consider, for example, an order issued by a speaker who does not have authority over the addressee.
- In Austin's terminology, a speech act can be **felicitous or infelicitous**.
 - For a speech act to be felicitous (that is, valid, successful...) it needs to meet a set of conditions that are called **felicity conditions**.
- In order to perform speech acts successfully words have to be used **properly**.
 - Note that some speech acts require **ceremonial action** in addition to language (e.g., christening).

IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENT

- Read the following newspaper article and explain why the baptisms were considered invalid in terms of speech act theory.



One-word gaffe invalidates thousands of US baptisms

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-60409113>



A Catholic priest in Arizona is learning the hard way that "words matter" after a one-word gaffe forced officials to invalidate thousands of baptisms he conducted over many years.

Church officials say that the priest, Andres Arango, used the word "we" instead of "I" during baptisms.

Catholics believe that only Jesus Christ has the power to baptise - not the wider community or the Church.

Mr Arango has resigned from his position and apologised.

According to the Catholic Diocese of Phoenix, Reverend Arango was reciting the words used for baptisms incorrectly until 17 June 2021. The Church has declared all baptisms he conducted up until that date invalid.

Church records show that Mr Arango arrived in the Phoenix area as a pastor in February 2013. Previously, he was the director of a Catholic campus ministry in California. Between 1995 and 2000, he was a teacher and pastor in Brazil.

It is unclear how many baptisms are now considered invalid, although local media has put the figure in the thousands. Church officials are asking that people who were baptised by Mr Arango or had their children baptised come forward.

At the centre of the controversy is Mr Arango's use of the word "we" instead of "I" in the phrase "I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit".

In a letter to local Catholic churchgoers, Phoenix Bishop Thomas Olmstead said that a "careful study" of the words conducted by local officials, in consultation with Vatican officials in Rome, had led them to declare the baptisms invalid.

Deepak Sarma, a religious studies professor at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, told the BBC that in religion, individual words can be "powerful" and "transformative".

"In this case...when the word 'we' is used, it seems to imply there's a community of worshippers doing the baptising," he explained. "The Catholic Church teaches that when a person baptises, it's really Christ who is working through that person."

The use of the words "I" or "we", Professor Sarma added, "causes or doesn't cause the transformation that is intended".

"If you say it incorrectly, the person who is intended to be baptised is not transformed," he added. "If they go along and proceed as Catholics and have other sacraments in the future, it is all based on the fallacy that they were, in fact, transformed."



PRAGMATICS

DIRECT VS INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS

DIRECT SPEECH ACTS

	Structures	Functions
<i>Did you eat the pizza?</i>	Interrogative	Question
<i>Eat the pizza (please)!</i>	Imperative	Command (Request)
<i>You ate the pizza.</i>	Declarative	Statement

Certain linguistic forms (particular constructions) are primarily associated with the performance of particular speech acts.

DIRECT SPEECH ACTS

- When an interrogative structure such as *Did you...?*, *Are they...?* or *Can we...?* is used with the function of a **question**, it is described as a direct speech act.
 - For example, when we don't know something and we ask someone to provide the information, we usually produce a **direct speech act** such as "*Can you ride a bicycle?*".
- The same holds for declarative sentences used to make an **assertion** (e.g., "*You can ride a bicycle*"), and for the imperative form used to give an **order** ("e.g., *Ride a bicycle!*").
 - Also, direct speech acts can be performed with the use of a **performative verb** (e.g., "*I apologize for being late*", "*I congratulate you on your promotion*").

IN SUM

- There are two types of direct speech acts:
 1. when the utterance's illocutionary force matches that of the **grammatical structure**: asserting with a declarative sentence, ordering with the imperative, and asking a question with the interrogative.
 2. when the speech act is performed with the use of a **performative verb** (e.g., *request, congratulate, invite, promise, apologize, resign, baptize*, etc.).
- All other speech acts are **indirect**; see next slide.

INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS

- Compare now the utterance “*Can you pass the salt?*”.
 - In this example, the speaker is **not really asking a question** about someone’s ability.
- In fact, we don’t **normally** use this structure as a question at all.
 - Rather, we use it in order to make **a request**.
- That is, we are using a syntactic structure that is normally associated with the function of a question with the **intention** to make a request.
 - This is an example of an indirect speech act; in this case, the illocutionary force of the utterance **differs** from the one associated with this particular grammatical structure.

THE ROLE OF CONTEXT

- The utterance “***You left the door open***” has a declarative structure and, as a direct speech act, it would be used to make a statement (that is, an assertion).
 - However, if you say this to someone who has just come in (and assuming it’s cold outside), you would probably want that person to **close the door**.
- But, for this purpose, you are not using the imperative structure; instead, you are using a declarative structure to make a **request**.
 - This is another example of an **indirect speech act**.

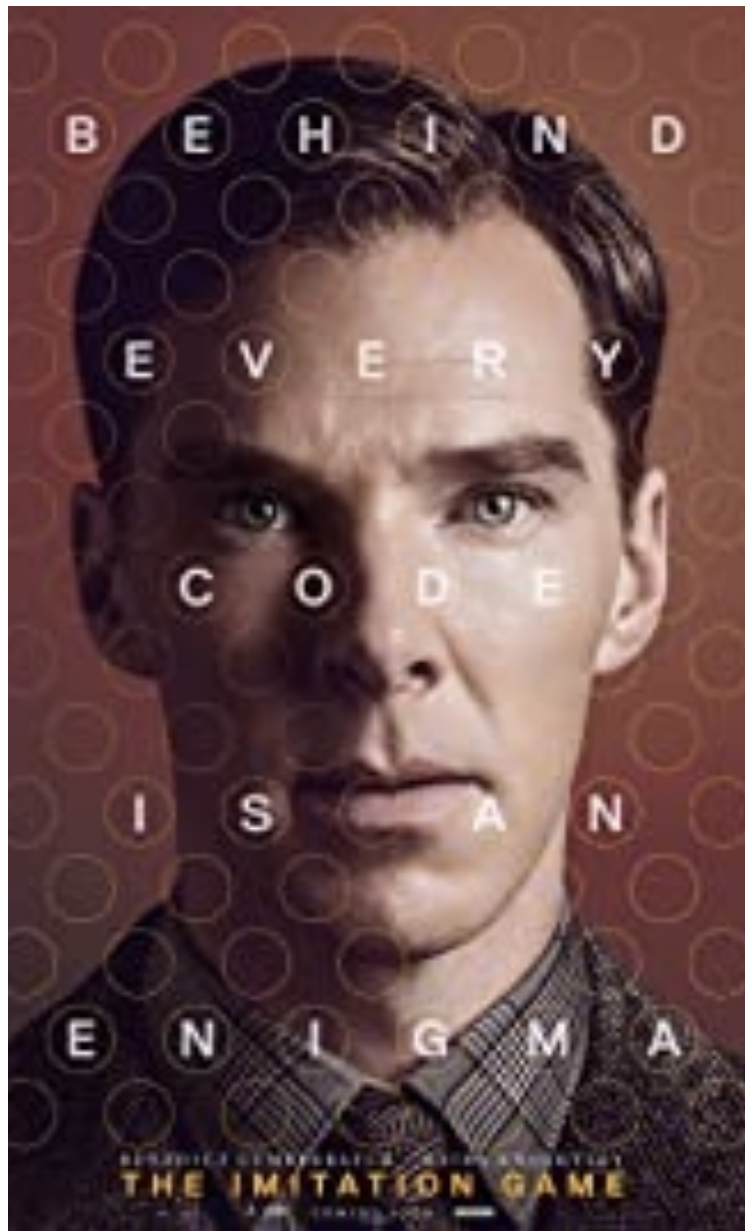
RECOGNIZING SPEECH ACTS (OR FAILING TO DO SO)

- Consider the following **scene**: a visitor to a city, carrying his luggage, looking lost, stops a passer-by.

VISITOR: *Excuse me. Do you know where the Ambassador Hotel is?*

PASSER-BY: *Oh sure, I know where it is.* (and walks away)

- In this scene, the visitor uses a form **normally associated** with a question (*Do you know...?*), and the passer-by answers that question literally (*I know...*).
 - That is, the passer-by is **acting as if** the utterance was a direct speech act instead of an indirect speech act used as a request for directions.



“THE IMITATION GAME” (2014)

- During World War II, the English mathematical genius Alan Turing tries to crack the German Enigma code with help from fellow mathematicians.
- Turing is a non-fictional character. He is regarded as the father of computer science and artificial intelligence. He is also alleged to have had Asperger syndrome, which typically shows in severe impairment in reciprocal social interaction, and inability to read implicit meanings.

IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENT

- In the following interaction, one of Turing's collaborators, Cairncross, makes several attempts to invite Turing to lunch but this leads to a communication breakdown.
- Can you identify Cairncross' invitation to Turing?
- Can you explain the communication breakdown that follows on the basis of speech acts?

[Turing is focused on his work, while all his co-workers, one of them being Cairncross, are leaving to have lunch.]

1 Cairncross: Alan?

2 Turing: Yes?

3 Cairncross: I said we're going to get some lunch.

4 [no response]

5 Cairncross: Alan?

6 Turing: Yes?

7 Cairncross: Can you hear me?

8 Turing: Yes.

9 Cairncross: I said we're off to get some lu—. This is starting to get a little bit
10 repetitive.

11 Turing: What is?

12 Cairncross: I had asked if you wanted to come have lunch with us.

13 Turing: Uhm, no you didn't, you said you were going to get some lunch.

14 Cairncross: Have I offended you in some way?

15 Turing: Why would you think that?

16 Cairncross: Would you like to come to lunch with us?

17 Turing: What time's lunch time?

18 Alexander: [frustrated, raised voice] Christ! Alan, it's a bleeding sandwich.

19 Turing: What is?

20 Alexander: Lunch.

21 Turing: Oh, I don't like sandwiches.

22 Cairncross: Never mind.

QUESTION

- What makes speakers opt for indirect speech acts as, for example, when making a request?
 - Compare “*Open that door for me!*” and “*Could you open that door for me?*”.



➤ Exercises 1-3.



PRAGMATICS

POLITENESS THEORY

WHAT IS POLITENESS?

- We **conventionally** think of politeness in general terms as being tactful, modest and nice to other people.
 - How does the everyday understanding of politeness translate **in pragmatic terms**?
- In pragmatic terms, politeness involves making linguistic and extra-linguistic choices in the relevant socio-cultural context in order to **maintain a social equilibrium** and show consideration for our interlocutor's needs.
 - The question is how this is performed **through language**.

THE NOTION OF 'FACE'

- Face, in pragmatics, is the **public self-image** that every member of society wants to claim for him/herself.
 - This is the **social sense of self** that everyone has and expects others to recognize.
- Politeness is showing awareness of, and consideration for, another person's face; what we call **face management**.
 - Although this term originates in **anthropology**, it is directly applicable to how humans interact in linguistic terms (as well as in non-linguistic terms).
- Face comes in **two variants**: positive and negative face.
 - Note that here 'negative' **does not mean** something bad; it is merely the opposite of 'positive' in the context of face management.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FACE

- **Positive face** is the need to be liked and connected, to belong to a group.
 - It is associated with one's **need for approval**.
- **Negative face** is the need to be independent and free from imposition.
 - It represents the **need for autonomy**.

FACE-THREATENING ACTS

- A speech act that represents a **threat to a person's self-image** is a face-threatening act (FTA).
 - Politeness thus serves to mitigate the face-threat, namely to **save face**.
- A prime example of FTAs is the speech act of **requests**, because they are aimed to impose on the hearer (the target of the request) a particular action, or course of action.
 - Therefore, they threaten the hearer's **negative face**.

IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

- Can you think of other speech acts that threaten the hearer's negative face?
 - Consider, e.g., orders, threats.

- Can you think of speech acts that threaten the hearer's positive face?
 - Consider, e.g., complaints, insults.

FACE-SAVING ACTS

- A face-saving act is aimed to **mitigate** the possible threat to another person's face.
 - Compare “*Could you pass me the salt?*” to “*Pass me the salt!*”.
- Indirect speech acts are **more polite** because they allow the speaker to perform the face-threatening act in an implicit way.
 - A request like “*Could you pass me the salt?*” suggests that the speaker is only asking if it would be **possible** for the hearer to perform this action.

QUESTION

- Among the different ways with which the same speech act can be performed how does a speaker decide on the politeness strategy to be used?

SOCIAL VARIABLES

- In order to decide which politeness strategy is appropriate in a given context, we must take into account **social variables**, such as:
 - the **social distance** that holds between the interlocutors (how close they are, what is the level of familiarity, etc.);
 - any **power relations** between them (if one holds a superior position due to age, rank, hierarchy, etc.);
 - and **social and culture-specific parameters** (for example, how appropriate or costly a certain act is in a given culture).

TWO TYPES OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES

Negative politeness strategies

- Oriented towards the hearer's negative face

Positive politeness strategies

- Oriented towards the hearer's positive face

NEGATIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES

- Some politeness strategies are oriented towards saving the **hearer's negative face**.
 - They are aimed to mitigate the imposition on the hearer and maintain **distance** between speaker and hearer.
- *Would you mind washing your hands?*
- *Can you close the door please?*
- *Could we perhaps meet for a coffee tomorrow?*
- *Sorry to bother you, but could you close the door?*
- *Sorry to interrupt, but may I borrow your book?*
- *I'm afraid I won't be free on Saturday.*
- *I'd be grateful if we could meet at the end of the week.*

POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES

- Other politeness strategies are oriented towards saving the **hearer's positive face**.
 - With these, the speaker aims to seek common ground and emphasize **closeness/solidarity** with the hearer.
- *Let's close the window.*
- *We really should close the door.*
- *You must be hungry, what about having lunch?*
- *Oh these biscuits smell wonderful. May I have one?*
- *Hey mate, can I borrow your book for a while?*
- *I agree, the film is interesting although certainly it is not innovative.*
- *So you don't like parties or parties don't like you?*

CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATION

- Some cultures (e.g., Japanese) opt for **indirectness** while others prioritize directness (e.g., Polish).
 - If you have grown up in a culture that has **directness** as a valued way of showing solidarity, and you use direct speech acts (*Give me that chair!*) to people whose culture is more oriented to indirectness and avoiding direct imposition, then you will be considered impolite.
- While cultures make use of both positive and negative politeness strategies, usually one type is **more prominent** than the other.
 - Compare how you would ask a friend to close a window **in English and Modern Greek**.
- Thus, linguistic differences are shown to be associated with **cultural differences**.
 - These **pertain** to spontaneity, directness, and intimacy vs. indirectness, distance, and tolerance.



➤ Exercises 1-3.

SUMMARY

- **Speech acts:** verbal actions with the utterance of which I do something with my words.
- **Direct speech acts:** when the act performed is explicitly named (either through the syntactic form or by means of performative verb).
- **Indirect speech acts:** when the act performed is not explicitly named but inferred on the basis of recognizing the speaker's intention.
- **Politeness:** making linguistic and extra-linguistic choices in the relevant socio-cultural context in order to maintain a social equilibrium and show consideration for the feelings of your interlocutor.