

# English Pragmatics

Pragmatics:

The Study of the Uses and Effects of language

Implied meaning

Language as used in concrete situations

Language: its impact on the world

1. Key figures (C. Morris, Wittgenstein, Austin, Searle, Grice)
2. Conversational Analysis
3. Text Pragmatics and CDA
4. Language, conflict and peace
5. Non-verbal communication

## University cafeteria -

Teacher A to teacher B: "It's Friday, unless you're tired"

### Cindy and Linnea

- Cindy: there is a bookstore over there
- Linnea: no
- Cindy: why not
- Linnea: I'm tired.
  
- Cindy: there is a bookstore over there. **Let's go inside.**
- Linnea: no, **I don't want to go inside.**
- Cindy: why **do you** not **want to go inside?**
- Linnea: **I don't want to** because I'm tired.



Charles Morris (1938): Syntactics  
Semantics  
Pragmatics

- Pragmatics studies (the origins), the uses and the effects of language.

# Ludwig Wittgenstein

(\*1889 Vienna, +1951 Cambridge)



*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922)

„Wovon man nicht sprechen kann,  
darüber muss man schweigen.“

*Philosophical Investigations* (1953)

„... musste ich schwere Irrtümer in dem erkennen was ich in  
jenem ersten Buch [dem *Tractatus*] niedergelegt hatte.“

Meaning = use

Language – an activity

Language games (Sprachspiele) – things you do with  
language

“Review the multiplicity of language games in the following examples, and in others:

giving orders, obeying them  
reporting an event  
play-acting  
singing catches  
guessing riddles  
making a joke, telling it  
translating from one language into another  
asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying.

It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in a language ... with what logicians have said about the structure of language (including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*).“

## John L. Austin (1911-1960)



- *How To Do Things with Words* (1962)
- “What I shall have to say here is neither difficult nor contentious; the only merit I should like to claim for it is that of being true, at least in parts. The phenomenon to be discussed is very widespread and obvious, and it cannot fail to have been already noticed, at least here and there, by others. Yet I have not found attention paid to it specifically.” (Austin 1962: 1)
- Sentence types: statement, question, command, exclamation
- Constative utterances
- Performative utterances

## Performative Utterances:

I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth

I declare the meeting opened

I promise to do this

I apologize

I do (*in the marriage ceremony*)

I thank you

I congratulate

I *hereby* question this statement

**Explicit performative (apology):**

I apologize for my behaviour

**Implicit performatives (apology):**

I am sorry, It won't happen again, It was stupid of me, I do hope it does not matter, I'll do better next time, I hope you're not cross with me, don't be offended ...



### **locutionary act:**

there's a bull in this field – „just saying it“

### **illocutionary act:**

the „force“ of an utterance

there's a bull in this field – warning

### **perlocutionary act:**

the „effect“ of an utterance

there's a bull in this field – hearer is frightened,  
hearer avoids going into the field

It's terribly draughty in here.

I am hungry.

Why are you always late?

Is that your car?

Do you know what time it is?

Are you particularly busy at the moment?

I've been trying to reach you all morning.

Why didn't you bring your husband along?

I know you couldn't finish your paper because you have so many things on your hands. (Irony?)

**Misunderstandings!**

utterance	sentence type	illocution
<p>(3)</p> <p>A: Hey – you’ve not washed up yet</p> <p>B: Yeah – I’ve been doing my homework all the time</p>		
<p>A: Okay then –</p> <p>But could you do the washing up now, please</p> <p>B: All right</p>		

(4)

A: So there’s no playgroup next week then

B: Oh, isn’t there [misunderstands A’s illocution!]

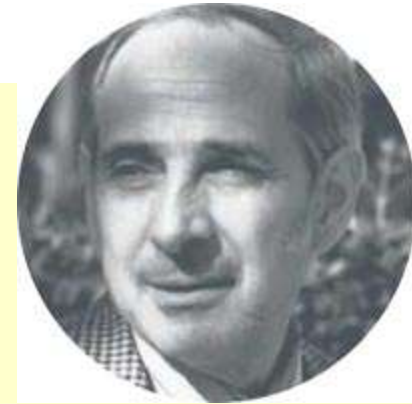
A: No, I was asking

B: Oh, I don’t know

**John Searle** (\*1932)

*Speech Acts* (1969)

*Expression and Meaning* (1979)



Assertives: (stating, suggesting, boasting, predicting, guessing ...)

Directives: (ordering, demanding, requesting, inviting, permitting ...)

Commissives: (promising, offering, refusing, threatening ...)

Expressives: (thanking, congratulating, pardoning, blaming, praising ...)

Declaratives: (naming, baptizing, declaring open, appointing ...)

## Searle: Indirect speech acts

An utterance can have two speech acts, one „on top of each other“

A: Do you smoke? (Request for information + offer)

A: let's go to the movies tonight (invitation)

B: I have to study for an exam (declining + giving reason)

A: I've been trying to reach you all morning (apology + reproach)

Split illocution (lateral indirectness)

utterance <      illocution 1 to addressee A  
                             illocution 2 to addressee B

## Split illocution (lateral indirectness)

A,B,C (professors)

A: Have you read my latest article on pragmatics?  
(to B: request for information; to C: boasting)

A(male), B (male), C(female)

A to B: How's your wife? (illocution for C?)

A: Can I give you a fag? (offer)

M: We've both given up fags (declines offer, warns  
husband)

Paul Grice (1975) „Logic and Conversation“

The Co-operative Principle (CP)

Four maxims: quantity, quality, relation, manner

