

Pragmatic aspects of natural language

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PA153 Natural Language Processing

Outline

- 1 Pragmatics
- 2 Grice's cooperative principle
- 3 Speech acts

Pragmatics

- Aspects of language not related to the structure of the language
 - situation context and context in general
 - interaction of the language structure with the context
- Examples
 - „What time is it?” at 3 AM after a party
 - „Do you have a hot-dog?” – „Ketchup or mustard?”
 - „What time is it?” – „Newspaper just came”
 - „Would you mind opening the window?”

Pragmatics – basic concepts

■ External pragmatics – communication situation

- $\{\{o_1, \dots, o_n\}, \textit{speaker}, \textit{audience}, \textit{time}, \textit{location}\}$
- $o_1, \dots, o_n =$ objects related to the conversation
- deictic expressions (I, you, here) – variables that gain value only in certain communication situation

■ Internal pragmatics

- relation between language users and the meaning
- declarative, interrogative, imperative, optative

■ Implicatures

- inferences intended by the speaker
- the speaker has **communication intension**
- and aims at transferring it to the audience

■ „It is impossible not to communicate.”



Grice's cooperative principle

- „Cooperate with your communication partners.”
 - the speaker follows some rules
 - audience expects that these rules are followed
- Grice's (conversational) maxims
 - **maxim of quality**: tell the truth
 - **maxim of quantity**: say (only) what is necessary
 - **maxim of relevance**: stay relevant to the topic
 - **maxim of manner**: avoid obscurity, ambiguity, ...

„Where is Tom?” – „A blue Škoda stays in front of Iva's house.”

- **Conversation implicatures**
 - when the principles are (or aren't) followed
 - „Hana has 4 children.”
 - „War is war.”

Speech acts

- Transfer of information is not the only purpose of language
 - „I am sorry.”
 - „I lodge a protest.”
 - „I give you my word.”
 - „I bequeath my house to my aunt Alice.”
 - „I now pronounce you husband and wife.”
- Each sentence has
 - informative aspect (meaning)
 - performative aspect (changes the state of the world)

Speech acts

- Locutionary act
 - meaning of the sentence
 - “is there some salt?”
- Illocutionary act
 - meaning as understood
 - “bring me some salt”
- Perlocutionary act
 - the action performed
 - the act of bringing the salt