

Seminar 4. Pragmatics

<i>Questions for discussion</i>	<i>Recommended reading</i>
1. Why is pragmatics commonly defined as meaning in use or meaning in context? Dwell on two competing approaches to pragmatics.	Thomas, J. (2013). <i>Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : Routledge: London and New York. P. 1–5.
2. Characterize the following levels of meaning: abstract meaning, contextual meaning/utterance meaning. What is <i>force</i> of the utterance?	Thomas, J. (2013). <i>Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : Routledge: London and New York, Pp. 1–5. Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., Hyams, N. (2003). <i>An Introduction to language</i> . 7 th edition. Thomson: Wadsworth, P. 207.
3. Why is John Langshaw Austin credited with generating interest in pragmatics? Why is he called an ‘ordinary language philosopher’?	Thomas, J. (2013). <i>Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : Routledge: London and New York, Pp. 28–29.
4. What is Austin’s performative hypothesis about? Why did it eventually collapse?	Thomas, J. (2013). <i>Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : Routledge: London and New York, Pp. 33–34; 44–47.
5. Prove that a speech act has two meanings: the surface meaning and the intended meaning. Give examples of speech acts.	Gordon, T. (2012). <i>The educator’s guide to linguistics</i> . Information Age Publishing, Inc. Charlotte, Pp. 66–76.
6. What is implicature? Explain the difference between conventional and conversational implicatures. Give examples.	Thomas, J. (2013). <i>Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : Routledge: London and New York, Pp. 57–61.
7. Explain the mechanisms by which people interpret conversational implicature in terms of Gricean Cooperative principle.	Thomas, J. (2013). <i>Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : Routledge: London and New York, Pp. 61–63.
8. Comment on Gricean maxims. What happens when people fail to observe the maxims?	Thomas, J. (2013). <i>Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : Routledge: London and New York, Pp. 63–72.
9. Why has the term <i>politeness</i> caused much misunderstanding in modern pragmatics? Name the phenomena that are closely connected to politeness. Prove that <i>deference</i> and <i>register</i> have little connection with pragmatics.	Thomas, J. (2013). <i>Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : Routledge: London and New York, Pp. 149–158.

10. Why is it unsafe to equate surface linguistic forms with politeness? Give at least three reasons.	Thomas, J. (2013). <i>Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : Routledge: London and New York, Pp. 155–157.
11. Focus on politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon. What is the difference between ambivalence and politeness?	Thomas, J. (2013). <i>Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : Routledge: London and New York, Pp. 157–159.
12. Spell out the conversational-maxim approach to politeness. What is Politeness principle? Which maxims explain the relationship between sense and force in human conversation according to Geoffrey Leech?	Thomas, J. (2013). <i>Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : Routledge: London and New York, Pp. 159–168. Leech, G. N. <i>Principles of Pragmatics</i> (1983). Longman: London & New York.
13. Spell out the face-management approach to politeness. What is Face theory in a nutshell? Who most contributed to it?	Redmond, Mark V. (2015). <i>Face and Politeness Theories</i> . English Technical Reports and White Papers. 2. https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_reports/2 .
14. Define the term <i>face</i> as a Face theory element? Dwell upon positive and negative faces.	Redmond, Mark V. (2015). <i>Face and Politeness Theories</i> . English Technical Reports and White Papers. 2. https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_reports/2
15. What acts are known as face-threatening acts? What feelings do they produce? Give examples of acts that can threaten positive face and negative face.	Redmond, Mark V. (2015). <i>Face and Politeness Theories</i> . English Technical Reports and White Papers. 2. https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_reports/2
16. Disclose the notion of <i>facework</i> . Which strategies do people use to manage threats to their own faces and to other people's faces?	Redmond, Mark V. (2015). <i>Face and Politeness Theories</i> . English Technical Reports and White Papers. 2. https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_reports/2

Practical tasks

Task 1: Read the dialogue between Hamlet and Polonius. What maxims of conversation does Hamlet violate? Explain.

Polonius: What do you read, my lord?

Hamlet: Words, words, words.

Polonius: What is the matter, my lord?

Hamlet: Between who?

Polonius: I mean, the matter you read, my lord.

Hamlet: Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have gray beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams: all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potentially believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for yourself, sir, should grow old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

Task 2: Which utterance does not contain a performative verb?

a. <i>I deny your charge.</i>	c. <i>I sentence you to three years in prison.</i>	e. <i>I resign.</i>
b. <i>I bequeath you my gold watch.</i>	d. <i>I know you.</i>	f. <i>I apologize.</i>

Task 3: Read through the following dialogues. Does Speaker B follow, violate or flout the maxim. Which maxim is it?

1	A: Have you seen my keys? B: They're in the kitchen.	4	A: Have you seen my box of chocolates? B: Chocolate is bad for your health.
2	A: Have you seen my keys? B: You left them at work. [B has no idea where A's keys actually are.]	5	A: I hear you went to the opera last night; how was the lead singer? B: The singer produced a series of sounds corresponding closely to the score of an aria from 'Rigoletto'.
3	A: Have you seen my box of chocolates? B: They're in your room.	6	A: Do you know where Fred is? B: He's in the kitchen or the living room.

Task 4: Certain types of question–answer jokes or riddles seem to depend for their effect on the reanalysis of a presupposition in the question after the answer is given. For example, in the question *What two things can you never eat before breakfast?*, the phrase *two things* invites an interpretation that presupposes two “specific things,” such as individual food items, as objects of the verb *eat*. When you hear the answer *Lunch and dinner*, you have to replace the first presupposition with another assuming two “general things,” not individual food items, as objects of the verb *eat*.

Can you identify the reanalyzed presuppositions involved in the following jokes?

1. Q: *Why do birds fly south in the winter?*

A: *Because it's too far to walk.*

2. Q: *Did you know that in New York someone is knocked down by a car every ten minutes?*

A: *No, but I imagine he must be getting really tired of it.*

3. In a clothing store, a customer asks a salesperson:

Q: *Can I try on that dress in the window?*

A: *Well, maybe it would be better to use the dressing room.*

Task 5: Watch the video dedicated to Chapters 1 and 2 of the book “How to do things with words” written by J. L. Austin. The lecture is about the nuts and bolts of Austin’s argument. Answer the questions:

1. What is the difference between constatives and performatives?
2. What conditions are necessary for a performative statement to take place?