Review Article

The Instinct of Inferences and False Executions The Process of Understanding beyond Meanings

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ABSTRACT

This work aims to demonstrate that linguistic acts often constitute false executions, diverging from the established rules of a linguistic game or the maxims of cooperation. Enunciation, in this sense, relies heavily on assumptions of ambiguity and vagueness, functioning primarily through an indeterminate inferential mechanism. Were this not the case, we would be compelled to exclude from discourse a significant number of linguistic forms that deviate from established classifications. Drawing on Austin's concept of illocutionary force and conditions of happiness, as presented in his Harvard lectures, and integrating Grice's analysis of logic and conversation, particularly his focus on implicature, this study highlights how certain assertive-representative expressions—despite their scientific inaccuracy—can still induce behavioral changes in recipients. By examining the performative nature of language and the dynamics of inference, we aim to shed light on how speakers navigate these linguistic ambiguities, offering a more comprehensive understanding of communication's practical functions in real-world contexts. In doing so, we challenge traditional boundaries of linguistic theory, suggesting that the role of inference and expectation is more central to communication than previously acknowledged.

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Pràgma

"Pay attention!": the sentence is, undoubtedly, well-constructed: its core meaning hinges on the imperative mood, a verbal form that generally conveys the directive act of the speaker (e.g., ordering, requesting, imploring). However, when stripped of contextual grounding and the linguistic-intentional dynamics between interlocutors, the phrase can become a communicative anomaly or, alternatively, a source of interpretative distortion. For instance, is the speaker issuing a command in a threatening tone, or are they offering a gesture of care? This interpretative ambiguity underscores the relevance of investigating the pragmatics of language—a discipline whose foundational principles are often credited to Charles William Morris. In *Foundations of the Theory of Signs and Signs, Language, and Behavior*, Morris systematically explored the relationship between language use, the user, and the spatiotemporal context [1,2].

His work remains pivotal, not only for its undeniable epistemological contributions but also for its emphasis on situating communication within a broader framework of human action and interaction. Etymologically, the term "pragmatics" derives from the Greek adjective πραγματικός (*pragmatikos*), meaning "pertaining to deeds," itself rooted in πρᾶγμα (*pragma*), signifying "deed," "event," or something of consequence. This linguistic origin reflects a fundamental principle: human communication is inherently event-based, transcending the mere application of rules

for describing states of affairs or identifying objects. If the meaning of "Pay attention!" could be determined purely through fixed rules, its communicative intent would remain unambiguous even in the absence of context. Yet, this is seldom the case. For much of its history, the philosophy of language pursued the construction of an ideal-formal language—a project championed by figures such as Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Alfred Tarski, and Willard Van Orman Quine. Claudia Bianchi, in her Introduction to the Philosophy of Language, provides a lucid synthesis of these early 20th-century approaches, highlighting their emphasis on logical and formal precision. In the traditional model, a sentence was primarily viewed as a vehicle for describing the world, with its truth value contingent on the correspondence between linguistic representation and an external state of affairs. Frege's contributions to this paradigm are particularly significant. In his 1891 essay Funktion und Begriff, Frege dissected propositions into functional and referential components. For example, the sentence "Caesar conquered Gaul" comprises the subject "Caesar" and the predicate "conquered Gaul," with the latter functioning as a logical operator that achieves completeness only when saturated with an object (e.g., a proper noun). In this framework, predicates act as constraints, determining the meaning and reference of the overall proposition. However, Frege's formal-logical approach is ill-suited for interpreting expressions such as "Pay attention!" and fails to account for the complex psychological and intentional dimensions of linguistic interaction. Recognizing these limitations, the 20th century witnessed a paradigm shift toward the study of ordinary language, where usage and speaker intent took center stage. Key figures in this movement include

John Langshaw Austin and Herbert Paul Grice, whose seminal contributions— speech act theory and the cooperative principle, respectively—will be explored in greater detail in the sections that follow. Austin's differentiation between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, and Grice's insights into implicature, offer critical tools for understanding how utterances like "Pay attention!" derive their meaning from contextual and pragmatic factors, rather than from purely syntactic or semantic rules. By reframing language as an action and emphasizing the interplay of context, intent, and interpretation, pragmatics challenges the reductionist tendencies of earlier formalist traditions. This shift opens avenues for examining how directive expressions, far from being anomalous, illuminate the rich complexity of human communication.

Limitation and False Execution

In the era of social networks, where platforms serve as both amplifiers and observatories of linguistic phenomena, we observe that false information can spread with remarkable speed. Despite its inherent falsehood, such information often proves effective enough to alter user behavior. Individuals, in many cases, even form "digital guerrilla" groups to defend the credibility of such misinformation. This phenomenon starkly demonstrates that interpreting statements solely through logical-formal frameworks is inadequate. Some other mechanism—psychosemantic and pragmatic—must underlie our capacity to understand and act upon such statements, even when they lack logical-formal correctness. Language, after all, exists only within the dynamic and interpretative practices of a community that gives it life. Certain propositions, while manifestly absurd, may nonetheless acquire functional truth-value in specific contexts. Consider examples like "Counting sheep helps you sleep" or "The Island of Happiness is in the Mediterranean." These assertions are patently untenable, yet they may gain traction through specific communicative channels if speakers accept them within their perceived domain of reality. Such cases reveal the workings of a logic of limitation, wherein the sender deliberately suppresses precise informational content, thereby transforming the recipient into an active agent of interpretation, development, and dissemination. This process, which I term false execution, highlights how understanding often arises not from clarity but from productive misunderstanding—a concept largely overlooked in the philosophy of language and underexplored in pragmatics.

An illustrative example can be found in the seemingly innocuous sentence: "Everyone knows he is dangerous."

At first glance, this sentence appears unproblematic and syntactically regular. However, its illocutionary force is amplified by three critical elements

- **The Factual Predicate:** The verb "knows" functions as a factual predicate, projecting an apparent truth into the proposition by invoking a presupposed reality. As noted by Kiparsky & Kiparsky and further explored by Lombardi Vallauri, factual predicates often embed unverifiable assumptions, making the conveyed meaning appear self-evident. Politicians frequently exploit this strategy with phrases like "Citizens know that…" or "The people believe that…" [3,4]. These constructions introduce propositions (e.g., "p") as if their truth were beyond question, relying on the perceived authority of the speaker to lend credibility.
- **Quantification through "Everyone":** The pronoun "everyone," acting as a subject, functions as an extensional quantifier. Its vagueness regarding scope and referent broadens

inferential access for the recipient. This ambiguity encourages listeners to interpret the claim in ways that align with their own cognitive or social frameworks, thereby fostering deeper engagement with the proposition.
- **Ambiguity of "Dangerous":** The adjective "dangerous" lacks a precise operational definition, making its meaning highly context- dependent. What constitutes "danger"? How is it measured? As with the earlier example of "Pay attention!"—where ambiguity left the speaker's intent unclear— "dangerous" serves as a semantically indeterminate category. The vagueness of such terms, far from diminishing their communicative power, invites participants to fill in the gaps with their own interpretations, thus enhancing their involvement. This process exemplifies how ambiguity and vagueness can enrich discourse by stimulating active participation and inferential reasoning.

The concept of false execution arises from this instinctive human tendency toward inferential participation. It reflects a collective dynamic in which individuals derive meaning through shared—but not necessarily accurate—interpretations of ambiguous linguistic elements. This phenomenon aligns with Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory, which posits that communication relies on the cognitive effort required to bridge gaps between explicit and implicit content [5]. In cases of false execution, such bridging efforts are particularly pronounced, as speakers and listeners collaboratively construct meaning from incomplete or ambiguous signals. To understand false execution as a broader linguistic principle, we must consider its implications for the philosophy of language and pragmatics. Traditional models have largely assumed that comprehension arises from clarity and logical structure. However, false execution challenges this assumption by demonstrating that misunderstanding is not merely a failure of communication but a fundamental mechanism by which language evolves and adapts to the interpretative practices of its users. This insight opens new avenues for exploring the interplay between ambiguity, inferential reasoning, and the social dynamics of language in an increasingly interconnected digital age.

Ambiguity

In the field of pragmatics, the concept of ambiguity is a central concern, and many scholars distinguish between lexical ambiguity and syntactic-structural ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity often arises in cases of polysemy, where a single word has multiple meanings depending on context. It can also stem from the lack of a one-to-one correspondence between the signifier (the word) and the signified (the concept or object it represents). Structural ambiguity, on the other hand, occurs when the syntax or structure of a sentence allows for multiple interpretations. A classic example is the crash blossom phenomenon, derived from the ambiguous headline "Violinist linked to JAL crash blossoms," which could either refer to a violinist involved in the JAL crash or a blossoming story about a violinist in connection with the event. However, a type of ambiguity that is often overlooked in the pragmatic literature is that related to the intentional and inferential process, which connects the speaker's communicative intention with the recipient's interpretation. This can be described as systemic ambiguity, a phenomenon that arises not from the words themselves but from the interaction between language use, social context, and cognitive processes. As we observed with the example "Be careful!"—where the speaker's intent could either be protective or threatening— systemic ambiguity affects the interpretation of practically any utterance. For instance, if one says, "I have a stomach ache" in response to an invitation to go out, intending to decline without

explicitly saying so, this utterance creates a "break" in the dialectical relationship, and the message is understood through misunderstanding. Here, the recipient's inferential process plays a crucial role in the final interpretation, which may or may not align with the speaker's original intent. This type of ambiguity is deeply connected to the implicature phenomenon described by Grice in Logic and Conversation, where the speaker implies meaning through context and shared knowledge, rather than through explicit Statement [6]. Grice's theory of implicature, particularly the distinction between conventional implicatures and conversational implicatures, offers a framework for understanding how speakers and listeners navigate the grey areas between what is said and what is meant. In cases of systemic ambiguity, the listener's ability to infer the speaker's intention based on pragmatic cues—such as social norms, tone, and context—becomes pivotal. The notion of implicature thus intersects with the idea of systemic ambiguity by illustrating how much of what is communicated relies on inference rather than explicit meaning. This raises important questions about how ambiguity functions not just as a formal property of language, but as a dynamic process that engages both the cognitive capacities of the speaker and the interpretative efforts of the listener. Furthermore, systemic ambiguity is not merely a theoretical curiosity but a practical feature of everyday communication. As highlighted by scholars like Sperber and Wilson in Relevance Theory, human communication is inherently inferential, and much of the meaning conveyed in conversation exists beneath the surface of explicit statements [5]. From this perspective, systemic ambiguity reflects the rich interpretative processes that allow for the flexibility and adaptability of language. It suggests that communication is often an emergent process, shaped by the interaction of shared assumptions, contextual cues, and the speaker's and listener's social and cognitive resources. In the digital age, where meaning can be quickly shaped and reshaped in online discourse, the phenomenon of systemic ambiguity takes on new dimensions. The rapid spread of information on social networks often relies on this type of ambiguity to engage users and encourage interaction, sometimes with unintended or even false interpretations. In conclusion, the study of ambiguity must move beyond traditional categorizations to account for the complex ways in which meaning is created, negotiated, and transformed in the interaction between speaker and listener. The concept of systemic ambiguity, particularly in the context of inferential and intentional processes, represents a crucial extension of current pragmatic theories and provides a valuable lens through which to explore the dynamics of human communication.

Dèixis

The term dèixis originates from the Greek δέῖξις (dèixis), meaning "demonstration" or "proof," which, in turn, derives from the verb δείκνυμι (dèiknymi), meaning "I show." The recovery of the original gloss and its meaning allows us to enter the semantic dimension of showing: deictic expressions—such as I, here, there, this, and similar terms—are linguistic elements through which the speaker situates themselves in space and time. However, their interpretation cannot be reduced solely to the logical or grammatical analysis of the parts of speech, nor to exploring their truth conditions. In practice, the use of deictics always depends on an extralinguistic factor and a deictic center [7]. For instance, in the sentence "Tomorrow, I will be with you a little here and a little there", the deictics are represented by I, tomorrow, you, here, and there.

The deictic center, in this case, typically coincides with the speaker of the utterance, whose spatial and temporal references vary depending on the intention to "show" them to the listener with whom the relationship is established. This relationship is not strictly defined by a class of linguistic terms, but by the context in which the communication takes place. The meaning of being with in the speaker's context remains ambiguous, just as the spatial determinations a little here and a little there are not fully clear. These could be objects of allegorical or metaphorical interpretation, without altering their potential spatial locations. The systematic categorization of deixis into personal, spatial, and temporal types was first rigorously organized by Charles Fillmore in his Santa Cruz Lectures on Deixis, and further developed by John Lyons in Semantics, a substantial work of significant relevance to the field [8,9]. However, what we wish to highlight here is that deixis always implies something "invisible" in discourse—a latent entity or framework through which social actors engage in inferential action. In other words, deictic expressions not only rely on shared situational contexts but also on the underlying social and cognitive structures that govern inference and meaning construction. This implicit infrastructure authorizes the inferential leaps that listeners make when interpreting deictic expressions. In this light, deixis is not only a tool for spatial- temporal orientation but also an inherently social and pragmatic function, where the listener is invited to infer the speaker's intentions, context, and social alignment. As such, deixis plays a crucial role in pragmatic theories of communication, where the meaning of utterances is often not entirely encoded in the linguistic form but rather in the shared assumptions, mutual knowledge, and cultural context between participants. This can be understood in terms of relevance theory, which emphasizes how hearers make pragmatic inferences based on minimal cues and expectations about what is most relevant in a given context [5]. Furthermore, deictic expressions can be seen as markers of social deixis, a category that reflects how language serves not just to locate participants in space and time, but also to position them within social hierarchies, identities, and relationships. As noted by Levinson, the use of deictic terms can reveal the social dynamics at play in communication, such as power, politeness, or solidarity [10]. For example, the deictic use of "I" and "you" is not merely a spatial-temporal marker but also an indication of social roles and intersubjective alignment, especially in the context of formal and informal speech acts. This layer of meaning—often overlooked in traditional linguistic analyses—represents a crucial aspect of deictic expression and points to the broader social functions of language. Finally, it is important to emphasize the pragmatic dimension of deixis, particularly in online discourse. In digital communication, where the physical context of the speaker and listener is often obscured, deictic expressions are not only bound to the linguistic context but also to the technological environment in which they appear. For example, a term like "here" in a virtual meeting or in an online comment section does not refer to a physical space but instead points to the shared, virtual presence of participants. This adaptation of deictic expressions in digital environments reflects the evolving nature of language in response to new forms of social interaction and highlights the need for a more dynamic and context-sensitive understanding of deixis in contemporary communication. In conclusion, deictic expressions are far more than simple markers of space and time; they are deeply embedded in the social and inferential processes of communication. Their interpretation is shaped by both the immediate context and the broader social frameworks that govern our understanding of meaning. Thus, deixis provides an innovative lens through which we can examine how language functions not only as a tool for conveying information but also as a mechanism for constructing social reality.

Presupposition

From our perspective, in his Essays on General Linguistics, Roman Jakobson provides a paradigmatic description of the cause of false execution, even though this was not his primary intention. Jakobson writes: "Speaking to a new interlocutor, everyone always tries, deliberately or involuntarily, to converge on a common vocabulary: either out of complacency or simply to be understood... Private property does not exist in language" [11]. The process of converging on a common vocabulary involves, at its core, adhering to an unwritten rule of restriction and adaptation. This alignment allows communicative intentions to be inferred and understood within the shared meanings of a speech community. The statement "If everyone knows that someone is dangerous" illustrates this dynamic—regardless of how danger is manifested or perceived by individuals, participants in the discourse adhere to a shared conceptual framework that allows them to infer danger's communicative intent. This tendency to infer and assume shared validity is a foundational feature of what we refer to as presupposition. Presupposition refers to information that is assumed or taken for granted within a discourse, even though it is not explicitly stated within the proposition itself. For instance, "Did you turn off the light?" presupposes that the light was on, just as "Caius stopped studying" presupposes that Caius had previously been studying. Similarly, "They claim freedom of opinion" presupposes that they lack freedom of opinion. These examples show that presupposition typically operates beneath the surface of a statement, influencing the way speakers and listeners interpret meaning. It is a form of implicit knowledge that participants in discourse rely on to maintain communicative coherence. As noted by scholars, the triggers for presupposition are not limited to verbs but can extend to adjectives, adverbs, and entire phrases, depending on the context [4].

For example,
- "Your life will change with your first digital diary": The use of "first" presupposes that more than one diary will be bought.
- "This SUV coupé amazes you more and more": The phrase "more and more" presupposes that the person has already been amazed.
- "You too take part in the competition!": The word "too" presupposes that others are already participating.

However, presupposition is not merely a grammatical phenomenon—it has crucial epistemological and social implications. The theory of presupposition, first outlined in formal semantics by Frege and Russell, has been further developed in pragmatic theories, especially through the work of Stalnaker and Karttunen, who emphasized that presuppositions are part of the background knowledge shared by communicative participants [12-13]. In their view, presupposition operates as a type of "common ground" that must be maintained throughout a conversation to ensure mutual understanding. Moreover, presuppositions are crucial for understanding how speakers navigate social and epistemic realities. Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory suggests that presuppositions function within the broader framework of epistemic cooperation, guiding how individuals process information that aligns with or challenges their existing beliefs [5]. In the context of everyday communication, presuppositions enable efficient cognitive processing by minimizing the amount of information that needs to be explicitly stated. The listener is expected to automatically fill in the gaps based on shared knowledge, which highlights the social nature of language and its role in constructing reality. Additionally, presuppositions and their triggers (e.g., definite descriptions, iterated adjectives, and certain verbs) are integral to understanding pragmatic presuppositions in discourse. For instance, the presupposition triggered by the definite article in "the king of France" involves the assumption that a king of France exists, which, if false, results in presupposition failure—a concept developed by Frege and explored in modern semantics [12]. This phenomenon is particularly evident in online discourse, where presuppositions can be contested or even manipulated to create persuasive or misleading narratives. The use of presupposition in fake news or social media content often exploits the assumption of shared knowledge, whereby the reader or viewer is implicitly expected to accept the validity of a claim without critical examination. Presupposition failure is another important concept that deserves attention. It occurs when the presupposed background knowledge is not shared, leading to confusion or communication breakdown. In such cases, presuppositions may trigger presupposition triggers that lead to unexpected interpretative outcomes or misunderstandings. The failure of a presupposition can be used as a tool for subverting or challenging social norms and expectations, particularly in contexts of political or ideological discourse. This is especially relevant in situations where power relations or social hierarchies shape the acceptance or rejection of presuppositions. In conclusion, presupposition plays a central role in the structure of everyday communication, mediating between what is explicitly said and what is implicitly understood. It operates as a crucial mechanism for the transmission of knowledge, beliefs, and social values within a discourse. By understanding the nature of presupposition and its epistemic and social functions, we can better appreciate the complex dynamics of meaning-making in communication, both in face-to-face interactions and in the digital age.

Metaphors

Metaphor represents a decisive proof of the shifts in meaning and the approximations of meaning with which we construct our discourse, constantly oscillating between clarity and ambiguity, guided by an instinct for inference. The Greek verb μεταφέρειν (metapherèin), from which the noun metaphor derives, means to transfer, transport, and change. Thus, metaphor is a transfer of sense and meaning based on substitution and the analogical relationship between what is replaced and the figure chosen to introduce into discourse. Beatrice Mortara Garavelli defines it as follows:

"Replacement of a word with another whose literal sense has some similarity to the literal sense of the replaced word. This definition... conforms to the conception of tropes as substitution figures (immutatio) which concern single words (in verbis singulis). The 'place' that is applied to find this trope is the locus a simili, the similarity, precisely; the procedure is the contraction of a comparison: an entity is identified with that with which it is 'compared'; hence the definition of metaphor as similitudo brevior [2]."

In the context of poetic art, substitution and contraction are primarily technical operations and expressions of the author's expertise. However, in everyday life, they evolve into phenomena that facilitate and expand communication. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, in their influential 1980 work Metaphors We Live By,

assert:
Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature [14].

This assertion is critical in understanding the cognitive role of metaphors: far from being mere linguistic flourishes, metaphors shape our perceptions and actions, influencing how we understand complex, abstract, and even emotional phenomena. For instance, when we say "I'm feeling down", we make an implicit metaphorical connection between a state of mind and a spatial direction. Despite the absence of a physical "down" to correspond to sadness, we intuitively understand the metaphor, demonstrating how deeply metaphorical systems are embedded in human cognition. As Lakoff and Johnson observe, metaphors of orientation—such as up-down, center-periphery, or front-back—are fundamental to our conceptualization of experiences and behaviors. These metaphors are not just linguistic but conceptual systems through which we structure our understanding of the world. They form the backbone of our everyday reasoning, guiding actions and interpretations of reality. In this sense, the language of life is a continuous negotiation of meaning—a figure of aggregation, as it were. The sentence "You are always at the center of my thoughts" is a straightforward example of this phenomenon. The notion of "center" is not a literal spatial reference but rather a metaphorical place of focus or importance. As Heine et al. suggest, metaphors act as vehicles for projecting abstract concepts into more tangible realms, enabling speakers and listeners to share complex, often ineffable ideas through familiar, grounded experiences [15]. Moreover, metaphors mediate between concrete and abstract realms, often reflecting cultural and psychological boundaries. The metaphor of the skin, for instance, represents a boundary: "The skin is a boundary; touching is union; well-being is high; illness is below," all reflecting a cognitive schema of containment and separation. Lakoff and Johnson elaborate on how these metaphors stem from our interaction with the physical world, shaping our experiences through embodied cognition. As they put it: "We experience many things, through sight and touch, as having distinct boundaries, and we often project boundaries upon them—conceptualizing them as entities and often as containers (e.g., forests, clearings, clouds, etc.)" [14]. This framing aligns with cognitive linguistics, which emphasizes how metaphors are not just linguistic expressions but cognitive tools for making sense of our experiences and organizing knowledge. The transformative power of metaphors is also evident when abstract or non-agentive concepts are attributed human qualities. When we say, "Life deceived me", we do not consider life as possessing the agency to deceive, yet we project human-like attributes onto it. This metaphorical personification helps us conceptualize life events and personal experiences in a way that renders them comprehensible and communicable. Langer emphasizes that such symbolic transformations allow us to navigate complex, often paradoxical human experiences, making them more relatable and emotionally resonant [16]. As Lakoff and Johnson further argue, metaphors function within larger conceptual systems that structure not just our language but also our thought patterns and behaviors.

Concepts such as life is a journey, time is money, and arguing is war are embedded in everyday discourse, serving as tools through which we organize experience. These conceptual metaphors shape not only the way we speak but also how we interpret and interact with the world around us. In this sense, metaphors are essential for cultural communication, as they encode shared beliefs and values, facilitating understanding and cooperation among members of a community. Furthermore, conceptual metaphors are often dynamic and shaped by context. As Krennmayr, Kaal, and Krennmayr argue, metaphors are not static but evolve in response to changing cultural, social, and political circumstances [17]. The way we talk about justice, freedom, or environmentalism is shaped by the metaphors that gain prominence in discourse, reflecting shifts in collective consciousness and values. In summary, metaphors are not mere rhetorical devices but fundamental structures of human thought and communication. They enable us to make sense of the world by projecting familiar concepts onto abstract or unfamiliar domains. Through the lens of cognitive and cultural theory, we understand that metaphors mediate our experiences, shaping our interpretations and actions in profound ways. Metaphor theory, particularly as developed by Lakoff and Johnson, opens up new avenues for exploring the cognitive, social, and pragmatic dimensions of language, shedding light on the powerful role metaphors play in constructing both individual and collective realities.

Performative Acts and Conditions of Happiness
John Langshaw Austin, widely regarded as the first rigorous analyst of ordinary language, devoted a significant portion of his scholarly work, particularly in his later years, to investigating the enunciation process. His focus was on the efficacy and validity of linguistic acts, culminating in the groundbreaking distinction between constative and performative utterances. For instance, a statement such as "The cat is on the pillow" exemplifies the constative nature of language, as it aims to describe a state of affairs. In contrast, a performative utterance like "I take you as my legitimate wife" or "I baptize you" does not merely describe reality but enacts a change in it. This distinction forms the crux of his seminal lectures at Harvard, later published as How to Do Things with Words. "Once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence, but the utterance of a statement in a linguistic situation, it is almost no longer possible not to realize that asserting is performing an act" [18]. Austin's initial opposition between constatives and performatives was eventually subsumed under a more comprehensive theory of speech acts, which encompasses the various dimensions of linguistic execution. Even seemingly descriptive statements, such as "I'm hungry," can, in specific contexts, function as performative acts—prompting actions such as procuring food. To account for this broader perspective, Austin introduced a tripartite framework for analyzing linguistic acts

- **Locutionary Act:** The act of saying something, encompassing three aspects—(a) the phonetic (the production of sounds), (b) the phatic (the adherence of the utterance to the rules of a particular language), and (c) the rhetic (the assignment of meaning and reference).
- **Illocutionary Act:** The performative function accomplished by the utterance. For example, the statement "Close the door" performs an act of ordering, while "I promise to be careful" performs an act of promising.
- **Perlocutionary Act:** The effect or consequence of the illocutionary act on the recipient, such as persuading, reassuring, or motivating them.

Austin's taxonomy of speech acts was subsequently refined by John Searle, who proposed a classification that aligns illocutionary acts with broader functional categories

- **Representatives:** Expressing belief or knowledge, e.g., asserting, concluding, or admitting.
- **Directives:** Attempting to get the hearer to do something, e.g., ordering, requesting, or advising.
- **Commissives:** Committing the speaker to future action, e.g., promising, threatening.
- **Expressives:** Expressing psychological states, e.g., thanking, apologizing.
- **Declarations:** Bringing about a change in the external world through linguistic authority, e.g., declaring war, naming, baptizing [19].

Conditions of Happiness and Contextual Appropriateness

Austin's exploration of performatives also introduced the concept of felicity conditions, or criteria that must be met for a speech act to be considered valid and successful

- **Conventionality of Procedure (A.1):** The act must adhere to an accepted conventional procedure.
- **Appropriateness of Context (A.2):** The circumstances of utterance must align with the procedure.
- **Correct Execution (B.1):** All participants must properly follow the procedure.
- **Complete Execution (B.2):** The procedure must be carried out fully.
- **Sincerity of Participants (Γ.1):** Speakers must genuinely intend to fulfill the act.
- **Corresponding Behavior (Γ.2):** The recipient must act in accordance with the performative act.

For example, the utterance "*I promise to be careful*" requires the recipient to recognize the promise, the context to permit such a declaration, and both participants to act congruently with its intended meaning. If any condition fails, the performative act collapses into *infelicity.*

Resilience and Fragility of Felicity Conditions

Austin's framework allows us to interrogate the vulnerability of performatives. Consider the utterance "I take you as my legitimate wife" in a context where one participant acts deceitfully, undermining sincerity (Γ.1). At first glance, the speech act appears successful; however, closer inspection reveals that its felicity conditions—particularly B.1, Γ.1, and Γ.2—are violated. This raises a profound philosophical question: Can performative acts exist within contexts that permit deception or misunderstanding? This question is particularly relevant in social contexts where implicit norms govern interaction. As Austin himself notes: "With the performative utterance, we pay maximum attention to the illocutionary force of the utterance and abstract from the dimension of factual correspondence" [18].

Yet, real-world linguistic exchanges often deviate from these ideal conditions. Speakers may misunderstand or deliberately misinterpret the illocutionary force of an utterance, leading to false executions. For instance, group dynamics can introduce what we might call collective implicature, where participants adhere to shared assumptions despite individual misunderstandings.

Innovative Perspective: Misunderstanding as Performative Strategy

Traditional analyses of performative acts focus on achieving felicity; however, recent scholarship has explored how misunderstanding can itself function as a performative strategy. This perspective challenges the notion that misunderstanding always leads to failure. As Fricker argues in her study on epistemic injustice, misunderstandings can perpetuate systemic power imbalances, subtly reinforcing social hierarchies even in ostensibly cooperative linguistic exchanges [20]. Furthermore, Laugier proposes that misunderstanding is not merely a deviation but an integral part of linguistic interaction, particularly in contexts of cultural or ideological plurality [10]. In such cases, interlocutors might not fully grasp the intended illocutionary force of a performative act but may still adhere to its broader pragmatic implicature, enabling communication to proceed on a superficial level. This opens new avenues for research into the resilience of performatives: how speech acts persist and function within contexts marked by ambiguity, deception, or partial comprehension. It also invites reconsideration of the boundaries between illocutionary and perlocutionary effects, emphasizing the fluid interplay between intent and reception in dynamic conversational settings.

The Maxims of Cooperation and the Implicatum

A purely ideal context and regular performativity are insufficient to construct a comprehensive theory of the linguistic operations of speakers. Human communication frequently transcends the boundaries of truth conditions and felicity rules, sometimes operating even in the absence of concrete referents. This necessitates grounding linguistic theory in the principles of convergence and inference, the only mechanisms capable of accommodating the phenomena of false executions and their widespread dissemination. In this respect, Grice's framework builds on earlier traditions, notably the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, who, nearly seventy years earlier, explored the role of mediation in knowledge during his Harvard lectures [21].

"My manifest aim is to consider verbal exchange as a case or a special type of intentional and rational behavior [6]."

Grice posited that conversation is made possible by a cooperative disposition among speakers. He formulated the Cooperative Principle, supported by four maxims that regulate conversational behavior

- **Quantity:** Provide the right amount of information—neither too much nor too little.
- **Quality:** Avoid falsehoods or statements unsupported by adequate evidence.
- **Relation:** Be relevant to the topic of discussion.
- **Manner:** Strive for clarity, avoiding obscurity, ambiguity, and unnecessary verbosity.

While these maxims serve as normative guides, Grice's most profound contribution lies in his theory of conventional and conversational implicatures. Implicatures address the inherent fragility of conversational cooperation, acknowledging the potential for misinformation, deception, and bad faith—conditions that mirror the limitations of Austinian felicity rules.

Conventional and Conversational Implicatures: The Inference Mechanism

Grice defined conventional implicatures as meaning shifts generated by specific elements of discourse— particularly connectives—that act as activators of implicature. For Instance:

"He is English, therefore courageous [6]."

Here, the coordinating conjunction "therefore" creates a spurious link between nationality and courage, despite the lack of a logical basis for such a connection. Nevertheless, interlocutors can infer a relational link, even if articulating its rationale proves challenging. Similar connectives, such as but, in short, even, or not yet, often operate in analogous ways. For example: *"Even she came to the party"* implies a broader presupposition: *"Everyone really came."*

Conversational implicatures, in contrast, emerge from entire propositions and rely on contextual cues rather than lexical triggers. Consider this example provided by Grice [6]
A: *"It seems Rossi doesn't have a girlfriend these days."*
B: *"He has gone to New York many times recently."*

While B's response may initially seem irrelevant, it invites the inference that Rossi's trips to New York might be connected

to meeting someone, perhaps a romantic interest. The shared understanding between A and B is not explicitly lexical but hinges on the implicatum, which encapsulates presuppositional elements of their conversational context.

Critical Perspective: The Fragility of the Cooperative Principle
Grice's model assumes a baseline of rationality and intentionality among speakers, yet real-world communication often deviates from these ideals. Miscommunication, manipulation, and divergence in presuppositional frameworks challenge the universality of the Cooperative Principle. For example, in cases of strategic ambiguity, speakers may deliberately exploit implicatures to obscure meaning or achieve ulterior motives. As Saul observes, conversational implicatures can be wielded as tools for evasion or indirect persuasion, complicating Grice's assumption of cooperative intent. Moreover, the principle of relation often intersects with cultural and contextual variability. What counts as "relevant" in one cultural or social context may appear tangential or even nonsensical in another. As Blum-Kulka demonstrates in her cross-cultural pragmatics research, the interpretation of implicatures is heavily influenced by cultural norms, underscoring the need for a more nuanced approach to conversational analysis [22].

Innovative Perspective: Implicatures in Digital Communication
In the age of digital communication, the dynamics of implicatures have evolved significantly. Platforms like social media, messaging apps, and forums introduce textual brevity, emojis, and memes as new vehicles for implicatures. For example, a simple emoji response can carry layered conversational implicatures, such as irony or approval, which are contextually understood by participants but resistant to traditional linguistic analysis. Recent studies, such as those by Dynel, highlight how online environments foster both cooperation and manipulation through implicatures [23]. The brevity and asynchronous nature of digital exchanges often amplify the risk of misinterpretation while simultaneously enabling users to craft more nuanced and strategic communicative acts.

Future Directions: Toward a Theory of Dynamic Implicature
To address the limitations of Grice's original framework, future research could explore a dynamic implicature theory that incorporates:

- **Contextual Adaptability:** How implicatures shift across cultural, social, and digital contexts.
- **Cognitive Load:** The role of cognitive processing in generating and interpreting implicatures, particularly in complex or ambiguous conversations.
- **Intentionality Spectrum:** Recognizing varying degrees of intentionality in the production and reception of implicatures, from deliberate manipulation to unconscious inference.

By integrating these dimensions, scholars can develop a more robust and flexible understanding of implicatures that reflects the complexities of modern communication.

The Search for Relevance
Human cognition, in producing communicative expressions, exhibits an inherent tendency to maximize relevance. This hypothesis underpins the cognitive principle of relevance formulated by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in Relevance: Communication and Cognition [5]. According to this framework, communicative intention, when translated into a linguistic act, generates specific expectations of relevance in the recipient. Consequently, predictability and relevance emerge as central

phenomena in the process of understanding. In everyday communication, individuals select information based on precise expectations, a process that underscores the inferential nature of communication. This mechanism helps to explain why speakers persistently adhere to the pràgma, irrespective of the linguistic act's specific category. Sperber and Wilson argue that relevance is a fundamental characteristic of our cognitive-information system—a notion that parallels Grice's concept of a cooperation mechanism but shifts the emphasis toward the recipient's cognitive effects. The communicative principle of relevance proposed by Sperber and Wilson can be summarized as follows: an input acquires relevance when it generates cognitive effects—namely, changes in the representation of states of affairs—from which meaningful outputs are derived. Let us consider the following exchange as an illustration

A: *"He might not make it…"*
B: *"He is a lion!"*

This dialogue immediately reveals two analytical levels. At the representative-conceptual level, B's metaphorical use of "lion" conveys attributes such as tenacity, courage, and resilience. These symbolic qualities act upon A, prompting a reevaluation of the conditionality expressed in their initial statement. Simultaneously, an information selection framework emerges.

- A's conditional statement suggests significant uncertainty.
- B's metaphorical response introduces a conceptual shift, generating expectations and encouraging A to infer a range of potential implications:
- Perhaps he will succeed.
- He is combative, tenacious, and proud.
- He will not give up easily.

Crucially, B's utterance is unlikely to lead A to imagine literal behaviors associated with lions, such as roaring or marking territory. This example highlights the human cognitive-information system's capacity to prioritize relevance and filter out irrelevant inputs. Without such selective mechanisms, communication would become saturated with incongruous interpretations. When a stimulus fully satisfies the listener's search for relevance, it qualifies as an ostensive stimulus. In Sperber and Wilson's framework, communication is characterized as ostensive-inferential: it relies on the interplay between the speaker's intention to make certain meanings manifest and the listener's ability to infer these meanings based on contextual cues.

Critical Perspective: Beyond Relevance Theory
While Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory has profoundly influenced pragmatic studies, it has faced criticism regarding its potential oversimplification of contextual dynamics. For instance, Carston highlights the challenge of delineating the boundaries of contextual assumptions necessary for inferential processes [24]. Moreover, Wilson and Sperber themselves acknowledge that the theory does not fully account for the interplay between emotional and cognitive factors in determining relevance [25-65].

Innovative Applications: Relevance in Multimodal and Digital Contexts
The modern communication landscape presents new challenges and opportunities for relevance theory. In digital environments, multimodal elements such as images, emojis, and memes function as ostensive stimuli, often generating rich inferential meanings that extend beyond the linguistic domain. For example, a single emoji can encapsulate multiple layers of relevance depending on

the conversational context, audience expectations, and cultural conventions. Recent studies, such as those by Yus, explore how digital communication reshapes the search for relevance by introducing asynchronous exchanges and abbreviated linguistic forms. These new modalities challenge traditional assumptions about the immediacy and linearity of inferential processes.

Future Directions: Toward a Dynamic Relevance Model
To address these challenges, future research could pursue a dynamic model of relevance that

- **Integrates Multimodal Stimuli:** Examines how non-linguistic elements interact with linguistic inputs to create composite relevance.
- **Explores Emotional Modulation:** Investigates how affective states influence the perception and prioritization of relevance in communication.
- **Models Adaptive Contexts:** Analyzes how relevance shifts dynamically in real-time conversations, particularly in online and cross-cultural interactions.

Such advancements would refine the applicability of relevance theory, ensuring its continued relevance in analyzing the complexities of contemporary communication.

Brief Conclusions
The exploration of linguistic acts, conversational principles, and the cognitive processes underlying communication has revealed the intricate interplay between structure, intention, and interpretation. Through the lens of Austin's performative theory, Grice's cooperative maxims, and Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory, this article has traced the evolution of pragmatic inquiry, emphasizing its capacity to account for both the efficacy and adaptability of human communication. Austin's distinction between constative and performative utterances, along with his triadic framework of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, provides foundational insights into the mechanics of language as action. However, as Grice demonstrates, the success of communication relies not solely on structural elements but also on an implicit cooperative framework that governs how speakers and listeners navigate meaning. The study of implicatures—both conventional and conversational—highlights the inferential nature of this process, where shifts in meaning and contextual relevance create a dynamic and adaptive communicative environment. Relevance theory, as proposed by Sperber and Wilson, extends these insights by foregrounding the cognitive dimension of communication. It posits that the search for relevance is an intrinsic characteristic of human cognition, driving the selection and interpretation of communicative inputs. This theoretical shift underscores the inferential and context-sensitive nature of understanding, allowing for a nuanced explanation of how speakers and listeners manage ambiguity, metaphor, and implication. Crucially, this article has also highlighted the limitations and future potential of these frameworks. For instance, Austin's conditions for felicity, while rigorous, struggle to account for phenomena such as deceit or false adherence in conversational exchanges. Similarly, Grice's maxims, though broadly applicable, require reinterpretation in light of the complexities introduced by multimodal and digital communication. Relevance theory, while offering a robust cognitive model, must evolve to address the growing prominence of emotional, multimodal, and cultural factors in shaping communicative outcomes. In synthesizing these perspectives, the article proposes that a comprehensive theory of communication must integrate the structural, cognitive, and contextual dimensions of language use. It must also account for

the increasing role of technology and cross-cultural interactions in redefining relevance and cooperation. Such an integrative approach promises to enhance our understanding of communication, not merely as a static transmission of information but as a dynamic, adaptive process that is central to human cognition and social interaction. By bridging classical theories with contemporary challenges, this article aims to contribute to a richer, more flexible framework for analyzing linguistic and communicative phenomena. It invites further research into the intersections of pragmatics, cognition, and digital media, ensuring that the study of language remains attuned to the complexities of the modern communicative landscape.

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