

Pragmatics Seen Through the Prism of Society

Jacob L. Mey

Abstract What do we mean when we talk about pragmatics as seen through a societal prism? Is not pragmatics by definition soci(et)al? In this chapter, I explain my views on pragmatics, and highlight its societal character, interpreted as a commitment to and from the *users*’ side. I especially look into the oppressive aspects of our language, and suggest ways and means to prevent such oppression, in an “emancipatory pragmatics,” as it would be appropriate to call it.

Keywords Pragmatics · Societal linguistics · Meaning and Use · Speech Acts · Pragmatic Acts · Emancipatory Pragmatics

1 By Way of Introduction: A Bit of Prehistory

The word “pragmatics” originates from the Greek. It is derived from the substantive *prágma* “action, act.” In classical Greek, one may call someone a *pragmatikós*, i.e., “a man of action,”—a bit like we do when in Danish we refer to such a person jokingly as a *praktisk gris*, literally “a practical pig,” meaning “a jack of all trades.” The adjective “pragmatic” is likewise used in modern times, in keeping with the classical tradition, to characterize the actions of people who distinguish themselves by being just “practical”: They suggest, or undertake, opportunities for action, as opposed to mouthing empty phrases. Compare also that in classical (as in modern) Greek, *tà prágmata* can refer to any kind of practical matters: On a hot day in the summer of 1956, while looking for the baggage depot in the Piraeus railway station, I was pleasantly surprised to have the porter refer to my stuff, in the classical way, as “my *pramata*”!

An earlier, shorter version of this chapter appeared in Norwegian as “Pragmatikk: en sosial vitenskap” in *Norsk Filosofisk Tidsskrift* 46(1) 2011, p. 6–19.

Thanks to Universitetsforlaget. Oslo and Steffen Borge for permission to use some of this material here.

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A. Capone, J. L. Mey (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Studies in Pragmatics, Culture and Society*, Perspectives in Pragmatics, Philosophy & Psychology 4, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-12616-6_2

Although the ancient Greeks in this way were the original sponsors of our use of the term “pragmatics,” they never developed any philosophy or school, which could be labeled “pragmatic.” This is not to say, though, that they never used pragmatic considerations in their philosophical reflections. The Socratic dialogues, for instance, provide shining examples of a practical application of language, in ways very similar to what we today would call ‘pragmatic.’ In conversations with his students and colleagues (including the occasional bystander or passerby), Socrates always focused on the “thing” to be discussed; cf. a subtitle like “*Perì tou hosíou*” (“About the sacred”), assigned to Plato’s *Euthyphro*. Actually, one could well imagine Socrates as saying, with a modern French politician, “What is it we are talking about here?” in order to refocus a pointless and never-ending parliamentary debate.¹

Likewise, the Greek Sophists, often held in contempt because they used their pragmatic knowledge of the language to earn a living, were successful because they knew how to use the language in practical situations such as court proceedings and inheritance issues. In these situations, it was of the utmost importance to use language’s opportunities for practical application (its ‘pragmatic’ aspects, one would say today), for instance, by catching the opponent in an improper use of a technical term, or neglect of an important distinction of legal terminology. Such an attitude to language’s more refined uses is nowadays often referred to in English as “sophisticated”—a term that in no way carries the negative implications that would be connoted, were one to qualify one’s opponent as a “sophist,” or his or her use of language as “sophistry.”

The word “pragmatic” itself, used as a technical philosophical term, however, does not appear until much later than the times of those early pragmaticists, the Sophists. In 1781, the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) published an essay with the title “Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View,” in which he emphasizes the human ability to come up with valuable opinions by means of reason; I will return to Kant’s importance for pragmatics later in the chapter (Sect. 2, below; see now also Wilson’s recent annotated edition of Kant’s essay; Wilson 2006).

The North American thinker Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), by many considered as the “true father” of pragmatics (see Fisch 1986, p. 81), did indeed list some “proto-pragmatic” thoughts in his *Notebooks* from the mid-1860s; however, he did not write up his notes until some 40 years later, when he was asked to contribute an encyclopedia article on the subject (the encyclopedia in question was James Mark Baldwin’s (1901 ff.) *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*; see Fisch 1986, pp. 114–116).

Not contented with the purely philosophical aspects of his theorizing about language, Peirce also emphasized the *practical* import of proper language use—*How to Make One’s Ideas Clear* is the title of one of his shorter, more popular contributions (Peirce 1878); here, he called his theory “pragmatism,” to emphasize its difference from what another American philosopher, William James (1842–1910), had named

¹ French prime minister Georges Clemenceau’s (1841–1929) famous line “De quoi s’agit-il?”, which he often used when he had the need to cut through the long, frustrating negotiations surrounding the Versailles treaty in 1919, and the accompanying effort of the five great powers to equitably “redistribute” Europe (See Nicolson 1934, p. 118 ff.).

“pragmaticism,” a view according to which all thought activities are only considered “true” insofar as they are of use to us, in accordance with the popular maxim “whatever works is true,” often attributed (rightly or wrongly) to William James.

Neither Peirce nor James was particularly interested in language as such and its description; nor did they pay much attention to how language works in everyday use (that which today would fall under the remit of pragmatics). Also, the nineteenth century’s growing interest in language’s historical foundations and its contemporary varieties (as studied in classic comparative philology and the more recent field of dialectology; see further Sect. 2, below) were themselves superseded in the early twentieth century by studies focused on language as structure and its systematic description, following Saussure’s (1916) groundbreaking work. As a result, the interest in language as it was being used in society became sidelined as an object of study for the theoreticians of linguistics. In fact, the current revival of such interests, along with the beginnings of a true linguistic pragmatics, took only place decades later; it happened neither in Continental Europe nor in the USA, but in the time-honored university centers of Britain: Oxford and Cambridge.

2 The “Pragmatic Turn”

As already intimated, the nineteenth century witnessed a phenomenal and rapid growth in the realm of the sciences: Physics (originally still called “natural philosophy,” with the term “scientific” itself generally considered a synonym of “philosophical”), astronomy, chemistry, biology, all made enormous progress. The students of language(s), mostly still called “philologists” (literally meaning: “lovers of the word”), who ever since the days of the early classical, and later the medieval grammarians and philosophers had been mostly concerned with philosophical and grammatical issues, joined forces with these defenders of “progress” (not just in the scientific sense), the “progressives.”² Language, according to this new attitude, should be explored *scientifically*, that is to say, its roots were to be pursued, its evolution and splitting into different dialects and languages were to be catalogued and explained along the lines sketched out by the natural and exact sciences.

The breakthrough of this new science of language (now often called “genetic” linguistics, in analogy with Charles Darwin’s newly established evolutionary genealogy of the vegetal and animal kingdoms) also had a parallel in new ways of describing historical developments, not as mere “sequences of kings and battles,” but as a “history of the people” who had lived and developed in historic times.³

² The young “United States of Brazil,” created upon the overthrow of the monarchy in 1888, chose as its motto *Ordem e Progresso* (“Order and progress”). And the French philosopher Auguste Comte, whose works became extremely popular among the “progressive middle class,” in particular its military segment, is considered to have been instrumental in nurturing the philosophy which led to the attempted secession of the Southern provinces in the early 1900s, coupled with the rather horrendous internecine fighting that took place in the wake of a failed military coup (see Verissimo 1932 for a novelized account of these happenings).

³ Green’s *Short History of the English People*; Green 1874) is an example of this new orientation. The quote is from the 1902 edition (p. xxiv).

This kind of “historical” (or more generally, comparative) linguistics celebrated one of its greatest triumphs, when it became clear that many of the major languages spoken in Europe and India came from the same proto-language, Indo-German, as it used to be called in those early days, when the research monopoly held by German scholars from Strassburg to Leipzig and Berlin dominated the field, and established the “historic” endpoints of the evolution as stretching from India to Germany.⁴

Typical of this unique interest in the historical aspects of language studies was a *Greek Grammar* published by the Grazer professor Georg Meyer (1878). This work, despite its title, was no longer a textbook of a particular language (in this case classical Greek), but a thorough historical examination and detailed account of the development of the Greek language’s phonology and morphology, based on a comparison with what had happened in the then known older Indo-European languages, such as Sanskrit, Iranian, Armenian, Balto-Slavic, Celtic, Germanic, and the ancient dialects of Italy, including Oscan, Umbrian, Sabine, Venetic, Faliscan, and, of course, Latin. This, and other works in the same tradition, were all modeled on the iconic handbooks of “comparative philology,” as this brand of linguistics had been developed in the German tradition, with the classical works of people like Karl Brugmann and Berthold Delbrück (*Outline of the Comparative Grammar of the Indo-European Languages*, 1886 and following years), to be joined after the turn of the century by scholars such as the Frenchman Antoine Meillet (1866–1936; see Meillet 1903) and the Dane Holger Pedersen (1867–1953). But even these “historical” scholars were not averse to studying the social aspects of language, especially as they came to the fore in the various dialects of the ancient and modern languages that they studied; generally speaking, the linguists of those times were much more generally (and globally) oriented than most of their modern colleagues, for whom it is important to make their mark in some specialized area of the language sciences.

As mentioned above, in Sect. 1, the early years of the twentieth century were witness to new and different interests beginning to capture the interests of scholars of language. The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), in his early career best known as a pioneer in the comparative branch of linguistics and (unbeknownst to himself) as the “grandfather” of the revolutionizing “laryngeal theory,” which moved the origin of Indo-European several hundred, perhaps as many as a thousand, years back in time (Saussure 1888), gradually moved his interests to what came to be called the “structural” model of language studies. Investigations into where language originated and how it evolved were downgraded in many linguistic milieus in favor of research dealing with the *functioning* of language. The main questions now asked were: How is language structured? and How does language work?

Various metaphors were proposed, some of which enjoyed great popularity; by some, language was considered to be a well-functioning organism, with the attending phenomena of birth, growth, and death; for others, language was more

⁴ They should (and to some degree, could) have known better. Irish was already known to be of Indo-European (IE) origin (which moved the IE language family’s Western boundary to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean), whereas the subsequent discovery of Near East and Central Asian languages such as Hittite and Tocharian confirmed that neither was India the latest (or should we say “the earliest”?) word in the history of what was to become called, with a more appropriate term, an “Indo-European” evolution.

like a mechanical structure, functioning, say, as a clockwork; others again thought of language's internal structure in terms of "building blocks."

The sounds of language and language's formal characteristics were studied in phonology and grammar, respectively, whereas the interest in where those sounds and forms came from gradually waned. In particular, questions such as how people were able to produce and use those sounds and forms in their daily lives did not receive similar attention. Especially the latter aspect, having to do with language's "use" (and its usefulness), was deemed to be unworthy of scientific inquiry, as it did not lend itself to an "exact" description: "we lose control," as Saussure has it, speaking of how to explain changes in language use ("le contrôle échappe" 1949, p. 111). Similarly, the interest in what words *mean* (their semantics) took a backseat to research inquiring how words *work* when combined in phrases and sentences (the study of syntax).

After World War II, when computers entered the scene, linguists adopted a tendency to try and describe and explain linguistic phenomena with the use of mathematical formulas and computer programs that would generate correct strings of words and combine them into understandable prose. So-called generative grammar had its heyday in the second half of the twentieth century, not least due to the influence of linguists such as Noam Chomsky (1928) and his associates, for whom the computer turned out to be the perfect metaphor—not only of language but of human intelligent behavior in general.

In all these endeavors, the emphasis was on an accurate and exhaustive description of the linguistic phenomena. Language was considered as a phenomenon that it was important to identify and explain in the smallest details, using methods of the natural sciences. Hypotheses were lined up and tested, and then either rejected or tied together with new hypotheses, in order to finally arrive at a coherent paradigm of explanation that would take care of all the phonetic, syntactic, and semantic features that together were supposed to account for a language's structure.

What was lacking in this kind of descriptions (or "grammars," as they had begun to be called, with a nod to the earlier traditions) was the *human* factor. The users of language were completely left out of the equation; the important questions that earlier in history been put on the table by the classical, medieval, and later the "Enlightenment" philosophers were completely forgotten—or at least ignored. Questions such as how to express oneself clearly, so that others may understand one (already posed by the Sophists and rhetoricians of old), and more poignantly, what general conditions prevail so that one is able to express oneself, period, were never brought up by those modern grammarians (or for that matter, had been considered seriously by their nineteenth-century predecessors).

Incidentally, the latter question was exactly what the earlier mentioned Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) had in mind, when he interpellated the "transcendental" conditions of human cognition: What is needed for us even to begin to understand ourselves and the world around us? (Kant 1781). Such an inquiry, when applied to language, would involve an examination not only of how we acquire language, but in addition, how we are able to put language to some decent, socially relevant use, and to do something sensible with it in the larger context of society. For language

is more than sounds and grammar rules: It is primarily a way of dealing with the world, as we will see below.

And this is where philosophers again enter the scene. The Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) first became known in the twenties of the last century as the author of the *Tractatus*, a logical-philosophical manifesto in which he holds a reckoning with the zeitgeist's speculative tendencies regarding our use of words, and advocates a strict empirical access to language; as he expresses it in the last "thesis" of his short treatise, "of that which one cannot express in an exact way, one should remain silent."

Twenty years later, after a terrible personal crisis, Wittgenstein (who, despite his family name's baronial connotations, was not nobility, but the scion of a wealthy and well-educated Viennese Jewish family) returned to England, where he had spent a couple of years prior to the Great War, and had become acquainted with philosophers such as Bertrand Russell. Here, too, he came under the sway of the influential group of Oxford thinkers such as Gilbert Ryle (1900–1976), Peter F. Strawson (1919–2006), and John L. Austin (1900–1958), who called themselves the "Ordinary Language Philosophers" (abbreviated "OLP"), and whose main thesis was, as it had been an early British empiricists such as John Locke's (1632–1704; see Locke 1622), that our language is a good enough tool to describe and explain reality: There is no need to create a special terminology in order to be able to think orderly and conduct meaningful philosophical discussions.

Most important in this connection is the OLP group's notion that language consists in "meaningful use," that is to say, the meaning of a term is specified by its use, not by abstract definitions (which would never be able to capture the term's full meaning anyway). Wittgenstein's take on this is reflected in a dictum posthumously attributed to him, viz., that "a word's meaning is its use" (echoing Peirce across the decades).⁵

Partly on account of provocative statements like this and similar ones (perhaps intended to *épater les bourgeois* listeners among his students and professional acquaintances), Wittgenstein remained a controversial figure throughout his life. In addition to being a hot-tempered and feared debater, he did not consider himself above a bout of fisticuffs when it came to defending his ideas (anecdotal evidence has it that he supposedly once endangered the life of the period's most famous representative of logical-empirical thought, Sir Karl Popper, by going at him with a fiery poker; Edmonds and Edinow 2001), and although Wittgenstein never published any further works during his lifetime after the initial *Tractatus* (the *Investigations* and all his later works were published after his death by his trustees), his influence on the "Oxbridge" environment was enormous, especially among the younger generations of students.

As already intimated, the established members of the "Ordinary Language Philosophy" movement were far from always in agreement with Wittgenstein and the various directions his fertile but undisciplined philosophical mind would take him.

⁵ "For a *large* class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (Wittgenstein 1953, p. 43).

In particular, his later moving away from logic to use, when it comes to establish “meaning,” brought him into conflict with a number of local “greats,” including Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), who initially had encouraged him, and even wrote a “Preface” to the *Tractatus* (a preface later discredited by Wittgenstein himself). And so it happened that his insistence on “use” as the defining element of our lives in and with language only caught the scientific community’s attention in the late 1950s through John L. Austin’s work; the latter’s seminal lectures (delivered at Harvard University in 1956) were published posthumously as a book entitled *How To Do Things with Words* (my emphasis; Austin 1962)

This was also the place where, and the time when, the “pragmatic turn” in linguistics, the scientific study of language, found its first, most concrete and most powerful expression. For Austin, language is a means of action, and conversely, our words are not empty phrases or pure descriptions: They *do* something to the world and its inhabitants. But if language is action, then our words are the tools we use to change the world and exert our influence on our fellow language users; when spoken in a particular situation by a person with the right qualifications, the words may indeed effect a change in the current state of affairs.

Austin’s examples are taken from situations that we all are familiar with. For instance, when in a Catholic wedding ceremony, the priest pronounces the words “I unite you in marriage” (in the original Latin version of the ritual: *Ego vos conjungo in matrimonio*), then in virtue of these words, the betrothed couple are now legally married. By his words, the priest has performed a *linguistic action* on the world, a “speech act,” as Austin would call it. (More about Austin and these linguistic actions in the next section.)

A younger but equally important member of the Ordinary Language Philosophy group was the British philosopher Herbert Paul Grice (1913–1988), initially Austin’s colleague at Oxford and later a professor at the University of California, Berkeley. Grice is best known for having formulated the so-called Cooperative Principle, which states that when talking, people will do whatever it takes for the conversation to succeed. They achieve this by ensuring that their contribution to the conversation is such as is required by the conversation and its participants (Grice 1975). This implies that as conversationalists, we stick to what Grice, basing himself on the classic Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy’s conception of an object’s substance in relation to its accidental properties, enshrined as the current, classical four “conversational maxims” of quantity, quality, relation, and manner (Grice 1978).⁶ By “quantity,” Grice means the amount of the information that is conveyed in a conversational exchange (not too much, not too little); with regard to “quality,” it specifies the speaker’s obligation to stay within the bounds of what is recognized as good conversational practice (one should not lie or deliberately say something which is not true); the maxim of “relation” requires the speaker to stick to the topic

⁶ One may wonder why Grice picked just these four, and not also others, from the nine original Aristotelian “*accidentia*.” In particular, the categories of “time” and “place” are more recently being brought into our thinking about speech acts with relation to the context in which those acts are being produced. (On this “sequentiality” in speech acting, see now Mey 2013).

and not say something that is irrelevant; and finally, the “manner” maxim encourages the speaker to practice brevity, not to go off on a tangent, and so on.

It is clear that Grice, when stating these maxims, assumed an idealized conversational situation; in real life, people do not necessarily respect (all of) his rules. But the interesting thing is that a maxim, even when violated, may give us an idea about what the speaker actually intended to convey to us. It is here that the Cooperative Principle comes to our aid. To take one of Grice’s famous examples: A university teacher, when asked to write a recommendation for one of his/her students, notes that the student has always attended the lectures, has a good handwriting, and has otherwise a pleasant personality. Clearly, something is missing here; more specifically, neither the maxim of quantity nor that of manner has been observed, to say nothing about the maxim of quality. By invoking the Cooperative Principle, the person to whom this recommendation is addressed immediately concludes that there is something else motivating this “flouting” of the maxims (as Grice was wont to call it): The professor’s silence about any of the student’s properly academic exploits indicates that the latter probably are not exactly shining, so that they preferably should be passed over in silence. Such a conclusion lends support to the assumption of what Grice and others have called the “implied meaning” of an utterance, viz., the kind of meaning that has to be “extracted” from the utterance via implication; normally, it is exactly that kind of meaning that we tend to lend more weight to than to anything that is expressly stated (Grice 1981).⁷ (See further below, Sect. 4, on “indirect speech acts.”).

Grice has often been attacked for not having paid sufficient attention to the realities of life and conversation. Whatever may be the grain of truth in this assertion, it remains a fact that Grice never intended to write a “conversation manual” along the lines of many such works produced during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (mostly for the benefit of the new bourgeoisie needing to make themselves acceptable to the higher strata of society). What does remain a reality in this context, however, is that Grice’s thinking on implicatures and their uses has opened a window onto some of the most fascinating features of human language use. Many (if not all) of the later pragmaticists, irrespective of their personal theoretical orientation, will forever be indebted to Grice for having uncovered this persistent trait in human communication, in virtue of which (to vary St. Paul’s apophthegm) “what we would say, that we do not: but what we do not want to say, that we say” (Romans 7:19).

3 Speech Acts

Austin’s point of departure as an OLP is the simple observation that there is a difference between utterances like

⁷ The technical term that Grice “concocted” (his own expression!) for this kind of conversational technique is the neologism “implicature,” and as such the term has gained entry into the terminology of pragmatics and speech act theory.

It's cold in here
and

Please be so kind as to close the window.

While the first utterance may be true or false (depending on the thermometer reading), and therefore can either be confirmed ("Yes, it is") or denied ("I do not think so"), a request for somebody to do anything (like in this case, closing a window) can neither be confirmed nor denied. The request may be accommodated or rejected; alternatively (in what some would call the worst-case scenario), it may be ignored altogether; however, as it strictly neither is "true" or "false," it has no "truth value" (as the philosophers would say). When I utter "It's cold in here," I'm just stating what appears to me as an objective fact, something anybody could verify (or falsify) just by glancing at the thermometer on the wall. But such an empirical check is impossible in the case of a request of the type "Please be so kind as to close the window." Such an utterance is neither true nor false, nor can it be subjected to any kind of empirical control.

Even so, there is something about the (successful) utterance that "does" something: The window gets closed. And since it in this way accomplishes a task, the latter utterance (if successful) *performs* something in the world of reality; which is why Austin suggested to call such utterances "performatives," by contrast to the former type, which are purely "constative" statements (Austin 1961; 1962, p. 60).

Of course it is not as if the words, taken by themselves, had this power, the "illocutionary force," of which Austin speaks (1962, p. 4 ff.). Rather, the words express an intention of the speaker—an intention which, in this case, could be characterized as either a suggestion or a request (to close the window). But also, in this and all other cases, we have to remind ourselves that language is not a magic wand: Any action depending on language use depends, at the same time and *ipso facto*, on the presence of a person, a language user other than the speaker. A member of the "speaking masses" that Saussure used to refer to ("la masse parlante"; 1949, p. 112) has to be willing to do what he or she is asked to do by the speaker's implicit suggestion or request (usually called an "indirect speech act"; more on this in the next section).

It is precisely this orientation towards (an)other person(s) and, more generally, towards the entire (with a nod to Saussure) "massive" social situation in which language is being used that the philosophers of language and the linguists traditionally have not been paying sufficient attention to; in fact, it is also one of the major weaknesses in the original theory of speech acts (more on this in Sect. 4, below). Even so, with regard to Austin himself, it is evident that his way of looking at language is very different from traditional philosophical or grammatical approaches, according to which sentences (or "judgments," as they were called in the tradition of the School) are evaluated and classified by the philosophers as to whether they are true or false, respectively, by the grammarians and linguists as to their "(in)correctness."

Whereas in Austin's view, the number of *individual* speech acts could well be over a thousand, the different *types* of speech acts may be divided into a few large groups (Austin 1962, p. 149). In the sequel, after Austin's premature death in 1958, his first and more or less "official" interpreter John Searle (who had been Austin's

student at Oxford in the 1950s) undertook to refine Austin's classification and make it more precise. In the following, I will stick to Searle's typology (which, on the whole, depends on and extends Austin's with a number of clarifications and simplifications; Searle 1969).⁸

In his book, Searle starts out with discussing the speech act of "promising," and examines what is required for people to make promises legally and responsibly. Among other things, whoever promises something must be sincere in their promise, have the intention to carry out what is being promised, and be able to perform the activities (including the nonlinguistic ones) that the promise entails. In addition, what is promised must be to the other person's (the "promisee's") benefit, since otherwise the uttered words of the "promise" would rather qualify as a threat (as in "If I ever see your ugly face around here again, I promise I will bash it in"). All such conditions (and more could be enumerated) are of the kind that Searle, following Austin, calls "felicity conditions," that is, conditions that have to be met for a speech act to be executed successfully: in Austin's words, to be "happy" or "felicitous" (Searle 1969, p. 57 ff.; Mey 2001, pp. 97–105).

Among the other types of speech acts that Searle enumerates are some that deal with our daily lives' most important and most frequently occurring activities, such as "greeting," "thanking," "congratulating," "well-wishing," "advising," "warning," "requesting," "asserting," and "questioning" (Searle 1969, pp. 66–67). For each of the speech act types concerned, different felicity conditions operate. Whereas certain speech acts are fairly straightforward and rarely have an effect beyond the here and now (for instance, a greeting is a greeting, and normally just that), others, like the standard case of "promising," have implications that exceed the simple utterance's spoken words along several dimensions, both in space, in time, and as to the wherewithal on the part of the speakers; consequently, the act's felicity conditions involve considerably more problematic aspects than the ones usually considered.

To take one example: The promises embedded in most marriage vows imply obligations (promised fulfillments) that (at least verbally) go far beyond the moment of uttering, and extend (at least potentially) to the end of the promiser and promisee's earthly existences. The problem here is that a felicity condition such as that of "being sincere," for a promise extending way into the far future, seems difficult to meet at the moment of uttering, let alone to continue to observe honestly and soberly, considering all the (un)likely events unfolding over a person's lifetime. For although the soon-to-be-married couple promise each other fidelity "till death do us part," it is a fact of life that a large portion (in some societies even the majority) of contracted marriages do not survive the infamous "seven-year itch"; now, being

⁸ It should be noted that the idea of an unbroken, smooth transition from Austin's original, partly unpublished ideas to what has become a more or less "canonical" version of speech act theory in the guise of Searle's interpretation, has come under attack for doing injustice to both Austin and Searle: to Austin, because his original ideas were transformed and "streamlined" into a systematic exposition on which their original author had no way of commenting; to Searle, because it deprived him of the right to be asserted as a prime linguistic philosopher on his own merits. See the lucid exposition of arguments in favor and against these two, irreconcilable "theses," provided in the work of the Brazilian scholar Kanavillil Rajagopalan (esp. Rajagopalan 2010, pp. 75–80; for a comment, see Mey 2014).

Interdisciplinary Studies in Pragmatics, Culture and
Society

Capone, A.; Mey, J.L. (Eds.)

2016, XIV, 990 p. 18 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-12615-9