Questions and assignments

Questions

2.1.1 Use the Organon model to distinguish the functions in the following utterance:
This is quite an interesting model!

2.2.1 Formulate a possible illocution and a possible perlocution for the following utterances:
   a. It's raining.
   b. Here comes a dog.

2.2.2 Using the following sentence, indicate what is wrong with the propositional felicity condition for promise as stated in Section 2.2:
   I promise you that someone will come tomorrow.

2.2.3 Using the illocutions flatter and lie, show that problems arise if an illocution is only considered successful when the addressee understands which illocution is meant.

2.2.4 Classify the following illocutions using Habermas's basic types:
   invite, presume, defy, offer condolences, request, describe, acquit, guarantee, order.

2.3.1 What kind of knowledge is required to deduce from the following statement that a threat and not a promise is implied?
   I promise you that you will get a whipping if you do that again!

2.3.2 Give an example of an utterance which, depending on the situation, can have the illocutionary force order, request, warn, and complain.

2.3.3 Indicate which elements of the following utterances are the reason for the assignment of an illocutionary force.
   a. I am warning you, there's a bull coming towards you.
   b. There's a bull coming towards you.

2.4.1 Using the term conversational implicature, explain why A can deduce from B's remark what time it is.
   A: What time is it?
   B: Well, the mail's arrived.

2.4.2 Provide arguments that would support the statement that not all of Grice's maxims are equally important.
2. Communication as action

2.4.3 Argue for or against the following line of reasoning from Leech (1983:15,16).

“... of Grice’s two Maxims of Quality (which I call submaxims), the second seems to be a predictable extension of the first:
Maxim 1: Do not say what you believe to be false.
Maxim 2: Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
If we say something for which we lack evidence, we do not know whether what we say is true or false. Therefore Maxim 2 simply says ‘Do not put yourself in a position where you risk breaking Maxim 1’; and both can be summarized in the precept ‘Avoid telling untruths’.”

2.4.4 Which maxims of the cooperative principle are being violated in the following dialogues? Indicate which conversational implicatures this leads to.
      B: In a minute. I just have to fry the liver.
      A: Suddenly, I’ve lost my appetite.
   b. A: Mrs. Johnson is an old witch.
      B: It’s wonderful weather for this time of year, don’t you think?

2.4.5 Explain how deliberate violations, or “floutings” as Grice calls them, of the cooperative principle as in (a) and (b) can still bear meaning. Also explain when such deliberate violations do lead, for example, to lying, by discussing some conditions that must be met for flouting to render the appropriate or intended effect. (This question is inspired by an example in Cook 1989.)
   a. I love it when you sing out of key all the time.
   b. My cell phone’s battery runs dead every five minutes.

2.5.1 Is B’s reaction a counter-example to the proposition that every utterance can be relevant in a conversation?
   A: (waiter) Can I get you something to drink?
   B: (customer) Naturally, everybody drinks.

2.5.2 Recall example (27) from Section 2.5. Now try to explain in your own words how the relevance principle works by applying it to the following example: a notice often found in the London Underground (subway).
   “Dogs must be carried on escalator.”

2.6.1 Use the terms face and face work techniques to explain the misunderstanding in the following dialogue.
   A: Are you going to do anything with those old chairs?
   B: No, you can have them.
   A: Oh, no, that’s not what I meant.
2.6.2 In the following dialogue, is B being positively or negatively polite? (B thinks the dress is ugly.)
A: So, what do you think of my new dress?
B: Well, it's risqué, that's for sure.

2.6.3 Rank the following statements from “extremely polite” to “less polite” using Brown and Levinson’s theory. Indicate which strategy has been used.

a. Do you agree to pay half of the bill thirty days before delivery?
b. Thirty days before delivery you will receive a bill for half of the order.
c. You have to pay half of the bill before delivery.
d. Though we do not like to make this demand, it is this company's policy that half of the bill be paid thirty days before delivery.

2.6.4 Explain why B does not answer with “Yes”, but immediately makes an offer in the following dialogue.
A: Do you have ice cream?
B: Do you want chocolate topping?

Assignments

2.5.1 In Section 2.5 it is argued that language is often/always underspecified. Consider the example “Thank you for observing no smoking”. Try to explain why language is often underspecified. Think, for example, of the economy principle, which applies in most human behavior.

2.5.2 Mikhail Bakhtin was a famous Russian philosopher and language theorist at the beginning of the last century (see also Section 4.2). In The Bakhtin Reader by Morris (1994:26–37) the following quote from Volosinov (a friend’s name under which Bakhtin wrote) is included:

“To understand another person's utterance means to orient oneself with respect to it, to find the proper place for it in the corresponding context. For each word of the utterance that we are in process of understanding, we, as it were, lay down a set of our own answering words. The greater their number and weight, the deeper and more substantial our understanding will be.”

Try to point out the differences and/or similarities between Volosinov’s reasoning and the view on relevance of Sperber and Wilson, as presented in Section 2.5 of this chapter.
Key to the questions

Answers Chapter 1

1.1.1 A definition of the concept *discourse studies* must contain at least the following elements:

- The focus is on all forms of oral and written communication.
- The topic of study is the relationship between form and function of utterances.
- The foundations of discourse studies lie within several disciplines such as psychology, sociology and philosophy.

1.1.2 The form of the first utterance “Could you pass the salt?” is a question. The addressee asks the addressee if the latter is capable of picking up the salt and passing it. The function of this utterance is to request the salt to the “asker”. The form of the utterance “Of course” is a confirmation of the question. However, because the second speaker subsequently does not pass the salt, he does not fulfill the request. The function of the first utterance is thus ignored.

1.1.3 In the first version, the suspicion of molesting is integrated as an independent main clause. As a result, it is emphasized. It is to be expected that the following text will focus on that suspicion. In the second version, the suspicion is embedded in a subordinate clause and, therefore, less emphasized. The subsequent text will probably address the question of who will take over the doctor’s duty. By changing the form of the utterance, the importance of the various elements can shift.

Answers Chapter 2

2.1.1 According to the Organon model every utterance has a relation with three elements: the sender, the world and the receiver. All three relations have a different function. The utterance “This is quite an interesting model” is a linguistic sign with three functions. First, the utterance has a “symptom” function: the utterance says something about the sender. This utterance reflects the sender’s opinion. Second, the utterance has a “symbol” function: it says something about the world, an object, in this case a certain model. Third, the utterance has a “signal” function: the receiver has to interpret the utterance or react to it.

2.2.1 The utterance “It’s raining” can have various illocutions. It can be a very simple announcement, but also a warning, for example, to bring an umbrella when leaving the house. It can also be a way of emphasizing the mutual bond: by making conversation the silence is broken. Possible perlocutions
of the utterance are that the person being addressed becomes aware of the fact that it is raining, or should bring an umbrella. If the utterance was meant just for making conversation, the perlocution could be that the person addressed reacts, mostly by approving, smiling or giving his opinion about the weather or something similar.

Possible illocutions of the utterance “Here comes a dog” are an announcement, for example, at the circus, or a warning, for example, if a dangerous dog that easily bites is involved. The perlocutions could be that the person addressed becomes aware of the fact that a dog will now appear (announcement) or that the person addressed runs away before the dog starts biting.

2.2.2 In this sentence a person other than the one who has to carry out the promised act makes the promise. This is a violation of the propositional content condition. However, a situation is conceivable in which a speaker promises something that he himself is not going to carry out. The sentence, for example, may be uttered by the operator of the electricity company, who promises that a mechanic will visit the addressee tomorrow. Therefore, the propositional content condition must not be taken too strictly.

2.2.3 Someone who flatters makes a remark with the purpose of making the addressee feel appreciated, as a result of which the latter becomes favorably disposed towards the speaker and is more inclined to do something for the speaker. The remark is prompted by self-interest. If the addressee sees through the flattery, the positive comments will more likely result in the addressee gaining a rather negative impression of the flatterer. If the addressee recognizes the illocution of the flattery, the speech act has not been successful.

A lie is not successful if the addressee finds out that the speaker is not telling the truth. The illocution of lying presents inaccurate information as accurate information. If the addressee realizes that the information is inaccurate, the illocution has failed.

2.2.4 This is a possible classification; try to come up with other defensible classifications yourself.

invite: regulative
presume: constative
defy: regulative
offer condolences: expressive
request: regulative

describe: constative
acquit: regulative
guarantee: expressive
order: regulative

2.3.1 According to the preparatory condition a promise always implies a positive result for the addressee. In this case the speaker promises some negative consequences: a whipping. The preparatory condition is thus violated. According to the cooperative principle, language users only violate conditions if there is a reason for it. The addressee can thus assume the violation is deliberate and that because of this a threat and not a promise is implied.
2.3.2 “The door is wide open!”

– Order: Close the door!
– Request: Could you close the door please?
– Warning: Burglars can walk in just like that.
– Complaint: It’s draughty here.

2.3.3 In (a) the word “warning” explicitly expresses the illocution. In (b) the word “bull” indicates that the addressee is being warned. Mostly, bulls are depicted as dangerous and aggressive animals.

2.4.1 B’s utterance conveys more than just the literal meaning of the utterance. Let's assume that B is cooperative and that his answer is thus relevant to the question what time it is. B’s answer is only relevant when both A and B know at what time the mail usually arrives. From this conversation, prior knowledge of A and B, and the cooperative principle, A can deduce the conversational implicature that B says that it is later than the time at which the mail arrives (but not too much later either, otherwise the utterance would not be precise enough).

2.4.2 Not all maxims are equally important. In practice, some maxims have to be sacrificed to the benefit of others, depending on the goal of the utterance. If person A wants to warn person B of a speeding car approaching, the fourth maxim (of manner) is very important. For example, it may be that strictly speaking the utterance (“Look out!”) is not (locally) relevant (for example, because the current conversation is brutally interrupted), and does not provide enough information (what does A have to look out for?). Often speakers choose to provide more information than is necessary, for example, repeating a message, because they want to make sure they get the message across. The purpose and the context of an utterance thus also determine which maxims are (less) important.

2.4.3 Leech’s reasoning is not correct. When speakers believe something, this does not necessarily mean that they can also prove it. Therefore, maxim 2 is not a predictable extension of maxim 1. There are more grounds on which a position can be taken or adopted than mere concrete, demonstrable evidence. When speakers say something which they believe to be true, this can also be based on religion, intuition, experience or a (reasoned) gamble. Actually, the second submaxim of quality is violated so often in practice that its existence is disputable. After all, people say so much more than they can actually prove.

2.4.4 In dialogue (a) also the maxim of relevance is violated. After B’s answer, one would expect a positive reaction, since dinner will be served shortly. A’s answer, a remark about the sudden loss of appetite, does not seem relevant in this dialogue. On the basis of the cooperative principle we have to assume that the remark is directly linked with the previous utterance. Thus we have to
deduce the conversational implicature that A does not like liver and that he does not care when dinner is served.
In dialogue (a) the maxim of quality is violated. Probably A has not lost his appetite, but he just does not like liver. We can deduce this conversational implicature because appetite is not normally something that is lost all of a sudden.
In dialogue (b) the relevance maxim is violated as well. Contrary to expectations, A's remark is not followed by a reaction to this remark, but by a totally different statement. On the basis of the cooperative principle we have to assume that B does not utter his reaction for no reason. Why does B not go into A's remark? Several conversational implicatures can be deduced: perhaps Mrs. Johnson is present or B finds it inappropriate to gossip about Mrs. Johnson.

2.4.5 Deliberate violations of the cooperative principle can only bear meaning when the sender intends the reader to perceive them as such. If the receiver does not perceive them as such or if he does not realize that the violations are deliberate, then the utterances are perceived as, for example, lies, and the communication becomes confusing or fails altogether. Examples (a) and (b) are not literally true, but most people will recognize them as figures of speech, in this case sarcasm and hyperbole, instead of lies. In using these deliberate floutings it is important for the sender to correctly assess the receiver's knowledge. They only work if the receiver has enough knowledge to know that singing out of key is not pleasant to listen to and that the average cell phone does not run dead very often. Children or foreign language learners sometimes take these figures of speech literally. Owing to the wrong assessment of their knowledge by the sender, the sarcasm in (a) is not recognized (“Thanks for the compliment, dad!”) and the hyperbole in (b) is perceived as a lie.

2.5.1 No, this is not a counter-example. The customer's utterance can be relevant as well, for example, if we deduce the conversational implicature that when everyone drinks, this customer will want something to drink too.

2.5.2 The locution can bear the meaning that you must carry a dog whenever you want to make use of the escalator, but no one will interpret the notice like that. Almost everyone will understand that this message is only relevant if you have a dog with you, partially on the basis of the knowledge that a dog's paws are small enough to become trapped in slots and moving parts of the escalator. To prevent this from happening, carrying the dog is advised (and not ordered).

2.6.1 B assumes that A wants to protect both A and B's face by using face work techniques, in this case the off-record strategy. B thinks that A in fact wants the chairs, but that he is using a pre-request in order to check the chances of a positive answer to the actual request. However, A does not want the chairs. The question is not a pre-request, but simply a request for information.
2.6.2 This is a matter of positive politeness. A wants to feel appreciated and B takes this into account. B does not say that the dress is ugly, but uses a more abstract and ambiguous description. In the case of negative politeness a speaker makes use of strategies that prevent a receiver from feeling forced into a certain position or action.

2.6.3  

d. with redressive action: negative politeness;  
a. with redressive action: positive politeness;  
b. off record;  
c. without redressive action, baldly.

2.6.4 B assumes that A wants to protect both A and B’s face and, therefore, uses a pre-request in order to check the chances of a positive answer to the actual request. Since the answer to the pre-request is affirmative, B immediately reacts to the actual request (“Can I have an ice cream?”), by making a proposal. In this way, B prevents A from having to ask the question and thereby possibly taking up a vulnerable position. (After all, the answer can be negative, resulting in A losing face.)

Answers Chapter 3

3.1.1 Leech claims that communication by definition is problem-solving. He assumes that a speaker always has a certain goal. The speaker’s problem is that he has to choose the most suitable utterance for achieving this goal. Leech emphasizes the choice of the speaker, who has to choose a certain form. However, the approach described in the first section of Chapter 3 also takes the context into account. The context influences the interpretation, and the way in which an utterance is interpreted determines the effect. Furthermore, Leech seems to imply that the choice of a linguistic form is always a conscious one, while scientists of the ordinary language philosophy were concerned with spontaneously produced utterances. There is a similarity as well: the scientists of the ordinary language philosophy assumed that language can provide insight into philosophical matters. Language is then seen as a symptom of deeper underlying principles. Leech also assumes that an utterance is a result of a deeper underlying reason.

3.2.1 A grammatical rule can be both descriptive and prescriptive. A grammatical rule is descriptive when it describes how people actually talk. An example would be the rule that (in English) the subject precedes the verb and that the object follows the verb. This is a descriptive rule because it has not been agreed on by people, but simply describes the way in which people use language (first there was language, which was later “written down” in grammar). A grammatical rule is prescriptive when it says how people ought to talk and write. An example would be the rule that one should not end a sentence with a preposition. This is a prescriptive rule, because it is advised, for example, by language teachers. Prescriptive rules are based on opinions about good and bad language use or on what the majority says or on how highly esteemed novelists use language, etc.