

Interletral

Cited bibliography and some pointers for further reflection ¹

1.6 Semantics and Pragmatics

1.6.1 Denotation and connotation

- Mounin, Georges, *Clefs pour la sémantique* (1972), Paris, Seghers.

George Mounin offers here a rigorous introduction to semantics by presenting the fundamental concepts needed to analyze the meaning of words, sentences, and texts. He draws a distinction between meaning as it is tied to the units and structures of language and meaning as it depends on use and the situation of utterance. Mounin also addresses polysemy, synonymy, lexical oppositions, and semantic nuances, showing how meaning is constructed both through the relationships among signs and through the interpretation of the speaker and the addressee.

- Kerbrat, Catherine, *La connotation* (1977), Lyon, PUL.

Catherine Kerbrat analyzes the concept of connotation as the set of secondary or associative meanings that words and expressions may convey beyond their strict denotative sense. She shows that connotation is contextual and cultural, depending both on social usage, the history of words, and the experiences shared by speakers. Kerbrat distinguishes different dimensions of connotation— affective, stylistic, and ideological—and emphasizes its role in communication, persuasion, and the construction of meaning in discourse.

- Rastier, François, *Sémantique interprétative* (1987), Paris, PUF.

François Rastier proposes in this work an approach to semantics focused on the interpretation of meaning rather than on a fixed correspondence between words and reality. He distinguishes the potential meaning of linguistic units from their actual significance in a text or discourse and emphasizes the importance of contextual relationships and the reader's knowledge. Rastier develops methods to analyze the semantic composition of texts, the variation of meaning according to context, and the way information is structured to produce effects of understanding. The work thus contributes to a textual and pragmatic semantics that connects language, discourse, and cognition.

(Another book written by François Rastier is available in English: *Meaning and Textuality*, Toronto, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press, 1997, translation of *Sens et Textualité*, Paris, Hachette, 1989)

1.6.2 The Implicit: Presuppositions, Implication and Implicatures

- Grice, Herbert Paul, "Logic and conversation" (1975), in Peter Cole & Jerry L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics, volume 3: Speech Acts*, New York: Academic Press, 41-58.

In this work, Herbert Paul Grice develops his theory of conversational implicatures, which explains how speakers convey meaning beyond what is explicitly stated. He begins by defining the cooperative principle and the conversational

¹ The title of a work in French indicates that no complete translation into English has been published and that it is necessary to consult the work in French.

maxims—quality, quantity, relevance, and manner—that guide communication to ensure the listener correctly understands the message. Grice then demonstrates that an utterance's meaning is not limited to its linguistic form; the listener interprets it by considering the context and the implicit rules of conversation. This approach, connecting language, intention, and social interaction, is foundational to modern pragmatics.

- Ducrot, Oswald, *Le dire et le dit* (1985), Paris, Minuit.

Oswald Ducrot explores the distinction between what the speaker says explicitly (the *said*) and what he or she implies or suggests (the *saying*). He shows that many statements do not merely convey neutral information, but also guide the recipient's interpretation and convey implicit assumptions, judgements or points of view. Ducrot analyses the linguistic mechanisms—such as connectors, modal verbs and certain syntactic structures—that enable these effects to be constructed when arguing. The book thus offers a reflection on the relationship between meaning, pragmatics and argumentative strategies in the functioning of language.

1.6.3 Speech acts

- Austin, John, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), Cambridge : Harvard University Press ; New York : Oxford University Press.

In the series of lectures that the English linguist delivered at Harvard in 1955, whose transcription forms the basis of this posthumous work, Austin shows that certain utterances do not merely describe the world, but perform an action when they are spoken. His theory of speech acts begins with the distinction between constative utterances and performative utterances. The linguist later refines this opposition and argues that every speech act is articulated through the locutionary dimension (the act of saying something), the illocutionary dimension (the action performed in saying something, for example promising or ordering), and the perlocutionary dimension (the effects produced on the interlocutor by what has been said). The success of a speech act depends, according to Austin, on a set of social and contextual conditions that he calls *felicity conditions*. This work profoundly transformed the philosophy of language and influenced pragmatic linguistics by bringing to light the action-oriented and social character of language.

- Searle, John, *Speech Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (1969), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

John Searle builds on and systematizes Austin's theory of speech acts. By categorizing acts according to the type of action they perform, Searle identifies the conditions under which each act succeeds and demonstrates that linguistic communication depends on social and contextual norms. Like Austin's work, his research has had a profound impact on pragmatics and discourse analysis, clarifying how language functions as a form of action in the world.