The problem of intentionality in the pragmatics of communicative language use
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abstract

The main goal of my dissertation is to demonstrate that the approaches to intentionality in traditional, philosophically motivated pragmatics and cognitive pragmatics are partial and insufficient because they adopt an individualist and therefore reductive view on intentional states in communicative language use. In order to articulate this claim, I analyse the influential traditional views of pragmatics, such as the Austinian and Searlean speech act theory, Gricean inferential pragmatics and relevance theory. I demonstrate that individualism is present in the examined theories because they are committed to an analytic, consensual standpoint of intentionality. I argue that the (reflected or unreflected) integration of Shannon and Weaver's cybernetic model of information processing is one of those commitments. The application of the cybernetic model in pragmatics results in the neglect of external, intersubjective elements of communicative language use. The natural realism of Austin only namely resides in the Searlean, received view of speech act theory since Searle assumes that we have collective intentions but he puts them back in the head of the individual speakers (because he argues for the reducibility of collective intentions to individual ones). The elimination of the intersubjective elements of communicative language use and the highlighting of the so called soul-to-soul transfers is of great importance in the framework of Gricean inferential pragmatics. In relevance theoretical approach, the individualist perspective of Searle and Grice is supported by classical computational cognitive psychology as well.

One of the consequences of the individualist account of intentionality is the need for a theory on the representation of mental states and their contents in communicative language use. Representationalism propagated by Searle and relevance theory also commits itself to the information processing model of Shannon and Weaver. Consequently, all the theories of pragmatics — except for the speech act theory of Austin — present intentional states as propositional representations which are of poliadic nature and perform well in the causally efficient explanation of linguistic acts. At the same time, this theoretical landscape cannot be full-fledged as it does not give an account of actual speaker's intentions, only of those which are attributed to the speaker. (However, it is possible that the speaker possesses these attributed intentions during communicative language use.)

With the analysis of the traditional pragmatics, such as the Austinian and Searlean speech act theory, Gricean inferential pragmatics and relevance theory, I demonstrate that the unreflected application of individualism and reductionism is problematic in pragmatics. If we try to give a full-fledged account of intentions in communicative language use, we have to breach the traditional accounts of beliefs, desires and intentions as well as the third person psychological approach to their propositional attitudes and contents and we have to examine the intentions behind the linguistic choices of the speaker as well.