

## **Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind and Cognition**

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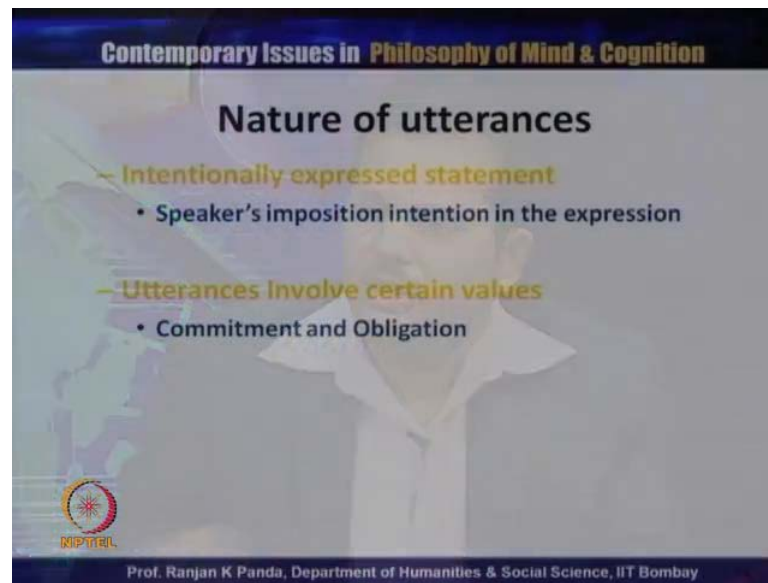
**Lecture No. # 34**

**Language and the World - 2**

Today we are going to discuss about the concept of the normativity and its association with the act of speech. We have already discussed about Schiffer's intention-based semantics, and we had stopped our discussion at this point, of how morality and insanity are part of the intension-based semantics. When we analyze the concept of meaning, we need to see where the speaker induces normative elements, when he is engaged in performing the act of speech.

Speech is a performative activity. Whenever we speak, we consider speaking, or making a statement as a performative act. This has been theorized by Sir (C); we have discussed that. Specifically today, we need to understand as to how the normative element comes into the discourse of the act of speech. In that context, it is through normativity that the intention-based semantics, tries to approach the concept of truth. So normative reason, in a sense, supports, or walks as a truth supporting reason. In that context, for say, in intentionally expressed statements, when the speaker is imposing an intension of expression, it is not the case that, the speaker just imposes the meaning, it is rather that, the utterances also involve certain values.

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So, there Sir (( )) brings in the notion of commitment, and obligation. When the speaker utters a statement, for example, the statement of promise, “I promise that I would lend you hundred rupees.” this promise involves a sense of commitment, and obligation. The moment the speaker utters this particular statement, he means what he says, what he is committing, and he tries to fulfill this promise.


Promise making is a kind of an intentional action, which shows that the speaker is not only inducing a kind of a special meaning to it, but is also expressing commitment and obligation. So, commitment, and obligation are the normative elements, ((utters)) to the linguistic representation that has been made through several performative expressions, like, promise, order, assertions, etcetera. Now (( )) agrees with this idea of intension based semantics, argued by Sir (( )); but he further refers to this point that, the statement has an emotional, or an affective attitude, and there is an intentional attitude.

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Contemporary Issues in **Philosophy of Mind & Cognition**

## Communication Intention

- Affective attitude (**emotion**)
- Intentional Attitude (**deliberation and decision**)
- **In the Gricean framework we fail to distinguish motive and emotion**

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So, there are two kinds of attitudes that the statement exhibits, one is that the emotional attitude, or the affective attitude, and the rational intentional attitude of the speaker; because, when the speaker says, or utters a promise, he knows what is being said. He is aware of this fact that he is making the statement, he is also aware of the fact that he is committed to do certain things. The sense of commitment is the result of some kind of a rational deliberation.

So, intentional attitude involves rational thinking. When we say that speech is a kind of a special kind of an intentional act, we also pre suppose this fact that, it is a rational, or deliberate action. In that sense, making a promise or an assertion is nothing but, expression of our decisions, or judgments about the particular case. So, in that sense it differs a from the Gricean framework, which says that, we fail to distinguish this motive and emotion.

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The slide features a dark blue header with the text 'Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind & Cognition'. Below this, the main title 'Schiffer on Utterance Meaning' is displayed in a large, bold, black font. The content is organized into a list of bullet points, with the first two in red and the subsequent two in black. At the bottom left, there is a circular logo for 'NIPTTEL' with a stylized sunburst design. The footer contains the text 'Prof. Ranjan K Panda, Department of Humanities & Social Science, IIT Bombay'.

- **Compositional semantics**
- **Noncompositional semantics**
- In the surest communicating circumstance the speaker's intention is not only a subjective factor in bringing out the effect in the audience, rather the circumstance itself is an important and unchangeable condition in bringing out the effect.
- Nothing to do with **habit** or **practice**

The motivating factor for intentional actions, or making, or forming the motivating factor of the act of speech, and the emotional factor that is attached with it, Schiffer's intention based semantics also refer to this idea that, the semantics is compositional in nature, where in the compositional aspect, in the surest communicating circumstances, the speaker's intention is not only a subjective factor in bringing out the effect in the audience, rather the circumstances itself is an important, and unchangeable condition in bringing out the effect.

So, Schiffer at the beginning tries to show that, meaning can be analyzed with reference to certain conditions, and that is what he called as the 'communicating circumstance' in which, both the speaker, and the hearer are participating; and this condition has nothing to do with the habits or practices. So, the meaning, for Schiffer, is not conventional as the way Grice has understood it, or the way (( )) construed it. The Sarlean interpretation on this intention based semantics is precisely to argue that, the meaning is conventional, and meaning is intentionally composed by the speaker. This is the very fact that the speaker induces the meaning, and also implies that, the speaker is trying to compose a kind of a content, that is embedded in the statement. So, Sarl is in favor of arguing out a thesis called 'the compositional notion of semantics' whereas, Schiffer and others would agree with the compositional notion of semantics, but slightly in a different way. We would like to see how Schiffer differs from, or disagrees with Grice. Firstly, for S, that is

the speaker, x may have some meaning other than p; so it cannot be S's policy to utter x only if he wants some A to think S thinks that P.

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The slide is titled "Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind & Cognition" and "Does Schiffer disagree with Grice?". It contains two points:

- Firstly, For S, x may have some meaning other than p; so it cannot be S's policy to utter x only if he wants some A to think S thinks that P.
- Secondly, S may have some other utterance type by which he also means that p; so it cannot be S's policy to utter x if he wants some A to think that p.'

The slide also features the NIPTIL logo and the name of the speaker, Prof. Ranjan K Panda, Department of Humanities & Social Science, IIT Bombay.

Schiffer is questioning the very intention of the speaker. How is it the case, that such a co-ordination takes place? The Gricean intention based semantics, does not explain this co-ordination between the speaker, and the hearer. Hence there is a difficulty that Schiffer is raising here. Secondly, S may have some other utterance type by which, he also means that p; so it cannot be S's policy to utter x if he wants some A to think that p. In this context, we cannot generalize this fact that, the speaker S cannot have a subjective policy. Now, these intentional expressions, made by the speaker does not imply that the meaning is subjective; but according to Schiffer's criticism, one can get this impression that the Gricean, and the Sarlean understanding of the meaning of, particularly the intention based semantics, gives an impression of the fact that, meaning is subjective, but that is not the case. For Schiffer, IBS - the intention based semantics, involve no subjective imposition of meaning in the conventional means of communication.

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**For Schiffer IBS involves**

- No subjective imposition of meaning in the conventional means of communication.
  - Mutual knowledge
  - Perfect coordination (self-perpetuating regularity)
- **Strategic interdependence** to regulate agent's goal oriented behaviour
- **Coordination equilibrium** to standardize goal oriented behaviour

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Rather than, the speaker and the hearer must have, or say some kind of mutual beliefs, or knowledge. They must be aware of each other, and that awareness, that knowledge is common to the speaker and the hearer will help us to explain the co-ordination that prevails between them; otherwise, what will the speaker say, and will what the hearer understand, or how does the hearer know that the speaker means this, and not that. Whenever the speaker utters  $p$ , he means  $x$ , and not  $y$ . So, this co-ordination is possible. The hearer would perfectly understand what the speaker means, for they share some common ideas, or knowledge, and thereby the co-ordination is possible. So, the perfect coordination, or what you call 'the self-perpetuating regularity condition' in fact, talks about a strategic interdependence to regulate agent's goal-oriented behavior. In fact, Schiffer further introduces a notion of co-ordination equilibrium, to standardize what is usually been expected whenever the speaker utters a speech. So, there should be a kind of standard, an acceptable standard, what is called 'the co-ordination equilibrium' to talk about, to analyze, the intentional meaning that is being imposed on a particular statement, whenever something is said. He further says that meaning is not conventional, rather meaning can be analyzed through certain cognitive functions. Now, the emergence of new conventions, new practices, and new orders, would definitely be a hindrance, and Schiffer says that should not be a hindrance, provided, we work out the meaning from a psychological point of view, or by following a psychological model. So, Schiffer ultimately argues for a psychological model of meaning, which replaces the conventional model.

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### Emergence of New Convention

- Should not be an hindrance to determine the meaning.
- Schiffer argues for Psychological Model of meaning that replaces conventional model
- Convention has be defined by psychological and non-semantic terms.

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This idea that new convention, or the emergence of a new convention, would create a conflict. So for S, this intention based semantics will be concerned, because again and again bringing this co-ordination equilibrium will be a tuff task; because, that is grounded on practice, or the notion of ((C)), as to how the speaker, and the hearer are a community, and shares a particular knowledge, or particular belief. So, therefore, Schiffer tries to draw our attention to the fact that, a psychological model would help us better to explain the intention based semantics. Therefore, he argues that we can replace the conventional notion of meaning through the psychological model. Convention has been defined by psychological, and in non-semantic terms. So, Schiffer’s notion of convention, or the conventional meaning, is to be defined with the help of certain psychological elements, as well as, with the help of certain non-semantic elements.

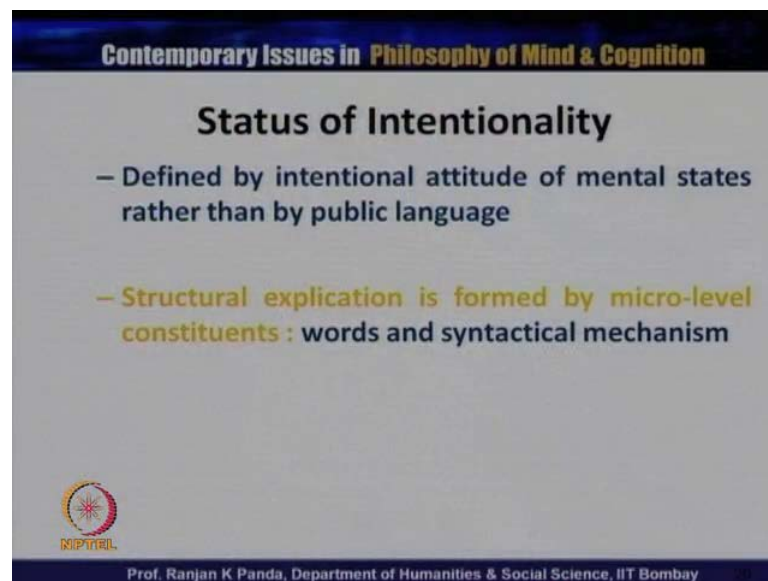
Now, what is non-semantic about? Schiffer’s intention based semantics, and what is psychological about Schiffer’s intention based semantics, particularly the psychological model, that he is bringing into the discourse of meaning? Now, when we try to read Schiffer’s argument, one can very well imagine about the status of intentionality present in the meaning. So, what would be the status of intentionality in this case? Whether intentionality remains as a psychological phenomenon, or is it a non-psychological phenomenon? The intentional attitude of the speaker is caused by, what Schiffer says as ‘the propositional attitude of the mental states’. So, intentionality is, in a sense, connected with the propositional attitudes of certain mental or cognitive states. Schiffer



does not want to understand the notion of intentionality, or the intentional attitude of the speaker, referring to the conventional uses of language. The linguistic form of life, for Schiffer, does not help to explain the intentional attitude. So language, for say, is not autonomous, or whether language is, in fact dependent on the function of human cognition, or the function of human mind. Sarl also argues that, as I have said earlier, according to Sarl, 'language is an institution created by the intentional attitude of the human beings'. In other words, it is intentionality through which we can explain the function of language in our everyday life. Intentionality is prior to language.

Schiffer on the other hand comes closer to the Sarlean thesis, but in a different way argues, that intentionality is not an independent property, rather that intentionality is exhibited by the function of certain cognitive states, or the propositional attitude of mental states. So, the structural explication is formed by micro-level constituents, and these micro constituents are words in one hand, and syntactical mechanism that is operating in our brain.

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**Status of Intentionality**

- Defined by intentional attitude of mental states rather than by public language
- Structural explication is formed by micro-level constituents : words and syntactical mechanism

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So, syntax or what you called the grammar, determines the language. The grammar is a part of the cognition, and the function of this cognitive state, determines the function of the language; because, when you talk about linguistic expressions, expressions are a product of the cognitive function of human mind.



This function, the cognitive function, happens in a particular way. The logic of this cognitive function shows that there is an order, there is a structure, there is a grammatical structure that is involved in producing, or making the linguistic activities possible. Hence, for Schiffer, the sentence of L, suppose L is one kind of a sentence, is nothing but, the sentence of G. So, the sentence of L will pre suppose that it is the sentence of G. So, in that sense, the meaning of whatever has been said in this particular sentence, the meaning of the sentence of L is connected with the meaning that is there in the mind.

So, in that sense, whenever we talk about understanding, or knowing as a kind of a cognitive activity, those cognitive activities can be accommodated as a part of the function of the mind. When I listen to your promise, the promise of the speaker, I understand that this is a promise, and not an order; or what the speaker means when he utters this particular statement.

So, understanding or knowing are very much a part of the cognitive activities that is related to cognition. Hence, the linguistic component, is part of the propositional attitude, and there are also certain non-semantic functions involved; and those non-semantic functions refers to the grammar, that is the grammar of thought.

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### Cognitive Version of Meaning

— “To know the meaning of mental representation s is to know what one believes when s is stored in one as belief where one believes the content of one’s belief, is conveyed by ‘that’ → clauses of belief predicates true.” (Schiffer 1989: 75)

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So Schiffer, in this connection, comes very close to (()). So, let us read Schiffer, Schiffer says, “To know the meaning of mental representation, S is to know what one believes,

when S is stored in one as belief, where one believes the content of one's belief is conveyed by 'that' clauses of belief predicates true".


So, the propositional attitude is not only exhibiting the intentional element present in the sentence, but also, can explain how a sentence is formed, how a sentence is being composed by the speaker, and what are the cognitive elements involved in composing the sentence, or the expression. So, there are both psychological elements, and there are also non-semantic elements, preferably for say, it is the grammar which is the primary condition for formulating the sentence. Hence the Schiffer's compositional semantics come close to Fodor's understanding of language of thought, or Chomsky's notion of universal grammar, because all these philosophers of language tried to analyze the meaning with reference to certain mental features, and they all emphasize that it is the grammar which is primary, it is the grammar which is non-semantic. Now one of the reasons, why Schiffer is talking about non-semantic analysis of the semantics, is precisely because, Schiffer finds the Grecians have given a circular explanation of meaning.

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**Structural correlation of mental states with expression**

- Non-linguistic mental states
- Non-circular explication of content
- "A non-linguistic account of content provides an attractively flexible basis for sketching the manifold possible dependencies of thought upon language ; the key point is that the ascription of content to propositional attitude is more abstract level than ascription of meaning to the natural language. The point is if my functional account of belief-individuation is correct, intentions are not required in the theory of propositional attitudes and their intentional properties." (Loar 1981: 203)

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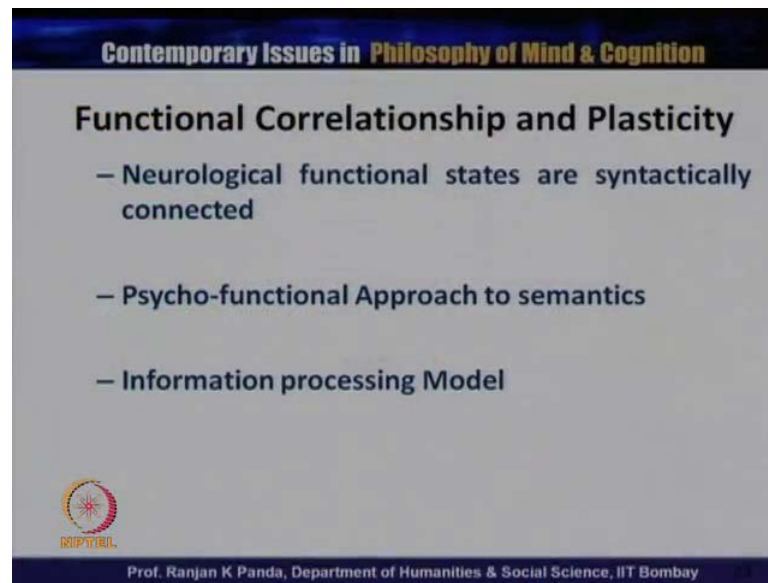
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He says, "If you would like to have an intention based semantics, and it can be well argued without giving primacy to the semantics". So, therefore, a non-circular explication of intentional content of an expression is possible; and it is possible precisely with reference to this kind of model. The grammatical states, belief states, which are

propositionally expressible, are grammatical states, which are non linguistic mental states. They are not entirely linguistic. Following Schiffer, Loar argues that, “a non-linguistic account of content provides an alternatively flexible basis for sketching the manifold possible dependencies of thought upon language; the key point is that, the ascription of content to propositional attitude is a more abstract level than ascription of meaning to the natural language. The point is if my functional account of belief-individuation is correct, intentions are not required in the theory of propositional attitudes, and their intentional properties.”

So, it is without those intentional properties, that one can individuate the speaker's belief, or what the speaker means when he/she expresses a particular statement. So, their expressions are caused, based on propositional attitudes, or mental state, and those mental states are pre linguistic mental states, or we can call it 'non-linguistic mental states'. The content is not part of that. One can also suggest, that the content is explained with reference to those cognitive functions of the mental states. Loar talks about the functional correlation, and plasticity. Just more and more belief states can be written in the brain. Hence the function is plastic, hence the function is expandable, and it is not limited by this fact that function is expandable. In the sense, more and more beliefs can be incorporated to this cognitive chamber, and hence this notion of plasticity. So, as far as this functional correlation is concerned, they try to draw some kind of relationship between the neural structure of the brain and the grammatical structure of these cognitive states. Now, this cause of relationship between these two states, the neurological functional states, and syntactically connected cognitive states are important to explain the intentional content of a statement.

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Hence, Loar and Schiffer would argue in favor of psycho functional semantics, precisely because, the psycho function analysis of meaning is non-circular. We are not trying to explain meaning through intentionality. Intention is not a primary factor to explain intentional meaning. Thus, it is non-circular, rather what is important is that the functional correlation between the neural structure of the brain, and the grammatical structure of the cognitive states.

The syntactic states, how syntactic states are formed, and how they have been connected to the neural and neural circuits, and how their function helps introducing a statement verses intentional one. So, this information processing model is, in fact, eliminating the notion of experience, the notion of consciousness, precisely because such a model can be analyzed by accepting the functional theory of mind; and we have already discussed how functional theory of mind reduces the conscious experience to certain neural functions of the brain.

Now, the (( )) here is this, not to reduce consciousness, not to give this idea of experience from the discourse of meaning, but to bring them back, and see how intention based semantics plays an important role in our everyday life; and such model is been argued out by John Sarl. Now Sarl's intention based semantics, thus emphasizes on this fact that intentionality is an intrinsic feature of mind, and the mind is conscious; and when

speaker is making a commitment expressing a promise, or giving an order the speaker must mean what he says.

Now, this idea of meaning, goes very well with experience; because, whatever has been said by the speaker is been experienced. So, speaking is a kind of a special act of speech, the special form of the act of speech in action also has a kind of an intention in action, because the speaker, while speaking also means what is being said.

So, meaning something cannot eliminate experience, rather speaking is an intentional action. It is a self reflexive action, it is a deliberate action, and hence it is a part of our thinking. So, intentional representation on intention based semantics, the meaning is, in fact, connected with mind, but it is not disconnected with convention either. It is not disconnected. So, meaning is not entirely a kind of an intentional, but meaning is entirely intentional, as far as, the relationship of intentionality with human mind is concerned.

It is not entirely internal, it is intentional, and not entirely internal, (()), it is a part of the convention, the practice, the yield stage of language. So, the linguistic form of life is something which is important for Sarl. Sarl tries to show that meaning is internal, as well as it is external. It is a part of the convention, hence it is external. It is being imposed by an intentional mind by the speaker, or the intentional mind of the speaker, or an intentional subject.

Hence, for some kind of internality is attached to it. Over and above, to mean something is to experience the content of your statement. So, in that sense, the association of language or linguistic activities is part of the mental activities; but it is not entirely governed by the mental activities. It is certainly external. Sarl does talk about the concept of background ability. What is it? It is a physical, or a dispositional ability of the biological, and it makes that intentional representation possible.

The intentional representation is made possible through a non-intentional power, a non-intentional ability, and what Sarl calls as background ability, the background is biological. Sarl says that it is there in the mind, but we cannot completely categorize it as conscious, or physical. It is biologically evolved power; because, according to Sarl consciousness itself has been biologically involved. So, Sarl is not characterizing the conscious intentional attitude of human beings as something mental in a Cartesian sense,

rather he wants to show that it is that physical capacity, the physical power, which makes intentional representation possible.

So, he holds onto a physical ontology, but he also suggests that the normative element, like the commitment and obligation is not intrinsic to the physical ability of the brain, rather it is intrinsic to human consciousness. So, intentional representation, particularly the linguistic representation, whether it is mental, or it is in the form of language, whether it is in the form of thought, or in the form of language or linguistic expressions, for Sarl, the content is isomorphic. The normative element, which I am trying to bring in very briefly, is to show how human consciousness has kind of a deontic force. This human consciousness has a deontic force, deontic power of human intentionality as Sarl would put it. The deontic power of human intentionality is important, in this sense, because, it is through this form of intentionality that human beings have constituted institutions. Human beings have built up institutions.

So, the creation of any institution is possible with the help of this reflective attitude of intentionality, or what as Sarl calls 'a self referential feature of intentionality'. So, intentionality, or intentional activities are self referential. In the case of the act of speech, whenever somebody is saying something, he means that he experiences that. So, what is being desired to speak, what is being intended to speak by the speaker, is also being experienced, and it is that experiential component, which shows that intentionality, or that the intentional activities are self referential activities. So, it is this self referential intentional activities that help in formulating what Sarl calls as 'constitutive rules'. Rules, which are in this form called as, you mean x as y in the context c, x is meant as y in the context c, so this is what is the 'logical form of constitute rules'. So, it is through constitutive rules, that institutions are formed.

So, human normative activities are very much associated with the function of institutions. We consider p as promise, which is been defined by an institutional structure, this kind of statement is considered as promise, not as an order. It is the institution, which defines the meaning of the expression. The meaning thereby, is a rule governed activity. So, conventions are rule governed. Let me briefly talk about the literal meaning, "the literal meaning determines the conditions absolutely in isolation, but literal meaning are vague and literal descriptions are always incomplete. Greater


precision and completeness are added by supplementing literal meaning with collateral assumptions and expectations”.

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## Literal Meaning

– “Literal meaning determines the conditions absolutely in isolation. But literal meanings are vague and literal descriptions are always incomplete. Greater precision and completeness are added by supplementing literal meaning with collateral assumptions and expectations.”  
(Searle 1983: 183)

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Searle does not give importance to literal meaning. He says, literal meanings themselves, are incomplete. Hence, intentional semantics is to be brought into the discourse of meaning. So, the development of linguistic categories, and the intentional abilities of human beings have to be taken in to consideration, and for that we need to talk about the conventions, the uses of particular concepts, or categories, and experience, that is experiencing the meaning of statement, which is very much a part of conscious intentional attitude of the speaker; and I have already talked about self reflectivity, or self referentiality, and how do we modify certain things, how do we formulate constitutive rules.



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## Linguistic Categories and abilities

- Practice/ usage
- Experience
- Consciousness attitude
- Self-reflectivity
- Intentional content – structural isomorphism
- Mental field and linguistic field

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We have already discussed about the structural isomorphism. So in that context, we have also referred to how meaning is external, that is, how do we behave linguistically in the world. So, the linguistic field is an intentional field. It is a field which is connected to the mind. Mind is not in isolation, because mind is experiencing things. The speaker is also an experiential subject. So, language and mind are very neatly connected; they are connected by the principal of intentionality. Hence, in the discourse of intention based semantics, we cannot rule out the significance of mind and consciousness. With this, I conclude the discourse on intention based semantics. Thank you.