UNIVERSITETET   
I OSLO

 Institutt for litteratur, områdestudier og europeiske språk

**SKOLEEKSAMEN**

**2011/HØST**

**2 sider**

**ENG2157 – Semantics and Pragmatics**

**4 timer Torsdag, 08. desember 2011**

**Tillatte hjelpemidler: Engelsk-engelsk ordbok.**

Answer Part I, ONE question from Part II and ONE question from Part III

**Part I (20%)**

Give a brief account of 3 of the linguistic concepts below. Illustrate your account with English examples.

1. modality
2. ambiguity vs. vagueness
3. bridging inference
4. speech acts
5. a conceptual network
6. semantic mirrors

**Part II (40 %)**

EITHER

The three categories *situation type*, *tense* and *aspect* are distinguished as central notions in semantics for describing ways that our languages allow us to construct different views of situations. Give an account of these notions, and use the examples below to illustrate briefly the interaction between situation type and aspect on the one hand, and the interaction between tense and aspect on the other. In your account, you are also welcome to provide examples of your own.

1. John was having an affair with his boss
2. We will be starting our meetups again right after Thanksgiving

OR

Account for the differences between *concepts*, *images* and *reference* and discuss the need for, and the adequacy of, these concepts in the linguist’s description of meaning. Give your own examples to illustrate and support your arguments.

**Part III (40%)**

EITHER

Consider an excerpt (see below) from Alan Bennet’s novel *The Uncommon Reader* (2007), and discuss two of the underlined quotes in view of the two theories of politeness advanced by Leech on the one hand and Brown and Levinson on the other.

Context:

Alan Bennett (2007): *The Uncommon Reader* is a humorous story about the Queen of England’s sudden interest in reading English fiction as she has stumbled on a travelling library while walking her dogs. Her private secretary, Sir Kevin, is vexed by this growing interest of hers, which takes much of the Queen’s time and which she makes a topic in most of her meetings, often to great embarrassment of the visitors. Sir Kevin considers it an absurd obsession. Seeing her almost daily, Sir Kevin is able to nag the Queen about this, and to devise different approaches.

“I was wondering, ma’am, if we could somehow factor in your reading.”

Once she would have let this pass, but one effect of reading had been to diminish the Queen’s tolerance for jargon (which had always been low).

“Factor it in? what does that mean?”

“I’m just kicking the tyres on this one, ma’am, but it would help if we were able to put out a press release saying that, apart from English literature, Your Majesty was also reading ethnic classics.”

“Which ethnic classics did you have in mind, Sir Kevin? The Kama Sutra?”

Sir Kevin sighed.

“I am reading Vikram Seth at the moment. Would he count?”

Though the private secretary had never heard of Vikram Seth he thought he sounded right.

“Salman Rushdie?”

“Probably not, ma’am.”

“I don’t see”, said the Queen, “why there is any need for a press release at all. Why should the public care what I am reading? The Queen reads. That is all they need to know. ‘So what?’ I imagine the general response.”

“To read is to withdraw. To make oneself unavailable. One could feel easier about it,” said Sir Kevin, “if the pursuit itself were less ….. selfish.”

“Selfish?”

“Perhaps I should say solipsistic[[1]](#footnote-1).”

“Perhaps you should.”

“Were we able to harness our reading to some larger purpose – the literacy of the nation as a whole, for instance, the improvement of reading standards among the young….”

“One reads for pleasure,” said the Queen. “It is not a public duty.”

“Perhaps”, said Sir Kevin, “it should be.”

“Bloody cheek,” said the duke when she told him that night.

OR

Give an account of Grice’s Cooperation Principle as a way to explain utterance meaning. Include a short account of the Maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manner, and give examples to demonstrate how they operate in utterance interpretation.

Do you see any weaknesses in Grice’s pragmatic theory ? Comment on alternative ways of accounting for the relation between “what is said” and “what is meant”.

**Begrunnelse: Ta kontakt med din faglærer på e-post innen 1 uke etter at sensuren er kunngjort i StudentWeb. Oppgi navn og kandidatnummer. Sensor bestemmer om begrunnelsen skal gis skriftlig eller muntlig.**

1. Solipsistic (adj) : of or characterized by solipsism, or the theory that only the self exists, or can be proved to exist [↑](#footnote-ref-1)