Motivating Analytic Pragmatism

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Abstract

Analytic pragmatism has, according to Robert Brandom, an expressive power that should make it attractive to any methodological pragmatist. This is due to the fact that it incorporates a commitment to semantic pluralism and metatheoretic pragmatic pluralism. After sketching the apparatus of analytic pragmatism, I discuss some difficulties regarding metatheoretic pragmatic pluralism and I suggest in the end a possible structuralist strategy for arguing in favor of analytic pragmatism that consists in looking for invariant results under metatheoretic pragmatic vocabulary substitution.

Keywords: Robert Brandom, analytic pragmatism, metatheoretic pragmatic pluralism, pragmatic vocabulary.

Introduction

Analytic pragmatism is a philosophy of language project presented for the first time by Robert Brandom in his 2006 *John Locke Lectures – Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism* (subsequently published in 2008 as a book, along with a *Preface* and a substantial *Afterword*; hereafter BSD). It is Brandom’s second big philosophy of language project after his inferentialist project formulated in *Making it Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (1994; hereafter MIE). This last celebrated book develops in great detail what is implicit in one traditional answer to the problem of the human
nature, namely that we are essentially rational and discursive beings. Making the answer fully explicit takes almost 800 pages, given the task of explaining what discursiveness is; it means constructing a new normative pragmatics (used to explain the genus of social practice and the species of linguistic/discursive practice) and a powerful inferentialist semantics (in order to construct an account of semantic content in terms of inferential consequences). Analytic pragmatism (hereafter AP) grew out of Brandom’s reflexive effort to make explicit what he was doing in the *Making It Explicit* when exploring the relations between pragmatics and semantics. It consists in a special metaconceptual apparatus for speaking about the relations between vocabularies and practices or abilities, one that aims at understanding algebraically the logic of the relations between meaning and use (semantics and pragmatics). Even though in the title of the book (*Between Saying and Doing*) “saying” is placed before “doing”, doing has actually explanatory priority in all of Brandom’s work. The resulting pragmatism is broadly conceived. Narrow pragmatism is the classical American pragmatism of Pierce, James, and Dewey and is characterized by an emphasis on evaluating beliefs according to their usefulness. The broadly conceived pragmatism focuses on the primacy of practices and includes the above mentioned figures, but also Kant, the early Heidegger, the later Wittgenstein, Quine, Sellars, Davidson, and Rorty. There are also many targets for a pragmatists, and Brandom’s special concern with discursive practices makes him a self-declared methodological pragmatist, one who believes – along Quine and Dummett – that “the point of semantic theory is to make sense of pragmatics – that meanings should be thought of as theoretical entities postulated to explain, or at least to codify, proprieties of use.” More particularly, Brandom is a semantic pragmatist for whom “only […] use can explain the association of meaning with, or its expression by, a vocabulary.” (*BSD*, 31).

In order to explain the analytic dimension of AP we must sketch the way Robert Brandom conceives analytic philosophy. His aim in *BSD* is that of extending, in a pragmatist fashion, the classical analytic project or, flipping the coin, that of pursuing pragmatism in an analytical spirit (*BSD*, xii). The classical analytic project is presented by focusing not on what different key figures of the analytic tradition have actually said
about their endeavors, but on what they were in fact doing: reformulating problematic vocabularies (mathematical, intentional, normative, modal etc.) in terms of some privileged vocabulary (logical, phenomenal, observational, naturalist etc.) using a set of logical tools. Thus, it is fair to say that the classical analytic project can be characterized by its commitment to the semantically, ontologically or epistemologically legitimacy of a single vocabulary (“methodological monism”) and to the centrality of logic in the process of semantic analysis (“semantic logicism”). Brandom supplements semantic logicism with a notion of pragmatic analysis of discursive practices or abilities (underlying vocabularies) in terms of some basic ones that, in some cases, might turn out to be non-discursive practices, *i.e.* practices present even in the case of non-discursive beings. Therefore, besides necessary and sufficient semantic relations between vocabularies (VV relations) we now have also pragmatic relations between sets of practices (PP relations), and meaning-use relations between practices and vocabularies and vocabularies and practices (VP and PV relations). Composing basic PP, PV, VV, and VP necessary or sufficient relations we get complex pragmatically mediated semantic relations between vocabularies.² Brandom claims that such relations recursively generate “an infinite set of such pragmatically mediated semantic relations” (BSD, 11). What

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² Thus, a vocabulary is VP-necessary just in case we can’t theoretically specify (speak about) some practices without it; if the vocabulary permits us to fully specify the practices, then it is VP-sufficient. Some practices are PP-necessary for others if in order to engage to do in some practices one needs to be able to do something else. For example, knowing how to subtract and how to multiply is necessary for learning how to divide. If successfully engaging in some practices is enough for someone to be able, in principle, to engage also in other practices, then the first set of practices is PP-sufficient for the second. Further, if engaging in some practices is enough for someone to count as saying something, then we have a PV-sufficiency relation; if someone doesn’t count as saying something unless she knows how to do something, then some practices or abilities are PV-necessary. Finally, if we can say in one vocabulary everything we were able to say using just another vocabulary, then the first vocabulary is VV-sufficient for the second; if we can’t express something implicit in one vocabulary unless we use another vocabulary, then the second is VV-necessary for the first one.
emerges is “a logic of the relations between meaning and use” (BSD, 8).3 Using this meta-conceptual apparatus, Brandom argues for a complex thesis concerning the relations between logical, intentional, deontic normative, and modal alethic vocabularies to the effect that “what is essential to understanding their semantics is their relation to the use of other vocabularies (non-modal, non-normative, non-logical ones)” (BSD, xi). Logical, modal, normative, and intentional vocabulary turn out to have an expressive function by letting us speak of pragmatic or semantic implicit features of our discursive practices related to the use of non-logic, non-modal, non-normative or non-intentional vocabularies. The relation of being a pragmatic metavocabulary and the elaborating-explicating (LX) relation between vocabularies are central in the AP’s metaconceptual toolbox. The first one obtains when a vocabulary is sufficient for saying what one must do in order to be able to use a certain vocabulary with a certain meaning.4 The second important relations obtains when (1) the target of a pragmatic metavocabulary is a set of practices that is necessary for the deployment of all autonomous vocabularies and (2) this set is sufficient for the elaboration of the pragmatic metavocabulary’s underlying practices. It turns out that logical, modal and normative vocabularies stand in this LX relation with ordinary descriptive vocabulary and that normative vocabulary is a pragmatic metavocabulary for modal vocabulary. The climax of BSD’s argument is that focusing on meaning-use relations allows us to see essential meaning-use features of semantic and intentional vocabulary. Along the way Brandom uses the analytic pragmatist metavocabulary to reframe and some central problems in the analytic philosophy having to do, among others, with compositionality semantics, indexical

3 This logic is accompanied by a diagrammatical representation of meaning-use relations that helps the reader understand the abstract claims involving vocabularies and practices. It’s not at all clear what “logic” means exactly in context. See also Macbeth (2010).

4 Thus, Brandom argues that although indexical vocabulary cannot be semantically reduced (translated into a) non-indexical vocabulary, it is possible to show that non-indexical vocabulary is a pragmatic metavocabulary for indexical vocabulary; we can say in non-indexical terms what one must do in order to deploy an indexical vocabulary).
vocabulary, the interpretation of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, the problem of reduction and explanation, the is-ought problem, the problem of artificial intelligence, and computational linguistics.

**Problems in Motivating Analytic Pragmatism**

Analytic pragmatism has, according to Robert Brandom, an expressive power that should make it attractive to any methodological pragmatist, regardless of any other particular pragmatist commitments one might have. This is due to the fact that it incorporates a commitment to semantic pluralism (*i.e.* the thesis that there are no privileged vocabularies so that any vocabulary can be legitimately used as a base vocabulary in the philosophical analysis process), and to metatheoretic pragmatic pluralism (*i.e.* the thesis that there are many legitimate ways of speaking about the use underlying meaning). Brandom takes seriously in BSD his commitment to semantic pluralism and, using his favorite normative pragmatic metavocabulary, he argues in favor of some remarkable results the relation between logical, modal, normative and intentional vocabulary. AP is advocated using a consequentialist strategy: the remarkable theoretical results achieved in BSD recommend the entire theoretical project. However, Brandom thinks that the commitment to metatheoretic pragmatic pluralism makes AP even more appealing: AP can be seen as the lingua franca of methodological pragmatists because the meaning-use relations constitutive for AP have explanatory power even if the metavocabulary used for speaking about the practices underlying vocabularies is differently conceived. Unfortunately, metatheoretic pragmatic pluralism is a thesis that stays in the shadows in BSD: in almost all the important arguments Brandom uses only one basic pragmatic vocabulary, namely the vocabulary of normative pragmatics and semantic inferentialist. In what follows, I present some difficulties relating to metatheoretic pragmatic pluralism.

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^5 “Use” in the pragmatist interpretation, refers to the practices necessary or sufficient for deploying a vocabulary that expresses certain meanings.
and I suggest a possible structuralist strategy for arguing in favor of analytic pragmatism that consists in looking for invariant results under metatheoretic pragmatic vocabulary substitution.

According to Brandom, the best thing that happened to the analytic project was the pragmatist challenge. The rehearsal of some of the arguments of Wittgenstein, Quine, and Sellars is meant to motivate a swiping pragmatist turn in philosophy and especially in the philosophy of language (seen by all of them as a first philosophy). Wittgenstein’s grammatical observations, on the one hand, raise in Brandom’s view problems for the assumptions that are central commitments to the classic analytic project. First, the assumption that there is a universal semantic vocabulary (methodological monism), one in which everything can be said is displaced. There are countless language games and none of them is central for discursive activity. As long as there is a coherent practice underlying a vocabulary we can say that the language game is rooted in a human practice and is legitimate. Because meaning is use, the focus on semantic relations without specifying underlying practices is illicit. Hence the focus of philosophical investigations should be on the description of local and temporal practices and non-theoretic. Logic has no central place in the philosophical analysis because what is disputed is exactly the form of the analytic project, the idea that philosophical understanding should be modeled somehow on scientific theoretic explanation. Thus, Wittgenstein rejects methodological monism and semantic logicism and advocates a kind of anthropological, elucidative (as opposed to explicative), descriptivist, and quietist pragmatism. Sellars, on the other hand, although not putting forward general criticisms against the classical analytic project, constructs relevant arguments against some brands of empiricism. What is important for Brandom’s purposes is not so much the details of his views, but his general strategy that motivates, as in the case of Wittgenstein’s arguments, a pragmatic turn. Sellars (1963b, 1997) argues that treating the phenomenal or observational vocabularies as privileged is wrong, given that there is a “pragmatically mediated semantic relation” between them and some target vocabularies. The idea of pragmatic dependency of one vocabulary on another is central for Brandom’s development of AP and further motivates the extension of the classic
analytic project as to incorporate not only semantic relations, but also pragmatically mediated semantic relations.

Finally, Quine attacks the analytic-synthetic distinction and the notion of atomic meaning. Meaning should let us say identity the correct inferences that can be made using some expressions. But what is a consequence of what depends on what other commitments one has. Therefore, one cannot systematically isolate the atomic meanings. The basic unity of significance is not the word, or the proposition, but the theory where world-facts are intertwined with word (or semantic) facts. Thus, one cannot theoretically delineate different languages or vocabularies and so cannot map their inferential connections using the instrument of modern logic.

Brandom irenic strategy of combining the classical analytic project with Wittgenstein’s pragmatism raises some issues. John McDowell (2008) argues that what is wrong with the classical analytic project is not just the fact that some semantic vocabulary is given illegitimate priority. The problem has more to do with the general idea of analysis and philosophical understanding. For McDowell, Brandom’s reference to Wittgenstein is misguided:

Brandom notes that the interest of his analytic project is sensitive to the vocabulary in which we specify a practice PV-sufficient for some vocabulary we are aiming to cast light on. But he does not dwell on the question whether we can expect to be able to do that in a way that permits something we can conceive as analysis of the target vocabulary. And the question is surely crucial for the prospects of his new project of analysis is. In specifying a practice PV-sufficient for a vocabulary, we might simply use, in second intention, expressions that belong to the vocabulary whose use we are describing. (“You have to use the word ‘person’ in such a way as to be able to be understood to be saying things in which the concept of a person figures.”) If we use such terms in describing how a vocabulary needs to be used to have its significance, we do not produce something with a counterpart, now in a pragmatically inflected version, of the kind of interest that was supposed to be possessed by achievements in the classical project of analysis. We do not contribute to anything that would deserve to be called “a project of analysis.” And I have been urging that Wittgenstein’s response to philosophical anxiety about meaningfulness überhaupt contains nothing to encourage analytic aspirations for pragmatic metavocabularies.

(McDowell 2008, 52)
Methodological pragmatism might take different shapes relative to how one conceives the relations between *explanandum* and *explanans*. The vocabularies needed for speaking about the practices underlying some vocabulary might be conceptually independent (or not) from the vocabulary used to specify the content of the vocabularies. At one end, we can have a pragmatic vocabulary that is conceptually independent of the vocabulary to be pragmatically specified. In this sense, Brandom’s pragmatism qualifies as strong pragmatism because of his claim that “fundamental semantic concepts can be defined in purely pragmatic terms” (MacFarlane 2006, 13). At the other end, we can have explanations where the target vocabulary is the same as the base vocabulary, as McDowell explains with reference to Wittgenstein’s grammatical observations. There is also a middle ground. Given Davidson’s claim, for example, that the notion of truth cannot be defined (although we can say some important things about the role it plays in our rational or linguistic practice), MacFarlane takes Davidson’s pragmatism as weak pragmatism, according to which “semantics is not conceptually autonomous from pragmatics.”

These brief remarks should be enough to make clear the fact that adherence to analytic pragmatism means accepting some implicit commitments that are not trivial, *i.e.* a specific and possibly problematic form of methodological pragmatism.

**Universal Semantic Vocabularies and Universal Pragmatic Vocabularies**

Brandom drops any hope of finding a universal semantic vocabulary as a base for analyzing all possible target vocabularies, and considers programs that have such an agenda, *e.g.* empiricism or naturalism, as ‘metaphysical’ programs. His reasons for rejecting this semantic version of metaphysics have to do (1) with the difficulty of making sense of the notion of “universal” that incorporates

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quantification over all vocabularies, and (2) with the discriminatory strategy that comes along with such universal vocabularies. Brandom argues that programs seeking to construct a base vocabulary for all actual (not possible) vocabularies, given semantic toleration, are legitimate and should give us a respectable notion of metaphysics.

One might aspect that a pragmatic theoretical language that cannot be used to speak about all actual practices is expressively inadequate. Thus, even though there is no universal semantic vocabulary, there might be a universal pragmatic metavocabulary, one that is universally VP-sufficient. But Brandom is again skeptical when it comes to the prospects of constructing such a vocabulary, and resists the temptation to make pragmatic expressive completeness a constraint for what counts as a good pragmatic theory. If a semantic universal vocabulary is a chimera, then surly the pragmatic vocabulary VP-sufficient for specifying the practices PV-sufficient for the universal semantic vocabulary is also an illusion. But this is not actually the reason

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7 “What most gives me pause about the commitments underlying programs of the sort I am calling ‘metaphysical’ is that they essentially require us to quantify over all possible vocabularies.” (BSD, 223).
8 “Everything that can be known, said, or thought, every fact, must in principle be expressible in the base vocabulary in question. It is in this sense (epistemological, semantic, or ontological) a universal vocabulary. What it cannot express is fatally defective: unknowable, unintelligible, or unreal. One clear thing to mean by ‘metaphysics’ is the making of claims of this sort about the universal expressive power of some vocabulary.” (BSD, 219).
9 “We can get around my earlier worries about the concept of all possible vocabularies by understanding the ‘everything’ in a regulative way, rather than constitutively. That is, for every vocabulary anyone comes up with, the metaphysician is committed to the favored base vocabulary being adequate, when suitably elaborated, to express what it expresses. We start by trying to codify the vocabularies we have, but acknowledge the commitment to address any more that may come along.” (BSD, 228) “Our slogan should be ‘Metaphysical discrimination without denigration’.”(BSD, 229; see also Brandom 2000, 181).
10 “We can lay alongside the aspiration to find a vocabulary in which everything can be said, the aspiration to find one in which one can say everything one must be able to do in order to say anything, that is to use any vocabulary whatsoever. This is just the idea of a universal pragmatic metavocabulary.” (BSD, 230).
why Brandom is skeptic regarding the prospect of finding a universal pragmatic vocabulary:

The lesson I drew from the young David Lewis’s methodologically principled polymorphous theoretical promiscuity is that a valuable kind of understanding consists in the sort of knowing our way about secured only by multiplying the crisscrossing of concrete ways of drawing the boundary between the expressible and the inexpressible, not globally and absolutely, but locally and relative to specific base vocabularies. The same will hold true of attempts to construct regimented universal pragmatic metavocabularies: their value lies in the details of their only partial successes, in where, specifically, they fail, and in how the line between partial success and partial failure varies as we try out quite different candidate base vocabularies. (BSD, 230-31)

Other methodological pragmatists are more optimistic. Huw Price, for example, is committed to the idea that different vocabularies perform different functions and that underlying practices can be specified using a unique pragmatic vocabulary. This is what he calls “functional pluralism” (2007). Price’s project is, in fact, to show that this vocabulary can be constructed in a naturalistic framework. Of course, this unique vocabulary is what Brandom means by a universal pragmatic vocabulary. However, at this point one could wonder what stops Brandom claiming that his favorite pragmatic vocabulary (non-semantic and non-intentional pragmatic normative vocabulary that takes as central the notions of commitment and entitlement) is actually the best candidate for the title of universal pragmatic vocabulary? In fact, Brandom is successfully using his pragmatic normative vocabulary throughout BSD. So why resist the temptation to push forward this pragmatic vocabulary as the universal pragmatic vocabulary? There is no proof in BSD that the failure of finding a universal semantic vocabulary reasonably implies a failure to find a pragmatic universal vocabulary. Brandom’s expressive ambition turns out to be a higher order one: “I am looking for a different kind of metavocabulary. It is at a higher level, making it possible to express crucial structural features of the relations between the dimensions of discursiveness they take as their targets, relations between what is said and what is done.” This metavocabulary is the vocabulary of analytic pragmatism, the theoretic language of meaning-use relations.
Analytic Pluralism and Metatheoretic Pragmatic Pluralism

The semantic pluralism that makes Brandom fruitfully investigate the relations between different philosophically interesting vocabularies is not mirrored in BSD by an implementation of pragmatic metatheoretical pluralism: Brandom uses just his favorite normative pragmatic (and inferentialist) idiom and no other. This is a problem because Brandom (1) acknowledges the theoretical autonomy of AP from the metatheoretic normative vocabulary used in *Making It Explicit*, and (2) recommends the apparatus of AP as a *lingua franca* for pragmatists:

Meaning-use analysis does not depend at all on any of the principle theses of *Making It Explicit*: not its normative pragmatics, not its inferentialist semantics, not its account, in terms of those, of what is expressed by representational locutions. [...] Meaning-use analysis strives to be neutral as far as the more detailed accounts of meaning, use, and the relations between them, to which it is applied are concerned. It aims to be adequate to express Dummett’s views, Davidson’s, David Lewis’s, or Stalnaker’s – those, indeed, of any of the relatively small number of philosophers who are explicitly concerned with what it is thinkers and talkers must do (the practices they must engage in or the abilities they must exercise) in order thereby to count as associating semantically relevant whatsis (whatever semantic interpretants the semantic portion of the theory assigns) with their locutions and performances. (BSD, 234)

But Brandom is not doing any exemplificatory work in BSD that would substantiate his second claim to the effect that pragmatists will benefit from adopting his analytic pragmatist vocabulary. One negative effect is, I think, the fact that there is a tendency in the secondary literature on AP to engage with Brandom’s project more in a critical way, and rather less in a constructive way. In what follows I’ll try to explain why this is so. If the paradigm for meaning-use analysis would have been successfully set out in BSD, one would aspect to see people adopting meaning-use analysis and even doing some AP-style pioneering work regarding vocabularies not analyzed in BSD.\footnote{AP is a project with a big To-do list: the expressivist conception of logic is just sketched out for some logical vocabulary, but logic is a Leviathan, so there’s a lot of work to be done to substantiate Brandom’s expressivist view; the AI pragmatic}
are many a pair of shoes to wear out. But people are not really putting on the new shoes. What went wrong? Why are pragmatists not endorsing Brandom’s theoretical results from BSD and why are not motivated to go on mapping the pragmatically-mediated relations between all kinds of new vocabularies in search for other new and illuminating results (as Brandom recommends we should do)? One reason is, I think, that there is no clear delimitation between the expressive power of the metaconceptual apparatus of analytic pragmatism and the optional, according to Brandom, pragmatic metavocabulary (the V sufficient for specifying any Ps). There is, in principle, a set of pragmatic metavocabularies and Brandom’s favorite theoretical idiom is just one of them. We can see Brandom’s strategy for arguing in favor of analytic pragmatism along the following lines: if we put to work the apparatus of AP and the normative pragmatic metavocabulary we get some extraordinary results (as in BSD); thus, analytic pragmatism is philosophically useful; analytic pragmatism is useful even when we substitute the normative pragmatic metavocabulary with other pragmatic metavocabularies; thus, analytic pragmatism should be adopted as a pragmatic lingua franca. But if the results in BSD depend on the normative pragmatic assumptions, then it is not clear how fruitful analytic pragmatism’s theoretic tools really are. Using some special pragmatic theoretic commitments is very important in motivating analytic pragmatism, because in this way we see how analytic pragmatism is supposed to work. But doing meaning-use analysis just in terms of normative pragmatics (and inferential semantics) is not helpful in convincing someone that the metaconceptual

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12 BSD’s motto is an Italian proverb: “Between saying and doing, many a pair of shoes is worn out.”
apparatus of analytic pragmatism is useful, because all the theoretic results from BSD, however interesting and surprising, will remain relative to a particular choice of pragmatic metavocabulary. If Brandom discourages us to see his favorite pragmatic vocabulary as a universal pragmatic vocabulary and in fact argues that we should not aspect to be able to find/construct such universal vocabulary, then there are little meta-philosophical incentives for adopting analytic pragmatism.

Towards Pragmatic Structuralism?

For all its virtues, pragmatic metatheoretical pluralism has its drawback: if AP turns out to have the expressive power Brandom envisages and becomes lingua franca for pragmatists, then we will find ourselves somehow in the same place, but just one level up on the expressive spiral. Different pragmatists will be able to express their theoretical commitments using the neutral metatheoretic apparatus of AP, but the theoretical standoff will remain in place, given the fact that there are substantial disagreements about what pragmatic explanation amounts to.\textsuperscript{13} The metaphysical stance identified in the classical analytic project as a commitment to semantic monism had, I think, the success it actually enjoyed \textit{exactly} because it was viewed as a strategy for making some kind of progress on the ontological and epistemological side of various debates \textit{via} semantics. What was essential for the success of the project was the fact that there was a large agreement on how the explicative relation between different vocabularies should look like (they should have to be conceptually independent), even though there was dispute what exactly the privileged vocabulary should be. Brandom is right, and we should seek to understand the relations between vocabularies by adopting a high standard of toleration. However, if there are too many ways in which something can be understood, then we might be on relativist ground. Brandom thinks that pragmatists will learn something from each other even if everyone is conservative and

\textsuperscript{13} For related worries about AP’s theoretical usefulness, see Whiting (2007).
does meaning-use analysis using just his favorite metatheoretical pragmatic vocabulary. Speaking about his own way of doing meaning-use analysis using only his favorite idiom from, Brandom argues that:

The more suggestive and illuminating the results of [my] applications turn out to be, the more reason there is to think that the meta-metavocabulary of meaning-use analysis is cutting at important joints, making visible structures of general significance. The value of the result was supposed to be something like the vector product of what we learned from the applications and what we learn about the apparatus by applying it. (BSD, 35)

But why would one think that using a different pragmatic metavocabulary we will be able to produce results that will be illuminating for all pragmatists? My suggestion is that taking seriously metatheoretical pragmatic pluralism opens up the space for a structuralist strategy that consists in looking for invariant results under metatheoretical pragmatic vocabulary substitution. The idea is that by substituting different pragmatic idioms in the apparatus of analytic pragmatism and working out the theoretical consequences of such substitutions, one might end up with the some important substantial results regarding the pragmatically mediated semantic relations between different vocabularies. If, for example, we use Dummett’s, Davidson’s, David Lewis’s, or Stalnaker’s favorite pragmatic vocabulary, and we succeed in showing that logical, modal and normative vocabularies are still LX-vocabularies, then this would be a strategy that would justify us to call analytic pragmatism the lingua franca of methodological pragmatists. If successful, such structural results under pragmatic vocabulary substitution would be one of the greatest virtues of Brandom’s analytic pragmatism. Adopting a structuralist line is a way of side-stepping the problem of having a multitude of pragmatic vocabularies in the methodological pragmatist camp. But what are the prospects for such a turn towards pragmatic structuralism? The main problem is that different pragmatic vocabularies come with different views on what pragmatic explanation amounts to. As we see in the case of Davidson’s theory, pragmatic vocabulary is not independent of semantic vocabulary. Things might look different for Dummett, Lewis, or Stalnaker, but this only shows that
there is not just one possible structuralist strategy, but a plurality of structuralist strategies relative to how one conceives the notion of pragmatic explanation.

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