



ELL101: Intro to Linguistics

Week 8-9 Pragmatics

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Pragmatics

The study of language in actual conversation or in context (“invisible” meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn’t actually said or written (Yule, 2010))

- Sentences are understood in context
 - *Can you pass me the salt?*
 - *I seem to have lost your phone number.*
 - *Would you like to come upstairs and see my etchings?*

Context

- Contexts are largely divided into two different types

Linguistic context

- actual utterances that precede a particular utterance in a discourse

Physical (social/situational) context

- situation in which a sentence is uttered

- *Bobby has to attend a conference in Boston. He is there now.*
- *Can you take the trash out?*
 - From your roommate who is running late one morning
 - To you who were in a crippling accident, but now is on the mend
 - To your younger sibling who is pestering you when you are trying to a conversation with your friend
 - In the same situation as above, but now to your friend instead of to your brother

Grice's Cooperative Principle I

Cooperative Principle

A number of maxims (regulations) that people observe in a normal discourse.
A set of assumptions that can be undertaken without any specific context

- Grice's Cooperative Principle is divided into the following four maxims:
 - Maxim of Quality
 - Maxim of Reference (relation)
 - Maxim of Quantity
 - Maxim of Manner

Grice's Cooperative Principle II

The Maxim of Quality

- Do not say what you believe to be false.
 - Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- (1) The venom of the purple-toothed spider isn't strong enough to kill people.
- We believe that the speaker has adequate evidence for his/her claim and is not saying something false.
- (2) a. The venom of the purple-toothed spider isn't strong enough to kill people because when I was bitten by it, I didn't die.
- b. #The venom of the purple-toothed spider isn't strong enough to kill people, but I don't know anything about the purple-toothed spider.

Grice's Cooperative Principle III

The Maxim of Relevance (relation)

- Be relevant.

(3) Alan: Is Jamie dating anyone these days?

Sam: Well, she goes to Cleveland every weekend.

(4) Rachel: We should think of something fun to do this weekend.

Sarah: #Yes, it happened to me in class today.

Grice's Cooperative Principle IV

The Maxim of Quantity

- Make your contribution as informative as is required.
- Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

(5) A: Where did you grow up?

B: On the corner of Astoria Boulevard and the 82nd Street.

B: In Astoria.

B: In Astoria, Queens.

B: In the Mid-Atlantic.

B: In the United States.

The maxim of manner

- Avoid obscurity of expression
- Avoid ambiguity.
- Be brief.
- Be orderly.

(6) A: What do you do for a living?

B: #What I do is that I'm an instructor and the subject matter that I teach is linguistics (cf. I'm a linguistics instructor)

(7) #Leslie read fifty pages and opened her book.

(8) #My mother didn't really want my room to be painted purple. I was worried that I wouldn't get good grades at the new school. When I was a child, my favorite color was purple. I worked very hard in all of my classes to get good grades. When I was ten years old, ...

Grice's Cooperative Principle VI

- Which maxim do the following conversations violate?

(9) A: How was the opera last night?

B: The singer produced a series of sound.

(10) A: Have you seen *Community*?

B: My dog is missing since yesterday.

(11) A: I'm nervous about the linguistics exam.

B: You will pass it.

(12) A: Do you know anything about the linguistics exam?

B: Linguistics is a scientific study of language and you will see a lot of questions about language.

(13) A: What did you do yesterday?

B: I went to the mall and bought a pair of shoes. (but didn't buy the shoes at the mall)

Grice's Cooperative Principle VII

- Which maxim do the following conversations violate?

(14) Woman: Do you love me? (sobbing)

Man: Yes. (playing a video game)

(15) Woman: It's past midnight and there is no train home today.

Man: Let me call you a cab.

(16) Woman: It's not you, it's me.

Man: I'll forgive you, so let's keep dating.

(17) Robber: Do any of you have a watch?

Man: Yes. (raising his left arm high)

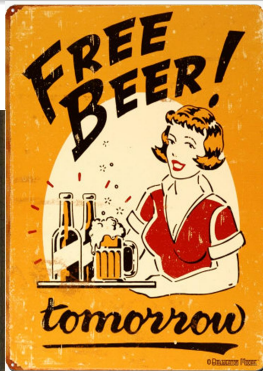
(18) A: Could you pass me the salt?

B: Yes, I could five minutes ago.

Deixis I

Deixis

- Words that can be interpreted only when the context is provided
- *here, there* (spatial), *this, that* (demonstrative), *now, then, yesterday* (temporal), *you, me, she, he* (person)



Anaphora and antecedent

- **Anaphora** is a deictic expression that is employed as a subsequent reference to an already introduced entity (e.g., *him, her, his, her, it, its, you* etc.)
- **Antecedent** is the referent of the anaphora (i.e., the first mention of the entity).

- (19) a. John_i shaved him_j
b. John_i shaved himself_i
- (20) a. John_i promised George_j to shave him_{i/j}.
b. John_i promised George_i to shave himself_i.
- (21) a. John_i told George_i to shave him_{i/j}.
b. *John_i told George_i to shave himself_j.

Deixis III

- Tell whether each of the following sentences contains any deictic words. For the ones that do, list those words.
 - They want to go to your concert to see your band perform.
 - The Ohio State Buckeyes won the NCAA football championship in 2003.
 - Many authors, such as Mark Twain and Carolyn Keene, chose to write under a pseudonym.
 - That is so cool let me see it!
 - Although there will certainly be another major earthquake in California, no one can predict for sure whether the next big quake will happen tomorrow, next week, or a decade from now.
 - Hippopotamuses are herbivores.
 - Is it possible for a technician to come here to help fix the problem, or do I have to take my computer over there?

Speech Acts

- A range of performing activities that can be carried out by language
 - conveying information
 - request information
 - giving orders
 - making requests
 - making threats
 - giving warnings
 - making bets
 - giving advice
 - offering apology
 - telling jokes
 - paying compliments

- (22) Could you pass me the salt?
- a. Type of sentence: interrogative (Question)
 - b. Speech act: request

Speech acts II

- What are the speech acts of the following sentences?

(23) John Jones has five dollars.

(24) Who ate my porridge?

(25) Shut up.

(26) Please scratch my nose.

(27) Do that again, and I'll punch your lights out.

(28) There is a mouse in the back seat of your car.

(29) Five bucks says that the Mets will beat the Phyllis this year.

(30) You ought to go to class at least once a quarter.

Direct / Indirect Speech Acts

- Direct Speech Acts: Performing functions in a direct and literal manner.
- Indirect Speech Acts: Performing functions in an indirect manner, often with using the performative verb (e.g., *know, ask, request, wonder etc.*)

(31) Direct

- a. Did John marry Helen? (Question)
- b. I ask you whether or not John married Helen. (Question)

(32) Indirect

- a. I don't know if John married Helen. (Statement)
- b. I would like to know if John married Helen. (Desire)
- c. Do you know whether John married Helen? (Question)

Speech acts IV

- Sentence type (i.e., declarative, interrogative, imperative) often does not match with the speech act.
- Declarative sentence
 - Columbus is the capital of Ohio. (Assertion)
 - I would like to know what the capital of Ohio is. (Question)
 - It would make me happy if you could take out the garbage. (Request)
- Interrogative sentence
 - Did you know that Columbus is the capital of Ohio? (Assertion)
 - What is the capital of Ohio? (Question)
 - Will you take out the garbage? (Request)
- Imperative sentence
 - Remember that Columbus is the capital of Ohio. (Assertion)
 - Let me ask you what the capital of Ohio is. (Question)
 - Don't forget to take out the garbage. (Request)

Speech acts V

- Below are descriptions of several possible contexts for the sentence "Do any of you have a watch?"
 - A frantic-looking man runs up to a group of people standing at a bus stop, checks the bus schedule, and then says hurriedly, "Do any of you have a watch?"
 - A jeweler who is renowned for the beautiful wristwatches that she makes sees a group of people walk into her shop and says to them, "Do any of you have a watch?"
 - The security guard who works at the metal detector at an airport holds out a pile of trays into which people may put their possessions before placing them on the conveyor belt. He says to the people standing in line, "Do any of you have a watch?"

Speech acts VI

- *"Do any of you have a watch?"*
 - A group of preteen girls is comparing jewelry. One girl says, "My jewelry is best, because I have the most." Another says, "Nope. Mine is the best because it all matches." This sort of thing goes on for a while. Finally the last girl pipes up that she thinks she has the best jewelry. "Oh yeah? What makes you so special?" She replies, "Just look at my wrist! Do any of you have a watch?"
 - A mugger traps a group of people in a dark alley and waves a gun at them while screaming, "Do any of you have a watch?"
 - Your linguistics instructor left his watch at home this morning, but he will need to monitor his time use in class. He wanders into the department lounge and says to his colleagues, "Do any of you have a watch?"

Speech acts VII

- *”Do any of you have a watch?”*
 - A woman goes to a masquerade ball and falls in love with one of her dance partners. However, of course, she cannot see his face. She knows only that he wore a very ornate and easily recognizable wristwatch. Now, every time that she approaches a group of eligible-looking men, she begins her conversation with, *”Do any of you have a watch?”*
 - A zookeeper is about to let a group of patrons try holding an exotic bird with a known tendency to peck at shiny objects. Before letting anybody hold her, the keeper says, *”Do any of you have a watch?”*
 - A kindergarten student has just learned how to tell time. Very proud of her new skill and certain that others will be as well, she marches up to a group of grownups and eagerly says, *”Do any of you have a watch?”*

Bibliography I

Yule, G. (2010). *The Study of Language*. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 4th edition. ISBN: 9780521749220; Course: ELL101 (textbook); Price: \$29.99.

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