

LSA.311: Lecture 1

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The Plan for Today

- Semantics vs. Pragmatics
- Two Reasons to Study Pragmatics (as a Semanticist)
 - Context in Semantics
 - Pragmatic Inferences and the Data of Semantics
- Implicature

Semantics vs. Pragmatics

- Semantics: linguistically encoded meaning
- Pragmatics: use of language in context

Semantics

- assigns interpretations to logical forms
- compositional
- algorithmic

Pragmatics

- what people do with language
- dangerously close to the Theory of Everything

Why Do Pragmatics?

- aspects of linguistically encoded meaning that are sensitive to use in context
- need to distinguish semantic aspects of meaning from pragmatic inferences

Context in Semantics

- Context-dependency
- Presupposition
- Speech act markers
- etc.

Context-Dependency / Indexicality

- An occurrence of *I* has as its semantic value the speaker of the utterance that the occurrence is part of.
 - $\llbracket I \rrbracket^c = \text{the speaker of } c$
- Non-indexical Pronouns, relative to variable assignment
 - $\llbracket \text{he}_i \rrbracket^{c,g} = g(i)$

Presupposition

- The phenomenon: A linguistic expression ϕ cannot be used properly unless the context satisfies a certain condition.
- Examples:
 - *I* cannot be used properly unless (the context is such that) the utterance has exactly one speaker
 - *the King of France* cannot be used properly unless (the context is such that) the participants take it for granted that there is a King of France

Speech Act Markers

- Expressions indicating what the speaker wants to do with the utterance
- *Frankly, I don't give a damn*

Semantics/Pragmatics

- The indexical *I*:
 - Semantics: semantic value of *I* is the speaker of the utterance that the occurrence is part of
 - Pragmatics: need to decide who the speaker is or rather, who counts as the speaker
 - * *I am an idiot* on a piece of paper pinned on your back
 - * *I had a good life* on a tombstone (after an example in Kratzer's dissertation)
- *I am not here right now* ("Answering Machine Paradox")

Two Components of Meaning

- We need to distinguish linguistically encoded meaning (semantics) from inferences in context (pragmatics)
- An easy case: *I had dinner with some of my students last night* \Rightarrow the speaker speaks English

Example: *some*

- *I had dinner with some of my students last night*
- natural, virtually automatic inference: I did *not* have dinner with all of my students last night.
- Is that inference due to the linguistically encoded meaning of *some*, i.e. *some* literally means 'some but not all', or is it due to a "pragmatic inference"?

Standard Answer: Pragmatics

- *some* means non-empty intersection between two sets *plus* the inference that the speaker would have used *all* if they could have
- but we need to have a theory
 - an analysis needs to present a package (syntax/semantics/pragmatics)
- How to compare against alternative analyses?
- Methodological preference? Grice's Modified Occam's Razor

Herbert Paul Grice (1913–1988)



- Main Works: "Meaning", "Logic and Conversation"

George Lakoff reports: Grice's William James Lectures at Harvard in 1967 were titled "Logic and Conversation." I was fortunate enough to be present, since I was teaching linguistics there at the time.

He refused to publish the lectures for two decades. I managed to distribute, through the linguistic underground in the 1960's and 70's, about 1,000 photocopies of the full book manuscript. Most of the most prominent people who have written on the subject—Steven Levinson, Georgia Green, Larry Horn, and so on—got into the subject during that period and had access to the full manuscript. The most popular version of Grice's ideas were distributed in a chapter of *Logic and Conversation* in Cole and Morgan's "Speech Acts" volume, which Grice has refused to publish until he got drunk at a party in 1973 at a conference in Austin. I suggested to Cole that he have a contract ready, which he did, and Grice signed on the dotted line. The entire manuscript has since been published in *Studies in The Ways of Words*, Harvard University Press, 1989. But there was a big gap between 1975 (when the chapter in Cole and Morgan appeared) and 1989 when the whole manuscript appeared (to little fanfare; it was largely ignored). Grice's maxims entered the published linguistic literature without their context.

Implicatures

- Implicatures = Inferences over and above the truth-conditional content
- Kinds of Implicature
 - conventional (cf. *and* vs. *but*)
 - conversational
 - * particularized (cf. *Jones has beautiful handwriting*)
 - * generalized (\Leftarrow this is what we'll be looking at)

The Grounds for Implicature

- Why did the speaker say what they said?
- The speaker would have said something other than what they said, unless p
- $\Rightarrow p$
- Assumption: the speaker is acting for good reasons, for reasons that we can understand
- i.e. the speaker was acting rationally

Grice's Principles for Rational Action in Communication

- The Cooperative Principle
- Grice's Maxims of Conversation (see handout)
 - Quality
 - Quantity
 - Relevance
 - Manner

The Mechanism for Implicature

- If the speaker had followed the Maxims, then the speaker would have said something other than what they said, unless p
- Assumption: the speaker followed the Maxims
- $\Rightarrow p$

An Example from Grice

- A is planning with B an itinerary for a holiday in France. Both know that A wants to see his friend C, if to do so would not involve too great a prolongation of his journey.
- A: Where does C live?
- B: Somewhere in the South of France.

Examples of Putative Implicatures

- from *some* to *some but not all*
- from *three* to *exactly three*
- from *or* to *not both*
- from *may* to *may not*

The Competitors

- Gricean implicature analysis
- Sophisticated ambiguity analyses

Next Time

- Gamut's reformulation of Grice's System
- Deriving quantity implicatures (e.g. from *some* to *some but not all*)
 - Assumptions needed
 - Predicted properties of implicatures
- The Symmetry Problem
- Horn Scales