

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 linguistically 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
⇒ 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

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

What We Did Today

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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