

# PRAGMATICS

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- ▶ Analyse the sentence according to 1) syntax  
2) semantics 3) pragmatics.

*My car has a flat tyre.*

# Analysis of Syntax

*My car has a flat tyre.*



Poss. form Noun Verb Art. Adj. Noun

Analysis of Syntax looks at the relationships between linguistic forms and they are arranged in sequence, without taking into account the world outside; it includes grammar, and does not consider who said, who said to whom, where, when or why.

# Analysis of Semantics

*My car has a flat tyre.*

A person reporting that his/her car has a deflated tyre.

Semantics analysis would focus on the meaning of lexical items i.e. what the words mean by themselves, as they are in the dictionary.

Contextual background why this statement is made is not considered.

# Analysis of Pragmatics

My car has a flat tyre.

Meaning of the utterance varies:

- ▶ In a tyre shop, this might be taken as.....
- ▶ If addressed to a friend with a car, .....
- ▶ If addressed to a friend without a car,.....
- ▶ If addressed to a police officer,.....

**Context** is paramount important in determining the meaning of an utterance.

**Speaker's intended message** is the focal point.

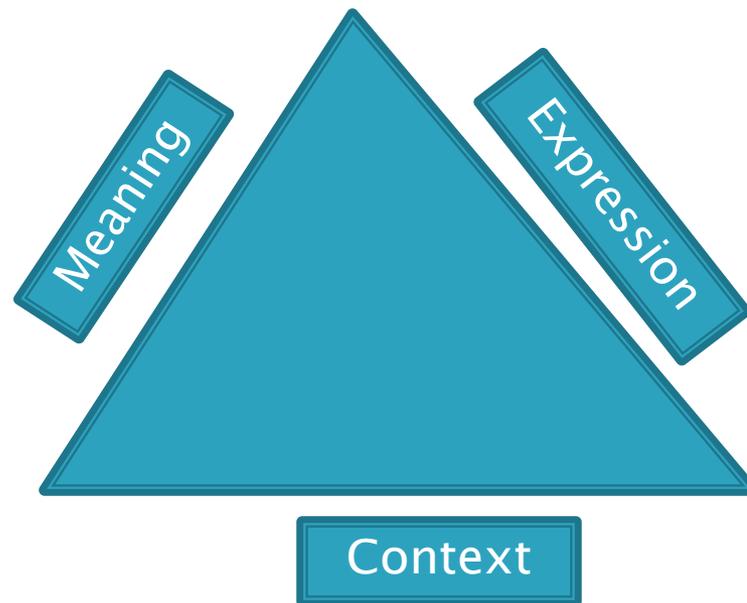
# Pragmatics Defined

- ▶ “the study of the language from the point of view of the users, especially the choice that they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants” (Crystal, 1997,p. 301).
- ▶ “meaning in interaction since it takes into account the different contributions of both hearer and speaker as well as the utterance and the context (physical, social and linguistics) to making of meaning” (Thomas, 1995)

- ▶ “concerned with audience–directed intention – how the speaker intends the utterance to be taken” (Olson, 1994, p.119)
- ▶ “the context within which an interaction occurs as well as the intention of the language users...” (Celce–Murcia & Olstain, 2000, p.118)

Features emphasized: the language user i.e. user’s point of view, and context

# Finegan's (2007) Three Faces of Language



- Expression – words, phrases, sentences, and pronunciation, including intonation and stress.
- Meaning – the senses and references of these elements of expression
- Context – the social situation in which social expression is uttered and including has been said in the situation
- Content – the intended message of an uttered in a particular context

Context is the total social setting in which the speech event takes place i.e. all factors that play a role in producing and understanding the utterances – the place, the time, the setting, the situation, the community, the cultural knowledge, the social distance and the status of the speakers/interlocutors and linguistic ability.

# Some Basic Notions in Pragmatics

Among basic concepts to the understanding of how pragmatics studies language use in context are:

- ▶ Presupposition
- ▶ Conversational implicature and
- ▶ Speech acts

# Presupposition

- ▶ a particular inference made in conversation
- ▶ acts as an aid to the hearer to make certain inferences based on what is said and explain coherence in utterance

1. John's wife runs a boutique.

Presupposition:.....

2. Betty remembered to take medicine.

Presupposition:.....

3. My friend didn't bother to open an bank account until she started to earn money.

Presupposition:.....

4. Can I have a fifty cent in change please?

Presupposition:.....

5. Thank you for not smoking.

Presupposition:.....

# Speech Acts

- ▶ Speech Acts and their study, called speech-act-theory, is a prominent part of pragmatics.
- ▶ Introduced by British philosopher J.L Austin in the 1960s.
- ▶ Irrespective of what we say, we are always “doing things with words.”
- ▶ Speech acts refer to the everyday activity of informing, instructing, ordering, threatening, complaining, describing etc when we use our language.
- ▶ Every speech act has three components : locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act.

# Types of Speech Acts

1. Representatives – state what the speaker believes –e.g.  
The earth is flat.  
Chomsky didn't not write about peanuts.
2. Commissives – speakers use to commit themselves to some future actions – promises, refusing, pledges e.g  
I'll be back.  
We will not go to that place again.
3. Directives – speakers use to get someone else to do something– command, order, request etc e.g.  
Gimme a cup of coffee  
Could you lend me a pen?

4. Declaration – change the world via their utterance e.g.: blessings, hirings, firings, arrests

Priest: I now pronounce you husband and wife.

Referee: You're are out!

5. Expressives – state what the speaker feels – pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, sorrow etc. e.g.:

I'm really sorry.

Congratulation!

6. Verdictive – a speech act that makes an assessment or judgement

# Exercise 1

Examine the following utterances and choose the appropriate type of speech act for each one:

1. I declare the games officially open.
2. Columbus discovered America in 1492.
3. Are you sure you can't stay just a few more minutes?
4. What a mean-spirited, divisive speech he gave.
5. Go ahead – make!
6. I pledge RM50.
7. Why don't you spend less time watching TV?
8. Thank you so much for your generous gift.
9. That's a lie!

# The Cooperative Principle

- ▶ In the 1960s the British philosopher Paul Grice studied the way people behave in conversation.
- ▶ Grice – effective conversational exchanges were governed by a principle called **cooperative principle (CP)**.
- ▶ He argued that people are expected to be cooperative in conversation, saying the thing that is required, when it is required, given the purpose of the conversation.
- ▶ The principle consists of Four Maxims

## The Maxims

- Quantity**     Make your contribution as informative as required.  
Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
- Quality**        Do not say what you believe to be false.  
Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- Relevance**    Be relevant.
- Manner**        Avoid obscurity  
Avoid ambiguity  
Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)  
Be orderly

(Grice,

1975, p.45–46)

E.G.:

Linda and Amy (friends for almost six years) bumped into each other at a party one night.

Amy: Oh dear...what a lovely dress. You look stunning!

Linda : Thanks...I just got promoted and my pay has boost up to \$ 6500 per month. I would have not been able to buy this dress with my previous pay.

Response giving more than is required, hence it violates maxim of quantity.

- ▶ Grice (1975) stated that the CP and maxims are standard assumptions involved in producing and interpreting utterances.
- ▶ Grice also saw these standards as the baseline that hearers use in recognizing and interpreting utterances that are inconsistent with the maxims.
- ▶ When a maxim has been flouted, and implicature generated (i.e. breaking one of maxims in order to lead the addressee to look for implied meaning i. e. indirect speech act).

# Characteristics of Indirect Speech Act

1. Violate at least one maxim of the cooperative principle
2. The literal meaning of the locution of an indirect speech differs from its intended meaning.
3. Hearers and readers indirect speech acts by noticing that an utterance violates a maxim and by assuming that the interlocutor is following the cooperative principle.
4. One the interlocutors have identified an indirect speech act, they identified its intended meaning with the help of knowledge of the context and of the whole around them.

E.G 1.:

Sue: Is the boss in?

Alan: The light's on in her office.

Sue: Oh, thanks.

- Alan's answer is not a direct answer. Thus it violates the maxim of relevance. Yet, Sue is satisfied with the answer as she seeks an indirect interpretation. She knows the boss's habits : the boss does not work in dark and does not leave the light on when she is gone for the day.
- Alan's reply is an example of an indirect speech act – though it appears to violate the CP but is indirectly cooperative.

E.G. 2:

Charlene: I hope you brought the bread and  
the cheese.

Dexter: AH, I brought the bread.

Maxim violated? Implied meaning?

Rick: Hey, coming to the wild party tonight?

Tom: My parents are visiting.

Maxim violated : Quantity

But still indirectly cooperative  
(Charlene has to assume that  
Dexter didn't mention the cheese  
because he didn't bring it and  
that Dexter has conveyed more  
than he said via conversational  
implicature)

E.G. 3

Ann: Where are you going?

Sam: To the V-E-T

- ▶ Speaker appears to violate maxim of manner by being vague. In the local context of these speakers, the dog is known to recognize the word 'vet', and hate being taken there, so Sam spelled it out implicating that he doesn't want the dog to know the answer to that question.

## E.G. 4

Leila just walked into Mary's office and noticed the work on her desk.

Leila: Whoa! Has your boss gone crazy?

Mary: Let's go get some coffee?

- ▶ Mary's response seems to violate maxim of relevance. But Mary is actually indirectly cooperative. Leila will have to infer the reason ( e.g. the boss may be nearby) why Mary makes an irrelevant remark.

5) Bert: Do you like ice cream?  
Ernie: Is the Pope catholic?

- ▶ Ernie's response does not provide 'yes' or 'no' answer and as such it appear to flout the maxim of relevance. Bert must assume that Ernie is being cooperative, so he considers Ernie's 'Pope" clearly the answer is 'Yes.'

# Politeness

Indirectness is also a tool to express politeness apart from the intended meaning.

E.g. :

Using question to make a request e.g.: Can you shut the window?

Anthropologists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1987) identified two kinds of politeness, deriving from Erving Goffman's concept of face. Face – every individual's feeling of self worth or self image,

This image can be damaged, maintained or enhanced through interaction with others.

1) **Positive Politeness**: based on the concept of positive face that is the desire to be liked/admired /appreciated and approved of some people.

- ▶ We let people know that we enjoy their company, like their personality, feel comfortable with them or interested in their well being.
- ▶ Strategies: Establish common ground on the topic, showing exaggerated interest, approval and sympathy, search for agreement.

2) **Negative politeness:** Based the concept of Negative face which rests on the fact that human beings respect one another's privacy, independence, and physical space.

- ▶ Avoid intruding on other people's lives, not to be overly inquisitive about their activities, and try not to impose our presence on them.
- ▶ Strategies: acknowledgement of one's debt to others, showing deference, over emphasis on other's relative power, self effacement etc.

# The Organization of Conversation

- ▶ Conversations are also rules governed.
- ▶ Covert architecture of organization must achieve the following: organize turns so that more than one person has a chance to speak and turn taking is orderly; allow interlocutors to anticipate what will happen next and, where there is choice, how the selection is to be decided; provide a way to repair glitches and errors when they occur.

# Turn Taking and Pausing

- ▶ Participant must tacitly agree on who should speak.
- ▶ When a participant fails to take the floor despite indications that it is turn, other speakers usually pause, then someone else begins speaking.

▶ E.g:

Alan: Is there something you're worried about?

[pause]

Alan: Is there something you're worried about?

Bill : No, but maybe you could help me

- ▶ Turn-taking conventions are violated when two people talk simultaneously. When this happens, a speaker may either relinquish the floor or turn up the volume and continue speaking.
- ▶ All cultures regulating turn taking in conversation in essentially similar ways:
  - Speakers signal when they wish to end their turn, either by selecting the next speaker or leaving the choice open ; the next speaker takes the floor by beginning to speak.

# Turn-Taking Signal

- ▶ Turn about to end – is signaled with verbal and non verbal cues.

## 1) Verbal cues

- ▶ Using tag question: isn't it?  
Speaker A: Pretty windy, isn't it?  
Speaker B: Sure is!
- ▶ By sharply raising or lowering the pitch of your voice
- ▶ Using phrase *or something*  
Speaker A: So he was behaving as if he'd been hit by a truck, *or something*.  
Speaker B: Really!
- ▶ Using other expressions – y'know, kinda, I don't know, or a trailing uhm.

## 2) Non-Verbal Cues

Continuing hand gestures – have more to say

- ▶ Putting hand to rest
- ▶ Gazing on the listener
- ▶ Looking away from the listener.

# Getting the floor

Signal the person to speak

- ▶ by addressing the next speaker by name.  
E.g.: What have you been up to these days, Helen?
- ▶ By turning toward the selected next speaker (or anyone may take the floor if the floor holder does not select the next speaker)

Competition may occur if speaker is not selected speakers speaking simultaneously for instance.

# Adjacency Pairs

Certain turns have specific follow-up turns associated with them.

- ▶ Request for Information and Providing Information

E.g. Adam: Where's the milk I bought this morning?

Betty: On the counter.

- ▶ Invitation and Acceptance

E.g.: Alex: I'm having friends to dinner  
on Saturday, and I'd  
really like you to come.

Bert: Sure

- ▶ Assessment and Disagreement

E.g. : Alex: I don't think Nick would play  
such a dirty  
trick.

Brit: Well, you obviously don't  
know Nick that  
well.

Such adjacency pairs comprise of two turns, one which follows the other. Other adjacency pairs; request for a favour/granting, apology /acceptance, question/answer etc.

### Characteristics of Adjacency Pair:

1. They are contiguous.
2. They are ordered
3. They are matched.

# Insertion Sequence

The requirement that the two parts of an adjacency pair be contiguous is violated in a socially recognized way (insertion of another adjacency pair). E.g.:

main  
adjacency  
pair

Adam: Where's the milk I bought  
this morning?

Betty : The skim milk?  
Adam: Yeah.  
Betty : On the counter.

insertio  
n  
sequenc  
e

# Preferred and Dispreferred Responses

- ▶ Certain kinds of adjacency pairs are marked by a preference for a particular type of second type. E.g. request, questions, and invitations have preferred and dispreferred answers. E.g.:

Fran: I really enjoyed that movie last night.  
Did you?

Frank: Yeah, it was pretty good. (Preferred)

Fran: I really enjoyed that movie last night.  
Did you?

Frank: No, I thought it was crummy, but I  
can see how

# Opening Sequences

Conversations are opened in socially recognized ways. E.g.:

- ▶ Morning.... (Greetings)
- ▶ Excuse me.... (when a stranger approaching in the street asking for time)
- ▶ Hello! (a display of one's voice to enable the interlocutor to recognize who is speaking)

# Closing Sequences

- ▶ Conversations must also be closed appropriately and when the participants have said everything they wanted to say.
- ▶ Closing sequence includes:
  1. a conclusion to the last topic covered in the conversation
  2. arrangements to meet at later time or express the hope of so meeting.

.....

# Conversational Routines

## Repairs

A repair takes place in conversation when a participant feels the need to correct herself or other speaker, to edit a previous utterance, or to restate something. E.g.:

1) Speaker: I was going to May's – uh, Sue's house.

2) Alex: Todd came to visit us over the spring break.

David: What?

Alex: I said Todd was here over the spring break.

3) Peter: Aren't those daffodils pretty?

Anna: They're pretty, but they're narcissus.

4) Speaker: I wanted to get a new – uh – a new what? a macallit. a new prescription.

- ▶ To resolve a repair – repeating the misunderstood or misheard utterance, correct the inaccurate, or supply word information.
- ▶ To initiate a repair, we may ask a question, repeat part of the utterance to be repaired (as in 5), stop speaking abruptly (as in 6) or use expressions *like, uh, I mean, or that is*. E.g.:
  - 5) Speaker: I am sure – I am absolutely sure it was                    him....
  - 6) Nelson: And here you have what's called the– (pause)
    - Juan: The carburetor?
    - Nelson: Yeah, that's right, the carburetor.

Repairs can be initiated and resolved by the person who uttered the words that need to be repaired or by another conversationalist.

Four possibilities: Repairs that are

- 1) Self initiated and self repaired;
- 2) Other initiated and self repaired;
- 3) Self initiated and other repaired;
- 4) Other initiated and other repaired.

- ▶ The most preferred pattern – self-initiated self-repairs which are least disruptive to conversation and to social relationship between conversationalists.
- ▶ The least preferred – repairs that are other-initiated and other repaired.
- ▶ Individuals in the habit of initiating and repairing utterances for others get branded as poor conversationalists or know-it-all.
- ▶ Conversationalists provide assistance to others in initiating and resolving repairs only if no possible option is available.

## Politeness in conversation

- ▶ Violating the turn taking principles by interrupting or failing to take turns is considered impolite.
- ▶ Conversation also requires proper closing. Not closing it appropriately is also stigmatized in the conversations of politeness.
- ▶ Communicate respect for independence and involvement by
  - 1) allowing interlocutors to both initiate and resolve repairs themselves,
  - 2) respecting their right to make contribution to the conversation without intrusion,
  - 3) recognizing other person's need for independence not abruptly ending a conversation but instead initiating a preclosing exchange, giving your interlocutors a chance to say something further before closing.
  - 4) initiating a conversation with greeting, conveying concern about our addressee's health and well being.