

# COURSE: SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS

LECTURE 9: Co-operation and implicature

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# Introduction

- ▶ In conversations, it is assumed that speakers and listeners involved in conversation are cooperating with each other.
- ▶ In accepting a speakers' presupposition, listeners assume speakers are truthful

'my car' - one who says this, it is assumed, indeed has a car, is not trying to mislead the listener,

Hence in such conversations, people are expected not to confuse, trick or withhold relevant information from each other

# Illustration

- ▶ In the middle of their lunch hour, one woman asks another how she likes the hamburger she is eating and receives the response.
- ▶ A hamburger is a hamburger.
- ▶ Expressions such as ‘ business is business’ , ‘boys will be boys’

# Illustration

- ▶ From a logical perspective, the reply seems to have no communicative value
- ▶ Such are called tautologies.
- ▶ If used in conversation, obviously the speaker intends to communicate more than is said.

- ▶ So when a listener hears such expressions, he has to assume the speaker is being cooperative
- ▶ Also the speaker intends to communicate something.
- ▶ That something must be more than just the words mean.

- ▶ It means that something must be more than just the words communicated.
- ▶ The additional conveyed meaning is called **implicature**.
- ▶ By stating ‘ a *hamburger is a hamburger*, the speaker expects the listener will work out , on the basis of what is already known, the implicature intended in the context.

# Implicature

- ▶ In the example' a *hamburger is a hamburger*, the implicature may be that the speaker has no opinion (good or bad).
- ▶ Or the meaning that all hamburgers are the same might be inferred
- ▶ Inference is important in interpretation of a speakers' meaning.

# The cooperative principle.

- ▶ Illustration
- ▶ Recently, we witnessed heavy rains and there were such directions from the authorities:
- ▶ The amount of rain will reduce and therefore schools shall open as scheduled.
- ▶ The rain doesn't stop. In fact, floods increase and lives are lost.
- ▶ The authorities were blamed of not giving the correct information.
- ▶ Is there cooperation in this case?

# The cooperative principle

- ▶ Another illustration
- ▶ A teacher calls the parent of her pupil
- ▶ Teacher: Your son is in class one and cannot write the word cow:
- ▶ Father: But teacher, you are giving him 'cow'? Cow is too big
  - ▶ You should give him a small one like mosquito

# The cooperative principle

- ▶ Consider the following scenario:

There is a woman sitting on a park bench and a large dog is lying on the ground. A man comes and sits down on the bench:

*Man: Does your dog bite?*

*Woman: No*

*(The man reaches down to pet the dog. The dog bites the man's hand)*

*Man: Ouch! But you said your dog doesn't bite.*

*Woman: He doesn't. But that is not my dog.*

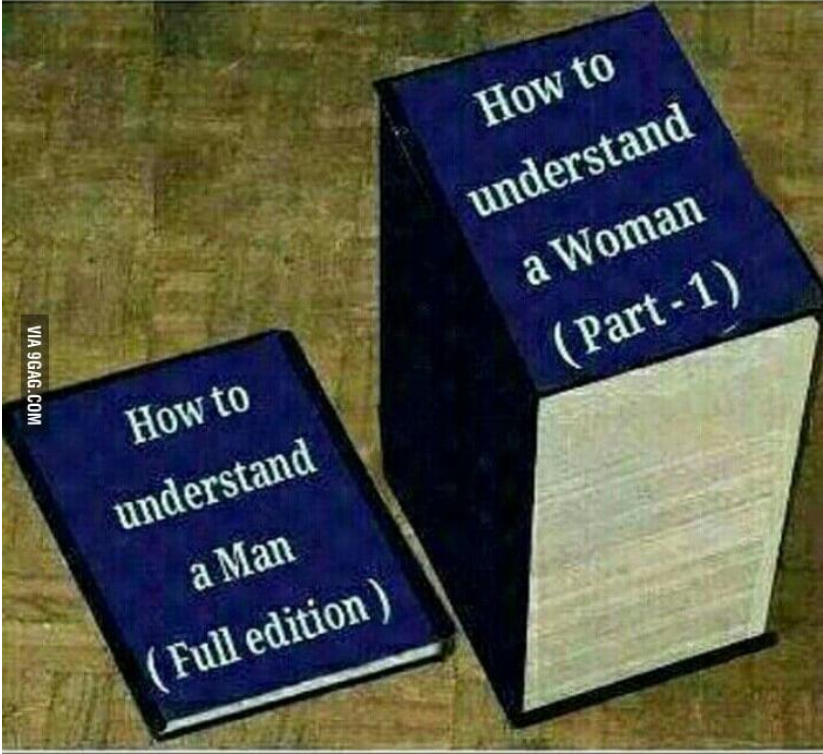
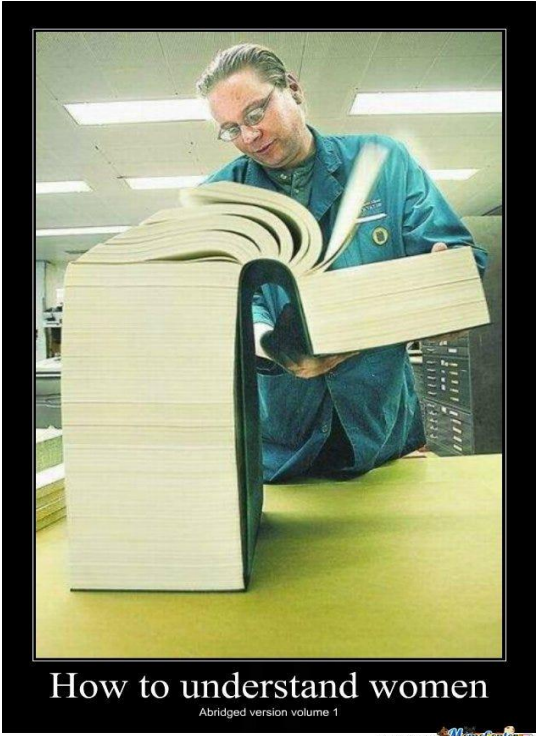
*From Yule (1996)*

Yule, George. (1996). *Pragmatics*. NY: Oxford University Press. Pg 36

# Cooperative principle

- ▶ From the illustration :
- ▶ The problem is caused by the man's assumption that more was communicated than was said.
- ▶ From the man's perspective, the woman provided less information than needed.
- ▶ She needed to have provide information stated later when she was asked the first question.
- ▶ The cooperative principle states that the people involved in communication will cooperate with each other.
- ▶ Elaborated in FOUR maxims

# Implicature



Source: <https://9gag.com/gag/aKq6ndO> Retrieved on 17/5/2024

# The cooperative principle

- ▶ The cooperative principle:
- ▶ *Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage when it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.*
- ▶ The maxims:
- ▶ Quantity
- ▶ Quality
- ▶ Relation
- ▶ Manner

Levinson, Stephen (1983). *Pragmatics*. Britain: Cambridge

# Maxims

- ▶ Note that maxims are unstated assumptions we have in conversations.
- ▶ We assume that people are going to give an appropriate amount of information, they are telling the truth, are being relevant and as clear as possible.
- ▶ Since they are assumed to be normal, speakers rarely mention them.

# Maxim of quantity

- ▶ Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange).
- ▶ Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

# Maxim of quality

- ▶ Try to make your contribution one that is true.
- ▶ Do not say what you believe to be false.
- ▶ Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

# Maxim of relation

- ▶ Be relevant
- ▶ Do not provide information that is not related to the current topic.
- ▶ Do we adhere to this all the time?

# Maxim of manner

- ▶ Be perspicuous
- ▶ Avoid obscurity of expression
- ▶ Avoid ambiguity
- ▶ Be brief( avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- ▶ Be orderly.

# HEDGES

- ▶ Expressions speakers may use to mark they are in ‘danger’ or that they are not adhering to the principles of the cooperative principle.
- ▶ Or cautious remarks
- ▶ Quality- statements may be used to indicate that what is being said is not totally true .
  - ▶ As far as I know, they’re married
  - ▶ I may be mistaken, but I thought I saw a wedding ring on her finger.
  - ▶ I am not sure if this is right, but I heard it was a secret ceremony in Hawaii.
  - ▶ He couldn’t live without her.

The communication context of these examples may be a recent rumour involving a couple known to the speakers.

Hedges can also be used to show the speaker is conscious of the quantity maxim

As you probably know, I am terrified of bugs.

so, to cut the long story short, we grabbed our stuff and ran.

I wont bore you with all the details, but it was an exciting trip.

- ▶ Hedges marking the maxim of relation
- ▶ Found in the middle of the speakers' talk when they say 'oh, by the way' and proceed to potentially unconnected information during a conversation.
- ▶ Other markers: anyway, well, to mark they have drifted to a possibly non-relevant material
  - ▶ I don't know if it is important, but some files are missing.
  - ▶ This may sound as a dumb question, but whose handwriting is this?

- ▶ Hedges in the expressions of manner
- ▶ This may be bit confused, but I remember being in a car
- ▶ I don't know if this is clear at all, but I think the other car was reversing.
  
- ▶ These hedges are indications are aware of the maxims.
- ▶ They also want to show that they are trying to observe them

# CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE

- ▶ Basic assumption in conversation: unless otherwise indicated, the participants are adhering to the cooperative principle and the maxims.
- ▶ Speakers communicate meaning via implicatures and listeners recognize those communicated meanings via inference.
- ▶ Inferences selected are those which will preserve the assumption of cooperation.

# Types of implicature

- ▶ Generalized conversational implicatures
- ▶ No special background knowledge of the context of utterance is required in order to make the necessary inferences or get additional conveyed meaning.
- ▶ A: I hope you brought the bread and the cheese.
- ▶ B: Ah, I brought the bread.
- ▶ A: Did you invite Bella and Cathy?
- ▶ B: I invited Bella.

- ▶ I was sitting in a garden one day. A child looked over the fence.
- ▶ Used in a general sense
- ▶ If speaker wanted to provide more specific sense, he would use the specific reference 'the'

# SCALAR IMPLICATURES

- ▶ Certain information is communicated by choosing a word which expresses one value from a scale of values.
- ▶ Especially when expressing .
- ▶ All, most, many, some, few
- ▶ Always, often, sometimes

# Scalar implicatures

- ▶ Speaker selects the word from the scale which is the most informative.
- ▶ I am studying linguistics and I have completed **some** of the required courses.
- ▶ The speaker here creates an implicature of ‘not all’
- ▶ They are **never** available.

# Particularized conversational implicatures

- ▶ Mostly, our conversations take place in contexts in which locally recognized inferences are assumed.
- ▶ Unlike the other two, this type relies on a context
- ▶ These are college mates and the answer to this question would be simply 'yes/No'
- ▶ A: Hey, coming for the wild party tonight?
- ▶ B: My parents are visiting.

# Particularized implicature

- ▶ BUT
- ▶ A has to draw some assumed knowledge that a college student may be visited by parents and would be expected to be in his room and quiet.

- ▶ Leila has just walked into Mary's office and noticed all the work on her desk
- ▶ Mary 's response seems to flout the maxim of relevance
- ▶ Leila: Whoa! Has your boss gone crazy?
- ▶ Mary: Let's go get some coffee.
- ▶ In order to preserve the assumption of cooperation, Leila will have to infer some local reason(the boss may be nearby)

# Properties of conversational implicatures

- ▶ Because these implicatures are part of what is communicated and not said, speakers can always deny that they intended to convey such meanings
- ▶ They can be reinforced
- ▶ They can be suspended

# Conventional implicatures

- ▶ Not based on the cooperative principle.
- ▶ Do not have to occur in conversations
- ▶ Do not depend on special contexts for their interpretation.
- ▶ Associated with particular words and result in additional conveyed meanings when those words are used.
- ▶ e.g the English conjunctions ‘but’ ‘and’
- ▶ Even, yet
- ▶ Mary suggested black, but I chose white. (Contrast)
- ▶ Even John came to the party.( contrary to the expectation)

# CONTEXT: The Interpretation of Linguistic Messages

- ▶ based on:
- ▶ knowledge of the meaning of the word
- ▶ knowledge about the context
- ▶ e.g. SLOW CHILDREN CROSSING
- ▶ Have you seen this road sign?

# Context

- ▶ linguistic context or co-text:  
set of other words used in the same phrase or context
- ▶ physical context: if the location will influence interpretation

# References

- ▶ <https://9gag.com/gag/aKq6ndO> Retrieved on 17/5/2024
- ▶ Levinson, Stephen (1983). *Pragmatics*. Britain: Cambridge.
- ▶ Yule, George. (1996). *Pragmatics*. NY: Oxford University Press

# Next lesson

- ▶ Our lesson next week is going to be:
- ▶ Reference and inference