Pragmatics

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Motivation

One waiter to another: *The cheese sandwich needs more coffee.*

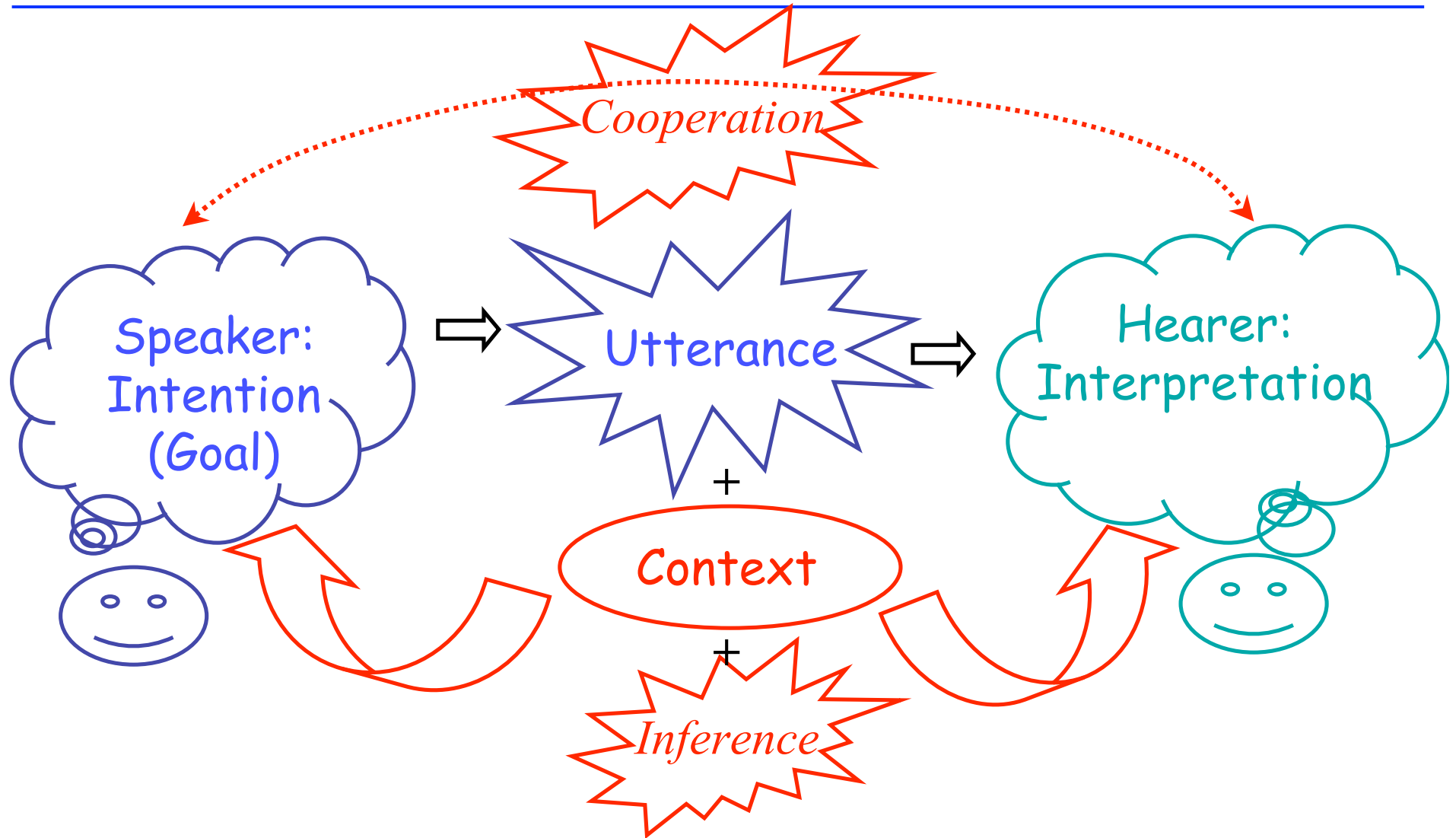

At a club swimming pool:

Please use the toilet, not the pool.

Pool for members only.

Pragmatics: Language Use in Context

Cooperation

Speaker: Intention (Goal) ⇒ Utterance ⇒ Hearer: Interpretation

Context

+ Inference +

Pragmatics: Language Use in Context

- **Utterance**: a linguistic form (not necessarily a grammatical expression or sentence) uttered by a speaker, usually (but not necessarily) with the intention to communicate something in an interaction with a hearer

- **Interaction**

- **Communication**

- **Linguistic context**: typically, language use does not consist of isolated, unrelated utterances; rather, utterances occur as part of a discourse
  - Monologue vs. dialogue
  - Spoken, written, multimodal
  - Face-to-face, over the phone, via computer, printed, …

- **Situational context**: language use does not happen in a vacuum, it happens in a physical and social environment

Much of language use is abbreviated and indirect.
Inference is crucial.

Pragmatic Phenomena

- Contextual reference
  - Types of contextual relationships between expressions and/or referents
  - Modeling of contextual reference

- Non-literal meaning
  - Conversational implicatures
  - Presuppositions
  - Speech acts

Contextual Reference

Contextual Reference: Pronouns

- Pronoun = a word that is used in place of a noun or noun phrase
  - I, you, he, she, it, this, one, that, himself, his, who, which, that, …

- The meaning of a pronoun depends on context:
  - Deictic use of pronouns (Gr. "deikynai" to show/point)
    Two friends watching a pretty girl walk by: You fancy her, don't you?
    Two friends just saw a third do something weird: He just does this.
  - Anaphoric use of pronouns (Gr. "ana" again, "phero" carry)
    The city council denied the demonstrators a permit because they feared violence.
    The city council denied the demonstrators a permit because they advocated violence.
    John called Bill a Republican. Then he insulted him.
    John called Bill a Republican. Then HE insulted HIM.
  - Bound use of pronouns
    Jane bit herself.
    *Jane said that the boy bit herself.
    *Herself bit Jane. (But: Whom did Jane bite? HERSELF (Jane bit).)
    Every child showed a toy that it/they brought.

More About Deixis

- Linguistic expressions the interpretation of which depends on the extra-linguistic context

- Person, time, place deixis

- Social deixis: use of particular forms depends on status or relationship between speaker and hearer, e.g., honorifics (cf. Ger. "du" vs. "Sie"; Eng. "Yes, Sir")

- "Pure indexicals": referent changes with context, but interpretation is independent of speaker's intention
  I, today, tomorrow, actual, present, …

- "True demonstratives": interpretation depends on speaker's intention
  she, he, that

- Borderline:
  here, now   [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/indexicals/#IndNonIndUsePro]

- Ambiguity
  Please park behind the green car.

Contextual Reference: Not Only Pronouns …

1. Two guys were working for the city.

2. One would furiously dig a hole, then the other would come behind him and quickly fill the hole.

3. They were drenched in sweat.

4. A man watching from the sidewalk couldn't believe how hard they were working, but also couldn't understand what they were doing.

5. Finally he said:

6. "I'm confused.

7. You dig a hole and then your partner comes behind you and fills it up again!"

8. The digger leaned on his shovel and replied,

9. "Oh yeah, it must look funny.

10. You see, the lazy jackass who plants the trees is sick again today!"

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Discourse Model

- "Catalogue" of discourse entities, referents of linguistic expressions
  - Operations:
    - Evoke (new) discourse entity
    - Access (old) discourse entity (coreference; bridging)
    - Add information about a discourse entity
  - Discourse entity status:
    - New, old, inferable
  - Basic types of discourse entities:
    - Objects (concrete/abstract) vs. events/states

- What introduces discourse entities:
  - Noun phrases, pronouns
  - Temporal and spatial expressions
  - Verbs
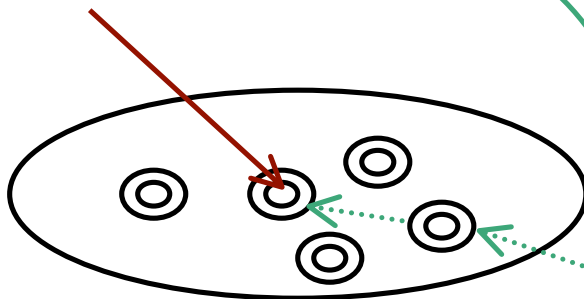 - …

Two Types of Anaphoric Reference

Coreference

Antecedent ..... Anaphor (anaphoric expression)
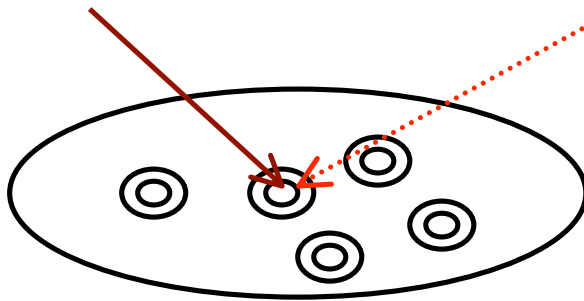
[Two guys]$_{1,2}$ were working for the city. [One]$_1$ would furiously dig [a hole]$_3$, then [the other]$_2$ would come behind [him]$_1$ and quickly fill [the hole]$_3$. [They]$_{1+2}$ were drenched in sweat.

…

[The digger]$_1$ leaned on [his]$_1$ shovel.

Bridging

Antcedent

[The digger]$_1$ leaned on [the shovel]$_{1'}$.

Anaphor (anaphoric expression)

Other Kinds of Contextual Reference

Not all discourse entities are introduced by nominal expressions:

- Verb ellipsis
  John loves sailing and Peter does, too. (John loves sailing. Peter too.)
  John loves his wife and Peter does, too. (John loves his wife. Peter too.)

- Anaphoric reference to events and states
  Peter sold his car. Now he regrets it/that.

- Temporal anaphora
  Dark clouds came. It started to rain.

- Anaphoric discourse connectives
  Dark clouds came. Then it started to rain.
  On the one hand, John is kind. On the other hand, he often looses his temper.
  Peter forgets a lot. For example, he did not send me a birthday card.

Not all nominal expressions introduce discourse entities:

- Bound pronouns
  Every man loves his car.

- Pronouns without antecedents
  It is nice weather.

Summary

- Contextual reference

- Anaphora, binding, deixis

- Coreference, bridging

- Pronouns, (definite) noun phrases, and other linguistic types

- Discourse referent, discourse model

Pragmatics (cont'd)

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Non-Literal Meaning

Non-Literal Meaning

- Most of language use is abbreviated and indirect, inference is crucial.

    A: Do you have coffee to go?
    B: Milk and sugar?

    A: Do you know what time it is?
    B: The train to Paris is already gone.

    A: And what time would you like to leave Pittsburgh?
    B: Uh hmm, I don't think there's many options for non-stop.
    A: Right. There's there non-stops today.

- Language users adhere to certain conventions that govern cooperative behavior
    - Speakers (generally) observe these conventions
    - Hearers assume that speakers (generally) observe them

    Cooperative language users make inferences based on the assumption of cooperative behavior.

Cooperative Principle (P. Grice)

- Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

- Maxims of conversation (Gricean Maxims):
  - Maxim of Quality: Be truthful.
    - Do not say what you believe to be false.
    - Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence
  - 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 Relation: Be relevant.
  - Maxim of Manner: Be clear.
    - Avoid obscurity of expression
    - Avoid ambiguity
    - Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
    - Be orderly.

Conversational Implicatures

- Inferences based on assumptions about what the speaker is trying to achieve and their observation of the cooperative principle, taking into account the literal meaning of the utterance and the particular circumstances.

  A: Where is Bill?
  B: Bill's car is parked in front of Susan's house.

  CI: Bill is at Susan's place.

- Can be cancelled (unlike logical entailments)

  e.g, Bill left his car at Susan's house last night because he had been drinking.

- "Enhance" the meaning of an utterance in context (unlike presuppositions, which are "preconditions" for an utterance to make sense at all)

- Maxim adherence, violation or flouting (exploiting)

Gricean Maxims: adherence and violation

A: When does the lecture start?
B: At eight a.m..

- Quality

  B1: I think at eight.
  B2: I don't know.

- Quantity

  B3: In the morning.
  B4: At 8:00:00

- Relevance

  B5: I at the internet pages of the department and saw the schedule there. I was using Firefox to do that. And it said that Mr. Saurer is teaching it and it begins at 8:00.

- Manner

  B6: At 2 a.m. New York time.

  B7: I know that the lecture that you are asking about starts later than the other lectures, before lunch, to be precise, it starts between 8:00 and 8:15 a.m. local time, that is CET, when the teacher starts speaking.

Conversational Implicatures: Examples

A: When does the lecture start?
B: At eight a.m..

Quality:

>> B knows or has sufficient evidence that the lecture starts at 8 a.m.

Quantity

>> (B assumes) 8 a.m. is as precise an indication as needed for the current purpose.

Relevance

>> (B assumes) telling the time is a relevant response to the question.

Manner

>> (B assumes) 8 a.m. is brief and clear enough.

Conversational Implicatures: More Examples

- Quality:
  A: What time is it?

- Quantity
  A: What color does the flag have?
  B: It is white.

  A: Some politics are corrupt.
  B: Are there politics who are not corrupt?

- Relevance
  Tea advertisement: It's the taste.
  A: Why didn't you eat your lunch?
  B: It's the taste.

- Manner
  A: Peter yelled at his boss and got fired.
  B: Peter got fired and yelled at his boss.

Scalar Implicatures

- Conversational implicatures based on the Quantity maxim, following a particular pattern: the use of an expression e_1 which is weaker than a possible expression e_2 according some entailment scale $_s$ implicates that e_2 does not hold.

  A: How many students came?
  B: Three.
  Scale: none, one, two, three, four, …
  SCI: Not more than three students came.

  A: How did Peter do on the exam?
  B: He passed.
  Scale: fail, pass, very good
  SCI: Peter did well enough to pass, but not very good.

  A: What shall we do tonight?
  B: We can go out for dinner or go to the movies.
  Scale: or, and
  SCI: B is proposing either dinner or movies, not both.

Flouting Gricean Maxims: Examples

- Flouting a maxim in order to exploit it: listener is supposed to notice!

- Metaphor, figure of speech, irony all work on the basis of flouting the maxim of quality, e.g.,

  JFK during his visit in Berlin: Ich bin ein Berliner.
  Time flies like an arrow.
  (My watch broke) Great!
  Student: Tehran's in Turkey. Teacher: And Boston's in Armenia, right.

- Quantity:

  A: How about Catherine's ability to concentrate on a task?
  B: Catherine is a butterfly flitting from flower to flower.

- Relevance:

  A: What do you think of the new teacher?
  B (sees teacher behind A's back): Lunch was really delicious today.

- Manner:

  A: What are you baking?
  B: Be I are tea aitch dee ay wye see ay kay ee.

Presuppositions

Presuppositions

- "Sincerity/appropriateness conditions" or "sense conditions": inferred propositions that must be true in the given context for an utterance to be appropriate or to make sense at all

  Peter sold his car.
  Peter did not sell his car.
  Peter's wife likes ice-cream.
  Peter regrets that he sold his car.
  Peter stopped smoking.
  The sun is shining again.
  Would you like to have more tea?
  Who ate the cookies?

- Can sometimes be cancelled (like implicatures, but unlike entailments)
  Peter did not sell his car. He in fact did not own any.
  If Peter is married, his wife likes ice-cream.

  But sometimes presuppositions are entailed (e.g., when not embedded)

- Accommodation: "context repair" to make a (compatible) presupposition to hold
  but not always possible
  ?He smokes.
  ?Peter saw the bike.
  ?Peter is also a bachelor.

Speech Acts

Speech Acts (Austin)

- Speech acts are what people do by using language:
  Every utterance performs an act, it does something, e.g., it can change someone's beliefs, it can move someone to act, or it can even change the state of the world

I apologize.
I object!   "performatives"
I promise to make dinner.

The earth is revolving around the sun.
What time is it?   "non-performatives"
Can you please pass the salt?

- Austin's speech act types/levels:
  - Locutionary act: the act of uttering a sentence with a particular semantic content
  - Illocutionary act: the act of asking, informing, promising, etc.
  - Perlocutionary act: the result/effect on feelings, thoughts or actions of the hearer

Classification of Illocutionary Speech Acts (Searle)

Assertive	S commits to sth being the case	Comment, suggest, swear, boast, conclude
Directive	S attempts to get H do sth	Ask, order, request, beg, invite, advise
Commissive	S commits to future course of action	Promise, plan, vow, bet, oppose
Expressive	S expresses psychological state	Thank, apologize, welcome, deplore
Declarations	S changes world	Resign, name, fire

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- Non-literal meaning
  - Conversational maxims
  - Conversational implicatures
  - Presuppositions
  - Speech acts