
Pragmatics

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Motivation

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

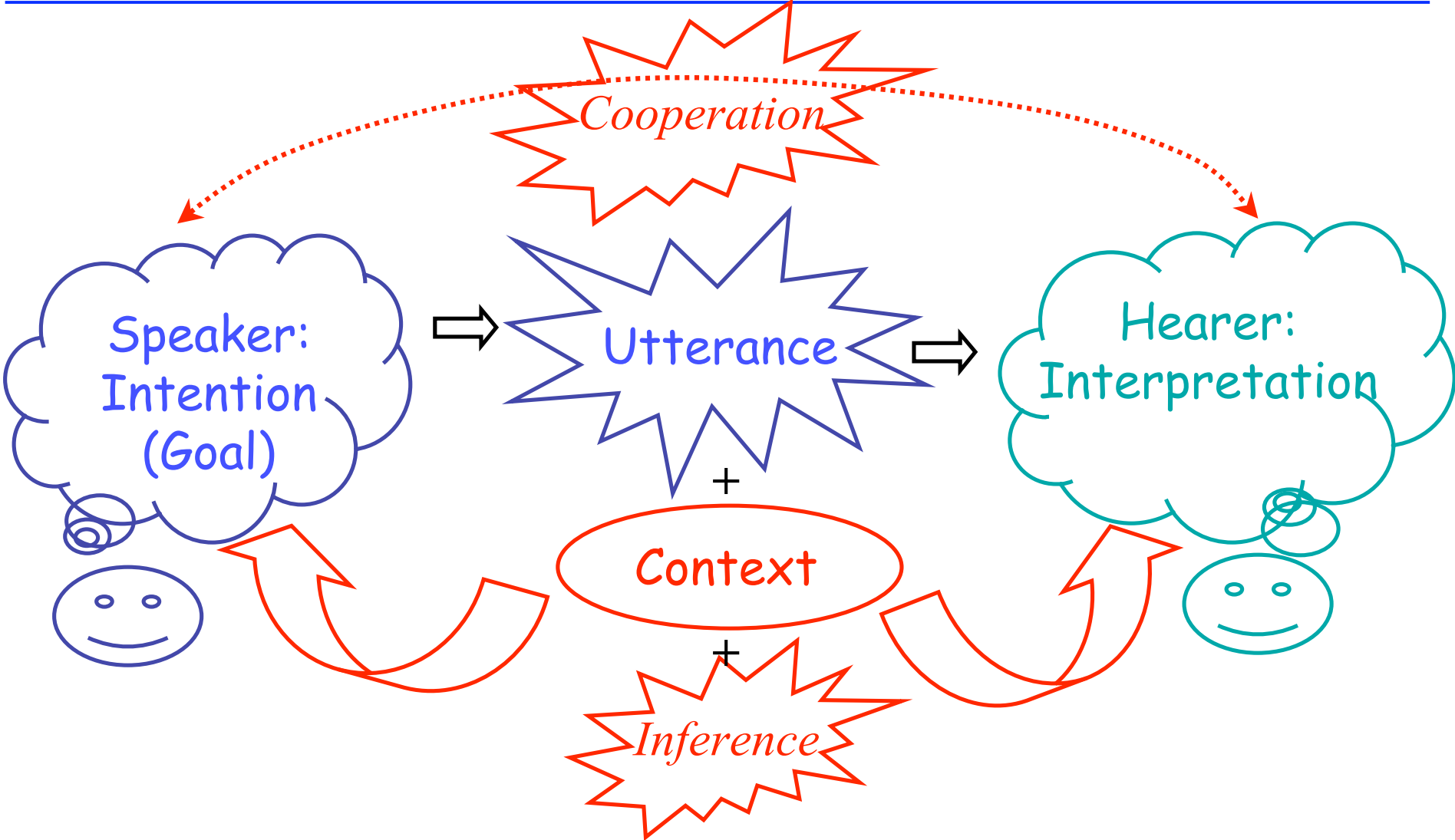


At a club swimming pool:

Please use the toilet, not the pool.

Pool for members only.

Language Use in Context



Context

- 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.

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:
 - 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 bit? HERSELF bit Jane.)
Every child showed a toy that **it/they** brought.
 - 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**.

Contextual Reference: Not Only Pronouns ...

Two guys were working for the city. One would furiously dig a hole, then the other would come behind him and quickly fill the hole. They were drenched in sweat.

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

"I'm confused. You dig a hole and then your partner comes behind you and fills it up again!"

The digger leaned on his shovel and replied,

"Oh yeah, it must look funny. You see, the lazy jackass who plants the trees is sick again today!"

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"I'm confused. **You** dig a hole and **then your partner** comes behind **you** and fills **it** up **again!**"

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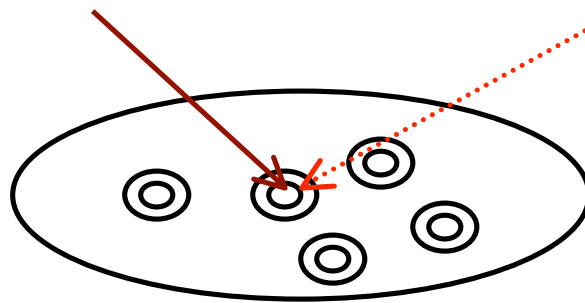
Discourse Model

- “Catalogue” of discourse entities used as “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)
- Basic types of referring expressions:
 - Noun phrases, pronouns
 - Temporal and spatial expressions

Two Types of Anaphoric Reference

Coreference

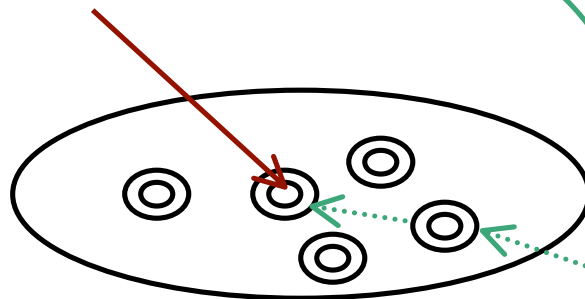
Antecedent Anaphor (anaphoric expression)



[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.

Bridging

Antecedent



...
[The digger]₁ leaned on [his]₁ shovel.

[The digger]₁ leaned on [the shovel]₁.

Anaphor (anaphoric expression)

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.

Other Kinds of Contextual Reference

- 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 loses his temper.
Peter forgets a lot. **For example**, he did not send me a birthday card.
- Pronouns without antecedents
It is nice weather.

Summary

- Contextual reference
- Anaphora, binding, deixis
- Coreference, bridging
- Pronouns, (definite) noun phrases, and other
- Discourse referent, discourse model