UNIT 3:ON REFERRING, SAYING AND IMPLICATING: REFERENCE AND INFERENCE

1

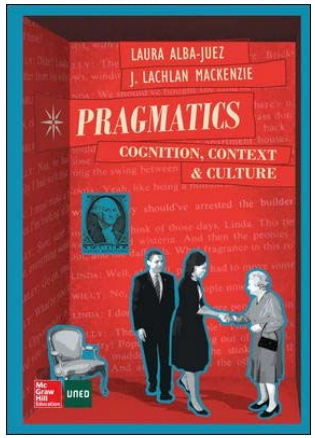
Corresponding to Chapter 3 (Pragmatics:

Definition and Scope) of base book:

Alba-Juez, Laura & Mackenzie, J. Lachlan (2016).

Pragmatics: Cognition, Context and Culture.

Madrid: McGraw Hill



REFERENCE

- As we build up a discourse, we mention and often re-mention various people and things. The pragmatic mechanism that allows us to introduce these entities into discourse and to keep track of them is called ***reference***.

- This mechanism makes crucial use of the speaker's and the hearer's shared knowledge. Besides, reference is often achieved through the use of proper names, which normally have a pragmatically determined conventional association with particular people, places and objects known to a speech community. All of this makes **reference an essential pragmatic phenomenon**.

Why is reference an essentially pragmatic mechanism?

- Reference is not the same thing as denotation. It is an action carried out by speakers and therefore alludes to the relationship created by a speaker between words and specific entities.
- The denotation or dictionary meaning of the word *room* would be something like "a portion of space within a building or other structure, separated by walls from other parts". Consider utterances (1) and (2), both said by a hotel receptionist to a workmate:

(1) Room 25 has to be cleaned by 12:00 p.m.

(2) Room 25 has complained about the noise at night.

- In both (1) and (2) the reference of the word *room* is different from its denotation, for in (1) the speaker does not refer to the prototype, but to a room (nº 25) in a particular hotel (not a dining-room or any other type of room in a house, for instance), and in (2) the speaker does not refer to a room at all.

- It is clear, though, that in (1) the meaning intended by the use of the word *room* is closer to its denotation than in (2), where this same word is used to make reference to a person or persons, more specifically, to the guest who happens to be occupying Room 25 at the moment of talk. This is an instance of the so called *deferred* (or *metonymic*) reference.

- Referential expressions are normally noun phrases, but verbs, whether nominalized or not, can be also used as referents of particular actions or activities, such as *driving* and *to watch TV* in the following examples:

  Driving is not my favourite thing.

  She doesn't like *to watch TV*.

- In the case of verbs, just as in that of nouns, the identification of the person, thing or activity cannot be properly made if there is not a conventional agreement within the given community as to what the referent of that person, thing or activity is. For instance, an extra-terrestrial being coming from a different planet where there are no cars, even in the hypothetical case that s/he knew how to speak English, would not be able to assign a referent to the word *driving*.

- In sum, the main point so far has been to note that **the process of referring is a pragmatic one**, for the referents introduced and used in any type of discourse could not be identified without taking into account both the speaker's and the hearer's intentions, actions and knowledge.

Types of reference

- There are different types of reference depending on different variables, such as the definiteness or indefiniteness of the expressions used, the type of thing or person being referred to, or the direction in which it refers within the text (backwards or forwards) or out of the text.
- Speakers normally introduce referents into discourse by using terms which are indefinite and explicit (e.g. *A dog that was astray in the street*), and later in the discourse refer to them by means of definite and inexplicit expressions (e.g. *the dog/(s)he/it*).
- **Definite reference** is realized by expressions containing definite determiners (e.g. *the cat*), certain pronouns (e.g. *they*), noun phrases and proper names (e.g. *motorbikes, Kenneth*), locative adverbials such as *here* or *in the box*, time adverbials such as *yesterday* or *the day after tomorrow*, etc.
- **Indefinite reference** is found in expressions with indefinite determiners (e.g. *a man, many people*), certain pronouns (e.g. *anyone*), such locative adverbials as *anywhere*, and time adverbials such as *some time* or *any time*.

- One and the same referent may be evoked by using either a **definite** or an **indefinite** expression, either **explicit** (e.g. *the guy who was looking at you*) or **inexplicit** (e.g. *he*), depending on the shared background knowledge, the relationship between the interlocutors, and many other variables affecting the speech situation.
- When we refer to a particular individual, the referring expression constitutes an instance of **specific reference**. When we refer to an object or person as pertaining to a group or class, as shown by the italicized noun phrases below, we are dealing with what we call **generic reference**:

A washing machine is a very useful appliance.

Computers can save your life.

Men are very primitive creatures.

The Italians are all very passionate.

- Martin & Rose (2003: 169) explain that "whenever the identity of a participant is presumed, that identity has to be recovered", and this recovery can be achieved in various ways, depending on where the relevant information is. Sometimes the information is found by looking backward in the text or discourse, as in the following example. This is what we call **anaphoric reference**:

That's my friend Suzanne. She is an actress.

- There is also another kind of anaphoric reference which is indirect and is called **bridging reference**. It refers backwards indirectly, as can be seen in the example below, where *the food* refers indirectly backwards to *a new Italian restaurant:*

We went to a new Italian restaurant yesterday and the food was delicious.

- Some other times we may have to look forward in the text in order to recover the participant or thing being referred to in which case we have an instance of **cataphoric reference**:

E.g.:

Immediately after she saw him, Camilla turned round and left the room.

- In some cases, we may find the referent within the same noun phrase. In the example below, the speaker makes clear that the house she is referring to is the one that is “in the woods”, thereby preventing the hearer from having to track the referent somewhere else in the text or context:

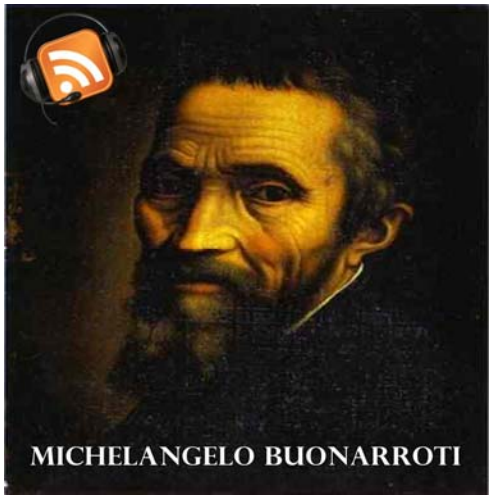
The house in the woods was her hiding place.

This type of reference is called **esphora**, and it allows us to identify participants without having to look elsewhere in the discourse.

- Speakers may also make reference to people and objects outside the text. If the reference looks out to shared or cultural knowledge, we speak of **homophora**, a kind of reference that is normally realized through names or definite noun phrases whose reference is obvious within the speech community, such as *The Pope, God, Shakespeare, the Senate*, etc.:

E.g.:

Michelangelo was considered the greatest artist of his time.



- In some cases, the reference looks out of the text but not to famous people or obvious, shared cultural knowledge, as in the example below, where the red motorbike looks outside the text, to someone or something that can be perceived with the senses. This is a case of so-called **exophoric reference**:

Look! *The red motorbike* has crashed into a tree!!

- **Exophora** normally refers to something outside the text that can be heard, seen, touched, tasted or felt by the interlocutors. Here *the red motorbike* is introduced for the first time, and therefore it is not mentioned anywhere else in the text, but the interlocutors can see the referent in their physical environment.

- There is still another kind of reference (not included by Martin & Rose in their taxonomy) that looks out of the text but that is neither homophoric (because the referents involved are not obvious or do not form part of shared knowledge) nor exophoric (because the referent cannot be seen, touched, etc. in the physical environment of the interlocutors). This is the case of, for instance, the first time someone or something is introduced in a narration, as in the examples below, where Mrs. Dalloway and Dick Gibson are presented by the respective authors in the opening line of their respective novels. We have called this type of reference **ideophoric**, because it creates the first idea of a referent that is not in the immediate physical environment but in the interlocutors' mind.

> *Mrs. Dalloway* said she would buy the flowers herself.
>
> (Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway,*1925)
>
> When *Dick Gibson* was a little boy he was not Dick Gibson.
>
> (Stanley Elkin, *The Dick Gibson Show,* 1971)

- In these cases, once the characters in question have been introduced, the successive reference made to them becomes homophoric, for they are now part of the authors' and readers' shared knowledge. Thus, **the phenomenon of reference is not a static one** for the way of referring to the same participant or entity may change according to the conditions and circumstances of the ongoing discourse.

Reference as a discourse process:

- When reference is viewed as a discourse process, referring sequences (not just isolated referring terms or expressions) may become crucial for the analysis.

- Thus, when analyzing a text such as a conversation, a letter, an e-mail message or a recipe, it is important to look at how the participants and entities are introduced and later tracked throughout the discourse, because the development of the referential process may reveal important aspects of the general meaning of the particular discursive event.

Deixis: Indexicals and context

- The word ***deixis*** comes from Ancient Greek, where it means "pointing to" or "picking out".
- Some words or expressions (such as *here, the day before yesterday, there, now, this, that, come* or *go*) require that we pick out a person, place, time or situation to determine how the expression refers; i.e. these expressions allow us to identify or "point to" referents that are particular to the context, and for that reason they are called ***deictics*** or also ***indexicals***.

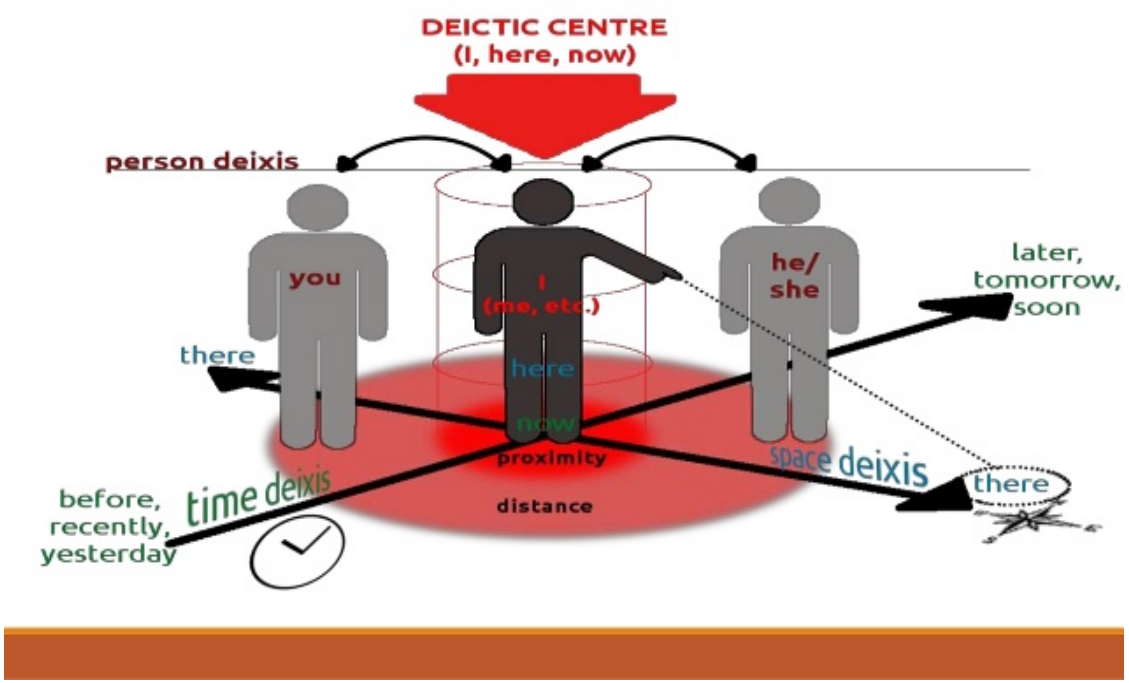
- The use of indexicals in discourse is one of the processes that clearly shows the relationship between language and context, because utterances like the following cannot be fully understood or interpreted if there is no further indication of who the speaker and addressee(s) are, or when and where they were uttered.

*I'll phone **you** next week.*

***You** and **you**, come here now!*

- In effect, the referents of deictic expressions shift depending on the contextual conditions; therefore, the **you** of the above examples is not going to be the same person in all its possible interpretations. It will, of course, depend on who the speaker and addressee are in each one of its possible contexts.

- The specific context where the speaker is located is what has been called the **deictic center**, for in this particular context the “I” will refer to the speaker, the “now” to the moment when the speaker is talking, the “here” will refer to the place where the speaker is located, etc. Therefore, all the referring expressions in a particular discourse situation will be interpreted in terms of the speaker’s deictic center.



Types of deixis

- Most analysts agree that there are three main types of deixis:

1) **Person**,
2) **Time**, and
3) **Spatial or Place** deixis.

To these three basic types two more have been added by some authors (e.g. Levinson 2006):

4) **Discourse** and

5) **Social** deixis.

- **Person deixis** is reflected in the grammatical category of person. Thus personal pronouns are the prototypical indexical expressions for this type. The first person normally points to the speaker and the second person to the addressee, while the third person points to a third party that may or may not form part of the particular discourse situation. These roles shift according to conditions such as conversational turn-taking, and therefore the *origo* or deictic center shifts along with them.

- **Time deixis** is prototypically encoded in the grammatical category of tense, but it is also found in adverbials such as *now, then, today, yesterday, ten years ago, next year*, etc.

- **Spatial or Place deixis** is prototypically encoded in adverbials such as *here, there, in this place* or *in that room*, which point to places related to the context of talk.
- *This* and *here* are examples of **proximal** (i.e. close to the speaker) place deixis, while *that* and *there* constitute instances of **distal** (i.e. non-proximal to speaker) place deixis.
- There are languages, such as Spanish, that have a third sub-type, namely the **medial place deixis**, encoded in the demonstrative *ese*, the proximal and distal ones being *este* and *aquel*, respectively.
- In both English and Spanish, verbs such as *come* and *go* (Sp. *venir* and *ir*) or *bring* and *take* (Sp. *traer* and *llevar*) encode spatial motion to or from the deictic center, and thus are prototypical examples of place-indexical expressions.

- **Discourse deixis** is observed when certain expressions (e.g. *this (situation), as pointed out before, in the previous chapter, in the next section*, etc.) are used to refer to some portion of the preceding or forthcoming discourse.
- A distinction should be made here between discourse or textual deixis and anaphora or cataphora. Discourse deixis refers to portions of the discourse itself, whereas anaphoric or cataphoric expressions refer to people or entities outside the text by connection to a prior or later referring expression (Levinson, 2006: 119). Thus, the demonstrative *That* in (a) is discourse deictic (because it refers back to the whole of David's utterance), while the one in (b) is just an example of anaphora, which is co-referential with *the house* and *the one*:

(a) David: *Get ready, Mary. We're off to the Maldives!*

Mary: ***That**'s what I've been waiting to hear for ages!!*

(b) *I like the house and **that** is the one I want to buy.*

- **Social deixis** is the type of deixis that points to aspects of the social relationship between interlocutors such as power, distance, social status or role of the participants in the speech event. This is the case of honorific expressions found in different languages, such as the so-called T/V pronouns (e.g. *tu*/*vous*; *tú*/*usted*; *du*/*Sie* in French, Spanish and German, respectively), which encode social aspects such as respect, different social class, or different age of the participants.

- Levinson (1983) distinguishes four axes on which the relations among participants are defined:

1) **Speaker to referent**, encoded in the use of referent honorifics such as titles (e.g. *Dr*. Sigmund Freud, *Count* Bismarck);
2) **Speaker-to-addressee honorifics**, an example of which are the T/V pronouns named above;
3) **Bystander honorifics**, which signal respect to non-addressed but present participants (for example, Keating (1998) writes about a kind of suppletive verbs and nouns which are used in the indigenous languages of Pohnpei (of the Federal States of Micronesia) in the presence of a chief);
4) **Speaker-to-setting honorifics**, which have to do with the levels of formality used depending on the setting or event. An example of this type of honorific is found in the distinction made in English between words of Germanic origin and those of Romance origin (e.g. *house*/*residence*, *land*/*territory*, *mean*/*signify*, etc.), the latter being generally used in more formal or technical contexts.

- Deictics are semantically deficient, and therefore many times, with all five kinds of deixis, gestures are necessary to help us identify the referent. This is what we call **gestural deixis**:

Teacher (pointing to Daniel and Karla)

You and ***you*** will come with me to the Headmaster's Office!!

- But sometimes no gesture is required because the knowledge of the basic parameters of the speech event are sufficient for the hearer to identify the referent. In these cases we speak of a **symbolic usage of deixis**,

(Martha enters the dining room to find her husband standing on the table)

Martha: What are **you** doing???

- It is interesting to note that some deictic expressions can have non-deictic usages. In some cases the expression is used in a generic, non-specific way, as in:

*With people like these, **you** never know how to react.*

- Some uses of the demonstratives which are *recognitional* or *empathetic* (Levinson, 2006: 108), are non-deictic too:

*Do you remember **that** blond woman we met the other day in the park?*

(Recognitional use: *that* is used to help the interlocutor recognize the person or thing in question)

*I hate him - **that** son of a bitch.*

(Empathetic use: *that* is charged with some kind of emotional meaning which has nothing to do with pointing to a distal person or object)

Grammaticalized deictic meanings

- The historical evidence from many languages indicates that spatial deixis is the most basic of all types. This is because the distinction between *this* and *that* (or between *este*, *ese* and *aquel* in Spanish) has to do with immediate perceptions of the speaker's environment, specifically concerning the question whether objects are relatively close to or distant from the deictic center, with English distinguishing two degrees of distance (proximal and distal) and Spanish three. (Other languages, e.g. Hausa and Tlingit (Huang 2013: 197), make four distinctions; and yet others have additional refinements, like whether the object is visible or not.)

- Person deixis in many languages, especially in the third person, is historically derived from spatial deixis: Spanish *él* and *ella*, for example, derive historically from Latin *illum* and *illam*, meaning 'that one (masc.)' and 'that one (fem.)' respectively; English *he* can ultimately be traced back to the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) **ki-* ('here') and *she* to **so-* ('this, that'). As for the origins of the first person pronoun *I*, these are lost in the mists of time, but notice how the deictic *here* is still associated with the speaker:

  Give it **here**! (= Give it to me).

  Same **here**! (= So am I)

- Time deixis is also derived from spatial deixis. The present time is correlated with the proximal deictic *this* and the past time with the distal deictic *that*; this is clearly because the present time coincides with the deictic center and thus is near, while the past is remote:

  These days far too many young people are out of work.

  In **those** times, the power of religion was much stronger in society.

- Discourse deixis can also derive historically from spatial deixis. This is a good example of how grammaticalization leads to more abstract expressions. In the following mini-conversations, we see the proximal deictic *this* and the distal deictic *that* take on discourse roles. The proximals are associated with agreement, and the distals with disagreement. These are also examples of what were originally spatial deictics being used in discourse deixis:

A: The company needs to avoid lay-offs.

B: **Here** I agree with you completely.

A: We need a new government immediately!

B: **That**'s typical of you – always blaming the government.

- Social deixis, finally, is different from the other types in not deriving historically from spatial or other types of deixis. Rather, honorifics work as a kind of overlay on the basis person-deictic system. In many of the languages of Asia, the first and second person pronouns derive from words for 'slave, servant' and 'lord, master' respectively (Heine & Song 2011). Here we can clearly see the grammaticalization of extremely deferential language use, with "Your slave wishes to invite her master for dinner" meaning 'I would like to invite you to dinner'. We see traces of this in European languages, too: in Dutch the V-form in the T/V pair is u, derived from 'your nobility'; in Portuguese formal letters the addressee is often referred to as "Vossa Excelência" ('your excellence'), and in Spanish the V-form *usted* is historically 'your mercy'. There is not much like this in modern English, except in very obsequious usage, as in:

  Did **Sir** enjoy his lunch?

where Sir is historically 'lord' (cf. Spanish *Señor*) and the third person is used (cf. *his* lunch) to avoid the possible unwanted intimacy of *your*.

- The past and present tenses as well as the markers of future time are time-deictic. These tenses are known technically as absolute tenses, since they demarcate absolute stretches on the time line, before, during and after the deictic center. English also has a relative tense, the perfect tense*, which is non-deictic since it does not involve the deictic center but simply relates events to each other. Consider the following examples:

(a) *Martha has now finished her new novel.*

(b) *Martha had finished her new novel before she started on a new one.*

(c) *Martha will have finished her novel by the end of the year.*

- In (a), the absolute tense is the present tense (as is shown by the form *has* and the adverb *now*) but the relative perfect tense indicates that the moment of finishing preceded the time identified as 'now'.
- In (b), the absolute tense in both clauses is the past, but the first clause also contains the relative perfect tense, indicating the relation of precedence (in the past) between the two events.
- In (c), the same applies, but in the future.

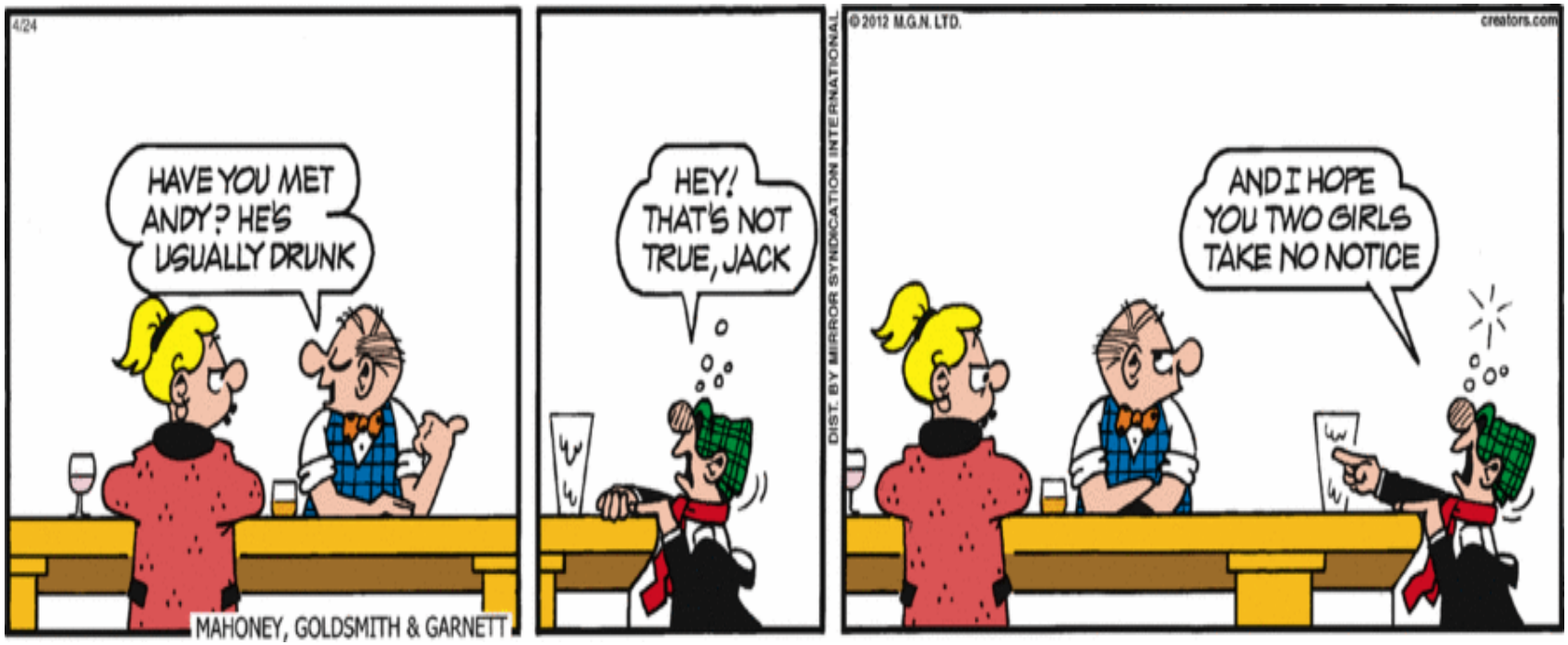
*We use the term 'tense' here in line with authors such as Comrie (1985), but admit that relative tenses could also be – and very often are – analysed as 'aspect' rather than 'tense'. This debate has no bearing on the matter discussed here.

- **In sum:**

Deixis is thoroughly pragmatic in crucially involving the deictic center, i.e. the moment of speaking and everything that goes with it. It is also pragmatic in having expanded from the indexical domains of person, space and time into those of discourse organization (discourse deixis) and the social relations between interlocutors (social deixis). We have also seen, too, that deictics can develop non-deictic uses, which substantially extend the range of pragmatic options for language users. Finally, we considered how deixis impinges upon grammar through processes of grammaticalization and how absolute tense, a central feature of English grammar, is a fundamentally deictic phenomenon.

Practice: Let us now analyze all the referring expressions, deictic or not, in the following texts:

a) *Andy Capp* comic strip:



b) Song: *England Skies* (Shake Shake Go)

Listen to and read the lyrics of this song and try to spot and classify the referents (deictic or non deictic) used. Then discuss them in the virtual class with your classmates:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLyDCtoqra8

Enjoy!!

Inference and implicit meanings

In both speaking and writing, our discourse contains many implicit meanings that our interlocutors apprehend through the mechanism of **inference**. In fact, linguistic communication could not exist without the parallel cognitive process of making inferences, which may be based on different types of meaning.

Types of inference:

Some inferences derive chiefly from contextual assumptions, while others are mainly built into the structure of the linguistic units that trigger them. The former are said to be pragmatic in nature, while the latter are considered to be primarily semantic.

Examples:

Pragmatic inference → conversational implicature (Grice's *meaning 'nn')*

To a friend, after the speaker discovers that his friend has been disloyal:

You are a fine friend indeed!

Conversational implicature: You are not a fine friend.

Logical, semantic inference → syllogism (Grices's *'natural' meaning*)

All men are mortal.

Socrates is a man.

Therefore, ***Socrates is mortal.***

Both semantic and pragmatic inference → presupposition

I regret not having gone to visit my aunt before she died

Presupposition: I did not visit my aunt before she died

Presupposition: shared assumptions and background knowledge

- **Presupposition** is the name given to a variety of linguistic inferences related to propositions whose truth (or assumption of truth) is taken for granted.

- These phenomena have been widely discussed by both philosophers and linguists; however, they have not yet been totally covered or comprehended. Logicians (e.g. Strawson 1950) originally described presuppositions in semantic terms, defining them as propositions entailed by a sentence and its negation:

E.g.:

I regret not having accepted the invitation

I do not regret not having accepted the invitation

Presupposition → **I did not accept the invitation**

- However, this definition presents some problems, because it fails to describe the presuppositions of some sentences such as the following, whose apparent negation seems to presuppose just the opposite:

Why did you buy that car? (Presupposition → **You bought that car**)

Why didn't you buy that car? (Presupposition → **You did not buy that car**)

- This and other issues have led scholars to reformulate the definition in pragmatic terms, the simplest reformulation containing the notion that **what matters is not whether the presupposed is true or not, but that both the speaker and hearer assume that the proposition said is presupposed as true**.

Types of presuppositions

There are three main kinds of presuppositions that are considered to be representative of the phenomenon:

1) **Existential**

2) **Factive**

3) **Connotative**

Existential presuppositions are inferences made in relation to the existence of people or things normally described in definite terms. Thus the utterance below presupposes that Peter exists, and that he has a brand new Mercedes Benz car:

I went for a ride in ***Peter's brand new Mercedes.***

Factive presuppositions are those triggered by the complements of epistemic and emotive factive verbs such as *know*, *realize*, *be aware*, *regret*, *be glad/sorry/surprised/amazed that*, etc., or the subject complements of *mean*, *prove*, *be obvious/ fortunate*, etc., as shown in the utterances below, where the presupposition for all cases (a to f) is the same, namely, that it is a fact (and therefore assumed to be true by the interlocutors) that Jim is dating Catherine:

a. *Did you know that Jim is dating Catherine?*

b. *I'm glad that Jim is dating Catherine.*

c. *That Jim is dating Catherine is obvious.*

d. *She is amazed that Jim is dating Catherine.*

e. *He wasn't aware that Jim is dating Catherine.*

f. *I was stupid not to realize that Jim is dating Catherine.*

Inchoative* verbs as in (a), cleft constructions as in (b), *wh*- questions as in (c), adverbial and relative clauses introduced by the corresponding subordinators as in (d) are also associated with factive presuppositions (FP):

a. Fred discovered that his friend had lied to him. (FP: Fred's friend lied to him)
b. It was in London that we went to see Tom Jones (FP: we went to see Tom Jones)
c. Why did you call so late at night? (FP: You called late at night)
d. When he recited the poem, everyone started to cry. (FP: He recited a poem)

(*Inchoative or 'inceptive' verbs are those verbs which show a process of beginning or becoming.)

Presuppositions can also be associated with *counterfactive* verbs such as *pretend* or *wish* in (a) below or counterfactual conditionals, as shown in (b), in which case the complement of the verb and the proposition expressed by the *if*-clause (respectively) are presupposed NOT to be true:

(a) 1. *He pretended that he was German*. (FP: He is NOT German)

2. *I wish I had a house in Miami*. (FP: I do NOT have a house in Miami)

(b) *If I had obeyed my mother, I would be happier now*. (FP: I did NOT obey my mother)

- **Connotative presuppositions** (CP or **connotations**) are associated with specific lexical items that are used in a restricted number of situations in which they apply. An example of this kind of presupposition can be observed in verbs of judging, such as *accuse*, *blame* or *criticize*, which involve the propositions 'A did B' and 'B is bad', both of which may or may not be presupposed, depending on the verb:

a. *She was accused of stealing the money*. (CP: Stealing money is bad)

b. *She was blamed for stealing the money*. (CP: Stealing money is bad)

c. *She was criticized for stealing the money*. (CP: She stole the money, and stealing money is bad)

Other examples of connotations include verbs such as *assassinate* or *murder*, whose use presupposes that the killing was intended, and in the case of *assassinate*, that the victim was someone with political power. A great number of other words, such as those in bold below, are also the triggers of certain connotative presuppositions (CP):

a) My neighbour is playing his bagpipes **again**. (CP: My neighbour has played his bagpipes before, and depending on the context and how it is said, it can also carry the connotation that this repetition is something negative and annoying)

b) When did you **stop** singing in bars? (CP: The addressee used to sing in bars before).

c) We were walking in the **jungle** when suddenly we heard some **roaring** (CP: The roaring, together with the fact of being in the jungle, presupposes the presence of some animal, probably a tiger or a lion)

d) I **started** playing tennis when I was ten years old. (CP: I had not played tennis before I was 10)

e) **All** my friends are fantastic. (CP: the set of the speaker's friends has at least three members).

f) The **regime** in that country has to come to an end. (CP: The leader of that country is a dictator)

Notice the following:

- In (a) above we again see that connotative presupposition is variable: after all, to a lover of bagpipe music, the presupposition could be quite different.
- In (c) we see that they are defeasible: it could be that the walkers in the jungle were deluded or in fact heard a waterfall or even overheard a film set with computer-generated animal noises!
- In some cases the same expression can be the trigger for different kinds of presupposition at the same time. For instance, in (f), the noun *regime* triggers the connotation that the leader of the country is a dictator, and the noun phrase *the regime* triggers the existential presupposition that there is a regime in that country.
- *All* is not used when the set has only two members. It would be ungrammatical to say something like “All my ears are big”.

Grammar and presupposition

Presuppositions are sparked off by the use of various grammatical constructions. The specific linguistic items that have this effect are called **presupposition triggers**.

E.g.: Every time you use a definite noun phrase you presuppose the existence of what you are referring to. This is why some logicians originally argued that you cannot say 'the King of Switzerland' since Switzerland is a republic and therefore does not have a king.

One frequently mentioned kind of grammatical construction serving as a presupposition trigger is the **factive predicate**, i.e. a verb or adjective that is followed by a complement clause, the content of which must be true for the speaker. Someone who says (a), using the factive predicate of cognition *know*, must presuppose the truth of the proposition 'Smoking can kill people'.

He knows that smoking can kill people.

Other kinds of presupposition trigger are:

- The **'implicative predicates' *manage* and *fail***, which presuppose effort on the part of the subject, differing only in whether success was achieved or not. In the following examples, the presupposed content is that Henry **tried** to get the car to start:

  Henry managed to get the car to start.

  Henry failed to get the car to start.

- **Cleft sentences**. These have the form *It* + *be* + focus + presupposition, as in:

  It was Cecilia who persuaded Donald to join us.

This construction is used if it is presupposed that 'Someone persuaded Donald to join us', with the information marked as 'Focus' supplying the identity of the 'someone' (*Cecilia*, in this case).

Notice the following:

- Certain emotion predicates that are followed by a complement clause do not involve a presupposition:

Elizabeth feared that Fritz was too clever for her.

The speaker here does not presuppose that Fritz was too clever for Elizabeth; in fact, she takes no position on the question. We therefore say that ***fear*** **is a nonfactive predicate.**

Not only emotion predicates can be nonfactive in this sense. Verbs of cognition and communication like *think*, *believe*, *say*, *state*, *claim* and many more share this property. In the following utterance, for example, the speaker reports Guy's belief without presupposing that it is true:

Guy believed that Hyacinth was a vampire.

- There are also predicates that are **counterfactive**. These involve the speaker presupposing that the content of the complement clause is untrue. A good example is *imagine* below, where the speaker presupposes that the little girl's bedroom was in fact not a castle:

The little girl imagined that her bedroom was a castle.

- One pragmatic use that is made of presuppositions is to make a request more polite, by presupposing that it has already been complied with. *Thank you for* is a factive presupposition trigger, as in:

Thank you for believing in me.

where the speaker presupposes that the addressee believed in her.

- Another pragmatic use is found in academic writing. Frequently it is necessary to introduce someone else's idea in a complement clause. If the idea is one they agree with, authors will often use a factive predicate, subtly presupposing that the contents are true; and if they disagree, a nonfactive predicate may be applied:

a) Jones (2008: 123) **observes/shows/proves** that Binding Theory has a fatal flaw.

b) Jones (2008: 123) **claims/states/argues/assumes** that Binding Theory has a fatal flaw.

- In any of the variants of (a), the speaker presupposes that Jones is correct; in any of the variants of (b), she makes no presupposition about the correctness of Jones's position.
- Barristers tend to be skilled at exploiting presuppositions, as in the famous 'loaded question' example:

*So, tell the court, when did you **stop** beating your wife?*

- **In sum:**

We have seen here that various aspects of the grammar of English can only be understood if we take the pragmatics of presupposition into account. The **interconnectedness of grammar and pragmatics** is one of the phenomena dealt with in functional grammars, which aim to understand not just what the structures of the language are but also how they are deployed in communication.

Implicature

The bridge from what is said to what is meant is very often built through a kind of inference that Grice called ***implicature***, a notion that is one of the single most important ideas in Pragmatics, and which is rooted in the fact that messages are radically underdetermined if only the natural meaning is taken into account for their production and interpretation.

The semiotic picture of the total signification of an utterance is composed of both what is said (the *natural meaning*) and what is implicated (the *meaning -nn*).

But *meaning –nn* is not homogeneous: Grice wrote about two main kinds of inference that generate such meaning, which he called

1) **Conversational Implicature**, and
2) **Conventional Implicature**.

He also contemplated other subtypes of intended meaning, such as those generated by presupposition or nonconversational and nonconventional implicatures, but these did not constitute the focus of his research and work.

Within Grice's theoretical framework, the *said* and the *conventionally implicated* are coded by the linguistic system. However, those meanings that are *conversationally implicated* are not; they are only inferred on the basis of some basic rational assumptions stated in the **Cooperative Principle** and its **maxims** of conversation, which all rational speakers are assumed to respect and follow (Grice, 1975: 45-46):

The cooperative principle:

Make your contribution such as 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 the Cooperative Principle:

The maxim of Quantity

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

The maxim of Quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

The maxim of Relation

1. Be relevant.

The maxim of Manner

Be perspicuous, and specifically:

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly.

Conversational implicature

Speakers do not always follow the Gricean maxims to the letter. Very frequently these maxims are not observed, and speakers intentionally 'flout' one, two, three or all of the maxims at the same time. In these cases, the hearer still assumes that the speaker is trying to be cooperative, and therefore looks for meaning at a deeper level than the literal one. In doing so, he makes an inference of the type called ***conversational implicature***, which is not coded in the language and has its basis in the rational shared assumptions of the interlocutors.

Flouting the Maxims: Examples

MAXIM OF QUALITY:

Being ironic is one of the prototypical strategies which flout the Maxim of Quality. Consider this utterance, said by a woman to her friend after the friend said something stupid:

What a clever idea!

by means of which the woman implies that the idea was just the opposite, i.e., rather stupid or NOT clever at all.

MAXIM OF QUANTITY

Example:

A: I think Sam and Sarah are not being honest with me, and I believe dishonest people are losers.

B: Well, I think Sarah is honest.

By not including Sam in her utterance, B may be conversationally implicating that Sam is dishonest, and that consequently, Sam is a loser.

MAXIM OF MANNER

Example:

A: Have you ever met Richard?

B: No, what's he like?

A: Well, he's not what one would call 'handsome'.

In her last utterance, A may be implicating, by being a bit obscure, that Richard is ugly or not very good-looking.

MAXIM OF RELATION

Example:

A: Would you like to come to London with me on Tuesday?

B: I have a medical appointment on Tuesday.

B's utterance does not exactly answer A's question by saying "yes" or "no", and it might seem irrelevant at first sight, but any competent speaker of English can work out the implicature that B's answer is negative, because one would expect B not to miss his medical appointment on Tuesday.

Other ways of non-observance of the maxims

Flouting a maxim is not the only way of non-observance of the maxims of the Cooperative Principle. Grice also pointed out that there are many occasions on which speakers fail to observe the maxims even though they have no intention of generating an implicature.

Grice writes about three other such types of non-observance:

1) ***Violating*** a maxim,
2) ***Opting out*** of observing a maxim, and
3) ***Infringing*** a maxim.

Thomas (1995: 72) points out that several writers since Grice have argued the need for another category, namely

4) ***Suspending*** a maxim.

1) **Violating a maxim:**

Grice clearly defines 'violation' as the *unostentatious* non-observance of a maxim, which means that the speaker who violates a maxim does not expect the hearer to know or realize that she is doing so. This category would then include cases of lying, in which the speaker violates the maxim of Quality but with no intention whatsoever of making the hearer realize that she is not telling the truth (in fact, this is the essence of lying), and therefore without generating any conversational implicature. This is very different from *flouting* this maxim and being ironic, in which case the speaker DOES want the non-observance of the maxim to be noticed, and this is precisely what triggers the conversational implicature.

Also, this category includes cases in which the speaker is not lying but is 'liable to mislead'. For instance, when in (a) B is not telling the complete truth:

(B bought a new motorbike with his parents' money without telling them)

B's father: *Have you bought a bicycle without telling us?*

B: ***No, I haven't bought a bicycle, Dad.***

2) ***Opting out of a maxim***:

A speaker opts out of a maxim when she indicates that she does not want to cooperate in the way the maxim requires, but does not wish to generate a false implicature or appear uncooperative. Examples of this type of non-observance are frequently found in public life when, for instance, a priest who is called to declare in a court refuses to reveal what the accused told him in confession.

3) ***Infringing a maxim***:

When a speaker has neither the intention of generating an implicature nor of deceiving anyone, she is said to 'infringe' a maxim. This may occur because the speaker is nervous, excited or drunk, or has some cognitive impairment, or because she does not have full command of the language (e.g. if she is a foreigner or a little child) and thus is incapable of making a clear point, etc.

4) ***Suspending a maxim***:

This category applies in cases in which there is no need to opt out of a maxim because there is no expectation that they will be followed, and therefore their non-observance does not generate any implicatures. A clear example of the suspension of the maxim of Quantity can be found in the telegrams of the 20th century, or in *sms* messages nowadays, where everyone expects that the text will be short, and therefore the cut in the quantity of words does not generate any conversational implicatures.

Conventional implicature

Grice also characterized another type of implicature which he called *conventional* because it is generated by the conventional meaning of the words or expressions used. Consider (a) and (b):

(a) *He is poor* ***but*** *honest.*

(b) ***Even*** *teachers can afford one of these laptops.*

By using the connector *but*, the speaker in (a) is committing herself to supporting the notion that poor people are normally not honest, and she cannot say she did not mean this because of the adversative meaning which is inherent to and conventionally implicated by *but*.

Likewise, in (b) the meaning conventionally implicated by *even* tells us that the speaker commits herself to the idea that teachers cannot afford to buy expensive computers.

- Conventional implicatures, being more attached to the linguistic form of the utterance than conversational implicatures, deal with *non-cancellable* aspects of meaning and therefore, like presuppositions, are triggered by features of the natural meaning of utterances.

- In fact, conventional implicatures are akin to pragmatic presuppositions, and many authors consider them to be the same phenomenon.

- Conventional implicatures are attached to the form of utterances, but not to their semantic content. That is why, in contrast with conversational implicatures –which are *non-detachable* from semantic meaning- , conventional implicatures are said to be *detachable* from it. This means that, for instance, the word *but* will always carry the same conventional implicature, irrespective of the general semantic content of the utterance in which it is placed.

How do conventional and conversational implicatures differ?

While conventional implicatures are mainly derived from the conventional meanings of the words and expressions used, **conversational implicatures** deal with non-natural, non-conventional meaning, and therefore the latter are said to display the following distinctive properties (Grice, 1975: 57-58):

- **Cancellability/defeasibility:** This means that the inference derived from the flouting of the maxims can be cancelled or defeated by adding some premises.

- **Nondetachability**: By saying that conversational implicatures are *nondetachable*, Grice means that the implicature is not attached to the linguistic form, but to the content of what is said, i.e., they are nondetachable from the semantic content of the utterance. Thus, conversational implicatures cannot be detached from an utterance by simply replacing the words by synonyms. In contrast to conversational implicatures, conventional implicatures are always detachable from the content of the utterance.

- **Calculability**: Conversational implicatures are calculable because, according to Grice, for every occurrence of the phenomenon, and based on the assumption of cooperation, it should be possible to show how an addressee can make the desired inference from the literal meaning or sense of the utterance in question. In other words, based on the Cooperative Principle, all implicatures can be 'calculated'. Conventional implicatures, in contrast, are not calculable by using pragmatic principles and contextual knowledge; they are given by convention.

- **Nonconventionality:** This property simply alludes to the fact that conversational implicatures are not conventional, and therefore are not generated from the conventional meaning of linguistic expressions, as conventional implicatures are.

Levinson (2000: 15) adds the following features to Grice's list, also taking into consideration the works of Sadock (1978) and Horn (1991):

- **Reinforceability**: This property refers to the fact that it is always possible to reinforce what is implicated by going on to say it in an explicit, overt way, which is clearly easier on the listener even if there are risks about being so direct. So for instance, in (a) below, the speaker could add (after a silent moment) "But Eunice is NOT" as a reinforcement of the original utterance "Well, Robert is an honest person, yes"; this is unsubtle but it is clear.

  A: *I think Robert and Eunice are very honest people.*

  B: ***Well, I think Robert is honest, yes.***

- **Universality:** Since this type of inference is not arbitrary but motivated, and it is assumed to derive from basic considerations of rationality, it is expected to be universal, in contrast with coded meanings. This means that in any language into which a given utterance is directly translated, the equivalent form should carry the same standard implicatures. So, for instance, the utterance "I have three nieces" carries the universal generalized implicature that 'I have no more than three nieces' in any language into which this utterance can be directly translated.

Generalized and particularized conversational implicature

Grice drew a distinction between what he termed ***generalized*** and ***particularized*** conversational implicatures.

- ***Generalized conversational implicatures*** (GCI) are those implicatures that are triggered without the need for a special context or scenario. Thus if a speaker utters (a), irrespective of the scenario where she got into a car, the hearer will be taken to infer that the car is not the speaker's, for the expression *an X* seems to trigger the generalized conversational implicature that *X* is not closely related to the speaker. Similarly, in any possible context, an utterance like (b) will always tend to generate the implicature that the speaker cannot run the mile in less than 4 minutes.

(a) *I got into a car.*

(b) *I can run the mile in 4 minutes.*

In contrast to GCI, there are other implicatures that will only be triggered if certain conditions are met and thus are classified as ***particularized conversational implicatures*** (PCI). Consider the example below, where B's flouting of the Relevance maxim could only implicate that Lily is with Jack in the particular sort of setting that A is Lily's brother (or relative) and has come to Jack's (and B's) house to ask about her whereabouts, that Lily had previously come to visit Jack, and that the participants share the knowledge that Jack likes Lily very much and therefore is happy when in her company:

A: *Hi, I'm looking for Lily. Have you by any chance seen her?*

B: ***Jack is very happy*** (PCI: Lily is now with Jack)

The example below illustrates and tries to clarify this difference by showing that a given utterance can generate both a GCI and a PCI at the same time. This is an interesting point, because it shows how the assessment of the weightiness of the two implicatures can cause a certain balance in the decision later taken by the speakers, given that, on the one hand, they should probably consider buying a water regulator because some of their neighbours already have one (PCI), but on the other, perhaps they don't need one, for not all their neighbours have installed one (GCI):

A: *Do we really need to install a water regulator?*

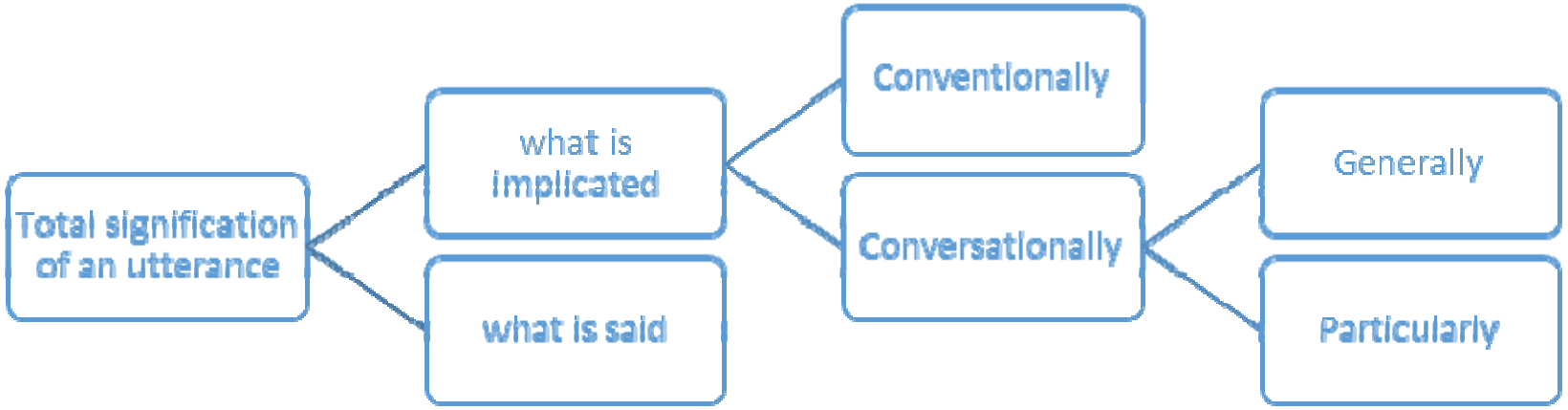
B: ***Some of our neighbours already have one.***

GCI: Not all of our neighbours have installed a water regulator.

PCI: Perhaps we also need to install one, yes.

As to the **differences between *GCIs* and *conventional implicatures*** (something you might be wondering about), Grice himself admitted that "non-controversial examples are perhaps hard to find, since it is all too easy to treat a generalized conversational implicature as if it were a conventional implicature" (1989: 37), but the basic criteria for distinguishing them would be that while GCIs are cancellable, nondetachable, reinforceable and universal, conventional implicatures have none of these properties.

Grice's distinctions regarding species of meaning is summarized in the following figure:



But this model does not show that there are other kinds of inference, such as those based on interactional politeness or conversational organization that were later to be treated by other authors (e.g. Leech 1983, Brown & Levinson 1987), nor does it include the neo-Gricean interpretation of the theory of implicature, which –among other things– points to the difficulties found in making the distinction between what is said and what is implicated, and within which not all of the Gricean maxims receive equal attention, as we shall now explain

Neo-Gricean theories of implicature

- Horn (1972, 1984, 2006) and Levinson (1995, 2000) have devoted much of their work to a refinement of Grice's theory of implicature, above all by exploring the concepts of *scalar implicature* and *generalized conversational implicature.*
- **Scalar (or Quantity) implicatures** derive from utterances in which a scalar term is used to suggest that the speaker had a reason for not using a more informative or stronger term on the same scale. Many utterances display scalar properties:

  a. ***Some*** *students do not like Professor James.*

  b. *Sam* ***should*** *be coming back from Paris now.*

In these three utterances, *some and should* are members of different scales. The scale to which *some* belongs includes <*all, many, some, few*>, and using *some* in this particular utterance will imply that the members of the scale to its left are not applicable. Likewise, *should* is a member of a scale that includes other modal verbs <*will*, *should*, *may*, *might*>, with the verb to the left of *should* (but not to its right) being excluded from the meaning of (b) by scalar implicature.

- Horn's (1972) work on lexical gaps is an early example of neo-Gricean pragmatics. He noticed there was a gap in the group of lexical items containing the negative particle. For instance, he pointed out that in the English language we have *none* (not one), but not **nall* (not all), and he argued that since *not all* is implied by the use of *some* and therefore is already a Q1 implicature, its meaning does not need to be lexicalized.
- The important contribution of Horn's work in this respect was to show that the **Q1 Maxim ("Make your contribution as informative as is required"**) is crucial to determining which concepts can be lexicalized. This leads to the conclusion that the foundation behind this kind of lexical gap is pragmatic and favours the idea that other phenomena might also be explained by examining such pragmatic conversational principles.
- A **Q1 implicature** is an implicature derived from the flouting of the first part of the Maxim of Quantity, i.e. "Make your contribution as informative as is required". A **Q2 implicature** is one derived from the non-observance of second part of Grice's formulation of the maxim: "Do not make your contribution more informative than is required".

- In later works, Horn (1984, 2006) argued that the Maxims of the Cooperative Principle can be reduced to just two principles: **the *Q Principle* and the *R Principle***. The Q Principle is a reinterpretation of the Q1 maxim, and the R Principle is a reformulation of the Q2 maxim and the Relation and Manner maxims, as reproduced below:

  The Q Principle: Make your contribution sufficient. Say as much as you can.

  The R Principle: Make your contribution necessary. Say no more than you must. (Horn, 1984: 13).

- Example (a) shows an utterance from which the addressee will most probably recover the *Q inference* that the woman in question was a stranger, or at least not a person close to the speaker, since he didn't say 'my wife', 'my mother', etc. because it is assumed that he has said 'as much as he can':

  (a) *I met a woman at the supermarket yesterday.*

- In (b) the hearer will recover the *R inference* that there will not be more than seven people for lunch, because it will be assumed that she is following the R Principle of 'not saying more than you must'.

  (b) *There will be seven of us for lunch today.*

- Another neo-Gricean author is Stephen Levinson who, within his **theory of preferred interpretation** (1995, 2000), defends the notion of *generalized conversational implicature* as an essential explanatory notion for a great variety of linguistic facts, such as those exhibiting the lexicalization constraints studied by Horn and exemplified above in this section.
- Levinson argues in favor of the GCI as the default or preferred inference, i.e. "one that captures our intuitions about a preferred or normal interpretation" (2000: 11).
- To explore default inferences, Levinson focuses on the maxims of Quantity and Manner, arguing that this kind of inference can neither be reduced to the level of sentence-meaning nor to that of speaker-meaning, for they are midway phenomena, influencing both grammar and speaker-meaning.

Levinson identifies three types of meaning:

1) ***Entailment*** (which is context-free and non-inferential),

2) ***Utterance-type meaning*** (which is context-free and inferential), and

3) ***Utterance-token meaning*** (which is context-sensitive and inferential).

- The Theory of Preferred Interpretation concentrates upon the second type, and is thus a theory of utterance-type meaning.
- An **utterance type** is a type of utterance with a 'predictable' GCI (Levinson 2000: 176), i.e. its inferred interpretation is regular across a range of contexts. Thus, GCIs belong to the realm of utterance types.

- In contrast, an **utterance token** is an utterance that has a single inferred interpretation which depends upon its context. Thus, *particularized conversational implicatures* belong to the realm of utterance tokens.

- Levinson bases his tripartite theory of utterance-type meaning on three basic heuristics or insights that in his view govern the process of inferential enrichment and that enable him to formulate the three following principles, derived from Grice's Quantity (divided into Q1 and Q2) and Manner maxims:

Q-principle (Q1)

Speaker's maxim: Do not provide a statement that is informationally weaker than your knowledge of the world allows, unless providing an informationally stronger statement would contravene the I-Principle. Specifically, select the informationally strongest paradigmatic alternate that is consistent with the facts.

Recipient's corollary: Take it that the speaker made the strongest statement consistent with what he knows. (Levinson, 2000: 76)

The recipient's corollary will induce scalar and clausal* *Q*-implicatures, as illustrated in (a) and (b):

(a) *Some of my classmates are lawyers.*

(Scalar implicature → Not all of my classmates are lawyers)

(b) *Peter believes his illness was caused by a virus*

(Clausal implicature → Peter does not know whether his illness was caused by a virus or not)

*Clausal implicatures are those derived "from contrasts between one expression that entails its embedded sentence(s) and another that does not". (Levinson, 2000: 76-77)

I- Principle (or *Principle of Informativeness*, based on Grice's Q2 maxim)

Speaker's maxim: The maxim of Minimization. "Say as little as necessary"; that is, produce the minimal linguistic information sufficient to achieve your communicational ends (Bearing Q in mind).

Recipient's corollary: the Enrichment Rule. Amplify the informational content of the speaker's utterance by finding the most *specific* interpretation, up to what you judge to be the speaker's m-intended* point, unless the speaker has broken the maxim of Minimization by using a marked or prolix expression. (2000: 114)

Levinson explains that the *I*-Principle collects a range of inferences that appear to go in the reverse direction to that in which *Q*-implicatures tend: "I-implicatures are inferences from *the lack of further specification to the lack of need for it, whereas Q-implicatures are inferences from the lack of informational richness to the speaker's inability to provide it*" (2000: 116).

*M-intention, according to Grice (1989: 105), is the complex reflexive intention involved in speaker's meaning, i.e. her intention to cause an effect in the recipient just by getting the recipient to recognize that that was her intention.

- Some examples exploiting the *I*-principle are found below, which show that *I*-implicatures are based on principles of economy:

a. *Alba-Juez and Mackenzie have written a book on Pragmatics.*

(*I*-implicature → Alba-Juez and Mackenzie wrote the book together)

b. *Charles left the building and a bomb exploded.*

(*I-implicature* → Charles *first* left the building and *then* the bomb exploded)

c. Possessive interpretations:

Ken's house (*I-implicature* → the house he lives in)

Ken's children (*I-implicature* → the children to whom he is a father)

- **M-Principle (Manner)**

Speaker's maxim: Indicate an abnormal, nonstereotypical situation by using marked expressions that contrast with those you would use to describe the corresponding normal, stereotypical situation.

Recipient's corollary: What is said in an abnormal way indicates an abnormal situation, or marked messages indicate marked situations. (Levinson, 2000: 136)

Levinson observes that *M*-implicatures seem to be essentially parasitic on corresponding *I*-implicatures. Thus compare the *M*-implicatures below with their corresponding *I*-Implicatures above:

a. Alba-Juez and Mackenzie both have written a book on Pragmatics.

(*M-implicature* → Alba-Juez and Mackenzie wrote two separate books on Pragmatics).

b. Charles left the building and almost immediately thereafter a bomb exploded.

(*M-implicature* → Charles leaving the building and the bomb's explosion may have been simultaneous.)

- As you may have noticed by now, Levinson's principles were inspired and based on Horn's. Levinson (2000: 137) himself acknowledges that Horn's Q Principle is 'pretty much equivalent' to both his Q and his M Principles, while Horn's R principle 'is roughly coextensive' with Levinson's *I*-Principle.

- Levinson's theory of presumptive (i.e. preferred or presumed) meanings is much more complex and extensive than we are able to show here, but its essence lies in being a set of generalizations about the interrelations of linguistic expressions and the default inferences generated by them. Finally, it should be added that Levinson claims his theory to be predictive in the sense that it can make predictions about presumptive meanings at different levels of generalization (morphological, lexical, etc.).

Implicature in the real world

George Carlin (1937-2008) was a comedian who liked to reflect upon language use. One of his favorite topics was the use of euphemisms. Listen to this part of an interview in which he mentions the use of the euphemism “the golden years”:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KITIt2O3Z8Q

There are many more video clips which you can watch where he speaks about euphemisms in real life, which I invite you to watch in order to reflect upon the workings of I-inferences, as well as to have a lot of fun.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how thoroughly pragmatics penetrates our everyday use of language by examining two notions with rather similar names, ***reference*** and ***inference***, but with very different effects.

Reference is concerned with how we identify and talk about the entities that form part of our discourse (persons, things, events, etc.).

Inference is involved in how we interpret what is being said to us, and this is especially important when the words uttered are not a direct reflection of the speaker's communicative intention.

What is common to both notions is that speakers, whether referring or inviting an inference, regularly leave it to the hearer to figure out what is meant. When someone leaves the office building and says to a co-worker, "Now, where am I parked?", she uses the first-person pronoun *I*; the denotation of that pronoun is the speaker but the reference is to her car. The colleague has no trouble understanding this because (a) you don't park people and (b) the context of looking for your car in the company's parking lot is a familiar part of the day's routine. Reference in this case, as in so many instances, is a co-operative activity involving input from the speaker and inferential work from the hearer.

With **conversational implicature**, similar processes are in play. When Romeo sighs that Juliet is the sun, he doesn't mean she is a fiery ball of gas 150 million kilometres away; rather, as with all poetic metaphors, the listener in the theatre understands, using his own experience of love (and his knowledge of Renaissance cosmology), what it is like to feel that someone is the centre of your universe, warming and nurturing you. That understanding is based, then, on processes of inference that can involve any aspect of a hearer's cognitive capacities (emotions, experience, education).

One major reason (but certainly not the only one) for a speaker to use indirect reference or a conversational implicature is to avoid hurting her interlocutor's feelings. Rather than using critical words, for example, a speaker can employ a formulation from which the hearer can deduce that (a) the speaker is not pleased but that (b) she still respects the hearer. Questions like these have been studied under the heading of 'politeness'. This will be the topic of our next learning unit.

END OF UNIT 3