ENG 236: Semantics and Pragmatics ❖ Spring 2006: TUE & FRI 9.00-10.30 @ E 002
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CLASSES 20-21: PRAGMATICS

OVERVIEW

- over the years, *discourse* has become of increasing concern for semantics
- in the next few classes, we will *investigate a subset of such concerns*

DEFINITIONS OF PRAGMATICS

The following *attempts at defining pragmatics* are taken from Levinson (1983):

1. Pragmatics is the study of those principles that will account for *why a certain set of sentences are anomalous, or not possible utterances*.
2. Pragmatics is the study of language from a *functional perspective*, that is, it attempts to explain facets of linguistic structure by reference to non-linguistic pressures and causes.
3. Pragmatics is concerned solely with *performance principles of language use*.
4. Pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are *grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a language*.
5. Pragmatics is the study of all those aspects of meaning not captured in a semantic theory. [⇨ *PRAGMATICS = MEANING – TRUTH CONDITIONS*]
6. Pragmatics is the study of the relations between language and context that are *basic to an account of language understanding*.
   [⇨ Pragmatics: study of the role context plays in speaker-/utterance- meaning]
7. Pragmatics is the study of the ability of language users to *pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate*.
8. Pragmatics is the study of *deixis (at least in part), implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and aspects of discourse structure*.

GOALS OF A PRAGMATIC THEORY

Levinson (1983) offers the *'black box' model of pragmatics*:

- what should be the *input* to such a theory, and what should be the *output*?
- theory of pragmatics: a *function* (mathematical sense) which assigns one set of entities (*domain*) to another set of entities (*range*); question: what are these entities?

Option I:

input = the full grammatical description of a sentence, together with information about the context in which it was uttered

output = a set of representations (or propositions) which capture the full meaning of the utterance in the context specified.

Option II:

Pragmatic theory should be based on the notion of context change — the theory is a function from utterances to contexts, the contexts brought about by each utterance.

INDEXICALITY, DEIXIS, AND MORE

(cf. Norrick 2001)

(1) The teacher told the students *he* wanted *them* to pass.

(2) The father wishes he had been able to instill in the son respect for *himself*.

(3) The neighbours seem always to try and keep up with *myself*.

(4) a. The *present King of France* is bold.
b. The present King of France is *not* bold.

(5) a. Mary *killed* John.
b. Mary *murdered* John.
c. Mary *assassinated* John.

Some issues:
• indexicality / deixis and anaphora (trad. syntax)
• anomaly (accounting for?)
• knowledge of the world ("encyclopaedic knowledge")

(6) a. Mary *regrets* that she borrowed John's car.
b. *Mary borrowed John's car.*
c. Mary *imagined* that she borrowed John's car.

(7) a. John *knows* that Mary borrowed his car.
b. *Mary borrowed John's car.*
c. John *believes* that Mary borrowed his car.

(8) a. ??Come there please!
b. ??Aristotle was Greek, but I don't believe it.
c. ??Fred's children are hippies, and he has no children.
d. ??Fred's children are hippies, and he has children.
e. ??I order you not to obey this order.
f. ??I hereby sing.
g. ??As everyone knows, the earth please revolves around the sun.

(9) *Jill wanted to get Bill a birthday present*, so she went and found her piggy-bank; she shook it, but there was no noise; she would have to make Bill a present.

PRESUPPOSITION

(10) John left work early again.

For any sentence S, *S^P will refer to the presuppposition(s) of S*.

(11) a. S = It stopped raining.
b. S^P = it was raining before
c. There was a time (after R/T of S) during which no drops of water were falling from the sky.

- presuppositions and *entailment*

(12) It didn't stop raining.

Presuppositions of sentence S are *inherited* by the negation of S, entailments are not.

- other constructions that allow inheritance: if-*clauses*, *modals*

(13) a. If John left work early again, he will be fired.
b. Maybe John left work early again.

Task 1: Use the inheritance tests to show *$(10)^P$ = John left work early before*.

Task 2: What do the following sentences presuppose? (Use the inheritance tests.)

(14) a. Mary regrets that she ate an apple.
b. It was John who brought an apple to the party.
c. Frank_F ate an apple too.
d. Frank ate_F an apple too.
e. Frank ate an apple_F too.
f. Each student from Mexico did well on the exam.
g. The King of France is bold.
h. Even Jill likes Frank.

Task 3: Name at least one entailment of each sentence in (14a-h).

Two major views on how presuppositions fit into a more general view of meaning:

(i) *The two-component model* (Gazdar 1979; Karttunen & Peters 1979)
Presuppositions have a special status. Sentences have two kinds of content, their ordinary semantic content and their presuppositional (pragmatic) content.

(i) *Pragmatic presupposition* (Stalnaker 1974, 1978; Heim 1982, 1990; van der Sandt 1992)
Presuppositions are admittance conditions for sentences into a context.

THE PROJECTION PROBLEM

- even though all of (15a-f) contain *it stopped raining*, they don't behave the same

(15) a. It stopped raining and then it started raining.
b. It started raining and then it stopped raining.
c. If it was raining, then it stopped raining by noon.
d. If John came to the party, then it stopped raining by noon.
e. Either it stopped raining or Mary had an umbrella.
f. Either it stopped raining or it never was raining in the first place.

THE INHERITANCE RULE APPROACH

(16) a. *Semantic rule for negation*
$\|$it is not the case that $\varphi\|$ = the set of worlds not in the set of $\|\varphi\|$
b. *Presupposition rule for negation*
(it is not the case that $\varphi)^P = \varphi^P$

(17) a.	John arrived on time too.	a^P.	Someone else arrived on time.
b.	Mary arrived on time.	b^P.	*(none relevant without context)*
c.	Mary is happy.	c^P.	*(none relevant without context)*

(18) a. Mary is happy, and John arrived on time too.
b. Mary arrived on time, and John arrived on time too.

(19) $(\varphi \,\&\, \psi)^P = \varphi^P$ plus as much of ψ presupposes as can't be deduced from the semantic meaning of φ.

- problems with the *projection rule approach*

(20) a. There is no king of France.
b. Therefore, the king of France isn't in hiding.

(21) a. I regret / realize that I haven't told the truth.
b. I haven't told the truth.
c. If I regret that I haven't told the truth, I will confess it to everyone.
d. If I realize that I haven't told the truth, I will confess it to everyone.

REFERENCES

Levinson, Stephen C. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Norrick, Neale R. 2001. Discourse and Semantics. In Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen & Heidi E. Hamilton (eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, 76-99.

[For Gazdar, Karttunen & Peters, Heim, Stalnaker, and van der Sandt, see the bibliography in PHP.]