

Linguistics Career Day: Wednesday, March 27, 2002 Tabaret hall, 9.30 a.m.

Implicature:

At a tea party, A. says Ms. X is an old bag. Silence. Then B. says

The weather has been quite delightful this summer, hasn't it?

No relation, but this implies that A's remark was inappropriate.

Illocutionary acts

- What is an illocutionary act?
- Reflected in every sentence (see Searle's theory)
- by saying I promise you perform the act of promising (and you couldn't say I promise and not have made a promise, unless, of course, you do not intend to follow through). Similarly: I order you.... I congratulate you...(Austin's theory)

Choice of verbs

- Certain verbs are called performatives, because they themselves perform actions:
- State, declare, promise, want, request, beg, thank...+hereby (by what I am saying here and now I do the following thing)
- Other verbs, instead are descriptive:
- Tell, leave, sing,
- *I hereby sing a song

Performative verbs

- I hereby state that...
- I hereby christen you...
- I hereby warn you....
- Present tense, first person, or passive but not second or third person.
- ??Bill hereby likes his cats.

Present tense

If Present Tense is not used, it is not a performative!

I hereby congratulated you on your promotion (past, not a performative).

The baby was christened Andreas (past, not a performative).

The baby is hereby christened Jane -(passive, performative)

Performatives do not have truth values

Constatives (sentences using descriptive verbs) have truth values. They can be true or false.

Performatives do not cover all the speech acts we perform

- Declarative
I took some candy.
Mary said that Susan was going to be late.
- Interrogative
What did you have for dinner?
- Imperative
• Take some candy!
• Say that Susan is going to be late!

...because Performatives are not
always explicitly stated

- Take some candy! (intended to get someone do something)
§I hereby urge you to take some candy.(performative statement)
- Did you take some candy? (to get someone to believe that you don't know something and hence to get that someone to inform you)
§I hereby inquire whether you took some candy (performative statement).
- I took some candy. (to get someone to believe it)
§I hereby state that I took some candy.(performative statement)

Felicity conditions

- I christen this baby
- Speaker has to be a priest
- The baby can't have been christened before
- Parents have to be present etc.

Note: In Searle's theory felicity conditions are refined and applied to a bigger range of speech acts, including also non-explicit Performatives.

Implicatures (some examples)

- Am I in time for supper?

- I have cleared the table.

Implicature: no, you are not in time.

- Have you cleared the table and washed the dishes?

I've cleared the table.

Implicature: I haven't washed the dishes.

Definition

- Implicatures are propositions that are being conveyed by the speaker, even when they are not explicitly mentioned.
- Cooperative principle: participants should cooperate
- Maxims:

Quality: do not say what you believe to be false (flouting the maxim creates irony)

- Quantity: do not make your contribution more or less informative than needed.
 - What did you have for lunch today?
- Answer 1: I had food.
- Answer 2: I had 87 meals, served on a slice of toasted bread slightly burnt....

Relation

- A. Have you seen Susan around?
- B. Bill went to the store an hour ago.

What is the relation, if any?

Manner

- Avoid obscurity, ambiguity. Be orderly.
- Cooperative ‘behaviour’ is not necessarily encoded in language. Consider B’s responses:

A: Give me a pencil!

B.:

- Hands him Saad’s book. (violates quality)
- Hands him two pencils (violates quantity)
- Sings a song (violates relation)
- Gets the pencil, punches A. with it and runs away (violates manner)

Which maxim is at work?

Is it violated or respected?

- A. is planning with B a holiday in France.
Both know that A. wants to see there his friend C., if this will not delay too much their departure from France.
- B. Where does C live?
- A. Somewhere in the south of France.

Two possibilities: cooperate or not cooperate

- Standard implicature (assuming cooperativeness)

I am out of gas.

There is a garage around the corner.

Implicature (which can be cancelled): you can get gas there.

- Flouting a maxim (cooperativeness is deliberately avoided)

A. Have you read any of his novels?

B . I have read some of them

Implicature: B. hasn't read all of them

(although it is logically possible that he/she read all of them)

A. Have you had anything to drink tonight?

B. I have had one glass of wine.

Implicature: B. had one glass of wine only.

How do we infer that there is an indirect speech act?

1. Felicity conditions
2. Context.
3. The cooperative principle

Can you please pass the salt?

1. The speaker knows that the hearer CAN pass the salt (epistemic modality) or that he would not mind. (deontic modality)
2. What is the point of asking this then if this answer is already known to the speaker? (=felicity condition is met)
3. The speaker infers that it is a request: speaker is aware of preparatory conditions for requesting(he is able to perform the action) and he is also aware that giving somebody the salt is quite normal.

Less inference, more convention?

Some analysts claim that the statement above can be best analyzed as an IDIOM. (Gordon and Lakoff 1975).

Speech act 'request' (Searle):

Please, lend me some money! Imperative (direct)

Indirect strategies:

Do you have any money on you? Question (indirect, giving is not mentioned)

Yes. (if the hearer interprets the question directly)-showing the speakers have access to both direct and indirect speech acts.

Can you please lend me some money? Question (indirect)
question preparatory condition

Will you give me some money? Question (indirect)
question propositional content condition