

Lectures in Linguistics 6

Dep. of English Language and Linguistics

College of Education for Women

University of Anbar

By Shaymaa Yaseen Thabit, shaymay692@gmail.com

Pragmatics

It is the branch of linguistics which deals with how speakers use language in ways which cannot be predicted from linguistic knowledge alone. In a narrow sense it deals with how listeners arrive at the intended meaning of the speakers. It is the study of how language is used to communicate within its situational context. As most linguists agree on the fact that pragmatics is distinct from grammar, which is the study of the internal structure of language (Parker and Riley 2005).

Pragmatics overlaps with discourse analysis, which deals with the various devices used by speakers and writers when they knit single sentences together into a coherent and cohesive whole.

Implicature

The American philosopher Paul Grice pointed out that an utterance can imply a proposition (i.e., a statement) that is not part of the utterance and that does not follow a necessary consequence of the utterance . Grice called such a statement an implicature. Take the following example: Susan says to her daughter Annie: Aunt Matilda is coming for a visit tomorrow morning. Annie responds: I think I should wear my striped shirt with the long skirt. Someone hearing this conversation would draw the inference that Aunt Matilda is a conservative person. So, in Gricean terms what we infer from a certain utterance is the implicature (implied meaning).

Conversational Maxims

Grice proposes that conversations are governed by what he calls the Cooperative Principle: the assumption that participants in a conversation are cooperating with each other. This cooperative principle, in turn, consists of four conversational maxims:

Maxim of Quantity

This maxim states that each participant's contribution to a conversation should be no more or less informative than required. Suppose Jane and Kim are college roommates. Jane walks into the living room of their apartment, where Kim is reading a book. Jane asks Kim *what are you reading?* Kim responds with *A book*, which raises an implicature. Jane reasons unconsciously: I asked Kim what she was reading and my question required her to tell me either the title of the book or at least its subject matter. She appears to be flouting the maxim of quantity. There must be a reason that she gave less information than the situation requires. The inference (implied meaning) is that she does not want to be disturbed, and thus is trying to end the conversation.

Note :

Grice used the term *flouting* to describe the intentional violation of a maxim for the purpose of conveying an unstated proposition.

Maxim of Quality

This maxim states that each participant's contribution should be truthful and based on sufficient evidence. Suppose an undergraduate in a geography class says in response to a question from the instructor Mr. Parker, *Baghdad is the capital of Egypt*. The instructor then says, *Yeah, and London is the capital of Turkey*. The student reasons unconsciously as follows: Mr. Parker said that London is the capital of Turkey; he knows that is not true. He appears to be flouting the maxim of quality; there must be a reason for him saying something false. The inference (implicature) is that the student's answer is false (Baghdad is not the capital of Egypt).

Maxim of Relation

This maxim states that each participant's contribution should be relevant to the subject of the conversation. Suppose a man wakes up in the morning and asks his wife *what time is it?* She responds with *Well, the paper's already come.* Her statement raises an implicature. The husband reasons unconsciously as follows: I asked about the time, and she mentioned something unrelated-the arrival of the newspaper. She appears to be flouting the maxim of relation; there must be some reason for her comment. The inference (i.e., the implicature) is that she does not know the exact time, but the arrival of the newspaper has something to do with the time, usually the paper arrives at 7:00 A.M. so it is now past that time.

Maxim of Manner

This maxim states that each participant's contribution should be expressed in clear fashion; that is, it should not be vague, ambiguous, or excessively wordy. Suppose Mr. and Mrs. Jones are out for a Sunday drive with their two preschool children. Mr. Jones says to Mrs. Jones *Let's stop and get something to eat.* Mrs. Jones responds with *Okay, but not M-c-D-o-n-a-l-d-s.* Mr. this raises an implicature. Mr. Jones reasons: She spelled the word McDonald's, which is certainly not the clearest way of saying it. She appears to be flouting maxim of manner. The inference might be that she does not want the children to understand that part of her statement.

In summary, (Parker and Riley 2005) add, an implicature is a proposition implied by an utterance. An implicature arises in the mind of a hearer when the speaker flouts(i.e., intentionally violates) one of the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, or manner.