

Overview of topics

Chris Potts, Ling 130a/230a: Introduction to semantics and pragmatics, Winter 2019

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1 Kinds of meaning

For any given utterance, we can ask

- What does it claim, ask, demand, ...?
- What does it presuppose?
- What does it suggest or imply?
- What are its connotations?

2 Entailment

- (1) a. Sandy danced.
b. Sandy waltzed.
- (2) a. A student danced.
b. A Swedish student danced.
c. A student waltzed.
- (3) a. No student danced.
b. No Swedish student danced.
c. No student waltzed.
- (4) a. Sandy didn't dance.
b. Sandy didn't waltz.
- (5) a. Every student danced.
b. Every Swedish student danced.
c. Every student waltzed.
d. At least one student waltzed.
- (6) a. Most students danced.
b. Most Swedish students danced.
c. Most students waltzed.

Try with *few*, *not every*, *only*, *a minority of*, and *exactly three*.

3 Modifiers

- (7) a(n) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Norwegian} \\ \text{near-sighted} \\ \text{alleged} \\ \text{former} \\ \text{fake} \\ \text{porcelain} \end{array} \right\}$ spy (which of these, if any, entail *spy*?)



- (9) a. banana cake
 b. skillet cake
 c. birthday cake
- (10) a. real time-machine (W/ Bob & Dave)
 b. real-time machine

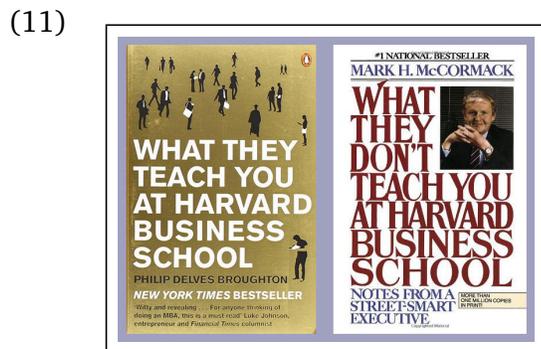
4 Pragmatics



Pragmatics is the study of the ways we enrich the conventionalized meanings of the things we say and hear into their fuller intended meanings. This enrichment is complex, but it is also systematic — and pervasive. The philosopher and linguist Paul Grice (left) was the first to push for a theory of pragmatics. We'll look closely at a variety of pragmatic phenomena, using Grice's theories as a starting point.

From a 1993 Supreme Court decision (cited in Solan & Tiersma's (2004) *Speaking of Crime*):

[L]anguage, of course, cannot be interpreted apart from context. The meaning of a word that appears ambiguous if viewed in isolation may become clear when the word is analyzed in light of the terms that surround it.



"These two books contain the sum total of all human knowledge" (@James_Kpatrick)

- (12) <https://kottke.org/11/01/the-hilarious-everything-bagel>:
 "Come on, Everything Bagels, who you tryin' to fool? You got like 6 seasonings on there. That's a lot, but it ain't everything."
 (@patrickmarkryan)
 "Last time I had an everything bagel I got poppy seeds, Mira Sorvino, and Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit all over my shirt." (@dwineman)

(13) Supreme Court: *Small v. United States* (April 26, 2005)More: <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/n11/?p=3248>

- a. *Background*: 18 U. S. C. §922(g)(1) forbids “any person [...] convicted in any court [...] of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year [...] to [...] possess [...] any firearm.”
- b. *Background*: “Petitioner Small was convicted in a Japanese Court of trying to smuggle firearms and ammunition into that country. He served five years in prison and then returned to the United States, where he bought a gun” and was subsequently arrested.
- c. *Small’s argument*: any court ranges only over U. S. courts.
- d. *Majority opinion*: The meaning of any is context dependent. For example, “any person may or may not mean to include persons outside the jurisdiction of the state.” and “In ordinary life, a speaker who says, *I’ll see any film*, may or may not mean to include films shown in another city.”
- e. *Dissenting opinion (Thomas, Scalia, Kennedy)*: The decision “institutes the troubling rule that any does not really mean any, but may mean ‘some subset of any’”.

(14) Honest or dishonest? The following contexts differ only in the price of movie tickets:

Context 1

Kyle and Ellen would like to see a movie.
 Kyle has \$20 in his pocket. Tickets cost \$8 each.

Context 2

Kyle and Ellen would like to see a movie.
 Kyle has \$20 in his pocket. Tickets cost \$10 each.

Kyle: “I have \$8.”

5 Presuppositions

- (15) Who wants to go swimming? We do, too. (NY Times editorial page, 2007-03-31)
- (16) Are you still looking for a job? [spam email]
- (17) Confirm your eBay transaction [spam email]
- (18) There is no God and Dawkins is his prophet.
- (19) From the movie High Fidelity:

“There’s something different about the sound of her voice ... And what did she mean last night, she hasn’t slept with him yet. Yet. What does *yet* mean, anyway? ‘I haven’t seen... Evil Dead II yet.’ What does that mean? It means you’re going to go, doesn’t it?”

6 Speech-acts

Sentence type	Examples	Force
Declarative	Turtles are amazing.	assertion
	I wonder where Kim is.	question
	You should move your bicycle.	suggestion
	You can have a cookie.	invitation
Interrogative	What day is today?	question
	What on earth are you doing?	accusation
	Do you want to have ice-cream?	invitation
	Could you help me?	request
Imperative	Move your bicycle!	command
	Have a cookie.	invitation
	Please rain!	plea
	Get well soon!	well-wish

(20) [Context: A police officer has stopped a driver for speeding.]

Driver: Is there any way that we can sort this out here, officer?

(21) Which actually invokes the speaker's right to counsel, in the technical legal sense?

- a. I hereby request to speak with a lawyer.
- b. Can I speak with a lawyer?
- c. Maybe I should talk with a lawyer.
- d. Will I see a lawyer at some point?

7 Framing

(22)



(23) Democratic party vs. Democrat party

(24) hunger relief

(25) tax relief

(26) Obamacare

(27) green space

8 Swearing

What are swears, and how do they work, semantically, pragmatically, socially, legally, ...? Why do they have so much power? What is the nature of the taboos that surround them?