Linguistics 590: Linguistic Pragmatics I
Syllabus, Spring 2009

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Note: Ellen Prince's syllabus had a week-by-week breakdown, with readings listed for each week. I tried that, but the syllabus rapidly became less "assertion" and more "metaphor". Instead, what follows is a list of topics, roughly in order, followed by a list of papers, at least some of which we'll read.

- Definitions; laying out the territory
- Speech acts
  - The Irreducibility Thesis
  - Indirect Speech Acts
- Implicature: Gricean Maxims
  - Generalized Conversational Implicatures
  - Explicature and Impliciture, if such things exist
  - The Semantics vs. Pragmatics question revisited
- Formalizing Gricean Maxims
- Presuppositions
  - Presupposition Projection
  - Common Ground and context changing
  - Harder presuppositions: sub-sentential, intensional
- Reference
  - Given vs. new
- Some (possible) case studies
  - The Present Perfect (presuppositions, puzzles, problems, Portner...)
  - Lying vs. Misleading (and why it matters)
  - Only: why it fails every test we throw at it
  - Focus (or: Semantics vs. Pragmatics isn't hard enough, let's throw in Phonetics)
- Things we'll hopefully run out of time before getting to
  - Metaphor

Books:

Davis, S., ed. 1991. *Pragmatics: a reader*. NY: Oxford Univ. Press.
Levinson, S. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Some other likely papers (to be distributed as needed):

Kent Bach on misconceptions about implicature
Robyn Carston on explicature and Kent Bach on impliciture
Gennaro Chierchia vs. Ben Russell on scalar implicatures
Larry Horn on metalinguistic negation
Ellen Prince on anchoring reference
Chris Potts on the mathematics of implicature
Craige Roberts on *only* and what the heck to do with it
Jennifer Saul on the philosophy of lying

GOALS OF THIS COURSE

By the end of the course, you should be able to recognize:

1. Whether or not a particular problem needs a pragmatic (and not semantic) answer;
2. How to express pragmatic solutions with precision;
3. What the available tools for pragmatic analysis are.

GOAL 1: IS THE PROBLEM PRAGMATIC?

> I've been trying to read Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* only to find rule (28)(iii) and (iv) incomprehensible:
>
> ```
> Aux  →  C (M) (have+en) (be+ing) (be+en)
> M    →  will, can, may, shall, must
> ```
>
> I noticed that for certain sentences two can be used at once like: "have been." I'm just a bit perplexed since I can't for the life of me locate the key principles that might affect one's decision to choose one, two, or all three of these.
>
> *from a post to the LiveJournal.com community "linguists"*

The answer (perhaps apparent by the time one is in grad school): these rules describe the *syntax* of English auxiliaries. Which ones a speaker uses is a *semantic* question that needn't be answered in a syntactic theory.

But there are less obvious cases...

(1) *Only John can solve this problem.*
   a. John can solve this problem.
   b. No one else can solve this problem.

Is (a) entailed? presupposed? implicated? vaguely implied? What about (b)? (If you think the answer is obvious, see Horn 1969 for one theory, Horn 1979 for a second, Horn 1992 for a third, Horn 1996 for a fourth; and discussion/proposals in various papers by Abbott, Atlas, von Fintel, Geach, Giannakidou, Ippolito, van Rooij & Schulz, Peter of Spain [later Pope John XXI], William of Sherwood (13th century), ...)

GOAL 2: EXPRESSING SOLUTIONS WITH PRECISION

"The pragmatic wastebasket"

> Be careful with forcing bits and pieces you find in the pragmatic wastebasket into your favorite syntactico-semantic theory. It would perhaps be preferable to first bring some order into the contents of the wastebasket. (Bar-Hillel, 1971)

Example One: Decomposition into semantic features

(2) *man*: has the features [+animate], [+human], [+sentient], [+volitional]....
persuade: object is [+animate]

#I persuaded the rock to leave. Mismatch of [±animate] feature.

But (McCawley 1968): *diagonalize*, *devein*, ...

Some things just don't belong in the semantics.

Example Two:

(3) a. ?? The Penn Linguistics Department has six professors.
b. The Penn Linguistics Department has six professors, and maybe more.

- *Option One*
  A number *n* means "exactly *n*". It can get an "at least *n*" meaning pragmatically.
  (The judgment in 3a follows from the semantics; 3b is pragmatic.)

- *Option Two*
  A number *n* means "at least *n*". It can get an "exactly *n*" meaning pragmatically.
  (The judgment in 3b follows from the semantics; 3a is pragmatic.)

Take care when tossing things into the wastebasket.

OVERVIEW OF THE TERRITORY

What is "pragmatics"? Well...

[See intro to the book, which spends 30 pages failing to answer this.]

The results of an utterance

I. The act *qua* action
   A. Changes in the world that result from a speech act

      e.g., *I now pronounce you husband and wife* has as its effect (in the appropriate circumstances) that you are now husband and wife

      cf. [I've just thrown this orange-and-black sphere into that ten-foot-high metal hoop with a net hanging off it] has as its effect (in the appropriate circumstances) that my basketball team has two [or one, or three] more points than it did before.

   B. Inferences from the speech act that aren't what the speaker is communicating

      e.g., from *I now pronounce you husband and wife*, you might infer that the speaker is invested with the power to do so (clergy, justice of the peace, licensed for the day...), but the speaker is not saying her utterance so that the hearer will conclude this.

      e.g., from *that dawg won't hunt, y'all*, you might infer that the speaker is from the Southern United States, but the speaker is (probably) not attempting to get this information across

II. The act *qua* speech
   A. The **SEMANTICS** of the utterance
      1. **Assertion**
      2. **Entailment**

   B. The **PRAGMATICS** of the utterance
      1. **"Conventional" implicatures**
      2. **"Conversational" implicatures**
         a. **Generalized CIs**
         b. **Particular CIs**
      3. **Presuppositions**