

Phonetics 2

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PRAGMATICS

- ◎ People usually mean more than they say, or something different from what they say.
 - How is it that people manage to understand one another?
 - Why don't people just say what they mean?

- Georgia Green (1989)
- “Contrary to popular belief, communication is not accomplished by the exchange of symbolic expressions.

⦿ Communication is, rather, the successful interpretation by an addressee of a speaker's intent in performing a linguistic act.”

Defining Pragmatics

- ◎ 1980s: Meaning in use or meaning in context. Too general
- ◎ Later:
 - speaker meaning (focus on the producer)
 - utterance interpretation (focus on the receiver)

Levels of meaning

- ① 1. Abstract meaning
- ② 2. Contextual meaning
- ③ 3. Force of an utterance

● Abstract meaning: dictionary meaning.

BUT

words acquire meaning according to the domain of discourse

Cat: pet

Cat: catalytic converter

◎ Coke: cocaine

Coca Cola

coal derivative

The priests are on Coke

Contextual meaning is usually
obvious for competent native
speakers

● **HOWEVER:**

**SOMETIMES WE DO HAVE DIFFICULTY
IN ASSIGNING CONTEXTUAL
MEANING (e.g. when there are rapid
changes of topic)**

**Ask for clarification, ask for contextual
information**

Reference in context

If he hadn't fallen out of bed, I wouldn't have found out about it

(this chair is)Reserved for the President

DEIXIS

Structural ambiguity

The priest walked among the
pilgrims eating their picnic
lunches

Interaction of sense, reference and structure

- OUT OF ORDER

Assigning sense and reference:
interdependent

FORCE

SPEAKER'S COMMUNICATIVE INTENTION

Is that your car?

You understand utterance meaning,
but

perhaps not the force:

Is it a complaint? Is it a request?

- ① You can understand both utterance meaning and force
- ② You can understand meaning but not force
- ③ You can understand force but not meaning

- ⦿ Both components are closely related but not inseparable.
- ⦿ Hearers can use paralinguistic or non-linguistic elements to work out the intended force

Definitions of Pragmatics

(revisited)

- Speaker meaning:

Concerned only with speaker,
excludes hearer

BUT

For the speaker, ambiguities of
sense, reference or structure
rarely exist

⦿ How are things, Scott?

- Utterance interpretation
(cognitive approach)

Focuses on the process of interpretation from the point of hearer.

◎ Meaning in interaction

Meaning is not inherent in the words alone, nor is it produced by the speaker alone, nor by the hearer alone. It is a dynamic process, involving the negotiation between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance and the meaning potential of an utterance (J. Thomas 1998)