



EGG 2018: Intro to pragmatics (week 2)

Session 1: The basic ideas – Gricean pragmatics 1

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Semantics vs. pragmatics

The traditional divide:

- ▶ **Semantics:** truth-conditional meaning
⇒ which situations can a given sentence describe truthfully?
(1) Alex is in Banja Luka and is attending EGG.



Semantics vs. pragmatics

The traditional divide:

- ▶ **Semantics:** truth-conditional meaning
 - ⇒ which situations can a given sentence describe truthfully?
 - (1) Alex is in Banja Luka and is attending EGG.
- ▶ **Pragmatics:** anything meaning-related that is connected to the use of an expression
 - ⇒ in which contexts is it acceptable to use a given sentence?
 - (2) A: What did Alex do this summer?
 B: Alex attended EGG and spent some days in Croatia.
 B': Alex spent some days in Croatia and attended EGG.



Semantics vs. pragmatics – II

Difficulty:

it is often not clear whether meaning that we intuitively perceive for a given sentence/expression should be attributed to the truth-conditional level or whether it is connected to its use in the particular context

⇒ has to be determined for each expression independently!



Semantics vs. pragmatics – II

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Goal of this course: introduce the traditional topics discussed in connection with pragmatic aspects of meaning

- ▶ conversational implicatures
- ▶ presuppositions
- ▶ speech acts
- ▶ conventional implicatures

⇒ this lecture is based on Grice 1975, Gamut 1991, and Kadmon 1991



Roadmap

Pragmatics: a characterization

The cases of 'and' and 'or'

Grice 1975: cooperativity and conversational maxims

Summary



And – I

What is the truth-conditional contribution of *and*? In which situations is (3) true?

- (3) Alex is in Banja Luka and is attending EGG.



And – I

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Analysis of the truth-conditional connector \wedge in classical logic:

A	B	$A \wedge B$
1	1	1
1	0	0
0	1	0
0	0	0

Does natural language *and* have the same semantics as \wedge ?

\Rightarrow (3) suggests that yes



And – II

Do the intuitions connected to (4) fit the analysis of *and* as \wedge ?

- (4) A: What did Alex do this summer?
B: Alex attended EGG and spent some days in Croatia.
B': Alex spent some days in Croatia and attended EGG.



And – II

Do the intuitions connected to (4) fit the analysis of *and* as \wedge ?

- (4) A: What did Alex do this summer?
 B: Alex attended EGG and spent some days in Croatia.
 B': Alex spent some days in Croatia and attended EGG.

Intuition: sometimes *and* seems to contribute the meaning of *and then*

⇒ Are there two *ands* or does this intuition result from the use of *and*?

⇒ How can we decide?



***And* – III**

- (5) Alex is in Banja Luka. She is attending EGG.



And – III

- (5) Alex is in Banja Luka. She is attending EGG.
- (6) A: What did Alex do this summer?
B: She attended EGG. She spent time in Croatia. She returned home at the end of August.
B': Alex spent time in Croatia. She attended EGG. She returned home at the end of August.



And – III

- (5) Alex is in Banja Luka. She is attending EGG.
- (6) A: What did Alex do this summer?
 B: She attended EGG. She spent time in Croatia. She returned home at the end of August.
 B': Alex spent time in Croatia. She attended EGG. She returned home at the end of August.

Observation: similar temporal sequencing effect without *and*



And – IV

► Assumption of two *ands*:

⇒ predicts sentences with *and* to be ambiguous

⇒ cannot explain the effect in (6); no *and*!



And – IV

▶ Assumption of two *ands*:

- ⇒ predicts sentences with *and* to be ambiguous
- ⇒ cannot explain the effect in (6); no *and*!

▶ Assumption of a use-related process:

- ⇒ does not predict ambiguity for sentences with *and*
- ⇒ can be adopted to also account for (6)



And – V

How can we account for (4) and (6) with a use-related process?



And – V

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Assumption: The use of *and* and sequences of utterances as in (6) is governed by an **additional pragmatic principle**.

(7) Events should be told in the sequence in which they happened.



And – V

How can we account for (4) and (6) with a use-related process?

Assumption: The use of *and* and sequences of utterances as in (6) is governed by an **additional pragmatic principle**.

(7) Events should be told in the sequence in which they happened.

Compatible with a **retraction of the suggested ordering**:

(8) Alex attended EGG and spent some days in Croatia, but I don't know what she did first.

⇒ also problematic if two *ands* are assumed!



Or – I

What is the truth-conditional contribution of *or*? In which situations is (9) true?

(9) Alex joined the walking tour, or she went rafting.



Or – I

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Analysis of the truth-conditional connector \vee in classical logic:

A	B	$A \vee B$
1	1	1
1	0	1
0	1	1
0	0	0

Does natural language *or* have the same semantics as the inclusive disjunction \vee ?

Is *or* inclusive? Or is it exclusive?



Or – II

Analysis of the **truth-conditional connector** \vee in classical logic:

A	B	$A \vee B$
1	1	0
1	0	1
0	1	1
0	0	0

Are there natural language expressions that clearly express exclusive disjunction \vee ?



Or – II

Analysis of the **truth-conditional connector** \vee in classical logic:

A	B	$A \vee B$
1	1	0
1	0	1
0	1	1
0	0	0

Are there natural language expressions that clearly express exclusive disjunction \vee ?

- (10)
- Either Alex joined the walking tour, or she went rafting.
 - Alex went rafting unless she joined the rafting tour.



Or – III

How can we decide whether plain *or* is inclusive or exclusive?

(11) [**Context:** It's Wednesday. A and B talk about B's plans.]

A: What are you going to do on the weekend?

B: I'll join the walking tour, or I'll go rafting.

⇒ Did B say something false if she ended up doing both?

⇒ Did B say something false if she ended up doing neither?



Or – III

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(12) Customers who are teachers or college students are entitled to a special reduction. (Tarski 1939:21 cited in Gamut 1991: 200)

⇒ What about students who teach?



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⇒ What about students who teach?

Analyzing *or* as expressing \vee cannot capture these examples!



Or – IV

How can we explain intuitions that *or* expresses exclusive disjunction?

(13) Alex joined the walking tour, or she went rafting.

⇒ strongly suggests that Alex did one but not both



Or – IV

How can we explain intuitions that *or* expresses exclusive disjunction?

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The use of *or* is regulated by two conditions:

- 1) Use *or* if you believe one of the disjuncts is true but don't know which.
- 2) The two disjuncts need to be connected in some respect.

⇒ not part of the truth-conditional meaning!



Or: condition 1

Condition 1: Use *or* if you believe one of the disjuncts is true but don't know which.

- (14)
- a. Alex likes beer or rakija.
 - b. Alex likes beer and rakija.
 - c. Alex likes beer.



Or: condition 1

Condition 1: Use *or* if you believe one of the disjuncts is true but don't know which.

- (14)
- a. Alex likes beer or rakija.
 - b. Alex likes beer and rakija.
 - c. Alex likes beer.

► If you believe that Alex likes beer and rakija, you state (14-b).



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- ▶ If you believe that Alex likes beer and rakija, you state (14-b).
- ▶ If you believe that Alex likes beer only, you state (14-c).



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 c. Alex likes beer.

- ▶ If you believe that Alex likes beer and rakija, you state (14-b).
- ▶ If you believe that Alex likes beer only, you state (14-c).

Condition 1 can be ignored if it is contextually warranted:

- (15) A: Does Alex like beer or rakija? I didn't buy any other drinks.
 B: Yes, she does (like beer or rakija). She likes beer.



Or: condition 2

Condition 2: The two disjuncts need to be connected in some respect.

(16) Alex likes beer, or Mary is from Germany.

⇒ When can (16) be uttered?

Example (16) becomes natural in a context that connects the truths of the two clauses in some way.

- (17) A: Which of the following three statements are true? Alex likes beer. Mary is from Germany. Banka Luka is in Croatia.
 B: Banja Luka is definitely not in Croatia. So: Alex likes beer, or Mary is from Germany. Or both.



Interim conclusion

- ▶ For the natural language connectors *and* and *or*, we need to distinguish their truth-conditional contributions from additional pragmatic conditions.

$$(18) \quad \textit{and} = \wedge \qquad \textit{or} = \vee$$

- ▶ Condition guiding the use of *and*:
 - Events should be told in the sequence in which they happened.
- ▶ Conditions guiding the use of *or*:
 - Use *or* if you believe one disjunct is true but don't know which.
 - The two disjuncts need to be connected in some respect.
- ▶ These conditions can be violated explicitly or implicitly (if the context allows it).

Are these conditions independently derivable or do they need to be stored with the lexical items?



Roadmap

Pragmatics: a characterization

The cases of 'and' and 'or'

Grice 1975: cooperativity and conversational maxims

Summary



Grice's cooperative principle (Grice 1975: 26)

Grice notes that talk exchanges (= discourses) are a “cooperative effort” to meet a common purpose:

(19) **Cooperative principle:**

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.



Grice's cooperative principle (Grice 1975: 26)

Grice notes that talk exchanges (= discourses) are a “cooperative effort” to meet a common purpose:

(19) **Cooperative principle:**

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

- ▶ “as is required” = guided by certain norms
- ▶ “at the stage at which it occurs” = depending on the discourse context
- ▶ “by the accepted purpose” = guided by a shared communicative goal

Central assumption: interlocutors observe the cooperative principle



Gricean maxims (Grice 1975: 26–27)

- ▶ **Maxim of Quantity:**
 - ▶ Make your contribution to the conversation as informative as is required.
 - ▶ Do not make your contribution any more informative than necessary.
- ▶ **Maxim of Quality:**
 - ▶ Do not say what you believe is false.
 - ▶ Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- ▶ **Maxim of Relation:** Be relevant.
- ▶ **Maxim of Manner:**
 - ▶ Avoid obscurity of expression.
 - ▶ Avoid ambiguity.
 - ▶ Be brief.
 - ▶ Be orderly.



Condition for *and*

Condition:

Events should be told in the sequence in which they happened.

- (20) Alex attended EGG and spent some time in Croatia.
⇒ first EGG, then Croatia

How can this condition be derived based on the Gricean maxims?



Condition for *and*

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How can this condition be derived based on the Gricean maxims?

- ▶ The speaker observes the cooperative principle and the conversational maxims.
- ▶ **Maxim of Manner:** be orderly!
- ▶ It is orderly to state events in the order in which they happened.
 - ⇒ Alex's attending EGG happened first
 - ⇒ Alex's spending some time in Croatia happened second



Conditions for *or* – I

Condition 1: Use *or* if you believe one of the disjuncts is true but don't know which.

- (21)
- a. Alex likes beer or rakija.
 - b. Alex likes beer and rakija.
 - c. Alex likes beer.
 - d. Alex likes rakija.

How can this condition be derived based on the Gricean maxims?



Conditions for *or* – I

Condition 1: Use *or* if you believe one of the disjuncts is true but don't know which.

- (21)
- Alex likes beer or rakija.
 - Alex likes beer and rakija.
 - Alex likes beer.
 - Alex likes rakija.

How can this condition be derived based on the Gricean maxims?

Maxim of Quantity: Make your contribution to the conversation as informative as is required!

- ▶ In circumstances other than the one described in condition 1, the speaker can make more informative statements:
 - ▶ speaker believes both options to be true → use *and*
 - ▶ speaker believes one specific option to be true → state that option
- ▶ **more informative = excludes more states the world might be in**



Conditions for *or* – II

Condition 2: The two disjuncts need to be connected in some respect.

- (22) a. Alex likes beer, or she likes rakija.
b. Alex likes beer, or Mary is from Germany.

Can this condition be derived based on the Gricean maxims?



Conditions for *or* – II

Condition 2: The two disjuncts need to be connected in some respect.

- (22) a. Alex likes beer, or she likes rakija.
b. Alex likes beer, or Mary is from Germany.

Can this condition be derived based on the Gricean maxims?

- ▶ **Maxim of Relation:** be relevant!
- ▶ The two disjuncts are part of the same utterance and are addressed at the same time.
- ▶ The two options described by the disjuncts need to be equally relevant to the discourse “at the stage at which it occurs”.
- ▶ **equally relevant = ??**
 - ⇒ relevance not as straightforwardly translatable as informativity
 - ⇒ more recent proposal: relevance = relation to current question under discussion (QUD) (see Roberts 2012)



Conversational implicatures (Grice 1975: 32–37)

Conversational implicatures are pragmatic inferences based on the truth-conditional content of an utterance and the Gricean maxims

They may arise as a result of:

- ▶ observing the maxims
 - ▶ *and* connecting eventive conjuncts: there is a temporal sequence
 - ▶ *or*: the relevant conjunction and neither of the disjuncts are true



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- ▶ ignoring one maxim for the sake of another

- (23) A: Where does Peter live?
B: Somewhere in the South of France.



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- ▶ ignoring one maxim for the sake of another

(23) A: Where does Peter live?
B: Somewhere in the South of France.

- ▶ explicitly and openly flouting a maxim

(24) A: I told Peter that his new haircut looks stupid.
B: You're a really good friend.



Summary

- ▶ Semantics and pragmatics are both concerned with meaning conveyed by natural language expressions.
- ▶ **Traditional distinction:**
 - ▶ **Semantics:** truth-conditional content
 - ▶ **Pragmatics:** other content that is expressed
- ▶ **Examples:** conjunction *and*, disjunction *or*
⇒ aspects connected to the truth-conditions and the use
- ▶ **Grice 1975:** all conversation is guided by the cooperative principle and its related conversational maxims
⇒ conditions on use of *and/or* derivable from the maxims



Literatur

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