Discourse and Pragmatics

BBI3210 LECTURE
DR AFIDA MOHAMAD ALI
What is pragmatics?

• The relation between communicative function and linguistic form.
• Pragmatics is the study of meaning in relation to the context in which a person is speaking or writing.
Context of situation

• We need to know this to understand and interpret what has been said to us.

• Physical, social, mental knowledge.

• Shared background, situational, co-textual knowledge.
• Situational context – what people know about what they can see around them.

• Background knowledge context – what people know about each other and the world. (cultural and interpersonal)

• Co-textual context – what people know about what they have been saying.
• Pragmatics assumes that when people communicate with each other, they normally follow some kind of cooperative principle, that is they have a shared understanding of how they should cooperate in their communications.

• This varies cross-culturally.

• What may be culturally appropriate what of saying or doing something in one culture may not be the same in another culture.
• Speech Acts
• Indirect and Direct Speech Acts
• Performatives
• Felicity conditions
• Presupposition
Speech acts

• We do things with words.

• We perform acts by using language.

• Examples???
Examples

• *asking* for a glass of juice,
• *promising* to pay your debt,
• *threatening* to quit your job,
• *ordering* someone to clean the classroom.
3 parts in speech acts:

- Locution or Locutionary acts (THE LITERAL MEANING)
- Illocution or Illocutionary acts (SPEAKER’S INTENTION)
- Perlocution or Perlocutionary acts (THE EFFECT)
What is the locution, illocution and perlocution?

- “It’s getting a bit chilly in here”
- “Are you going to FBMK? My class is there too”.
- “The bus won’t move until you boys move away from the doorway”
Indirect and Direct Speech Acts

• Direct speech act
  We mean what we say.

• Indirect speech act
  We intend something different from what we say. Hidden agendas.

Refer example page 57.
What is the intention?

• “This room is a mess!”

“Honey, I heard something downstairs!”

• “You know, roses are my favourite”
What is the assumption here?

Son: My flight arrives at 7am!
Mom: We will be there.

Daughter: I think I have to extend a semester.
Dad: It’s alright. We’ll support you.
Performatives

- kinds of speech acts, or ritualistic utterances
- People accomplish various social actions when they talk.
- Based on social conventions, rituals or ceremonies.
- Must follow felicity conditions strictly to be acceptable and validly used.
Examples of performatives

"I sentence you to death"

“I divorce you…”

“I name this ship”

“You have the right to remain silent…”

“I now pronounce you man and wife”

“The court finds you guilty as charged”

“With this ring, I thee wed. “

“I bet you ten dollars..”

“I swear allegiance to the King and that I will respect the Constitution and all other laws of our country”
Athletes' Olympic Oath

• “In the name of all the competitors I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them, committing ourselves to a sport without doping and without drugs, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honor of our teams.”
Announcement of Eid Fitri

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,

Assalamualaikum wbh.

"I sentence you to death"
4 felicity conditions

- the sender believes the action should be done.
- the sender has the right to tell the receiver to do the action.
- the receiver has the ability to do the action
- the receiver has the obligation to do the action
- (Refer pg 58.)
Presupposition

- Common knowledge shared by language users.
- Context dependent.
- Common assumption that we have.

“Would you like some coffee?”

“Would you like anything to drink?”
• Cooperative Principles
• Flouting the cooperative principles
• Violating the cooperative principles
• Conversational Implicatures
Cooperative Principles
(Grice 1975)

• In order to understand and interpret what someone else says, we cooperate with each other.

• When people talk with each other, they generally cooperate in making their utterances understandable by conforming to what they believe to be the other person’s expectations about how people usually behave in conversation.

• There are 4 expectations (maxims) or cooperative principles.
4 maxims

- Maxim of quantity (sufficient)
- Maxim of quality (true)
- Maxim of relevance (related)
- Maxim of manner (clear)
Maxim of quantity

- Example:

  “I won’t bore you with all the details..”

  “I’ll make this short…”

  “Well, in a nutshell…”
Maxim of quality (true)

• Example:

“I may be mistaken but…”

A: What time is it?
B: It’s ten to two.
Maxim of relevance (relation)

• Example:

“By the way…”

“Speaking of holidays, where will you celebrate your Aidil Fitri?”
Maxim of manner (clarity)

• Example:

“Let me make it clear for you…”

“What I’m trying to say is…”
• These maxims have a social point of view – maintain politeness.

• Must include politeness to save the other person’s face from being humiliated, embarrassed or losing face (Goffman 1967).
Flouting the cooperative principles

- Sometimes we **flout** the maxims
- We deliberately choose **not to observe** or follow the maxims.
- When you don’t say what you mean.
- **But we still want the listener to get our meaning.**

Refer to page 64 and 65.
This is a conversation between A and B. Which Gricean maxim is used or flouted?

What is the implicature?

Task 1

A: Have you done your homework Timmy?

B: Is dinner ready mom?
Task 2

A: Where is my Ipod? I thought I left it here on the table.
B: I saw the cleaner in here earlier.
Task 3

A: Yes, may I help you?
B: It’s okay. I’m just browsing.
A: We have a new range of styles over here…you’re a size …hmm let’s see.. 12 right?
B: No thanks.
Task 4.

A: What do you think of Paris Hilton’s new song?

B: She’s just pretty glam and glitzy ya know…
Task 5

A: Oh uh. He’s coming this way.
B: Who?
A: You know who.
What about violating the maxims?

• Violation here means the speaker deliberately intend to deceive.

E.g. Telling a lie about a divorce.

A: Mommy and daddy is just having a little quarrel, that’s all.
Grice's Conversational Implicatures

- When we talk, we sometimes imply on something indirectly.
- Speakers make inference on what the other person is saying.
- Indirect and implied.
What is implied by the speaker?
What is inferred by the listener?

• “Oh my god, I left my wallet at home!”

A: “I’m going to Jalan TAR today”
B: “Anwar’s trial is today”

• “I love the High School Musical. But it’s kinda boring to go alone…”
Treat everyone with politeness, even those who are rude to you. Not because they are nice, but because you are.

Politeness brings out smiles.

Say PLEASE.
The words 'polite' and 'politeness' can be traced back to general notions related to cleanliness or to smooth, polished, refined, planned, civilized, or courtly activity. Etymologically the English word 'polite' is derived from the Latinate past-participle of the verb 'polire' which is 'politus', meaning 'polished' or 'smoothed'.

(http://www.indiana.edu/~discprag/polite.html)
FACE AND POLITENESS

• Two other key notions in the study of discourse and pragmatics are face and politeness.

• “Face” (as in “to lose face”, being humiliated, embarrassed) refers to respect that an individual has for him/herself, and maintaining that 'self-esteem' in public or in private situations. Usually you try to avoid embarrassing the other person or making them feel uncomfortable.

• Refer to unit A6 in your textbook (pages 18-22)
• Face is threatened when someone fails to live up to social standards. Any speech act may impose on this sense, and is therefore face threatening. And speakers have politeness strategies for lessening the threat.

• Positive face- need to be liked

• Negative face- need to be respected
The Politeness Principle – ITS IMPORTANCE

• to maintain social equilibrium and friendly relations (social relationships) which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place.

• Leech defines politeness as forms of behaviour that establish and maintain courtesy. That is the ability of participants in a social interaction to engage in interaction in an atmosphere of relative harmony.
• **Brown & Levinson (1987)**
  
  • Politeness phenomena exist in all cultures
  
  • All human beings, in order to enter into social relationships with each other, must acknowledge the other person.
  
  • People avoid intruding upon each other's territory and seek to enlarge the territory of others.
  
  • Make others feel good and the same will be done to them.
  
  • To create a positive impression and rapport with the other person
Lakoff (1973) maxims of politeness:

- Don’t impose (We apologise for imposing "I'm sorry to bother you but…")
- Give options (We give the hearer the option to refuse "Do you think you could possibly…")
- Make your receiver feel good. (Give compliments "You're better at this than me")
Example:

Mum: Is that you Lisa?
Lisa: Yeah its me.
Mum: Hi darling.
Lisa: I’m at the LRT station. Do you think you could possible come pick me up?
Mum: Sure.
Lisa: Or are you in a rush to have dinner and all?
Mum: Oh we’ve already had our dinner. But I’ll come and get you.
Lisa: Oh that’d be great. I’m at the LRT.
Mum: Ok.
Lisa: Thanks mom.
Mum: Bye
Lisa: Bye.
Categorize these statements according to Lakoff's maxims.

- Could you possibly…
- I'm sorry to bother you but…
- Is it possible if we can have a meeting…
- I'm sorry …I would love to continue with out chat but I'm afraid I have to leave
- now…
- You're the expert in this…
- I'm not an expert in baking. You are!
- It's okay if you're busy. I'll come by later..
• In emergencies, it is hard to follow politeness principle e.g. A house on fire and you'd say "Get out quickly!" to your guests.

• But if there is no emergency, you'd say "I'm sorry but I'm in a hurry to go to the doctor, my mom's terribly sick. Do you mind if we call it a day?"

• Sometimes it's not what you say but HOW you say it.
Brown and Levinson list three 'sociological variables' that speakers employ in choosing the degree of politeness to use and in calculating the amount of threat to their own face:

(i) the social distance of the speaker and hearer (D)
(ii) the relative 'power' of the speaker over the hearer (P);
(iii) the absolute ranking of impositions in the particular culture (R).
Brown and Levinson sum up human politeness behaviour in four strategies, which correspond to these examples:

- **bald on record,**
- **negative politeness,**
- **positive politeness,** and
- **off-record-indirect strategy.**
• GO TO https://sites.google.com/a/sheffield.ac.uk/all-about-linguistics/branches/pragmatics/example-research-face-theory-and-politeness
• The bald on-record strategy does nothing to minimize threats to the hearer's “face”.

• An emergency: Help!

• Task oriented: Give me those!

• Request: Put your jacket away.

• Alerting: Turn your lights on! (while driving)
• **The positive politeness strategy** shows you recognize that your hearer has a desire to be respected. It also confirms that the relationship is friendly and expresses group reciprocity. Positive politeness means being complimentary and gracious to the addressee (but if this is overdone, the speaker may alienate the other party).

• Attend to the hearer: You must be hungry, it's a long time since breakfast. How about some lunch?

• Avoid disagreement: A: What is she, small? B: Yes, yes, she's small, smallish, um, not really small but certainly not very big.

• Assume agreement: So when are you coming to see us?

• Hedge opinion: You really should sort of try harder.
Your presentation on the advantages of e-commerce would've been better had it not been for the use of the word 'dude' 183 times.
The negative politeness strategy also recognizes the hearer's face. But it also recognizes that you are in some way imposing on them. Intended to avoid giving offense by showing deference.

Negative politeness is found in ways of mitigating the imposition:

- Hedging: Er, could you, er, perhaps, close the, um, window?
- Pessimism: I don't suppose you could close the window, could you?
- Indicating deference: Excuse me, sir, would you mind if I asked you to close the window?
- Apologizing: I'm terribly sorry to put you out, but could you close the window? You must forgive me but....
• Impersonalizing: The management requires all windows to be closed.
• Be indirect: I'm looking for a pen.
• Minimize imposition: I just want to ask you if I could use your computer?
• Pluralize the person responsible: We forgot to tell you that you needed to buy your plane ticket by yesterday.
• Some other examples would be to say, “I don't want to bother you but...” or “I was wondering if...”
• **Off-record indirect strategies** take some of the pressure off of you. You are trying to avoid the direct FTA of asking for a beer. Instead you would rather it be offered to you once your hearer sees that you want one.

• Give hints: It's a bit cold in here.

• Be vague: Perhaps someone should have been more responsible.

• Be sarcastic, or joking: Yeah, he's a real Einstein (rocket scientist, Stephen Hawking, genius and so on)!
Scollon & Wong-Scollon (2001)

It is a person's right to be included as member of a group. We should show involvement or interest by agreeing, supporting, approving.

Involvement strategies – strategies to maintain closeness with others, to show them that we consider them our friends.

*Students give examples??

See table A6.1 pg 21 in your textbook
• It is a person's right to not be dominated. So, we show independence from being dominated or imposed by others. We do this by giving options, not imposing.

• Independent strategies – to maintain distance because they are not our friends and to maintain respect.

*Students give examples??

We must choose which politeness strategy to use based on our relations to the person and how significant the matter is.
Japanese culture practices involvement indirectness and positive politeness. Western culture practices negative politeness strategy and independence.

### Western culture

* Could you close the window for me?
* Can I close the window?
* Hey, close the window, would you?

### Japanese culture

* Isn’t it a little chilly?
* It’s cold don’t you think?
* I wonder why it’s so cold today?
• **Face threatening acts (FTAs)** - acts that infringe or threaten on the hearers' need to maintain his/her self esteem, and be respected.

• Politeness strategies or mitigation devices are developed for the main purpose of dealing with these FTA's.
Some Face threatening acts

- expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule, complaints and reprimands, accusations, insults (A indicates that he doesn't like/want one or more of B's wants, acts, personal characteristics, goods, beliefs or values)

- contradictions or disagreements, challenges (A indicates that he thinks B is wrong or misguided or unreasonable about some issue, such wrongness being associated with disapproval)
• expressions of violent (out-of-control) emotions (A gives B possible reason to fear him or be embarrassed by him)

• irreverence, mention of taboo topics, including those that are inappropriate in the context (A indicates that he doesn't value B's values and doesn't fear H's fears)

• bringing of bad news about B, or good news (boasting) about A (A indicates that he is willing to cause distress to B, and/or doesn't care about B's feelings)
• Raising of dangerously emotional or divisive topics, e.g. politics, race, religion, women's liberation (A raises the possibility or likelihood of face-threatening acts (such as the above) occurring; i.e., A creates an dangerous-to-face-atmosphere)

• Blatant non-cooperation in an activity - e.g. disruptively interrupting B's talk, making non-sequiturs or showing non-attention (A indicates that he doesn't care about B's negative- or positive-face wants)

• Use of address terms and other status-marked identifications in initial encounters (A may misidentify B in an offensive or embarrassing way, intentionally or accidentally).
How to resolve face threatening acts.

• Use of mitigation devices in conversation to take the edge of face threatening acts.

• Use of pre-sequence.

Example:

A: Are you doing anything after work? (pre-sequence)
B: Why are you asking?
A: I thought we might go for a drink (indirect speech act)
B: Well, no, nothing in particular. Where would you like to go?
• Use of **insertion sequence** in the middle to minimize the face threatening act of “inviting someone out”

Example:

A: I’m dying for a drink (off record invitation)

B: yes it’s really hot isn’t it? (an off record rejection of the invitation).

A doesn’t lose face if rejected. B hasn’t rejected but simply commented on the weather.
Cross cultural politeness or social norms

• Politeness strategies are not the same across languages and cultures.

• What may be a culturally appropriate way of saying or doing something in one culture may not be the same in another culture. Failure in understanding politeness strategies in other cultures and languages can cause miscommunication/ misunderstanding.

• e.g. In some cultures, the bedroom is private and must be entered with permission.
• Respect for others may be culture specific. In some cultures, an initial refusal of an offer may be merely polite and invite repetition. But in others, it is the opposite.

• # Give your example of a politeness phenomenon or impoliteness (violating the norm). E.g. gift-giving, usage of words in Malay – *aku*, *engkau*, *kamu*, *awak* may be alright for some, but not for other people and specific situations.
• **Politeness vary according to gender.** Women are more polite than men?

• Examples – street remarks, cat calls by men to women. Women don’t do that kind of behaviour.