



# CHAPTER 2

# LANGUAGE IN USE



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- PRAGMATICS
  - NATURAL AND CONVENTIONAL SIGNS
  - LINGUISTIC SIGNS
  - UTTERANCE AND SENTENCE
  - PROSODY
  - NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION
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# 1. PRAGMATICS

- It is another branch of linguistics concerning with meaning.
- Semantics is mainly concerned with a speaker's competence to use the language system in producing meaningful utterances and processing (comprehending) those produced by others.
- Pragmatics is concerned with a person's ability to derive meanings from specific kinds of speech situations- to recognize what the speaker is referring to, to relate new information to what has gone before, to interpret what is said from background knowledge about the speaker and the topic of discourse, and to infer or 'fill in' information that the speaker takes for granted and doesn't bother to say.



## 2. NATURAL AND CONVENTIONAL SIGNS

- A language is a system of symbols through which people communicate. The symbols may be spoken, written, or signed with the hands.
  - Language is only one of the common activities of a society. The totality of common activities, institutions, and beliefs make up the **culture of that society**.
  - A language is a complex system of symbols, or signs, that are shared by members of a community. It will be useful to consider other signs that we know and how we react to them.
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- All sorts of sights, sounds and smells can be natural signs; they communicate to someone who observes and can interpret but their messages are unintentional, the by-products of various events.
  - Unlike natural signs, conventional signs have human senders as well as human receivers; each one has an intention and an interpretation.



# The Process of Getting Information

*a. perception*

*b. identification*

To say that we 'recognize' a phenomenon means that we match it with previous experiences stored in our memory.

*c. interpretation*



Meanings are often personal. The meaning of any sign depends on the space-time context in which we observe it.

### 3. Linguistic Signs

- Words are linguistic signs, similar in certain respects to natural and conventional signs. They do not 'have meanings' but rather are capable of conveying meanings to those who can perceive, identify and interpret. Words go together to form sentences which in turn are capable of conveying meanings—the meanings of the individual words and the meaning that comes from the relation of these words to one another.

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- Suppose we hear an utterance, know the language, know the meanings of the words and the sentences formed with the words. We may still not fully comprehend what is said because we don't know what the utterance is about. We don't grasp the speaker's intention, largely because we don't know what is being referred to. On the other hand, when communication is successful, we, as hearers, interpret correctly because we derive some information from what has been said previously (the discourse context) and from knowledge of the speaker and from a grasp of conditions and circumstances in the environment (the physical-social context).

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- Thus, as listeners, we begin by identifying the phonetic message and through the phonetic message identify the semantic message.
  - As listeners we use our background information to interpret the message.
  - As Fillmore (1979:78) puts it, we need to know not only what the speaker says but also what he is talking about, why he bothers to say it, and why he says it the way he does.

## 4. UTTERANCE AND SENTENCE

- An utterance is an act of speech or writing; it is a specific event, at a particular time and place and involving at least one person, the one who produces the utterance, but usually more than one person.
- A sentence, on the other hand, is not an event; it is a construction of words (in English or whatever language) in a particular sequence which is meaningful (in that language).

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- The meaning of a sentence is determined by the language, something known to all people who have learned to use that language. It is the meanings of the individual words and the meaning of the syntactic construction in which they occur.
  - The meaning of an utterance is the meaning of the sentence plus the meanings of the circumstances: the time and place, the people involved, their backgrounds, their relationship to one another, and what they know about one another. All these circumstances we can call the physical-social context of an utterance.



# Linguistic and utterance meaning

- **linguistic meaning**, what is communicated by particular pieces of language,
- and **utterance meaning**, what a certain **individual meant** by saying such-and-such in a particular place, at a particular time, and to certain other individuals.
- A bit of information inserted in such a context is called an **implicature**—a **conversational implicature**, to be precise.

## 5. PROSODY

- We produce all our spoken utterances with a melody, or **intonation**: by changing the speed with which the vocal bands in the throat vibrate we produce rising or falling pitch or combinations of rise and fall.
- By making one syllable in a sense-group especially loud and long, usually where the change of pitch occurs, we endow that word with a special prominence called **accent**.
- **Intonation and accent** together constitute **prosody, the meaningful elements of speech apart from the words that are uttered**.

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- In general, as Allan (1986:Chapter 5) points out, a **falling tune** suggests that the speaker is confident of what he or she is saying and the utterance is delivered with finality; it shows speaker dominance. A **rising tune** is more oriented toward the addressee.
  - Naturally, individual speakers differ: some are more assertive in their speech, others more attuned to the feelings of the addressee. And there are dialect differences; it is a common observation that some speakers have a rise where others would end an utterance with a falling tune.



Some common distinctions made with intonation in utterances that have the same verbal material.

**1 Statement vs question (fall vs rise)**

- Yes. - Yes? - This is the place. - This is the place?

**2 Information sought vs repetition requested (fall vs rise)**

- When? - Where? - When? - Where?

**3 Parallel structure vs antithesis (fall vs fall and rise)**

- This is my sister, - Ellen.
- This is my - sister, - Ellen.



## 4 Open question vs alternative question (rise vs rise, fall)

- Do you have a - pencil or a pen?
- Do you have a - pencil or a  $\bar{\text{pen}}$ ?



## 5 Full statement vs reservation (fall vs fall-rise)

- $\bar{\text{That's true}}$ , (or  $\bar{\text{That's true.}}$ )
- $\bar{\text{That's - true}}$

## 6. NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

- a. **Paralanguage**---ways of using the voice that they may be expressive, communicative in a secondary sense that include laughing, giggling, crying (which need not accompany an utterance); whisper, falsetto, a quavering or 'breaking' voice; and other elements that are vocal but not verbal: the relative loudness or softness of the voice, high or low pitch, the modulations of pitch from a near monotone to an exaggerated rising and falling, a nasal quality, a rasping sound, the tempo of speech
- b. **Gestures**---there are visible signs, which have a standard, shared meaning, and there are elements of appearance—'body language'— which possibly create an effect on the observer and therefore on the interpretation of a spoken message.