



Nurul Chojimah

Utterances and their Meanings: an Introduction to Pragmatics

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Impressum / Imprint

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek: Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

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Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek: The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

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Coverbild / Cover image: www.ingimage.com

Verlag / Publisher:

LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing

ist ein Imprint der / is a trademark of

OmniScriptum GmbH & Co. KG

Heinrich-Böcking-Str. 6-8, 66121 Saarbrücken, Deutschland / Germany

Email: info@lap-publishing.com

Herstellung: siehe letzte Seite /

Printed at: see last page

ISBN: 978-3-659-75287-2

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Preface

Communication with others is one of human's basic needs. Being a social creature, human cannot live well without getting in touch with others. Through communication, psychological, social, academic and cultural problems can be resolved. In order to have successful communication, understanding intended messages delivered by addresses is a necessity. This is one of the bases for studying meaning in context or pragmatics.

The book that you are holding is analogous to a door for entering a very large room called pragmatics. It is a door since it presents the basic knowledge of pragmatics. It introduces what pragmatics is and topics commonly discussed in it: deixis, cooperative principle theory, relevance theory, speech act theory, and politeness theory. Reading the outlines of theories in pragmatics, learners are expected to be able to easily understand the theories in the original version. In other words, this book is a 'stepping stone' to a better and deeper understanding to pragmatics. For this reason, each chapter is provided with suggestion for further readings. Besides, at the end each chapter, there are exercises functioning to confirm the learners' understanding of what they have learned. Most of conversational examples presented in this book are naturally-occurring talks that I have collected from many sources such as everyday conversation, notices posted in public places, statements in mass media, and

others. For the sake of the authenticity, the examples of talks are written in their original languages provided with the English version.

The materials discussed in this book have been trialled in years among Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners at two colleges in Indonesia: State Islamic Institute of Tulungagung and Universitas Brawijaya (UB), in which pragmatics is one of compulsory courses at those institutions. For this reason, I have to thank them for being my 'guinea pig'. Besides, I am also very grateful to them for their corrections and naturally-occurring talks they gave to me. In addition, my thanks also go Dr. Sukarsono and Iis Nur Rodiyah, M.A., for proofreading and reviewing my manuscript.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Linguistics and its Branches

It is broadly understood that linguistics is a study of language covering lexical, syntactical, and discourse levels. It ranges from phonological, morphological, and syntactical patterns, to a stretch of sentences combined into one meaningful unit of communication. Linguistics has many branches, depending on its focus. Linguistics focusing on the description of how a specific language is constructed is called descriptive linguistics or micro linguistics. Phonological systems, word formation systems, syntactic structures, and the systems of meaning in a specific language, such as English or Indonesian, are the main concern of descriptive linguistics or micro linguistics. To put differently, descriptive or micro linguistics covers *phonology*, *morphology*, *syntax*, and *semantics* in a certain language.

Phonology is a study of sound in a certain language. As such, Indonesian phonology deals with the sound existing in the Indonesian language. Morphology is a study of how words in a specific language are formed. For instance, English words are formed, among other things, by coinage, borrowing from other languages, clipping, and many others. Syntax is a study of sentence structure in a given language. In Indonesian, noun always comes first, and then followed by adjective, like *tangan panjang*¹ (long hand). In case an adjective comes earlier as in *panjang*

¹ *Tangan* (noun) is the equivalent of hand.
Panjang (adjective) is the equivalent of long.

*tangan*², the meaning gets different. At last, semantics is a study of sentence meaning covering word, phrase, and sentence level.

In addition, linguistics focusing on how language is used for daily communication is called macro linguistics. It deals with language used in political speeches, advertisements, casual conversations, doctor-patient consultations, and others. Different from micro linguistics whose levels of analysis are phoneme, words/phrases, and sentences, macro linguistics is concerned with discourse level. Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics are classified into macro linguistics. Notice the figure below.

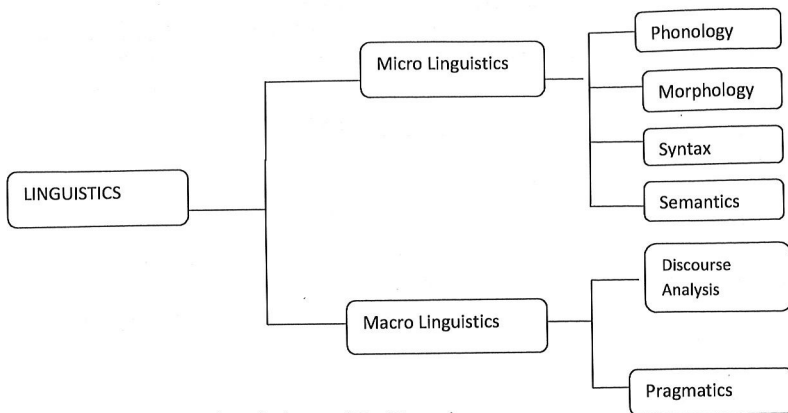


Figure 1: Linguistics and Its Branches

Micro and macro linguistics are different in some ways. Unit of analysis is the first point of difference. Different from micro linguistics whose unit of analysis is isolated sentences, macro linguistics analyzes discourses ranging from two short sentences to thousands of ones or more. The second difference is the dependence on

² *Panjang Tangan* is an Indonesian idiomatic expression whose meaning is fond of stealing.

the context. Macro linguistics is very much context-dependent or context-bound or context-sensitive, while micro linguistics is context-independent or context-free. The other difference between those studies is the well-formedness. Micro linguistics deals with very grammatical sentences, but well-formedness is not the main concern of macro linguistics. Meaningfulness and coherence are the main concern of macro linguistics. *Next*, data in micro linguistics are created or invented by analysts, while data in macro linguistics are naturally-occurring data. The differences between the two can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Differences between Micro Linguistics and Macro Linguistics

	Unit of Analysis	Context-dependence	Sentence Well-formedness	Data
Micro Linguistics	Sentence in isolation	Context-free	Grammatical	Invented Data
Macro Linguistics	Discourse	Context-bound	Grammatical & ungrammatical	Natural Data

The intersection between linguistics and other disciplines has led to the setting up of new branches such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, ethnolinguistics, and others. Just to remind readers, sociolinguistics is a study of language variety due to social factors, like age, gender, social status, geographic area, and others. Thus, sociolinguistics is the combination between linguistics and sociology. Psycholinguistics is a study of how human produces and understands a language. It, therefore, deals with linguistics and psychology. Moving to ethnolinguistics, this is a study concerned with language and culture.

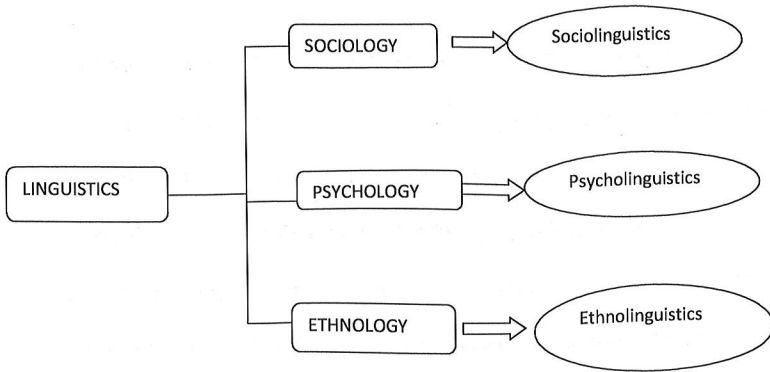


Figure 2: New Branches in Linguistics

1.2 What is Pragmatics?

As touched on in the previous paragraphs, semantics is one of academic disciplines in micro linguistics concerning the study of meaning. In other words, it is related with the meaning of lexical items. Pragmatics is the one in macro linguistics studying meaning. As such, both semantics and pragmatics share something in common: they are the study of meaning. However, they are different in terms of the context dependence. Semantics deals with the context-free meaning, but pragmatics deals with the context-sensitive meaning. Or, it can be stated that pragmatics is an academic discipline studying meaning based on the context, or it is the one studying the speaker's intended meaning. Speaker's intended meaning means that it deals with the analysis of what a speaker means by his/her utterances rather than what the words or sentences literally mean. In other words, pragmatics is concerned with what is meant by what is said.

In relation to the concept of pragmatics, Crystal as quoted by Moore says that pragmatics is a way of investigating how sense can be made of certain texts even when, from a semantic viewpoint, the text seems to be either incomplete or to have a different meaning to what is really intended (2001: 1). Indeed, pragmatics allows us to determine what speakers/writers intend to convey even when their utterances are truly under-determined or unclear. I once found a very good notice in a bus station:

- (1.1) *Terima cas HP*
(We provide electricity for recharging your mobile)

The word that might trouble readers is *cas* which is neither Indonesian nor English. Despite the indeterminacy, I could infer that the small shop provides electricity to recharge mobile. I come to this inference since I truly know that Indonesian people tend to pronounce *cas* or *ces* for the word *charge*. Another example is an utterance uttered by one of my students that I happened to hear:

- (1.2) *Pak³ X kosong*
(Mr. X is absent)

The utterance in (1.2) is under-determined since the diction *kosong* is not appropriate for describing the existence of someone. The Indonesian word *kosong* is equivalent with *vacant*, so that it is appropriate for describing a room, not human. Hearing the utterance, however, I know for sure that Mr. X cannot teach because of a certain condition. Utterances (1.1) and (1.2) confirm Grundy's statement saying that pragmatics is partly about trying to account in systematic ways for our ability to

³ *Pak* is an Indonesian specific term for addressing an older or more senior male person.

determine what speakers intend even when their utterances are so dramatically under-determined (2000: 10).

Pragmatics deals with context or encyclopedic knowledge. Context can help readers/listeners to determine the meaning of what is said (Grundy, 2000: 13).

Understanding utterances, one is required to understand the context within which the communication takes place. One needs to know who the addressees are, the relationship between addressees and addressers, and when/where the communication takes place. Consider the utterance (1.3).

(1.3) *What time is it?*

Semantically, the question merely means asking about the time. Pragmatically, on the other hand, it might mean either *you are too late* or *you are too early*, depending who the addressee and the addresser are, what relationship they have, and when/where the communication takes place. *What time is it?* might mean *you are too late* when the question is raised by a teacher to her student coming to the class 5 minutes before the class ends. On another case, the same question might mean *you are too early* when it is raised by a teacher to her student coming to her house at 5 o'clock in the morning. Another proof of the importance of context in determining the speaker's intended meaning is the utterance (1.2). Without understanding the context, it is quite difficult for anyone to uncover what is meant by what is said. Context is indeed a determinant factor contributing to the utterance interpretation.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Yule, George. 1996. *Pragmatics*. Oxford. Oxford University Press

Chapter 2

DEIXIS

Deixis is derived from a Greek word, for pointing or indicating. Moore mentions that deixis is ‘verbal pointing’, that is pointing or indicating something by using language (2001: 14). Levinson defines deixis as the relationship between language and contexts as reflected in the structures of the languages themselves (1983: 54). Agreeing with the definitions given by those authors, I define deixis as the relation between referents and their pointers. Linguistic expressions used for pointing out referents are called deictic expressions. In this respect, Grundy mentions that deictics are demonstratives, words that point people, times, and places (2000: 25).

Globally, referents are pointed out by the use of person pronouns, demonstrative pronouns (this, these, that, those), adverbs of time (now, yesterday, today, and others), and adverbs of place (here, there, and others).

2.1 Types of Deixis

Traditionally, deixis is classified into three types: person, place, and time. Levinson, however, adds two more types of deixis: social and discourse (1983: 62-63), totalling there are five types of deixis. In relation with those classifications, I am the proponent of traditional classifications. My rationale is that social deixis can be combined in person deixis, and discourse deixis can be included into place deixis.

2.1.1 Person Deixis

Person deixis deals with how roles of individuals in a speech event are linguistically encoded. The roles of individuals in a speech event are addresser, addressee, and neither addresser nor addressee. The deictic center or the central person in this type of deixis is the speaker. Deictic expressions used to encode those roles are subject, possessive, and object pronouns: *I, me, my, mine, you, your, yours, he/she, him/her, his/her, and his/hers*. See Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Individuals' Roles in a Speech Event and Their Linguistic Realizations

Roles in a Speech Event	Linguistic Realizations	
	Grammatical Category	Deictic Expressions
Addresser	First person Pronouns	<i>I, me, my, mine, we, our, us, ours</i>
Addressee	Second Person Pronouns	<i>You, you, your, yours</i>
Neither a Speaker nor an addressee	Third Person Pronouns	<i>He/she, him/her, his/her, his/hers</i>

Determining the referent of the pronoun *I*, one needs to know who the speaker is. The pronoun *I* constantly means *saya* or *aku* in Indonesian, *ich* in German, or *ana* in Arabic, but it has variable referents since it refers to different persons in different occasions. This pronoun might refer to Mr. Bean if it is uttered by Mr. Bean. The referent of it could be Mrs. Green if it is Mrs. Green who mentions the pronoun. Pronoun *I* is a deictic expression since the meaning of it is not static, but it keeps changing, depending on the context. Consider the following utterance:

- (2.1) A Andrew *I need to have your signature, Sir.*
- B Mr. Paul *Sure..... I will sign it right now*

The referent of *I* in (2.1A) is Andrew, but it might change into Mr. Paul due to the conversational turn taking. Thus, *I* in (2.1) might be either Andrew or Paul, depending on who the speaker is. Understanding the context is the requirement in order to know the referent of *I*.

The deictic expression for first person pronoun in English is just *I*. In Indonesian, however, the use of first person pronoun is a little bit problematic since social attributes are linguistically encoded. In Indonesian, the role as an addresser is encoded in two deictic expressions: *saya* and *aku*, each of which has social constraints in usage. The use of those pronouns is dependent on the social status of a referent and the degree of intimacy between/among interlocutors.

Saya is used in formal situation such as in speeches, teaching and learning process, meetings in offices, and many others. Besides, the pronoun *saya* is used in daily communication between/among individuals whose social relation is distant. By contrast, the pronoun *aku* is appropriate for informal situation such as in casual conversation between/among classmates, dialogues between parents and kids, and many others. Consider the short dialogues in (2.2) and (2.3).

- (2.2) Lecturer *Temui saya besok pagi di aula.*
 (See me tomorrow morning in the hall.)
 Student *Baik, Bu.....*
 (Okay, Mam...)

- (2.3) Rina *Aku mau ke perpustakaan. Mau ikut?*
 (I am going to the library. Will you join me?)
 Reni *Ya, aku ikut.*
 (yeach,...I am going with you).

Social attributes apparently occur in those discourses. In (2.2), the speaker is a lecturer and the addressee is her student. The social lecturer-student relation in Indonesia tends to be distant, and the distance can be seen from the use of the pronoun *saya*. A closer relationship between interlocutors is recognizable in (2.3). The pronoun *aku* is the deictic expression indicating an intimate interpersonal relationship.

What about second person pronoun? The second person pronoun *you* is used to refer to an addressee in a speech event. The pronoun *you* does not constantly name or refer to the same person in all occasions. Rather, it is variable, depending on the context. Consider the dialogue (2.4).

- (2.4) Andrew **You** have to sign this form, otherwise **you** will be excluded from this group.
Philip Okay, I will. What about **you**? Have **you** signed?

In (2.4), the role as an addressee is mutually played by both Andrew and Philip. When Andrew takes turn, the pronoun *you* refers to Philip. But, this pronoun refers to Andrew when the turn is taken by Philip. Thus, like the pronoun *I*, the referent of the pronoun *you* is not static; it depends on who the addressee is. The use of *you* as in (2.4) is sometimes accompanied with gestures such as gaze and therefore requires physical monitoring of the speech event for the interpretation.

English does not encode social attributes to the second person pronoun. In consequence, the pronoun *you* is appropriate for addressing anyone, regardless of his/her social status. Even this pronoun is socially acceptable for addressing a president. On the contrary, social attributes of an addressee is linguistically traceable

in Indonesian. Unlike English, which has a single second person pronoun, Indonesian has richer pronominal systems. It has varied second person pronouns. In relation with this, Kadarisman (2005) identifies three groups of second person pronoun in Indonesian. The first group is the second pronominal encompassing *kamu*, *engkau*, and *Anda*. The second group is second pronominal substitutes covering *Saudara*, *Bang/Kak* (+name), *Bapak/Ibu* (+name). The last group is zero pronoun. An example of the use of a second person pronoun in Indonesian is in (2.5). It is a short message I got from one of my students.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| (2.5) Student | <i>Apa Ibu hari ini ada di kampus?</i>
(Are you at campus today?) |
| Nurul | <i>Tidak. Ada apa?</i>
(No, what is the matter?) |

In the dialogue, the student addressed me with a pronominal substitute *Ibu*, meaning “Madam” or “Mam”. Thus, my role as an addressee in the dialogue is linguistically encoded with the word *Ibu*. She did not use *kamu*, *engkau*, or *Anda* since the latter pronouns are not socially acceptable in this context.

Moving to third person pronoun, Lyon, as quoted by Levinson mentions that this pronoun is different from first or second person pronoun, in that it does not correspond to any specific participant-role in a speech event (1983: 69). Thus, a third person pronoun stated in an utterance does not refer to the addresser nor the addressee. Consider the dialogue (2.6).

- (2.6) *Oca* *He is my favourite singer.*
Risda *Oh,.....he is.....? hm.....*

In (2.6), *he* is used deictically since this pronoun is mentioned without any prior discourse context. Encountered with such an utterance, *Risda* needs a contextual resolution—Levinson’s terminology—in order to get the right referent of *he*. In this respect, *Risda* should find an exophoric relation between *he* in *Oca*’s utterance and the world outside the text.

It is different from the use of *he* in (2.7).

- (2.7) *Intan* *You know Justin Bieber?*
Mutiara *Yes.....what is the matter?*
Intan *He is my favorite singer.*
Mutiara *Oh..!?*

In (2.7), *he* refers to the name mentioned previously: Justin Bieber. In this respect, the pronoun *he* is used anaphorically, instead of deictically.

2.1.2 Time Deixis

Unlike person deixis, which is concerned with individuals’ roles in a speech event, time deixis deals with the time at which an utterance is produced. Referents of deictic expressions of this type of deixis are dependent on the coding time. Like person pronouns whose referents are relative to participants’ roles in a speech event, time adverbs in time deixis are relative to the time of utterance. The deictic center or the central time of this deixis is the time at which the utterance is produced. Deictic expressions of time can be classified into two: (1) deictic names encompassing *now*,

today, tomorrow, and yesterday and (2) non-deictic names preceded with *last, next, this, and that*.

The referents of deictic expressions *now, today, tomorrow, and yesterday* are dependent on when the utterance containing those words is produced. Semantically, those words have constant meanings: at the moment of speaking, on this day, the day after today, and the day before today, respectively. Pragmatically, however, they are variable. Consider (2.8).

- (2.8) *Pat* **Today** I have an appointment with my advisor.
 Sam Oh,.....you have...? hm.....

What does *today* refer to? The referent of it is relative to the time of utterance. If it is stated on Tuesday, so it refers to Tuesday. But, if the conversation takes place on Friday, the appointment between Pat and her advisor is on Friday, not Tuesday.

Consider an advertisement text in (2.9).

- (2.9) *The Car you saw today and intend to buy tomorrow.*
 Somebody saw yesterday and intend to buy today.
 (Taken from Grundy, 2000: 22)

Discourse (2.9) proves that the referents of deictic terms *today, tomorrow, and yesterday* are variable, depending on when the utterance is produced. The same case happens in a notice written in Indonesian, commonly posted in a public transportation, as in (2.10).

- (2.10) **Hari ini** bayar *besuk gratis.*
 (Pay for today, and free of charge for tomorrow)

What do you think of that notice? When must you pay, and when are you going to be free of charge?

The second classification of deictic expression is the one containing non-deictic terms preceded with adjectives *next* and *last* (e.g. *next* month, *last* year) and demonstratives *this* and *that* (e.g. *this* week, *that* day). Understanding the moment of utterance is obligatory when we hear utterances as in (2.11) and (2.12).

- (2.11) Philip *I will finish my study **next month**.*
Pat *Okay, good luck.*

In what month is Philip going to finish his study? If he performs this act of promising in August, it means that he is going to finish his study in September, but it will be in October if the promise is made in September, and so on.

- (2.12) Oca *When did **the last train** leave?*
Risda *Oh,.....I have no any idea.*

Which train does the phrase *the last train* refer to? It might refer to any train which had left most recently before the moment of speaking. The term *the last train*, however, might refer to a particular train without knowing the moment of utterance. See the dialogue in (2.13).

- (2.13) Oca *Do you know the schedule of the last train?*
Risda *Oh,.....it leaves at 21.05.*

Regardless of whenever the question is raised, the schedule of the train remains the same. In this respect, *the last* is used intrinsically, not deictically.

A similar problem might arise when we use the demonstrative pronouns *this* and *that*. For example *this year* might refer to the period of June to July (academic year). In a different context, the same phrase might refer to the period of January to December or to a period of 365 days from the point of utterance.

The summary of the classification of deictic expressions of time is presented in

Figure 2.1.

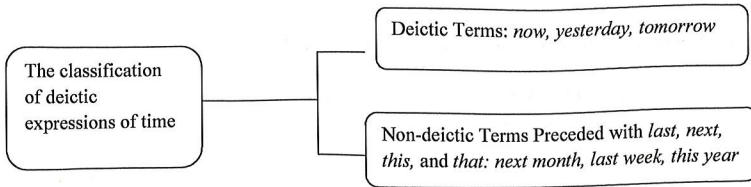


Figure 2.1 The Classification of Deictic Expressions of Time

2.1.3 Place Deixis

Place or space deixis concerns with referents of place adverbials in relation with the location where a speech event takes place. The deictic center or the central place in this deixis is the location in which the utterance is produced. Place adverbials can be represented either absolutely (non-deictically) or deictically. Absolute or non-deictical way in representing place adverbials can be seen in (2.14) and (2.15).

(2.14) *The meeting will be held in FIB Room 212*

(2.15) *You can see me in Rektorat Building, first floor*

Place adverbials *FIB Room 212* and *Rektorat Building, first floor* do not have relative meanings, in the sense that regardless of where an utterance containing those adverbs are produced, the referents remain the same.

Place adverbials can also be represented deictically or by using deictic expressions because of which their referents are relative to the location where the utterance is produced. Levinson mentions that there are some pure deictic words, notably in English the adverbs *here* and *there*, and the demonstrative pronouns *this* and *that* (1983: 79). Consider (2.16) and (2.17).

(2.16) *The meeting will be held here*

(2.17) *You can see me there*

To which places do *here* and *there* in (2.16) and (2.17) refer to? The referents of those place adverbs are relative to the location of where those utterances are produced. If (2.16) is produced, let's say, in Room 212, so the referent of *here* is Room 212. The same case happens in (2.17). Interpreting *there* in this respect, one needs to know the location of the speaker. It would be much easier for the addressee if (2.17) is expressed gesturally (by pointing out a specific distant place).

Something worth noting is that *here* is proximal, in the sense that the referent is close to the speaker, and *there* is distal, meaning that the referent is far from the speaker. In relation with proximal and distal place adverbials, Indonesian has three place adverbials encoding proximal-distal dimensions: *di sini* (right here), *di situ* (nearby), and *di sana* (over there).

The demonstrative pronouns *this* (*pl. these*) and *that* (*pl. those*), when combined with nouns might function as deictic expressions. It means that the

locations of the nouns following *this* and *that* get relative to the place where the utterance is produced.

(2.18) *This pen is the one that I bought last night*

(2.19) *That house is very roomy.*

This in (2.18) and *that* in (2.19) respectively suggest that the pen is close to and the house is distant from the speaker. The use of *this* and *that* are deictically and gesturally. It means that while uttering those utterances, a speaker might strengthen their statement by using gestures such as by holding the object or pointing it out with a finger.

Other place deictic expressions are *left*, *right*, *up*, *down*, *above*, *below*, *in front of*, and *behind*, all of which are relative to the speaker's location. The relativity of the referent of each can be seen from the *left* and *right* cases. When I have a face-to-face communication with my students, so my left is their right, and their left is my right. The same case happen with *up* and *down*, *in front of* and *behind*, and many others.

Finally, let's look at some motion verbs that have deictic meanings, such as *come* and *go*. They are considered as deictic terms since there is some distinction between the direction of motion between an addresser and his/her addressee.

(2.20) *Pat is coming, but Linda is going.*

Utterance (2.20) suggests that 'Pat is moving toward the speaker's location', but 'Linda is moving away from the speaker's location.' But this is not always so, for

although *come* basically means moving toward a speaker's location, it can also be used to mean the speaker is moving toward his/her addressee as seen in (2.21)

(2.21) *I am coming.*

Utterance (2.21) suggests that 'the speaker is moving forward his/her addressee's location, since it is unlikely for a speaker to move forward his/her own location.

Exercise

1. Try to create utterances in which the following words and phrase *this, you, and on the left* might be used (a) deictically and non-gesturally; (b) deictically and gesturally.
2. Suppose that you come across the phrase *the last chapter*. When can you use it (a) deictically and (b) intrinsically?
3. Do you think that the pronoun *we* can be included in deitic expression? What is your rationale?
4. When can a third person pronoun be used deictically? Provide examples.
5. What is the difference between *I am coming to Malang* and *I am going to Malang*?

Chapter 3

CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURES

3.1 Introduction

What is implicature? Before answering the question, reconsider an utterance in (1.3) in the earlier chapter, repeated here:

(3.1) *What time is it?*

Pragmatically, the question has various meanings. When it is raised by a young guy to a beautiful lady on a public transportation, the question might mean that he would like to open a conversation. When it is raised by a teacher to his student coming late, it means *you are too late*. Notice that the young guy does not tell the young lady that he would like to introduce himself, but he conveys it. The same case happens to the teacher-student dialogue. The teacher does not reprimand him because of being too late, but he conveys it. Consider a very interesting notice displayed at my campus as stated in (3.2). Something worth noting is that students at my campus commonly sit on stairs because of which people cannot smoothly go up and down the stairs.

(3.2) *Menurut hasil penelitian, hanya semut dan kecoa yang biasanya duduk di tangga.*

(on the basis of a research report, it is only ants and cockroaches which commonly sit on stairs).

Readers of the notice understand it to mean that we are not allowed to sit down on stairs. The ban, however, is not explicitly stated, but it is conveyed in the notice.

Another interesting notice is the one that I once read at a certain campus in Malang city. It says:

- (3.3) *Ya Tuhan, jadikan kami orang-orang yang memelihara KEBERSIHAN*
(Oh my Lord, make us the ones who constantly keep our environment clean)

Although the campus management does not require faculty members to keep the campus clean, they certainly convey it. And, even though the message in the notice reads like a prayer, readers know that it is a command.

At least, there are two conclusions that can be drawn from the utterances (3.1), (3.2), and (3.3). *First*, form and function do not necessarily coincide. In other words, what is said frequently goes beyond what is meant and vice versa. *Second*, people are generally able to distinguish between what is said and what is meant. It means that despite significant distinctions between forms and functions of utterances, people are able to grasp what is intended by speakers/writers.

The arising problem is: how can people catch the intended meaning? Or, how can they distinguish between what is meant and what is said? For the time being, it is sufficient to explain that context is very important to determine what is meant behind what is said. For example, the two contexts in which the question *What time is it* might help people to interpret it as either *You are too late* or *I would like to introduce myself to you*. Knowing that academic forums such as scientific journals and academic discussions/seminars are the appropriate media to release research reports, people know that utterance (3.2) is a ban. And knowing that prayers are generally

made personally and orally in a very private area enables readers of (3.3) to understand that it is a command. Theories in pragmatics suggest that context is not the only factor contributing to the meaning understanding. Those theories are the main concern of this chapter and the following one. In particular, this chapter touches upon the theory proposed by Paul Grice (1975), and the following one discusses Relevance Theory by Sperber and Wilson (1986).

3.2 Cooperative Principle Theory by Grice

To Grice, human talk exchanges in a speech event represent cooperative efforts (1975: 45). The indicator of being cooperative is that the talk exchanges consist of a succession of connected remarks through which maximally efficient communication can be reached. It means that participants in a speech event constantly produce relevant utterances. If, for example, participant A produces an utterance, participant B will relevantly respond to it. In other words, Grice is sure that people having a conversation tend to be cooperative, even if it is not evident from what is literally said.

Grice then proposed a general principle guiding people in using language. This principle is called *cooperative principle*. The principle says *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*. This principle is then broken down into four maxims that guide us how to communicate: *maxim of quantity, quality, relation, and manner*, each of which covers submaxims.

A. The Maxim of Quantity

This maxim deals with the quantity of information we need to share with others. We are required to be able to measure how much information is needed. Too much or too little information will not result in maximally efficient communication. This maxim has two submaxims:

- (i) Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange;
- (ii) do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

In order to make it more understandable, Grice gives us an analogy: *If you are assisting me to mend a car, I expect your contribution to be neither more nor less than is required; if, for example, at a particular stage I need four screws, I expect you to hand me four, rather than two or six.*

B. The Maxim of Quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true. This maxim is broken down into two submaxims:

- (i) Do not say what you believe to be false;
- (ii) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

This maxim suggests that being honest and sincere is obligatory in human communication. The analogy of this maxim given by Grice is the following case: *I expect your contributions to be genuine and not spurious. If I need sugar as an ingredient in the cake you are assisting me to make, I do not expect you to hand me salt; if I need a spoon, I do not expect a trick spoon made of rubber.*

C. The Maxim of Relation

Be Relevant

This maxim suggests that we need to be relevant with current exchanges. Grice proposed an analogy of this maxim as follows: *I expect a partner's contribution to be appropriate to immediate needs at each stage of the transaction; If I am mixing ingredients for a cake, I do not expect to be handed a good book.*

D. The Maxim of Manner

Be perspicuous. It is related with how we express our ideas in a speech event.

This maxim is broken down into four submaxims:

- (i) Avoid obscurity of expressions ;
- (ii) Avoid ambiguity;
- (iii) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity);
- (iv) Be orderly.

The analogy of this maxim is as follows: *I expect a partner to make it clear what contribution he is making, and to execute his performance with reasonable dispatch.*

The arising question is: does it mean that Grice suggests that speakers keep adhering to the maxims all the times? No, he does not suggest that way. He admits that the principle and the maxims are oriented to, such that if talk exchanges do not proceed as how it is guided, hearers assume that the principle and the maxims are nevertheless being adhered at some deeper level. The example could make it clearer.

- (3.4) Bill *Did you attend Mr. Albert's class this morning?*
Pat *KIMLI⁴ is held in Bali*

Here, if you read Pat's contribution literally, you will conclude that it fails to answer Bill's question, such that it seems to violate at least the maxim of quantity and relevance. In other words, you would claim that Pat is not cooperative. Despite the superficial failure to cooperation, Pat's utterance is nevertheless cooperative at some deeper level.

Relying on the assumption that Pat is nevertheless cooperative, let's try to find out what possible connection there could be between Pat's presence in Mr. Albert's lecture and KIMLI held in Bali. Connecting those utterances, you could arrive at an inference that Mr. Albert, who is an internationally-recognized linguist, was absent this morning since he attended KIMLI in Bali. In consequence, Pat did not attend his lecture this morning.

Thus, the inference is relied on the assumption of cooperation. By assuming that human is basically cooperative, we can draw an inference from utterances which are not interconnected superficially. To Grice, such kind of inference is called *conversational implicature*.

Participants in talk exchanges may fail to fulfill a maxim in various ways which can be classified into at least three groups:

- (1) Quietly violating a maxim;

⁴ KIMLI stands for *Kongres Internasional Masyarakat Linguistik Indonesia* (International Conference of the Linguistic Society of Indonesia)

- (2) Opting out or hedging a maxim;
- (3) Flouting a maxim.

3.2.1 Quietly Violating a Maxim

Quietly violating a maxim means that a speaker seems not violate a maxim, or he/she seems to observe maxims. The characteristic of quietly-violated maxim is that the unstated connection between/among utterances is very obvious. In other words, there seems to be no infringement of a maxim. To make it clearer, consider the short dialogue in (3.5).

- (3.5) *Bill Did you attend Mr. Albert's class this morning?*
Pat He presented his paper in KIMLI conference in Bali this morning.

In this example, the unstated connection between Bill's question and Pat's answer is so obvious, since Pat explains Mr. Albert's activity this morning. Relying on Pat's answer, Bill will easily infer that Pat did not attend Mr. Albert's class this morning. In this example, Pat violates the maxim of quantity and relevance, but the violation is performed very quietly. Another example of such a violated maxim is seen in (3.6).

- (3.6) *1 Mom You do not prepare for tomorrow's class?*
2 Kid We are free tomorrow.....
3 Mom Free....? Why must be free....?
4 Kid Someone told me so.....

The infringement of the maxim of relation can be seen from the kid's first answer (line 2). *We are free tomorrow* as the response of the mom's question violates

the maxim of relation since it does not directly answer the mom's question. Despite the violation, the unstated interconnection between the utterances is so obvious. The second answer of the kid (line 4) seems to violate the maxims of relation and quantity. It violates the maxim of relation since the response (line 4) is not relevant with the question. It also infringes the maxim of quantity since the response is not as informative as required. Despite the apparent failure in superficial connection, the unstated connection between the utterances remains very obvious. In this case, the kid violates the maxims of relation and quantity, but he adheres to the maxim of Quality, 'Don't say what you lack adequate evidence'. Thus, the kid implicates that he does not know why his class is going to be free tomorrow.

Exercise

Analyze the dialogues in (3.7), (3.8) and (3.9). Prove that they quietly violate maxims.

(3.7) *Rina* *Have you read 'Pride and Prejudice'?*
 Bayu *My nephew borrowed it for three months. I*
 don't know when he will return it.

(3.8) *Mom* *I need your help to make some cake.*
 Daughter *There will be midterm tests for the whole*
 week.

(3.9) *Husband* *What time is it?*
 Wife *Top Nine News⁵ has just begun.*

⁵ *Top Nine News* is a news program on Metro TV Indonesia; it starts at 09.00 p.m

3.2.2 Opting Out or Hedging Maxims

Opting out or hedging maxims means that an addresser would like to signal his/her addressee how much he/she observes or obeys a maxim. Dealing with this, Grundy states that hedges tell others how informative, well founded, relevant, and perspicuous our messages are (2000: 79). Using hedges, the utterances get more neutral and plain.

3.2.2.1 Hedges of the Quantity Maxim

The degree of informativeness of messages can be eliminated by using some phrases *as far as I know.....*; *I am not sure if this is true, but.....*; *I may be wrong, but.....*; and many others. The use of those expressions signals that the addresser does not fully observe or obey the maxim of quantity. Those hedging expressions hedge or limit how much information an addresser would like to share. The example in (3.10) will make it clearer.

(3.10) *As far as I know, smoking damages your health.*

In this utterance, the speaker is making a very strong statement saying *smoking damages your health*. If this is the case, it means that the speaker is fully responsible with the quantity of the information he/she shares. But by prefacing it with *as far as I know*, the speaker simultaneously eliminates the quantity of information being conveyed and advises the addressee to measure how much the he/she observes the maxim of quantity.

Consider another example in (3.11).

(3.11) *To the best of my knowledge, statistics is difficult.*

Prefacing the utterance with the phrase *to the best of my knowledge*, the speaker would like to signal the addressee that the amount of the information is very limited.

3.2.2.2 Hedges of the Quality Maxim

The well foundedness of utterances can be hedged with some phrases, among other things are *they say, as you probably know, I can't say more, I probably do not need to say this, but....*, and many others. Those phrases signal the addressee that the speaker's information is not as truthful as normally expected. For example, consider the utterances in (3.12) and (3.13).

(3.12) *I probably do not need to say this, but I came across your boy friend in Cineplex 21 with her former girlfriend.*

(3.13) *They say that my GPA is 3.9*

Prefacing the utterance with *I probably do not need to say this, but... or they say that....*, the addresser suggests that his addressee needs to gauge how much he abides by the maxim of quality. Those phrases suggest that the message might not be as well founded as would normally be expected. So, *I probably do not need to say this, but...*

and *they say that...* serve as comments on the extent to which the speaker is abiding by the maxim of quality.

3.2.2.3 Hedges of the Relation Maxim

Hedges of relation maxim are used to show that what a speaker says is not relevant. Phrases which can be used for showing the irrelevance are *oh, by the way....*; *I am not sure if this is relevant, but...*; *I don't want to change the subject, but...* and many others. Utterances in (3.14) and (3.15) are the examples.

(3.14) *Oh, by the way, have you seen my book?*

(3.15) *I don't want to change the topic, but we have to discuss our tomorrow's meeting*

Just imagine that (3.14) and (3.15) are stated by one of your friends in the middle of discussion on movie. Those utterances show that the speaker would like to change the current topic. To signal his/her addressee that he/she violates the maxim of relation, he/she prefaces his/her utterances with *oh, by the way* and *I don't want to change the topic, but...*

3.2.2.4 Hedges of the Manner Maxim

Hedges of manner maxim show that a speaker delivers messages in perspicuous ways. It means that the messages might be obscure, ambiguous, not

brief, and not in a good order. Expressions that can be used to signal the perspicuous ways are *I am not sure if this is clear, but...*; *I don't know if this makes sense, but...*; *this may be a bit tedious, but...*; *if you see what I mean...*, and many others.

Utterances in (3.16) and (3.17) are the examples.

(3.16) *I am not sure if this is clear, but locution is the utterance and illocution is the act.*

Please imagine that the utterance (3.16) is stated in front of engineering students, who are not familiar with pragmatics concepts. Stating *locution is the utterance and illocution is the act*, the speaker realizes that she presents an obscure topic. To signal the obscurity, she hedges her utterance by saying *I am not sure if this is clear, but...*

(3.17) *This may be a bit tedious, but I have to keep teaching because we have 3 credits.*

Stating *I have to keep teaching because we have 3 credits*, the speaker realizes that he/she violates the maxim of manner since he/she does not present his/her teaching material briefly. He/she, however, signals that his/her presentation is as perspicuous as normally expected by saying *this may be a bit tedious, but...*

One important point about those maxim hedges is that none of them adds truth values of the utterances. Thus, utterances in (3.10) up to (3.17) remain true despite the absence of hedging expressions. Those expressions merely signal to others how informative, well founded, relevant, and perspicuous the messages are.

Exercise

1. List three hedging expressions for each maxim in your national language or in a local language you are familiar with.
2. What is the difference between:
 - a. *They are married* and *They say that they are married*.
 - b. *To the best of my knowledge, pragmatics deals with meaning in context* and *Pragmatics deals with meaning in context*.
3. Why do we need hedging expressions? What do you think if we do not use hedging expressions?

3.2.3 Flouting Maxims

Flouting is another way done by a speaker to signal his addressee that he ignores a maxim. Flouting a maxim results in a conversational implicature or implicature for short. Flouting a maxim is typically performed by uttering something in totally brief, absurdly false, completely different, or totally irrelevant utterances. In other words, flouting maxim is equal with exploiting the maxim.

3.2.3.1 Flouting the *Quantity Maxim*

Flouting the maxim of quantity, a speaker provides information either less or more than required. The utterance in (3.18) is both less and more informative than required.

(3.18) *You are a student of UB*⁶.

Something worth noting is that (3.18) is stated by a lecturer at Universitas Brawijaya, one of reputable universities in Indonesia. She got mad when she found one of her students cheated. Uttering the utterance in (3.18), the teacher does not abide by the maxim of quantity in that the information does not appear to be informative superficially. She does not tell further what is wrong with being a student of UB. Nor does she explain what the student should do in order to deserve to have the label 'a student of UB'. On the other hand, utterance in (3.18) is self-evidently true since every body knows that the student is a student of UB. Stating something that has been widely known, the speaker gives information more than required. Thus, (3.18) at the same time gives less and more information than required. As such, it is the infringement of the maxim of quantity. What does the teacher implicate? I am sure that anyone reading (3.18) will not find any difficulty knowing what the lecturer means.

3.2.3.2 Flouting the Quality Maxim

The infringement of the quality maxim can be seen from the figures of speech: *irony, metaphor, and hyperbole*. *Irony* is a figure of speech in which a fact is presented in an opposite condition. The example is in (3.19). This utterance is uttered by a language-department student who is very allergic with numbers.

⁶ UB is Universitas Brawijaya, one of reputable universities in Indonesia

(3.19) *Statistics is the easiest course for me.*

The utterance (3.19) flouts the maxim of quality because the fact is truly different from what is said. In fact, the speaker is allergic with numbers, so he is not happy with statistics course. This implicates that statistics is perhaps the most difficult subject.

The utterance (3.20) is a metaphor. It is a figure of speech by which a person or an object is described by referring to something having similar characteristics.

(3.20) *Her eyes are like the moon.*

In (3.20), the speaker describes someone's eyes by referring to the moon. It flouts the maxim of quality since superficially, eyes and the moon are not comparable. The moon is an object above the Earth, and eyes are part of body. According to Grice, such comparasion has categorial falcity. At a deeper level, however, they are comparable since they have similar characteristics. Eyes are sparkling, and so is the moon. Eyes are beautiful, and so is the moon. Thus, the speaker implicates that he/she admires the beauty of his/her addressee's eyes.

Hyperbole is a way of speaking that makes someone or something sounds bigger, better, smaller, worse, or more unusual. The example of it is in (3.21). It was a challenge given by an Indonesian politician, Anas Urbaningrum, to Indonesian citizens. At the time of speaking, he was cornered by Indonesian mass media due to the Hambalang corruption case.

- (3.21) *Gantung saya di Monas⁷ apabila kedapatan saya makan uang Hambalang⁸.*
(Hang me on Monas as you find me take a bribe from the Hambalang project).

Utterance (3.21) flouts the maxim of quality since the speaker deliberately said what he believed to be false. Utterance (3.21) is evidently-false since the speaker knows that the message apparently contains falsity. Capital punishment in Indonesia is enacted for terrorism and drug crimes, not corruption. Besides, capital punishment in Indonesia is executed by shooting in a very remote area, not by hanging in a public place like Monas. Thus, having a desire to be hung on Monas is something evidently impossible. Expressing an impossible desire, Anas Urbaningrum would like to convince people that he is 'clean' in a hyperbolic way.

3.2.3.3 Flouting the Relation Maxim

Flouting relation maxim means that a speaker deliberately does not contribute as relevantly as required. Grice admits that finding the example of this is not easy. But consider the utterance in (3.22). It was stated by one of my sisters several years ago. One point readers should know is that one of our relatives is too talkative. She likes talking all the times. Once in a while, we were gathering, and she talked about her family in a very detailed way. It was tedious, but none of us could stop her until one of my sisters stood up and said:

⁷ Monas stands for Monumen Nasional, a national monument in Jakarta, Indonesia

⁸ Hambalang is one territory in West Java, Indonesia. Hambalang project is a construction of sport facility building managed by the Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Indonesia.

(3.22) *Mbak*⁹, *shodaqallahuladziim*¹⁰.....

What my sister did flouts the maxim of relation since *shodaqallahuladziim* functions to close the Qur'a reading. My sister implicated that it was the time for the speaker to stop talking. Fortunately, she succeeded in making the speaker understand the implicature.

3.2.3.4 *Flouting the Manner Maxim*

The maxim of manner is flouted when a speaker deliberately does not speak perspicuously. He might use obscure and ambiguous terms, or he does not speak briefly nor orderly. Notice the utterance in (3. 23).

(3.23) *Semuanya akan dikupas secara tajam, setajam silet*¹¹.
(Everything will be discussed sharply, as sharply as 'silet').

Utterance in (3.23) is constantly uttered by the host of *Silet*¹², an infotainment program on RCTI¹³. The host blatantly violates the maxim of manner since she uses an ambiguous term, that is *silet*. It is ambiguous since it might refer to both the name of the infotainment itself and a device with a sharp blade for removing hair from the skin's surface. What does she implicate? It implicates that her TV program—

⁹ *Mbak* is an Indonesian specific term for calling older female person.

¹⁰ *Shadaqallahuladziim* is an Arabic expression for closing the Qur'an reading.

¹¹ *Silet* is razor blade.

¹² *Silet*, in the context of TV program, is an infotainment program on RCTI.

¹³ RCTI stands for Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia, one of private TV stations in Indonesia.

SILET—is a very critical infotainment, in the sense that it can analyze issues completely, deeply, and sharply. According to the management of the program, the sharpness is as sharp as a razor blade.

Exercise

Decide whether the following utterances are flouts or not, and if they are, of which maxims:

1. Money does not grow on trees but it blossoms at our branches (Lloyd's Bank advertisement, taken from Grundy, 2000: 76).
2. BA better connected person (British Airways advertisement, taken from Grundy, 2000: 77).

Suggestion for further Readings

Grice, H.P. 1975. Logic and Conversation. In Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan (Eds). *Syntax and Semantics Vol 3 (41-43)*. New York. ACADEMIC PERSS, INC.

Chapter 4

RELEVANCE THEORY

In the previous chapter, we discussed how Cooperative Principle and the four conversational maxims guide us in interpreting utterances. It is assumed that the four maxims are mutually known by both speakers and hearers. According to the theory, meanings are inferred from how far speakers obey the maxims. What is conveyed by speakers consists of entailment (what is said) and implicature (what is implied).

In this chapter, we try to discuss another theory concerning meaning interpretation: *Relevance Theory* (RT for short) proposed by Sperber and Wilson written in their book: *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (second Edition, 1995). RT is claimed as an inferential model of pragmatics. According to this model, a communicator or a speaker provides evidence of his/her intention to convey a certain meaning which is inferred by the audience on the basis of evidence provided. An utterance is a linguistically coded evidence.

The goal of inferential model is to explain how hearers infer the speaker's meaning on the basis of the evidence provided. In order to explain this process, RT is divided into two main cores: (1) relevance and cognition, and (2) relevance and communication.

4.1 Relevance and Cognition

Sperber and Wilson confirm that human beings are efficient-processing devices (1995: 46). Efficiency in any field, including in communication, can be defined in respect to a goal. Being efficient in communication processing is the

condition in which the goal of communication can be optimally achieved at the most minimal effort. The information processing involves connecting old information and the new one.

RT believes that an individual is able to draw inferences because of relevant inputs. An input such as an utterance, a sound, an image, a sight, and many others, is relevant for an individual when it connects with his prior information. Connecting the input and his prior information, he can yield a conclusion. For example, there is someone asking me a question: *Can you show me the nearest hospital?* The question saying *Can you show...* is the input. Being encountered with such a question, I try to connect it with my prior information. *First*, I will relate this with my linguistic background knowledge. Looking at the sentence construction and the intonation, on the basis of my linguistic knowledge, I conclude that it is a question. In relation with linguistic knowledge, I can also conclude that the input is not merely a question. Instead, it is the realization of asking for help. *Second*, I will connect it with my geographical knowledge by which I can measure the distance between the location where I am now and the nearest hospital. Relying on my linguistic and geographical knowledge, I can come to the conclusion that the utterance uttered by the speaker is a question, and it needs an answer. This is the illustration of a relevant input. Relevant input results in efficient information processing; it does not need complicated processing efforts. In short, the more mental process needed, the less relevant the input is, and the less mental process involved, the more relevant the input is. The example of asking for information of the nearest hospital is the example of a relevant input since it does not need great mental effort to process.

4.2 Relevance and Communication

RT deals with ostensive communication, that is intentional or on-purpose communication through which an addressee can understand an addresser's thought. Besides, RT is concerned with ostensive stimulus, that is inputs which can easily attract addressee's attention, prompt his/her retrieval prior experiences, and point an intended conclusion. Such kind of inputs enables an addressee to efficiently process. Knowing of human capacity to process information efficiently, an addresser may be able to produce utterances which are likely to attract his addressee's attention, to prompt the retrieval of prior information, and to point him to an intended conclusion.

RT believes that an ostensive stimulus is optimally relevant to an addressee if: (a) it is relevant enough to be worth the addressee's processing efforts; (b) it is the most relevant one if it is compatible with the speaker's abilities and preferences (Wilson and Sperber: 256). The item (a) means that a stimulus is relevant enough if the addressee considers that the stimulus is indeed worth processing. If, for example I say *it is hot here* without any stress in intonation nor gestures, my addressee would probably think that I just let him know about the hot weather. If I deliberately gaze meaningfully to him and have strong intonation, my addressee would have a stronger conclusion that I need some drink. The item (b) means that in order to be easily understood, a speaker will choose the most convenient strategies in delivering inputs

It is evident that explicitly communicated content of utterances tend to go beyond what is linguistically encoded. It means that what is said is frequently

different from what is meant. The hearer's task is to hypothesize the speaker's meaning. RT believes that elaborating the explicit content and recovering the implicit messages are equally important. In a more detailed description, RT provides a comprehension process in human communication:

- a. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about explicit content (in RT it is called EXPLICATURE) by determining referents of deictic expressions, disambiguating ambiguous words or phrases, or enriching original utterances;
- b. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about intended contextual assumptions (in RT it is called IMPLICATED PREMISES);
- c. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about intended contextual implications (in RT it is called IMPLICATED CONCLUSIONS).

4.2.1 Explicature

What is explicature? Explicature is the development or enrichment of utterances. An utterance can indeed be elaborated because of which its explicit content can be determined. An utterance can be elaborated by determining referents of deictic expressions in it, e.g. *I* → *Hary*; *you* → *Andrew*; *it* → *my cat*, and many others. Changing ambiguous terms into non-ambiguous ones is another way to determine the explicit content of an utterance, e.g. *reading my book* → *might be either reading my writing or reading the book of mine*. According to Grundy (2000), explicature is mainly motivated by an indeterminacy of language. Consider an example of a short dialogue in (4.1).

- (4.1) *Peter* *Would you drive a Mercedes?*
Mary *I wouldn't drive ANY expensive car*
(taken from Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 194)

The explicatures of Mary's response in (4.1) can be seen in (4.2).

- (4.2) *Mary would not drive expensive car.*
(taken from Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 194)

The utterance is explicatured by referent resolution; the deictic expression *I* in (4.1) is changed into *Mary*. Mary's utterance may be intended as a promise as in (4.3).

- (4.3) *Mary promises that she will never drive any expensive car*
(taken from Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 194)

The utterance in (4.2) is the basic-level explicature of the original utterance; the one in (4.3) is a higher-level explicature. Higher-level explicature is the one revealing the attitude of the speaker. The characteristic of high-level explicature is the existence of speech act descriptors like *promise that* or *ask whether*, or attitudinal ones such as *regret that* or *be pleased that*.

4.2.2 Implicated Premises and Implicated Conclusions

Mary's answer in (4.1) does not directly answer Peter's answer. It, however, stimulates Peter to activate his memory retrieval mechanism. His memory concerning expensive cars automatically comes up. He might retrieve the names of expensive cars as in (4.4), (4.5), and (4.6).

- (4.4) *A Mercedes is an expensive car.*

- (4.5) *A Rolls Royce is an expensive car.*

- (4.6) *A Cadillac is an expensive car.*

If Mary's answer is processed as in (4.4), (4.5), and (4.6), it would yield an implicated conclusion as in (4.7).

(4.7) *Mary wouldn't drive a Mercedes.*

Or, Peter can construct another premise and conclusion as in (4.8) and (4.9).

(4.8) *People who refuse to drive expensive cars disapprove of displays of wealth.*

This premise brings about the occurrence of a conclusion as is (4.9).

(4.9) *Mary disapproves of displays of wealth.*

In conclusion, Mary's answer in (4.1), which does not directly answer, Peter's question is an implicature.

Exercise

1. X : Were you present in Mr. X's class this morning?

Y : APEC is held in Bali

How do you interpret the dialogue between X and Y?

2. Teacher : What time is it?

Student : Traffic jam is pervasive, Mom.

Give some comments on the dialogue between a teacher and a student.

3. What makes RT different from Cooperative Principle Theory?

Suggestion for further Readings:

Sperber, Dan. & Wilson, Deidre. 1986. *Relevance Communication and Cognition* (2nd Edition). Oxford. Blackwell.

Chapter 5

SPEECH ACT

This chapter outlines the theory of speech act written in *How to Do Things with Words* by Austin (1975). Besides, it presents the improvement of the theory by Searle (1976).

5.1 The Evolution of the Speech Act Theory by Austin

Speech act theory proceeded from the philosophers' opinion believing that a sentence is meaningless unless its truthfulness and falsity can be tested. Sentences having such a property are declarative ones or constatives whose function is to describe state of affairs. Sentences in (5.1), (5.2), and (5.3) are the examples.

(5.1) *Mathematics is one of courses in my school.*

(5.2) *Universitas Brawijaya is one of state universities in Indonesia.*

(5.3) *Indonesia proclaimed its independence in 1945.*

Those utterances are constative since each carries information whose truthfulness and falsity are testable. You can check out whether (5.1) is true or false by looking at official documents (the curriculum and the teaching schedule in my school), confirming to officials, students or lecturers at my school. You can check out official documents in the management of Universitas Brawijaya to test the truth of (5.2). The truth and falsity of (5.3) can be confirmed by referring to history books, asking historians, and many others.

Not affirming the philosophers' idea, Austin (1975: 12) believed that sentences and their utterances might function to perform actions. He was sure that sentences remain meaningful even though they are not intended to make true or false statements. Such sentences are called *performative sentences* or just performatives for short. Performatives are the ones containing performative verbs. Performative verb is a verb whose actions are explicitly encoded such as *apologize, declare, name, proclaim, warn, agree, disagree*, and many others. Utterances in (5.4) up to (5.7) are the examples of performative sentences.

(5.4) *I apologize for my being late.*

(5.5) *I name my cat catty.*

(5.6) *I promise to be home earlier tomorrow.*

(5.7) *I pronounce you husband and wife.*

Sentences in (5.4) up to (5.7), according to Austin, are not used to say things, but they are intended to do things. Those sentences do not describe how I do the *apologize, name, promise, and declare*. Instead, they reflect that I do the actions. Thus, while uttering something, I do something, or to say something is to do something, or in saying something we are doing something. This is the basic concept of speech act theory.

According to Austin, constatives can be assessed from their truth and falsity, but performatives are assessable from their felicity. A felicitous or happy performative is the one which can be successfully performed. Indeed, in order to

come off, a performative needs to meet felicity conditions. Felicity condition is the requirements that must be met by performatives if they are to succeed or be happy. Austin noted that a successful performative is called felicitous or happy, and the fail one is infelicitous or unhappy. For instance, suppose I say *I hereby pronounce you husband and wife* to two lovers. This performative will never be successfully performed by me since I am not the person who have the right to marry people. But, it will come off or get felicitous, in that the performative result in immediate and significant effects, if it is stated by the father of a bride in a Muslim family, or by a clergyman in protestant culture.

Austin explained further that the characteristics of performatives are as follows:

1. The subject is first person: *I*;
2. The sentence is active construction;
3. The tense is simple present;
4. It is likely to insert the adverb *hereby*.

On the basis of the characteristics, please compare the utterance in (5.7) and the ones in (5.8), (5.9), and (5.10).

(5.8) *I am pronouncing you husband and wife.*

(5.9) *I pronounced you husband and wife.*

(5.10) *He pronounces you husband and wife.*

The progressive aspect in (5.8) shows that it is a statement, rather than a performative. The past tense in (5.9) and third person pronoun in (5.10) indicate reports. Thus, they are not performative.

Austin's work eventually shifted to the dichotomy of explicit and implicit performatives. Explicit performatives are the ones whose actions are explicitly stated as we discussed previously. In addition, Austin conceded that an utterance does not necessarily need performative verbs in order to be performative since empirical data prove that performatives can be performed in cruder devices and less explicit. The devices are **the mood, adverbs, particles, and intonations**. Performatives using the mood, adverbs, particles, and intonations as the indicating devices are called *implicit performatives*.

Mood is concerned with the type of sentence. One can perform a performative as in (5.11), instead of (5.12).

(5.11) *Go out!*

(5.12) *I order you to go out*

Despite the absence of formal characteristics of performatives, (5.11) reflects a performative, that is ordering other to go out.

Adverbs or adverbial phrases can be used to indicate performatives. Consider the utterances in (5.13) and (5.14).

(5.13) *I promise to be earlier tomorrow.*

(5.14) *I **will be home earlier tomorrow without fail.***

The utterance in (5.14) is an implicit performative performing the action of promising. The action is traceable from the mood and the adverbial phrase *without fail*. English grammar confirms that a promise can be realized in a declarative sentence using simple future tense as you can see in (5.14). The implicit performative gets more explicit due to the adverbial phrase *without fail*. Thus, the utterance in (5.14) is a performative albeit without any performative verbs.

A particle is a very small piece of matter. Particles in sentences are *still*, *whereas*, *therefore*, and many others. Empirical data prove that such particles might be used to indicate performatives. Look at the utterances in (5.15) and (5.16). The explicit speech act of concluding (5.15) is realized in a more implicit way as in (5.16). The device used to realize the speech act is the particle *therefore*.

(5.15) *I conclude that statistics is not as difficult as I imagined.*

(5.16) *Therefore, statistics is not as difficult as I imagined.*

Intonation is also a good device to realize a speech act since it can distinguish whether an utterance functions as a warning, a question, or a protest.

(5.17) *Tomorrow is the examination week!* (a warning)

(5.18) *Tomorrow is the examination week?* (a question)

(5.19) *Tomorrow is the examination week!?* (a protest)

In sum, it can be concluded that Austin's work moved from the very rigid and formal criteria of performatives to the more flexible ones, in the sense that performative verb is not the only device to construct a performative sentence.

Austin finally came to the conclusion that the dichotomy between performatives and constatives is not relevant since empirical data prove that all utterances perform specific actions even though they literally do not reflect actions. He believed that in saying something one is performing three acts simultaneously:

- (1) **Locutionary act or locution:** the literal meaning of an utterance;
- (2) **Illocutionary act or illocution:** the force or the act behind an utterance. It can be either the act of making statements, disagreeing, agreeing, promising, and many others. For example, I say:

(5.20) *I name my cat catty.*

The utterance in (5.20) contains the force of naming. It is very easy to determine the illocutionary force of (5.20) since the force is explicitly encoded in the lexical choice of *name*. In some cases, however, the force is implicitly encoded as in (5.21).

(5.21) *Your idea sounds good.*

Despite the absence of a performative verb indicating agreement, the sense of agreeing is traceable from how the speaker acknowledges the plus point of the idea.

- (3) **Perlocutionary act or perlocution:** the bringing about the effects on the addressee by means of illocutionary acts. The perlocutionary effect of (5.20) is

that people around me know the name of my cat, and the effect of (5.21) is making my addressee happy.

Something should be noted is that the focus of Austin's interest is the second act, that is illocutionary act. The term SPEECH ACT actually refers to this act.

All in all, Austin's theory undergoes evolution. It proceeded from the dichotomy between constatives and performatives. He proved that sentences remain meaningful eventhough their truth and falsity are not testable. He proposed formal criteria of performatives, and he eventually classified performatives into explicit and implicit ones. From this, his work shifted to the dimensions of locution, illocution, and perlocution; they are the acts that are simultaneously performed whenever one utters an utterance. The evolution of Austin's theory is described in figure 5.1.

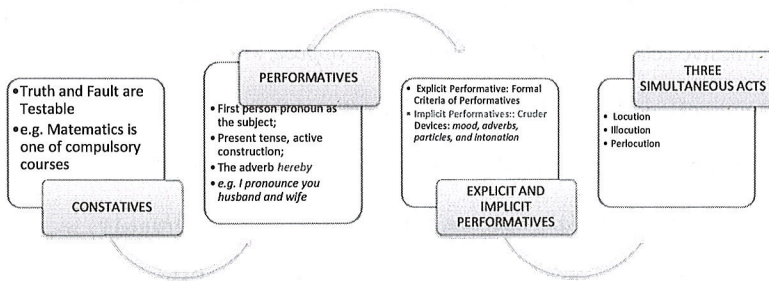


Figure 5.1 The Evolution of Speech Act Theory by Austin

5.2 Austin's Classification on Illocutionary Act

Austin distinguished five general classes of illocutionary act: *Verdictives*, *Exercitives*, *Commissives*, *Behabitives*, and *Expositives*. **Verdictives** are actions involving judgments. They deal with fairness and unfairness, soundness and unsoundness, and truth and falsity. Jury, arbitrator, judges, and empire commonly perform this act. The few examples of verdictive acts are *acquit*, *convict*, *estimate*, *assess*, *grade*, and many others.

Exercitives are the acts of giving a decision in favor of a certain action. This is the act of decision to do something, as distinct from a judgment that it is so. It is advocacy that it should be, not estimation that it is so. It is an award, not an assessment. The examples of exercitive acts are *appoint*, *dismiss*, *name*, *order*, *sentence*, *proclaim*, *announce*, and many others.

Commissives are acts indicating a speaker's commitment to a certain action. Examples of commissive acts are *promise*, *give my words*, *oppose*, *swear*, *agree*, *disagree*, *intend*, *consent*, and many others. **Behabitive acts** are the reaction to the speaker's or other people's behaviour, deeds, fortunes, and misfortunes. *Apologize*, *thank*, *congratulate*, *condole*, *complain*, *approve*, *welcome*, *bless*, *curse*, *wish*, *challenge*, *defy*, *protest*, and *dare* are a few examples of behabitive acts. **Expositive acts** are the acts of exposing views, arguments, references, and the like. Acts included in this class are *affirm*, *deny*, *remark*, *inform*, *apprise*, and many others. Something worth noting is that Austin conceded that the classes are not exclusive in the sense some acts can be included in more than one class. The summary of the act classification can be seen in Figure 5.2.

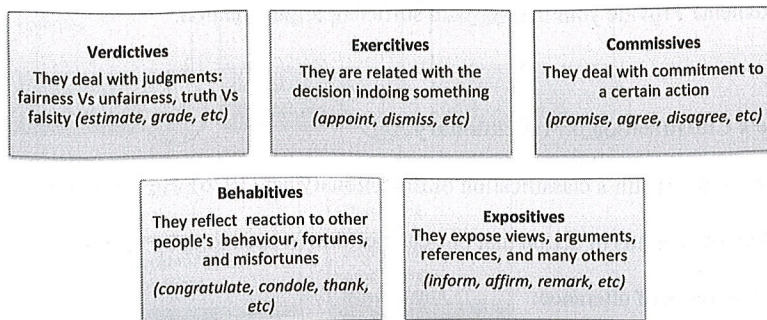


Figure 5.2 Austin's Classification of Illocutionary Acts

Exercise

- Identify the locution, illocution, and perlocution of the following utterances, and determine their classification of illocution:
 - I grade you A.*
 - I vote for him.*
 - I will be on time next time.*
 - Let me seal my lips.*
 - Thanks a lot for your concern.*
 - I affirm that language is sometimes arbitrary.*
- Determine the felicity conditions of each utterance above.
- According to Austin, utterances do not need performative verbs in order to be performative. What does it mean? Provide your answer with examples.
- A Moslem wife says *I divorce you* to her husband. What do you think? Do you think it will be felicitous?

5. *I disagree with you* is performative, but *I run* is not. Do you agree with my statement? Provide your answer with sufficient argumentation.

5.3 Searle's Classification on Illocutionary Act

Searle refined the Austin's classification of illocutionary act (1976). He stated that there are five basic kinds of action that one can perform in speaking, by means of the following five types of utterance:

- (i) **Representatives;** they are related with a speaker's commitment to the truth of something. *Asserting, concluding, assessing,* and the like are the examples of representative act.
- (ii) **Directives;** they are related with a speaker's attempt to get his addressee to do something. The examples of this act are *requesting, questioning, ordering, asking for help,* etc.
- (iii) **Commissives;** they deal with a speaker's commitment to future actions, such as *promising, threatening, offering, warning,* etc.
- (iv) **Expressives;** they deal with expressions of psychological states such as *thanking, apologizing, welcoming, condoling, congratulating,* etc.
- (v) **Declaratives;** they are related with acts having immediate changes, such as *proclaiming independence, declaring war, christening, firing from employment,* and many others.

Searle's classification of speech act is summarized in Figure 5.3.

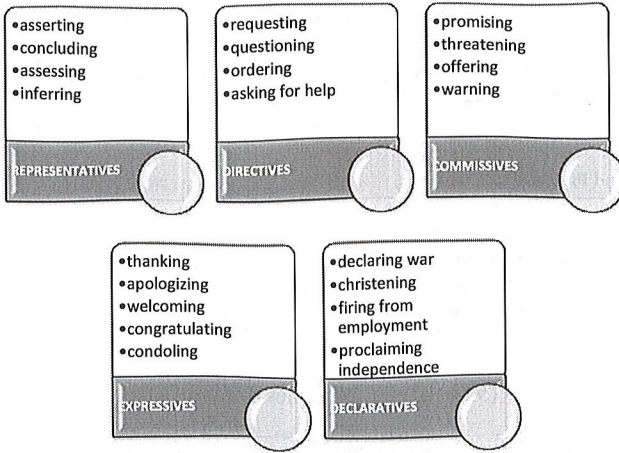


Figure 5.3 Searle's Classification on Illocutionary Act

5.4 Indirect Speech Act

As touched on previously, Austin distinguished between explicit and implicit performatives. The force or the act is explicitly encoded in earlier performatives, and implicitly stated in the latter ones. In relation with this matter, Searle talked a lot about indirect speech acts. He explained further that indirect speech act is the condition in which one illocutionary is performed indirectly by way of performing another (1975: 60). A statement used as a request and a question used as a command are a few examples of indirect speech act.

Grundy (2000) proposed a very good indicator of directness and indirectness in speech act. To him, the directness and indirectness can be seen from the agreement between the form and function of sentences. When form and function match, it reflects direct speech act. By contrast, the disagreement between form and function

results in an indirect speech act. He explained that English has three forms of sentence, each of which has different functions. The forms and functions of English sentences can be seen in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Form and Function in English

Forms	Functions
Declarative	Making assertion
Imperative	Making orders/requests
Interrogative	Making Questions

The utterances in (5.22), (5.23), and (5.24) are the examples of direct speech acts.

(5.22) *I will give you a midterm test tomorrow* (declarative used as an assertion)

(5.23) *Prepare yourself for your tomorrow's midterm test* (imperative used as a command).

(5.24) *Are you well-prepared for tomorrow's test?* (interrogative used as a question)

The utterances in (5.25), (5.26), and (5.27) are indirect speech acts.

(5.25) *Can you open the door?* (interrogative used as a command)

(5.26) *Thank you for not smoking* (declarative used as command)

(5.27) *I wonder when the test begins* (declarative used as a question)

Focusing on the act of requesting, Soshana Blum-Kulka (1989) distinguished between conventional and non-conventional indirectness. Conventional indirectness in request is linguistic forms which are conventionally known as request realization. She explained further that conventional indirectness is associated with ambiguity at

the level of utterance. The conventionalization includes the convention of lexical choices and syntactic patterns commonly used for realizing a request. Searle (1975) gave considerable examples of this type of indirectness:

(5.28) *Can you pass the salt?*

The utterance in (5.28) is an indirect request in the sense that it is syntactically realized in an interrogative form, but it functions as a request. It is conventional indirect since the syntactic pattern and lexical choices in (5.28) are standardly used as a request. For some people especially those who are not quite knowledgeable with English, however, the utterance is ambiguous since she has to determine whether it is a genuine question or a request.

(5.29) *I would like you to go now.*

(5.29) is a conventional indirect request. It is syntactically realized in a declarative sentence, but it has directive function. English grammar confirms that the use of *subject+would like+someones+to infinitive* pattern has the function as a request. Despite the popularity of this pattern, the use of it results in ambiguity since an addressee is required to determine whether it is information or a request.

Moving to non-conventional indirectness, Soshana Blum-Kulka explained that it is associated with ambiguity at the speaker's meaning level. One of the characteristics of this indirectness is the multiplicity in meanings. In addition to understanding to the language conventions, relying on contexts and referring to

conversational principles are the factors contributing to the meaning understanding. The utterance in (5.30) is an example of a request realized in a non-conventional way.

(5.30) *It is hot here.*

(5.30) is a non-conventional indirect request since it is multiply interpretable. Being encountered with such an utterance, an addressee needs to interpret whether the speaker merely informs about the weather or he means something else. It probably means that the speaker would like to have some drink, or he would like the addressee to turn the AC on, or he would like him to open the door, and many others.

Suggestion for further Readings

Austin, J.L. 1975. *How to Do Things with Words* (2nd ed.). Oxford. Oxford university Press.

Searle, John R. 1976. A Classification of Illocutionary Acts. In *Language in Society*, Vol. 5. No. 1 (April, 1976), pp. 1-23. Available in <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4166848>.

Chapter 6

POLITENESS

In the previous chapter, we discussed both direct and indirect speech acts. The former speech act is the one whose illocutionary force is explicitly encoded. The force of the latter one, on the contrary, is implicitly encoded. Many people believe that the indirectness in speech act, especially the threatening ones, is motivated by politeness. What is politeness? This is the concern of this chapter. It outlines the book entitled *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* written by Brown and Levinson (1987). The outline covers face and face threatening acts, strategies for performing FTAs, and factors contributing to the choice of FTA strategies.

6.1 Face in Politeness Theory

What is politeness? In general, politeness can be defined as linguistic attitude which can make an addressee feel at ease. Hence, the parameter of being polite is the convenience in the part of the addressee. In relation with this matter, Brown and Levinson in their phenomenal book entitled *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* proposed the concept of face. Face is basic desires/needs that everyone wants to satisfy. Face is divided into two: *positive face* and *negative face*. Positive face is the desire to be well-thought of by others. It can be represented in the desire to be respected by others, the desire to be treated as friends, the desire to be admired, the desire to be understood, and many others. Addressing someone by using a term

indicating intimacy such as *buddy*, *friend*, *sis*¹⁴, *bro*¹⁵, and the like is one of strategies to satisfy his/her positive faces. Consider the dialogues in (6.1) and (6.2).

- (6.1) *Peter* *Sis, have you submitted the homework?*
 Mary *Not yet. What is the matter, friend?*

- (6.2) *Peter* *Congratulation for your success.*
 Mary *Oh, thanks.*

In (6.1), Peter and Mary mutually satisfy their interlocutor's face by using terms indicating intimacy *sis* and *friend*. Addressing interlocutors with terms indicating intimacy suggests that the speaker would like to show the important role of the addressee in his life. Congratulating is another strategy to satisfy one's positive face as seen in (6.2) since such act suggests that a speaker acknowledges his addressee's merits.

Negative face is the desire to be free from imposition. It means that humans have the desire to go about their business freely, without being impeded by others. Consider (6.3).

- (6.3) *Lecturer* *I let you free to read any book.*
 Students *Okay, Ma'am.....*

In (6.3), the lecturer tries to fulfill her students' negative face since she does not compel them to read a certain book. Instead, she lets them free to choose any books they want to read. As such, the teacher does not impose on the students' life.

¹⁴ *Sis* is the clipping of *sister*

¹⁵ *Bro* is the clipping of *brother*

Exercise

Determine to which face are the following utterances addressed to?

1. PRUDENTIAL: Always Listening, Always Understanding (the advertisement of an insurance Company).
2. Fly At Your Command. (the advertisement of Korean Air).
3. When you fill their cup, you don't just fill their belly. You fill their mind and feed their future (the advertisement of World Food Programme).

6.2 Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)

In daily communication, however, humans' positive and negative face wants cannot be satisfied all the times. On one occasion, an addresser threatens his addressee's face, but on another occasions, he has to threaten his own face. As such, both addresser's and addressee's faces are mutually vulnerable. According to Brown and Levinson, acts which threaten humans' face are called Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). FTAs can be seen from the perspectives of whose face and which face are threatened. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 respectively present some acts threatening an addresser's and addressee's faces.

Table 6.1 Acts Threatening the Addresser's Face

Addresser's Face	Face Threatening Acts	Linguistic Realizations
Positive	Apologizing	<i>Sorry for my being late I apologize for this inconvenience</i>
	Congratulating	<i>Congratulations for your victory Great!! You have a good job.</i>
	Self-humiliating	<i>Oh,.....how stupid I am</i>
Negative	Expressing thanks	<i>Thank you for your concern</i>
	Accepting thanks, apologies, offers	<i>You are welcome, it is okay, ok, thanks</i>

The act of apologizing damages the speaker's positive face since it indicates that the speaker regrets doing a prior FTA. Regretting a prior action, a speaker admits his mistake, and to some degree it damages his own face. The act of congratulating threatens the speaker's positive face since it suggests that he acknowledges his addressee's superiority, and it damages his own face. Self-humiliating necessarily threatens the speaker's positive face since it foregrounds the speaker's weakness and ignores his strengths.

Expressing thanks threatens a speaker's negative face since the speaker may feel constrained to acknowledge his addressee's good deed such as giving help or debts. Accepting thanks, apologies, offers, and others is included into negative-face threatening act since the speaker may feel constrained to minimize his hearer's good deeds or transgressions.

Table 6.2 Some Acts Threatening the Addressee's Face

Addressee's Face	Face Threatening Acts	Linguistic Realizations
Positive	Criticizing	<i>Oh, your writing needs improvement; there are weaknesses here and there</i>
	Disapproving, disagreeing	<i>Choose another topic for your thesis.</i>
	Accusing	<i>It is you who have to be responsible for this inconvenience.</i>
	Insulting	<i>This is the worst seminar I once attended.</i>
Negative	Ordering	<i>Can you serve me?</i>
	Suggesting, advising	<i>Why don't you change your topic?</i>
	Reminding	<i>Mam, I remind you about the exam schedule.</i>
	Threatening/Warning	<i>I warn you that smoking is a bad habit</i>

The acts of criticizing, disapproving, disagreeing, accusing, and insulting indicate that the speaker has negative evaluation of some aspects of his addressee's positive face. Meanwhile, the acts of ordering, suggesting, advising, reminding, threatening, and warning are included into negative-face threatening acts since they indicate that the speaker intends to impede his addressee's freedom of action.

Exercise

1. Find out one example of act threatening a speaker's positive face. Realize the act linguistically either in English or your local language.
2. Find out one example of act threatening a speaker's negative face. Realize the act linguistically either in English or your local language.
3. Find out one example of act threatening an addressee's positive face. Realize the act linguistically either in English or your local language.
4. Find out one example of act threatening an addressee's negative face. Realize the act linguistically either in English or your local language.

6.3 Strategies for Performing FTAs

To minimize social disharmony, humans tend to avoid doing FTAs. In case FTAs need performing, humans try to seek strategies to minimize the threat. Brown and Levinson (1987: 68-71) proposed strategie for performing face threatening acts. Those strategies are schematized in Figure 6.1.

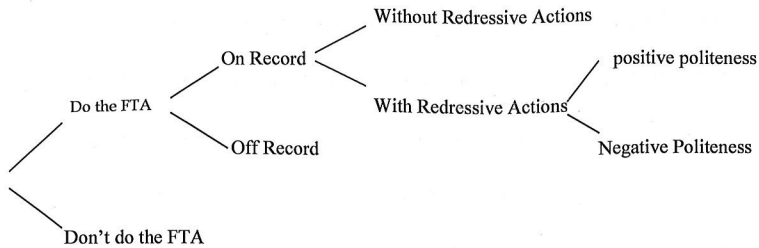


Figure 6.1 Strategies for Performing FTAs by Brown and Levinson (1987: 69)

6.3.1 Do the FTA

This subheading outlines the strategies to perform FTAs: *on-record strategy* and *off-record strategy*.

6.3.1.1 On-Record Strategy

On-record strategy is the strategy whereby the FTA is clearly seen. It is divided into *without redressive actions/baldly* and *with redressive actions*, each of which has different characteristics.

A. Without-redressive-action Strategy

This is a very open and blatant strategy in realizing FTAs, so that the threat is clearly seen. The prime reason for applying this strategy is maximum efficiency and effectiveness in communication. The main characteristic of this strategy is the absence of mitigating devices. This strategy is commonly realized in imperative and negative declarative sentences. Data in (6.4) are the examples.

- (6.4) (a) *Return my book tomorrow.*
 (b) *Leave my office right now.*
 (c) *I don't agree with you.*
 (d) *Lend me some money.*

Utterances in (6.4) contain face threatening acts realized very openly and blatantly since the threat is clearly encoded and no devices are used to mitigate the threat. Data in (a), (b), and (d) offend the hearer's negative face, and (c) threatens the hearer's positive face.

B. With-redressive-action Strategy

With-redressive-action strategy is the one for performing FTAs accompanied with mitigating devices. The use of mitigating devices is intended to counteract the potential face damage due to the FTAs. Redressive actions can take either positive politeness or negative politeness, depending on what face is stressed.

b.1 Positive Politeness

Positive politeness is oriented to the hearer's positive face. Brown and Levinson explained that positive politeness is approach-based. It means that the potential face damage due to a certain act can be minimized by 'approaching' the addressee. Treating an addressee as a friend, a relative, a member of a group is the implementation of the approach. Acknowledging the addressee's merit is another approach-based strategy to minimize the threat. Some strategies minimizing the threat by using positive politeness and their linguistic realizations are presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 FTAs Minimized with Positive Politeness Strategies

FTAs	Positive Politeness Strategies	Linguistic Realizations
Borrowing a book	Noticing to the addressee's interests, wants, needs, goods.	<i>My goodness, your garden is so beautiful. By the way, may I borrow your book?</i>
Suggesting		<i>Your writing is good, but it would be much better if you refine some minor mistakes before you publish it.</i>
Asking to come	Using in-group identity marker	<i>Come here, Sis.....</i>
Requesting something	Be optimistic	<i>I'm sure you won't mind if you send me some catalogues of your products.</i>
Asking to stop doing an activity	Including both the speaker and his addressee in an activity	<i>Let's stop discussing the issue.</i>

b.2 Negative Politeness

Brown and Levinson (1987: 129) mention that negative politeness is redressive actions addressed to the addressee's negative face. It means that the potential face damage is minimized with linguistic expressions satisfying the addressee's negative face. The main characteristic of this type of politeness is that FTAs are generally realized in indirect ways. The indirectness is recognizable from the disagreement between the form and the function of sentences. An interrogative sentence used for asking for help is one case in point. Some examples of FTAs minimized with negative politeness and their linguistic realizations are presented in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 FTAs Minimized with Negative Positive Politeness Strategies

FTAs	Negative Politeness Strategies	Linguistic Realizations
Asking for help	Conventional Indirect	<i>Can you pass the salt? Can you open the window?</i>
Borrowing something	Be pessimistic	<i>Could/would/might you lend me your handycam?</i>
Asking for help	Minimizing the imposition	<i>I just dropped by for a while to ask you if you could help me.....</i>
Asking for help	Apologizing for doing FTAs	<i>I am sure you must be busy, but I don't want to bother you, but..... Please forgive me if.....</i>
Suggesting	Impersonalizing S and H	<i>It seems much better that the topic of this thesis is changed into.....</i>

6.3.1.2 Off-record Strategy

A face threatening act is done off record if it is realized in multiply- interpretable utterances. It means that the FTA is realized in indirect ways; the speaker let his addressee decide what the intended message is. Using off record strategy, a speaker actually would like to perform an FTA, but he wants to avoid the responsibility for doing it. In consequence, the FTA is realized in such a way, so that the intended message is not easily recognized. Brown and Levinson (1987: 211) mentioned that off record is a strategy in which the actor leaves himself an 'out' by providing himself with a number of defensible interpretations; he cannot be held to have committed himself to just one particular interpretation of his act. Consider the utterance in (6. 5).

- (6.5) X *It is hot here....*
 Y *Ehm,.....*

The X's utterance has some possible interpretation. It might mean that X wants Y to turn the AC on, or he wants to move to another room, or he needs some water, and many others. Which interpretation is the most likely one? It depends much on the context. In this case, X let Y decide by herself what is in fact intended.

How is off-record strategy realized? To Brown and Levinson, this strategies is realizable by flouting the maxims of conversation. Please remember Cooperative principle Theory by Grice. Some FTAs realized in off-record strategy, in particular by flouting conversational maxims, are presented in Table 6. 5.

Table 6.5 FTAs Minimized with Off-record Strategy (by Flouting Conversational Maxims)

Flouted Maxims	Strategies	Linguistic Realizations	Probable Intended Acts
Quantity	Understatement	<i>He is alright</i>	Criticizing, complimenting
	Overstatement	<i>I have called you thousand times!</i>	Reprimanding
	Tautology	<i>You are a student of a high-quality university</i>	Declaring disappointment, reprimanding
	Using Irony	<i>He is a real genius (after he has done a series of stupid deeds)</i>	Insulting
	Using rhetorical question	<i>Do you want me to fail you?</i>	Declaring disappointment, reprimanding
Relation	Giving hints (motives for doing an FTA)	<i>It is cold here</i>	Requesting to shut the door
		<i>This meat ball is bland</i>	Criticizing, asking other to pass the salt
Manner	Displacing the addressee	<i>X : Y, can you pass the stapler? (in fact, I am much nearer than Y)</i>	Asking for help

6.3.2 Don't do the FTA

This strategy suggests that human is generally encountered with two choices: performing an FTA or not doing it, each of which has its own consequences.

Exercise:

Read the following three announcements. Do you think there is a difference in the extent to which the three announcements address positive and negative face? (This exercise, including the announcements are taken from Grundy, 2000: 157).

1. The next station is Kowloo Tong. Passengers may change there for MTR trains.
2. The next station is Kowloon Tong. Passengers should change here for KCR trains.
3. The next station is Newcastle. Passengers for Sunderland, Middlesbrough, Carlisle and the Newcastle Metro should change here.

6.4 Factors Contributing to the Choice of FTA Strategies

Given various strategies for performing FTAs, the raising question is: *what factors contribute to the choice of disagreeing strategies?* Brown and Levinson (1987: 68-84) explain that there are two factors contributing to the choice of FTA strategies: the payoff of each strategy and social factors.

6.4.1 Payoffs of Each Strategy

Each strategy can indeed be associated with some payoffs or benefits. By going *on record* a speaker can get the following advantages: he can be considered as an honest person; he can avoid the danger of being seen as a manipulator; he can minimize the danger of being misunderstood. In short, on-record payoffs are *clarity*

and *demonstrable non-manipulativeness*. In addition, efficiency in communication is the apparent payoff of bald-on-record strategy.

Going on record with positive politeness and negative politeness, a speaker can satisfy his addressee's positive face and negative face, respectively. The implication of satisfying the addressee's face is that social disharmony can be minimized. Using off-record strategy, a speaker can satisfy the addressee's negative face to a degree greater than that afforded by the negative politeness strategy. Besides, a speaker can avoid the responsibility for this action.

6.4.2 Sociological Factors

In addition to the payoffs of each strategy, according to Brown and Levinson, sociological factors also significantly contribute to the choice of FTA strategies. Those factors are: the social distance (D), the relative power (P) of a speaker over his/her addressee, and the rank (R) of imposition or the severity of the act. Social distance (D) represents the closeness between a speaker and his addressee. In many cases, the closeness is based on an assessment of the frequency of interaction and social attributes. The scale of closeness is distant and close. The relationship between a master and his housemaid is generally distant, but the relationship between/among classmates tends to be close.

The relative power (P) deals with asymmetric social status, in the sense one party has greater power over another one. A more powerful party is likely to impose on the more powerless one. A more plausible view would be that P is not attached to individuals, but to individuals' roles. Thus, the P value is clearly seen in the roles of

employer-employee, parent-child, teacher-student, husband-wife, and many others. This aspect, however, is not constant all the times. It is relative, instead. A principal might have a greater role than a teacher, but when the teacher pulls a gun, the P is reversed.

The ranking (R) of imposition or the degree of severity of FTAs. It deals with the impact of FTA to the psychological convenience on the part of the addresser or the addressee. FTAs result in various psychological convenience. Some FTAs moderately damage the addresser and/or the addressee's face because of which the psychological inconvenience is not serious. Asking for information about the time and asking for help to close a door are the two cases in point. Other FTAs severely damage the addresser's or the addressee's face, and it results in severe psychological inconvenience, such as borrowing some money.

It is necessary to demonstrate the contribution of D, P, and R in determining the choice of FTA strategies. Let's consider the contribution of the D variable. Suppose that the relationship between a speaker and his addressee (D variable) is distant, and the P is more or less equal, and the R is not great. The relationship is for example, between two colleagues who are not close, and the imposition is the request for telling the time. Such kind of relation and imposition results in an utterance as the one in (6.6).

- (6.6) X *Excuse me, would you mind telling me what
 time it is?*
 Y *Oh, it is eight o'clock sharp.*

In (6.6), X performed an FTA, asking for some information about the time to Y. Given that they have distant relationship, the act is realized in a quite formal way. The realization of the act would be different if X and Y have a closer relationship as seen in (6.7). In the excerpt, the act is realized in a very informal way.

- (6.7) X *Got the time, buddy?*
 Y *Eight sharp.*

Turning to the P variable, suppose that the D and R are constant. It means that the speaker has either greater or smaller roles than his addressee, and the relationship between them is close, and the imposition is not great. The dialogue in (6.8) represents the realization of an FTA by a speaker who has a socially-greater role than his addressee, and (6.9) is the one realized by a speaker who has a socially-smaller role than his addressee.

- (6.8) X *Excuse me Mam, would it be all right if I
 leave earlier?*

- (6.9) X *Mind if I leave earlier?*

The dialogues in (6.8) and (6.9) suggest that P is the variable contributing to the difference between (6.8) and (6.9).

Moving to the R variable, suppose that P and D are constant, in the sense that the power between a speaker and his addressee is more or less equal, and the relationship between them is close, and the imposition is borrowing some money. The linguistic realization of the FTA would be as in (6.10).

- (6.10) X *I am broke. May I borrow some
 money?*

If, for example, the D is great (the speaker and his addressee are strangers), and the P is equal, the linguistic realization would be as in (6.11).

(6.11) X *I'm terribly sorry to bother you, Sir. Would you please lend me some money to buy some meal? It seems that I must have dropped my purse somewhere.?*

Exercise

How are you going to perform the following acts? Don't forget to consider the variables of D, P, and R.

1. Invite someone out.
2. Ask someone the time.
3. Accuse someone of telling a lie.
4. Tell someone that she/he is smelly.

Suggestion for further Readings

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