Lecture Fifteen: *Semantic Pragmatics and Pragmatic Pragmatics*

I. Administrative
   A. Long essays will be returned tonight to those who turned them in on time.
   B. From here to the end of the semester: readings & writings.
   C. *Questions?*

II. Discussion of the Long Essays

III. Worksheet on Lycan & Searle

IV. Building on the Model
   A. You don’t have to be Wittgenstein to recognize the importance of accommodating use-based elements in your Theory of Meaning. The question is, how do we do this?
   B. For those interested in making their ToM work as a model of communicated meaning, it is important to involve *context* in the account.
      1. ‘Context’ refers to any element that is (a) not officially linguistic in character, and (b) required to explain the significance of an uttered sentence.
      2. Typically (b) is taken to be delimited in a given case by speaker intentions, although perhaps this can be expanded. However, given this, context is difficult to model, since literally anything could be part of it as determined by the speaker.
      3. There is debate over whether the *utterance* or the *sentence* should be the focus of the account here. It may seem obvious that the utterance must be what is explained, but there are those that say these meaning properties are attributable to sentences as a part of what makes them so useful.
   C. One idea that guides theorists who work on this is that of *total content* or *total significance* (see Grice, O’Rourke).
1. This could be seen as the union of sentence meaning and speaker meaning. Alternatively, one could take it to be the combination of the semantic content and the pragmatic content, or the combination of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.

2. Typically, propositional content is taken to be the foundation of this, given that it is most closely associated with the sentence uttered and serves as an input into the process of determining speaker meaning.

3. On this approach—which I will assume this week—the goal is to see how one can build on the propositional content and thereby capture the additional elements of significance required to obtain the total content.

4. The picture.

V. Semantic Pragmatics

A. The first thing one must do is account for those elements of the total content that are (a) not supplied as part of conventional meaning, but (b) are drawn from the utterance context in a way guided strictly by rules supplied by the conventional meaning, and (c) when supplied, yield a truth-evaluable propositional content.

1. These include what we have called “context sensitive terms”, such as pronouns and other terms or phrases that exhibit the property of deixis.

2. For example, ‘you’, ‘I’, ‘neighborhood’, and even times or seasons can be deictic in their employment.

3. What gets included here is a bit tricky. There are paradigm examples, but then there are also elements that seem like they could be a part of semantic pragmatics but were identified by those working in pragmatic pragmatics (e.g., conventional implicature: ‘and’ vs. ‘but’, dead metaphor). It is probably best to begin by assuming a graded, multidimensional relationship between the strictly sentential and the clearly contextual.

B. Approaches to Semantic Pragmatics

1. One could parameterize the meanings assigned to sentences, associating the parameters with the context-sensitive elements and allowing those to be set by the context when the sentences are
uttered (e.g., Davidson).

2. Alternatively, one could think in terms of a single function that assigns elements to context-sensitive terms and phrases from the context as needed to fill out the propositional content of the sentence (e.g., Harman).

3. Another classic approach is due to Kaplan, who takes sentences to have characters, which are functions from contexts to contents. Contexts are tuples of non-sentential elements, so his approach here is similar to that of Davidson. Contents are propositions with the holes plugged by contextual elements, or we can understand these as functions from worlds to truth-values.

VI. Pragmatic Pragmatics

A. Pragmatic pragmatics goes beyond what is strictly constrained by elements of the sentence.

1. For a given uttered sentence, ask what is left over in the total content after you have taken away the conventional meaning and the semantic pragmatic contributions.

2. This is more free form and unconstrained, but interestingly, we are very good at identifying the elements, and typically with great speed.

3. There isn’t much of a line between semantic and pragmatic pragmatics—in fact, the status of various elements of content remains in dispute.

B. Pragmatic pragmatic elements

1. Speech acts (Austin, Searle)
   a. Performative utterances
   b. Locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts

2. Communicative inference (Grice, Sperber & Wilson)
   a. The Cooperative Principle and associated maxims
   b. Conversational implicature – particular and generalized
c. Conventional implicature

3. Indirect force (Searle)
   a. Conservative approach
   b. Criticisms: processing and syntactic markers

4. Presupposition (Strawson)

5. Focus