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COGNITIVE PRAGMATICS

Lecture 2:

Communicative intentions and linguistic conventions in verbal communication

Recall

- The code model fails to account for the *richness of communicated meaning* (Origgi & Sperber 2000),
i.e., the fact that the number of context-specific meanings that can be communicated by a linguistic form is vast and potentially unlimited.
- These meanings are constituted by the specific intentions of speakers and are inferentially recognized by hearers.

- Human communication consists of *forming, expressing* (→ by speakers),
and *inferentially recognizing* (→ by hearers) complex communicative intentions.
- Verbal comprehension involves a combination of *coding* and *mindreading* (Wilson & Sperber 2012).

What are communicative intentions?

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→ Overt intentions, i.e., intentions whose fulfilment requires their recognition.
(Grice 1957; Bach & Harnish 1979; Wilson and Sperber 2012)

What are communicative intentions?

“*S* means something by utterance *U*”

is equivalent to

“*S* intends utterance *U* to produce some response *R* on the part of *H*
by means of getting *H* to recognize *this intention*.”

→ Meaning-constituting intentions are *reflexive*.

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- (13) a. I sure hope the kids settle down tonight.
b. Santa only comes if the kids are asleep.

Also: secretly planting Ann's handkerchief at the crime scene.

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Two Ways to Get a Driver to Stop and Pull Over

- (a) Standing on the shoulder of the road and waving;
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→ *speaker-meaning or telling*

Grice 1975

Tomasello 1999, 2015, 2016; Baron-Cohen 1997; Wilson and Sperber 2012

In summary

Girce's model of communication

- Most human communication is intentional and inferential;
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[?] *What is the role of language in communication?*

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[?] *What is the role of language in communication?*

- Language conventions ($\rightarrow \text{code}_2$) facilitate communication but are not necessary for it;
- they help us solve **coordination problems** characteristic of communication.

What are coordination problems?

- A **coordination problem** occurs when two or more people need to choose the same action or strategy to achieve the best possible outcome, but they have multiple options to choose from.
- The **challenge** is that they must *somehow* agree on which option to pick, even though there's no obvious way to *communicate* or *guarantee* they'll make the same choice.

Bert and Ernie in the Shopping Mall

→ Bert and Ernie lost contact with each other in the shopping mall and want to find each other, that is, meet at the same location.

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B			
E	<i>car</i>	<i>bookshop</i>	<i>ice-cream shop</i>
<i>car</i>	1	0	0
<i>bookshop</i>	0	1	0
<i>ice-cream shop</i>	0	0	1

Lewis Signalling Game

- Two players (\rightarrow the *sender* and the *receiver*) must coordinate their actions based on signals sent by the sender.
- The sender chooses a signal to convey a message, and the receiver must interpret it to take the correct action.

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Red and Blue Flags

- Two possible states of the world:
 - the enemy is coming from the land,
 - the enemy is coming from the sea.
- Two corresponding actions:
 - arranging the defence of the wall,
 - arranging the defence of the waterfront.

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 - the enemy is coming from the sea.
- Two corresponding actions:
 - arranging the defence of the wall,
 - arranging the defence of the waterfront.
- The **challenge** is that there are multiple possible *ways to interpret the signals* (→ *interpretation systems*), and both players must converge on *the same interpretation* (→ *interpretation system*) for the interaction to be successful.
- The **goal** is for both players to achieve a shared understanding and successfully coordinate their behaviour. (→ **a game of perfect common interest**)

Red and Blue Flags

	S		
		<i>land—red</i> <i>sea—blue</i>	<i>land—blue</i> <i>sea—red</i>
R			
		1	0
<i>red—wall</i> <i>blue—water</i>	1		0
		0	1
<i>red—water</i> <i>blue—wall</i>	0	1	

Recall

- A coordination problem often arises when there are multiple possible equilibria, and players must coordinate on which equilibrium to choose.

Conventions by Lewis

A **convention** is a regularity in behaviour that satisfies the following conditions:

- **Mutual benefit:** The regularity is beneficial to the participants *because* it helps them coordinate their actions effectively.
- **Common knowledge:** The participants know that the regularity exists, and they know that the others know, and so on.
- **Expectation:** Each participant follows the regularity *because* they expect others to do so.

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Digression

common knowledge	<i>versus</i>	shared individual knowledge
mutually shared beliefs	<i>versus</i>	merely shared beliefs
↑ <i>common ground</i>		

Gricean communication as a signalling game

→ Communication consists of forming, expressing (→ signalling), and recognizing complex intentions.

what is signalled: the speaker's intention

the correct action: the hearer's representation of the speaker's intention

Gricean communication as a signalling game

(12) A: How about going to the cinema together tomorrow?

B: I have to pick up my *independent* sister from the airport.

[*irony*] B's sister is not independent. (\Rightarrow ?)
B jest disappointed in B's sister. [\rightarrow expression]

[*move*] B *declines* A's invitation.

\Rightarrow_2 B has to pick up B's independent sister from the airport **tomorrow**.

\Rightarrow_1 **B will not go to the cinema with A tomorrow.**

[*coded*] B has to pick up B's independent sister from the airport.

\gg B has a sister.

Gricean communication as a signalling game

(13) Open the window!

Gricean communication as a signalling game

(13) Open the window!

(13') *I suggest you to* open the window.

(13'') *I allow you to* open the window.

In summary

- Verbal comprehension involves a combination of *coding* and *mindreading* (Wilson & Sperber 2012).

How to test one's ability to read other minds?

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→ Sally-Annie as a False-Belief Test

The Scenario:

- The child is shown a story with two characters, typically named **Sally** and **Annie**.
- Sally has a basket, and Annie has a box.
- Sally places a marble in her basket and then leaves the room.

The Deception:

- Annie takes the marble from Sally's basket and places it in her box.

The Key Question:

- *When Sally returns, where will she look for the marble?*