

8.4 Language in use: exercises

8.4.1 Ambiguity and situation

1. Which of the following utterances would be unambiguous in an actual situation? To illustrate, give the situation.

	Ambiguity	Situation that makes the utterance unambiguous
(1) How dare you speak before the Queen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • before the queen speaks • in front of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the queen is about to speak, the addressee butts in. - the addressee is in a very low position of power (a prisoner?) and says something, not necessarily before the queen speaks.
(2) Oh look, the mother of Janet and Peter!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one person: mother of Janet and Peter • two people: woman and Peter 	one or two people are present
(3) Running water can be wasteful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person is letting water run from the tap • the water runs by itself 	A person is letting water run from the tap. The speaker stands beside running water.
(4) I have a skip in my garden.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a 'container' • jumping around 	There is a container in the speaker's garden. The speaker is jumping in the garden.
(5) Spring in the air!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a season • a jump 	It is spring and warm. One person is giving the other instructions.
(6) We watched this programme about llamas in the Andes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching in Andes • the Llamas are in the Andes 	Where the watching takes place.
(7) She bought a new pair of high heels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new shoes • shoes to replace the old ones 	Number of high heels "she" owns
(8) She slipped on her new high heels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • putting on • falling over 	whether "she" is lying on the ground or standing up
(9) I got a new leash for my dog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new leash • a leash to replace the old one 	number and state of leashes in the speaker's possession

8.4.2 Communication

2. Describe the outcome of the communication in the following exchanges:

- (10) A: Do you have another woman?
 B: I wouldn't dream of it! (B is having an affair) **purposely warped communication: B is lying**
- (11) A: We are going to the Europa Park by car. (A is Swiss and actually means "coach")
 B: Well, drive carefully! **interlocutor-impaired: A lacks the correct vocabulary**
- (12) A:¹ [ˈfɔ:kʰændlz].
 B: There you are. Four candles.
 A: No, [fɔ: ˈkʰændlz].
 B: Well there you are, four candles.
 A: No[fɔ: ˈkʰændlz], 'andles for forks.
 B: Fork 'andles (gives A a fork handle)
inadvertently warped (misunderstanding arises out of homophony)
- (13) A: Where did you leave the car?
 B: It's in the garage (passing tram drowns out the following) waiting to be mended.
 A: Great, thanks. **inference-impaired (noise of a passing tram)**
- (14) A: You smashed that priceless Ming vase. Brilliant, well done!
 B: Oh, that's a relief... **inadvertently warped (B is unable to understand A's sarcasm)**

3. Give examples for

- a communicative situation which is symmetrical (in terms of two interlocutors).
e.g, two students talking about a lecture; both have equal status and equal rights to voice their opinion
- a situation in which interlocutor B feels the need to give negative feedback to an opening by interlocutor A. **A: Hi Monika B: Hello – Mrs Clark. (Note: B is socially more powerful than A)**
- two ways in which the message "sit down" can be conveyed between interlocutors of different social status.
Inferior speaker, superior addressee: "Would you please sit down for a second, madam?"
Superior speaker, inferior addressee: "Sit down!"
- a situation in which child A gives a seemingly plausible explanation for the disappearance of a piece of cake (the dog got it) and B realises that A is lying. What elements can give B that impression.
A avoids eye-contact with B, fidgets or toys with or hesitates, then overly quickly or overly casually claims that the dog is to blame. Non-verbal extra-lingual signals.

8.4.3 Speech Acts

- (15) Passengers are kindly requested to refrain from smoking.
locutionary act: statement
illocutionary act: directive/request: do not smoke
perlocutionary force: nobody smokes
- (16) I really hate it when people don't switch off their mobile phones in class.
locutionary Act: statement
illocutionary act: a threat, request
perlocutionary force: People will turn off their phones
indirect speech act; Direct speech act: "Turn off you phones when you are in class."
- (17) A breath of fresh air would be really great.
locutionary Act: statement
illocutionary act: a request or suggestion

¹ See The Two Ronnies <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cz2-ukrd2VQ>

perlocutionary force: somebody will open a window or allow the speaker to go for a walk

indirect speech act; Direct speech act: "Open the window" or "I'd like to go for a walk."

- (18) Please change quickly to the connecting trains.

locutionary Act: directive

illocutionary act: a request to ensure minimal delays

perlocutionary force: People will move quickly to their next trains

- (19) Could you make even more noise when you get back late?

locutionary Act: question, request for information

illocutionary act: a complaint

perlocutionary force: Interlocutor(s) will be more quiet in future

indirect speech act; Direct speech act: "Don't make so much bloody noise when you get back late!"

- (20) Damn, I need to make a call and am completely out of juice.

locutionary Act: statement

illocutionary act: a request to borrow someone's phone

perlocutionary force: The speaker will be allowed to borrow someone's phone.

indirect speech act; Direct speech act: "Please, can I borrow your phone to make an urgent call."

- (21) Give us a fiver!

locutionary Act: directive

illocutionary act: a request

perlocutionary force: Speaker will be given £ 5

- (22) A "thank you" from time to time would be nice.

locutionary Act: statement

Illocutionary act: a complaint coupled with a request for improved future behaviour

perlocutionary force: interlocutor will be more grateful in the future

indirect speech act; Direct speech act: "Say 'thank you' for what you get."

- (23) You are spending a lot of time at that cafe lately...

locutionary Act: statement

illocutionary act: a request for information or a complaint

perlocutionary force: Interlocutor will explain what s/he is doing at the café

indirect speech act; Direct speech act: "What are you doing at the café?"

5. Describe the locutionary acts in the above examples.

5. What is the illocutionary act in the above examples?

6. What could the perlocutionary force of the examples be?

7. Identify the indirect speech acts, give the situation in which they might be uttered and say what a corresponding direct speech act might look like.

8. Add the missing performatives to the following examples:

(24) I hate it when that happens, I must _____. **admit, say**

(25) I _____ you think that is really funny. **suppose**

(26) You are gonna get a smack in a minute, I _____! **swear, am warning you**

(27) I _____ you, reconsider this rash decision. **beg, implore**

(28) As we don't think any of our concerns are being addressed, we hereby _____ further negotiations. **cancel, suspend, withdraw from**

(29) If you don't agree with the decision you can always _____ objections with the boss. **discuss, raise**

(30) I _____ to the way in which you treat your workforce. **object**

9. What are the Felicity Conditions for a situation in which a speaker says

(31) I hereby declare this bridge open.

- speaker must be an official, a politician, a celebrity or a person of elevated social status (s/he must have authority/power)
- the speech act comes after an official, formal event with speeches (the act must be carried out according to conventional procedure)
- the speaker cuts a ribbon that hangs across the carriage way (the act must follow a ritual)
- the speaker knows that after the ceremony the bridge will be used (the speaker must appear to believe in the institution and the power of the performative)
- the public will use the bridge afterwards (interlocutors will behave accordingly afterwards)

8.4.4 CP and Implicatures

10. Analyse the following exchanges in terms of Maxims and Implicatures.

(32) A: I am out of petrol.

B: There's a garage round the corner (Grice 1975: 51)

Maxim of Relation does not seem to be observed fully, but the connection between the two turns is clear: B's implicature is that A can get petrol around the corner. Grice states that "the unstated connection between B's remark and A's remark is so obvious that, even if one interprets the supermaxim of Manner, 'Be perspicuous,' as applying not only to the expression of what is said but also to the connection of what is said with adjacent remarks, there seems to be no case for regarding that supermaxim as infringed in this example." (Grice 1975: 51)

(33) A: Smith doesn't seem to have a girlfriend these days.

B: He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately. (Grice 1975: 51)

Again, the Maxim of Relation does not seem to be observed fully, but "B implicates that Smith has, or may have, a girlfriend in New York. ... In both examples, the speaker implicates that which he must be assumed to believe in order to preserve the assumption that he is observing the maxim of relation." (Grice 1975: 51)

(34) A: What is the capital of New York State?

B: I know it's not New York. Albany perhaps?

Maxim of Quality is not observed "Don't say that which you lack adequate evidence for", but this is clearly signalled with conventional implicature using "perhaps". Grice has this to say: "There is no reason to suppose that B is opting out; his answer is, as he [sic] well knows, less informative than is required to meet A's needs. This infringement of the first Maxim of Quantity can be explained only by the supposition that B is aware that to be more informative would be to say something that infringed the maxim of Quality". (Grice 1975: 51)

(35) A: Where is my mobile?

B: Where you left it.

Maxim of Quantity "Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)" is flouted. B's implicature is conversational, expressing unwillingness to help.

(36) A: I really didn't enjoy the play last night. Too much bad language.

B: To be cutting edge nowadays, it seems you need to use the f-word constantly.

Maxim of Relation is not overtly observed, but the conversational implicature of B's rather general observation is that B agrees with A.

(37) A: Where were you on the night of the murder?

B: I'd rather not say.

B overtly opts out of the Maxim of Quantity. No real implicature is created except perhaps that B has done something that needs to be kept a secret but has no bearing on the murder.

(38) A: Why are you late for the meeting?

B: I succumbed to a bout of postprandial torpor.

A: Can you say that in English?

B flouts the Maxim of Manner "Be clear", but may have attempted to create an implicature by replying truthfully (falling asleep after a meal) but making a joke out of it by using overly sophisticated vocabulary.

(39) A: I really can't help you, mate, sorry.

B: What a fine friend you have turned out to be.

B seems to flout the Maxim of Relevance and Quantity. Two possible conversational implicatures could be created: that B complains about A or that B, by being ironic, hopes to persuade A to change her/his mind about being helpful.

(40) A: Do you think Charles will be here in time?

B: I just heard there is a major traffic jam on the motorway.

B flouts the Maxim of Relevance and Quantity thereby creating a conversational implicature that s/he assumes Charles will be late, held up by or in the traffic jam.

(41) A: Have you taken the rubbish out and washed the floors?

B: I've taken the rubbish out.

B flouts the Maxim of Relevance and Quantity thereby creating a conversational implicature that the floors remain unwashed.

(42) A: Did you like the latest album by the Stones?

B: Do they really still need the cash?

B flouts the Maxim of Relevance and creates a conversational implicature that the album is really not good at all.

(43) A: Jane and Patrick are thinking of emigrating to Australia.

B: I'd miss Patrick.

A: I didn't realise you don't like Jane.

B: Oh I do, but Patrick is a really good mate.

A infers, wrongly, that B does not like Jane, i.e. misreads B's non-observance of the Maxims of Quantity (give as much information as is needed) and Manner (be clear) as a conversational implicature suggesting that B has a problem with Jane.

(44) A: I saw you-know-who in her garden this afternoon.

B: Oh dear, she's back then...

A looks like flouting the Maxim of Manner ("you-know-who" is less than clear), but could be said to be suspending it as "you-know-who" is clearly understood by B but the name of the person may be a taboo in the household.