

\***Information structure:** topic // focus

Topic – comment

Focus (new) – given

**Pragmatics** – the study of various aspects of language use; it deals with the ways in which language-users use and interpret words and utterances in particular situations.

**Aspects of language use:**

- a. the role of context and presuppositions,
- b. language functions and speech acts,
- c. conversational implicatures.

### 1.1. Linguistic context

- (1) a. The right **bank** of the River Danube in Budapest is nice and hilly.  
b. The **bank** has announced an increase in interest rates.

Physical context ← **deixis // deictic expressions**

**Deictic expressions** – ‘anchors’ to the context: personal pronouns (*I* = the speaker, *you* = the addressee), temporal adverbs (*now* = the moment of speaking, *yesterday* = the day before, *tomorrow*), locative adverbs (*here* = the place of speaking, *there*).

### 1.2. Presupposition

- (2) Did you give up drinking? ← presupposition: You were / are a drinker.

Presupposition ‘survives’ under negation / question!

Presupposition vs. entailment: cf. examples like *The president was killed*.

Presuppositions can be triggered by definite expressions and possessive constructions, clefts, factive verbs (*regret*, *realize*), implicative verbs (*manage*), iterative modifiers (*again*).

### 2.1. Language functions

- cognitive function: the communication of a state of affairs,
- expressive function: the expression of the speaker’s attitudes,
- directive function: influencing the hearer’s behaviour (*Could you open the window?*),
- phatic function: establishing and maintaining contact with the hearer,
- metalinguistic function,
- poetic function.

**2.2. Speech acts** ← illocutionary act: asserting, stating, reporting, complaining, promising, inquiring, warning, suggesting, ordering, requesting, thanking, greeting.

Performative predicates: *I hereby test*: I hereby declare you husband and wife // #I hereby know you.

Ambiguity:

- (3) a. Why don’t you leave? ← question, request  
b. When are you leaving? ← question, suggest

### 3. Conversational implicatures + Grice’s maxims

Cooperative Principle: ‘make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged’

Maxim of Quality: Make your contribution one that is true; do not say what you believe to be false and do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Maxim of Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required but not more informative than is required.

Maxim of Relevance: Be relevant.

**Implicature** – information that is implied (that can be entailed) based on the real world context.

Conventional implicature:

(4) I am tired **but** happy.

*Implied:* Normally, people are not happy when they are tired.

Conversational implicatures are based on speakers' agreement to comply with Principles and Maxims of conversation.

(5) Speaker A: The doorbell rang.

*Implied:* *Could you open the door?*

Speaker B: I'm in the bath.

*Implied* (← Maxim of Relevance): *No, I cannot open the door right now, open it yourself.*

(6) John Snow dies in the first episode of the GoT.

*Implied* (← Maxim of Quality): I am sure and I have some evidence that JS dies ...

(7) I have 1000 forints.

*Implied* (← Maxim of Quantity): I do not have more than 1000 forints.

### Exercises

1. State what semantic features the words share and how the A words and the B words are related. (Use the + and – values of such features as 'animate', 'male', 'human', 'concrete', 'solid'.)

A. husband, man, son, monk, chief

B. bull, stallion, drake, ram, rooster.

2. Describe all possible readings of the following ambiguous sentences:

a. Peter saw Mary drunk. b. We laughed at the colorful ball.

3. What is one obvious presupposition of a speaker who says:

a. Your watch is broken. b. The King of France is bald.

4. Describe the best//the only possible way to understand this conversation in terms of conversational implicatures:

Speaker A: Does Mary have a boyfriend?

Speaker B: She's been driving to Santa Barbara every weekend.