Review

Indicative mood sentences: sentences that are typically used to make claims—as a result, they can sensibly be prefaced with: "It is true/false that"

Argument: A set of claims/statements (premises) given to provide support for another statement (the conclusion)

Argument markers: Words commonly used to preface premises (reason markers) or conclusions (conclusion markers)

Conditionals vs. arguments: Conditional statements (form: If P then Q) are not arguments on their own (without implicit conversational context);

so "If___, then ___" is not an argument marker.
(This is also true for "either____ or _____")

Validity: Arguments can be good or bad. Good (deductive) arguments are *valid*: IF the premises of the argument are true, the conclusion MUST also be true.

In other words: If the premises of a **valid** argument are all true, then the conclusion **cannot** be false

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Note: The definition of "validity" ***does not*** say anything about the **ACTUAL** truth values of the premises or conclusion—the premises or conclusions of a valid argument may actually be either true or false.

What can't happen (in a valid argument) is all true premises AND a false conclusion

Examples:

1. All men are mortal. T/F?
2. Mr. Ed is a man. T/F?
3. Mr. Ed is mortal. T/F? Valid?

1. Some people are left-handed. T/F?
2. Babe Ruth is a person. T/F?
3. Babe Ruth is left-handed. T/F? Valid?

1. All human beings walk on four legs. T/F?
2. Tigers are human beings. T/F?
3. Tigers walk on four legs. T/F? Valid?

1. If Santa Claus exists, he sings for the Village People. T/F?
2. Santa Claus exists. T/F?
3. Santa Claus sings for the Village People. T/F? Valid?

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Soundness: Though all good (deductive) arguments are valid, not all valid arguments are good arguments.

Good arguments prove their conclusions, but they need true premises to do this

So a good argument must not only be valid; it needs to have true premises

Arguments that are valid AND have true premises are ***sound arguments***

Once again, however, though all good deductive arguments are sound (valid, with all true premises) *not all sound arguments are good arguments*

Circular arguments and the regress of justification

1. Whales have hair

∴ 2. Whales are not hairless.

Is this argument sound?

Is it good?

Since the goal of an argument is often to prove that a doubtful claim is true, good arguments also depend on having premises that are acceptable to their audience.

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Evaluate the following as an attempt to prove that God exists to someone who doesn't already believe it

1. The Bible is inspired by God.
2. Everything inspired by God is true.
3. So, everything the Bible says is true.
4. The Bible says that God exists.
5. God exists.

Since the goal of an argument is often to prove that a doubtful claim is true, good arguments also depend on having acceptable premises.

When are premises acceptable?

Theoretically, every premise can be doubted, and so will need to be supported using still more premises, and so on, *ad infinitum*

So, it seems that arguments will need to be infinitely long to fully justify their conclusions.

The traditional (practical) solution: find premises that are accepted or won't be challenged (by the argument's audience)

So how do we find these common premises in practice?

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By:

(1) *Assuring:* We indicate that we could defend our premises, even though we are not giving that defence right now.

(2) *Guarding:* We weaken our claims so that they are less subject to attack.

(3) *Discounting:* We anticipate criticisms but dismiss them by further considerations.

ASSURING: We assure our audience that our premises are generally acceptable without explicitly proving that they are.

(a) citing authorities:

(true) Doctors agree that …

Recent studies have shown that …

It has been established that …

(false) It's no longer held that …

That view has been undermined by new evidence that …

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(b) giving our own confidence:

I'm certain that …

Over the years, I've learned that …

I'm willing to bet the farm that …

(c) (Bad type) abusive assurances

Everyone with any sense agrees that …

Of course, no one will deny that …

It's just common sense that …

Nobody but a fool would deny that

(false) (That's just so naïve …)

No one seriously maintains that …

You would have to be pretty dumb to think that …

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If people only gave assurances when appropriate, you could usually take them at face value

Unfortunately, assurances often point to the ***weakest*** parts of arguments.

E.g., "I don't really need to convince you that…"

Sceptical worry: Why are they saying this? Maybe I should look closer.

GUARDING OUR PREMISES

We can do this by:

(1) Weakening the *extent* of a claim from 'all' to 'most' to 'a few' to 'some,' and so on: e.g., "Don't trust anyone over 30"

Uh, I meant, " Don't trust *most people* over 30"

"Don't trust *some people* over 30"

(2) *Probability* locutions: e.g., "it is certain beyond a reasonable doubt that…" lowered to "it is likely that…," or to "it's plausible that," and so on.

(3) Describing our *cognitive* state: "I know that" is weakened to "I'm pretty convinced that," "I suspect that," "I'm leaning to that," and so on

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Finding the balance: You want to weaken premises to avoid criticism, but not so much that they don't properly support the conclusion

1. All/most/some/one whales weigh more than 5 tons.
2. Willy is a whale.

∴ 3. Willy weighs more than 5 tons.

Beware of *corrupting* guarding terms into *insinuators:* "*Perhaps* you've been less than honest with me"

At face value?

Conversational implication?

Even more sneaky: Introduce a guarded statement and then talk as if it were not guarded at all.

"Perhaps Paul Martin has not been forthright with the Gomery inquiry. Of course, he may have been pressured by Chrétien to hide the facts. But a minister of finance owes more to the Canadian people than to an outgoing prime minister!"

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DISCOUNTING: We sometimes defend premises by raising possible criticisms only to reject them

e.g. The ring is beautiful, but (the ring is) expensive

vs. The ring is expensive, but beautiful

Each sentence of the "discounting" pair agrees on the facts; the discounting expression "but" suggests that the second overrides or trumps the other

Structure of "A but B"

(1) A is said to be true
(2) B is said to be true
(3) Yet A and B are said to conflict in some way (i.e., *but*)
(4) B is implied to be more important than A ("but" discounts the importance of the truth of A)

We may discount to block certain conversational implications of what we have said

(e.g.) "Bertuzzi is an aggressive player, but he is not mean."

"aggressive" on its own conversationally implies vicious; so we discount this implication

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"The situation is difficult, but not hopeless."

"It's true that most people prefer Hollywood movies, but most people have no taste"

Other discounting sentence connectives

Although she is poor, she is honest.

Although she is honest, she is poor.

Format: Although A, B

Two General Discounter Formats:

1. Discounter A, B
2. A, discounter B

First pattern	**Second pattern**
although	but
though	however
while	nonetheless
whereas	nevertheless
even if/though	yet
	still

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Abusing discounting:

(1) discounting weak objections to avoid other, stronger ones.

"My views may upset you, but they are honest opinions" (The person's views are racist, say)

(2) *discounting straw man*.

"Bilingualism is a great idea in theory, but you'll never get everybody to speak both official languages"

Countering abusive discounting: (1) is this the criticism most would really raise or are their stronger complaints?

(2) is the discounted view one that is really held?

Speech Acts (Chapter 2 material, pp 22*ff*)

The point of this material is that language is a tool, and the same tool can be made to perform different tasks

This will aid us when interpreting people's claims and arguments

Performatives: Saying something can do more than merely making a statement —*it can make something happen*

e.g., saying, "I do" at a wedding, along with other trappings, *makes* one married

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An umpire's saying, "You're out" to a person not only makes a claim, it makes that person out

Explicit performative test: In saying "I——," I thereby——."

e.g., In saying "I congratulate you," I thereby congratulate you

Context of utterance must be appropriate (no sarcasm, people must be around, not in a play, etc.)

performative verbs: e.g.: promising, resigning, swearing, apologizing, refusing, stating, asserting, describing, questioning, concluding

Argumentative Performatives

If I say, "I conclude that such and such," I thereby conclude that such and such.

If I say, "I base my argument on the claim that such and such," I thereby base my argument on that claim" (46)

A *conversational exchange*: where people use language to affect each other

A *conversational act* is one that causes an effect in others by the meaning of what they say

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e.g., I say to you "There are perogies in the fridge" In saying this, I perform:

(a) a ***linguistic act***, (I utter a meaningful sentence, using appropriate words in the right order)

(b) the ***speech act*** of making a statement, and

(c) the ***conversational act*** of making you *aware* of the contents of the fridge.

Conversational acts can fail to achieve their point:

(a) if the hearer doesn't understand what's said, or

(b) if the person used an inappropriate linguistic or speech act (e.g., commanding or questioning, instead of stating)

Examples:

1. We *urge* others to do something (a speech act) to *persuade* them to do it (a conversational act)

   "You should watch 'The Daily Show,' since it's the funniest, wisest news programme on TV"

2. We *tell* others something (a speech act) to *get them to believe* something (a conversational act)

   "Jane tells us that drug addiction makes use of the same neural pathways as love."

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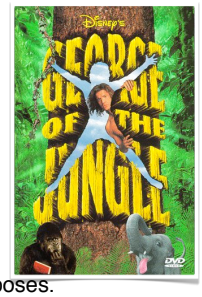
3. We *warn* others (a speech act) to *put them on their guard* (a conversational act)

   "Hey, George of the Jungle, you should watch out for that tree."



Grice's Conversational Rules for cooperative conversations (i.e., not for interrogation, being robbed, etc.)

Cooperative Principle: Conversers should use language in a way that helps them achieve their common goals.

Some cooperative rules:

Rule of Quantity: (1) Say enough to achieve common purposes.

Rule of Quality:

(1) Don't say what you believe is false.

(2) Don't say things without sufficient proof.

People should be able to expect that we are not lying, and that we aren't just "winging it"

It's reasonable to be challenged on these points, since people don't always tell the truth, and people do "talk off the tops of their heads"

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Rule of Relevance: Be relevant. Don't change the subject, don't interrupt.

"When can I get the text for this class?" "I prefer to watch TV"

Rule of Manner:

(1) Avoid words that aren't commonly understood

(2) Avoid ambiguity

(3) Be brief

(4) Be organized

Conversational Implication:

Since most of the time, most of us:

(a) implicitly (try to) follow these rules and implicitly know we are following them, and

(b) expect others to assume that we are following them, we can give much information without directly saying it

Conversational implication: When we do not actually say something, but imply it by a common conversational rule

Thirsty person asks: "Where can I get a pop?"

You answer: "The 7-11"

The *conversational implication* (Quantity) is that this is the closest pop source.

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It's possible to say something that is literally true, but whose conversational implication is false:

"Oh, you haven't beaten anyone up today."

Sometimes, what is literally false can conversationally imply something true (e.g., by metaphor)

"She's a real tiger, when she plays Scrabble"

What might someone conversationally imply in the following?

(1) It's getting a little chilly in here.

(2) The crowd didn't actually throw bottles at him (a rock singer).

(3) Well, he hasn't been sent to jail yet.

VIOLATING CONVERSATIONAL RULES:

Sometimes we deliberately break these rules to make subtle points:

Ambiguity: "I cannot praise his work too highly"

Damning with faint praise: "She usually comes to work on time and sometimes stays till the end of her shift"

Pointedly changing the subject: A: "The premier is two-faced and arrogant"; B: "Hello, Mr. Premier!"

Examples: Rule violated? Conversational implication?

How was the class this morning? "*It's over*"

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Do you want to w-a-l-k the d-o-g?

CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATION AND RHETORICAL DEVICES

A literal question seeks information

But a rhetorical question can imply an assertion or order

"Would you close the door?"

"Is anyone here smart enough to keep the door closed?"

Why not be more direct, then?

Questions also are governed by conversational rules similar to statements: e.g. Quantity—don't ask obvious questions)

Quality (Don't ask misleading questions, or questions based on false assumptions: "When did you stop beating your wife?")

Rhetorical questions often deliberately break the rule of Quantity: The answer to the question is (should be) obvious, and the "question" is intended to make the hearer acknowledge this

"Could you wait your turn?" (expected answer: "Yes, I *should* wait my turn")

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Whether a question is rhetorical or literal, depends on context:

e.g., "No, I have a serious stab wound"

Two stage process:

(i) is the question literal or rhetorical

(ii) if rhetorical, what is the force of the question?

Overstatement or hyperbole: Exaggeration break's Grice's rule of Quality to achieve rhetorical effect.

Conversational purpose? To draw attention to something: "I'm so tired I could sleep in a cow's butt."

(i) Is the statement literal or figurative

(ii) If figurative, what is the literal force of the statement?

Understatement: We say something is "not bad" or "mediocre," etc. and directly violate the Rule of Quality.

The rhetorical force of understatement can be to get people to see how much better than ordinary something is, to suggest that the effort, while good by most people's standards, is still beneath one's own, etc.

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Irony and Sarcasm: When we expect others to take our words as having the *opposite* meaning

"Smooth move, buddy."

"Nice one"

"Thanks for the quick and painless stiletto, *dear friend*"

Context determines whether the question is to be taken literally or rhetorically

Figurative Language

We often use metaphors to express ideas more powerfully

e.g., Canada's social safety net.

Metaphors seem implicitly to have the form of an analogy: A is to B as C is to D

A safety net is to an aerialist as welfare benefits are to people who've lost their jobs.

When metaphors are used in arguments, they should be replaced with more literal statements, to make the comparison explicit.

We can then evaluate the comparison for accuracy and relevance

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Evaluative Language

Many arguments use words that evaluate things either positively or negatively

"'Fahrenheit 9/11' is a *great* documentary"

"Trudeau was a *fine* prime minister."

"Idi Amin was an *evil* man"

"Sherron Watkins did the *right* thing when she blew the whistle on Enron"

A theory of evaluative terms: Evaluations typically arise when we have to make choices or decisions among actions or things:

Should I/we/they do A or B, given standards appropriate in this area?

Is A or B or C better, for the job at hand?

Thus to say something is good in some way is to say that it meets relevant standards in that area.

We have different evaluative standards for morals, religion, aesthetics, personal projects, etc.

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They can reinforce each other or conflict

e.g., Gauguin: his aesthetic vs. his moral duties

"Wiping out humanity would be good for ecology, but morally horrific"

Evaluative words are often subject specific

e.g., "sin" is a religious evaluative expression

"illegal"

"hot"?

"slapdash"?

The same type of quality can be given a positive or negative spin by choice of evaluative expressions: "He is a *careful/ponderous* thinker"

"too" often turns a positive quality into a negative one: too smart; too honest, too nice, too friendly, too happy, etc.

What about "too kind"?

So, when we analyse arguments, we should identify evaluative terms, because the quality of arguments can depend on whether these evaluative terms are appropriate.

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Often the difference between evaluative and descriptive terms is not clear

e.g. homicide (killing a person) vs. murder (*wrongly* killing a person)

Some words are not (strictly) evaluative, but seem so because they have acquired negative or positive connotations

e.g., nuclear, spinster, hussy, political, discrimination, and so on.

EUPHEMISM AND SPIN DOCTORING

Euphemism: using a delicate, inoffensive, or even positive term instead of one that may have negative connotations

Good uses: to be polite or considerate

"John passed away"

"Jerry is physically and mentally challenged"

"Aunt Mary speaks her mind"

Bad uses: to downplay serious wrongs

"Sally got nonelective retirement"

"There was some collateral damage in our most recent bombing run"

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Other expressions: playing hardball, negative patient outcomes, ethnic cleansing, violent peace, pre-owned, …

Spin doctor: to present things in either a positive or negative light

Examples of spin-doctor slogan pairs:

Pro-Choice vs. Pro-Life

Progressive Education vs. Back to Basics

Liberal vs. Conservative

Alternative Lifestyles vs. Family Values

Tax freedom day vs. Publicly owned institutions

In-class/homework:
Worksheet provided

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