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Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the study of how language is affected by the context in which it occurs: for example, the relationship between the speakers in a conversation or the immediately preceding utterances in a text. Pragmatics is distinct from grammar, which is the study of the internal structure of language. (Grammar, in turn, is generally divided into several areas of study: semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology. These areas are covered in Chapters 3–6.) Keeping in mind this distinction between pragmatics (language use) and grammar (language structure), let's consider some observations that we can make about language use and context.

- (1) If Jack says *Kathy's cooking dinner tonight*, and Jill replies with *Better stock up on Alka-Seltzer*, an observer might conclude that Kathy is not a good cook.
- (2) The utterance *I apologize for stepping on your toe* can constitute an act of apology. The utterance *John apologized to Mary for stepping on her toe* cannot.
- (3) The utterance *I now pronounce you husband and wife* can constitute an act of marriage if spoken by an appropriate authority, such as an ordained Catholic priest. If uttered by an 8-year-old child, however, it cannot.
- (4) An appropriate answer to the question *Do you have the time?* might be *7:15*; an inappropriate answer would be *Yes*.
- (5) When a friend says something that you agree with, you might respond by saying *You can say that again*. But it would be inappropriate for your friend to then repeat what he or she originally said.

Observation (1) illustrates the fact that sentences can imply information that is not actually stated. Observation (2) illustrates the fact that we can *do* things by uttering sentences, as well as say things. Observation (3) illustrates the fact that the nature of the participants in a verbal exchange can determine the effect of what is actually said. Observation (4) illustrates the fact that a correct answer to a question is not necessarily appropriate. Observation (5) illustrates the fact that speakers don't always mean exactly what they say.

All of these phenomena are pragmatic in nature. That is, they have to do with the way we use language to communicate in a particular context rather than the way language is struc-

tured internally. Moreover, we will assume that the phenomena in (1–5) are systematic; that is, they are governed by a system of principles. What we will now try to do is construct the system of principles that will account for these phenomena. Keep in mind that what follows is a theory designed to account for the observations in (1–5).

Implicature

In his article “Logic and Conversation,” the philosopher Paul Grice (1975) pointed out that an utterance can *imply* a proposition (i.e., a statement) that is not part of the utterance and that does not follow as a necessary consequence of the utterance. Grice called such an implied statement an **implicature**. Consider the following example. John says to his wife, Mary, *Uncle Chester is coming over for dinner tonight*, and Mary responds with *I guess I'd better hide the liquor*. Someone hearing this interchange might draw the inference that Uncle Chester has a drinking problem. In Grice’s terms, we might say that Mary’s utterance raises the implicature that Uncle Chester has a drinking problem.

There are three important points to note about this example. First, the implicature (Uncle Chester has a drinking problem) is not part of Mary’s utterance (*I guess I'd better hide the liquor*). Second, the implicature does not follow as a necessary consequence of Mary’s utterance. (A necessary consequence of an utterance is called an **entailment** and will be covered in the chapter on semantics.) Third, it is possible for an utterance to raise more than one implicature, or to raise different implicatures if uttered in different contexts. For example, Mary’s response (*I guess I'd better hide the liquor*) might raise the implicature that Uncle Chester is a teetotaler, and that the mere sight of alcohol and its consumption offends him, so Mary is hiding it from his view. Thus, implicatures are heavily dependent upon the context of an utterance, including the participants. However, we have not yet constructed any hypotheses about how these implicatures arise. We will now consider what such a theory might look like.

Conversational Maxims

Grice proposes that conversations are governed by what he calls the Cooperative Principle: the assumption that participants in a conversation are cooperating with each other. This Cooperative Principle, in turn, consists of four **conversational maxims**: Quantity—a participant’s contribution should be informative; Quality—a participant’s contribution should be true; Relation—a participant’s contribution should be relevant; and Manner—a participant’s contribution should be clear. Grice’s claim, however, is not that we strictly adhere to these maxims when we converse; rather, he claims that we interpret what we hear *as if* it conforms to these maxims. That is, when a maxim is violated, we draw an inference (i.e., an implicature) which makes the utterance conform to these maxims. Grice used the term **flouting** to describe the *intentional* violation of a maxim for the purpose of conveying an unstated proposition. This, then, would constitute a theory of how implicatures arise. Let’s now consider how this theory of conversational implicature applies in some hypothetical cases.

Maxim of Quantity. This maxim states that each participant’s contribution to a conversation should be no more or less informative than required. Suppose Kenny and Tom are

college roommates. Kenny walks into the living room of their apartment, where Tom is reading a book. Kenny asks Tom, *What are you reading?* Tom responds with *A book*, which raises an implicature. Kenny reasons (unconsciously) as follows: I asked Tom what he was reading, and my question required him to tell me either the title of his book or at least its subject matter. Instead, he told me what I could already see for myself. He appears to be flouting the Maxim of Quantity. There must be a reason that he gave less information than the situation requires. The inference (i.e., the implicature) that I draw is that he does not want to be disturbed, and thus is trying to end the conversation.

Maxim of Quality. This maxim states that each participant's contribution should be truthful and based on sufficient evidence. Suppose an undergraduate in a geography class says, in response to a question from the instructor, *Reno's the capital of Nevada*. The instructor, Mr. Barbados, then says, *Yeah, and London's the capital of New Jersey*. The instructor's utterance raises an implicature. The student reasons (unconsciously) as follows: Mr. Barbados said that London is the capital of New Jersey; he knows that is not true. He appears to be flouting the Maxim of Quality; there must be a reason for him saying something patently false. The inference (i.e., the implicature) I draw is that my answer is false (i.e., Reno is not the capital of Nevada). (This and the next two examples are adapted from Levinson [1983].)

Maxim of Relation. This maxim states that each participant's contribution should be relevant to the subject of the conversation. Suppose a man wakes up in the morning and asks his wife, *What time is it?* She responds with *Well, the paper's already come*. Her statement raises an implicature. The husband reasons (unconsciously) as follows: I asked about the time, and she mentioned something seemingly unrelated—the arrival of the newspaper. She appears to be flouting the Maxim of Relation; there must be some reason for her seemingly irrelevant comment. The inference (i.e., the implicature) I draw is that she doesn't know the exact time, but the arrival of the newspaper has something to do with the time, namely that it is now past the time of day that the newspaper usually comes (i.e., 7:00 A.M.).

Maxim of Manner. This maxim states that each participant's contribution should be expressed in a reasonably clear fashion; that is, it should not be vague, ambiguous, or excessively wordy. Suppose Mr. and Mrs. Jones are out for a Sunday drive with their two preschool children. Mr. Jones says to Mrs. Jones, *Let's stop and get something to eat*. Mrs. Jones responds with *Okay, but not M-c-D-o-n-a-l-d-s*. Mrs. Jones's statement raises an implicature. Mr. Jones reasons (unconsciously) as follows: She spelled out the word *McDonald's*, which is certainly not the clearest way of saying it. She appears to be flouting the Maxim of Manner; there must be a reason for her lack of clarity. Since the kids cannot spell, the inference (i.e., the implicature) I draw is that she does not want the children to understand that part of her statement.

In summary, an implicature is a proposition implied by an utterance, but neither part of nor a logical consequence of that utterance. An implicature arises in the mind of a hearer when the speaker flouts (i.e., intentionally violates) one of the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, or Manner.

Exercise A

1. In the movie *The Doctor*, an orderly is wheeling patient Jack McKee (William Hurt) down a hospital corridor on a gurney. McKee is nearly naked except for a single sheet draped over him. McKee looks up at the orderly and says, *Do you think you could get me a thinner sheet? I'm not sure everybody can see through this one.* McKee's utterance raises an implicature—namely, that he wants more covering. Which of Grice's maxims does McKee flout?
2. Assume that you are teaching a course. A fellow instructor approaches you after you have graded a test and asks, *How did Mr. Jones do?* You respond with *Well, he wrote something down for every question.*
 - a. Which of Grice's maxims does your response appear to flout?
 - b. What is the implicature raised by your response?
3. You ask a friend, *Do you know where Billy Bob is?* The friend responds with *Well, he didn't meet me for lunch like he was supposed to.*
 - a. Which of Grice's maxims does your friend's statement appear to flout?
 - b. What is the implicature raised by your friend's statement?
4. In each of the exchanges below, the italicized phrase indicates that the second speaker is trying to avoid violating a conversational maxim (i.e., Quantity, Quality, Relation, or Manner). Name the maxim.
 - a. SERVER: What can I get you?
CUSTOMER: I'll have a chef's salad. Oh, *by the way*, is there a post office nearby?
 - b. JOHN: What happened during your interview today?
MARY: Well, *to make a long story short*, they didn't hire me.
5. Gretchen is married and has two children, ages 7 and 4 years. In a conversation critical of her father-in-law, held in the presence of her children, she referred to her father-in-law as *the first generation* and to her children as *the third generation*.
 - a. Which of Grice's maxims does Gretchen appear to flout?
 - b. What is the implicature raised by Gretchen's utterance?
6. For each of the following exchanges, determine (a) which of Grice's maxims the second speaker's utterance appears to flout, and (b) the implicature raised by the second speaker.
 - a. BOB: Do you want some dessert?
RAY: Do birds have wings?
 - b. DIANE: Don't you think John is a nice guy?
SUSAN: Yeah, he's about as sensitive as Attila the Hun.
 - c. JOHN: Who was that man I saw you with yesterday?
MARY: That was just someone.
 - d. SALES CLERK: Could I have your name?
CUSTOMER: It's K-A-T-H-R-Y-N R-I-L-E-Y.
7. Consider the exchange in Exercise (6d). What implicature would a customer raise by spelling his name if it were *Frank Parker*?

Speech Acts

In his book *How to Do Things with Words*, British philosopher John Austin (1962) had the fundamental insight that an utterance can be used to perform an act. That is, he was the first

to point out that in uttering a sentence, we can *do* things as well as *say* things. (Before Austin, philosophers held that sentences were used simply to say things.) For example, if you say to someone who is leaving your office, *Please close the door*, you are not just saying something but also making a request. Likewise, if you say to a friend after a fight, *I'm sorry for the way I acted*, you are not just saying something but also apologizing. Finally, if you say to your boss, *I'll come in on Saturday to finish the Katzenelson Project*, you're not just saying something but you're also making a commitment.

Thus, each speech event (or **speech act**) has at least two facets to it: a **locutionary act** (i.e., the act of saying something) and an **illocutionary act** (i.e., the act of doing something). These concepts are defined in more detail as follows.

Locutionary Act. This is the act of simply uttering a sentence from a language; it is a description of what the speaker *says*. Typically, it is the act of using a referring expression (e.g., a noun phrase) and a predication expression (e.g., a verb phrase) to express a proposition. For instance, if a doctor says to a patient, *You must stop smoking*, the referring expression is *you*, and the predication expression is *stop smoking*.

Illocutionary Act. This is what the speaker *does* in uttering a sentence. Illocutionary acts include such acts as stating, requesting, questioning, promising, apologizing, and appointing. In the preceding example (*You must stop smoking*), the illocutionary act is one of ordering. The illocutionary act is sometimes called the **illocutionary force** of the utterance.

In the rest of this section, we will examine speech acts first from the perspective of the illocutionary act involved and then from the perspective of the locutionary act.

A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts

The philosopher John Searle (1976), one of Austin's former students, pointed out that there is a seemingly endless number of illocutionary acts. There are statements, assertions, denials, requests, commands, warnings, promises, vows, offers, apologies, thanks, condolences, appointments, namings, resignations, and so forth. At the same time, he observed that some illocutionary acts are more closely related than others. For example, promises and vows seem to be more alike than, say, promises and requests. Thus Searle attempted to classify illocutionary acts into the following types.

- **Representative.** A representative is an utterance used to describe some state of affairs—for example, *Javier plays golf*. This class includes acts of stating, asserting, denying, confessing, admitting, notifying, concluding, predicting, and so on.
- **Directive.** A directive is an utterance used to try to get the hearer to do something—for example, *Shut the door*. This class includes acts of requesting, ordering, forbidding, warning, advising, suggesting, insisting, recommending, and so on.
- **Question.** A question is an utterance used to get the hearer to provide information—for example, *Who won the 2008 presidential election?* This class includes acts of asking, inquiring, and so on. (Note: Searle treated questions as a subcategory of directives; for our purposes, however, it is more useful to treat them as a separate category.)

- **Commissive.** A commissive is an utterance used to commit the speaker to do something—for example, *I'll be back by 10:00 P.M.* This class includes acts of promising, vowing, volunteering, offering, guaranteeing, pledging, betting, and so on.
- **Expressive.** An expressive is an utterance used to express the speaker's emotional state—for example, *I'm sorry for calling you a dweeb.* This class includes acts of apologizing, thanking, congratulating, condoling, welcoming, deplored, objecting, and so on.
- **Declaration.** A declaration is an utterance used to change the status of some entity—for example, *You're out*, uttered by an umpire at a baseball game. This class includes acts of appointing, naming, resigning, baptizing, surrendering, excommunicating, arresting, and so on.

Exercise B

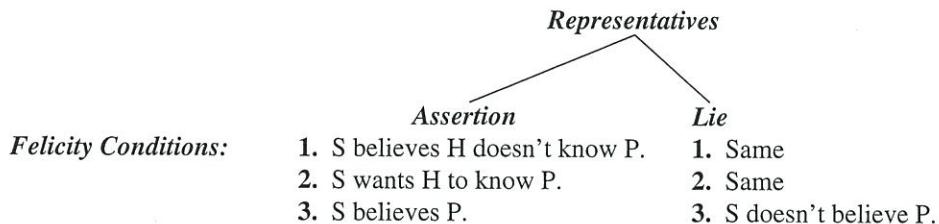
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1. Classify each of the following utterances as a directive, commissive, representative, expressive, question, or declaration. (Take each utterance at face value; i.e., don't read anything into it.)
 - a. A child says to her playmate, *Happy birthday.*
 - b. A doctor says to a patient, *I advise you to stop smoking.*
 - c. One secretary says to another, *My daughter's getting married in August.*
 - d. A priest says over an infant, *I baptize you in the name of . . .*
 - e. A mother says to her daughter, *Who washed the dishes?*
 - f. A passerby says to a motorist with a flat tire, *Let me help you with that.*
 - g. One friend says to another, *I swear I won't see Martha again.*
 - h. A parent says to her child, *I forbid you to leave your room.*
 - i. A man says to a friend, *What time is it?*
 - j. A buyer says to a seller, *I agree to your terms.*
 2. In the movie *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, James Madden is telling Judith how he has been wronged by his daughter. The following interchange ensues.
 JUDITH: Oh, I'm sorry.
 JAMES: You don't have to be sorry; you didn't do anything.
 James misinterprets Judith's remark, because it is ambiguous as to what illocutionary act it performs. What are the two illocutionary acts that *I'm sorry* can perform? (Hint: They are both types of expressives.)
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Felicity Conditions

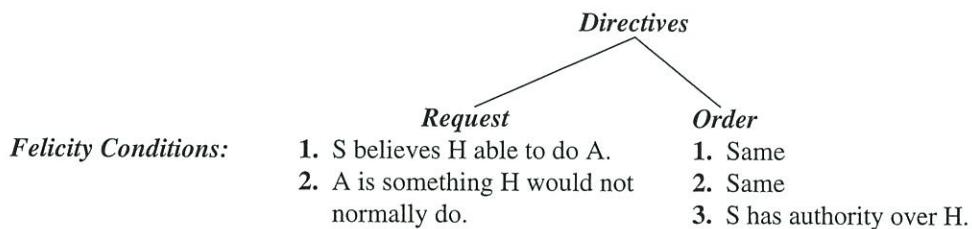
Early on, Austin realized that context was an important factor in the *valid* performance of an illocutionary act. He noted, for example, that the participants and the circumstances must be appropriate. An umpire at a baseball game can cause a player to be out by uttering, *You're out!* but an excited fan in the bleachers cannot. Likewise, the act must be executed completely and correctly by all participants. If during a game of hide-and-seek, Suzie says to Billy, *You're it*, and Billy responds with *I'm not playing*, then the act of naming is not valid. Finally, the participants must have the appropriate intentions. If a friend says to you, *I promise I'll*

meet you at the movies at 8:00 P.M., but actually plans to be home watching television at that time, the act of promising is not valid. Austin called these conditions **felicity conditions**.

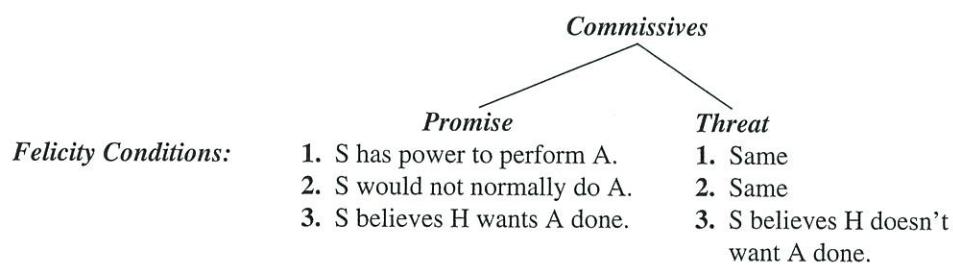
These conditions help us account for the relationship between specific illocutionary acts within the same category. Consider the difference between two different types of representatives: assertions and lies. The felicity conditions for both are the same except that in an assertion *S believes P*, and in a lie *S doesn't believe P*. This is illustrated in the following diagram (*S* = speaker, *H* = hearer, *A* = act, *P* = proposition).



Now consider the difference between two different types of directives: requests and orders. The felicity conditions for orders are exactly the same as those for requests except that orders have the additional condition that *S has authority over H*. This is illustrated in the following diagram.



Consider, finally, the difference between two types of commissives: promises and threats. Note that two of the felicity conditions are identical for both types of commissives. However, in a promise *S believes H wants A done*, and in a threat *S believes H doesn't want A done*. This is illustrated in the following diagram.



Exercise C

1. Pat and Chris are having an argument in a restaurant, and Pat throws a glass of water on Chris's shirt. Chris responds with *Thanks a lot*. What felicity condition on thanking does Chris's utterance violate?
 - a. The act for which one is thanked must be in the hearer's best interest.
 - b. The act for which one is thanked must be a past act.
 - c. The act for which one is thanked must be witnessed by the speaker.
 - d. The act for which one is thanked must be in the speaker's best interest.
 - e. Both (b) and (d).
- †2. What felicity condition on apologies is violated by the following utterance: *I apologize for what I'm about to do*.
3. At noon a woman goes to a pharmacy to check on a prescription that is being filled. The woman is told that the prescription has to be brought from another location, but that it will arrive no later than 6:00 P.M. The woman fumes for a minute and then says, *I'm sorry, but I can't come back later this evening*. The woman's utterance appears to be an apology (i.e., *I'm sorry . . .*). However, it is not.
 - a. What felicity condition on apologizing does it violate?
 - b. If the utterance is not an apology, what is it?
4. Ordinary questions can be distinguished from exam questions—the type of question a teacher asks a student (for example, *What is the cube root of 27?*). Ordinary and exam questions differ in one of their felicity conditions. How do the felicity conditions for ordinary questions and exam questions differ?
5. A self-proclaimed "preacher" was observed at LSU's Free Speech Alley, an area of campus where speakers may publicly address passers-by. In the heat of his fervor, the preacher addressed a nearby squirrel as follows: *Repent, you squirrel; repent, you evil fornicating squirrel*. Refer to one of the felicity conditions on directives to explain why this utterance is an invalid directive.
6. It has often been noted that imperative structures, which are associated with directive speech acts, cannot be used with certain types of predicates (verb phrases); for example, **Be tall*. Use the concept of felicity conditions to explain why **Be tall* is not a valid directive, but *Stand up straight* is.

Explicit Versus Nonexplicit Illocutionary Acts

One of Austin's most fundamental insights was the realization that English contains a set of verbs, each of which actually *names* the illocutionary force of that verb. Consider the following sentences:

- (6) I *confess* that I stole the family jewels.
- (7) I *warn* you to stop teasing your sister.
- (8) May I *inquire* where you got that gun?
- (9) I *promise* I'll come to your birthday party.
- (10) I *apologize* for calling you a liar.
- (11) I *name* this "The Good Ship Lollipop."

Note that, if said under the right circumstances, each of these sentences performs the act named by the verb: (6) constitutes a confession (a type of representative); (7) constitutes a warning (a type of directive); (8) constitutes an inquiry (a type of question); (9) constitutes a promise (a type of commissive); (10) constitutes an apology (a type of expressive); and (11) constitutes an act of naming (a type of declaration). Consequently, the verbs in each sentence are known as **performative verbs**.

In order for a performative verb to have its performative sense (i.e., to actually perform the illocutionary act it names), it must (i) be positive, (ii) be present tense, (iii) have a first person agent (i.e., performer of the action of the verb), and (iv) refer to a specific event. Consider, for example, the following sentences.

- (12) I *promise* I'll bring the beans.
- (13) I *can't promise* to bring the beans. (not positive)
- (14) I *promised* I would bring the beans. (not present)
- (15) *Big Bob promises* that he'll bring the beans. (not first person)
- (16) I *promise* people things from time to time. (not specific)

Sentence (12) contains a performative verb (*promise*) used in its performative sense (positive, present tense, first person agent). Thus, uttering (12) can constitute a promise. On the other hand, (13–16) contain the same verb (*promise*), but in these cases it does not have its performative sense. Thus, uttering (13–16) do not constitute promises; they merely describe some state of affairs (i.e., they are all representatives).

In addition, not all verbs are performative verbs. Consider, for example, the verb *know*, as in the utterance *I know that the cube root of 27 is 3*. *Know* is not a performative verb because performative verbs must meet the following criteria: (i) a performative verb describes a *voluntary* act (you can't choose to know or not know something); (ii) a performative verb describes an act that can only be performed *with words* (you can know something without saying you know it); and (iii) a performative verb can be used with the performative indicator *hereby* (you can't say **I hereby know such and such*). (Recall that an asterisk before an expression means it is unacceptable.) These three tests for distinguishing performative and nonperformative verbs are summarized in the following chart.

<i>Performative Verbs</i>	<i>Nonperformative Verbs</i>
(e.g., <i>deny</i>)	(e.g., <i>know</i>)
(a) <i>voluntary</i> act (e.g., ‘denying X’ is voluntary)	(a) <i>involuntary</i> act (e.g., ‘knowing X’ is involuntary)
(b) act can be performed <i>only with words</i> (e.g., ‘denying X’ requires words)	(b) act can be performed <i>without words</i> (e.g., ‘knowing X’ doesn’t require words)
(c) can be used with <i>hereby</i> (e.g., <i>I hereby deny X</i>)	(c) can’t be used with <i>hereby</i> (e.g., * <i>I hereby know X</i>)

The term **explicit performative** describes an utterance that contains a performative verb used in its performative sense. Any utterance *not* containing a performative verb used

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in its performative sense we will call a nonexplicit performative. The following chart illustrates that virtually any type of illocutionary act can be achieved through either an explicit or a nonexplicit performative utterance.

	<i>Explicit Performative</i>	<i>Nonexplicit Performative</i>
<i>Representative</i>	I <i>deny</i> that I killed Cock Robin.	I did not kill Cock Robin.
<i>Directive</i>	I <i>forbid</i> you to leave your room.	Don't leave your room.
<i>Question</i>	I <i>ask</i> you where you were on the night of May 21.	Where were you on the night of May 21?
<i>Commissive</i>	I <i>vow</i> that I'll be faithful to you.	I'll be faithful to you.
<i>Expressive</i>	I <i>thank</i> you for your help.	I appreciate your help.
<i>Declaration</i>	I <i>resign</i> .	I don't work here anymore.

It may be necessary to expand the concept of explicit performative to include such stock utterances as *Thanks* and *Congratulations*, which serve as conventional ways of expressing *I thank you* and *I congratulate you*, respectively. Along the same lines, we might treat nouns derived from performative verbs (e.g., *advice* from *advise*) as capable of functioning as explicit performatives. Note that an utterance such as *My advice is for you to leave now* corresponds precisely to the explicit performative *I advise you to leave now*.

Exercise D

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1. Explain why each of the performative verbs in the following utterances is *not* being used in its performative sense.
 - a. I *warned* you not to open that door.
 - b. *Promise* her anything, but give her Arpege. (advertisement for perfume)
 - c. I *won't insist* that you leave.
 - d. Mr. Jones *insists* that you work late tonight.
 - e. *Apologize* to your Aunt Martha immediately.
 2. A sign over a bar door says *Minors are forbidden to enter*.
 - a. What is the illocutionary force of this utterance?
 - b. Is the illocutionary act explicit? Explain. (Hint: Change passive voice [e.g., *Mr. X was sentenced to death*] to active [e.g., *The judge sentenced Mr. X to death*].)
 3. The following announcement is made over a public address system at an airport: *Passengers are requested to proceed to gate 10*.
 - a. What is the illocutionary force of this utterance?
 - b. Is the illocutionary act explicit? Explain. (Hint: See Exercise 2.)
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Direct Versus Indirect Illocutionary Acts

Particular sentence types are associated with particular illocutionary acts. For example, imperative sentences (*Bring me my coat*) are uniquely designed for issuing directives. Thus,

a directive delivered by means of an imperative sentence is said to constitute a **direct illocutionary act**. However, if another sentence type such as an interrogative is used to issue a directive (*Would you bring me my coat?*), then that utterance is said to constitute an **indirect illocutionary act**.

Direct Illocutionary Acts. The following table gives an example of each type of illocutionary act and its associated syntactic form (i.e., sentence type).

Utterance	Illocutionary Act	Syntactic Form
(17) Keep quiet.	Directive	Imperative
(18) Do you know Mary?	Yes-No question	Yes-No interrogative
(19) What time is it?	Wh-question	Wh-interrogative
(20) How nice you are!	Expressive	Exclamatory
(21) It's raining.	Representative	Declarative
(22) I'll help you with the dishes.	Commissive	Declarative
(23) You're fired.	Declaration	Declarative

Thus, any time a directive is issued with an imperative sentence, it constitutes a direct illocutionary act; anytime a *yes-no* question is issued with a *yes-no* interrogative, it constitutes a direct illocutionary act, and so on. (The boxed material in the preceding table identifies those sentence types that are uniquely associated with a particular illocutionary act.)

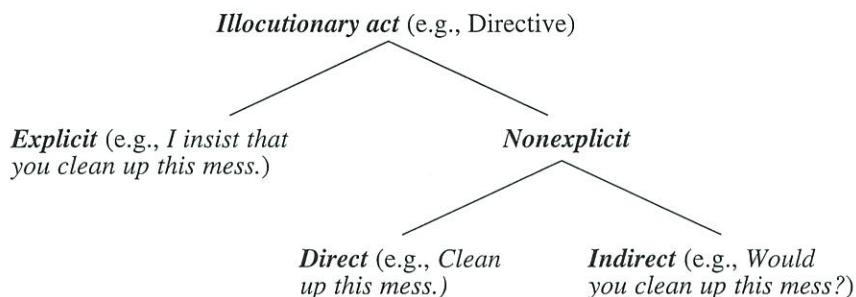
Before we move on, note that direct speech acts, especially directives, can often appear abrupt or even rude (*Bring me my coat*). Thus, speakers are motivated, for reasons of politeness, to mitigate, or soften, such speech acts. One method speakers use is to phrase illocutionary acts, especially directives, indirectly.

Indirect Illocutionary Acts. In general, an illocutionary act is issued indirectly when the syntactic form of the utterance does *not* match the illocutionary force of the utterance. Consider the following examples. (For purposes of comparison, the direct phrasing is given in parentheses below each utterance.)

Utterance	Illocutionary Force	Syntactic Form
(24) You might give me a hand with this. (Give me a hand with this.)	Directive	Declarative
(25) And you are . . . (Who are you?)	Wh-question	Declarative
(26) Could you keep quiet? (Keep quiet.)	Directive	Yes-No interrogative
(27) Do you have the time? (What time is it?)	Wh-question	Yes-No interrogative
(28) Can I give you a hand with that? (I can give you a hand with that.)	Commissive	Yes-No interrogative

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| (29) I'm sorry to hear about your loss.
(How sorry I am to hear about
your loss!) | Expressive | Declarative |
| (30) Why don't you be quiet?
(Be quiet.) | Directive | Wh-interrogative |

Let's summarize this section on illocutionary acts. The illocutionary part of a speech act is what the utterance does (rather than what it says). Illocutionary acts can be grouped into six types: representatives, directives, questions, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Illocutionary acts are valid only if their felicity conditions are met. Illocutionary acts can be achieved through either an explicit or a nonexplicit performative. A nonexplicit performative is, in turn, either direct or indirect. The various means of performing illocutionary acts are illustrated in the following diagram.



Exercise E

1. For each of the following utterances, state (i) the syntactic form, (ii) the illocutionary act it performs, and (iii) whether the illocutionary act is performed directly or indirectly.
 - a. A clerk says to a customer, *And your account number is . . .*
 - b. A sign at the entrance to a cafeteria line: *It is not impolite to pass others if there is space ahead.*
 - c. An impatient husband grousing to his wife: *Shouldn't we be leaving soon?*
 - d. The envelope supplied for paying your credit card bill carries the following notice: *Did you remember to sign your check?*
 - e. A student, wheedling a teacher for an A, says *If I don't get an A in this course, I'll lose my scholarship.*
 - f. Smith is fixing a flat tire as Jones looks on. Smith says, *You can give me a hand with this* in order to get Jones to help him.
 - g. Smith is fixing a flat tire as Jones looks on. Smith says, *Why don't you give me a hand with this?* in order to get Jones to help him.
-

Expressed Versus Implied Locutionary Acts

As we said earlier, a speech act consists of an illocutionary act (what is done) and a locutionary act (what is said). At this point, we want to turn our attention from illocutionary acts to locutionary acts. The locutionary act is concerned with the propositional content of the utterance, which is what follows the performative verb in an explicit performative and is the entire utterance in a nonexplicit performative. In the following examples, the propositional content is in italics.

- (31a) EXPLICIT: I promise *I'll come to your birthday party*.
(31b) NONEXPLICIT: *I'll come to your birthday party*.

The propositional content of a locutionary act can be either expressed directly or implied via implicature. An **expressed locutionary act** is one in which the utterance actually contains all elements of the propositional content of the illocutionary act involved. For example, consider a warning, which is a type of directive. The propositional content of a directive must predicate a future act of the hearer. Thus a warning such as *I warn you to stop smoking* constitutes an expressed locutionary act because its propositional content predicates a future act (to stop smoking) of the hearer (you).

On the other hand, in an **implied locutionary act**, the utterance does not express the propositional content of the illocutionary act involved. For example, consider the warning *I warn you that cigarette smoking is dangerous*. This utterance constitutes an implied locutionary act because it does not predicate a future act of the hearer; instead, it predicates a property of cigarettes. The hearer must infer the relevant propositional content via implicature. The hearer reasons (unconsciously) something like this: The speaker issued an explicit warning, which is a type of directive, but failed to predicate a future act of me, the hearer. Thus, since the utterance is not overtly relevant, the speaker appears to be flouting Grice's Maxim of Relation. However, the speaker knows I smoke cigarettes, and since there must be some reason for this seemingly irrelevant comment, the inference (i.e., the implicature) that I draw is that the speaker is trying to get me to stop smoking.

Some types of illocutionary acts (e.g., questions and representatives) have no restrictions on their propositional content. Thus, a common method for implying propositional content in such cases is for the speaker to express a precondition for the proposition he or she is trying to convey. For example, *Do you have a watch?* (as opposed to *Do you have the time?*) expresses a precondition for having the time. Likewise, *The battery's dead* (as opposed to *The car won't start*) expresses a precondition for the car starting.

Make no mistake: It's not always obvious if you're dealing with an expressed or an implied locutionary act. The same utterance may contain an implied locution on one occasion, but an expressed locution on another. For example, if an uncle asks his niece, *Do you have a watch?* in order to help him decide what to get her for her birthday, then the proposition of interest is *expressed* by the utterance. However, as we saw in the preceding paragraph, if the same utterance is used to ask the time, then the proposition of interest is only *implied* by the utterance.

The following table displays a representative example of each of the six types of illocutionary act, the felicity condition governing the propositional content (if any), and exam-

amples of locutions that express and imply the proposition of interest (S = speaker, H = hearer, A = act, P = proposition).

<i>Type of Illocution (and Example)</i>	<i>Propositional Content</i>	<i>Utterance with Expressed Locutionary Act</i>	<i>Utterance with Implied Locutionary Act</i>
Representative (assertion)	any P	The car won't start.	The battery's dead.
Directive (request)	future A of H	Please do the dishes.	The dishes are piling up.
Question (<i>yes-no</i> question)	any P	Do you have the time?	Do you have a watch?
Commissive (volunteering)	future A of S	I'll help with the dishes.	You look like you could use some help with the dishes.
Expressive (condolence)	past event related to H	I am sorry to hear your mother died.	I am sorry to hear about your mother.
Declaration (firing)	H fired	You're fired.	You'll need to start considering other offers.

Directives in particular are prime candidates for implied locutionary acts because, as noted earlier, directives constitute an imposition on the hearer. Thus, it is quite often more polite to *imply* the propositional content of a directive than to express it directly. For example, suppose Amy has missed class and wants to borrow notes from Beth. The following utterances might be used.

<i>Utterance</i>	<i>Illocutionary Act</i>	<i>Locutionary Act</i>
(32) Lend me your notes from Friday.	Direct	Expressed
(33) Could you lend me your notes from Friday?	Indirect	Expressed
(34) I could sure use the notes from Friday.	Indirect	Implied

As we move from (32) to (34), the utterances become increasingly oblique, but also increasingly polite. In fact, (34), since it does not express the propositional content of a directive, could be (intentionally) misconstrued by Beth as a general comment on Amy's academic situation. The point is that implied locutionary acts serve the same function as indirect illocutionary acts: Both distance the speaker from the speech act.

Consider the distancing effect of the implied locutionary act in another example, a sign in the botanical gardens at Oxford: *Please make a donation to help us maintain this His-*

toric Garden and unique collection of plants. Visiting similar gardens often costs at least two pounds. The implied proposition in the second sentence is “a reasonable donation is two pounds.” Moreover, this utterance flouts Grice’s Maxim of Relation. The reader of the sign reasons (unconsciously) as follows: The sign requests a donation but refers to something seemingly unrelated—the admission cost to other gardens; there must be some reason for the seemingly irrelevant comment. The inference (i.e., implicature) the reader draws is that the garden owners don’t want to specify the amount of the donation directly, since a donation is voluntary. Instead, they state what other gardens charge for admission and hope the reader makes the connection.

Exercise F

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1. For each of the following utterances, state whether the relevant proposition is expressed or implied.
 - a. A sign on a fence reads *Parking here prohibits rubbish collection*.
 - b. A warning on a can reads *Do not incinerate*.
 - c. A train conductor points to a NO SMOKING sign and says to a passenger who is smoking, *Do you see that sign?*
 2. The following sign was observed on a British Rail train car: *Passengers are reminded that a valid ticket is required for each journey made*. This seems to be a roundabout way of saying *Buy a ticket*.
 - a. Is the illocutionary act performed by the sign explicit or nonexplicit?
 - b. Is the locutionary act performed by the sign expressed or implied?
-

Literal Versus Nonliteral Locutionary Acts

A locutionary act can be either literal or nonliteral, depending upon whether the speaker actually means what is said or not. Consider, for example, the warning on a pack of cigarettes, which reads *Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health*. The warning means exactly what it says; thus, it constitutes a **literal locutionary act**. On the other hand, consider an antismoking poster that depicts a bleary-eyed, disheveled man with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth; the caption reads *Smoking is glamorous*. The caption does not mean what it says (in fact, it means quite the opposite); thus, the caption constitutes a nonliteral locutionary act.

Nonliteral locutionary acts are those for which a literal interpretation is either impossible or absurd within the context of the utterance. For example, the famished husband who walks through the door and says to his wife, *I could eat a horse* (instead of, say, *I am very hungry*) is performing a nonliteral locutionary act. The locution is nonliteral because most human beings could not (and certainly would not) eat an entire horse. Likewise, the college student who says to her roommate, *I guess it would kill you to turn down that radio* (instead of, say, *Please turn down the radio*) is performing a nonliteral locutionary act. The locution is nonliteral because there is no known causal connection between turning down radios and death. Another example is the teacher who says to the schoolyard bully who is picking on Little Timmy, *Pick on someone your own size* (instead of *Don’t pick on Little Timmy*). The teacher is performing a nonliteral locutionary act because the teacher (presumably) does not

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really want the bully to pick on someone larger, but rather to stop tormenting his current victim.

Note that all of these examples can be analyzed as flouting Grice's Maxim of Quality. That is, they all involve someone saying something that is blatantly false under the circumstances. Moreover, note that all cases of sarcasm essentially involve nonliteral locutionary acts (e.g., *Smoking is glamorous, I guess it would kill you to turn down the radio*), but not all nonliteral acts are sarcastic (e.g., *I could eat a horse*).

Nonliteral locutionary acts, however, can be quite complex. For example, a shop owner in England erected the following sign in front of his store: *If you want your wheel clamped, by all means park here*. (A wheel clamp is a device that keeps the car from being moved.) The literal way to word the sign would be something like *Don't park here* or *Parked cars will be clamped*. The sign as worded, however, is nonliteral because a literal interpretation would be absurd within the context of the utterance. That is, to interpret the sign literally would require the reader to assume that there are drivers who would actually like to have their wheels clamped.

Exercise G

1. For each of the following, state whether the locution is (i) expressed or implied and (ii) literal or nonliteral.
 - a. A sign in front of a garage states *Don't even think of parking here*.
 - b. A highway sign says *Do not exceed 55*.
 - c. A highway sign says *Speed Limit 55*.
2. One night you go to visit a friend in her apartment. When you walk in, your friend is sitting there with all the lights off. In an attempt to get her to turn on a light, you say, *What is this, a mausoleum?*
 - †a. Is the locution expressed or implied?
 - †b. Is the locution literal or nonliteral?
Suppose you were in the same situation just described, but instead you said, *It's kinda dark in here*.
 - a. Is the locution expressed or implied?
 - b. Is the locution literal or nonliteral?
3. The comedians Laurel and Hardy are sitting in a jail cell commiserating about being captured in the act of robbing a bank. Laurel says, *Ollie, when you said "Why don't you scream so everyone can hear?" . . . Well, I thought you really meant it*. Explain the "humor" of this routine in terms of speech act theory.

Overview of Speech Act Theory

Speech acts, as we have seen, each have two facets: an illocutionary act (i.e., what is *done*) and a locutionary act (i.e., what is *said*). The illocutionary act can be achieved either *explicitly* (i.e., by using a performative verb in its performative sense) or *nonexplicitly*. Moreover, a nonexplicit illocutionary act can be performed either *directly* (i.e., syntactic form matches illocutionary force) or *indirectly*. The locutionary act can be either *expressed* (i.e., by articulating propositional content) or *implied*. Likewise, the locutionary act can be either *literal* or *nonliteral*.

These four variables define 16 theoretically possible types of speech acts. However, since any nonexplicit illocutionary act can, at least in theory, be made explicit by prefixing a performative verb to it (e.g., *Shut up* → *I hereby order you to shut up*), we will ignore explicit performatives for present purposes. The remaining 8 types of nonexplicit illocutionary acts are illustrated in the following table. (Each utterance could be used in a particular context to get someone to refrain from smoking.)

<i>Utterance</i>	<i>Direct</i>	<i>Expressed</i>	<i>Literal</i>
(35) Please don't smoke.	+	+	+
(36) By all means, go right ahead and smoke. (sarcastic)	+	+	-
(37) Think about what you're doing to your lungs.	+	-	+
(38) Would you please not smoke?	-	+	+
(39) Go ahead and kill yourself, see if I care.	+	-	-
(40) I guess it would kill you to stop smoking.	-	+	-
(41) Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.	-	-	+
(42) Smoking is glamorous. (under picture of derelict smoking)	-	-	-

Exercise H

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1. For each of the following speech acts, state whether it is (i) explicit or nonexplicit; (ii) direct or indirect (applies to nonexplicit only); (iii) expressed or implied; and (iv) literal or nonliteral.
 - †a. To express agreement, a friend says, *How right you are!*
 - †b. A teacher says to his student, *I suggest you spend more time on your homework.*
 - c. A sign on the side of the road reads *Construction ahead.*
 - d. A congratulations card depicts a baby and the words *Your baby boy has arrived.*
 - e. In the movie *Honky Tonk Man*, Marlene Mooney tries to get Red Stovall to give her his sandwich by saying, *If you're not gonna eat this [sandwich], I can finish it for you.*
 - f. In the corner of an envelope, there's a printed message stating *Post Office will not deliver mail without proper postage.*
 - g. John shows up for class after missing the previous session. He turns to his friend Mary and says, *Did you take notes during the last class?* He intends it as a request to borrow Mary's notes.
 - h. A parent, attempting to get his child to close her mouth while eating, says, *You're so attractive when you talk with your mouth full.*
 - i. A sign on the interstate reads *Speed limit enforced by radar.*
 - j. A highway sign reads *YIELD.*
 - k. Count Monte Crisco has been insulted by Count Marmaduke; Monte Crisco says to Marmaduke, *I challenge you to a duel.*
-

Summary

The theory of pragmatics makes use of such concepts as implicature and conversational maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner), speech acts (illocutionary and locutionary acts), a classification of illocutionary acts, felicity conditions on illocutionary acts, explicit/nonexplicit and direct/indirect illocutionary acts, and expressed/implied and literal/nonliteral locutionary acts. These theoretical constructs help explain how language users are able to use context to interpret utterances, to “do” things with words, and to “say” things without actually uttering them.

Supplementary Readings

Primary

- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language use*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole and J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics 3: Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). New York: Academic Press.
Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
Searle, J. R. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In P. Cole and J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics 3: Speech acts* (pp. 59–82). New York: Academic Press.
Searle, J. R. (1976). The classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society*, 5, 1–24.

Secondary

- Coulthard, M. (1995). *An introduction to discourse analysis*. London: Longman.
Grundy, P. (2008). *Doing pragmatics* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
Huang, Y. (2007). *Pragmatics*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
Levinson, S. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1996). *Relevance* (2nd ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
Walsh, T. (1998). *A short introduction to formal discourse analysis*. Chicago: Parlay Press.

Coulthard, Grundy, and Walsh provide clear introductions to pragmatics and discourse analysis. Levinson's *Pragmatics* is a comprehensive textbook; since it has a detailed index and bibliography, you can also use it as a reference tool. Huang's more recent textbook covers a variety of topics and includes many interesting exercises. Brown and Levinson's work gives an extended treatment of politeness phenomena in various languages and provides the framework to which much recent work in politeness responds. The other works are more advanced and would be more accessible after you've completed additional work in linguistics.

Supplementary Exercises

1. Traugott and Pratt (1980:237) cite the following joke. Determine (i) which of Grice's maxims Sam violates in his *first* utterance and (ii) the implicature that Farmer Brown draws from it. (Hint: Assume that Sam is telling the truth.)

FARMER BROWN: Hey, Sam, my mule's got distemper. What'd you give yours when he had it?

SAM: Turpentine.

(a week later)

FARMER BROWN: Sam, I gave my mule turpentine like you said and it killed him.

SAM: Did mine, too.

2. Consider the following "tip" concerning conversations in Hungary:

Don't be surprised by sudden, abrupt changes in subject. Hungarians often have an "official" opinion and also a private opinion. A subject change may mean one has said too much or has come too close to voicing an unacceptable political opinion. (Braganti & Devine 1984:127)

Which of Grice's maxims would be violated by the Hungarians' behavior in such a circumstance?

3. Big Bob asks Muffy, *Who was that man I saw you talking to yesterday?* Muffy replies, *That was my mother's husband.* Which of Grice's maxims does Muffy's reply appear to violate? What implicature does her reply raise?
4. In an episode of *Leave it to Beaver*, Wally is trying to keep Beaver from finding out that he (Wally) plans to go to a football game with his friend Chester. Chester calls Wally on the phone; Wally talks and hangs up. The following interchange takes place:
BEAVER: Who was that, Wally?
WALLY: Just some guy that called up.
Which of Grice's maxims does Wally's response violate? What is the implicature his reply raises?
5. On the TV show *Little House on the Prairie*, the preacher says to Mrs. Ingalls, *Family discipline is based on promises kept—whether punishment or reward.* The preacher here is lumping together two different types of illocutionary acts.
 - a. What are the two illocutionary acts the preacher is referring to?
 - b. What general category of illocutionary acts do they both belong to?
 - c. How do the two illocutionary acts differ in terms of their felicity conditions?
6. In the movie *Educating Rita*, the following interchange transpires between Frank (a professor) and Rita (a new student), who have not previously met.
FRANK: And you are . . .
RITA: What?
FRANK: And you are . . . What is your name?
 - a. What is the illocutionary force of Frank's first utterance?
 - b. What is the syntactic form of Frank's first utterance?
 - c. Why does Rita fail to recognize the illocutionary force of Frank's first utterance?
 - d. How does Frank "repair" his first utterance by adding to it in his second utterance?
7. When an author signs a contract with a publisher to write a book for a sum of money, what type of illocutionary act are the parties performing?
8. A friend comes to visit you for the first time and, being positively impressed by where you live, says, *What a nice house you have!* The syntactic form of your friend's utterance is _____. The illocutionary act is _____. The illocutionary act is performed (directly, indirectly).
9. For each of the following utterances, state whether the locutionary act is literal or nonliteral.
 - a. You go to a movie and the Warthog family comes in and sits down behind you. They crumple candy wrappers and talk for the first 20 minutes of the movie. Finally you have had enough, and you turn to them and say, *I don't want to have to call the manager.*
 - b. Assume the context is the same as in (a), except you say, *I can still hear the movie; would you mind speaking up?*
10. One night you go to visit a friend in her apartment. When you walk in, your friend is sitting there with all the lights off. In an attempt to get her to turn on a light, you say, *It's kinda*

dark in here. She says, *What are you talking about?* and you say, *I'm asking you to turn on a light.* Answer the following regarding your second utterance.

- a. Is the illocution explicit or nonexplicit?
 - b. If nonexplicit, is the illocution direct or indirect?
 - c. Is the locution expressed or implied?
 - d. Is the locution literal or nonliteral?
11. Dirty Harry, in trying to get a criminal to give up his gun, says, *Go ahead—make my day.* Identify the type of speech act conveyed by this utterance, given the context.
a. explicit, expressed, literal
b. nonexplicit, direct, implied, nonliteral
c. nonexplicit, indirect, implied, literal
d. explicit, implied, literal
e. nonexplicit, indirect, implied, nonliteral
12. Francine wants to find out from Jolene the name of Jolene's date. For each of the following utterances, state whether it is (i) explicit or nonexplicit; (ii) direct or indirect (applies to non-explicit only); (iii) expressed or implied; and (iv) literal or nonliteral.
a. You haven't told me your date's name, Jolene.
b. What's your date's name, Jolene?
c. For the last time, Jolene, I'm asking you to tell me the name of your date.
d. Please don't bore me with the name of your date, Jolene.
13. A mother says to her child, *Why don't you stop sucking your thumb?* in order to get the child to stop sucking his thumb. The child replies, *Because I don't want to.*
a. What pragmatic distinction has the child failed to learn (or is at least ignoring)?
b. Explain how the child interprets the mother's utterance so he can respond to it as he does.
14. The medical staff at a women's clinic regularly sends out the following report:
Dear [patient's name]:
We have received a report of the Pap smear taken from your recent examination. The Pap smear shows no evidence of abnormal or unusual cells. Your smear is therefore normal.
Best regards,
[doctor's name]
- The final sentence of the report may seem unnecessary to some readers. Explain why the clinic includes this sentence, using a theoretical concept from pragmatics.
15. In an episode of the *Andy Griffith Show*, Thelma Lou's plain-looking cousin Mary Alice comes to Mayberry for a visit. Thelma Lou and Helen refuse to go to the big dance with Barney and Andy unless they find a date for Mary Alice. Barney and Andy try to line up Gomer, and the following conversation ensues:
- ANDY: How would you like to take Thelma Lou's cousin to the dance?
GOMER: Is she pretty, Andy?
ANDY: She's nice, Gom. She's real nice.
Explain what Andy is doing linguistically when he says, *She's nice, Gom. She's real nice.*
16. Explain why a sign that states *Thank you for not smoking* is a directive and not an expressive (i.e., an act of thanking).

17. The boss says to an employee, *You're fired*. The employee responds, *You can't fire me; I quit*. The employee is essentially claiming that the boss's utterance violates a felicity condition on firing. Explain.

Exploratory Exercises

1. Brown and Levinson (1987) outline strategies that speakers (and writers) use to make their contributions more polite. These strategies are often used when issuing requests and other directives, which impose on the listener/reader. Some of the strategies discussed by Brown and Levinson are outlined below. In each case, the request on the left is a highly direct, imperative form. The revisions on the right show the more indirect (and presumably more polite) effect achieved by applying each strategy.

Question the request

Give me a vacation. → *Can you give me a vacation?*
I wonder if I could have a vacation.

Be pessimistic about the request

Type this memo. → *Could/Would you type this memo?*
Is it possible for you to type this memo?

Minimize the imposition of the request

Answer these questions. → *Take a moment to answer a few questions.*

Give deference to the agent of the request

Send me some information. → *As a novice, I need your expert opinion.*
Please send me some information.

Apologize to the agent of the request

Turn in your key. → *I'm sorry, but you'll have to turn in your key.*

Impersonalize the request

Submit your report on Friday. → *Reports must be submitted on Friday.*
It is necessary to submit reports on Friday.

Generalize the request

Wear your ID card. → *All personnel must wear their ID cards.*

Nominalize the request

Do not smoke at your desk. → *Smoking is prohibited at your desk.*

Incur a debt for the request

Speak at our next meeting. → *I would be grateful if you could speak at our next meeting.*

Now consider the following memo, which was sent to residents of an apartment building on the shore of Lake Superior from the property manager of the building. Identify any indirectness strategies used in this memo. Also speculate on why indirectness was used in this situation, taking into account the relationship between the property manager and the residents. Consider, for example, whether it would be appropriate or advisable for the property manager to use more direct language, and explain your reasoning.

We have recently observed individuals out beyond the fence line below Lake View Apartments. We ask that you please be aware that this area is fenced off for safety reasons; like all lakeshores, the embankment is always changing and is not considered a safe area for walking.

We understand that the quiet and serenity of the lakeshore draws people near, but for safety reasons, access to this one small area of the grounds cannot be allowed.

We dislike imposing on the residents, but we would be grateful for your assistance in this matter.

2. Changing tables, for use when changing a baby's diaper, are increasingly common in public restrooms. Consider the following notices that were posted on or near the changing table in three different establishments.

A. Never leave a baby unattended.

B. Just a reminder . . . always stay with your baby when using this table.

C. Do not leave your baby unattended.

Use concepts from pragmatics to write an analysis of the similarities and differences among these notices. Include some discussion of why the similarities and differences exist. For example, are there any advantages or disadvantages to these various modes of expression? Do they seem designed for the same type of readers? You may want to refer to the discussion of politeness in Exploratory Exercise 1 for further ideas.