

lecture 04, issues in translation: assertability and implicature

phil1012 introductory logic

overview

this lecture

- issues that arise with respect to translating English sentences into PL
- first in a series of 'mini-lectures' on the issues
- assertability and implicature

learning outcomes

- after doing the relevant reading for this lecture, listening to the lecture, and attending the relevant tutorial, you will be able to:
 - explain the difference between what is said, what is implied, and what is implicated by the utterance of a sentence
 - distinguish between what is said, the proposition expressed by an utterance of a sentence in a context, and what is merely implied or implicated by an utterance of a sentence in a context

required reading

- section 6.1 of chapter 6

truth and appropriateness

truth and appropriateness

- there is a distinction between **sentences** and **utterances**
- a speaker might utter a sentence, and express a proposition, which may be true or false
- the act of uttering a sentence is itself called an **utterance**
- an utterance can be **appropriate** or **inappropriate**

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- consider the following exchange:
 - you: where is the general lecture theatre?
 - me: through the main entry, across the lawn, and on the right
 - my utterance is **true** and **appropriate**

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- consider the following exchange:
 - you: Where is the general lecture theatre?
 - me: # in Sydney
 - my utterance is **true** and **inappropriate**
 - in what sense was my utterance inappropriate?
 - it was uncooperative
 - what are the rules governing appropriate utterances?

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- H. P. Grice:
 - a general principle for cooperative conversation . . .

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.
(Grice 1989 p. 26)

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- Grice attempted to capture the ideal of cooperative conversation with a series of maxims

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- maxims of quantity:
 - make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purposes of the exchange)
 - do not make your contribution more informative than required

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- maxim of quality:
 - try to make your contribution one that is true
 - do not say what you believe to be false
 - do not say something for which you lack adequate evidence

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- maxims of relation:
 - be relevant
 - e.g. . . .

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- maxim of manner:
 - be perspicuous
 - avoid obscurity of expression
 - avoid ambiguity
 - be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
 - be orderly

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- in general an utterance will be appropriate if and only if it conforms to these maxims

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- consider the earlier example again:
 - you: where is the general lecture theatre?
 - me: # in Sydney
 - which maxim(s) did I violate?
 - the maxim of quantity (or relevance? or both?)

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- what's the point of knowing the distinction between truth and falsity and appropriateness and inappropriateness?
 - well, we are aiming to capture the **truth conditions of an utterance** in our translations
 - so we need to be able to tell the difference between a sentence being true but inappropriate to utter in a context and its being false as uttered in a context
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what is said and what is merely

implicated

what is said and what is merely implicated

- there is another important distinction between . . .
 - what is **said**
 - what is **implicated**
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- consider another example:
 - you: Did you pass the exam?
 - me: If I didn't, I'm fool
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- what is **said**: if I didn't pass the exam, I am a fool
 - PP: I passed the exam
 - FF: I am a fool
 - $(\neg P \rightarrow F)$ ($\neg P \rightarrow F$)
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- what is **implicated**: I passed the exam
 - PP: I passed the exam
 - FF: I am a fool
 - PP
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- interestingly, it was by **flouting** a conversational maxim that I managed to convey this
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- what's the point of knowing the distinction between what is said and what is implicated by an utterance?
- well, we are aiming to translate what is said by an utterance
- so it is important to be able to distinguish between what is said and what is merely implicated

wrapping up

this lecture

- we looked at some important distinctions in the philosophy of language which can help us with our translations
- we are aiming, in our translations, to capture only what is said, not what is implied or implicated by an utterance

next lecture

- lecture 05, the semantics of PL