A truism: “We cannot take what someone says out of context.”

Why?

A corollary of the truism:

Meaning lies not in the expression uttered alone, but in its utterance by a particular speaker on a particular occasion of use.

An utterance is an action, one made in speaking.

Therefore, an utterance is a speech act, something we speakers do with words.

An action is something intentionally undertaken by an agent. So then, what is a speech act intended to do? What does it (ideally) accomplish?

It conveys a meaning. What the heck is a meaning?

Paul Grice recognized that a meaning is something broader than just what we convey linguistically. So he started with that broader conception. In the paper in which the following definition occurs, Grice was very clear that by “utterance” he meant any kind of communicative act. And he starts with an intuitive insight: We only mean for something to be communicated by our actions if we mean it to be recognized as so-meaning.

Grice’s basic notion of utterance meaning:¹

“U meant something by uttering x” is true iff, for some audience A, U uttered x intending:

1. A to produce a particular response r
2. A to think (recognize) that U intends (1)
3. A to fulfill (1) on the basis of his fulfillment of (2). (Grice 1957)

This is a complex kind of intention that only works if the intended audience recognizes the intention. Grice called it meaning, for ‘non-natural meaning’, to distinguish it from what he called natural meaning. The latter he illustrated with smoke means fire: this is based on a causal relation between smoke and fire, and requires no agency or intentions to obtain. In contrast, meaning requires an agent and an audience, and involves the former conveying some intention to the latter.

¹ somewhat revised subsequently, to ward off counter-examples, but the basics staying the same.
We can often convey the same kind of content—propositional content—without intending to. To modify an example due to Grice: Suppose that V. I. Warshawski, the famous Chicago private eye, has been hired to Mrs. X to track Mr. X, who the Mrs. suspects of having an affair. Warshawski gets some juicy photos of Mr. X and his paramour in flagratio. She shows them to her friend and fellow private eye, Mr. Y—“Hey, Jim, look at these! Caught ‘im red-handed, didn’t I?”. Unbeknownst to her, Mr. X’s paramour is Mrs. Y, Jim’s wife. So Warshawski has just conveyed to Mr. Y that his wife is having an affair. However, she didn’t mean it. She likes Jim, and would have broken it to him more gently.

But Grice was also clear that not all meaningful acts involve speech. For example, in many cultures (most? all?), a traffic cop may waive a motorist on with a sweeping gesture of one arm. Perhaps, you say, this motion is iconic. But that doesn’t make it non-meaningful, for its success depends on recognizing the intentions of the “utterer”, the motioning cop. One can imagine the same physical movement being used to swat at a pesky wasp. How do we as observers of a speech act distinguish a meaningful act, a speech act, from one that is not? Intention-recognition is key. When the cop is directing a motorist, she will typically make eye contact with him, to insure that he recognizes that he is her intended audience. There is no audience in the wasp-shooing action; the cop just hopes there will be a natural causal effect on the wasp of the arm movement, and in fact might prefer that the wasp not see it as an act of agency on her part (so there’s no retaliation). Making eye contact, like pointing, is an indexical action, an indication of the source and intended goal of the intention.

Even if a speech act is meaningful, how do we recognize the underlying semantic intention? Again, Grice started with the non-linguistic cases. Here is one of my own: Holding one’s hand out straight ahead at chest height, elbow bent, with the palm facing the intended audience has a particular meaning, again commonly used by traffic cops: ‘halt’ or ‘stop’. But the same gesture has quite a different meaning in Buddhist iconography: ‘fear not’ or ‘be at peace’. How do we know which meaning a given “utterer” intends? You might say that if a traffic cop in uniform makes the gesture on a busy street corner, that suggests the first, while if a Buddhist teacher in a temple does, it suggests the second. But what if the cop is a Buddhist? Such cases, when considered in detail, argue that we have to take into account the particular occasion of use and the contextually recognizable immediate goals and intentions of the agent. More on this later.

Note that the success of a speech act, its uptake, lies not in the acceptance of what the speaker says, but in the recognition of her communicative intention, of what she means. Then the success of a meaningful act requires intention-recognition on the part of the audience, and this, in turn, argues that competence in the conveyance of meaning requires that the agent grasps what kinds of intentions it is reasonable to expect that her audience will recognize. See Thomason (1990) for an excellent development of the idea that we can cash this out in pragmatic theory by using insights from Planning Theory in Artificial Intelligence. The latter aims at modeling agency, with a special interest in modeling collaborative tasks. The strong consensus is that this requires modeling how the agents involved recognize and track each others’ evolving intentions.

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2 Grice was also concerned to give examples where the meaningful act was not conventional. See the extended discussion of this in the papers on meaning reprinted in Grice (1989).
What does this characterization of meaning (the one I’ll assume hereinafter, unless specifically noted to be otherwise) bear on the structure of linguistic theory, and what might it tell us about the role of pragmatics in such a theory?

Consider the generative enterprise, after Chomsky (1957): The empirical criterion of adequacy of a linguistic theory is to give an account of all and only the well-formed sentences of a particular language. Explanatory adequacy requires that we do this in a way that explain how children across all languages acquire the ability to competently use a language in such a short time and on the basis of impoverished data. Chomsky assumes that this is facilitated by an underlying universal grammar.

One of the central things we know about language is that we do not memorize linguistic expressions or their meanings as a learned list, but, instead, our linguistic competence is productive: An expression may be produced on the fly, new in the world, and yet its meaning can be grasped and implicitly agreed upon by both speaker and addressee. It is one of the great achievements of linguistic semantics in the late 20th century that we came to understand how this might be so. Emmon Bach (1989:7-8) describes this achievement as the development of a theory of language as an interpreted formal system:

. . .One way of characterizing what Chomsky did is to say that Chomsky put forward a certain thesis or hypothesis about natural languages, namely, that a natural language . . . can be described as a formal system [i.e., a set of explicit, unambiguous rules, specifying all and only the grammatical utterances of the language in question]. I call that "Chomsky's Thesis" from 1957.

. . .Syntax is the study of language from a purely formal point of view with no attention to meaning. If we were to talk about a natural language, we could go on and say a great deal about the language from this purely formal point of view. Some linguists in our century seem to imply that this is all there is to say, that the only important thing about language is the network of formal relationships and contrasts that exist in the language. In the United States, some of the most influential linguists before Chomsky seemed to have this idea. One was Leonard Bloomfield, another was Zellig Harris, who was Chomsky's teacher. Of course, they recognized that words have meanings, but they seemed to think that the study of meaning could not be done in a precise and scientific way. In this respect, they agreed with many philosophers and logicians who said that natural languages are so vague and ambiguous that they cannot be described in the same way that artificial languages, such as [the predicate calculus], can be described.

One philosopher who did not agree with this view was Richard Montague. In [Richard] Montague's papers on natural language, which were written in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Montague claimed that natural languages could be treated in just the same way as the formal artificial languages of the logician. . .This is what I like to call "Montague's Thesis": Natural languages can be described as interpreted formal systems. . . Montague took over from the logical tradition, the philosophical tradition, the methods of so-called model-theoretic semantics. . . Semantics assigns to sentences and other expressions interpretations that are something that have to do with whether they are true or false. In general, to determine whether a sentence is true or false, two things are necessary: (1) you must know what the sentence means and (2) you must face the sentence with some situation in the real world and see whether it corresponds to the meaning of the sentence. [pp.7-8]

According to Chomsky, we put together words, in keeping with their syntactic categories, to form sentences, in accord with a finite set of linguistic rules. Since the rules may be recursive,
such a set may still produce an infinite set of well-formed expressions of the language. According to Montague, if we can understand all these expressions, it must be because we have an interpretive system that works in tandem with the syntactic rules, taking the meanings of the words and applying to them semantic rules that reflect the way they are composed syntactically. The test of whether we have assigned the correct meaning to a word or syntactic construction is whether the meaning we get by applying the semantic rules accords with a native speaker’s intuitions about the information conveyed by the utterance. This is cashed out by Montague (e.g., see his PTQ) as the truth conditions of the utterance.

Prior to Montague, many philosophers (and many linguists besides—Bloomfield and, apparently to this day, Chomsky) were pessimistic about the possibility of giving an explanatory account of natural language semantics. If language is an interpreted formal system, it should be possible to give a compositional account in which the meaning of the whole is a function of the meanings of the parts and the way they’re put together. But that’s not enough to account for the attested meanings, in the sense defined above. Consider:

Few words or expressions of any natural language have a meaning in isolation that corresponds to the meanings attested in actual utterances. That is, linguistic meanings quite often vary according to context. This is quite obvious when an utterance contains a pronoun (1) or an elided constituent like the verb phrase in (2):

(1) He is happy.
(2) Mark did.

But context-sensitivity is much more pervasive and subtle than this. Consider (3):

(3) Eating some of the cake is better than eating all of it. (Ostertag 2008)

What does the speaker of (3) claim is better? Presumably, eating some but not all of the cake is better than eating all of it. But does eating some of the cake literally mean ‘eating some but not all’? No, not in all contexts:

A: Who ate the cake?
B: I’m not sure. I know John ate some of the cake, but I don’t know if he ate all of it.

B explicitly leaves open the possibility that John ate all the cake, without seeming to contradict himself, so this would argue that eating some isn’t inconsistent with eating all. Then why does it seem to mean ‘some but not all’ in (3)? Why should this stronger meaning of some of the cake, if it isn’t part of the regular, conventional meaning of some of the cake, arise in certain contexts, not in others? It seems intuitively that in (3) if we didn’t enrich some of the cake to mean ‘some but not all of the cake’, the result would be pragmatically anomalous: How can eating some be better than eating all if eating some might include eating all? Since (Grice 1967, Horn 1972) all is stronger than some, and we might assume that the speaker wants to come as close as possible to answering A’s question, if the speaker doesn’t say all that suggests that she couldn’t consistently say all. In this case, that’s true. So we take her to mean ‘some but not all’. This conclusion requires a complex pattern of reasoning, based in part on what wasn’t said, in part on
the assumption that B was cooperatively addressing A’s question, and assuming as well that the
speaker meant something non-anomalous. This is reasoning to the best explanation, abductive.

Evidently, understanding (1)-(3) require us to consider how context influences compositionally
derived meanings, and then we enter into the domain of **pragmatics**.

But even the semantically converted tend to remain wary of pragmatics. Thus, Bar-Hillel (1971)
complained about the “pragmatic wastebasket”: Basically, if you don’t understand how a
meaning arises, just waive your arms and say that it’s pragmatics. It’s one thing to posit a few
indexicals and context-sensitive expressions like those in (1) and (2). It’s quite another to
address issues that go beyond that, and which intrinsically involve abductive inference based on
rich contextual information. So is it possible to say anything interesting, in the scientific sense of
**falsifiable**, about such contextual factors in interpretation?

If we want a truly **generative** account of meaning—predicting all and only the attested meanings,
then our semantic rules are going to have to deliver conventional contents which are just what we
need for interpretation in context, for understanding not just the conventional content alone, but
the meaning of a speech act made with that content.

To tackle this, we need to understand more about what a speech act is, and about what kinds of
contextual features play a role in the interpretation of such an act.

What kinds of speech acts do competent speakers perform? Is each act **sui generis**?

That won’t do. Generative grammar tells us that we can expect an infinity of well-formed
expressions of a human language (Chomsky’s thesis). Compositional rule-by-rule semantics
tells us that we can give each well-formed expression a rule-derived interpretation (Montague’s
thesis). Then do you mean to say that we can just do anything we like with the result, use it to
perform any old meaningful action we like?

Then put it another way: Is there a linguistically illuminating and illuminated taxonomy of types
of speech act?

A rich vein of the literature in pragmatics pertains to the study of speech acts. The Austinian
tradition best exemplified by the work of Searle, aims to classify the kinds of speech acts we
perform. For example, here’s the taxonomy from Searle (1975):

**Assertives:**
Commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition: suggesting, putting forward, swearing, boasting, concluding. *No one makes a better cake than me.*

**Directives:**
Attempt to make the addressee perform an action: asking, ordering, requesting, inviting, advising, begging. *Could you close the window?*

**Commissives:**
Commit the speaker to some future course of action: promising, planning, vowing, betting, opposing. *I'm going to Paris tomorrow.*
Expressives:
Express how the speaker feels about a state of affairs: thanking, apologising, welcoming, deploiring. *I am sorry that I lied to you.*

Declarations:
Change the state of the state of the world to bring it into conformity with the propositional content: *You are fired, I swear, I beg you, I hereby pronounce you man and wife.*

This taxonomy may be of interest from the point of view of the theory of action or social theory. But it isn’t clear that it would satisfy the linguistic desiderata:

**Linguistic desiderata for speech act theory:**
A theory of speech acts should be linguistically motivated—grounded in the conventional content of the utterances used to make them—and explanatory, offering testable predictions about both (a) the kinds of speech acts attested across languages, and (b) in particular utterances, the kind of speech act we would take a speaker to proffer, given the conventional content of what she says and the context of utterance.

Searle offers several parameters which distinguish his speech acts. But the most important is direction of fit, of which there are two values: Speech acts display **word to world** fit just in case they portray the world as being so-described. Speech acts display **world to word** fit in case they propose that interlocutors behave in such a fashion that the world comes to fit the description. Searle notes “Direction of fit is always a consequence of illocutionary point. It would be very elegant if we could build our taxonomy entirely around this distinction in direction of fit, but though it will figure largely in our taxonomy, I am unable to make it the entire basis of the distinctions.”

I’m going to argue that we can, and in fact should, do this, with the extension of a tradition that originates in work by Robert Stalnaker (1979). We can profitably distinguish speech acts in terms of this two-way distinction, with one natural elaboration:

- **assertion**: an act of proposing an addition to the interlocutors’ C(ommon)G(round) (Stalnaker 1979). If adopted, this addition would commit the interlocutors to accepting that (and behaving as if) the world fits the words. Note that this is a weaker commitment than belief, in keeping with Stalnaker’s characterization of the interlocutors’ Common Ground.
- **suggestion**: an act of proposing that interlocutors adopt intentions to act in specific ways. There are two types of speech act proposals, reflecting an essential distinction in the types of goals interlocutors may propose in discourse:
  - **direction**: an act in which a speaker proposes to her addressee that he adopt a particular intention to act in the world. This is the sort of speech act typically performed with an imperative. It is a proposal to make the world fit the words.
  - **interrogation** or **question**: an act of proposing that the interlocutors collectively commit to collaborative inquiry, thus an act which would establish a direction for the discourse itself. It is a proposal that the interlocutors discover the proper fit between world and words, thereby resolving the question.
In other words, on this view all speech acts are proposals to an interlocutor, and the central distinction lies in whether the proposal involves a commitment to truthfully portraying the world as it is, a proposal to adopt intentions to make the world change so as to conform to one’s portrayal, or a proposal to find the correct fit. The distinction among the two types of suggestions is about whether the proposed intentions should be jointly adopted with a view to the direction of discourse, or adopted by one of the interlocutors in a broader field of action.

This taxonomy cross-cuts Searle’s at several junctures. Some of his Directives would be interrogations on this view (for example asking); while others would be directions (ordering, inviting, advising, …); and some might be classed here as assertions (I hereby request you to close the window). Speech acts which fall under my category of assertions may be found in all five of his types. Besides the Directive just noted and the Assertives, these would include most Commissives (vowing as in the example I’m going to Paris tomorrow), Expressives (I am sorry that I lied to you) and Declarations (including performatives like I hereby pronounce you man and wife, to be discussed below). So it is clear that the present account approaches the question of what a speech act is, and how we might distinguish different types of speech acts, from a different angle.

If we are to develop a linguistically satisfying account of speech acts, and speech act types, we need to provide empirical evidence for the types of speech acts proposed and a theoretically interesting explanation for how they are differentiated and recognized by interlocutors. While most of the classical work on speech acts tended to focus on verb types, especially performatives, the linguistic evidence argues that the foundation of such an account should instead be in a theory of clause types and their semantics and pragmatics. There are two observations about grammatical mood, which I take to be language universals. Here is the first:

**Mood (grammatical universal):** All known languages display three basic clause types, characterized as a distinction in grammatical mood:
- Declarative
- Interrogative
- Imperative

As Sadock & Zwicky (1985:160) put it, one might find it “a surprising fact that most languages are similar in presenting three basic sentence types with similar functions and often strikingly similar forms. These are the declarative, interrogative, and imperative.” These moods may be realized quite differently from language to language or even in one and the same language. For example, interrogative mood may be reflected morphologically in some languages (e.g., Japanese verbal morphology), syntactically in others (English word order and extraction), or even prosodically (English utterance final phrase accent and boundary tone). But it is generally agreed that mood arises as a function of the compositional morpho-lexical and structural semantics of the clause. Moreover, as Sadock & Zwicky note, there are a number of notable syntactic similarities in the imperative across languages, including the fact that even in ergative languages the addressee is almost always the subject in imperative sentences, whether transitive or intransitive; and a strong tendency for subjects, and even subject-verb agreement, to be suppressed in imperatives, even in languages which otherwise display a strict subject agreement feature on the main verb.
The grammatical mood universal is reflected cross-linguistically in a second universal, a robust generalization about the pragmatics of mood:

**Mood (pragmatic universal):** There is a strong correlation between choice of grammatical mood and intended type of move in a language game:

- Declarative mood is typically used to make an **assertion**
- Interrogative mood is typically used to pose a **question**
- Imperative mood is typically used to issue a **direction**

We should be careful not to confuse this correlation with the **semantic content** of grammatical mood. Work on speech acts has always recognized that one mood may be used to perform different types of acts, e.g. a declarative used to pose a question (looking at someone quizzically, I say *you're not hungry*, even without final prosodic rise) or issue an order (*you WILL clean your plate!*). Most formal semantic work on declarative and interrogative mood has taken them to conventionally indicate the semantic type of the resulting interpretation: a declarative denotes a proposition: type *(s,t)*, whereas an interrogative denotes a set of propositions: type *(s,t),t* (intuitively, the alternative possible answers to the question). Recent work on the semantics of imperatives by Portner, Zanuttini and their colleagues (see the references below) has taken a similar tack, treating them as denoting a particular type of property: type *(s,e,t)* (indexed to the addressee via an abstract agreement feature). If this were correct, then we could conclude that mood determines semantic type, the type then correlated by default with type of move, as summarized in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M O O D</th>
<th>S E M A N T I C</th>
<th>D E F A U L T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td><em>(s,t)</em></td>
<td>Assertion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td><em>(s,t),t</em></td>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td><em>(s,e,t)</em></td>
<td>Direction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Semantics and Pragmatics of Mood**

A declarative clause may denote a proposition, but its use does not, of course, inevitably amount to an assertion. For one thing, such clauses may occur embedded, as in *John believed that his breakfast was ready*, where the complement clause is not asserted. In parallel fashion, though a semantic question is a set of propositions, it is important not to confuse that object with a pragmatic question, as we also see in embedded uses: *John wondered whether his breakfast was ready* reports on John’s consideration of a set of alternatives; it doesn’t pose the corresponding question for discussion in the discourse in which the utterance occurs. Though it is less common, it is now generally recognized that imperative clauses may occur embedded, as well, subject to a several constraints, in a several languages (Kaufmann 2014; Kaufmann & Poschmann 2013). In such uses, as with the other mood-types, the imperative clause is not used to propose a direction to the addressee, but instead to report such an event of proposing.

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3 This is not a new idea. See [CITATIONS***]. What is new here is (a) a particular motivation for why we find the correlation with just these kinds of moves, and (b) more detail about the relationship between the semantics of mood and the pragmatics of speech act types, a relationship mediated by semantic type.
Moves—assertions, questions, suggestions—are types of utterances, which in turn (Bar-Hillel 1971) are uses of a constituent in a context of utterance. Given the proposed conventional contents of the clause-types, we can see that their default use for the corresponding types of moves is functionally natural. This should be fairly obvious for the declaratives: Their semantic type is that of a proposition and what one asserts is a proposition. Similarly, interrogatives denote a set of propositions, and asking a question poses such a set of alternatives—intuitively, the possible answers to the question—for consideration. As a first pass, take the meaning of an imperative clause to be its realization conditions: it specifies what the world would be like if the targeted agent (typically the addressee) were to realize the property denoted. Then if the imperative is issued as a direction, it is a proposal that the addressee realize the property. If we take these three types of moves to be constitutive of the language game, then this suggests an explanation for the grammatical mood universal. Each language has some way of distinguishing the three basic semantic types because these are designed to serve those basic roles of an utterance in discourse.

Of course, as Wittgenstein famously pointed out, just because a tool was designed for a particular use, that doesn’t mean that it cannot be used in other ways. Just so, these natural correlations between mood and speech act type are defeasible. I will argue that this defeasibility, too, is natural and readily understood, as a function of the intentional structure of the discourse in which a move takes place.

This natural correlation contrasts with the lack of regular correlation between the conventional content of utterances and the classical speech act types of Austin or Searle. Thus, it seems, those classical speech act theories have no account of the two universals pertaining to mood.

We’ll have more to say about the roles of these three basic types of speech act types in our next class. Let’s step back now and consider our goals in constructing a pragmatic theory, as they’ll be reflected in this course:

Pragmatics is the field that tries to answer the question

(version 1)

**How does context affect interpretation?**

And since we’re generative linguists, and we want our theory to be falsifiable, as an answer to this question we want to predict the answer to this one:

(version 2)

**Given a linguistic string under a syntactico-morphological analysis, and a particular context of utterance, and given the attested interpretations available to competent addressees in that context, in what ways are those interpretations a function of context?**

N.B.: the lack of uniqueness assumption: I said *interpretations*. 
• Is that appropriate, or does it only mean that we haven’t yet identified all the relevant parameters of context to control for a unique interpretation?
• Don’t we want to leave room for vagueness? If so, could we ever have a single interpretation?

Take an utterance, following Bar-Hillel (1959) to be an ordered pair of a specific content (a linguistic string under an analysis that includes its prosodic structure) and a specific context of utterance.

An utterance is an ordered pair of an expression under a linguistic analysis and a context of utterance. Bar-Hillel (1971)

Then we have the following crucial foundations for pragmatics:
• a theory of conventional semantic content. ≠ ‘what is said’
  best there is: a syntactically driven/constrained compositional semantics (rule-by-rule syntax-semantics)
• a theory of what a context of utterance is
  too often taken for granted; we find that authors are quite at odds about what they take a context to be

And we can re-phrase our question in a third way:

(Version 3)
How can we explain the way that a given linguistic constituent varies in meaning across different utterances?

This, I will argue, is Grice’s (1959) sense of mean

All the above also suggests that if a pragmatic theory is robust, it can and should play a role in helping us to determine what the conventional semantic content of an expression is. That is, once we’ve got independently motivated accounts of context, of context update and the way that context influences meaning (including truth conditional meaning), and general pragmatic principles that control contextual inferences, that should help us to abstract away from those factors to determine the conventional content of the expression uttered across a variety of contexts, with different attested meanings in those contexts. E.g. modal auxiliaries and other evidentials, only, the, etc. Big puzzles about these little words and how they vary so much in meaning across different contexts. We need an adequate pragmatic theory to help make sense of this.

Here are some basic theses we’ll explore in this course, none of them generally accepted or—if they are in principle—their implications for pragmatic theory adequately recognized:

1. Organized context: a context of utterance is itself a complex phenomenon, involving both shared information of the interlocutors about the way things are and information about their
evident goals, plans and priorities, both kinds of information themselves hierarchically organized and dynamically changing even in the course of interpretation of a single utterance. Competent interlocutors track this information through discourse in systematic ways, as it gets added to by successive utterances and other shared input. And in turn, this context and its current organization at a particular point in a discourse both drive and constrain what we can reasonably take a speaker to intend to mean by a given utterance, with its specific conventional content, in that context.

The methodological point of taking context to be organized in this way is that it identifies the in-principle distinct parameters that (a) might have relatively independent effects on interpretation, and (b) accordingly, should be controlled for in exploring the predictions of the theory.

2. **Rich context-sensitive content:** conventional content itself is more complex than is often recognized, with at least three types of content; consideration is too often restricted to what I’ll call *proffered content*. But other types of content, in particular *presupposed content* and the *auxiliary content* contributed by conventional implicatures, both constrain and update context in an on-going way in the course of interpretation, with indirect truth-conditional effects on the resulting attested interpretation. Hence, our intuitions about “what is said” in a given utterance are the result of the interaction of multiple types of conventional content.

3. **Pragmatic intrusion:** Not all that contributes to the intuited truth conditions of an utterance is conventionally given.

Two rather different trends in contemporary work on pragmatics illustrate rather extreme approaches to explaining apparent context-sensitivity, which I’ll exaggerate and use as strawmen:

- **LF pragmatics:** the reduction of properly pragmatic phenomena to semantics via an elaboration of the syntactic level of L(ogical)F(orm) to attempt to capture aspects of interpretation that are arguably due to context, not aspects of content itself
- **Wild West pragmatics:** the use of free contextual inferences to enrich meaning in an unconstrained fashion

Our goal is to steer a course between these extremes, so that what is arguably a contextual or *conversational* factor stays out of conventional content, and yet we predict regular contextual motivations and constraints on the inferential processes involved in deriving meaning from content.

**References**


