## Assignment 5: Pragmatic Aspects of Meaning, Plus a Little More Semantics

## Ling 324; Fall 2007 Due on Nov. 28 in class

Your answers should be clear and well-organized, and written in full sentences in proper English when asked to provide explanations. Please type your answers. This time I want you to work in groups of three or less! Larger groups will not get credit for this assignment!

- Suppose I am talking to the graduate committee of the Linguistics department about the likelihood of the students in Ling 324 being able to go on to graduate school. I say, "The best student in Ling 324 certainly deserves to be admitted to graduate school!" The definite description *The best student in Ling 324* might be used here either attributively or referentially. (a) Describe a scenario where it is used attributively and one where it is used referentially; (b) Must the attributive and referential uses have the same truth-value? Explain why or why not.
- 2. (This is part of exercise 2 on pp. 229–230 of our textbook). Call a verb "a performative verb" if it can be used as the highest verb in a sentence that can be uttered performatively. Which of the following verbs is a performative? For those that are, illustrate their performative potential in a sentence that can be uttered performatively. For those that are not, explain briefly why. Here are the verbs: *concede, believe, say, thank, frighten, deny, nominate, joke, congratulate, doubt.*
- 3. (This is a portion of the first part of exercise 3 on pp. 238–239 of our textbook). For each of the following illocutionary acts, give three non-synonymous sentences that could be used to perform them.
  - (1) Reminding someone to pick up the cleaning
  - (2) Offering to help someone wash the dishes
  - (3) Asking someone to hurry in the shower
- 4. (This is the second part of exercise 3 on pp. 238–239 of our textbook). For each of the following sentences, name at least two illocutionary acts their utterance could simultaneously perform. If special contextual factors must be present to do this, specify them.
  - (4) Assignments will be collected next week.
  - (5) I'm cold.
  - (6) Is Linda there?
  - (7) Our dinner reservations are at seven o'clock.
  - (8) You may want to review Chapter 3 before Friday's test.

- 5. (This is part of exercise 4 on pp. 254 of our textbook). In each of the pairs below, sentence (a) conversationally implicates sentence (b). For each pair, provide a reason for thinking that the implication is not an entailment, and calculate how the implicature is generated as best as you can, indicating where contextually specific premises need to be supplied.
  - (9) (a) Joan swung at the ball.
    - (b) Joan missed the ball.
  - (10) (a) I don't think your solution works.(b) I think your solution doesn't work.
  - (11) (a) Mary brought a man from Montreal as her guest.(b) The man was not Mary's husband.
  - (12) İ wonder what time it is.(b) The speaker wants to be told what time it is by the addressee.
- 6. Consider the example in (13).
  - (13) Most cats are black.

And now consider the following two intuitively specified models, M<sub>1</sub> and M<sub>2</sub>.

M<sub>1</sub>: There are 20 black cats, 2 white cats, and 80 black dogs.

M<sub>2</sub>: There are 2 black cats, 20 white cats, and 80 white dogs.

- (a) In model  $M_1$ , is the sentence in (13) true or false, according to your intuition? Explain your answer.
- (b) In model  $M_2$ , is the sentence in (13) true or false, according to your intuition? Explain your answer.
- (c) One possible way of representing the semantics of *most* is as follows.
  - (14)  $\llbracket [\text{most N}]_i \mathbb{S} \rrbracket^{M,g} = 1$  iff for more than half of the individuals  $d \in U, d \in \llbracket \mathbb{N} \rrbracket^{M,g}$ and  $\llbracket \mathbb{S} \rrbracket^{M,g[d/t_i]} = 1$ .

Using the semantics of *most* given in (14), determine the truth value of the sentence in (13) in model  $M_1$ . Explain how you arrived at your answer.

- (d) Does the semantics of *most* given in (14) correctly represent the truth conditional meaning of (13)? Explain your answer.
- (e) Another possible way of representing the semantics of *most* is as follows.
  - (15)  $\llbracket [\text{most N}]_i \mathbb{S} \rrbracket^{M,g} = 1$  iff for more than half of the individuals  $d \in U$ , if  $d \in \llbracket \mathbb{N} \rrbracket^{M,g}$  then  $\llbracket \mathbb{S} \rrbracket^{M,g[d/t_i]} = 1$ .

Using the semantics of *most* given in (15), determine the truth value of the sentence in (13) in model  $M_2$ . Explain how you got your answer.

(f) Does the semantics of (15) correctly represent the truth conditional meaning of (13)? Explain your answer.