Section 4
Utterance meaning

Content of Section 4

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- **Conversational implicature** (Hàm ngôn hội thoại)

- **Conventional implicature** (Hàm ngôn quy ước/ước định)

- **Speech acts** (Hành động ngôn từ)

- **Performatives** & **Constatives** (Câu hành ngôn & Câu nhận định)

- **Politeness**, **co-operation** & **indirectness**

(Tính lịch sự, tính hợp tác & tính gián tiếp)

- **Deixis** (Trực chỉ)

4.1. Presupposition - **Definition**

Presupposition is what a speaker or writer assumes that the receiver of the message already knows.

'John doesn't write poems anymore' **presupposes that** *John once wrote poetry.*

'Would you like another beer?' **presupposes that** *the person called you here has already had at least one beer.*

4.1. Presupposition – **Characteristics**

- The presupposition of an utterance **remains** the same under its NEGATION:

(1)a. 'John stopped smoking.

(1)b. 'John did<u>n't</u> stop smoking.'

→ a-b both presuppose that John once smoked cigarettes.

- The presupposition of an utterance **remains** the same under its INTERROGATION:

(4)a. 'John stopped smoking.'

(4)b. 'Did John stop smoking?'

(4)c. 'Why did John stop smoking?'

→ a-c all presuppose that John once smoked cigarettes.

4.1. Presupposition – **Characteristics**

• The presupposition of an utterance may be **cancelled** under its EXTENSION:

(5)a. 'She didn't feel regret at the over-cooked meat.'

(5)b. 'She didn't feel regret at the over-cooked meat because it was in fact well-done.'

→ (5)a presupposes that *the meat was overcooked*

while (5)b presupposes that *the meat was well-done.*

NP = N' + N

NP = Det + (AdvP) + (AP) + hN

Det: a/an/the – this/that/these/those/whose – poss (my/his/your)

Poss NP = poss + hN

Indefinite NP = **a/an + hN**

Definite NP = the + hN

"I lost **my watch** yesterday at Bến Thành market."

The utterance **presupposes** that the speaker / I had a watch.

4.1. Presupposition – **Classification**

4.1.1. The existential presupposition

A *possessive*[45] noun phrase (abbreviated to NP)

$\Rightarrow$ a complete statement: X had / has / will have + an *indefinite*[46] NP

Example:

(2)'I lost **my watch** yesterday at Bến Thành market.' SVOA

The utterance **presupposes** that I *had a watch*.

(1)'They haven't spoken to each other since **their** last week's **quarrel**.'

The utterance **presupposes** that they *had a quarrel* last week.

4.1. Presupposition – **Classification**

4.1.1. The existential presupposition

A *definite*[48] NP $\Rightarrow$ a complete statement

There is/was/are/were (*not*)+ an *indefinite* NP (+<u>adjunct of place</u>)

There exist/exists/existed + an *indefinite* NP (+<u>adjunct of place</u>)

Example:

(1)'Children like **all the pictures** in this book very much.'

The utterance **presupposes** that *there are/exist a number of pictures* in this book.

a number of *pictures can be found* in this book.

(2)'**The king** of Sweden has just left for France.'

The utterance **presupposes** that *there is/exists a king* in Sweden.

4.1. Presupposition – **Classification**

4.1.1. **The existential presupposition**

A *definite* NP $\Rightarrow$ an *indefinite* NP

Example:

'**The book you gave me** is worth reading.

The utterance **presupposes** that you gave me *a book*.

4.1. Presupposition – **Classification**

4.1.2. **The factive presupposition**

Example:

- 'Nobody **realized** <u>that</u> **Kelly was ill**.'   sv

The utterance **presupposes** that *Kelly was ill*.

- 'Ed **realized/didn't realize** <u>that</u> **he was in debt**.'

The utterance **presupposes** that *Ed was in debt*.

- 'I **was aware/wasn't aware** <u>that</u> **she was married**.'

The utterance **presupposes** that *she was married*.

4.1. Presupposition – **Classification**

4.1.3. The non-factive presupposition

Example:

- 'I **imagined** <u>that</u> **Kelly was ill**.'

The utterance **presupposes** that *Kelly was not ill*.

- 'I **dreamed** <u>that</u> **I was rich**.'

The utterance **presupposes** that *I was not rich*.

- 'He **pretends** **to be ill**.'

The utterance **presupposes** that *he is not ill*.

4.1. Presupposition – **Classification**

4.1.4. The lexical presupposition

Example:

- 'You're **late again**.'

The utterance **presupposes** that you were *late before*.

- 'I <u>'m going to</u> **change my job**.'

The utterance **presupposes** that I *have a job <u>already</u>*.

- 'I've just **got a driving license**.'

The utterance **presupposes** that I had *no driving license before*.

The utterance **presupposes** that I did *not have a driving license before*.

4.1. Presupposition – **Classification**

4.1.5. The structural presupposition

A **Wh**-*question* $\Rightarrow$ a complete statement

Example:

- 'Where did you buy the bike?'

The utterance **presupposes** that the listener / you bought a bike.

- 'How long has your grandfather been in hospital?'

The utterance **presupposes** that the listener's (your) grandfather has been in hospital.

- 'When did he leave?'

The utterance **presupposes** that he left.

4.1. Presupposition – **Classification**

4.1.5. The structural presupposition

> *A* **Wh**-*embedded clause* $\Rightarrow$ a complete statement

Example:

- I was eating popcorn <u>when Mike smashed the television set</u>.'

The utterance **presupposes** that Mike smashed the television set.

- 'I don't know <u>why I've got an average mark.</u>'

The utterance **presupposes** that I've got an average mark.

- It is odd how proud he was.'

The utterance **presupposes** that he was proud.

4.1. Presupposition – **Classification**

4.1.6. The counter-factual presupposition

> *An **if** clause* $\Rightarrow$ a complete statement

Example:

- 'If I had enough money, I would buy that house.'

The utterance **presupposes** that I do not have enough money.

- 'If I had had enough money, I would have bought that house.'

The utterance **presupposes** that I did not have enough money.

- 'If you were my friend, you'd have helped me.'

The utterance **presupposes** that you are not my friend.

4.1. Presupposition – **Classification**

4.1.6. The counter-factual presupposition

An **embedded** *clause* after '**wish**' ⇒ a complete statement

Example:

- 'They wish (that) they could go on vacation <u>now</u>.'

The utterance **presupposes** that they cannot go on vacation <u>now</u>.

- 'I wish I had studied medicine.'

The utterance **presupposes** that I did not study medicine.

4.1. Presupposition – **Classification**

4.1.6. The counter-factual presupposition

> *A clause* with ***a modal perfect verb form*** $\Rightarrow$ a complete statement

Example:

• 'You shouldn't have seen such a horror film.'

The utterance **presupposes** that you **did see / saw** a horror film.

• You could have talked to the dean.'

The utterance **presupposes** that you did not talk to the dean.

In brief, it is believed that

- presuppositions are closely linked to the words and grammatical structures that are actually used in the utterance and our knowledge about the way language users conventionally interpret them

- presuppositions can be drawn when there is little or no surrounding context

4.2 Conversational implicature - **Introduction**

- **Situation 1**. In the middle of their lunch hour, one woman asks another how she likes the hamburger she is eating, and receives the answer:

  'A hamburger is a hamburger.'

- **Situation 2**.

  A: 'I hope you brought the bread and the cheese.'

  B: *'Ah, I brought the bread.'*

- In **situation 1**, speaker's utterance may implicate that **she does not like hamburger.**

- In **situation 2**, B's utterance may implicate that **B did not bring the cheese**, since what is not mentioned was not brought.

4.2 Conversational implicature - **Definition**

- **Conversational implicature** promises to bridge "the gap between **what is literally said** and **what is conveyed**."

- Example:

(1) A: 'Coffee?'

    B: 'It would keep me awake all night.'

→ B's utterance may implicate that ***B would rather <u>not</u> drink coffee.***

(2) A: 'Have you finished the student's evaluation form and reading list?'

    B: 'I've done the reading list.'

→ B's utterance may implicate that ***B has <u>not</u> done the evaluation form, since what is not mentioned <u>has not been done yet</u>.***

4.2 Conversational implicature - **Characteristics**

1. People may **draw** somewhat **different conversational implicature** from **a certain utterance**.

2. Conversational implicature can **be suspended** or **denied**.

3. Conversational implicatures are "**conclusions** drawn from **utterances on particular occasions** and **not from isolated sentences**.

Grice' theory of conversational implicature

Grice has proposed a way of analyzing conversational implicature based on **the co-operative principle** and **its four basic maxims** of Quality, Quantity, Relevance, and Manner.

The co-operative principle:

➢ be as helpful to your hearer as you can

➢ controls the way in which a conversation may proceed

➢ and its **maxims**, which are guidelines for the efficient and effective use of language in conversation

Grice' theory of conversational implicature

Four basic maxims of the co-operative principle:

- **The maxim of Quality**

try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:

(i) do not say what you believe to be false

(ii) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

- **The maxim of Quantity**

(i) make your contribution as informative as required for current purposes of the exchange

(ii) do not make your contribution more informative than is required

Grice' theory of conversational implicature

Four basic maxims of the co-operative principle:

- **The maxim of Relevance**

(i) make your contribution relevant (correct topics)

- **The maxim of Manner**

(i) avoid obscurity

(ii) avoid ambiguity

(iii) be brief

(iv) be orderly

In short, these maxims specify what participants have to do in order to converse in a maximally efficient, rational, co-operative way: they should speak sincerely, relevantly and clearly, while providing sufficient information.

In fact, these conversational maxims are <u>not</u> always observed.

4.2 Conversational implicature – **Classification**

- There are **two types** of conversational implicature which are both of great interest.

1. Those that derive from *the observation of conversational maxims*

2. Those that derive from *the violation of conversational maxims*

The observation of conversational maxims

- **<u>Maxim of Quantity</u>**: Make your contribution as informative as required and do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Example: *Mother: 'Have you finished your homework and put your books away?'*

   Son: 'I have finished my homework.'

→ The son's utterance may implicate that the son has <u>not</u> put his books away or the books have <u>not</u> been put away yet.

- **<u>Maxim of Relevance</u>**: Make your contribution relevant.

Example: *A: 'Can you tell me the time?'*

   B: 'Well, the milkman has come.'

→ B's utterance may implicate that B does <u>not</u> know <u>the exact time</u> of the present moment, but B can provide some information from which A may be able to deduce the approximate time, namely the milkman has come.

The violation of conversational maxims

- **<u>Maxim of Quality</u>**: Make your contribution one that is true.

Example: *A: 'John has two PhDs.'*

        B: 'John has two PhDs but I don't believe he has.'

→ B's utterance may implicate that A should be suspicious of the true value of John's two PhDs.

- **<u>Maxim of Relevance</u>**: Make your contribution relevant.

Example: *A: 'Where's Bill?'*

        B: 'There's a yellow VW outside Sue's house.'

→ B's utterance may implicate that if Bill has a yellow VW, he is now in Sue's house.

Distinction between **presupposition** and **conversational implicature**

PRESUPPOSITION	CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE
Presupposition is more straightforward and more objective. It is easily drawn **before making an utterance**.	**Conversational implicature** is less straightforward and more subjective/personal. It is derived from **observing** or **violating one or more maxims** and drawn **after a conversation is over**.
Ex: 'Is the Pope Catholic?' The utterance **presupposes** that *the Pope does exist in the world.*	Ex: A: 'Do you like apples?' B: 'Is the Pope Catholic?' B's utterance **may implicate** that *he/she does like apples.*

4.3. Conventional implicature

- Unlike conversational implicatures, conventional implicatures don't have to occur in conversation, and they don't depend on special contexts for their interpretation.
- Not unlike lexical presuppositions, conventional implicatures are associated with specific words and result in additional conveyed meanings when those words are used.
- Example:

(1) 'Linda suggested black, but I chose white.'

→ The utterance may implicate that the speaker does something <u>in contrast to</u> what has been suggested.

(2) 'Even John came to the party.'

→ The utterance may implicate that <u>contrary to</u> the speaker's expectation, John came.

4.4. **Speech acts** – Definition

- A **speech act** is an UTTERANCE as a functional unit in communication.

- Quite contrary to the popular belief that actions and words are entirely distinct, many actions can actually be performed with words.

4.4. **Speech acts** – Characteristics

- A speech act has **two kinds of meaning**:

➢ **locutionary meaning** (also known as propositional meaning), which is its **basic literal meaning** conveyed by its particular words and structure(s);

➢ **illocutionary meaning** (also known as illocutionary force), which is **the effect the utterance might have on the hearer**.

- Example:

Sam: 'I am thirsty.' (= 'Give me something to drink, please.')

Annie: 'I'll bring you a glass of water.'

The locutionary meaning of 'I am thirsty' is I am suffering from my thirst.

The illocutionary meaning of 'I am thirsty' is Sam indirectly requests Annie to give him something to drink.

4.4. **Speech acts** – Classification

There are **<u>five</u> main types of speech acts** (Searl, 1981)

- The **representative** describes a state of affairs in the world: asserting, stating, claiming, affirming, making hypotheses, describing, predicting, reporting, etc.

- The **commissive** commits the speaker to a course of action: promising, vowing, threatening, offering, etc.

- The **declarative** changes the world by bringing about or altering the state of affairs it names: dismissing, sentencing, naming, announcing marriage, etc.

- The **directive** intends to get the listener to carry out an action: commanding, requesting, begging, warning, challenging, inviting, suggesting, giving advice, etc.

- The **expressive** indicates the speaker's psychological state(s) or feeling(s)/attitude(s) about something: greeting, apologizing, complaining, thanking, etc.

4.4. **Speech acts** – Classification

Leech (1983) proposed an **extra category**, which is called the rogative.

- The **rogative** refers to a special kind of directives which deals with requests for information and which is typically in form of a question.

Speech-act category	Typical expression	Example
Declaratives	<u>declarative</u> structure with ***speaker as subject*** and a performative verb in simple present tense	*We* find *the defendant guilty.* *I* resign.
Representatives	<u>declarative</u> structure	*Tom's eating grapes.* *Bill was an accountant.*
Expressives	<u>declarative</u> structure with words referring to feelings	*I'm* sorry *to hear that.* *This beer is* disgusting.
Directives	<u>imperative</u> sentence	Sit *down!* Fasten *your seat belts.*
Rogatives	<u>interrogative</u> sentence	*Where did he go?* *Is she leaving?*
Commissives	<u>declarative</u> structure with ***speaker as subject*** and **future time** expressed	*I'll* call *you tonight.* *We're going* to turn *you* in.

Distinction between direct and indirect speech acts

Speech acts can be **classified** as **direct** or **indirect**.

✓ In a **direct speech act** there is <u>a direct relationship</u> between its linguistic structure and the work it is doing.

✓ In **indirect speech acts** the speech act is <u>performed indirectly</u> through the performance of another speech act.

• Performing a direct speech act, the speaker utters a sentence which means exactly what he or she says:

Ex. 'Come in, please.' is <u>a direct request</u>.

• Performing an indirect speech act, the speaker utters a sentence which does not mean exactly what he or she says:

Ex. '<u>Won't you</u> come in?' is not merely <u>a Yes-No question</u>. It is <u>an</u> <u>indirect</u> <u>request</u> made in a very concerned manner.

Distinction between locution, illocution and perlocution

- A **locutionary** act is the saying of something which is meaningful and can be understood.

For example, <u>saying the</u> <u>sentence</u> Shoot the snake is a locutionary act if hearers understand the words shoot, the, snake and can identify the particular snake referred to.

- An **illocutionary** act is using a sentence to perform a function.

For example, 'Shoot the snake' may be intended as <u>an order</u> or <u>a piece of advice</u>.

- A **perlocutionary** act is the results or effects that are produced by means of saying something.

For example, <u>shooting the snake</u> would be a perlocutionary act.

Distinction between locution, illocution and perlocution

- In brief,

- the LOCUTION of an utterance is producing an utterance, which is a meaningful linguistic expression.

- the ILLOCUTION of an utterance is using such an utterance to perform a function.

- the PERLOCUTION of an utterance is causing a certain effect on the hearer or others.

4.5 Performatives and constatives - **Definition**

- A **performative** is one that actually describes the act that it performs, i.e. it PERFORMS some act and SIMULTANEOUSLY DESCRIBES that act.

- For example,

'I promise to repay you tomorrow'

is a performative because in saying it the speaker actually does what the utterance describes, i.e. he promises to repay the hearer the next day.

The utterance both describes and is a promise.

4.5 Performatives and constatives - **Definition**

- A **constative** asserts something that is either <u>true</u> or <u>false</u>.

- For example,

'John promis<u>ed</u> to repay me tomorrow' is a constative because the utterance does not simultaneously do what it describes, i.e. John promised to repay the hearer the next day.

The utterance describes a promise but is not itself a promise.

4.5 Performatives and constatives - **Characteristics**

- To make his/her utterance more polite, the speaker tends to replace an active performative with the 1st person singular subject by its passive version with the 2nd or 3rd person singular/plural subject

- The 1st person <u>singular</u> subject, which is I, can be replaced by the 1st person <u>plural</u> subject

- The 1st person <u>singular</u> subject, which is I, can be replaced by the 3rd person <u>plural</u> subject

Distinction between **explicit performatives** and **implicit performatives**

- Explicit performatives are those that contain A PERFORMATIVE VERB while implicit performatives are those that <u>do not</u> contain A PERFORMATIVE VERB.

Ex1. 'I <u>hereby</u> WARN you that you will fail' is an <u>explicit</u> performative (i.e. a <u>verbalized</u> warning)

while 'If you do not try your best, you'll fail in the exam' is an <u>implicit</u> performative (i.e. an <u>implied</u> warning).

Ex2. 'I PROMISE to give you a helpful hand when you are in need' is an <u>explicit</u> performative (i.e. a <u>verbalized</u> promise)

while 'If you need me at any time, just call' is an <u>implicit</u> performative (i.e. an <u>implied</u> promise).

4.6 Politeness, co-operation and indirectness

The principle of politeness

Two maxims concerning the principle of politeness:

- *The approbation maxim*: Minimize dispraise of the other maximize praise of the other.

- *The tact maxim*: Minimize the cost to the other; maximize the benefit to the other.

- Example:

'Set the table.' (the least polite)

'Can you set the table?'

'Could I possibly ask you to set the table?' (the most polite)

4.6 Politeness, co-operation and indirectness

Politeness and co-operation

- There is no doubt that politeness and co-operation are often in conflict with each other. Language users must be consciously aware of this conflict and flexibly apply both of the principles in face-to-face conversation.

- Example:

Tom: 'Do you like the wine I picked out?'

Gina: 'Not really.' (+direct, +negative)

Tom: 'Do you like the wine I picked out?'

Gina: 'It's Italian, isn't it?' (−direct, +negative)

4.6 Politeness, co-operation and indirectness

Politeness and indirectness

• Politeness and indirectness are closely related to each other and that is why indirect negative responses are <u>more</u> <u>polite</u> than direct ones:

Jenny: 'Well, I've done this. I've dyed my hair blonde.'

Ed: (a) 'You look awful.' (+direct, +negative)

•   (b) 'You look amazing.' (−direct, ±negative)

Jean: 'What did the students say about my teaching?'

Kate: (a) 'Pretty bad.' (+direct, +negative)

      (b) 'Let's hope none of them are lawyers.' (−direct, +negative)

      (c) 'Some students are very positive.' (−direct, +negative)

4.7 Deixis - Definition

- Deixis is a technical term (from Greek) for one of the most basic things we do with utterances. It means 'pointing' via language.

- Deictic expressions are also sometimes called indexicals.

- When you notice a strange object and ask, 'What's that?', you are using a deictic expression ('that') to indicate something in the immediate context.

Deixis consists of three notions

- Personal deixis "can mark a number of overlapping distinction: person, gender, number, and social relations." [Finegan, 1994: 178] Pronouns and their alternative forms are usually markers of personal deixis. The system of English pronouns contrasts in person between <u>first person</u>, <u>second person</u> and <u>third person</u> and in number between <u>singular</u> and <u>plural</u>.

- Spatial deixis is "the marking in language of the orientation or position in space of the referent of a linguistic expression." [Finegan, 1994: 179] Common markers of spatial deixis in English are demonstratives (this vs. that) and such <u>adverbs of place</u> as here, there.

- Temporal deixis is "the orientation or position of the reference of actions and events in time." [Finegan, 1994: 180] In English, temporal deixis can be marked either by such words and phrases as before, last time, now, then, tomorrow