Origins of Human Communication

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Lecture 4. Language as Shared Intentionality

Human linguistic communication has same social-cognitive, social-motivational infrastructure as pointing and gestural communication - but attention-directing done with conventions.

⇒ NOT written, but spoken language. [Intuitions come from written.]

⇒ NOT meaning as thing, but use of linguistic forms for communicative functions

- Direct att. in shared conceptual space - like gestures (but w/conventions)

⇒ NOT grammatical rules, but patterns of use => schemas

- Constructions themselves as complex symbols "She sneezed him the ball"
- NOT 'a grammar' but a structured inventory of constructions: continuum of regularity => idiomaticity ➔ grammaticality = normativity
  - Many complexities = "unification" of constructions w/ incompatibilities
- NOT innate UG, but "teeming modularity" (1) symbols, pred-arg structure, social intentions/speech acts, speech/phonology, categorization, etc. (2) diff. functions
  - not many language universals, but some due to universals of: human cognition, social cognition/attention, vocal-auditory processing.

4.1. Common Infrastructure of Pointing and Language

- JAF and Common Ground (Speech Situation) = same
- Assumption of Helpfulness = same
- Social Intention = same (also Indiv. Intentions) + some new?
- Communicative Intention = same
- Referential Intention = expressed differently

(1) Expression of Motive

- basics in intonation (request, inform) = same; with some additional

conventions (e.g., other intonations, speech act verbs, etc.)

- expression of attitude in expressives = same, but also modal/epistemic

(2) Reference as attention directing

- indeterminacy of reference => need JAF (def. ref.), just as in gestures
- paradigmatic choice: perspective, construal, prag. inferences
- syntagmatic combos: segmenting communicative act

4.2. Evolutionary/Historical Origins

- Primacy of the utterance: Holophrases - reference + expr. of motive
  - referents here & now = pointing => demonstratives (direct att. in space)
  - referents *not* here & now = characterizing gestures => content words
    - ¬ noun = 'thing'; verb = 'event': categories

ape att-getters	------	co-operative pointing	⟶	demonstratives & deictics
ape int-movements	------	characterizing gestures	⟶	content words [nouns, verbs]

  - Others outside CG/JAF (children) imitatively learn: convention > use
    - ¬ drift, arbitrariness => generalization of **conventionality** (money)
- Grammar: Two aspects of a situation symbolized
  - "Eat" ..... "Berries" => then mental combination under one contour
    - ¬ e.g., after non-comprehension? breakdown and repair
  - Utterance Semantics = Event (incl. state) + Participants (+ setting)
    - ¬ role of imitation in construction of event categories
    - ¬ also: topic introduction (w/ demonstratives)
  - Utterance Pragmatics = (i) speaker motives & attitudes

    (ii) structuring of info for A's perspective/knowledge/expectations
    - ¬ referential choice for NPs and VPs (referential newness)
    - ¬ topic-focus for information structure of utterance (relational newness)

- Grammaticalization of constructions = pre-fab. packages for recurrent comm. situations - constructions themselves as complex symbols "She sneezed him the ball"
    - incl. both semantics & pragmatics
    - incl. both utt.-level and phrase-level: NPs & VPs & PPs as modular
    - Emergence of second-order symbols (gramm. morphemes from Ns, Vs, demonstratives) via grammaticalization, as "relational glue" in constructions

      (1) relating referents to one another or designating role in whole utterance
        - ¬ case marker or word order for semantic role
        - ¬ external agreement (e.g., subj-verb) for semantic role
        - ¬ internal agreement (e.g., determiner-adj-noun) for phrase grouping

      (2) grounding referents in ongoing JAF [N = 'space'; V = 'time']
        - ¬ Nouns = determiners, possessives, relative clauses, etc.
        - ¬ Verbs = tense-aspect-modality
        - ¬ Indefiniteness & Non-finiteness
    - Example = car wreck: C motive = quest, inform; A perspct. = agent, patient

      - agent-focus inform: "Mary hit Jerry." [She hit Jerry] [Mary hit him]

      - patient-focus inform: "He got hit (by Mary)." [The guy in the hat got hit]

      - agent Q: "Who hit him?" "Whom did she hit?" [Whom was she hitting?]

      - patient Q: "Who got hit (by her)?" [Who ought to have gotten hit?]

      - agent cleft: "It was Mary that hit him" "It was Jerry whom she hit."

      - patient cleft: "It was Jerry who got hit (by her)"

      - agent cleft Q: "Was it Mary that hit him?" "Was it Jerry whom she hit?"

      - patient cleft Q: "Was it Jerry that got hit (by her)?"
    - Example of process:
      - *He pulled the door and it opened* => *He pulled the door open* (resultative construction)
      - *I am going to see my bride* => *I'm gonna see the next century* (go-future)
      - *I want it ... I buy it* => *I want to buy it* (infinitival complement)
      - *I believe that*!... *Mary will wed John* => *I believe that Mary will wed John* (S-complement)
      - *My boyfriend ... He rides horses ... He bets on them* =>
        My boyfriend, who rides horses, bets on them (relative clause)
    - "Yesterday's discourse is today's syntax"; "Yesterday's syntax is today's

morphology" (T. Givón): processing, predictability, prag. inferences

- Many problems created by "unification" of constructions w/ incompatiblties
  - EG: extraction constraints (Goldberg, 2006)

- Discourse
  - narratives as motivation for complex TAM marking
  - noun classes for reference tracking in narratives
- Universals = universals of human cognition, communication, v-a processing
  - no Universal Grammar (what is it, anyway?)

4.3. Ontogenetic Origins

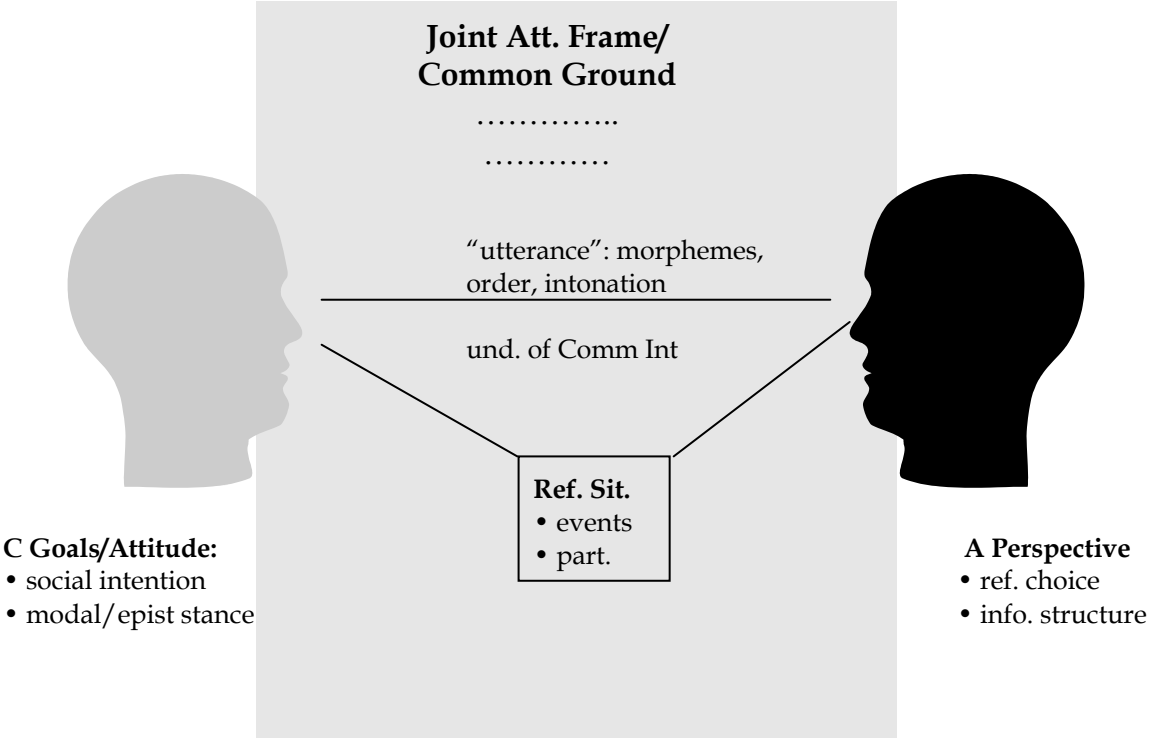
- Primacy of utterance; initial holophrases [often final word of adult utt.]
  - request or indicate objects (e.g., by naming them with a requestive or neutral intonation);
  - request or indicate the recurrence of objects or events (e.g., *More, Again, Another-One*);
  - request or indicate dynamic events involving objects (e.g., *Up, Down, Open, Close*);
  - request or indicate the actions of people (e.g., *Eat, Kick, Ride, Draw*);
  - indicate the location of objects and people (e.g., *Here, Outside*);
  - ask questions (e.g., *Whats-that?* or *Where-go?);*
  - indicate a property of an object (e.g., *Pretty* or *Wet*);
  - mark specific social events and situations (e.g., *Hi, Bye, Thank-You, No*).
- Cultural (imitative) learning of holophrase: form => function (role reversal)
- Extracting Words
  - Child hears whole utterances; to extract word must:
    - ¬ comprehend overall comm. act
    - ¬ blame assignment of components: segment comm. act
  - JAF + word learning studies (summarized in T 2001)
    - ¬ way Mom uses words inside JAF matters; outside no
    - ¬ experiments in hiding/finding JAF: (e.g., T & Barton, '94)
  - Known words in utterance (syntagmatics) => helps blame assignment
  - Known alternatives (paradigmatics) => construal (dog vs pet vs pest)
    - ¬ Referential choice exps: shared-new [C,B,T 2000; W&T, 2005
  - Conventionality, imitation, normativity
    - ¬ Historically = conventions; developmentally = norms (laugh)
- Abstracting Constructional Patterns

- After holophrases => verb islands, item-based constructns (not a grammar)
  - ¬ abstract slots based on **function**
  - ¬ first without and then with syntactic marking
- Abstract constructions => grammaticality as normativity
  - ¬ syntagmatic categories: **analogy** based on function: Subj-Obj
  - ¬ paradigmatic categories: **distributional analysis**: Ns & Vs
  - ¬ constraint based on **entrenchment & pre-emption**

4.6. Summary: Linguistic Communication

- Same social-cognitive, social-motivational infrastructure as pointing [Fig. 2]
- Symbols = gestures, drift to arbitrary => conventions
  - ontogeny: observe use (function) in utterances & imitate: normative
- Grammar = constructions and their creative combination [grammaticalization]
  - ontogeny: find patterns (function) and generalize: normative
- Phylogeny + History in Ontogeny
  - Ontogeny = dual inheritance: genes and utterances

Figure 2



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