

International Linguistic Association

Monthly Lecture Series

Dr. Daniel Harris

Indirect Communication

Abstract:

We sometimes communicate indirectly. For example, if we're in the elevator and I say 'you're on my foot', I am probably indirectly requesting for you to move. If you understand this indirect request then we've indirectly communicated. How does this process work? The most influential account is Grice's theory of conversational implicature. But Grice's theory has recently been beset by criticisms. Some have complained that Grice's reconstructions of the reasoning used to interpret an implicature are both incomplete and psychologically unrealistic. Others have correctly pointed out that Grice's theory is formulated so as to apply only to assertoric speech acts and so can't explain non-assertoric acts, such as the example above. Others have shown that Grice's tests for implicature don't always work; for example: implicatures aren't always cancellable, and are sometimes tied to the expressions uttered and not just to what was said with them. I will respond to these objections by getting clearer about the psychological processes underlying indirect communication as well as the social norms that govern cooperative interaction. The view I will present is not a replacement for Grice's theory but an elaboration of it that draws on contemporary cognitive-scientific work on mindreading and philosophical work on the psychological norms that govern collective action.

Saturday, April 6, 2019 11 AM - 12 PM

Hunter College, West Building, 904 Lexington Avenue, Room 424 West

New York, NY 10065

Directions

The West Building of Hunter College is on the south west corner of Lexington Avenue and 68th Street, right by the Number 6 subway station. Enter the building by the revolving doors on 68th Street and register with the security guards, whose desk is to the left of the doors. Then take the escalator up to the fourth floor. At the top, you will see a sign to your left pointing along a corridor to room 424. The room is on the right hand side of the corridor.

There will be a meeting of the ILA's Executive Board from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on the same day in room 1222 of the West Building.

NOTE: All attendees will be asked to show some form of ID in order to enter the college.