Ling 140a: Pragmatics

The Structural Equivalence of Imperative and Declarative Constructions
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Imperative and Declarative constructions (IaDs) are a common construction consisting of an imperative followed by the word *and*, and a declarative. This produces a conditional meaning, the imperative providing the antecedent, and the declarative being the consequent, as in (1):

(1) Study hard and you will pass the class.

This construction will be examined in light of pragmatic phenomena in order to determine where it gets its meaning and to what extent that source is pragmatic. Von Fintel & Iatridou 2015 distinguish IaDs by whether they are endorsing (e-IaDs) or non-endorsing (n-IaDs) of the imperative. They then provide two opposing analyses for this division in meaning – Type I, in which the two types of IaDs differ through an underlying structural difference, and Type II, in which they differ purely through pragmatic means. The first question this presentation addresses is whether or not a simple two-way division is sufficient to account for all types of meaning that can be given by IaDs. The primary question that follows is what analysis for distinguishing between types of IaDs to take. Type I suggests that e-IaDs contain true imperatives and n-IaDs don’t, while Type II suggests that both types of IaDs are structurally the same. Adopting Type I would, therefore require that any analysis for imperatives be compatible with the imperatives in e-IaDs. However, Type II would require a purely pragmatic account for their endorsing meaning. This presentation will look at the implications of both, by considering compatibility with currently accepted analyses of imperatives and the Gricean maxims.

References:


Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English