

Patricia A. Lee

Based upon earlier work on indirect speech acts, Professor Lee is now investigating nonliteral uses of language and the role of context and prosody in the interpretation of such utterances. Of particular relevance is what information is conveyed (either intentionally or not) by intonation, stress and other voice qualities, as well as the contribution of facial expressions and physical gestures to the message. The impact of the the continually changing linguistic and interpersonal context on the interpretation of what is said also plays a role in this research. Related to and deriving from this work is a new study on how humans and animals communicate with each other involving to what extent each species uses forms only (or primarily) available to it and how message exchanges are modified according to the environmental constraints.

A long term project that Dr. Lee has been engaged in is the history of modern pragmatics. Beginning with the British interest in the study of ordinary language (as opposed to philosophical/logical language) and the rise of generative grammar in America, there developed a rigorous approach to semantics and pragmatics which combines a logical analysis of underlying syntactic structure with a formal interpretation of Gricean rules of conversation to create a viable theory of pragmatics. The question of a theory of semantics is much more difficult in detail and there are many opposing viewpoints, but a formalization of conversational implicature is progressing.

References

- 1989 Form and Function in illocutionary acts. *Journal of English Linguistics* 22.216-39.
- 1981 Topical bibliography in linguistic pragmatics. *University of Hawaii Working Papers in Linguistics* 13:1-89.