Exercise 4 Communication Breaches
Due Wednesday, November 20

Using what you have learned about interaction, communication and language, you are going to create a breach in communication and observe the results. Both the breach and your analysis of it will require you to draw on material from lecture, discussion readings, and the text.

In the course of your daily interaction, look for an opportunity to violate communicational norm. You will have to know something about communicational norms to do this. Violate the norm, and, as accurately as you can, record the ensuing interaction.**

Some suggestions for breaches (though you should feel free to invent your own):
-violate turn-taking behavior in some way (there are many ways to do this, including refusing to take your turn)
-assume no interpersonal context for understanding utterances either on your or another’s part (these breaches are fun)
-make utterances ignoring sequential context (be creative!)
-make utterances that violate the principle of cooperation (you saw a pretty dramatic example of this in Tuesday’s lecture)
-violate a norm for a nonverbal facet of communication

The write-up
The write-up for this project should be between two and four double-spaced, typed pages (any less than two pages and it is very likely you have not been thorough enough; an essay more than four pages should be double-checked for gratuitous inclusions).

The write-up should be a complete essay that argues a central point and has a clear beginning, middle, and end. It should include a description of the breach itself (giving the reader enough context to understand it), and its consequences. You MUST locate the breach you conducted and your analysis of the ensuing interaction in the relevant literature about communication and language you have studied in this class. Be as specific as you can. As always, grades will reflect, in part, the degree to which course material is applied to the case at hand in useful and illuminating ways. Your task here is to draw on course material in ways that help the reader (and you!) understand the social-psychological phenomena at work in the breached interaction, and hopefully, in interactions more generally.

As always, I am willing to read drafts over and offer feedback before the assignment is due. However, due to an increased volume of such requests on the last two exercises, I need to receive drafts you’d like read no later than Monday morning (sending them via email is best). I can read only one draft per student. Thanks!

** I recommend committing these breaches with people who know you reasonably well, and who you will be able to debrief when your breach is complete. For goodness’ sake do NOT attempt this in a situation in which anyone’s course grade, employment, or criminal record might be at stake.