

### Lecture 13: Pragmatics

#### **Introduction:**

Pragmatics and Semantics are inter-related subjects; therefore, Pragmatics may not be easily separated from semantics. While semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences, pragmatics can be defined as a major study of linguistics that defines the hidden meanings of a writer and speaker.

#### **I. Pragmatics:**

The term pragmatics was first coined by Morris in 1938. Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies the ways language is tied to the contexts in which it is used. Pragmatics is defined as the study of “invisible” meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it is not actually said or written (Yule,2010). It refers to the encoding of particular communicative functions in specific grammatical and lexical elements of a given language (Ibrahim & Abbas, 2010).

It could be said that the field of pragmatics investigates what is unsaid. That is, a person might say a sentence that have many meanings, and the hearer needs to read between lines to get the meaning. Therefore, It is the pragmatics that defines what a listener or a reader can analyse the intended meanings (Siddiqui, 2018). In addition, Crystal (1987) claims that Pragmatics deals with the factors that manages the language for what a speaker wants to choose within the pool of language that could satisfy whenever it is used within a social context and its effects on others.

#### **II. Context:**

There are three types of contextual information:

##### **a. Physical context**

The physical context encompasses what is physically present around the interlocutors at the time of communication. What objects are visible, where the communication is taking place, what is going on around, etc. (Jarmila. P & Jirka. H, 2011).

##### **b. Linguistic context**

The linguistic context is the set of other words used in the same phrase or sentence (Yule,2010). It is about what has been said before in the conversation (Jarmila. P & Jirka. H, 2011).

**e.g.** Linda came home late yesterday. She thought nobody would notice.

##### **c. Social context**

The linguistic context is the social relationship of the people involved in communication (Jarmila. P & Jirka. H, 2011).

**e.g.:** Mr. President, stop bugging me and go home. (Unaccepted because you can't talk like this to the President.).

#### **III. Deixis:**

There are common words in language that cannot be interpreted at all if we do not know the context, especially the physical context of the speaker (Yule,2010). In other word, there are some expression in English like *here, there, this, that, now, then, you, me, she* that are virtually impossible to be understood if we do not know who is *speaking, about whom, where* and *when* (Yule,2010).

There are three types of deixis (Yule,1996):

- **Person deixis:** they are used to point to things like: *it, this, these* and people such as *him, them*.
- **Spatial deixis:** the use of words and phrases to point to a location like: *here, there, and near that*
- **Temporal deixis:** used to point to a time such as *now, then, and last week* (Yule,2010).

#### IV. Reference:

Reference can be defined as an act by which a speaker or a writer uses language to enable a listener or reader to identify something. A reference can be performed by the use of proper nouns such as *Chomsky*, other nouns in phrases like *a writer, my friend*, or pronouns such as *he, she, and it* (Yule,2010).

##### a. Inference:

In English language we can use names associated with things to refer to people, and use names of people to refer to things. This process is called inference (Yule,2010).

e.g. Can I look at your Chomsky?. The word Chomsky here refer to a book that is written by Chomsky.

##### b. Anaphora:

Anaphora is the use of an expression whose interpretation depends upon another expression in context (its antecedent or postcedent). Anaphoric reference means that a word in a text refers back to other ideas in the text for its meaning.

e.g. Ann arrived, but nobody saw her. The pronoun “she” refers to Ann.

##### c. Cataphora:

Cataphoric reference, which means a word refers to ideas later in the text. It is the use of an expression that depends upon a postcedent expression.

e.g. When she arrived home, Ann went to sleep. The pronoun “she” appears earlier than the noun “Ann”.

#### V. Presupposition

In pragmatics, presupposition is what the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance. That is what a speaker (or writer) assumes is true or known by a listener (or reader) can be described as a presupposition (Yule,2010).

e.g. Jane no longer writes fiction. **Presupposition:** Jane once wrote fiction.

#### VI. Speech acts:

When language is used by human beings in real-life situations, there are generally communicative goals associated with every utterance. Speakers express their emotions, ask questions, make requests, commit themselves to actions. They do things with words. The acts speakers perform when they make an utterance are called speech acts.

John Searle claims that “speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so on.” John L. Austin (1962) was the first to formulate these insights into a theory, which came to be known as the **Speech Act Theory**.

##### a. Locution, Illocution and Perlocution

According to Speech Act Theory, each utterance consists of three related acts:

- **Locutionary act:** This is the basic act of utterance, of producing a meaningful linguistic expression. Well-formed utterances usually have a purpose.
- **Illocutionary act:** An utterance is produced with some function in mind, thus it has a so-called communicative force.
- **Perlocutionary act:** The utterance should have an effect on the listener.

#### VII. Politeness:

Politeness can be defined as showing awareness and consideration of another person’s face (Yule,1996). Saying something that represents a threat to another person’s self-image is called a face-threatening act. For instance, using a direct speech act to ask someone to do something like saying: *Give me that paper!*, you are behaving as if you have more social power than the other person (Yule,2010).

## VIII. The Distinction Between Semantics and Pragmatics:

Drawing the distinction between semantics and pragmatics can be regarded as one of the most challenging aspects for language learners to make. Ibrahim & Abbas (2010) summarized the differences between those semantics and pragmatics as the following:

- Semantics concentrates on the meaning that comes from linguistic knowledge whereas pragmatics concentrates on those aspects of meaning that cannot be predicted by Linguistic knowledge alone and takes into account the knowledge about the physical and the social world.
- The focus of pragmatic analysis is on the meaning of speakers' utterances rather than on the meaning of words or sentences which is the concern of semantics.
- Semantics covers what expressions mean, while pragmatics covers what speakers mean through using those expressions.
- Pragmatics involves how speakers use language in contextualized social interactions, In other words, how they do things with words, as Leech(1974, p.64) would say.
- Semantics invites a focus on meaning and truth conditions without regard to communication and context.

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