

## Chapter 10

### *Pragmatics: The invisible meaning*

**Pragmatics:** it is the study of speaker meaning and how more is communicated than he said. It is the study of “invisible” meaning and how we recognize what is meant even when it is not actually said or written. To make that happen, speakers or writers must be able to depend on a lot of shared assumptions and expectations when they try to communicate.

To explain: pragmatics is the study that concerned with the interpretation of linguistic meaning in context, i.e. pragmatics is the general study of how context affects the linguistic interpretation. In other words, pragmatics helps us look beyond the literal meaning of words and utterances and allows us to focus on *how meaning is constructed in specific contexts.*

E.g. *What time do you call this?! '*

**Literal meaning** = What time is it?

**Real meaning** = Why are you so late?!+-

**Context:** context is either Physical Context or the Linguistic Context (Co-Text) in which words are used.

**Linguistic Context:** it is the knowing of a language that permits combining sentences to express complex thoughts and ideas, e.g. bank, play, etc.

**Situational Context:** it is the knowledge of who is speaking, who is listening, what is the subject being discussed and general facts about the world we live in, e.g. lecture, court, etc.

**Deixis** (deictic expression): it is the phenomenon of positioning of an utterance in or about as surrounding reality, which achieved by pointing at variables

along some of its dimensions. That is to say that, using words such as *this* or *here* as a way of “*pointing*” with language. In other words, they are very common words in our language which cannot be interpreted at all if we do not know the context especially the physical context of the speaker. These words are *here* and *there*, *this* or *that*, *now* and *then*, *yesterday*, *today* or *tomorrow*, as well as pronouns such as *you*, *me*, *she*, *him*, *it*, *them*. Consider the following example:

- *You’ll have to bring it back tomorrow because she isn’t here today.*

Accordingly, there are essentially four dimensions involved: *time*, *place*, *society* and *discourse*. These dimensions are expressed by the following categories or types:

### ***Types of Deixis***

1. ***Person Deixis***: they are the ones that used to refer to things such as (*it, this that, these* boxes) and people (*him, her, them, those* idiots), etc.
2. ***Spatial Deixis***: they are words and phrases used to point out to a location, i.e. any reference to place within a conversation ( Discourse) such as: *here, there, near, that mountain, this ranch, these parks*, etc..
3. ***Temporal Deixis***: they are words or phrases used to point to a time, i.e. any reference to time within a conversation (Discourse) such as: *now, then, last week, next week, yesterday, today, two days ago*, etc.
4. ***Social Deixis***: *Face-to Face communication* involves a number of social actors whose roles underlie the basic *Three-fold distinction* between *First person (addressor)* such as: *I, We, me* and *us*. The *Second person (addressee)* such as: *you* (singular or plural), *your* and *yours*. *Third person* or others such as: *they, their, him, his, her, hers, he, she, it* and *its*.

***Reference***: it is an act by which a *speaker/ writer* uses language to enable a *listener/ reader* to identify someone or something. To perform an act of reference, we can use *proper nouns* (Chomsky, Clooney, Bush, etc.), *other*

*nouns in phrases* (a writer, my friend, the bird, etc.), or *pronouns* ( he, she, it, they, etc.).

**Inference**: it is an additional information used by a *listener/ reader* to create a connection between what is said and what must be meant. Thus, we can use names associated with things (*honey, salad, etc.* ) to refer to people, and use names of people to refer to things ( *Chomsky, Hemingway, etc.*).

**Anaphora** ( *anaphoric expression*): it is the use of pronouns (*it*) and noun phrase with *the* (e, g. *the puppy, etc.*) to refer back to something already mentioned. That is to say that, *anaphora* can be defined as *subsequent reference to an already introduced entity*. Consider the following example:

- *We saw a funny home video about a boy washing a puppy in a small bath. The puppy started struggling and shaking and the boy got really wet. When he let go, it jumped out of the bath and ran away.*

In this type of referential relationship, *the second* (or *subsequent*) referring expression is an example of anaphora (i.e. referring back). The first mention (*a puppy*) is called (*antecedent*).

**Presupposition**: it is an assumption by a speaker/ writer about what is true or already known by listener/ reader. That is to say that, it is an implicit assumption about the world or background belief relating to an utterance whose truth is taken for granted in **Discourse**. A presupposition must mutually known or assumed by the *speaker* and *listener* (*addresser* and *addressee*) for the *utterance to be considered appropriate in context*. It will generally remain a necessary assumption whether the utterance is placed in the form of an *assertion, denial, or question*. Consider the following examples:

- Jane no longer writes fiction.  
**Presupposition: Jane once wrote fiction.**
- Have you stopped eating meat?  
**Presupposition: you had once eaten meat.**
- Your brother is waiting outside.  
**Presupposition: you have a brother.**

- Why did you arrive late?  
*Presupposition: you did arrive late.*
- My car is a wreck. Or my car is not a wreck.  
*Underlying Presupposition: I have a car.*
- I used to regret marrying him, but I don't regret marrying him now.  
*Underlying Presupposition: I married him*

**Speech acts:** a speech act is an action such as “*promising, requesting, commanding, questioning or informing*” performed by a speaker with an utterance, either as a *direct speech act* or an *indirect speech act*. For example, if you say, “*I’ll be there at six,*” you are not only speaking, you seem to be performing the speech act of “*promising*.”

### **Direct and indirect speech acts**

Jeff Verschueren (1999:22-5) maintains that *Speech Act Theory* suggests that all speech acts in any language anywhere in the world, fall into **FIVE** categories:

1. **Assertive ( Direct Speech Act)** : it is a speech act that expressing a belief and committing the speaker to the truth of what is asserted, i.e. an assertive speech act is a sentence that states fact. Such sentences are simple statements.

E.g. *John is a dedicated student.*      *It was the most exciting match.*

*The day is very hot.*

*China grows very fast.*

*2 x 2 x 2 = 8*

*Socrates is bald.*

2. **Directive ( like request: Indirect Speech Act)**: it is a speech act that expressing a wish and counting as an attempt to get the hearer to do something, i.e. to express a desire:

E.g. *Can you pass the salt?*      *May I leave early?*

*Could you open the window?*      *May I be excused?*

*Please, go down to Como* ( city and lake in northern Italy).

*Bless my family, please.*

*Go to your room.*

*Vote for me.*

3. **Commissive** ( like *offer* , *promises*): it is a speech act that expressing an intention and accounting as a commitment for the speaker to engage in a future course of action:

*E.g. I promise to go to India.*

*I'll be there at 10 o'clock.*

*We offer you the job of official tourist guide.*

*I'll give you 5 dollars for the watch.*

4. **Expressive** ( like *apologies*): it is a speech act that expressing a variety of psychological states and simply counting expressions of a psychological state:

*E.g. I'm terribly sorry.*

*Thank you for giving me the money.*

*Congratulation on marrying.*

*We greatly appreciated what you have done for us.*

*I apologize for stepping on your face.*

*I believe in God.*

5. **Declarative**( like *baptizing*, *declaration*): it is a speech act that expressing no psychological state and the point of which is to bring about a change in institutional reality, i.e. declaratives are utterances that change the world by representing it as being so changed:

*E.g. I hereby declare war on your country. This meeting is adjourned.*

*I now announce you husband and wife. The weather is warm and sunny.*

**Politeness**: can be defined as showing awareness and consideration of another person's face or public self-image. That is to say that, Politeness comprises linguistic and non-linguistic behavior through which people indicate that they take others' feelings of how they should be treated into account. Thus, with politeness in general terms, we have to do with ideas like being tactful, modest and nice to other people. In the study of linguistic politeness, the most relevant concept is "face." Your face, in pragmatics, is your public self-image. This is the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone also to recognize.

*E.g. - Say 'please' and 'thank you' when asking someone to do something for you.*

*- Congratulate others on their achievements: When you applaud other people's success, they will do the same for you.*

- *Take other people's feelings into consideration: If something makes you feel bad, make it a point to avoid saying or doing so yourself.*

***Negative and Positive Face:*** we have both a *negative* and a *positive* face. (Note that “*negative*” does not mean “*bad*” here, it is simply the opposite of “*positive*.”). These two aspects of face are the basic *wants* or *needs* in any *social interaction*; during any social interaction, cooperation is needed amongst the participants to maintain *each other's face*.

***Positive Face:*** it is the need to be connected, to belong, to be a member of a group , etc. That is to say that, the need for self-image to be accepted, appreciated and approved of by others. To be treated as a member of the same group and to know that his wants are shared by others.

***Negative Face:*** it is the need to be independent and free from imposition, i.e. it is the need to be independent, to have freedom of action, and not to be imposed on by others.



Thank  
you!!