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The Role and Significance of Pragmatics in Modern Linguistics

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Abstract: This article analyzes the theoretical foundations of pragmatics in linguistics, the stages of its development, and its fundamental principles. It highlights the communicative function of pragmatics in the speech process and its role in expressing the relationship between the speaker and the listener. Additionally, the connection between the concepts of pragmatic meaning, speech situation, and context with linguistic units is scientifically explained. The research provides conclusions on the importance of pragmatics in modern linguistics and its relationship with other linguistic fields.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Linguistics, Pragmatic Meaning, Speech Situation, Context, Communication, Speech Act, Linguistic Analysis

1. Introduction

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies the relationship between language users and language. It addresses two principal issues: first, the identification of various types of speech acts and speech products; and second, the description of the features and characteristics that influence the determination of which proposition is expressed within a particular utterance and communicative context [1, 2].

Assertions, commands, counterfactual statements, requests, assumptions, denials, appeals, objections, predictions, promises, calls, reflections, explanations, insults, conclusions, hypotheses, generalizations, responses, and acts of deception are all examples of speech acts. The objective of pragmatic analysis is to determine the necessary and sufficient conditions for the successful—or, in some cases, normal—performance of a speech act. This task involves examining factors such as the speaker's intention; the presence or absence of certain characteristics of speech acts occurring within the same context; the knowledge, beliefs, expectations, and interests of both the speaker and the listener; the time at which an utterance is produced and its consequences; the truth value of the proposition; and the semantic relationships between the proposition and other propositions within the speech act [2, 3].

Literature Review

V.G. Gak emphasizes that the essence of pragmatics is closely connected with the human factor. According to him, "Pragmatics encompasses not only the interpretation of utterances but also the problems associated with selecting their forms in specific communicative situations" [4]. B.Y. Norman points out that Gak's definition incorporates

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both the speaker's perspective (the selection of linguistic forms) and the listener's perspective (the interpretation of utterances). Expanding upon this idea, Norman states:

"In choosing particular linguistic units for an utterance, the speaker may express both explicit and implicit intentions. In doing so, the speaker may or may not take into account the listener's capacity for comprehension. Nevertheless, the speaker aims to achieve communicative effectiveness through the use of indirect speech acts and various forms of language play" [5].

During communication, individuals assume the roles of information sender (addresser) and information receiver (addressee). Every communicative utterance, whether oral or written, possesses a communicative function and contains information that the recipient is expected to understand. The recipient's perception and interpretation of the transmitted information give rise to pragmatic relations.

Such relations may vary considerably in nature. A text may simply serve as a source of information about facts and events that are unrelated to the recipient and therefore evoke little personal interest. Conversely, the information conveyed may affect the recipient's emotions, provoke a particular emotional response, or motivate specific actions. The ability of a text to generate such communicative effects and the addresser's capacity to exert influence on the addressee are referred to as the pragmatic aspect or pragmatic potential of the text [6].

L.A. Nefedova and Y.A. Titova argue that all linguistic signs possess a certain degree of pragmatic influence, or communicative effect, on readers and listeners. Drawing upon the work of V.N. Komissarov, they identify three principal factors that determine the nature of pragmatic impact [7].

First, pragmatic influence is determined by the content of the message itself. Second, the perception of a message depends on the characteristics of the linguistic signs through which it is conveyed. The same message can be expressed in different ways, and speakers select linguistic means in accordance with their intended communicative effect. Third, the pragmatic impact of an utterance depends on the recipient's interpretation and perception of the message [8]. Thus, successful communication is shaped not only by the speaker's intentions and linguistic choices but also by the recipient's ability to comprehend and respond to the conveyed information.

2. Materials and Methods

The transition toward the principle of activity-based cognition has led to a new interpretation of one of the central problems of linguistics the concept of meaning. At the intersection of language phenomena, studied by semantics, and speech phenomena, examined by pragmatics, a rapidly developing field known as pragmasemantics, or the semantics of speech, has emerged. Pragmasemantics focuses on the meaning of a speaker's utterance as a reflection of the goals and intentions underlying the subject's speech activity. Within this framework, particular attention is paid to the relationship between explicit (directly expressed) and implicit (hidden or inferred) meanings.

3. Results and Discussion

It is widely acknowledged that the primary functions of language are cognitive and communicative in nature. This perspective has been developed and interpreted in various ways by scholars such as Charles Sanders Peirce, Noam Chomsky, Ray Jackendoff, and Rolandas Pavilionis. Linguistic units acquire their specific meanings and content through human understanding and interpretation within a particular conceptual system. The uniqueness of each communicative situation and its close connection with fundamental cognitive processes necessitate a comprehensive examination of the functional nature of language [9].

The principal objective of communication is the establishment of conceptual interconnectedness, namely, the mutual activation of relevant knowledge structures among communicators and the exchange of meaning units formed on the basis of different types of knowledge. Like cognitive ability itself, language constitutes an inseparable component of human consciousness. In the process of communication, it performs an essential role in generating the operations necessary for the systematic transmission of knowledge or for activating such knowledge within the consciousness of the addressee [10].

Discussing the conventional norms of communicative behavior, Viktor Gak introduces the concept of the *pragmeme*, which refers to a linguistic unit that performs a pragmatic function. The same *pragmeme* may be expressed through different linguistic forms across languages. In some cases, a *pragmeme* may exist in one language while lacking a direct equivalent in another. For example, the Russian expression “*priyatnogo appetita*” and the French “*bon appétit*” have no exact counterpart in English. In Russian culture, expressions of gratitude addressed to the host after a meal are commonly answered with “*na zdorovye,*” whereas such a custom is absent in French culture. Conversely, French etiquette requires guests to compliment the meal when it is being served. Studies have also noted that Japanese speakers tend to apologize more frequently than Europeans, including situations in which Europeans or Americans might not consider an apology necessary [11].

Similarly, farewell expressions differ across languages and cultures. In Russian, leave-taking may be expressed through forms such as “*Do svidaniya,*” “*Proshchayte,*” or “*Vsego dobrogo,*” whereas Uzbek speakers commonly use expressions such as “*Xayr,*” “*Yaxshi qoling,*” “*Yaxshi boring,*” or “*Men boray.*” Furthermore, in Uzbek, the expressions “*Xayrli tong*” (Good morning), “*Xayrli kun*” (Good day), “*Xayrli oqshom*” (Good evening), and “*Xayrli kech*” function as greetings, while “*Xayrli tun*” (Good night) functions as a farewell. In this case, the linguistic forms themselves represent the surface expressions, whereas the communicative meanings of greeting and leave-taking constitute the corresponding *pragmemes*. Thus, different linguistic forms may realize distinct pragmatic functions depending on their communicative context [12].

Boris Norman likewise examines the pragmatic properties of purpose-oriented syntagms, although he does not employ the term *pragmeme*. Every society structures communicative behavior according to particular cultural norms. These norms establish numerous specific rules, including the appropriate forms of address, conventions regarding interruption during conversation, and acceptable interpersonal distance in everyday communication. However, the existence of such differences does not justify claims that one culture is inherently more civilized or polite than another; rather, they reflect culturally specific patterns of communicative behavior [13].

In speech activity, pragmatic components often outweigh purely semantic meaning. In other words, speakers are concerned not only with conveying objective information but also with expressing their subjective attitudes toward the content of communication. Consequently, alongside the communicative function of language, its phatic and emotive functions become equally significant. Through these functions, language serves not only as a vehicle for transmitting information but also as a means of establishing social contact, maintaining interpersonal relationships, and expressing emotions and personal evaluations.

There are certain types of speech acts in which the pragmatic dimension predominates over all other aspects of the conveyed content. These include swearing, oaths, pledges, curses, blessings, and similar expressions. In other cases, linguistic units accompany the primary semantic content and serve to reinforce its pragmatic effect. Consider the following examples: “How many times do I have to tell you?” (expressing anger: “you never understand”); “I do not think so” (a polite disagreement: “that is not the

case"); "There is only a little left..." (expressing sympathy: "please be patient"); "I am not holding you back" (indicating displeasure: "you may leave if you wish"); and "What can I say!" (expressing agreement: "you are absolutely right"). In such cases, the pragmatic meaning extends beyond the literal semantic content of the utterance [14].

The pragmatic aspect of speech is particularly evident in communicative etiquette. For example, questions such as "How are you?", "How are things?", or "Are you well?" are typically answered with conventional speech etiquette formulas such as "Fine," "Thank you," "Thanks to God," "Not bad," "It is going well," or "Everything is fine." These expressions function as pragmatic markers conveying different shades of affirmation and social courtesy.

M.N. Epstein applies the term *pragmeme* to stylistically marked words that carry evaluative connotations. The scholar classifies lexical units into three groups according to whether they contain evaluative meaning.

The first group consists of neutral words that do not express any evaluative attitude, such as *house*, *book*, *linguistics*, *green*, and *to see*. The second group includes words whose meanings contain an evaluative component, although the specific object, phenomenon, or individual being evaluated is not explicitly identified. Examples include *good*, *bad*, *useful*, *harmful*, *attraction*, and *horror* [15].

The third group comprises words in which objective and evaluative meanings are inseparably intertwined. For instance, the word *discredit* denotes the act of damaging someone's reputation or bringing them into disgrace, while simultaneously conveying a negative evaluation of the action and suggesting that the person concerned has been treated unfairly. Similarly, the word *condemn* may share a comparable objective meaning but can carry a positive evaluative implication by indicating that an individual has been justifiably criticized for wrongdoing, misconduct, or aggression.

In lexical items belonging to the third group, objectivity and evaluation are combined to form a *pragmeme*. Within their lexical meanings, the semantic aspect reflecting the relationship between the word and the designated phenomenon and the pragmatic aspect reflecting the speaker's attitude toward the content of the message are closely interconnected. Thus, the integration of a word's semantic foundation with its pragmatic function represents a distinctive characteristic of the lexical system.

Drawing upon the theoretical perspectives of V.G. Gak, B.Y. Norman, and M.N. Epstein, as well as general principles of pragmatics, it may be argued that the concept of the *pragmeme* should be expanded to encompass implicit syntagmatic structures that express pragmatic meanings at the syntactic level. Such an approach would provide a broader framework for analyzing the interaction between linguistic form and communicative intention.

K. Susov emphasizes the significance of the theoretical contributions of Karl Bühler during the formative stages of pragmatic linguistics. According to Susov:

"The works of the Austrian psychologist Karl Bühler, particularly his fundamental study *Theory of Language: The Representational Function of Language*, played a substantial role in the development of pragmatic ideas. Although Bühler neither employed the term 'pragmatics' nor attempted to establish it as an independent discipline, his research laid important foundations for later pragmatic inquiry. He formulated the principles of linguistic science as a system of axioms based on empirical generalizations, distinguished between speech and linguistic forms, described the primary functions of linguistic signs, and examined the characteristics of various types of signs, including those belonging to the indicator field. In many respects, his work corresponds closely to the concerns of contemporary linguistic pragmatics."

Bühler's activity-based approach to language is particularly distinctive. Within this framework, he identifies four fundamental objects:

H (Sprechhandlung) – speech activity;
 W (Sprachwerk) – linguistic expression;
 A (Sprechakt) – speech act;
 G (Sprachgebilde) – linguistic structure.

In the first dichotomy, phenomena are classified according to whether they are:

Associated with the subject (speaker);

Independent of the subject.

In the second dichotomy, phenomena are differentiated according to their level of organization:

Lower-level phenomena, including speech activity and linguistic means;

Higher-level phenomena, including speech acts and linguistic structures.

Within communicative interaction, signs and sign forms perform specific functions. According to Bühler, language in use establishes connections among the sender of the sign, the receiver of the sign, and the field of objects and situations to which the sign refers. Consequently, linguistic signs perform a threefold function within the communicative process.

It should be emphasized that although the studies of Charles Sanders Peirce, Charles William Morris, Rudolf Carnap, and Karl Bühler provided the foundation for the development of semiotics and the emergence of pragmatics, the problems of communication as manifestations of linguistic sign activity had not yet been fully articulated at that stage.

Subsequently, the philosophy of language entered the sphere of linguistic semantics and contributed significantly to the investigation of numerous linguistic problems. These included issues related to spontaneous spoken discourse, the unlimited variability of linguistic expressions, indirect modes of expression, and forms of “non-serious” speech activity such as irony, humor, deception, flattery, and linguistic manipulation. In this way, the activity-based approach to communication introduced new perspectives for understanding language as a dynamic process of human interaction and meaning construction.

4. Conclusion

Thus, numerous interdisciplinary concepts began to be systematically discussed within collaborative scholarly debates involving specialists from philosophy, logic, linguistics, sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, artificial intelligence, cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, cognitive semantics, and related fields. As a result of such interdisciplinary interaction—and particularly through the cooperation between the philosophy of language and linguistics—a new approach emerged that viewed linguistic meaning as a synthesis of action and content. It was on the basis of this synthesis that pragmatics developed as a relatively independent field of study.

It is well known that the functional realization of any linguistic unit becomes actualized through speech activity in accordance with specific internal principles and norms. However, when these units deviate from their conventional patterns of use due to the requirements of a particular discourse situation or the functions they perform within a given context, the need for pragmatic analysis inevitably arises.

In the process of communication, the impact of linguistic units on the listener is determined by both intralinguistic and extralinguistic factors associated with the discourse situation. These factors play a crucial role in defining the nature and operation of language functions. Within pragmalinguistic research, particular attention is devoted to examining the extent to which language functions operate in a specific discourse context. Furthermore, scholars investigate the role and significance of these functions in ensuring

either the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of communication, thereby providing a deeper understanding of how linguistic choices influence communicative outcomes.

From a pragmalinguistic perspective, successful communication depends not only on the semantic content of linguistic expressions but also on their ability to fulfill particular communicative intentions within a given social and contextual environment. Consequently, the study of language functions in discourse contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which speakers achieve their communicative goals and influence the perceptions, attitudes, and responses of their interlocutors.

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