PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF CONDITIONALS

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Abstract

This article is devoted to the study of possibility of conditional sentences to perform some speech activities in a certain communicative context. In particular, it studies the problem of conditional relationships from the viewpoint of pragmatics, in particular, their potential to carry out some speech acts. The aim of the research is to reveal the pragmatic aspect of conditional sentences in English such as to perform some speech acts.

Keywords: - Condition, conditional sentence, speech acts, performatives, locution, illocution, perlocution, pragmatics, context, communication

Introduction:-

The general assumption is that there is always some pragmatic explanation for how, in any given case, sentence meaning can determine what the speaker means. For example, the assumption about the claims of ambiguity is that diverse uses of an expression are best explained not by different pieces of linguistic information several conventional meanings but by one piece of linguistic information combined with extra linguistic information. The term pragmatics in the present study has not been used so broadly as to apply to the full range of phenomena falling under the heading of language users, including such areas as social psychology, sociolinguistics, cultural anthropology and rhetoric. The discussion is restricted to those aspects of use that are directly related to acts of communication including perlocutionary acts as argued[1].

Arguably, the notion of context is often invoked to explain how pragmatics complements semantics. It is a platitude that a sentence's linguistic meaning generally does not determine what

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[1] Bach, K. and Harnish, R. Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts. Cambridge: Mass MIT Press. (1979).

is said in its utterance and that the gap between linguistic meaning and what is said is filled by something called context. The idea behind the aspect of platitude is that a speaker can mean different things even when using his words in a thoroughly literal way. The truth is that even as he speaks literally is a matter of context. Bach and Harnish have further suggested that what one says in uttering the words can vary. Therefore, what fixes what one says cannot be facts about the words alone but must also include facts about the circumstances in which one is using them. Those facts comprise the context of utterance. There are basically two sorts of contextual information, one much more restricted in scope and limited in role than the other. Information that plays the limited role of combining with linguistic information to determine content is restricted to a short list of variables, such as the identity of the hearer and the time and place of an utterance.

Pragmatic information concerns facts relevant to making sense of a speaker's utterance of a sentence. The hearer thus seeks to identify the speaker's intention in making the utterance. In other words, the hearer seeks to explain the fact that the speaker said what he said, in the way he said it. Because the intention is communicative, the hearer's task of identifying it is driven partly by the assumption that the speaker intends him to do this. The speaker succeeds in communicating if the hearer identifies his intention in this way, for communicative intentions are intentions whose fulfilment consists in their recognition. Pragmatics is concerned with whatever information is relevant, over and above the linguistic properties of a sentence, to understanding its utterance. Considering the previously mentioned, the discussion of the pragmatic functions of conditionals done here is a pragmatic approach based on the Speech Act Model.

The Speech Act Theory categories utterances according to function rather than form. There is therefore, a greater exegetical and homiletically value in classifying conditionals in this way, because it brings the interpreter closer to the speaker's intent. When viewed from the point of the speech act model therefore, all conditionals are seen as implicit per formatives which are used to do something in addition to stating condition; that is, to persuade the listener, to make a strong assertion, to manipulate the listener, to give an exhortation, to express a gentle rebuke, to ask something in a polite way, to justify oneself, to mock someone, or to convey a lament and many others[2].

. Let's analyze the following examples:

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[2] Young, A. Richard. A Classification of Conditional sentences based on the Speech Act Theory. Chicago: University of Chicago. (1989).

Context: 'Would you like to drink, or could you eat anything?' 'No, thank you, Bessie.' 'Then I think I shall go to bed, for it is past twelve o'clock; but you may call me if you want anything in the night".

Context: Tennison found Jones sitting outside the door. He looked very pale. 'OK,' she said cheerfully. 'If you're feeling better, you can drive me back to the station.' 'Sorry about that, boss,' Jones replied. 'I must have eaten something last night that made me ill" [3].

Context: "It's Cora!" he shouted. "Cora! Cora!" shouted Uncas. They continued their hunt; Duncan and Uncas followed closely, while Hawkeye was more cautious because the way up the mountain was dangerous. Slowly, the two men in front got closer to the Hurons. Suddenly Cora stopped. "I will go no further," she cried. "Kill me if you want, you hateful Huron." The Indian with Magua pulled out his knife to kill her, but Magua stopped him and pulled out his own knife. "Woman, choose; my wigwam or my knife!" "I am yours! Do what you will with me," she replied.

In the above examples, we can see the potential of conditional constructions to perform implicitly a speech act of permission giving in a given situation. It should be noted that any means of explicit expression of permission giving act are used in the examples. Only the social situation helps to identify such function of the conditional constructions.

References

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