

# Pragmatics

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# Pragmatics

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**Pragmatics:** It is a branch of linguistics that studies how we use utterances to mean what they mean because of the context we use them in. It is a study of the communicative use of language.

- I will see you tomorrow at 5 pm.

# Pragmatics

- Ramesh has opened a bar recently.

Context 1- (Mahesh is organizing a public awareness program for total alcohol prohibition in his village.)

- **Can you ask Ramesh to inaugurate the meeting?**

Context 2- (The government has asked Mahesh to identify poor villagers who are looking for jobs to distribute grants (money) to start their own business.)

- **Do you think Ramesh needs help?**

# Pragmatics

- Ramesh has opened a bar recently.

Context 3- (Mahesh is using unfair means to influence voters to win the elections by distributing liquor to the villagers on the eve of the elections.)

- **Do you know anyone I could ask for help?**

# Pragmatics

Contextual Meaning

Interaction between Context and what is said

Utterance means different things in different contexts.

What we study in pragmatics – how we use language to communicate different things in different contexts.

# Pragmatics

## Austin's Taxonomy

**Locutionary Act**  
**Illocutionary Act**  
**Perlocutionary Act**

Locutionary act refers to the actual act of saying or uttering something. (the literal meaning of the words)

Illocutionary act refers to what one is trying to do by speaking. (the intention of the speaker)

Perlocutionary act refers to the effect or the consequence of what is said on the listener

# Pragmatics

For example: suppose you were to say to your friend

**There is a gang of armed robbers patrolling the highway.**

Locutionary act : Information

Illocutionary act : intention of utterance = warning and asking to  
take care

Perlocutionary act : consequence of utterance: be scared to drive by  
that highway

# Pragmatics

## Explicit Speech Act: by using performative verbs

bet, challenge, warn, dare, nominate, promise, resign, welcome, approve, demand etc.

1. I challenge you to finish the whole basket of eggs.
2. I promise to return your money next year.
3. I warn you not to interfere with my work.
4. I resign.
5. I declare, Joseph and Mary, husband and wife,



# Pragmatics

## Searle's Typology/ Taxonomy

### A Classification of Illocutionary Acts

1. Assertives
2. Directives
3. Commissive
4. Expressives
5. Declarations

# Pragmatics

## Searle's Typology/ Taxonomy

### 1. Assertives

Utterances/verbs that 'commit the speaker to something's being the case, to the truth of expressed proposition.'

Verbs like.... boast, complain, conclude, deduce etc.

e,g.:

- a. I complained that *I was being denied access in the library,*
- b. I concluded that *the pilot had lost his control of his aircraft.*

# Pragmatics

## Searle's Typology/ Taxonomy

### 2. Directives

Utterances/verbs that 'attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something.'

Verbs like.... Ask, order, command, request, beg, pray, invite, permit, advise, etc.

e,g.:

- a. She requested *him to fill a form*
- b. She asked *the students to maintain decorum.*

# Pragmatics

## Searle's Typology/ Taxonomy

### 3. Commissives

Illocutionary acts whose point is to commit the speaker to some future course of action.' (It is the opposite of Directives.)

Verbs like.... promise, commit, assure, vow, guarantee, etc.

e,g.:

- a. Miriam Promised *to maintain the school for ever.*
- b. Miriam vowed *never to drive that fast again.*
- c. Miriam guaranteed that *she would solve the problem.*

# Pragmatics

## Searle's Typology/ Taxonomy

### 4. Expressives

An expressive Illocutionary act expresses the mental or psychological state or attitude towards an event that is presumed to be true.'

Verbs like.... thank, congratulate, apologize, condole, welcome, etc.

e,g.:

- a. I welcome *what my friend has said*.
- b. I apologize *for my over- enthusiam earlier*.
- c. I congratulate *you on your punctuality* .

# Pragmatics

## Searle's Typology/ Taxonomy

### 5. Declarations

Illocutionary acts 'where one brings a state of affairs into existence by declaring it to exist.' (performative utterances)

Verbs like.... resign, appoint, declare etc.

e,g.:

- a. I resign.
- b. I declare you husband and wife.
- c. I appoint you chairperson of the board .

# Pragmatics

## Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

Distinction between direct and indirect speech acts is that of the relationship between the structure and intended function of the utterance.

Whenever this relationship is direct and straightforward ... it is direct speech act...

If this relationship is not straightforward ... it is called indirect speech act...

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# Pragmatics

## Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

E.g.: (Direct Speech Acts)

- You change the flowers in the vase.  
(Structure: Declarative, Function: Statement)
- Do you change the flowers in the vase?  
(Structure: Interrogative, Function: Question)
- Change the flowers in the vase.  
(Structure: Imperative, Function: Order)



# Pragmatics

## Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

E.g.: (Indirect Speech Acts)

- Could you hold my bag for me?  
(Structure: Interrogative, Function: Request)
- Would you pass me the book?  
(Structure: Interrogative, Function: Request)

# Pragmatics

## Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

Some Indirect speech acts include hints, insinuations, irony, and metaphor

E.g.: (**Indirect Speech Acts**)

- A: Mom, can I go out to play?  
B: It's raining outside.
- A: (Husband): Sweetheart, I am sorry I am late, I am hungry.  
B: (Wife): I have cleared the dishes.

# Pragmatics

## Cooperative Principle and Its Maxims

H. Paul Grice in his 'Logic and conversation' (1975) talked about certain principles that underlies in all conversations.

He introduces to the cooperative principle in conversation that every participant is expected to observe.

In his words: 'Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.'

# Pragmatics

## Cooperative Principle :Maxims

- a) Each participant must make a contribution
- b) Contribution should be appropriate to the topic of the conversation
- c) Allow others to speak and make your contribution at the proper stages
- d) Respect the direction in which the conversation is moving without unnecessarily deviating from the topic of conversation.

# Pragmatics

## Cooperative Principle :Maxims and Sub-maxim

### Maxim of Quantity

It refers to the quantity of information that must be provided in a conversation.

### Sub- Maxims

1. Make your contribution as informative as required.
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required

# Pragmatics

## Cooperative Principle :Maxims and Sub-maxim

### Maxim of Quantity

e.g.

A (teacher to student): Were there any difficulties in solving the problem?

B1: (Student): Yes, it was initially, But when I sat down with my friends and we discussed it together, we could come up with the answer.

B2: Yes.

B3: Last evening I went to my friend's house and we tried to solve the problem, but we could not. So we took my motorbike and went to a few other friend's houses. Then we decided to meet at 5 pm in on of our houses..... and finally solved the problem.

# Pragmatics

## Cooperative Principle :Maxims and Sub-maxim

### Maxim of Quality

‘Try to make your contribution one that is true’

### Sub- Maxims

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

# Pragmatics

## Cooperative Principle :Maxims and Sub-maxim

### Maxim of Relation

It is important that everyone makes contributions to the conversation that is relevant.

### Sub- Maxims

- ‘Be relevant’

e.g. A: How did you do in your examination today?

B: The water in the tank is not clean.



# Pragmatics

## Cooperative Principle :Maxims and Sub-maxim

### Maxim of Manner

It deals with how to say something in a conversation rather than what to say.

‘Be perspicuous’ (abilities to express ideas clearly)

### Sub- Maxims

1. Avoid obscurity of the expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief.
4. Be orderly.

# Pragmatics

## Politeness Principle and Its Maxims

Geoffrey Leech in his seminal work 'Principles of Pragmatics'  
He talked about politeness principles in all conversations.

It functions alongside Grice's Cooperative Principle.

Politeness can be understood as respecting another person's  
public self image.

Leech formulates it as : 'Minimize the expression of impolite  
beliefs' and ' Maximize the expression of polite beliefs'

# Pragmatics

## Politeness Principle and Its Maxims

**Positive Politeness:** It consists of ‘maximizing the politeness of polite illocutions’.

**Negative Politeness:** It consists of ‘minimizing the impoliteness of impolite illocutions’.

e.g.

- a) Help me carry my bag home.
- b) You couldn't possibly help me carry this bag home

# Pragmatics

## Politeness Principle and Its Maxims

### Maxims of Politeness Principle

- a) The Tact Maxim
- b) The Generosity Maxim
- c) The Approbation Maxim
- d) The Modesty Maxim
- e) The Agreement Maxim
- f) The Sympathy Maxim

# Pragmatics

## Politeness Principle and Its Maxims

### The Tact Maxim

- a) Minimize cost to other.
- b) Maximize benefits to other.

It is from listener's perspectives

e.g.

- a) Could you carry this bag to my house?
- b) Carry this bag to my house! (more impolite)
- c) I was wondering if you could carry this bag to my house.

# Pragmatics

## Politeness Principle and Its Maxims

### The Generosity Maxim

- a) Minimize benefits to self.
- b) Maximize cost to self.

It is speaker oriented. It is reversed to the tact maxim.

e.g.

- You can use my computer, if you want. (offer)
- Please do come for a party at my house tonight. (invitation)
- Give me your book. (cost to listener)
- I was wondering if you could give me your book.
- Let me carry my bag to my house. (Cost to self)
- I was wondering if I could carry my bag to my house.

# Pragmatics

## Politeness Principle and Its Maxims

### The Approbation Maxim

- a) Minimize dispraise of other.
- b) Maximize praise of other.

It is listener oriented.

e.g.

- A: Do you like my new blue car?  
B1: No, I don't like blue cars.  
B2: Yes; though I personally prefer the ones in red colour.
- C: Did you like my performance?  
D1: Yes.  
D2: Thank you for that wonderful performance. We had a great time.

# Pragmatics

## Politeness Principle and Its Maxims

### **The Modesty Maxim**

- a) Minimize praise of self.
- b) Maximize dispraise of self.

It is speaker oriented. It is reversed to the approbation maxim.

e.g.

- A: Your performance was magnificent.  
B1: Thank you, I knew it.  
B2: Thank you. I am glad you liked it.
- C: Please accept it as a small token of our appreciation.  
D: Please accept it as a magnificent token of our appreciation.



# Pragmatics

## Politeness Principle and Its Maxims

### The Agreement Maxim

- a) Minimize disagreement between self and other.
- b) Maximize agreement between self and other.

e.g.

- A: It was an interesting match, isn't it?  
B1: No. It wasn't.  
B2: Yes it was. But I thought the middle overs could have been a little better, isn't it?

# Pragmatics

## Politeness Principle and Its Maxims

### **The Sympathy Maxim**

- a) Minimize antipathy between self and other.
- b) Maximize sympathy between self and other.

e.g.

I am happy to hear about your son.

I am extremely sorry to hear about your son.





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**THANK YOU**