

The Pragmatic Function of Language and Meaning Formation

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Abstract:

This paper examines the pragmatic function of language, focusing on how meaning is created, interpreted, and communicated in real life. It also emphasizes that linguistic meaning contains both stable (invariant) and context-dependent (variable) elements that change depending on the speaker, the situation, and communicative intentions. The author provides examples from various languages illustrating how the same concept can be understood differently in different cultures and contexts.

Keywords: Language, Meaning, Pragmatics, Invariant and Variant Meaning, Interpretation, Linguistic Variability

Introduction

Language is the primary socially significant form of reflection of the human environment and of oneself, that is, a form of storing knowledge about reality and a means of acquiring new knowledge about it. Language, according to W. von Humboldt, is a living activity of the human spirit, the unified energy of a people, emanating from the depths of the human being, permeating its entire being, and underpinning all other human activities. In Humboldt's interpretation, language does not directly reflect the world [1]. It is through language that human beings interpret the world. Different languages, according to Humboldt, are different worldviews; that is, they do not represent different designations for the same thing, but rather offer different visions of it.

Materials and Methods

The study of pragmatics and the construction of linguistic meaning has become a focus of contemporary linguistics, as it explores not only the method of meaning creation but also its internal context, intention, and action. Unlike semantics, which focuses on the literal meaning of words and sentences, pragmatics studies how speakers and listeners co-create meaning in real-world

communicative situations. Many scholars from linguistic traditions have made important contributions to this field, each with their own unique perspectives and methods [2]. In the field of foreign linguistics, the founders of pragmatics include such eminent philosophers and linguists as John L. Austin, John Searle, and H. P. Grice. Austin introduced the idea of speech acts, arguing that language is not only a tool for describing reality but also a tool for performing actions. His scholarly orientation between locative, extrinsic, and postlocative acts demonstrates that meaning is the speaker's intention and its impact on the listener. Building on this, John Searle classified systematic discourses and emphasized the role of rules and conventions in the formation of meaning. But Grice expanded this field by introducing the concept of implication, pointing out that speakers often convey meaning directly through shared knowledge and the principle of cooperation. Later, thanks to scholars such as Stephen Levinson and Jacob May, pragmatics developed into a comprehensive discipline emphasizing the importance of context, reasoning, and sociocultural factors in communication [3]. These borrowed approaches collectively established that meaning is dynamic, context-dependent, and rooted in interaction. Linguistics studies the pragmatic potential of language from both a functional and stylistic perspective, emphasizing the role of linguistic communication and precision. Scholars such as Victor Vinogradov contributed to the understanding of phrasing and stylistics, arguing that linguistic units carry not only semantic but also expressive and pragmatic meanings. Another woman, Natalia Volmanovskaya, uses a communicative-pragmatic approach that focuses on speech acts and interactions, emphasizing how social norms and communicative goals shape meaning [4].

Results and Discussion

Many researchers also paid considerable attention to the expressive function of language, exploring how emotional, evaluative, and stylistic elements influence interpretation. In this tradition, meaning formation is closely tied to the functional use of language in discourse, where grammatical structures, lexical choices, and stylistic devices interact to produce communicative effects. This idea can be illustrated through several concrete linguistic examples: For instance, in English and Russian, color categories are structured differently. English uses a single word "blue" for all shades, while Russian distinguishes between *синий* (*dark blue*) and *голубой* (*light blue*). This means that Russian speakers are linguistically required to separate these shades, which can influence how they perceive and categorize color differences in everyday life [5].

Turkish grammar requires speakers to indicate the source of information. The sentence "he came" can be formed as *geldi* (I witnessed it personally) or *gelmiş* (I heard it from someone else). Unlike English, Turkish grammar requires speakers to always indicate whether knowledge is direct or indirect, thus expressing confidence and evidence.

In German and French, grammatical gender assigns different categories to objects. For example, the word "bridge" in German is "die Brücke" (masculine) and in French it is "le pont" (masculine), whereas in English the word "bridge" is gender-neutral [6]. This can lead to associations: German speakers may tend to describe bridges as more elegant or graceful, while French speakers may tend to describe them as more beautiful or graceful.

Uzbek and English differ in how they structure family relationships. In English, the word "uncle" is used for both maternal and paternal uncles. However, in Uzbek, there's a distinction: *tog'a* refers specifically to a maternal uncle, while *amaki* refers to a paternal uncle. This nuanced linguistic mapping of family relationships is evident in forms of social address. English uses the formal "ty"

(you) in all situations [7]. French distinguishes between *tu* (informal) and *vous* (informal), while Uzbek distinguishes between *sen* (informal) and *siz* (informal/respectful). These systems require speakers to maintain social distance, politeness, or status in everyday speech. Together, these examples demonstrate Humboldt's idea in action: languages not only denote general truths but also structure them, shaping how those truths are perceived and understood.

Every language, by designating individual objects, is in fact creative; it forms a picture of the world for the people who speak it. Each language, according to Humboldt, forms a circle around the people to which it belongs, a circle beyond which one can only transcend by entering another. Language, as a system of worldview, exerts a regulatory influence on human behavior: people interact with objects as language presents them to them [8]. In other words, we use language in two ways. First, with its help we reflect our experience of cognition of reality—we call this type of activity reasoning, thinking, fantasizing, and retelling. When we use language as a representational system, we create a model of our experience. This model of the world, created with the help of the representative capabilities of language, is based on our perception of the world. However, the mental experience that words denote is not the same for everyone, just as the objects from which it consists are not the same. A person's mental experience, reflected in a word, includes both a common element common to all people (an invariant) and individual experiences that are either implicitly or explicitly embedded in the meaning of the word (a variant). Of interest in this regard is the pragmatic approach to semiotic theory, represented by the works of Charles Peirce and Charles Morris [9].

In Peirce's theory, a linguistic unit is described as an element of semiosis, which Peirce understands as an "infinite series of interpretations" of a linguistic unit produced by communicants in the act of linguistic communication. In the process of linguistic practice, the image of a linguistic unit is formed on the basis of the invariant that enables communication. At the same time, it "acquires" variable elements that allow this unit to be used in various speech situations, which is also expressed in the social experience of using this unit or the reflection of individual connections and relationships in reality, assessed through the subject's perception. Moreover, the ratio of invariant and variable elements in a linguistic unit can be arbitrary, which ultimately leads to a rethinking of its content [10]. Therefore, adequate communication requires an analysis and consideration of linguistic units in their relationship to the processes of communication and to what communicants wish to express. Secondly, we use language to convey our model, or representation, of the world. It should be noted that both the invariant component of the created linguistic picture of the world and the variable component are conveyed, and the addressee, having perceived the speaker's picture of the world, can enrich or clarify it with their own subjective components [11].

For example, the word "love" clearly illustrates this. It has a common core meaning (invariant), which everyone understands as a strong emotional attachment or affection. However, its actual meaning varies depending on individual experience (variable). For one person, love may mean romantic passion; for another, parental care; for a third, religious devotion; and for a fourth, a connection to loss or pain. Thus, the same word has both a general meaning and highly personal interpretations. Another example is the word "freedom," which reflects Peirce's idea of unlimited interpretation. A student might understand freedom as the right to express one's opinion, a political leader as national independence, a worker as financial independence, and a teenager as freedom from parental control [12]. Each interpretation expands the meaning of the same linguistic unit depending on the context and the interlocutors.

This variability is also evident in everyday communication. The phrase "good morning" can function differently depending on the situation and the intention: it could be a heartfelt compliment from a teacher, a neutral approval from a boss, a sarcastic criticism from a friend, or a mild disappointment from a parent. Although the words remain the same, the listener reinterprets their meaning based on tone, context, and relationships. Finally, even simple statements, such as "it's cold in the city" or "it's cold today," are interpreted differently by different people being spoken to. One person might imagine freezing winter weather, another mild discomfort, and a third person might associate "cold" with emotional detachment [13]. Thus, the speaker not only acquires the speaker's model of the world but also enriches or modifies it through his or her own subjective experience. Depending on the goals and situation of communication, communicators "shape" the semantics of language units. It is considered a practice that changes and renews the meaning of each speech act; That is, the speaker selects language units when organizing a message, taking into account the suitability or unsuitability of a particular language unit to meet all the conditions for the success of the speech act [14]. The addressee, in turn, acting as an interpreter, reconstructs not only the referent of the message but also its intention or purpose, in particular, the speaker's intention to provoke a response in the addressee. Thus, language serves as a means of understanding the reality that concerns a person and as a means of transmitting information about it between people; that is, it performs cognitive and representational functions. Another important function of language - communication - is directly related to these functions [15].

Conclusion

In conclusion, language is not only a tool for naming things or exchanging information, but also a way for people to understand and organize reality. According to Humboldt's idea, different languages create different ways of seeing the world, because they influence how people think and interpret their experiences. Meaning in language is not fixed. It depends on context, situation, and personal experience. The same word or phrase can have slightly different meanings for different people, and this meaning can change depending on how and where it is used. Therefore, communication is not only about transmitting information but also about interpreting and understanding meaning. In general, language has three main functions: it helps people think and understand the world, it expresses their thoughts and experiences, and it facilitates communication between people. These functions demonstrate that language is an essential part of human life and plays a central role in shaping how people see and interact with the world.

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