**Lecture Two: Pragmatics**

1. **What is Pragmatics**

Early works associated with pragmatics came from philosophers who tried to understand how meaning is made when using language, they refused to accept that an understanding of the real use of the language can be reached through explaining sentence forms and meaning. In other words, a sentence or an utterance can do more than *describing* some state of affair, or *state* some facts; using utterances such as ‘you’re fired’ or ‘I quit’ speakers perform actions. Hence, in pragmaticslanguage is not viewed as a system of representations but as a system of devices for engaging in various sorts of social activity. Therefore, the intended meaning of a word or utterance cannot be attained unless it is interpreted in the context in which it had appeared (Devitt &Hanley, 2003).

Pragmatics is basically defined as “the study of language usage” (Levinson, 1983 p.5). Today pragmatics has a very wide scope among which we find mainly:

1. Speech acts
2. Conversational Structure
3. Presuppositions
4. Implicatures
5. Deixis (extralinguistic reference)
6. **Speech Act Theory**

The theory examined the interrelationship between language utterances, their intentions, and how these intentions are communicated. In other words, it seeks to find out how communicative goals are achieved through the use of language. The main leaders of the theory are: Austin (1962) and Searle (1969).

* 1. **Austin’s Speech Act Theory**

Austin explained the complexity of ‘saying’ which is the doing of something, and named utterances ‘*locutionary acts’* because they have specific effects on both the speaker and the hearer.

He suggested that the speaker does three different things at the same time when producing an utterance, and distinguished between three types of acts:

1. **The locutionary act:** refers to the act of saying something. The production of a locution includes the different dimentions of language (phonetics, syntax and semantics).
2. **The illocutionary act:** because “we do not just produce well-formed utterances with no purpose, we form an utterance with some kind of function in mind” (Yule, 1996 p. 48), the illocutionary act (illocutionary force/ the communicative force) refers to what the speaker does with words. In other words, it is speaker-based and denotes the function of the locutionary act, for instance, promising, requesting, advising, warning…

The same locution may have different illocutionary forces if produced in different circumstances. For example; ‘the gun is loaded’ can be a threat, a warning, a statement… However, the same illocutionary act can be accomplished using different locutionary acts.

1. **The perlocutionary** **act**: it is hearer-based, it refers to the effects that the utterance has on the feelings, thoughts and actions of the listener. However, the perlocutionary act may not occur even if the speaker intends to achieve them, and they may occur when they are not intended (Austin, 1962).

**Examples**:

* You can’t do that (locution)
* Protesting (illocutionary force)
* Stopping someone from doing something (perlocutionary act)
* Shoot her (locution)
* Ordering / urging/ advising (illocutionary act)
* Persuading (perlocutionary act)

* 1. **Searle’s Speech Act Theory**

Searle (1979) suggested five types of illocuctionary acts:

1. **Assertives;** include speech acts in which the speaker attempts to describe the world and commit him/her to the truth of the utterance. Examples of such acts include suggesting, swearing, boasting, concluding, asserting, claiming…
2. **Directives;** include speech acts in which the speaker tries to get the listener do something. They range from modest ones such as invitations to fierce ones such as ordering. Examples of such acts include inviting, advising, requesting, begging, commanding, ordering…
3. **Commissives;** include speech acts in which the speaker is committed or expresses his intention to do an action or change in the future. Examples of such acts include promising, planning, vowing, opposing, warning, offering…
4. **Expressives;** include speech acts in which the speaker expresses his psychological state about a particular state of affairs. Examples of such acts include thanks, apologies, congratulations, blames, condolences, welcomes…
5. **Declarations;** the successful performance of this type of speech act result in immediate change in the world. Examples of such acts include resigning, declaring war, firing from a job, marrying…

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