Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach
Dr. Anindita Sahoo
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
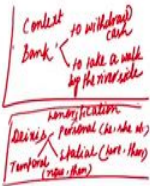**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

Lecture - 52
Pragmatics: An introduction - Part 3

Hello everyone, welcome to this session of the NPTEL course Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:26)

So, with these three types of diectic phrases so personal related to pronouns, personal pronouns, then spatial related to space information, then temporal space means the place and information related to location or place, and then temporal related to the time information, we need to move to the next one presupposition. But, before that remember deixis can also include information related to honorification, that is also another thing I I forgot here.

Honorification could be a part of the personal information also, high honorific, low honorific, mid honorific, there is this Hindi we have different varieties of honorification, in English. It is different; in English, hardly there is any honorific marker at the pronoun level, it is always you. So, you, he, she and we generally do not have the honorification, I will not write honorification as a separate domain, rather this is a part of the personal deixis.

Look at the difference when it is English, we do not need any honorific marker. The pronouns do not have any honorific deictic or any honorific deixis marked on it. But, in case of let us say South Asian languages like Hindi or Odia. In these languages honorification is a very distinct phenomenon; depending on who you are talking to, your honorification changes. That is why in Hindi we have non-honorific tu, honorific tum and high honorific aap. These are the pragmatic markers or these are the deixis or these are the deictic markers that languages carry.

In this non-honorific, mid honorific and high honorific, you can actually have a crosslinguistic division. Some languages would belong to honorific displaying or covert honorific category or type the other one would be overt honorific type. So, typologically also languages can be studied depending on the honorification system that they have.

So, that was about deixis, let us not talk much about it now, because there are other points to be taken care of. Then we have the presupposition. Presuppositions are what? To give a very basic definition of presupposition, this is what a speaker or a writer assumes is true or known by a listener or a reader.

In case of language, you will have four different domains: listening, speaking, reading and writing. So, listening and speaking can be clubbed in one category, reading and writing can be clubbed in the other category; when a writer writes or reader reads, when a speaker speaks or listener listens. Reading and writing are script centric, listening and speaking are speech centric. One is spoken variety or the oral variety, the other one is written variety, like writing and reading.

Keeping that in mind, what is a presupposition as a scope of pragmatics? Presupposition would be mainly, what a speaker assumes is true. What I speak, I assume that it is true. Since I am saying it I am the sender of the message and the onus is on me. So, I being the initiator or I being the sender, what I assume is true and I also assume that the listener knows about it or the listener should know about it.

So, that is what the presupposition is going to be understood in the domain of pragmatics. I am not really going to talk much about presupposition for the moment, because I would eventually move to a very interesting scope of pragmatics that is speech acts.

Speech acts, as the term suggests, these are interesting things if you think about speech acts. you would realize that all the sentences or all the words that we speak or all kinds of constructions that we use in the day-to-day discourse, the nature is very different. We do not always say or we do not always speak declarative sentences.

There are different ways of conveying the message to different audience or different readers. Speech acts are the special kind of forms or the special kind of speech forms which are used to describe non-statement constructions. When you actually perform a speech act, when you are moving away from the statement rather you are adding some extra pragmatic information to it.

When you request, when you command, when you question, when you inform, and when you promise, so, requesting, commanding, questioning, informing and promising are various kinds of speech acts. Why we would call it a speech act? Because, just by stating the sentence is not enough to add these kind of extra functions to it.

When you say come here, that means, you are commanding and your voice, your modulation and your body language can also be a part of it. So, all of this they would be put together to form or to or to perform not to form to perform a speech act.

Come here has to be said in a certain way, it cannot randomly be said; when you say please pass me the water bottle, it has to be said in a certain way, because you are just not speaking, you are also performing an act and what act? That is the speech act.

By deploying the linguistic phrases or the linguistic context, you are also using some other pragmatic references or some other pragmatic markers. By using the words like please or by changing the voice modulation or by taking the pitch higher so the high pitch, low pitch thing, all of them would have a certain kind of effect on your statement, and those effects would be known as the speech act.

You are just not speaking, you are also performing an act. And, what kind of act? The act of requesting, act of commanding, act of questioning, act of informing and act of promising. So, each of these are independent or individual speech acts.

Maybe just quickly I will talk a little more about presupposition, because I spoke very little. In case of presupposition, we assume that our listeners can recognize, which referent it is intended, let us say I am saying come here; so when I say come here, whether I am commanding I am requesting or I am just simply making a statement, it is our presupposition like we assume that it is true or it is known by the listener.

So, what a speaker assumes is true or known by a listener can be described as a presupposition. I, as a speaker, or me Anindita as a speaker, I assume what I say is true. If I assume that it is true and if I know that the listener knows about it, that means, I presuppose it, but in a lot of cases, the presupposition is considered to be a little faulty in some sense, it is not always possible that the listener or the reader knows the truth or the listener knows what we are going to say, it may not be possible.

Considering we assume the listener knows about it, what we want to say or what is the context of our message, we design our linguistic message on the basis of the large scale assumptions about what our listeners already know. We kind of presuppose it. We try to understand in advance that our readers or our listeners are aware about our statement.

I will give you a simple example, maybe that will clarify. This is an example from Yule's book Language. If someone tells you your brother is waiting outside, there is an obvious presupposition that you have a brother. So, the statement itself that your brother is waiting outside, does presuppose that you have a brother. If you do not have a brother, how can somebody say that your brother is waiting outside?

So, this is the book that I told you George Yule is the author, The Study of Language. It is one of the very basic books that all linguistic students should refer to. It is published, the latest publication is I think 2010. Please check the book when you have time, if you get the PDF copy or you can buy a copy of it if you want.

Now let us go back to our questions related to presupposition. Presupposition would be when I say your brother is waiting outside; that means, the presupposition here is that I have a brother. This is in the domain of pragmatics, When I say something or when I utter this statement, I assume that the listener already has a brother.

So, that is one thing I would simply give an example and maybe the other example that Yule gives. If I ask you a question, why did you arrive late? When I say why did you arrive late, there is a presupposition that you have arrived late. So, my question why arrive late, does entail a presupposition that you have come late.

When I say I finished my homework, I assume that I did get homework to finish. The presupposition is that I had homework. If I do not have homework, how can I finish it. So, these are certain examples that I can give in the domain of pragmatics or in the scope of pragmatics.

When you think about the bigger scopes of pragmatics, the issues like context, deixis, presupposition and speech acts, these are the part of the discussions that you might have, in case you ever want to study pragmatics in detail. And, the last, but not the least I would say is the conversational implicatures.

Since I always talk about spoken aspect of language I am going to; I am definitely going to focus on the conversational aspect of pragmatics or scope of pragmatics, because, when you are trying to describe a language, you do have to take into account the speech or the native speakers, who who are the ones who are going to be used as your subjects. A lot of research on pragmatics involves the conversational discourse.

I told you this course could be either written or spoken. In the category of written discourse you might have media writing or literary writing or you can simply have the memo or other kinds of fictional and non-fictional writing pieces. But, as far as spoken discourse is concerned, generally we consider the natural conversational data, but besides that we also have audio files let us say some speech analysis. Somebody has given a speech somewhere and then we are going to analyze his speech. So, that is a different story, but in most of the cases the pragmatists are interested to analyze the natural conversation.

Taking into account this natural conversation, we have the conversational implicatures. What does a pragmaticist do in case of such instances? They try to study the inferences that arise on the basis of some general rules of maxims of conversational behavior.

There are different kinds of maxims, Grice maxim, if you heard about it. I do not think I would discuss in detail, but you remember when you analyze a conversation you actually have a lot of related things associated with it. So, you need to figure out what are the basic rules or what are the general rules that a pragmaticist should follow when you are trying to study let us say pragmatics or, when you are trying to study conversational implicatures or conversational recording.

One very important thing to remember here since I brought the maxim issue here, Grice maxim is considered to be which is related to meaning and communication related issues. I am not really going to go into meaning communication or communicative intention of your conversation as far as this particular course is concerned, which though it is a very important thing to know, but then that is beyond the scope of this course.

My focus is going to be on the basic understanding of pragmatics which I have already done. I have already told you, what are the basic simple definitions and how the broader definitions can be narrowed down to grammaticalization, and the anomaly of sentences, and how the onus is on the native speaker to or as always it happens in most of the language related issues. The pragmatic informations are already loaded and when the speaker speaks, when the speaker tries to communicate, in most of the cases you try to put it as a presupposition or you try to make it clear that there are different contexts associated with it, just the linguistic context is not going to be enough.

You definitely need to add other kinds of physical context, the deictic markers, presuppositions that you have, you might perform a couple of speech acts, then only the conversation becomes interesting. The conversational implicature might have some relation as far as the other scope of pragmatics is concerned.

So, for today's discussion, I would stop it over here, I have already given you an idea what is pragmatics, and very briefly we have discussed, who is the one who is considered to be the most seminal researcher or producing the most seminal work. Then we did have certain

discussions on how to define pragmatics and on the basis of the definition that we have had, we did talk about starting from Morris.

Definition of Morris and then Levinson and then Yule, all these 3 researchers that I have cited in this particular unit, all of them they try give us or they focus on helping us to understand how pragmatics as an academic discipline should be comprehended, or how it should be accepted or how it should be appreciated in that sense.

So, from the definition to the scope, there has been almost a general understanding we have had about pragmatics.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:28)

Maybe I would talk about it very briefly, what are the different types of pragmatics; one would be your universal pragmatics; the other one is language specific pragmatics. Let me just briefly give you an idea before I wind up the session. Universal pragmatics would be the general theory of what aspects of context get encoded and how. It is something like language with a big L and language with a small l.

Language with a big L is about universal language like it is about universal grammar as the formulas would account for it. And, then the language of small l English, Hindi, Odia or

Japanese or Chinese or Italian, so these are the independent languages or individual languages, which would have language specific pragmatics.

Before we approach to language specific pragmatics, let us first understand what is universal pragmatics. Universal pragmatics will have a universal grammar and then one general theory, which can be applied to any aspect of context that is encoded and we try to understand how it is encoded, that is something like language with big L, as I just mentioned.

Besides the universal pragmatics, much like universal grammar, we also have language specific pragmatics. I will give you a very simple example I just discussed about honorification. When you talk about honorification, English on a pragmatic study of honorification English will have different scope, then the pragmatic study of honorification in Hindi. Hindi, which is an Indo-Aryan language, honorification is more wide, more varied, more dynamic, but in case of English, when you study the language specific pragmatics of honorification, hardly there is anything to talk about it, because it does not have this multi-layered honorification system as Hindi has.

Now let us try to understand honorification as a deixis and honorification as a linguistic deixis. If we approach it from a universal pragmatics perspective, we would approach how in general, honorification is treated in the world's language, maybe through the subject-verb agreement, but subject-verb agreement could be a universal feature.

But, if you approach the language specific pragmatics, then in Hindi you would say it is not just subject-verb, there is also the object agreement. Certain sentences in Hindi will have object agreement honorification. So, that would be language specific pragmatics of Hindi and otherwise honorification is generally subject-verb agreement or marking on the pronouns, thou, thee kind of thing if you remember from the old English.

So, this is how types of pragmatics are understood. One is going to be universal, the other one is going to be language specific. Universal pragmatics targets big L, language specific pragmatics targets small ls like English, Hindi, Japanese, Korean etcetera.

Holistic Definition

- Pragmatics is the study of all those aspects of meaning not captured in a semantic theory
- PRAGMATICS = MEANING – TRUTH CONDITIONS

So, to summarize what I have said so far, pragmatics is the study of all those aspects of meaning, which is not captured in a semantic theory. Semantic typology I have already discussed and it is the most abstract thing in linguistics as a discipline. Anything that semantic theory cannot capture, can be captured by pragmatics, because of its broad domain or because of its inclusive approach or the inclusive domain.

So, just to make your life simpler, remember pragmatics and semantics there is a lot of overlapping, they are interconnected upto some extent, because both the disciplines focus on the meaning aspect of it. Anything that cannot be captured by semantic theory, pragmatics is going to explain that. So, without understanding semantics, you cannot study pragmatics and without formally understanding pragmatics, it is not enough to understand semantics. There is a lot of overlapping between these two.

That is why, if we write it in a mathematical formula then pragmatics is equal to meaning minus truth conditions; truth conditions are related to semantic theory. If you remove the truth condition from meaning that is what you get pragmatics. If you do not have pragmatics, it is the semantics like something that could not be captured by semantic theory, which is the truth condition pragmatics can always fill that. With this information, I would move to a

pragmatic typology in my next session and which does not actually have much, because as I just mentioned pragmatic typology is not a fully grown discipline yet.

A lot of people are working on it, but there is a long way to go; this is relatively a younger discipline. And, it is not as easy as we saw in syntactic, morphological, and lexical typology, it is not that easy to draw the crosslinguistic generalizations in pragmatics.

However, we will see how much we can proceed, but considering this is the last leg of typological discussion, I would like to make it clear that I would not be able to give you much information about pragmatic typology rather I would like to keep it for a next advanced level course. But, whatever tiny bit of information I have I am going to talk about it in the next session.

Thank you.

Keywords: presupposition, honorification, speech act, conversational implicature, Grice maxim, universal pragmatics, specific pragmatics