

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

Lecture - 53
Pragmatic Typology

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Pragmatic Typology

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Introduction to Language Typology
By
Edith. A. Moravcsik (2013)



Hi, hello everyone. Welcome to this session of my NPTEL course Appreciating Linguistics: A typological approach. We are almost at the end of the typological discussions related to different linguistic domains. We have had a detailed discussion on lexical typology, morphological typology, syntactic typology and phonetic typology. Semantic typology also we have had quite a lot of discussions on various issues, various challenges, various, methods and the last leg of this domain specific discussion is Pragmatics Typology.

Pragmatics typology is comparatively a new discipline or new domain, I will not say discipline, it is a new domain of linguistics. It is a young field. Let us have the introduction slides first or introductory points, then we can eventually go into the pragmatic typological discussions. It is a relatively young field that deals with typologies of pragmatics and conversational structures. If you remember it correctly, at the beginning of the of the course I did mention that I would pay equal attention on the formal and functional aspect of linguistics, if not equal, considering it is a typological approach, a bit of my focus has been

more on the functional or the descriptive side of it, but in the syntactic typology section, we did have a couple of discussions on formal syntax.

So, taking the discussion forward or taking the understanding of linguistics as a multidisciplinary field further, I would like to say pragmatics is primarily the discourse centric domain of linguistics. That means here, through pragmatics we are trying to see or we will see how language has been used in the real sense, how it is used in the discourse whether it is spoken or written.

Again, my emphasis would be on the spoken aspect of it or the spoken part of it, but at the same time, there has been enough research and the discourse pragmatics of the written form. Since we are not focusing much on the written aspect, our focus is going to be on the spoken form and taking into account the spoken discourse of pragmatics, I would like to say that this is a relatively young field that deals with typology of pragmatics. What pragmatics? The spoken discourse pragmatics and primarily it involves the conversational structure.

A lot of new linguists are also using the term interactional linguistics. Pragmatics is a part of the interactional linguistics which involves the conversational structure. Since, I just mentioned, this focuses on the language use and then the principles that shape them, we cannot ignore its functional aspect; it is rooted in the functional domain of linguistics.

These are the two main things that you need to remember when you are trying to understand pragmatic typology; first, it does discuss the conversational structure and it does discuss the language use and the principles that shape them. A lot of researchers would also say that pragmatic typology is mainly a domain of or a part of contrastive pragmatics.

This is at least 30 years old, at least I am saying. Littlewood(1983) or Film(1984), these two works are most seminal in this domain and this is a tradition of the study of crosslinguistic pragmatic phenomena, and important recent advances have been made in the systematic and detailed comparison of the conversational interaction. As I just mentioned, it is always there in the domain of interactional linguistics.

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The image shows a woman in a blue shirt speaking in front of a whiteboard. The whiteboard has handwritten notes in red ink. At the top left, it says 'Implicit vs Explicit'. Below that, a question is written: 'Question: How to define the cross-linguistic generalization? Are there any typological properties for a typology of anchoring devices and strategies? (conclusionism)'. To the right, 'Contrastive Pragmatics' is defined as 'study of cross-linguistic pragmatic phenomena'. Below that, it says 'Important home of Pragmatic Typology' and '★ implicit and explicit layers of meaning'. In the top right corner, there is a logo for NPTEL.

So, two things, I am going to write it here before I move on to anything else. So, this is a; so, one is your contrastive pragmatics and the other one would be two points you remember crosslinguistic pragmatic phenomena, right; crosslinguistic pragmatic phenomena that this is the study of maybe I can write it like this, study of crosslinguistic pragmatic phenomena. So, that is what all about pragmatic typology is ok, right.

So, if this is what we are going to focus on, so, for sure it it does emphasize on the contrastive pragmatics or the contrastive domain of the compare and contrast, right. So, that is what; so, when you when you think about what exactly could have been the possible reason for the development of pragmatic typology, so, these two are the are the main things that you have to understand. There is a cross linguistic pragmatic phenomena and one of the most recent advances in this domain has been the systematic and detailed comparison of of conversational interaction.

So, what are the linguists trying to do in the recent days? A lot of a lot of repository or a lot of corpus has been created on the basis of the conversational data, right. So, and the recording of this conversational data and when they are trying to study it in a more detailed, more systematic fashion, this this has resulted in a in a streamlined field of pragmatic typology

which is not very young, it is relatively a younger field if you compare it with other domains of linguistics.

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Introduction

- A relatively young field that deals with typologies of pragmatics and conversational structures.
- Also involves typology of systems of language use and the principles that shape them
- Challenges:
 - i. Matter of sampling
 - ii. Changes in evidentiary standards
 - iii. Natural control method



Though it is comparatively a younger field, it is garnering a lot of attention because of the very nature that it deals with. What is the nature of it? I am talking about the nature of pragmatics as a domain which focuses on language use and the principles that shape them. These two things are very important. We need to find out how it is used in the discourse and second what are the various principles that it shapes or these uses.

Language use cannot be that random; definitely it is random, we cannot put everything in a streamlined fashion though a lot of things are regularized, a lot of things are streamlined in natural language, but there still has been certain randomness. Barring this tiny amount of randomness aside, a lot of things in natural language are actually streamlined. This streamlined domain of language, this has been and the way the streamlined process of language use has been shaped by a few principles.

So, the aim or the objective or the scope of pragmatic typology is to unravel or to understand such principles, which help us to understand how language flows in a streamlined fashion as much as possible, keeping aside a couple of randomness that it has.

And what are the different approaches that the linguists are following? We will talk about it very briefly, but again, as I just mentioned, I will keep this particular unit very brief and very simple unlike what I did for the semantics, unlike what I did for the syntactic, phonological, and morphological typology, because that was the core focus of my course and these two semantic typology and pragmatics typology I would like to just give you a very brief information and eventually you may take up an advanced course later.

As I just mentioned, as far as pragmatic typology is concerned, a lot of new generation linguists including the older ones, are working tirelessly to contribute to the development of contrastive approach, and this comparative or contrastive approach has eventually led to a discipline called pragmatic typology. So, what is one of the most important questions that that this discipline asks? That is something we need to know.

One of the most important questions that it would ask is the layers of meaning in language use. If not the most important question, I will say one of the important let us say theme. So, the theme of pragmatic typology would be the use of meaning. That is why I would like to keep semantics and pragmatics typology in one unit because there is a lot of overlapping as far as the domain is concerned, as far as the discussion is concerned. There are two things: one is implicit, the other one is explicit layers of meaning.

Implicit and explicit layers of meaning would be something very important when you are talking about pragmatic typology. So, what does it mean? When you say implicit and explicit layers of meaning, in what? Not in language structure, rather in language use. That results in different types; different cultures have different sort of usages as far as language is concerned. And this theme of implicit and explicit layers of meaning which has already been a part of the semantic typology would be interesting for some people too or people who are engaged in pragmatic research.

So, keeping in mind this important theme of pragmatic typology, the question is how to describe such a crosslinguistic definition. So, this is the theme and the question would be, how to define the crosslinguistic generalization? That is a tricky affair in pragmatics typological research. The entire discussion revolves around this pertinent question.

Considering there are so many cultures, there are so many individuals and we just discussed ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. So, it depends on the individual use of language which eventually leads to the bigger change in language use. Keeping in mind that we have so many varieties of cultures in this world and so many individual users, how to account for crosslinguistic generalization? This is one of the most pertinent questions that pragmatic typology asks as a linguistic discipline. If you rephrase the question, the question is going to be, are there any realistic prospects for a typology of anchoring devices and strategies? This is another question that Jef Verschueren would ask.

The same question can be asked in a different way. Are there any realistic prospects; I will write it as it is written in that paper exactly, prospects for a typology of anchoring devices and strategies; typology of anchoring devices and strategies. These are the questions which Jef would ask, maybe I will just briefly write the reference over here. So, this is what I want you to remember when we are trying to understand pragmatic typology.

The concern here is how to answer this question or how to approach this question. The question there are many different ways by which you can actually figure out or you can think about the meaning which involves the implicit and explicit layering as far as language use is concerned, but it would need a lot of empirical data to study, and this sample should not be restricted as the formal topologies would do, that is not going to be a good thing to do as far as the pragmatic typology is concerned.

So, to approach this question and these are the two key questions that Verschueren(2009) has discussed a couple of methods to answer these queries or to consider these questions or to approach it from these perspective, but before that let us just have a look at some information that we have about pragmatics. When we talk about the implicit and explicit layering of meaning, before that we need to understand what pragmatics is and what sort of information does pragmatics convey as a linguistic discipline.

It is truly an interdisciplinary area of research as far as pragmatics is concerned. This is a cognitive, social and cultural science of the language further language with a big L. So, considering it has the cognitive components, social components and cultural components, and it is primarily used in the communication domain of human language. We need to understand

these two questions what Verschueren has raised from an inclusive perspective, from an inclusive method which should give us some inputs about the cognitive aspect of it, cultural aspect of it, and social aspect of it.

Instead of identifying or instead of targeting it from each of these domains, we would rather approach pragmatics as a broadly conceived field. This broadly conceived field will have elements or will have points or will have inputs from various other disciplines. Keeping that in mind, we will try to have a look at what Verschueren would suggest to think about or let us say to consider pragmatic typology as a newer discipline.

So, Verschueren's idea is that when you approach these two questions which I have mentioned over here, how to define the crosslinguistic generalization in pragmatic typology, and the second one is are there any realistic prospects for a typology of anchoring devices and strategies; what is the method, what is the mechanism? For semantic typology, we have seen there are certain mechanisms of semantic change.

To account for the pragmatics typological questions, do we have a strategy or do we have a device? I will just briefly talk about what are the matrix that he would use to answer these questions, to understand the explicit and implicit meaning. First thing that he would suggest, there is nothing called absolute implicitness; this does not exist.

If absolute implicitness does not exist, we have to find out the implicational of it or we have to find out the comparative implicitness. There is nothing called absolute. The second thing that he would say, to answer this question that there are these he has proposed a three-dimensional matrix for these questions. The first thing that he would suggest that there is nothing called absolute implicitness as far as meaning is concerned.

There must be something which is explicitly said through the language use. You cannot say that the entire meaning has been implicit here, and you could not understand the way it has been spoken, a particular phrase or a word has been used. That does not work in pragmatics or in meaning. Then the second thing is that the second matrix that he would suggest the explicitness and then the implicitness are therefore, no absolute opposites.

Let us take a very simple example of a word, let us say picture. It has an explicit meaning and some people say there has been some implicit meaning too. When I say picture, I can actually visualize something before my eyes. I can think of the picture of a tree or the picture of a fruit or a picture of a house. I can actually visualize something. So, these are the explicit representation or the explicit interpretation of a word picture.

But, now if we ask the question from the pragmatic typological perspective, is there any way by which we can say that or we can find out there has been something implicit associated with it? I do not know. Maybe this is not the right kind of example, but as far as typological questions of pragmatics are concerned, if you compare the implicit and explicit meanings of any given linguistic component, that means, they are not actually diametrically opposite to each other.

You cannot keep implicitness and explicitness in two opposite directions, because there is nothing absolutely implicit. Since there is nothing absolutely implicit, how can it be an opposite of absolute explicit? There are certain words where the meanings are absolutely explicit like when you say book, book you can easily figure out that, a book can be visualized or can be conceptualized like this. There is everything explicit about it since, there is nothing called absolutely implicit, we cannot claim that implicitness and explicitness are absolutely opposite to each other that does not work. So, that is the second thing.

The third thing, the degree of explicitness of markers of implicitness or the features or the triggers of the implicitness is actually used for the understanding of non-explicitly stated meaning, this is a little tricky. So, the third point or the third dimension or out of the three-dimensional matrix that Verschueren would propose, the third one is a combination of the implicitness and then the explicitness. So that means, when you think about the implicitness and explicitness, Verschueren would say that the degree of explicitness of markers of implicitness, that means, implicitness will have certain markers and these markers are primarily explicit.

In such cases, these markers or we can call them let us say triggers. These triggers or the markers, they come from the inferential processes and what kind of inferential processes, which are helped to understand the non-explicitly stated meaning is quite a variable. So, there

is nothing fixed, there is nothing standard about it; this is a variable it might change depending on the situation. So, when you are trying to understand the markers of the implicitness, this is basically explicit.

These are the two words you need to keep in mind; one is implicit versus explicit. I do not know if you could follow what I said. So, I am just going to summarize it for you. The first claim typological claim that Verschueren would make is that in pragmatic typology as far as meaning is concerned, there is nothing absolutely implicit.

That means, no linguistic unit would have 100 percent implicit interpretation that does not work, there must be some component of explicitness. So, which one is more prominent? The explicitness is more prominent because there is nothing called absolute implicit. Then the second dimension of the matrix would be the explicitness and implicitness are therefore, not absolute opposites. Explicitness can be absolute, implicitness is not.

Since, there is a mismatch between implicitness and explicitness, you cannot put it in the term like absolutely opposite to each other that does not work. Third, all kinds of implicitness will have certain markers or triggers and these markers are the markers of explicitness. So, because of this nothing remains as absolutely implicit and these markers are quite a variable, they are not fixed you would not find it, you will not find that there is one particular marker which is found across the linguistic phenomena across the language; that does not work.

So, these are the three dimensions that Verschueren would propose or would talk about to understand the implicitness and then the explicitness of meaning, but before going to that we need to understand do you think this kind of an attempt would help us to plot across linguistic pattern or it sounds to be superficial. This is not a possible way to imagine a form of pragmatic typology even in relation to some of the fundamental concepts of linguistic pragmatics.

When you compare it with the linguistic the fundamental principles of Levinsonian principle. In Levinsonian works of pragmatics, if you try to approach it from a fundamental method; do you think this kind of an approach is going to help us to understand pragmatic typology.? That is one side of discussion, we are not really going to go into much detail. But just

remember it is not an easy task to draw a pattern crosslinguistically depending on the language use as far as the implicitness and explicitness of meaning is concerned.

With this, let us try to find out what could be the possible challenges or what are the most commonly used methods that pragmatics typologists deploy to to understand the key concepts or to understand the nuances of this discipline. One big challenge that pragmatic typology faces as far as method is concerned or as far as discussion is concerned is the matter of sampling.

So, these are the following Verschueren's claims or following Verschueren's questions we have these two big terms in hand, implicitness and explicitness of meaning, which makes the task even more difficult to plot a pattern in pragmatic typology.

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Challenges

- A relatively young field that deals with typologies of pragmatics and conversational structures.
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And if that is the question or that is the challenge that we have in hand, now we will see what are the different methods which have been used to find out a solution for these kinds of questions. People have worked on it and then pragmatic research considering this is usage centric or functions centric they do follow the descriptive approach.

Any discipline that follows the descriptive approach has to deal with a lot of empirical data, this empirical data brings its own challenges in the methodology and in the research. So, what I will do in the next session is that I will find out what are the different methods that linguists

have been using to understand or to come up with crosslinguistic generalizations in pragmatic typology and what are the challenges that they are facing. So, when they are talking about the sampling size, there must be some challenge.

What are the different standard procedures that involve pragmatics research and why this is also a problem for certain, like what are the possible reasons for which these evidentiary standards could also be a problem. And, what are the other methods that linguists deploy or the linguists use to come up with crosslinguistic generalizations in pragmatic typology?

So, these are the questions I am going to take up in the next session, but as I have just mentioned this unit semantic and pragmatic typology I am going to put it in a little more abstract form without giving much data. This is just a brief introduction about the disciplines and maybe in the long run if you are more interested to know more about semantic and pragmatic typology, you can register for an advanced course later.

The next session is going to wind up the discussions on pragmatics typology.

Thank you.

Keywords: interactional linguistics, conversational structure, contrastive pragmatics, implicit and explicit meaning, anchoring devices and strategies