

Current Laudable Aim of Introducing Learners to Real Acts of Communication: A Brief Note

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Abstract- This paper attempts to introduce learners to real acts of communication through various methods. Starting ideas from different linguists, this paper presents the link between sociolinguists and conversations and also presents the need for studying conversation as it is a phenomenon of everyday life. Thus, this paper, through introducing various methods puts conversation more systematic.

Index terms- Linguists, conversation, communication, speech, manner, language, expressions

INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, language helps one to carry out purposes and functions in human affairs. Transaction and interaction are the chief functions performed by language. Transaction denotes transference of messages, information etc and interaction stands for maintenance of social relations and expression of personal attitudes. Any analytic approach in linguistics involving contextual considerations is termed 'Discourse Analysis'. An analyst therefore is concerned with what people using language are doing. Data for him is the record of a dynamic process in which language is used as an instrument of communication in a context, by a speaker to express meanings and achieve intentions. It is his duty to describe the regularities in the linguistic features used by people to express meanings and to achieve intentions.

Brown and Yule (1983) claim that the analysis of discourse is necessarily the analysis of language in use of how it serves in human affairs carrying out purposes and functions. They have adopted two terms to describe the major functions of language. That function which language serves in the expression of 'content' is 'transactional' and that function involved in expressing social relations and personal attitudes is

'interactional'. The value of the use of language to transmit information cannot be denied, yet it should be noted that the use of language to establish and maintain social relationships is also equally important. In fact, a great deal of every day human interaction is characterised by the primarily interpersonal rather than the primarily transactional use of language. When two strangers are standing shivering at a bus stop in an icy wind and one turns to the other and says "My Goodness, 'it's Cold, 'it's Cold', it is difficult to suppose that the primary intention of the speaker is to convey information. On the contrary, it expresses just a desire to be friendly, much of the fascination of Discourse analysis comes from the realization that language, action and knowledge are inseparable. As Austin puts it, "The most essential insight is that utterances are actions". (12).

Some actions can be performed only through language (e.g. apologizing), which others can be performed either verbally or non-verbally (e.g.- ; threatening). In addition, it has become quite clear that communication is impossible without shared knowledge and assumptions between speakers and hearers. Again language and situation are inseparable. There is no deterministic relationship with the result that most everyday uses of language are much more flexible. Yet it is often within our capacity to pronounce what kind of language to expect in different situations. Phonology, lexis, syntax and paralinguistic features such as speed rhythm help us to achieve this skill. Hence, our awareness of socio-linguistics as an indispensable foundation for understanding discourse, thus helps us to become effective conversationalists by ourselves.

J.R.Firth has regarded conversation as the key to a better understanding of what language is and how it works. Socio-linguistics will have to be based at least

partly on the analysis of how people actually talk to each other in every day settings such as streets, shops, restaurants, buses, trains, schools, doctors, surgeries, factories and homes. Therefore, socio-linguistics will have to incorporate analysis of how conversation works. i.e., how the talk between people is organized; what makes it coherent and understandable; how people introduce and change topics; how they interrupt and ask questions and give or evade answer, and in general, how the conversational flow is maintained or disrupted. From the point of view of both core-linguistics and socio-linguistics, Austin's claim has the maximum weight:

“The total speech act in the total speech situation is the only actual phenomenon which in the last resort we are engaged in elucidating” (P 147).

Conversation is the basic, commonest use of language, a pervasive phenomenon of everyday life which deserves systematic study on those grounds alone. According to Firth, the main concern of descriptive linguistics is to make statements of meaning. His argument was that language was fundamentally a way of behaving and making others behave, and therefore ultimately, the linguist must concern himself with the ‘verbal process in the context of situation’. For Firth, language was only meaningful in its context of situation. The primary concern of linguistic theory, Chomsky argued, is with the underlying knowledge, the competence of the social – hearer. The newly awakened interest in the study of situated speech has resulted in an explosion of curricula and material during the last few years, with the laudable aim of introducing learners to real acts of communication.

It is learnt that learners need to become analysts of discourse themselves. In addition to appreciation of the setting, the discourse topic and the discoverable pre-suppositions of the participants learners have to see through ‘referential meaning’ to the discursal significance of shifts of stress and key, kinesics and stereo-typical strategies of conversation. Coulthard argues vehemently that it should be a part of language learning to realize the communicative potential of linguistic form by a training in elucidation procedures for the discovery of possible interpretations in appreciation of Gumperz's

comment that by signaling a speech activity a speaker also signals the social presuppositions in terms of which the language is to be interpreted’. We can put discovery methods to a good discursal use by introducing into our materials the kind of questioning Gumperz proposes for his interethnic. Communication studies:

1. What is A trying to achieve by talking in this way?
2. What is it about the way he says it what makes you...?
3. Could you be trying to ...?
4. How should he have said it, if he wanted to?
5. How did B interpret what A said?
6. How can you tell how B misunderstood?
7. How should B have replied to show that he did understand?

Such questions can be supplemented by others designed to probe the connections between our selective perception as hearers, readers and the actual cues present in the utterances. H.G. Widdowson, in his ‘Teaching Language as Communication’ talks at length about the importance of sentence in developing the communication abilities. He has worked elaborately on the nature of discourse and of the abilities that are engaged in creating it. He illustrates that are engaged in creating it. He illustrates with lucidity the two functions performed by a sentence i.e., the proposition and allocation. Drawing our attention to a conversation between A and B, he points out of A said, “My husband will return the parcel tomorrow”, B would report this in three ways, the first and the second being direct and indirect forms. The third choice is to report not the sentence itself, but the sentence as an expression of a proposition. This, he can do in a variety of ways:

1. She said that the parcel would be returned by her husband tomorrow.
2. She said that it would be her husband who would return the parcel tomorrow.
3. She said that it would be the parcel that her husband would return tomorrow.
4. She said what her husband would do tomorrow would be to return the parcel and so on.

But in order to report in the third manner, B must have a definite idea of the illocutionary act A was supposed to B be performing at the time. it depends on the circumstances of utterance what has preceded in the conversation, what B' knows of the situation,

the relationship between A and her husband, between A, B and the person that B is reporting to, the nature of the parcel and so on. B might interpret A's remark in a number of ways and report it accordingly. He may even make use of such reporting verbs like 'promised', 'threatened', 'warned', 'predicted', 'commanded' etc; according to the situation. Brown and Yule offer some features which characterize spoken language:

1. The syntax of spoken language is typically much less structured than that of written language.
2. Spoken language contains many incomplete sentences, often simple sequences of phrases.
3. In conventional speech, where sequential syntax can be observed, active declarative forms are normally found.
4. In spoken language, the largely paratactically organised chunks are related by 'and' 'then' and more rarely 'if'.
5. In written language, there is a strong tendency to structure the short chunks of speech so that only one predicate is attached to a given reference at a time as in: it's a biggest eat + tabby + with tom ears.
6. In written language, sentences are generally structured in subject – predicate form, in spoken language, it is quite common to find what Given calls 'topic-comment structure, as in "the cats + did you let them out"'.
7. In chat about the immediate environment, the speaker may rely on (e.g.,) gaze' direction to supply a referent: (Looking at the rain) 'frightful', isn't it?
8. The speaker may replace or refine expressions as he goes along; 'this meant this chap she was going out with'.
9. The speaker typically uses a good deal of rather generalised vocabulary: a lot of got, do, thing, nice stuff and things like that.
10. The speaker may produce a large number of pre-fabricated 'fillers': "well, erm, I think, you know, if you see what I mean, of course and so on.

What all stated above attests to the fact that there is a profound link between socio-linguistics and conversation, thereby undying the need for studying conversation as a phenomenon of everyday life in a systematized method. To effect cohesion in

conversation, sentences ought to be contextually appropriate.

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