PRAGMATICS AND SPEECH ACT THEORY AS DISCIPLINES STUDYING VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Tuhtayeva Shahzoda Oktamovna.

Independent researcher of SamSIFL.

shaxa-17-04@ mail.ru

Abstract: This article is devoted to the basic categories, conditions of illocutionary acts, types of differences among them and one of the most well-known classifications made by Fraser. Special attention should be paid to the performative hypothesis and types of performatives. The students are to be able to distinguish between performative and constatives utterances. Unlike constatives, that can be true or false, performatives have felicity conditions – a typology of conditions which performative utterances must meet if they are to succeed or be "happy". It should be made clear that in the utterance of a sentence three kinds of acts are simultaneously performed: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. It is very important that the conditions of performing illocutionary acts be elucidated and analyzed on numerous examples to be able to use the knowledge acquired in practice.

Key words: Pragmatics, linguistics, locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary, performative and constatives utterances, intercultural communication

The essence of language is human activity – activity on the part of one individual to make himself understood by another, and activity on the part of that other to understand what was in the mind of the first. These two individuals: the producer and the recipient of language, or as we may more conveniently call them the speaker and the hearer, and their relationship to one another should never be lost sight of if we want to understand the feature of language and of that part of language which is dealt with in grammar [Jespersen. The Philosophy of Grammar].

Consider the following facts about the use of English. "How are you?" counts as a greeting, not a farewell. "Can you pass the salt?" is frequently used as a request, while "Are you able to pass the salt" is not. "John is married to his work" involves a

metaphor. "I will be there" is used as a promise, a warning, a threat or a prediction, but not as a criticism or a request.

"Well" at the beginning of an utterance may signal a sense of contemplation, annoyance, or a surprise.

"Your breath smells so bad it would knock a buzzard off a manure wagon" will be heard as an insult.

Each of these facts goes beyond what we would want to ascribe as knowledge a native speaker has about the grammar of English. Knowing a grammar is to know the rules for characterizing language form. Knowing facts of the sort presented above, however, involves knowing rules for language use as well.

When we use language, we characteristically do three things:

we say something;

we indicate how we intend the hearer to take what we have said and

we have definite effects on the hearer as a result.

For example, if I tell you, "The police stopped drinking by midnight" I might intend to say that the police enforced a midnight curfew (rather than to say that they themselves, ceased imbibing). In so speaking, I might communicate to you that what I have said is to be taken as a claim on my part rather than, say, an admission. And because I have made this claim about the police, I might intend to affect you in a certain way, for example, to relieve you rather than anger you or surprise you, perhaps because I know you were worrying about how late your children were out.

Pragmatics as the theory of speech communication studies what is involved in linguistic communication, what can be communicated, how the speaker goes in accomplishing the intended communication and many certain strategies are selected under particular circumstances to bring about the communication.

First, when talking about linguistic communication one is referring to the case in which the speaker is attempting to communicate to the hearer by relying at least in part on the semantic interpretation of the linguistic form uttered. E.g., to shout, "The ice is thin" may linguistically communicate a warning; to comment, "That was certainly a

dumb thing for me to do", may be taken as an apology depending on the situation in which I spoke and my manner of speaking.

Second, linguistic communication succeeds only when the speaker has an attitude, which he intends to convey to the hearer in using language, and the hearer recognizes this attitude. If, for example, I am terribly embarrassed by a past action and comment on my thoughtlessness, you might take me as issuing an apology. You may have correctly understood my feelings but not by way of linguistic communication. Similarly, if I say, "I will take you skiing for your birthday", intending it to be a promise, but you hear it as a threat. Since you abhor skiing I will have failed to communicate either a threat or a promise: I did not intend the former, you did not recognize my intent of the latter.

Finally, there is an area that is specifically excluded from the theory, namely, the theory of conversation including such elements as openings, closings, repairs, responses, discussions, explanations, and a variety of other conversational acts. Consider the utterance "Good morning. How are you?" This counts as a greeting just as the utterance of "Excuse me. Could I talk to you for a moment?" may count as an apology followed by a request.

From the point of view of language learning and of intercultural communication, it is important to recognize that the individual who wishes to learn a new language must, in addition to acquiring a new vocabulary and a new set of phonological and syntactic rules, learn the rules of speaking: the patterns of sociolinguistic behaviour of the target language. It is a well-known axiom of sociolinguistics that languages differ from one another not only in such areas as phonology, syntax and lexicon, but in the very use to which these linguistic resourced are put. Members of one community share not only a language, but also knowledge of the speech conduct appropriate to the various events which make up their daily existence.

It follows that the understanding and knowledge of appropriate speech behaviour is crucial if learners are to communicate effectively with native speakers of the language they are learning. Communicative competence includes not only the mastery

of grammar and lexicon, but also the rules of speaking, e.g. knowing when it is appropriate to open a conversation and how, what topics are appropriate to particular speech events, which forms of address are to be used to whom and in which situations and how such speech acts as greetings, compliments, apologies, invitations and complaints are to be given, interpreted and responded to.

To summarize, the hearer operates on the assumption that the speaker is using the language seriously and attempting to communicate with the hearers. He initially assumes that the speaker is speaking literally and, therefore, attempts to determine what the speaker is literally saying – the literal operational meaning of the utterance. If this fails, either because no literal interpretation can be made or there are clues that the utterance is intended to be taken figuratively, then the hearer must consider both the potential semantic interpretations of the sentence as well as his theory of figurative language interpretation to then determine the operational meaning of the utterance, but in this case what the speaker has figuratively said. In either the literal or the figurative case – the speaker is never doing both at the same time with the same utterance – the hearer has at this point, in understanding the speaker, arrived at the operational meaning of the utterance.

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