



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE:ENG432

COURSE TITLE:PRAGMATICS

**COURSE
GUIDE**

**ENG432
PRAGMATICS**

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Introduction

ENG432: *Pragmatics* is a three-unit course available in the first semester of first year for B.A English and B.A (Ed) English programmes. Pragmatics as a programme of study develops out of the desire to properly explain the nature of language and how it works in the context of people and situations. Much of the progress made in this discipline may be attributable to reactions of linguistic scholars and all those interested in communication to the formal approach to language study, especially structural linguistics and those that believe that language is a purely mental process. Pragmatics and other sociolinguistic sub-fields attempt to demonstrate the social dimensions of language and explain the difference between linguistic forms and what speakers actually say and mean in different social contexts. Pragmatics has been defined as the study of speaker/context meaning showing how language users manipulate language forms, distort or reorganise sentences in order to express their intentions. And at other times they say one thing but mean another or use questions to express requests/demands. Thus pragmatics demonstrates the relationships between what speakers say and what they actually mean and the kind of effect they expect on the minds of the hearers. The study of pragmatics therefore aims at enlarging the scope of enquiring into the true nature of social meaning and their effects in various situations.

What You Will Learn in this Course

The general aim of this course is to demonstrate how language as a social phenomenon functions in practical social situations contrary to the view that it is a mere cognitive skill that should be studied from a formal structuralist point of view. It therefore attempts to show how speakers and writers make language choices to achieve their intentions. And this they do effectively because the context guides them to encode and interpret meanings beyond words or grammatical structures. The overall aim of this course therefore is to expose you the crucial notion of speaker/writer's (contextual) intended meaning-making process and not just to give you head knowledge but also to impact practically on your language performances at the end of this course.

Course Aims

There are 20 units in the course and each unit has its objectives. You should read the objectives of each unit and bear them in mind as you go through the units. In addition to the objectives of each unit, the overall aims of this course include:

- 1) to introduce you to the fundamental definitions and theories of pragmatics as a sub-field of socio-linguistics
- 2) to demonstrate the various ways speakers or communicators *mean* in different social contexts
- 3) illustrate how grammatical elements may assume new meanings in some definite situations and how language may be viewed as performing actions
- 4) explain the relationship between pragmatics and other disciplines

Course Objectives

Based on the general aims of this course, some objectives as a whole are set out. These are the things you should be able to do by the time you complete the course. If you are able to meet the objective, you would have achieved the aims of the course. Therefore on your successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- b. Explain the meaning of pragmatics as a sociolinguistic study and the difference between pragmatics and semantics
- c. Describe the influence of the context comprising social assumptions, values, conventions or world view on speakers and hearers
- d. Explain such concepts as speech acts, politeness, conversational principles or implicature.

- e. Discuss at least one theory of pragmatics and how it has enabled you to understand better the functions of language in the context of people and situations
- f. Apply the knowledge gained to communicate effectively in different social contexts, especially applying such concepts as politeness, indirectly speech act or indexical in social communication
- g. participate in further studies and research in pragmatics

Working through This Course

You have to work through all the study units in the course. There are 20 study units in all.

Course Materials

Major components of the course are:

- 1. Course Guide
- 2. Study Units
- 3. Textbooks
- 4. Assignments File
- 5. Presentation Schedule

Study Units

Module 1 Meaning and Scope of Pragmatics

- Unit 1 Some Definitions of Pragmatics; Principles/Goals of Pragmatics; Scope of Pragmatics; Utterance Meaning vs. Sentence Meaning
- Unit 2 Pragmatics: A Historical Overview; Charles Morris (1938) Carnap (1938); Pragmatics and Semantics
- Unit 3 Context in Language Use: Meaning and Features of Context; Linguistic Context; Physical/Environmental Context; Interpersonal Context; Situational/Socio-Cultural Context; Institutional Context; Components of Discourse Context; Text and Context

Module 2 Concepts in Pragmatics

- Unit 1 Tact: Tact as a Pragmatic Concept; Face-Saving Tact
- Unit 2 Deixis: Deictic Reference; Person deixis; Place deixis; Time deixis
- Unit 3 Social deixis; Discourse deixis; Meaning and Deictic Reference
- Unit 4 Reference and Inference: Semantic Reference; Pragmatic Reference; Intention; Inference
- Unit 5 Presupposition: Semantic Presupposition; Presupposition

- Unit 6 as Shared Assumption; Presupposition in the Real World
Conversational Principle: Conversational Maxims;
Entailment Implicature
- Unit 7 The Politeness Principle: Politeness; Politeness as Face
Saving; Models of Politeness Strategies
- Unit 8 Speech Acts: Doing Things with Words; Locutionary Act;
Illocutionary Act; Perlocutionary Acts; Indirect Speech
Act
- Unit 9 Speech Events: Utterances and Speech Events;
Conversations as Speech Events; Pragmatics and
Conversation Analysis

Module 3 Theories of Pragmatics

- Unit 1 Austin's Theory of Pragmatics
- Unit 2 Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature
- Unit 3 Other theoretical Contributions: Bach's and Harnish's
Intention and Inference; Adegbija's 'Balanced and
Unified' Theory

Module 4 Pragmatics and its Interfaces

Unit 1	Pragmatics and Discourse Structure; Pragmatics of Non-Sentences; Pragmatics of Deferred Interpretations; Pragmatics of Language Performance
Unit 2	Pragmatics and Grammar Pragmatics and the Lexicon; Pragmatics and Intonation
Unit 3	Pragmatics and Core Linguistics; Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics; Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis
Unit 4	Doing Pragmatics
Unit 5	Doing Pragmatics II

Textbooks and References

Every unit contains a list of references and further reading. Try to get as many of the textbooks listed as possible. The textbooks and materials are meant to deepen your knowledge of the course.

Assessment File

An assessment file and a marking scheme will be made available to you. In the assessment file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. The assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadline stated in the presentation schedule and the Assignment file. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total score. Further information on assignments will be found in the assignment file itself and later in this *Course Guide* in the section on assessment

Presentation Schedule

The Presentation Schedule included in your course materials gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor-marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against falling behind in your work

Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMA)

Every unit contains at least one or two assignments. You are advised to work through all the assignments and submit them for assessment. Your tutor will assess the assignments and select four which will constitute the 30% of your final grade. The tutor-marked assignments may be

presented to you in a separate file. Just know that for every unit there are some tutor-marked assignments for you. It is important you do them and submit for assessment

Final Examination and Grading

At the end of the course, you will write a final examination which will constitute 70% of your final grade. In the examination which shall last for two hours, you will be requested to answer three questions out of at least five questions

Course Marking Scheme

This table shows how the actual course marking is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignment	Four assignments, best three marks of the four count at 30% of course marks
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Course Overview

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date of completing the study units and dates for examinations.

Unit	Title of Work	Weeks Activity	Assessment (End of Unit)
	Course Guide		
Module 1 Meaning and Scope of Pragmatics			
1	Some definitions of Pragmatics; Principles of Pragmatics; Scope of Pragmatics; Utterance Meaning vs. Sentence meaning	Week 1	Assignment 1
2	Pragmatics: A Historical Overview; Charles Morris (1938); Carnap (1938); Pragmatics and Semantics	Week 2	Assignment 2
3	Context in Language use; Meaning and Features of Context; Linguistic Context; Physical/environmental Context; Interpersonal Context; Situational/Socio-Cultural Context;	Week 3	Assignment 3

	Institutional Context; Components of Discourse Context; Text and Context		
Module 2 Concepts in Pragmatics			
1	Tact: Tact as a Pragmatic Concept; FST	Week 4	Assignment 1
2	Deixis: Deictic Reference; Person deixis; Place deixis; Time deixis	Week 5	Assignment 2
3	Social deixis; Discourse Deixis; Meaning and deictic reference	Week 6	Assignment 3
4	Reference and Inference: Semantic Reference; Pragmatic Reference; Intention; Inference	Week 7	Assignment 4
5	Presupposition: Pragmatic Presupposition; Semantic Presupposition; Presupposition in the Real World	Week 8	Assignment 5
6	Conversational Principle: Conversational Maxims; entailment; Implicature	Week 9	Assignment 6
7	The Politeness Principle: Politeness; Politeness as Face-Saving; Models of Politeness Strategies	Week 10	Assignment 7
8	Speech Acts: Doing Things with Words; Locutionary Act Illocutionary Act; Perlocutionary Acts; Indirect Speech Act	Week 11	Assignment 8
9	Speech events; Utterance and Speech Events; Conversations as Speech Events; Pragmatics and Conversational Analysis	Week 11	Assignment 9
Module 3 Theories of Pragmatics			
1	Austin's Theory of Pragmatics	Week 12	Assignment 1
2	Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature	Week 12	Assignment 2
3	Other theoretical Contributions: Bach's and Harnish's Intention and Inference; Adegbiya's Balanced and Unified Theory	Week 12	Assignment 3
Module 4 Pragmatics and its Interfaces			
1	Pragmatics and Discourse Structure: Discourse Markers; Pragmatics of non-sentences; Pragmatics of Deferred Interpretations	Week 13	Assignment 4

2	Pragmatics and Grammar; Pragmatics and the Lexicon; Pragmatics and Intonation	Week 14	Assignment 5
3	Pragmatics and core Linguistics; Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics; Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis	Week 14	Assignment 6
4	Doing Pragmatics	Week 15	Assignment 7
5	Doing Pragmatics II	Week 15	Assignment 8
	Revision	1	
	Examination	1	
	Total	17	

How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecture. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to the lecturer. In the same way a lecturer might give you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read, and what your text materials or set books are. You are provided exercises to do at the end of every sub-section of the units, just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit, and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next to this is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you complete the unit. These learning objectives are meant to guide your study. The moment you finish a unit, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If this is made a habit, then you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a Reading section. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

- Read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment.
- Organise a Study Schedule. Design a "Course Overview" to guide you through the Course. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Important information e.g. details of your tutorials, and the date of the first day of the Semester is available from the study centre. You will need to

gather all information into one place, such as your diary or a wall calendar. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates and schedule of work for each unit.

- Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything to stay faithful to it. The major reason why students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please, let your tutor know before it is too late for help.
- Turn to Unit 1; read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
- Assemble the study materials. You will need your set books and the unit you are studying at any point in time.
- Work through the unit. As you work through the unit, you will know what sources to consult for further information.
- Keep in touch with your study centre. Up-to-date course information will be continuously available there.
- Well before the relevant due dates (about 4 weeks before due dates), keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignment carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignments not later than the due date.
- Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study materials or consult your tutor.
- When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
- When you submit an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before you start on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also the written comments on the ordinary assignments.
- After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the Course Guide).

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

The dates, times and locations of these tutorials will be made available to you, together with the name, telephone number and address of your tutor. Each assignment will be marked by your tutor. Pay close attention to the comments your tutor might make on your assignments as these will help in your progress. Make sure that assignments reach your tutor on or before the due date. Your tutorials are important; therefore try not to skip any. It is an opportunity to meet your tutor and your fellow students. It is also an opportunity to get the help of your tutor and discuss any difficulties encountered on your reading.

Summary

English is just like any other language that struggled for existence for many centuries. But today it has become a world language. A course on the History of the English Language is indeed a worthwhile academic engagement that will not only expose you to the stages of the development of the language but also the factors that led to its growth. At the end, you should be able to say whether English will continue in its present growth and role as a world language or whether we shall expect another language to rise in the next 50 years.

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MODULE 1 MEANING AND SCOPE OF PRAGMATICS

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Unit 2	Pragmatics: A Historical Overview; Charles Morris (1938) Carnap (1938); Pragmatics and Semantics
Unit 3	Context in Language Use: Meaning and Features of Context; Linguistic Context; Physical/environmental Context; Interpersonal Context; Situational/socio-cultural Context; Institutional Context; Components of Discourse Context; Text and Context

UNIT 1 MEANING AND SCOPE OF PRAGMATICS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

If you see a notice like “drink to your fill” on a library shelf, you definitely know what each of the words means, and you also know what the notice means. However, you’re not likely to think that the notice is asking you to drink some natural liquid water. If you are very smart you would normally understand that you are being advised to read as many books as possible. What you have done is to use the meaning of the words in combination with the context in which they occur and try to decode the meaning which the writer of the notice intended to communicate.

Speakers and writers often *mean* much more than they say/write and expect their hearers/listeners to understand them. They will generally assume that some aspects of meanings that are not expressed in words

are deducible from the context. This assumption is based on their shared environment, values, social conventions or world view which guides them to interpret meanings beyond words or grammatical structures. Ultimately the goal is to rightly interpret the speakers intended meaning. The notion of the speaker's or writer's intended meaning is a very crucial element in the study of pragmatics. And as you will see in this study, traditional pragmatics is all about investigating the speaker/writer intended meaning rather than what is expressed in words.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define pragmatics in your own words
- describe the principles/goals of pragmatics
- explain the scope of pragmatics
- differentiate between utterance meaning and sentence meaning.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Some Definitions of Pragmatics

Quite a number of language scholars have defined pragmatics, which are of interest to us in this study. These definitions throw some light on the nature, principles and scope of pragmatics. Let's look at a few of them.

- (i) **Leech & Short (1981:290)** - Pragmatics is "the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered." Notice the word "utterances" not necessarily *sentences*.
- (ii) **Leech (1983:6)** - Pragmatics is "the study of meaning in relation to speech situations". The speech situation enables the speaker use language to *achieve a particular effect* on the mind of the hearer." Thus the speech is goal-oriented (i.e. the meaning which the speaker or writer intends to communicate).
- (iii) **Levinson (1983:9)** – Pragmatics is "the study of those aspects of the relationship between language and context that are relevant to the writing of grammars." Notice in this definition that interest is mainly in the inter-relation of language and principles of language use that are context dependent.
- (iv) **Yule (1996:127)** – Pragmatics is "the study of intended speaker meaning." It is "in many ways ... the study of invisible meaning

or how we recognise what is meant even when it isn't actually said (or written).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. In your own words, define pragmatics
2. Look at the four definitions very closely; what do you observe are the common features of all of them, highlighting the goals of pragmatics?
3. Can you think of situations where you have had to interpret a statement from a pragmatic point of view rather than merely looking at the meaning of the words in the sentence (s)?

3.2 Principles/Goals of Pragmatics

From the above definitions of pragmatics you will notice that there are some common features that will help us understand better the principles and goals of pragmatics: All the definitions stress the following:

- Language use i.e. language in actual speech situations (language performance rather than mere cognitive skills). In other words, what is important is how language users communicate in oral conversations or in writing, not necessarily how grammatically correct the sentences are.
- Discourse/utterance rather than sentence
- The context of the speech – location of participants in a conversation/discourse
- Goal of utterance/discourse or speaker's intention
- Participants in a conversation/discourse situation, their roles, relationship and identities, since these have some influence on how meanings are encoded and interpreted
- Shared assumptions/knowledge, cultures, or conventions of participants in communication.
- The fact that interactants do not rely only on their knowledge of the language system when they interpret meaning but also their knowledge of the world, cultures, conventions or world view.

In stressing utterances in communication rather than structural sentences, a pragmatics analyst seeks to explain what communicators actually “do” with language whether consciously or unconsciously. Let's look at this illustration.

Jide alights from a taxi. Luckily he sees a friend of his (Mark) standing nearby. He goes forward to talk to Mark while the taxi waits for him.

Jide: Mark, what's up? Do you have some change on you?

Mark: What I have is not enough to pay a taxi fare.

Notice that Jide seemingly asks two questions: “what’s up?” and “do you have some change on you?” Mark immediately understands that Jide is not asking a yes or no question, rather a request for money to pay his taxi fare, so he gives an explanatory answer. Again he takes it for granted that “what’s up” is a form of greeting than a question. Now “yes” or “no” would have been the right answer to the second question if it was asked in a different context; say a bank. Of course you know that if they were total strangers Mark will certainly not use the same words; hence “what’s up” was not only a greeting but also a means on initiating a conversation/discourse. It also indicates that some psychological bond or *relation* exists between them. Hence Jide right assumed that Mark would interpret his “questions” correctly.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. In talking about principles of pragmatics, we have described how the study of pragmatics works and what the goal is (i.e. what the study aims at achieving). With this in mind, try to outline the variables (or factors) which enable Jide and Mark to communicate effectively looking closely at the above illustration.
2. Do you think that the study of pragmatics is another way of undermining the study of grammar?

3.3 The Scope of Pragmatics

By scope, we mean the levels to which the study of pragmatics has been extended. For the purpose of our present study, we must mention that linguistic pragmatics as it is used today is a lot more restricted than when the term “pragmatics” was first used by Charles Morris (1938). Morris was interested in *Semiotics* – the general study of signs and symbols. Pragmatics was defined as the “relation of signs to the interpreters.” We shall look at this in detail in the next unit. Morris then extended the scope of pragmatics to include psychological, biological and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs (Levinson, 1983). This will include what is known today as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistic, neurolinguistics among others. Today, linguistic pragmatics mostly dwells on those factors of language use that govern the choices individuals make in social interaction and the effects of those choices on others (Crystal, 1987).

In recent times however, extended researches in cultural studies and social discourse argue in favour of *discourse pragmatics* rather than the traditional linguistic pragmatics. Fairclough (1989) for instance argues that rather than see language use as an individual’s strategies of encoding meaning to achieve some particular effects on the hearer or reader, we should be concerned with the fact that social conventions and

ideologies, define peoples roles, identities and language performances; people simply communicate in some particular ways as the society determines. While people can manipulate language to achieve certain purposes, they in some circumstances are actually ruled by social conventions. In the same vein, pragmatic study has thrown some light on the study of literature giving rise to literary pragmatics, while the application of pragmatics to computational linguistics has also developed into computational pragmatics, etc.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Summarise in your own words the scope of pragmatics.

3.4 Utterance Meaning versus Sentence Meaning

In the definition of pragmatics by Leech (above), you will notice that one of the principles of pragmatics is the emphasis on “utterance” meaning rather than word or sentence meaning, and how such utterances relate to the context in which they are used. The difference between an utterance and a sentence is the fact that an utterance need not be syntactically perfect the same way we expect a sentence to be. A sentence must satisfy some basic grammatical rules (e.g. subject/verb/complement structural pattern.) An utterance on the other hand doesn’t even have to be a sentence. It may be a word like “settle,” a phrase like “area boy,” a contracted form like “what’s up?” or an exclamation like *hei* or *Ooh!* The “meaning” we associate with these utterances is defined in terms of their *functions* or the *intention* of the speaker in uttering them. While sentence meaning is a function of the words in the sentence together with the overall sense of the sentence, utterance meaning relies much more on the intention of the utterance in relation to the context.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

1. Differentiate between utterance meaning and sentence meaning.
2. Make a list of utterances which though may not be grammatical, are communicative.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Pragmatics as a linguistic discipline is a worthwhile academic endeavour as it exposes us to interesting insights to the actual functions of language in social interactions. Thus, the study of language has been extended significantly beyond mere description of linguistic properties to the various creative ways individual communicators construct meaning in different socio-cultural contexts. Pragmatics has also been

able to account for social meanings which formal semantics has tended to overlook, giving new insights to the understanding of literary texts and in fact helping to formulate strategies for the teaching and learning of language.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have examined the various definitions of pragmatics which enable us see the actual concerns and goals of linguistic pragmatics. All the definitions agree that pragmatics is a study of meaning from the point of view of the language user, showing what choices s/he makes and how these capture his/her intentions in some particular contexts. Hence, pragmatics stresses utterances rather than sentences; utterance functions/goals rather than grammaticalness and the kind of cultures/conventions which influence how speakers/writers encode and interpret meaning. We have also examined some areas of study where pragmatic principles have been quite useful in the interpretation of meaning giving rise to discourse pragmatics, literary pragmatics, and computational pragmatics among others. We shall consider pragmatics and its interfaces in details later in this study.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) What do you think should be the main concerns of a pragmatic analyst?
- 2) Why is utterance meaning considered as more important in pragmatics than sentence meaning?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Crystal, D. (1987). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Levinson, S. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yule, G. (1996). *The Study of Language* (2nd ed). Cambridge: CUP.

UNIT 2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PRAGMATICS

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- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the first significant studies that developed to what today is known as pragmatics and subsequent efforts that have popularized the discipline. You will also see how these pioneering efforts attempted to broaden the scope of pragmatics and the extent of improvement thereafter as more language scholars became interested in the field. You will get to see why we have decided to discuss the relationship between Pragmatics and Semantics in this unit rather than in the last module where the interfaces of Pragmatics are generally discussed.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the development of pragmatics as a discipline
- mention important scholars that are associated with this development
- describe some important stages in the early studies of pragmatics
- explain the relationship between pragmatics and semantics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Origin of Pragmatics (Charles Morris, 1938)

The origin of modern pragmatics is attributable to Charles Morris (1938), a philosopher who was concerned with the study of the science of signs or “Semiotics”. According to Morris, Semiotics consisted of three (3) broad branches namely:

- (a) Syntax being the formal relation of signs to one another

- (b) Semantics being the formal relations of signs to objects to which they refer
- (c) Pragmatics being the formal relations of signs to interpreter (the language user)

Within each of these branches (e.g. syntax) Morris also distinguished between “pure studies” and “descriptive studies.” Pure studies concerned with the explanation/elaboration of sign system/symbols used to describe language called *metalanguage*. While descriptive studies are the application of the metalanguage to a particular language, i.e. descriptions of signs (or words) and their usages. As we noted in Unit 1, Morris attempted to include some aspects psychology, biology and sociology which occur in the functioning of signs known as the “biotic aspect of semiosis” in pragmatics. But we know that this scope is much wider than what goes on today in linguistic pragmatics.

Interestingly, Morris’ broad use of pragmatics has been retained in some quarters and this explains the use of the term in disciplines such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, communication etc. Pragmatics is also used within analytical philosophy.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. What are the contributions of Charles Morris to the development of modern linguistic pragmatics?
2. Can you distinguish between Morris’ use of the term “pragmatics” and linguistic pragmatics as we have it today?

3.2 Carnap (1938)

Carnap like Morris was a philosopher and logician. His work is quite influential because of his attempt to narrow down the scope of pragmatics. He also distinguished a trichotomy of semiotics as follows:

- (i) If in an investigation explicit reference is made to the speaker, or to put it in more general terms, to the user of the language, then we assign it (the investigation) to the field of pragmatics.
- (ii) ...If we abstract from the user of the language and analyze only the expressions and their designata, (references) we are in the field of semantics.
- (iii) And finally, if we abstract from the designata also and analyze only the relations between the expressions, we are in (logical) syntax (*quoted from Levinson, 1983:3*)

Carnap retained Morris’ idea of pragmatics as an investigation in which explicit reference is made to the speaker or the user of the language and

equated pragmatics with descriptive semiotics (formal study of meaning). Like Morris, he made a distinction between pure and descriptive studies, equating pragmatics with the latter. He also added a *pure pragmatics* to include concepts like belief, utterance and intention and how they relate to each other. This latter idea (i.e. pure pragmatics) has since been dropped. In the 1960s, Carnap's definition of pragmatics as requiring reference to the user was adopted within Linguistics, especially within a movement called "Generative Semantics."

It is necessary to mention here that Carnap's definition of pragmatics as requiring reference to the user of the language is as too narrow as it is too broad.

According to Levinson (1983), it is too broad because it admits such studies as 'slips of the tongue' or word associations and studies in linguistic pragmatics should be restricted to investigations that have at least some linguistic implications. On the other hand, it is too narrow because if we take words like *I* and *you* for example, they identify particular participants (or users) and their role in the speech event, just as words like *here* and *now* indicate the place and time of the event (not necessarily referring to the user). Therefore it is argued that Carnap's definition might be modified to say something like "If in an investigation explicit reference is made to the speaker, or to put it in more general terms, to the user of the language, *and those linguistic investigations that make necessary reference to aspects of the context*, then we assign it to the field of pragmatic."

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. How would you distinguish between the works of Charles Morris and that of Carnap?
2. What are the limitations of Carnap's definition of pragmatics?

3.3 Pragmatics and Semantics

According to Carnap (1938) "if we abstract from the user of the language and analyse only the expressions and their designate (objects), we are in the field of Semantics". Hence Semantics is "the formal relation of signs to the objects they refer," (Morris 1938). While Semantics is defined as meaning of words or linguistic expression in a given language, (without reference to the speaker and the situation), pragmatics is defined in relation to the speaker and the context of the communication event, with particular interest on the functions, intentions, goals and effects of utterances.

Semantics simply concerns the conventional meaning of words, phrases and sentences rather than what a speaker or writer might want the words to mean in a particular context/situation. This technical approach to meaning centres on the objective and general (Yule, 1996). Hence, we talk of meaning in terms of universal applications. In other words, what an English expression means in Nigeria is what it should mean elsewhere. So linguistic semantics emphasises conventional meaning expressed by the use of words and sentences of a language.

Some scholars however have argued that pragmatics is no different from semantics because according to them semantics adequately covers all aspects of pragmatics. The contextual theory of meaning (which is a semantic theory) for example, explains the relationship between language and the context. On the other hand, scholars in defence of pragmatics, argue that pragmatics covers those areas that semantics has hitherto overlooked, especially the concept of speech acts. It throws more light to what speakers/writers actually do with language and what effects they expect from their hearers/reader. In semantics you ask, “what does gyp mean? But in pragmatics the question is “what do you mean by gyp?” So the focus of pragmatics is the user rather than the linguistic code.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Differentiate between pragmatics and semantics.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We can see that interest in the study of the nature of meaning is not just a linguistic affair, but a concern that cuts across disciplines. This explains why earlier studies of meaning began with philosophers (e.g. Charles Morris and Carnap). It is interesting to note that the search for both linguistic and social meanings is an ongoing activity and the results of these studies have further thrown significant lights on the true nature of meaning. Semantics which is often described as the study of “the meaning of meaning” has been so extended to include these interesting studies of which pragmatics is, as a matter of fact, a part. It is therefore difficult to discuss the origin of pragmatics without reference to semantics. It is by a thorough understanding of semantics that the functional meaning of pragmatics emerges especially if we view pragmatics as an extension of semantic (or linguistic) meaning to contextual and user-based meaning.

5.0 SUMMARY

The first use of the term “pragmatics” is associated with Charles Morris and Carnap in the 1930s. These were philosophers who were interested in the study of semiotics (the science of signs) and how the meaning associated with signs may be described in linguistic terms. Hence they distinguished three branches of semiotics as syntax, semantics and pragmatics. While Morris used the term “interpreter” to explain the focus of pragmatic study, Carnap used the expression “the user of the language.”

Carnap identified the fact that since the investigation of meaning is user-based; it must therefore seek to find what intention the user has for using some particular words or sentences. It is the intention of the speaker that indicates the functions of the utterance and what results that are anticipated. This view of linguistic pragmatics was eventually adopted generally, dropping other broader psychological and sociological aspects of signs proposed by Charles Morris.

Semantics and pragmatics are two sisters belonging to the same parent (semiotics). The difference between the two according to Morris and Carnap is that semantics is concerned with the meaning of words, phrases and sentences without reference to who uses them, why they are used and the influence of the context on the expression. Pragmatics on the other hand handles those areas which linguistic semantics could not handle, i.e. attention to the user of the language, his particular intention (depending on the situation s/he finds himself) and how s/he expects his hearer (or reader) to respond.

A good understanding of pragmatics will enable you adopt the right kind of language use in different social contexts and possibly achieve the kind of result you expect. As a matter of fact, a good understanding of the roles of language in society demands the kind of linguistic (or communicative) competence that is required to use language in specific social contexts. In the next unit, we shall look more closely at the various types of contexts and how they influence language use.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the contributions of Charles Morris and Carnap to the development of linguistic pragmatics
2. With copious examples differentiate between pragmatics and semantics.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 CONTEXT IN LANGUAGE USE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Meaning and Features of Context
 - 3.2 Linguistic Context
 - 3.3 Physical/environmental Context
 - 3.4 Interpersonal Context
 - 3.5 Situational/socio-cultural Context
 - 3.6 Institutional Context
 - 3.7 Components of Discourse Context
 - 3.8 Text and Context
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Language “use” in this study will definitely refer to the use of linguistic codes (words) in the context of social life since pragmatics is the study of language use by individuals in specific social situations and whose actions are actually influenced by these situations. The study of language in its social context began with the rise of popular interests in sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis and ethnography of speaking in the 1970’s particularly as a reaction to purely abstract linguistics. Scholars were concerned with a more balanced way of studying language, other than focus on language structures alone. To them it was crucial to also examine the relationship between language and society and how language use is influenced by the social context. The goal of this kind of contextual study according to Dell Hymes (1974) is to:

- (i) involve language in practical issues such as education, minority groups and language policies
- (ii) show how social function gives form to the ways in which linguistic features are encountered in actual life
- (iii) identify social functions and discover ways in which linguistic features are selected and grouped to serve them (sharing a concern with social realism and validity)
- (iv) show that a socially constituted linguistics is concerned with social as well as referential meaning and with language as part of

communicative conduct and social action (*quoted in Lavandera (1988:4).*

In this unit, we shall be looking at the features and components of context and how various contexts can influence meaning and language use. We shall also see why context is so crucial in the study and understanding of linguistic or discourse pragmatics.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. Why is the study of language in relation to its social context important?
2. What are the goals for the study of context according to Dell Hymes?

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define context
- describe the features of a context
- differentiate between the different types of contexts
- discuss the components of discourse context proposed by M.A.K. Halliday
- explain why context is an important concept in pragmatics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Meaning and Features of Context

Context refers to the situation, within which language functions. It may be physical/environmental, social context or institutional situation, including events, time, culture or social conventions that can influence language use. The first use of the term “context of situation” is attributable to Bronislaw Malinowski, a social anthropologist, who in his study of language behaviours among some native Indians concluded that language is a “mode of action” and as social behaviour is closely tied to the relevant social situation in which it is used (Malinowski 1935). The meaning of words was not to be restricted to sounds of utterances or their grammatical structure but must include the “pragmatic context” in which they are uttered. J.R. Firth (a linguist) expounded this study and in his contextual theory of meaning argues that context is the bedrock of any linguistic enterprise because “normal linguistic behaviour as a whole is meaning effort, directed towards the maintenance of appropriate patterns of life” (Firth 1957: 223). Since every utterance occurs within a “culturally determined context of

situation” meaning is tied to that context about the speaker and the ways he perceives himself, his roles in the society and his relationship with other members of the society. As pragmatics investigates context-based meaning it will be impossible to talk about pragmatics without reference to the context in which utterances are made. And as a matter of fact, linguistic codes are actually selected and used according to some social sets of standards. It is contextual considerations that make the difference between structural linguistics and sociolinguistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis. We shall look at the features of context as we examine the various types of contexts.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. Attempt a definition of context.
2. Why is context a crucial element in the study of pragmatics?

3.2 Linguistic Context

This refers to the set of words in the same sentence or utterance. This forms the linguistic environment that determines the sense of the words in the context. For example if the word “shoot” appears in a linguistic context along with other words like “dribble,” “penalty,” “goal”, or “over the bar”, we immediately understand the *shoot* that is meant. If on the other hand, the same word appears with words like “soldier”, “artillery” or “war,” the meaning is immediately known. The linguistic context (also known as *co-text*) of a word or words therefore has a strong effect on what we may think such words mean. Generally words occur together and frequently used with some particular words with which they collocate.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

1. Think of words that are likely to occur in the same linguistic context with “bank,” “war,” “school.”
2. What meanings are likely to be attached to a word like “settle,” if it appears in the same context with words like, *rent*, *landlord*, *caretaker* etc? Think of what it may mean if it appears with words like *police*, *traffic*, *offence* etc.

3.3 Physical/Environmental Context

Again we know that words mean on the basis of the physical or environmental context. As we saw in Unit 1, the meaning of the word “drink” on a library shelf is different from its meaning on the door of a canteen. The physical context definitely influenced our interpretation of the word. Our understanding of words or expressions is much more tied

to the physical context particularly in terms of the time and place being referred to in the expressions. Other features of the context include:

- Participants, e.g. boys, girls, men, traders
- Ongoing activity, e.g. playing, chatting, debating
- The place, e.g. church, class, stadium, dining table
- The time, e.g. time of the day or season

Hymes (1964) identifies the following general contextual features:

- Participants, i.e. people involved, e.g. husband and wife; neighbours; colleagues; teachers and students etc.
- Topic i.e. what the discourse is about, e.g. politics, religion, race, health, etc.
- Setting, i.e. where the event takes place, e.g. at home, at work, at school etc.
- Channel, e.g. medium – speech, writing, non-verbal)
- Code (dialect/style)
- Message form (debate, chat etc)

All of the above features may not rigidly be ascribed to the physical context. For example, the channel/medium or code through which the piece of discourse is carried out are determined by other variables such as education, age, status or class which may well be described as some features of the socio-cultural context.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

What features of the physical context do you consider very important in the analysis of any piece of discourse?

3.4 Interpersonal Context

The interpersonal context focuses on psychological considerations that influence speech or talk. There is no doubt that the state of the mind of the speaker or writer places some constraints on the quality or amount of interactions s/he engages in. His inputs and reactions are predictable if he is sad, happy, excited or bored. Critics of pragmatics emphasis on such criteria as intention, belief or rationality, argue that the understanding of text and talk is not dependent on elements rooted in psychology rather, on social factors such as “power” and “status” and how they are distributed and maintained linguistically in the society (Lavandera, 1988). Interestingly many social analysts of discourse, among who are also interested in pragmatics do indeed recognise the influence of socio-cultural variables that affect the production of discourse, or text. But the fact remains that individual speakers or

writers do make linguistic choices and decide what to say and how to say it. Therefore factors that place constraint on their ability to do this (e.g. state of the mind) is of interest to pragmatic analysts.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

In your own words describe what is meant by “interpersonal context” and say why it is essential in a pragmatic study of text or talk.

3.5 Situational/Socio-cultural Context

Unlike the other contexts discussed above, the situational context concerns mainly with socio-cultural considerations. The context of culture includes beliefs, value system, religion, conventions that control individuals’ behaviour and their relationship with others. These socio-cultural rules of behaviour often guide them in order to communicate effectively with one another. Some beliefs or conventions may be considered as universal, while some are culture-specific, especially those that guide utterances, non-verbal communication and other forms of social behaviour that may be interpreted meaningfully.

Knowledge of socio-cultural rules of behaviours brings up the idea of “communicative competence” which according to Dell Hymes (1972) is the ability of the speaker to know when to speak, when not and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner. This competence is integral with attitudes, values and motivations concerning language, its features and uses in the most suitable and appropriate contexts. Take a newspaper headline like “The butcher of Zamfara” for an example. How would a non-Nigerian interpret it considering the general meaning of “butcher”? How would you interpret it – as a Nigerian who is familiar with the controversy surrounding the implementation of the Sharia in the Northern states? Take another example:

A little child:	(scribbles unintelligibly on the surface of a white paper and presents it to his father, smiling) Daddy, see...!
Father:	(hugs the child) ah...beautiful, this is the most brilliant writing I’ve ever seen.

You will agree with me that the father has applied the best communicative etiquette in his response to his child’s writing, considering the context and the participant in the communication event.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

1. Describe the features of the situational/socio-cultural context.
2. How would you interpret the headline: “the butcher of Zamfara” in view of the Nigerian socio-cultural situation?

3.6 Institutional Context

Much of what we refer to here as “institutional context” may have actually been covered as part of the social/cultural context, but it is necessary to identify certain elements of the context in some specialized kind of settings like educational institutions, which impose some constraints in language use. Take a Convent or a purely Islamic institution for example: there are certain conventions there that govern people’s mode of communication and behaviour which is not just “social” or “cultural.” We consider this as institutional and much of this institutional standards or “common sense assumptions” (Fairclough, 1989), determine social behaviour and individuals simply imbibe them as natural and unchanging. For example, there are certain ways people must greet one another in some of these places. Expressions such as “bless you” or “it is well” in some Christian mission universities have become almost institutionalised that people are made to believe that unless they greet each other that way they may never be enjoy certain privileges. In some cases these rather peculiar manner of expressions help to identify the individuals and the institutions they are associated with.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 7

Give examples of some institutional contexts and describe certain mode of language use associated with them.

3.7 Components of Discourse Context

M.A.K. Halliday (1976) identifies three components of the context which we shall discuss in this sub-section. According to Halliday, situation types can be represented as a complex of three dimensions, namely:

- (i) The ongoing activity
- (ii) The role relationships
- (iii) The symbolic channel (i.e. the medium, either written or spoken)

The ongoing activity is referred to as *the Field* which is the total event in which the text (or utterance) is functioning. It is the primary aim of the discourse and what subject matter the interactants must explore. According to Hudson (1980), the field of discourse is the “what about”, “the why” of discourse: it may be political, religious, academic, health,

marriage etc. Very often an individual's choice of words in a conversation is governed by the field of discourse.

The role relationships are referred to as *the tenor*. It is the “with whom” of discourse. The tenor shows the kind of social relationships that exists among interactants; type of role interaction (how they take turns and what influences it) and how temporal or permanent such relationships are. It also mirrors the identities of the people involved. Some social variables such as age, status, education etc. influence how individuals assign roles to one another in conversations.

The mode of discourse is the function of the text in the event, including the medium of expression. This is the third component of the dimensions of the context. Hudson calls it “the how” of discourse. Again the subject matter of a discourse and the relationship between the interactants often determine the best mode of expressing the text, either in writing or verbally. Legal documents for example demand writing, while interpersonal communication is usually done orally. The choice of words is also influenced by the formality or informality of the relationship that exists among speakers or writers. Look at this example: two people address the same person (Oluwatosin Adeyemi) in the following terms:

- A: You're welcome, Miss Adeyemi (formal)
 B: Hi Tosin! (Informal)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 8

1. Look at the above text again. What relationships do you think A and B have with Miss Adeyemi.
2. In your own words describe the three components of the context proposed by Halliday.

3.8 Text and Context

As we noted in Unit 1, rather than emphasize the sentence, utterance, text or talk is emphasized in pragmatics. A text is a unit of language in use (Halliday & Hasan 1976). It is any utterance or passage spoken or written of any length that forms a unified whole. It is not a grammatical unit like a clause or sentence, but could be a sentence, paragraph, or a whole passage. It is not limited by size and therefore does not consist of sentences, but rather realized by sentences (Halliday & Hasan 1976). A text is therefore considered as a meaningful unit rather than a grammatical unit. This means that it may not be grammatically correct but meaningful and analyzable as a discourse unit. The meaning associated with a text is realised in a context. As we have already

discussed, the meaning of any text or utterance largely depends on any of the various types of context identified above.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 9

1. Give examples of what you consider as texts
2. Explain the relationship between a text and a context

4.0 CONCLUSION

Context is a requisite concept in pragmatics. As a matter of fact pragmatics has been defined by many scholars as the study of context-based meaning. In other words, the study of pragmatics is the study of how language use is influenced by the context. Context is the central “influencer” of meaning especially considering how people interact with one another in different situations.

In your own personal interactions and relationships, you will agree that all the time you were able to communicate effectively with people because you recognise the kind of social attitudes and conventions that guided your interactions and you responded exactly the way you were expected to respond. You were able to apply your knowledge of the society and its cultures in your interactions and you talked when you should and kept silent at other times. All these are factors of the context which determined the way you related with others as a member of the same society.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have been able to look at the features and types of contexts namely linguistic context, physical/environmental context, interpersonal context, situational/socio-cultural context and institutional context. All these context types dictate meaning and effective communicators are able to combine the features of each in their communication. It is important to note here that virtually all of these contexts have a part to play in any particular piece of discourse or conversation. For example two people in a discussion will generally choose words that belong to the same linguistic context and possibly apply analogies that are relevant to both their environmental and cultural contexts. They may even go ahead to speak certain slang that belong to their professional or institutional context which non-member may not readily understand. Effective communicators always do this.

We have also looked at the components of discourse context as field, tenor and mode, where field stands for the topic/theme of the communicative event; tenor as the role relationships between

interactants and mode as the choice of the medium of expression, either written or spoken. A written piece of discourse or an utterance is referred to as text which depends on the context for its meaning.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the importance of context in the study of pragmatics, give examples
2. Describe any four (4) types of contexts and explain how they affect intended meaning of a speaker or writer.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 2 CONCEPTS IN PRAGMATICS

Unit1 Tact: Tact as a Pragmatic Concept; Face-Saving Tact

Unit 2	Deixis: Deictic Reference; Person deixis; Place deixis; Time deixis
Unit 3	Deictic and Meaning; Deictic Centre; Deixis and You
Unit 4	Reference and Inference: Semantic Reference; Pragmatic Reference; Intention; Inference
Unit 5	Presupposition: Pragmatic Presupposition; Semantic Presupposition; Presupposition in the Real World
Unit 6	Conversational Principle: Conversational Maxims; Entailment, Implicature
Unit 7	The Politeness Principle: Politeness; Politeness as Face saving; Models of Politeness strategies
Unit 8	Speech Acts: Doing things with words; Indirect Speech Act; Locutionary Act Illocutionary Act; Perlocutionary Acts; Searle's Acts
Unit 9	Speech Events: Utterances and Speech Events; Conversations as Speech Events; Pragmatics and Conversation Analysis

UNIT 1 TACT: TACT AS A PRAGMATIC CONCEPT; FACE-SAVING TACT

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Tact as a Pragmatic Concept
3.2	Tact as Politeness
3.3	Forms of Illocutionary Function
3.4	Face-Saving Tact
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

You probably have met someone who needed help from you and you expected him to adopt a particular attitude and a style of language to speak to you. Instead the person spoke in a way that rather than appeal to you, made you turn him away. It is also possible that you have heard someone speak in a particular way that soothed the situation, and got what s/he wanted. In some Christian circles, people are often urged to speak “with wisdom” considering the situation and the people associated with the situation in order to achieve the desired goal. All these

instances point to the fact that there are “better” or more appropriate ways of communicating certain information, so that we don’t sound “too pointed” or “too direct” or “insulting” or “uncultured” or even “foolish.” People who speak just “any how” are often accused of lacking tact in communication. Someone said something to you and you felt that the person did not apply some “tact.” Why? It is because language has something in common with politeness and common sense. As a matter of fact tact is one kind of politeness (Leech, 1983). We shall discuss in details the role of politeness in discourse in Unit 7 of Module 2. In this unit we shall attempt to look more closely at the various ways communicators apply some tact or tactics in communication in order to achieve their desired goal.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- (i) From what we have said so far, what do you think is tact?
- (ii) What is the importance of applying some tact when you speak or write?

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain what tact is
- describe the relationship between tact and politeness
- explain why tact is very essential in communication
- apply what you have learnt in practical communication.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Tact as a Pragmatic Concept

According to Adegbite (2000) tact or “tactics” is a means of interpreting the discourse value of information encoded in a word and its relationship with other linguistic items which precede or follow the items as well as some other non-linguistic factors of communication based on the communicative context of an utterance. “Discourse value” is the meaning which the speaker or writer expects his hearer/reader to decode or interpret. A question for example may not be intended to elicit any answer at all, but may aim at eliciting another kind of response from the participant. Rhetorical questions do not generally demand any verbal answers. Tact therefore is that alternative discourse options which are available to you, that will enable you communicate more comprehensively, appropriately and most friendly. If I asked you, “don’t you think your shirt needs washing?” You are not likely to respond, “Yes, I think it does.” You will know I am tactically suggesting that

you wash your shirt. On the other hand, you're likely to feel embarrassed if I told you: "your shirt is dirty; go and wash it." Below is a news item which appeared on the cover page of *Newswatch* magazine for over five weeks during the later part of 1986. It said "*Who killed Dele Giwa?*" It is indeed a question, but is it really a question? What kind of answer does it demand?

I think it is a tactical way of appealing to the minds of the Nigerian people against military dictatorship than just a question. Dele Giwa – the founding editor of *Newswatch* was murdered during Babangida Regime and fingers pointed to the military administration. Rather than accuse the military government directly, the headline kept asking "who killed Dele Giwa" even when it was almost obvious that everyone knew the killers. Just as a question may not elicit any answer, a statement may stand for a question and be interpreted as such. A declarative statement may also be intended to function as a request. If you tell me: "Sir, I need just N500 to complete my school fees." I won't take it as mere information; I will take it that you are making a request. And this of course is a tactical way of making the request because if you just come to me and order me to give some money, I may not. Thus tact enables participants in a discourse to consider not only the linguistic context of discourse but to make valid judgements with the result of matching utterances with appropriate functions which the speaker and hearer intend (Adegbite, 2000).

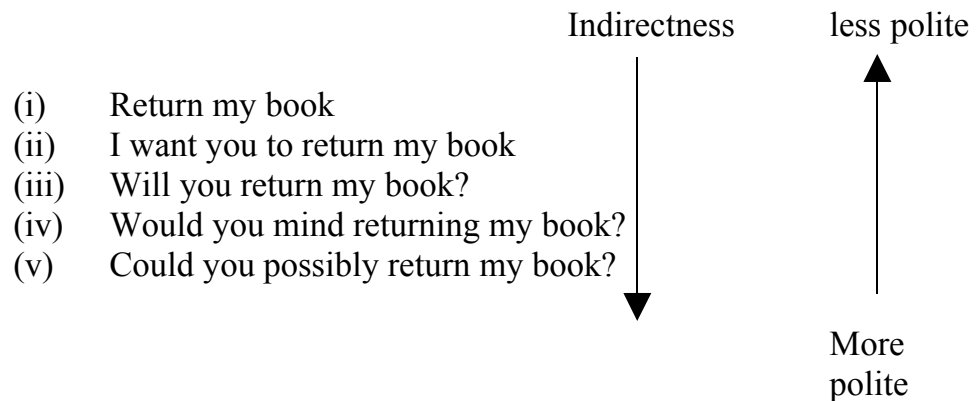
SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

- (i) Give examples where questions are not intended to elicit answers
- (ii) Give other examples of statements that are actually meant to make requests or ask questions
- (iii) Why do you think this kind of tact is effective in communication?

3.2 Tact as Politeness

When communicators apply tact in speaking or writing, they do so in order to present some serious subject that may ordinarily appear offensive in a more polite and receptive manner. And we must point out here that one of the principal aims of tact is to achieve politeness. In pragmatics, we always pay attention to the force of our utterance. When people speak, their words or expressions generally have some force (or illocution) on the hearer. And this illocution may be positive or negative. To increase the level of politeness, it is recommended that it is better to use more indirect kind of illocution. According to Leech (1983), the indirect illocutions tend to be more polite because they increase the degree of options that people have and then the more indirect an illocution is the more diminished its force tends to be. Let

me illustrate with the following examples:



Sometimes, some indirect illocutions functions as commands, while some don't. An offer such as "won't you come in?" implies that coming in is in the interest of the person being addressed although it doesn't sound too polite. On the hand, "will you return my book?" sounds rather harsh and authoritative. "Would you mind returning my book?" is indirect and polite.

Leech (1983) argues that the tact maxim essentially has two sides to it, i.e. a negative side, meaning "minimize the cost to *y*" and positive side "maximize the benefit to *y*." This means that in proposing an action to *y*, *z* should direct his illocution towards a positive outcome by restricting *y*'s option of saying "No." Thus an imperative like "relax" or "help yourself" which does not allow *y* to say No, is actually a positive polite way of making an offer. A positive force might even be added to it by a persuasive emphasis of "have a drink" or "you must have a drink."

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What is the goal of tact in communication?

3.3 Forms of Illocutionary Function

Illocutionary functions are those functions that correspond to what the speaker or writer intends to achieve on the mind of the hearer or reader. As we have observed earlier these functions or goals may be positive or negative. Leech (1983) identifies four (4) types of illocutionary functions that are possible in different types of context especially in relation to achieving social goals of maintaining comradeship. They are as follows:

- (i) Competitive; this illocutionary goals competes with social goal e.g. ordering, asking, demanding, begging
- (ii) Convivial; this illocutionary goal coincides with social goal e.g. inviting, greeting, thanking, congratulating

- (iii) Collaborative; this illocutionary goal is indifferent to the social goal; asserting, reporting, announcing, instructing
- (iv) Conflictive; this illocutionary goal conflicts with social goal e.g. threatening, accusing, cursing, reprimanding

Only the first two involve politeness, however where the illocution is competitive, it only tends to reduce discord in case of competition between y and z. etc. We shall examine in details the meaning and functions of “illocutionary acts” in Unit 12.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

How would you classify the following utterances going by Leech’s variety of illocutionary functions?

- Shut your mouth!
- You’re welcome, please come in
- Do you mind picking up that pen?
- Guinness is good for you (advert)
- IBB and Abacha: the billions they stole (a newsmagazine headline)

3.4 Face-Saving Tact

All we have discussed so far about tact and how it relates to politeness is to show the various ways individuals use language to achieve the desired aims and sustain social relationships. When a speaker tries not to cause offence, he is said to be protecting the hearer’s face. So face-saving tact is a strategy in communication aimed at lessening someone feeling of threat or fear. It might be in form of polite request or a statement that is actually a question, in order to reduce someone’s possibility to feel threatened, embarrassed or insulted. “Could you possibly close the door please” is a more face-saving tact than an imperative “close the door!”

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Can you think of instances where you have failed to protect someone’s face? What were their reactions?

4.0 CONCLUSION

You will agree with me that tact is very important in language use. You can imagine how peaceful our families and societies would be if everyone should apply some tact in the way we talk to one another. You will also agree with me that most conflicts in our society today is traceable to the fact that someone had forgotten the principle of face-

saving and the other person had reacted rather harshly. We should now begin to apply these principles in our language use so that our relationships might be better as well as our world.

5.0 SUMMARY

Tact is the most appropriate way of sending a message that captures the speaker's intension and receives the best kind of response because the receiver feels the message soothes him. Tact often operates with the principles of politeness, where the receiver feels that his "face" is protected or respected. Some tact is not necessarily outright politeness, but the sender applies the best form of discursive strategy that gives the sender no choice to react wrongly. Sometimes a question may be presented as a statement, while a statement may be rendered in form of a question. All in an effort to achieve the best discourse value of an utterance.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Why is tact important in language use?
- 2) Give examples of statements that are actually meant to make requests or ask questions.
- 3) Why do you think this kind of tact is effective in communication?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Adegbite, W. (2000). "Pragmatics: Some Basic Principles and Procedures." In Babajide, A. (eEd.) *Studies in English Language*. Ibadan: Enicrownfit.

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UNIT 2 DEIXIS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - Deictic Reference
 - 3.1 Person Deixis
 - 3.2 Place Deixis
 - 3.3 Time Deixis
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

To fully understand the speaker/writer's intended meaning, his identity, situation, time and environment should be known to the reader/hearer. If you get a short note that says: "meet us there this evening" it is assumed you understand 'us', 'there' or 'this evening' since meaning depends on the knowledge of who is speaking, about whom, where and when the expressions are made. In this unit we shall be looking at how little words like 'us' 'there' 'this evening' etc. are used to identify particular persons, time or place associated with utterances.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of person deixis, place deixis and time deixis
- distinguish between deictic and non-deictic references
- differentiate between deictic references and anaphoric references
- discuss how the context in determines deictic references in relation to person, place and time.
- apply your knowledge of deixis in discourse to your everyday communication.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Deictic Reference

Words such as *us*, *I*, *we*, *him*, *then*, *now*, *there*, *here* etc. usually identify referents so that the addressee may be able to quickly pick out a person,

place or time relevant to the understanding of the intended meaning. These words are called 'indexical' and their functions, i.e. being able to encode the context are called 'deictic' borrowing from the Greek word meaning 'pointing' or 'to point out.' The above deictic references are therefore used as pointers to persons, place or time the speaker has in mind. It is important to note that it is the context of utterance that again gives meaning to indexical like *you*, *here*, *now*, or *there*. If you hear me say:

- (1) You, you and you, see me in my office
- (2) You don't come here often, do you?
- (3) When you pick up the book, you don't know whether to read the entire text or a few chapters
- (4) Now is the right place to meet there

In (1) you will expect that I practically point specifically to certain persons using gestures or eye contact apart from just speaking. And you will also notice that each of the 'you' will refer to a different person whose identity will be known only by those present when I make the statement. In (2) 'you' refers to a particular person at a particular time and place and 'here' will be meaningful if both the speaker and the hearer are at the same place. My 'here' in (2) and 'now' and 'there' in (4) may not be your 'here' or 'now' if both of us are at different places and at different times. But notice the 'you' in (3). The 'you' does not refer to any particular referent, so that being present when it is used does not help you to identify the referent. This generalized use of 'you' is said to be *non-deictic*.

Deictic expressions used to point to persons are called *person deixis*, e.g. I, him, we, you etc. *Place deixis* is used to point to locations e.g. here, there, beside, etc, while *time deixis* is used to point to time, e.g. now, then, this evening, tomorrow etc.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

How does context help to determine indexical references?

3.2 Person Deixis

Among the indexical that refer to persons in English, only the word YOU appears to be the only deictic, i.e. the context is required to determine the referent. Other third person pronouns *he*, *she*, *it* or *they* do not function as deictic rather refer anaphorically to persons or objects already mentioned in the text. Unlike other languages like French or German, 'you' has both the polite and familiar forms (*vous/tu* in French) 'you' in English is used to refer to an individual or a group. Sometimes

a speaker may add ‘you-all’ when s/he wishes to make a distinction but has only one form available to him/her. However in Nigerian English we do have a way of using pronouns honorifically (use of pronouns to show respect or group identification). This explains why we often use ‘we’, ‘us’ or ‘they’ as referents (person/persons being referred to) rather than to an addressed (person being addressed). Look at the following examples:

- (i) As I told *us*, we do need not wait any longer
- (ii) I was talking to *us*, about the Niger Delta conflicts
- (iii) In this Unit, *we* shall be looking at how little words ...function...

Notice that the *we* in (i) includes the speaker but the *we* in (iii) although appears to include the speaker does not. The teacher applies the honorific ‘we’ as a form of identification with the students even when it is clear that ‘we’ in that context refers to the students. Again notice the use of ‘us’ in (i) and (ii). Why do you think the speaker uses ‘us’ instead of ‘you’?

- (iv) *They* are calling you

We often hear this statement, sometimes from children where ‘they’ is used to refer to an individual as a means of showing respect. In this case ‘they’ is not a referent to the antecedent in the co-text but a pointer to the context.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

- (i) Try to make some statements that illustrate how ‘we’, ‘our’ or ‘us’ function as deictic
- (ii) Do you agree that all third person pronouns are non-deictic? Show how ‘they’ may be used as a person deixis.

3.3 Place Deixis

Consider the following example:

- (i) The lecturer’s office is along the corridor *on your right*
- (ii) The lecturer’s office is along the corridor *on your left*

Let’s assume that the above descriptions are given to two different students who are going to the same place. You will naturally assume that the place each student is standing when the description is made determines the location of the lecturer’s office, i.e. the context indicates whether the office is ‘on your right’ or ‘on your left.’ If you and I stand facing each other, your right will be my left, while your left will be my

right. So it is always important to know where the speaker is at the time he is speaking to be able to interpret correctly what s/he means by *right*, *left*, *here*, *there*, *above*, *go* or *come*.

Take another example:

- (iii) I'm going to Lagos
- (iv) I'm coming to Lagos

Again the difference between the two expressions depends on the location of the speaker and what s/he considers as either moving toward or moving away from. Proximity to Lagos from where the speaker is, again may be a determining factor. In English, demonstratives such as *this/these* and *here* are often used to indicate proximity, while *that/those* and *there* indicate distance. In all the examples, you can see clearly how deictic expressions depend on the context to determine the reference of the items they point to.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Under what circumstances would it be appropriate to say:

- (i) I'm going to the class
- (ii) I'm coming to the class?

3.4 Time Deixis

As we noted in section 3.1 above, time deixis refers to deictic references that point to the time an utterance is made as well as the time the speaker intends to communicate to the hearer. The reference of the following deictic items can only be determined by the time the utterance is made: *now*, *then*, *soon*, *before*, *later*, *ago*; *yesterday*, *today*, *tomorrow*; *next*, *last*; *Monday*, *week*, *month*, *year* etc.

If read a letter your Dad wrote you last year, and it says:

- (i) Try to stay at school more often *this year*

You are not likely to be mistaken about 'this year' since the above expression was not made at the time you pick up the letter. Therefore the instruction to stay back at school may not apply to you at the time you are reading the letter probably the second or the third time. Again if your Dad wrote you this year (the year you're reading this lecture) and said:

- (ii) I hope you perform well *this year*

You will understand that ‘this year’ refers to the school year and not necessarily the calendar year. But if the expression was part of a card he gave you on the 1st of January, of course you will know he meant the new year (the calendar year). But if you read that on your birth day, then ‘this year’ will refer to the period up to your next birth day. We also see this kind of variety of references with deictic items like *today*, *now*, *tomorrow* or *Wednesday*. Consider these other examples:

- (iii) *Today* is my birthday
 (iv) *Today* women are strong political office holders

If I said (ii) on a Monday, then Monday is my birthday. But if said (iii) on a Monday, the referent merely includes Monday plus all other times the speaker considers as ‘today.’ In other words, ‘today’ in (iii) refers to the present time (not old time).

- (v) Let’s do the work *now*
 (vi) I don’t really know what to do *now*

Again *now* in (iv) refers to the present time, either at 8 am or 12 noon. While ‘now’ in (v) refers to an unspecified moment and remains unexpired.

- (vii) I’ll see you *tomorrow*

‘Tomorrow’ in (vi) refers to the day after today if the speaker and hearer are within the same time frame. Otherwise the hearer’s ‘tomorrow’ may not be the speaker’s ‘tomorrow.’ You will probably begin to see why Linguists recommend that when reporting a speech or utterance, attention should be paid to expressions that indicate time for property interpretation of meaning. If someone says:

- (viii) I’ll be traveling to Abuja tomorrow

A good report of that expression will be ‘s/he said s/he would be traveling to Abuja *the next* day.’ This is because ‘the next’ is more general to capture the intended meaning irrespective of the speaker/hearer’s time. If the reporter reports ‘tomorrow’ he will definitely miss out the time the speaker had in mind, because the speaker’s ‘tomorrow’ may not be the hearer’s ‘tomorrow’ especially in relation to the time the report is being read.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Again look at the above examples i.e.

- (i) Let's do the work *now*
- (ii) I don't really know what to do *now*

Would you consider 'now' in (ii) as deictic or non-deictic and why?

- (iii) Is it always necessary to consider deictic references in the interpretation of meaning?
- (iv) Distinguish between deictic references and anaphoric references. Give examples for your answer.

4.0 CONCLUSION

When people make statements they are usually careful to let the listeners understand when they are speaking and where they are speaking to enable the listeners interpret their intentions correctly. If they don't manage words that indicate time, for instance effectively, they may end up confusing the listeners. We can then conclude that deictic expressions are very important elements in communication and demand proper understanding and management. You will agree with me that a word like 'we' would definitely create a problem to a listener who does not understand whether it represents a deictic reference or just a mere first person pronoun. Similarly, words like *here, there, right, left, now, then, today* etc. that indicate place and time need proper understanding and interpretation which the context of utterance generally provide. From the above discussion, you can see that a strong relationship exists between the context and deictic reference, because it is the context that indicates the referent which deictic elements refer to.

5.0 SUMMARY

The word 'deixis' (pronounced 'day-icksis') is a Greek word which means 'pointing' via language. In English most pronouns, adverbs and demonstratives perform this function. Hence deictic expressions like *I, we, you, him, them* etc. are called person deixis. Other deictic references like *here, there, thence* etc. are pointers to locations and are known as place deixis while time deixis indicate time and are referred to as time deixis e.g. *now, then, this evening, today, tomorrow* etc. All of these deictic references/indexicals depend on the context to indicate their referents. It is possible to distinguish between what is considered as close to the speaker (*this, here, now*) and what is distant (*that, those, there, then*). It is also possible to indicate whether movement is taking place towards the speaker's location (*come*) or away from his/her

location (go). In real life situations, people apply deictic references to communicate effectively and may even make some fun with them. If you see a sign on a canteen door saying: *No Credit Today, Come Tomorrow* I'm sure you will understand what that means.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Explain the meaning of person deixis, place deixis and time deixis. Illustrate your answer with examples.
- 2) Distinguish between deictic references and anaphoric references. Give examples for your answer.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Grundy, P. (2000). *Doing Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.

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UNIT 3 THE DEICTIC AND MEANING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Deictic and Meaning
 - 3.2 Deictic Centre
 - 3.3 Deixis and You
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a continuation of our study on deixis. In this unit we shall be looking more closely at how time or place determines deictic reference. We shall also be looking at the concept of deictic centre and how to recognize deixis in social situations.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the relationship between deictic and meaning
- explain the term “deictic centre” and why it is often shifted
- discuss how deixis operates in the real world.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Deictic and Meaning

In attempting to distinguish between the meaning of deictic like *here* or *now* from its variable reference, Hanks (1992:52) says that ‘here’ is the “the region immediate to you” while ‘now’ is ‘the time immediate to this utterance.’ Whenever a deictic occurs, what changes are not these propositional meanings, rather the place and time that the speaker refers to as the context shifts. Let’s look at this example taken from Grundy (2000:33). It is an advert on a Mazda showroom. It says:

- (i) The car you saw today and intend to buy tomorrow, somebody saw yesterday and intends to buy today

Of course what the person that saw the car yesterday and intends to buy

today referred to as ‘today’ was ‘tomorrow’ to him. So you can see that knowing what day is picked out by deictics such as *today*, *tomorrow* or *yesterday* depends on knowing the time of the utterance. So that if you look at the canteen notice that says:

- (ii) No credit today, come tomorrow

You’re not likely to pin down when ‘tomorrow’ really is, thus the adage ‘tomorrow never comes.’

The idea that mere uttering a deictic immediately effects a reference, i.e. index-referent identity hypothesis - the referent of an indexical is the very thing picked out by their linguistic meaning has been argued against in recent times. For instance, Nunberg (1993) proposes a theory of ‘deferred reference’ which distinguishes between the index (what is indicated e.g. today, tomorrow, here, now etc) and the interpretation (what is referred to). If I pick up a biro and tell you:

- (iii) These are the latest in town now

Nunberg points out that by picking out a single biro and referring to a plural form ‘these’ shows clearly that the reference is not the biro I picked out, rather other biros of the same kind that are the latest in town. The interpretation you reach depends on how you are able to link the index with the right reference, which is not evident in the immediate context. This is what is meant by deferred reference and Nunberg believes that all deictic reference works in this way. First identify the index, and then the index is instantiated into an interpretation.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Think of other examples that illustrate Nunberg’s deferred reference.

3.2 Deictic Centre

Again let’s assume you are going to my office, and someone tells you:

- (iv) The lecturer’s office is on *the* left

In this case we have to decide whether ‘the left’ is the speaker’s or the hearer’s. It is generally assumed that the ‘left’ meant is the speaker’s. The speaker’s location at the time of the utterance is the *deictic centre*, which in this case determines ‘the left’ being referred to. The deictic centre however can be shifted as we saw in the earlier example in Unit 5, i.e.

- (v) The lecturer’s office is along the corridor *on your left*

The right interpretation of the deictic reference here relied on the context – in this case, the direction you were facing. The introduction of a co-text (*your*) in example (v) advises the addressee that the deictic centre has shifted from the unmarked location of the speaker to the marked location of the addressee. Speakers often do this to save their hearer the trouble of asking ‘do you mean your left or my left?’ Sometimes a shifted deictic centre can be effected without a co-text. If I’m looking for my child and a Good Samaritan tells me:

(vi) Behind the car

I will assume that my child is behind the car in relation to me rather than the Good Samaritan. Speakers have their ways of updating deictic centres using expressions like ‘when you get to...’ or ‘before the Anglican church’ etc. We also do the same thing with reference to time when we tell our listeners ‘after that, or tomorrow the 15th of March, 2008 etc. In this case we give them enough clues to what deictic reference is meant.

However, there are times when it is difficult to identify a deictic centre or when there are ‘competing deictic centres.’ You visit a friend and on his door, he leaves a notice that says:

(vii) Will be back in 15 minutes

And you wonder whether the deictic centre is your friend’s ‘15 minutes’ or yours. Or you’re reading a newspaper and there is a group photograph on which you are told:

(viii) On the right is the Minister of State ...

If you are not told that ‘the right’ is yours, you’ll be confused. Some speakers or writer are not always mindful of the problems they create for their hearers/readers when they use indexicals that make context identification difficult. But good listeners/readers always have their way of identifying the deictic centre or avoid it altogether.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Try and identify the deictic centre of the following expressions:

1. This edition was recorded last Christmas (after listening to music on tape)
2. There is a growing need for improve health care in this country (in an interview where more than one country is being talked about)

3.3 Deixis and You

In discussing ‘deixis and you,’ we shall be looking at more examples of deixis in real life situations and how to interpret them. You may have been thinking of the various ways you have been using deixis to encode meaning in time past. Of course it is clear that individual uses of deictic references vary with the encoding of relationship between persons, time and place. As a student if you use ‘we’, ‘us’ or ‘our’ to refer to your membership of the National Open University, e.g. if you tell a friend, ‘we lost the match’ or ‘they didn’t invite us’ where *we* and *us* stand for the university, you are simply encoding your membership/affiliation of the university. We do this all the time without even realizing that these are examples of deixis.

The other day my wife told me:

- (ix) If *we* buy a new freezer, *we* will buy a carton of fish and in the *next six months* *we* won’t be talking about fish.

Notice the first ‘we’ referring to me and her; the second ‘we’ obviously referring to her because she does most of the buying and the third ‘we’ referring to the entire family that would not need fish in six months. The person deixis has enabled my wife to encode much of the meaning she intended, while my knowledge of deictic reference enabled me to interpret correctly what the indexical represents without her explaining to me what the various ‘we’ referred to. More importantly look at the use of ‘the next six months.’ You may ask: Does she mean the next six months from the time the statement was made or from the time the freezer is bought or next six months from now? Remember that the freezer had not even been bought at the time the statement was made. With your knowledge of deixis and deictic reference, you will realize that ‘the next six month’ would be from the time the freezer was bought. Another example is from a media interview involving a policeman and a robbery suspect.

- (x) Policeman: Did you say *you* often met at x?
 Suspect: *We* kept *our* weapons *there*?

Who do you think the policeman’s ‘you’ refers to? The suspect quickly understood the ‘you’ that was meant and responded appropriately. How do we know? In her answer she said ‘we’ referring to all members of the robbery gang. Again ‘there’ is taken for granted as referring to ‘x,’ an already mentioned location.

We saw in example (ii) above that speakers/writers even make fun with the use of indexical; we may say ‘fun’ but such funs do indeed have their significant intended meanings. The notice that says: ‘no credit

today, come tomorrow' shows that tomorrow is endless but in terms of meaning, you will agree with me that it is another way of saying 'we don't sell on credit.' Think of other examples of deixis especially the ones you have actually noticed either as notices, adverts, new headlines, interviews etc.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Give five (5) examples of indexicals that you have seen in adverts, notices, news headlines etc. and try to interpret their references.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This sub-section of our study has demonstrated how deictic references function in various social contexts. We have also seen that deixis is a very important feature of language in use across societies and cultures. In one society however, indexical such as 'there' may be used in a sense that may represent 'here' in another. For example Grundy (2000) shows how the indexical 'there' at a restaurant in Hong Kong represents what a similar notice in a British environment would have as 'here' depending on what the reader in each of the contexts views as the deictic centre. All the time speakers/writers apply the various deictic references in ways that identify their hearers/readers, their locations and the time frame within which communication takes place.

5.0 SUMMARY

The meaning of deictic references depends mainly on the context. However, whenever a deictic occurs, the propositional meaning does not change rather the place and time that the speaker refers to as the context shifts. Nunberg (1993) in his theory of 'deferred reference' distinguishes between the index (what is indicated) and the interpretation (what is referred to) and argues that the interpretation you reach depends on how you are able to link the index with the right reference, which is not evident in the immediate context. The speaker's location at the time of the utterance which establishes the context is known as the *deictic centre*. The deictic centre can shift from the unmarked location of the speaker to the marked location of the addressee. Speakers often do this in order to give their hearers enough clues to locate the deictic centre easily. This is often done through the use of co-texts.

Deixis can be identified in various social situations/contextes just as we apply deictic references in our everyday communication. We also often find them in notices, interviews, the media etc.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Give five (5) examples of indexicals that you have found in adverts, notices, news headlines etc. and try to interpret their references.
2. Write short notes on each of the following: person deixis, time deixis, place deixis

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 REFERENCE AND INFERENCE

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Semantic Reference
 - 3.2 Pragmatic Reference
 - 3.3 Intentions
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- 4.0 Conclusion
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

A speaker or writer sometimes uses one thing to refer to another and expects his listener/reader to make the connection between the two things. Often, things are used to refer to people and personal names like John, Uche or Ola can refer to things based on some associations. A student once told a classmate: “I lost my *Stone and Cozens*” and the addressee immediately understood that “Stone and Cozens” was a Biology textbook. Here the names of the authors are used to refer to their work in a College context. Similarly, speaker/hearers do make some *inferences* or assumptions which generally enable them to interpret meaning correctly. In this unit, we shall be looking at how reference and inference help speakers/writers communicate their intentions to their hearer/readers.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define the words “reference,” “intention” and “Inference”
- differentiate between semantic reference and pragmatic reference
- distinguish between reference and inference
- explain the importance of intention to the communication of meaning.

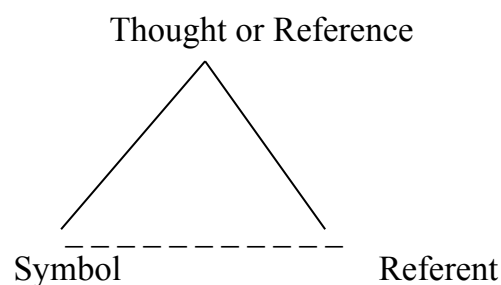
3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Semantic Reference

One fundamental characteristics of human language is the phenomenon of “aboutness” i.e. we are able to talk *about* things not present in our

immediate environment as well as things that are displaced in time and space (Carlson, 2006). This is true of the fact that the significance of human language is found in the way utterances correspond to things or facts around us. However, it is difficult to generalize this correspondence to “facts” or “truths” because not every linguistic sign has a corresponding object in the physical world. Verbs or prepositions for instance, that indicate actions and relationships do not have direct physical references. The types of words or phrases that formally display references are demonstratives and indexical words as we saw in the last two units.

Semantic reference is a type of verbal or written “pointing to” or identifying (picking out) of certain objects or individuals that a speaker wishes to talk about. Earlier studies in semantics argue that the meaning of a word or sentence is intimately connected to the truth value of the sentence; hence reference is what relates words to the world of objects on whose condition truths relies on (See McGin, 1981). Ferdinand de Saussure in his sign theory of meaning had contended that the linguistic sign is made up of a *signifier* (the word) and the *signified* (the object) and both are linked by a psychological associative bond (Palmer, 1996). Ogden & Richard (1923) conceives this relationship as a triangle, thus:



The *symbol* is the word or sentence; *referent* is the object (in the external world). Thought/*reference* is the concept. There is no direct link between the symbol and referent. The link is through the thought or reference (i.e. the concepts of our minds). Reference is therefore the object that the mind conceives about the entity which the word expresses or refers. Thus the referent of the word *chair* is an object with four legs for sitting. This forms the basis of the proposition by philosophers like Russell and Frege that reference contributes to the truth and falsity of a statement. But we know that not all words have obvious referents in the physical world, (e.g. Christmas, liberty, love etc) and again several expressions may even refer to one referent but to avoid this limitation, semanticists use the terms *denotation* and *connotation* to differentiate between direct reference and extension.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. Is it altogether untrue that the meaning of a word is the object that the word refers? Give examples to support your answer
2. List ten (10) words that do not refer to any physical object in the world but have meaning.

3.2 Pragmatic Reference

Talking about semantic theory, those that argue that reference determines truth or falsity (e.g. Russell and Frege) fail to realise that if semantic reference characterizes the meaning of words and sentences in a general sense, there is another kind of *meaning* which results from producing and understanding the actual utterance and intention of the speaker, in which case we cannot talk about direct reference of some particular words in the sentence. What we may even refer to as truth or falsity of the words or expressions turns out to be pragmatic rather than semantic. If we say that reference of a word or phrase is what contributes to the truth or falsity of a sentence, we notice that there are other words and expressions in the same sentence that do not have direct references but play a role in determining the truth or falsity of the sentence, so we talk of functions rather than reference. Strawson argues that truth or falsity is a property of *use* of a sentence via an utterance in a particular context. He further points that a verb such as ‘refer’ or ‘mention’ is a verb of *doing* because if you say *x* refers to *y*, rather than the general reference, there may be specific reference which the speaker has in mind in which case the truth depends on the speaker and the context of the utterance (Carlson, 2006). If at a general level we talk of *x* (e.g. the ruling party) referring to *y* (PDP) in the Nigerian context, there may be another context where *x* (the ruling party) does not refer to PDP. So rather than asked what *y* refers to generally (semantic reference) we should rather asked what *you* are referring to as *y* (pragmatic reference). In fact in some cases, some references do not even refer to anything at all even though they have meaning from a semantic point of view. If you say “the skinny woman” you may be referring to a particular woman on one occasion and another in another occasion, but semantically there is no particular individual because there are many skinny women in the world. Take your mind back to our discussion on deictic references.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Distinguish between semantic reference and pragmatic reference, give examples.

3.3 Intentions

Now the question is does reference always represent the speaker's intentions? Does an error of reference nullify the speaker's intention? Does a hearer always recognise the speaker's reference as his/her intentions? Bach (1992) argues that "best of intentions" are good enough, i.e. demonstrations do not have semantic significance. For example if there are two mobile phones on the table and I point at one of them and say: "that's my phone" and went on to pick the wrong one in error, the argument is that the mistaken demonstration does not affect reference, my intention to refer to my own phone still holds. Referential intentions are such that should be recognised and that the hearer is able to recognise the reference as well as the intention. One's reference in the above example is not fixed by one's belief; it is fixed by the intention to refer and the intention that it be recognised as such (Carlson, 2006). Take another example; you are sitting in my office facing me. On the wall behind me is usually a picture of a cat. Unknown to me someone had replaced the picture with the picture of a human baby. As we discuss, I pointed backward (behind me and in front of you) and say to you: "that cat is young bobcat." My belief is that the picture behind me is that of a bobcat and intention is to refer to the picture of a cat on the wall. You are to recognise my intention, however through my gesture. I have said something false despite my belief that I was saying something true. My intention to refer to a cat is not the relevant intention here. What is rather available is the picture of a human baby. Since having intentions is not a property of language but that of speakers and listeners that may be carried out or indicated by action, pointing has no semantic relevance. Listeners are often able to work out the speakers' intentions despite errors in pointing. The most important thing therefore is that the listener understands the speaker's intention even when reference indicated by gestures fails.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

1. What is the meaning of "intention" from a pragmatic point of view?
2. Does reference always represent intention?

3.4 Inference

Inference is the process of working out meaning or the intention of the speaker from the text or utterance available to you. This deductive process is usually based on some background knowledge of the context/ shared understanding of values, social conventions or beliefs between the speaker and the hearer. Hearers or readers are always faced with the task of working something out, and making explicit what is meant from

what is not said or written. If someone tells you: *once again, I've lost valuable property in an air crash*, you are likely to infer that: the person had been in an air crash before or that he is not likely to travel by air anymore. Your inference however doesn't have to be correct all the time, but that you are attempting to make additional interpretation of an utterance is normal. Even in the reading of literary texts, we make a great deal of inferences in terms of facts we take for granted and aspects of culture/social knowledge without which a text becomes difficult to appreciate.

We can infer the illocutionary force of an utterance that seems indirect and also infer that a conversational principle has been violated. According to Horn (2006), speakers implicate while hearer infer. We shall examine this in details in unit 10.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Make a list of utterances that you have heard or read and what you can infer from them as possible intentions of the speakers.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We can see that reference, inference and intention have one common goal, i.e. successful communication. When we refer to things, we are either attempting to identify a particular thing by direct reference using some particular words or we are referring to things using not only words but also by actions, e.g. pointing, which the context enables our hearer to identify. Very often we have had to work out the meaning of utterances by inferring to certain dimensions of meaning relevant to the context which the utterance draws upon. All of these are geared toward arriving at the speaker's intention. Linguistic pragmatics is essentially about how speakers and hearers are able to communicate effectively without always relying on what is explicitly expressed in words but by a combination of other factors such as utterance, behaviour, context, culture etc.

5.0 SUMMARY

Semantic reference differs from pragmatic reference in the sense that the former refers to what has a tangible object in the word upon which its truth value draws upon. Pragmatic reference on the other hand, depends on the speaker and the context to determine what is meant. "What is meant" is generally the intention of the speaker – what is actually communicated and rightly interpreted by the hearer/reader. To achieve this hearers and reader make a lot of inferences especially where the speaker expects the hearer to make the right inference because they share a common knowledge of events, culture or social background.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Distinguish between semantic reference and pragmatic reference, give examples.
- 2) What is meant by intention? Does reference always represent intention?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Horn, L. R. & Ward, G. (2006). *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

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UNIT 5 PRESUPPOSITION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Pragmatic Presupposition
 - 3.2 Semantic Presupposition
 - 3.3 Presupposition in the Real World
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Speakers or writers usually design their message on the assumption that the hearer or reader already has a degree of the knowledge of what is being communicated. What the writer assumes the reader already knows about the subject and the context of the information is known as *presupposition*. Inference as we saw in the last unit is actually based on presupposition because whether inference is right or wrong, the reader is acting upon some relevant information about the subject. Take the headline “Who killed Dele Giwa?” for example. This question presupposes that (a) the writer and reader know whom Dele Giwa was (b) both know that Dele Giwa actually got killed and that his killers are unknown (c) the unknown assassins might be discovered (d) the reader has the right to know and may do something about the information he gets.

In this unit we shall be looking more at how presupposition is based on shared assumption between speaker and hearer and how some clauses (especially introduced by *when*) give rise to presupposition. We shall also be looking at how to differentiate between semantic presupposition and pragmatic presupposition.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define presupposition
- give examples of presupposition in everyday speech situations
- identify some clauses that trigger off presuppositions
- differentiate between pragmatic presupposition and semantic presupposition.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Pragmatic Presupposition

When we speak with people, we generally make valid assumptions about the background of what we say, which we presume to be mutually known. If someone tells you:

- (i) Registration for the workshop ends tomorrow

For you to respond appropriately it is assumed that you know something about “the workshop” in question. If you do not know, we conclude that the speaker made a wrong assumption about your knowledge of the workshop. This results in a failure of presupposition in which case you ask to know what he is talking about. There would not be any point in saying: *registration for the workshop ends tomorrow* unless the speaker knew that the hearer is properly informed about the upcoming workshop and the process of registration. In fact this condition must be met before making the utterance. The speaker must presuppose that the hearer is conversant with the workshop and perhaps eager to be registered. This background knowledge can be called pragmatic presupposition because they are not linguistic in nature, they are the *felicity condition* which must be met for the utterance to be appropriate otherwise, the speaker will have to go all the way to explain the upcoming workshop, the aims, the expected particular, registration procedure, the date etc.

What do you think is pragmatically presupposed in the following statement?

- (ii) Thank you for not smoking

In English certain clauses trigger off presuppositions, especially those that express change of state predicates (e.g. *begin, continue, stop*, etc) introduced by “after” and “before” (Grundy, 2000). Look at the following examples:

- (i) I began drinking 8 glasses of water daily after I read the medical book
- (ii) I continued studying after I obtained my first degree at the age of 60
- (iii) She stopped smoking after she suffered lung cancer
- (iii) presupposes that (a) I was drinking less than 8 glasses of water before (b) I read a medical book.
- (iv) presupposes that (a) I was studying before (b) I obtained a degree at the age of 60

- (v) presupposes that (a) she was smoking before (b) she suffered lung cancer (c) smoking could have caused the lung cancer.

Implicative verbs such as *forget*, *happen* and *manage* do also prompt presuppositions (Grundy, 2000). Consider the following examples:

- (iv) The lecturer forgot to give a summary of his lecture and left everyone guessing what he said at the beginning

presupposes that he should have given a summary of his lecture

- (v) A similar thing happened to my parents when they travel to Libya

presupposes that what happened was a matter of chance

- (vi) Tope managed to pass the examination

presupposes that (a) the examination was not easy (b) she lacked the necessary skills to pass the examination (c) her passing the examination was a surprise

From the above examples we can argue that presuppositions are conventionally associated with grammatical constructions (Grundy, 2000).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

What presuppositions can you identify in the following examples?

1. I never loved eating beef until a cow knocked me down
2. The Principal didn't remember to lock his office at the time the thieves raided our school.
3. Can I ask another question?
4. I wonder what you're thinking about.

3.2 Semantic Presupposition

So far, we have established that pragmatic presupposition is related to the context. The other type of presupposition that does not rely on context for its interpretation is known as semantic presupposition. Take (viii) above as an example, i.e. "Tope managed to pass the examination." Whenever a personal name like "Tope" is used, there is usually the existence of a referent that we can easily identify the name with. In other words, there is a referent that matches the description. This kind of presupposition is known as semantic presupposition. Unlike pragmatic presupposition, semantic presupposition always takes

place when a definite description occurs, especially when a proper name is used or when an expression is used as the title of a book and so on.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Differentiate between pragmatic presupposition and semantic presupposition. Give examples.

3.3 Presupposition in the Real World

In our daily interactions with people, we often rely on a number of presuppositions in order to communicate effectively with them. In some specialized settings such as the courts, between lawyers and their clients, the hospital between doctors and their patients, the media during interviews or the police stations between policemen and crime suspects. Very often during interviews, questionings or cross-examinations, people are not often very conscious of the answers and responses they give and before they realise it, they've already accepted the presuppositions contain thereby implicating themselves. Take the example of the policeman and a robbery suspect we saw in unit 6 for example.

Policeman: Did you say you often met at *x*?
Suspect: *We kept our weapons there?*

The policeman's question presupposes that the suspect had actually told him that the robbery gang met at *x*? The suspect's answer now confirms that they actually met at *x* since we can easily conclude that 'there' points to *x*.

The next example is a dialogue between a doctor and her patient.

Doctor: The last time you came, who did you bring?
Patient: Who did I bring?
Doctor: Yes
Patient: She
Doctor: So how come you have another card?
Patient: I don't know

Notice "another card" and the patient's response. The obvious presupposition is that the card the patient presents is not the right one. Having been at the hospital before, it is assumed that she must have obtained a card which presently has been substituted for a new one.

Another example is an interview of a former Flying Eagles Defender, his views about the team's performance in one of their intercontinental

tournaments and what the Coach should do. Study how presuppositions enable the interviewer and the interviewees to interpret meanings.

- Journalist: What is your impression about the performances of the Flying Eagles...?
- Player: I believe the team has not performed too badly... (Notice “performed too badly” presupposing the team has performed badly).
- Journalist: Are you saying the team has played as well as you expected?
- Player: The most important thing is that they have qualified for the world youth championship...instead of criticizing the coach, other coaches should give him advice on how to strengthen the squad.
- Journalist: Are you backing (the present) coach because you once played under him?
- Player: I’ve played under many coaches before and every coach has his bad side...I’d tell him to reduce the training sessions of the players...
- Journalist: Obviously, you are also admitting that they have not played as well as you would have wanted...

Read the dialogue again and with your knowledge of presupposition, explain how the journalist was able to conclude that the player supports both the players and the coach.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Presupposition is a feature of a normal everyday discourse/conversation. When we communicate, our knowledge of the language system enables us to make valid assumptions and conclusions in order to interpret utterances correctly. Very often we don’t always express all we have in mind in words, much of the meanings we convey are rooted in the context we find ourselves. We deliberately allow ourselves to mean more than we express in words. And because we rely on some background knowledge and information we have and what we take for granted that the hearer knows about us, we expect them to make the right interpretations of what we say.

So we can rightly conclude that the knowledge of presuppositions will help us communicate effectively and probably keep us from unnecessary embarrassments and troubles.

5.0 SUMMARY

Presupposition is the assumption that the hearer already knows about the subject and the context of the information. The context includes shared knowledge of the environment, culture, belief or world view. This enables the hearer to make the right assumption or inference as he interprets a piece of information. Pragmatic presupposition depends more on the context for its interpretation and meaning while semantic presupposition does not. Semantic presupposition takes place when there is a definite reference which matches a description like a proper name or a title of a text book.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Differentiate between pragmatic presupposition and semantic presupposition. Give examples.
- 2) What presuppositions can you identify in the following examples?
 - i. I never loved eating beef until a cow knocked me down
 - ii. The Principal didn't remember to lock his office at the time the thieves raided our school.
 - iii. Can I ask another question?
 - iv. I wonder what you're thinking about.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Grundy, P. (2000). *Doing Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.

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UNIT 6 CONVERSATIONAL PRINCIPLE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Conversational Maxims
 - 3.2 Entailment
 - 3.3 Implicature
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to better explain how speakers mean things that they don't actually say in words, the linguistic philosopher Paul Grice (1967) makes a distinction between "natural" and "unnatural" meanings of utterances. He further argues that a speaker and a hearer are guided by some "conversational principles" in order to make the right references and interpret meaning beyond the linguistic content of an utterance (Grice, 1975). In this unit we shall be discussing in details what the above concepts are and how they may enable us understand how speakers and hearers communicate effectively. Some more theoretical issues about the Grice's theory of pragmatics will be examined in Unit 14.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- explain the various conversational maxims
- differentiate the maxims
- explain the terms "entailment" and "implicature"
- distinguish between entailment and implicature
- explain the importance of entailment and implicature in encoding meaning.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Conversational Maxims

Grice observed that when people talk they try to be "cooperative" and attempt to obey some "cooperative principle" which demands that they

make their conversational contributions such as is required, at the stage where it occurred, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk in which they are engaged. The conversational principle operates with some “maxims” in the assumption that the speaker does not say what is false, or irrelevant, or too much or too little.

The maxims are:

1. QUANTITY

- (a) Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the conversation)
- (b) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required

2. QUALITY

Try to make your contribution one that is true

- (a) Do not say what you believe to be false
- (b) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

3. RELATION

Be relevant (your contributions should be such that are relevant to the conversation)

4. MANNER

Be perspicuous

- (a) Avoid obscurity
- (b) Avoid ambiguity
- (c) Be brief
- (d) Be orderly

The cooperative principle determines the way a hearer can deduce some additional information from an utterance above some “truth conditional content” of a message, i.e. if I say: “I have a white elephant”, the truth condition content/meaning of this statement is that I actually have an elephant that is white in colour. Anything outside of this is false. Any additional information that is possible in the expression is called “implicature”. Conversational implicature actually occurs when the conversational maxims namely quantity, quality, relation (relevance) and manner are seemingly violated, thus “forcing the hearer to make additional assumptions in order to understand the speaker as conveying something true and relevant” (Kempson, 1988:141). In other words, my saying that I have a white elephant seemingly violates the maxim of

quality that urges me not to say what is false, even though there might be some personal meaning which I intend to communicate.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- x: My present situation is more of heaven on earth
 y: Indeed, but to think that time changes yesterday is amazing.

What conversational maxims are seemingly violated by x and y. Think of additional information or implicature that is communicated.

3.2 Entailment

When Grice attempted to distinguish between “natural” and “unnatural” meanings of utterances he was actually referring to entailment and implicature. Let me explain.

- (i) I bought a new car

The natural meaning of “I bought a new car” is that at least I paid for a new car which now becomes mine by virtue of the commercial transaction that took place between me and the car dealer. This kind of meaning is what is known as *entailment*. You can’t talk of someone buying a thing without entailing that someone paid for it or at least reaching an agreement to pay later. Entailment is more of semantic concept in that it locates meaning from its “truthful” or “logical” property. If I say Q entails R then it follows that if Q is true, R also has to be true. If it is true that Q bought R, then it true that R has been paid for by Q.

Entailments occur at the level of general meaning and its explicit use has been seen sometimes as a kind of loose paraphrasing technique or summary (Wales, 1989). For example a news headline that says: “*Obasanjo runs to America for help*” is a brief and truthful essential entailment of a more informative explanation which may be enlarged in the content of the news. Grice attempts to show that when people talk they often move from entailments which the conversational principles are concerned with, to “non-natural” meaning variables that often violate some or all of the principles.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. What is entailment? Give examples for your answer.
2. Why do we need to study properties of entailment in pragmatics?

3.3 Implicature

As we have earlier noted, implicature is a component of speaker meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is *meant* without necessarily being part of what is *said*. Interestingly, speakers usually mean more than they say, especially drawing upon the context of the utterance. Implicatures actually occur when the conversational maxims are violated. A statement like “a child is a child” does not seem to be informative enough and therefore breaks the maxim of quantity. But you know what is meant. Look at other examples:

3. Thanks a million (hyperbole)
4. Mirinda – taste the thrill (advert)
5. Who is sufficient all by himself (rhetorical question)
6. Sprite – obey your taste (advert)

Literary devices and advertisements often violate the maxims as we can see above.

Implicatures arise because of interactant’s mutual understanding of the conversational maxims. Non-conventional meanings which arise as a result of flouting some of the maxims become possible since a statement may result in different implicatures in different contexts. This is another way of saying that an implicature is a result of a listener making an inference as the most likely meaning an utterance may have in a given context. The direct implicature of “a child is a child” said at home, may differ if the same statement is made at a school during an inter-house sport. Grice’s “implicature” is synonymous to Yule’s “invisible meaning.” We shall examine some types of implicatures proposed by theorists in Unit 14.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What meanings are implicated by the above literary devices and adverts? Say what maxims are seemingly violated.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The conversational principle is assumed to be in operation in a conversation for implicature to take place (Yule, 1996). Implicature occurs because a speaker flouts some or all of the maxims deliberately or for reasons such as linguistic imperfection, socio-cultural reasons, or where violation is already expected in order to encode some particular social meaning. Conversational principles are another attempt at explaining how interactants encode and interpret meaning in different contexts.

5.0 SUMMARY

The conversational principles operate with maxims namely Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner which ensure that speakers give adequate information, say the truth, be relevant and clear as possible. Implicature results when a maxim is violated forcing the hearer to make an assumption of some additional information which the utterance conveys. Implicature has been defined as “what is communicated less what is said” (Haugh, 2002). Unlike entailment which is the generally logical meaning that may be inferred from an utterance, implicature relies more on the context for their interpretation. Implicatures may be identified in our everyday conversations, adverts, literary works, news headlines etc.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Discuss the conversational maxims proposed by Grice
- 2) Explain the term “Implicature.” When do implicatures occur? Give examples to illustrate your answer.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Grundy, P. (2000). *Doing Pragmatics* (2nd Ed.). London: Arnold.

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UNIT 7 POLITENESS PRINCIPLE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Politeness
 - 3.2 Politeness as Face-Saving
 - 3.3 Models of Politeness Strategies
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In our study of tact in unit 4, we noted that language use often demands some form of politeness in order not to sound “too pointed,” “uncultured” or “rude.” This is because language as a form of cultural expressions consists of etiquette and rules of behaviour that interactants must imbibe and practice. Politeness is therefore one type of the manifestations of etiquette or proper behaviour in communication. In this unit we shall be considering the role of politeness phenomena as an important concern of pragmatics in the role of communicating social meaning.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- discuss the roles of politeness phenomena in communication
- describe some forms of politeness strategies
- explain why politeness is considered as “face-saving”
- apply politeness in your everyday communication.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Politeness

Politeness is not just about showing some compliments, it is rather the exercise of language choice to create a context intended to match addressee’s notion of how he or she should be addressed. Among the aspects of context that are particularly determined by language choice in the domain of politeness are the power-distance relationship of the interactants and the extent to which a speaker imposes on or requires

something of their addressee. Thus being “polite” is simply a way a speaker implicates a context that matches the one assumed by the hearer (Grundy, 2000:144-5). This we do by applying some great deal of linguistic politeness as a rule for ensuring the appropriate etiquette or conduct. Look at the example below showing expressions of politeness phenomena:

- (i) Could you possibly pick up that pen for me please
- (ii) Peak up that pen for me

As we can see in the above examples, politeness principle does not always encourage economy of words as we observed in the case of pragmatic presupposition, rather the speaker of (i) adopts politeness strategy as long as it satisfies his intention and needs. That is not to say, however, that there are no situations where (ii) will be the most appropriate.

Polite utterances often encode the relationship between the speaker and hearer. In the above example, (i) may be my way of asking an adult student who came to see me in my office to pick up a pen for me. But if my child were to be in my office (ii) will indeed be appropriate without his feeling upset. According to Grundy (2000), if we do not see the relationship between us and the persons who address us as they do, we may be upset by the strategies they use, since these strategies imply the kind of relationship we have with them, thus linguistic politeness is “the function of language to imply the most appropriate speaker-addressee relationship” (2000:147).

Now look at the mail below which I received from the secretary of the International Association of World Englishes, when I was initially unable to register as a member of the IAWWE.

I do apologize for the inconvenience. IAWWE uses PayPal as one way to accept membership dues because PayPal is inexpensive and simple to use. Other banking services we investigated in the past were too costly and might have meant a substantial increase in membership fees.

We do realize that there are some limitations with PayPal. One limitation is that it does not accept credit cards from certain countries because of a high percentage of financial fraud cases there. Nigeria is one instance of this. Macau is another. It isn't fair to you, but IAWWE does not have influence on PayPal's policies.

IAWE values members from Nigeria, Macau and other countries and regions that are not supported by PayPal.

For the time being, the only alternative we have is for you to send a check/cashier's check/money order in US dollars to the secretary-treasurer (me). I understand that there are fees for getting money orders and that this is far less convenient than using a credit card, and I am sorry about that.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Imagine you were me, how would you consider the pragmatic effects of this mail? Do you think there are some politeness strategies? Are they enough?

3.2 Politeness as Face-Saving

The concept of “face” in pragmatics refers to someone’s self image. Your face therefore is your emotional and social sense of self worth that you expect someone else to recognise (Yule, 1996). If anyone says something to you that constitutes a threat to yourself image, that is called *face-threatening act*. If someone tells you:

- (iii) Leave the road! And another tells you:
- (iv) Could you please, move a little bit to your right

The first person (iii) speaks to you as if s/he has some authority or social power over you. If he doesn’t really have that power, s/he is indeed threatening your face. The other person who adopts an indirect speech act (in form of a question) removes the face threatening act, thus making his request less threatening. This other person that removes your tendency to feel threatened has performed a *face-saving act*. This face-saving strategy constitutes politeness.

You have both the negative face and positive face. Your *negative face* is your need to be independent and free of any form of imposition, while your *positive face* is your need to be well treated, to belong, to be a member of the group (Yule, 1996). A face-saving act that recognises another person’s negative face will be concerned about his need *not* to be imposed, harassed or insulted. Thus the need to use such expressions as “I’m sorry to bother you...” “I just couldn’t help asking if...” “I know you’re busy but...” etc. A face-saving act that emphasises a person’s positive face will show solidarity and be mindful of a common goal, tendency or a common weakness. For instance if someone tells

you: “O’ you’re very kind.” And in response you say: “Thanks, but I’m not as kind as you are.” You are being polite by applying a positive face-saving act, implying that you are not in any way better.

The appropriate language use that shows politeness varies among cultures. Many times what some cultures consider as impolite may not be impolite to some. For instance in my Igbo culture, it will be impolite for a child to say to his parent, “come on Dad,” or “don’t be silly mum.” This will indeed be viewed as face-threatening or outright insult. But this is not the case in some European cultures. Interpreting how interactants communicate is actually a matter of pragmatics – being able to interpret what is intended, rather than what is said.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain the difference between positive face and negative face. Give examples to support your answer.

3.3 Models of Politeness Strategies

The notion of “face” was actually that of Goffman’s, while the elaborate work on linguistic politeness was carried out by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987). They insisted that for politeness to take place, someone has recognised the other person’s “self esteem” and the need to protect it. In most of our encounters with people, Brown and Levinson argue that our face is put at risk. Asking me to take a longer process of registration because my country is branded fraudulent, or telling you to wait indefinitely outside the lecturer’s office constitute face-threatening to you and I. In some cases those who threaten us attempt to reduce the effect of such impoliteness by using some redressive language designed to compensate the threat. So they say: “I do apologise for the inconveniences” or “sorry about that” or they make a joke of our complaints. This type of politeness strategy, i.e. use of redressive expressions is targeted at compensating for face-threatening behaviour. When performing face-threatening act to perform, Brown and Levinson propose three strategies, namely:

- (a) Do the act on record (without attempting to hide what we’re doing)
- (b) Do the act off record (in such a way to pretend to hide it)
- (c) Don’t do it at all

In the “do the act on record” strategy, you do it (i) baldly- without redress (ii) with positive redress (iii) with negative politeness redress. This could be with expressions such as “I’m sorry”, or make a joke or call the addressee’s pet name etc.

In his own model of politeness strategies, Lakoff (1973) argues that politeness principle like conversational principle operates with some maxims which are assumed to be followed by interactants in their conversations with others. As with the cooperative principles any flouting of these maxims will definitely affect meaning provided it is perceived for what it is (Cook, 1989). Lakoff therefore formulates the maxims as follows:

- (a) Don't impose
- (b) Give options
- (c) Make your receiver feel good

In English, we often use such expressions as “would you mind...” “could you possibly...” “May I ask if...” etc. which give the addressee the option of refusal and then we often apologize for imposing (“I’m sorry for interfering ...”) and add praise to make our hearer feel good (e.g. “I’m indeed not as kind as you...”). But we know course that politeness principle often violates much of conversational maxims. In our effort to be polite we often ignore what we may call “truth” or be as brief as possible in order to achieve some face-saving goal. A friend of yours stands in front of you with a horrible look in his new cap and seeks your opinion. Although you may later tell him the truth, but at that instant, a polite: “beautiful, you look great” will help him take-in whatever bland comment you may need to make later. But then you have flouted the maxim of quality.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Do you agree that politeness is tied to culture? Support you answer with examples

4.0 CONCLUSION

Like tact, politeness functions as the grease that lubricates our communication with others. Every one of us is constantly in need of being loved, accepted, protected and recognised. Fortunately the language system, especially language use has provided the means of providing for these needs. Linguistic politeness is the pragmatic use of language in such a way that protects other people’s self image, self-esteem and self-respect. And this is reciprocal. Even though cultural interpretation of utterance makes it sometimes difficult to really generalize what constitutes polite expressions, we know however that politeness itself is universal.

5.0 SUMMARY

Politeness is an exercise of language choices to create a context intended to match addressee's notion of how he or she should be addressed. This is because interactants always carry with them their consciousness of self esteem known as "face". And every communicative event puts our face at risk. So linguistic politeness is the other person's recognition of this face and the need to protect it through discursive means. This is called face-saving. A threat to your self esteem constitutes face-threatening act. Your *negative face* is your need to be independent and free of any form of imposition, while your *positive face* is your need to be well treated, to belong, to be a member of the group. Whenever someone's face is threatened communicators do often apply some redressive strategies to mitigate the impoliteness. The appropriate language use that shows politeness however varies from culture to culture. Lakoff (1973) proposes that in order to achieve politeness we must apply some maxims namely, don't impose, give options and make your hearer feel good.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) What is politeness? Do you agree that politeness is tied to culture? Support your answer with examples.
- 2) Explain the difference between positive face and negative face. Give examples to support your answer.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Grundy, P. (2000). *Doing Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.

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UNIT 8 SPEECH ACTS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Doing things with Words
 - 3.2 Indirect Speech Act
 - 3.3 Locutionary, Illocutionary, Perlocutionary Acts
 - 3.4 Searle's Acts
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

You will recall that in Unit 6 we identified the role of the context in determining the meaning of indexical references such as *here*, *there* or *now*. If I say to you: "the work must be finished *now*" and someone else tells you "youths are far more responsible *now* than ever" and your father tells you "I'm here *now*," you are able to differentiate between the various indexical *now* depending on the context in which each occurs. The last expression for example may be interpreted as a reassurance than mere announcing your father's presence at that particular time or even a warning. Speech acts show the force that utterances have for counting as actions rather than mere giving of information. In this unit we shall examine in fair details how words or utterances perform actions such as promising, commanding, warning etc. More theoretical issues on Speech Acts will be examined in Unit 13.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain how interactants do things with words
- describe the locutionary act, Illocutionary act and perlocutionary act
- distinguish between a direct speech act and indirect speech act
- discuss the various speech acts proposed by Grice.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Doing things with Words

John Austin (1962, also Searle, 1969) recognised that language is a tool for performing actions. Therefore the “meaning” we associate with an utterance is the user’s intention, and not the meaning of words in the utterance. If we study a user’s intention, we are studying what s/he does with words, either in speech or writing. Austin postulates that when an individual makes an utterance, s/he performs some “speech acts” such as requesting, questioning, pronouncing, informing etc. This implies that rather than talk of linguistic *forms* of the utterance, we talk of the *functions* of these forms. For example:

	Form	Function
(i) May I use your pen for a moment?	Interrogative	<i>Request</i>
(ii) Did you attend the lecture?	Interrogative	<i>Question</i>
(iii) Leave the room!	Imperative	<i>Command</i>
(iv) I lost the opportunity	Declarative	<i>Information</i>

Forms such as “Did you attend the lecture?” “Are you coming to my party” “Can you play the piano?” used as questions are described as *direct speech acts*. Now compare direct speech acts with the following forms:

- (v) Can you play the piano?
- (vi) Can you spare your piano?

The form in (vi) is not likely to be treated as a question just like the form in (i). Rather than being viewed as a question about the person’s ability to spare his piano, you will treat it as a request although it is presented in form of a question. This is described as *indirect speech act*.

We realise that we indeed do things with words when we talk. We often say:

- (vii) “I’m here now” to *comfort* someone or *reassure* them
- (viii) “I’ve come again” to *apologise* for troubling someone
- (ix) “Don’t forget me” to *remind* someone that he hasn’t done your job or
- (x) “You met me well” to *invite someone to eat* with you

All the above examples show that there is a difference between the literal meaning of what is said and what acts the utterances actually performed.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. Explain the term “direct speech act.” Give examples for your answer.
2. Give other examples of utterances that show that we perform acts as we speech.

3.2 Indirect Speech Act

As we said above, indirect speech act is when a statement is used to perform an action such as request, permission, or apology other than its direct implication. A question like “do you have some money there?” from a friend alighting from a taxi certainly means a request for some money. “You packed the car on the road” could mean “go and remove the car” or “the door is open” may be a request (indirectly) asking someone to shut the door. What do you think of a situation where someone fails to understand another person’s indirect speech act? If someone comes to you and asks you: “please do you know the way to the post office?” If you simply say *yes* and go away, of course the person will definitely get embarrassed because you have failed to interpret his/her indirect speech of asking you to direct him/her to the post office. S/he may even take it that you understood but deliberately didn’t want to help him/her.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain how indirect speech acts work in everyday communication. Give examples to support your answer.

3.3 Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts

Take the statement in (x) above again for example. It says:

“You met me well.”

- (a) First, this statement conveys a proposition that the speaker is met in good condition of health and both the speaker and hearer are well. In this case, the statement as a sentence is conveying something true and meaningful.
- (b) If this sentence is taken as an utterance, it has a force, which is counted as an invitation to eat. Used in this way, it doesn’t matter if the sentence is true or false; rather the utterance represents the intention of the speaker to invite.
- (c) The utterance will have some effects or consequences, especially

what the invitee considers the utterance to mean for him. Normally in the Nigerian context, the invitee will consider the utterance not just as an invitation to eat but also a form of a welcome, comradeship and acceptance, even if he doesn't join in the meal. In most cases the invitee doesn't eat but the speaker is well disposed to having him at table.

Austin (1962) explains that when an individual makes a sentence with a certain meaning using the grammar, phonology and semantics of the language. S/he performs the *locutionary act*. Therefore (a) above is locutionary act because it makes a determinate "sense." The *Illocutionary act* is the intention of an utterance to constitute either an act of promise, command, invitation, agreement, greeting, pronouncement etc. (b) above is the illocutionary act (i.e. to invite). If the utterance achieves certain response or effect, like embarrassment, fear, confusion, enjoyment, acceptance etc., it is called the *Perlocutionary act*. Therefore (c) above is the perlocutionary act.

The illocutionary act is where speakers or writers actually "do things with words". According to Austin, illocutionary act is performed by "performative sentences", because by virtue of its structure, a performative sentence has a "conversational force" like the force of pronouncing a man and a woman husband and wife or sentencing a defendant in court. We shall look at this in details in Unit 13.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

With examples, differentiate between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

3.4 Searle's Speech Acts

Searle (1969) gives the condition for performing speech acts. The "felicity conditions" must be met in order to make a promise for instance. The conditions are as follows:

- i. the utterance refers to some future act of the speaker
- ii. the speaker would not normally be carrying it out
- iii. the speaker recognizes he has taken on a responsibility

These "conditions" are to determine when the performance of speech act may be appropriate or inappropriate.

Searle (1976) further gives 5 types of *acts* that are performed in speaking. They are:

- (i) *Representative Act* – describing events, process, states; also assertions, claims, reports, suggestion etc. A newspaper report such as “the plane crashed at Lisa in Ogun State in the early hours of yesterday” will be considered as performing a representative act.
- (ii) *Declarative Act* – pronouncing, sentencing, christening, e.g. *I christen you John.*
- (iii) *Directive Acts* – commanding, requesting, pleading, inviting, e.g. *Leave this room immediately!*
- (iv) *Expressive Acts* – greeting, scolding, condoling, appreciating, congratulating, apologizing, e.g. *I wish a merry Christmas*
- (v) *Commissive Acts* – betting, challenging, promising, threatening, offering, vowing, warning e.g. *I promise to provide you with adequate social amenities.*

We can see clearly that these acts coincide with Austin’s illocutionary act – the act that expresses the speaker’s intention.

Cook (1989) argues that the above acts must be performed by someone who has the necessary authority to do so. For instance a declarative act of pronouncing a man and a woman husband and wife must be spoken (not written) by a clergyman, while sentencing a man to imprisonment should be at the end of a court proceeding by a judge.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Differentiate between Austin’s speech acts and Searle’s acts. Illustrate with examples.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Although Austin’s and Searle’s speech acts have generated lots of reactions and criticism, we may not deny that their contribution has been a significant effort in the explanation of how language works in the context of users and situations. Indirect speech act for instance, shows the various ways speakers communicate their intentions in speech without being too direct or offensive. It also shows creative use of language by interactants to achieve some specific goals. This is captured in illocutionary speech acts.

5.0 SUMMARY

Speech acts show how speakers (and writers) “do things with words” (Austin, 1962). According to Austin three fundamental acts are performed by speakers namely (i) *locutionary act* – uttering a sentence with no ambiguous meaning, through the grammar, phonology and

semantic of a language (ii) *illocutionary act* – performing an act by uttering a sentence, where the real intention of the speaker is encoded either to promise, condemn, invite, christen or sentence (iii) *Perlocutionary act* – the effect the utterance might have. The pragmatic content of any utterance is captured in the illocutionary act because that is where the action of the speaker is demonstrated. Searle (1976) proposes five acts which may be regarded as an extension of Austin's illocutionary acts. The acts are representative, declarative, directive, expressive and commissive.

An Indirect speech act is another manifestation of a speaker's illocution. When a statement is used to perform an action like a request, or permission other than its direct implication, Austin says he has performed an illocutionary act, thus conveying the speaker's intention. So the statement: "you left the door open" is an indirect way of requesting that the hearer should close the door. We shall examine some of the reactions of scholar to Austin's speech acts in Unit 13.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. With examples, differentiate between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.
2. Differentiate between Austin's speech acts and Searle's acts. Illustrate with examples.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Grundy, P. (2000). *Doing Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.
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UNIT 9 SPEECH EVENTS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Utterances and Speech Events
 - 3.2 Conversations as Speech Events
 - 3.3 Pragmatics versus Conversation Analysis
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 11, we were introduced to speech acts showing how speakers “do things with words.” In this unit, we shall see how speech acts work in different speech events of our every life. A speech event is what is going on, including both linguistic and non-linguistic activity that make up the context. Every speech event makes some demands on the participants as to the appropriate contribution required of them. Take for example a dialogue below:

- A: Let me see your card
B: It's not with me
A: And why do you think you'll be treated without your card?
B: The nurse said I should come
A: Go back to the nurse and tell her to register you afresh

Anyone listening to this exchange would be able to recognise the kind of speech event it is as an encounter between a physician and a patient. It is also possible to understand why B's answer: “the nurse said I should come” is the appropriate answer to A's question “...why do you think you'll be treated without your card?” You can see that B's answer is a speech act that particularly relies on the function of the act in the speech event where a doctor thinks a patient had no right to treatment without a hospital card.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the role of utterances in speech events
- describe some formal properties of speech event

- describe some specific speech events where participants do things with words
- discuss the relationship between Pragmatics and Conversation Analysis.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Utterances in Speech Events

Speech events represent speech genres upon when linguistic choices are made. Here the form is defined in terms of the “style” or register prevalent in the event. Items such as “card”, “nurse”, or “treat” clearly define the speech event where the utterances are made. Look at another example:

Fry the onion and garlic gently in the butter or margarine until cooked but not browned. Add tomatoes, wine, seasoning, sugar and parsley, stir well and simmer gently 10 minutes. Drain the scampi well, add to the sauce and continue simmering for about 5 minutes, or until they are just heated through. Serve with crusty French bread, or boiled rice (Grundy 2000:169)

How would you describe the above text? Suggest a speech event where it occurred.

Utterances, either as words, phrases or sentences are linked with particular speech events or contexts in which they occur. We noted in Unit 11 that speech acts represent the intention of the speech and the function of the act itself. Again look at the following statements/interrogatives and try to identify the context in which they occurred or likely to occur and say what direct/indirect act each performs:

1. The chancellor is here again
2. The nurse said I should come
3. Mustapha’s men (are) still in the army
4. What matters is how you see yourself
5. Like I was telling us...
6. Women are now active political stakeholders
7. Are we all here?
8. Do I know you?
9. What’s your name by the way?
10. How are you doing?

Levinson (1979) proposes “activity type” rather than “speech event” because the latter implies that all acts constitute speaking. He defines activity type as a “goal defined, socially constituted, bounded, events

constraints on the participants, setting and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions. Paradigm examples would be teaching, a job interview, a jural interrogation, a football game, a task in a workshop, a dinner party and so on.” Levinson believes that what is important is that activity type is a “culturally recognised activity, whether or not that activity is co-extensive with a period of speech or indeed whether any talk takes place in it at all” (1979:368). A one-on-one conversation is an activity co-extensive with a period of speech while a football game is not. The function of any utterance depends on the meaning of words which differentiate the utterances as well as the role each utterance plays in the event (Levinson, 1979). The structure of the activity type/speech event therefore consists of the speech acts the utterances perform in the event.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. Look at the No. 7-10 indirect speech acts above and say what functions each is meant to perform
2. What will you say are the formal properties of speech event according to Levinson

3.2 Conversations as Speech Events

A conversation is like other speech events such as a radio interview, telephone exchange, career talks, debates, classroom event etc. In either of these events there are elements of organised turn-taking that demands certain types of contributions from participants. Each contribution to a talk exchange is purposeful and contributes significantly to the general anticipated outcome of the event (Grundy 2000). A conversation often satisfies Levinson’s cultural relevance criterion for speech activity. In some conversations elements of code-switching usually occur where interlocutors employ certain culture-bound speech acts to drive home their intentions. In such conversations interactants are able to take some natural turns, employ their knowledge of the language system to convey their intentions, employ discourse strategies like hesitations, pauses, false starts, attention getters, slurs, fillers etc. and engage other language devices in conversation. Below are two conversations. Study them carefully, suggest the context of these events and try to examine some features of conversations as speech events. Pause in the B part of the conversations in marked by (.).

A.

- A: That’s really a beautiful dress
 B: Thank you. I’m glad you like it
 A: Would you like some more wine?

- B: I beg your pardon?
 A: Would you like some more wine?
 B: Oh, er, no thank you. But perhaps you could bring me a little orange juice?
 A: Yes, of course
- A: Here you are
 B: Thank you
 A: Would you like to dance?
 B: Well, I'd love to, but I'm afraid I don't know how to tango
 A: Actually, I think this is a waltz
 B: I see, I'm afraid I don't know how to waltz, either
 A: Oh, do let me teach you (The New Cambridge English Course book 3)

B.

- A: You should eat first
 B: I know what I want to eat (.)
 A: What's happened here (.) All the books on the shelf?
 B: Your older books are in the second bedroom. I need the space for my books
 A: Ezi okwu? You've really moved in, haven't you?
 B: Go and have a bath (.)
 A: And what was that flowery scent on my good man?
 B: I gave him a scented talcum powder. Didn't notice his body odour?
 A: That's the smell of villagers. I used to smell like that until I left Aba to go to secondary school. (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Half of a Yellow Sun*)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. In addition to suggesting the context of the above speech events and features of conversations as speech events, try to identify the participants in the conversations.
2. What kind of relationships is implied in the conversations of the interactants in the two conversations?

3.3 Pragmatics and Conversations Analysis

From all we have discussed so far it is quite clear that conversation is a discourse type that contains several discourse strategies that are of interest to pragmatics. Every piece of conversation consists of some acts that represent the speaker's intention and our efforts in discovering and evaluating those acts/discourse strategies amount to efforts in

pragmatics. This section will be devoted to a more detailed examination of conversion and conversation analysis. The question we will attempt to answer here is whether conversation analysis is the same thing as doing pragmatics.

In the last sub-section (3.2), we identified some of the features of conversations namely turn-taking, and other strategies like fillers, repair mechanisms, overlaps etc during a conversation. Cook (1989) observes that conversation like any other type of talk is widely used in a more informal sense and has the following characteristics:

- (i) not primarily necessitated by a practical task;
- (ii) any unequal power of participations is partially suspended;
- (iii) the number of participants is small
- (iv) turns are quite short
- (v) talk is primarily for the participants and not for an outside audience (Cook 1989:51)

Number of participants is suggested as between 3 and 5 or a little more but certainly a conversation is not likely to take place among 20 or more people. It is also observed that there is no fixed length of turns in conversation, but it is clear that when one person talks for 30 minutes, a conversation has certainly ended. Conversation analysts (also known as *ethnomethodologists*) attempt to discover what methods people in a conversation use to participate in and make sense of interaction (Cook 1989). They actually observed that conversation involves turn-taking, meaning that one speaker's turn begins where the other person's turn ends and interactants tend to know when to take turns with absolute precision within split-second timing. Overlaps occur less frequently and where they do occur at all some repair mechanisms are applied to remedy them. Overlaps will generally signal annoyance, urgency, or a desire to correct what is being said (Cook, 1989). Conversation analysis "tries to describe how people take turns, and under what circumstances they overlap turns or pause between them" (1989). Conversation provides the raw data for a pragmatic study. While conversation analyst is involved on the structure of turn-taking in a conversation and what they imply about the roles and relationships of interactants, a pragmatic analyst is primarily concerned with how this structure contributes to the meaning making process and other speech acts that signal the speaker's intention; how direct or indirect speech acts, contribute to the overall communication of the speaker's intention and what results s/he expects. Ethnomethodologists identify turn types, the main one being what they describe as *adjacency pair*. This occurs when the utterance of one speaker makes a particular kind of response likely, usually a choice of two likely responses. For example a request will likely attract either an *acceptance* or *refusal*. Other examples of adjacency pair are shown below:

1. OFFER (a) acceptance (preferred) (b) refusal (dispreferred)
2. ASSESSMENT (a) agreement (preferred) (b) disagreement (dispreferred)
3. BLAME (a) denial (preferred) (b) admission (dispreferred)
4. QUESTION (a) expected answer (preferred) (b) unexpected answer

A “dispreferred” response is often marked by either a slight pause or a preface like “well,” “you see,” “em...er (hesitation) etc. Read the conversation below, paying attention to the turn-taking process and the pragmatics of the utterances.

- A. You, know, Mr. Sanda, to you it may seem a joke, but these things really do happen you know
- B. What things?
- A. Those who make money with black magic. I mean, there are people who do it. It is bad money. It doesn't always last, and the things people have to do to get such money, it's terrible business. Sometimes they have to sacrifice their near relations, even children. It's a pact with the devil but they do it.
- A. It's a pact with the devil all right, but it doesn't produce any money. They just slaughter those poor victims for nothing
- B. Those overnight millionaires then, how do you think they do it?
- A. Cocaine. 419 swindle. Godfathering or mothering armed robbers. Or after a career with the police. Or the Army, if you're lucky to grab a political post. Then retire at forty – as a General who has never fought a war. Or you start your own church, or mosque. That's getting more and more popular.
- B. You don't believe anything, that's your problem
- A. There are far too many superstitions...
- C. Na true, Ah, oga, make you hear this one o. E take in eye see this one o, no to say den tell am
- A. Don't bother. It's too early in the morning; my stomach won't be able to take it...
- C. And what of hunchbacks? Dat na another favourite for making money. They take out the hunch, sometimes while the man self still dey alive
- B. Yes, that's supposed to be most effective, when the hunch is carved out with the owner still breathing... (Wole Soyinka: The Beautification of Area Boy)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

1. Suggest a context of the above conversation
2. Attempt a pragmatic analysis paying attention to concepts such as presupposition, deixis, indirect speech acts etc.
3. How would you do a conversation analysis of the above text?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Conversation is one type of speech events where we see interactants in action. In it speakers demonstrate their knowledge of language and apply some discourse strategies to communicate their intention. Some of these strategies include speech acts in a variety of social contexts where people meet and interact with one another. The study of conversation gives us insights to the various ways utterances convey meanings in different types of speech events. An ethnomethodologist approach extends to the analysis of how speakers take turns in a conversation and how that enhances the art of communication.

5.0 SUMMARY

Speech events or activity types represent speech genres upon when linguistic choices are made. So utterances as words or sentences that are linked with a particular speech event reveal the context in which the utterances occur. So it easy to identify a discourse event as occurring at a hospital, a police station, a classroom or a business office. Utterances often convey some speech acts which represent the intention of the speech/the function of the act itself.

A conversation is a speech event like radio interview, telephone exchange, career talks or a debate. In either of these events there are elements of systematic turn-taking that demands certain types of contributions from participants. A conversation analyst is concerned with a description of how people take turns and the circumstances under which they overlap or pause between them. A pragmatic analyst is interested in how a conversation demonstrates meaning through speech acts and other discourse strategies that communication the speaker's intention.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Describe the features of a conversation as a speech event?
- 2) In exercise 3.1 above, discuss the indirect speech acts performs in the questions nos. 7-10.

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MODULE 3 THEORIES OF PRAGMATICS

Unit 1	Austin's Theory of Pragmatics
Unit 2	Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature
Unit 3	Other Theoretical Contributions: Bach's and Harnish's Intention and Inference; Levinson's Tri-Heuristic Theory; Adegbija's "Balanced and Unified" Theory

UNIT 1 AUSTIN'S THEORY OF PRAGMATICS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 5 of Module 2 we tried to show how speech acts explain the force that utterances have for counting as actions rather than mere giving of information. We also examined how words or utterances perform actions such as promising, commanding, warning, inviting etc. In this Unit, we shall examine some theoretical issues which speech acts raise and the reactions of language scholars to these issues. For example, do all sentences/utterance perform the kind of actions that Austin suggests? Are the examples that Austin gives as illocutionary acts applicable to all communication events? These and more other questions will be addressed in this Unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- distinguish between performative and constative sentences
- explain what is meant by the performative formula
- describe Austin's infelicities condition
- discuss the contribution of Austin's speech acts to the study of pragmatics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Types of Acts

Austin (1962) postulates that when an individual makes an utterance, he performs (i) the *locutionary act*, which is the act that utters a sentence with a certain meaning using the grammar, phonology and semantics of the language (ii) the *Illocutionary act* which is the intention of an utterance to constitute either an act of promise, command, criticism, agreement, greeting, pronouncement etc. (iii) the *Perlocutionary act* which is the effect or the response it achieves on the hearer like embarrassment, fear, confusion, enjoyment, or amusement. Remember that one utterance or sentence can perform all of the above functions. The illocutionary act is where speakers actually “do things with words”. According to Austin, illocutionary act is performed by “performative sentences”, because by virtue of its structure, a performative sentence has a “conversational force” like pronouncing a man and a woman husband and wife or sentencing a defendant in court. The illocutionary act carried out by the use of some sentence is to invest the utterance of that sentence with a particular illocutionary force (Palmer, 1996). For example “I pronounce Tayo and Bayo husband and wife” or “I christen this child Anthony.” According to Austin, the sentence (that actually performs the act of joining a man and a woman as husband and wife) is called a *performative sentence*.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Why do you think the illocutionary force is the most important of all the acts proposed by Austin?

3.2 Performatives and Constatives

In order to distinguish between the three acts, i.e. *locutionary*, *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary* acts, all which take place when utterances are made, Austin argues that sentences that *do* something (rather than *say* something) are *performatives* and, the performative (doing) sentences as we noted in 3.1 above are associated with the illocutionary act - the act especially done in speaking like the ones that christen or marry. Descriptive sentences (i.e. sentences that say something) are called *constatives*. Austin however argues that every normal utterance has both the descriptive (saying) and effective (doing) properties and that saying something is also doing something.

That act of stating or asserting something (that appears like illocutionary acts) are referred to as “canonical constatives” and such sentences are by assumption not performatives. So, a sentence like “star is a brighter

life” is not performative. The acts of ordering or requesting (accomplished by imperative sentences) and the acts of asking (accomplished by interrogative sentences) are “dubious examples of performative sentences” (Sadock 2006:55). Hence a sentence like “leave my office immediately” is not performative. Austin concludes that locutionary aspect of speaking (locutionary act) is primarily in the domain of constatives, while the performative sentences are in the domain of illocution (performing illocutionary acts).

The perlocutionary act, also performed by speaking is the effect of the illocutionary act on the addressee’s feeling, thought or action. Using the above example, it is producing the belief that Bayo and Tayo are now husband and wife or causing people to believe that a child is christened Anthony.

Now the question scholars ask is, what really is the difference between illocutionary act and perlocutionary act because both of them has almost the same force on the hearer?

Austin agreed that there’s a difficulty in distinguishing illocution and perlocution. But he suggests that illocution is “conventional in the sense that at least it could be made explicit by the performative formula; but the latter could not” (1962:103 *cited in* Sadock 2006:55). This formula test however, merely tells us what illocutionary act is *not* but fails to tell us what illocution is. Searle (1975, Allan 1998) agrees that a potential expression by means of performative sentence is a sufficient criterion for recognising an illocution. Sadock (1977) does not agree. Austin himself says that to be an illocutionary act the means of accomplishing it should be conventional. Most scholars adopt Austin’s explicit performative in the treatment of illocution. But the treatment of threat (threatening) has remained problematic (Sadock 2006). If I tell you: “if you don’t leave my office now, I call the police” I’m certainly threatening you without using a conventional performative like: “I threaten you...” We shall look at the performative formula below to understand better what Austin means by “conventional” or “explicit performative.”

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

With your understanding of performatives and constatives, differentiate between locutionary and illocutionary acts.

3.3 The Performative Formula

Austin's performative formula attempts to define performative utterances in terms of a grammatical formula for performatives. The purpose is to make explicit the illocutionary act that the speaker intends to carry out in uttering the sentence. The formula is as follows:

"I (hereby) verb-present-active X

The formula begins with a first person singular subject (often a pronoun) and an active verb in the simple present tense that makes explicit the illocutionary act. In addition, the formula may contain the self-referential adverb *hereby* (Sadock 2006). Such forms Austin calls *explicit performatives* as opposed to *primary performatives*.

Therefore the following sentences follow the performative formula and are explicit performatives, performing illocutionary acts:

- (a) I (hereby) christen this child Anthony
- (b) I pronounce you, husband and wife
- (c) I sentence you to 2 years imprisonment, etc.

This formula according to Austin, however is not a sufficient criterion (without the adverb *hereby*) for determining performatives because there are descriptive (or constative) sentences that fit into the formula. For instance a sentence like: "I pronounce it that it is well," fits into the formula although it not performative sentence. It also clear that there are other forms that differ from the formula that may be considered as performatives. Look at the following sentences:

- (d) You are sentenced to 2 years imprisonment
- (e) The court sentences you to 2 years imprisonment
- (f) You are fired
- (g) Come here

All the above utterances may serve as substantial performative without the formula. Austin therefore concluded that the performative formula was neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for recognising those sentences we may call performatives (Sadock 2006).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Write out five examples of sentences that may be called performatives even though they don't follow the performative formula.

3.4 Infelicities

When does speech act work? When does it fail? Austin uses the doctrine of infelicities to explain when performatives fail. If you see a man and a woman in the street and tell them: “I pronounce you husband and wife,” of course, you may not be lying but whoever takes you serious and begin to say: one student pronounces this couple husband and wife will certainly be blamed for uttering something false. Because you are not in position to pronounce a man husband and wife, although you may have uttered a correct performative sentence, you are not aptly described as false but as “improper,” “unsuccessful,” or “infelicitous.” Austin distinguishes between three categories of infelicities namely:

- (a) *Misinvocation*, which disallow a purported act (i.e. a pretended act – something done hard to believe). For example an individual who is not traditionally vested with the power to marry a couple, or christen a child is disallowed from performing it. Similarly, no purported act of banishment is allowed in Nigeria (as in some societies of the world). So anyone that attempts to perform the act of banishment Nigeria will be considered infelicitous.
- (b) *Misexecution*, - when the act is vitiated (weakened or destroyed) by errors or omission occurring while performing the act by the right authority. For example if a priest/pastor fails to use the right names or fails to complete the ceremony of marriage, the purported act does not take place.
- (c) *Abuses* – were the act succeeds, but the participants do not exhibit the right attitude or thought associated with the happy performance of such act – through insincere promises, mendacity (false statement) or unfelt congratulations etc. (Sadock 2006).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain the term “infelicities” as used by Austin. Illustrate your answer with examples.

3.5 Searle’s Contribution

Searle (1969:22) argues that “speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour.” Therefore speech act is the basic unit of communication in language through which acts are performed according to rules. He believes that speech acts are intentional behaviours and like Austin, he distinguishes between the “illocutionary act” which he considers as “complete” speech act and “perlocutionary act” which is the effect or consequence of the illocutionary act on the hearer. He also distinguishes “utterance act” (the act of uttering words) which Austin

calls “phatic acts” from “propositional acts” (act of referring/predicating). On his rule-based acts, Searle identifies two kinds of rules (i) regulative rules (ii) constitutive rules. Regulative rules “regulate antecedently or independently existing forms of behaviour.” (p.33). Constitutive rules create or define new rules of behaviour. They constitute and regulate an activity whose existence is logically dependent on the rules (Adegbija, 1999). The rules of football for instance not only regulate the game but create the very possibility of playing such a game (Searle, 1969).

Searle borrows and revises Grice’s (1957) notion of meaning which proposes the view that if speaker (x) means something by z (x) intended the utterance of z to produce some effect on hearer (y) by means of y recognition of x’s intention. Searle argues that this notion of meaning based on intended effects fails to take into account the extent to which meaning can be a matter of rules or convention and confuses illocutionary acts with perlocutionary acts. He emphasizes the need to capture the intentional and conventional aspects of the relationships between them in our account of illocutionary acts (Adegbija, 1999:201). Searle’s theory of pragmatics tends to combine some important aspects of Grice’s intentional theory of meaning with Austin’s conventional theory of speech acts and therefore appears richer than Austin’s.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Write a summary of Searle’s theory of pragmatics.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We must conclude that John Austin’s theory of speech acts is a major contribution to the study of pragmatics. And we must also admit that it has been one theory that has generated a lot of reactions and criticisms from scholars. For instance Strawson (1971) views Austin’s speech acts as a wrong explanation of how language works. Christening and marrying for example take place at highly ritualistic and ceremonial settings/situations with rules that define their performance. What one says in such situations is part of formalized proceedings rather than example of common communicative behaviour. Therefore it will be wrong to use them as typical of how language works in real life, everyday situations. Strawson rather argue in favour of Gricean intention theory because some common place speech acts - such accomplished by declarative sentences succeed by arousing in the addressee the awareness of the speaker’s intention to achieve a particular goal (Sadock, 2006).

One can also say that Austin's speech acts have been successful not just by its intrinsic contribution but also by the number of researches and contributions which the theory has generated over the years.

5.0 SUMMARY

Austin's (1962) speech acts identify three (3) types of acts namely (i) the *locutionary act* (ii) the *illocutionary act* (iii) the *Perlocutionary act*. One utterance or sentence performs all of the above acts. The illocutionary act (the most important of the acts) is usually performed by a performative sentence. The latter is characterised by some performative verbs such as *christen*, *pronounce*, *sentence*, *banish*, *promise* etc. Descriptive sentences (i.e. sentences that say something) are called *constatives*. Austin distinguishes performative (doing) utterances from descriptive (saying) utterances. The former are associated with the illocutionary act while the latter is concerned with locutionary/perlocutionary acts. Explicit performatives are reduced to formula known as the *performative formula* written as: "*I (hereby) verb-present-active X* (I hereby Christen this child Anthony).

Austin further argues that for the above speech act to be valid it must meet some felicity conditions otherwise such act will be deemed null and void. He identifies three types of infelicity conditions as *misinvocation*, *misexecution* and *abuses*.

John Searle defends Austin's speech acts and retains the idea of illocutionary acts but adds that speech acts as the basic unit of communication are performed according to rules. He believes that speech acts are intentional behaviours and recognises some elements of the intentional theory of Grice. We conclude therefore that the speech acts theory of Austin and Searle is a major contribution to the study of pragmatics.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) With your understanding of performatives and constatives, differentiate between locutionary and illocutionary acts.
- 2) Explain the term "infelicities" as used by Austin. Illustrate your answer with examples.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Grundy, P. (2000). *Doing Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.
- Yule, G. (1996). *The Study of Language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: CUP.
- Sadock, J. (2006). "Speech Acts" in Horn L. and Ward G. (eds) *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

UNIT 2 GRICE'S THEORY OF CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 9, we were introduced to the Grice's implicature which is the additional information that is deducible from an utterance outside of its entailment. To arrive at the implicature, we noted that one or more of the conversational maxims may have been violated, which forces the hearer to make some valid inferences as to the real intention of the speaker. In this unit, we shall be considering some more concepts associated with Grice's theory of implicature and how they enable us understand better how speakers and hearers are able to communicate effectively. We shall also consider some reactions by scholar to the Gricean notion of implicature.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- mention and explain some types of implicatures
- describe non-conversational implicature
- distinguish between implicature and explicature
- explain the relationship between implicature and social meaning

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Types of Conversational Implicature

Grice identifies two types of implicature (i) generalized conversational implicature (ii) particularized conversational implicature. Generalized

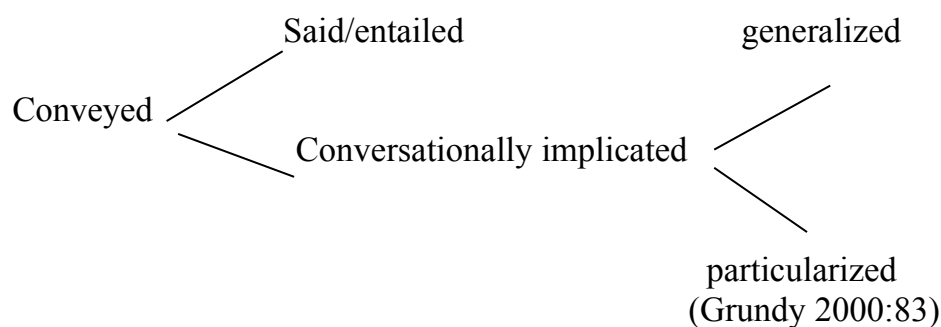
conversational implicature occurs irrespective of the context. For example:

- (i) Some Nigerians are Muslims
- (ii) 5 litres of fuel starts my engine

The two statements above give rise to the same generalized implicatures regardless of the context they occur. And they remain implicatures rather than entailment because in statement (i) some Nigerians are Muslims, it is clear that the statement may be denied. The implicature is that not all Nigerians are Muslims; in fact we have more Muslims in the north than there are in the south. Statement (ii) 5 litres of fuel starts my engine, may as well be denied because the statement didn't say that 5 litres is all my engine needs to start. The engine actually requires 70 litres. The case of the generalised implicature is that the same inference, i.e. that not all Nigerians are Muslims and that my engine needs more than 5 litres to run, are the most likely irrespective of the context.

However, statement (i) above may give rise to other forms of implicatures which depends on the context. For example some Nigerians are Muslims, while some are Christians; some are neither Muslims nor Christians, some are traditional religionists etc. Similarly for statement (ii) someone might even conclude that less than 5 litres may start my engine or more etc. Because these implicatures depend on the context of use, Grice calls them 'particularized implicature.' A particularized implicature is different from the generalized implicature that is associated with words like *some* since they are the inferences we need to make as they relate to some particular contexts.

You will recall that one of the conversational maxims is relation or relevance, i.e. make your contribution relevant to the conversation/context. If all implicatures were particularized, one can reasonably argue that the maxim of Relation (relevance) is enough to account for all implicatures, because the implicature would be what the addressee has to assume to render the utterance relevant to the context (Grundy, 2000). But generalized conversational implicature does not rely on how relevant an utterance is to a context, rather on quantity (maxim of Quantity) and manner (maxim of Manner). When a speaker uses the word 'some' it is because s/he is not in position to use the word 'all' and is therefore taken to imply 'not all' by the Maxim of Quantity (Grundy, 2000). This is explained in the figure below:



The above data gives rise to what is known as ‘scalar implicature.’ According to Gazdar (1979) implicature therefore operates with scales, so that one scale would include ‘some’ and ‘all’ and another ‘do brilliantly’ and ‘make progress.’ What this means is that if you take any item on a scale, the items above or below it is automatically excluded. In other words you cannot choose ‘some’ and ‘all’ at the sometime. If you choose ‘do’ you automatically exclude ‘make’. Gazdar gave other hypothetical scales as <certain...probable...possible><and...or> and <must...may...might> (Grundy, 2000). This explains why you are not likely to get confused if I ask you:

(iii) Would you like Coke or Fanta?

Of course you know that I’m not asking you to choose both. My choice of ‘or’ has excluded the possibility of ‘and’ so you’re sure I’m saying it’s either Coke or Fanta and not both. By the notion of scalar implicature, because ‘or’ is on the scale below ‘and’ a speaker selecting ‘or’ (as I have done) would be implying ‘not and.’ Thus either Coke or Fanta or both is an entailment and either Coke or Fanta but not both is an implicature (Grundy, 2000). If you listen to people converse, you will notice that they apply the notion of these scales without even realizing it.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Describe the different types of conversational implicatures proposed by Grice?

3.2 Non-Conversational Implicature

Another term for describing ‘non-conversational implicature’ is ‘conventional implicature’ which according to Levinson 1983:127 is the ‘non-truth conditional inferences that are not derived from superordinate pragmatic principles like the maxims, but are simply attached by convention to particular lexical items or expressions.’ Let me illustrate with this advert by the First Bank of Nigeria:

(iv) First Bank: *truly* the first

The lexical item ‘truly’ is a conventional implicature because (i) the word ‘truly’ has a general meaning or entailment, i.e. *certainly, in actual fact, or factually* (ii) the word also conveys an implied meaning or implicature like *this may be contested, or this is not really true*. So the word ‘truly’ is conventional because it is closely associated with particular lexical items, i.e. ‘the first.’ While it is the first bank in Nigeria, the second idea of ‘first’ is the implicature though conventional because we can’t really say that it is ‘truly’ the first or not.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. Can you give other examples of non-conversational implicature?
2. “Even babies understand pain.” Try to explain the meaning of the conventional implicature ‘even.’

3.3 Explicature

The term “explicature” was first used by Sperber and Wilson in their book titled: *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, 2nd edition, (1995). They argue that the single principle of relevance is enough to explain the process of utterance interpretation and understanding. They replaced the Gricean notion of implicature (a non-conventional meaning recovered by making some inferences) with a *two-stage* process in which the hearer recovers first an *explicature* which is an inference or series of inferences that *enrich* the under-determined form of the utterance to a full propositional form, and then an implicature - an inference which provides the hearer/reader with the most relevant interpretation of the utterance (Grundy, 2000). We can then say that explicature is an enrichment of an original utterance to a fully elaborated propositional form. Look at the following examples:

- (i) First Bank: *truly* the first
- (ii) Limca: 1st for taste,

The above adverts may be explicated as follows: (i) First Bank is the first indigenous Nigerian Bank, and has proved to be the first in terms of its highest standard of customer service delivery (ii) Limca soft drink is first among all others for taste. Sperber and Wilson believe that Gricean implicature leaves the addressee with too many probabilities and therefore propose a Relevance theory that goes beyond these probabilities to enable addressees to be *sure* that they have recovered the most relevant of a all possible set of inferences. If an addressee is able to recover the explicature of a proposition, it becomes easier for him/her to make the right inference. Sperber and Wilson also identified a “higher

level explicature” which seeks to reveal the propositional attitude of the speaker to his/her utterance. In other words, the speech acts description for the utterance. This means that even where an utterance is explicit enough (may be associated with an explicature) there is still a higher level explicature which the addressee needs to recover. Speech acts are therefore treated as attitude to propositions rather than as actions.

It is argued that explicature (i.e. inference/series of inferences that enrich/elaborate the under-determined form...to a full propositional form) are motivated by the indeterminacy of language (Grundy 2000). This indeterminacy is as a result of the economy of expression which characterizes natural language. A lot of expressions may represent or mean other things which require inferential process to be able to arrive at their full interpretation. Even where utterances with straightforward grammatical relations are made, there may still be some possible semantic relations that may be inferred with different uses of the expression. So utterances require some degree of *enriching* or *fleshing* for the most relevant inference to be made about their meaning.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Differentiate between Explicature and Implicature.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Grice’s conversational implicature stems from the fact that people communicate meaning or assumptions explicitly (clearly, overtly or plainly) or implicitly (totally completely though often indirectly). What is said or entailed (what our words mean) is distinguished from what is implicated (what we mean by using some particular words). So implicatures are simply a matter of more being communicated than said. For a conversational implicature to take place it is assumed that some cooperative principles are in operation, which of course is usually violated.

5.0 SUMMARY

The two types of implicature identified by Grice and his followers are (i) generalized conversational implicature, which occurs irrespective of the context and (ii) particularized conversational implicature, which is based on the context of speakers and situations. Other forms of implicatures are conventional implicature and scalar implicature. The former operates with certain words which naturally occur with some others. Scalar implicature suggests that if one word in a scale of say ‘sometimes’ and ‘always’ is chosen to describe a phenomenon, the normal inference is that the other is dropped. The Relevance theorists, Sperber and Wilson,

argue that the maxim of Relation (relevance) is enough to account for all implicatures because implicature is what the addressee has to assume to render the utterance relevant to the context. They replaced the Gricean notion of implicature with a *two-stage* process in which the hearer recovers first an *explicature* which is an inference or series of inferences that *enrich* the under-determined form of the utterance to a full propositional form, and then an implicature - an inference which provides the hearer/reader with the most relevant interpretation of the utterance.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Explain the terms ‘generalized implicature’ and ‘particularized implicature’
- 2) Differentiate between Explicature and Implicature

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Grundy, P. (2000). *Doing Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.

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UNIT 3 OTHER THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

We have so far examined some major theories of pragmatics that enable us understand what pragmatic is and how it is perceived by scholars in Linguistics and other related fields. Generally pragmatic theories attempt to explain how utterances convey meaning in context, explain how meaning is decoded from utterances in context especially in particular situations and how the context contribute to the meaning making enterprise. They also endeavour to explain how speakers can say one thing and mean another, how speakers and hearers of utterances perceive them as conveying the meaning they are considered as conveying in particular utterances and how deduction or inferences are made in context with respect to what meaning has been encoded in particular utterances (Adegbija, 1999). In this unit we shall be considering some more of such theoretical contributions that has enhanced interests and studies in pragmatics over the years.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

What goals do you think, pragmatic theorists aim at achieving?

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain Bach's and Harnish's Intention and Inference theory
- summarise Sperber and Wilson's Relevance theory
- distinguish between Levinson's theory and Adegbija's balanced and unified theory.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Bach's and Harnish's Intention and Inference Theory

Bach and Harnish (1979) rejected Searle's and Austin's theory of speech acts which propose that an illocutionary act is based the speaker's intention to perform actions such as christening or marrying. You will recall that Strawson (1971) had earlier rejected Austin's theory and proposed an intention-centered theory. He argued that formalised ceremonial acts such as christening and marrying cannot represent everyday communication. Bach and Harnish followed Strawson in distinguishing between ceremonial acts for which convention is taken to be the primary illocutionary act, and the case of non-ceremonial acts like asking and stating, which they call 'communicative' and for which they assume that intention is crucial to the accomplishment of the illocutionary act (Sadock, 2006). The major contributions of Bach and Harnish may be summarized as follows:

- (i) to suggest a very general *Speech Act Schema* (SAS) for communicative illocutionary acts,
- (ii) to show how inferences based on *Mutual Contextual Beliefs* (MCBs) play a role in communicative speech acts, and
- (iii) to make detailed use of Grice's notion of conversational implicature in fleshing out the theory (2006:63).

The SAS is explained as follows:

- 2a. S is uttering e
- h. S means...by e
- i. S is saying so and so
- j. S is doing such and such (p.63)

Premise 2a follows from hearing the speaker utter e, plus the hearer's knowledge of the language, and 2b follows from 2a plus the knowledge that in this language, e means...Then 2c follows from 2b, supplemented with the assumption that S is speaking, literally plus the knowledge that there are certain MCBs in the context in which e has been uttered. The reasoning to the conclusion 2d – that S is doing such and such in uttering e – involves the previous conclusion, other MCBs and what Bach and Harnish call the *Communicative Presumption* (p.63).

This theory affirms that linguistic communication is basically an inferential process; therefore, illocutionary acts are performed with the intention that the hearer identifies the act being performed. The inference made by the hearer and the inference he "takes himself to be intended to make is based not just on what the speaker says but also on

mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs)” (Bach and Harnish, 1979:5). Inference (based on SAS) means that in inferring what S is saying, H also relies on the “presumption of literalness (PL)” i.e. “if S could (under the circumstances) be speaking literally, then S is speaking literally. Conversely, if it is evident to H that S could not be speaking literally, H supposes to be speaking nonliterally and therefore seeks to identify what the nonliteral illocutionary act is” (1979:12). Non-literalness usually results in indirect speech acts in which S says one thing and means another or performs one illocutionary act while performing another at the same time. Thus if S says “you met me well” S may be informing H he met him well (i.e. S is healthy) and at the same time inviting him to dinner. The success of the second act is tied to the first and therefore, for the second act to be understood, the first must be recognised. This account covers both literal and non-literal speech acts.

An act is communicatively successful as soon as the speaker’s illocutionary intention is recognised by the hearer. Therefore, “the intended effect of an act of communication is not just any effect produced by means of the recognition of the intention to produce a certain effect; it is the recognition of the effect.” Therefore “perlocutionary acts are limited to the “intentional production of effects on (or in) the hearer” (p.15; Adegbiya, 1999).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Distinguish between Austin’s illocutionary acts and Bach and Harnish’s communicative illocutionary acts.

3.2 Levinson’s Tri-Heuristic Theory

You will recall that Grice identified some types of implicatures namely generalized and particularized conversational implicatures. And we have seen how a statement like “some Nigerians are Muslims” results in a generalized Quantity (or Q) inference (notice *some*, i.e. not all) and the context-dependent particularized Relation (or R) inferences (i.e. relevant to the context). In his paper “Three Levels of Meaning” Levinson (1995) suggests that Q inferences (and Manner or M inferences) are instances of *utterance-type* meaning and R inferences are instances of *utterance-token* meaning.

Utterance-type is a predictable type of utterance which has regular inferred interpretation across a range of contexts (Grundy, 2000). An utterance token on the other hand is a single instance of an utterance whose interpretation depends on the context. Utterance meaning therefore yields conventional understandings or interpretations whose meanings, unlike those of utterance-tokens do not differ according to

context. Utterance meaning resembles sentence meaning, but unlike sentence meaning, it is inferred and may be cancelled where the context does not allow the inference (Grundy, 2000).

Levinson argues that utterance-type implicatures may be traced to the insights (called *heuristics*) that give rise to Grice's maxims of Quantity and Manner. The first Quantity (Q1) maxim – make your contribution as informative as is required is in effect a command to say as much as you can in the circumstance. Thus, “What is not said is not the case” (Levinson, 1995:97). If I say ‘some’ it implies ‘not all.’ Leech (1983) argues that the Quantity maxim essentially requires the use of the indefinite article (i.e. *a, an, or some*) when the speaker/hearer lacks insufficient knowledge to refer to definitely (with the use of ‘the’). Grice's second Quantity (Q2) maxim which says: “do not make your contribution more informative than is required” enjoin us to say as little as we can so that if I say: ‘a female pilot’ I will take it for granted that the hearer will interpret it to mean ‘a woman that flies an aircraft’ but then inviting the M inference. Of course I may mean ‘a woman that flies an aircraft’ by saying ‘female pilot’ but may mean something else by simply saying ‘a woman that flies an aircraft.’

We can summarise Levinson's contribution as follows:

- (a) identifies three levels of meaning: (i) *utterance –type* (instances of Grice's quantity and manner maxims) (ii) *token-type* (related to relation maxim) (iii) *entailment*
- (b) Q2-inferences are not like Q1 and M (manner) inferences because they provide general expected interpretations which show the conventional way speakers and hearers resolve the meaning of certain interpretations.
- (c) *Utterance type* meaning constitutes one of the three levels of meaning with *token-meaning* and *entailment* (Grundy, 2000)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

In your own words, summarize the contributions of Levinson to the explanation of linguistic pragmatics

3.3 Adegbija's Theory of Pragmatics

Adegbija (1982) proposed a “balanced and unified” theory of pragmatics building on the works of Searle, Grice, Bach and Harnish. He advocates utterance interpretation involving basically an inference process. Like Austin and Searle, Adegbija argues that we perform acts with words and the effects the words produce are not necessarily only hearer-directed. “Illocutionary acts may be conventional but need not always be because the force of some illocutionary acts is determined by

the intention of the speaker while others still may have to do with the pragmatics of the particular situation of social interaction” (1999:203). Using his example, if my boy is tearing his toy and I say to him “hello,” he is likely to interpret this as a warning against his action. The pragmatics of the situation determines the illocutionary force and enables the boy to understand that “hello” is not appropriate to the situation and therefore functions as a warning against what he is doing or an order to stop tearing his toy. This interpretation is further determined by the relationship between father and son. Such inferential process according to Adegbija is nurtured by the pragmatics of the situation, the social relationship obtaining between father and son, and the linguistic elements used in performing the illocutionary act. These factors are called the “pragmasociolinguistic context” and Adegbija argues that these need not necessarily have anything to do with a specific intention of the speaker. The pragmatics of a situation of social interaction according to Adegbija (1982) may consist of any or all of the following:

- (a) the cognitive or effective states of the participants in the interaction at hand
- (b) special relationship obtaining among participants
- (c) mutual beliefs, understanding, or lack of these
- (d) the nature of the discourse and how this relates to the interests of both the hearer and the speaker and to the context of interaction

Adegbija argues that an illocutionary act *always* takes place and a perlocutionary effect *always* occurs even if these are not the ones specifically intended by the speaker. In other words, the hearer’s inference, based on the pragmaticsociolinguistic context, determines what illocutionary act he perceives the speaker as performing. This inference on the part of the hearer would seem to be more important in identifying and interpreting illocutionary acts than any fixed intentions which the speaker might have. Pragmatic factors often change in the course of discourse and this may influence the illocutionary force of utterances as well as their perlocutionary sequels (1999:203).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain Adegbija’s “pragmasociolinguistic context” and how this affects interpretation of meaning

4.0 CONCLUSION

Pragmatics theories illustrate the various attempts by scholars to explain how linguistic pragmatics demonstrates the nature of language and how it works in the context of speakers and situations. Beyond the works of

Back and Harnish, Levinson and Adegbija examined in this unit, it is interesting to note that more studies in pragmatics have continued over the years. Some of these studies do not only concentrate on the explanation of pragmatics as a subject, but its interrelationship with other disciplines. This we shall be considering in the subsequent units.

5.0 SUMMARY

Bach and Harnish's theory of pragmatics suggests a very general *Speech Act Schema* (SAS) for communicative illocutionary acts. SAS is explained as S is uttering e; S means...by e; S is saying so and so and S is doing such and such. Communicative illocutionary acts are proposed rather than Austin's ceremonial speech acts. This theory also shows how inferences based on *Mutual Contextual Beliefs* (MCBs) play a role in communicative speech acts, and makes detailed use of Grice's notion of conversational implicature in fleshing out the theory.

Stephen Levinson (1995) identifies three levels of meaning: (i) *utterance -type* (instances of Grice's quantity and manner maxims) (ii) *token-type* (related to relation maxim) (iii) *entailment*. Quantity 2 (Q2) -inferences are not like Quantity 1 (Q1) and M (manner) inferences because they provide general expected interpretations which show the conventional way speakers and hearers resolve the meaning of certain interpretations.

Adegbija proposed a "balanced and unified theory" that argues that illocutionary act is determined by the pragmasociolinguistic context which has nothing to do with a specific intention of the speaker. The context includes the cognitive or effective states of the participants in the interaction at hand; their special relationships; mutual beliefs, understanding, or lack of these and the nature of the discourse and how this relates to the interests of both the hearer and the speaker and to the context of interaction. Adegbija submits that an illocutionary act *always* takes place and a perlocutionary effect *always* occurs even if these are not the ones specifically intended by the speaker. In other words, the hearer's inference, based on the pragmasociolinguistic context, determines what illocutionary act he perceives the speaker as performing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 5) Discuss two theories of pragmatics you know and how they contribute to your understanding of pragmatics
- 6) Describe the features of Adegbija's "pragmasociolinguistic context" and why you consider it important to the explanation of pragmatics.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Grundy, P. (2000). *Doing Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.

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MODULE 4 PRAGMATICS AND ITS INTERFACES

Unit 1	Pragmatics and Discourse Structure: Discourse Markers Pragmatics of Non-Sentences; Pragmatics of Deferred Interpretations Pragmatics of Language Performance
Unit 2	Pragmatics and Grammar Pragmatics and the Lexicon; Pragmatics and Intonation
Unit 3	Pragmatics and Core Linguistics; Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics; Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis
Unit 4	Doing Pragmatics; Doing a Project Work in Pragmatics; Researching Topics; Reading Literature
Unit 5	Doing Pragmatics; Data Collection; Analysing Data; Methodology; Reporting Findings

UNIT 1 PRAGMATICS AND DISCOURSE STRUCTURE

CONTENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall be examining some other ways speakers and writers encode meaning using some grammatical elements in discourse. Discourse (as we shall see in details later), is the actual use of language in specific situations or what you may call a demonstration of language in action. Pragmatic meaning is expressed in discourse and this we have so far tried to prove in this study. In an attempt to provide a detail account of pragmatic strategies in a particular discourse context, it is important to examine how the discourse is structured, the various grammatical elements or discourse markers in the expression, how coherent the discourse is and of course how the overall content of the

utterance is presented to convey certain semantic or pragmatic meanings. This we shall attempt to do in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this study, you should be able to:

- describe the nature and functions of discourse markers
- explain the meaning and patterns of non-sentences speech acts
- identify the pragmatics of figurative statements
- discuss the pragmatic of language performance in a particular social context.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Discourse Markers

Discourse Marker (DM) generally refers to “a syntactically heterogeneous class of expressions which are distinguished by their function in discourse and the kind of meaning they encode” (Blakemore 2006:221). There has not been a consensus among linguists as to what they are and how many they are in English. Some scholars have used such terms as *pragmatic marker*, *discourse connectives* or *discourse particle* to describe a discourse marker and again it is difficult to conclude that they all refer to the same thing. Using Blakemore’s model, we shall give examples of Discourse markers (DMs) in English as:

- (i) well
- (ii) but
- (iii) so
- (iv) indeed
- (v) in other words
- (vi) as a result
- (vii) now

To call the above items ‘discourse markers’ is probably intended to explain the fact that they must be described at the level of discourse rather than sentence. The term ‘marker’ is to reflect the fact that their meanings must be analysed in terms of what they indicate or *mark* rather than what they describe (Blakemore 2006). But one thing is clear and it is that DMs function as markers of relationships between units of discourse. They are important to pragmatic research because they are expressions that often contribute to *non-truth-conditional* sentence meaning distinguished from other expressions by their roles in indicating relationship of the basic message to the foregoing discourse (Fraser, 1996).

Bearing in mind that pragmatics is viewed as *meaning minus truth condition* (while semantics is the study of truth-conditional meaning), DMs fall to pragmatics because they do not contribute to truth-conditional content of the utterance that contains them. Look at the following example:

- A. *You're likely to go for your lunch earlier today, right?*
 B. *Well, I haven't thought of that*
 A. *I forgot to tell you that Okey left this morning but forgot this laptop*
 B. *Poor him.*

You will agree that B's use of 'well' does not contribute to the meaning of his response which basically is that he hadn't thought of going for lunch earlier. The same thing happens in A's second statement. Although the suggestion of contrast in the use of 'but' is noted, it still does not contribute to the meaning of the statement which is that (i) Okey had travelled (ii) He forgot his laptop. Some linguistics have argued that DMs do not contribute to truth-condition and that truth condition itself is a property of mental representation rather than linguistic representation (Carston, 2000; Blakemore 1996, 2000). This we see clearly in the above examples. The natural question that arises now is: if DMs do not contribute to truth-condition meaning what do they contribute to?

It is important to note here that DMs are not the only examples of non-truth conditional meaning. Fraser (1990, 1996) gave four examples of 'pragmatic markers' that express non-truth conditional meaning: (i) *Basic Markers* (e.g. *please*) which indicate the force of the intended message (ii) *Commentary Marker*, which comment on the basic message (e.g. *frankly*) (iii) *Parallel Marker* (e.g. *damn*), which encode an entire message...separate and additional to the basic and/or commentary message (iv) *Discourse Marker* (e.g. *after all*, *but* and *as a result*) which in contrast to commentary markers do not contribute to 'representational meaning' but only have 'procedural meaning, signalling how the basic message relates to the prior discourse (Blakemore 2006).

You will recall that Grice (1957) had earlier pointed out how implicature represents meaning above some truth-condition meaning. He later pointed out that while some utterances communicate information about the 'central or ground-floor' speech act, DMs like *but* or so communicate information about a 'non-central or higher level' speech act (Grice, 1989). In the example above A performs a ground floor statement that Okey has travelled and has forgotten his laptop and at the same time a non-central speech act by indicating that he is drawing a contrast between the two parts of the statement. The function of *but* is to signal the performance of this act and hence it does not affect

the truth value of the utterance. Those aspects of linguistic meaning that contribute to the content of the ground-floor statement are said to contribute to *what is said*, while those aspects of meaning which signal information about the performance of a non-central act are said to contribute to what is *conventionally implicated*. (Blakemore 2006).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

“They don’t read the Quran, so I decided to bring the Bible to them.”

Identify the truth condition proposition of the above statement; what do you think is the function of ‘so’ in the statement.

3.2 Pragmatics of Non-Sentences

In his “pragmatics of non-sentences” Stainton (2006) points out that while interactants communicate with words such as ‘Lagos’ (as an answer to a question like ‘where do you live?’) or a noun phrase like ‘my father’ in answering a question like ‘who pays your school fees?’ they also do utter fully grammatical expressions “which happen to be less-than-sentential nouns and Nps, adjectives and AdjPs, as well as PPs, VPs, and so on.” In other words, “speakers routinely utter bare words and phrases not syntactically embedded in any sentences, and they thereby perform speech acts like asserting, asking, commanding and so on” (2006:266). While we may not be concerned with theoretical issues raised by Stainton here, we must acknowledge the fact that both oral and written communications demonstrate the various ways language users perform acts, since they do not always have to speak or write in what theoretical grammarians may classify as “correct sentences.” An expression such as “the head of department” uttered by one of your friends at seeing a car driving in from the gate, is not a sentence but a noun phrase and the function of asserting which it performs is not from a prior linguistic context, rather a non-linguistic context. Similarly, if you say: “playing too careful” as you watch the Super Eagles, you appear to utter a verb phrase, but you have definitely made a point. Statements that are not necessarily sentences appear in newspaper headlines, book titles, labels, adverts or other marketing communications. These appear as single words or phrases and interestingly readers are able to recognise their illocutionary force or the kind of speech acts they perform. Some linguists however believe that whenever a non-sentence is uttered, producing some speech act, the speaker actually uses a sentence. They think that non-sentence expressions may in fact be described as *elliptical sentences*. The term ellipsis is when certain items in a sentence are understandably elided, e.g. *he has left the room*, may just be ‘he has left.’ Stainton argues that this kind of explanation may be explaining away the existence of

genuinely non-sentence speech acts.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. Distinguish between ellipsis and non-sentence speech acts
2. Give examples of non-sentence speech acts

3.3 Pragmatics of Deferred Interpretations

I have borrowed the term “Pragmatics of Deferred Interpretations” from Nunberg (2006) to explain further the fact that we often use expressions to refer to something that is not part of the denotational sense of that expression. In Unit 7 where we examined the term ‘reference’ in details, we noted that the natural language system enables us to use one thing to refer to another with which it has some close association. In the context of deference, Nunberg (2006) points out that figurative expression such as metaphor, metonymy, polysemy etc. are cases of deferred interpretations. Although many linguists or language users generally have considered, figuration as a mere play of language use with some stylistic effects, Nunberg argues that metaphors for instance are marked by background assumptions with cultural interests and that what creates the stylistic effect of say: *wigs* for judges, is “not the mechanism that generate it, but the marked assumptions that license it...the playful presupposition that certain (professionals) are better classified by their attire than by their function” (2006:344). If you will recall, Grice (1967) treats metaphors and other figures of speech as some kind of implicature, involving the violations of some truth-conditions. Nunberg however argues that deferred uses of expressions operate through a process of “meaning transfer” which is purely a pragmatic process. “Meaning transfer is the process that allows us to use an expression that denotes one property as the name of another property, provided there is a salient functional relation between the two” (p.346). So where there is a correspondence between the properties of one thing and the properties of another, the name of the first property is often used to refer to the properties of the other. So examples of metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche are in fact cases of meaning transfer. If I say “we need more hands to finish the work” (synecdoche) where “hand” represents “men” there is a correspondence between the assumed properties of hands and that of men (hands being part of a man’s body) which in turn correspond with work (For a full detailed discussion see Geoffrey Nunberg: “The Pragmatics of Deferred Interpretation” in *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, Blackwell, 2006)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Give an example of a metaphor and try to relate it with the pragmatic principle of meaning transfer.

3.4 Pragmatics of Language Performance

Clark (2006) observes that traditional pragmatics had concentrated so much on “pre-planned, non-interactive” language, like that of novels, newspapers, broadcasting etc, without sufficient attention to interactive language performance in real life situations. In his paper “pragmatics of language performance” he insists that in order to fully appreciate how language users interact, we must pay attention to “spontaneous, interactive language” of canteens, classrooms, offices, kitchens or football fields. In real life communicative context, speakers decide *what* to say and *how* to say it. For instance speakers will naturally apply discourse strategies such as repetitions, hesitations, fillers or even speech errors to communicate effectively. The language of conversation according to Clark is the best form of language in use that must be of interest to modern pragmatics. The interactive language of conversation is performed through “communicative acts” and such interactive language has its origin in joint activities. “When people do things together in cafes, classrooms, and offices, they need to coordinate their individual actions, and they use a variety of communicative acts to achieve that coordination...communicative acts are themselves joint actions that require coordinating, and people have a special class of communicative acts for this coordination” (Clark 2006:266). Communicative acts include (i) *Signal* made up of ‘content’ and ‘performance’ (ii) *display* made up of indicating (or pointing). For example:

Jide: *I lost my grandmother last week; did I tell you?*

Obinna: *Oh no!*

Jide utters a sentence as a signal to Obinna. Notice that a signal here is the action by which Jide *means* something to Obinna. Jide performs his utterance by asking him a question in order to gain his approval to tell him a story. The choice of what to say i.e. the choice that Jide makes to use a question to seek Obinna’s permission is known as *content*. The choice of using his voice and perhaps a nod, or gestures to designate himself as the speaker while Obinna is the hearer is called *performance*. Content is the *what*, while performance is the *how*. If after the story of his grandmother’s death Jide asks Obinna, “which is your Dad’s car?” and he points, the act of pointing becomes the *Display*. Display in this context is referred to as *communicative act of indicating*. The act of pointing is an *index* to the car. Speakers “perform what they say in a *particular time, place and manner*, constituting the right moment, for the right duration, originating from and directed to the right locations, at the right amplitude, with the right gestures. They display their signals to others in order to designate such things as the speaker, addressee, time,

place and content of their signals” (p. 366-7). All these are crucial to the full understanding of pragmatics as the study of language in context of speakers and situations. (For details on *Pragmatics of Language Performance*, see Herbert Clark in *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, Blackwell, 2006)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain Clark’s concept of communicative acts in the light of the earlier proposition by Austin.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The relationship between pragmatics and discourse analysis is such that one presumes the other. Up till now some scholars still believe that the two are more or less the same, but it is safer to state that discourse analysis presumes pragmatics i.e. a good discourse analysis of a text is likely to take into account issues that are of interest to pragmatics. We shall look at this in details in Unit 18. It is quite clear however that most pragmatic studies have been carried out on utterances or text that may be describe as discourse. As we can see, discourse markers, non-sentence expressions, deferred interpretations and interactive language performances are various areas of discourse that have significant pragmatic implications.

5.0 SUMMARY

Discourse Markers such as *well, but, so, indeed, in other words, as a result*, and *now* function as markers of relationships between units of discourse and are important to pragmatic research because they are expressions that contribute to *non-truth-conditional* sentence meaning distinguished from other expressions by their roles in indicating relationship in discourse. Non-sentence expressions are those that speakers routinely utter which contain words and phrases that are not syntactically embedded in any sentences, and do perform speech acts like asserting, asking, commanding, promising etc. And it is quite clear that speakers do not always have to speak in ‘proper’ sentences in dynamic social situations. Hence, it is of interest to pragmatic study to examine and analyse expressions that capture interactive language performances i.e. how communicators interacts in contexts such as schools, markets, bedrooms, offices etc. Much of these interactions involve figurative expressions or deferred interpretations, again demonstrating how some expression are used to represent things with which they have close associations.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Distinguish between ellipsis and non-sentence speech acts
- 2) Explain Clark's concept of communicative acts in the light of the earlier proposition by Austin.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Yule, G. (1996). *The Study of Language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: CUP.

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UNIT 2 PRAGMATICS AND ITS INTERFACES

CONTENTS

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 - 3.1 Pragmatics and Grammar
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In units 17 and 18 we shall be considering the interface of pragmatics and other linguistic disciplines; in other words we shall see how grammar, lexicon and sound/tone of voice interact with pragmatics. The questions we are likely going to answer will include: are there not purely grammatical constructions that convey pragmatic information for example those that reflect the speaker's and hearer's beliefs/assumptions about the world (i.e. presupposition) or the propositional attitudes of the addressee? How do words (lexical items) include meanings that may be interpreted pragmatically from two conceptual settings? Isn't it possible to convey pragmatic meaning through prosodic variations (e.g.) rising/falling tones)? These and other questions we intended to examine more critically in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the interaction of pragmatics and grammar
- explain the interface of lexicon and pragmatics
- illustrate with examples how prosodic variations may convey pragmatic meanings
- apply the knowledge gained from the study to practical communications.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Pragmatics and Grammar

Scholars of pragmatics believe that every grammatical truth-condition construction in any natural language has a non-truth condition equivalent that has pragmatic values (Horn 1993, Green 2006). This means that some grammatical constructions which we take for granted as truth-condition statements have some definable pragmatic equivalents. We shall discuss one or two simple examples of this in this sub-section. Now, look at the following sentences:

- 1a. The child was knocked down by a car
- b. 50 protesters were shot
- c. Some bags of the killer-beans had been sold before it was discovered that it was dangerous

The above constructions or sentences are passive constructions. Why do speakers/writers sometimes (deliberately) choose passive constructions over active ones? Looking at sentence 1a, the truth condition of the sentence is simply that a child was knocked down by a car. But the intention of the speaker (non-truth condition value) may be to highlight the seriousness of knocking down a child; hence 'the child' is made prominent as the topic of the sentence (receiving sentence stress). It may merely be to defer information about the agent (the car) till the end of the sentence. It is also possible that the speaker or writer may be deliberately silent about the agent as in sentence 1b. If this statement (1b) appears as a newspaper headline, one may conclude that the newspaper is protecting the interest of the police who are the likely shooters of protesters. Using passive constructions allow the expression of the agent to be entirely suppressed, enabling a speaker to accommodate the fact that it is unknown (as in 1b) or irrelevant (as in 1c) or just avoid saying who the agent is even if the speaker knows (Green 2006). Let us look at other examples:

- 2a. She was made to stand for five hours
- b. He was selected as the best student of English
- c. His suggestion was rejected

Using a passive also implies that the event being described had some effect on some individual within a particular context. Often the individual is the agent as in 2a. She (the agent) is made to stand for five hours. We are not told who made her to stand for that long hours but we are made to *feel* for her. The intention of the speaker might just be to appeal to our emotion. The effect of the situation on the agent may be positive as in 2b and again negative as in 2c. The pragmatic value of that

statement might be that the speaker believes that the fact of the rejection may include his person and not just the suggestion.

The point we are making here is that certain conditions expressed in grammar point to beliefs and attitudes of the speaker which amount to presuppositions, and they are so strongly linked to syntactic constructions. So we cannot just hold on to grammatical constructions alone without reference to those beliefs and attitudes that underlie the constructions. Green (2006) uses time relations to explain this fact. For example we use the present tense to refer to future time so long as the event referred to is assumed to be 'prearranged.' If I say:

- 1a. The Super Eagles play their first match tomorrow
- b. The Super Eagles are going to play their first match tomorrow

I can use 1a, to represent 1b in many of the same situations because the event is mutually understood and prearranged more because the speaker and hearer are speaking from the same contextual platform.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- 1. Think of other examples involving the use of verbs or adverbs that illustrate the interaction of grammar and pragmatics.
- 2. Write at least five passive constructions and explain their pragmatic values

3.2 Pragmatics and the Lexicon

Earlier in this study when we endeavoured to make a distinction between pragmatics and semantics, we noted that semantics dwells on the linguistic aspects of representing the formal (or universal) meaning of words and sentences, while pragmatics is concerned with the context/speaker's meaning. Thus in examining the pragmatics of lexicon, we are simply considering the tendency of words or lexical units having pragmatic meanings. Some scholars of semantics even agree that a full account of lexical meaning has to include more information than that which allows one to discriminate the meanings of different words (Blutner, 2006). Let's look at the following examples taken from Blutner 2006:489:

- 2a. Should we take the lion back to the zoo?
- b. Should we take the bus back to the zoo?

What is the difference between the meaning of 'take back' in sentence (2a) and that in (2b)? You will agree that the lion is the object being taken back to the zoo, while the bus is the instrument that takes back to

the zoo. You will also notice that ‘the zoo’ in (2a) is different from what is meant in (2b) in relation to the two items (i.e. the lion and the car). The pragmatic components of utterances is usually embedded on the different conceptual setting or context especially with words that do not discriminate two occurrences like ‘take back’ in the above sentences. In the Nigerian context several English words have come to be used in a number of contexts that results in semantic extensions or pragmatic usages. Look at the different use of the word *see* in the following examples:

- c. I can *see* the plane from afar
- d. I would like to *see* the Vice Chancellor
- e. I *see* what you mean
- f. To get the contract, you may have to *see* the personal manager

The meaning of *see* in (2c) is obvious from a semantic point of view but certainly not in d-f. While meaning is arbitrarily assigned to words in English like in any other language, it is still arguable that our knowledge of the environment, the world/culture is highly related to the meanings we assign to lexical items.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. What do you think is the meaning of ‘the zoo’ in (2a) and (2b)
2. Explain the meaning of *see* in the following statements:
 - (a) I would like to *see* the Vice Chancellor
 - (b) I *see* what you mean
 - (c) To get the contract, you may have to *see* the personal manager
3. Differentiate between the meanings of *settle* or *settled* in the statements below:
 - (a) We eventually *settled* in the FCT after two years of indecision
 - (b) At 35, I think it about time you *settled down*
 - (c) You can’t go because you have not *settled* the seller
 - (d) *Settle* the policeman if you must have your driver’s license back

3.3 Pragmatics and Intonation

A lot of research evidences abound on the role of prosodic variation, i.e. intonation (high/low; rising/falling tones) accent, contours, pauses, etc. in the interpretation of a wide range of utterances (e.g. Bolinger 1986, Ladd 1996, and Hirschberg 2006). In this section, we shall endeavour to show how intonation may affect the interpretation of syntactic structures as well as some semantic phenomena. We shall also examine a few

examples on the relationship between changes in intonation and discourse structure and the role of intonational variation in the interpretation of some speech acts.

There have been a lot of interests among linguists over the years in defining a mapping between prosody and syntax and some agree that prosodic phrases divide utterances into meaningful segments of information (Hirschberg 2006). And it is possible that phrase boundaries may indicate differences in the interpretation of certain syntactic attachments such as prepositional phrases, adverbial modifiers or relative clauses. It has also been found that “the presence or absence of a phrase boundary can distinguish prepositions from particles and can indicate the scope of modifiers in conjoined phrases” ((Hirschberg 2006:523). Look at the following sentences and see whether you can identify how phrasing indicate possible difference interpretations. Phrase is marked by ‘\’.

- (a) I help the child /with the red cap
- (b) The teacher speakers English and French/ you know
- (c) The student that reads poems/ is absent
- (d) My Dad laughed /at the party

Where syntactic ambiguity exists (as with some examples above) prosodic variation may influence their disambiguation. Pitch accent has been the usual way of conveying some nominals. For example:

- (e) NIGERIAN language teachers (teachers of Nigerian language(s))
- (f) Nigerian LANGUAGE TEACHERS (language teachers who are Nigerians)
- (g) All WIVES and MOTHERS (wives who are also mothers)
- (h) All wives and MOTHERS (wives who are not yet mothers)

At the semantic level, *accent* has also been used in the interpretation of sentences especially with highlighting the *focus* of the statements. Consider the following examples:

- (i) We BOUGHT the car (not borrowed or stolen)
- (j) We bought THE CAR (not the lorry or the train)
- (k) Bola introduced TINU to Ebube (non else was introduced)
- (l) Bola introduced Tinu to EBUBE (to non else)
- (m) ELDERS must be respected (especially elders not youths)
- (n) Elders must be RESPECTED (not slighted, or disrespected)
- (o) Elders MUST be respected (not optional)

The above examples show how accenting certain items indicate the focus of statements.

The role of intonation has also been studied in the interpretation of some discourse phenomena. Pronouns for instance are markable using varying tones or may in fact be accented and interpreted differently depending on whether they are prominent or not in different contexts. If you hear a politician or a middle class businessman say:

- (p) ME, you're talking to ME like that.... Or
- (q) I don't belong to THEIR club,

you can easily interpret what the 'ME' and 'THEIR' represent. Most times, accented pronouns like the ones above are usually (overtly) corroborated by the expression of the face of the speaker. The air of arrogance and pride is usually unmistakable.

Intonational variations may also be used to perform speech acts especially in conveying syntactic mood (e.g. the imperative 'HOLD it'), speaker attitude, belief or emotion. "Some inherent meaning has often been sought in particular contours – though generally such proposals include some degree of modulations" (p.533). Voice contours can also be used to distinguish between direct and indirect speech acts. For example, a question requiring *yes* or *no* answer may elicit a statement answer depending on intonation. Your visitor, standing on the door says: "Are you around?" and you reply: "Please do come." A question like "are you around?" in its literal sense will demand a simple yes or no but in this context may be interpreted as a request or perform some action. Look at another example:

- (r) I like girls
- (s) I like girls?

The above examples show that a declarative statement may be turned to a question by using a rising tone or contour. Also, some indirect speech acts such as "you packed your car on the road" or "the door is open" are rendered as direct statements with usually no rising contour. But a speaker may choose to accent any of the lexical items such as 'road' or 'open' to highlight the focus of the statement. These examples no doubt show the interaction of linguistic pragmatics with intonation.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

With examples from syntax, semantic and discourse, show how intonation interact with pragmatics.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Overtime, studies have proved that virtually all fields of linguistics have some levels of interaction with pragmatics. Because pragmatics is purely about how speakers/writers use all language resources available to them to make meaning in practical communication context, there are bound to be the demonstrations of different forms of strategies involving words, syntactic structures, intonation etc in texts and talks. So we can conveniently conclude that pragmatics does indeed interact effectively with all linguistic sub-fields. And this we have tried to show in this sub-section.

5.0 SUMMARY

Pragmatics interacts with grammar. And this is true because most of the grammatical structures which we take for granted as having truth-conditions do indeed have their non-truth condition equivalents with pragmatic interpretations. Passive structures for example have their way of highlight the intention of the speaker by making prominent the topic of the sentence and deferring information about the agent till the end of the sentence. Also, certain conditions expressed in grammar point to beliefs and attitudes of the speaker which amount to presuppositions, and these are strongly linked to syntactic constructions.

At the level of lexis, scholars agree that a full account of lexical meaning has to include more information than that which allows one to discriminate the meanings of different words. And in different contexts words have been use to include some contextual elements which reflect the speaker's intention, belief, culture and world view.

Pragmatics also interacts with intonation. Linguists agree that prosodic phrases divide utterances into meaningful segments of information. And it is possible that phrase boundaries may indicate differences in the interpretation of certain syntactic attachments. Studies also show that through pitch accent, prosodic variation may help to disambiguate syntactic ambiguities. And at the semantic discourse levels, accent has been used in the interpretation of sentences especially with highlighting the focus of the statements and in performing speech acts. Speech acts convey syntactic mood, speaker attitude, belief or emotion.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Discuss the interaction of pragmatics with lexicon
- 2) With examples from syntax, semantic and discourse, show how intonation interact with pragmatics.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Yule, G. (1996). *The Study of Language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: CUP.

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UNIT 3 PRAGMATICS AND ITS INTERFACES

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Pragmatics and core Linguistics
 - 3.2 Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics
 - 3.3 Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we discussed extensively on the interaction of pragmatics with some linguistic subfields such as syntax, lexis, semantics and phonology. In this unit, we shall briefly examine how pragmatics has helped to provide answers to some fundamental theoretical questions in some of these subfields. We shall also examine the relationship between pragmatics, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. We have earlier pointed out some dimensions of interaction of pragmatics and discourse analysis, for which this unit is merely an elaboration.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain what is meant by ‘core’ linguistics and how pragmatics relates to them
- describe the interaction of pragmatics and sociolinguistics
- explain the interface of discourse analysis and pragmatics
- discuss the importance of pragmatics to the study of other linguistic subfields.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Pragmatics and Core Linguistics

Linguistics is formally defined as the scientific study of language and its subfields, i.e. phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics are often referred to as ‘core linguistics.’ Already we have endeavoured to explain the interaction of pragmatics with these subfields by pointing out the

mediatory roles pragmatics plays in providing answers associated with meaning in relation to the context, especially where these subfields have failed to relate meaning to social life. For instance, the formal semantic assumption that the meaning of a sentence is to know the conditions under which the sentence is true or false does not capture all we mean by meaning; hence the distinction between semantics and pragmatics; while the questions of truth and falsity (truth conditionality) is a matter of semantics, pragmatics handles the rest especially about the judgements that a speaker makes in his decision about what to say, how to say it and when to say it (Palmer, 1996). As a matter of fact pragmatics tends to simplify semantic analyses (Levinson, 1983).

At the level of grammar, we noted that speakers/writers are not always governed by lexical or syntactical rules. Indexical references/social deixis that pose problems to specialists in morphology and grammar are explained in terms of implicatures. A sentence such as: "I am speaking to us" where 'us' is a matter of honorifics, may be considered faulty, from a purely syntactic position. We have also noted that while speakers and writers do utter fully grammatical expressions, they also routinely utter bare words and phrases not syntactically embedded in any sentences, and they thereby perform speech acts like asserting, asking, commanding etc. When discussing the theories of speech acts, we also noted that the essential syntactic facts about sentence-types (declarative, imperative, interrogative etc.) are related to the concept of illocutionary act. According to Austin, 'performative' sentence, have some illocutionary 'force' that are found in verbs. We are also familiar with the fact that much interactions exist between indirect illocutionary force and sentence structure, which logically establishes the relationship between discourse/conversational structure and syntax (Levinson, 1983). For instance, conversational organisations such as turn-taking and repair mechanism involve syntactic processes. Some movement rules and the concept of focus/topic relate to how certain items are brought forward, indicating how certain information may come before others. Much of these lexical and syntactic processes have their pragmatic implications.

We have also related pragmatics with phonology showing how prosodic variations do indeed signal pragmatic information. We noted that intonation, stress, or accent clearly play some significant roles in disambiguating items, interpreting discourse information, and performing speech acts. On the whole we can see clearly that pragmatics perform what we may call 'bridging' roles among the various subfields of linguistics.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Write a summary on the relationship between pragmatics and other linguistic subfields.

3.2 Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is defined as the study of language in relation to the society (Hudson, 1980) while pragmatics is concerned with the study of language *use* in relation to the social context. Sociolinguistics cuts across many levels of linguistics and due to the many areas of common interests that the two disciplines share, it has been very difficult to draw a clear boundary between them. Some scholars believe that pragmatics is in fact a sub-field of sociolinguistics. In studying language in its social context, two important functions of language come to the fore: (i) language or speech is used as a means of communication (ii) it is used as a means of identifying social groups. These two functions are performed on definite social contexts, beliefs, cultures and world views. These variables in turn influence linguistic choices and what pragmatic implications these choices may have. Studies in pragmatics over the years have revealed interesting insights in the interfaces of sociolinguistics and pragmatics, showing how speech acts are performed in conversations and how speakers in socio-cultural contexts adopt pragmatic principles to encode meaning to achieve certain results on the mind of their hearers. Sociolinguistic variables such as age, social class, status, education etc. often influence what kind of speech act or indirect speech acts that are performed. These complementary roles clearly reveal that sociolinguistics has contributed immensely to certain areas of pragmatics especially the study of speech acts and social deixis. However, pragmatics has much to contribute to sociolinguistics. In trying to understand the social significance of patterns of language use, Levinson (1983) suggests that it is important to understand the underlying structural properties and processes that constrain verbal interaction.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Describe the relationship between pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

3.3 Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis

The relationship between pragmatics and discourse analysis is such that makes it difficult to really say where one ends and where the other begins or when one explicitly excludes the other. The most popular definition of discourse analysis is given by Brown and Yule (1983) i.e. "...the analysis of language in use...which is not to be restricted to the

description of language forms independent of the purpose or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs.” Hence, a discourse analyst will describe language forms as they are used in communication but will go further to explain the functions of these forms in real life situations. According to Adegbija (1999) a discourse analyst will answer the following questions:

- What is the conversation or discourse about? (focus on theme/subject matter of discourse)
- What comments are being made about the topic? (participation/contributions of participants)
- Who are the speakers and addressees and what are their roles and relationships? (relationships and how this is reflected in discourse)
- How is turn taking effected? What are the turn taking techniques? (does age, sex, status, etc affect it?)
- How has the topic been linked from one speaker to another? Or how has coherence in discourse been achieved? (does violation of rules, omissions etc communicate extra-sentential meaning)
- How is reference made to different objects, persons, things or places? Is it done backward, forward, within the text, or outside the text? (focus on content)
- How is meaning decoded from the discourse? (What contributions does the context of discourse make to the encoding and decoding of meaning?) (focus on context)
- What specific and overall functions do the different utterances in the discourse perform? (Interpretation of meaning).
- How is discourse terminated by participants?
- What specific function does the discourse perform in particular social/cultural context?

The last question especially coincides with the concern of pragmatics. The theories of pragmatics which we have discussed so far, attempt to explain how people create meaning and make sense of what is said in specific situations. Speakers are guided by their knowledge of the language system alongside their knowledge of the socio-cultural system, beliefs and traditions and the fact that meaning is not constructed from the formal language of the message alone. Every piece of discourse or conversation gives the speaker an opportunity to apply some pragmatics principles to encode meaning in words that most realise their intention. Both pragmatics and discourse analysis link form to function and this may help language learners to familiarize themselves within a discourse, rather than just the formal structure of a language. Unfortunately most learner concentrate with trying to understand the meaning of every word and their literal meaning. But discourse structure may consist of functional units which only a pragmatic interpretation will help to decode (Cook, 1989).

According to Cook, pragmatics provides us with a means of relating stretches of language to the physical, social, and psychological world in which they take place. While discourse is the totality of all these elements interacting, pragmatics tends only to examine how meaning develops at a given point. It provides us with something like “a snap shot meaning.” Discourse is “more like a moving film, revealing itself in time, sometimes over a long time.” Discourse is the material upon which we apply pragmatic interpretation. Hence, discourse analysis presumes pragmatics, meaning that a comprehensive discourse analysis, will definitely involve pragmatic interpretation of meanings.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Distinguish between pragmatics and discourse analysis

4.0 CONCLUSION

Pragmatics has a potential application to all fields in linguistics with the function of providing answers to how utterances are encoded and understood and how they perform actions in specific contexts. We have seen in this unit how pragmatics interacts with core linguistics, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. And we must mention here that pragmatics is applicable to other fields that are concerned with providing solutions to the problem of communication such as applied linguistics (i.e. the theory and practice of language learning), computational linguistics, interpersonal communication etc. You will agree that pragmatics is a crucial branch of linguistics that demands careful study and practice.

5.0 SUMMARY

Pragmatics interacts with ‘core linguistics’ such as phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics. For instance, the formal semantic assumption that the meaning of a sentence is to know the conditions under which the sentence is true or false does not capture all we mean by meaning but pragmatics explains the judgements that speakers make in their decision about what to say, how to say it and when to say it. Studies in pragmatics over the years have also revealed interesting insights in the interaction of sociolinguistics and pragmatics, showing how speech acts are performed in conversations and how speakers in socio-cultural contexts adopt pragmatic principles to encode meaning to achieve certain effects on the mind of their hearers. Pragmatics also relates to discourse analysis and provides the means of relating stretches of language to the physical, social, and psychological world in which they take place. While discourse is the totality of all these elements

interacting, pragmatics tends only to examine how meaning develops at a given point. Discourse analysis presumes pragmatics, meaning that a comprehensive discourse analysis, will involve pragmatic interpretation of meanings.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Describe the relationship between pragmatics and sociolinguistics
- 2) Distinguish between pragmatics and discourse analysis.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Cook, G. (1989). *Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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UNIT 4 DOING PRAGMATICS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Doing a Project Work in Pragmatics
 - 3.2 Researching Topics
 - 3.3 Reading Literature
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Linguistics is often defined as a “scientific study” of language because of the nature of investigation that is involved in the study. Over time, language experts have applied scientific methods such as observation of some phenomena/variables in language use, identification of problems, formulation of some testable hypotheses, collection and analyses of data based on some methodology, presentation of research findings and recommendations based on findings. However, not all pragmaticists view their subject as science although at one point or another, they have had to apply one or more scientific methods. In these last units of the course, we shall be examining some general methods of pragmatic research that you will need to familiarise yourself with and in fact get involved in. Topics that are investigable will be suggested, which means that after this study you should be able to carry out a pragmatic research work on any topic of your choice. These units however, do not intend to delve into extensive theoretical issues/discussions of research methodologies across disciplines, rather to give you basic guidelines on how to carry out linguistic investigation, particularly pragmatics which is our main concern here.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the nature of pragmatic research
- describe how to get research topics
- explain the importance of review of literature in linguistic research
- suggest investigable topics that you may want to work on.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Doing a Project Work in Pragmatics

Let us consider this scenario: you get to the library and you see a 100 level student (a boy) of English reading a book on politics and it was during the second semester examination. And you say to him: “hello, why don’t you read a book on language?”

Then he replies: “it’s because I enjoy reading politics.” You leave him and move on to take your seat. Again you observe another student, this time a 200 level female student of English reading a book on sports. You also say to her: “why don’t you read a book on language?” She looks at you for a while, smiles and drops the book; then she goes to the shelf and picks a book on language and begins to read. You nod in satisfaction because this student understands your indirect speech act, rather than the 100 level student who took your indirect speech act for a direct speech act. You can reasonably begin to imagine that the two different responses you got from the two students from two different levels may suggest some topics that may be turned to testable hypotheses as follows:

- 100 level students do not generally understand indirect speech acts
- 100 level students may show their displeasure to strangers by responding to the propositional content rather than the illocutionary force of utterances, by treating indirect speech act as if they were direct speech acts
- Not all 100 level students treat indirect speech act as though they were direct speech acts, their responses depends on variables such as age, mood, level of exposure, degree of communicative competence, subject of request etc.
- When 100 level students do not respond to illocutionary force of indirect speech acts, it is simply a matter of choice and not for lack of pragmatic understanding

Each of these may be investigated, by trying to frame a testable hypothesis. For example, we may hypothesize that 100 level students respond equally (un) cooperatively to indirect and direct requests and then set out to test this hypothesis by designing an experiment in which a sample of 100 level students are selected and made to respond to series of requests, some expressed directly, some indirectly. The data collected from this experiment is then recorded and transcribed, analysed and finding will emerge proving the hypothesis right or that it failed. If it turns out that the 100 level students irrespective of their programmes respond to direct speech act than indirect speech act, this will presumably have implications on the way mature students should

address new students. This research might also suggest a follow-up one which should find out whether 100 level students failed to respond to indirect speech because they don't understand their pragmatic contents or because they don't generally like to be talked to indirectly. This kind of research is usually referred to as "empirical" because it studies real observable phenomena (Grundy, 2000).

Grundy (2000:219) summarises the nature of pragmatic investigation as follows:

- Frame a testable hypothesis (or series of hypotheses) suggested by some observation about the way the world appears to work
- Design an experiment which will enable you to collect data which test this hypothesis
- Collect the data under experimental conditions
- Quantify the data in order to determine whether or not the hypothesis is proved
- Consider the implications of the findings and whether follow-up experiments would be useful

Let me quickly mention here that a "hypothesis" is a tentative statement about relationships that exist between two or among many variables; they are assumptions or conjectural statements about relationships that need to be tested and subsequently accepted or rejected (Asika, 1991). Empirical research often tries to determine whether there is a significant association or not between two variables. For example, you may try to establish whether there is a significant association between level of exposure and understanding of indirect speech acts.

The different positions about how pragmatic research should be carried out have given rise to different approaches especially by the fact that not all aspects of pragmatics could be investigated using the scientific approach described above. As a matter of fact, pragmatic meaning depends very much on inference, which is not a directly observable phenomenon; therefore there are a lot other ways as we shall see in this study that pragmatic investigation may be carried out without the empirical approach.

It is also important to note that identification of a research problem, will generally lead to *Research Questions*. This often replaces the hypothesis as a guide to data collection and analysis, especially where research does not involve experiments. For instance, in our research about the 100 level students, research questions may be framed as follows:

- Do all 100 students respond negatively to indirect speech act?

- What factors are responsible for the negative response of 100 level students to indirect speech acts? Etc.

You will observe that the above approach is associated with spoken discourse, where recording and transcription are necessary. Interestingly, you will also notice that not all spoken discourse demands the kind of scientific approach described above. For example, if you're doing a pragmatic study of a conversation, you may not need an experiment about how frequent some 100 level students respond to requests; rather you will be concerned with observing the sequential properties of the talk and how interactants take turns and so on. We shall examine some other areas of research as we proceed.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. Outline the first steps to begin a research in pragmatics
2. Explain the term "hypothesis" and why it is important in pragmatic study
3. What do you think is the best approach to pragmatic investigation

3.2 Researching Topics

Getting an interesting research topic need not be difficult if you are interested in the study itself. The very first step is to ensure that you are adequately familiar with the area you are trying to study. However being adequately familiar with a particular area of study is not the same thing as getting a researchable topic. A topic must capture the subject of your study. It should be concise and striking. You are usually required to narrow the topic and limit your writing to the topic. It makes it easier for you to include only the relevant information and maintain the required length of the project. Before submitting any topic for approval (if your research is for academic purpose) it is necessary to discuss it with your study group or classmates. You can also consult an expert or your teachers for their opinion. Below are possible subject areas that you may find interesting. They are mere suggestions and by no means restrictive. I have borrowed some of them from Grundy 2000:229.

- (i) Study of conversation – especially the structure of turn-taking and other conversational strategies
- (ii) Structure and Pragmatic properties of seminars, interviews, talk types (e.g. telephone conversation, contributions to radio-phoning programmes etc) especially investigating how roles are assigned, how expectations are signalled etc.
- (iii) Focusing on power and distance, how relation is encoded; facework – how speakers and hearers use politeness strategies

- (iv) Studies of infants and their recognition and production of pragmatic strategies; the role of pragmatics in enabling first language acquisition
- (v) Intercultural pragmatics – how members of different cultures accommodate and react to socio-pragmatic differences
- (vi) Study of contexts: whether external social structure determines how talk is organised and the type of contributions that occur; or is the context created by the talk itself?
- (vii) Ethnomethodology – providing ethnographic account of the way that talk and life are related. Showing how membership and cultural affiliation are oriented to and have both including and excluding functions
- (viii) Pragmatic strategies in mass media reporting – showing features of speech acts/implicatures of headlines, editorials, cartoons etc.
- (ix) Investigating how properties of entailment, implicatures, explicatures, direct/indirect speech and signalled in advertisements, barlines, etc. and their particular effects
- (x) Literary pragmatics – how writers employ their knowledge of language use to communicate pragmatic information in the context of some particular social groups etc.

As we have noted earlier, topics may be generated from these areas that may lead to an exciting and rewarding experience. Remember that it is always advisable to read round a subject area before deciding on a topic. A good topic is usually a product of an initial research to avoid starting off and get stuck along the way. Some topics may initially appear interesting when in actually fact they are complex for you at your undergraduate level. That's why you need to always consult your supervisor or an experience person to guide you. Having a good researchable topic makes your work a bit easier and enjoyable.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. Outline some fundamental steps to procuring a topic.
2. Suggest some areas of study you may want to do research on.

3.3 Reading Literature

Your “Review of Literature” (or Literature Review) is not the same as “reading round” a subject area. Your review of literature begins after you have read round a subject area as part of your initial research. You must have also got a topic. If you do a serious review of literature on your chosen topic, you will be surprised that a good number of works has been done in that area. This will give you adequate background understanding of your topic, and help you identify the significance of your own study (i.e. your work is likely going to cover an area where

previous works have not adequately covered). Generally your review of literature will give you a firsthand understanding of the theoretical background of your topic area. That is why it is always good to begin with early (perhaps classical) account of the study and then the recent, and the most recent works on the topic. Recent works (or publications) in any topic is usually found in current journals of the particular discipline. You are therefore advised not to rely on text-books alone. There are several international journals on the subjects of pragmatics and discourse analysis. You may search the internet for journals such as *The Journal of Pragmatics*; *Pragmatics*; *Intercultural Pragmatics*; *Discourse and Society*; *Discourse Studies*; *Discourse and Communication*; *Journal of Politeness Research* etc. There are also local academic journals in your library that can be of help to you. When you read, you will notice that authors and researchers would have made statements to explain certain terms, concepts or theories that you might have found difficult in text-books. Some may even refer you to other helpful materials. You may also find certain analytical procedures explained and applied.

It is necessary to warn you against the temptation to copy from a source without proper acknowledgement or referencing. Unfortunately some students find similar works to theirs, and all they do is to “dub live” or simply make photocopy of the material and submit as theirs. This is academic fraud that is punishable by law. Avoid this temptation by all means. If you understand what you are reading, you can always put your understanding in your own words and where you must quote or paraphrase you endeavour to acknowledge your source. I’m sure that you must have been taught how to do this in your general study course. Reading literature on your topic demands that you do appropriate note-taking. This will enable you organise your materials and prepare you for the actual writing of the project. Again I’m sure that you are familiar with note-taking techniques. On a final note, if you read enough, you will be able to write enough.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

1. Why is it necessary to do a review of literature on a subject area before writing a research project?
2. Mention some materials you must read as part of your review of literature

4.0 CONCLUSION

Writing and submitting a well-research project on any topic of your choice is a compulsory graduation requirement for all undergraduate students. Therefore the importance of the procedure for a linguistic

research cannot be over emphasised. In this unit, we have attempted to take you through some fundamental first steps to doing a research in pragmatics. We started by giving you a general overview on how to begin and finish an empirical research and then went on to describe some first steps of pragmatic research namely, choosing a topic and doing a review of literature. These are the fundamentals; try to understand and apply them and you will be ready for the next steps in Unit 20.

5.0 SUMMARY

A research project in pragmatics begins with identifying a researchable topic that will naturally generate some testable hypotheses. Hypotheses are generally used if a research involves some empirical test to generate data. But where research is more of description, research questions are used and then data are procured without experiments. Data are analysed, findings are recorded and conclusions are made based on findings.

A good project is a product of a good researched topic, while a good topic is a product of a sound initial research on an area that is adequately familiar to the researcher. A topic must capture the subject of the study. It should be concise and striking often requiring that it is narrowed and limited to the particular area of interest.

Review of Literature is the extensive reading of materials on the subject area beginning from the old to the most recent literatures on the topic. Previous works will normally answer questions bordering on concepts, theories, arguments, results etc on the topic that will enrich the researcher's understanding of the area of study. Most importantly previous researches will acquaint you with the level of works that has been done in that area and establish the relevance of your own work. Researchers have had to drop their initial topics when in the course of reading they discovered that someone had already done exactly the same work. Reading previous literatures involves reading books, journal articles, media articles etc.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Outline some fundamental steps to procuring a topic
- 2) Why is it necessary to do a review of literature on a subject area before writing a research project?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Cook, G. (1989). *Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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UNIT 5 DOING PRAGMATICS II

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Data Collection
 - 3.2 Analysing Data
 - 3.3 Methodology
 - 3.4 Reporting Findings
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall conclude the procedures for doing pragmatics. In the last Unit we identified the key steps to begin a linguistic research. In this Unit, we shall be examining how to do data collection and analysis of your data. Remember that data is what you are going to test to either prove your hypothesis or consider it as false. In case you are working with research questions, your data will enable you get the answers you aim at achieving. Let me quickly mention here that your research aim must be clearly stated before proceeding with your research. Usually research questions are tailored towards achieving the overall aim of your project.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe how to go about collecting data for your project
- explain at least one methodology for analysing your data
- mention one theory of pragmatics that you can base your analysis on
- discuss how to begin and finish a research project in pragmatics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Data Collection

If your research is empirical requiring test of a hypothesis like the one that tests how I00 level students respond to indirect speech act, then your data will normally be elicited. In that case you will be careful to design the elicitation experiments to ensure you elicit the kind of

response (i.e. the data) that will measure what you are testing. Remember that you must eliminate all irrelevant variable and do not manipulate your data to prove your hypothesis. Very often, good data analyses always prove certain hypothesis wrong. It is necessary that while you are recording a conversation, the participants should not know that they are being recorded; otherwise you may not get a natural conversation. Although, you may need some information about the interactants which you may not get in the conversation, thereby requiring you to talk to them individually, in that case, you may have to talk to them and seek their permission to use their conversation for academic purpose. This will take care of an ethical issue that forbids you revealing data provided by informants without their consent. So you have to decide whether to obtain prior consent of your informants before collecting your data, or ask their permission to use data after they have been collect or not to ask permission at all (Grundy, 2000). Your decision will depend on the circumstances where the data are collected and the kind of conversation involved.

You may be collecting data that requires interviews or questionnaires. You either decide to record the interview and transcribe later or carry out a structured interview where you write down the interviewee's responses. Whether you are collecting data from elicitation method, interview or questionnaire, your raw data is essentially the pattern of naturally occurring language use by speakers in their socio-cultural or institutional contexts that will enable you make some judgements as to whether your hypothesis is right or wrong. Therefore there is no research without available data and it must be presented in the work, either qualitatively or quantitatively (i.e. involving figures, tables, graphs etc.) It is wrong therefore to go on to describe patterns of turn-taking in a conversation or discourse structures of some data without presenting them for us to see. Some students go on to do some "analysis" and then bring in bits of what they call data here and there in the analysis without presenting the data itself first. If you are doing a study of written communication, the parts of the material that serves as your data must be copied out. If they are adverts, news headlines, cartoons, stickers etc. you must endeavour to present the written version of the data and where necessary (as in adverts) original copies should be attached as appendices. Remember that our attention here is language use – that is why it is linguistic research and we are testing how meaning is generated, processed and disseminated in the context of users and situations.

In summary Grundy (2000) gives us some points to note especially if data collection is such that aims at testing some hypotheses:

- (i) Whenever possible, do pilot collection exercises first to enable you see whether the data you are collecting is audible and transcribable or useful for the purpose you have in mind.
- (ii) Consider whether you need to use all the data or just some part of them. Sometimes excluding any part of the data may render them an incomplete record of speech event recorded.
- (iii) Don't be too ambitious: one hour of conversation involving several speakers can take many days or even weeks to transcribe. So limit the amount of data you set out to collect to what you can practically transcribe and adequately analyse.
- (iv) Ensure that your data contains the information you need. Nothing is more frustrating than to have data which do not really reveal what you had hoped they would or that are difficult to hear and transcribe.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. Explain the term "data" in a pragmatic context.
2. Describe some data collection procedures that you know.
3. Explain the importance of data to any research work.

3.2 Analysing/Interpreting Data

Analysis is the breaking down and ordering of the data (quantitative information) involving searching for trends and patterns of association and relationships among data or group of them. Interpretation involves the explanation of the associations and relationships found in the data, including inferences and conclusions drawn from these relationships (Asika, 1991).

Let's assume your research is the activity type investigating the structures and pragmatic properties of seminars/interviews or such that focus on power and distance. You will be required to identify from the data how the speech events are goal oriented and whether they determine their own structures or not; how expectations are signalled, implied and referred to; how talk is constrained and how participants indicate constraints on allowable contributions; how functional roles assumed by a speaker and assigned to another speaker are determined etc. how power and distance are encoded; how speakers and hearers use politeness strategies to acknowledge the face want of others (Grundy, 2000); how properties of discourse perform speech acts, construct identities, reflect societal norms, beliefs or ideologies; how implicatures signal culture-based meaning; etc. Your data is likely to reveal much more depending on how successful your data collection procedure has been.

Your analysis may require that you put certain information in figures or tables or workout some percentages, especially if your research is quantitative arising from an empirical method. Sometimes your analysis may also demand that you identify some analytical categories in which case, you break your analysis into sections or sub-sections. Your analysis must stick to the overall goal of the research and must be able to answer your research questions positively/negatively or prove/disprove your hypotheses.

It is important to mention here that in linguistic (or pragmatic) research; we do not generally edit our data before analysis as is the practice in some disciplines. We may “edit” some wrong figures, involving names or numbers but certainly not the actual discourse samples of respondents. Whatever variety of language use you obtain is very essential even where they are idiosyncratic. What some people call “errors” in language use are indeed indicators of variables that reveal a lot about speakers, their social identities, statuses, beliefs etc. Again I would like to warn against manipulating your data; trying to “correct” what an informant/respondent said. As long as we are testing language habits and how they occur in their natural settings, constructing values, identities, societies; sometimes how these mediate attitudes and perform social actions, we have no choice than to leave the raw data the way it is. Some students have also been found to generate some “data” all by themselves, for instance someone doing a study of bumper stickers and writing some stickers herself in order to complete the number she wants and then coming back to say she collected them from the field. This is absolutely dishonest. Stick to your data and where you have some difficulty in your analysis; consult your teacher or supervisor. You will notice that this section on doing pragmatics have concentrated on some key issues about linguistic research and do not cover all you need to know about research and its technicalities. It is assumed that you have done a course on research methodology.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

What does data analysis involve? Give examples

3.3 Methodology

Methodology is about how you intend to do your analysis. If you are applying a scientific method of analysis involving experimentation, transcription of data, analysis of questionnaire etc where your result will demand some figures and statistics, then it is quantitative. If it is descriptive, which involves your own judgement and interpretation of the data based on some inferences etc, then it is qualitative. You will need to state this clearly in your work. Your methodology is usually

determined by the theory you adopt in your analysis. If you are investigating patterns of speech acts in news headlines for example, you will need to clearly define and explain the speech acts theory and why you think it is the most appropriate in the study of language use of news headlines. Naturally your analysis will be qualitative method where you will do a descriptive kind of analysis. At your level however, your supervisor will guide you as to how you approach the matter of theory and methodology.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

1. Explain the term “methodology”.
2. Describe some research methodologies that you know

3.4 Reporting Findings

What you report as your research finding is the actual outcome of your research, not your hypotheses. Some students attempt to force their research questions or hypothesis into their findings whether or not findings justify their hypotheses. As we said earlier, your findings do not have to prove your hypotheses or answer ‘yes’ to your research questions. Your concern is to do your investigations and report your findings objectively. It is your findings that determine your final conclusions and possible recommendations. At this point, the reader will be able to see clearly the contributions your research has made. Always do a thorough citation at the end. Your bibliography must reflect all the materials you have used in the Work.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain the importance of reporting your findings in a clear and lucid manner.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We can then conclude that pragmatics is a practical exercise that reveals the many dimensions of language use and the various levels of meanings they generate in social contexts. Pragmatics is an exercise in search of meanings. Much of these “meanings” are actually a revelation of ourselves - our intentions and tendencies; our identities, relationships, cultures and beliefs; our hopes, our strengths and our weaknesses. So every effort in pragmatic research provides an opportunity to understand better the nature of language, how it works and what it means to us.

5.0 SUMMARY

Your data collection method is primarily determined by the type of research you are conducting, either qualitative or quantitative. An empirical research demands that you collect elicitation data that aim at testing some hypotheses. Since pragmatic judgements are often deductive and inferential, research doesn't have to be experimental; hence some data can simply aim at studying pragmatic properties of some forms of spoken and written discourse.

Analysis is the breaking down and interpreting the data, involving searching for trends and patterns of association and relationships among data or groups of data. Interpretation involves the explanation of the associations and relationships found in the data, including inferences and conclusions drawn from these relationships. In pragmatic research, analysis must mind the focus of the study either how power and focus are mediated; or how patterns of turns are encoded; or how speech acts are performed etc. in specific discourse samples. Analysis is based on some methodology, either quantitative or qualitative, after which findings are reported and conclusions are made.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Explain the term “data” in a pragmatic context. Describe some data collection procedures that you know
- 2) What does data analysis involve? Give examples

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Levinson, S. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Asika, N. (1991). *Research Methodology in the Behavioural Sciences*. Ikeja: Longman.

Grundy, P. (2000). *Doing Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.