

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN PRAGMATICS

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Abstract:

This article explores pragmatics and the importance of emotions in pragmatic process. It is a complex and multifaceted topic that bridges cognitive science, philosophy, psychology, and linguistics. Pragmatics, in a general sense, refers to the study of how context influences the interpretation of language, and it extends to how speakers convey and interpret meaning in everyday communication. And this work also proposes to study different approaches of scholars and researches about this matter.

Keywords: Emotion, pragmatics, social context culture, empathy, language, reality, cultural values, speech acts, communicative acts.

Introduction

Pragmatics is a part of linguistics which targets at how context impacts on the interpretation of meaning in communication. It analyzes how people utilize language in verbal or non-verbal speeches and how meaning is affected by factors such as the social context, the relationship between the speakers, and the specific circumstances in which communication takes place.¹ When a speaker or author tries to draw the attention of a listener or reader, to influence them communicatively, to interest them, to attract their thoughts, or, conversely, to distract, excite convince or deceive, there is a need to study the expressive, emotional-evaluative connotative meaning of a word or phrase, that is, its pragmatic meaning. Thus, the use of the additional meaning expressed by a word occurs due to communicative-pragmatic needs.

Literature review

Emotions, which are often seen as distinct from rational thought or reasoning, play a crucial role in shaping pragmatic processes, influencing not only the content of communication but also the way messages are formulated and understood.

In his work, the german scientist Wendy Wilutzky describes emotion as a naturally social phenomenon. He explains that emotions not only most commonly occur in social contexts, but also they are mostly reactions to other people.

Kirsh and Maglio's work on Distinguishing epistemic from pragmatic action suggests that emotions are mostly focused at achieving certain objectives within a social context, so that they are similar with pragmatic actions; and in other cases emotions can be plausibly construed as acts of probing the social environment so as to extract or uncover important information, thus complying with the functions of epistemic actions.²

¹ M. Ko'chiboyev. Matn pragmatikasi. Samarqand-2015., 6-bet

² Kirsh, D., and Maglio, P. (1994). On distinguishing epistemic from pragmaticaction. Cogn. Sci. 18, 513–549. doi: 10.1207/s15516709cog1804_1



Methods and discussion

Emotions significantly impact pragmatic processes in several ways:

1) Social Context and Interaction: Emotions affect how individuals approach and manage social interactions, which are a key to pragmatic competence. For instance, feelings, such as love, happiness, joy, jealousy or anger can lead how one interprets a speaker's intent, or how one chooses to respond. Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive, control, and evaluate emotions which helps individuals navigate the social and contextual layers of communication. Let's look at this example which is taken from the best seller novel "David Copperfield" by Charles Dickens:

"...He patted me on the head; but somehow, I didn't like him or his deep voice, and I was jealous that his hand should touch my mother's in touching me-which it did. I put it away, as well as I could."

In this statement the main lead of the novel, David represents his feeling of jealousy to his future stepfather. He didn't like Mr. Murdstone, his attitude to David's mother made him angry and jealous.

2) Tone and Non-Verbal Cues: Emotions often manifest in non-verbal aspects of communication, such as facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice. These cues provide important pragmatic information that helps recipients interpret a speaker's emotional state and, by extension, the intended message. For example, sarcasm, which involves a mismatch between what is said and the emotional tone conveyed, relies heavily on emotional cues to be understood pragmatically.

3) Speech Act Theory: Emotions also play a role in the execution of speech acts, which are communicative acts that carry out a function (e.g., requesting, promising, apologizing). Emotional context can affect the success or failure of these acts. A request made with frustration or a promise made with joy can alter the interpretation and effectiveness of the act.

Pragmatics often involves inferring meaning beyond the literal content of speech. This is known as pragmatic inference, and emotions play a key role in guiding such inferences:

Grice's maxims. In cooperative communication, speakers typically adhere to Grice's maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, manner), but emotions can shape how these maxims are interpreted. For instance, if a speaker is angry, the expectation of relevance might shift, leading the listener to interpret more broadly or with greater sensitivity to emotional undertones.

"How is she?" said my aunt sharply.

"Ma'am", returned Mr. Chillip, "I apprehended you had known. It's a boy"

My aunt said never a word, but took her bonnet by strings, in the manner of a sling, aimed a blow at Mr. Chillip's head with it.... She vanished like a discontented fairy; and never came back any more. (David Copperfield by Ch. Dickens)

In this example, David's great-aunt on father's side, Miss Betsey Trotwood Copperfield wanted her cousin to be a girl and have the baby call after herself -Betsey. She still asked the doctor surely : "How is she?", yet she didn't know the baby is a boy. The doctor's answer made her shocked and angry. She did say nothing. She expressed her emotions with her actions.

Emotions can alter the perception of social context, which is crucial for pragmatic inference. For example, if someone is speaking with an evident sense of sadness, a listener might interpret a statement more sympathetically, even if the literal meaning suggests something different. Pragmatic competence involves using emotional context to navigate these nuances. Emotions also



enable individuals to engage in empathy and theory of mind, which are essential for pragmatic reasoning. Empathy helps people understand the emotions and intentions of others, which in turn informs how they interpret statements. For example, an empathetic listener might understand that a sarcastic remark is not meant to be taken literally, based on their ability to read the speaker's emotional state.

Emotions influence decision-making in communication in ways that may override purely logical or rational reasoning. For example:

Politeness Strategies: When emotions are involved, speakers might choose more indirect or mitigated forms of speech to avoid conflict, such as using hedging or polite requests. These decisions are often made in response to anticipated emotional reactions (e.g., fear of anger, guilt, or rejection) from the listener.

Conflict Resolution: Emotions are central to how people handle disagreements and conflicts in communication. Emotional responses can prompt a speaker to engage in various pragmatic strategies, such as apologies, justifications, or confrontational tactics, depending on the emotional stakes of the interaction.

Emotional Regulation: Effective communication often requires regulating one's emotions to maintain cooperative and productive interaction. A speaker may suppress emotional reactions to avoid over-expressing anger or frustration, enabling them to achieve a more pragmatic, goal-directed conversation.

Results. Emotions shape not only individual utterances but also larger structures of discourse. In narrative communication, for instance, emotions guide how stories are told and how information is framed:

Framing and Persuasion: Emotions often influence how messages are framed within a narrative. A persuasive speaker may evoke fear, joy, or anger to motivate listeners to take a specific action. Emotional framing alters the pragmatic effect of the discourse by shaping the listener's attitudes and responses.

Discourse Markers: Emotionally charged words or phrases, such as exclamations ("Oh no!" or "How wonderful!"), serve as discourse markers that signal emotional shifts in the conversation. These markers provide pragmatic clues to the listener about the emotional context of the speaker's message, aiding in interpretation.

Conclusion

In pragmatic processes, emotions are not merely ancillary; they are integral to how communication is constructed, interpreted, and responded to. Whether in direct speech acts, inferences, emotional regulation, or intercultural exchanges, emotions significantly shape the dynamics of communication. Effective pragmatics requires not only linguistic competence but also emotional intelligence—being attuned to the emotional dimensions of interaction to facilitate smoother and more accurate communication.

Understanding the interplay of emotions and pragmatics helps explain how humans communicate beyond the surface level of words, and it underscores the importance of context, social dynamics, and empathy in meaning-making.



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