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Linguistics

Paper : Pragmatics And Discourse Analysis

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1. Introduction

Dell Hymes suggested that any communicative use of language or speech event is constituted and analysed in eight distinct factors, each associated with a different function. The present analysis comprises a Speech event consisting of people from two socio-culturally and politically different communities.

This Speech event analysis is of an English Hollywood movie 'A Passage to India' based on E.M. Foster's novel by the same name. The text begins with [GAVEL POUNDING] in line number 1 at 01:57:33,046 and ends with UHH... [LAUGHTER] in line number 14 at 01:59:56,189.

The text is transcribed using simplified notations for conversation analysis. The analysis is done after each speech act, sometimes two or more speech acts appear to be so inextricably linked to each other that it is thought fit to analyse them in continuation.

The Setting is the court of City Magistrate in district Chandrapore of colonial India. The Participants includes a judge, lawyers, Police Officer, accused, victim/litigant, audience, court attendants and clerks. The Instrumentalities is made up of Speech, the Message form (i.e. the spoken English, kinesics, gesture, facial expressions, vocalic non-verbal, non-verbal speech like hammer and Gavel pounding) a register of a language presumably understood by the participants; and the topic: case against an Indian, Dr. Aziz accused of violating the dignity of a young English girl Miss. Quested.

Underlying the event is a complex set of socially recognized rules, which can be most easily recognized by considering possible breaches of them. Imagine for instance the audience did not stand upon the Gavel pounding and remained engaged in conversation with each other. Or imagine the police officer ignored the judge's nod and did not rise. Or just think how absurd will it appear if the Police Officer stood up and said nothing, or read out an account of a football match. Or think what might happen if the Defence (or the Prosecution) upon its turn started singing a song or used for its argument a language like Latin, which is still inscribed on shields in the courts and other institutions, for their Defence but that the audience may no longer understand. Or the Participants arguing while the judge is speaking, or goes to sleep. In fact it

could be seen, towards the end, that how the judge disapproves repeatedly the violation of Norm of maintaining silence and peace in the court, by pounding hammer and by using speech imperative ‘order.’

2. Speech Situation, Speech Event and Speech Act

A speech event is embedded into a hierarchically higher unit speech situation and is itself composed of smaller units called speech acts. One example Hymes gave of a speech situation, an event, and a speech act is “a party (speech situation) a conversation during the party (speech event) and a joke within the conversation (speech act)” (Hymes 1986:56). Interviews, buying and selling goods in a shop, sermons, lectures, and informal conversation (Lillis 2006: 420 - 426) are further examples of speech events. In this analysis the Court of the City Magistrate provides the speech situation. This speech situation is made up of several smaller speech events.

3. Components of Speech (SPEAKING)

Each speech event can be described and analysed, ethnographically, in terms of its components which Hymes captures in his mnemonic device SPEAKING. Ethnography of a communicative event is a description of all the components that are relevant in understanding how that particular communicative event achieves its objectives. They also provide a “framework for the comparison of speaking practices across communities” (Ingrid 2005: 979, Hymes 1986 and Troike 1982 chapter 4). Hymes identified sixteen components (Hymes 1986: 59) that need to be distinguished in speech event analysis under ethnographic approach to communication. It is to be noted that all of them need not be specified simultaneously. The components are as follows:

3.1 *The Setting and Scene (S)*

Setting refers to the time and place, i.e., the concrete physical circumstances in which speech takes place. Scene on the contrary refers to the abstract “psychological setting or the cultural definition of the occasion.” Within a particular setting, of course, participants are free to change scenes, as they change the level of formality – Anger, laughter or a joke. An example, provided by Hymes (1986: 60), showing a change in the scene while the setting remains constant is that of a shift in the dramatic time in a play or a movie.

This speech event analysis takes the Court of the City Magistrate as its Setting. The event is situated in the district of Chandrapore in Colonial India. The time is in day probably some part of morning before noon. On one side of the judge's seat was a door labeled 'MAGISTRATES OFFICE' and the door on the other side is labeled 'JAILORS OFFICE.' A shield with a sign of the British Empire was on the wall above behind the judge's seat and a plaque inscribed in Latin is opposite to it. While Court proceedings makes up the scene. However, during the prosecution's arguments, scenes are found to shift in order to relate to the past events.

3.2 *The Participants (P)*

Hymes (1986: 58) argues that the threefold division of a speaker, hearer, and the topic postulates a dyad, speaker-hearer (or source-destination, sender-receiver, and addressor-addressee). However, there are certain situations that require specification of three participants [addressor, addressee, hearer (audience), source, spokesman, addressee; etc.]. Recall the last lecture you attended at a seminar or a conference and think of the roles people are engaged in this particular speech situation. Sure they differ from the nature of roles that of a speaker and a hearer in a conversation between you and your friend. Rather this situation involves an addressor and addressees (the audience) with a limited or no opportunity of role change. Hymes therefore came up with the term participant. Participants include various combinations of speaker–listener, addressor–addressee, or sender–receiver.

The Participants in this speech event are:

P1 – The Judge: Deputy to the City Magistrate; Indian old male in his chair.

P2 – The City Magistrate: among the crowd; English bachelor engaged.

P3 – Senior police officer (probably Superintendent of Police): English old male with the prosecution.

P3 – The litigant: English young fiancée to the City Magistrate sitting next to her in the crowd.

P4 – The accused: Indian doctor, middle age widower with two children, standing in the trial box.

P5 – Audience: Indians in the balcony, all men mostly middle aged (their occupation and status is not relevant). English in the court room includes women. Men most are English servants with their wives.

P6 – Prosecution: includes two English advocates and the police officer on the right in the room.

P7 – Defence: all Indians one young, two old sitting parallel to the prosecution on the left.

3.3 Ends (E)

Ends refers to (1) the conventionally recognized and expected outcomes of an exchange, and (2) the personal goals that participants seek to accomplish on particular occasions. The former is what Hymes calls as outcomes and the latter as goals.

The two may not be in harmony all the time, infact they often conflict each other. Emphasizing this demarcation between outcomes and goals, Hymes says that the purpose of a speech event from the community's stand points may differ from those of the participants as in the event of litigation where both parties desire to win. Similarly, a trial in the court of law, as is the case in the present analysis, has a recognizable social end in view, but the various participants, i.e., the judge, jury, prosecution, defense, accused, witnesses, and audience have different personal goals. See below, for example.

The Judge: To uphold the law, to determine the truth, to evaluate the acceptability and validity of the arguments by the Prosecution and the Defence, to establish guilty, to establish the quantum of punishment, and to pronounce the sentence.

The Prosecution: To argue and impress the judge so as to establish the accused guilty and to secure maximum sentence for the accused.

The Defence: To argue and impress the judge so as to establish the innocence of the accused and to secure the acquittal of the accused.

Audience: Indians would like to see the accused be pronounced innocent and be acquitted. The British would like to see the accused be pronounced guilty and his subsequent conviction.

3.4 Act sequence (A)

Act sequence refers to the precise words used, how they are used, and the relationship of what is said to the actual topic at hand. The former is labeled as the message form and the latter as message content.

Many serious errors occur when there is a mismatch between form and content this is because we ignore the fact that "...how something is *said* is part of *what* is said" (Hymes 1986: 59). Ask yourself can you be

apologetic or mourning while putting a broad grin on your face; or talking out loudly while attending a condolence.

In this analysis many different instrumentalities as message form for the purpose of the trial, which forms the topic at hand. Sometime the forms are evoked with a conflicting Key (see analysis below).

3.5 Key (K)

Key refers to the tone, manner, or spirit in which a particular message is conveyed. Key may enter the analysis nonverbally by participant's behavior, gesture, posture or even the kind of clothes they wear etc. Hymes stressed that "when it is in conflict with the overt content of an act, it often overrides the latter (as in sarcasm)." (Hymes 1986: 62)

In this analysis there are instances when the Key is in conflict with the overt content of the speech act. For example see analysis line:

3.6 Instrumentalities (I)

Instrumentalities refer to the choice of channel, e.g., "oral, written, telegraphic, semaphore, or other medium of transmission of speech." It also refers to the actual forms of speech employed, such as the language, dialect, code, or register that is chosen. Formal, written, legal language is one example of instrumentality.

This speech event displays the use of a variety of Instrumentalities as are given below:

Verbal	Spoken English, written English, written Latin, court documents, files and books.
Nonverbal	Kinesics: eye movement, facial expression, gaze, body posture.
Non-speech sounds	Gavel and hammer pounding.
Visual semiotics	Statue of justice, union jack, shields etc.
Dresses	Uniforms of Police, lawyers, Judge etc.
Silence	Particularly when personified by the accused – Dr. Aziz, and by the victim – Miss. Quested.

Proxemics Separation of the British and the Indians in the court room. Reservation of spaces for the judge and the other Participants and between the defence and the prosecution; and between them and the audience.

3.7 Norms of interaction and interpretation (N)

Norms of interaction refer to “the specific behaviours and properties that attach to speaking – that one must not interrupt, for example, or that one may freely do so; that normal voice should not be used except when scheduled in a church service (whisper otherwise); that turns in speaking are to be allocated in a certain way” (Hymes 1986: 64). Norms must be observed while, say paying a visit to a place of worship, attending an academic event, an exhibition, theater or a political gathering and the like.

Norms of interpretation refer to how the norms of interaction may be viewed by someone who does not share them. This may lead to misunderstandings or a complete breakdown in communication. There are similarly different interpretations associated in different cultures with loudness, silence, gaze return, and so on.

3.8 Genre (G)

Genre refers to clearly demarcated types of utterances that depend on the kind of speech event one is engaged in. Proverbs, riddles, sermons, prayers, lectures, and editorials each represent distinct genres fit for particular occasions.

This speech event uses mostly legal English with serious Key. Sometimes it includes sarcasm and mocking.

4. ‘A Passage to India:’ A Speech Event Analysis

1 (01:57:33,046 --> 01:57:35,548)

A: [GAVEL POUNDING]{3}

A servant standing in the Court pounds the Gavel. It is a form of Non-verbal communication which has a serious, legal Key. This communicative act may be analyzed within both Instrumentality as well as Act

sequence with Gavel pounding forming the form of communication while content to which it is related is an announcement of the arrival of the judge so that the things fall to order. The typical Norm realized in this process is the order to rise as a show of respect to the judge. The Norm is concurred by all the Participants. Apparently there seems no mismatch in the expectation to follow this Norm. Although, one section of the Participants – the Indians might probably not like to rise at the arrival of the judge but still they do concur with the Norm possibly so as not to offend the other Participants or be accused to challenge the institutional authority of the court.

2 (01:57:45,558 --> 01:57:49,062)

C:DAS IS A GOOD MAN,MRS. TURTON.

The City Magistrate, but today among the crowd as he is the interested party to the case, uses spoken English as Instrumentality with serious Key. The Norm of addressing a married English lady with the title ‘Mrs.’ is adhered to. The key used is serious but the form of the Act sequence does not literally convey the Message content. It is used to satisfy the concern of Mrs. Turton that his absence as the judge today might influence the outcome of the trial. Mrs. Turton, Ronny and Ms. Quersted are the Participants (This speech act is in reference to the previous speech event, can be ignored)

3 (01:57:52 --> 01:57:52)

J:[NODS TO THE POLICE OFFICER]

The judge, Deputy to the City Magistrate, is officiating the business today. The Instrumentalities comprises of papers, documents, files and books, on his large desk. He uses non-verbal nod with serious Key as a Message form as well as one of the Instrumentality to order the Police Officer to rise and produce the argument. The other Participants comprise the audience. The Norm inherent in this speech act is adhered to by the Police Officer as he takes the cue and rise.

4 (01:57:56,069 --> 01:57:57,570)

P: THANK YOU, SIR.

Conforming to the Norm of the previous speech act the Police Officer rises and produces his arguments. He uses spoken English with serious Key as the Instrumentality. A slight bow (and an imperceptible nod)

is also used, redundantly, along with the speech as a mark of respect and gratitude in honour of the judge. No other Instrumentalities are used. In the domain of speech the Message form 'Sir' is used as title of address in English to someone who is higher in rank or authority. This Message form also encapsulates the Norm as it is considered an expression of gratitude and formula to begin the argument in many institutional settings including the Court of Law. There are no mismatches between Form and Content and the Norms of the various Participants.

5 (01:57:57,570 --> 01:58:00,573)

P: ON APRIL 3rd OF THIS YEAR,

The Instrumentalities used in this act is spoken English, with serious Key. The speaker likely tries to evoke the Norm of established formula for factual description in legal domains when he begins his talk with the exact factual date. The speaker, by referring to some past event, brings about a change in the Scene. The Setting remains the same.

6 (01:58:00,573 --> 01:58:09,582)

P: MISS QUESTED AND MRS. MOORE WERE INVITED TO A TEA PARTY AT THE HOUSE OF GOVERNMENT COLLEGE'S PRINCIPAL.

No other Instrumentalities except spoken English with respectful serious Key are used. Following the English Norm, the title 'Miss' and 'Mrs.' are used to address and show respect to an unmarried English lady and a married English women respectively. The speaker invokes Mrs. Moore, a participant who is not present. There is no mismatch between Message form and its content, neither there is any incongruity between Norms of the speaker and the hearer, however the Indian Participants may not identify with the Norm. Further, a tea party may not be normative to the Indian Participants and therefore a fuller appreciation of what constitutes a tea party may not be reached by them.

7 (01:58:09,582 --> 01:58:23,096)

P: HERE, THE PRISONER FIRST MET MISS QUESTED, A YOUNG GIRL FRESH FROM ENGLAND. UNTIL THIS PARTY, THE PRISONER HAD NEVER BEEN SO CLOSE TO AN ENGLISH GIRL.

The speaker uses spoken English with serious Key as the Message form while the declarative forms the Instrumentality. The intention to use this Message form is to evoke the underlying content of establishing guilt of the accused.

The speaker brings forth the Norm that it is thought inappropriate and beneath the dignity of the Whites (particularly White women) to be in the company of the Orientals. The real content of the Message is not in harmony with its form since what the speaker is trying to emphasize is that a young White girl will be an object of desire for the Oriental men. This understanding is not captured by the declarative nature of the officer's speech. As such the speaker is relying on Rhetorical aspect of speech. The allusion is to the past events and therefore leads a change in the Scene of the event.

8 (01:58:23,096 --> 01:58:27,600)

P: IN CONSIDERATION OF THE LADIES PRESENT, I'LL MERELY ALLUDE TO THE FACT

The speaker uses spoken English with serious Key. The Message content evoked by the Form are: excuse and circumvention. This speech is a reminder of the fact that it is normative in the presence of women that certain talk, considered as inappropriate, should be avoided or strategies to circumvent it be used. The speaker is trying to rely on euphemism to proscribe certain use of language which falls under the domain of taboo.

9 (01:58:27,600 --> 01:58:30,603)

P: THAT HE'S A WIDOWER LIVING ALONE.

Spoken English with serious Key is used. The speech is declarative but is used to establish guilt by exploiting the social belief that a widower has sexual desires to be fulfilled. This proposition is not parallel to the Ends expected by the accused and the Indian Participants. But it is in accord to the Prosecution and to other English Participants.

10 (01:58:30,603 --> 01:58:37,110)

P: IN PRESENTING OUR EVIDENCE, I'LL PROVIDE AMPLE PROOF OF HIS STATE OF MIND.

Spoken English with serious legal Key is used both as Instrumentality and as Message form. It is used to prepare the ground for arguing and establishing guilt of the accused. Registers like ‘proof’ and ‘evidence’ suggests to the Legal Genre of the event. Such a use of speech also highlights the Norm that proof and evidence are admissible to the court of law rather than unsubstantiated opinions and beliefs.

11 (01:58:37,110 --> 01:58:54,127)

P: BEFORE GOING THROUGH THE HISTORY OF THIS APPALLING CRIME, I WANT TO STATE WHAT I BELIEVE TO BE A UNIVERSAL TRUTH.

THE DARKER RACES ARE ATTRACTED TO THE FAIRER, BUT NOT VICE VERSA. [SLOW, EMPHATIC, DETERMINED TONE]

The speaker uses spoken English with proverbial seriousness as Key. It is used to render his arguments acceptable. The Genre that the speaker tries to evoke is proverbial since the hue he provides to his opinions are presented in a fashion similar to a proverb but in a fact like manner by using a declarative. In so doing the speaker also attempts to convince the jury about the guilt of the accused. There is an evident conflict of Ends of various Participants.

12 (01:58:54,627 --> 01:58:58,631)

D: EVEN WHEN THE LADY IS LESS ATTRACTIVE THAN THE GENTLEMAN?

The Instrumentality of spoken English evokes the sarcastic Key in this speech act. The Form of the Message is a question. The content evoked, however, is sarcasm and disagreement with the Police Officer’s proposition. It also serves to mock the belief and the absurdity of such an opinion held by the Officer in particular and the English in general. The Genre evoked in this speech act is that of a joke and as a consequence induces much laughter and mirth among a section of the Participants who do not concur with the proposition. However, given the differential Goals that the various Participants seek in this speech event, the English Participants find this speech act disgusting as is evident in their non-verbals. The judge on the other hand, given his concern for the Ends (institutional outcomes) and to maintain and enforce the Norms of the Setting is also irked by the fuss created by the laughter which is reflected in the following speech act.

13 (01:58:59,132 --> 01:59:06,639)

J: ORDER! [HAMMER POUNDING] {4}

Two message forms, apart from Kinesis, Proxemics and Facial expressions are used in this speech act namely; spoken English and non-verbal hammer pounding. Both of which are used to issue order to maintain silence. The Key is serious and legal. Hammer pounding, together with speech, is used as a Norm to control the behaviour of the Participants. The Norms evoked are the assertion of authority, order to maintain calm and silence in a court of law. The Norm is challenged by one section of the Participants and is violated by their rupture into cackling laughter.

14 (01:59:38,171 --> 01:59:56,189)

IA: UHH. [CACKLING LAUGHTER, CLAPPING, GESTURING, POINTING]

Instrumentalities and Message form used are vocalic non-verbal, facial expressions and gestures. The content meant to be evoked are humour and mocking. Further, it is likely that it might be used to subvert and challenge the foreign rule of Law in specific and enslavement of India in general. For when evoked in a court of law it serves to mock and is a display of violation of authority of the institutions maintained by the Colonial rule. The Genre is humour.

5. Index to the Text

Arabic Numerals stand for the line number.

Numbers within () indicate time of origin and time of completion of the speech act.

Text within [] indicates non-verbal speech.

Number within { } indicates number of repetitions of the speech act.

A: Attendant

C: City Magistrate

D: Defence lawyer

J: Judge

P: Police Officer

IA: Indian audience



Linguistics

Paper : Pragmatics And Discourse Analysis

Module : Speech Event Analysis

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