PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION IN PRAGMALINGUISTICS

Pragmatic analysis in the sphere of principles of communication produced at least three theories.

The first principle of communication is known as the Principle of Co-operation. It was proposed by Paul Grice in 1975. It states: ‘Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.’ The co-operative principle includes four maxims that define the contents of the communicant’s utterances.

1. The Maxim of Quality demands that one must not tell lies.
2. The Maxim of Quality demands that one should not use very long and complicated utterances.
3. The Maxim of Relevance demands that one should not mention things that are not directly connected with the topic of conversation.
4. The Maxim of Manner demands that one should not make one’s utterances overcomplicated.

The co-operative principle is intuitively attractive, and it seems likely that we (unconsciously) use it, or some very similar approach, in our interpretation of discourse.

On the other hand, the Gricean maxims are not equally applicable to every situation. They are not always observed, and the failure to do so can take a number of forms.

1. Opting out: making clear that one is aware of the maxim, but is prevented for some reason from observing it. Politicians and reporters observing an embargo on the publication of news are in this situation.

2. Violating a maxim: often with the intention to mislead, this is often a quiet act, also known as lying.

3. A clash arises when one cannot be fully co-operative. For instance, to fulfil one maxim (say, of quantity) might require one to break another (of quality), in a situation where one is not certain of the accuracy of some information, and hence uncertain whether to say something which may be helpful, but where one’s evidence is inadequate. One may therefore hedge one’s contribution. Phrases such as *I understand that*, or *it seems to me* may indicate this [1, p. 24].

4. Flouting: this is the most interesting way of breaking a maxim. One makes clear to the hearer that one is aware of the co-operative principle and the maxims, so that the audience is led to consider why the principle or a maxim was broken. The assumption, in other words, is not that communication has broken down, but that the speaker has chosen an indirect way of achieving it [1, p. 25].

Thus Paul Grice presents an idealized account of the average verbal interaction.

The conventions that are most often responsible for disobedience to the maxims of the Principle of Co-operation were summarized by Geoffrey Leech in his book *Principles of Pragmatics* (1980). He introduces the Politeness Principle which runs as follows: ‘Minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs’ and ‘maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs.’ To this politeness principle he attaches six maxims. Each maxim is accompanied by a sub-maxim, which is of less importance. These support the idea that negative politeness (avoidance of discord) is more important than positive politeness (seeking concord).

1. **Tact maxim** (in directives [impositives] and commissives): minimize cost to other; [maximize benefit to other].
2. **Generosity maxim** (in directives and commissives): minimise benefit to self; [maximize cost to self].
3. **Approval maxim** (in expressives and representatives [assertives]): minimise dispraise of other; [maximize praise of other].
4. **Modesty maxim** (in expressives and representatives): minimize praise of self; [maximize dispraise of self].
5. **Agreement maxim** (in representatives): minimize disagreement between self and other; [maximize agreement between self and other].

6. **Sympathy maxim** (in representatives): minimize antipathy between self and other; [maximize sympathy between self and other] [3].

All the maxims are designed to adapt the behaviour of the communicant so that his or her partner should feel at ease. This should be achieved even at the cost of disobeying the Principle of Co-operation.

However, Politeness in this model is essentially a scalar phenomenon: the degree of imposition on the hearer will normally condition the degree of indirectness, mitigation or other politeness marker from the speaker [1, p. 73].

Not all of the maxims are equally important. For instance, “Tact” influences what we say more powerfully than does “Generosity”, while “Approbation” is more important than “Modesty”. Note also that speakers may adhere to more than one maxim of politeness at the same time. Often one maxim is on the forefront of the utterance, with a second maxim being invoked by implication [4].

Another principle of communication was proposed by D.G. Bogushevich. According to his theory Language is a universal means of organizing human activity. He comes to two important conclusions.

1. Language must meet the requirements of the basic principle of organizing, the **Principle of Pragmatic Sufficiency** which for Language can be formulated in the following way: “We say what we believe is necessary and enough, and meets the requirements of present conditions of activity” [2, p. 19].

2. The largest linguistic structure should be the one which is used to organize interpersonal activity, that is, an event of communication [2, p. 19].

An event of communication should be a frame into which all other units of a language must be fitted. The frame itself should be constructed in accordance with the Principle of Pragmatic Sufficiency. It means that the frame should necessarily have relations to other frames, to a certain state of things, that should be changed (organized), as well as to the participants of the event of communication. Besides, its form should meet the requirement of the situation in the current activity (be enough to organize it). We can see then that the Principle of Pragmatic Sufficiency demands that any event of communication should possess all properties of a linguistic sign as it was defined by C.W. Morris.

Since the function of events of communication is to organize, its immediate constituents (ICs) should perform the function of influence. This leads us to conclude that ICs of events of communication must be those by which the participants exert their influence upon each other. Such units are series of utterances of each of the communicant. Such series are called “communicative parts”. The latter perform their function through informative units, utterances (“speech acts”).
These three theoretical descriptions of the process of communication do not contradict each other because they describe different aspects of a participant’s behaviour.

References