

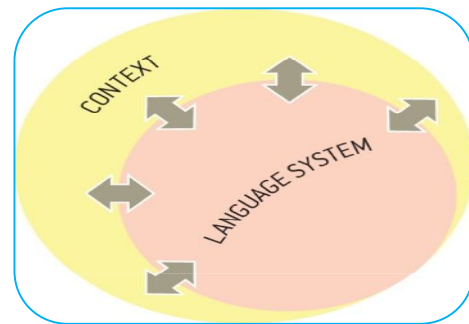


THE STUDY OF POLITENESS PRINCIPLE IN THE SECOND ACT OF THE HOMECOMING

Suyog Sudarshan Dodal
Assistant Professor, Dept. Of English,
Adarsh Education Society's ACS College, Hingoli. Maharashtra.

ABSTRACT:

Language is a effective medium of communication. Human beings communicate their ideas, thoughts, emotions and views through language and for that effective communication are necessary. For effective communication one has to learn and use various linguistic techniques and for it to study language and its subfields are necessary. Linguistic is the science which studies the origin, organization, nature and development of language. Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistic which explains the ways in which context contributes to meaning. According to Levinson "Pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammartized or encoded in the structure of language" (Levinson 09). It shows that the meaning and analysis of any conversation exchange is not only depending on the linguistic knowledge of the speaker and listener, but also it deals with context of the conversation, knowledge about the status of speaker and hearer, intensions of speaker and hearer and so on. Thus, it helps to understand the proper meaning from the conversation exchanges of the plays. It studies the functions of language and its relation with context. Thus, in any conversation, a variety of factors are responsible for proper meaning like age, sex, social status, reference etc.



KEYWORDS: ideas, thoughts, emotions, language and context.

INTRODUCTION :

Politeness principle is very important term of pragmatics. Politeness principle is related with interpersonal feature of communication exchange. Though the main function of language is communication, but it also helps to maintain social relationship between speaker and listener. There are various theories related to politeness principle by various researchers like Grice, Lakoff, Leech and Brown & Levinson. First formulated by Lakoff in 1973, politeness theory has since expanded academia's perception of politeness. Politeness is the expression of the speaker's intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts towards another, (MILL06) There are two types of face- positive and negative face. A positive face is accepted and liked by others, means it is connected to others but negative face is related to that person's independence. According to Geoffrey Leech in conversation exchange the speakers and listeners pursue certain civil rules and social goals to establish harmonious relationship between them. They confront clashes while pursuing their goals and they use various linguistic strategies to attain them. For Leech through politeness it is possible for everyone to preserve human relationship and avoid clashes, means they maintain their positive face by observing politeness..

He relates it with conversation and it is helpful for everyone to improve their conversation means communication skill.

The politeness principle proposed is further sub divided into six subcategories i.e.

- (1) Tact Maxim :
- (2) Generosity Maxim:
- (3) Approbation Maxim:
- (4) Modesty Maxim:
- (5) Agreement Maxim :
- (6) Sympathy Maxim: (Leech132).

- 1) The tact maxim denotes that our expression of beliefs implies minimum cost to others and maximum benefit to others, it is in line with the concept of positive face explained by Lakoff.
- 2) The generosity maxim explains that our expression denotes minimise benefit to self and maximise cost to self. It also suggests the positive politeness theory as it focuses on hearer's interest and needs.
- 3) The approbation maxim suggests that minimise the expression of beliefs which express dispraise of other and maximise the expression of beliefs which express approval to other. It suggests to avoid maximum disagreement, either to praise or to become silent.
- 4) The modesty maxim states that through our communication we must express to minimise the expression of praise to self and to maximise the expression of dispraise of self.
- 5) The agreement maxim denotes minimise the expression of disagreement between self and other and maximise the expression of agreement between self and other, again denotes the positive face. It is necessary for the upliftment of society.
- 6) The sympathy maxim explains that minimise antipathy between self and other and maximise sympathy between self and other. It takes to use small group of speech acts like congratulation, commiseration and condolences.

In this present research paper the researcher has applied the politeness principle on the selected conversation exchanges of the act two of *The Homecoming*. It is Harold Pinter's one of the most controversial play, a fine example of absurd play. The plot moves around Ruth and her homecoming. In the first act of the play *The Homecoming* the dramatist has introduced Max's family, his two sons and brother. The absence of female character from long time has changed the language of all the male characters of the house. The struggle for power and feminity are the main themes of the play. All the male characters use derogatory language for Ruth the only female character of the play. The politeness principle helps us to understand the proper meaning and intensions of all characters. Here we see in the first act Max feels superior than Sam due to his masculine power but weaker in front of his sons. The arrival of Ruth and Teddy from America has changed the circumstances of the house. Except Teddy and Sam everyone wants to control and get higher position in the house. In the end we get a shock as Ruth is ready to stay in that house of London, even ready to work as prostitute. mother and lover. Teddy also accepts it suggests the typical patriarchal thinking and the absurd, meaningless life of modern people. The politeness principle and it maxims helps to know the contextual meaning of the conversation and even throws light on the mentality of society and helps to understand the real intensions of the playwright.

In the following conversation exchange from the act two between Max and Ruth we observe that every character of the house follow politeness maxims in their conversation as they praise each other's qualities and follow social rules, in this sense they follow agreement maxim with society as they behave civilly with each other. Upto this time they think Ruth as their guest, so they behave politely after her arrival in the house. We surprise on their sudden change of manners and language as in first act they use uncivil words for female class. Here. The change in their behaviour is a sign of future disaster in the life of Teddy. In the first scene of the second act we observe the cooperative and polite behaviour of

Max, Ruth and Teddy. The contextual study suggests that they have certain hidden intensions behind such polite behaviour.

MAX. I'm glad you like it. *(To the others)* Did you hear that? *(To RUTH)* Well, I put my soul and heart in it. I can tell you. *(He sips)* And this is a lovely cup of coffee.

RUTH. I'm glad.

Pause

MAX. I've got the feeling you're a first rate cook.

RUTH. I'm not bad.

MAX. No, I've got the feeling you are a number one cook. Am I right Teddy?

TEDDY. Yes, she is a very good cook. *(The Homecoming 45)*

The politeness principle denotes the interpersonal relationship and the context of the speaker and listener. Here, from the above conversation we observe that Max and Ruth behave politely with each other and follow politeness principle which leads to develop the further relationship, action and immorality in the play. At first Ruth praises the lunch made by Max and maintains the maxims of approbation sympathy as she explained that "That was a very good lunch." *(The Homecoming 44)* Max's reply suggests that on the one hand he follows maxim of agreement as he is agrees that he is very good cook, but on the other hand, he im of thing to other family members suggests his rude nature and his weak power in the house due to his age. In the end again he praises the coffee made by Ruth suggests their increasing relationship and he maintains maxim of approbation here. Ruth expresses her happiness over Max's praise denotes her compliance with maxim of approbation. Even, it also suggests that she is now feeling more comfortable in that house. Max again emphasises on her cooking skill suggests that he is tired by cooking in the house, even he does not agree with Ruth on this matter and confirms his statement as repeating the question to Teddy. It apparently suggests his noncompliance with maxim of agreement but in reality he praises Ruth for his own benefit. In the last part of the dialogue, Teddy follows maxims of agreement and approbation as he agrees with his father's opinion and praises Ruth, again suggests his good and cultured nature.

In the following conversation, with the help of politeness principle we observe that Ruth is not happy in America and she wants to tell some secrets about her past life to Lenny and clears her intension to stay there. Before this conversation she disagrees with Teddy on the matter of cleanness, emphasises Teddy to stay there for more time. Thus, she observes politeness principle in her conversation with Teddy's family members denotes her intension that she feels more powerful and free in that house than her own educated, cultured life of America. The contextual study helps us in this matter.

RUTH. I'm fond.

Pause

What do you think of my shoes?

LENNY. They're very nice.

RUTH. No, I can't get the ones I want over there.

LENNY. Can't get over there, eh?

RUTH. No... you don't get them there.

Pause

I was a model before I went away. *(The Homecoming 56-57)*

In the above conversation we observe that Ruth is overambitious as she first explains that she likes cloths and shoes, suggests that she flouts maxim of modesty by explaining her likes and dislikes. Her real intension is different i.e. to tell truth to Lenny about herself and to stay there as she is tired by cultured life of America, which suggests that modern educated life is meaningless and absurd. Lenny follows maxim of agreement and modesty as he calls that shoes as nice, here he is failed to understand

the real meaning from her remark. In the end Ruth clears that these shoes are not proper there. Ruth explains that she was a model, a photographic model for the body, works outside for it for many times. Here she tries to follow maxim of sympathy as she tries to maximise sympathy between her and Lenny. We see this incident as the climax scene of the play, as after it Ruth goes near to Teddy's family and deliberately goes away from Teddy.

In the following conversation, we observe that Joey deliberately violates politeness principle as he likes Ruth and wants to stay with her in that house. Every other character of hearted resistance from Teddy and Sam look trifle as all the other powerful characters has decided to put her in the house.

SAM. He's her lawful husband. She's his lawful wife.

JOEY. No he don't! He don't get no gravy! I'm telling you. I'm telling all of you. I'm kill the next man who says he gets the gravy.

MAX. Joey...what are you getting so excited about?(*To Lenny*) It's because he's frustrated. You see what happens?

Pause

You know something? Perhaps it's not bad idea to have a woman in the house...(The Homecoming 69)

The politeness principle helps the readers to study the interpersonal relationship between the characters. It also throws light on the typical thinking of male dominated society. The playwright criticises on this mentality of modern society. At first Sam follows the maxim of sympathy as he supports Teddy and shows sympathy towards him. We observe that Sam is only moral character in the play who follows social agreement suggests his compliance of maxim of agreement. Joey violates maxims of sympathy and agreement in this conversation due to his over sentimentalism. He does not show any sympathy towards Teddy and even threatens everyone to kill them if they speak about it. In this sense he flouts social agreement about morality. Max violates maxims of agreement and sympathy with Joey as he tries to sooth him and explains that he is frustrated. Joey again speaks loudly about frustration suggests his noncompliance of maxim of agreement. In the end Max due to his fear, follows maxims of agreement and sympathy with Joey and calls him correct, suggests that he intentionally follows and violates these maxims. The politeness principle suggests that the in the interpersonal relationship the meaning is depend on context rather than literary meaning. In the end of the conversation Max decides to put Ruth at their house, suggests his noncompliance with maxims of social agreement, but the contextual study denotes that he did this due to his selfishness.

Thus, the politeness principle helps the reader to understand the hidden meaning of the characters and playwright. It also throws light on interpersonal relationship of the characters and clears that the meaning of any conversation depends not only on literary meaning of the words bur on the contexts too. It also helps us to develop our communication skills and to create better harmony in the society. Even it helps us to understand the Pinter's plays properly and to recognise his real intension behind putting communication gap and certain absurd elements in his plays. The present research paper helps us to understand the real meaning and communication of the act second of *The Homecoming*.

WORK CITED:

- Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford University Press, 1962. Print.
- Cook, G. *Discourse*, Oxford University Press, 1989. Print.
- Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Methuen, 2004 print.
- Grice, H. P. *Logic and Conversation: William James Lecturers*. 1967 rpt. 1989, 01:143. Print.
- _____. *Logic and Conversation*, in P. Cole and J. L. Morgan (Eds.). 1975,41-58. Print.
- Grundy, Peter. *Doing Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- Leech, Geoffrey. *Principles of Pragmatics*. Longman Group Limited, 1983. Print.

- Levinson, Stephen. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press, 1983. Print.
- Pinter, Harold. *The Homecoming*. London: Methuen, 1987. Print.
- ___. *The Birthday Party*. London: Methuen, 1965. Print.
- Parwo, BambangKaswanti. *DeiksisDalamBahasa Indonesia*. Jakarta: P. N.
- Searle, J. R. *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge University Press, 1979. Print.
- ___. *Indirect Speech Acts*, in P. Cole and J. L. Morgan (Eds.). 1975: 59-82. Print.
- Simpson, Paul. *Language through Literature: An Introduction*. Routledge, 1997. Print.
- Thorat, Ashok. *A Discourse Analysis of Five Great Indian Novels*. MacMillan Press Ltd., 2002. Print.
- Yule, George. *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.
- ___. *The Study of Language*. Cambridge University Press. 1985. Print.
- Dyson, A.E. ed. *The Birthday Party, The Caretaker, The Homecoming. A Casebook*, MacMillan Press Ltd.,1986.