

The Function of Context in Interpreting the Meaning of Language in Communication—Based on the Pragmatics

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Abstract: Context is the study of the meaning of discourse in a specific context. It has a great constraint on the understanding and expression of discourse. This article focuses on the relationship between context and meaning, and will summarize the role of context in the interpretation of language meaning in communication.

Keywords: Meaning; Different Context; Pragmatics

1. Introduction

1.1 Research background

From the perspective of modern foreign context studies, Polish anthropologist Malinowski (1930) was the first who put forward the concept of context. He first put forward the term “context of situation” in his article *The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Language* written in 1923 and believes that a language is basically rooted in the cultural and social life and customs of the people who speak it, and it is difficult to understand a language correctly without referring to these broad contexts. Through his research, it is concluded that words have no meaning without context. Later, relevance theory defined relevance as the relationship between hypothesis and context.

Many studies have shown that context is the study of the meaning of discourse in specific situations, and context has a great binding effect on the understanding and expression of discourse. The binding effect is also reflected in the fact that words or expressions that do not make sense in general occasions can be understood and accepted in specific contexts, and sometimes even have unexpected effects.

1.2 Significance of this study

Language understanding is a complex cognitive and psychological process, which is reflected in the fact that verbal communication is limited by communicative occasions and social and cultural factors. The speaker's discourse organization depends on the listeners' contextual hypothesis ability and reasoning ability in a specific communicative context. With the difference of people's environmental experience and cognitive ability, their cognitive context will be different and their cognition of things will be different. There are already a significant number of people who concentrate their attention on studying the function of context in interpreting the meaning of language in communication and intercultural communication and very few decide to focus on pragmatics angle.

The paper aims to conduct a systematic introduction to the meaning of pragmatics, the definition of cultural context and the definition of situational context and then explain the differences of context with examples from both Chinese and English, so as to provide useful reference for future similar research practice.

2. General study of the pragmatics

2.1 General introduction of the pragmatics

Language research should study the application of language, the function of language, and the relationship between language, context and culture. At the same time, in language practice, there are often many phenomena that cannot be

explained by either syntax or semantics. Linguistics researchers find the new way to solve the problem- context. It has been found that the pragmatic explanation of linguistic phenomena is often more sufficient, more convenient and more satisfactory than the semantic explanation. Thus pragmatics came into being.

The concept of pragmatics first put forward by the American philosopher Charles Morris in the 1930s. Pragmatics as a relatively independent branch of linguistics was gradually established in the 1970s. It developed rapidly in the 1980s and formed a relatively complete system; it has established its own research scope and the method. After decades of efforts by pragmatics researchers, great progress has been made in the study of pragmatics.

Pragmatics is the study of meaning in context. It deals with particular utterances in particular situations and is especially concerned with the various ways in which many social contexts of language performance can influence interpretation. In other words, pragmatics is concerned with the way language is used to communicate rather than with the way language is internally structured. Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). It has, consequently, more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves. So pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning and contextual meaning. And it is the study of how more gets communicated than is said and of the expression of relative distance. These are four areas that pragmatics is concerned with.

One of the goals of pragmatics is to explain how context and meaning are connected. Therefore, it has guiding significance for cross-cultural communication.

2.2 The application of pragmatics in cross-cultural communication

For a long period of time since the 1960s and 1970s, the study of foreign languages in China has been influenced by structuralism. Too much attention is paid to the learning of language forms and too little attention is paid to the function of language forms. Under this kind of influence, grammatical translation plays a dominant role in foreign language learning. It seems that the basic vocabulary, basic sentence structure and the basic grammar have learned, the language has learned. In practice, however, the problems arise. Many studies have shown that the amount of language knowledge is not directly proportional to the appropriateness of pragmatics. Pragmatic theory tells us that language learning cannot be understood as simple grammar and lexical learning. The purpose of foreign language learning is not only to teach students to master the form and meaning of language, but more importantly, to let students master the usage of language, especially in different situations of communicative use.

In the cross-cultural communication between China and English speaking countries, the two sides come from two different languages and cultural backgrounds. In their communication, they will unconsciously use the thinking habits and communicative modes in their own culture to carry out communicative activities or to understand each other, which may lead to pragmatic errors. Different languages reflect different thinking modes. Language cannot be transmitted without social and cultural background. Communication will be in an awkward situation because of the different cultural backgrounds of both parties, if this point is not taken into account in cross-cultural communication.

3. General meaning of context based on the pragmatic

Different language environment makes the meaning of the same sentence different. There are many factors that influence the language environment. In different situations (time, place, people, etc.), the same utterance may have different meaning. The context of the sentence itself is the meaning of the words before and after the collocation of words in which the mood signs and other factors. It is to bring the combination of words with independent meaning to a specific context and the collocation before and after the language to express different meanings.

In different cultures, the same lexical term may not mean the same thing to people of different culture backgrounds. Differences of word meaning due to cultural differences. In addition to the language itself, the composition of the objective environment, the expression of the identity of people communicative occasions communicative purposes communicative objects body movements are non-linguistic context composition factors.

In cross-cultural communication, cultural differences are inevitable, and context plays a key role in cross-cultural communication. In cross-cultural communication, people usually infer semantics from the structure of language and the subjective and objective environment of language. The meaning of a word is rooted in the linguistic context, which extends the meaning of a word. It is also necessary to understand the meaning of intercultural communication through linguistic context. Cross-cultural communication also takes place in a certain situation. In situational communication, cross-cultural communication is easier to achieve through the understanding of body and objective environment. Situational context is the main component of cross-cultural communication. In cross-cultural communication, cultural context makes linguistic context more coherent and expresses more hidden meanings in linguistic context. Contextual cognition enables people to combine native culture with foreign culture to understand the differences between cultures. It can help avoid unnecessary cultural conflicts in cross-cultural communication; it can also help people choose language expression, body movements and facial expressions in cross-cultural communication and reduce misinterpretation of cultural information.

4. The function of context in interpreting the meaning of language in communication

Context, to a certain extent, reduces the barriers to communication, makes communication more smooth, and enables communication to receive good results. Language environment is essential for understanding language. It is an important means to resolve ambiguity: Any language has many words are ambiguous, used in a sentence usually embodies the meaning, it must make a choice based on context. In a language environment, the speaker only people to express a meaning. Polysemy is also very common in English, and some kind of meaning can often be reflected through the context However, the existence of polysemy and ambiguity does not cause confusion in communication because the specific context can make it simple.

Speakers of a language must possess in order to express their intentions and interpret those of others. In order to investigate how we can "make meaning by using language is necessary to bring in the notion of context, that is, the way the various elements are combined, how they relate to the world at large, and the purposes for which they are used. This side of language study is generally called pragmatics. The central message of pragmatics is that meaning does not come ready made or 'packaged' in words or sentences, but is constructed by speakers and hearers through processes of interpretation, in the context in which the language is used.

5. Conclusion

Context plays an important role in pragmatics. Pragmatics attaches particular importance to the study of context. Context is indispensable for people to accurately understand the speaker's intention in verbal communication.

People communicate every day. Language, like air, accompanies people all the time. Whether the spoken words can be accepted and understood by the hearer depends on whether they are coincident with the context. How to organize the words people use to express their feelings to achieve the desired effect, the key is to adapt to the context. In communication, people do not feel they are using context. Because people can organize their own language according to the context, express their own meaning, and unconsciously adapt to the local environment at that time. However, the scope of verbal communication is wide. Only effective verbal communication can reflect a person's pragmatic ability, and the study of context is to communicate more effectively.

References

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