



Understanding misunderstanding: An approach to Speech Act and No Approach to Ideology

Lecturer Dr. Manal Adnan

Ministry of Education /Karkh 2 Manaladnan70@gmail.com

Abstract : Speech act and ideology are two important topics in the study of meaning within the context in which the occurrence occurs. The variety of readings of utterances reveals a mess of misunderstanding. This paper aims at explaining the misunderstanding that may occur and if there are practical recommendations for written texts. The comparison between the ability in the case of speech act and the disability in the case of ideology reflects the nature of misunderstanding in the two. Thus, it is concluded that suggesting a kind of graphic system to explain the meanings (punctuating the meaning) helps to avoid wrong identifications of speech acts but it cannot offer a similar solution with recognizing the ideology of spoof texts. **Key Words:** speech act, ideology, spoof text, punctuating meaning.

فهم سوء الفهم : مسلكا لأفعال القول ولا مسلكا للأيدولوجيا

د منال عدنان سعدون Manaladnan70@gmail.com

وزارة التربية/ مديرية الكرخ الثانية

المخلص : أفعال القول والأيدولوجيا هما موضوعان مهمان في دراسة المعنى في السياق الذي يحدث فيه اللفظ اللغوي. ان تنوع تفسيرات اللفظ اللغوي يسبب فوضى في تفسير المعنى. هذه الورقة البحثية تهدف الى توضيح سوء الفهم الذي يمكن ان يحدث وفيما اذا كان من الممكن وجود توصيات عملية بهذا الشأن في النصوص المكتوبة. ان المقارنة بين القدرة على ذلك في حالة أفعال القول وعدم القدرة في حالة للأيدولوجيا يعكس طبيعة سوء الفهم في الحالتين. لذا استنتج ان اقتراح نظام صوري لتوضيح المعنى او علامات ترقيم يساعد في تجنب التمييز الخاطئ للمعاني ولكن لا يمكن ان يعرض حل مشابه في حالة تميز الأيدولوجيا في نصوص القصص التهكمية.

الكلمات مفتاحية: أفعال القول، الأيدولوجيا، النص التهكمي، علامات ترقيم المعاني

Introduction

The story of meaning started with explaining the meaning of words in the field of semantics, but the meaning behind words and a round them has recently made the story a huge novel. The text is dealt with in different and more complicated ways. Thus, from semantics to speech act theories to critical discourse analysis, the meaning becomes the mirror of everything: words, context and beliefs of speakers (or writers). In this paper, there is a sort of comparison between speech act concept in pragmatics and ideology concept in critical discourse analysis concentrating on the idea of misunderstanding and the idea understanding. Misunderstanding of writers` intentions (not speakers) and suggest the technique of punctuating the meaning of each sentence while writing them. On the other hand, the idea of understanding the writer, going deep to his mind and discover hidden beliefs or the beliefs that he wants to teach through his texts is dealt with by analyzing spoof texts as an example of indirect strategies to build beliefs in readers` minds.

It is hypothesized that this development in studying meaning needs more details to be practically useful in analysis and able to present solutions to the problems like misunderstanding of meanings and beliefs in writing texts. Hence, the paper aims at presenting two problems related to recent theories of meaning and present a sort or hint to deal with. Thus, it is concluded that , although the theories of explaining meaning don't present solutions for problems like misunderstanding of speech acts in the written texts and ideologies in some texts like spoof, it is possible to present a solution for the first but not for the second.

Misunderstanding and punctuating meanings

The various meanings in language which are theorized and divided in the speech act theory by Austin (1962) and its development by Searle



(1968) are highly complicated and sometimes problematic in every day communication. This paper aims at explaining part of this complexity and presetting a procedure to solve it. In this paper, it will be shown that this complexity and multifariousness can be dealt with by the idea of punctuating meanings in the written texts.

Misunderstanding of speech acts

The common view to language that it is words that describe the world. A sentence (for example, 'it's hot in here, isn't it?') describes a situation. But, in fact, When people speak, they are only describing the world around them, but are they also somehow 'acting within it'? Speech Act theory states that when people speak they are also 'acting in the world' because what is said has a descriptive meaning and it may also have an effect on those around, causing them to act, or think, or respond in particular ways to what is said. The words have the power to cause things to happen. If someone says 'It's hot in here, isn't it?', They may not simply describe a state of affairs, but trying to act to change it, by getting someone to close the window. According to J.L Austin (1973:375), speech can be classified into functions. Thus, each utterance carries a meaning and this meaning is its function in communication. Meaning may be expressed explicitly (direct strategy), e.g. I warn you, which is often unproblematic in its interpretation since it is a performative act (ibid: 382). The problem is usually created when the act is expressed implicitly (indirect strategy), e.g. come with us, it can be understood in different ways if they spelt out in isolation from its context (Aitchison, 1999: 99).

The problem which is highlighted in this paper is 'what is to do if the context shows that the meaning can be order or threat'?

Back to the theories, force of utterance is presented as a solution to the problem above by presenting the concept of Perlocutionary act and its relation to the notion of effect of act, whether it is actual or intended.

It reduces the gap of transability of meaning because illocutionary act cannot stand against the wind in case of indirect speech where the form and function do not coincide (Searle and Van der Veken op. cit. p. 7).

However, people understand each other if they get the intention of the utterance using the context and testing what is called 'felicity conditions' stating that each speech act has its felicity conditions that make it distinguished from other meanings in language. Hence, one can understand what he/she hears or reads in terms of context, force and felicity conditions. But, what if he/she violated the maxim of manner and presents an utterance that has more than one reading in the light of these three elements! In fact, there are two possibilities; to understand the utterance as it is intended by the speaker or writer or to misunderstand it. In the second case the continuity of the dialogue at the same setting or even in a different setting resolves this misunderstanding (Liddicoat, 2007: 172-173). e.g.1

Woman: I'm going to The Garden City. I'll see Mark there.

Man (after two hours): I did not see you in The City Garden. Why did you want to meet Mark!

Woman: Oh! I meant that you were very busy and I felt bored to explain that I thought to go to The Garden City (a garden for babies) and I will see Mark there because he missed you too.

These are SMSs between two friends. In this kind of text, it is very dangerous to communicate by utterances that have multiple interpretations because there may be no immediate response that lays the intended meaning open. The first two utterances by the woman are understood as two statements because the man thinks that she is telling him what she is going to do and he wants to make a surprise for her by being in the same place she wants to go to. The man may understand the utterances as invitation so that



he goes there. But the intended meaning is objection (for the first utterance) and prediction (for the second utterance). The reaction of the woman has exposed the misunderstanding.

The role of non- linguistic elements like facial movement reflects the difficulty of understanding the intended meaning in the absence of the alternative in the written texts or one –sided communication like letters. This dependence on non-linguistic aids in spoken language calls for making use of some techniques learned side by side with learning meaning in written language. The alternative of non-linguistics aids in written communication can be explained below;

e.g. 1 Good morning you bring some new hats today I will come to see them to know my opinion send me someone to take me quickly I have not had my breakfast yet

It is difficult to decide how many sentences are there. Thus, it is difficult to interpret the meaning of each sentence, e.g. 2

Good morning. You bring some new hats! Today I will come to see them. To know my opinion, send me someone to take me quickly. I have not had my breakfast yet.

or

Good morning. You bring some new hats today? I will come to see them to know my opinion. Send me someone to take me quickly; I have not had my breakfast yet.

In each case, punctuation changes the way the sentences are understood. The first case shows that the speaker is surprised that someone brings new hats and today he will go to see them. To know his opinion someone should take him quickly since he has not had his breakfast yet.

In the second case, the speaker asks is someone brings new hats so he will go to see them and show the opinion. The he ordered to send someone to take him before he starts having breakfast

Punctuation (its role in understanding the meaning in written texts) is important inspiration to solve the problem of misunderstanding of speech acts in such texts.

One important point to be highlighted at this position; to which extent is punctuating speech act required?

Punctuating Meanings

The writer of advertisement in "thank you for smoking", with a picture of yellow smile on a cigarette face, wants his text to be understood in one way which is definitely warning not thanking. Thus, punctuation seems necessary. Another example from The Guardians is the headline "even after Iraq, too many elites, still think war is a blood chess game". The writer wants to his words to be seen as criticism not a statement. But this isn't always the case because writers sometimes want to the utterance to be confusing and the deviation in the maxim of manner that creates unclear intention is committed intentionally. For example, the note written by a naughty student at the bottom of the exam sheet of paper "thanks you, you taught us to be honest". If the student is afraid of the other students to discover that gives hints to the teacher that the students have cheated in the exam, he will not punctuate this note as compliment, letting the teacher loose (Halliday & Hassah:1976).

The examples above can be linked to the problem of misunderstanding happens in chats by cell phones that are dealt with through using the smiles which are not verbal tools.

Hence, (crystal: 2019) suggests that non- punctuated meaning is the meaning carries the meaning of intended implacture or violation of cooperation maxims. This radically changes the way of receiving the texts of various kinds by the readers. In brief punctuating speech acts means:



1. understanding the intended meaning of the utterance correctly, or
2. Understanding that there is more than one reading for the utterance .

Finally, meaning can be marked by some signs like question mark '?' or exclamation mark '!' taking in consideration that meaning should be marked by something linked to it. Speech acts are divided into five kinds; representatives, expressive, commissive, declaration and directive (Searle, 1977: 32-33). Each category may rely on certain standard criteria to choose the form of referring to meaning. For example, representatives should rely on 'lines' because the meaning of speech acts of this kind related to describing the events. Thus, there is a sort of straightness in these acts.

E.g.3 There are no classes tomorrow—/. The park will a good place to spend the time—//.

Where—/ refers to 'claim' and —// refers to suggestion.

This approach to punctuate the verbal language is inspired from the punctuating of written texts and the use of emojis in SMSs. Emojis are symbols that have become common components of expressing ideas and feelings, including temper, gladness, celebration, and correspondingly evocative expressions, in digital communication, including text messages sent through smartphones and social media stages such as Facebook (Novak P.K., Smailović J., Sluban B., Mozetič I, 2015). Emojis have a characteristically social flavor and are debatably extra-linguistic in basis, in that they are not part of the typical lexicon of any natural language, they have a distinct place in digital communication, representing 'shared culture' at multiple levels of coarseness (ibid). The use of emojis, in comparison with the use of punctuation marks, leads to the same end which is clarifying the intention and resolving any expected misunderstanding. Hence, using the 'smiley' after the message 'I've waited you for ages' omits the possibility of understanding it as reproach and it makes it refer to polite blame. This shows that the use of extra linguistic tools in written language plays a vital role to overcome any kind of misunderstanding, and the role that facial expressions and body movement play in spoken language can be roofed too in written language or texts; the example below may show how punctuating meaning can be essential in understanding the written texts especially in SMSs : e.g. 4

Wife: hi

Husband: hi

Wife: coming for lunch?

Husband: I have meeting O

Wife :Shall we wait long Q

Husband: I don't know_

Wife: We will have lunch_

Husband: ok

Where: O= complaining, Q=question, _ = informing

It seems that no quarrel happens between the couple because the husband is late. The husband shows his wife that he is not happy to be late by using speech act of complain, She, on the other hand, explains that she just wants to know if he will come late by the use of speech act of question. If the wife does not use the punctuating mark, the husband may understand her question as complain and his reaction will be different. The use of the speech act of informing by the husband is a normal reaction of her normal question and her reaction by using informing speech act is necessary in order not to understand that she becomes angry.



To conclude, it is possible to show meaning without taking care about the complexity of form-meaning relation in language simply by punctuating meanings. Referring to speech acts by punctuation marks means that the reader can be told the intended meaning as if he/she is the writer and also can know if he/she has to deal with an implicated meaning. As well, disambiguating utterances in writing is easier than speaking because speech acts can be marked and expressing meaning can be very direct.

Ideology in Spoof texts

The other aspect shows that it is not always possible to understand the misunderstanding in the written texts. It is 'ideology' which is dealt with here in spoof texts. A spoof text is a text which tells the events of the past have an unpredicted witty comic ending. Its main purpose is to amuse the readers with funny story. It starts with an Orientation in which some information about the participants (focus on individual participant like as people, animals or certain things) and the setting (the time and the place; when and where the events happen) are given to understand the story. This kind of tells is short because it depends on its ending which must quickly come and carefully liked to the events. The events, on the other hand, tell about the sequential of the story. Some events are discovered in sequential way which able to arrange the story read nicely. Finally, the story ends with an unexpected funny plot in the end which amuse the reader, thus when one knows that he reads a spoof, feels that he soon will find something surprising but witty.

Linguistically speaking, in spoofs action verbs in the past tense are used. The use of adverbial phrases of time and place are used also to make the reader focus on a specific setting and events. In addition, the use of direct speech is an essential linguistic feature in this text because it is a tell not descriptive text. The events have a chronological order and connective tools like (first, then, finally) are used for this purpose but sometimes the numbers like (first, second...) can be used (Sudarwati & Grace. 1916: 17)

Discussion: In this paper the idea of reflecting the ideological function of the text is based on the hypothesis: the repetition of the same meaning or theme by using (various) linguistic tools can be in form of a series texts in each the same theme is highlighted, not in form of focusing on a theme in the same text.

The spoof texts related to Juha tells are taken as examples. The tells about this character in Arab literature emphasizes simplicity and idiocy that poor and simple people are characterized by. Thus, when people mention Juha's donkey or Juha's nail in Arab societies, in different kinds of texts and everyday life talk, they refer to two points: to be very simple or to be idiot. Thus, Juha tells summaries are used as ideological means of simplicity and idiocy. However; ideology in the sample under hand is analyzed in two ways:

First, the ideology of simplicity and idiocy can be driven by some linguistic tools used intentionally by the writer. Hence, linguistic ideological techniques are utilized to highlight the relatedness between poverty and idiocy in these tells throughout the text which seems to be taller (has larger number of word) than the texts where the ideological function is manifested in the twist. This means that the ideology of the idiocy of the poor is highlighted throughout the text as well as the text is ideologically used in everyday life. See the example in the appendix

To investigate the ideology of simplicity and idiocy in the text three linguistic tools are highlighted:

1.repetition: repetition of the same sentence for five times in this short text and from the beginning to the end shows the speaker is a simple person and his son is simple too because intelligent people and even normal people consider it is naive to be so.

"Tomorrow, you will come with me to the market"



“Did you hear?”

The repetition of the sentence stands for the repletion of the same action. the repetition of the word ‘Juha’, on the other hand, refers the simplicity that the name (the charter that has the name) carries, that is why writers tend to repeat the words when they write texts for children because they are not able to link the reference to the referent.

2.lexicalization

The use of the word ‘donkey’ which a significant figure in Juha tells stands for both idiocy and poverty. As well, the use of the word ‘idiot’ to describe Juha also emphasizes directly the ideology of idiocy.

3. Implication

The use of the phrase “the men laughed at” has an implied meaning which is ‘there is some that acts in silly way and make others laugh at him’. Moreover; the use of the phrase ‘burst out laughing” means that ‘that person act sillier than expected’.

In addition, the twist of the spoof has implied meaning: juha was a stupid person since he thought what he was doing was right but people liked to criticize him.

secondly, the spoof texts themselves carry their themes at the end of the text. Hence, they don’t reveal an ideology throughout because the text structure is :

-Orientation----- description do not contain linguistic tools focus on a certain theme

-events ----- actions that lead to the twist without having linguistic tool focus on a certain theme

-twist -----a funny ending that carry implication about Juha`s simplicity or idiocy

But because juha series of tells always have this implication at the end, it is clear that these tells have one obvious ideology which is the simplicity or idiocy of poor people. In this respect, characters may carry an ideological means. This is different from allusive references which refers to famous quotes form history or mythology or even life events, a particular attribute is linked to a particular charter or event that make them allude to it.

Conclusion This paper highlights some aspects of the problems of implications in meaning by making a comparison between misunderstanding the meaning of speech acts in the written texts and the problem of hiding some novel ideologies in the written texts like spoofs. In the first case, it is able to suggest a solution of punctuating meaning to deal the problem but in the second case it is not possible to explain the intended ideology by the writer of the text because belfies are presented directly and implicitly. The second presentation is written to be indirect. As a result, “the meaning that written texts carry can’t be always clarified by the writer and it requires linguistics analyses to find out by the reader.” is a sentence which can be proved in various ways and this paper presents anew way to do so.

Bibliography

1. Aitchison, J.(1999). Linguistics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Crystal,David. (2019). Making A point: The Pemickety Story of English punctuation.London: profile Books.
3. Halliday,M.A.K.,& Hassan,Ruqaiya.(1976). Cohesion I English. Lonndon: longman.
4. Liddicoat, A.J. (2007). An Introduction to Conversation Analysis. New York, NY 10038: Continuum.
5. Novak P.K., Smailović J., Sluban B., Mozetič I(2015) Sentiment of emojis. PLOS ONE, 10 (12)



6. Searle, J. R. (1977). A Classification of Illocutionary Acts. In Rogers, B.11 and J.P. Murphy .
7. Searle J. R. and Van Der Veken D. (1985). Foundations of Illocutionary Logic. Cambrid.
8. Sudarwati & Grace. 1916." Problems in writing spoof", Nurma, Khairul, volum 3 No.1

The appendix

Juha once said to his son when he was about twelve years old:

- Tomorrow, you will come with me to the market.

Early in the morning, they left the house. Juha settled on the back of the donkey, his son walking beside him. At the entrance to the market square, Juha and his son were subjected to harsh taunts:

- Look at this man, he has no mercy! He is comfortably seated on the back of his donkey and he lets his young son walk on foot.

Juha said to his son:

- Did you hear? Tomorrow you will come with me to the market again!

On the second day Juha and his son did the opposite of the day before: the son climbed on the donkey's back and Juha walked beside him. At the entrance of the square, the same men were there, who cried out

- Look at this child, he has no education, no respect towards his parents. He sits comfortably on the back of the donkey, while his father, the poor old man, is obliged to walk!

Juha said to his son:

- Did you hear? Tomorrow you will come back with me to the market!

On the third day Juha and his son came out of the house on foot, pulling the donkey behind them, and so they came to the square. The men laughed at them:

- Look at these two idiots, they have a donkey and they do not even benefit from it. They walk without knowing that the donkey is made to carry men.

Juha said to his son:

- Did you hear? Tomorrow you will come with me to the market!

On the fourth day, when Juha and his son left the house, they were both perched on the back of the donkey. At the entrance to the square, the men let their indignation burst out:

- Look at these two, both riding the donkey! they have no pity for this poor beast!

Juha said to his son:

- Did you hear? Tomorrow you will come with me to the market!

On the fifth day, Juha and his son arrived at the market carrying the donkey on their shoulders. The men burst out laughing:

- Look at these two crazy, you have to lock them up. They are the ones who carry the donkey instead of riding on his back.

And Juha said to his son;

- Did you hear? Whatever you do in your life, people will always find fault and criticism.