Faculty of Arts, Design and Humanities

Psycholinguistics

Module code TEFL5022-2018-2

Analysis of conversation

MA, English Language Teaching

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Conversation 1

This is a dialogue between a shopkeeper and a customer named Boyd. The conversation takes place on the phone when Boyd calls to order more paint rom the same shop.

Spoken Language Features

Language in context or language in use has been termed as a separate branch in linguistics called Pragmatics. It deals with the detailed analysis of language in use i.e. spoken language and it highlights certain features imperative to the understanding of the context. The thorough study of spoken English is crucial in order to address the disparity between what is intended and what is communicated and hence interpreted. As Poole (1999) puts it: "we communicate more than we say" – therefore to comprehend HOW what is being uttered, pragmatists look at the following features: adjacency pairs, Grice's conversational maxims, fillers, deictic expressions, non-standard use of grammar, vocatives, omission, contraction, coordination, tag questions, hedges, discourse markers, false start, hedges, implicate, backchannels, slang etc. (University of London, 2018; University of Malta, 2017; Dinu, 2012).

Few of the features will be explained well by the following example:

Backchannels

Backchanneling, as the word shows, keeps the conversation going. It is the use of phrases that carry out a conversation without doubt on part of the speaker. These are also sometimes called supportive minimal vocalizations because they seem necessary for the listener to show that he is attentive and taking it in (Dinu, 2012).

For example, Line 2: Yuh

Line 11: Yeah

These show that the listener heard and confirmed what the speaker already knew.

Non fluency features

These indicate silent or filled pauses, repetition, or false starts.

For example, Line 1: I ordered some paint from you <u>uh</u> a couple of weeks ago

This shows that the speaker took a few seconds to think of <u>when</u> he ordered, therefore known as a filler or filled pause.

Similarly, Line 5: An

Line 6: Uhm .. what's the price now <u>eh</u> with VAT do you now <u>eh</u>

Line 7: Er

Line 12: Eh yes Uhm

Line 15: <u>Er, hh</u> I'll tell you what I'll just <u>eh eh</u> ring you back

Vocatives

These are titles that are used to address the speaker. These also signify the relationship between/ among the speakers, Dinu (2012)

Line 9: Three pounds nineteen a tube sir

This demonstrates a formal relationship.

Tag questions

These are used by the participant to reaffirm for the sake of certainty.

Line 6: do you know

Line 10: three nineteen is it

Line 13: isn't it

Line 16: you see

Hedge

Line 15: Er, hh <u>I'll tell you what</u> I'll just eh eh ring you back

The underlined phrase is a technique called hedging which shows that the speaker isn't sure of what he wants and needs time to think.

Discourse markers

Line 14: Well

Speech acts

The concept of speech acts was introduced in 1969 by Searle when he further elaborated on Austin's ideas about language being used as a tool to convey a certain meaning, also known as, actions. Therefore, four categories were named: directives (to show commands), commissives (to show promises), expressives (to express apology) and representatives (to assert/ establish). Here, notably, the use of directives is evident (Dinu, 2012)

Line 4: How many tubes do you need sir

Similarly, at the end of the dialogue, expressives were used.

Line 16: I'll need sorry I did – wasn't sure of the price you see

Turn taking and pauses

Turn taking occurs in a sequential way often without a speaker mentioning it. In conversation 1 here, 10 seconds pause occurred because that is when the shopkeeper informed the customer that he needs to calculate the costs for him. Therefore the shopkeeper informed the customer indirectly that a pause is ensued, (Dinu, 2012)

Deixis

Levinson (1983) emphasizes the importance of deixis (meaning to point or indicate) both temporally and spatially. In order to refer to what has already been said, the use of deictic expressions is vital. For example, Line 3: some more indicates that more paint is needed (Dinu, 2012)

Lines 7, 12, 14 make use of *that* which again refers to the paint and its cost.

Adjacency pairs

These are responses in return to a statement/ question already occurred.

In this conversation, Line 2 *YUH* was the affirmation to the claim made in Line 1.

Similarly, lines 5 and 6 are the responses to the question asked by the shopkeeper about the number of tubes needed. Line 7 was again the answer to when the customer asked for the current VAT rate.

Line 10: three nineteen is it

Line 11: yeah

Another example,

Line 13: that's for the large tube isn't it

Line 14: well yeah it's for the thirty seven ee's

This shows that the responder may or may not agree but there comes a reply every time, hence these are called adjacency pairs (University of Malta, 2017).

Cooperative principle

As far as this goes, Grice's four maxims (1975) namely: quality, quantity, relevant and manner, indicate the truthfulness, worthiness, relevance and forthrightness of a conversation.

Conversation 1 adheres to the quantity maxim because both parties talk to the point about what concerns them and don't prolong unnecessarily. Similarly maxim of relevance is also justified because only the paint is being discussed. Lastly, maxim of quality also applies because the customer mentioned that he needed time to be sure how much he wanted (University of Malta, 2017).

Politeness principle

It refers to face saving and face threatening acts. Considering how polite the speaker or listener, it looks at phrases or words that indicate positive and negative acts.

Line 16: sorry I did – wasn't sure of the price

This shows that the customer saved face by apologizing about taking time and asking to order when he wasn't sure how much he needed.

Conversation 2

This is a dialogue between two people, one of them is someone who has moved from Nottingham to London and has started working there. He talks about the long commuting hours and the incessant workload that he is having trouble managing. The conversation takes place in person.

Spoken Language Features:

Backchannels

Line 5: Yeah

Line 10: Oh

Line 12: Oh dear

Line 15: Oh really

Line 20: yeah, that's it

Non fluency features

Line 2: Well yeah – its um –

Line 6: Um

Line 16: Well –yes I do – um London's not really . . .

Tag questions

Line 19: It's really hard to get to know people, isn't it**?**

Hedge

Line 2: Well – yeah – it's um – it' almost like a full . . .

The word *like* here shows that the speaker is trying to explain and is hesitant about the current situation.

Discourse markers

Line 2: Well - yeah – it's um – it's almost a full ….

Line 8: Well nearly two hours a day

Line 16: Well – yes I do - um

Speech act

One of the four speech acts is *representatives*, which applies here.

Line 1: How's it going? I gather you're having a bit of a tiring time.

Line 7: No *I gathered* you've got a lot of travelling.

The phrase *I gather* shows that the speaker has observed something of the sort, therefore he/she makes the statement.

Turn taking and pauses

Throughout the conversation, there is no overlap because one speaker ends and the other follows, fulfilling TRP – transition Relevance Point. Moreover, since one speaker is asking about the other's situation, open questions have been used which enforce turn taking and appropriate pauses (Holland, 2011).

Deixis

Line 1: How's it going?

 The it refers to the scenario where a new teaching fellow is settling in and has started work not long ago.

Line 15: Oh really - do you miss **it** a bit?

Adjacency pairs

Conversation 2 has multiple adjacency pairs because one of them asks the other about settling in and how is going with work. It is a constant to and fro of questions and answers.

Line 1: How's it going? . . . .

Line 2: Well - yeah – it's um – it's almost like a full – teaching load in a way I mean sort of preparations –wise . . .

Line 2 was in response to the question in line 1.

Line 7: No I gathered you've got a lot of travelling

Line 8: Well nearly two hours a day – well hours . . . .

It again shows that even though the speaker didn't ask how long it takes to travel but since he assumed wrong, the speaker in line 8 corrected and replied.

Cooperative principle

Maxim of quality – this was not flouted because both were speaking the truth, albeit a bit hesitantly

Maxim of quantity – the speaker who just moved to London tends to drag answers instead of replying succinctly and concisely, therefore violating the maxim of quality.

Maxim of relevance – it is partly violated because the answer ends in the form of a question thereby changing the course of the conversation.

Maxim of manner – the new Londoner was a bit ambiguous and sounded a bit indirect about his time in London. He felt a bit of trouble moving from Nottingham and so was gingerly expressing his concerns.

Politeness principle

The speakers both are politely addressing one another. In Line 12, the speaker uses 'od dear' which indicates how courteous the other seemed when he mentioned that he spent quite some time commuting to work. The speakers sounded supportive of each other especially as noted by the persistent use of *oh* (University of York, 2018)*.*

Line 10: Oh

Line 12: Oh dear

Line 15: Oh really

ASSIGNMENT 2 ANALYSIS OF CONVERSATION   TEFL5022

Analyse the conversations in terms of spoken language features, speech acts and moves, turn-taking and pauses between the participants, adjacency pairs, Co-operative Principle and Politeness Principle. Use sub-headings to organise your answer, which should be in academic style and report format. The word limit is 1,500 words and the deadline is █ May 2018 at 12pm.

CONVERSATION 1

1 A I ordered some paint from you uh a couple of weeks ago some vermilion

2 B Yuh

3 A And I wanted to order some more the name's Boyd

4 B Yes [how many tubes would you like sir

5 A   [An-

6 A Uhm ... what's the price now eh with VAT Do you know eh

7 B Er I'll just work that out for you

8 A Thanks (10 second pause)

9 B Three pounds nineteen a tube sir

10 A three nineteen is it =

11 B = Yeah

12 A Eh (1.0) yes uhm (dental click) jus   justa think That's what three nineteen

13   That's for the large tube isn't it

14 B Well yeah it's for the thirty seven cc's

15 A Er, hh I'll tell you what I'll just eh eh ring you back I have to work out how many

16   I'll need Sorry I did   wasn't sure of the price you see

17 B Okay

CONVERSATION 2

1 H: How's it going? I gather you're having a bit of a tiring time

2 R: Well yeah – it's um - it's almost like a full – teaching load in a way I mean

3   sort of preparation-wise I'm spending a long time – preparing lectures and

4   things

5 H: Yeah

6 R: Um – the travelling's not very nice.

7 H: No I gathered you've got a lot of travelling

8 R: Well nearly two hours a day – well two hours there and sort of

9   two hours back

10 H: O?

11 R: In actual fact it does take me two hours when I walk up to the station.

12 H: Oh dear [what

13 R: [very good – on to be in Nottingham – (this is) what I keep saying

14   to myself

15 H: Oh really do you miss it a bit?

16 R: Well - yes I do -- um London's not really -- to me not all it's cracked up to be

17 .   or I haven't found it yet but maybe it just takes a few months to settle into

18   it.

19 H: It's really hard to get to know people, isn't it?

20 R: Yeah, that's it

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