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PROPOSITION IN PRAGMLINGUISTICS

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Annotation:

This paper is devoted to the study of proposition in linguistics and pragmatics. We will analyze definitions of proposition given by different linguists and analyze them. Based on them, at the end of this work, we will give conclusions on the role of proposition in pragmlinguistics.

Keywords: pragmatics, pragmlinguistics, proposition, utterance, speech act

"Pragmlinguistics" or the occupation with pragmatic aspects of language can be important where computational linguists or artificial intelligence researchers are concerned with natural language interfaces to computers, with modelling dialogue behavior, or the like. What speakers intend with their utterances, how hearers react to what they hear, and what they take the words to mean will all play a role of increasing importance when natural language systems have matured enough to cope readily with syntax and semantics. Asking a sensible question to a user or giving him a reasonable response often enough depends not only on the "pure" meaning of some previous utterances but also on attitudes, expectations, and intentions that the user may have. These are partly conveyed in the user's utterances and have to be taken into account, if a system is to do more than just give factual answers to factual requests (Hubert, 1981, p. 178).

Pragmatics has potential application to all fields with a stake in how utterances are understood. Such fields include those, like the study of rhetoric or literature, that are not immediately concerned with practical problems (thus Sperber & Wilson (forthcoming) see a close relation between pragmatics and rhetoric). But they also include fields that are primarily concerned with solving problems in communication, and it is here that the applications of pragmatics are likely to be of direct practical importance (Levinson, 1983, p. 376).

Propositions are traditionally regarded as performing vital roles in theories of natural language, logic, and cognition. Proposition is a theoretical term. It names an entity



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whose existence is inferred as opposed to a kind that is directly observed (van Elswyk, 2022, p. 1).

According to the SIL Glossary of Linguistic Terms a proposition is that part of the meaning of a clause or sentence that is constant, despite changes in such things as the voice or illocutionary force of the clause.

A proposition may be related to other units of its kind through interpropositional relations, such as temporal relations and logical relations.

The meaning of the term proposition is extended by some analysts to include the meaning content of units within the clause.

Example: The tall, stately building fell is said to express propositions corresponding to the following:

- "The building is tall."
- "The building is stately."
- "The building fell."

Collins Dictionary provides the following definition to proposition: "A proposition is a statement or an idea which people can consider or discuss to decide whether it is true."

Below we will study definition of proposition with some examples provided by David Crystal on Simon Fraser University webpage.

The unit of meaning which constitutes the subject matter of a state, and which is asserted to be true or false. It takes the form of a simple declarative sentence.

An example of a proposition:

- (1) Mary hates phonetics.
- (1) is a declarative sentence--the speaker is asserting that (1) is true, even if in reality it is not true.
- (2) Does Mary hate phonetics.

Here, the speaker is trying to find out if the proposition in sentence (1) is true.

- (3) Mary does not hate phonetics.

Here, the speaker is asserting that the proposition in (1) is false.

- (4) If Mary hates phonetics, she will likely fail the course.

The first clause in (4) is a conditional clause, the second is a consequential clause. If the first proposition is true (that Mary hates phonetics), as a consequence the second clause is predicted to apply (that she is likely to fail the course). The second clause is a prediction of a proposition. At the time of the speech event, neither proposition can be asserted as true or false.



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Whenever two illocutionary acts contain the same reference and predication, provided that the meaning of the referring expression is the same, I shall say the same proposition is expressed. And in the utterances of:

(5) If Sam smokes habitually, he will not live long.

(6) The proposition that Sam smokes habitually is uninteresting.

in both 6 and 7 the proposition occurs as part of another proposition. Thus a proposition is to be sharply distinguished from an assertion or statement of it, Stating and asserting are acts, but propositions are not acts. A proposition is what is asserted in the act of asserting, what is stated in the act of stating. The same point in a different way: an assertion is a (very special kind of) commitment to the truth of a proposition (Searle, 1969, p. 29).

The concept of a proposition is one of the central concepts in the philosophy of language. Propositions are, to a first approximation, the meanings of our declaratives sentences: if the sentence "Socrates is sitting" means that Socrates is sitting, that Socrates is sitting is a proposition. However, propositions have been defined in some other ways, and, although it has usually been assumed that the same entity can do all the things that those definitions attribute to them, it is not always clear that they can (Eduardo, 2016, p. 1).

In conclusion, we see that in order to explain what can go wrong with statements we cannot just concentrate on the proposition involved (whatever that is) as has been done traditionally. We must consider the total situation in which the utterance is issued-the total speech-act (we are going to study more about it our next works)- if we are to see the parallel between statements and performative utterances, and how each can go wrong. So the total speech act in the total speech situation is emerging from logic piecemeal as important in special cases: and thus we are assimilating the supposed con- stative utterance to the performative (Austin, 1975, p. 52).

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