A Pragmatic Inquiry of Syllogism and Relevance in Academic Discourse

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In the recent past, considerable value has been given to pragmatic analysis by numerous linguists to interpret human speech such as Leech (2016), Morini (2016), Steinkrüger (2016) and Martin & Perez (2014). *Relevance*, an important element of pragmatic inquiry is a universal function of communication. From the Pragmatics viewpoint of relevance, two contributions are worth mentioning; Aristotle's Theory of syllogism and the Gricean maxim of relevance. Aristotle's ideology of logic concentrates on the notion of syllogism: the deduction (Steinkruger, 2015). Grice proposed the principle to probe relevance through his Maxim of relevance in his Cooperative Principle which suggests that speaker should remain relevant to the topic during conversation. This paper attempts to explore the effectiveness of Aristotle's Theory of syllogism and the Gricean maxim of relevance in determining the relevance of discourse in the classroom. The outcomes of the research are based on the data collected through recordings of thirty postgraduate classrooms. The total transcribed data comprised of 126341 words. The study reveals that Gricean maxim of relevance and Aristotle's theory of Syllogism are not pertinent in determining relevance in classroom discourse. Furthermore, this research is an effort to determine relevance in classroom discourse through a model proposed by us, *Relative Relevance Model of Communication*. Keeping in view the importance of context in pragmatic ideology, this study proposes the idea of direct and relative relevance to determine the relevance of discourse in classrooms.

Keywords: *maxim of relevance, relative relevance, syllogism, classroom discourse, non-observance*

Introduction

The theme of pragmatic relevance may be seen in relation to Grice's (1976) focal claim that the required attribute of verbal and non-verbal communication is the expression and recognition of intention (Winson and Sperber, 2002). To establish his claim, he proposes an inferential model of communication which states that the speaker provides suitable evidence of his/her intention to convey a message while the listener infers meaning on the basis of evidence. Decoding of the message is dependent on the inputs provided to non-demonstrative and unclear process of inference that creates meaning through inference. So the aim of inferential pragmatics is to investigate how the hearer infers meaning on the basis of evidence provided by the speaker (Wilson & Carston,

2007). On the other hand, theoretic description of relevance is built on another idea of Grice that utterances naturally produce expectations which incline the hearers towards particular meaning. From the perspective of pragmatic relevance, Grice (1976) has presented two extremes of relevance i.e. observance and nonobservance as he views that speaker should observe the maxim of relevance during conversation i.e. he should remain relevant to the topic. The query arises how can a speaker sound irrelevant or oblivious to the maxim of relevance during conversation?

Speakers non-observe Grice's maxims, still they follow the cooperative principle; speakers and listeners should cooperate during the conversation and they should make their contribution as required. Sometimes, speakers are aware of the fact

that they are conveying more than saying and in natural conversation, non-observance is quite obvious (Attardo, 1993). So, the speakers voluntarily non-observe the maxims to convey intended meaning (Greenall, 2009). Thus, the understanding of meaning in this respect can be relative and perceptual varying from person to person. Kelinke (2010) argues that implicit meanings are extracted by listeners bearing in mind the situation, setting, circumstantial, intention, association (between hearer and speaker) and encyclopedic background etc.

Regarding the Gricean idea of implicature (Grice, 1989), Mooney (2004) opines that Implicature is an essential constituent of communication. It not only supports to what is said, but it also favours the idea of what is implicated/ communicated. So it provides a chance to the listener to rephrase his/her utterances and in response, the listener may review and reconsider it (Bach, 1994). Therefore, it may be possible during the conversation that saying one thing may employ another meaning (intended meaning). This strategy is the part of natural conversation. It is inferred that utterances are quite relative during the conversation as these may carry a different meaning for different listeners and every listener will perceive and interpret utterances differently.

The traditional approach to the inquiry of pragmatic relevance contends that Grice's conversational maxims are considered as a culturally authenticated model to analyze speech events in terms of linguistic structures to explain pragmatic implications of meanings. In terms of the pragmatic ideology of meanings, non-observance of Gricean maxims sometimes leads towards following of Gricean cooperative principle (Levinson, 1983). Here, the question arises how do speakers non-observe Gricean maxim of relevance in conversation?

Aristotelian and Modern Perspective on Relevance

Aristotle's earliest works on logic are still prevalent in the pragmatic ideology of relevance. After Aristotle, many other remarkable scholars contributed to the logical theory, such as Kant (1724-1804) earned reputable acknowledgements (Bennett, 2016). However, it is still believed that nothing eloquent has been contributed to Aristotle's philosophy during two millennia (Steimkruger, 2015). Aristotle's ideology of logic concentrates on the notion of syllogism: the deduction. For Aristotle "a deduction is speech (logos) in which, certain things, having been supposed, something different from those supposed results of necessity, because of their being so" (Ribeiro, 2014, p,133). Despite the vivid generality of Aristotle's view of relevance, the concept is not an accurate match for the modern concept of relevance. Steimkruger (2015) has pointed out three main differences which are significant to our study as well.

1. The plural "certain things having been supposed" was taken by some olden reviewers to reject arguments with only one premise.
2. The argument is considered "because of their being so" where the conclusion is based on the relevance of the superfluous premises while premises can be varying with inconclusive arguments.
3. Aristotle explicitly said that "the results of necessity must be different from what is supposed". This idea ruled out the controversy that conclusion should match with one of the premises. Modern trends of validity regard this concept trivial.

For Aristotle, Syllogism (sullogismos) is translated as a deduction rather than its contemporary English equivalent. In current usage, syllogism means argument of a very

precise form. Modern ideology of relevance and validity distinguishes valid syllogism (the conclusions rely on premises) while invalid syllogism (the conclusions do not rely on premises) being part of pragmatic ideology (Evans & Curtis-Holmes, 2005). The latter concept (invalid syllogism) is inconsistent according to the Aristotelian concept as he assumed that a conclusion depends upon the relevance of premises. On the other hand, the Gricean maxim of relevance states that during the conversation, speakers should remain relevant to the idea. Furthermore, he should not abruptly shift from one topic to another as this may result in non-observance of the maxim of relevance. We believed that utterances in its natural settings cannot be irrelevant rather these are related to the premises of conversation; as a result, plays its role in drawing the logical conclusion. Likewise in classroom discourse, utterances (of students and instructors) cannot be irrelevant, rather utterances favour logical sequencing and continuity in the development of ideas that result in drawing a logical and appropriate conclusion. Taking into account, the ideology of contemporary pragmatic relevance, we propose *Sequential Relative Relevance Model of Communication*.

Sequential Relative Relevance Model of Communication

Classroom discourse is the sequence of speech events between instructors and students following both traditional and modern teaching methods. This may be termed as classroom sequential communication system. So instructors may follow the inductive and deductive approach to teaching. The inductive sequence is initiated with some activities and examples that determine rules while the deductive sequence is initiated with rules/generalized idea followed by examples and explanations. Classroom discourse is different from other formal and informal discourses as sometimes long detailed topic/idea cannot be covered in single classroom sessions. So these detailed sessions are extended to more classroom sessions and instructors link current session to the previous sessions to establish continuity. This is called relational sequence. By adopting and adapting these strategies, instructors interlink various ideas. Keeping in view Aristotelian concept of syllogism, the Gricean maxim of relevance and modern philosophy of relevance, we assume that in academic discourse more specifically classroom discourse, the idea on non-observance is not valid; rather the sequence of utterances favour the idea of relative relevance. So, this Relative Relevance may be "logical or direct" and "relative or indirect".
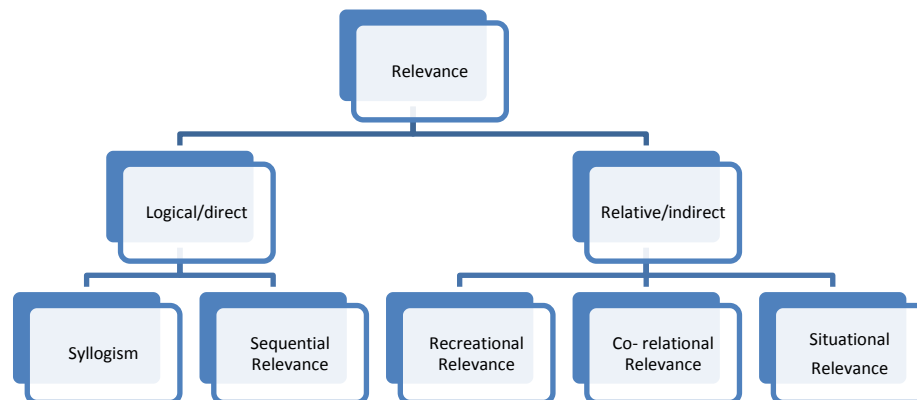
Logical or Direct Relevance Logical or direct relevance is objective, direct, systematic and explicit sequences of speech that shows a direct link of utterances with the situation. So it demands less effort on the part of hearer for understanding meaning as ideas are clear and direct and no implicit concepts are conveyed. Logical or direct relevance may be divided into a syllogism and sequential relevance.

Syllogism In Greek, syllogism is a type of logical altercation among speakers following deductive reasoning to draw a conclusion. Application of syllogism on academic discourse complies with the detailed elucidation of structurally and thematically identical ideas arranged in a deductive sequence. So, the detailed description of ideas helps the hearers to deduce the meanings as these are explained with appropriate examples, explanations, reasons, arguments and sagacity.

Sequential Relevance In classrooms, ideas are arranged in a sequence and discourse moves from easy to intricate concepts. So, instructors initially provide a base for the complex idea gradually moving towards difficult concepts. These sequences of concepts are interweaved and logically arranged for the convenience of the hearers (students).

Relative/ indirect Relevance In formal and informal discourses, sometimes ideas are not directly linked to the topic of discussion but still, these utterances fit into the context. Similarly in classroom discourse, sometimes utterances are not directly linked to the topic but these are part of the context. This is called relative relevance. It can be divided into correlational/quasi-relational, recreational and situational.

Correlational/Quasi Relational Correlational relevance concentrates on two objects, ideas and variables that can be explained with the help of examples. Moreover, sometimes these ideas are not directly linked to the topics of discussion but they fit into the pragmatic ideology of contextual relevance. In classroom discourse, comparison i.e. explaining similarities and clarifying differences (with others) is assumed as a part of correlational relevance as these strategies are part of describing the things in relation to one another and one idea or thing is dependent on other for its description.

Recreational Relevance Irony, telling jokes and humour are considered as a part of informal discourses. Lee's research (2006) on academic discourse opened new vistas of researching as he found humour in spoken academic as one of integral parts of academic discourse. In classrooms, instructors use these strategies to enhance students' interests in the topic and to keep them active. Humor created by telling jokes or irony is not directly part of the topic or idea but it is related to the context.

Situational Relevance Discourses are not static; rather these are in continuous flux called "languaging" (Johnstone, 2008). This process is an amalgamation of various ideas and ideologies that can be associated with social identity, attitude, style and social life of individuals. So every individual act in a different way in the same situation and action depends upon individual's perception that may ultimately lead to the use of various expressions in discourses. Situational relevance focuses on the use of language according to the situation. Classroom discourse is a bourgeois altercation among the linguists with a traditional and modern school of thoughts; *Relevance* of discourse in the classroom is one of the important aspects. So this study aims at exploring relevance with reference to Aristotle's idea of syllogism and the Gricean maxim of relevance.

Methodology

This study is based on qualitative research design. The data was collected from

postgraduate classrooms of three public sector universities through convenience sampling. Thirty classroom sessions were audio/video recorder (ten lectures from each university). The whole data was transcribed. The extracted examples from the data were further used to determine relevance in classroom discourse. As a whole, 755 minutes were recorded from female classroom sessions while 61507 words were transcribed. On the other hand, 765 minutes were recorded from male classroom sessions while 64834 words were transcribed. So, transcribed data contained 126341 words.

Research Questions

Q. How far Gricean maxim of relevance and Aristotelian logic of syllogism are effective in determining relevance in classroom discourse?

Q. What is the possible strategy to determine relevance in classrooms discourse?

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data generated for the study through recording was analyzed and presented in two sections. The first section deals with expressions that favour the idea of logical and direct relevance while the second section deals with the idea of relative relevance in classroom discourse.

Logical or Direct Relevance in Classrooms

Instructors frequently use clear and explicit expressions that favour the idea of direct relevance. In the following example, the instructor is teaching speech articulation as part of IPA in Phonetics course and this classroom session is quite interactive.

Example 1 T:"Those sounds we will cover in IPA separately right? So right now we are talking about places of articulation. We will just discuss the sounds which are familiar to us and we are going to talk about the pulmonic places of articulation of pulmonic

sounds only. Do you remember I told you that in IPA first, we deal with pulmonic and then non-pulmonic and then double articulation and vowels? Okay, let's quickly review how many types without looking at your handouts I just want to know what you have done in your... I mean how much time you have given to phonetics. Yes, how many places of articulation?"

S: "Eleven"

T: "eleven? Yes. Can anybody name them?...anyone place of articulation. Out of eleven can you recall anyone."

S: "Labiodental"

T: "Labiodental, so what do we mean by labiodentals, the contact of, yes I told you that you have to specify the power of the tongue. So labiodental is usually with the…. is it tongue or lips?"

S: "Lips"

T: "Ya its lips so its lip and which? Upper lip and teeth and which teeth upper or lower? Yea its upper teeth and lower lip. Can't you just speak and find it I mean why do you recall your memory. Think of a sound which you produce from the labiodental place and produce it and see that who are that (creatures).Yes, your name?"

The idea presented in example 1 is structurally and thematically identical. The descriptions of themes are explicit as an instructor is explaining every aspect of sound delivery through her parts of mouth and tongue.

Example 2 In example 2, the instructor is talking about the business plan. This classroom session is well organized, interlinked and sequenced. The overall organization of the session shows that every theme is interlinked in a way that listener will get the idea if he/she will relate it to the previous clue.

Table 1: logical the Sequence of Classroom session
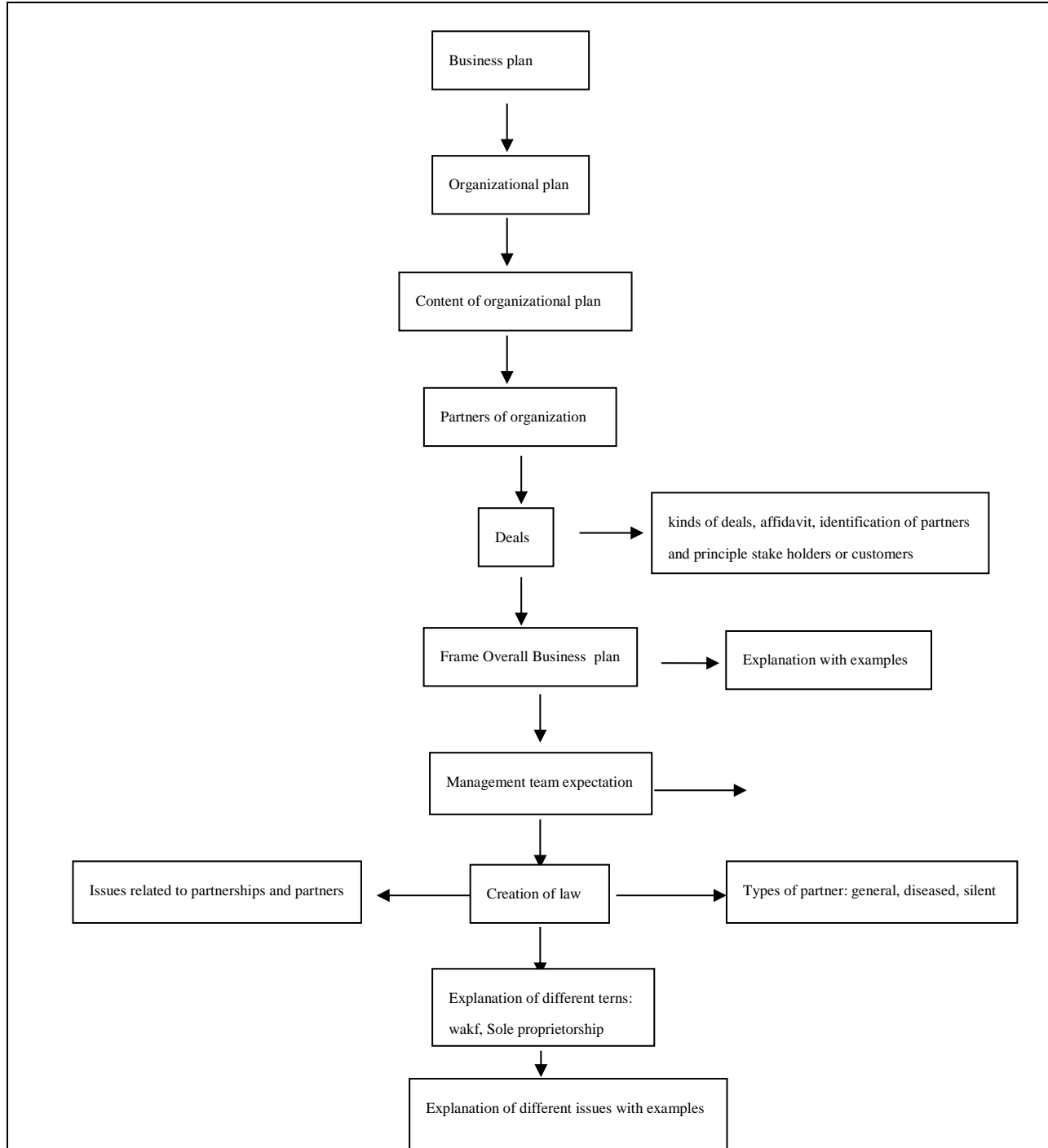
Instructor introduced the topic initially, "I want to discuss the portion of your business plan that is the organizational plan." He further explained various components of "organizational plan". He told the complete organization of classroom session initially and said "I want you to cover different things. Number one, what is the form of ownership? What is the structure of your organization? That is to say how it is structured? Who is the director? And what is the patch level management? The basic

rationale for providing these details are, the people who are investing in this venture would like to know, who are the people?" Moreover, he told the configuration of an organization that "the pattern of organization covers the top managers, deals, overall terms and conditions and give and take of the organization." The session moves with the explanation various types of deals, the significance of affidavit, identification of partners and main stakeholders/consumers. He further explained the main steps to be taken to frame the whole business plan as he said, "You try to basify your management team that it becomes a syllable point in terms of how you frame your overall business plan? Right." At the end, he discussed the managerial skills of the organizer, future prospects of the management team and some legality like the creation of law, kinds of partners, various concerns of partnership and partners, *waqf*, a sole proprietorship. The session is concluded with the discussion on different themes and ideas with examples. Overall, the lecture is thematically arranged and contents are organized.

Relative Relevance in Classrooms

The collected data shows more occurrences following direct relevance than relative relevance. Sometimes, these instances are not directly linked to the topic but utterances are contextually relevant and fulfil the criterion of pragmatic relevance. Close observation of classroom discourse shows that it cannot be classified as highly formal or informal rather it swings between formal and informal.

Example 3

In this example, the instructor was trying to explore website through the computer but unable to access that. So he borrowed a smartphone from a guy. The guy was initially a bit reluctant. The instructor said, "you look a bit confused as there can be some fallacious or personal message may appear on your smartphone screen" while the rest of the class broke into laughter. The whole conversation between student and teacher is as follows:

T: "I want you to look at those studies that will give you an idea how to make your own business plan? OK. Who has the copy of that business plan to which I am talking about? Ok. Let's look at the organizational plan. Now I want to do is, first is the form of ownership which we are going to discuss now. We are going to do different forms of ownership and what type of ownership that you will have? I hope I shall not receive any untoward messages while using your phone. Hnnn…Is this a cause for your concern?"

S: "No Sir, it's not like that"

In this example, the utterances of instructor and students are not the part of the topic but these are related to that particular situation. According to the pragmatic doctrine of relevance, these utterances are relevant to that particular context.

Example 4

The instructor was instructing the students in Paragraph writing. She talked about the logical sequences in paragraph writing with the help of example like writing a paragraph on "how to boil an egg". During the session, she talked about Zubaida Aapa who is a celebrity and famous cook in Pakistan and renown for telling home remedies. Students make fun of Zubaida Apa and there are jokes as well related to her cooking and home remedies. When the instructor said, "Zubaida Apa knows everything", the whole class broke into laughter. Although, there is no relation between Zubaida Apa and paragraph writing the instructor either want to produce/enhance the interest of the students or she wants to break the monotonous routine of class to create students' interests. The whole conversation between students and teacher is as follows:

T: "For example, if you are asked to write paragraph how to boil an egg? What will

you do? You need to follow a logical order, here you are describing the process. OK. So you need to follow order …. Logical order. Zubaida Apa talked about everything if you will listen carefully you don't need any doctor, she is known to talk about everything ok…."

S: Laugh

T: "Coming back to lesson girls and boys…using active verbs help the reader to visualize".

Although the description of a public figure, prevalent in-jokes these days is not the part of the academic session directly the instructor tried to make it part of the discussion to avoid the monotonous and boring routine of the classroom session. She created a correlation between the topic and the given example (How to boil an egg?) to elaborate her point of view. The way of description collectively gives the idea of coherence and cohesion in paragraph writing too.

Example 5

Another example is extracted from a classroom session where the instructor is discussing various models of speaking. At the end of the session, she talked about their recent trip to Thandyani. We assumed through the whole conversation that some students hire a cab while the rest of them availed university transport. The whole conversation between students and teacher is as follows:

S: "We were also there with you on the trip".

T: "Yes, You enjoyed a lot".

S: "Madam, we went to enjoy".

T: "But, you should always take care of yourself. Your parents were not there to see you".

S: "Yes, we told them. The weather was so good".

T: "You drove so fast".

S: "Madam, we went to enjoy. Weather is nice today too. We can go to trip today too".

T: "Yes, Weather is good today but I shall not be able to go. OK. Take care. Allah Hafiz. See you in next class".

The above piece of conversation is not directly related to the topic of "Speaking" as such but it is related to the context of the conversation. So, according to the pragmatic ideology of context, it is relevant to that context.

Aristotle's idea of syllogism concentrates on "results of necessity" which should be different from what is supposed. This idea revokes the altercation that "conclusion should match with one of the supposed premises". The modern idea of relevance ruled out this concept. The modern concept of "invalid syllogism" suggests that conclusion can be false while the results of two or more premises are true. On the other hand, the Gricean maxim of relevance suggested that speaker should remain relevant to the topic during the conversation as Grice (1989) viewed relevance a vital part of utterances as it is helpful in directing the conversation in a logical direction. This idea withheld the notion of non-observance of the maxim of relevance in discourse. In Classroom discourse, if one would imply the notion of non- observance, there will be no communication which is against the idea that discourse is not static. If the speaker does not converse on a particular topic in classroom discourse, this does not signify the idea that he is irrelevant. He may not be relevant to the particular topic or theme but his utterances are relevant to the context. We named it as relative relevance.

Speakers have the ability to speak according to the context and the need for the situation. We named it as pragmatic relevance. During classroom sessions, speakers (instructors and students) do not always converse on subject related areas. Sometimes, they deviate from the topic but the utterances remain relevant to the context due to their pragmatic relevance. "Relative Relevance

Model of Communication" focuses on the significance of pragmatic meaning. Direct relevance favours the idea that utterances should be explicit, straight, objective, analytical, scientific, explicit and clearly related to the context. The idea of relative relevance is further divided into a syllogism and sequential. Syllogism favours the idea that utterances should be structurally and thematically identical and sequential relevance advocates the objective of sequence in conversation. Hence, the implicit messages can be decoded easily by the listeners. Appropriate and logical sequences in a conversation impart direct-logical idea to any utterance. Relative Relevance is divided into co-relative, situational and recreational. Correlational relevance focuses on the interdependence of two variables, ideas or objects that look irrelevant to the topic but close analysis of the utterances show that they follow the pragmatic ideology of relevance and in classroom discourse; it can be the strategy for comparing and contrasting. Situational relevance relies on the behavioural aspects of computation which may be dependent on culture and situation. Recreational relevance is appropriate to use of different recreational strategies like humour, irony, pun, mockery etc. Discourse is the amalgamation of various moves serving various purposes, from personal to professional. These three dimensions (correlational, situational and recreational) of relative relevance may be interlinked. One interesting aspect of this model is that both direct relevance and relative relevance uphold the idea of context which adheres the ideology of relevance in context. Hence, we found pragmatic relevance a prominent feature of classroom discourse.

Conclusion

This Pragmatic inquiry concentrates on the fact that discourse should not be dealt with a static object (Johnstone, 2008). It may change its shape and direction through 'co-construction and negotiation among speakers'. So the idea of 'languaging' supports the contextual use of language. Two extremes of the Gricean maxim of relevance (observance and non-observance of the maxim of relevance) deny the dynamic nature of discourse as non-observance means that the speaker is irrelevant which may not be true according to the pragmatic ideology of context. On the other hand, Aristotle's idea of syllogism concentrates that conclusion should match with one of the premises. Modern trends of relevance regard this idea trivial as the results may not rely on premises. Taking into account the pragmatic ideology of relevance and contextual use of language, the Relative Relevance Model of Communication developed by us examines language from two dimensions direct relevance and relative relevance that is useful in determining relevance in classroom discourse.

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