The Importance of Cultural Context in Analyzing the Discourse of Seller-Buyer Interaction

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Abstract

The study represents everyday life struggle in which language is considered as a problem-solving process. The current study is an attempt to investigate Mosuli cultural and Islamic traditions as a crucial factor for explaining linguistic formulas used by maneuvers in seller-buyer interaction. It also investigates the socio-linguistic variables and their effect on sequential organization, the types and more frequent acts in seller- buyer interaction and to see what are the specific choices of speech, style and the most frequent acts.

It is found that the cultural context is an effective factor in understanding and analyzing the linguistic utterances as acts which represents strategies for pricing and purchasing and that speech acts reflect the social and cultural traditions related to language. Social and Islamic traditions as generosity and hospitality are deeply rooted in the Mosuli society. Moreover, sellers and buyers avoid in most cases threatening the negative face to reach their goal of persuasion.

Adopting Sinclair-Coulthard's model(1975), the study has come up with a set of conclusions among which : understanding the cultural context is crucial for successful performance of selling buying strategies, speech acts and addressing forms help in accomplishing the negotiation process; also speech acts as strategies are heavily used to achieve the goal of interlocutors in Mosuli society.

Key Words: Culture, Context and Discourse, The Communicative Competence

اهمية السياق الثقافى فى تحليل خطاب البائع و المشترى

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الملخص :

مثل الدراسة صراع حياتى يومى حيث تعتبر اللغة عملية حلحلة هذا الصراع. تعد هذه الدراسة محاولة لفحص تأثير الثقافة الموصلية والتقاليد الاسلامية كعامل مهم فى تفسير الصيغ اللغوية المستخدمة بواسطة المتناورين فى حديث البائع و المشترى. و تبحث الدراسة ايضا تأثير المتغيرات الاجتماعية على التنظيم المتسلسل للألفاظ وانواعها واكثرها تكرارا فى حديث البائع والمشترى ولرؤية ما هى الخيارات اللفظية والاسلوب وكذلک لرؤية فيما اذا كانت متشابهة فى مختلف مواقع الحوار.

لقد افصحت الدراسة ان السياق الثقافى للغة عامل مؤثر فى فهم و تحليل الالفاظ اللغوية كأفعال كلام والتى تمثل استراتيجيات للتسعير والمقايضة و بالتالى انجاح عملية البيع و الشراء و ان افعال الكلام تعكس العادات والتقاليد الثقافية و الاجتماعية المتعلقة باللغة. وهذه العادات والتقاليد الاسلامية و الاجتماعية كالكرم و التواضع متجذرة بعمق فى المجتمع الموصلى. بالأضافة الى ان البائعين و المشترين يلجأون فى معظم حواراتهم الى الافعال الكلامية هذه للوصول الى الهدف من الاقناع.

فقد خلصت الدراسة الى مجموعة من الاستنتاجات من (1975), Sinclair and Coulthard بالأعتماد على نموذج هو امتداد لنموذج بينها: فهم السياق الثقافى للغة امرا حاسما لأنجاح استراتيجيات البيع و الشراء فضلا عن ان استعمال الافعال الكلامية و المناورات و استعمال صيغ النداء تسهم فى انجاح عملية البيع و الشراء. كما بينت الدراسة ان الافعال

1.Introduction

Discourse as a language is used in interaction where verbal meaning is relevant to the context of the interaction happens whether situational or cultural background for example 'Power', 'gender', 'conflicts' and racism (Jatmiko et.al,2018.P:479). Discourse analysis is the study of language, it studies the ways sentences and utterances go together to make texts and interactions, and how these texts and interactions fit into our social world.

Analyzing how we manage conversations comes from an approach to discourse known as interactional sociolinguistics, which is concerned with the ways people signal and interpret what they think, what they are doing and who they think they are being in social interaction (Rodney,2018:23).

2. Statement of the Problem

Most work on context has focused on the conventional elements of speech act theory, in particular, felicity conditions, which help the speaker attain a successful performance of speech utterances. However, speech act theory failed to take into consideration the variation in 'cultural context' as a significant factor in assuring successful communication performance and reception. Sellers and buyers are said to be frequently using different strategies of encoding and decoding their local belief systems and salient cultural notions in constructing their speech utterances. The present study is an attempt to answer the following:

1.how important is the effect of Iraqi and Islamic culture on seller-buyer interaction?

2.what speech acts are used by Mosuli sellers and buyers in daily interactions?

3. The Aims of the Study

The current study aims to :

1-Investigate and describe the interaction as reflected in seller-buyer discourse .

2-uncovering the reasons behind the use of strategies by Mosuli sellers and buyers .

3-Show the relation between the strategies used by both seller and buyer and the successful selling buying process in terms of type and frequency of acts.

4-investigating how sellers and buyers invoke and exploit their cultural context in recognizing and retooling discourse process .

4. Hypotheses:

1. sellers and buyers' expressions are formulaic in nature.

2. there is a great influence of the Iraqi culture and Islamic traditions on the interaction between Seller and buyer.

3. Cultural and social constraints, personality, are fundamental attributes of seller- buyer interaction.

5. Data Collection and Procedure

The procedure of the study involves tape-recorded conversation which have been collected from bazzar in the city of Mosul in Iraq. The researcher depended on recordings and observation .The recording of interaction which are in Mosuli Arabic have been translated into English. Personal observation notes have been made. These notes involve information about interactants behavior and non-verbal language which may help to interpret utterances appropriately.

6. Scope of the Study

The present study is limited to a sample of tape-recorded conversation between seller and buyer in the Mosuli social context .The number of the participants in each conversation ranges from two to four. The time ranges from five to ten minutes of oral discourse of seller-buyer interaction .

7. Value of the study :

The study under question can be of considerable value for course designers to take into consideration the social values of the Iraqi culture and the traditions of strategies of negotiation. The study also is useful for those who interest in cross cultural studies, for it presents an overview of the relationship between language and culture. It is also important for those who work in bussiness field because the functional and effective sale and purchase transaction depends on the patterns of interaction.

8.The Modal of Analysis

The study adopts Sinclair and Coulthard's model (1975),which is known a Discourse analysis based on six categories "interaction", "transaction", "sequence", "exchange", "move" and "act". Sinclair and Coulthard's model (1975) considers exchange as the basic structure unit of analyzing discourse :The exchange consists of two moves; initiating move and responding move. Move consists of the smallest unit of discourse which is act. However, all the categories of analysis mentioned are grouped together to constitute the highest discourse unit called interaction.

9. Literature Review and Theoretical Background

9.1 Culture

The concept of communicative competence requires reference to the notion of *cultural competence,* or the total set of knowledge and skills which speakers bring into a situation. As stated by such anthropologists as Geertz (1973) and Douglas (1970), *cultures* are systems of symbols, and language is only one of the symbolic systems in this network. This definition implies that interpreting the meaning of linguistic behavior requires knowing the cultural meaning in which it is established. For example, understanding humor and interpreting literature perhaps demand the most culture-specific information(Saville_Troike, cited in Mckey and Hornberger2009:367). Hudson(1976:73) defines culture as "socially acquired knowledge". This means that culture is one part of memory, namely the part which is 'acquired socially', in other words, culture is something one learns from other people. He adds that non-cultural concept is one which we build without reference to other people, as a convenient way of interpreting our experience.

Cultural context encompasses our understanding of social norms of behavior and speech and incorporates the moral code, laws, cultural norms, and behavioral expectations governing interpersonal relations. The cultural component of context is stable, and is referenced by speakers, as well as hearers, in encoding and decoding the linguistic meaning conveyed during exchanges (Chakrani 2007:44).

9.2 Discourse, Context and Culture

Van Dijk(2009:2-4) sees that context may refer to "verbal context," also called "co-text," such as proceeding or following words, sentences, speech acts or turns within a discourse or conversation. It is also used to refer to the "social situation" of language use in general, or to the specific situation of a given (fragment of) text or talk. In this sense, context means: the non-verbal, social and situational aspects of communicative events. He adds that "context" refers to those properties of the communicative situation that are relevant to discourse. Such a definition focuses on the relevant properties of the situation rather than the situation itself. Widowson(1996:63) refers to context as a schematic construct of knowledge. The achievement of meaning is a matter of matching up the linguistic elements with the schematic elements of the context. He states that context is not an external set of circumstances but a selection of them internally represented in the mind. Yule(2010:130) defines context as our mental representation of those aspects of what is physically out there which we use in arriving at an interpretation.

Bach (in Szabo,2005:21) states that 'context' is the conversational setting broadly constructed. It is the mutual cognitive context. It includes the current state of conversation (what has just been said, what has just been reffered to), the physical setting , salient mutual knowledge between the conversants, and relevant broader common knowledge.

Brown and Yule(1983: 38) reviews some features of context that are set by Hymes(1964) which are relevant to the identification of the type of speech event. Those features are as follows :

(1) Participants: (characteristics and their relationship) knowledge of sex, age, social status and the relationship between the addressee and addressor.

(2) Topic: what is being talked about.

(3) Setting: where the event is situated in terms of place and time, physical relations of interactants with respect to posture, gesture and facial expressions.

(4) Channel : The contact between the participants by speech, writing, singing, smoke signals.

(5) Code : what language, dialect, style of language.

(6) Message form : what form is intended-chat, debate, love-letter, sermon

(7) Event : the nature of communicative event within which a genre may be embedded- thus a sermon or prayer may be a part of a larger event, a church service.

(8) Key : which involves evaluation- was it a good sermon.

(9) Purpose : what the participants intend about as a result of the communicative event.

Cutting(2002: 3-10) states that the context is divided to three types:

(1) The situational context: it refers to the speaker's knowledge at the moment, in other words, what the speakers know about what they can see around them or the immediate physical situation where interaction is taking place.

(2) The background knowledge context: what the participants know about the world of each other. This can be either:

(a) Cultural general knowledge that people know in their minds about different areas of life.

(b) Interpersonal knowledge, which represents specific and possibly private knowledge about the history of speakers.

(3) The co-textual context which refers to the context of text itself, the speakers have enough knowledge of what they have been saying. It includes grammatical and lexical cohesion.

10. Text Analysis

This text is an interaction between a young seller and a policeman who is the buyer in a shop for plastics . The policeman can be recognized from his uniform. The two participants are of high politeness.

The buyer: As-Salamu Alaykum

The seller: Alaykum Alsalam

The buyer: My friend, do you have a peeler?

The seller: Yes

The buyer: How much is it?

The seller: one thousand

The buyer: Do you want us to go away?

The seller: By Allah our prices are fixed.

The buyer: We haven't been to home for days and we want some needs.

The seller: God help you, no problem leave it on me.

The buyer: No, it doesn't fit, we just want you to make a special discount.

The seller: Take the needs you want, then we will talk.

The buyer: (speaking with his friend 'Ali' by mobile) hello, Ali what the needs you want? This is a nearby shop, and he looks a good boy. I understand.

(After few minutes)

The buyer: How much the total price is?

The seller: I will deduct 250 dinar for each item, is that fine?

The buyer: God's mercy be on your parents.

The seller: The total price is six and a quarter, give me five.

The buyer: Thank you very much.

Analysis of the Text

The topic of interaction is about the price of the good

The buyer initiated the discourse by greeting **(greeting)** the seller saying "Al-Salam Alykum" as an expression of greeting only used in Islamic culture which reflects the cultural belief. The seller responded by repeating the same phrase **(reply)** "Alykum Al-Salam". The buyer continues the conversation **(development)** by asking the seller **(interrogative question)** if he has a peeling instrument. The buyer addressed the seller using the pronoun 'my' and the noun 'friend' to

express intimate relationship, this reflects the desire of the buyer 'the policeman' to reduce differences in behavior in order to stress solidarity. The seller replied with 'yes' **(reply)**. The buyer asked about the price **(question)**. The seller responded by saying 'one thousand' **(reply)**. The expression 'Do you want us to go away?' although produced with a literal form of question, it does not constitute a request for information since the buyer already knows that the answer to his question is negative. Therefore, the buyer performed request **(indirect request)** to reduce the price, since he knows that the seller cannot perform such a culturally daring form of getting one's guest away. The seller answered by using a swearing expression 'by Allah' in order to make the buyer believe him. And he made informative statement when he said 'our prices are fixed' **(informative)**. He used the deictic expression 'our' to refer to himself and other staff of the shop. The seller's answer reveals that the meaning of the buyer's utterance is not to be interpreted literally, therefore, does not constitute a simple and straightforward yes or no question, the buyer conventionally implicated that the price should be reduced. The seller's answer is a form of a strong denial to the assertion implied in the buyer's question.

The buyer stated that he did not go home for days **(justification)**, he used the pronoun 'we' to refer to himself and his other friends in the police station, then he made request when he stated that he wanted some needs **(request)**. He made the request by using a declarative sentence. The seller replied by saying "God be help you" **(invocation)** then he made an offer using the imperative form ' no problem leave it on me' as Iraqi social expression to affect the buyer and to get his satisfaction **(offer)**. The buyer refused seller's offer **(disagreement)** then he made a direct request by using a declarative sentence "we want you to make a

special discount" **(request)**. The seller told the buyer to take the needs **(directive)** and he made **(metastatement)** 'we will talk', he used the modal 'will' to refer to the near future.

Although the person who calls via the telephone says "hello" but this is not a greeting, it is an answer to the summons from the caller embodied in the ringing of the telephone. The buyer began to talk with his friend, he addressed him using his name 'Ali' to show intimate relationship between them **(Nomination)**. The buyer asked his friend if he wanted other needs **(question)** then he stated that 'this shop is near and the seller looks a good boy' as a reason of why he was buying from that shop **(justification)**. He ends the conversation with his friend saying "I understand".

After a few minutes, the buyer resumed the conversation and asked about the total amount of the needs he took **(resumption and question)**. The seller made an offer when he said "I will deduct 250 for each item" **(offer)** then he made interrogative tag question 'is it fine' **(question)** to ensure that the seller is satisfied. The seller at his turn showed agreeing through invocation statement 'May God pleases the soul of your father' as Islamic social expression when you agreeing with someone **(agreement)**. The seller stated the total price **(informative)** then he made a request by using the imperative form of the verb 'give me five' **(request)**. The buyer welcomed the idea and thanked him**(acknowledge)**. By this exchange the speakers completed their turns and had nothing more to add **(termination)**.

The interaction took place within seller-buyer everyday life situation. The style of conversation is informal. The buyer assumed the higher status because he is a policeman and the young seller occupies the lower status. The overall exchanges shows the degree of politeness and

the stress is on the solidarity. The most frequent acts are question, request, reply. The two participants take part and play a basic role in the organization of the structure of this interaction. The table below shows the Numbers and Percentages of Speech Acts.

Acts	Frequency	Percentages
Question	5	19.2%
Request	4	15.4%
Reply	3	11.5%
Informative	2	7.7%
Offer	2	7.7%
Justification	2	7.7%
Greeting	1	3.8%
Invocation	1	3.8%
Disagreement	1	3.8%
Directive	1	3.8%
Metastatement	1	3.8%
Nomination	1	3.8%
Agreement	1	3.8%
Acknowledge	1	3.8%
Total	26	99.8%

Table above indicates that the most frequently used act is (question). It makes up 5 (19.2%) out of total percentages of acts. It is used by the buyer to request for information about the good. The table also shows that the number of request acts is 4(15.4%) of total number of acts because request used as a vehicle of getting the addressee to do something politely. The reply acts constitute 3(11.5%) of total number of acts as an

answer to the questions and requests made in the interaction. Morover, it has been identified throughout the data analysis that the use of Iraqi social expressions and statements are widely used by sellers and buyers as means to accomplish their goals in gaining the exchange. Several social traditions deeply rooted in the Mosuli society that works as affecting strategies: above, the tradition of generosity towards guests is an important Mosuli cultural behavior that is employed by the buyer especially when the buyer don't go home for days. So, by the virtue of being a displaced person and a guest he persuades the seller to reduce the price. The seller is obliged to make the discount as a sign of generosity and hosting.

11. Conclusions

1. the cultural context is essential in understanding the successful performance in The seller buyer interaction.

2. sellers and buyers use different strategies of encoding and decoding their local belief systems and salient cultural notions in constructing their speech utterances.

3. market discourse is similar to political discourse in that both use various strategies including positive strategies or negative strategies like: offer, suggestion, promise, accept, disagreement, question, informative, justify, threaten and conclude as ways of resolution the conflict which help in accomplishing the negotiation process.

12. Suggestions for further study

The following suggestions are given to end the study:

1. It is necessary to conduct studies on the multilingual/multicultural market in some cities of Iraq.

2. Another area of investigation is to investigate online shopping and make a comparative study between online shopping and real shopping.

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المستخلص

تمثل الدراسة صراع حياتي يومي حيث تعتبر اللغة عملية حلحلة هذا الصراع. تعد هذه الدراسة محاولة لفحص تأثير الثقافة الموصلية والتقاليد الاسلامية كعامل مهم في تفسير الصيغ اللغوية المستخدمة بواسطة المتناورين في حديث البائع و المشتري. و تبحث الدراسة ايضا تأثير المتغيرات الاجتماعية على التنظيم المتسلسل للألفاظ وانواعها واكثرها تكرارا في حديث البائع والمشتري ولرؤية ما هي الخيارات اللفظية والاسلوب وكذلك لرؤية فيما اذا كانت متشابهة في مختلف مواقع الحوار.

لقد افصحت الدراسة ان السياق الثقافي للغة عامل مؤثر في فهم و تحليل الالفاظ اللغوية كأفعال كلام والتي تمثل استراتيجيات للتسعير والمقايضة و بالتالي انجاح عملية البيع و الشراء و ان افعال الكلام تعكس العادات والتقاليد الثقافية و الاجتماعية المتعلقة باللغة. وهذه العادات والتقاليد الاسلامية و الاجتماعية كالكرم و التواضع متجذرة بعمق في المجتمع الموصلي.

بالأضافة الى ان البائعين و المشترين يلجأون في معظم حواراتهم الى الافعال الكلامية هذه للوصول الى الهدف من الاقناع. بالأعتماد على نموذج هو امتداد لنموذج Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), فقد خلصت الدراسة الى مجموعة من الاستنتاجات من بينها: فهم السياق الثقافي للغة امرا حاسما لأنجاح استراتيجيات البيع و الشراء فضلا عن ان استعمال الافعال الكلامية و المناورات و استعمال صيغ النداء تسهم في انجاح عملية البيع و الشراء. كما بينت الدراسة ان الافعال الكلامية كاستراتيجيات مستعملة بكثرة في المجتمع الموصلي.

جامعة الموصل
كلية التربية الاساسية

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بحث مقدم من قبل الطالبة

خالدة سعود احمد

في

علم اللغة و اللغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية

بأشراف

الأستاذ الدكتور

ويس جلود ابراهيم

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