CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Language plays an important role in day-to-day conversation. The word ‘language’ implies ‘relationship,’ which people need to maintain in society or everyday life while conversing with one other. The study of language, used in society and the context of the language used by the speakers, goes deep into the thought series of the speakers to dig out the intended or implied meaning. Language is so much associated with our thought that Samuel Johnson, in his Lives of the Poets (1779-81), calls it “the dress of thought.”

A study of the use of language and its relationship with the society, either real or fictional, would bring out the fact that language strongly influences the society. The study of language has recently grown with different theories of its own, each dealing with a special impact of language on users and society and the meaning conveyed by the use of it. The primary study of language is meaning in the literal sense or the denotative meaning, which falls in the field of ‘Semantics.’ But the way the meaning of a sentence changes from one society to another, from one context to another, and from one speaker to another, made the linguists consider the contextual concept into the analysis of meaning, which is the subject matter of a whole domain of language study called ‘Pragmatics.’ According to pragmaticians in particular and linguists in general, pragmatics is related to ‘meaning.’ David Crystal (1971:243) says “pragmatics studies the factors which govern someone’s choice of language when they speak or write”. Pragmatics, deals with
contextualised utterances, brings out the hidden meaning or the implied meaning of the sentence. According to George Yule, “the study of ‘intended speaker meaning’ is called pragmatics” (1985:127).

Language is basically used for the purpose of communication. It is important to bring out the total meaning of an utterance, both the syntactic and the contextual meaning. According to Leech (1983:01) “…we cannot really understand the nature of language itself unless we understand pragmatics: how language is used in communication”.

The philosophers whose ideas lay much emphasis on the term ‘pragmatics’ are Austin, Searle, and Grice. Austin’s Theory of Speech Acts makes it much easier to bring out the meanings and implications of acts performed in speeches and to understand utterances in social interactions with both their direct and indirect meaning. Searle provided a much-systematized version of the theory of speech acts of Austin; whereas Grice’s Theory of Co-operative Principles provides the maxims to be followed in conversation to be socially cooperative while people are engaged in an interaction with each other.

2.2 H. P. Grice and His Contribution to Language

Herbert Paul Grice was born in 1913 in Birmingham, England. He was educated in Clifton College and then at Oxford University. He was a professor at the University of California, where he taught until his death in 1988 in Berkely. Grice had a wider influence in language philosophy, through his lectures and unpublished manuscripts. The best known of his lectures were the William James Lectures, which he delivered at Harvard University in 1967. The ideas presented by Grice in these lectures were later known as the theory of Conversational Implicature, which were posthumously published as a part of Studies in the Way of
Words. His ideas presented through his lectures contributed largely to the study of ‘speaker meaning’ and ‘linguistic meaning.’

The contribution of Grice to language study is of great importance in the field of pragmatics. Two of the major concepts of pragmatics, namely, Cooperative Principle and Conversational Implicature were proposed by Grice. He thought that a certain kind of cooperativeness underlies language use and so proposed the theory of cooperative principle, which lays the maxims of conversation to further the purpose of communication and to save it from failure. But sometimes people violate the maxims of cooperative principle with certain intended or implied meaning. These intended or implied meanings form the concepts of the theory of Conversational Implicature.

Grice considered ‘inferences’ as one of the crucial features of pragmatic interpretation. Inferences help people to get more meaning from the utterance of the speaker than what actually is said. The aspects of the meaning of the speaker inferred on the basis of contextual assumption and Communicative Principle are generally known as Implicature. Grice proposed this theory of inferred meaning or implied meaning as the theory of Conversational Implicature. Grice’s contribution to language is such that it provides the rules to further the conversation as well as to infer the meaning from the contextual background, which are both directly related to meaning, and are considered as inseparable part of pragmatics.

2.3 Cooperative Principle and the Maxims of Conversation

People use language to communicate with each other, so they should be careful enough to use language in such a way that the purpose of their communication should not fail. While engaged in conversation speakers
generally observe the Cooperative Principle and listeners generally assume that speakers observe the Cooperative Principle.

Grice introduced the theory of Cooperative Principle with his philosophical thought that for a large class of utterances one may distinguish, within the total signification, between what is said and what is implicated. Grice stated the Cooperative Principle in the following words: “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged”. (Grice, in Cole and Morgan, 1975: 45). According to David Crystal (1971:245), “these principles control the way a conversation proceeds”.

The use of language in conversation should be such that it should help to promote the purpose of communication. To achieve this end in conversation speakers and listeners must be cooperative to each other, even though they might sometimes literally sound not to be cooperative, they use the language with implied meaning(s).

The theory of Cooperative Principle has provided interesting insights to the scholars in the fields of linguistics, pragmatics, and communication studies and urged them to look seriously into person-to-person interaction. It, also, has provided fresh insights to interpret and understand literary works.

Grice’s philosophical idea that cooperativeness underlies the use of language in communication made him formulate certain maxims that are together known as the maxims of cooperative principle. They are also sometimes named as ‘Gricean maxims’. These maxims or rules of conversation are the centre around which Grice’s theory of Cooperative Principle revolves with the view to regulate conversation. The use of the
maxims of Cooperative Principle is of great importance in order to have linguistic integrity, politeness and to enrich social harmony through language. The maxims of the cooperative principle of Grice would “specify what participants have to do in order to converse in a maximally efficient rational (and) cooperative way” Levinson (1983:102).

The maxims of conversation that Grice formulated are: Maxim of Quality, Maxim of Quantity, Maxim of Relation, and Maxim of Manner.

Maxim of Quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true.

a) Do not say what you believe to be false.

b) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

By this maxim, Grice means that speakers should always provide true and valid information.

Maxim of Quantity

a) Make your contribution as informative as is required.

b) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

In this maxim, Grice means to say that while engaged in a conversation people should always check the quantity of information that is required at a particular stage and in a particular context of communication to be cooperative.
Maxim of Relation

Be relevant.

According to this maxim, speakers should provide information that is relevant to the topic of conversation. The information must be related to the subject matter of their communication in some way.

Maxim of Manner

Be perspicuous.

a) Avoid obscurity of expression.

b) Avoid ambiguity.

c) Be brief.

d) Be orderly.

This maxim states that people should not use jargon, i.e. words or sentences that have more than one meaning, etc. They should be brief enough to give a chance to the other speaker to speak, and they should always present information in an orderly manner.

S. Blum-Kalka defined the maxims as conversational norms which “serve as a set of guidelines by which interlocutors judge each other’s contributions to talk and make sense of what is said” (1997: 40).

Grice treated the use of language in communication as being cooperative and proposed the cooperative principle and the maxims of truthfulness, informativeness, relevance, and clarity; but he did not prescribe such use of maxims. Although, these maxims are useful for analysing and interpreting conversation, they reveal the intended purposes of language
use in communication, both in day-to-day social life and in fictional world.

Speakers do not necessarily follow the rules or the maxims of the Cooperative Principle; rather they intentionally violate certain maxims in accordance to the purpose in their mind to be performed through language. The intentional violation of maxims provides the hearer the opportunity to infer the meanings that are not said, and they try to make out the implied meaning.

2.4 The Relevance Theory: Sperber and Wilson

The Relevance Theory put forward by Sperber and Wilson is an attempt to explain the basic process of inferring meaning out of an utterance in an act of communication, taking into consideration the evidence that makes the context. It takes into account, for the explanation of its aim, Grice’s theory of Cooperative Principle. Grice in his theory of Cooperative Principle and the maxims, put forward to be followed by the participants engaged in conversation, states the maxim of relation which says that the utterance(s) of the speaker should ‘be relevant’ to the goal of communication. Speakers have a tendency to violate / flout the maxims of conversation and believe that the hearer would infer the meaning that is implied in the utterance which seems to be a violation of the conversational maxims. Hearer’s takes into account the context of the utterance and the Conversational Implicature to consider that the utterance is relevant and thus makes out the meaning with the most possible relevant features.

Sperber and Wilson propose that contextualization gives rise to ‘contextual effects’ which is a characteristic feature of relevance. “Contextual effects include such things as adding new information,
strengthening or contradicting an existing assumption, or weakening old information. The more the contextual effects, the greater the relevance of a particular fact”-(Cutting, J, 2002: 43). The theory further says that along with the contextual effect what determines the relevance of an utterance is the ‘processing effort’, as the degree of relevance depends on the effort needed to find out fact(s) to infer the meaning of an utterance in a given context.

Sperber and Wilson in *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* aim “to identify underlying mechanisms, rooted in human psychology, which explain how humans communicate with one another” (1986: 32) and are of the view that Grice’s analysis of ‘underlying mechanisms’ “explains communication too poorly” (1986: 32). They argue that the maxim of ‘relation’ is a vague one and a fuzzy maxim as regard to the relation of the utterance to infer meaning, and consider that their approach to the theory of relevance is a better way to interpret utterances, or what they call as ‘ostensive’ communication than the standard Gricean maxim of relation.

The Relevance Theory of Sperber and Wilson thus presents a challenge to the traditional view of relevance and context of a verbal communication as it questions the criteria’s for the selection or choice of a relevant context in order to infer the speaker’s meaning embedded in the utterance(s). They introduce the notion of ‘cognitive environment’ considering the fact that each individual has his/her own way of inferring meaning out of an utterance based on his/her “physical environment and of his (/her) visual abilities” (1986: 39).

According to Sperber and Wilson, “‘Relevance’ is a fuzzy term, used differently by different people, or by the same people at different times.” (1986:119). A communicator uttering an utterance, according to
Sperber and Wilson, has generally two intentions in mind which they try to fulfil, namely, “first, the informative intention…and second, the communicative intention” (1986: 163).

The Relevance Theory also proposes to bring in the concept of psychological aspect involved in the process of communication which is referred to as cognitive context. Discussing and arguing on the ideas of cognition and communication, the Relevance Theory proposes to have an ‘inferential model’ of approach to the act of communication.

2.5 The Theory of Speech Acts

J.L Austin introduced the theory of Speech Acts with the view that people perform different acts while they use sentences and utterances. Austin delivered a set of William James Lectures at Harvard University, which were published, in the form of a book entitled How To Do Things With Words (1962). This book introduced the theory of Speech Act, which is one of the major theories in the field of pragmatics. According to Austin, the use of language itself is an act and people perform linguistic acts like promising, warning, requesting, etc., by use of speech.

For example, if a man in a marriage ceremony says “I take this woman to be my lawfully wedded wife” then he is not simply stating a sentence rather he performs the act of marrying.

A spoken text that helps us to perform an act contains a verb, which is either explicit or implicit in the sentence. The verb is termed by Austin as ‘performative verb’. A performative utterance can never be assessed in terms of truth and falsity; rather it goes infelicitious or becomes
unhappy depending on the situation whether the ‘conditions for happy performatives’ are followed or not.

The theory of speech act put forward by Austin has been re-classified by Searle. Searle classified five different types of acts of speech, namely, Representative, Directives, Commissives, Expressives, and Declarative.

Representatives are speech acts that commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition.

The illocutionary verbs employed are: asserting, hypothesizing, concluding, etc.

For example,

Women share the same status as men in the society.

Directives are speech acts used by the speaker to make the hearer to do something.

The illocutionary verbs employed are: requesting, commanding, begging, questioning, etc.

For example,

Give me a pen.

Commissives are speech acts which are employed by the speaker if he commits himself to a certain course of action to be taken in the future.

The illocutionary verbs employed are: threatening, warning, promising,
guaranteeing, etc.

For example,

Mr. B-We will get married next year.

Expressives are speech acts that express the feelings of the speaker. They express particularly the psychological state of the speaker associated with feelings of joy, sorrow, etc.

The illocutionary verbs employed are: apologizing, congratulating, welcoming, sympathizing, etc.

For example,

May I ask your pardon for being late in the party?

Declaratives are speech acts that tend to bring out a change in the external situation of the world through utterances.

The illocutionary verbs or verb phrases employed are: christening, declaring war, firing from employment, resigning, marrying, etc

For example,

We were pronounced as ‘wife and husband’ by the marriage Registrar.

2.6 Indirect Speech Acts

The theory of Indirect Speech Act was put forward by Searle who believed that “a sentence that contains the illocutionary force indicators
for one kind of illocutionary act can be uttered to perform, IN
ADDITION, another type of illocutionary act.” (Searle, in Cole and
Morgan, 1975: 59).

An utterance uttered to perform the function of communication, i.e, to
share or express ideas, thought, views, etc. is to confirm the form and
the function of the language, for example, an interrogative form is used
to perform the function of asking a question; but speaker’s also use
interrogative form to make a request which is not the conventional
function of an interrogative structure.

For example,

A: Do you know which bus goes to the Airport?
B: Yes, I know (goes away).

Here, A uses the interrogative form to make a request to know about the
bus that goes to the Airport; for which he uses interrogative form to
perform the function of a request which is generally done by way of
using imperative form. B considers the literal meaning, which is
the direct function of the form, and hence only partly answers the
question, excluding the implied question.

Yule (2010: 134) lists the syntactic structures in the form of a table as
given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structures</th>
<th>Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Command (Request)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>Statement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Yule, “whenever one of the structures in the set above is used to perform a function other than the one listed beside it on the same line, the result is an Indirect Speech Act.” (2010: 134). While for Searle Indirect Speech Acts are those utterances which have two illocutionary forces “in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another.” (Cole and Morgan, 1975: 60) The two illocutionary acts performed through an utterance, according to Searle, could be termed as ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’. The one which is not literal is the primary illocutionary act and the one that is literal is the secondary illocutionary act.

Indirect speech acts perform acts through words which are basically meant to serve the purpose of avoiding sounding impolite to the hearer, as people in society consider indirect speech acts to be more polite than direct speech acts which “is based on some complex social assumptions.” (Yule, 2010: 135).

To bring out the indirectness of an indirect speech act, Searle opines that indirect speech act “includes a theory of speech acts, certain general principles of cooperative conversation, and mutually shared factual background information of the speaker and the hearer, together with an ability on the part of the hearer to make inferences” (Cole and Morgan, 1975: 61).

### 2.7 The Theory of Politeness Principle

Like the cooperative principle, the politeness principle is also related to human interactions and interpersonal relationships. Politeness principle makes the conversational participants comfortable for exchanging their views in conversation. It helps in promoting the face-saving act and to reduce the danger of face-threatening act and, hence, makes the
conversation polite. It is a bi-focal phenomenon, which the speaker and the hearer both have to follow. According to Thorat (2002:19) “Politeness displays a kind of asymmetry”. Leech (1983: 132) proposed six maxims of politeness to be followed in a conversation. They are:

Tact Maxim
   a) Minimize cost to other  b) Maximize benefit to other

Generosity Maxim
   a) Minimize benefit to self  b) Maximize cost to self

Approbation Maxim
   a) Minimize dispraise of other  b) Maximize praise of other

Modesty Maxim
   a) Minimize praise of self  b) Maximize dispraise of self

Agreement Maxim
   a) Minimize disagreement between self and other
      b) Maximize agreement between self and other

Sympathy Maxim
   a) Minimize antipathy between self and other
      b) Maximize sympathy between self and other

The maxims of politeness show that the whole idea of politeness depends on the notion of self and other in which the ‘benefits’ are all directed towards the ‘other’. In a conversation the utterances are to be constructed in such way that they should not sound rude or the hearer should not consider the speaker to be impolite, as, if that occurs the whole soul of a successful conversation is lost. To sound rude or to be impolite is to threaten the social image of the hearer which is his ‘face’. According to Goffman, face is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (1967: 5). ‘Face’, as Brown and Levinson claim, could have two types, namely, ‘positive face’ and ‘negative face’. Dijk (1997: 50) defines a ‘positive face’ is that social image of a person
“which is the person’s concern that he or she be thought well off by others, as positively contributing to social world”. Whereas, the aspect of face which “claims the right for non-imposition” following the concern of the person “to preserve a certain degree of autonomy, a space within which he or she has freedom of action” is ‘negative face’ (Dijk, 1997: 50).

The concern of the social image and the concept of ‘face’ of the person give rise to the use of language in a polite way. To sound polite, to avoid being rude, to save the ‘face’ of the hearer, and to participate in conversation with utterances that could make the process of communication successful one should follow certain strategies.

Dijk (1997: 51) defines politeness strategies as “the means by which interactants fend off and redress ‘such’ risks to face.” He has classified politeness strategies into five main categories: Bald On-Record Strategies, Positive Politeness Strategies, Negative Politeness Strategies, Off-the-Record Strategies, and Opting Out.

If the risk of face-threatening is minimal or the speaker ignores the face of the hearer he could use language in a direct way and use the strategy of on-record, whereas if the speaker wants to “enhance the positive face needs of the interlocutor” (Dijk, 1997: 51) he could use the positive politeness strategies, for which he could adopt means such “as attending to the hearer, stressing reciprocity, displaying a common point of view and showing optimism” (Dijk, 1997: 51). If the speaker wants to save the negative face of the hearer the negative politeness strategies are brought into play; on the other hand, if an utterance is considered to be of high-risk face threatening act then the speaker should be indirect to save himself from accountability “for any specific communicative intent” and “leaves maximal options for deniability” (Dijk, 1997: 52), and if the risk to social image of the hearer is of too-great intensity by
an utterance then it is better to opt out and avoid saying anything of the sort.

2.8 The Theory of Conversational Implicature

According to Grice, speakers engaged in a conversation tend to follow the Cooperative Principle; but on certain occasions they intentionally violate the maxims of Cooperative Principle to convey something that is not literal. They use the principle of Implicature to convey the implied meaning, which the listeners understand by inferences. This theory is known as the theory of Conversational Implicature, which was proposed by H. P. Grice in 1967 in the William James Lectures that he delivered at Harvard. According to Crystal (1980:228), “implicatures have been classified into generalized and particularized types- the former not being restricted to a particular context; the latter requiring a specific context”.

There are different types of Implicatures: Conversational Implicature, Conventional Implicature, and Scalar Implicature.

2.8.1 Conversational Implicature

Conversational Implicature is the most widely accepted form of implicature which Grice has classified into two types: Generalized Conversational Implicature and Particularised Conversational Implicature.

Generalized Conversational Implicature

Generalized conversational implicatures, according to Grice, “arise irrespective of the context in which they occur”. Grundy (1995: 44)
Particularised Conversational Implicature

Particularized implicature, according to Grice, is “derived, not from the utterance alone, but from the utterance in context.” Grundy (1995: 45). To bring out the total meaning of the utterance the hearer could not rely solely upon the utterance, rather he has to take into consideration the context in which the utterance is uttered.

2.8.2 Conventional Implicature

Conventional Implicature is “conventionally associated with particular lexical items, they are not readily cancellable” (Grundy, 1995: 47)

2.8.3 Scalar Implicature

According to Yule, Scalar Implicature communicates information “by choosing a word which expresses one value from a scale of values” (1996: 41)

2.9 Violation of Conversational Maxims

Cooperativeness plays a vital role in successful communication to exchange the thoughts and views of the people. While in a conversation people always try to cooperate with each other to achieve their intended goal. Gricean theory of cooperativeness and maxims are followed with the intention to make the purpose of conversation successful. But, the adherence to the Gricean maxims of conversation is not always explicit, rather speakers tend to violate the maxims and make the hearer to infer meaning from the implicit utterance which would bring out the real meaning of the utterance or intention of the speaker. When a speaker intentionally violates the maxims of conversation “he assumes that the
hearer knows that their words should not be taken at the face value and that they can infer the implicit meaning.” (Cutting, 2002: 37)

According to Grundy, “whenever a maxim is flouted there must be an implicature to save the utterance from simply appearing to a faulty contribution to a conversation” (1995: 39)

According to Djik (1997: 50) “in actual usage, in many situations speakers do not express their intentions in the clearest and most explicit ways of possible: indirectness and the flouting of Gricean maxims are the norm rather than the exception”.

2.10 Conclusion

The chapter, termed as ‘theoretical framework’ is meant to explain the different theories of Pragmatics that have been considered to carry out the research and to analyse the selected data. The chapter, therefore, deals with the major theories of pragmatics namely, theory of Cooperative Principle, theory of Speech Acts, Conversational Implicature, theory of Politeness Principle, and the Relevance theory that was put forward by Sperber and Wilson (1986: viii) state that it “is grounded in a general view of human cognition”.