

How the 'Unsaid' is communicated in English and Colloquial Arabic: A Comparative Study

Researchers:

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1. Introduction

Pragmatics is concerned with the meaning, not only the lexical meaning but also it goes beyond the literal meaning to arrive at a pragmatic meaning. It needs a situation, participants and chunks of words. These words mean more than their dictionary meaning. They have some other meanings to offer. This invisible meaning is communicated through some words in a conversation. It conveys the idea of what George Yule calls "the unsaid" in his book Pragmatics and how it is kept unspoken yet communicated to other participant(s) in a shared context.

The unsaid is anything that is part of what is said but for some reason it is not mentioned. Therefore, what is said leads us to the "unsaid". The unsaid delivers a message which is not uttered through words so the communicated exceeds what is said. Yule defined pragmatics in his book pragmatics as "pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said."

Not only is the unsaid concerned with one type of situations or a single nation, but it is found in everyday conversations and literary works as well. The relation between the "unsaid" and the communicated is relatively achieved. Sometimes, there is a difficulty determining the meaning of the unsaid and this leads to a mysterious conversation or misunderstanding. The "unsaid" depends

on cultural, personal and universal elements besides the background of the interlocutors.

2. Aim of the study:

The study aims at investigating the concept of the "unsaid" and the concept of "communicated" and discover how these two terms are interrelated to each other using some conversational utterances to illustrate to what extent they affect each other depending on the used words and the situation itself. It explores the methods in which the "unsaid" can be presented and the reasons why words are left hidden or not stated linguistically. The relationship between the participants of a conversation matters in determining what is said and what is kept invisible or unexpressed.

3. Scope of the study:

The study focuses on the concept of "unsaid". It deals with what is not mentioned in a conversation yet understood. It looks for the invisible meanings throughout the uttered words. It attempts to answer the following questions:

- What is meant by "unsaid"?
- Why are there "unsaid" words/ meanings?
- What are the types of "unsaid"?

4. Sources of data:

This study depends on collected data from the following sources:
Books, short stories and web sites
Everyday language and legal language

Dramas and journals

5. Methods of research:

The following procedures are followed:

Definition of terms:

The study provides definitions of some linguistic terms used in the thesis.

Collecting data:

Data are collected from the various sources, which are mentioned above.

Analyzing and discussing data:

Data will be analyzed according to the aim of the study which is to tackle the concept of "unsaid" and the communicated taking into consideration conversational markers and how this concept should be linked with some linguistic theories such as "conversational analysis theory" and "speech act theory".

6. Theoretical framework:

Speech act theory:

Speech act theory is tenable in so far as it is possible, and sensible, to view utterances as acts. An utterance is the production (oral or in writing) of a token of a linguistic structure which may or may not correspond to a complete sentence. An act, generally speaking, is something that we 'do': a piece of active (vs. passive) behavior by an agent.

In speech act theory, by viewing utterances as acts, we consider the production of words or of sentences as the performance of speech acts and we posit the speech act as the unit of linguistic communication.

It is a task of speech act theory to explain in which senses and under which conditions uttering something can be doing something, thus providing a conceptual framework for describing and understanding the various kinds of linguistic action.

Austin's distinction of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts

J. L. Austin affirmed that the real object which the theory of language has to elucidate is "the total speech act in the total speech situation" (Austin 1962: 148) Speech acts are commonly taken to include such acts as promising, ordering, greeting, warning, inviting and congratulating.

Speech act can be analyzed on three levels:

A locutionary act: the performance of utterance: the actual utterance and its ostensible meaning, comprising phonetic, phatic and rhetoric acts corresponding to the verbal, syntactic and semantic aspects of any meaningful utterance.

An illocutionary act: the pragmatic "illocutionary force" of the utterance, thus its intended significance as a socially valid verbal action.

Perlocutionary act: its actual effect, such as persuading, convincing, scaring, enlightening, inspiring or otherwise getting someone to do or realize something, whether intended or not (Austin, 1962).

7. Conversational analyses:

The basic idea advanced by Harvey Sacks was that conversation is orderly in its details manifest themselves in the form of turn types; turn transition, membership categorization device and many forms of indexicality (words and sentence fragments with multiple possibly meaning) designed to guarantee that participants fulfill hearing and listening requirements According to Sacks, these requirements must be displayed by all participants at most points in any interaction if conversation and interaction are to succeed Techniques of conversational analysis are exchanging structure, discourse markers, turn-taking, terms of address, coherence and cooperative principles.

8. Definition of "unsaid":

The unsaid as defined in dictionaries is what is thought but not spoken out loud or discussed and what is hidden or implied in a speech of an individual. The term "unsaid" belongs to the field of conversation which is the study of language in use and pragmatics which studies the way the contexts attribute to meaning. Yule in his book "the study of Language" (1994) discusses the idea of "invisible meaning". He says that; "In many ways, pragmatics is the study of "invisible" meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn't actually said (or written). In order for that to happen, speakers (and writers) must be able to depend on a lot of shared assumptions and expectations."

The "unsaid" is as important as what is said and may be more important as we know more than we tell. We use the said or spoken words to understand the "unsaid" meaning. In other words, the said leads us to the "unsaid". The speaker uses some words to deliver a

hidden meaning depending on the ability of the listener/hearer to interpret and understand it. While the said is communicated and the said leads to the "unsaid" the unsaid is also communicated. The unsaid is mainly related to the communicated as Yule says in his book "pragmatics" (1996) "...what is said is recognized as part of what is communicated."

The "unsaid" can be found in all fields of language like literature, politics, holy language and everyday language. Language with its styles; formal, informal and standard has invisible meanings which assure the existence of the idea of "unsaid". For example, in courts the judge says "Tohawal awrak Al-mothm ela fadelt Al-mofty". This utterance has an unsaid meaning which is hidden but communicated as audience share the same knowledge so they can interpret the sentence correctly. It means that the trial was very disappointing as the judge announced the suspect a criminal and he was sentenced to death, hence he said that the verdict would be sent to Al-mofty.

In Ernest Hemingway's short story "Cat in the Rain" (1925), George asked his wife "Did you get the cat?" and she replied "It was gone." Her answer has an unsaid meaning as it implies that the cat went away so she couldn't get it. She answered the question giving a hidden meaning as she stated the reason why she couldn't get the cat instead of answering using No.

Another example is "Have you found a place yet?" The question has a hidden meaning which is not stated in a linguistic form. It presupposes that the speaker speaks to someone who is searching for a place.

Any utterance which has an "unsaid" meaning presupposes the existence of an entity as Straw stated in his book "Identifying reference and truth-values" (1964). For example, "where are my car keys?" we know from this question that the speaker has a car but he doesn't find its keys. If the speaker doesn't have a car, a gap will be created between the participants of the conversation as the listener assumes that the speaker owns a car.

Palmer in his book "Semantics" (1981) declares that there are two main problems while discussing presupposition. "The first is whether we can draw a distinction between what is asserted and what is presupposed.... The second is what phenomena should be brought under the heading of presupposition." (127) Therefore, we cannot separate between said words and presupposition and unsaid and presuppositions as they cannot be sharply divided into parts.

9. How is the unsaid communicated?

The listener interpret what is said to infer the hidden or the "unsaid". The communicated meaning is the meaning that is delivered to the listener or the reader through said and "unsaid". The "unsaid" can be communicated through many aspects.

9. 1. Passive voice:

Passive voice is different from active voice because the original roles of the object and the subject are interchanged without changing the actual meaning of the sentence. Active and passive voices don't differ in meaning but they differ in style. They also differ in the focus of attention. The passive voice is a grammatical rule which keeps the subject passive or "unsaid" for many reasons. The doer of the action is no more present in the sentence so it is not mentioned but it can be inferred from the sentence.

Considering the following example, "Football is being played in several countries around the world." there is no information about the doer of the action as the writer doesn't want to tell anything about the agent. The emphasis here is on the agent. The doer of the action is kept unsaid as players or footballers are playing football. The agent should have the ability to be capable of playing football.

"I was born at Cairo" is a sentence in the passive voice form. This form (passive) is more popular than its active form. It ignores the doer of the action as everybody knows that the speaker's mother is the one who gave birth to the speaker so it is not mentioned but inferred by logic from the sentence.

Sometimes, we don't know the doer of the action so we keep it "unsaid" like in "My wallet was stolen." We don't know any information about the one who stole the wallet. Of course, he is a thief but we don't know who he is. In this sentence, there is another "unsaid" which is the speaker had a wallet. "This pen was manufactured in Japan." has an "unsaid" meaning as it gives no information about the factory or the company which made the pen. The writer/speaker didn't tell us much about the making of the pen because he/she doesn't have specific information about the factory that made the pen. The sentence, "This is my book which was stolen", offers hidden meanings. The first is that the speaker has a book. The second is that someone stole the book and the speaker has found it.

9. 2. "If" third conditional:

The third conditional "If" speaks about the past. It states the impossibility of achieving an action. It tackles unreal ideas and imagination. It describes what had happened in an opposite way. The sentence, "If I had won the lottery, I would have bought a car." declares that the speaker hadn't won the lottery and as a result he didn't buy a car. It delivers the meaning in an opposite way. This sentence represents that it is impossible to win the lottery and to buy a car.

9. 3. Wh. questions:

Some wh. questions have "unsaid" meaning. They ask about information while they have hidden information. For example, in "Approaching Simone" (1973) by Megan Terry, Mother said, "My dearest children, where are your stockings?" In this question Mother asks about the place of the children's stockings. So the "unsaid" here is that the children have stockings but this is not mentioned directly as it can be understood from the question. In the same play, Simone asked a question "How long has she been in France?" to know the time that her friend Carolina spent in France. No one in this

linguistic conversational exchange mentioned that Carolina has been in France as they have shared experience/knowledge.

Asking a question like "When do you go to school?" has an unsaid meaning that the addressee goes to school but the speaker wants to know the time that he/she goes to school. This question may rely on personal information or the speaker may assume that the child is at the age of school so he wants to know more information about him/her.

When asking a friend "What is the colour of your new car?" I know that he/she has a car and it's new. This information is unsaid as I know this person and there is a matter of closeness between us so I didn't ask my friend if he/she has a car or not because I know he/she does and this is the hidden meaning of the question.

When I meet a tourist and ask him "Where do you come from?" or "What is your nationality?", I noticed from his language and style that he is a foreigner so he has a different nationality from mine and he came from another country so I asked him that question to let the tourist provide me with information about his country.

"Who did John phone yesterday?" has an "unsaid" meaning which is I know that John phoned someone yesterday but I don't know who he/she is so I asked this question depending on the information that I know to get the information I don't know.

9. 4. Quantifiers:

We use quantifiers when we want to determine the amount of something Quantifiers like (some, a lot of, most, many, much, few, little,...)

The sentence, "Most children start school at the age of five." Means that lots of children start school at the age of five and other children do not start school at the age of five. This means not all children start school at the same age (five years old). This meaning is delivered with the use of the quantifier "most". Another example of sentence which uses a quantifier to give "unsaid" meaning is "We ate some bread and butter" It means but didn't state in a linguistic form that we didn't eat all the bread and

butter as we ate some and left some This meaning is hidden but communicated through the use of the word "some"

"Many" is a quantifier which defines the amount/number of things as it defines the amount of books in this example, "I bought many books" This sentence says that the speaker bought many books not all the books. The listener presupposes that the speaker went to a bookshop and he paid money to get a lot of books

10. Why are there "unsaid" words?

Some writers use utterances that have unsaid meanings to let the readers interpret the meaning of the said words in order to refresh their minds. They use these words to give the reader the chance to guess what the hidden meaning of the written words is. Moreover, a speaker uses words that may have unsaid meanings for many reasons like avoiding embarrassment or trigger arguments or critical situations and keeping, privacy in front of others.

Yule in his book "pragmatics" (1996:3) states "This perspective then raises the question of what determines the choice between the said and the unsaid. The basic answer is tied to the notion of distance. Closeness, whether it is physical, social, or conceptual, implies shared experience. On the assumption of how close or distant the listener is, speakers determine how much needs to be said. "

The relation and distance between the participants of a conversation determine what is said and what is "unsaid". If the participants are close, they leave things hidden or "unsaid" as they know them and some events may be a part of their shared experience. Close people share the same background so they don't need to mention and explain or state the intended meaning of every word. The conversation of two intimate friends differs from the conversation of two colleagues. The conversation of two people of the same country differs from the conversation of two people of different countries. The conversation of relatives differs from the conversation of strangers.

The following conversation, between two friends, shows their closeness. They have shared knowledge and previous common activities so they have no need to mention these activities again,

Paul: Let's get together.

Mathai what a good idea! But what are we going to do?

Paul: let's do something different today.

Mathai like what ?

Paul: what about go fishing?

Mathai: sounds great.

From this conversation, we can infer that Janet and Paul went out together before doing some activities that they don't mention in their dialogue so Paul suggests to "do something different" this day unlike the previous outings. Going fishing is a new thing for both of them.

Difficulty of interpreting "unsaid":

There are some problems that we encounter while interpreting the "unsaid". These problems rise from the difficulty of determining the intended meaning. This difficulty has cultural, personal, historical and social dimensions. It differs from one person to another, from a society to another and from a nation to another.

Ishak, in her research "Similarities Between Verbal And Nonverbal Language: A Study With Reference to Conversational Interactions." (1991) Says "when people from the same culture enter an interaction, they adopt more or less the same pattern of proxemic behavior, and so matters are likely to go smoothly"

Hamdie argues in his article "Some Cases of Ambiguity in English" (2009) that "Ambiguity to crystal (1988,15) is the reference to a word or a sentence which expresses more than one meaning and this reference has to do with linguistics." The ambiguity keeps things "unsaid" as it doesn't offer the direct meaning. It offers two or more meanings through one sentence.

Structural ambiguity and semantic ambiguity create uneasiness of interpreting utterances. Matthews in his book "Syntax" explains the structural ambiguity in the sentence "The shooting of the hunter was disgraceful." It has two meanings expressed in one utterance. It

means that either "They shot the hunter." or "The disgrace was in the act of shooting them." The intended meaning is not emphasized in the sentence.

Another sentence has a semantic ambiguity, "I saw a bat." The word "bat" means a bat of tennis or an animal. The exact meaning of the word is kept "unsaid". A conversation between two friends may seem ambiguous;

A. Who is he?

B: an American History teacher.

The answer (B) is quite confusing as it has two unstated meanings. The first one is an American teacher of History. The second is a teacher of American History so the word "American" may describe "History" or "teacher".

Conclusion:

The study attempts to reach a conclusion based on the previous procedures. This conclusion summarizes the relationship between "unsaid" and communicated dealing with presuppositions and the problems that face participants interpreting visible meanings.

What is said and what is "unsaid" depends on the matter of "closeness". Close friends may not mention the names of things they talk about and keep them "unsaid" because they have secrets and shared information, or they don't want anyone to understand/get what they are talking.

The "unsaid" can be presented through many styles like passive voice, third conditional "If", wh questions and quantifiers. Those methods have the "unsaid" meaning on its own way. They present the hidden faces of the invisible meaning.

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