

A Pragmatic Analysis of President Obama Speech after Mubarak's Stepping down

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Abstract: The paper tries to present a pragmatic stylistics analysis using Grice's Theory of Implicature of the speech of President Barak Obama on February 11th 2011 commenting on the Egyptian ex-President's stepping down. Contextually, Obama's speech has been given on the same day after a few hours from Mubarak's Resignation Statement delivered by his Deputy, Omar Soliman. I choose this speech in particular as it linguistically represents a good piece of inferences that can be made in terms of Pragmatic Stylistic approach. Pragmatic interpretation depends mostly on what is being communicated not literally said. So Pragmatics defined by how people perceive the meaning of a text, in and out of context.

Key words: Pragmatics, Analysis, speech, Obama, Egyptian, stepping down.

Introduction:

Language is one of the most important sources of knowledge possessed by humans. Because of their influence on the way they adapt to the world around them. Language is, in fact, the primary means by which they perceive human civilization. Literature is one of the uses of creative language; it is a linguistic use found in any of the distinctive methods; it also forms part of all civilizations without exception. Literature includes a number of linguistic materials that can be used to study a particular language belonging to a specific culture.

The influence of the development of linguistics was reflected in 1950s and 1960s during the growing interest in what linguists suggest about literary language.

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The branch of linguistics, which deals with the complementary relationship between language and literature, is known as stylistics. Lately, stylistics has benefited from advances in pragmatics, which are primarily concerned with the relationship between language and the context of its use. Stylistics is like 'a middle ground' between linguistics and literary criticism

Recently, work in stylistics has benefited from developments in pragmatics, which is primarily concerned with the relationship of language to its context of use. Salvador acknowledges that the convergence of some branches of pragmatics - such as the theory of speech acts, approximate the interests of scientists in the study of style – which is one of the factors that has introduced a new name for this area of stylistics, "Pragmatics". As the term itself implies, "Pragmatics" is a discourse-oriented approach by blending "stylistics" with "pragmatics".

1. Pragmatics:

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics that studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning. It studies how the transmission of meaning depends not only on the linguistic knowledge as (grammar, lexicon etc.) of the speaker and listener, but also on the context of the utterance, knowledge about the status of those involved, the inferred intent of the speaker, and other factors. So that, pragmatics clarify how language users are able to overcome visible ambiguity, since meaning relies on the manner, place, time, etc. of an utterance.

According to the Book of *The study of Language* by George Yule, Communication clearly depends on not only recognizing the meaning of words in an utterance, but recognizing what speakers mean by their utterances. The study of what speakers mean, or 'speaker meaning', is called pragmatics.

Pragmatics has many definitions among linguists. Some observations have been made that pragmatics can be inferred as the study of language use, or the study of linguistic phenomena from the view point of their usage properties and processes. Some linguists consider that this definition does not provide the scope of the field enough because it does not introduce a strict boundary between pragmatics and some other areas in the field of linguistics, such as conversation analysis.

As pointed out in Huang (2007), two main schools of contemporary pragmatics can be identified: Anglo-American and European Continental. Within the Anglo-American, pragmatics is thought of as the systematic study of meaning

dependent on language use. Pragmatics is seen as a core component of a theory of language like phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Topics of inquiry include speech acts, implicature, presupposition and deixis. On the other hand, within the Continental tradition, pragmatics is seen to encompass much of what goes under the realms of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and discourse analysis. Pragmatics is to present a functional perspective on every aspect of linguistic behavior. The Continental approach considers pragmatics (called pragmalinguistics) a theory of linguistic communication.

1.1 Speech act:

The border discipline where speech act analysis belongs is called "pragmatics". We have been considering ways in which we interpret the meaning of an utterance in terms of what the speaker intended to convey. We have not yet believe the fact that we have to know how the speaker want us to take (or interpret the function of) what is said.. generally, we can usually note the type of action that performed by a speaker through his words. So that "speech acts" is a term used to describe actions such as requesting, commanding, questioning or informing. We can define a speech act as the action performed by a speaker during his utterance.

Direct and indirect speech acts: When an interrogative structure such as "Did you ride a bicycle?". In this case it is used to described **direct speech act**.

But for example: "Can you pass the salt?" in fact, we are not really asking a question about someone's ability. Usually, we don't normally use this structure as a question at all. We normally use it to make a demand or request. That is, we are using a syntactic structure related to the function of a question, but in this case with the function of a request. This is a pattern of **an indirect speech act**. Whenever one of the structures in the set above is used to perform a function other than the normal, the result is an indirect speech act. The utterance "You left the window open" has a declarative structure and, as a direct speech act, would be used to make a statement. However, if you say this to someone who has just come in (and it's really cold outside), you would probably want that person to close the window as you feel cold. You are not using the imperative structure. You are using a declarative structure to make a request. It's another example of an indirect speech act. The main purpose we use indirect speech acts to make actions seems to be requests in an indirect way, as (Could you open that door for me?) are generally considered to be more gentle or more polite, as general, than direct speech acts (Open that door for me!). Exactly why they are considered to be more polite is

based on some complex social traditions. (*The study of Language* book by George Yule).

1.1.1 Speech acts theory (SAT):

Speech acts theories did not start as a linguistic enterprise; it rather began as a philosophical investigation of the power of words in language. The two philosophers whose names are associated with SAT are John Austin and John Searle. It treats an utterance as an act performed by a speaker in a context with respect to an addressee. These theories treat an utterance as an act performed by a speaker in a context with respect to an addressee.

Speech Act Theory is interested in the ways in which language can be used. It arose by Austin, but was developed by Searle. The theories of Austin and Searle are described and several problem areas are identified. If it is to be an applicable theory of language usage, speech act theory must be able to integrate with a theory of discourse structure, because if speech acts are identifiable as units of language, then it must be possible to include them in a model of discourse.

1.2 Implicature (Invisible meaning)

In general, pragmatics is the study of invisible meaning, or how the hearer recognizes what is meant even when it isn't actually said. For that to happen, speakers (or writers) must be able to rely on assumptions and expectations when they try to communicate. The consideration of those assumptions and expectations arouse us with some insights into how more is always being communicated than is said. Our interpretation of the "meaning" is not based only on the words, but on what we think the writer intended to convey.

Therefore, implicature is one of the most important tools in pragmatics; it refers to the nature and power of pragmatic explanations and can be shown in some general *principles of co-operation* to present significant functional explanations of linguistic phenomena. Implicature is the result of violating or flouting one of the four maxims of Grice's cooperative Principle (CP): Quality, Quantity, Manner and Relation. This model is adopted to analyze this model of presidential speech.

2. Grice's Model of communication:

It is essential a theory about how people use language. Grice believes in four essential maxims forming the CP. These rules (maxims) of communication

allow to draw inferences and to go beyond what is stated as long as they are of the logical kind. They help us understand how sentences relate in sequence, how they are related at a deeper level even though they are unrelated on the surface. These principles that generate implicatures have thus a very general explanatory power providing a large number of apparently unrelated facts. In so doing, these inferences are called *implicatures when applied*. Speakers communicate meaning via implicature and hearers recognize them via inference. Grice's four maxims that form the CP are as follows:

1. **Relation:** be relevant; make your contribution relevant to the ongoing conversation.
 2. **Quantity:** be informative; make your contribution as informative as required.
 3. **Relation:** Be relevance
 4. **Manner:** Avoid obscurity of expression, Avoid ambiguity, Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity), Be orderly.
- 3. Political discourse:**

Political discourse is identified by its actors or authors or as so called "politicians". Indeed, the great dimension of studies of political discourse is about the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions, such as presidents and prime ministers and other governmental members, parliament or political parties, both at the local, national and international levels. Some of the studies of politicians take a discourse analytical approach (Carbó 1984; Dillon et al. 1990; Harris 1991; Holly 1990; Maynard 1994; Seidel 1988b). Politicians in this sense are the group of people who are being paid for their (political) activities, and who are being elected or appointed (or self-designated) as the central players in the polity.

However, politicians are not the only participants in the domain of politics. From the interactional point of view of discourse analysis, we therefore should also include the various hearers in political communicative events, such as the public, the people, citizens, the masses', and other groups or categories. Hence, the field of political discourse by its principal authors' is insufficient and needs to be extended to a more complex view of all its relevant participants, whether or not these are actively involved in political discourse, or merely as recipients.

4. Obama's Speech:

The speech has divided into separate sentences the whole speech divided into 43 utterances:

1"Good afternoon, everybody. There are very few moments in our lives where we have the privilege to witness history taking place.

2This is one of those moments; this is one of those times.

3The people of Egypt have spoken.

4Their voices have been heard and Egypt will never be the same.

5By stepping down, President Mubarak responded to the Egyptian people's hunger for change.

6But this is not the end of Egypt's transition, it's the beginning.

7I'm sure there will be many difficult days ahead and many questions remain unanswered.

8But I am confident that the people of Egypt can find the answers, and do so peacefully, constructively and in the spirit of unity that has last few weeks.

9For Egyptians have made it clear that nothing less than genuine democracy will carry the day.

10The military has served patriotically and responsibly as a caretaker to the state and will now have to ensure a transition that is credible in the eyes of the Egyptian people.

11That means protecting the rights of Egypt's citizens, lifting the emergency law, revising the constitution and other laws to make this change irreversible, and laying out a clear path to elections that are fair and free.

12Above all, this transition must bring all of Egypt's voices to the table, with spirit of peaceful protest and perseverance that the Egyptian people have shown can serve as a powerful wind at the back of this change.

13The United States will continue to be a friend and partner to Egypt.

14We stand ready to provide whatever assistance is necessary and asked for to pursue a credible transition to a democracy.

15I'm also confident that the same ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit that the young people of Egypt have shown in recent days can be harnessed to create new opportunity, jobs, and businesses that allow the extraordinary potential of this generation to take flight.

16And I know that a democratic Egypt can advance its role of responsible leadership not only in the region but around the world.

17Egypt has played a pivotal role in human history for over 6,000 years, but over the last few weeks the wheel of history turned at a blinding pace, as Egyptian people demanded their universal rights.

18We saw mothers and fathers carrying their children on their shoulders to show them what true freedom might look like.

19We saw a young Egyptian saying, “for the first time in my life I really count, my voice is heard.”

20Even though I am only one person this is the way real democracy works.

21We heard protesters change SalmeaiSalmeai we are peaceful again and again.

22We saw a military that would not fire bullets at the people they were sworn to protect.

23We saw doctors and nurses rushing into the streets to care for the people that were wounded.

24Volunteers checking protesters to make sure they were unarmed.

25We saw people of faith praying together and chanting – Muslims, Christians chanting “we are one.”

26And though we know the strains between faiths still divided too many in this world, no single event will close that chasm immediately.

27These scenes remind us that we need not be defined by our differences; we can be defined by the common humanity that we share.

28And above all, we saw a new generation emerge.

29A generation that uses their own creativity and talent and technology to call for a government that represented their hopes and not their fears.

30A government that is responsive to their boundless aspirations.

31 One Egyptian put it simply “most people have discovered in the last few days that they are worth something.” And that cannot be taken away from them anymore.

32Ever.

33This is the power of human dignity. And it can never be denied.

34Egyptians have inspired us and they’ve done so by putting the lie of the idea that justice is best gained through violence.

35For in Egypt, It was the moral force of nonviolence, not terrorism, not mindless killing, but nonviolence, the moral force that bent the arc of history to moral justice once more.

36And while all of the sights and sounds we heard were entirely Egyptian, we can’t help but hear the echoes of history.

37 Echoes from Germans tearing down a wall, Indonesian students taking to the streets.

38 Ghandi leading his people down the path of justice.

39 As Martin Luther King said in celebrating the birth of a new nation in Ghana, while trying to perfect his own "There is something in the soul that cries out for freedom." Those were the cries that came from Tahrir Square and the entire world has taken note.

40 Today belongs to the people of Egypt and the American people are moved by these scenes in Cairo and across Egypt because of who we are as a people and the kind of world we want our children to grow up in.

41 The word Tahrir means liberation.

42 It's a word that speaks to that something in our souls that cries out for freedom.

43 Forever more it will remind us of the Egyptian people, of what they did, of the things that they stood for, and how they changed their country and in doing so changed the world. Thank you."

5. Pragmatic Analysis of the speech:

In utterance (1, 2) Obama begins his speech by saying how important this day is, and calls

history to take place because these are important moments that cannot be forgotten.

a- **Direct implicature:** the importance of the event.

b- **Indirect implicature:** he does not declare what is the actual event, and in the same time he opposes **the maxim of Manner** as he does not declare it directly why we have such privilege, although he will announce it explicitly in utterance (5).

(3, 4) Egypt started to change and the entire world heard the voice of its people.

a- **Direct implicature:** the success of the revolution.

b- **Indirect implicature:** using the word "never" implies that he supports people and illustrates his protest against the government. In addition he opposes **the maxim of Manner** by using "the same" it is not clear the same of what? Can have more than one meaning.

(5) In this utterance he declares that his speech about Mubarak stepping down.

a- **Direct implicature:** stepping down meets the demands of Egyptians.

b- **Indirect implicature:** The word "hunger" implies that the Egyptians had spent very long time longing for a change that they deserve.

(6, 7) This stepping down is just the beginning of transition towards democracy; it is not the

end, and this revolution will act against the difficulties.

a- Direct implicature: It is the begging of Egyptian freedom.

b- Indirect implicature: he opposes **the maxim of Quantity** by using the sentences "many questions remain unanswered", what these question and

How it ought to be answered?

(8) Egyptians will deal with answers and manipulate such difficulties in the spirit of unity.

Direct implicature: he believes in Egyptian ability.

(9) Egyptians have potentials that approved to the entire world that the next days will bring

nothing but true democracy.

Direct implicature: the outcomes of the revolution will soon take place, as the same as the Egyptians want.

(10) Obama praises the Egyptian Armed Forces who protected the 25th January Revolution

and did not fire a bullet towards a revolutionist.

He uses Grice's Model of communication in the utterance "The military has served patriotically and responsibly as a caretaker to the state" as the follow: he goes with the maxim of Quality.

Quantity and Relation: he imposes his conditions on the Supreme Council of the Egyptian Armed Forces but in the shape of a friendship.

Manner: He praises the Egyptian Armed Forces in inappropriate situation.

(11) The transition will be credible when it protects the citizens' rights.

a- Direct implicature: USA stands side by side in supporting Egyptians.

b- Indirect implicature: USA asks the ruling entity in Egypt to adopt these needs and supervise achieving them. USA as the biggest country in the world, it assumes itself to take care of changes taking place in the world under the pretext of achieving democracy, so Obama tries to speak on behalf of the revolutionists.

(12) The most important thing the transition will bring Egyptian's voices to the table.

Indirect implicature: he opposes the **maxim of Manner** by using the word "on the table" it is ambiguous, he means "National dialogue".

(13, 14) USA and Egypt have been and will be friends and partners and we are ready to aid

Egyptians.

a- Direct implicature: He offers friendship but if the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces assures a democratic change.

b- Indirect implicature: the offer or a deal that he presents should not be said publicly.

So He flouts the **maxim of Manner**. None can predict that these protests would overthrow that deeply rooted system.

(15) Obama praises this generation of the Egyptian youth.

a- Direct implicature:Obama says that Egyptians have possibilities that are beyond what is usual or ordinary. This power can be used successfully for taking the opportunity to create new jobs and businesses.

b- Indirect implicature: he opposes the **maxim of Manner** by praise the Egyptian youth in addition they does not take their opportunity in jobs during Mubarak government.

(16, 17) Obama predicts that Egypt, if characterized by genuine democracy, will not take

charge of wise leadership in the region but in all the world as well. Moreover, historically, Egypt has a great place in human history

Indirect implicature: using the word "right" implies that these protests are legitimate.

(18, 19, 20) Repeatedly Obama expresses his admiration of some aspects witnessed during the

18-day of revolution. Such as, parents who were carrying their children on shoulders to take part in the revolution.

(21) One of the most important aspects of Egypt's recent revolution is "Peaceful" that

Obama transliterates the Arabic phrase into "SalmeaiSalmeai". He does not translate the expressing to show his appealing of the Egyptian behavior.This reflects how Obama interests in what the Egyptians say.

(22) He speaks again in praise of the Armed Forces of Egypt as they were fully honest and do

not engage in clashes.

Indirect implicature: it could be inferred that there is an indirect reference to some Arab countries that used military forces to suppress demonstrators

like Yemen. And now like Libya, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, and so on. Obama flouts the **maxim of Quantity** by repetition.

(23, 24) Here, he gives an integrated image drawn by the unity that emerged during the

revolution. So he praises the curative and medical crews and the volunteers as well.

(25, 26) He speaks about the sectarian religious unity between Muslims and Christians.

Although there have been sectarian strife that still rupture some countries.

(27) The spirit of the revolution is only humanity, there is no difference in religion, class or

gender, the all is one.

Indirect implicature: using the verb "remind us" Indicates that he had forgotten the meaning of humanity and remembered it in the scenes of the revolution.

(28, 29, 30) President Obama considers that the most important thing in the revolution is the

emerging of the new generation of the young people harnessing their creativity, talent and technology to make a change.

Indirect implicature: 1- using the word "technology" indicates that this new generation is conscious of the Internet and the means of communication and the war now is a war of thought, and can enter to any nation turned it upside down.

2- using the word "boundless" indicate that Egyptians have wide-ranging dreams, difficult to obtain. So he opposes **the maxim of quality and manner**.

(31, 32, 33) here is no one can deprive Egyptians' right or degrade them as before.

a- Direct implicature: USA stands with democracy and human rights.

b- Indirect implicature: using the verb "discovered" and expression "worth something" Explains that the Egyptians did not appreciate the meaning and the value of their union.

(34) Egyptians have laid the principle of achieving demands in a peaceful manner.

Indirect implicature: what Egyptian do is right, Obama opposes the **maxim of Manner** as he does not state it publicly.

(35) **a- Direct implicature:** Obama asserts that there is another view for change different from this bloody one.

b- Indirect implicature: Obama once again breaks the **maxim of Quality**; he says things that are not true; what about the "moral justice"?

Obama also violated the **maxim of Manner** as he did not declare with whom he compares Egypt. He opposes the **maxim of Quantity** by repetition.

(36) Actions and sounds taking place in Egypt's revolution are all Egyptian made.

Indirect implicature: America did not enter to isolate the ruling regime and this revolution from the Will of Egyptians. Here he opposes the **maxim of manner** in addition **maxim of quantity** by repeating the word "history".

(37, 38) Obama compares what has been in Egypt with that in German and Indonesia.

Indirect implicature: he does not like what is made in these countries.

(39) He quotes from Martin Luther King's word and linking it by the voices of Tahrir Square

to say that they are deeply-rooted inside the souls which seek for freedom and dignity.

(40) The scenes of revolution have astonished the whole world not only Obama.

(41, 42) He makes a connection between the events and the meaning of the word "Tahrir".

Indirect implicature: "Tahrir Square" became a symbol of "freedom". Obama opposes **the maxim of Manner**.

(43) The Egyptian revolution has won the admiration of the whole world. What is going will be recorded by the history. The Egyptians changed their history and changed how world look at them.

6. Conclusion

Obama's sentences are expressive and relatively short, although there are long ones to serve the ideas they represent. Repetition is an aspect of this speech. Obama repeats some certain phrases or utterances in the same context to affirm the concept he wants to make it clear, Repeatedly Obama talks in praise of the Egyptians to assure them that USA stands on the people not the ruler side. Throughout his speech, he tries to elevate and increase the importance of the Egyptian revolt serving its main aim: USA stands on the side of the people. He calls upon history to take place more than one time; He refers to the army's role twice, to make the audiences feel how far Obama is interested in the military affairs. By analyzing this speech through implicature, it became clear the importance of such pragmatic tool as a prime example of communicating more than what is said.

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