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# PRAGMATIC INFERENCE AND LANGUAGE EVOLUTION

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## *Abstract*

"Inferences are made when a person (or machine) goes beyond available evidence to form a conclusion. An inductive inference is one which is likely to be true because of the state of the world. Unlike deductive inferences, inductive inferences do yield conclusions that increase the semantic information over and above that found in the initial premises.

However, in the case of inductive inferences, we cannot be sure that our conclusion is a logical result of the premises, but we may be able to assign a likelihood to each conclusion.

Similar to deductive inference, induction can be broken down into three stages. The first stage is to understand the observation or stated information. The second is to form a hypothesis that attempts to describe the above information in relation to the person's general knowledge. The resulting conclusion goes beyond initial information by incorporating one's general knowledge in the result. The third step is to evaluate the validity of the conclusion that was reached. (Blackwell's Dictionary of Cognitive Science Johnson-Laird, Philip N., Human and Machine Thinking, 1993.)

Key words: deductive reference, inductive inferences , semantic meaning

There are different demands for correct understanding of the concept of pragmatic inference, for example: speaker and listener need to be the same 'level of intelligence'. Because of the degree of knowledge and competence need to be the same, because of the reason that the message could be received in its real value. For example: Most intelligent people use Latin and Greek words and if the listener does not know the real meaning of a single word, that is used by a speaker and the idea that the speaker wants to convey to listener could be lost and that situation leads to misunderstanding. For example: Panacea , 'Pandora's box' etc.

— Nowadays, Hope is panacea.

This theme was discussed in the scientific article named: " Salient inferences: pragmatics and the inheritors" by Clark, Billy (2009). In his work Clark suggested that inferences are made without conscious reflection. In order to support his argument the author provided this example: If the speaker invited listener to lunch and that person reply:

That would be lovely!

After this reply the speaker can register this utterance as acceptance to the invitation. Although this utterance does not have direct answer such as , : "Thank you, of course I will come".

The utterance "That would be lovely." provide a number of conclusions:

1. The fact of acceptance.
2. The listener is pleased to be invited.
3. The listener feel relatively positive toward the person, who invited him/her.

Another example that the author used to prove his argument on this theme, is a joke about student and lecturer:

(Lecturer has been copying onto an overhead projector what he has just been saying to the class)

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Student: Excuse me. Can you read what you're writing?

Lecturer: I'm saying it as well!

Student: Yes. Sorry. I meant could you read it out one more time please?

The last utterance has critical meaning, as utterance "Yes. Sorry. I meant could you read it out one more time please?" denotes the conclusion that, handwriting of the lecturer is really bad.

Conclusion

In conclusion the author suggested that "we make inferences in understanding all cases of everyday communication. In general, the fact that we are doing so is not something we think about or discuss. The inferential processes become more salient in some cases, such as jokes or cases where we misunderstand each other. Some cases require relatively complex inferences where the salience of the inferential processes is relatively high."

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