

## A Journey from Literal to Pragmatic Concept -- A Case Study of AMU Jargon

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### Abstract

Communication, which is generally defined as an act of transferring information from a human to another human, involves a linguistic code as their means. In these linguistic codes the encoder (speaker) encodes some ideas and concepts that get decoded by decoder (hearer). Every social set up or group develops its own terms and Jargon to convey ideas and concepts quickly. These terms and jargon simplify communication for insiders<sup>1</sup> but make it complex for outsiders<sup>2</sup>. The data was collected through observation and interviews with the participants. The findings of the study show that jargon is an important aspect of communication in AMU, and it is constantly evolving to meet the needs of its speakers. The study also highlights the importance of pragmatic competence in understanding jargon and its use in different contexts. These ideas and concepts are highly pragmatic in nature and their development seems as a journey which starts from literal meaning and reaches to pragmatic meaning via context. This paper discusses how the lexicalized concept of an utterance changes into an ad hoc concept and how pragmatic inference operates in these changes, in special reference to AMU campus jargon.

**Keywords:** AMU, Literal concept, Pragmatic concept, Jargons, Literal meaning, Pragmatic meaning.

<sup>1</sup> Insiders refer to the members of a particular social set up or group.

<sup>2</sup> Outsiders refer to those who are not the members of a particular social set up or group.

## **Introduction**

Every word encodes literal meaning, also known as lexicalized meaning. This lexicalized meaning contributes in giving the meaning or concept to the proposition in which it occurs. Communication, traditionally defined as ‘an act of transferring information from a sender to a receiver by means of a (linguistic) code’ - (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). According to code model (Sperber & Wilson, 1986) a speaker codifies his thought and idea into a linguistic string and that encodes the hearer of that linguistic string decodes thought and idea of linguistic string. According to this model, at the end of communication, which starts from codification and ends at de-codification of thoughts and ideas, the speaker and hearer will share the same thoughts and ideas that are encoded (Semantic Model).

The later studies show that there is no one-to-one mapping between linguistic meaning and utterance meaning. In other words, there is a gap between semantically-underspecified meaning and speaker meaning (Pragmatic Model). These gaps can only be bridged by pragmatic inference.

As, according to truth-conditional pragmatics, a word may contribute an ad hoc concept or meaning to the proposition expressed, that is, something that differs from the concept the word encodes (the lexicalized concept or meaning). This ad hoc concept or meaning is also called the pragmatically derived concept or meaning. According to Carston (Carston, 2010: 242.) the pragmatically derived concept may be more specific or more general than the encoded concept; that is, its denotation may be either a proper subset or a superset of the denotation of the linguistically encoded concept, or it may be a combination, both extending the lexical denotation and excluding a part of it.

Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) is a premier institution of higher education in India, known for its academic excellence and diverse student body. The university has a rich history and a unique culture, which is reflected in the language used by its students, faculty members, and staff. The language used in AMU is characterized by its technical terminology and colloquialisms, which are unique to the university.

This research paper aims to explore the journey of jargon used in AMU, from its literal interpretation to its pragmatic use. The study uses a case study approach to examine the language used by AMU students, faculty, and staff. Data were collected through observation and interviews with the participants. The study also highlights the importance of pragmatic competence in understanding jargon and its use in different contexts.

The literature on jargon is extensive, and scholars have studied its use in different contexts. According to Crystal (1997), jargon is a specialized language used by specific groups, characterized by its technical terminology and colloquialisms. Jargon is often used to convey complex ideas and concepts that are difficult to express in everyday language.

In academic institutions, jargon is used by students, faculty members, and staff to communicate within their specific fields of study. According to Swales (1990), academic jargon is a specialized language used by scholars to communicate within their fields of study. Academic jargon is characterized by its technical terminology and complex sentence structures, which are difficult for non-experts to understand.

**Pragmatics** is the study of how people use language in different contexts to achieve their communicative goals. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning in context. Pragmatics is an important aspect of understanding jargon, as the meaning of jargon can change depending on the context in which it is used.

## **Methodology**

This research paper aims to explore the journey of jargon used in AMU, from its literal interpretation to its pragmatic use. The study uses a case study approach to examine the language used by AMU students, faculty members, and staff. The data for this study was collected through observation and interviews with the participants.

## **Research Design**

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The research design for this study is a case study. According to Yin (2014), a case study is a research method that focuses on an in-depth analysis of a single case or a small number of cases. In this study, the case is the jargon used in AMU.

### **Sampling**

The participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that involves selecting participants who meet specific criteria (Palinkas et al., 2015). In this study, the participants were selected based on their affiliation with AMU, their proficiency in English, and their use of jargon.

### **Data Collection**

The data for this study was collected through observation and interviews. The observation was conducted in different settings, including classrooms, seminars, and meetings. The purpose of the observation was to identify the jargon used in different contexts and to understand its use. The interviews were conducted with students, faculty members, and staff to gain insights into their use of jargon.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected from observation and interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of data analysis that involves identifying patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, the data were analyzed for patterns and themes related to the use of jargon and its journey from literal interpretation to pragmatic use.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected, the study used multiple sources of data, including observation and interviews. The data were also analyzed by two independent researchers to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their confidentiality was ensured throughout the study.

### **Limitations**

The study has some limitations, including the small sample size and the use of a single case study approach. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to other academic institutions or contexts.

### **Defining Jargon**

To meet the particular needs of the profession, every profession has a special kind of vocabulary. Primarily, in the field of sociolinguistics, this special or technical vocabulary of a particular profession is referred to as Jargon (see, Akmajian, 2001). For instance, medical jargon, legal jargon and linguistic jargon are being used by health professionals, law professionals and linguistics professionals respectively. Secondly, Jargon is not considered as limited to professional groups only, but also exists in what we might term ‘special interest’ groups (Akmajian, 2001, 300-301). These ‘special interest’ groups make use of jargon that are especially suited to the particular interests of the group. The shared use of jargon is often the basis for a feeling of group solidarity, with the accompanying feeling that those who do not use the jargon are not part of the “group.”

### **AMU Jargon**

It is evident from sociolinguistic study that every professional or special-interest group develops its own terms and Jargon, to convey ideas and concepts quickly, in their everyday language. Similarly, Aligs<sup>3</sup> have also developed certain oddities or special vocabulary in their everyday language. These oddities or special vocabulary used by Aligs is referred to here as ‘*AMU Jargon*’. Majority of Aligs share Hindi, Urdu, and English as their means of communication. Therefore, a large part of AMU jargon consists of ordinary Hindi, Urdu, and English words to

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<sup>3</sup> Alig is a term usually used to refer to those who have studied in Aligarh Muslim University

which special meaning has been assigned. Despite being derived from these languages (Hindi, Urdu, and English) speakers of these languages will feel difficulty in understanding AMU jargon, if they do not have familiarity with it. Besides derived terms, neologism is also very much evident in AMU Jargon. Neologism has been specially coined by Aligs themselves. AMU Jargons are realized in the following tables.

i) *Derived jargon realized as follows:*

Derived Jargon	Glossary
/ʃita/	‘leopard’
/paip/	‘pipe’
35	‘a numeral’
75	‘a numeral’
/rɔket/	‘rocket’
/baba/	‘Father’
/kes/	‘case’
/məiyət/	‘dead body’
/ʃɔrsi/	‘Smoker’
/dihl/	‘dealing’
/di:lər/	‘dealər’
/lu:t/	‘A tribe’
/ʃavəl/	‘rice’
/gaõ/	‘village’
/mit <sup>h</sup> ai ka dɔbba/	‘Sweet box’

ii) *Coined jargon realized as follows:*

Coined Jargon	Explanation
/b <sup>h</sup> əsər/	‘quarrel’

/b <sup>h</sup> əsoɾi/	‘quarrelsome’
/bisi/	‘insane talk’
/kəɾɾa/	‘a kind of adjective’
/d <sup>h</sup> āsu/	‘a kind of adjective’
/k <sup>h</sup> əɾyər/	‘old student’
/si ɔf ti/	‘see off tea’

Most or all of these terms may have become so familiar to the old residents of this campus that they seem formal language.

### Defining Literal and Pragmatic Meaning

According to Leach (1996), both semantics and pragmatics deal with meaning, but the difference lies in two different uses of the verb MEAN. The semantic meaning comes from the answer to the question ‘What does X mean?’ while the pragmatic meaning comes from the answer to the question ‘What do you mean by X?’ Literal meaning refers to the basic meaning that a lexeme has encoded within itself. In other words, literal meaning is the linguistically specified basic word meaning that a word has in isolation. While pragmatic meaning is those meanings which come from the use of the word.

### Literal and Pragmatic Meaning in Case of AMU Jargon

As discussed above, literal meaning is the linguistically specified basic word meaning that a word has in isolation. While pragmatic meaning is those meanings which come from the use of the word. We may see all these types of meanings of AMU jargon in the following table.

AMU Jargon	Literal Meaning	Use in General context	Use in AMU context
/ʃita/	‘leopard’	/ye mere ʃite hē/ ‘These are my leopards’	/ye mere ʃi:te hē/ ‘These are my brave boys’
/paɪp/	‘pipe’	/vo paɪp kəhā mila t <sup>h</sup> a/ ‘Where did you got that pipe’	/vo paɪp kəhā mila t <sup>h</sup> a/ ‘Where did u meet him?’
23	‘a number’	/siddiq, ek 23/	/siddiq, ek 23/

		‘*Siddiq, a 23’	‘Siddiq, give us three of two teas’ (making three out of two cups tea)
75	‘a numeral’	/75 k <sup>h</sup> ane modzib ke d <sup>h</sup> aba fʃalte hẽ/ ‘*to eat 75, let us go to Mujib’s Dhaba’	/75 k <sup>h</sup> ane modzib ke d <sup>h</sup> aba fʃalte hẽ/ ‘to eat 75, let us go to Mujib’s Dhaba’
/rəkət/	‘rocket’	/vo rəkət ho gəya/ ‘That became rocket’	/vo rəkət ho gəya/ ‘He ran away’
/baba/	‘Father’	/baba se mıl lo/ ‘Meet father’	/baba se mıl lo/ ‘Meet baba (someone having a special rank)’
/kes/	‘case’	/vo bəhʊt bəra vala kes hɛ/ ‘That is a bigger case’	/vo bəhʊt bəra vala kes hɛ/ ‘He is a big trouble man’
/məryət/	‘dead body’	/ye kɪski məryət hɛ/ ‘Whose death body is this?’	/ye kɪski məryət hɛ/ ‘Whose maiyat (old assets) is this?’
/fərsi/	‘drugs taker’	/vo bəhʊt bəra fərsi hɛ/ ‘He is an addict (of something)’	/vo bəhʊt bəra fərsi hɛ/ ‘He is a chain smoker’
/dɪlɪŋ/	‘dealing’	/ʊski dɪlɪŋ tait hɛ/ ‘He has good manner of conduct’	/ʊski dɪlɪŋ tait hɛ/ ‘He has a good network’(+ve) ‘He is a liar or fraud’(-ve)
/di:lər/	‘dealer’	/zahid! bəhʊt bəra di:lər hɛ vo/ ‘Zahid, he is a big distributor’	/zahid! bəhʊt bəra di:lər hɛ vo/ ‘Zahid, he is such a big liar’
/lu:t/	‘A tribe/race’	/lu:t kən t <sup>h</sup> a/ ‘Who was lu:t (a member of the lu:t tribe)’	/lu:t kən t <sup>h</sup> a/ ‘Who was that stalker?’
/d̪amɪŋ/	‘dining’	/mẽ d̪aenɪŋ k <sup>h</sup> a ke aya hũ/ ‘I have come after eating dining’	/mẽ d̪aenɪŋ k <sup>h</sup> a ke aya hũ/ ‘I have come after eating dining (lunch/dinner)’
/purana fʃavəl/	‘old rice’	‘eləksən ke taim mẽ purane fʃavəl nikəl ate hɛ’ ‘During election old rice comes out’	‘eləksən ke taim mẽ purane fʃavəl nikəl ate hɛ’ ‘During election old student comes out’
/gaõ/	‘village’	/mẽ gaõ mẽ rəhta hũ/ ‘I live in village’	/mẽ gaõ mẽ rəhta hũ/ ‘I live in MM hall’



## AMU Jargon in Lexical Pragmatics Paradigm

Lexical pragmatics starts from the hypothesis that the meaning expressed by a lexical unit is underdetermined by its semantics and provides a framework to study the processes involved in bridging the gap between the encoded and the communicated meaning of lexical units (Blutner, 2004; Unger, Christoph, 2005). In other words, lexical pragmatics investigates the mechanisms by which linguistically specific word meanings are modified in use.

Although, there are three lexical-pragmatic processes such as narrowing, broadening and metaphorical extension, by which a linguistically specific word meaning travels to reach the pragmatic meaning. But in the case of AMU Jargon, we find that the linguistically specific word meanings of these Jargons travel only by the means of metaphorical extension.

## Conclusion

Thus, at the end of the paper, I would like to conclude by raising the query which comes to my mind while pursuing my findings. The study provides insights into the journey of jargon used in AMU, from its literal interpretation to its pragmatic use. The study highlights the importance of pragmatic competence in understanding jargon and its use in different contexts. The findings of the study have implications for language teaching and learning in academic institutions, particularly in terms of teaching jargon and pragmatics.

What is the cognitive process involved in using these jargons? Is there any other motivation which plays its part apart from linguistic motivated processes? The answer to this can only be a speculation that although the use of jargon observes the element of 'random' there is still some cognitive thought process that influences its journey throughout this metaphorical extension.

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