



Pragmatics as an Independent Level of Language Analysis in Linguistics

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *An extension of the study of meaning or semantics is Pragmatics. Pragmatics deals with the contextual aspects of meaning in particular situations. As distinct from the study of sentences, pragmatics considers utterances, i.e. those sentences which are actually uttered by speakers of a language. Pragmatics is concerned with how people use language within a context, in real-life situations. In pragmatics we study how factors such as time, place and the social relationship between speaker and hearer affect the ways in which language is used to perform different functions. Pragmatics allows investigating how this meaning beyond the words can be understood without ambiguity. The extra meaning is there, not because of the semantic aspects of the words themselves, but because of sharing certain contextual knowledge with the writer or speaker of the text. Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication. A theory of pragmatics would essentially be concerned with the disambiguation of sentences by the contexts in which they were uttered.*

Linguistics is the study of language as system. It involves an investigation of the nature, structure, constituent units, and modification of any system. Linguistics is called theoretical when it attempts to establish a theory of the underlying structure of language and it is called applied when linguistic concepts are put to use for pedagogical purposes.

Linguistics today is a subject of study, independent of other disciplines. Before the twentieth century, the study of language was not regarded as a separate area of study. It was considered to be a part of studying the history of language or the philosophy of language, and this was known not as linguistics but as philosophy. So 'Linguistics' is a modern name which defines a specific discipline, in which we study language not in relation to some other area such as history or philosophy, but language as itself, as a self-enclosed and autonomous system, worthy in study in its own right.

The main concern of modern linguistics is to describe language, to study its nature, and to establish a theory of language. That is, it aims at studying the components of the language system and to ultimately arrive at an explanatory statement on how the system works. Linguistics does not study an individual language, it studies' language in general. According to Robins: "Linguistics is concerned with human language as a universal and recognizable part of the human behavior and of the human faculties perhaps one of the most essential to human life as we know it, and one of the most far-reaching of human capabilities in relation to the whole span of mankind's achievements" (GL 46).

In studying language which is the subject matter of linguistics, we mark or subdivide the area in order to study it in an analytical and systematic way. Language has a hierarchical structure. This means that it is made up of units which are themselves made up of smaller units which are made up of still smaller units till we have the smallest indivisible unit, i.e. a single distinguishable sound called a phoneme. Or we can put it the other way round, and say that single sounds or phonemes combine together to make larger meaningful units of sounds. These combine into a larger meaningful unit called a morpheme; morphemes combine to form a large unit or sentence; and several sentences combine or interconnect to make a unified piece of speech or writing, which we call a text or discourse.

At each level, there are certain rules that operate which per-

mit the occurrence and combination of smaller units. So we can say that rules of phonology determine the occurrence and combination of particular phonemes, rules of word-formation cover the behavior of particular morphemes; rules of sentence-formation determine the combination and positioning words in a sentence. Each level is a system in its own right. It is important that, because of the existence of rules at each level, we can analyze each level independently of the other.

This means that if we study one level, e.g. phonology or the sound system, we need not necessarily study another level, say that of sentence formation. We can study phonology on its own, and syntax on its own. Although these levels are linked in that one is lower in the hierarchy, and another is higher in the hierarchy, and the higher level includes the lower, still each level is independently because it has its own rules of operation that can be described, analysed and understood.

An extension of the study of meaning or semantics is Pragmatics. Pragmatics deals with the contextual aspects of meaning in particular situations. As distinct from the study of sentences, pragmatics considers utterances, i.e. those sentences which are actually uttered by speakers of a language. Not only has semantics now become an important area of inquiry in linguistics, but it has also been extended to the level of pragmatics.

Pragmatics is seen by some linguists as an independent level of language analysis as it is based on utterances in the same way as phonology is based on sound, syntax on sentences and semantics and both words and sentences. The link between pragmatics and semantics remains, however, that at both levels we are concerned with meaning. Semantics attempts to relate meaning to logic and truth, and deals with meaning as a matter primarily of sense-relations within the language. Pragmatics attempts to relate meaning to context of utterance; it views language as action which is performed by speakers.

Pragmatics deals with utterances, by which we will mean specific events, the intentional acts of speakers at times and places, typically involving language. Pragmatics is concerned with how people use language within a context, in real-life situations. In pragmatics we study how factors such as time, place and the social relationship between speaker and hearer

affect the ways in which language is used to perform different functions.

Pragmatics is concerned with how people use language within a context, in real-life situations. While semantics was concerned with words, phrases and sentences, the unit of analysis in pragmatics is the utterance. In pragmatics we study how factors such as time, place and the social relationship between speaker and hearer affect the ways in which language is used to perform different functions. Language is action, and much of the interaction between human beings is based on verbal action, for example when we request, promise, swear, apologize etc.

Pragmatics is a way of investigating how sense can be made of certain texts even when, from a semantic viewpoint, the text seems to be either incomplete or to have a different meaning to what is really intended. Pragmatics allows investigating how this meaning beyond the words can be understood without ambiguity. The extra meaning is there, not because of the semantic aspects of the words themselves, but because of sharing certain contextual knowledge with the writer or speaker of the text.

Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication. Pragmatics is usually thought to involve a different sort of reasoning than Semantics. Semantics consists of conventional rules of meaning for expressions and their modes of a speaker encoding thoughts into words and the listener decoding words back into thoughts.

Pragmatics concerned with the concepts like belief, utterance, and intension and their logical inter- relation. The term pragmatics was applied not only to branches of inquiry, but also to features of the object language, the idea that pragmatics was the study of aspects of language that required reference to the users of the language then led to a very natural, further restriction of the term in analytical philosophy. Pragmatics is the study of languages, both natural and artificial that contains indexical terms.

The facts with which pragmatics deals are of various sorts, including;

- i) Facts about the objective facts of the utterances, including: who the speaker is, when the utterance occurred, and where,
- ii) Facts about the speaker's intentions. On the near side, what language the speaker intends to be using, what meaning the speaker intends to be using, whom the speaker intends to refer to with various shared names, whether a pronoun is used demonstratively and the like. On the far side, what the speaker intends to achieve by saying what he does.
- iii) Facts about beliefs of the speaker and those to whom the speaker speaks, and the conversation they are engaged in; what belief do they share; what is the focus of the conversation, what they are talking about, etc.
- iv) Facts about relevant social institutions which affect what a person accomplishes in or by saying what he does.

Pragmatics deals with utterances the intentional acts of speakers at times and places. Logic and semantics traditionally deal with properties of types of expressions, and not with properties that differ from use to use or from utterance to utterance, and vary with the particular properties that differentiate them. The distinction between sentence and utterance is of fundamental importance to both semantics and pragmatics.

Different theorists have focused on different properties of utterances. The philosophers usually take utterances as paradigmatic or assertive uses of declarative sentences, where

the speaker says something. Near-side Pragmatics is concerned with the nature of certain facts that are relevant to determining what is said. It is not limited to resolution of ambiguity, the reference of proper names, indexical and demonstratives, and anaphors, and some issues involving presupposition. In all these cases facts about the utterances, beyond the expressions used and their meanings, are used. Far-side Pragmatics is focused on what happens beyond saying. It is up to semantics to tell what someone literally says when they use expressions of a given type; it is up to pragmatics to explain the information one conveys, and the actions one performs, in or by saying something.

Pragmatics is a systematic way of explaining language use in context. It seeks to explain aspects of meaning which cannot be found in the plain sense of words or structures, as explained by semantics. As a field of language study, pragmatics is fairly new. Its origins lie in philosophy of language and the American philosophical school of pragmatism. As a discipline within language science, its roots lie in the work of Paul Grice on conversational implicature and the cooperative principle, and on the work of Stephen Levinson, Penelope Brown and Geoff Leech on politeness.

Grice's so-called theory of conversation starts with a sharp distinction between what someone says and what someone implicates by uttering a sentence. What someone says is determined by the conventional meaning of the sentence uttered and contextual processes of disambiguation and reference fixing; what she implicates is associated with the existence to some rational principles and maxims governing conversation. What is said has been widely identified with the literal content of the utterance; what is implicated, the implicature, with the non-literal, what it is communicated, but not said, by the speaker.

Consider his initial example: "A and B are talking about a mutual friend, C, who is now working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies: Oh quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet" (Grice 64-75).

What did B say by uttering "he hasn't been to prison yet"? Roughly, all he literally said of C was that he hasn't been to prison up to the time of utterance. This is what the conventional sentence meaning plus contextual processes of disambiguation, precisification of vague expressions and reference fixing provide.

Grice's second theory is in actual fact a theory about how people use language. There is a set of over-arching assumptions guiding the conduct of conversation. These start from the rational considerations and may be formulated as guidelines for the efficient and effective use of language in conversation to additional co-operative ends. Grice identifies as guidelines of this sort four basic maxims of conversation or general principles underlying the competent use of language, which jointly express a general co-operative principle. These principles are expressed as follows:

- **Quantity**
 - o Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
 - o Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
- **Quality**
 - o Super maxim: Try to make your contribution one that is true.
 - o Sub maxims:
 - Do not say what you believe to be false.
 - Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- **Relation**
 - o Be relevant.

- **Manner**

- o Super maxims: Be perspicuous.
- o Sub maxims:
 - Avoid obscurity of expression.
 - Avoid ambiguity.
 - Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
 - Be orderly.
 - Frame whatever you say in the form most suitable for any reply that would be regarded as appropriate; or, facilitate in your form of expression the appropriate reply (Grice 273).

Grice sees the principles governing conversation as derived from general principles governing human rational cooperative action.

The conversational implicature is a message that is not found in the plain sense of the sentence. The speaker implies it. The hearer is able to infer the message in the utterance, by appealing to the rules governing successful conversational interaction. Grice proposed that implicatures like the second sentence can be calculated from the first, by understanding three things:

- The usual linguistic meaning of what is said.
- Contextual information (shared or general knowledge).
- The assumption that the speaker is obeying what Grice calls the cooperative principle.

Presupposition is another kind of pragmatic inference, which is more closely based on the actual linguistic structure of sentences. And this inference cannot be thought of as semantic in the narrow sense, because they are too sensitive to contextual factors. The distinction has been evolved between the ordinary usage of the word and its technical usage within linguistics. The technical concept accommodates only a small proportion of the usages associated with the ordinary language term, and the reader who hopes for a full explication of the latter within a single pragmatic concept is bound to find the rather narrow range of phenomena.

The concept of presupposition (mostly after about 1969) has a set of important distinctions and alternative approaches were thus well established in the philosophical literature. Foremost among these were:

- (i) The distinction between logical implication or entailment and presupposition
- (ii) The contrast between assertion and presupposition
- (iii) The issue of whether it was proper to think of presupposition as a relation between sentences, between statements or between speakers on the one hand and assumptions on the other
- (iv) The issue of whether the apparent ambiguity of negation between a presupposition-denying sense and a presupposition-preserving sense is to be thought of as a scope distinction or a lexical ambiguity
- (v) The possibility that apparently background assumptions, presuppositions, could in fact be viewed as assertions or entailments, on a par with the rest of a sentence's meaning

In addition, a certain range of presuppositional phenomena had been adduced in the philosophical literature, including the presuppositions of:

- a) Singular terms, e.g. definite descriptions, proper names
- b) Quantified noun phrases, e.g. 'All of George's children' can be claimed to presuppose 'George has children'
- c) Temporal clauses
- d) Change of state verbs: e.g. 'Alex has stopped beating his brother' can be claimed to presuppose 'Alex had been beating his wife'

When language is used by human beings in real-life situations, there are generally communicative goals associated

with every utterance. Speakers express their emotions, ask questions, make requests, commit themselves to actions – they do things with words. In linguistic pragmatics, we use the term speech act to describe such language actions. A wide range of utterances can qualify as speech acts.

Speech acts are communicative acts performed through the oral or written use of language. Within speech acts, Austin distinguished among locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary levels, but speech act theory has been devoted almost exclusively to the illocutionary level, so that speech act and illocutionary act are in practice synonymous terms. An elementary speech act consists of a propositional content and an illocutionary force. Illocutionary force concerns the act the speaker intends to do in performing the speech act. All illocutionary forces, in Searle's version of speech act theory, can be grouped into five classes, according to their basic intention or illocutionary point: assertives, commissives, directives, declaratives and expressives. The illocutionary force and the propositional content of a speech act determine its conditions of success and satisfaction.

Speech act theory, then, adopts a social or institutional view of linguistic meaning. This is sometimes opposed to the intentionalist view favored by Grice (1957) and Strawson (1964), but there need be no inconsistency.

Most current pragmatic theorists are neo-Griceans in that they adopt at least some version of his main three contributions:

- i. a fundamental distinction of what a speaker says and what he implicates;
- ii. a set of rules or principles, derived from general principles of rationality, cooperation and/or cognition, that guide, constrain or govern human linguistic communication (there are differences among neo-Griceans on the exact nature of these principles and of pragmatic reasoning generally, as we shall see); and
- iii. a notion of communicative intention (called *M(eaning)-intention* by Grice) whose fulfillment consists in being recognized by the addressee.

Pragmatics will have as its domain speakers' communicative intentions, the uses of language that require such intentions, and the strategies that hearers employ to determine what these intentions and acts are, so that they can understand what the speaker intends to communicate. The fact that a word or phrase has a certain meaning clearly belongs to semantics. On the other hand, a claim about the basis for ascribing a certain meaning to a word or phrase does not belong to semantics. Perhaps, because it relates to how the language is used, it should be categorized as part of Pragmatics.

Pragmatics is the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed. There are two major types of problems to be solved within pragmatics: first, to define interesting types of speech acts and speech products; second, to characterize the features of the speech context which help determine which proposition is expressed by a given sentence. It is a semantic problem to specify the rules for matching up sentences of a natural language with the propositions that they express. In most cases, however, the rules will not match sentences directly with propositions, but will match sentences with propositions relative to features of the context in which the sentence is used. Those contextual features are part of the subject matter of pragmatics.

By analyzing the responses given by the Arts and Science College Faculties belonging to different range of marks we can say that 40% of them are not familiar with the definition of Pragmatics and the level of Pragmatics in Language analysis.

Table 1 -Over all percentage of Responses

Types of Questions	Correct Responses %	Incorrect Responses %	No Responses %
Arranging the Language structure	20	6	7
Entailment	22	4	7
Implicatures	14	11	8
Speech Act	15	11	6
Identifying the Pragmatic Levels	19	10	5
Identifying the Premise	26	7	9
Identifying the Conclusion	16	13	8
Identifying the Implicature	10	10	11
Identifying the Meaning	24	16	6
Identifying the Maxim of Quality	12	9	19
Identifying the Collection	17	19	7
Identifying the Maxim of Relevance	10	15	20

Bar chart 1 -Over all percentage of Responses

From the overall tabulation we can identify that most of the faculties are not aware of the Implication, the four Maxims in Conversational Implicatures and also they are not sure with identification the correct interpretation of any given utterance. They are also not responsive to the questions of Pre-suppositions.

The faculty from the English Department should forfeit significant attention to Linguistics. And also they should give noteworthy interest to the hierarchical structures of language like Phonetics and Phonology, Morphology, Semantics, Syntax, Discourse and also Pragmatics. As the faculty of Arts and Science College they should pay more remarkable concentration to these areas than the importance they are giving to Literature.

Remedial Measures

The remediation of pragmatic problems forms a significant part of the caseload for professionals. There is little systematic evidence that demonstrates the benefits of speech and language therapy for the difficulties lie primarily within the pragmatic domain or which indicates whether changes in pragmatic behaviors, are a result of a specific intervention that can be measured over time.

Pragmatics of language is relatively under-explored and is far from a coherent field of study. Nevertheless, it is no less important than other language fundamentals because it decides how language is to be used pragmatic competence entails knowledge of how. Pragmatic competence entails knowledge of how language is constructed and its permissible range of use. Second, it calls for the knowledge of how we share the world with others

Last but not least, it requires picking up cues from the language and social behavior of others, and to understand the perspective of others. The cognitive prerequisites of sophisticated pragmatic development in a child would therefore include: (a) accurate perception and understanding of speech; (b) production of intelligible speech; (c) appreciation of cultural norms and (d) inhibition of inappropriate speech or behavior.

Some general measures are provided to develop skills in major pragmatic areas. Use of Different Language Functions

- Ask questions or make suggestions to help the learner use language for different purposes:
 - o Desired Language Function
 - o Suggested Question or Comment
 - o Comment "What did you do?" or "Tell me about ..."
 - o Request "Tell your friend . . ." or "What do you want?"
 - o Question " Ask me . . ."

- Respond to intended message rather than correcting the pronunciation or grammar; but provide an appropriate model. For example, if one says, "That's how it doesn't go," respond, "You're right. That's not how it goes."
- Take advantage of naturally occurring interactions to increase use of different language functions.

Adaptive Language Use

- Role play conversations that might occur with different people in different situations. For example, set up a situation (or use one that occurs during the course of a day) in which the person has to explain the same thing to different people.
- Encourage use of effective persuasion. Discuss different ways to present a message:
 - o polite ("Please may I go to the party?") vs. impolite ("You better let me go.");
 - o indirect ("That music is loud.") vs. direct ("Turn off the radio.");
 - o Discuss why some requests would be more persuasive than others.

Conversation and Narration Skills

- Comment on a person's topic of conversation before introducing a new topic. Add related information. This will help him to say more about a particular topic.
- Provide visual prompts such as pictures, objects, or a story outline to help the person tell a story in sequence.
- Encourage the person to rephrase or revise an unclear word or sentence. Provide an appropriate revision by asking "Did you mean . . ."
- Show how nonverbal signals are important to communication. For example, talk about what happens when a facial expression does not match the emotion expressed in a verbal message, e.g., using angry words while smiling.

Use of suggestions such as these will help foster appropriate pragmatic language skills with the person, who might otherwise be at a disadvantage during social interactions.

Homework suggestions for Pragmatics

i) Eye Contact

- It is important, in our culture that a person looks directly at the person who is talking to them. This may be very difficult for them to do.
- Remind them 'When you look at me, think about me. When I look at you, I am thinking about you.' And that 'where your eyes go, your mind goes.' and 'what you are looking at is what you are thinking about.'
- Play a game where you look at different objects or persons in the room and the learner must guess what you are thinking about (it is the thing you are looking at).
- Also, ask 'what was I thinking while I was looking at it?' If you were looking at a clock you could have been thinking 'Gee, I wonder what time it is?' or 'how much longer 'till lunchtime?'

ii) Greeting Someone

- Eye contact, a firm grip and strong handshake, saying 'Hello, how are you' or 'It's nice to meet you.' for new acquaintances. Saying 'Hi' with a brief wave for friends are behaviors that are socially appropriate.
- Remembering to say 'Please' and 'Thank You'. Some persons have great difficulty recognizing when they need to ask permission or when someone gives them a kind word or gesture, so discussing these situations and role playing them can be very helpful.

iii) Topics of Conversation

- Often times a person will have one particular topic he loves to talk about.
- He may not be sensitive to or aware of the fact that others, especially adults, may not be interested in hearing

about his favorite topic in great detail.

- Explore other topics that can be used in conversation. What are the things that people like to do in general? What do they see other people doing besides their favorite topic? What about family, pets, jobs, vacations, hobbies, sports, art or music?
- When the person can name some of these areas of interest other people have, how they engage in a conversation about them, without immediately changing the topic back to their favorite subject.

iv) Maintaining a Topic

- Once a topic has been identified, practice asking 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why' and 'how' questions about the topic to keep the conversation going.
- For some persons, the formulation of these kinds of questions is extremely difficult. They may need a lot of opportunities to practice formulating questions. Use visual aids, such as question starter cards, to help them, such as: 'Who is _____?' 'When did _____?' etc.

v) Turn Taking

- Carrying on a conversation is about a back and forth exchange between two or more people on a shared topic of interest. It involves listening to what the other person

said, commenting on it, then either making an additional statement about the topic and/or asking a question of the other person to signal the turn taking.

- We do this so easily and automatically that we have to remember how difficult this is for the learning persons. You will need to model these behaviors for them and help them with formulating an appropriate transitional question or comment.
- Passing something back and forth, pretending it is a microphone, is a good visual reminder of who should be talking and who should be looking and listening to the person talking. In this respect, pragmatics explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity since meaning relies on the manner, place, time etc. of an utterance. The ability to understand another speaker's intended meaning is called pragmatic competence.

Pragmatics is a way of investigating how sense can be made of certain texts even when, from a semantic viewpoint, the text seems to be either incomplete or to have a different meaning to what is really intended. Pragmatic awareness is regarded as one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, and, though it can be taught, often comes only through experience.

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