



THEORETICAL BASES OF THE STUDY PRAGMATICS

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: February 11 th 2023 Accepted: March 11 th 2023 Published: April 17 th 2023	Pragmatics is the study of how communicative messages, context, speaker intent, and recipient understanding all interact in a certain situation. When a person communicates with someone else, that person's message will have both a <i>denotative</i> meaning (what the words mean through strict dictionary interpretation) and a <i>connotative</i> meaning (how the words could be interpreted through the details and context of a situation). In order to study a message from a pragmatic standpoint, there are several accepted theories used for analyzing the pragmatics of a given utterance.

Keywords: pragmatics, discourse analysis, acknowledges, *denotative* meaning, *connotative* meaning

Pragmatics is the study of how people interact when using language. Language-in-use is hereby defined as a part of human interaction. People live, work and interact with each other in social networks. They get up in the morning, see their family, go out to work or to school, meet their neighbours in the street, take buses, trams or trains, meet other people at work or in school, go to pubs and clubs, etc. In all these social networks of the home, the neighbourhood, the village, town or city, the school or job environment, sports clubs, religious meetings and so on, they interact with each other. One of the main instruments for interaction is talk.

The origin of modern pragmatics is attributable to Charles Morris (1938)¹, a philosopher who was concerned with the study of the science of signs or "semiotics". According to Morris, semiotics consisted of three (3) broad branches such as

(a) syntax being the formal relation of signs to one another

(b) semantics being the formal relations of signs to objects to which they refer

(c) pragmatics being the formal relations of signs to interpreter which is the language user. Within each of these branches (eg syntax) Morris also distinguished between "pure studies" and "descriptive studies" pure studies concerned with the explanation or elaboration of a sign system and symbols used to describe language called metalanguage. While descriptive studies are the application of the metalanguage to a particular language, i.e. descriptions of signs (or words) and their usages.

Interestingly, Morris broad use of pragmatics has been retained in some quarters and' this explains the use of the term in disciplines such as

sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, communication etc. Pragmatics is also used within analytical philosophy. Another scholar in this concept is Carnap in 1938². Carnap like Morris was a philosopher and logician. His work is quite influential because of his attempt to narrow down the scope of pragmatics. He also distinguished a tracheotomy of semiotics as follows.

(i) If in an investigation explicit reference is made to the speaker, or to put it in more general terms, to the user of the language, then we assign it (the investigation) to the field of pragmatics.

(ii) If we abstract from the user of the language and analyze only the expressions and their designate, (references) we are in the field of semantics.

(iii) And finally, if we abstract from the designate also and analyze only the relations between the expressions, we are in (logical) syntax (quoted from Levinson, 1983:3).

Carnap retained Morris' idea of pragmatics as an investigation in which explicit reference is made to the speaker or the user of the language and equated pragmatics with descriptive semiotics (formal study of meaning). Like Morris, he made a distinction between pure and descriptive studies, equating pragmatics with the latter. He also added a pure pragmatics to include concepts like belief, utterance and intention and how they relate to each other. This latter idea (ie pure pragmatics) has since been dropped. In the 1960's Carnap's definition of pragmatics as requiring reference to the user was adopted within linguistics, especially within a movement called "generative semantics". It is necessary to mention here that Carnap's definition of pragmatics as requiring

¹ Morris Ch. Writings on the General Theory of Signs. - The Hague - Paris, 1977. - 324 p.

² Carnap R. Introduction to Semantics. - Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942 (reprint 1959, 1975, 2002). - 1088



reference to the user of the language is as too narrow as it is too broad.

According to Levinson (1983)³, it is too broad because it admits such studies as "ships of the tongue" or word associations and studies in linguistics pragmatics should be restricted to investigations that have at least some linguistics implications. On the other hand, it is too narrow because if we take words like I and you for example, they identify particular participants (or users) and their role in the speech event, just as words like here and now indicate the place and time of the event (not necessarily referring to the user). Therefore it is argued that Carnap's definition might be modified to say something like "if in an investigation explicit reference is made to the speaker, or to put it in more general terms, to the user of the language, and those linguistic investigations that make necessary reference to aspect of the context, then we assign it to the field of pragmatics".

Quite a number of language scholars have defined pragmatic, which are of interest to us in this study. These definitions throw some light on the nature, principles and scope of pragmatic. Let's look at a few of them. Leech (1981, P. 290)⁴ maintain that pragmatics is "the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered. Notice the word "utterances" not necessarily sentences. Leech (1983, P. 6) defines pragmatics as "the study of those aspects of the relationship situations", the speech situation enables the speaker use language to achieve a particular effect on the mind of the hearer". Thus the speech is goal-oriented (i.e. the meaning which the speaker or writer intends to communicate). Levinson (1983, P. 22) sees pragmatics as "the study of those aspects of the relationship between language and context that are relevant to the writing of grammars". Notice in this definition that interest is mainly in the inter-relation of language and principles of language use that are context dependent. For Yule (1996, P. 127)⁵ pragmatics is "the study of intended speaker meaning". It is "in many ways ... the study of invisible meaning or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn't actually said (or written).

By scope, we mean the levels to which the study of pragmatics have been extended. It should be mentioned that linguistic pragmatics as it is used

today is a lot more restricted than when the term "pragmatics" was first used by Charles Morris (1938). Morris was interested in *semiotics* - the general study of signs and symbols pragmatics was defined as the "relation of signs to the interpreters". Morris then extended the scope of pragmatics to include psychological, biological and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs Levinson (1983).

This will include what is known today as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics among others. Today, linguistics pragmatics mostly dwells on those factors of language use that govern the choices individuals make in social interaction and the effects of those choices on other (Crystal, 1987)⁶. In recent times however, extended researches in cultural studies and social discourse argue in favour of discourse pragmatics rather than the traditional linguistic pragmatics. Fairclough (1989)⁷ for instance argues that rather than see language us as an individual's strategies of encoding meaning to achieve some particular effects on the learner or reader, we should be concerned with the fact that social conventions and ideologies, define peoples roles, identifies and language performance, people simply communicate in some particular ways as the society determines. While people can manipulate language to achieve certain purposes, they in some circumstances are actually ruled by social convention. In the same vein, pragmatic study has thrown some lights in the study of literature giving rise to literary pragmatics, while the application of pragmatics to computational linguistics has also developed into computational pragmatics, etc.

Pragmatics is the study of how communicative messages, context, speaker intent, and recipient understanding all interact in a certain situation (Green, 1989)⁸. When a person communicates with someone else, that person's message will have both a *denotative* meaning (what the words mean through strict dictionary interpretation) and a *connotative* meaning (how the words could be interpreted through the details and context of a situation). In order to study a message from a pragmatic standpoint, there are several accepted theories used for analyzing the pragmatics of a given utterance. Grice (1975)⁹

⁶ Crystal, D. (1987). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of language*. Cambridge: CUP.

⁷ Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. London: Longman.

⁸ Green, L. (2002) *African American English* Cambridge University Press

⁹ Grice, H. Paul. 1975. *Logic and conversation*. In: P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics*. Vol. 3: *Speech*

³ Levinson S. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴ Leech G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.

⁵ Yule, G. (1996). *The study of language* 2nd ed. Cambridge: CUP.



postulated the theory of Cooperative Principle, which states that every conversation is governed by a set of principles that act as norms to enhance communication.

Thus, speakers can infer through these maxims the intended meaning of language. Though Grice's theory of Cooperative behavior has generally been accepted in the linguistic community, there is another theory that, when combined with Gricean maxims, enhances the pragmatic understanding of a situation. Brown & Levinson's (1987)¹⁰ research into politeness add insight into situations where people break the Cooperative Principle. Politeness theory centers on the fact that, in social situations, people want to preserve their self-image, or "face", to others (pp. 61). At times, people make linguistic choices to not impose on others and to instead preserve a community of likeability, freedom of action, and appreciation. The linguistic choices that people make to influence a situation can be classified into positive politeness strategies (expressing solidarity) and negative politeness strategies (increasing distance between speaker and receiver to preserve status). In advertising, ads often will enact both positive and negative politeness strategies to help consumers feel that, even though the ads act as a request to buy a product, the consumers' agency is preserved.

The year 2014 proved to be an exciting one for pragmatics and discourse analysis as it was characterized by a series of cross-over initiatives, reaching out beyond the boundaries of the single fields. In pragmatics, this cross-over was seen particularly strongly in the works on corpus pragmatics. While corpus-linguistic methods have become relatively mainstream in discourse analysis, the reach into pragmatics had been quite limited to date. Another continuing area of interdisciplinary development is the increasing attention which prosodic and multimodal factors are gaining in (mainstream) discourse and pragmatic research.

The year's work was also characterized by the prominence of evaluation and, connected to this, the continued growth in research into impoliteness. Research into discourse has continued past trends but is increasingly characterized by its responsiveness to current affairs and to the impact agenda that is being set by the British funding councils. Given the very large number of publications in discourse and pragmatics, this review will attempt to address these trends (and only as seen in studies of English) rather than survey the entirety of the excellent research

published in 2014. This year saw the publication of the Discourse Studies Reader, edited by Johannes Angermuller, Dominique Maingueneau, and Ruth Wodak, as well as the third edition of the Discourse Reader, edited by Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland¹¹. The Discourse Studies Reader approaches discourse studies not as a branch of linguistics but as a project 'which runs counter to the division of knowledge into specialized disciplines and sub-disciplines' and the editors explicitly set out to bring together both discourse theory and discourse analysis.

Moving on to textbooks, 2014 saw the publication of two pragmatics textbooks, both of which go beyond a simple teaching tool by presenting different ways of understanding pragmatics. *Pragmatics and the English Language* by Jonathan Culpeper and Michael Haugh¹² is an important addition to the field; it serves as an introduction both to pragmatics and to a new way of approaching pragmatics: integrative pragmatics. In this approach the authors reject the forced dichotomy of first-order (the view of the researcher) vs. second-order (the view of the participant) perspectives on pragmatics in favour of an approach which acknowledges the importance of both perspectives and focuses on interaction as a way of bridging them. Similarly, they seek to bridge the divide between the North American and European traditions of micro- and macro-pragmatic studies. It is always exciting to see eminent researchers dedicate time to textbooks and the result in this case is a research driven textbook which is very student-friendly. Each chapter is written in a highly accessible style and combines both theoretical overviews and discussions of case studies. The reflections sections bring in data from a range of Englishes examining variation within and between Englishes and covering both synchronic and diachronic aspects, which is indeed one of the many interesting aspects of the book. The book is positioned explicitly as the pragmatics of English.

This is innovative in two ways: first, it acknowledges the plurality of Englishes, and second, it acknowledges the fact that a great deal of pragmatics research is actually English pragmatic research; as they write, 'unlike most introductory pragmatics books which give the impression that the pragmatic phenomena they discuss are general, applicable to many languages and cultures, we call a spade and spade—this is a book about pragmatics and the English language'. This awareness and honesty are very much appreciated. The chapters cover both old and new ground, including: familiar

Acts. New York: Academic Press.

¹⁰ Brown, Penelope and Steven C. Levinson. 1987. *Politeness. Some Universals in Language. Usage.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹¹ Jaworski Adam and Nikolas Coupland eds. *The Discourse Reader.* 3rd edn. Routledge. [2014] pp. 518.

¹² Culpeper J., Haugh M. *Pragmatics and the English Language.* - Bloomsbury: Red Globe Press, 2014. - 316 p.



referential pragmatics, informational pragmatics, pragmatics meaning, pragmatics acts, interpersonal pragmatics, and metapragmatics.

Understanding Pragmatics by Gunter Senft¹³ adopts the broad view of pragmatics, conceptualizing it as the 'cultural and social embedding of meaning' and as a 'transdiscipline'. The structure of the book highlights the insights and contributions to pragmatics from a range of disciplines, with each chapter covering one of these. Thus, the following are included: philosophy, psychology, human ethology, ethnology, sociology, and politics. This means that alongside expected topics such as speech-act theory and deixis, which are covered in the first two chapters, the third chapter discusses ritual, which is less frequently covered in such depth in introductory books.

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¹³ Senft G. *Understanding Pragmatics*. - Routledge, 2014. - 222 p.