

Definition of Pragmatics

Since its introduction to modern linguistics, pragmatics has been defined in numerous ways:

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics concerned **not only with the linguistic meaning of utterances but also with the speaker's intended meaning**. Levinson states that "Pragmatics is the study of all those aspects of meaning not captured in a semantic theory" (1983, p. 12).

The interest in this field initially appeared as a reaction to Chomsky's (1965) notion of the use of language as an abstract construct based on competence, which has to be mastered separately from the actual functions of language in use (Leech, 1983).

This one indicates that since semantics is concerned with the study of meaning, that is the relation between the different linguistic signs (words, phrases.....) and what those signs denote, i.e. it focuses on the propositional meaning (denotative meaning) of different language structures and neglects the context in which those structures are used, pragmatics appeared to cover those aspects ignored by semantics such as the context in which language is used, the different paralinguistic features, and the participants' social and cultural backgrounds.

Yule (1996) suggests four areas, with which pragmatics is concerned.

1. Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). It has, consequently, more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves. ***Pragmatic is the study of speaker meaning.***
2. This type of study necessarily involves the interpretation of what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said. It requires a consideration of how speakers organize what they want to say in accordance with who they are talking to, where, when, and under what circumstances. ***Pragmatic is the study of contextual meaning.***
3. This approach also necessarily explores how listeners can make inferences about what is said in order to arrive at an interpretation of the speaker's intended meaning. This type of study explores how a great deal of what is unsaid is recognized as part of what is communicated. We might say that it is the investigation of invisible meaning. ***Pragmatic is the study of how more meaning gets communicated than is said.***
4. This perspective then raises the question of what determines the choice between the said and the unsaid. The basic answer is tied to the notion of distance. Closeness, whether it is physical, social, or conceptual, implies shared experience. On the assumption of how close or distant the listener is, speakers determine how much needs to be said. ***Pragmatics is the study of the expression of relative distance.*** (1996, pp. 3- 4)

History of Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a new branch of linguistics, research on it can be dated back to ancient Greece and Rome where the term 'pragmaticus' is found in late Latin and 'pragmaticos' in Greek, both meaning fit for an action.

As a term 'Pragmatics' was used for the first time in 1938 by the philosopher Charles Morris as a subdivision of 'semiotics'. According to him, semiotics includes three aspects: syntactics/syntax, semantics and pragmatics. He referred to pragmatics as the part of semiotics which emphasizes the relationship between users, words and reference relationships.

New perspectives in the field of linguistics helped shift linguists' focus to examining real life conversations (language used in its real context) which led to the developments of significant theories introduced by linguists such as Austin (1962), Searl (1969) and Grice (1975) (Leech, 1983, p. 2).

Later on, other linguists made useful contributions in the field of pragmatics; In 1977, Mey published the 1st Journal of Pragmatics in Holland. In 1983, Leech wrote his book 'Principle of pragmatics' and Levinson wrote his 'Pragmatics'. In 1988, there was establishment of the IPRA (the International Pragmatic Association) and this was the year where pragmatics turned into an independent discipline.

Context and Meaning

Many linguists and researchers (Cook, 1999 and Widdowson, 2000) argued the importance of the aspect of context and its role in the understanding the properties of language (appropriate interpretation of meaning) and, thus, they suggested the importance of the study of different features of context since it is the central issue in the newly developed disciplines, particularly, pragmatics.

Mey identified context as follows:

Context is a dynamic, not a static concept. It is to be understood as the surroundings, in the widest sense, that enable the participants in the communication process to interact, and that make the linguistics expression on their interaction intelligible. (1993, p. 38).

Types of Context

Linguistic Context (co-text)

This type of contextual information is all about what has been previously said in a conversation. Sometimes it is called co-text and identified as the set of words that surround the language unit in question in the same phrase, or sentence.

Physical Context

Such type of contextual information includes what is physically present around the speakers/hearers at the time of communication. What objects are present, where the communication is taking place (*the environmental conditions-outdoor- as temperature, lighting, an noise level, the distance between communicators, the seating arrangements*), as well as the timing, what is going on around, the situation in which it is used (*Is this a special occasion such as holiday celebration or anniversary of an event at the site?*), and what actions are occurring, all of which assist in making communication successful.

Historical Context (epistemic context)

The historical context is the background knowledge which is already discussed and talked about by the participants in previous communication occasions (Verderber, R. F., Verderber, K. S., & Berryman-Fink, 2008). This previous shared knowledge affects the current communication incidents (West & Turner, 2009).

Social Context

The social context refers to the social relationship among the participants in communication (speakers/ hearers) such as kinships, friendship, work relationships, social contracts, and acquaintances (Randal & Wayne, 2013). It influences how you interpret things, how you speak, what you speak about, or how you act.

According to Halliday,

Knowledge is transmitted in social contexts, through relationships, like those of parent and child, or teacher and pupil, or classmates, that are defined in the value systems and ideology of the culture. And the words that are exchanged in these contexts get their meaning from activities in which they are embedded, which again are social activities with social agencies and goals. (1989, p. 6)

Cultural Context

The cultural context is the influence of the values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions which are widespread in societies on one's behaviour. Culture is included in all aspects of life. It has an effect on how people think, how people converse, and how people act. This is the reason why misunderstandings may occur in intercultural communication where the communicators are from different cultural backgrounds.

Psychological Context

The psychological context is represented in the moods and feelings that influence people in communication and may affect the interpersonal relationship. It is the psychological situation in which a person is during a conversation. For instance, if a teacher starts a class directly after students have done an exam, no one will listen to him/ her because the psychology of the students before the exam is not the same as after the exam (Annan-Prah, 2015).

Conclusion

Lecture 01

Boxer (2003, p. 51) asserts that “students must not only stretch their linguistic abilities but use all areas of their developing communicative competence ...”. They should not only focus on the linguistic knowledge and ignore the side of pragmatics because pragmatic competence helps to raise their pragmatic awareness and make them successful cross-cultural communicators. Thus, pragmatic competence is considered a basic component of second language learners’ communicative ability (Amaya, 2008).

Semantics	VS	Pragmatics
<p>Semantics is the study of the relationship between linguistic entities and their literal meanings, it is concerned with the propositional meaning of words rather than overall meaning of discourse pieces.</p>	<i>Definition</i>	<p>Pragmatics is the study of language users’ ability to connect and make compatible language and context by surmounting the inconvenience they come across during social conversations and the way their choices of linguistic forms influence other participants’ understanding and interpretation of their intentions in the act of communication.</p>
<p>A branch of linguistics concerned with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The study of the relationship between language entities and their meanings. ➤ The denotative meanings of language units. 	<i>Characteristics</i>	<p>A branch of linguistics concerned with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The use and function of language. ➤ The relationship between the linguistic expressions (utterances) and their context of use and users.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Form (Sign) and referent ➤ Denotative and connotative meanings ➤ Lexicalization ➤ Etymology ➤ homonymy ➤ Polysemy ➤ Synonymy and antonymy 	<i>Areas</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Constatives vs. performatives ➤ Felicity conditions (sincerity conditions) ➤ Deixis ➤ Presuppositions and entailments ➤ Speech act theory ➤ The cooperative principle ➤ Grice’s maxims ➤ Theory of relevance ➤ Theory of Politeness

<p style="text-align: center;">Sentence</p> <p>A sentence is a group of words combined together by the grammatical rules of a language.</p> <p>Sentence Meaning (Type Meaning) It is concerned with what is literally said by uttering the sentence. This type of meaning is attached to the sentence at the level of words.</p> <p>Descriptive/Referential Meaning</p> <p>What does X mean?</p> <p>Semantic meaning is concerned with the meaning that the grammar and vocabulary convey.</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Utterance</p> <p>An utterance is the use of a piece of language by a particular speaker, on a particular occasion, for a particular purpose.</p> <p>Utterance meaning (Speaker Meaning) The notion of utterance/speaker meaning was derived in order to account for the intuition that we sometimes use to express thoughts that are not directly expressed in the sentence meaning but that the audience must derive for a successful conversation.</p> <p>Situational/Contextual Meaning</p> <p>What do you mean by X?</p> <p>Pragmatic meaning is concerned with the implied meaning of linguistic passages, meaning in context and the interlocutors in the speech events intentions.</p>
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Table 3: The Semantic-pragmatic Distinction