

## PRAGMATICS

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**Abstract:** *Pragmatics in the English language is one of the youngest of the linguistic disciplines. However, its history can be traced back to the 1870s and the philosophers Charles Sanders Pierce, John Dewey, and William James.*

Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition that considers words as tools for understanding the world and rejects the idea that the function of thought is to mirror reality directly. Pragmatists suggest that all philosophical thought, including language, is best understood in terms of its practical uses.

In 1947, Charles Morris drew upon pragmatism and his background in philosophy, sociology, and anthropology to set out his theory of pragmatics in his book 'Signs, Language and Behaviour'. Morris said that pragmatics "deals with the origins, uses, and effects of signs within the total behaviour of the interpreters of signs."

**Key words:** *Linguistics, contex, language, metaphor, nonverbal communication, syntax, pragmatics, semantic, structure.*

### Introduction

Pragmatics is an important branch of linguistics in the English language. It helps us look beyond the literal meaning of words and utterances and allows us to focus on how meaning is constructed in specific contexts. When we communicate with other people, there is a constant negotiation of meaning between the listener and the speaker. Pragmatics looks at this negotiation and aims to understand what people mean when they communicate with each other. Pragmatics looks at the difference between the literal meaning of words and their intended meaning in social contexts. It takes into account things such as irony, metaphor and intention.

The Oxford Companion to Philosophy (1995) defines pragmatics as:

The study of language which focuses attention on the users and the context of language use rather than on reference, truth, or grammar"

Pragmatics is key to understanding language use in context and is a useful basis for understanding language interactions.

Imagine a world where you had to explain everything you meant in full; there could be no slang, jokes probably wouldn't be funny, and conversations would be twice as long!

Let's take a look at what life would be like without pragmatics.

'What time do you call this?!

'Literal meaning = What time is it?

Real meaning = Why are you so late?!

Because of the insights of pragmatics, we know that the speaker does not actually want to know what time it is, but is making the point that the other person is late. In this case, it would be best to apologise rather than give the speaker the time!

The 'cooperative principle' is a theory by Paul Grice. Grice's theory explains how and why conversations tend to succeed rather than fail. Grice's theory is based on the idea of cooperation; he suggests that speakers inherently want to cooperate when communicating, which helps remove any obstacles to understanding. In order to facilitate successful communication, Grice says that when we talk, it is important to say enough to get your point across, be truthful, be relevant, and be as clear as possible.

Main part

In linguistics and related fields, pragmatics is the study of how context contributes to meaning. The field of study evaluates how human language is utilized in social interactions, as well as the relationship between the interpreter and the interpreted.<sup>[2]</sup> Linguists who specialize in pragmatics are called pragmaticians. The field has been represented since 1986 by the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA).

Pragmatics encompasses phenomena including implicature, speech acts, relevance and conversation,<sup>[3]</sup> as well as nonverbal communication. Theories of pragmatics go hand-in-hand with theories of semantics, which studies aspects of meaning, and syntax which examines sentence structures, principles, and relationships. The ability to understand another speaker's intended meaning is called pragmatic competence. Pragmatics emerged as its own subfield in the 1950s after the pioneering work of J.L. Austin and Paul Grice.

Pragmatics was a reaction to structuralist linguistics as outlined by Ferdinand de Saussure. In many cases, it expanded upon his idea that language has an analyzable structure, composed of parts that can be defined in relation to others. Pragmatics first engaged only in synchronic study, as opposed to examining the historical development of language. However, it rejected the notion that all meaning comes from signs existing purely in the abstract space of langue. Meanwhile, historical pragmatics has also come into being. The field did not gain linguists' attention until the 1970s, when two different schools emerged: the Anglo-American pragmatic thought and the European continental pragmatic thought (also called the perspective view).<sup>[4]</sup>

The study of the speaker's meaning focusing not on the phonetic or grammatical form of an utterance but on what the speaker's intentions and beliefs are.

The study of the meaning in context and the influence that a given context can have on the message. It requires knowledge of the speaker's identities, and the place and time of the utterance.

The study of implicatures: the things that are communicated even though they are not explicitly expressed.<sup>[5]</sup>

The study of relative distance, both social and physical, between speakers in order to understand what determines the choice of what is said and what is not said.<sup>[6]</sup>

The study of what is not meant, as opposed to the intended meaning: what is unsaid and unintended, or unintentional.<sup>[7]</sup>

Information structure, the study of how utterances are marked in order to efficiently manage the common ground of The referred entities between speaker and hearer.

Formal Pragmatics, the study of those aspects of meaning and use for which context of use is an important factor by using the methods and goals of formal semantics.

The study of the role of pragmatics in the development of children with autism spectrum disorders or developmental language disorder.

Pragmatics considers the meaning of language within its social context and refers to how we use words in a practical sense. To understand what is genuinely being said, we must examine the contexts (including the physical location) and look out for social cues, for example, body language and tone of voice.

Let's look at some different pragmatic examples, and their contextual meaning, and see if it starts to make a bit more sense.

Example : You and your friend are sitting in your bedroom studying, and she says, 'It's hot in here. Can you crack open a window?'

If we take this literally, your friend is asking you to crack the window - to damage it. However, taken in context, we can infer that they are actually asking for the window to be opened a little.

Semantics and pragmatics are two of the main branches of linguistics. While both semantics and pragmatics study the meaning of words in language, there are a couple of key differences between them. Semantics refers to the meaning that grammar and vocabulary provide, and does not consider the context or inferred meanings. In contrast, pragmatics looks at the same words but in their social context. Pragmatics considers the relationship between social context and language.

#### Conclusion

Pragmatics is the study of the meaning of language in social context. Pragmatics is rooted in philosophy, sociology, and anthropology. Pragmatics considers the construction of meaning through the use of context and signs, such as body language and tone of voice. Pragmatics is similar to semantics, but not quite the same! Semantics is the study of words and their meanings, whereas pragmatics is the study of words and their meanings in social context. Some of the main pragmatic theories are the 'Co-operative principle', 'Politeness theory', and 'Conversational implicature'.

#### RESOURCES:

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