

Pragmatics: A Book Review

Parviz Maftoon, Zahra Bavand Savadkouhi*

Department of English, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

*Email: zbavand@yahoo.com

Received for publication: 01 March 2016.

Accepted for publication: 15 June 2016.

Abstract

Pragmatics was written by Chapman (2011) and published by MPG Books Group, Bodmin and Kings Lynn in Great Britain. Chapman's monograph offers a beautifully clear and wide-ranging introduction to all the major developments in core theoretical pragmatics, from the very beginning to the present day. With increasing scholarly interest in meaning in context in the field of linguistics (e.g. Halliday, 2001; Hasan, 2009; Van Dijk, 2009), it seems like a timely contribution.

The author's aims of this book are to describe both early and recent developments in pragmatics, and also to show how pragmatics relates to the study of language more generally.

It does more than provide an introductory overview. It encourages the reader to engage with some of the fundamental issues faced by pragmatics, and to appreciate the current controversies and debates in which they are engaged.

The primary aim of this book is to contribute students taking undergraduate degree level courses in pragmatics or in linguistics more generally, it should also be useful to postgraduate students in these areas and to researchers in linguistics and related disciplines who are interested in finding out about what is currently going on in pragmatics.

Introduction

Chapter 1 provides the reader with exactly the kind of introductory book which is recommended to anyone wanting a grasp of pragmatics to the point. The book is divided into seven chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 give a general outline of pragmatics, broadly defined as a study of context-dependent meaning. This chapter is considered as a good introduction, providing readers with a general overview of pragmatics. Chapman first presents an elegant and clear explanation of two types of pragmatics currently being practiced as theoretical pragmatics and social pragmatics, the former of which is the focus of this book. She further attempts to explain the relationship between pragmatics and linguistics. In her opinion, pragmatics can be delineated as outside of and separate from mainstream. Finally, a brief introduction to the structure of the book is put forward.

In other words, readers achieve information concerning pragmatics, both semantic (word/sentence-level) aspects of meaning and knowledge of non-linguistic (social and cultural) contexts are essential; however, the major aim of this part is to discuss about Knowledge of non-linguistic that constitutes the prominent focus of pragmatics. She discussed in respect with pragmatics, types of pragmatics and the considerable role of pragmatics in communication and interaction. The way Chapman presents her idea is not abstract, but it is so convenient, accessible and concrete. In fact, they are meaningful and real. Chapman made her best attempts to enable readers receive strong information regarding two influential schools of pragmatics, along with their specific purposes, assumptions and methodologies. The Anglo-American tradition analyses meaning as an abstract system by developing formal accounts of language use (theoretical

pragmatics), while European Continental pragmatics concerns itself with features of communication as they are influenced by general conditions of language use and by social, cultural and/or situational factors (social pragmatics).

Chapter two explores the nature of pragmatics by discussing how it relates to semantics and what makes it different from semantics. It is devoted to a discussion of how semantics and pragmatics, despite their points of differences, can be jointly dependent. Distinctions between the foci of semantics (sentences) and that of pragmatics (utterances) are discussed in this part. Next, notions such as logic, truth conditions and mood are explored. It after giving a brief explanation regarding the semantics/pragmatics, recommends a useful principle for the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, that is, semantics refers to sentences and while pragmatics concerned with utterances. She then puts the emphasis on the relationship between logic and language. In this section, Chapman also talked explicitly concerning language and logic, mood, the explicit and implicit knowledge and presupposition. It seems she presented these kinds of information more friendly. Even novice and newcomers attain the relative knowledge without any frustration and effort. This chapter ends with a suggestion that there are meanings to be recognized beyond the literal sense of sentences/utterances. The complexity of this study is explained in terms of such concepts as entailment, presupposition and deixis. She tries to give a clear and accessible discussion of four types of semantics/pragmatics distinctive phenomena: the relationship between mood and function, the distinction between explicit and implicit meaning, presupposition, and deixis.

Chapter 3 expresses required knowledge and information in relation to pragmatic history, its emergence and development, considering how that branch of language study changed and developed. This part reviews the history of pragmatics from the perspectives of both linguistics and philosophy. It considerably focused on structuralism and its prominent role in the development of modern linguistics. It places the emphasis on language as a structured system. Within language study, Saussurean's parole might be viewed as the direct ancestor of present-day pragmatics since it puts the emphasis on individual speakers, and it tells us that it is Morris who introduced the term pragmatics into linguistics. Within the study of philosophy, early usage of the term pragmatics as a label for a certain area of language study comes from Carnap, one of the primary logical positivists. Although not describing their work as being ~pragmatics, Austin and Grice, who are the leading force in ~ordinary language philosophy, contributed a lot to the development of pragmatics. Their theories are nowadays seen as fundamental to the subject. Pragmatics developed with the establishment of the Journal of Pragmatics in 1977, the reference to pragmatics in textbooks on general linguistics by the 1980s and the establishment of the International Pragmatics Association in 1986.

Chapters 2 and 3 together put the central theories of pragmatics in context. Any reader, whether new to pragmatics or familiar with the field, will find this part informative and a good contextualization for the proposed main pragmatic theories in the following parts of the book. Beginning by situating pragmatics within de Saussure's structuralism, Chapter 3 first addresses the way in which logical positivism gave rise to early pragmatic thinking and then explores how pragmatics proper, developed by 'ordinary language' philosophers, broke away from this tradition.

Chapters 4 forms the central part of this volume, which is devoted to setting out the main theories, terminologies and mechanisms of theoretical pragmatics. Chapter 4 is mainly concerned with two related but separate classical pragmatic theories, that is, Austin's speech act theory and Gricean's implicature. In terms of speech act theory, Chapman starts with Austin's account of performatives, further explains illocutionary acts, and finally presents five categories of illocutionary force (verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, expositives). After elaborating on Gricean's implicature (conventional implicature, conversational implicature,

generalized conversational implicature), which deals with how and why literal and intended meaning differ, Chapman comes to show both critical and supportive responses to Gricean implicature.

Chapter 4 continues the discussion of the contribution these thinkers made to pragmatics. It incorporates speech act theory and its many dimensions, types of implicature, the cooperative principle and its conversational in Chapter 5. Neo-Griceans put the work of pragmatics forefather H.P. Grice under careful examination and suggested improvements to Grice's original programme. Grice's four maxims are reduced in number to three according to Levinson's Q-, I- and M-principles, and to two in light of Horn's Q- and R-Principles. Another influential approach and the most reductionist of all is relevance theory; for relevance theorists, only one maxim (i.e. principle of relevance) suffices. Their hypothesis represents a broader scope than that of the neo-Griceans, dealing with how language links with mind and the cognitive processes when language is produced and interpreted.

Chapter five introduces three prominent pragmatic theories, namely, neoGricean pragmatics, relevance theory, and semantic autonomy and pragmatic intrusion, to bring the survey of pragmatic theories up to date. The first section provides an insightful discussion on two types of neo-Gricean pragmatics: Horn's Q- and R-Principles, and Levinson's Q-, I- and M-Principles. The second section presents a clear introduction to Wilson and Sperber's relevance theory, covering the principles of relevance, explicature and implicature, and conceptual and procedural meaning. Chapman argues that relevance theory is much less close to Grice than neo-Gricean pragmatics because the principle of relevance is a general principle, or a fact, of human cognition. In illustrating semantic autonomy and pragmatic intrusion, the last section gives a brief survey of three approaches: Recanatian contextualism, Cappelen and Lepore's insensitive semantics and Bach's minimal semantics. I appreciate the author's lucid introductions to different types of pragmatic theory and her analysis of them. What is worth pointing out here is her sharp eye on the similarities and differences in each type of pragmatic theory.

Chapter 6 discusses regarding the application of pragmatics. It presents an insightful discussion and valuable comments on how pragmatics can be applied to the study of politeness theory, literature, language acquisition, clinical linguistics and experimental pragmatics. She states that the study of politeness in linguistic interaction leads to sharply on pragmatic theories particularly on speech theory and Grice's account of conversational implicature. Chapman continues the term politeness is used to describe behavior that shows respect and consideration for others, Also some of the earliest contributions to the development of politeness theory came from Robin Lakoff who published two short but very influential articles on the subject in the early 1970s. She also points out sometimes social pressure towards politeness influence how people express themselves.

However, chapter 6 begins with a review of politeness and the more recently emerging area of impoliteness. In addition, it touches upon the role pragmatics plays in different types of literary texts and in child language acquisition. It also gives an account of the application of pragmatics to psycholinguistics-related studies: the analysis of cognitive impairments of people with communicative disabilities (clinical pragmatics) and also research that puts the merits of current pragmatic theories (and counter-theories) to the test in laboratory and experimental environments.

The last chapter of the book offers an overview of the applied side of pragmatics and how pragmatic thinking features in other branches of language studies also with focus on meaning in context. Chapter 7 addresses four other fields that have relation to language in context: conversation analysis, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics. The relationship between them and pragmatics is discussed, and some instructive and illuminating comments are offered on their

similarities and differences. It provides a summary of relationships placed between pragmatics and related disciplines: conversation analysis, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics. With only a quick glance at the book's title and contents, readers are likely to form an impression that Chapman's Pragmatics is not very different from any other introductory book on pragmatics. Nevertheless, what makes this monograph distinct and at the same time appealing and highly recommendable, is the reader-friendly style that Chapman has adopted. Unlike the authors of several other books of a similar nature, her preference of presentation is not to provide only a general introduction of concepts followed by examples and brief explanation, nor does it treat pragmatics topics primarily in abstract terms, using specialized terminologies and assuming a prior knowledge of pragmatics issues. Chapman takes the time to introduce and define each account in a clear and comprehensible manner, before probing deeper into detail about relevant complexities and debates.

At the end of each chapter, a short section with suggestions for further reading is also offered. Readers may notice some repetition but I feel that this treatment is for the good reason that it helps to raise the reader's awareness of the relationships between concepts that might otherwise not become so apparent to them at first sight. Despite this (and the other inevitable limitations of an introductory and yet wide-ranging treatment of the subject), there is no doubt that novice students of pragmatics will find Chapman's Pragmatics a friendly and helpful companion as they travel through the pragmatics landscape, in their quest to learn more about topics of interest or to carry out research in their chosen areas.

References

- Bagarić, V. (2007). Defining communicative competence. *Metodika*, 8(1), 94-103.
- Brown, H. D. (2014). *Principles of language learning and teaching: A course in second language acquisition* (6th ed.). Pearson Education Inc.
- Cook, A. L. (2006). *Implicit learning in adult second language acquisition: abstractness and awareness*. A short version of this paper was given at the Moving Forward Postgraduate Conference, College of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Aberdeen.
- Ellis, R. (2008). *Principles of instructed second language acquisition*. Center for Applied Linguistics, Digest.
- Ellis, R. (2012). *The study of second language acquisition* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Erton, I. (2007). Applied pragmatics and competence relations in language learning and teaching. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 3(1), 59-73.
- Grenoble, L. A. (2000). *Discourse analysis*. Retrieved July 2, 2007, from www.indiana.edu/~slavconf/SLING2K/pospapers/grenoble.pdf.
- Guariento, W., & Morley, J. (2001). Text and task authenticity in the EFL classroom. *ELT Journal*, 55(4), 347-354.
- Hatch, E. (1978). Discourse analysis and second language acquisition. In E. Hatch (Ed.), *Second language acquisition: A book of readings* (pp. 401-435). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Krashen, S. D. (1987). *Principles and practices of second language acquisition*. Prentice-Hall International.
- Krashen, S. D. (1988). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Prentice-Hall International.
- Lee, Y. (2006). Specifying display questions: Interactional resources for language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40, 691-713.

- Lin, G. H. C., Su, S. C. F., & Hsuang Ho, M. M. (2009). *Pragmatics and Communicative Competences*. International Conference on TESOL & Translation, Department of Applied English, JinWen University of Science & Technology.
- Liu, J., & Le, T. (2012). A case study on college English classroom discourse. *International Journal of Innovative Interdisciplinary Research*, 2, 1-10.
- Liu, M. & Zhu, L. (2012). An investigation and analysis of teacher talk in college English class. *International Journal of Linguistics*. 2 (5): 117-120.
- Ma, N. D. (2013). The role of pragmatics in English language teaching, pragmatic competence. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2(4), 63-71.
- Maclaughlin, B. (1992). *Myths and misconceptions about second language learning: What every teacher needs to unlearn*. Educational Research Reporter, 5.
- Markee, N. (Ed. 2015). *The handbook of classroom discourse and interaction*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc, BlackWELL.
- Olshtain, E., & Celce-Murcia, E. (2008). *Discourse Analysis and Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1111/b.9780631205968.2003.00037.x
- Rebuschat, P. (Ed.) (in press, 2015). *Implicit and explicit learning of languages*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Roberts, C. A. (1994). Transferring literacy skills from L1 to L2: From theory to practice. *The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students*, 13, 209-221.
- Saniee, A. (1993). *Raising Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic awareness of intercultural rhetoric in writing through group dynamic assessment*. Islamic Azad University: Science and Research Branch, Faculty of Languages and Literature-Department of English Language Ph.D Thesis in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.
- Schmidt, R. W., & Richards, J. C. (1980). Speech acts and second language learning. *Applied Linguistic*, 1(2), 129-157. Doi: 10.1093/applin/1.2.129
- Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 206–226.
- Searle, J. (1965). What is a Speech act? In M. Black (Ed.). *Philosophy in America*. London: Allen and Unwin, 221—239.
- Smith, P. W. H. (1991). *Speech act theory, discourse structure and indirect speech acts*. Submitted in Accordance with the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The University of Leeds Department of Philosophy.
- Taguchi, N. (2013). Individual differences and development of speech act production. *Applied Research on English Language*, 2(2), 1-16.
- Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning*, 46(20), 337-343. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1996.tb01238.x>