Pragmatics Theory and Its Application

语用学理论及其应用

■ 王 丹 编著

Pragmatics Theory and Its Application

语用学理论及其应用

王 丹 编著

Preface

This is a book about a branch of linguistics—pragmatics. The book deals with pragmatics theories and their applications in other fields. It is a representative selection of theories and topics on the most important branches of pragmatics studies. Meanwhile, we take a multidisciplinary approach in that what we have selected to present in this book represents researches emanating from other well-established disciplines.

Such a broad range of materials available in pragmatics will greatly help teachers and students to build up their own knowledge in and understanding of the subject. In addition, it will contribute to the development of pragmatics as a unified discipline in Chinese universities, helping to overcome the difficulties in understanding the essence of the relevant theories and to promote the progress of pragmatics studies.

The book is to be highly recommended to all those who want to gain an insight into the nature of pragmatics from a theoretical point of view or in application to their research activities. It is accomplished when there are increasing opportunities in China for pursuing pragmatics studies, so it will ensure the possibility of meeting the new requirements of people in relative research fields.

The Author
June 8th, 2017

前　言

　　20 世纪是语用学在我国诞生、成长和发展的世纪。我国传统语用学吸收了西方语言学的理论，引进和发展了新的方法，在继承传统的基础上进行了一番更新改造，从而获得了新的旺盛的生命力，走上了现代语用学的大道。自从 20 世纪 80 年代莱文森（Stephen C. Levinson）《语用学》（*Pragmatics*）出版以来，语用学研究有了很大的发展，出现了一系列新的研究热点、观点和理论，如语言中的礼貌现象、跨文化的语用研究、对格莱斯（Herbert Paul Grice）的合作原则（Cooperative Principle）进行修正和扩展的"新格莱斯主义"、关联理论，以及语用学研究的动态和认知倾向等。

　　本书共有八章。第一章，语用学介绍；第二章，语用学的研究范围；第三章，指示语；第四章，会话含义；第五章，关联理论；第六章，预设；第七章，言语行为理论；第八章，跨学科语用学。第一章是导论部分，涉及语用学研究的起源、实质，及其和语言学研究的关系等。第二章介绍了语用学的研究范围。第三章阐释了语言和语境的关系，并指出这种关系是通过指示这一现象在语言结构上得到反映，指示词项的"编码"和"解码"都要依赖语境。对指示的传统研究包括人称指示、时间指示和空间指示三种。第四章内容基于语用学是语言交际过程中意义的传递和理解的研究观点，主要介绍了格莱斯的合作原则和下属的四个准则、违背准则产生会话含义的过程，以及会话含义作为一种语用推理所具有的四种特征。第五章是会话含义的续篇，从关联理论、关联与认知方面进行了介绍。第六章主要介绍了"预设"的相关概念，不同哲学家的见解和后续语义学家、语用学家对于预设这一问题的主要探讨。第七章主要介绍了奥斯汀（John Austin）和塞尔（John Searle）的言语行为理论（Speech Act Theory）及贡献、礼貌原则及言语行为的跨文化视角。第八章阐述了传统日常语言的使用、顺应中的语言使用，以及语用学在相关学科中的应用，如认知语用学、文化语用学、社会语用学、翻译研究与语用等。

<div align="right">

作者

2017 年 6 月 8 日

</div>

CONTENTS

1 An Introduction to Pragmatic Study

Pragmatics deals with the relationships of signs in language to users. It has aroused great attention in linguistics circles since its emergence as an independent subject of study in the 1970s. This chapter is an attempt to make a systematic introduction of its rising and development, two of its underlying concepts, speech act and context of situation, and its main subjects for discussion, such as deixis, presupposition, theories on speech act and indirect speech act, and cooperative and polite principles, etc. The origins of its technical terms are here traced, basic concepts defined, some of its theses expounded. The article gives readers a panoramic view of the discipline under discussion.

Pragmatics studies the use of language and its rules. It establishes the pragmatic rules and studies the specific context of a particular discourse from the speaker's and hearer's point of view. Pragmatics takes language as a kind of behavior restricted by various social conventions. It emphasizes that the context may influence various aspects of the discourse. Pragmatics is a discipline which was formed in the 1970s. Pragmatics reveals phenomena that were ignored or avoided by many linguists for a long time. It tries to establish a series of scientific methods to explain this kind of phenomenon, which greatly expands the way of understanding the meaning of language. Therefore, it has drawn widespread attention through constant development. Today, pragmatics has become a hot topic in the field of linguistics.

1.1 The Development of Pragmatics

The term pragmatics was proposed by American logician Charles Morris. Although pragmatics is a relatively 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 being practical. Modern use and current practice of pragmatics are credited to the influence of the American philosophical doctrine of pragmatism.

The term "pragmatics" is attributed to the philosopher Charles Morris (1938) who was concerned to outline the general shape of a science of signs or semiotics as Morris preferred. Within semiotics, Morris distinguished three distinct branches of inquiry: Semiotics can be divided into syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics.

Syntactics (Syntax)—the study of the formal relations of signs to one another.

Semantics—the study of the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable.

Pragmatics—the study of the relations of signs to interpreters.

A number of traditions have contributed, individually and collectively, to the formation of the field of linguistic pragmatics. Allowing ourselves, for the sake of presentation, to associate the tradition of pragmatics with its name, any historical discussion inevitably starts from the classical definition of "pragmatics" by Morris (1938) as the study of the relationship between signs and their interpreters. Though the concerns that constitute the scope of pragmatics have a much longer history, pragmatics—as a notion—was born from an extremely ambitious project. It was in his attempt to outline a unified and consistent theory of signs or semiotics, which would embrace everything of interest to be said about signs by linguists, logicians, philosophers, biologists, psychologists, anthropologists, psychopathologists, aestheticians or sociologists, that Morris proposed the following definition of the field:

In terms of the three correlates (sign vehicle, designatum, interpreter) of the triadic relation of semiosis, a number of other dyadic relations may be abstracted for study. One may study the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable. This relation will be called the semantical dimension of semiosis… the study of this dimension will be called semantics. Or the subject of study may be the relation of signs to interpreters. This relation will be called the pragmatical dimension of semiosis... and the study of this

dimension will be named pragmatics. (Morris, 1938: 6)

For Morris, pragmatics studies the relations of signs to interpreters, while semantics studies the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable, and syntactics studies the formal relations of signs to one another.

By elaborating the sense of pragmatism in his concern of conversational meanings, Grice (1975) enlightened modern treatment of meaning by distinguishing two kinds of meaning, natural and non-natural.

Grice suggested that pragmatics should centre on the more practical dimension of meaning, namely the conversational meaning which was later formulated in a variety of ways (Levinson, 1983; Leech, 1983).

Practical concerns also helped shift pragmaticians' focus to explaining naturally occurring conversations which resulted in hallmark/characteristics discoveries of the Cooperative Principle by Grice (1975) and the Politeness Principle by Leech (1983).

Subsequently, Green (1989) explicitly defined pragmatics as natural language understanding. This was echoed by Blakemore (1990) in her *Understanding Utterances: The Pragmatics of Natural Language* and Grundy (1995) in his *Doing Pragmatics*.

The Anglo-American tradition of pragmatics study has been tremendously expanded and enriched with the involvement of researchers mainly from the Continental European countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Belgium.

A symbol of this development was the establishment of the IPrA (the International Pragmatics Association) in Antwerp in 1985. In its *Working Document*, IPrA proposed to consider pragmatics as a theory of linguistic adaptation and look into language use from all dimensions (Verschueren, 1987).

Henceforward, pragmatics has been conceptualized as to incorporate micro and macro components (Mey, 1993).

Throughout its development, pragmatics has been steered by the philosophical practice of pragmatism and evolving to maintain its independence as a linguistic subfield by keeping to its tract of being practical in treating the everyday concerned meaning.

1.2 The Use of Pragmatics

Pragmalinguistics mainly studies the pragmatic problems of language itself, and it focuses on context. Cognitive pragmatics studies the relationship between language and cognition, centering on relevance theory. Developmental pragmatics studies the acquisition of pragmatic ability of mother tongue. Inter-language pragmatics focuses on the pragmatic ability of foreign language. Kasper (1989) defined inter-language pragmatics as the study of the model of second language learners in their using and acquiring the second language. Cross-cultural pragmatics researches on the relation between pragmatics and culture.

An abstract characterization will place emphasis on pragmatics either as a "component" of linguistics (like phonology, syntax and semantics) or as a "perspective" pervading the components and giving them a pragmatic "accent".

A practical characterization of the tasks and functions of pragmatics takes its point of departure in the traditional problems that linguistic research has grappled with over the years, and for which pragmatics provides a novel solution. Among these are the numerous practical problems that we meet in the exercise of our linguistic functions. Many of these problem areas have been opened up to pragmatics from the "outside": problems of conversation and turn-control; problems of argumentation; problems of language use in educational settings; problems of interaction between humans and computers; and in general, all sorts of communication problems in anthropology, ethnography, psychiatry and psychology, the public language inside and outside of social institutions, rhetoric, the media sciences, educational sciences, and so on and so forth. Other clusters of problems are more in the traditional vein: ambiguity of utterances, "lazy" reference of pronouns, "voice" in narrative and other texts and so on.

Why do we need pragmatics? The general answer is: Pragmatics is needed if we want a fuller, deeper and generally more reasonable account of human language behavior.

A more practical answer would be: Outside of pragmatics, no understanding; sometimes, a pragmatic account is the only one that makes sense.

What's more, a pragmatic look at the problems of endangered languages tells us not just to go out there and describe, but to fight what has been called "linguistic genocide", or "linguicide" for short (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994).

1.3 Pragmatics Study in China Today

As a relatively new branch of linguistics, pragmatics is developing rapidly. Recent years in China, more and more linguists' interest has changed, from formalism to functionalism, from structural and transformational-generative linguistics to practical studies of language in use. And above all, they have found pragmatics useful and helpful in natural language understanding. Therefore, studies on pragmatics can be divided into several branches. There are cognitive study of language in use; socio-cultural study of language in use; social psychological study of language in use; pragmatics in language teaching and research; pragmatics in translation studies; pragmatics and language studies; pragmatics and discourse in writing studies; network communication pragmatics research, etc.

Pragmatics study in China mainly focuses on foreign language teaching-oriented pragmatics research; pragmatic errors and improving pragmatic competence of students; contrastive study of pragmatic translation— "equivalence" and study on the cultural differences between Chinese and foreign language, the study of Chinese grammar and language usage, etc.

Above all, from a macro-pragmatics perspective, broadly speaking pragmatics is made up of cross-cultural pragmatics, inter-language pragmatics, societal pragmatics, cognitive pragmatics, etc. Nowadays, a growing number of scholars in China continue to move forward pragmatics studies in conjunction with Chinese.

1.4 International Pragmatics Study Today

International Pragmatics Conference held in Melbourne, Australia, on 12-17 July, 2009 discussed many relevant researches in the field of pragmatics study, which included cross-cultural and intercultural communication in post-

colonial and towards post-national societies as well as across world regions; the social dimensions of code-switching; mediated communications such as Internet Relay Chat, email, SMS messaging; politeness strategies, negotiation, conversational cooperation; questions of identity, and other minority talk, aspects of power and ideology, etc.

1.5 The Significance of Pragmatics

From its humble beginning as a place where one could deposit the unsolved (and perhaps unsolvable) problems that the classical parts of linguistic studies (such as syntax and semantics, perhaps even phonology) wanted to get rid of, at least temporarily, to the present state of pragmatics as a fully fledged representative of the linguistic disciplines, not much time has elapsed.

Over the past half century, the famed Israeli linguist Yehoshua Bar-Hillel (1971) coined the catchy phrase that figures at the head of this section; in his opinion, pragmatics served as a temporary stop for all the things that syntax and semantics could not deal with: a kind of linguistic waste basket. Now, not so many decades later, the waste basket has served its function—I am not saying it is quite empty yet, but we have managed to upgrade the basket to a more prominent position, and accorded its descriptive and explanatory status as a recognized field of language studies.

The relationship between pragmatics and other linguistic disciplines, especially semantics and pragmatics, may still give rise to heated dispute, but nobody today would deny pragmatics its place in the sun. Moreover, pragmatics studies have diversified themselves into such various fields as second language education and educational settings in general, questions of gender-based language use and language discrimination, the inter-cultural dilemma of assimilation vs. ghettoization, the struggle for linguistic rights and the fight against linguistic imperialism, and so on. Even recent developments in the area originally known under the label of human-computer interaction have begun to recognize the impact of pragmatic thinking.

What this shows is that, first, pragmatics is not a unified discipline in

the sense that it acknowledges a unique method and focuses on only one object. Second, the diversity of the areas where pragmaticists are active is best captured if we consider pragmatics not to be an independent component of linguistics (on a line with, say, semantics or syntax) but rather as a perspective on the way we study language—a perspective that at the same time informs our study of human interaction in the direction outlined above. As the British pragmaticist Norman Fairclough has observed, the pragmatic perspective being a critical one, it examines and states "the conditions under which interactions of a particular type may occur" (Fairclough, 1995: 48)—interactions that include speech acting, conversational interaction, language use in institutional settings, the discourse of literature, the prescribed language use in schools and other official surroundings, the language of sexual oppression and counter-oppression or emancipation, the fight for linguistic rights, so on and so forth. Fairclough continues: "such a statement cannot be made without reference to the distribution and exercise [of power] in the institution and ultimately, in the social formation," that is, in society at large. (Fairclough, 1993: 48; Mey, 2001: 320–321). On the notion of perspective, see further Haberland and Mey (1977: 21), Verschueren (1999: 7), and Mey (2001: 9–11).

Topics for Discussion:

1. How do you understand the relationship between semantics and pragmatics?
2. What is the use of pragmatics?
3. How do you avoid ambiguousness in daily conversations?
4. What role does context play in pragmatics studies?

Supplementary Reading

Pragmatics in the History of Linguistic Thought

By Andreas H. Jucker

1 Introduction

Pragmatics is still a relatively young branch of linguistics. It was only in the early 1970s that more and more linguists started to devote their attention to this field. The International Pragmatics Association (IPrA) was founded in 1985. Its early conferences took place in Viareggio (1985), Antwerp (1987), Barcelona (1990), and Kobe, Japan (1993). The international *Journal of Pragmatics* started publication in 1977, and the journal *Pragmatics* in 1991 (Mey 1998b: 720). The *Journal of Pragmatics* started with about 400 pages per year in the seventies and has steadily increased its volume to over 2,500 pages per year by 2009. This increase is mirrored in similar increases in the volume of textbooks, monographs, collected volumes, more specialized journals (*Pragmatics and Cognition* 1993, *Historical Pragmatics* 2000, *Intercultural Pragmatics* 2004, *International Review of Pragmatics* 2009, *Pragmatics and Society* 2010), and in particular in the publication of handbooks in pragmatics (Mey 1998b; Verschueren *et al.* 2003; Horn & Ward 2004; Mey 2009a; Cummings 2010; and Bublitz *et al.* 2010). Pragmatics is no longer just a small subfield of linguistics but one of the dominant areas, indeed it may be argued to have become a discipline in its own right. It has developed "from a humble beginning at the remote outposts of philosophy and linguistic semantics ... into a vast realm where often conflicting theories and practices reign" (Mey 2009a: vi).

Given such a large and diverse field of study, it might reasonably be questioned whether it is at all possible to write a coherent history for this field. In 1996, Biletzki still maintained that this was not possible. Pragmatics—according to him—did not have a history.

Its maturity is attested to by both the number of practitioners in the field, and the variety of directions in which its branches grow out to various

disciplines. Yet sitting on any of the branches of this pragmatic tree—
be they philosophical, linguistic, psychological—one wonders if the tree
mightn't topple over for lack of roots. For pragmatics seems to have no
formal, institutionalized history. (Biletzki 1996: 455)

In the meantime, several (partial) histories of pragmatics have appeared, most
notably Nerlich and Clarke (1996) and Nerlich (2009, 2010).

Two issues are at stake. First, where does the history begin and which
period does it cover? Does it focus exclusively on the roots of the discipline
before it constituted itself as a recognized field of study? Or does it also cover
the development of the discipline over the forty or so years of its existence?
The introduction of the term "pragmatics" is generally attributed to Charles
Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) and to Charles Morris (1901–1979), but the
field only constituted itself as such in the 1970s. And second, the historian of
pragmatics must decide on the delimitation of the field of pragmatics in order
to locate its various roots at a time when the field had not constituted itself (see
e.g. Biletzki 1996: 457–9).

I shall take a broad view on both these issues by including not only
pragmatics *avant la lettre* but also a brief and necessarily selective account
of the development of the discipline itself and by adopting a broad, basically
Continental European view of pragmatics (see below). First, I shall briefly
outline some of the roots of pragmatics in the academic traditions of the
nineteenth and early twentieth century, at a time when the term "pragmatics"
had not been introduced and when it was not linguists but scholars in other
fields who were interested in studying the use of language. In a second step
I shall briefly refer to the work by philosophers such as Peirce, Morris, and
Carnap, who in the first half of the twentieth century first introduced and used
the term "pragmatics". This leads on to the work by the ordinary language
philosophers Austin and Searle, and also to Grice, who in the 1950s and 1960s
to a large extent set the agenda for the more widespread work in pragmatics
in the 1970s and 1980s, when the field of pragmatics really took off and was
taken over by linguists. The second part of this contribution is then devoted

to the further development of pragmatics in the context of linguistic thought in general and against the background of some important paradigm shifts that have radically transformed the landscape of linguistics over the last four or five decades.

2 Pragmatics *avant la lettre*

In a wider sense the roots of pragmatics can be located in all those philosophical traditions that rejected the "descriptive fallacy" (Austin 1962: 3), i.e. the idea that language represents states of affairs that are either true or false. Language is more than just a representation of thoughts, it is used by speakers to communicate with each other, to influence hearers in certain ways, and, indeed, to change the world (see Nerlich 2010: 193). Such a view of language has its roots in antiquity. It was part of the rhetoric in the "liberal arts" or "trivium" of rhetoric, grammar, and logic. From its earliest beginnings rhetoric has been concerned with the art of persuasion, with the different methods by which speakers can influence their audience. In his *Rhetoric* Aristotle distinguished three ways of persuading others: *logos*, the appeal to their reason; *pathos*, the appeal to their emotions; and *ethos*, the appeal to the speaker's personality or character (see Corbett 1990: 37). Aristotle thus focuses on the effect that language has on the audience and how these effects can be achieved (see Dascal and Gross 1999; Tindale 2010). [1]

In the nineteenth century language studies were almost exclusively focused on historical-comparative linguistics, the regularities of sound change, and the reconstruction of earlier languages. Linguists were interested in individual languages and the relationships between them. They compared different languages in order to establish common ancestor languages and in order to reconstruct older languages. Such a perspective did not leave much room for studying language in use, language in its social and communicative context, and the effects of language on the audience. However, there were several neighboring disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, and semiotics, in which language was seen from an interactive and communicative perspective. What these disciplines had in common was that they saw language