

# Pragmatics

Disciplina nata nel 1980.

It studies the language from a FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE (tries to explain facets of linguistic structure by reference to non-linguistic causes).

The study of language as a mean to reach a goal. Every communicative reaction begins with SOMEONE WHO WANTS SOMETHING.

Verbal communication=words --> no, just in riddles.

TEXT TYPE: every kind of texts both oral and written.

(When there's a communication, there's a text type).

INTENDED MEANING: the meaning the person initiates the conversation wants to convey.

UTTERANCES: smallest units that together make up a text, preceded and followed by a pause.

Pragmatics studies the relation between LANGUAGE, MEANING and CONTEST.

It studies the **intended and perceived meaning of (words, clauses, sentences -> of) UTTERANCES in interaction.**

Speakers generally IMPLY MORE than what they say.

*Words*: belong to the vocabulary of general English.

*Terms*: belong to specific fields and they have one and only one meaning.

Words=terms NO!

*SEQUENCE*: a sequence of words that starts with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

-->syntactic structure (object of study of Syntax).

*UTTERANCE*: sequence of words preceded and followed by a pause.

--> object of study of Pragmatics.

## Meaning:

~ PROPOSITIONAL MEANING

~ IMPLIED MEANING

~ INTENDED MEANING (=the meaning that the speaker wants to convey).

~ PERCEIVED MEANING

The hearer can retrieve (recuperare) the implied meaning or pretend not to understand it or not understand it at all.

## Context:

= background culture.

" Door!

I'm in the bath!

Ok! "

Pragmatics and discourse analysis both study the meaning of words in context. Therefore the meaning that can be explained by the knowledge of:

-PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL WORLD: bilocation does not exist! (If I'm in the bath I cannot open the door).

-SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING COMMUNICATION: I'm having my well deserved bath, no way I'm going and opening the door).

-TIME: related to physical and social constraints (=vincoli).

-PLACE: home (maybe of both).

--> where the words were uttered or written.

They analyze the meaning of *words in interaction* and how people communicate more information than the words they use.

### **SPEAKER'S MEANING:**

Depends on ASSUMPTION OF KNOWLEDGE, --> hypothesis based on factual evidence  
on previous knowledge shared

The speaker creates a message that has an **INTENDED MEANING** that often is also an **IMPLIED MEANING**.

### **HEARER:**

Interprets the message and decodes the implied meaning, if any, and formulate further assumptions and test them through their utterances.

We distinguish 3 types of contexts:

- 1) **SITUATIONAL COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT**
- 2) **BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE CONTEXT / KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD (KOW)**
- 3) **CO-TEXTUAL CONTEXT / CO-TEXT**

These three together make up the CONTEXT of the communicative exchange.

### **RELATION BETWEEN CONTEXT AND MEANING-MAKING:**

There are 3 main reasons why context is related to the production and the interpretation of meaning:

- 1) It influences the **WAY** we communicate.
- 2) It helps reduce the potentiality of utterances --> utterances have a meaning-potential, if they're isolated from the context an utterance can mean anything, we cannot predict its meaning if it's isolated. Es: "Door!"
- 3) It allows us to use utterances which are reduced in explicitness and understand other people utterances that are reduced in explicitness --> **DEIXIS**: there, here, this, that...

## **Deixis:**

Words that point at something around us and link the language to the external world.

They are divided in:

- 1) Personal pronoun --> avoid to use the name of people.
- 2) Time deixis --> one, then, in 5 minutes
- 3) Place deixis --> here, there, this, that.

Thanks to Deixis we avoid being over-explicit, we use less words (people take things for granted and expect explicitness to be reduced as much as possible).

### **1) SITUATIONAL COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT**

The situation where the interaction takes place at the moment of the speaking.

It refers to non-verbal and extra-linguistic information that helps the speaker eliminate any ambiguity (formal/ non-formal, personal/ social....).

### **CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES**

The situational context is made of a number of contextual variables:

- 1) **Topic**
- 2) **Setting**

### 3) Participants

### 4) Medium

- They help us understand the *intended meaning* and so reduce the *potentiality of utterances*.
- They allow us to be reduced in explicitness.
- They determine the way the speaker communicate with one another: when, where, how, who with, if they speak at all.

### 1) Topic

- It may affect lexis, grammar, style and if we can communicate at all.

Ex: Legal documents. --> complex clauses, clarifications, repetitions, formal language.

Topic often overlaps with purpose and text type (--> clarify - increase explicitness, decrease implicitness, hence reduce possible interpretations - and formal document).

- It helps reduce the potentiality.

Ex: This place is a greenhouse.

Two meanings:

- 1) at home --> NON-LITERAL= it's hot in here.
- 2) a real estate agent showing a house to potential buyers --> LITERAL = a place where yo can find flowers.

- It implies a reduction in explicitness:

Ex: The topic is English linguistic.

"She commented about her mistake.

Prepositional verb.

Right. She commented on her mistake."

--> it works just in this specific context.

### 2) Setting

It refers to the spatiotemporal location and illustrates how *time* and *place* may affect the text.

- It may affect language/communication in a variety of ways.

TIME: -*diachronic* = the evolution through time, it relates to the way something changes over time.

(Ex: If you read Chaucer you need to be familiar with Middle English; knowledge of Italian Medieval culture is required to appreciate Dante).

-*synchronic* = relates to the way something is used at a certain point in time but in different context (Ex: lesson VS office hours--> today we're going to speak about.. VS How can I help you?).

PLACE: church, at home... --> it influences the type of concepts to be expressed (if any) and the type of language employed.

- It helps understand the intended meaning.

Ex: In a Church

A: May he rest in peace!

B: Amen.

Ex: Friends at home:

A: De Niro is one of the best actors ever!

B: Amen! (= I agree with you).

### 3) Participants

■ **Characterized by different sub-variables influencing communication** (what is said, how we say it).

- individual identity (personality: shy, talkative..)
- social identity (differences in gender, class, religion, ethnicity, age and role - particularly related to taboo issues).
- personal and/or social relationship between interactants
- presence or absence of audience

■ **Reduce potentiality**

Ex: A person during a row with their friends:

A: If you do that, you can go to hell! NOT LITERALLY

Ex: A priest during a homily:

A: If you do that, you can go to hell! LITERALLY

■ **Reduction in explicitness**

Ex: Shall we meet in front of the Orient Express at 8:30 pm?  
Same place same time?

### 3) Medium

(=/ channel)

■ **Differences between spoken language and written language:**

WRITTEN: organized, complex structure, linear progression, grammatical accuracy.

SPOKEN: disorganized, simple structure, subject changing, grammatical inaccuracy.

Channel= physical instrument used to deliver a message through a medium. Ex: radio, tv.

We can have hybrid:

~ written-to-be-spoken (--> politicians)

~ spoken-to-be-written (--> lectures).

### TEXT

= the whole communicative interaction which can be realized through different **text-types**: conversation, phone call, Skype call, political speech, oral exams, lectures, assignments, text messages, emails, etc.

#### **Interplay between medium and the rest of variables:**

1) Medium + text type and purpose

Speech by the Italian president of Republic VS University lecture

Medium= spoken language --> same medium (but one is written to be spoken and one is spoken to be written) but the text type and the purpose are different.

2) Medium + channel + participants

- Phone call between two friends: "Oh, hi, it's me. How's life?"

- Phone call between a student and a lecturer: "Good morning professor, it's Marco Rossi here. I was wondering whether you could give me some information about..."

## 2) BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE CONTEXT / KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD (KOW)

■ The background knowledge context or knowledge of the world is constituted by everything we know about the world --> all the information that we possess and that:

- 1) influences our communicative behavior
- 2) allows us to reduce the potentiality of utterances
- 3) to perform utterances reduced in explicitness and understand other people's utterances which are reduced in explicitness.

■ It's the knowledge about how things usually go in the world which we update with every new experience we make; it is stored in our memories and helps us fill the missing links in communication and understand the intended meaning of utterances.

Ex: The policeman put up his hand and stopped the car.

### Encyclopedic/cultural VS (inter)personal KOW

- 1) Encyclopedic/cultural KOW: open-access knowledge shared by the members of the same group or community (which may vary in size) acquired through school, books, tv, radio, cinema, the Internet.
- 2) (Inter)personal KOW: knowledge acquired through previous conversations and social activities, which includes personal knowledge about the interlocutor; it is the knowledge, different and unique, which each of us possess.

## 3) CO-TEXT

■ The co-text is the context of the text itself.

It is constituted by linguistic information --> the words, sentences, utterances which constitute the rest of the text and come before and after the utterance we're considering.

■ The difference between the previous two type of contexts is that the situational and background contexts include non-verbal/ non-linguistic (ex: social) elements.

■ The reason why co-text is important are:

- 1) it influences our communicative behavior
- 2) it allows us to reduce the potentiality of utterances
- 3) it allows us to perform utterances reduced in explicitness.

[A change in co-text implies a change in the whole communicative exchange and in the intended meaning of utterances].

~~~~> Context is therefore the dimension which turns language as a formal system into a mean of communication! Language doesn't exist in a void, it exists in context.

{Discourse and analysis}

## Cohesion VS Coherence

COHESION: grammatical and lexical unity of the text --> the way the text makes links with and within itself. It is the way the CO-TEXT hangs together. The language making its grammatical and lexical relationship explicit.

COHERENCE: is in the meaning, the text needs to show unity of meaning and thematic & logical progression to be considered coherent.

(meaningful=that has meaning <--> coherence=that shows progression in meaning).

## Cohesion:

Language making links with itself (making its grammatical and lexical relationship explicit) and verbal signals present in the text (co-text is only made up of linguistic elements).

### COHESION DEVICES:

- 1) GRAMMATICAL COHESION--> can be achieved thanks to four devices
  - reference
  - substitution
  - ellipsis
  - conjunction
- 2) LEXICAL COHESION--> can be achieved thanks two two devices
  - repetitions
  - lexical reiterations

### REFERENCE:

Consists of the use of linguistic forms--> referring expressions--> used to indicate or refer to something in the external world or in the text --> referent.

Reference is used to avoid unnecessary repetitions, which would make the text over-explicit. Repetitions are dangerous because the human brain is forced to remember what is repeated and human communication is generally based on reduction in explicitness!

Use of a pronoun is grammatical cohesion.

Use of another noun as "kid" is lexical cohesion.

### Exophoric VS Endophoric Reference

**EXOPHORIC**: when the reference is dependent on the context outside the text. (Ex: Elisabetta is a lecturer of English linguistic --> Elisabetta exists in real life).



With exophoric reference we mean two things:

- 1) the first time a certain reference is mentioned in the text--> the *referring expression* represents the *first mention of the referent* in the text.

Ex: Tom is studying hard at the moment because he has 3 exams.

- 2) the *referring expression* refers to something in the KOW (also known as *intertextuality*).

Ex: - What happened here? Looks like Second World War broke out in this apartment.

--> cultural/ encyclopedic intertextuality, Second World War is part of the past.

- A: OMG! What Sara told him yesterday was amazing!

B: You bet it was!

--> interpersonal intertextuality.

(There are words that actually point to the entity they refer to: DEIXIS).

**ENDOPHORIC**: when the reference refers to items within the same text. (Ex: Jack and Sandra will get married soon. They met at University. BUT: Jack and Sandra are exophoric reference).



There are two types of endophora:

- 1) **Anaphora** (anaphoric reference)= links back to a reference that has already been mentioned in the same text (--> left dislocation, ex: My neighbors, they moved).

Ex: Jack and Sandra will get married soon. They met at university.

- 2) **Cataphora** (cataphoric reference)= links forward to a reference that follows in the text (right dislocation, ex: They moved, my neighbors).

Ex: Millions of copies of his novel have been sold so far. Don Brown is one of the most famous writers of the year.

### ASSOCIATIVE ENDOPHORA:

There are associations in which the NPs (nouns and pronouns) are not explicitly linked to each other, but one of them is linked to entities associated with the other NP--> associative endophora.

Ex: YouTube is a popular video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips. --> you need to have a knowledge about the **presuppositional pool** of website based on propositional words. The presuppositional pool of "website" makes us understand that the "video sharing" being talked about is 'public viewing online' rather than physically passing DVDs to friends. Associative endophora is half way between endophora and exophora, because it depends partly on the knowledge of what went before and after within the same text, and partly on background knowledge of cultural or interpersonal context.

Ex2: I'm going to give out a questionnaire. And I'll give you one as well. Sometimes this week, I hope tomorrow, I'll get *them* all done.

*Them* is associative endophora because it is plural and yet it coheres with 'a questionnaire' --> they know that students produce 20-50 questionnaires.

Every word can be easily associated with other words and every word also has a presuppositional pool.

### DEIXIS:

Proximal deixis--> near to the speaker/deictic focus: this, here (this man, come here).

Distal deixis--> away from the speaker/deictic focus: that, there (that man, go there).

#### 1) Person deixis (I, you, them)

To point a person--> personal pronoun.

Person deixis involves:

~the speaker: the first person.

~the addressee: the second person.

~other significant participants in the speech situation (neither speaker nor hearer): third person.

|             | Singular            | Plural    |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------|
| 1st person  | I/me                | We/us     |
| 2nd person. | you                 | you       |
| 3rd person  | he/him, she/her, it | they/them |

▼ The first person dominates the second and the third person, the second person dominates the third person--> if the group referred to includes a 1st person, a 1st person plural pronoun must be used, even if there is only one first person and thousand of second/third persons. If there is no 1st person, but at least one 2nd person, then a 2nd person pronoun is needed. Only if neither 1st nor 2nd person is present can plural forms of third person pronouns be used.

▼ Representative vs true use of the plural pronouns--> the pronoun *we* is rarely used by a group of people, but by a single person who speaks on the behalf of the group. On the other hand, *they* usually refers to a plurality of references, rarely it is used for a single person-> representative use is rare.

Ex: Look at him! He's all dressed up!

--> in the context: him/he= John ~ outside the context: a man.

## 2) Place/spatial deixis (here, there)

To point a location.

Locative adverbs--> *here* and *there*.

Demonstrative/determiners--> *this* and *that*.

(*Here* can be meaningless unless the hearer can locate the dividing line between *here* and *there*, paradoxically there is no limit to how far away *here* can extend-->INDEFINITE EXTENSION. Ex: *Here* in our local Galaxy cluster).

Ex: The glasses are there, can you take them, please?

--> in the context: there= in the cupboard ~ out of the context: a place away from the speaker.

## 3) Time/temporal deixis (now, later, in five minutes)

To point a time.

Can be divided in:

~before the moment of utterance

~at the time of utterance

~after the time of utterance

(*Now* is a kind of temporal *here* and it has the same indefinite extension. Ex: Press the button *now*!  
- The solar system is now in a relatively stable phase).

Ex: I'll see you in 5 mins.

--> in the context: in 5 mins= at 10:45 ~ out of the context: 5 mins after the moment of speaking.

## 4) Discourse deixis (*this*--> future discourse elements; *that*--> past discourse elements; *hereby*-->point to current discourse).

Ex: Listen to this: go out and never come back! --> this= ahead, future.

That was not a nice thing to say, you know? --> that= behind, past.

## 5) Psychological use of spatial deixis (spatial deixis are object of metaphoric generalization, one extension is the abstract space and another is the emotive distancing/closeness)

Ex: What do you think of this idea of mine?

I can't stand that guy! --> emotive distancing

This beautiful city of ours! --> closeness

## 6) Gestural deixis (support relevant aspects of the speech situation, the speaker needs to )

Ex: I need three volunteers: you, you and you.

## 7) Symbolic deixis (relevant aspects of the speech situation (re)established over time)

Ex: Isn't this weather gorgeous?

(**Social Deixis:** *tu/vous* pronouns-->*tu* points downwards along the scale of social status, *vous* points upwards; *tu* indicates intimacy, *vous* indicates lack of intimacy/distance).

## SUBSTITUTION:

Use of substitution (one, so, did/had/would...) to hold the text together and avoid unnecessary repetitions.

Ex: I have a Mac computer.

I don't have one (--> a Mac computer), but I wish I did (--> had a Mac computer--> the whole phrase).

It's John gone?

I think so (--> John is gone).