

Introduction

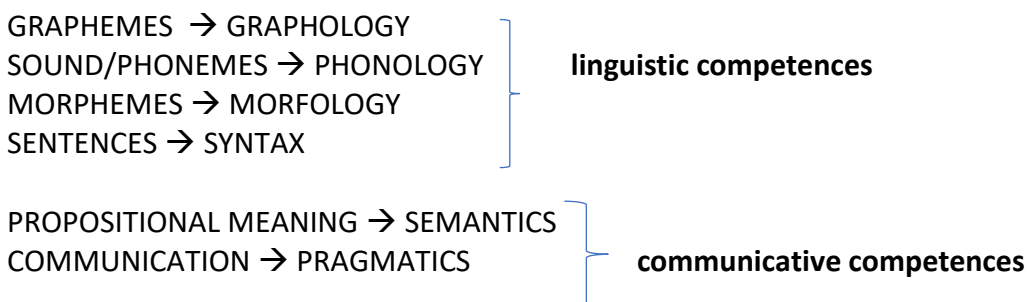
- 1) Is “to speak” the same as “to communicate”?
- 2) Is “say” the same as “mean”?
- 3) Is communication only through words?
- 4) When we speak are we automatically communicating?
- 5) Marked sentences are communicative? Ex. “Pizza tonight?”
- 6) Why jokes make laugh?
- 7) Why a riddle become “easy” after we know the answer?
- 8) Why horror films frighten us?
- 9) How skillful communicators persuade us?
- 10) If we remain silent we are still communicating something?
- 11) Is the word “meaning” easy to define?

KNOWLEDGE → COMPREHENSION → APPLICATION → EVALUATION: our task is to know the theory - meaning being able to explain the theoretical frameworks with a **terminological appropriateness**, commenting on it, being critical - and to apply it.

PRAGMATICS is everyday talk, because we need to communicate every day; the first impression of pragmatics tends to be that it is really quite easy: the examples and the ways in which they are described seem to accord closely to our **intuitions** about everyday talk. But, as times goes on, we realize that the underlying ideas in pragmatics are really very difficult indeed.

However, **we usually start from intuition (data) and then we arrive to the rules and the theory; the approach is bottom up/inductive: starting from data, we arrive to the rule.**

In the theoretical modules we study LINGUISTICS and languages are the object of study of linguistics. Language/Linguistics are umbrella terms ¹; language is made up of units and different disciplines study these units



¹ Umbrella term = a term used to cover a broad number of functions and items that all fall under a single and common category

In this course we will focus on PRAGMATICS and partially on SEMANTICS² AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS.

Pragmatics and discourse analysis

PRAGMATICS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS study **LANGUAGE IN RELATION TO CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND FEATURES**: pragmatics and discourse analysis study **the meaning of words in context**, that is to say that they study the part of the meaning that can be explained by the knowledge of:

- PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL WORLD
- PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS
- TIME, PLACE IN WHICH THE COMMUNICATION EXCHANGE HAPPEN
- PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE INTERACTION

IT IS THE STUDY OF THE MEANING OF WORDS IN INTERACTION AND THE STUDY OF HOW INTERACTORS COMMUNICATE MORE INFORMATION THAN THE WORDS THEY USE.

PRAGMATICS IS ABOUT THE RELATION BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND ITS USERS: the speaker produces a linguistic message and intends or imply a meaning, the hearer has to interpret the message and infer the meaning.

P. and D.A. both look at discourse³ and texts⁴: they study **how stretches of language become meaningful and unified** (D.A. calls the quality of being “meaningful and unified” coherence; pragmatics calls it relevance) (coherence → cohesion: how words relate to each other in the text, “building” coherence; relevance → Relevance Theory: how the assumptions of relevance hold the text together)

P. and D.A. are also **both concerned with function: the speaker short-term purposes in speaking and long terms goals in interacting** (Speech Act Theory: describes what utterances are intended to do)

N.B. PRAGMATICS # DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

D.A. studies how the social transaction imposes a framework on discourse; it looks at the structure of discourse.

Topics: 1) how written text hold together 2) conversation structure: how what one speaker say can influence the next speaker’s response → **conversation analysis**: examines conversation structures

Also, **D.A. is mostly linked to the written language**

² Semantics: the study of the literally/propositional meaning of words; the semantic meaning of words is described in a dictionary

³ Discourse analysis is the study of **how words can steel (= guidare) people towards and opinion** or another: Power is able to use words skillfully and carefully in order to let people believe (even unconsciously) in something; discourse is the use of words to construct a certain image of something/someone; discourse analysis studies the relation between language and power

⁴ Texts = written or spoken “interactions”

P. gives lot of importance to the social principles of conversation: P. has **a socio-cultural perspective on language usage**, examining the way in which the **principles of social behavior are expressed by language**; it describes the unwritten maxims of conversation that speakers follow in order to cooperate and being socially acceptable with each other → Cooperative Principle, Politeness Principle.

Implicit vs explicit communicative competence:

- **We have to turn implicit into explicit, in order to understand the functions of language.**
- IMPLICIT > EXPLICIT IN SYNTAX = MT2; IMPLICIT > EXPLICIT IN COMMUNICATION = MT3
→ **WHAT WE SAY (EXPLICIT) # WHAT WE IMPLY (IMPLICIT)**

- A. "Do you like my dress, honey?"
- B. "I like the color"

If we analyze these utterances we can infer that:

- A is a woman (dress)
- There is a close relationship between A and B (honey) (term of indirection = vezzeggiativo)
- **B doesn't like the dress, but she/he is trying to be polite and not to say that she/he doesn't like it, in order to avoid to make A angry or embarrassed. B is focusing on the only thing she/he likes about the dress, the color, in order to say that "there is something I like, even if the dress is horrible".**

We can suppose that A and B are **a couple or mother and daughter**; when people knows each other very well it is strange to be so polite ex. my sister would have said that she hate the dress, but between a couple or with your mother, to avoid quarrels or to respect each other, is not so strange to be polite. I expect from my sister/best friend an unpolite answer, but I don't expect an unpolite answer from my boyfriend, or from my daughter.

- The PROPOSITIONAL MEANING IS "I LIKE THE COLOR", THE IMPLIED MEANING IS "I HATE THE DRESS"

SO THE EQUATION VERBAL COMMUNICATION = WORDS IS NOT CORRECT!

BUT, there are exceptions, depending on the text-type, ex **riddles** → it's all about words: **the literal/semantic/proposition meaning of words is always enough to retrieve the intended meaning, to understand the proposition meaning of words is enough to understand what we mean** (intended meaning). That is why riddles are difficult to translate ex roots = piedi della montagna, I can translate with "radici"; piedi del letto I can't translate with "feets". Words are language-specific!

In other text-type, in fact the majority of text-type, ex every day conversation the equation words = communication is not correct: words are not enough to understand the intended meaning, what we say (propositional meaning) is different from what we imply/intend (intended/implied meaning). That is why the answer Pragmatics gives to the question: "Is the equation Verbal Communication = Words correct?" is NO.

N.B. the text-type is the first thing to consider when we analyze a conversation!

Some definitions of Pragmatics (= a young discipline; there are still many things to be explained)

SEE SLIDES

- *Levison*, 1983 provides two definitions of P. (and): the first part of the definition he provides is unclear, so we don't take it into account (why certain type of sentences are anomalous or unacceptable ???); in the second part he describes Pragmatics as the study of language from a functional perspective⁵: it attends to explain facets of linguistics structures by references to non-linguistics pressures and causes → example dialogue bw A and B: B answers "I like the color" to avoid to make A angry; the semantic meaning it's clear, but it is actually not what B means, because the intended meaning is "I don't like the dress". **B's response has nothing to do with linguistics but it is a matter of psychology**: B knows A and wants to avoid to make A angry → non-linguistics causes and pressures.
 - *Leech*, 1981: "the study of the relation between language and its users (speaker and hearer), more specifically the study of the contextual conditions that lead the speaker to choice an utterance and the hearer to interpret it in a certain way"
 - *Thomas*, 1995 : "meaning in use or meaning in interaction"
 - *Yule*, 1996: "how people make sense of each other linguistically"
 - *Huang*, 2007: "study of meaning dependent on the use of language"
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- ➔ Pragmatics is the study of language in use: it studies THE RELATION BETWEEN LANGUAGE, MEANING AND CONTEXT AND FOCUSES ON LANGUAGE AS IT IS USED BY ITS USERS IN COMMUNICATION; WHAT FUNCTIONS HAVE LANGUAGE TO SATISFY SPEAKERS' NEEDS.
 - ➔ It takes into account the fact that speaker often IMPLY MORE THAN WHAT THEY SAY ; IT STUDIES HOW SPEAKER USE LANGUAGE TO PRODUCE MESSAGE AND "MEANING", IT STUDIES HOW THE INTENDED (BY SPEAKERS) MEANING IS CONVEYED AND THE PERCEIVED (BY HEARER) MEANING - OF WORDS, PHRASES, CLAUSES AND SENTENCES - TO BE MORE EXACT, OF UTTERANCES IN INTERACTION - IS PERCEIVED → utterance = a sequence of words preceded and followed by a pause; an u. is what people say in communication (utterance = enunciato)

⁵ Function vs form: functional perspective is the study of language considering the function that language can have: what we can do with language; it is the study of language as a mean to achieve a goal, in fact we talk because we need something, communication starts when we want something

N.B Some definitions:

- 1) Sentence = frase: a sequence of words starting with a capital letter and finishing with a punctuation mark; also one word can be a sentence, if it IS a lexical verb ex. Stop!; usually S = NP + VP (subject + object) = SIMPLE SENTENCE
- 2) Phrase = sintagma : is a group of two or more words that together form a unit ex. noun phrase: the boy with a red hat → he
- 3) Clause = proposizione: **1 lexical verb = 1 clause** (2 lexical verbs = 2 clauses) ; a complex sentence is made up of **2 clauses** (or more) depending one from another → subordination [= main clause + subordinate (or embedded/dependent) clause ex. She thinks that **they have arrived** → /She thinks/ = main clause + that = subordinator/complementizer (C) + /they have arrived/ = subordinated clause (CP) * S= NP +VP* V+CP * (VS They have arrived = simple sentence = 1 clause)] or two coordinated EX. /Sue cooked dinner/ AND /Paul washed the dishes/.
- 4) Word # term: terms are the specific vocabulary of a discipline, when terms are used they refer to something that is very specific and have one propositional meaning, instead words are more general and can have more propositional meaning (words in dictionaries have different meanings, while a term has only one meaning).

SENTENCE VS UTTERANCE: SENTENCE = WHAT I SAY → PROPOSITIONAL MEANING (SEMANTICS) VS UTTERANCE = WHAT I MEAN → INTENDED MEANING (PRAGMATICS).

Sometimes, the propositional and the intended meaning are the same_ex
“Do you like my dress” “NO” → propositional meaning = NO, intended meaning = NO → propositional meaning = intended meaning; **but MORE OFTEN THEY ARE NOT THE SAME**, either because the speaker intend or imply something else, either because the hearer interpret the message differently.

“I like the color”

- S = I like the color
- U = I hate the dress → INTENDED MEANING: the only thing I like about the dress is the color; IMPLIED MEANING: I don't like the dress.
- ➔ P. studies the difference between utterances and sentences: **does the utterance mean the same as the sentence or the utterance contains more information**: implies/intends more/less than the sentence ?

The word “meaning” must be carefully used: there are different types of meaning, so the words has no sense without a pre-modifier

PROPOSITIONAL MEANING = SEMANTIC MEANING OF THE SENTENCE

INTENDED MEANING = WHAT SPEAKER MEANS, WHAT S/HE WOULD LIKE TO SAY BUT HE DOESN'T SAY EXPLICITLY. "Do you like my dress?" "No" → INTENDED MEANING = PROPOSITIONAL MEANING # "Do you like my dress?" "I like the color": PROPOSITIONAL MEANING "I like the color" # INTENDED MEANING **"The only thing I like about the dress is the color"**

IMPLIED MEANING: WHAT SPEAKER IMPLY WHEN SAYING SOMETHING **"The only thing I like about the dress is the color" → implying: "I don't like the dress"; THE IMPLIED MEANING IS THE INTENDED MEANING MADE IMPLICIT** (# intended meaning is MORE explicit). **THE INTENDED MEANING CAN BE IMPLIED, "HIDDEN", SO IT BECOMES IMPLIED MEANING**

PERCEIVED MEANING: **WHAT THE HEARER UNDERSTANDS, H'S INTERPRETATION** (if the intended meaning is different from the perceived meaning → misunderstanding).

The hearer can also pretend to not having understand the intended meaning of the speaker, and to utter an utterance that contains another intended/implied meaning

Ex.

A. "Can we open the window?" → intended meaning: it is possible to open the window? (request); implied meaning: can YOU open the window?

B. "I think that everybody with arms could open a window" → B. answer as if he had "perceived" the utterance with its propositional meaning (as a sentence) - as if A had asked if it is physically possible for a human being to open a window; to convey another implied meaning: "I don't want to open the window for you".

This is not the answer the hearer would have expected and so the h will be surprised.

More often than not, speakers mean more than what they say, so, to understand the propositional meaning of words/sentences, is not enough to understand the "real" meaning of the utterance: what the speakers means, his/her intended (or implied) meaning; so P. studies the difference between utterances and sentences, between intended or implied meaning and propositional meaning: does the utterance mean the same as the sentence or the utterance contains more information: implies/intends more/less than the sentence ?

Context

We have just said that words are not always enough to understand the intended meaning: **not only the speaker can intend or imply a meaning, and the hearer has to infer this meaning; the context in which the communication exchange takes place can provide additional information, helping the hearer to infer the meaning.**

CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING WHICH BOUNDS AROUND A COMMUNICATIVE INTERACTION: time, place, roles of the interactors, relation bw these people (formal/informal), background knowledge they share (that helps to understand a reference). **CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING INVOLVED IN COMMUNICATION, WHAT I SEE, LINGUISTIC AND NON-LINGUISTIC INFO, INFO ACQUIRED AS A**

MEMBER OF SOCIETY AND AS “AN ADULT” WHO KNOWS HOW THINGS GO IN THE WORLD, KNOWLEDGE THAT SHOULD BE SHARED BY BOTH INTERACTORS

WE CAN’T BEGIN AN ACT OF COMMUNICATION WITHOUT A CONTEXT AND OFTEN WE CAN’T UNDERSTAND THE INTENDED MEANING OF AN UTTERANCE IF WE TAKE IT IN ISOLATION FROM EVERY CONTEXT

- A. “Door!”
- B. “I’m in the bath!”
- A. “Ok!”

Door!

- We have an utterance in isolation (no context), so we can’t understand what it means exactly: maybe somebody is knocking on the door, maybe A is saying “mind the door!”, maybe A wants someone to open/close the door... we can also supposed that “door” as to be intended with its propositional meaning: someone is pointing at the door and saying: “this is called door”, as s/he was teaching to a child.
- At this stage we can claim what we will understand analyzing the rest of the interaction.

I’m in the bath!

- This utterance provides important info: **bath** suggests info about:
 - PLACE: a home
 - RELATION BW A AND B: close relation (we don’t take a bath when a stranger is in the house)
 - ➔ Background knowledge: we know we don’t take a bath in a public toilet and while a stranger is in the house
 - TIME: while B is relaxing, having a bath

Ok!

- A has understand that B can’t go open the door, so s/he will go

So, these are no random sentences: **these people are communicating in a particular situation, we select utterances after a reflection, to convey our meaning.** If something in the context change, we must change words ex I don’t say “Door!” to my boss, if I want my boss to open the door.

In this interaction, the interactors are communicating more than what their words apparently say

Door! = go open the door

I’m in the bath! = I can’t/don’t want because I’m having a bath (* physical and socio-psychological factors)

Ok! = I see. I’ll get the door myself, then

Meaning in context

Meaning is “created” in context → intended, conveyed and perceived, through non-linguistic means, that are part of the context.

Meaning in context can be explained by:

- 1) PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL WORLD
- 2) SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING COMMUNICATION

In this case (bath):

- I'm in the bath, so I can go open the door, bilocation doesn't exist in this world = PHYSICAL WORLD
- it's not socially acceptable to go open the door wearing a towel = SOCIO-CULTURAL PRINCIPLES
- I'm relaxing, it is my deserved bath, so I don't want to go open the door; maybe B is a flat mate who does absolutely nothing at home, and A wants him to do finally something. We don't know the exact situation, but we are certain that A and B have a close relation and that they are both at home. = SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

ALSO, there is a reason why A says "Door!": we start a communicative interaction, as we have said before, because we need something.

The propositional meaning doesn't help us at all to understand what these people mean, so PROPOSITIONAL MEANING ≠ COMMUNICATIVE / INTENDED MEANING

THE INTENDED MEANING IS THE PRODUCT OF A NEGOTIATION BETWEEN SPEAKER AND HEARER: THE SPEAKER'S MEANING IS BASED ON ASSUMPTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE ⁶ SHARED BY THE SPEAKER AND THE HEARER

| UTTERANCE | UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS | IMPLIED MEANING |
|-----------------|---|--|
| | Chain of thought preceding the very uttering of an U | |
| Door! | Someone is knocking on the door/ it is probably for you/ I am not going this time | Go open the door |
| I'm in the bath | I know you want me to get the door / I know it's for me / I know you always get the door so I should go this time | BUT I can't because I'm in the bath / I don't want to go |
| Ok! | | I'll get the door myself |

⁶ Assumptions of knowledge = hypothesis based on factual evidences or previous knowledges ex. if I enter in the room where a mt's lesson takes place, I can guess who is the teacher and who are students: because I know that the teacher has got a microphone and talks to the class, while students pay attention and take notes (FACTUAL EVIDENCES) and I also know how student should behave (be silent, pay attention) and maybe I also know the teacher because I met her the previous year (PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE).

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | Since you are having a bath, I know you can't go open the door | |
|--|--|--|

We draw assumptions before we speak, because the assumptions we draw “construct” our utterance → a CONTEXTUAL ELEMENT LEAD US TO DRAW ASSUMPTIONS AND TO FORMULATE AN UTTERANCE IMPLYING A MEANING

| CONTEXTUAL ELEMENT | UNDERLYING ASSUMPTION | IMPLIED/INTENDED MEANING | UTTERANCE |
|---|---|--|------------------|
| <p>SOUND: knocking on the door</p> <p>The contextual element is what initiate the communicative interaction; context makes utterances</p> | Someone is knocking on the door/ it is probably for you/ I am not going this time | Go open the door | Door! |
| | I know you want me to get the door / I know it's for me / I know you always get the door so I should go this time | BUT I can't go/don't want to go | I'm in the bath! |
| | Since you are having a bath, I know you can't go open the door | SO, I will get it | Ok! |

SPEAKER → UTTERANCE → IMPLIES UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS and his utterance has AN IMPLIED/INTENDED MEANING

HEARER → DECODES THE IMPLIED/INTENDED MEANING and draws his own ASSUPTIONS → another utterance “made” by hearer’s assumptions can be uttered

The speaker construct a message that has an intended meaning, which is often, but not always, implied; if the meaning is implied or intended, the hearer has to perceive the intended and implied meaning and to interpret it; the hearer interprets the message and have to decode the implied meaning, if any. When this is not done, misunderstanding takes place. His/her decoding of the message leads them to formulate other assumptions and test them through utterances, and so on an so forth.

Pragmatics is about the use of the language, more than the language itself.
Even if I say something apparently senseless, the h will always try to understand what I mean.

COMMUNICATION = SPEAKER'S MESSAGE (A) + a MEANING → HEARER'S INTERPRETATION → H CAN SPEAK BACK (B) → ANOTHER MESSAGE + a MEANING → A'S INTERPRETATION

Texts are meant to exhibit reduction in explicitness, not everything that is meant is stated ex sometimes, when I ask a question, I am not asking the question *per se*, but I want to know an information, to make a deduction, influencing my behavior: if I ask for ex "what kind of car is it?" maybe I want to know because I want to deduce how expensive it is; on their turn, deductions are based on presuppositions ex. "the more expensive the car is, the more the money that can be lent on it"

Context and meaning making

Context is linked to the production and the interpretation of meaning (that is why pragmatics can be defined as meaning in context), for 3 reasons

- 1) IT INFLUENCES THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE
- 2) IT HELPS TO REDUCE THE POTENTIALITY OF UTTERANCES
- 3) IT ALLOWS US TO USE UTTERANCES THAT ARE REDUCED IN EXPLICITNESS AND TO UNDERSTAND UTTERANCES THAT ARE REDUCED IN EXPLICITNESS (everything not explicitly said can be retrieved thanks to the context)

- ✓ **THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE** changes according to the context ex. we can use terms instead of words, in a specific field.
- ✓ **POTENTIALITY OF UTTERANCES** utterances have MEANING POTENTIAL: **they can potentially mean everything** (including the opposite of their propositional meaning ex. irony, jokes) if taken in isolation, SO, **we can't predict what an utterance is made to convey, if the utterance is take in isolation, without a context; we can't reduce the potentiality of the meaning of an utterance, so guess what is the speaker's intended meaning, if we consider the utterance without a context.**

EX "Door!"

- Someone is knocking
- Mind the door
- Open the doors
- The wind is blowing and the door is about to slam
- ...

If we know the context in which this utterance is uttered, **we add info (pieces of context), that can help to reduce the potentiality of meaning.**