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### PRAGMATICS AND ITS ROLE IN OUR LANGUAGE

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**Abstract:** Linguists interested in language structure consider the formal properties of language, including word structure (morphology), sentence structure (syntax), speech sounds and the rules and patterns between them (phonetics and phonology), and meaning in language (semantics and pragmatics).

Linguists also study the way that language is used, and this can cover a very broad range of subjects, since language enters almost every area of human activity. Examples include: psycholinguistics (the psychology of language acquisition and use); historical linguistics and the history of languages; applied linguistics (using linguistic knowledge to help in real-world situations like language teaching); sociolinguistics, varieties of English, discourse analysis and conversation analysis (language use in social contexts) and stylistics (the use of different styles in language).

Keywords: linguists, language, semantics, pragmatics.

#### Introduction

Language is a unique quality that sets apart the human race from all other species. Language has allowed mankind to communicate and express ideas, which has had a major factor in our development over time. However, language does not merely consist of words and phrases. Different types of expression are embedded in our language; most of which we use without even noticing.

For any specific language, natural speakers will inherently know the uses and the rules for many types of expressions. These rules determine the interaction between people and between societies. This article will look at one aspect of those rules: **pragmatics**.

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics concerned with the use of language in social contexts and the ways people produce and comprehend <u>meanings</u> through language. The term *pragmatics* was coined in the 1930s by psychologist and philosopher Charles Morris. Pragmatics was developed as a subfield of linguistics in the 1970s.

### Main part.

Pragmatics is a branch of **linguistics**, which is the study of language. Pragmatics focuses on **conversational implicature**, which is a process in which the speaker implies and a listener infers. Simply, pragmatics studies language that is not directly spoken. Instead, the speaker hints at or suggests a meaning, and the listener assumes the correct intention.

In a sense, pragmatics is seen as an understanding between people to obey certain rules of interaction. In everyday language, the meanings of words and phrases are constantly implied and not explicitly stated. In certain situations, words can have a certain meaning. You might think that words always have a specifically defined meaning, but that is not always the case. Pragmatics studies how words can be interpreted in different ways based on the situation.

The definition might be a bit confusing, so let's look at some examples to clarify the role of pragmatics in our language. This first example is one that you probably use in your own life every day. Say you are in line at a store



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to pay for your purchases. The cashier asks, 'How are you today?' Do you immediately go into an in-depth account of your health issues, varying mood, relationship status, everything else going on in your life? Of course not! Usually, you respond with something similar to, 'Fine, how are you?' with the same expectation that the cashier will not go into full detail of how she truly is. This interaction perfectly shows pragmatics at work. It is understood that this question does not really ask you to explain everything going on in your life. The implication relies on the context and situation. It is good manners to ask strangers how they are, but it is not intended for a detailed response.

**A Definition of Pragmatics** 

- the study of the practical aspects of human action and thought.
- the study of the use of linguistic signs, words and sentences, in actual situations.

Pragmatics outlines the study of meaning in the interactional context

It looks beyond the literal meaning of an utterance and considers how meaning is constructed as well as focusing on implied meanings. It considers language as an instrument of interaction, what people mean when they use language and how we communicate and understand each other.

Jenny Thomas says that pragmatics considers:

- the negotiation of meaning between speaker and listener.
- the context of the utterance.
- the meaning potential of an utterance.

What would happen to language if Pragmatics did not exist?

Pragmatics acts as the basis for all language interactions and contact. It is a key feature to the understanding of language and the responses that follow this. Therefore, without the function of Pragmatics, there would be very little understanding of intention and meaning.

We would like to demonstrate this by showing you how life would be WITHOUT Pragmatics: 'Can you pass the salt?'

Literal Meaning: Are you physically able to do this task?

Literal Response: 'Yes'

(Pragmatic Meaning: Will you pass me the salt?

Pragmtic Response: pass the salt to the speaker.)

'What time do you call this?'

Literal Meaning: What time is it? Literal Response: A time (e.g. 'twenty to one.')

(Pragmatic Meaning: a different question entirely, e.g. Why are you so late? Pragmatic Response: Explain the reason for being so late.)

### Conclusion.

Briefly we can state that Pragmatics is the study of how context affects meaning, such as how sentences are interpreted in certain situations (or the interpretation of linguistic meaning in context). Linguistic context is discourse that precedes a sentence to be interpreted and situational context knowledge about the world. In the following sentences, the kids have eaten already and surprisingly, they are hungry, the linguistic context helps to interpret the second sentence depending on what the first sentence says. The situational context helps to interpret the second sentence because it is common knowledge that humans are not usually hungry after eating.

We use pragmatics on an everyday basis, but do you know how? "You invited your friend over for dinner. Your child sees your friend reach for some cookies and says, 'Better not take those, or you'll get even bigger.' You can't believe your child could be so rude".



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In a literal sense, the daughter is simply saying that eating cookies can make you gain weight. But due to the social context, the mother interprets that sentence to mean that her daughter is calling her friend fat. The first sentence in this explanation refers to the semantics—the literal meaning of the sentence. The second and third refer to the pragmatics, the actual meaning of the words as interpreted by a listener based on social context.

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