PRAGMATICS

- Charles Norris (1938) suggested that

' Pragmatics is the science of the relations of signs to their interpreters'.

In other words, pragmatics is concerned not with language as a system or product, but rather with the interrelationship between language (form), (i.e) communicated messages and language users. Pragmatics tends to cover the following questions :

- How do people communicate more than what the words or phrases of their utterances might mean and how do people make their interpretations ?
- Why do people tend to say or interpret something in one way rather than another ?

- How do people's perceptions of contextual factors influence the process of producing and interpreting language ;

a- who the interlocuters are ?

 b- the relationship ?

c- what circumstances they are communicating in ?

- Hence, pragmatics questions the « Code Model » of communication that was developed into the discipline of simiotics. The code model of communication is reagarded as an encoding and decoding process.

- The code is a system that enables the pairing of messages ; (meaning internal to senders and receivers) and signals (what is physically transmitted ; sounds, smoke signals, writing…) between the senders and receivers.

With respect to this view , communication is successful to the extent that both the sender and the receiver pair signals and messages in the same way, so that the message broadcasted in the form of a given signal is identical to the one received when that signal is decoded.

- **This code model has the merit of describing a way in which communication can be achieved between bees or other animals.**

- **However, it is inadequate to account for the ways humans actually communicate.**

MODERN APPROACHES TO PRAGMATICS

- Modern approaches to pragmatics recognize that human communication largely exploits a code (a natural language), but also do engage in reasoning about others' intentions.

- They do not only exploit the evidence presented by the signals, but also evidence from the sources including perceptions and general knowledge of the word **(Sperber & Wilson 1986).**

PRAGMATIC MEANING

Presumably, the task of 'semantics'is to describe and explain linguistic meaning [what a given utterance means by virtue of the words used and the ways in which they are brought together.

Pragmatics is concerned with the study of the meaning that linguistic expressions receive while being used.

One of the tasks of pragmatics is to explain how participants in a conversation move outside the decontextualized meaning (linguistically encoded) ; meaning of the words and phrases to a grasp of their meaning in context.

The process can undergo several aspects.

- Assigning reference : what does **a word** stand for. (technically refer to).

- Figuring out what is communicated directly , what does **a word used** mean in the context.

- Figuring out what is communicated indirectly, implicitly .

- What is the illocutionary force of an utterance?

- **(Reference)** is not simply a relationship between the meaning of the word or phrase and an object or person in the world.

- It is a **social act** , in which the speaker assumes that the words or phrases chosen to identify an object or person will be interpreted as the speaker intended

- The meaning of any utterance is not fully determined by the words that are used. There' a gap between the meaning of the words used by the speaker and the thought that the speaker intends to represent by using those words on a particular occasion.

- Sometimes the meaning of an utterance underdetermines the communicator's intended meaning. This gap is filled by the addressee's reasoning about what the communicator may have intended to convey.

FIGURING OUT WHAT IS COMMUNICATED INDIRECTLY

Sometimes the import of an utterance does not lie in the thought expressed by the utterance , but rather with thought the hearer assumes that the speaker intends to suggest or point to.

Technically speaking it lies in what is implicated or communicated indirectly.

⊙ *Pragmatics tends to explain what is implicitly communicated.*

Part Two

THE CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPLE AND MAXIMS OF CONVERSATION

In response to this issue Paul Grice, the British philosopher, suggested a solution in the mid-1960's. He argued that people are disposed to assume that communicative behaviour is ruled by certain norms. He named these norms ' **the Co-operative Principle and Maxims of Conversation'.**

Deriving an interpretation that satisfies the co-operative principle is effected through four maxims which the communicator is supposed to abide by :

CONVERSATIONS MAXIMS

- **Truthfulness**   Communicators should do their best to make contributions which are true.

- **Informativeness**   Communicators should do their best to be adequately informative.

- **Relevance**   Communicators should do their best to make contributions which are relevant.

- **Style**   Communicatorss should do their best to make contributions which are appropriately short and clearly expressed.

- Grice labelled these maxims using terms which are perhaps, less intuitive ; ' **quality, quantity, relation and manner**'.

- According to Grice, not all people can observe these maxims, but they are understated assumptions that underlie communication.

If a speaker gives little information when an informative one is expected , then he is prompting the listener to look for a meaning that is different from or additional to the meaning that is verbally expressed ; (i.e.) to work out the ' conversational implicature'.

- Yet Grice's theory has a number of limitations. It does not incorporate **the impact of social and interpersonal factors** which influence the participants' preferences and goals, and are important in conversation.

- Moreover, Grice's approach does not explain the fact that **context** plays an extremely important role in determining the thought expressed by an utterance, (i.e.) **it does not explain pragmatic aspects of what is communicated.**

The Impact of Social factors

If Grice's **theory of conversation** (1989) that consolidates the idea that conversations are governed by norms, pointed to the importance of the social regularities that are reflected in communicative interaction.

Relevance theory in contrast , much considers the social factors that influence communication and that can only be analysed as part of the context

Moreover, **<u>social pragmatics</u>**, has suggested other communicative norms, for instance ; Geoffery Leech (1983) maintains that the *'Politeness Principle'* would be a necessary supplement to **the Co-operative Principle**, arguing that people sometimes break this principle for ' politness reasons', (i.e.)

'*to maintain a social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enables us to assume that our interlocuters are being co-operative in the first place'*.

Accordingly, **Leech** proposes a ' **set of politness maxims'** such as ' **modesty maxim'** and **agreement maxim'**, sometimes they are known as rules ; --

........**minimizing praise of self** , **maximizing dispraise of self** / **minimizing disagreement between self and other** / **maximizing agreement between self and other.**

Pragmalinguistic perspective and Sociopragmatic perspective

The pragmalinguistic perspective focuses on the linguistic strategies used by interlocuters to convey a given pragmatic meaning.

Sociopragmatic perspective focuses on the socially-based assessment , beliefs and interactional principles that underlie people's choice of strategies.

Additionally, Brown & livinson (1987) have tried to explain what impact can social factors have on people's use of language with regard to Model of Politness **'Face'** ; *'the public image that every member wants to claim for himself'*, drawing a dinstinction between positive and negative face.

Positive face *is every person's need to have his/herself image appreciated and approved of,*

and

negative face *reflects every person's territories, rights, claims and personal preserves to be respected ; having a freedom of actions and freedom from imposition.*

Brown & Levinson (1987) argue that speakers have **three main variables** into account when dealing how to word <u>a face –threatening utterance</u> especially when it comes to requesting or challenging.

- The power differential between the interlocuters [amount of quality] **[P].**

- The distance-closeness between them **[D].**

- The degree of imposition of the content of the utterance **[R- rank].**

Conversational Patterns and Structure

Conversational analysis / **discourse analysis** is an approach from the observation that people take turns in conversation where pairs of utterances are proceeded.

These pairs are called <u>adjancency pairs</u> in the sense that the first member of a pair requires the presence of the second member. Hence, a question requires an answer.

Convesational analysis is an approach to discourse analysis, but patterns as insertion sequence can also be treated from a pragmatic point of view, where case factors , such as 'face' are included and justification for such an occurrence is justified.

Meanwhile, within **cognitive-psychological approach** , it could be argued that these observed patterns follow the general principles of **human cognition and communication**. Therefore, they dispute the need for turn taking rules and most of the apparatus of conversation analysis.

The context

All approaches to pragmatics have recognized the major role that context can play in the process of communication. For pragmatic meaning , context contributes both to what is communicated directly and to what is communicated indirectly.

In social pragmatics, the following features of situational context have a great influence on people's use of language.

- **The participants** : their roles, the amount of power differential between them, the degree of distance-closeness between them, and the number of people invoved.

- **The message content** : how 'costly' or 'benificial' to the speaker/hearer, how face-threatening it is, does it exceeds or stays within the rights and obligations of the relationship.

- **The communicative activity** : is it a job interview, a lecture, amedical consultation, how the norms of the activity influence language behaviour , for instance ; the right to answer or ask a question, disourse structure and level of formality.

- Brown and Levinson's **P, D** and **R** have been widely used in social pragmatic studies and have been widely manipulated to find out how they influence language use.

- This context however, is occasionally considered as the concrete environment in which conversation takes place and it impacts the communication process.

- Yet in pragmatics, a *more psychological notion of the context is crucial and the physical environment is not the only to affect directly people's utterance production and interpretation*.

*In pragmatics, context can be defined   as the   set   of   assumptions   **(mental representations   capable of being true or false)** that have a bearing on the production and   interpretation   of   particular communicative acts.*

The formerly discussed points along sections presumes the existence of two broad approaches to pragmatics ;

a cognitive-psychological approach and

socio-psychological approach.

- **Cognitive-Psychological Approach**

    Cognitive pragmaticists tend fundamentally to ask the question ' **What is communication ?**','**How communication is possible ?**' They primarily attempt to investigate the relation between the decontextualized meaning of an utterance.

    What speakers mean by their utterance on given occasions and how listeners interpret those utterances on those given occasions.

Primarily, such an approach declines large scale data collection, but contented itself to specific examples of communicative utterances that are assessed to be valid , reliable and enough for theorizing.

Consequently, pragmatics research owed the majority of its insights to philosopphers, for instance ; Grice, Austin and Searle.

- **Socio-psychological approach**

   Social pragmaticists tend to emphasize on the ways in which particular communication exchanges between individuals are embedded and contained by **contextual factors ; social, cultural and others…** Social pragmaticists relies on empirical research ; collecting pragmatic data.

   Occasionally, those data are used for descriptive purposes and at other instances, they are used to test ' the Face Model of Politness', (Brown & Levinson Theory. 1978-1987).

THE END