The importance of pragmatics in Linguistics

Seilkhanova Rita Nurniyazovna
*An assistant of the department of Uzbek language, languages and social issues
at Karakalpak Medical Institute*

Annotation:

Pragmatics as a field of study has a rich history, and its recognition as a significant approach to language learning and understanding began to gain prominence in the mid-20th century. In linguistics, the study of pragmatics focuses on how context influences the interpretation of meaning in language. This includes aspects such as speech acts, implicature, presupposition, and discourse analysis, all of which are crucial for effective communication. While the theoretical foundations of pragmatics can be traced back to philosophers such as Charles Peirce and Charles Morris in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the systematic study of pragmatics as a distinct linguistic discipline gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s.

Key words: Interpreting Intentions, pragmatic competence, literal interpretations, punctuation, culture, facial expression, unspoken aspect.

One of the key figures in the development of pragmatics as a field of study was philosopher and linguist J.L. Austin, whose work on speech acts laid the groundwork for understanding how language is used to perform various functions beyond simply conveying information. Another influential figure was H.P. Grice, whose work on implicature and conversational implicature provided important insights into how listeners infer meaning from context and background knowledge, even when it is not explicitly stated in the utterance.

In the realm of language learning and teaching, the incorporation of pragmatics into language curricula became more widespread in the late 20th century and continues to be an essential component of communicative language teaching approaches. Pragmatic competence, or the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts, is now recognized as a fundamental aspect of language proficiency. Therefore, while the theoretical foundations of pragmatics have deep historical roots, its recognition as a vital approach to language learning and understanding became more established in the mid-20th century and has continued to evolve since then.[1]

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[1] H.P. Grice "Logic and Conversation" (1975)

As we mentioned above Pragmatics, the study of language use in context, holds a paramount importance in the process of learning English as a second language. While mastering grammar and vocabulary are essential, understanding pragmatics is what truly empowers learners to communicate effectively and fluently in diverse social situations. There are some main pragmatics matters in learning English:

First of all, Navigating Social Norms which means Every language has its own set of social norms and conventions. Pragmatic competence enables English learners to decipher these norms, ensuring that their language use aligns with the cultural expectations of native speakers. It's not just about what you say, but how you say it, and to whom. Pragmatics helps learners navigate the intricate web of cultural norms and expectations embedded within a language. English, as a global language, varies significantly in its usage across different cultures and contexts. [2]Understanding pragmatics enables learners to decipher not just what is said, but what is meant, bridging the gap between literal interpretations and intended messages.

Secondly, Interpreting Intentions that Pragmatics helps learners interpret the intentions behind words. Understanding implied meanings, sarcasm, politeness, and indirect requests equips individuals with the ability to grasp the subtleties of communication. This skill is invaluable in everyday conversations, making interactions more meaningful and genuine.

Thirdly, Effective Communication involves more than just grammar and vocabulary. Pragmatic knowledge aids learners in choosing appropriate language for different situations. Whether it's a formal presentation, a casual conversation, or a job interview, pragmatics guides learners in using language that suits the context, making their communication more persuasive and impactful. In addition to that, Language often contains ambiguities and vague expressions. Pragmatic skills allow learners to resolve these ambiguities by considering the context, tone, and non-verbal cues. This ability is crucial for understanding complex texts, engaging in debates, and comprehending abstract ideas. Proficiency in pragmatics is essential in professional and academic environments where nuanced communication is paramount. Business meetings,

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[2] Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson "Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage" (1987)

negotiations, academic discussions, and job interviews all require a deep understanding of pragmatics to convey ideas persuasively and interpret subtle cues accurately.

As a regard of social interactions, building relationships relies heavily on effective communication. Pragmatic competence helps learners establish rapport, convey empathy, and express emotions appropriately. Whether in personal relationships or professional settings, understanding the nuances of pragmatics strengthens connections with others. In real-life situations, effective communication involves more than just stringing words together. Pragmatic knowledge empowers learners to express themselves clearly and interpret others' intentions accurately. It aids in recognizing sarcasm, irony, humor, and other forms of non-literal language, ensuring that learners comprehend the intended meaning beyond the literal words.

The most important one is English is a global language spoken in diverse cultures. Pragmatic understanding enables learners to communicate respectfully across cultural boundaries. Being aware of cultural differences in communication styles prevents misunderstandings and fosters positive interactions in multicultural environments. Moreover, miscommunications can lead to conflicts. One of the primary goals of language is to facilitate social interaction. Pragmatic competence equips learners with the ability to comprehend and use social language appropriately. This means understanding the unwritten rules of conversation – when to speak, when to listen, and how to respond. Politeness strategies, speech acts, and turn-taking conventions all fall under the realm of pragmatics, shaping meaningful dialogues.[3]

Pragmatic skills enable learners to navigate disagreements with tact and diplomacy. Understanding the underlying meanings of statements helps in resolving conflicts amicably, turning potential disputes into opportunities for understanding and compromise. In essence, pragmatics is the key to unlocking the true essence of English language communication. It empowers learners to move beyond basic vocabulary and grammar, delving into the rich tapestry of social interactions. By appreciating the importance of pragmatics, English learners can enhance their language skills, ensuring that their words not only convey meaning but also resonate with the depth and subtlety

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[3] John Searle "Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language" (1969)

inherent in human communication. Title: The Importance of Pragmatics in Learning English: Beyond Words and Grammar.

Consider the simple statement, **"It's cold in here."** Without additional context, this sentence is ambiguous; it could be a factual observation or a polite request to close a window. Pragmatics helps us decipher such ambiguity, allowing us to interpret intended meanings accurately.

One fundamental aspect of pragmatics is speech acts, which encompass various communicative functions like requests, promises, apologies, and suggestions. For instance, saying "Could you pass the salt?" is not merely a question but a polite way of making a request. Understanding speech acts is essential for successful everyday interactions, as it enables us to respond appropriately to different communicative intentions.

Implicature is another crucial concept in pragmatics. It refers to the information that is implied but not explicitly stated in a conversation. When someone says, **"She ate some of the cookies,"** the implicature is that she did not eat all of them. Grasping implicatures enhances our ability to read between the lines, discerning the unsaid meanings in conversations. Let's illustrate various aspects of pragmatics in a simple conversation:

"Understanding Pragmatics in Action"

Scenario: Emily and Alex are having a conversation in a coffee shop. Emily has just arrived and noticed that Alex is already sitting at a table with two cups of coffee.
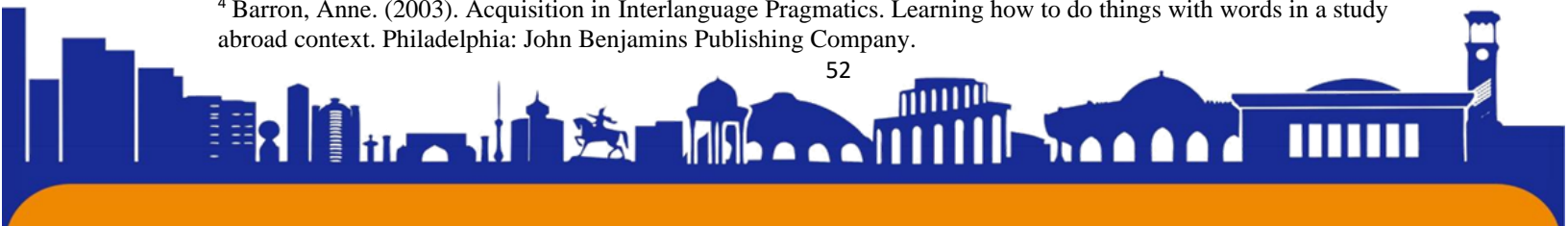
Emily: *(raising an eyebrow)* "Oh, you got me a coffee, too?" [4]

In this short conversation, several pragmatic elements come into play:

1. **Speech Act**: Emily's statement is not just an inquiry; it's a indirect way of expressing surprise and mild disappointment. Her tone and facial expression convey the pragmatic function of her utterance. Although she framed it as a question, the intended speech act is closer to a complaint or a request for an explanation.

2. **Implicature**: Emily's remark implies that she expected Alex to get her a coffee, considering they are meeting at a coffee shop. The implicature here is that Alex's

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[4] Barron, Anne. (2003). Acquisition in Interlanguage Pragmatics. Learning how to do things with words in a study abroad context. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

action (buying two coffees) suggests a social norm or expectation: if someone is getting coffee, they generally get it for the person they are meeting, too.

3. **Politeness**: Despite her surprise, Emily phrases her statement as a question rather than a direct complaint. This choice of politeness strategy helps maintain a more positive tone in the conversation, even though she is expressing her disappointment.

4. **Context**: The context of the coffee shop setting and the fact that Emily and Alex are meeting for a casual conversation influence the interpretation of Emily's statement. In a different context, such as a formal business meeting, her response might have been different.

5. **Nonverbal Cues**: Emily's raised eyebrow and intonation add nonverbal layers to her statement. These cues provide additional context, helping Alex understand the implied meaning behind her words. [5]

In this example, pragmatics helps us understand the unspoken aspects of the conversation, allowing us to interpret the intended meaning beyond the literal words spoken. Pragmatic competence enables individuals to navigate social situations effectively, considering not just what is said, but how it is said and in what context.
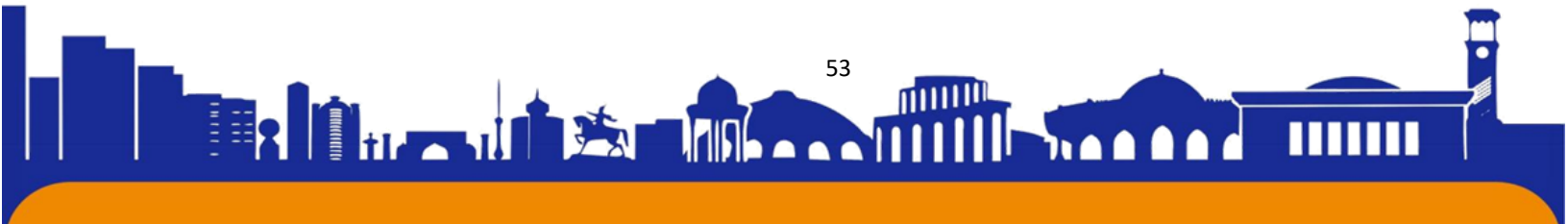
Furthermore, pragmatics delves into politeness strategies, exploring how cultures and social contexts influence our choice of words. Different cultures have varying norms of politeness, affecting how requests and refusals are formulated. Pragmatic competence allows individuals to navigate diverse social settings, adapting their language use to match the expectations of a particular culture or context.[6]

In the digital age, where communication often occurs through text messages and online platforms, understanding pragmatics becomes even more critical. In written communication, individuals rely heavily on **emoticons, emojis, and punctuation** to convey tone and emotion, compensating for the absence of facial expressions and intonation.

In conclusion, pragmatics serves as a cornerstone for effective communication. By delving into the intricacies of language use, pragmatics equips us with the tools to

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[5] Stephen C. Levinson and Deirdre Wilson "Pragmatics"** (2006)

[6] Keith Donnellan "Reference and Definite Descriptions" (1966)

decipher hidden meanings, interpret implied messages, and navigate the complexities of social interactions. In a world where communication is key, a strong grasp of pragmatics empowers individuals to convey intentions accurately and fosters meaningful connections across diverse cultures and contexts. In addition, recognizing the importance of pragmatics in learning English, learners can elevate their language proficiency beyond the confines of textbooks, embracing the rich tapestry of human interaction that language truly represents.

Used Literature:

1. H.P. Grice "Logic and Conversation" (1975)

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