In this session we will consider...

- How to define pragmatics
- How it relates to other areas of linguistics
- The scope of pragmatics
- Some key areas that will be developed in more detail in this course.

Consider utterances like...

- It's Ok, I'm not going to stay the night.
- Happy reading! I'm back on 8/8/08.
- I'm there now!

How does the hearer/reader make sense of them?

Pragmatics is...

THE STUDY OF MEANING IN CONTEXT

How does pragmatics relate to other areas of linguistics?

- Phonology – the study of sounds and sound systems
How does pragmatics relate to other areas of linguistics?

- **Phonology** – the study of sounds and sound systems
  - Does not focus on who produces the sounds and for what purpose.

- **Morpho-syntax** – the study of how morphemes and other linguistic forms are arranged
  - Concerned with whether or not sentences are well formed.

- **Semantics** – the study of the relationships between verbal descriptions and real entities or states of affairs in the world.
  - Attempts to establish these relationships as true or not.
  - Does not focus on who produces them, when, or for what purpose.

What is pragmatics?

“The science of language seen in relation to its users.”

- Concerned with what utterances mean in context, rather than what they mean by themselves.
- Context enables the hearer to interpret speaker meaning and intent.
### Information from context: words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UTTERANCE</th>
<th>WHO/ WHERE?</th>
<th>MEANING of the word coffee</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee?</td>
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Pencil?

Consider the utterance

I want to have a shower, have you got a pencil?

What sort of pencil does the speaker probably want?

Information from context – literal or figurative?

Would you like a piece of cake?

This course is a piece of cake!

Information from context – literal or figurative?

Context allows a hearer to distinguish between literal and figurative uses of language.

Misunderstandings can still occur, as in this reported example.

A: My daughter called from Australia – she wants to know what’s 180C in Fahrenheit?
B: Get's pretty hot there, doesn't it?

A: It's an oven!

B: Sure is!

Answering a question – how much detail?

Context also determines what the hearer will judge to be an appropriate answer to a question.

Have you got the time?

What are some possible true answers?

• Yes I have
• About 3
• A bit after 3
• Half past 3
• 3.15 and 30 seconds
• 3.15, and 30.298 seconds
• The bus has just gone
• Time for a break!

Key concepts in Pragmatics

1. The co-operative principle
The co-operative principle

‘...make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.’

(Grice, 1975:45)

Quality:

- Try to make your contribution one that is true; i.e.
  - [i.] do not say what you believe to be false
  - [ii.] do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

Quantity:

- Give the right amount of information; i.e.
  - [i.] make your contribution as informative as is required
  - [ii.] do not make your contribution more informative than is required

Relation:

- Be relevant

Manner:

- Be perspicuous:
  - [i.] avoid obscurity of expression
  - [ii.] avoid ambiguity
  - [iii.] be brief
  - [iv.] be orderly

Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning rather than sentence meaning

meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader).
Key concepts in Pragmatics
1. The co-operative principle
2. Relative distance

Relative distance
On the assumption of how close or distant the listener/reader is, the speaker/writer determines how much needs to be said.

I’m there now, where are you?
- person
- place
- time
- person
  (spatial)
  (temporal)
  (personal or social)

This has meaning if the hearer can attribute meaning to the deictics.

Deixis
Deixis functions differently across languages in the range of meanings that can be made, and how the deictics are used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HERE or THERE??</th>
<th>close to the speaker</th>
<th>close to the hearer</th>
<th>far away from both speaker and hearer</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>here</td>
<td>there (if there is a distance between S and H)</td>
<td>there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>kore</td>
<td>sore</td>
<td>are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish (Spain)</td>
<td>aqui</td>
<td>ahi</td>
<td>alli</td>
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TASK 1
Work in small groups and make a list of the languages you know.
Pool information about how meanings regarding relative distance can be made.
Consider: personal/social deixis
-temporal deixis

Person deixis
Example: We: inclusive or not?
- Shall we go to lunch? (includes the hearer)
- We are trying to improve the situation as soon as possible. (includes the speaker and others, but not the hearer)
- We went to the city with John. (I and somebody else were accompanied by John, not John and I went to the city)

Person deixis
Example: use of personal pronouns
- Does the choice of personal pronoun reveal the speaker or writer’s relationship or attitude to the person being referred to?

Time deixis
How are the equivalents of terms like ‘last’, ‘this’ ‘next’, ‘then’ ‘now’ used in context in another language you might know.
Are they different or similar to English?
What opportunities are there for confusion to arise?

Key concepts in Pragmatics
1. The co-operative principle
2. Relative distance
3. Mutually assumed knowledge

Mutually assumed knowledge
Language choices are based on the knowledge which the hearer is assumed to have.
A man asked to see you.
The man had a green jacket
The prime minister said nothing.
Types of contextual knowledge

• (1) the situational context: what speakers know about what they can see around them;

• (2) the background knowledge context: what they know about each other (interpersonal) and the world (cultural);

• (3) the co-textual context: what they know about what has already been said.

TASK
The speakers are postgraduate students at the University of Edinburgh.

AF is a Scottish woman;
DM is a male classmate from England.

They share some background knowledge you may not have:

for example:
• Arran is an island off the coast of Scotland
• Arran has low hills.
• Scottish people like walking in the hills, and can do it for many hours

also
• Michelle is DF’s wife
• DF and Michelle had originally planned to go to Spain for their holidays but hadn’t had enough money.
• AF: (2) So you went to Arran. A bit of a come-down isn’t it! ((laughing))
• DM: It was nice actually. Have you been to Arran?
• AF: No I’ve not. (1) Like to go.
• DM: Did a lot of climbing.
• AF: // (heh)
• DM: // I went with Francesca (0.5) and David.

AF: Uhuh?
DM: Francesca’s room-mate. (2) and Alice’s – a friend of Alice’s from London. (1). There were six of us. Yeah we did a lot of hill walking. (0.5) We got back (1) er (2) Michelle and I got home she looked at her knees. (0.5) They were like this. Swollen up like this. Cos we did this enormous eight hour stretch.
AF: Uhmm.

Situational context

(1) the situational context: what speakers know about what they can see around them;
We got back (1) er (2) Michelle and I got home she looked at her knees. (0.5) They were like this. Swollen up like this. Cos we did this enormous eight hour stretch.

Background knowledge

• (2) the background knowledge context: is outside the text- what they know about each other (interpersonal) and the world (cultural);

shared interpersonal background knowledge
• is knowledge acquired through previous verbal interactions or joint activities/experiences.
• includes personal knowledge about the other speaker/s.
shared cultural knowledge

- social groups or communities of practice have shared background knowledge:

  e.g. Students at Macquarie, Linguistics students, members of a choir, members of a rowing club. A group of friends who went to school together. [Can be as broad as ‘people who live in Australia’.]


• AF: (2) So you went to Arran. A bit of a come-down isn’t it! (laughing))
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• AF: Uhm.

(3) the co-textual context: (inside the text) what they know about what has already been said.

AF: (2) So you went to Arran. A bit of a come-down isn’t it! (laughing))
• DM: It was nice actually. Have you been to Arran?
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Key concepts in Pragmatics

1. The co-operative principle
2. Relative distance
3. Mutually assumed knowledge
4. Speech Acts

Pragmatics is also concerned with **how actions are achieved through language.**

“ How to do things with words”

Speech Act Theory

Depending on the context,

- Have you got a pencil?
- Have you got the time?
- Is the printer on?
- Is that your car?

might be

- A question…
- a request…
- a warning….. or ?????
Pragmatics is also the study of how more is communicated than is said.

Speech acts may be direct or indirect. Comprehension must go beyond consideration of linguistic forms to uncover speaker meaning.

Key concepts in Pragmatics
1. The co-operative principle
2. Relative distance
3. Mutually assumed knowledge
4. Speech Acts
5. Scripts

Pragmatics is also the study of scripts i.e. people's expectations in a culture of how an interaction will occur.
• optional and obligatory elements
• sequencing of stages

TASK 3. Movie script: Notting Hill
• WILLIAM Can I help you?
• ANNA No, thanks. I'll just look around.
• WILLIAM Fine.

WILLIAM That book's really not good – just in case, you know, browsing turned to buying. You'd be wasting your money
• ANNA Really?
• WILLIAM Yes. This one though is... very good.

WILLIAM I think the man who wrote it has actually been to Turkey, which helps. There's also a very amusing incident with a kebab.
• ANNA Thanks. I'll think about it.
• WILLIAM If you could just give me a second.
WILLIAM Excuse me.

THIEF Yes.

WILLIAM Bad news.

THIEF What?

WILLIAM We’ve got a security camera in this bit of the shop.

THIEF So?

WILLIAM So, I saw you put that book down your trousers.

THIEF What book?

WILLIAM The one down your trousers.

THIEF I haven’t got a book down my trousers.

WILLIAM Right -- well, then we have something of an impasse. I tell you what -- I’ll call the police -- and, what can I say? -- If I’m wrong about the whole book-down-the-trousers scenario, I’ll really apologize.

THIEF Okay -- what if I did have a book down my trousers?

WILLIAM Well, ideally, when I went back to the desk, you’d remove the Cadogan Guide to Bali from your trousers, and either wipe it and put it back, or buy it. See you in a sec.

Summing up

- Speaker meaning
- Contextual meaning
- How more is communicated than is said
- The expression of relative distance
- How to do things with words
- The idea of cultural scripts

Pragmatics examines

- What people achieve with words. (Speech act theory)
- How they use the resources of context in making and understanding meanings. (Conversational principles and implicature)
- How they negotiate the interpersonal meanings and face (Politeness)
- How this occurs in different cultures. (Cross cultural pragmatics)
Pragmatics is investigated through:

- Psycholinguistic or cognitive approaches
- Sociological approaches
- Conversation analysis
- Discourse analysis
- Critical discourse analysis

Pragmatics has implications for:

- Professional communication
e.g. Health sciences
  Law
- Cross cultural communication
- Communication disorders
- Language teaching and learning
- Translating and interpreting

and many many aspects of communication in everyday life.

Source: