A HIGHLIGHT ON PRAGMATICS

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INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics is a relatively late comer in linguistics. It enters the linguistic scene at the end of the 1970s. However, to many people, this is a rather new area. Pragmatics was a reaction to structural linguistics as outlined by Ferdinand de Saussure. In many cases, it expanded upon his idea that language has an analyzable structure, composed of parts that can be defined in relation to others. Pragmatics first engaged only in synchronic study, as opposed to examining the historical development of language. However, it rejected the notion that all meaning comes from signs existing purely in the abstract space of *langue*.

Pragmatics deals with *utterances*, by which we will mean specific events, the intentional acts of speakers at times and places, typically involving language. Logic and semantics traditionally deal with properties of types of expressions, and not with properties that differ from token to token, or use to use, or, as we shall say, from utterance to utterance, and vary with the particular properties that differentiate them. Pragmatics is sometimes characterized as dealing with the effects of context. This is equivalent to saying it deals with utterances, if one collectively refers to all the facts that can vary from utterance to utterance as 'context.' One must be careful, however, for the term is often used with more limited meanings.

WHAT IS PRAGMATICS?

There are many definitions of pragmatics, because this field of linguistics has been so charming and appealing to so many people that each one of them seems to claim an interest in it and define it from different perspective. According to Leech (1983: X), pragmatics can be usefully defined as the study of how utterances have meanings in situations. In a way, through this definition, Leech is clearing up the differences between semantics, syntax, and pragmatics. What he is trying to say here is like this: Sentences are for syntax, while utterances for pragmatics; sentence meanings free from situations are for semantics, while utterance meanings bound with situations are for pragmatics.

Crystal (1987: 120) says that pragmatics studies the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others. This definition emphasizes the absolute roles that context and language users (speaker and hear) play. The former is instrumental in framing language users' choices of linguistic means for optimal communication outcomes, while the later are solely responsible for the awareness of context or speech environment in which they are to perform certain functions via language or fulfill specific objectives by utilizing available linguistic means within their capability.

Leech (1983:6) defines pragmatics as "the study of meaning in relation to speech situations". The speech situation enables the speaker use language to achieve a particular effect on the mind of the

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hearer." Thus the speech is goal-oriented (i.e. the meaning which the speaker or writer intends to communicate). Levinson (1983:9) defines pragmatics as "the study of those aspects of the relationship between language and context that are relevant to the writing of grammars." In this definition that interest is mainly in the interrelation of language and principles of language use that are context dependent. While Yule (1996:127), pragmatics is "the study of intended speaker meaning". This definition is in accord with Crystal (1997, p. 301) who says that pragmatics is "the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication. Mey (1993:42) states that pragmatics is the study of the condition of human language uses as this is determined by the context of society. Pragmatic is needed if we want a fuller, deeper, and generally more reasonable account of human language behavior.

Based on the definitions above, we can see that the context take a big part in learning pragmatics because it is the study of language use. No definition of pragmatics will be complete in the absence of some mention of context and utterance. If you see a notice like "*Awas Anjing Galak*" in front of someone's house, you definitely know what each of the words means, and you also know what the notice means. You know that you have to be careful when you want to come close to the house because there is a fierce dog there which is ready to bite you. You normally understand the notice well because you know that a dog is only loyal to its master and the people it recognizes. What you have done is to use the meaning of the words in combination with the context in which they occur and try to decode the meaning which the writer of the notice intended to communicate. Speakers and writers often *mean* much more than they say/write and expect their hearers/listeners to understand them. They will generally assume that some aspects of meanings that are not expressed in words are deducible from the context. This assumption is based on their shared environment, values, social conventions or world view which guides them to interpret meanings beyond words or grammatical structures. Ultimately the goal is to rightly interpret the speakers intended meaning. The notion of the speaker's or writer's intended meaning is a very crucial element in the study of pragmatics. And as you will see in this study, traditional pragmatics is all about investigating the speaker/writer intended meaning rather than what is expressed in words.

In the definition of pragmatics by Leech, you will notice that one of the principles of pragmatics is the emphasis on "utterance" meaning rather than word or sentence meaning, and how such utterances relate to the context in which they are used. The difference between an utterance and a sentence is the fact that an utterance needs not be syntactically perfect the same way we expect a sentence to be. A sentence must satisfy some basic grammatical rules (e.g. subject/verb/complement structural pattern.) An utterance on the other hand doesn't even have to be a sentence. It may be a word like "asu!" a phrase like "kurang ajar. The "meaning" we associate with these utterances is defined in terms of their *functions* or the *intention* of the speaker in uttering them. While sentence meaning is a function of the words in the sentence together with the overall sense of the sentence, utterance meaning relies much more on the intention of the utterance in relation to the context.

HISTORY OF PRAGMATICS

Pragmatics is a relatively late comer in linguistics. It enters the linguistic scene at the end of the 1970s. As a word, pragmatics appeared 2000 years ago. Back there, it was spelt as pragmaticus in Greek) and pragmaticos in Latin. As a term, is associated with Charles Morris and Carnap in the 1930's. These were philosophers who were interested in the study of semiotics (the science of signs) and how the meaning associated with signs may be described in linguistic terms. Hence they distinguished three (3) branches of semiotics as syntax, semantics and pragmatics. While Morris used the term "interpreter" (language user) to explain the focus of pragmatic study, Carnap used the expression "the user of the language."

Carnap identified the fact that since the investigation of meaning is user-based, it must therefore seek to find what intention the user has for using some particular words or sentences. It is the intention of the speaker that indicates the functions of the utterance and what results that are anticipated. This view of linguistic pragmatics was eventually adopted generally, dropping other broader psychological and sociological aspects of signs proposed by Charles Morris. Semantics and pragmatics are two sisters belonging to the same parent (semiotics). The difference between the two according to Morris and Carnap is that semantics is concerned with the meaning of words, phrases and sentences without reference to who uses them, why they are used and the influence of the context on the expression. Pragmatics on the other hand handles those areas which linguistic semantics could not handle, i.e. attention to the user of the language, his particular intention (depending on the situation s/he finds himself) and how s/he expects his hearer (or reader) to respond.

A good understanding of pragmatics will enable one adopt the right kind of language use in different social contexts and possibly achieve the kind of result you expect. As a matter of fact, a good understanding of the roles of language in society demands the kind of linguistic (or communicative) competence that is required to use language in specific social contexts. In the next unit we shall look more closely at the various types of contexts and how they influence language use.

On mentioning the origin of pragmatics, we can go back to ancient Greek and Roman academic works. At that time some great philosophers had discussed something related to pragmatics. And we can say pragmatics develops from philosophy. First, the term "pragmatics" first appeared in linguistic philosophy in 1930s, for then western philosophers began to shift their focus onto the studies of language symbols, which developed into semiology later. And the early pragmatics was just a branch of semiology that was under the philosophers' studies, which means that pragmatics originates from the philosophers' studies on language. Second, the theoretic basis for pragmatics is from philosophy. To be more specific, pragmatics originates from the following aspects: the studies of semiology; the studies of linguistical philosophy in the 20th century and the studies of function linguistics on language forms. Third, the main studies of pragmatics such as indexical and presupposition also have philosophical background.

Here we should mention some philosophers who have played very important role in the development of pragmatics. Such as Wittgenstein, Morris, Austin, Searle, Levinson, Leech, Pierce, Carnap and so on. Wittgenstein and Austin once had discussed the origin of pragmatics

in England, France and German in 1930s. Morris, who played the most important role in the first stage of the development of pragmatics, held an opinion that the studies of pragmatics must involve the aspects of society, of psychology, of nerve, of culture and of other things that affected the symbols and their meanings. And the most influent thing that he did on pragmatics was that in 1938 he had divided semiology into three parts: syntactics, semantics and pragmatics. The famous philosopher Carnap had very similar ideas with Morris, and he made some supplement, he thought that the studies of pragmatics should on the relationship between users and words as well as the reference of words. And he divided studies into pure theoretic ones and descriptive ones. And he made the aims of pragmatics studies more specific, that is the relationship between language users and words and the reference relationship. Bar-Hiller, the student of Carnap, suggested the studies of pragmatics should have definite aims and he claimed that the definite aims should be decitics such as "I", "Here", "Now". Austin and Searle put forward the Speech Act Theory, which was the most influent topic in the studies of pragmatics during the second stage. Most important three issues of pragmatics and three stages in the development of pragmatics

In 1983 Levinson and Leech published their respective works *Pragmatics* and *Principle of Pragmatics,* which set up the theoretic system of pragmatics. In 1977 Mey and Haberland started the *Journal of Pragmatics* in Holand. The start publication of the *Journal of Pragmatics,* the publishing of *Pragmatics* and the International Pragmatics Association that was set up in 1988 are considered the most important three issues for the development of pragmatics and indicate that pragmatics has become an independent discipline in

linguistics. Generally speaking, the establishment of pragmatics as an independent discipline experiences three stages: the first stage is from the late 1930s to late 1940s, during this period, some philosophers such as Pierce, Morris and Carnap considered pragmatics to be a branch of semiology and all the studies were within the domain of philosophy; The second stage is from the beginning of 1950s to late 1960s. During this period, three famous philosophers called Austin, Searle and Grice made studied on speech act and implicature theory, and their achievements sustained the basic theory of pragmatics. The studies were still within the domain of philosophy then; The third stage is after 1970s, the biggest three issues happened and pragmatics became an independent discipline.

The scope or the levels to which the study of pragmatics has been extended, it needs to mention that linguistic pragmatics as it is used today is a lot more restricted than when the term "pragmatics" was first used by Charles Morris (1938). Morris was interested in *Semiotics* – the general study of signs and symbols. Pragmatics was defined as the "relation of signs to the interpreters." We shall look at this in detail in the next unit. Morris then extended the scope of pragmatics to include psychological, biological and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs (Levinson, 1983). This will include what is known today as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and neurolinguistics among others.

Today, linguistic pragmatics mostly dwells on those factors of language use that govern the choices individuals make in social interaction and the effects of those choices on others (Crystal, 1987). In recent times however, extended researches in cultural studies and social discourse argue in favour of *discourse pragmatics* rather

than the traditional linguistic pragmatics. Fairclough (1989) for instance argues that rather than see language use as an individual's strategies of encoding meaning to achieve some particular effects on the hearer or reader, we should be concerned with the fact that social conventions and ideologies, define peoples roles, identities and language performances; people simply communicate in some particular ways as the society determines. While people can manipulate language to achieve certain purposes, they in some circumstances are actually ruled by social conventions. In the same vein, pragmatic study has thrown some lights in the study of literature giving rise to literary pragmatics, while the application of pragmatics to computational linguistics has also developed into computational pragmatics, etc.

SCHOOLS OF PRAGMATICS

The studies of Pragmatics are divided into two big schools: British & American School and European School which can be subdivided into France School, Prague School and Copenhagen School. British & American School is traditionally centering on studying the sentence structure and grammar, and their studies of pragmatics is also restricted to several definite topics such as deictic expressions, conversational implicature, presupposition, speech and conversation structure. Their studies belong to Micro-pragmatics. European School has a wide visual and understanding, and their studies even include conversation analysis, cultural anthropology, social linguistics and psycholinguistics during intercommunication. Their studies belong to Macro-pragmatics.

When we talk about Micro-pragmatics and Macro-pragmatics, we may ask what are micropragmatics and macropragmatics. The studies of Micro-pragmatics are, on the level of language using, centering upon the

discussion of pragmatic tasks aroused by the understanding of language symbols' reference and implicature during conversation, which include context, conversational implicature, reference, pragmatic principles, speech acts, conversation analysis, deixis, presupposition and conversational principles.

While the studies of Macro-pragmatics are, on the level of society and culture, the problems to use language for language user during the process of communication, including Pragmatic Acts, Literary Pragmatics, Pragmatics Across Cultures and the Social Aspects of Pragmatics. Metapragmatics which can be considered as a review, a survey or a reflection of pragmatics itself, including making statements about itself, questioning itself, improving itself, quoting itself and rethinking the methodologies and theoretic system during the process of its studies. Metapragmatics is dealt with: one, as a theoretical discussion on what pragmatics is, and what it should comprise; two, as a discussion of the conditions and possibilities that enable people to act by using words, to 'do' pragmatics by acting pragmatically; and finally, three, as the pragmatic pendant to the metapragmatic level, which is often captured under the label of 'reflexive language'. Metapragmatics is dealt with language that characterizes or describes the pragmatic function of some speech.

Since the 1980s Pragmatics, as an independent discipline, has been developing very quickly and soundly, so far, it has got delightful achievements and attracted more and more students and scholars to conduct researches on it. And now, pragmatics has new development, many scholars begin to do cross studies, such as interactional sociolinguistics, inter-language pragmatics, cross-cultural pragmatics, pragmatics and

translation, pragmatics and language teaching which contains two: pragmalinguistics and socio-pragmatics, cognitive pragmatics and clinical pragmatics. The next discussion will cover the micro-pragmatics which include deixis, presupposition (pragmatic presupposition and semantic presupposition), conversational implicature and Grice, conversational principles (cooperative principle and politeness principle), speech act (type of acts, classifying illocutionary acts, conversational Analysis).

MEANING AND FEATURES OF CONTEXT

Context refers to the situation, within which language functions. It may be physical/environmental, social context or institutional situation, including events, time, culture or social conventions that can influence language use. The first use of the term "context of situation" is attributable to Bronislaw Malinowski, a social anthropologist, who in his study of language behaviours among some native Indians concluded that language is a "mode of action" and as social behaviour is closely tied to the relevant social situation in which it is used (Malinowski 1935). The meaning of words was not to be restricted to sounds of utterances or their grammatical structure but must include the "pragmatic context" in which they are uttered. J.R. Firth (a linguist) expounded this study and in his contextual theory of meaning argues that context is the bedrock of any linguistic enterprise because "normal linguistic behaviour as a whole is meaning effort, directed towards the maintenance of appropriate patterns of life" (Firth 1957: 223).

Since every utterance occurs within a "culturally determined context of situation" meaning is tied to that context about the speaker and the ways he perceives himself,

his roles in the society and his relationship with other members of the society. As pragmatics investigates context-based meaning it will be impossible to talk about pragmatics without reference to the context in which utterances are made. And as a matter of fact, linguistic codes are actually selected and used according to some social sets of standards. It is contextual considerations that make the difference between structural linguistics and sociolinguistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis. We shall look at the features of context as we examine the various types of contexts.

A. Linguistic Context

This refers to the set of words in the same sentence or utterance. This forms the linguistic environment that determines the sense of the words in the context. For example if the word "shoot" appears in a linguistic context along with other words like "dribble," "penalty," "goal", or "over the bar", we immediately understand the *shoot* that is meant. If on the other hand, the same word appears with words like "soldier", "artillery" or "war," the meaning is immediately known. The linguistic context (also known as *co-text*) of a word or words therefore has a strong effect on what we may think such words mean. Generally words occur together and frequently used with some particular words with which they collocate.

B. Physical/environmental Context

The physical context definitely influenced our interpretation of the word. Our understanding of words or expressions is much more tied to the physical context particularly in terms of the time and place being referred to in the expressions. Other features of the context include: **Participants**, e.g. boys, girls, men, traders; **On going activity**, e.g. playing, chatting,

and debating; **The place**, e.g. church, class, stadium, dining table**; The time**, e.g. time of the day or season.

Hymes (1964) identifies the following general contextual features: **Participants,** i.e. people involved, e.g. husband and wife; neighbors, colleagues; teachers and students etc. **Topic** i.e. what the discourse is about, e.g. politics, religion, race, heath, etc. **Setting**, i.e. where the event takes place, e.g. at home, at work, at school etc. **Channel**, e.g. medium – speech, writing, non-verbal); Code (dialect/style); **Message form** (debate, chat etc)

All of the above features may not rigidly be ascribed to the physical context. For example, the channel/medium or code through which the piece of discourse is carried out are determined by other variables such as education, age, status or class which may well be described as some features of the social-cultural context.

C. Interpersonal Context

The interpersonal context focuses on psychological considerations that influence speech or talk. There is no doubt that the state of the mind of the speaker or writer places some constraints on the quality or amount of interactions s/he engages in. His inputs and reactions are predictable if he is sad, happy, excited or bored. Critics of pragmatic emphasis on such criteria as intention, belief or rationality, argue that the understanding of text and talk is not dependent on elements rooted in psychology rather, on social factors such as "power" and "status" and how they are distributed and maintained linguistically in the society (Lavandera, 1988). Interestingly many social analysts of discourse, among who are also interested in pragmatics do indeed recognize the influence of socio-cultural variables that affect the production of discourse, or text. But the fact remains that individual

speakers or writers do make linguistic choices and decide what to say and how to say it. Therefore factors that place constraint on their ability to do this (e.g. state of the mind) is of interest to pragmatic analysts.

D. Situational/socio-cultural Context

Unlike the other contexts discussed above, the situational context concerns mainly with socio-cultural considerations. The context of culture includes beliefs, value system, religion, conventions that control individuals' behaviour and their relationship with others. These socio-cultural rules of behaviour often guide them in order to communicate effectively with one another. Some beliefs or conventions may be considered as universal, while some are culture-specific, especially those that guide utterances, non-verbal communication and other forms of social behaviour that may be interpreted meaningfully.

Knowledge of socio-cultural rules of behaviours brings up the idea of "communicative competence" which according to Dell Hymes (1972) is the ability of the speaker to know when to speak, when not and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner. This competence is integral with attitudes, values and motivations concerning language, its features and uses in the most suitable and appropriate contexts. Take a newspaper headline like ***"Dolly Tidur Selama Bulan Puasa"*** for an example. How would a non-Surabayan interpret it considering the general meaning of "Dolly"? How would you interpret it – as a Surabayan or East Javanian who knows the situation of this place as a great prostitution business.

Take another example in Indonesian context, the setting is in a bedroom, the participants are the new-married couple, it

happened many years ago when I was still achild:

Minah: Ado apo Abang?
Abang: Sempit kali Minah, nggak bisa masuk.

Someone who listens to the fragment of their conversation might interpret that they are making love. That is the interpretation of the hearer based on the behaviour and attitude of bride and bridegroom in Indonesian socio-cultural context. In fact after the dialogue continues, the couple is talking about the shoes which were bought someday was very narrow. This dialogue will be funny to other hearers because of the misinterpretation.

E. Micro Pragmatics

Under this heading, the discussion concerning with micro-pragmatics which includes deixis, presupposition (pragmatic presupposition and semantic presupposition), conversational implicature and Grice, conversational principles (cooperative principle and politeness principle), speech act (type of acts, classifying illocutionary acts, conversational analysis).

1. Deixis

Deixis means pointers or something that points to other things. In order words, indexicals are linguistic forms or expressions that refer to other things. In a sense, deixis can be a synonym of language expressions. According to Fillmore, deixis can be roughly categorized into five types. They are deixis of person (pronominal deixis), deixis of place (spatial deixis), deixis of time (temporal deixis), deixis of discourse (discoursal deixis), and deixis for social purposes (social deixis).

Pronominal deixis refers to a person pointer or assigner. "He", "I", etc are typical examples. Spatial deixis denotes a place pointer. Examples include "here",

"there", "this", "that", "up", "down", "north", "inside", "top", "bottom", etc. There are many temporal deixis in English, "Now", "then", from now on", "last year", "in the future", etc. are all examples of this kind. A discoursal deixis is self-explicit in that it is used primarily in a discourse unit and for discoursal purposes. We employ discoursal deixis a lot for textual coherence or as procedural indicators. For instance, we use "to begin with", "first", "next", "in the following paragraph", "last but not the least", etc. to smooth the transitions or connections between different parts of a textual unit. Apparently a social deixis is for the sake of politeness in social interaction.

2. Presupposition

Speakers or writers usually design their message on the assumption that the hearer or
reader already has a degree of the knowledge of what is being communicated. What the writer assumes the reader already knows about the subject and the context of the information is known as *presupposition*. Inference as we saw in the last unit is actually based on presupposition because whether inference is right or wrong, the reader is acting upon some relevant information about the subject. Take the following example "Who killed his second wife?". This question presupposes that (a) the speaker and hearer know that he has two wife; (b) both know that the second wife was killed and that his killers are unknown (c) the unknown assassins might be discovered; (d) the reader has the right to know and may do something about the information he gets.

Presupposition is based on shared assumption between speaker and hearer and how some clauses (especially introduced by *when*) give rise to presupposition. We shall also be looking at how to differentiate

between semantic presupposition and pragmatic presupposition. As presupposition often suggests more than what is simply said and associates itself with the speaker's belief system, it is another component of pragmatic analysis. Many people display interest in presupposition. Semanticists claim a strong interest in presupposition because via entailment they find a relationship between two propositions.

a. Pragmatic Presupposition

When we speak with people, we generally make valid assumptions about the background of what we say, which we presume to be mutually known. If someone tells you: (i)"Registration for the workshop ends tomorrow".

For you to respond appropriately it is assumed that you know something about "the workshop" in question. If you do not know, we conclude that the speaker made a wrong assumption about your knowledge of the workshop. This results in a failure of presupposition in which case you ask to know what he is talking about. There would not be any point in saying: *registration for the workshop ends tomorrow* unless the speaker knew that the hearer is properly informed about the upcoming workshop and the process of registration. In fact this condition must be met before making the utterance. The speaker must presuppose that the hearer is conversant with the workshop and perhaps eager to be registered. This background knowledge can be called pragmatic presupposition because they are not linguistic in nature, they are the *felicity condition* which must be met for the utterance to be appropriate otherwise, the speaker will have to go all the way to explain the upcoming workshop, the aims, the expected particular, registration procedure, the date etc. What do you think is pragmatically presupposed in the

following statement: "(ii)Thank you for not smoking".

In English certain clauses trigger off presuppositions, especially those that express
change of state predicates (e.g. *begin, continue, stop*, etc) introduced by "after" and
"before" (Grundy, 2000). Look at the following examples:
(iii) I began drinking 8 glasses of water daily after I read the medical book
(iv) I continued studying after I obtained my first degree at the age of 60
(v) She stopped smoking after she suffered lung cancer
(iii) presupposes that (a) I was drinking less than 8 glasses of water before (b) I read a medical book.
(iv) presupposes that (a) I was studying before (b) I obtained a degree at the age of 60
(v) presupposes that (a) she was smoking before (b) she suffered lung cancer (c) smoking could have caused the lung cancer. Implicative verbs such as *forget, happen* and *manage* do also prompt presuppositions (Grundy, 2000). Consider the following examples:
(vi) *The lecturer forgot to give a summary of his lecture and left everyone guessing what he said at the beginning.*
presupposes that he should have given a summary of his lecture
(vii*) A similar thing happened to my parents when they travel to London.*
presupposes that what happened was a matter of chance
(viii) *Pininta managed to pass the examination.*
presupposes that (a) the examination was not easy (b) she lacked the necessary skills to pass the examination (c) her passing the examination was a surprise From the above examples we can argue that presuppositions

are conventionally associated with grammatical constructions (Grundy, 2000).

b. Semantic Presuppositions

So far, we have established that pragmatic presupposition is related to the context.

The other type of presupposition that does not rely on context for its interpretation is known as semantic presupposition. Take (viii) above as an example, i.e. "Pininta managed to pass the examination." Whenever a personal name like "Pininta" is used, there is usually the existence of a referent that we can easily identify the name with. In other words, there is a referent that matches the description. This kind of presupposition is known as semantic presupposition. Unlike pragmatic presupposition, semantic presupposition always takes place when a definite description occurs, especially when a proper name is used or when an expression is used as the title of a book and so on.

Conversational implicature, conversational principles, conversational analysis, and relevance theory need to be discussed in relation to pragmatics. The relationship between pragmatics and semantics; pragmatics and discourse; pragmatics and speech acts is also important to discuss concerning with pragmatics.

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