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**Pragmatics and the English Language, Jonathan Culpeper, Michael Haugh. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke (2014), 316 pp., ISBN: 9780230551732**



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## Pragmatics and the English Language

Jonathan Culpeper, Michael Haugh, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2014, 316 pp. ISBN 9780230551732

*Pragmatics and the English Language* is a textbook in Palgrave Macmillan's *Perspectives on the English Language* series designed to provide advanced students of the English language and linguistics with an in-depth understanding of the field. The textbook, co-authored by two eminent scholars in pragmatics, Jonathan Culpeper and Michael Haugh, more than lives up to these expectations. Not only does it offer a remarkably well-written, up-to-date and comprehensive overview of pragmatic research today, it is also ground-breaking in a number of ways.

Firstly, the book is pioneering in putting forward an "integrative pragmatics" (p. 11) which seeks to "bridg[e]... the micro Anglo-American approach [which focuses exclusively on users and interpreters and ignores social relations or situations] and the macro Continental European approach [which takes a socio-cultural perspective], and not neglect... the middle ground" (p. 8). Rather than over-emphasising the differences between these established pragmatic traditions (cf. Huang 2015: 4-6, Jucker 2012, Mey 2013, Nerlich 2010 on these approaches, cf. also recent pragmatics textbooks, e.g. Birner 2013 and Huang 2015, both of which adopt the Anglo-Saxon tradition in isolation), analysts are urged to recognise the merits of both. Culpeper and Haugh's integrative pragmatics is an attempt to do just that. It focuses on a wide array of topics, some more formal, focusing on linguistic structure, and others more socio-cultural in nature, dealing with social function and context. In addition, topics core to micro pragmatics, such as deixis, presupposition, conversational implicature and speech acts, are addressed but in such a way as to ground them in a particular interactional and socio-cultural context. As the authors put it, "more micro linguistic issues are informed by dynamic two-way inter-relations with more macro socio-cultural issues; conversely, more macro issues of socio-culture are informed by dynamic two-way inter-relations with more micro linguistic issues." (p. 7).

A second distinctive feature of the book, and one related to this attempt to occupy a middle ground, is the authors' focus on incorporating both first and second order perspectives, i.e. incorporating the perspectives of users/participants and observers/analysts respectively. In the integrative pragmatics put forward, second-order theorisation is seen as grounded in first-order perspectives as these arise in a particular instance of language use. As such, the analytical focus is on interaction as that place where meaning emerges. As a consequence, the book places a large emphasis on illustrating concepts via empirical data and applying theories to empirical data.

The third distinctive feature of the book is its concentration on the English language, as indeed made explicit in the title of the textbook, *Pragmatics and the English Language*, and fitting to the series, *Perspectives on the English Language*. In this point, the book contrasts with a research tradition in pragmatics which has tended to assume a universal pragmatics despite primarily describing and analysing examples and data in English. It also breaks with a tradition which has adopted concepts from English and often falsely assumed their universality and thus suitability for pragmatic theorisation. In addition, the authors' rejection

of such tendencies is clearly communicated and underlined via manifold references to cross-cultural pragmatic contrasts between English and other languages on a multitude of levels.

The fourth distinguishing quality of Culpeper and Haugh's book is their recognition of and commitment to describing pragmatic variation within English. The book includes many reports of studies highlighting register and situational variation, and also diachronic variation. However, particularly noteworthy in this regard is the authors' acknowledgment of the global status of English and in particular the considerable attention they pay to pragmatic variation between national and sub-national varieties of English around the world. In so doing, they acknowledge recent research devoted to the pragmatics of single national varieties (Barron/Schneider 2005) and also the recent emergence of the field of variational pragmatics (cf. Barron 2014, in press, Schneider/Barron 2008). Indeed, their stated aim is to provide not a "pragmatics of English" (p. 8), but rather a "pragmatics of Englishes" (p. 9), that is to provide a pragmatics textbook which "show[s] how pragmatic phenomena and concepts can be related to various Englishes" (p. 11). I turn now to a brief description of the structure and content of the book.

The textbook is divided into nine chapters, with chapter one serving as an introductory chapter and chapter nine as a brief conclusory chapter. A bibliography and detailed index are also included. The remaining seven chapters of some 36 pages on average, present a comprehensive overview of the field.

The introduction illustrates the indispensability of a pragmatic perspective in understanding meaning in interaction with a real-life example from a courtroom setting which shows that "Meaning can kill you" (p. 1) and a subsequent discussion of the problems which a dictionary-led analysis of language in context would leave unsolved. The centrality of pragmatic analysis in language studies established, the authors then move to outlining the distinctive features and focus of the textbook and above all to introducing their integrative approach to pragmatics.

Chapter two, Referential Pragmatics, deals with reference and in particular with definite expressions, deictic expressions and anaphoric expressions. The authors highlight the fact that these short expressions are both semantic and pragmatic phenomena and in doing so focus in particular on illustrating how these expressions frequently depend on the context of use for their interpretation. The various types of expressions in each category and also their uses and functions in interaction are detailed in considerable depth. In this context, Culpeper and Haugh highlight the fact that contrary to the general depiction of referring expressions as empty gaps to be filled with information from their context of use, referring expressions may themselves also signal and construct contexts. In addition, they throw light on the dynamic process by which speakers select from a range of referring expressions and by which hearers retrieve referents.

Chapter three centres on Informational Pragmatics (also termed textual rhetoric or discourse pragmatics) and examines how information is packaged and organised within the scope of the sentence to make it more or less prominent. The distinguishing characteristics of informational background and foreground are first discussed with reference to the concepts of

figure and ground. Following this, the discussion then moves to two instances of background, namely background assumptions (in the context of schema theory) and then presuppositions (with particular reference to presuppositional types and triggers and tests of presuppositions). Foregrounded information is investigated with reference to foregrounding theory and thus takes up the notion of cognitive salience. Focus is then considered, with end focus, prosodic prominence, focus and particular syntactic structures, semantic contrasts, and also focus formulae discussed in detail. As in chapter two, chapter three closes with an investigation of informational grounding as a dynamic process in interaction.

Chapters four and five deal with the study of pragmatic meaning, that which is meant but not said. The authors highlight the complexity of pragmatic meaning and introduce the reader to an array of approaches to such meaning, some of which are speaker-centred, focusing on the meanings which speakers make available through their utterances, others of which are hearer-centred. Grice's speaker-centred work on implicatures is first dealt with and with this as a basis, neo-Gricean and post-Gricean approaches are introduced and discussed. The discussion of neo-Gricean work (also speaker-oriented) concentrates on the role of literal notions of what is said in understanding meaning representation and also on the role of utterance-type meaning representation based on expectations of language use. Following this, post-Gricean work is introduced in the context of relevance theory, a hearer-centred contextualist approach to pragmatic meaning representation which examines how hearers reconstruct speaker meanings. Chapter five then takes up the question of whose pragmatic meaning we focus on. In this context, the authors, having highlighted and critically discussed the existence of multiple perspectives on speaker meaning in detail, draw on Goffman's (1981) work on participation frameworks and discuss its consequences for pragmatic meaning in the context of participant footings and recipient meanings. Following this, the question as to how pragmatic meanings are understood is addressed and two perspectives, namely the utterance processing view (that view long adhered to in pragmatics) and the discourse processing view (encompassing concepts of incrementality and sequentiality and looking at meaning in discourse rather than at the level of utterances) are contrasted. The chapter closes with a discussion of how pragmatic meanings arise in interaction, a discussion which focuses on accountability for pragmatic meaning.

Chapter six is concerned with pragmatic acts. It first deals with speech act theory, introducing the speech act, felicity conditions, speech act taxonomies, directness and indirectness, as well as some of the criticisms made of the theory particularly with reference to its assumed universality. Initial accounts of how indirectness functions in speech act theory are also critically discussed and alternative approaches put forward. Following this, schema theory coupled with prototype theory is drawn upon to allow a description of pragmatic acts which allows for their complexity and fuzziness. The chapter then turns to the joint construction of pragmatic acts in sequence and to the role of activity types in framing these.

Chapter seven on Interpersonal Pragmatics focuses on approaches to politeness and impoliteness. It first focuses on the social-cultural view of politeness (both prescriptive and descriptive social norms) and then moves to the pragmatic view of politeness, and in particular to the conversational-maxim view and the face-saving view of politeness. Discussion then switches to more recent approaches to politeness, among them the discursive,

relational and frame-based approaches. Following this, the authors turn to impoliteness and finally to the interactional approach to politeness which gives equal weight to politeness<sup>1</sup> and politeness<sup>2</sup> perspectives.

Chapter eight, Metapragmatics, is concerned with language use about language use. The authors point out that underlying all language use is an awareness of one's own language use but also an awareness that others are aware of their own and one's own language use (reflexive awareness). They identify four types of explicit indicators of metapragmatic awareness and then introduce three key types of reflexive awareness underlying metapragmatic competence, namely metacognitive awareness, meta-representational awareness and meta-communicative awareness. Each is explicitly related to the content of chapters two to seven and the reader is shown the significance of reflexive awareness in negotiating pragmatic meanings, pragmatic acts and politeness.

Finally, chapter nine, entitled Conclusion, draws the strands together and again summarises in more detail the innovative integrative approach put forward and its implications for the methodological approach adopted.

Content-wise, *Pragmatics and the English Language* has the quality to become a standard reference book in the field. The book is comprehensive in focus and innovative in furthering thinking in the field. It introduces readers to all of the basic concepts, principles, and theories in pragmatics, familiarises them with a wealth of cutting-edge state-of-the-art research in pragmatics, encourages them to see parallels and links between different pragmatic approaches and pushes readers to confront problematic aspects and to question well-established approaches. In addition, the details given of the findings of a range of empirical studies in the reflection boxes whet the reader's appetite to undertake research in pragmatics themselves. The book is, therefore, compact, comprehensive, challenging and innovative in one. It is suitable for the advanced student, also those without any prior knowledge of pragmatics, and also without doubt for researchers in the field.

Culpeper and Haugh's textbook is written in a clear, reader-friendly style. Readers will particularly welcome and enjoy the wealth of examples and extracts drawn from such sources as corpora, discussion boards, films, novels, poems, newspapers, comic strips and jokes. These are not only imperative for the authors' stated integrative aims, but also bring the textbook to life, grab the reader's interest, and help illustrate difficult concepts and theories. Further techniques used to ensure accessibility include the use of conclusion sections at the end of each chapter and the use of bold highlighting for important terms. In addition, special effort is made to ensure cohesion within and in particular across chapters, and cross-references in later chapters to concepts introduced in early chapters are many. Also, each chapter includes several reflection boxes which will appeal to readers. These allow the main text to concentrate on essentials. At the same time, they make stimulating reading, describing synchronic and diachronic pragmatic variation, contrasting pragmatic features of English with other languages, adding theoretical details and extending discussions of particular concepts or topics. Such techniques enable Culpeper and Haugh to fulfil their goal to be accessible to readers without compromising the complexity of the material dealt with.

The textbook thus meets the vast majority of the needs of its primary target audience, the advanced student of pragmatics. However, there is one area which might be reworked in a later edition. What is missing in my view is student support to *do* – not just to read about – pragmatics. This point is easily addressed with the inclusion of exercises and discussion questions with possible sample solutions (possibly via access-restricted online appendices) for further reflection. It is an aspect which particularly needs tackling in the context of life-long and autonomous learning. In addition, instructors would also welcome such additions.

Furthermore, and also related to the needs of the target audience, I would have liked to have seen a much stronger methodology orientation in the book particularly given a) the focus on interaction and b) the fact that the book is targeted at advanced students who will very likely – either to gain module credits in classes guided by the principle of research-based learning or in a later context (e.g. writing a thesis) – be obliged to carry out empirical research themselves. The section in the book on methodology is a mere page in length and although integrative pragmatics is put forward as being all-encompassing on a methodological level, the section remains abstract and unhelpful to the student wishing to engage in empirical research. An extensive chapter on methodology would have been a welcome addition in my view, as would a list of possible research topics or assignments following each chapter.

Despite these caveats, there is no doubt that *Pragmatics and the English Language* is groundbreaking in the integrative approach taken to pragmatics and in its timely focus on the pragmatics of English(es). It is thought-provoking and challenging in the depth of its treatment of a wide range of areas in pragmatics and fresh and inviting in its high level of accessibility and reader-friendliness. It is a very welcome addition to the field, destined as it is to become essential reading in advanced pragmatics courses and an invaluable resource for all those interested in pragmatics.

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