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Pragmatics

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To Nicholas’ grandparents

PREFACE

To squeeze all that goes under the rubric of **pragmatics** within the confines of a linguistics textbook would be neither possible nor desirable. Consequently this book is quite conservative in scope and approach, and considers the main topics in a particular tradition of work. This is the largely Anglo-American linguistic and philosophical tradition that builds directly, for the most part, on philosophical approaches to language of both the logical and 'ordinary language' variety (an exception is the set of topics treated in Chapter 6, which has a sociological origin). In contrast, the continental tradition is altogether broader, and would include much that also goes under the rubric of *sociolinguistics*. But even within this much narrower field, this book is in some ways restricted, since its main aim is to provide an introduction and background to those topics that, perhaps largely for historical reasons, are central to the Anglo-American tradition of work in pragmatics. The would-be pragmaticist must understand these issues in depth, if he or she is to understand the background to a great deal of current research in both linguistics and philosophy.

One major way in which this book is perhaps innovative is the inclusion in Chapter 6 of a brief review of work in conversation analysis. Apart from its demonstrable importance for theories of language usage, work in conversation analysis contributes directly to many of the same issues that have preoccupied philosophers of language, and thence linguists, while employing a startlingly different methodology. So both despite and because of the fact that conversation analysis springs from a quite different tradition from the other topics reviewed, a summary of findings is included here. In the Chapter, I have presented explicitly a re-analysis of some issues in the philosophical theory of speech acts along conversation analytic lines, but the reader should be able to spot a number of further re-analyses of material dealt with differently elsewhere in the book.

Nevertheless, the omission of certain topics from coverage in this book does warrant explanation. In the first place, a relatively narrow range of contextual factors and their linguistic correlates are considered here: **context** in this book includes only some of the basic parameters of the context of utterance, including participants' identity, role and location, assumptions about what participants know or take for granted, the place of an utterance within a sequence of turns at talking, and so on. We know in fact that there are a number of additional contextual parameters that are systematically related to linguistic organization, particularly principles of social interaction of various sorts of both a culture-specific (see e.g. Keenan, 1976b) and universal kind (see e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1978). Such omissions reflect the primary aim of the book, namely to provide an introduction to the philosophico-linguistic tradition, rather than to attempt an exhaustive coverage of all the contextual co-ordinates of linguistic organization.

Secondly, there are two particular topics omitted that are generally admitted to belong within a fairly narrow view of what constitutes pragmatics. One is the **topic/comment** (or **theme/rheme**) distinction. Terminological profusion and confusion, and underlying conceptual vagueness, plague the relevant literature to a point where little may be salvageable (but see e.g. Gundel, 1977). For example, whereas we may be told how to identify a topic in a simplex declarative sentence, we are never told how to identify the topics of a sentence of arbitrary complexity (i.e. we are never offered a projection principle). In addition there is reason to think that the whole area may be reducible to a number of different factors: to matters of presupposition and implicature on the one hand, and to the discourse functions of utterance-initial (and other) positions on the other. The other major omission is less defensible, namely the absence of systematic remarks on prosody, and intonation and stress in particular. The fact is that, given the clear importance of prosodic factors in pragmatics, the area is grossly understudied. There is disagreement even about the fundamentals of how such factors should be described, whether as discrete elements or variable ones, wholes (e.g. tonal contours) or parts (e.g. 'levels'), evidenced by quite different approaches on either side of the Atlantic. But if the way in which the phenomena are to be recorded is unsettled, the pragmatic functions of prosodic patterns are really quite unexplored (see, though, e.g. Brazil, Coulthard & Johns, 1980). Future textbook writers will hopefully find themselves in a happier position. Meanwhile the omission should be recorded.

The reader may also be disappointed to find little reference to languages other than English (Chapter 2 is a partial exception). The problem here is that other languages, and especially non-Indo-European ones, have simply not been subjected to the same kind of analysis. This is the more regrettable because, from those investigations that have been done (e.g. Fillmore, 1975; Anderson & Keenan, in press; Sadock & Zwicky, in press), it seems likely that pragmatic organization is subject to very interesting cross-linguistic variation. But until we have much more information in hand, we can only guess at the universal application (or otherwise) of those categories of analysis that have been developed. In this respect, we can hope for significant advances in the next decade or so.

The book also contains no systematic observation and theory about the relations between pragmatics and syntax. There are, of course, theorists who hold, by theoretical *fiat*, that no such relations exist

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NOTATION CONVENTIONS

(For elementary explications of logical symbolism see Allwood, Andersson & Dahl, 1977; for transcription conventions, used mostly in Chapter 6, see the Appendix to that Chapter.)

A, B, C	sentential variables (esp. Chapter 4)
p, *q*, *r*	sentential variables
A(e_1)	ad hoc notation for a sentential variable that indicates the occurrence of an expression e_1 in a sentence A
F, G	predicate constants, as in F(*x*); also predicate variables in section 3.2.6
a, *b*, *c*	individual constants; also persons in expressions like ‘*a* knows that *p*’
x, *y*, *z*	individual variables
$\vee$	inclusive disjunction
$\bigvee$	exclusive disjunction
~	negation
$\rightarrow$	material conditional
$\leftrightarrow$	biconditional
=	identity
$\neq$	negative identity
$\forall$	universal quantifier
$\exists$	existential quantifier
$\in$	is an element of a set
{ }	sets
$\langle\ \rangle$	ordered sets or n-tuples
$\Vdash$	entailment
$\gg$	presupposes
$+\rangle$	implicates
K	speaker knows that; thus K*p* = speaker knows that *p*
P	epistemic possibility for speaker; thus P*p* = *p* is compatible with all that the speaker knows
$\Box$	necessary; e.g. $\Box p$ = it is necessary that *p*
$\Diamond$	possible; e.g. $\Diamond p$ = it is possible that *p*
λ	lambda-operator (Chapter 4)
γ	gamma-operator (Chapter 4)

1
The scope of pragmatics

The purpose of this Chapter is to provide some indication of the scope of linguistic pragmatics. First, the historical origin of the term **pragmatics** will be briefly summarized, in order to indicate some usages of the term that are divergent from the usage in this book. Secondly, we will review some definitions of the field, which, while being less than fully satisfactory, will at least serve to indicate the rough scope of linguistic pragmatics. Thirdly, some reasons for the current interest in the field will be explained, while a final section illustrates some basic kinds of pragmatic phenomena. In passing, some analytical notions that are useful background will be introduced.

1.1 The origin and historical vagaries of the term pragmatics

The modern usage of the term **pragmatics** is attributable to the philosopher Charles Morris (1938), who was concerned to outline (after Locke and Peirce)[1] the general shape of a science of signs, or **semiotics** (or **semiotic** as Morris preferred). Within semiotics, Morris distinguished three distinct branches of inquiry: **syntactics** (or **syntax**), being the study of "the formal relation of signs to one another", **semantics**, the study of "the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable" (their designata), and **pragmatics**, the study of "the relation of signs to interpreters" (1938: 6). Within each branch of semiotics, one could make the distinction between **pure** studies, concerned with the elaboration of the relevant metalanguage, and **descriptive** studies which applied the metalanguage to the description of specific signs and their usages (1938 (1971: 24)).

As instances of usage governed by **pragmatical rule**, Morris noted that "interjections such as *Oh!*, commands such as *Come here!*, ... expressions such as *Good morning!* and various rhetorical and poetical devices, occur only under certain definite conditions in the users of the language" (1938 (1971: 48)). Such matters would still today be given a treatment within linguistic pragmatics. But Morris went on to expand the scope of pragmatics in accord with his particular behaviouristic theory of semiotics (Black, 1947): "It is a sufficiently accurate characterization of pragmatics to say that it deals with the biotic aspects of semiosis, that is, with all the psychological, biological, and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs" (1938: 108). Such a scope is very much wider than the work that currently goes on under the rubric of linguistic pragmatics, for it would include what is now known as psycholinguistics, socio-linguistics, neurolinguistics and much besides.

Since Morris's introduction of the trichotomy syntax, semantics and pragmatics, the latter term has come to be used in two very distinct ways. On the one hand, the very broad use intended by Morris has been retained, and this explains the usage of the term *pragmatics* in the titles of books that deal, for example, with matters as diverse as the psychopathology of communication (in the manner of G. Bateson and R. D. Laing – see Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967) and the evolution of symbol systems (see Cherry, 1974). Even here though, there has been a tendency to use *pragmatics* exclusively as a division of *linguistic* semiotics, rather than as pertaining to sign systems in general. This broad usage of the term, covering socio-linguistics, psycholinguistics and more, is still the one generally used on the Continent (see e.g. the collection in Wunderlich, 1972, and issues of the *Journal of Pragmatics*).

On the other hand, and especially within analytical philosophy, the term *pragmatics* was subject to a successive narrowing of scope. Here the philosopher and logician Carnap was particularly influential. After an initial Morrisian usage (Carnap, 1938: 2), he adopted the following version of the trichotomy:

> If in an investigation explicit reference is made to the speaker, or to put it in more general terms, to the user of the language, then we assign it [the investigation] to the field of pragmatics ... If we abstract from the user of the language and analyze only the expressions and their designata, we are in the field of semantics. And, finally, if we abstract from the designata also and analyze only the relations between the expressions, we are in (logical) syntax.

Unfortunately Carnap's usage of the term *pragmatics* was confused by his adoption of Morris's further distinction between pure and descriptive studies, and he came to equate pragmatics with descriptive semiotics in general, and thus with the study of natural (as opposed to logical) languages (Carnap, 1959: 13; see the useful clarification in Lieb, 1971). But Carnap was not even consistent here: he also held (Carnap, 1956) that there was room for a **pure pragmatics** which would be concerned with concepts like *belief*, *utterance*, and *intension* and their logical inter-relation. This latter usage, now more or less defunct, explains the use of the term in, for example, the title of a book by Martin (1959). Thus at least four quite different senses of the term can be found in Carnap's works, but it was the definition quoted above that was finally influential.

Incidentally, already in Morris's and Carnap's usages there can be found a systematic three-way ambiguity: the term *pragmatics* was applied not only to branches of inquiry (as in the contrast between pragmatics and semantics), but also to features of the object language (or language under investigation), so that one could talk of, say, the pragmatic particle *Oh!* in English, and to features of the metalanguage (or technical description), so that one could talk of, say, a pragmatic, versus a semantic, description of the particle *Oh!*. Such an ambiguity merely seems to parallel the way in which the sister terms *semantics* and *syntax* are used, and to introduce little confusion (but cf. Sayward, 1974).

The idea that pragmatics was the study of aspects of language that *required* reference to the users of the language then led to a very natural, further restriction of the term in analytical philosophy. For there is one aspect of natural languages that indubitably requires such reference, namely the study of **deictic** or **indexical** words like the pronouns *I* and *you* (see Chapter 2). The philosophical, and especially logical, interest in these terms is simply that they account for the potential failure of generally valid schemes of reasoning. For example, "I am Greta Garbo, Greta Garbo is a woman, therefore I am a woman", is only necessarily true if in addition to the first two premises being true, the speaker of the conclusion is the same speaker as the speaker of the first premise. Bar-Hillel (1954) therefore took the view that pragmatics is the study of languages, both natural and artificial, that contain indexical or deictic terms, and this usage was explicitly adopted by Kalish (1967), and most influentially by Montague (1968). Such a usage has little to offer linguists, since all natural languages have deictic terms, and it would follow, as Gazdar (1979a: 2) points out, that natural languages would have no semantics but only a syntax and a pragmatics. If the trichotomy is to do some work within linguistics, some less restricted scope for pragmatics must be found.

In fact, in the late 1960s, an implicit version of Carnap's definition -investigations requiring reference to the users of a language – was adopted within linguistics, and specifically within the movement known as **generative semantics**. The history of that movement awaits a historian of ideas (but see Newmeyer, 1980), but its association with pragmatics can be explained by the resurgence of the interest in meaning which the movement represented. Such an interest inevitably involves pragmatics, as we shall see. Moreover this interest in meaning in a wide sense proved to be one of the best directions from which generative semantics could assail Chomsky's (1965) **standard**

(7) ??As everyone knows, the earth please revolves around the sun

The explanation of the anomalies exhibited by these sentences might be provided by pointing out that there are no, or at least no ordinary, contexts in which they could be appropriately used.[4] Although an approach of this sort may be quite a good way of illustrating the kind of principles that pragmatics is concerned with, it will hardly do as an explicit definition of the field – for the simple reason that the set of pragmatic (as opposed to semantic, syntactic or sociolinguistic) anomalies are presupposed, rather than explained.[5]

Another kind of definition that might be offered would be that pragmatics is the study of language from a **functional** perspective, that is, that it attempts to explain facets of linguistic structure by reference to non-linguistic pressures and causes. But such a definition, or scope, for pragmatics would fail to distinguish linguistic pragmatics from many other disciplines interested in functional approaches to language, including psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. Moreover, it may be plausibly argued that to adopt a definition of this sort is to confuse the *motives* for studying pragmatics, with the *goals* or general shape of a theory (about which more later).

One quite restricted scope for pragmatics that has been proposed is that pragmatics should be concerned solely with principles of language usage, and have nothing to do with the description of linguistic structure. Or, to invoke Chomsky's distinction between **competence** and **performance**, pragmatics is concerned solely with performance principles of language use. Thus, Katz & Fodor (1963) suggested that a theory of pragmatics (or a theory of **setting selection** as they then called it) would essentially be concerned with the disambiguation of sentences by the contexts in which they were uttered. In fact it is clear that contexts do a lot more than merely select between available semantic readings of sentences – for example, irony, understatement and the like are kinds of use that actually create new interpretations in contexts. Still, one could claim that grammar (in the broad sense inclusive of phonology, syntax and semantics) is concerned with the context-free assignment of meaning to linguistic forms, while pragmatics is concerned with the further interpretation of those forms in a context:

> [Grammars] are theories about the structure of sentence types ... Pragmatic theories, in contrast, do nothing to explicate the structure of linguistic constructions or grammatical properties and relations ... They explicate the reasoning of speakers and hearers in working out the correlation in a context of a sentence token with a proposition. In this respect, a pragmatic theory is part of performance. (Katz, 1977: 19)

This position has a number of adherents (Kempson, 1975, 1977; Smith & Wilson, 1979), but it has a serious difficulty. The problem is that aspects of linguistic structure sometimes directly encode (or otherwise interact with) features of the context. It then becomes impossible to draw a neat boundary between context-independent grammar (competence) and context-dependent interpretation (performance). This problem is unwittingly illustrated by Katz's explication of this boundary: he points out that the pairs *rabbit* and *bunny*, or *dog* and *doggie* differ in that the second member of each pair is appropriately used either by or to children. Since the distinction is one relating to the appropriate users of the terms in a context, the distinction would not be part of a linguistic description of English, which would merely note that the members of each pair are synonymous. However, it is clear that the distinction is built into the language, in just the same way that in many languages degrees of respect between participants are encoded in lexis and morphology. Katz suggests that in order to ascertain whether a linguistic feature is context-dependent or context-independent, we imagine the feature occurring on an anonymous postcard (as an approximation to the empty or **null context).**[6] But if we apply this criterion we see that the implication or inference that speaker or addressee is a child is as available when *bunny* is written on an anonymous postcard as it is when said in some concrete appropriate context (Gazdar, 1979a: 3). And that of course is because the kind of appropriate speaker or addressee is encoded by the term *bunny*.

Here we come to the heart of the definitional problem: the term *pragmatics* covers both context-dependent aspects of language structure and principles of language usage and understanding that have nothing or little to do with linguistic structure. It is difficult to forge a definition that will happily cover both aspects. But this should not be taken to imply that pragmatics is a hodge-podge, concerned with quite disparate and unrelated aspects of language; rather, pragmaticists are specifically interested in the inter-relation of language structure and principles of language usage. Let us now consider some potential definitions that are more plausible candidates.

We may begin with a definition that is specifically aimed at capturing the concern of pragmatics with features of language structure. The definition might go as follows:

(8) Pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are **grammaticalized**, or encoded in the structure of a language[7]

Or, putting it another way, one could say that pragmatics is the study of just those aspects of the relationship between language and context that are relevant to the writing of grammars. Such a definition restricts pragmatics to the study of certain aspects of linguistic structure, and stands in strong contrast to Katz's proposal, outlined above, that would restrict pragmatics to the study of grammatically irrelevant aspects of language usage. Such a scope for pragmatics would include the study of **deixis**, including honorifics and the like, and probably the study of **presupposition** and **speech acts**, i.e. much of the present book. It would exclude the study of principles of language usage that could not be shown to have repercussions on the grammar of languages, and this could be an embarrassment, because, at least at first sight, the extremely important implications called **conversational implicatures** would lie outside the purview of a pragmatic theory. On the other hand, such a scope for pragmatics has the possible advantage that it would effectively delimit the field, and exclude neighbouring fields like sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics – in short it would bound Morris's and Carnap's definitions in a way that guaranteed linguistic relevance.

Now, any definition of pragmatics that excludes one of its presumed focal phenomena, namely conversational implicature, is unlikely to be attractive. Nevertheless, its adherents might appeal to the plausibility of the following general principle: any systematic principle of language usage is ultimately likely to have an impact on language structure. There is perhaps some basis for such an assumption (see e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1978: 260ff). And in fact conversational implicatures, which are inferences that arise on the basis of some general rules or maxims of conversational behaviour, can indeed be shown to have repercussions on linguistic structure (see Chapter 3 below). So the definition may in fact be much less restrictive than it appears at first sight.

Other problems concern the notions of context and grammaticalization that the definition rests on. Arguably, though, it is a strength of this approach that it is not required to give a prior characterization of the notion of context. For, assuming that we have a clear idea of the limits of semantics, then pragmatics studies all the non-semantic features that are encoded in languages, and these features are aspects of the context. What aspects of the gross physical, social and interactional aspects of the situation of utterance are linguistically relevant is thus an empirical question, and we can study the world's languages to find out what they are. Of course, we would need to make an important distinction here between **universal pragmatics**, the general theory of what aspects of context get encoded and how, and the **language-specific pragmatics** of individual languages; for example, the pragmatics of English might have relatively little to say about social status (beyond what we need to describe the appropriate contexts for the use of *sir*, *your honour* and the like), while in contrast the pragmatics of Japanese would be greatly concerned with the grammaticalization of the relative social ranks of participants and referents.

On the other hand, the notion of grammaticalization, or linguistic encoding, is thorny. To be effective, we need to be able to distinguish mere correlation between linguistic form and context from incorporation of contextual significance into the associated linguistic form. There is little doubt that there are clear cases of the one and the other: for example, the slurred speech associated with drunkenness may be mere correlation, while the association of intimacy or solidarity with the French pronoun *tu* is a grammaticalized feature of context. But there are many borderline cases. To make the distinction, perhaps the following criteria might be suggested: for a feature of the context to be linguistically encoded, (a) it must be intentionally communicated, (b) it must be conventionally associated with the linguistic form in question, (c) the encoding form must be a member of a contrast set, the other members of which encode different features, (d) the linguistic form must be subject to regular grammatical processes. On these grounds one might hope to exclude, say, the association of a particular dialect with a speaker from a particular area – such an association, perhaps, not being normally intentionally conveyed, not being associated with the linguistic features by arbitrary convention but by historical 'accident', and so on. On the other hand, features of 'baby talk', of which the lexical alternate *bunny* is a part, would presumably be considered to be encoded in English, because at least some of them seem to meet these criteria. However, it is unlikely that these criteria are sufficient to distinguish many borderline cases, and the notion would need further explication.[8]

In sum, the main strength of this definition of pragmatics is that it restricts the field to purely linguistic matters. Yet it is probably too restrictive to reflect accurately current usage. The most unfortunate restriction is the exclusion of those principles of language use and interpretation that explain how extra meaning (in a broad sense) is 'read into' utterances without actually being encoded in them. It is a definition, then, that handles the aspect of pragmatics concerned with linguistic structure, but not the side concerned with principles of language usage, or at least only indirectly as they impinge on linguistic organization.

In the definition above, the notion of encoding implies that pragmatics is concerned with certain aspects of meaning. One kind of definition that would make this central might run as follows:

(9) Pragmatics is the study of all those aspects of meaning not captured in a semantic theory

Or, as Gazdar (1979a: 2) has put it, assuming that semantics is limited to the statement of truth conditions:

> Pragmatics has as its topic those aspects of the meaning of utterances which cannot be accounted for by straightforward reference to the truth conditions of the sentences uttered.[9] Put crudely: PRAGMATICS = MEANING – TRUTH CONDITIONS.

Such a definition is likely, at first, to cause puzzlement. Surely semantics is, by definition, the study of meaning in its entirety, so how can there be any residue to constitute the topic of pragmatics? But here we need to note that the definition of semantics as the study of meaning is just as simplistic as the definition of pragmatics as the study of language usage. First, we need to distinguish between some broad sense of the term *semantics* used in a more or less pre-theoretical way (see e.g. the coverage in Lyons, 1977a),[10] and a technical use of the term to cover a particular, deliberately restricted semantic theory in an overall theory of grammar, or language structure. Semantic theory in the latter sense is going to have a very much narrower scope than the study of meaning in its entirety, as we shall indicate immediately below. Secondly, the intended scope of the term *meaning* in the definition is extremely broad, in a way that will need explication. So the answer to the puzzle is that, from the point of view of an overall integrated linguistic theory, there will be a great deal of the general field of meaning left unaccounted for by a restricted semantic theory, and this could indeed constitute the domain of pragmatics.

One objection to such a definition could be that the scope of pragmatics would seem therefore to vary considerably according to the kind of semantic theory adopted – narrow semantic theories like those based on truth conditions will leave a large residue of ‘meaning’ to be studied in pragmatics; apparently broader semantic theories, like some of those based on components or features of meaning, may leave much less for pragmatics to deal with.[11] Certainly it has to be admitted that to some extent the nature of a pragmatic theory must depend crucially on the kind of semantic theory adopted, but that will be true for any definition of pragmatics that seeks an exclusive domain, complementary and non-overlapping with semantics. But it is important to see that this dependency is only partial, for we now know enough about the nature of meaning in the broad sense to make it likely that there are substantial areas that could not be accommodated within *any* single semantic theory built on homogeneous principles.

This knowledge is based on some substantial advances made in the last ten years or so, namely the discovery that there are at least half a dozen distinct and different kinds of meaning component or implication (or inference) that are involved in the meaning of natural language utterances. The distinctions are based on the fact that each of these kinds of inference behaves in different ways. In particular, they behave differently in **projection**, i.e. in the ways in which they are communication involves the notions of intention and agency, and only those inferences that are openly intended to be conveyed can properly be said to have been communicated. To help us draw a line between the incidental transfer of information, and communication proper, we may appeal to an important idea of the philosopher Grice (1957). Distinguishing between what he calls **natural meaning** (as in *Those black clouds mean rain*), and **non-natural meaning** or **meaning-nn** (equivalent to the notion of intentional communication), Grice gives the following characterization of meaning-nn:[13]

(10) S *meant-nn z* by uttering U if and only if:
(i) S intended U to cause some effect z in recipient H
(ii) S intended (i) to be achieved simply by H recognizing that intention (i)

Here, S stands for speaker (in the case of spoken communication; for sender or communicator in other cases); H for hearer, or more accurately, the intended recipient; "uttering U" for utterance of a linguistic token, i.e. a sentence part, sentence, or string of sentences or sentence parts (or the production of non-linguistic communicative acts); and *z* for (roughly) some belief or volition invoked in H.

Such a definition is likely to be opaque at first reading, but what it essentially states is that communication consists of the 'sender' intending to cause the 'receiver' to think or do something, just by getting the 'receiver' to recognize that the 'sender' is trying to cause that thought or action. So communication is a complex kind of intention that is achieved or satisfied just by being recognized. In the process of communication, the 'sender's' communicative intention becomes **mutual knowledge** to 'sender' (S) and 'receiver' (H), i.e. S knows that H knows that S knows that H knows (and so ad infinitum) that S has this particular intention.[14] Attaining this state of mutual knowledge of a communicative intention is to have successfully communicated. A simple illustration may help to clarify the concept: it distinguishes between two kinds of 'boos', or attempts to frighten someone. Suppose I leap out from behind a tree, and by sheer surprise frighten you. I have caused an effect in you by 'natural' means. But now suppose that you know I am behind the tree, you are expecting me to leap out, and I know you know all that: I can still (maybe) frighten you by leaping out, just by getting you to realize that I intend to frighten you. Only the second is an instance of communication (meaning-nn) in Grice's sense. Grice intended his definition of communication to cover such non-verbal cases, but we will be concerned here (and henceforth) only with those cases where linguistic behaviour is part of the means whereby the communicative intention is recognized.

A puzzle that immediately arises is how this complex reflexive communicative intention is meant to be recognized by the recipient. Surely, one could argue, it can only be recognized by knowledge of some convention that U means *z*; but in that case we can do away with talk of complex intentions and construct an account of communication based directly on the notion of conventional signal. But this misses Grice's essential insight, namely that what the speaker means by U is not necessarily closely related to the meaning of U at all. Indeed U may have no conventional meaning, which allows for the creation of new terms, nonce expressions, and thus ultimately for some aspects of language change (for an explanation of how these communications may be understood, see Schiffer, 1972: Chapter V). But crucial for pragmatics, Grice's theory explains how there can be interesting discrepancies between **speaker-meaning** (Grice's meaning-nn) and **sentence-meaning**.[15] For example, *Linguistics is fascinating* said ironically may be intended by the speaker to communicate 'Linguistics is deadly boring'. Further, there appear to be general conventions about the use of language that require (or, perhaps, merely recommend) a certain degree of implicitness in communication, with the consequence that it is virtually ensured that what the speaker means by any utterance U is not exhausted by the meaning of the linguistic form uttered (see Chapter 3 below). How then is the full communicative intention to be recognized ? By taking into account, not only the meaning of U, but also the precise mechanisms (like irony, or general assumptions of a certain level of implicitness) which may cause a divergence between the meaning of U and what is communicated by the utterance of U in a particular context. Much of this book is concerned with spelling out these mechanisms which, like other aspects of linguistic knowledge, we use daily in an unconscious way.

If we now adopt Grice's *meaning-nn* as the scope of meaning in the definition of pragmatics in (9), we shall include most of the phenomena that we want to include, like the ironic, metaphoric and indirect implications of what we say (elements 5, 6 and 7 in Table 1.1), and exclude the unintended inferences that intuitively have no part to play in a theory of communication. It should be added that there are a number of philosophical problems with Grice's theory (see e.g. Schiffer, 1972), but they do not seem to vitiate the value of the central idea.

We now have some sketch of the scope of meaning that is referred to in the definition, namely all that can be said to have been communicated, in Grice's sense, by the use of a linguistic token in a context. But can we give as a definition of pragmatics nothing but the complement of, or the residue left by, semantics in the field of meaning? Is there no conceptual integrity to the scope of pragmatics itself? We might try to find such a conceptual unity by making the distinction between sentence-meaning and utterance-meaning, and hope then to be able to equate semantics with the study of sentence-meaning and pragmatics with the study of utterance-meaning.

The distinction between **sentence** and **utterance** is of fundamental importance to both semantics and pragmatics. Essentially, we want to say that a sentence is an abstract theoretical entity defined within a theory of grammar, while an utterance is the issuance of a sentence, a sentence-analogue, or sentence-fragment, in an actual context. Empirically, the relation between an utterance and a corresponding sentence may be quite obscure (e.g. the utterance may be elliptical, or contain sentence-fragments or 'false-starts'), but it is customary (after Bar-Hillel) to think of an utterance as the pairing of a sentence and a context, namely the context in which the sentence was uttered. It is important, but in practice exceedingly difficult, to maintain this distinction at all times in the study of meaning. As an index of the difficulty, one may note that linguists frequently oscillate between assigning notions like *presupposition, illocutionary force*, *truth condition* to sentences or utterances, although important theoretical consequences follow from the choice. One may claim that the confusion here results from the need for yet further distinctions: thus Lyons (1977a) advocates distinctions between text-sentences and system-sentences, sentence-types and sentence-tokens, utterance-types and utterance-tokens, and utterance-acts and utterance-products. It is unlikely, though, that we can handle all these if we cannot make the first distinction systematically (and the alert reader can no doubt find mistakes of this sort within this book). For expositional reasons, we shall need to use the word *utterance* in various ways in this book, but where it is used to contrast with *sentence* it should be taken in the sense advocated by Bar-Hillel, as a sentence (or sometimes string of sentences) paired with a context.[16] And this is the sense relevant to the proposal that semantics is concerned with sentence-meaning, and pragmatics with utterance-meaning.

Many authors accept this equation implicitly, but there are a number of problems with it. In the first place, in the (rare) cases where sentence-meaning exhausts utterance-meaning (i.e. where the speaker meant exactly what he said, no more, no less), the same content would be assigned both to semantics and pragmatics. In other words, we would need to restrict the notion of utterance-meaning in such a way that we subtract sentence-meaning, and in that case we are back to a definition of pragmatics by residue. But there are other problems: for there are aspects of sentence-meaning which, at least on truth-conditional or other narrow semantic theories, cannot be accounted for within semantic theory. Such aspects are conventional but non-truth-conditional elements of sentence-meaning, e.g. what we shall call *conventional implicatures* and (at least on many theories) *presuppositions*, and perhaps even aspects of *illocutionary force* (concepts expounded in the Chapters below). On the assumption of a truth-conditional semantics, such aspects of sentence-meaning would have to be dealt with in pragmatics, and so there can be no direct equation of sentence-meaning and semantics. On the same assumption, there is another overwhelming problem for the proposal: for it is not sentences but rather utterances that make definite statements, and thus can sensibly be assigned truth conditions (as philosophers have long noted; see e.g. Strawson, 1950; Stalnaker, 1972). The argument rests in part on the pervasive nature of deixis (see Chapter 2 below) in natural languages, for sentences like (11) are true or false only relative to contextual parameters, thanks to the fact that *I*, *now* and the tense of *am* are variables given specific values only on particular occasions of utterance (i.e. (11) is true only when spoken by certain speakers, those who are sixty-three, or true of individuals only at certain times, when they are sixty-three):

(11) I am now sixty-three years old

These facts seem to establish that truth conditions must be assigned to utterances, i.e. sentences with their associated contexts of utterance, not to sentences alone (or, if one likes, truth conditions include context conditions). So again, it makes no sense to equate semantics with the study of sentence-meaning.

There is another formulation of essentially the same proposal: semantics should be concerned with meaning out of context, or non-context-dependent meaning, and pragmatics with meaning in context. The strong version of this, apparently held by Katz (1977), assumes that there is some given, natural level of context-independent meaning, and that sentence-meaning can be described independently and prior to utterance-meaning. But as we have argued, and will illustrate below, this does not seem to be the case. For, if one accepts a truth-conditional semantics then one is forced to state truth conditions on sentences-in-contexts, or if one prefers (as Katz would) that semantics is concerned with aspects of meaning assigned by convention to linguistic forms, then one includes context-dependent aspects of meaning within semantics. A weaker version of the same proposal would be to consider that semantics is an abstraction away from context-dependent utterances, in so far as this is possible (as suggested by Carnap, 1959: 13; Lyons, 1977a: 591). In any case, it does not seem that the distinction between sentence-meaning and utterance-meaning can be relied upon to clarify the distinction between semantics and pragmatics.

We are left with the unrefined definition that pragmatics is concerned with the study of those aspects of meaning not covered in semantics. Despite many advantages, such a definition fails to draw attention to the unifying characteristics of pragmatic phenomena. Let us turn to another definition that would give the context-dependent nature of such phenomena more centrality:

(12) Pragmatics is the study of the relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding

Here the term **language understanding** is used in the way favoured by workers in artificial intelligence to draw attention to the fact that understanding an utterance involves a great deal more than knowing the meanings of the words uttered and the grammatical relations between them. Above all, understanding an utterance involves the making of *inferences* that will connect what is said to what is mutually assumed or what has been said before.

The strengths of such a definition are as follows. It recognizes that pragmatics is essentially concerned with inference (Thomason, 1977): given a linguistic form uttered in a context, a pragmatic theory must account for the inference of presuppositions, implicatures, illocutionary force and other pragmatic implications. Secondly, unlike the definition in (8), it does not make the distinction between semantics and pragmatics along the encoded/unencoded line; this is important because, as we shall see, there is still controversy over whether such pragmatic implications as presuppositions or illocutionary force are or are not encoded or grammaticalized in linguistic forms. Thirdly, it includes most aspects of the study of principles of language usage, for there seems to be a general principle of the following kind: for each systematic set of constraints on the use of language, there will be a corresponding set of inference-procedures that will be applied to language understanding (see Levinson, 1979a).

The weaknesses are, unfortunately, equally clear. First, pragmatics will then include the study of the interaction between linguistic knowledge and the entirety of participants' knowledge of the world (or 'encylopaedic knowledge'). For example, in order to understand the little story in (13), one needs to know the following assorted facts: presents are usually bought with money; piggy-banks are used to hold money; piggy-banks are generally made of a dense material like metal or plastic; money inside a container of dense material will generally rattle, etc.

(13) Jill wanted to get Bill a birthday present, so she went and found her piggy-bank; she shook it, but there was no noise; she would have to make Bill a present

This example comes from work in artificial intelligence (Charniak, 1972) which is concerned with the attempt to translate the significance of ordinary utterances into an explicit representation that might be used by a computer to produce 'intelligent' responses. The immense pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate

Such a definition should have a nice ring to it, from the point of view of those who wish to place pragmatics on a par with other aspects of linguistic inquiry. For if pragmatics is to be considered an aspect of linguistic competence in Chomsky's sense, then like other aspects it must consist of some abstract cognitive ability. Further, such a view provides a nice parallel with semantics: for just as a semantic theory is concerned, say, with the recursive assignment of truth conditions to well-formed formulae, so pragmatics is concerned with the recursive assignment of **appropriateness-conditions** to the same set of sentences with their semantic interpretations. In other words, a pragmatic theory should in principle predict for each and every well-formed sentence of a language, on a particular semantic reading, the set of contexts in which it would be appropriate.

Such a view enjoys much support, not only among linguists (see e.g. Van Dijk, 1976: 29; Allwood, Andersson & Dahl, 1977: 153; Lyons, 1977a: 574) but also among philosophers (originally Austin, 1962 and Searle, 1969). But unfortunately it is beset with many problems. First, as we shall see, most definitions of pragmatics will occasion overlap with the field of sociolinguistics, but this definition would have as a consequence exact identity with a sociolinguistics construed, in the manner of Hymes (1971), as the study of **communicative competence**. Secondly, it requires a fundamental idealization of a culturally homogeneous speech community or, alternatively, the construction of *n* pragmatic theories for each language, where *n* is the number of culturally distinct sub-communities. For example, in a village in South India, where there may be say twenty distinct castes, a single honorific particle may have just one meaning (e.g. speaker is inferior to addressee) but have twenty distinct rules for its *appropriate* usage: members of one caste may use it to their cross-cousins, others only to their affines, etc. (for the actual details see Levinson, 1977). Thirdly, speakers of a language do not always comport themselves in the manner recommended by the prevailing mores – they can be outrageous, and otherwise 'inappropriate'. So such a definition would make the data of pragmatics stand in quite an abstract relation to what is actually observable in language usage, whereas for many linguists one of the major contributions of pragmatics has been to direct attention once again to actual language usage. Fourthly, it seems to be a fact that pragmatic constraints are generally defeasible, or not invariable. So suppose we attempt, for example, to phrase accounts of the pragmatic notion of presupposition in terms of appropriateness conditions, we shall find that they wrongly predict conditions of usage. For instance, the verb *regret* seems to presuppose that its complement is true, and so we could try the following characterization: the sentence *John doesn't regret cheating* can only be used appropriately in contexts where it is known (or believed) that John cheated. But unfortunately we can then easily imagine a context in which that sentence might be appropriately used, in which it is *not* assumed that John cheated: for example, you thought he had cheated, asked me whether he now repents, but I tell you he never did, and persuade you accordingly, and then I say *So John doesn't regret cheating* (Gazdar, 1979a: 105). The problem is quite general: when the pragmatic implications of an utterance do not match the context, then in general the utterance is not treated as in any way infelicitous or inappropriate or bizarre -rather the pragmatic implications are simply assumed not to hold. But the use of the notion of appropriateness-conditions would in that case simply make the wrong predictions.

Finally, and decisively, there is another problem with the use of the notion of appropriateness as a primitive or basic concept in pragmatics. For, there is a widespread phenomenon that Grice has called **exploitation:** in general, if there is some communicative convention C that one does A in context Y, then suppose instead one does B in Y, or does A but in context Z, one will not normally be taken to have simply violated the convention C and produced nonsense. Rather, one will generally be taken to have exploited the conventions in order to communicate some further pertinent message. For example, if I normally doff my cap only to my superiors, but on an occasion doff my cap to an equal, then I can effectively communicate an ironic regard, with either a joking or a hostile intent (the non-linguistic example is intended to draw attention to the great generality of the phenomenon; for a study of a particular linguistic practice and the jokes thus made available, see the study of the openings of telephone calls by Schegloff (1979a)). Irony is a good example of this exploitation and the difficulties such usages pose for a pragmatic theory based on appropriateness, for ironies take their effect and their communicative import, and thus their appropriateness, precisely from their inappropriateness. So the problem is in general that, in being grossly inappropriate, one can nevertheless be supremely appropriate! True, one may need some notion of 'normal practice' (in preference perhaps to appropriateness) even to describe such phenomena, but it would be a mistake to limit pragmatics to the study of that normal practice or appropriateness. Pragmatics should be much concerned precisely with such mechanisms whereby a speaker can mean more than, or something quite different from, what he actually says, by inventively exploiting communicative conventions. We must conclude that, despite its initial attractions, the proposal that pragmatics be based on a notion of appropriateness should be discarded: language usage is too elastic to allow a pragmatic theory to be based on such a concept. If instead one accepts that the goal of a pragmatic theory is to predict the meaning, in the broad Gricean sense, of an utterance in a specified context, then none of these difficulties arises.

At this point, someone searching for a simple definition of pragmatics is likely to be exhausted. One possibility is to retreat to an *ostensive* or *extensional* definition, i.e. simply to provide a list of the phenomena for which a pragmatic theory must account (cf. Stalnaker, 1972). Such a definition might run as follows:

(15) Pragmatics is the study of deixis (at least in part), implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and aspects of discourse structure

This list would certainly provide a reasonable indication of some central topics in pragmatics, but the definition scarcely helps those unfamiliar with these topics and has other more serious drawbacks. For in common with all extensional definitions, it provides no criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of further phenomena that may come to our attention; at best one can say that what warrants pragmatic treatment for some new topic is simply linguists' consensus based on intuitive 'family resemblance' to more familiar pragmatic topics. But surely such intuitive resemblance must be based on some underlying implicit common themes – our difficulty is that when we try to spell these out we arrive at the various problems experienced in our earlier attempts at definition.

At this point, we might step back and attempt some conceptual clarification from other angles. Katz & Fodor (1963) tried to delimit the scope of semantics by a boundary drawing exercise: the 'upper bound' of semantics was provided by the borders of syntax and phonology, and the 'lower bound' by a theory of pragmatics, understood as a theory of contextual disambiguation. Using the same strategy, we could say that the upper bound of pragmatics is provided by the borders of semantics, and the lower bound by sociolinguistics (and perhaps psycholinguistics too). Indirectly, we have already explored this way of thinking in our consideration of the proposal that pragmatics is 'meaning minus semantics', and the idea that some distinction from sociolinguistics is necessary was responsible for some of the dissatisfaction with a number of the definitions above. We have already seen the difficulties of drawing a neat dividing line between semantics and pragmatics; given the cross-cutting criteria of conventionality and non-defeasibility (see again Table 1.1), the best strategy seems to be to restrict semantics to truth-conditional content. Assuming that this is accepted (and many linguists would resist it), we can turn our consideration to the lower bound, the border between pragmatics and sociolinguistics. Here things are even more problematic. Let us take two paradigmatic kinds of sociolinguistic phenomenon, and ask how they fall with respect to two of our definitions of pragmatics, namely, the most restrictive and the broadest definitions. Consider **honorifics**, most simply exemplified by the polite singular pronoun of address in European languages (like *vous* vs. *tu* in French – let us call this the V vs. the T pronoun). There are a number of sociolinguistic investigations of such honorifics and their usage (e.g. Brown & Gilman, 1960; Lambert & Tucker, 1976). If we take the view that pragmatics is concerned only with grammatically encoded aspects of context (see definition (8) above), then we might propose a tidy division of labour between pragmatic and sociolinguistic accounts of honorifics: pragmatics would be concerned with the *meaning* of honorifics (e.g. with the specification that V encodes that the addressee is socially distant or superior), while sociolinguistics would be concerned with the detailed recipes for *usage* of such items (e.g. the specification that amongst some segment of the speech community, V is used to aunts, uncles, teachers and so on, or whatever the local facts are). Such studies would be exclusive but complementary. Now, however, consider what happens if we take pragmatics to be the study of the contribution of context to language understanding: suppose normally an aunt gives her nephew T, but on an occasion switches to V, then in order to predict the intended ironic or angry meaning, a pragmatic theory must have available the detailed recipe for usage that tells us that V is not the normal usage, and thus not to be taken at face value. So on this broader scope for pragmatics, the neat division of labour collapses – pragmatic accounts of language understanding will at least need access to sociolinguistic information.

Taking another paradigmatic kind of sociolinguistic phenomenon, namely the variable phonological realizations associated with social dialects (see e.g. Labov, 1972a), let us ask how our definitions of pragmatics treat such facts. On the most restrictive view, that pragmatics is concerned with linguistically encoded aspects of context, such facts would seem to lie outside the purview of pragmatics. Such an exclusion would rely on the restricted sense of *encoding* that required, *inter alia*, that the significances in question are (a) intentionally conveyed (and we can now say, meant-nn) and (b) conventionally associated with the relevant linguistic forms. For, as we noted, the association of particular accents (realized by proportions of phonological variables) with particular social or geographical communities is generally not part of an intentional message (Labov (1972a) argues that such variables are only very partially under conscious control), nor are such social significances associated with linguistic forms by arbitrary synchronic convention so much as by regular historical and social process. However, if we take the broader scope of pragmatics represented by the definition that relates context to language understanding, there may well be cases where sociolinguistic variables would be of relevance to language understanding. Gumperz (1977), for example, has argued that such variables can be used to invoke domains of interpretation, e.g. to mark transitions from chat to business. Or, consider the case of a comedian telling a joke about a Scotsman, an Irishman and an Englishman – he may well rely on mimicked features of accent to track which protagonist is talking. In short, drawing a boundary between sociolinguistic and pragmatic phenomena is likely to be an exceedingly difficult enterprise. In part this can be attributed to the diverse scopes that have been claimed for sociolinguistics (see Trudgill, 1978: Introduction), but in part it comes about because sociolinguists are interested in inter-relations between language and society however these are manifested in grammatical systems: sociolinguistics is not a component or level of a grammar in the way that syntax, semantics, phonology and, quite plausibly, pragmatics are.

Another angle from which we might attempt conceptual clarification of the issues is to ask: what are the **goals** of a pragmatic theory? The term *goal* is used here in the special way current in linguistic theorizing, and is to be distinguished from the ultimate goals or motivations that might prompt interest in a theory. Those ultimate motivations will be the subject of the next section, but here we are interested in exactly what it is that we expect a pragmatic theory to do. One abstract way of thinking about this is to think of a pragmatic theory as a 'black box' (an as yet unexplicated mechanism), and to ask: what should be the input to such a theory, and what should be the output (or: what is the theory meant to predict, given what particular information)? We can then think of a theory as a *function* in the mathematical sense, which assigns one set of entities (the *domain*) to another set of entities (the *range*), and the question is, what are these sets of entities? Thinking the same way about syntax, we can say that a given set of rules (a syntactic analysis) is a function whose domain is the set of possible combinations of morphemes in the language L, and whose range has just two elements, denoting the grammatical and the ungrammatical in L;[18] or thinking about semantics, we might say that a semantic analysis of L has as its domain the set of well-formed sentences of L, and as its range the set of semantic representations or propositions representing the meaning of each of those sentences. It is by no means so obvious what the input and output of a pragmatic theory should be.

Two authors, at least, have been explicit on this subject. Katz (1977: 19) suggests that the input should be the full grammatical (including semantical) description of a sentence, together with information about the context in which it was uttered, while the output is a set of representations (or propositions) which capture the full meaning of the utterance in the context specified. Since a sentence plus its context of use can be called an utterance, Katz's suggestion implicitly concerned. As was suggested at the outset, if one really wants to know what a particular field is concerned with at any particular time, one must simply observe what practitioners do. The rest of this book will largely be concerned with an overview of some of the central tasks that pragmaticists wrestle with.

Before proceeding to a discussion of the motivations that lie behind the growth of the field in recent years, it would be as well to clarify the role that pragmatics might be seen to play within linguistic theory as a whole. There is no doubt that some workers see pragmatics as a running commentary on current linguistic methods and concerns, and its role as the juxtaposition of actual language usage with the highly idealized data on which much current theorizing is based. Viewed in this way, attempts to delimit pragmatics in the ways explored above would make little sense; pragmatics would not be a component or level of linguistic theory but a way of looking afresh at the data and methods of linguistics. In that case, pragmatics would be a field more akin to sociolinguistics than semantics. It is therefore worthwhile seeing that, whatever the merits of this view, there is a need for a kind of pragmatic theory that can take its place beside syntax, semantics and phonology within an overall theory of grammar.

The need for a pragmatic component in an integrated theory of linguistic ability can be argued for in various ways. One way is to consider the relation of the pragmatics-semantics-syntax trichotomy to the competence-performance dichotomy advanced by Chomsky (see Kempson, 1975: Chapter 9). In Chomsky's view, grammars are models of competence, where competence is knowledge of a language idealized away from (especially) irregularity or error and variation; to this, Katz influentially added idealization away from context (see Lyons, 1977a: 585–91, for discussion of kinds of idealization). On such a view, insofar as pragmatics is concerned with context, it can be claimed that by definition pragmatics is not part of competence, and thus not within the scope of grammatical descriptions. But suppose now we require that adequate grammatical descriptions include specifications of the meaning of every word in a language, and such a requirement has normally been assumed, then we find words whose meaning-specifications can only be given by reference to contexts of usage. For example, the meaning of words like *well*, *oh* and *anyway* in English cannot be explicated simply by statements of context-independent content: rather one has to refer to pragmatic concepts like relevance, implicature, or discourse structure (this claim will be substantiated in the Chapters below). So either grammars (models of competence) must make reference to pragmatic information, or they cannot include full lexical descriptions of a language. But if the lexicon is not complete, then neither is the syntax, semantics or phonology likely to be. There are other arguments that have been made along the same general lines, to the effect that to capture regular processes (e.g. syntactic regularities) one must refer to pragmatic concepts (see e.g. Ross, 1975), arguments that will arise from time to time in the Chapters below.

Another more powerful kind of argument goes as follows. In order to construct an integrated theory of linguistic competence, it is essential to discover the logical ordering of components or levels. For example, Chomsky has elegantly argued that syntax is logically prior to phonology, in that phonological description requires reference to syntactic categories, but not vice versa; syntax is thus **autonomous** with respect to phonology, and phonology (non-autonomous with respect to syntax) can be envisaged as taking a syntactic input, on the basis of which phonological representations can be built up. Accepting for a moment this kind of argument, the question is, is it possible to argue that there is some accepted component of grammar that is non-autonomous with respect to pragmatics (i.e. some component requiring pragmatic input)? If so, pragmatics must be logically prior to that component, and so must be included in an overall theory of linguistic competence.

It seems fairly clear that it is possible to make this argument in a convincing way. For example, we have already noted the argument (and see Chapter 2 below) that if semantics is to be truth-conditional, then the truth conditions can only be assigned to utterances, not sentences – in other words, contextual specifications are a necessary input to a semantic component, and thus pragmatics is (at least in this respect)[19] prior to semantics. Gazdar (1979a: 164–8) assembles a number of detailed arguments to this effect (and philosophers have long noted further such arguments -see e.g. Donnellan, 1966; Stalnaker, 1972; Kaplan, 1978; etc.). One of these, due to Wilson (1975: 151), will have to suffice here, and holds not just for truth-conditional semantics but for virtually any semantic theory independent of pragmatics. Consider the following sentence:

(21) Getting married and having a child is better than having a child and getting married

Good arguments will be given in Chapter 3 to suggest that the word *and* of itself does not mean (have the semantic content) ‘and then’, but is neutral with respect to a temporal dimension. So, there is no difference in *semantic* content between *p and q* and *q and p*, or between ‘getting married and having a child’ and ‘having a child and getting married’. How then are we to explain that (22) does not mean the same as (21)?

(22) Having a child and getting married is better than getting married and having a child

We have to provide a pragmatic account, along the following lines. The 'and then' reading of both *ands* in the first sentence can be shown to be systematically 'read in' to conjoined reports of events by a pragmatic principle governing the reporting of events: tell them in the order in which they will or have occurred. If this is accepted, then the semantic content of (21) (and identically for (22)) would only allow the interpretation that A is better than A (where A is composed of *p and q* or *q and p*, neutral with respect to ordering). But such a reading is either necessarily false or meaningless, and in any case semantically anomalous. The sentence can only be assigned the right truth conditions, or alternatively be given the correct semantic representation, if the pragmatic significance of *and* in this sentential context (namely the 'and then' interpretation) is taken into account before doing the semantics. This amounts to a concise argument that semantics is not autonomous with respect to pragmatics, and that pragmatics provides part of the necessary input to a semantic theory. But if pragmatics is, on occasions, logically prior to semantics, a general linguistic theory simply must incorporate pragmatics as a component or level in the overall integrated theory.

1.3 **Current interest in pragmatics**

There are a number of convergent reasons for the growth of interest in pragmatics in recent years. Some of these are essentially historical: the interest developed in part as a reaction or antidote to Chomsky's treatment of language as an abstract device, or mental ability, dissociable from the uses, users and functions of language (an abstraction that Chomsky in part drew from the post-Bloomfieldian structuralism that predominated immediately before transformational generative grammar). In looking for the means to undermine Chomsky's position, *generative semanticists* were then attracted to a considerable body of philosophical thought devoted to showing the importance of the uses of language to an understanding of its nature (work by Austin, Strawson, Grice and Searle in particular). To this day, most of the important concepts in pragmatics are drawn directly from philosophy of language. Once this broader scope for mainstream American linguistics was established,[20] pragmatics soon took on a life of its own, for the issues raised are interesting and important in their own right.

But there have also been powerful motivations of a different kind. In the first place, as knowledge of the syntax, phonology and semantics of various languages has increased, it has become clear that there are specific phenomena that can only naturally be described by recourse to contextual concepts. On the one hand, various syntactic rules seem to be properly constrained only if one refers to pragmatic conditions; and similarly for matters of stress and intonation.[21] It is possible, in response to these apparent counter-examples to a context-independent notion of linguistic competence, simply to retreat: the rules can be left unconstrained and allowed to generate unacceptable sentences, and a performance theory of pragmatics assigned the job of filtering out the acceptable sentences. Such a move is less than entirely satisfactory because the relationship between the theory of competence and the data on which it is based (ultimately intuitions about acceptability) becomes abstract to a point where counter-examples to the theory may be explained away on an *ad hoc* basis, *unless* a systematic pragmatics has already been developed.

Alternatively, pragmatics and other linguistic components or levels can be allowed to interact. Arguments between these two positions have never been fully articulated, and because of their highly theory-dependent nature are dealt with, in this book, only in passing. (But see Gordon & Lakoff, 1975 ; Ross, 1975 ; Gazdar & Klein, 1977; Lightfoot, 1979: 43–4.)

On the other hand, concurrent developments in semantics have isolated intractable phenomena of a parallel kind: presuppositions, speech acts and other context-dependent implications, together with troublesome phenomena like honorifics and discourse particles that had long been given short shrift in the work of generative grammarians. Further, thought about the nature of the lexicon, and how one might construct a predictive concept of 'possible lexical item', has revealed the importance of pragmatic constraints (see Horn, 1972; McCawley, 1978; Gazdar, 1979a: 68ff). It is these issues, arising from the study of meaning, with which this book is centrally concerned.

In addition to these particular problems that seem to require pragmatic solutions, there are also a number of general motivations for the development of pragmatic theory. One of the most important of these is the possibility that pragmatics can effect a radical simplification of semantics.[22] The hope is based on the fact that pragmatic principles of language usage can be shown systematically to 'read in' to utterances more than they conventionally or literally mean. Such regularly superimposed implications can then become quite hard to disentangle from sentence or literal meaning; in order to prise them apart, the theorist has to construct or observe contexts in which the usual pragmatic implications do not hold. For example, it seems perfectly natural to claim that the quantifier *some* in (23) means 'some and not all':

(23) Some ten cent pieces are rejected by this vending machine

and that would be the basis of the natural interpretation of a notice with this message, attached to the machine. But suppose I am trying to use the machine, and I try coin after coin unsuccessfully, and I utter

(23); I might then very well communicate:

(24) Some, and perhaps all, ten cent pieces are rejected by this vending machine

and indeed I could say this without contradiction. Faced with these facts the semanticist must either hold that *some* is ambiguous between the readings 'some and not all', and 'some and perhaps all', or allow a pragmatic account of the different interpretations. (Parallel arguments can be made for the word *all*, and indeed most of the lexical items in a language.) This pragmatic account would explain how principles of language usage allow addressees to 'read in' the 'not all' implication. Since such a pragmatic account is available, as will be seen in Chapter 3, we can let the semantics just provide a reading compatible with 'some and perhaps all'. Not only will such a division of labour approximately halve the size of the lexicon (by accounting for different interpretations of words by a general external principle), it will also immeasurably simplify the logical base of semantics – the word *some* can be equated directly with the existential quantifier in predicate logic (while the reading 'some and not all' taken as basic leads to serious internal contradictions: see Horn, 1973 and Chapter 3 below). In this way, by unburdening semantics of phenomena that are resistant to semantic treatment but tractable to pragmatic explanation, there is considerable hope that pragmatics can simplify semantic theories.

Another powerful and general motivation for the interest in pragmatics is the growing realization that there is a very substantial gap between current linguistic theories of language and accounts of linguistic communication. When linguists talk of the goal of linguistic theory as being the construction of an account of a sound-meaning correspondence for the infinite set of sentences in any language, one might perhaps infer that such a grand theory would *eo ipso* give an account of at least the essentials of how we communicate using language. But if the term *meaning* in this correspondence is restricted to the output of a semantic component, those interested in a theory of linguistic communication are likely to be greatly disappointed. For it is becoming increasingly clear that a semantic theory alone can give us only a proportion, and perhaps only a small if essential proportion, of a general account of language understanding. The substantial gap that remains to be bridged between a semantic theory (together with a syntactic and phonological theory) and a complete theory of linguistic communication will be demonstrated throughout this book. Where are we to account for the hints, implicit purposes, assumptions, social attitudes and so on that are effectively communicated by the use of language, not to mention the figures of speech (e.g. metaphor, irony, rhetorical questions, understatement) that have preoccupied theorists eliciting certain pragmatic implications).

One of the motivations for research in pragmatics might then be to establish the effects of the uses of language on language structure. But such research requires a fundamental clarification of the *explicans*, i.e. the functional matrix that is to produce explanations of linguistic structure. Unfortunately, many recent examples of such work have utilized explanatory principles that have been left quite vague (see M. Atkinson, 1982). It is important, therefore, that there be sufficiently well-defined pragmatic principles and structures to make such functional explanations precise and testable.

How, therefore, should we think of the uses of language, in a way that could provide functional accounts of linguistic structure? We might turn to traditional approaches to the 'functions of speech' (see the summary in Lyons, 1977a: 50–6). Perhaps the most thoughtful of these is Jakobson's (1960) modification of earlier schemes (see especially Bühler, 1934). He suggests that the functions of speech can be to focus on any of the six basic components of the communicational event: thus the **referential** function focuses on the referential content of the message, the **emotive** function on the speaker's state, the **conative** function on the speaker's wishes that the addressee do or think such-and-such, the **metalinguistic** function on the code being used, the **phatic** function on the channel (establishment and maintainance of contact), and the **poetic** function on the way in which the message is encoded. Any such scheme, though, is of dubious utility to the pragmaticist in search of functional principles: the categories are of vague application, they do not have direct empirical motivation, and there are many other rival schemes built upon slightly different lines. Perhaps the only clear utility is to remind us that, contrary to the preoccupations of many philosophers and a great many semanticists, language is used to convey more than the propositional content of what is said. Certainly, very few linguists have produced analyses of linguistic facts that make use of gross functional categories of this sort (but cf. Halliday, 1973). A very similar sort of enterprise has been engaged in by philosophers interested in the notion of **speech act** (addressed in Chapter 5): either by examining a special set of verbs called **performative verbs,** or by more abstract conceptual analysis, they arrive at classifications of the basic purposes for which language can be used (see e.g. Searle, 1976). Again, such schemes seem to be far too broad to relate to detailed aspects of linguistic structure.

How else, then, might we proceed? One possibility, which has scarcely been explored, would be to take some large sample of the world's languages and ask what basic pragmatic distinctions are needed to describe their grammatical structures. (The procedure requires, of course, acceptance of the view that not all encoded features of meaning are semantic simply by definition.) We would note that many languages have, in addition to the three basic sentence-types mentioned above, others that appear to be similarly circumscribed in use: **exclamatives** that are used paradigmatically to express surprise, **imprecatives** to curse, **optatives** to express a wish, and so on (again, see Sadock & Zwicky, in press).[26] Some languages would motivate distinctions that, from the point of view of European languages, are quite exotic. For example, to describe the lexicon, morphology and syntax of Javanese one would need to distinguish three levels of respect to addressees and two levels of respect to referents (Geertz, 1960; Comrie, 1976b); to describe the particles of a number of South American Indian languages one would need to distinguish between sentences that are central versus those that are peripheral to the telling of a story (Longacre, 1976a); to describe the third person pronouns of Tunica one would need to distinguish not only the sex of the referent, but also the sex of the addressee (so there would be two words for 'she' depending on whether one is speaking to a man or a woman; Haas, 1964), while in some Australian languages the pronouns encode the moiety or section (kinship division) of the referent, or the kinship relation between referents (e.g. there are sometimes two words one of which means 'you-dual of the same moiety' and another 'you-dual in different moieties from each other'; Dixon, 1980: 2–3; Heath et al. 1982); to describe the Quileute demonstratives one needs to make a distinction between objects visible and not visible to the speaker (Anderson & Keenan, in press); and so on.

From this profusion of language-specific material one then might be able to build up some idea of just which aspects of the context of utterance are likely in general to exert functional pressures on language. Further, taking features that are directly and simply encoded in one language, one may well be able to find the same features encoded in more subtle and less visible ways in either the structure or the use of other languages. For example, although we do not have in English the grammaticalization of the levels of respect that exist in Javanese, we do have means of expressing degrees of respect, largely by choices in the use of expressions: thus (31) would generally be a more polite request than (30):

(30) I want to see you for a moment
(31) I wondered if I could possibly see you for a moment

So by taking at first just the grammaticalized or encoded features of context in the world's languages, we would have both something like a 'discovery procedure' for relevant functions of language, and a constraint on the relatively vacuous theorizing that often attends speculation about the 'functions of speech'. We can then go on to ask how in other languages without such grammatical means, the same functions are achieved (if indeed they are). Such a way of proceeding has much to recommend it, but scant progress has been made in that direction.

To all such approaches to the uses of speech, a strong objection might be made along the following lines: rather than look for a series of static functions or contextual parameters, one should attend directly to the single most important dynamic context of language use, namely conversation, or face-to-face interaction. The centrality of this functional matrix for language use hardly needs arguing: face-to-face interaction is not only the context for language acquisition, but the only significant kind of language use in many of the world's communities, and indeed until relatively recently in all of them. Those interested in functional explanations of linguistic phenomena ought then to have a considerable interest in the systematics of face-to-face interaction. The question is how best to approach the study of such interaction. There are perhaps two basic lines of attack: straightforward empirical analysis, and analysis-by-synthesis.

It is the first kind of approach that has so far yielded the most insight, but it is worth considering the possibility of the analysis of interaction by synthesis. Interaction, in the abstract sense intended here, can be understood as the sustained production of chains of mutually-dependent acts, constructed by two or more agents each monitoring and building on the actions of the other (in this sense the mathematical theory of games studies one kind of interaction; see Luce & Raiffa, 1957). Such an approach might begin by adopting Goffman's (1976) distinction between **systems-constraints** and **ritual-constraints,** where the first labels the ingredients essential to sustaining any kind of systematic interweaving of actions by more than one party, and the second those ingredients that, while not essential to the maintaining of interaction, are nevertheless typical of it – they are, if one likes, the social dimensions of interaction. Concentrating on systems-constraints, one may then ask what necessary and jointly sufficient conditions must be met in order for that highly co-ordinated kind of inter-dependent behaviour that we call interaction to 'come off' Suppose, for example, we had as our task the programming of two robots in such a way that they could systematically aid one another in an open range of tasks: what properties beyond the specific abilities required for the tasks would they need to have ? (It may be helpful to think in terms of some specific co-operative task, like the production of a building or a machine.) First, it is clear that they would need to be mutually oriented; they would each need to be aware of what the other was doing at any time. Secondly, they would need to be aware of the interactional domain (e.g. their scope for movement, and the properties of objects around them), and be constantly updating this as it was affected by their actions. Thirdly, they would need, in some sense, to be rational – to have an effective means-ends reasoning that told them how to implement each desired goal. Fourthly, each would need to be able to produce acts conditional on the other producing acts, thus securing the chains of interdependent acts typical of interaction. This would seem to require the ability to reconstruct from each other's behaviour the probable goal that the behaviour was intended to achieve (otherwise, the interdependent actions would not be likely to culminate in the achievement of the joint task). Fifthly, there would need to be some specific relation between their overall goals (if interaction is agonistic, or in the terminology of the theory of games, *zero-sum*, then their goals must be inversely related; if interaction is co-operative then there must be some specific shared goals). Sixthly, each robot would have to know that the other had these properties, and know that each knew that, otherwise they could hardly rationally plan actions dependent on the other's plans. It is just possible that these properties would be sufficient, together with the abilities required by specific tasks, to engender a co-ordinated interdigitation of actions that would (remotely) resemble human interaction. The purpose of this thought-experiment is to draw attention to the fact that a number of pragmatic phenomena can be explicated by reference to just these sorts of features: for example, as we shall see, deixis can be thought of as based on the assumption of mutual orientation, presupposition on the assumption of shared knowledge of a domain and its updating, speech acts on the making explicit, for other participants, of one's interactional goals, conversational implicature on the assumption of interactional co-operation, and so on. Thus, if such an approach were developed, one might hope that all the essential concepts for the analysis of pragmatic phenomena would be traceable to the fundamentals of interaction (for an actual computer simulation of conversation along these lines see Power, 1979).

In fact, though, such an approach is still likely to be much too abstract to provide systematic functional accounts of the minutiae of linguistic structures. For a start, it would need to be complemented by the study of *ritual-constraints*, the social and cultural constraints on interaction. Amongst these, there are cross-situational constraints enjoining appropriate social decorum, while there are others appropriate just to specific interactional moments or specific kinds of cultural events. It might be thought that such social constraints would be likely, simply by being social, to be culturally variable, and thus of no great interest to a general (or universal) pragmatic theory. However, this does not seem necessarily to be the case. For example, there are clear pan-cultural principles governing the production of 'polite' or socially appropriate interaction, and these can be shown to have systematic effects on the linguistic structure of many languages (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Leech, 1980). It is also clear that there are highly specific ritual constraints of a universal, or near universal nature: for example, nearly all cultures seem to have greeting and parting routines (see Ferguson, 1976). More speculatively, it is also likely that in all cultures there are social events demarcated as *formal events* (Irvine, 1979; J. M. Atkinson, 1982), and that some aspects of formality have universal linguistic realizations. Here again there has been very little systematic exploration, although such universal features of the organization of interaction are good candidates for potentially important functional pressures on linguistic structure. Whatever the attractions of universal features of interaction for the explanation of universal pragmatic phenomena, there are also clear language-specific pragmatic phenomena, as in the domain of **social deixis** and elsewhere, where functional accounts of language structure would need to relate these to culture-specific aspects of interaction. Finally, where there are important divisions between kinds of culture and society, one might well expect systematic differences between the associated languages – for example, it is likely that literacy has systematic effects on the lexical, syntactic and semantic structure of languages, even if these have never been spelt out (see Goody, 1977). Here it is evident that an interest in language usage motivated by functionalist approaches to linguistics would take us well beyond the confines of pragmatics (as sketched in the definitions above) into the domain of sociolinguistics and beyond. However, in so far as such social features are part of the meaning of utterances, they ought also to be treated in pragmatics; yet within pragmatics, these social constraints on language usage and their systematic effects on language structure, have been very much understudied, perhaps as a result of the philosophical and linguistic bias (no doubt reflected in this book) towards what Biihler (1934) called the *representational*, and Jakobson (1960) the *referential*, function of language.

The other more promising line of investigation is to explore directly the nature of conversational interaction. The basic concepts of conversation analysis, as employed in a branch of **ethnomethodology,** are the subject of Chapter 6. Here it will suffice to note that this kind of investigation, employing techniques quite alien to the dominant tradition in linguistics, has revealed that conversational interaction has an elaborate and detailed structure of which we have very little conscious awareness. In this area, at least, the would-be functionalist is offered the kind of rich and intricate structure that may match the detailed organization of linguistic structure, and so can be claimed plausibly to stand in a causal relation to it. For example, the probable universal existence of tag-questions (under a functional definition) can perhaps be related to the universal operation of rules of turn-taking that allow as one option the ending of current speaker's turn by a selection of a next speaker. But, as yet, few linguists have applied the insights from conversation analysis to functionalist studies one of the regular closing forms that persons use in conversation (*Okay, see you later* or the like). That is, some turns at talking come in pairs, such that one part of the pair requires the second part in response, while conversations have overall structures with well-bounded beginnings and endings. In short we have strong expectations about the structure of conversation which warrant many different kinds of inference (see Chapter 6). We also incidentally know that it is not the beginning (although that, being known in advance by participants, is not part of what is communicated), because there is no token of a conversational opening (like *hello*), and the particle *so* with which utterance (i) begins has the function of tying the present utterance back to prior utterances.

We know the facts in (33) 2 in a rather more complicated way. Whereas the interrogative form of the first utterance might be claimed to encode a question, that is not all that is intended: it would be strikingly uncooperative if B were to say *yes* (meaning just 'yes I am able to come') and then not go to A. Somehow, the interrogative form can also convey a request, and this interpretation is strongly reinforced here by the presence of the word *please* (see Chapter 5). Much more difficult is to see how B's response in (ii) can be understood as a request refusal, for there is no overt relation at all between its semantic content and that function. The implication relies on some very general expectation of interactional co-operation, which allows one to assume that if one utterance calls for a response (and the request in (i) does so), then one may assume (other things being equal) that a following utterance is a relevant response (see Chapters 3 and 6). Such an assumption is strong enough that when one comes across a response that is apparently irrelevant (as (ii) overtly appears to be), an inference is triggered that would preserve the assumption of relevance. Here, in (ii), the utterance provides the clue: B has to go to Edinburgh; thus if A and B are both far from Edinburgh (and mutually know this), so that it will take the rest of the day to travel and do things there, then B is busy today; so B is indirectly producing a reason why he or she can't easily come to see A, and in so doing can be understood to be refusing A's request. In actual fact there is just one overt trigger for this inference: the particle *well* in English serves to warn the recipient that some inferencing must be done to preserve the assumption of relevance. It can be plausibly claimed that, like *so* and many other words, *well* has no semantic content, only pragmatic specifications for usage. (See Chapter 3; an alternative account of this inference and the role of *well can* be constructed using the notion of **dispreferred** response in Chapter 6.)

In (33) 2 we also have the inference that utterance (iii) counts as a repeat request. To account for this, we would need first of all to explain how the form *how about VERBing* is more or less restricted to usages in suggestions (again, this looks like a linguistic form that has pragmatic rather than semantic content, a problem discussed in Chapter 5). So A is suggesting that someone do something on Thursday. Again, in order to preserve the assumption of relevance, an inference must be made about who is to do what: since the last mention of someone doing something involved B going to A, that is presumably what A intends, and may thus be taken to have meant. Here we seem to be implicitly relying on a further assumption, namely an assumption of topical coherence: if a second utterance can be interpreted as following on a first utterance, in the sense that they can be 'heard' as being concerned with the same topic, then such an interpretation of the second utterance is warranted unless there are overt indications to the contrary (again, see Chapters 3 and 6). Finally, the particle *hmm* is not dismissable as just a 'performance error' or a 'filled pause'; it has specific interactional functions, best explicated in terms of the system for taking turns at speaking in conversation, where it can be seen to be (amongst other things) a turn-holding device (see Chapter 6).

We come now to the inferences in (33) 3. What are the sources for these ? We have already seen that indirectly the question in utterance (i) must be understood as a request. Now it simply follows that, if A is requesting B to come, and A is behaving rationally and sincerely, we may assume all the facts in (a)–(g). Why? Partly because if we explicate the concept of requesting, it will be found to be constituted of the very speaker beliefs and wishes listed in part in (a)–(g) (see Chapter 5). But of course it would be possible to go through the behavioural motions of requesting without having any of the requisite beliefs and intentions. Therefore one is warranted in making the inference from the behaviour to the beliefs and intentions of the speaker only by a general assumption of sincerity, or co-operativeness (see Chapter 3). If A knows in advance that B can't come, then he is being deceptive; but *if* he knows that B knows that he knows that B can't come, then he cannot be interpreted as requesting at all (utterance (i) might then be a joke, or if B is in an incapacitated (say, inebriated) state, perhaps a gibe).

The inferences in (33) 4 are easier to account for. The word *here* denotes the (pragmatically bounded) place where the speaker (A) is at the time of speaking; if B does not know (or cannot find out) where A is, *here* is uninterpretable in the sense that B cannot comply with the request to go there. So A would be less than fully co-operative or rational if he did not think that B knew (or could find out) where he was. We also know that A and B are not in the same place (or at least are at some distance from one another). We know this because the word *come* (at least with the tense and aspect in (i)) denotes either motion towards the speaker at the time of speaking (as in *Come to breakfast, Johnny*) or motion towards the addressee's location at the time of speaking (as in *I'm coming, Mummy*). Note that as with *here*, the meaning of *come* can only be explicated by reference to pragmatic or contextual parameters (speakers, addressees, times and places of speaking). In utterance (i), *come* cannot denote movement towards the addressee, because the subject of *come* is *you*, and the addressee can hardly move to where the addressee already is. So it must denote movement towards the speaker; but again, the addressee can hardly move towards the speaker if there is no significant distance between them; therefore A and B are not in the same place. Here we might note that they are also not in Edinburgh: we know this for B because B claims to have to *go* to Edinburgh, and *go* here means movement away from the place of the speaker at the time of speaking; we know it for A also, because if A is in Edinburgh, then B's having to go to Edinburgh can hardly be an excuse for B not going to A today. We make all these inferences on the basis of the deictic words, *come, go* and *here* (not to mention *now*), together with reasonings about the nature of our physical world (see Chapter 2). A natural interpretation (by an observer or analyst) of this deictic set-up is that A and B are talking on the telephone. Finally, we know that (A believes that) B has been to A's present location before because of the word *again:* this can be claimed to be a pragmatic rather than a semantic implication just because, unlike semantic implications, those associated with *again* are not normally negated by the negation of the main verb. We are inclined therefore to say that *again* **presupposes,** rather than semantically entails, that some event referred to happened before as well (see Chapter 4).

The implication (33) 5, that the day of speaking is other than Wednesday or Thursday, is also due to deixis (explained in Chapter 2), for the word *Thursday* in utterance (iii) is used in a deictic way that invokes pragmatic parameters (there are other usages that do not, e.g. *Pay day is Thursday*). Here the modifier *this* picks out a particular Thursday in relation to the speaker's location in the week: *this Thursday* means the Thursday of the week in which the speaker is speaking.[30] But on Thursday, the Thursday of this week cannot, by pragmatic convention, be referred to as *this Thursday;* we must instead say *today*. By the same token, we cannot say *this Thursday* on Wednesday, because we ought to say *tomorrow*. So the exchange in (32) takes place neither on Wednesday nor on Thursday. (There may be some different restrictions on usage here in different varieties of English, and there are also some interesting ambiguities; see Chapter 2 below and Fillmore, 1975.)

Finally, we have the inferences in (33) 6 that A is male, and of apparently higher social status than B. These are based most soundly on the vocative item *sir*, for that is what that word seems to mean. Again, on a truth-conditional theory of semantics, those meanings cannot be captured – we would not want to say that B's assertion in (ii) was false if B had simply misidentified A and assumed mistakenly that A was a male superior (that would make truths relative to whomsoever they are addressed).[31] Further, *in* an intuitive way, the meanings of *sir* here are not part of the content of what is asserted; they are background assumptions about the context, specifically the kind of person B is addressing. We may therefore say that *sir* **conventionally implicates** that the addressee is male and socially higher in rank than the speaker (see Chapter 3).

There are no doubt many other pragmatic inferences that can be wrung from an exchange as short and insignificant as this. But these will serve to indicate the general nature of the phenomena that pragmatics is concerned with. The point is that we can compute out of sequences of utterances, taken together with background assumptions about language usage, highly detailed inferences about the nature of the assumptions participants are making, and the purposes for which utterances are being used. In order to participate in ordinary language usage, one must be able to make such calculations, both in production and interpretation. This ability is independent of idiosyncratic beliefs, feelings and usages (although it may refer to those shared by participants), and is based for the most part on quite regular and relatively abstract principles. Pragmatics can be taken to be the description of this ability, as it operates both for particular languages and language in general. Such a description must certainly play a role in any general theory of linguistics.

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1 Apart from this connection, there is only the slightest historical relation between pragmatics and the philosophical doctrines of **pragmatism** (see Morris, 1938 (1971: 43); Lyons, 1977a: 119). There have been recent attempts, however, to recast Morris's trichotomy in a Peircean (or pragmatist) mould, which are not covered in this book: see Silverstein, 1976; Bean, 1978.

2 On another interpretation, all pragmatic parameters refer to users of the language, if only because such parameters must, in order to be relevant, be known or believed by participants.

3 We shall use the symbol ? ? at the beginning of example sentences to indicate that they are (at least putatively) pragmatically anomalous, reserving * for sentences that are syntactically ill-formed or semantically anomalous; a single initial ? indicates anomaly on at least one of these three levels, but is non-committal about the nature of the anomaly.

4 This line of argument relies on the distinction between **use** and **mention**, or between 'ordinary' usage and metalinguistic usage, for which see Lyons, 1977a: 5ff and references therein. In the sense of this distinction, sentences like (1)–(7) can be mentioned, but they cannot easily be used.

5 Another problem is that it is often in fact possible to imagine

contexts in which the alleged anomalies are after all quite usable – the reader can try with the examples above. This problem will recur when we consider the concept of appropriateness of an utterance, discussed below.

6 Here contrast Searle (1979b: 117): "There is no such thing as the zero or null context for the interpretation of sentences ... we understand the meaning of such sentences only against a set of background assumptions about the contexts in which the sentence could be appropriately uttered."

7 The term *grammaticalization* is used throughout this book in the broad sense covering the encoding of meaning distinctions – again in a wide sense in the lexicon, morphology, syntax and phonology of languages.

8 Consider e.g. the French *Je suis malheureuse*, which encodes that the speaker is female: in what sense would this be *intentionally* communicated?

9 The "straightforward" qualification, Gazdar explains, is necessary because pragmatic implications often derive in part from the truth conditions of sentences uttered. See Chapter 3 below.

10 A usage general in linguistics until the influence of formal semantics, practised by philosophers, was felt in the 1960s.

11 Feature-based semantic theories are not of course *inherently* broader than truth-conditional ones. But feature-based theories are usually associated with a scope for semantics that would include all the conventional content of sentences, whereas (as we shall see) truth-conditional theories cannot have such a broad scope.

12 The notion of conventional content is clearer intuitively than it is theoretically; for example, we would want to say that the term *genius* has the conventional content 'exceptional intellect' or the like, even though it may be predicated ironically, and thus convey the non-conventional meaning 'exceptional idiot'. Such a distinction would seem to rest on the distinction between content that is inherent or 'given' (cf. the Saussurean notion of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign) and meaning that may be derived by general principles of inference taking contextual factors into account. See Lewis, 1969 for an important philosophical analysis of the concept of convention, which stresses the essentially arbitrary nature of any convention. See also Morgan, 1978; Searle, 1979b on the notion *literal meaning*.

13 There is a slight rephrasing of Grice's (1957) formulation here, legitimated, I hope, by Schiffer's (1972: 14) discussion.

14 The concept of mutual knowledge is discussed in Lewis, 1969, and Schiffer, 1972: 30ff, and is of considerable potential importance to pragmatic theory; e.g. one may want to say that a speaker

that B believes that A is male, should have the additional qualification ‘or at least, B is acting as if he or she thinks A is male’, etc.

[30] Or the Thursday in some week otherwise pragmatically identified, e.g. by gesture at a calendar. 52

[31] But some assertions, e.g. those with *you* as argument of a predicate, do indeed have just such a relativity. The point here rests on the fact that the vocative item *sir* is not such an argument (e.g. subject or object of a verb); thus the meaning of *sir* seems not to be part of the proposition expressed by (ii), and thus not part of the truth conditions.

2

Deixis

2.0 **Introduction**

The single most obvious way in which the relationship between language and context is reflected in the structures of languages themselves, is through the phenomenon of **deixis.** The term is borrowed from the Greek word for pointing or indicating, and has as prototypical or focal exemplars the use of demonstratives, first and second person pronouns, tense, specific time and place adverbs like *now* and *here*, and a variety of other grammatical features tied directly to the circumstances of utterance.

Essentially deixis concerns the ways in which languages encode or grammaticalize features of the **context of utterance** or **speech event,** and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance. Thus the pronoun *this* does not name or refer to any particular entity on all occasions of use; rather it is a variable or place-holder for some particular entity given by the context (e.g. by a gesture). The facts of deixis should act as a constant reminder to theoretical linguists of the simple but immensely important fact that natural languages are primarily designed, so to speak, for use in face-to-face interaction, and thus there are limits to the extent to which they can be analysed without taking this into account (Lyons, 1977a: 589ff).

The importance of deictic information for the interpretation of utterances is perhaps best illustrated by what happens when such information is lacking (Fillmore, 1975 : 38–9). Consider, for example, finding the following notice on someone's office door:

(1) I'll be back in an hour

Because we don't know *when* it was written, we cannot know when the writer will return. Or, imagine that the lights go out as Harry has just begun saying:

(2) Listen, I'm not disagreeing with *you* but with *you*, and not about *this* but about *this*

Or, suppose we find a bottle in the sea, and inside it a message which reads:

(3) Meet me here a week from now with a stick about this big

We do not know *who* to meet, *where* or *when* to meet him or her, or *how big* a stick to bring.

The many facets of deixis are so pervasive in natural languages, and so deeply grammaticalized, that it is hard to think of them as anything other than an essential part of semantics. If semantics is taken to include all conventional aspects of meaning, then perhaps most deictic phenomena are properly considered semantic. However, by at least some of the views that we reviewed in Chapter 1, deixis belongs within the domain of pragmatics, because it directly concerns the relationship between the structure of languages and the contexts in which they are used. But all such categorizations are theory-dependent, and on the view that we have adopted for convenience, namely that pragmatics concerns those aspects of meaning and language-structure that cannot be captured in a truth-conditional semantics, the grammatical category of deixis will probably be found to straddle the semantics/pragmatics border.

The important point, wherever the pragmatics/semantics boundary is drawn, is that deixis concerns the encoding of many different aspects of the circumstances surrounding the utterance, within the utterance itself. Natural language utterances are thus 'anchored' directly to aspects of the context.

2.1 **Philosophical approaches**

The topic of deixis, or as philosophers usually prefer, **indexical expressions** (or just **indexicals),** may be usefully approached by considering how truth-conditional semantics deals with certain natural language expressions. Suppose we identify the semantic content of a sentence with its truth conditions, then the semantic content of

(4) Letizia de Ramolino was the mother of Napoleon

will amount to a specification of the circumstances under which it would be true, namely that the individual known as Letizia de Ramolino was in fact identical to the individual who was the mother of Napoleon. The truth of (4) in no way depends on who says it, but simply on the facts of history.[1] But now suppose we try to analyse:

(5) I am the mother of Napoleon

We cannot assess the truth of this sentence without taking into account who the speaker is; for (5) is true just in case the person uttering the sentence is indeed identical to the individual who is the mother of Napoleon, and false otherwise. In which case, in order to assess the truth of (5) we need to know, in addition to the facts of history, certain details about the context in which it was uttered (here, the identity of the speaker). The expression *I* is not of course the only such troublesome feature of English; the following examples all present us with the same sort of problems (with the relevant deictic expression italicized, a convention followed throughout this Chapter):

(6) *You* are the mother of Napoleon
(7) *This* is an eighteenth-century man-trap
(8) Mary is in love with *that* fellow over *there*
(9) It is *now* 12.15

The sentences are true, respectively, just in case the addressee is indeed the mother of Napoleon, the object currently being indicated by the speaker is indeed an eighteenth-century man-trap, Mary is indeed in love with the fellow in the location indicated by the speaker, and at the time of speaking it is indeed 12.15. In each case the context-dependency can be traced to specific deictic expressions or indexicals. Sentences that contain such expressions, and whose truth values therefore depend on certain facts about the context of utterance (identity of speakers, addressees, indicated objects, places and times, etc.), are not of course in any way special or peculiar. For just about every utterance has this context-dependency, due in no small part (at least in many languages) to **tense.** For, roughly, the following utterance will be true

(10) There *is* a man on Mars

just in case *at the time of speaking* there is a man on Mars, whereas (11) will be true just in case at *some time prior to the time of speaking*(10) would have been true:

(11) There *was* a man on Mars

There has been considerable philosophical interest in expressions that have this context-dependent property, like demonstratives, first and second person pronouns, and morphemes indicating tense. It was Peirce who first termed such expressions **indexical signs,** and argued that they determined a referent by an existential relation between sign and referent (see Burks, 1949). Peirce's category in fact included rather more than the directly context-dependent expressions that are now called deictic or indexical, and his particular system of categories has not been put to much effective use in linguistic pragmatics (but see e.g. Bean, 1978).

Part of the philosophical interest in this area arose from the questions of whether (a) all indexical expressions can be reduced to a single primary one, and thence (b) whether this final pragmatic residue can be translated out into some eternal context-free artificial language. Russell, for example, thought that the reduction in (a) was possible, by translating all indexicals (or as he preferred, **egocentric particulars)** into expressions containing *this*, where the latter referred to a subjective experience. The pronoun *I* would thus be rendered 'the person who is experiencing this' (for severe difficulties with such a view, see Gale, 1968). Reichenbach argued, also in support of (a) and with an ultimate view to (b), that all indexicals involve an element of **token-reflexivity,** i.e. refer to themselves, so that, for example, *I* means 'the person who is uttering this token of the word *I*'. This view may be initially attractive, but it has many difficulties (Gale, 1968). Further, while there are indeed token-reflexive or self-referring expressions in natural languages, as in (12) and, arguably, in (13) (see Chapter 5):

(12) *This sentence* contains five words
(13) I *hereby* apologize

these pose formidable problems for logical analysis, and nothing is gained by assimilating indexicals to token-reflexives if this can possibly be avoided.

From a linguistic point of view, the question in (b), whether ultimately deictic expressions can be translated into context-independent terms without loss of meaning, is perhaps a philosophical red-herring. Natural languages, after all, just do have indexicals, and it is the task of linguistic analysis to model these directly in order to capture the ways in which they are used. It is worth pointing out, however, that there are some good arguments to the effect that ultimate reduction is impossible (Bar-Hillel, 1970: 77–8; Lyons, 1977a: 639-46).

However, if it is intended, as part of a general programme of semantic analysis, to extend logical techniques to handle sentences containing indexicals, provision must somehow be made for their context-dependency. The syntax and semantics of classical logics (say, first order predicate calculus) make no such provision. How should indexicals be accommodated, so that the notion of **logical consequence,** as it applies for example to the inference from (14) to (15), can also be applied to the inference from (16) to (17) ?

(14) John Henry McTavitty is six feet tall and weighs 200 pounds
(15) John Henry McTavitty is six feet tall