THE 7TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

The Pragmatic Dimension of Text

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Abstract: This article looks at how the pragmatic aspects of language have led to the birth of a separate discipline, pragmatics, and also, to the critical of some branches of linguistics, as discourse analysis and text linguistics. Being outlined initially through opposition with analytic philosophy, the pragmatic aspects are studied within the philosophy of natural language. Notions as speech act, non-natural meaning or conversational implicature are rapidly integrated in linguistic research, that tries, through these concepts, to explain the non-linguistic elements of the transmission of messages within the linguistic framework. It is the case of integrated pragmatics in France. The interference of linguistics with the sciences of communication led to the emergence of some disciplines that integrate the pragmatic facts, as discourse analysis and text linguistics. The breaking with linguistics occurs with cognitive pragmatics, when the interpretation of transmission of messages as a process of coding and decoding becomes unfitted to explain the non-linguistic facts that do not belong to language. In this context it is developed a critique to the principles of the disciplines that postulate the existence of some objects, beyond the sentence, as discourse or text.

Keywords: speech act; non-natural meaning; conversational implicature; text linguistics; discourse pragmatics

1. Introduction

Although the study of the use of text begins in Graeco-Roman antiquity as rhetoric, the emphasis of the pragmatic perspective occurs in the twentieth century by widening the domain of philosophy of language, on the one hand, and linguistics, on the other. If in philosophy of language it happens a theoretical separation between the study of scientific language and natural language, in linguistics, the research of the pragmatic aspect is initially integrated into more extensive study of language. However, the advance in linguistics from the abstract study of message to the concrete study of it, in communicative context, reveals the pragmatic dimension of the text inside the so-called text linguistics. Not all researchers have agreed that inclusion of the pragmatic dimension into linguistics. Thus, cognitive pragmatics and text pragmatics have emerged as reaction to this inclusion, setting up pragmatics as a domain by itself.

2. Pragmatics and Philosophy of Language

Linguistics and philosophy of language are the two areas that have facilitated the emergence of a pragmatic perspective on the text. Although rhetoric and text study in the communicative context, which was later called text linguistics, can be seen as preparatory elements before the birth of pragmatics, the origin of this discipline is usually located in the two series of conferences delivered at Harvard University, *William James Lectures*, by John Austin, in 1955, and Paul Grice, in 1967 (Moeschler, Reboul, 1999, pp. 13-14). Disputing the logicist theses of analytic philosophy, the two emphasize rather the study of natural language. Introducing the notion of speech act, Austin shows that language has not a descriptive function, but in communication, has an actional one. However,

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Grice brings the inference into the study of natural language, showing that the common language is not as flawed as analytical philosophers considered it.

Austin's lectures, later published under the title *How To Do Things with Words*, require a review of the hypotheses of analytical philosophy of language that all utterances, except the interrogative, imperative and exclamatory, describe reality, which means that they can be interpreted in terms of their truth value. If they refer to a real fact, then are true, otherwise they are false. Austin denies this account by showing that there are a number of utterances, which although are not interrogations, imperative or exclamatory sentences, they do not describe anything, but rather execute acts on reality. At the same time, they may not be evaluated as true or false (Austin, 1962, pp. 4-7). The examples used by Austin are following: (1) "I do (sc. take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)" – as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony; (2) "I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*" – as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem; (3) "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother" – as ocurring in a will; (4) "I bet you sixpence it will rain tommorow". This category of utterances is called by Austin performative, that unlike constative ones which may be true or false, can not be liable to be interpreted in the light of true value, but in terms of successful/ unsuccessful, according to the achievement or failure of the act uttered. The distinction performative/ constative is subsequently given up and replaced with a new classification. The use of language involves the achievement of a three categories of speech acts: locutionary act, the act of saying something, illocutionary act, the act performed in saying something, and perlocutionary act, the act performed by saying something. (Austin, 1962, pp. 94-107). Thus, we can distinguish the locutionary act "he said that...", from the illocutionary act "he argued that..." and the perlocutionary act "he convinced me that...".

One of the most important successors of Austin's speech acts theory is John Searle, whose main contribution refers to the distinction between the illucotionary act and the propositional content of the illocutionary act (Searle, 1969, pp. 22-33). Searle starts the research from the distinction between speech acts and the reference and predication, noticeable in following statements: (1) "Sam smokes habitually"; (2) Does Sam smoke habitually?"; (3) Sam, smoke habitually!"; (4) "Would that Sam smoked habitually". Though in each case the same reference and predication occur, they are part of a complete speech act which is different from any of the other three. In uttering (1) a speaker is making an assertion, in (2) asking a question, in (3) giving an order, and in (4), in an archaic form, expressing a wish or desire. Searle shows that a proposition must be sharply distinguished from an assertion or statement of it. The propositions (6) "If Sam smokes habitually, he will not live long" and (7) "The proposition that Sam smokes habitually is uninteresting" explain the very reason of such distinctions. There are two different elements in any sentence: the indicator of the propositional content and the indicator of the illocutionary force. Thus, in sentence "I promise that I will come", "I promise" is the indicator of the illocutionary force and "I will come" is the indicator of the propositional content.

Unlike Austin, who dealts with the analyze of the particular uses of the language, Paul Grice tends to build up a general pragmatic theory of the language. Concurrently, Grice differs Austin in emphasizing the difference between the literal meaning of the words used by a speaker and their possible use with a distinct meaning that isn't clear just on the level of the sentence (Chapman, 2005, p.62).This subject is approached by Grice in his article "Meaning" where he distinguishes between literal meaning and speaker's meaning and the latter is defined with relation to the speaker's communicative intention. There are differentiated two types of meaning, natural and non-natural meaning. The former is illustrated in following sentences (Grice, 1996, p.85): (1) "Those spots mean (meant) measles"; (2) "Those spots didn't anything to me, but to the doctor they meant measles"; (3) "The recent budget means that we shall have a bad year". For non-natural meaning Grice uses following examples: (4) "Those three rings on the bell (of the bus) mean that the bus is full"; (5) "That remark, 'Smith couldn't get on without his trouble and strife', meant that Smith found his wife indispensable". While for natural meaning is implied the truth of what is meant, being impossible to add "but he hadn't got measles" in (1), for non-natural meaning what is meant doesn't imply the truth as a necessary consequence, allowing to add in (4) "But it isn't in fact full – the conductor has made a mistake", or in (5) "But in fact Smith deserted her seven years ago". At the same time, Grice brings in his definition of meaning the members of communication, the transmitter and the receiver, so

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integrating meaning into the communicative process. The transmitter's communicative intention of a meaning isn't enough, it also must be recognized by the receiver in order to ensure the success of communication. Consequently, the speaker must have a supplementary intention besides that of communication, a second intention to recognize first communicative intention. In order to illustrate this difference of two intentions Grice uses following sentences (Grice, 1996, p.88): (6) "I show Mr. X a photograph of Mr. Y displaying undue familiarity to Mrs. X"; (7) "I draw a picture of Mr. Y behaving in this manner and show it to Mr. X". While the first sentence exemplifies natural meaning, the sentence (7) is a case of non-natural meaning. In (7) the recognition of my intention to make Mr.X to believe there is something between Mr.Y and Mrs. X is irrelevant in the producing of this effect by the photograph. Mr.X will suspect Mrs.X just seeing the photograph, even if instead of showing it to him I had left it in his room by accident. The things are changed if I show intentionally the photograph to Mr.X in order to inform him about Mrs. X and its relation with Mr.Y. Therefore Grice identifies besides natural meaning another kind of meaning that he names it non-natural and defines it in terms of speaker's intentions to produce some beliefs on the hearer. At the same time, to this he adds the speaker's second intention as the hearer to recognize the speaker's informative intention, and this recognition is the cause of the hearer's belief (Chapman, 2005, p.73).

Grice's language theory round along with the development of the conversational logic, where he starts from the premises that *meaning and use don't overlap, but they aren't either totally separated* and *the meaning is related to the use of language, but the two are't equivalent*. Grice's basic idea is that there are some natural principles which guide efficiently and rationally the exchange of information through the cooperation between the users of language, and the speakers relying on these principles can utilize sentences for conveying information whose meaning is more than what is stated or than propositions that are semantically expressed (Soames, 2003, p. 200). Thus is formed the idea of the Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1991, pp. 26-27). Starting from this general principle, Grice, similar to kantian distinction, describes a number of maxims and submaxims grouped in four categories: Maxims of Quantity (1) Make your conversational contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange); (2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required; Maxims of Quality (1) Do not say what you believe to be false; (2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence; Maxim of Relation (1) Be relevant; Maxims of Manner (1) Avoid obscurity of expression; (2) Avoid ambiguity; (3) Be brief; (4) Be orderly. Grice uses the Cooperative Principle and the four sets of maxims for defining the notion of conversational implicature, whose general outline appears to be following (Grice, 1991, pp. 30-31): "A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that p has implicated that q, may be said to have conversationally implicated that q, provided that (1) he is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; (2) the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that, q is required in order to make his saying or making as if to say p (or doing so in those terms) consistent with this presumption; and (3) the speaker thinks (and would expect the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition in (2) is required". The account of conversational implicature is made comparatively with conventional implicature. While the latter is a part of information conveyed by uttering a sentence, beeing dependent of either the meaning of sentence, or the meaning of a word or syntactical form, the former is generated by the interaction between the particular contexts of uttering the sentence and the meaning of expression uttered, plus general maxims that rule the rational and cooperative exchange of information within the conversation (Soames, 2003, pp. 203-204). The samples of conventional implicature can be following sentences: *She is poor but honest* implies by virtue of the conjunction *but*, the contrast between *poor* and *honesty*; *He is an Englishman, and, therefore, brave* implies by virtue of *therefore* that *brave* is a consequence of the fact of beeing *Englishman*; *He isn't here yet* implies by virtue of the meaning of *yet* that *he* is expected to arrive at a certain time; *It wasn't Sam who solved the problem* implies that someone else than Sam solved the problem. For conversational implicature the meaning of the words isn't enough to decode the all sense of the sentence. For instance, assuming I ask a colleague *Is Markus there?* and she answers *There is a pink Porsche behind the library building*, understanding literally the answer hasn't any sense. If, however, I appreciate my

colleague is cooperative and I know Markus has a pink Porsche, then I can understand that Markus is in library (Mey, 2009, p. 366).

All these notions, illocutionary force, non-natural meaning, conversational implicature, have in common the emphasis of the distinction between what is conventionally said by language and what is really transmitted, the contents conveyed exceeding the conventional limits of a message. Locutionary act is always accompanied by an illocutionary act pointed by illocutionary force of the utterance; beyond the natural meaning, which is neutral in relation to the members of communication, there is non-natural meaning, where the contents conveyed are related with the speaker's intention and the receiver's recognition of this intention; conversational implicature shows that what is actually transmitted by words is only a part of the meaning which is conveyed, the understanding of complete meaning requiring a plus of information derived from the default context.

3. Linguistics and Pragmatics

The presence of pragmatic elements in the linguistic structures has as effect the integration of pragmatics into linguistics. Linguistics extends its domain in order to include the pragmatic facts. Following this expansion the so-called integrated pragmatics is born, initiated by the works of O. Ducrot and J.C. Anscombre and developed as argumentative theory. As general principles, integrated pragmatics expresses two theses (Moeschler, Reboul, 1999, pp. 25-26): the non-descriptivist and the self-referential thesis. The non-descriptivist thesis is defined by opposition to the descriptivist one and implies that the statements do not convey states of facts, having not a function of representation, but they mean actions, speech acts. Is reformulated, in fact, with other words, the distinction operated by Austin between performative and constative. The thesis of self-referential sense indicates that understanding the sense of a sentence means understanding the reasons of its enunciation. To describe the sense of an utterance means to represent the type of the act that the utterance must achieve it. It is outlined a twofold distinction between sentence and utterance, on the one hand, and meaning and sense, on the other hand (Moeschler, Reboul, 1999, pp. 77-78). While the meaning of sentence is the object of linguistics, the sense of utterance belongs to pragmatics.

The advance of mere function of representation of language is shown inside linguistics by a series of the researches that led, ultimately, to the emergence of a new branch of linguistics, text linguistics, whose object is the text, a structure above the sentence which includes pragmatic facts. Émile Benveniste is one who criticized the attempts of structural linguistics to eliminate from its field of research the elements related to enunciation and discourse, showing the limits of a such artificial separation by a two systems of opposition (Moeschler, Reboul, 1999, p. 74): the correlation of personality, which brings into opposition the members of communication, first (*I*) and second person (*you*), with the third person (*he, she*), who is absent from the communicative situation; the correlation of subjectivity, which distinguishes between the subjective (*I*) and non-subjective person (*you*). *I* does not be defined than in terms of enunciation, not in terms of objects, as it happens with nominal structure (Émile Benveniste, 2000b, p. 240). *I* means "the person who enounces the current instance of discourse containing the word *I*". The personal pronoun *I* is not worth than within the instance of discourse where it occurs. Similarly, the pronoun *you* is "the person who the speaker addresses to in the current instance of discourse containing the word *you*." On the other hand, the communication is possible only because each speaker is set as the subject, referring to himself (herself) in discourse as *I* (Émile Benveniste, 2000a, p. 247). In this way *I* brings another person who, although is outside the self, becomes my echo to whom I say *you* and who says to me *you*. The personal pronouns *I* and *you* are the signs of the presence of subjectivity in language. Between *I* and *you* it is established a polar reciprocal relationship in which, although *I* has a central position, none of the terms can exist without the other.

In 1960, in a text entitled *Closing statements: Linguistics and poetics*, Roman Jakobson expressed his theory of communication. Analyzing the elements of a verbal communication, he identifies six functions of language, each of them beeing focused on the one or the other of the elements. Each speech act requires the presence of six elements: the addresser, one who sends a message, the

addressee, one who receives that message, the context reffered to the message, also called the referent, the code that offers the rules for structuring the message, which is common to the two partners of communication, the contact that concerns a connection made by a physical and psychological channel between them. Jakobson shows schematically the elements of the communication process as in following figure (Jakobson, 1960, p. 353):

<div align="center">

CONTEXT

ADDRESSER_____MESSAGE_____ADDRESSEE

CONTACT

CODE

</div>

Each of these factors leads to the different functions of language. These functions are not present separately in the verbal communication, but they coexist in any communicative process, predominatly one or the other. The six functions are: 1) the emotive function, focused on the addresser; 2) the conative function, focused on the addressee; 3) the referential function, focused on the context (referent); 4) the poetic function, focused on message; 5) the phatic function, focused on the contact; 6) the metalingual function, focused on the code. Thus, the above scheme of elements of communication is rewritten by Jakobson as one of functions (Jakobson, 1960, p. 357):

<div align="center">

REFERENTIAL

EMOTIVE_____POETIC_____CONATIVE

PHATIC

METALINGUAL

</div>
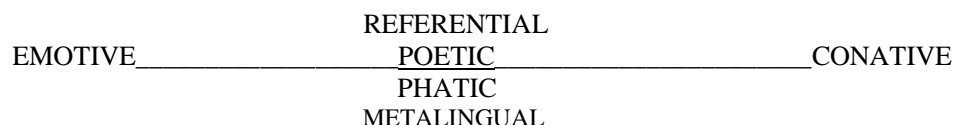
The expression of the functions of language within the communicative context switches to the semiotic understanding of language, and this perspective involves close links with the integration of the study of language into the process of communication. In this respect the functional sentence perspective proposed by the Prague Linguistic Circle is a forerunner in text linguistics. The functional sentence perspective suggests the distinction between sentence, as a grammatical structure, and the actual use of this structure, its functioning, in a speech act in the form of an utterance, enunciation, message, communication (Danes, 1994, pp. 122-123). Within an utterance, as elementary unit of communication, may be distinguished two elements: the theme (what the speaker is speaking about) and the enunciation proper (later on called the rheme, what the speaker says about the theme).

A number of researchers will integrate the pragmatic aspects of the text in a broader semiotic approach. Starting from the understanding the text as a sign, Heinrich Plett believes that the text has three levels of reference, sign-sign, sign-interpreter and sign-object relations, and a complete semiosis of text should include text syntactics, text pragmatics and text semantics (Plett, 1983, p. 50). The relationship sign-interpreter reveals the pragmatic dimension of text, which is seen as a tool of linguistic communication between transmitter and receiver. The interpretation of a text should take into account both the circumstances of the sender's transmission and the addressee's reception (Plett, 1983, p. 84). On the other hand, Lita Lundquist, based on Searle's division in act of reference, act of predication and ilocutionary act, shows that the analysis of any text requires consideration of three levels of research, the referential, predicative and ilocutionary level, that has as result the assignment of some textual structures: thematic, semantic and pragmatic (Lundquist, 1980, pp.14-15). In another work, the same author comes again to the object of text linguistics, adding two more levels of analysis to the three already identified, syntactic and rhetorical. The pragmatic level involves the account of the relationship between text and its users within a particular context of communication (Lundquist, 1990, p. 10).

Text linguistics differs from the structural view on language, firstly, by imposing a new object, the text. This is not studied in isolation from the conditions of production and reception of the message, but it is defined as communicative occurrence (Beaugrande, Dressler, 1981). Jean-Michel Adam's

definition of the elementary unity of text, the sentence-utterance, exemplifies how the pragmatic aspects of text are embedded in text linguistics. The sentence-utterance, as minimal unity, is called "utterance" because it is the result of a act of enunciation, beeing conveyed by a sender to a receiver-interpreter, and also is called "sentence" in order to emphasize that is implied a syntactic and semantic micro-unit (Adam, 2008, pp. 121-123). Each sentence-utterance has three complementary dimensions: enuntiative aspect, which assigns a referential content, the argumentative orientation and an illocutionary force.

4. Pragmatics versus Linguistics

Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson are the authors who separate pragmatic processes of the language, operating a division of pragmatics from linguistics, as cognitive pragmatics (Reboul, Moeschler, 2001, pp. 60-61). The division is based upon the distinction berween sentences and utterances. While an utterance has a variey of properties, both linguistic and non-linguistic, the sentence, as the purely linguistic properties of utterance, describes a common linguistic structure, shared by a series of utterances which differ, for example, in time and place where they are enunciated, in the identity of the speaker or the speaker's intentions (Sperber, Wilson, 1995, p. 9). If, before this, pragmatics, being attached to linguistics, used linguistic codes to interpret utterances, after separation, pragmatics needs a new theory of interpretation of utterances. For, if within the language it is evident that there is a grammatical common pool that would provide decoding messages, within the pragmatic facts, consisting of inferential processes, should be argued that the speaker and the hearer share the same premises and make similar inferences following the same rules (Sperber, Wilson, 1995, p. 15). Within the framework of the code model the mutual knowledge of the speaker and the hearer of the context in which a utterance is understood is absolutely necessary. But the paradoxical nature of the mutual knowledge prevents its consideration as the hypothesis of the theory (Sperber, Wilson, 1995, pp. 18-21). Introducing concepts of manifest act and cognitive environment, the two authors state that the mutual knowledge must be replaced with the mutual manifestness (Sperber, Wilson, 1995, pp. 39-42); this situation requires the abandonment of the codic hypothesis for pragmatics and its substitution by the inferential one.

Based on setting up Sperber and Wilson's cognitive pragmatics, Anne Reboul and Jacques Moeschler use the arguments of division of pragmatics from linguitics in their operation for grounding the discourse pragmatics, by virtue of the denial of axioms of discourse analysis and text linguistics. The emergence of text linguistics had a double motivation: the sentences contain elements that can not be interpreted into the sentence itself, on the one hand, and the interpretation of a given text can not be reduced to the sum of the interpretations of the sentences that compose it (Reboul, Moeschler, 2010, pp. 14-15). These difficulties have led to the establishment of a new object of research, discourse (or text). However, the attempts to set up discourse analysis (and text linguistics) were struck by the impossibility of assesing of some internal units of discourse (text), and, later, after the introduction of some linguistic marks that would ensure the coherence of discourse, one could not be argued the existence of any relation between the presence or the absence of the marks of coherence and the coherence or incoherence of the discourse (Reboul, Moeschler, 2010, pp. 57-64). Thus, if we already have a separation between sentence and utterance, it is not the case of introduction of a new object of inquiry, discourse, which is nothing but a series of utterances (Reboul, Moeschler, 2010, p. 173).

A critique on text linguistics had been also made previously by romanian author Emanuel Vasiliu, in his *Introduction to text theory*, in which he claims that there is not a different text syntactics and text semantics from syntactics and semantics of the sentence, but only a text pragmatics (Vasiliu, 1990, pp. 148-157). Thus text linguistics is an unnecessary discipline since its object of study does not require a particular syntactic and semantic treatment, and text can be very well analyzed within the propositional syntactics and semantics. What actually it is complained to text linguistics as an autonomous discipline is the existence of text as such, as an object distinct from sentence. Criticism is directed chiefly on the possibility of text syntactics and semantics. A text syntactics should provide the possibility to distinguish, in virtue of formal criteria, between text and non-text. But a text grammar

would be nothing but an extension of grammar of sentence, by providing some rules that help us to distinguish strings of sentences that are text from those that are not. A syntactic rule, however, can not capture the difference in meaning between a string of sentences that compose a text and a series of sentences unrelated. Cohesion, seen as syntactic standard of textualiry, is rather, if it can be considered a standard, a semantical one. Therefore, text can not be defined sintactically, as the sentence is defined grammaticaly. Or, at best, defining text syntactically can only be done starting from the grammatical definition of sentence. But then, there is no difference between sentence and text. Either semantically, there is no difference between text and sentence. Since every text consists of sentences, the meaning of the text depends on the meaning of its constituents, the sentences that compose it. In respect of the terms of cohesion and coherence, they are pragmatic, not syntactic or semantic. Both terms are defined in relation to the expectation of speakers and the relationship between members of communication and the signs of linguistic system they manipulate it. Thus, the same series of sentences can be accepted as text under certain conditions and as non-text in changed conditions, depending on the rules of the linguistic behavior of speakers. Therefore the notion of textuality, like coherence and cohesion, does not reflect an imanent feature of a series of sentences, but only the attitudes of the speakers (of acceptance or refusal) in regard to this series. Textuality is a pragmatic notion and, therefore, there is only text pragmatics.

5. Conclusion

The research of the pragmatic aspects of the text was shaped closely related to the evolution of pragmatics as discipline. Speech acts, non-natural meaning and conversational implicature opened the field of pragmatic studies, directing attention to the presence of some non-linguistic elements in the use of language. The inquiries of these issues are made firstly within linguistic framework, through integrated pragmatics or communicative view of text and text linguistics. Cognitive pragmatics dissociates definitively linguistic and non-linguistic processes, defining pragmatics by new principles, independent of the study of language. With this division, it is also emerging a pragmatic program that criticizes the aims of discourse analysis and text linguistics to integrate the pragmatic processes. Discourse pragmatics effectively abolishes the axioms of these disciplines, denying any theoretical reasons for postulating some objects of research as discourse or text. The only authentic division is the one between sentence, the object of linguistics, and utterance, the object of pragmatics. In this context discourse is reductible to a series of utterances.

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