REPORT ON TWO PRAGMATIC SYMPOSIA IN HELSINKI

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Suomen kielitieteellisen yhdistyksen vuoden teemaksi oli tällä kertaa valittu pragmatiikka. Aiheesta järjestettiin kaksi päivän kestävää tilaisuutta Helsingin yliopistossa (26.11.1988 ja 13.1.1989). Ensimmäinen oli tarkoitettu alustukseksi ja yleiskeskusteluksi: siihen oli kutsuttu eri aloja ja suuntauksia edustavia lingvistejä puhumaan pragmatiikasta kielitieteessä. Toisessa symposiumissa taas pidettiin lukuisia lyhyitä esitelmiä, joissa pragmatiikan asemaa eri kielitieteen alueilla käsiteltiin hyvinkin erilaisista näkökulmista. Niitä lukijoita varten, joilla ei tällä kertaa ollut mahdollisuutta olla tilaisuuksissa läsnä, esitän seuraavassa lyhyesti käsitykseni siitä, mistä symposiumeissa keskusteltiin.

The Linguistic Association of Finland organized two one-day symposia on pragmatics this winter. The meetings took place at the University of Helsinki, on November 26, 1988, and January 13, 1989. The first of these was planned as a forum for a general discussion: a number of linguists representing different approaches were invited to give their views on the status of pragmatics in linguistics. The second symposium consisted of a number of short papers in which pragmatic aspects of linguistic research were considered in a wide range of fields. The present yearbook contains revised versions of some of the contributions presented at the conferences.

The first symposium, the general discussion of pragmatics, was opened by Jan-Ola Östman, the president of the association. He began by pointing out that, for some linguists, pragmatics is equal to a wastepaper basket into which one may throw any linguistic phenomena hard to account for in a straightforward manner. For others, again, pragmatics is an extremely broad general notion, covering too much to be useful in linguistic analysis. Pragmatics is, however, not equal to 'performance' or 'parole', Östman

emphasized. One of the basic questions he addressed to the discussants and the floor concerned the relations between empirical research and theory in pragmatics.

Östman briefly outlined the history of pragmatics, starting from its philosophical origins, also briefly mentioning pragmatism and its potential relation to pragmatics. He pointed out that pragmatics came into linguistics from several different directions at about the same time. He then distinguished two main approaches to the field during the past 15-20 years, a behavioural one and a linguistic-structural one. Linguistic pragmatics is based on the same type of rules that are used elsewhere in linguistics. The behavioural approach to pragmatics, again, began in sociology and anthropology, one branch of which came into linguistics in the form of conversation analysis - through ethnomethodology. In addition to these two approaches, other areas of linguistics also deal with pragmatic phenomena, e.g. textlinguistics, discourse analysis, systemic linguistics, communication science and applied linguistics. Still other areas that are of interest for the influence they have had in the development of pragmatics are artificial intelligence, psychology, theories of language acquisition/learning, biology, neurology, and, of course, semiotics. Referring, next, to several conferences and publications in the field that have contributed to the definition of pragmatics, Östman questioned the need for consensus as an absolute aim, as even other areas of linguistics, syntax for instance, manage to survive despite the absence of a common view of syntax.

Next, Östman gave a summary of some basic ideas forwarded by Jef Verschueren, the secretary general of IPrA (The International Pragmatics Association). For Verschueren, pragmatics should be seen (a) in terms of linguistic 'adaptation', and (b) as a 'perspective' on language rather than as a "box". The perspective view, first of all, is the result of the following two characteristics. Pragmatics

does not have an 'object of investigation' the way phonol-
ogy, morphology, syntax and semantics have. Secondly,
pragmatics does not have an 'object of correlation', such
as, for instance, society in sociology. The perspective
type of broad definition should be easy to accept by every-
body but at the same time it may make pragmatics a waste-
paper-basket kind of framework. Even semantics, on second
thought, is not very different from pragmatics as far as
these criteria are concerned. The relationship between
semantics and pragmatics is, as we all know, a tricky
question. Östman wondered how semantics, whose object of
investigation - meaning and/or function - is similar to
that of pragmatics, could be more like morphology than like
pragmatics. Moreover, if meaning is accepted as the object
of investigation for semantics, then why is function not
acceptable as the object of investigation for pragmatics?

The adaptation view is ultimately connected with prag-
matics in the sense of how language helps us to survive.
Adaptation can be of different kinds. We may, for instance,
speak of 'macro-adaptation' (e.g. language change, develop-
ment of pidgin languages, language ontogenesis) and 'micro-
adaptation' (e.g. forms of address). Adaptation, in prin-
ciple, is bi-directional. Thus, in choosing a particular
form of address, the speaker adapts her/his language to a
particular linguistic environment. On the other hand, s/he
may also create her/his own linguistic environment. For
instance, through the choice of a particular form of address
s/he may regulate the degree of intimacy of a particular
communication situation. Östman suggested that the notion
of 'function', in fact, covers a lot of what Verschueren
considers in terms of 'adaptation'. Östman, however,
emphasized the importance of what he saw as implications of
the theory of adaptation, e.g. the importance to stress
notions such as 'variability' and 'contextual effect' in
linguistic research. Variability for Östman is a factor
connected with linguistic indeterminacy: language-users

must have room to move and change, and human behaviour cannot be as rule-governed as is often thought. It must be possible to make choices without excluding all other alternatives, and the theory must therefore be able to account for such "indeterminate" choices, choices that still leave options open. Contextual effect is especially interesting, said Östman, not from the perspective of intentions but from the hearer's point of view. The speaker's intentions are central in Verschueren's theory of adaptation. Östman, however, particularly stressed the importance of investigating how the speaker's message may get a different meaning than originally intended, without the hearer necessarily "misunderstanding" anything. It seems that meanings partly also develop, or come into being, by themselves.

As a conclusion, Östman outlined his own pragmatic model. For him language is primarily to be seen as human behaviour, and the fundamental question in pragmatics is, therefore, what we may learn about human behaviour through investigations of linguistic details. In the Östman model, 'structure' and 'pragmatics', or form and function, are perspectives (cf. Verschueren's interpretation of this view, above). 'Semantics', on the other hand, is a filter and the central unit of the model, corresponding basically to human cognition. The model is highly dynamic: the boundaries and contents of its parts may not be defined beforehand (cf. the discussion of linguistic indeterminacy above).

An essential aspect of pragmatics, said Östman, is its implicitness. One of the criteria to measure this might be the presence or absence of the speaker's responsibility for what s/he is saying. Semantics, in contrast, is basically explicit in character. Pragmatics consists of three different parameters: 'coherence' (the effect of culture/society on the speakers), 'politeness' (the choice of interactional strategies), and thirdly, personal 'involvement'. These

parameters are to be used for the description of the prag-
matic - what Östman calls the 'implicit' - aspects of
language. Every utterance is potentially anchored with the
help of the three simultaneously, and the parameters are
connected with each other and hence influence each other.
Various categories, which are useful in the concrete task
of linguistic analysis, can be defined within the three
parameters.

Several aspects contribute to the dynamic character of
the model. First, all three parameters are taken into
account in the process of choosing linguistic expressions.
Secondly, other options are never forgotten or totally
excluded and no choices are definite. The speaker has to be
able to adapt to the hearer's possibly different inter-
pretation of her/his message. Östman finished his talk by
presenting a few examples of analysis within this frame-
work. A summary of Östman's presentation is to be found in
Finnish elsewhere in this volume.

Jaakko Lehtonen, representing a communication-science
approach, started out from the view of communication as
social participation and called for a more systematic form
of teaching cross-cultural communication. He criticized
linguistic approaches where human behaviour is viewed
through language, pointing out that there are several non-
linguistic ways of communicating. These, for Lehtonen, do
not belong to the domain of linguistic pragmatics. He saw
another risky area in what he called the 'illusion of
intentionalism': the actual linguistic behaviour, he said,
is not all based on intentions, choices, and strategies.
Rather, to a large extent, language processing takes place
through various cognitive scripts, or schemata, and these
are automatic rather than the results of conscious or
unconscious choices. The notion of 'adaptation' - in the
sense of cultural, situational, and/or interactional adap-
tation - Lehtonen regarded central to communication.

During the discussion that followed, Lehtonen asked if

it is, in fact, always clear whether the focus of linguistic investigation is language, the human being, or society. Östman suggested that the function of pragmatics might be seen as forming a bridge between linguistics and communication science. Several views were then presented on what should be the starting point and the direction of pragmatic analyses of language. Some, like Jaakko Lehtonen, approach communication from a macro-perspective of cognitive structures. Others, again, Östman for instance, want to concretize and point out the importance of also starting out from linguistic analysis. Eija Ventola also stressed that both perspectives are essential for pragmatic analyses. Valma Yli-Vakkuri reminded those present of the fact that as long as we do not know what goes on in the brain, we are talking of models of linguistic behaviour, using notions that are basically metaphors.

The next speaker, Auli Hakulinen, basically represented an ethnomethodological approach to language, and consequently stressed the importance of analysing language in context. She emphasized that the complete expression of language can only be found in conversation, the primary form of language, and advocated conversation analysis as the only serious empirical method of analysis. Further, Hakulinen heavily criticized the notion of 'implicitness': according to her, what linguists have failed to cope with in their analyses is typically labelled 'implicit', which then basically stands for optionality. In conversation analysis the difference between explicit and implicit elements is unnecessary: one cannot postulate an implicit element at a particular point in a particular conversation. Hakulinen called for a 'grammar of action' which may have a propositional core. The rest, she stressed, is not something optional but rather, extremely crucial. To be able to analyse this part it is necessary to adopt a framework other than the one consisting of an autonomous grammar with its explicit elements, completed by pragmatics to cope with

the implicit parts. This is also why one cannot apply
methods from discourse analysis to conversation analysis;
there is a paradigm difference between the two. Conversa-
tion analysis does not start out from ready-made categories.
The important thing is how the interactants - and not how
the linguist - understand each other. Hence, a turn cannot
as such be interpreted. It is the form of the next turn
that reveals how the preceding one has been understood. In
conversation analysis implicitness may have the sense of
making someone do something without saying it. Hence, a
pause may be an implicit marker. Implicitness, then, is of
importance but implicit markers should not be confused with
linguistic markers.

As to the perspective approach to pragmatics, Hakuli-
nen pointed out that, though there is no need for the term,
the thought itself is familiar to conversation analysts.
'Variability', again, she went on, has the sense of negoti-
ating meanings, and the view of meanings gradually being
formed during the process of text production/comprehension
tallies with the framework she is working with.

In the discussion that followed Hakulinen's presenta-
tion, Östman pointed out that pragmatics must also be able
to account for phenomena in written language. Other aspects
that caused discussion at this point were the existence and
form of potential rules or norms in language use and in
linguistic analysis, as well as the nature of the context
to be considered in analysis. Decontextualization became a
major issue, as it seems to be a serious problem for ethno-
methodologists.

Eija Ventola discussed the status of pragmatics in the
Hallidayan framework of linguistics. She started out from
the notion of 'perspective'. Presenting a series of
hierarchic models and systemic networks, she considered the
relations of the different levels and showed that prag-
matics is not seen as a separate level in systemic
linguistics. The role of semantics is also a debated

question. A weak point in systemic linguistics, according to Ventola, is the lack of a systematic description of the variables at the situational level. Ventola drew no line between semantics and pragmatics. Further, she stressed the importance of taking the entire text into account in the semantic description. On the level of discourse one finds different genres that the model must be able to deal with. Situation, she said, might be taken into account so that pragmatics would be characterized as an 'instance', while systemic linguistics would then provide the situation 'type'. Ventola also emphasized the importance of empirical data. 'Adaptation', she stated, has to do with the situation, for instance in the sense of the relations between the interactants. As to 'variability', she stressed that systemic linguistics does not contain rules but probabilistic system networks that give guidelines for the direction of preselection in a particular situation. A detailed description thus only concerns a particular situation.

During the discussion that followed the presentation, the probabilistic structures and choices were questioned by Östman. Ventola pointed out that the purpose of the systemic networks is to explicitly show the choices that are made. Tapani Kelomäki wondered about the role of the a priori in defining 'types': In what terms is e.g. the default 'type' to be defined? Ventola emphasized that one has to work both from the hypotheses to the data and vice versa and that our society is based on certain 'types', which is what we today have to start out from.

The general discussion reported above was followed by another one-day symposium in January. Linguists from within different approaches were invited to relate their work to pragmatics and to further react to the issues considered at the first symposium. The second symposium was originally planned as a two-day meeting but due to last-minute financial problems, it had to be shortened, which at first caused a flow of cancellations. In the end, however, the

day did not seem to be long enough for all the presentations and the discussion they caused.

The president of the association, Jan—Ola Östman, again opened the meeting, connecting the day's programme to the general discussion one and a half months earlier. The first speaker was a special guest, Jacob L. Mey from Odense, Denmark. In a talk entitled "A Pragmatic Look at Artificial Intelligence", he discussed aspects of connectionism, contrasting such models with classical mentalism in artificial intelligence.

After that, two members of the research group "Style and Text" at Åbo Akademi presented pragmatic aspects of their work. Martina Björklund dealt with implicit criticism, in her talk entitled "Interaction of Text and Context in 19th c. Russia". She considered Chechov's famous story The Steppe through some features of the socio-cultural environment in which the text was created. My own topic, "Temporal Adverbials in Text Structuring", related to discourse functions of adverbial placement in English.

Next, three papers on language disorders discussed aphasia from different viewpoints. Pirkko Kukkonen dealt with phonetic and phonological aspects in the interpretation of aphasic speech errors. Anu Klippi examined how aphasic patients convey intentions. To compensate a language disorder, aphasic people tend to make frequent use of extra-linguistic information. Communicative strategies seem to vary greatly from one person to another. Minna Silvast presented aspects of a conversation between an aphasic patient and his speech therapist. The case study seemed to confirm what Klippi had said in the preceding presentation.

After the lunch break and the annual meeting of the association, Esa Itkonen considered the relation between semantics and pragmatics. He advocated a reexamination of the status of semantics, rather than that of pragmatics. Semantics he defined as an abstract action coded into form. The task of pragmatics, then, he stated, is to study how

and why the abstract action is realized as a concrete one.

Urpo Nikanne, next, using GB-theory as his syntactic and conceptual semantics as his semantic framework, outlined a model of the relation between pragmatics and grammar. Then, Salli Kankaanpää, with a conversation-analysis approach, discussed the phenomenon of answering a question with a counterquestion. She argued that this type of question is primarily a question that has the function of helping the interactant to answer in such a way that s/he need not repair what s/he said, later on in the conversation.

Janina Orlov discussed the beginning and the end in Pushkin's Tale of Tsar Saltan from a pragmatic point of view. She showed how the author, by using this text type but manipulating it to fit his purposes, succeeded in conveying what he would not for political reasons have been allowed to say explicitly. Finally, Fredrik Ulfhielm dealt with aspects of Japanese pragmatics in a talk entitled "Moon and Turtle: The Magic World of Spoken Japanese". He focussed on the issue of explicitness vs. implicitness in spoken Japanese. In line with the old Japanese proverb about the moon and the turtle - similar in shape but radically different in content - what is explicitly uttered is often far removed from what is actually meant, but left unsaid or merely implied.

Each of the presentations was followed by discussion, so no large-scale general discussion took place at the end of the intensive day. Östman rounded off with a list of problematic areas for pragmatics. What the two symposia gave to those present was a huge perspective on how pragmatics may be related to and used in a number of very different frameworks in linguistics. The lively discussions of the various issues in focus during the symposia were extremely interesting, as indicated by the active response from the hearers and the number of papers in the second meeting. And pragmatics continues to be the association's

theme of the year, as Bruce Fraser and Jef Verschueren have
been invited to Finland in the spring.