

## Pragmatics 1 – Introduction to the study of pragmatics

Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader)

- the study of *speaker meaning*  
(the analysis of what people mean by their utterances)
- the study of *contextual meaning*  
(the interpretation of what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said)
- the study of *how more gets communicated than is said*  
(the investigation of *invisible meaning*)
- the study of the *expression of relative distance*  
(the choice between the said and the unsaid is tied to the notion of distance, closeness implies shared experience)

**Pragmatics** and its relationship with other areas of linguistic analysis:

*syntax* - the study of the relationships between linguistic forms

*semantics* - the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and entities in the world

*pragmatics* - the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms

(humans are taken into consideration only in pragmatics)

Example: *The duck ran up to Mary and licked her.*

Syntax and syntactic analysis: correct structure - missing elements -

- *The bottle of ketchup ran up to Mary.* is also well-formed

semantics: 'duck' is animate – 'bottle' is inanimate

the verb 'run' requires animate subject – semantics is concerned with the truth conditions of propositions expressed in sentences

formal semantics:

*The duck ran up to Mary* (proposition *p*) *and licked her* (proposition *q*).

If *p* is true and *q* is true, then *p & q* (& = ampersand) is true.

Unfortunately, whenever *p & q* is true, it logically follows that *q & p* is true.

(*The duck licked Mary and ran up to her.*)

pragmatics: more being communicated than said

Regular pragmatic principle of language use:

Interpret order of mention as a reflection of order of occurrence.

### Regularity

People tend to behave in fairly regular ways when it comes to using language.

Some of the regularity comes from the fact that people are members of social groups and follow general patterns of behavior expected within the group.

Most people within a linguistic community have similar basic experiences of the world and share a lot of non-linguistic knowledge. Compare the following examples:

1. *I found an old bicycle lying on the ground. The chain was rusted and the tires were flat.*
2. *I found an old bicycle. A bicycle has a chain. The chain was rusted. A bicycle also has tires. The tires were flat.*