

LoCastro, Virginia. 2003. **An Introduction to Pragmatics. Social Action for Language Teachers.** Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press. Pp. Xi+366.

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Virginia LoCastro's book is a fine contribution to the list of already existing introductory texts on pragmatics, with the added value of including new themes not covered in other books. It presents an accessible and comprehensive overview of pragmatics with a special focus on interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics, which are areas of particular interest in an increasingly "globalised world."

In the line of Thomas (1995) and Yule (1996), the book addresses the main topics in the field of pragmatics: deixis, presupposition, politeness, information structure, speech acts, conversational implicature, relevance theory, etc. In addition to presenting the areas of cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics in specific chapters towards the end of the volume,

the author makes references throughout the book to the way certain pragmatic features may affect language teaching and learning. This is, in my view, one of the main assets of this book.

Another strength of the book is that it is geared not only toward expert readers but non-expert ones as well. The chapters are divided into three main sections: Basic Concepts, Analytical Perspectives: Theories of Pragmatic Meaning, and Pragmatics in the Real World. Like Grundy (1995), LoCastro includes exercises and tasks for readers to apply to the contents of each chapter. The discussion questions, tasks, and text analyses allow readers to check their understanding of theoretical aspects and apply their understanding to practical exercises. These sections are useful for second/foreign language students and teachers, who are likely to be the main audience for this book. In the same line, the use of examples from language learners, although generally restricted to examples from Japanese and Spanish native speakers, enables teachers and students to gain a better understanding of the concept by identifying the pragmatic problems that learners may have. The examples also provide teachers with materials they may be able to use in their own teaching practice.

Although the organisation of the different sections and subsections in each chapter does not always follow a clear pattern, the contents are presented clearly and the reader is only expected to have a rudimentary knowledge of linguistics. In the preface, the author mentions that she believes that some of the books on pragmatics are too difficult for students or second language teachers and states her intention to make her book accessible to these readers. With this purpose in mind, she also includes a useful short list of suggested readings at the end of each chapter.

In the first section, the author focuses on basic pragmatic concepts, in terms that are accessible to non-native speakers of English. The aim is to provide the reader with an overview of fundamental pragmatic issues and thus pave the way for the understanding of sections 2 and 3. In chapter 1, which shows the difficulties encountered in trying to define the concept of pragmatics, the author not only explains the role that pragmatics has within linguistics, but she also relates it to other fields, thus "stepping out of the traditional areas of linguistics" (LoCastro, 2003: 20). This inclusive view of "pragmatics," which has much in common with Green's (1989) interpretation of pragmatics as the study of "intentional human action," seems to fit very well in our present world. Chapter 2 focuses on the concept of meaning and reflects on the problems that second language learners may have when interpreting pragmatic meaning. Chapter 3 delves into the topic of deixis, which is illustrated with various examples from different languages (Spanish, German, Italian, French, Japanese, Javanese, etc.). In chapter 4, the author introduces the concepts of

entailment and presupposition. It is interesting to note that both in this chapter and in chapter 5 there is an emphasis on the importance of taking prosody into account in order to understand presuppositions and the way information is presented by speakers. To complete this section, chapter 6 presents the notions of face and politeness, focusing again on cross-cultural differences. The concepts are presented with examples and their corresponding interpretations, which again represent a very useful tool for second language learners and teachers.

In the second section, the author moves from the basic concepts presented in the first section to a discussion of the topics of implicature, speech acts and relevance, which are respectively classified as philosophical, sociolinguistic, and cognitive approaches to pragmatics. In chapter 7, conversational implicatures, Grice's maxims and their limitations are explained. This is also the case in chapter 8, where the broad areas of Conversational Analysis and Speech Act Theory are summarised, and their limitations are discussed. Chapter 9, which focuses on the positive and negative outcomes of Relevance Theory, includes, for the first time, a specific section on applications to second language acquisition.

The contents of sections 1 and 2 form the basis for the third and final part of the book, *Pragmatics and the Real World*. Although each of the previous chapters shows the importance of considering the listener, as well as the speaker, in the interpretation of pragmatic meaning, LoCastro highlights her stance, in this respect, by beginning this section with a specific chapter on the role of the listener (chapter 10). Chapters 11 and 13 delve into the areas of cross-cultural pragmatics and politeness respectively. Both chapters are closely related, as one of the aims of the author in chapter 13 is to show how Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory can be challenged on the basis of cross-cultural variation. All the chapters in this section are related to second language learning and teaching (and, in fact, each article ends with a specific section on applications to this field); however, it is chapters 12, 14 and 15 that address the concept of interlanguage pragmatics directly. Although the Birmingham group is mentioned in chapter 8, it seems that an account of Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) model of classroom discourse analysis should have been added to that chapter and to chapter 15, which contains a specific section on pragmatic development in the classroom.

In sum, the strength of LoCastro's book is twofold. First, it provides a reader-friendly and comprehensive overview of pragmatic concepts and approaches that are accessible to non-expert readers on pragmatics and, secondly, it provides L2 in-service and pre-service teachers with background knowledge in interlanguage pragmatics, illustrated with practical exercises and materials, in order to help them become more aware of their

learners' pragmatic problems in the L2 and thus learn to better address the difficult task of teaching pragmatics in a second language.

References

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