

Book review

Pragmatics for Language Educators: Virginia LoCastro, Routledge, New York/London, 2012, 331 pp., ISBN: 978-0-415-80116-4, €40.99

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Virginia LoCastro's book *Pragmatics for Language Educators* is a contribution to the growing interest in teaching pragmatic aspects of second and foreign languages (e.g. Huth and Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006; Soler and Flor, 2008). The book's goal is "to help both novices and experience researchers in the field of pragmatics to expand their awareness of the social aspects of language in use" (p. xi) and it pursues what LoCastro calls an "inclusive view of pragmatics" (p. xi). This means not only that LoCastro sees both micro- and macro-contextual factors as vital for the creation and interpretation of meaning in interaction but also that she includes a number of fields focusing on the study of language, interaction and culture – e.g. conversation analysis (CA) and discourse analysis, among others – in the study of pragmatics.

Pragmatics for Language Educators consists of thirteen chapters, grouped together into four parts. Part I gives, in three chapters, an overview over the field of pragmatics, with a particular emphasis on the 'territory' covered by the book. In Part II, each of the seven chapters focuses on a central area of pragmatics. Part III features two how-to chapters on research projects in sociopragmatics. The conclusion in Part IV discusses the relevance of pragmatics in a culturally diverse world.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the "territory" of pragmatics, defined by LoCastro as "how human beings can get from what is said in words to the communicative purpose of any words in talk" (p. 5). Particularly helpful is the description and discussion of the scope of pragmatics in relationship to other fields of study of language in use, such as sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis and the ethnography of speaking. LoCastro concludes by proposing that pragmatics is a "form of analysis that focuses on speaker meaning [. . .] a basic tool to be used within all of these fields and others" (p. 13).

Chapter 2 presents an overview over basic principles of pragmatics. It covers a wide range of topics – sentence and utterance meaning, use and usage, context and action, intentionality and force, reference and indexicality, anaphora, entailment and presupposition, prosody, information structure, grammaticalisation, functional views of language, meaning in interactions, inference and implicature, cultural and background knowledge – and closes with a discussion of what constitutes language data for pragmatics. LoCastro acknowledges that, while data that have not been influenced by any researcher's agenda are ideal for the study of pragmatics, researchers are often forced to adapt their data collection procedures and use elicited or simulated data.

Chapter 3 focuses primarily on what LoCastro calls "sociolinguistic approaches" to describing how speakers create meaning. Starting with a discussion of Grice's conversational maxims and their limitations, the chapter then moves on to principles originating from conversation analysis such as preference organisation, turn-taking, adjacency pairs, preferred and dispreferred responses. The chapter also includes an introduction to concepts – principally speech act theory and interactional sociolinguistics – that are fundamental to understanding other core areas of pragmatics, e.g. politeness and contextualisation cues.

Chapter 4, the opening of the second part of the book, is devoted to cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP). This field is delineated from interlanguage pragmatics by its focus on participants who are full members of a target language community rather than classroom language learners, and from intercultural communication by its focus on two distinct groups of people, one of which is the target language community. Consequently, LoCastro warns that CCP may entail attempts to generalise the behaviours of particular cultural groups, which, if done thoughtlessly, can lead to overgeneralisation and stereotyping. The chapter discusses concepts such as pragmatic failure and cross-cultural speech acts, but also the often neglected role of listener behaviour in meaning-making. Interestingly – and this is a feature of the entire book, which includes many examples from Non-Western languages and cultures – LoCastro explicitly includes a subchapter on cross-cultural studies in which English has not been used as the baseline for comparison.

Chapter 5 moves on to interlanguage pragmatics. It includes an account of both positive and negative pragmatic transfer as well as the developmental stages of pragmatic development. The chapter is not only concerned with the development of speech acts, but also with the interlanguage realisation of strategies to attain interactional goals, for example in academic speech events. Moreover, factors which limit ILP development, e.g. the instructional environment, metapragmatic awareness, exposure to pragmatic norms and learners' identity concerns, are also discussed.

In Chapter 6, LoCastro introduces the field that so much of the research in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics centers on: politeness. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory takes a central role within the chapter, but space is also dedicated to criticism of Brown and Levinson's framework and alternative perspectives on politeness, e.g. 'relational work' (Locher and Watts, 2008). The chapter ends with a case study on how an international teaching assistant in the USA communicates respect for students.

Chapter 7 is devoted to identity and its construction through interaction. It draws on a variety of theories of identity and approaches to the study of identity, and explores issues of personal as well as group identity. The enactment of identity and its analysis is then further explored through action theory and conversation analysis. Upon showing how CA can be used to investigate how identity is enacted in interaction – in particular in educational contexts – LoCastro argues, quoting Moerman (1988:123) for a "culturally contextualised conversation analysis" (p. 172) in which contextual information is taken into account.

Chapter 8 moves on to discuss institutional talk as one of the contexts in which everyday language is often embedded. The chapter examines a range of 'activity types', including oral examinations, doctor-patient discourse, courtroom trial discourse, job interviews and workplace communication. In doing so, it extrapolates many of the factors that have been found to characterise institutional talk, e.g. asymmetry, allowable contributions, etc. (Drew and Heritage, 1992).

Chapter 9 is concerned with language, gender and power. It outlines the debates between the various approaches to language and gender – from the "dominance" view over the "difference" view to the postmodern stance which sees gender as enacted and performed. It then moves on to discuss the relationship of language and power in the context of political discourse and gender. The chapter includes many examples from non-Western perspectives, in particular Japan and Africa.

Chapter 10 closes the second part of the book with a focus on pragmatic development in the foreign and second language classroom: "Learning the social rules of speaking [. . .] opens doors to the community of the L2, serves to smooth entry into speech events and other occasions, and helps to break down stereotypes about the language learners and their L1 sociocultural background" (p. 235). Pragmatics is thus essential to communicative language teaching, in which language is seen as a social tool to create meaning (Savignon, 2007). In this chapter, LoCastro not only summarizes the current research on the teachability of pragmatics in classroom contexts but also stresses the importance of providing explicit input on pragmatic rules with materials that are accessible and relevant to learners and accurately represents these rules. The chapter ends with an, albeit short, summary of what teachers can do to integrate pragmatics into their teaching, with a particular focus on awareness-raising activities.

Chapter 11 is what LoCastro calls a "primer" (p. 290) on how to conduct small research projects in the area of sociopragmatics. It is a very practical guide, starting from how to find ideas and setting up a study through to designing the research, collecting data, analysing and interpreting the data and presenting the findings.

Chapter 12 follows up on this and provides suggestions for topics of projects in sociopragmatics. It focuses on four topical areas – questions, apologies and refusals, pragmatic glitches and misfires, and bilingual political discourse. These examples should be read, LoCastro suggests, "to spark lateral thinking" because "for the most part, these could not be carried out within a short period of time" (p. 301).

Chapter 13 closes the book. It emphasizes again the strong link of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. While sociolinguistics focuses on the linguistic uses in relationship to social groups, pragmatics provides the tools to research how meaning is created at a micro level. Moreover, LoCastro stresses that developing insight into pragmatics can work towards acknowledging difference, and against labelling speakers that diverge from the standard in a negative manner or stereotyping and discriminating against them.

This book will find many interested readers. Curiously, its intended audience remains slightly fuzzy: while the title is Pragmatics for Language Educators, the preface mentions language educators only in passing, after "novices and experienced researchers in the field of pragmatics" (p. xi). Slightly odd in this context is also the fact that, while there are two chapters on doing small pragmatics projects, practical tips and advice on how to teach pragmatics in the language classroom take comparatively little space. Suggestions on how to explore the topics from Chapters 4 to 9 in ordinary language classrooms, many of which are constrained by time and required syllabi, would have been more helpfully integrated and expanded on within each of these chapters, for instance in the 'applications to the classroom' sections which, as it is, are fairly short.

Moreover, novices to the field would also find the amount of topics covered slightly overwhelming. In particular, some topics from Chapter 2 – e.g. "grammaticalisation", "information structure" and "entailment and presupposition" – are not discussed again later. Thus, what their place in the story of pragmatics for language educators is remains unclear. It would have been more helpful to include in their place a chapter about intercultural communication and lingua franca contexts instead of the relatively narrow focus on cross-cultural pragmatics presented in Chapter 4.

However, the fact that each chapter ends with suggested readings, discussion questions and a data analysis exercise ensures that undergraduate and postgraduate students will profit from this book for their personal or professional development, while foreign language teachers and teacher trainers can derive ideas for their own pedagogic practice, for instance for developing teaching materials on pragmatic aspects of language use. The book will find good uses in classes in a range of fields, including intercultural communication, professional communication, pragmatics and language teaching, but can also be used for self-study.

What is more, the book also makes a valuable contribution to the field of pragmatics by providing a very convincing delineation of pragmatics from other fields of study, illustrated by the image of a close-up photography of a flower with a single-lens reflex camera: "if one zooms in on one petal of the flower, the rest of the flower goes out of focus. Adopting this metaphor, the researcher can see all these fields as part of the fuzzy, out-of-focus background, while narrowing down to one to one approach will enable the analyst to study in detail one view of how language is used. [. . .] The researcher's choice of analytic perspective is basically constrained by the purpose of the study" (p. 13).

All in all, this is an excellent book. It will allow teachers to develop their pedagogic practice to include a focus on pragmatic aspects of second and foreign language use, and help students develop the reflective skills they require to develop into competent, confident and adaptable foreign language users.

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