

## MAE 824 – Topics in Pragmatics

### Course Description

Pragmatics is the study of the relationship between an utterance and the context in which the utterance is produced. We normally think of people using language to produce utterances, though the act of production involves not only words and grammar but also vocal prosody, gesture, gaze, and bodily stance. The context of production is also much grander than the time and place of utterance and it includes the physical, spatial, temporal, social, interactional, institutional, political, and historical circumstances in which a person produces an utterance. By 'utterance' and 'context' we name systems of interconnection among very many features, and the study of the relationship between utterance and context is not to be undertaken lightly. Nonetheless it is a study that for centuries has been of great interest to philosophers, linguistics, semioticians, and psychologists. And even if you don't want to focus on pragmatics as a field of academic study, it's worth considering a few questions that we will ask and try to answer in this course:

- I know the kind of actions I can perform with my body and with tools I use, but what kind of actions can I perform with my words?
- Sometimes, I am in conversation with somebody and, although we both know exactly the meaning of every word, I still don't get what the other person is driving at. What am I missing?
- I know some people who are forever saying *please* and *thank you*, just like my mother taught me when I was a child. And then there are some other people I know who rarely say *please* or *thank you*, and I know my mother would say they are not being polite, but nobody else seems to bother. Why is that?
- Say "It's cold in here" and mean "It's warm in here". Can you do it?—And what are you doing as you do it? And is there only one way of doing it?

That last question was asked by a philosopher. Asking and answering questions like these is not just what we should do as students and scholars; it is also a matter of practical communication—especially communication among people from different social and cultural backgrounds. If you decide to take this course, I hope it will not only be one more step on the road to an academic qualification, but it should also be a means to make us all better communicators.

### Instructor

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### Required Textbook

Archer, D., Aijmer, K., & Wichmann, A. (2012). *Pragmatics: An Advanced Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge. ISBN: 978-0-415-49787-9. This book is available for purchase at the NIE Campus Bookstore. Price: SSD 45. Online resources are available for this title at <http://www.routledge.com/cw/archer/>.

### Topics and Readings

#### 1. 15 August Unit A1: The origins of pragmatics

##### Unit B1 Readings

Nerlich, B. (2010). History of pragmatics. In L. Cummings (Ed.), *The pragmatics encyclopedia* (pp. 192-195). Abingdon, UK & New York: Routledge.

Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London & New York: Longman. Chapter 1, 'Introduction.'

#### 2. 22 August Unit A2: Research methods in pragmatics

##### Unit B2 Readings

Kasper, G. (2008). Data collection in pragmatics research. In H. Spencer-Oatey (Ed.), *Culturally speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 279-303). London: Continuum.

Van der Henst, J.-B., & Sperber, D. (2004). Testing the cognitive and communicative principles of relevance. In I. A. Noveck & D. Sperber (Eds.), *Experimental pragmatics* (pp. 141-171). Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kohnen, T. (2009). Historical corpus pragmatics: Focus on speech acts and texts. In A. H. Jucker, D. Schreier & M. Hundt (Eds.), *Corpora: Pragmatics and discourse. Papers from the 29th International Conference on English Language Research on Computerized Corpora (ICAME 29), Ascona, Switzerland, 14-18 May 2008* (pp. 13-36). Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi.

#### 3. 29 August Unit A3: The semantics-pragmatics interface

**Team presentation of Exploration C1 by Angeline Seet and Lisa Wah:**

*Choosing, transcribing, and annotating a dataset*

**Unit B3 Readings**

Jaszczolt, K. M. (2010). Semantics-pragmatics interface. In L. Cummings (Ed.), *The pragmatics encyclopedia* (pp. 428-432). Abingdon, UK & New York: Routledge.

Stalnaker, R. (1974). Pragmatic presuppositions. In M. K. Munitz & P. K. Unger (Eds.), *Semantics and philosophy* (pp. 197-214). New York: New York University Press.

Enfield, N. J. (2003). The definition of WHAT-d'you-call-it: Semantics and pragmatics of recognitional deixis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35(1), 101-117. doi: 10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00066-8

**4. 5 September Unit A4: Speech acts: Doing things with words**

**Unit B4 Readings**

Manes, J., & Wolfson, N. (1981). The compliment formula. In F. Coulmas (Ed.), *Conversational routine* (pp. 115-132). The Hague: Mouton.

Jucker, A. H. (2009). Speech act research between armchair, field and laboratory: The case of compliments. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41(8), 1611-1635. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2009.02.004

Eisenstein, M., & Bodman, J. W. (1993). Expressing gratitude in American English. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 64-81). New York: Oxford University Press.

**5. 12 September Unit A5: Implicature**

**Team presentation of Exploration C2 by Howard, Nur, and YC:**

*Exploring routinized speech acts using corpora*

**Unit B5 Readings**

Grice, H. P. (1989). Logic and conversation. In H. P. Grice (Ed.), *Studies in the way of words* (pp. 22-57). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Leech, G. N. (1981). *Semantics: The study of meaning* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin. Chapter 16 'Semantics and Pragmatics.'

Wilson, D. (2010). Relevance theory. In L. Cummings (Ed.), *The pragmatics encyclopedia* (pp. 393-399). Abingdon, UK & New York: Routledge.

**6. 19 September Unit A6: Pragmatics and the structure of discourse**

**Team presentation of Exploration C3 by Daniel and Tian Li:**  
*Testing for implicatures*

**Unit B6 Readings**

Tsui, A. B. M. (1994). *English conversation*. Oxford, UK & New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 2, 'The Structure of Conversation.'

Stubbs, M. (1983). *Discourse analysis: The sociolinguistic analysis of natural language*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell. Chapter 9 'On the Surface of Discourse: Prefaces and Alignments.'

McCarthy, M. (2003). Talking back: "Small" interactional response tokens in everyday conversation. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 36(1), 33-63. doi: 10.1207/S15327973RLSI3601\_3

**7. 26 September Unit A7: Pragmatic markers**

**Team presentation of Exploration C4 by Rani, Lai Khar, Xinru, and Adeline:**  
*The organization of discourse structure*

**Unit B7 Readings**

Diani, G. (2004). The discourse functions of *I don't know* in English conversation. In K. Aijmer & A.-B. Stenström (Eds.), *Discourse patterns in spoken and written corpora* (pp. 157-172). Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Gilquin, G. (2008). Hesitation markers among EFL learners: Pragmatic deficiency or difference? In J. Romero-Trillo (Ed.), *Pragmatics and corpus linguistics: A mutualistic entente* (pp. 119-149). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Rühlemann, C. (2007). *Conversation in context: A corpus-driven approach*. London: Continuum. Chapter 6 'Discourse Management Phenomena.'

**3 October RECESS**

**8. 10 October Unit A8: Pragmatics, facework, and (im)politeness**

**Team presentation of Exploration C5 by Grace Tham and Kai Sin:**  
*Pragmatic markers: Further explorations*

**Unit B8 Readings**

O'Driscoll, J. (2007). Brown and Levinson's face: How it can—and can't—help us to understand interaction across cultures. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 4(4), 463-492. doi: 10.1515/IP.2007.024

Watts, R. J. (2003). *Politeness*. Cambridge, UK & New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 10 'Politic Behaviour and Politeness Within a Theory of Social Practice.'

Culpeper, J., Bousfield, D., & Wichmann, A. (2003). Impoliteness revisited: With special reference to dynamic and prosodic aspects. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35(10-11), 1545-1579. doi: 10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00118-2

9. 17 October

**Unit A9: Pragmatics, prosody, and gesture**

**Team presentation of Exploration C6 by Rani, Lai Khar, Xinru, and Adeline:**  
*Facework and im/politeness*

**Unit B9 Readings**

Mennen, I. (2007). Phonological and phonetic influences in non-native intonation. In J. Trouvain & U. Gut (Eds.), *Non-native prosody: Phonetic description and teaching practice* (pp. 53-76). Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.

Wichmann, A. (2004). The intonation of *please*-requests: A corpus-based study. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36(9), 1521-1549. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2004.03.003

Gussenhoven, C. (2004). *The phonology of tone and intonation*. Cambridge, UK & New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5 'Pragmalinguistics: Three biological codes.'

10. 24 October

**Unit A10: Cross-cultural pragmatics**

**Team presentation of Exploration C7 by Nurul Hassan and Karen Chia:**  
*Prosody and non-verbal communication*

**Unit B10 Readings**

Wierzbicka, A. (2003). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: The semantics of human interaction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter. Chapter 3 'Cross-cultural pragmatics and different cultural values.'

Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics*, 4(2), 91-112. doi: 10.1093/applin/4.2.91

Argyle, M. (1988). *Bodily communication* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Madison, CT: International Universities Press. Chapter 4 'Cultural differences in bodily communication.'

11. 31 October

**Unit A12: Pragmatics and power**

**Team presentation of Exploration C8 by Wendy Ng and Rita Gupta:**

*Cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics*

**Unit B12 Readings**

van Dijk, T. A. (2006). *Discourse, context and cognition*. *Discourse Studies*, 8(1), 159-177. doi: 10.1177/1461445606059565

Harris, S. (1995). Pragmatics and power. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 23(2), 117-135. doi: 10.1016/0378-2166(94)00008-3

Haworth, K. (2006). The dynamics of power and resistance in police interview discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 17(6), 739-759. doi: 10.1177/0957926506068430

12. 7 November

**Unit A11: Historical pragmatics**

**Team presentation of Exploration C9 by Li Qi and Daniel:**  
*Power*

**Unit B11 Readings**

Culpeper, J. (2010). Historical pragmatics. In L. Cummings (Ed.), *The pragmatics encyclopedia* (pp. 188-192). Abingdon, UK & New York: Routledge.

Kohnen, T. (2009). Historical corpus pragmatics. In A. H. Jucker, D. Schreier & M. Hundt (Eds.), *Corpora: Pragmatics and discourse. Papers from the 29th International Conference on English Language Research on Computerized Corpora (ICAME 29), Ascona, Switzerland, 14-18 May 2008* (pp. 13-36). Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi.

Taavitsainen, I., & Jucker, A. H. (2008). "Methinks you seem more beautiful than ever": Compliments and gender in the history of English. In A. H. Jucker & I. Taavitsainen (Eds.), *Speech acts in the history of English* (pp. 195-228). Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins

## Assignments

**Attendance and Readings.** You are expected to attend class regularly and to complete weekly readings from Section A of the textbook and the additional readings listed. You should read the relevant Section A from the textbook before each meeting. I will circulate a roster for you to mark your attendance at each class meeting.

**Extension Tasks.** You are expected to carry out extension tasks from Section B of the textbook based not only on the short extracts in the textbook but also the complete article or chapter available on Blackboard. Your written responses to the tasks in Section B are due on the week following discussion of that topic. Your responses to all extension tasks should total between two and three single-sided pages in one week's assignment. All students should complete the extension tasks in Units B1 and B2. After these first two assignments, you can choose to do either the five odd-numbered assignments (B3, B5, B7, B9, B11) or the five even numbered ones (B4, B6, B8, B10, B12). Please submit each assignment in two equivalent forms: a soft copy through Blackboard and a hard copy to me.

**Explorations.** On nine occasions throughout the course, a team of between two and four students will present a lesson based on a task in Section C (Explorations) in the textbook. This assignment involves conducting your own research and reporting it to the class. You should plan a presentation to the class to last for no more than 45 minutes and make your presentation the week following the lecture of the topic. Make sure that your presentation includes an introduction to the topic of your research, a body in which you describe what you have done and why you did it, and a conclusion in which you describe what you have learned from doing the research. Please make your presentation as effective as possible by good organization, effective use of visual aids, an engaging style of delivery, and meaningful interaction with your audience. The team grade will be determined by the votes of me and the students in your audience on the *Presentation Evaluation Form* (see below).

**Take-Home Tests.** Your knowledge and interpretation of the readings and lectures will be assessed by two tests. The tests are in take-home format and each student should write his or her own exam. The midterm test will be available on 26 September and will be based on the topics we have covered in weeks 1-7. Your answers are due on 10 October. The final test will be available on 7 November and will be based on the topics covered in weeks 8-12. Your answers are due on 14 November. Each question will be taken from one of the Explorations sections in the textbook. (Question 1 will be taken from Unit C1; Question 2 will be taken from Unit C2; and so on.) You must choose to answer four questions, each of which will be scored out of 25 points for a maximum of 100 points on each test.

**Authorship.** Some of your assignments for this course involve integrating information from published sources into your own writing and most assignments involve work done on your own. When you are working on your own, you need to be careful to avoid plagiarism, collusion, and complicity. In the ELL Policy on Academic Dishonesty, these terms are defined as follows. *Plagiarism* is “passing off someone else’s ideas or work, wittingly or unwittingly, as your own;” *collusion* means “copying from another’s work;” and *complicity* means “allowing another student to practice collusion, i.e., to copy your own work.”

**Assessment**

I will award letter grades for the Extension Tasks and Explorations and percent scores for the two tests. The meanings and equivalencies of the grades follow.

Grade Name	Grade Point	Narrative
A+	5.00	Excellent. Work goes well beyond the requirements of the assignment.
A	5.00	Demonstrates full understanding of all concepts; creatively applies theories and methods to new problems in the field.
A-	4.50	Intermediate grades
B+	4.00	
B	3.50	Demonstrates understanding of all concepts; can correctly apply theories and methods to new problems in the field.
B-	3.00	Intermediate grades
C+	2.50	
C	2.00	Demonstrates understanding of some but not all concepts; some errors in applying theory and methods to new problems in the field.
D+	1.50	Intermediate grade
D	1.00	Demonstrates understanding of a limited number of concepts; many errors in applying theory and methods to new problems in the field.
F	0.00	Lack of understanding of concepts; not capable of applying theories and methods to new problems in the field. Assignment not completed by deadline.

Your final grade for the course will take into account grades awarded on all assignments in the following proportions.

Assignment	Percentage of Final Grade
Midterm Test	25%
Final Test	25%
Extension Tasks	30%
Explorations	20%





**Presentation Evaluation Form**

Presentation Grade [5 = Excellent (A+); 4 = Good (A); 3 = Satisfactory (B); 2 = Some problems (C); 1 = Many problems (D); 0 = Did not present (F); NA= not applicable].

Presenter(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 1. Introduction: Did the introduction capture the audience's interest? Was necessary background given? Was a clear purpose conveyed?

\_\_\_ 2. Organization: Was there a clear organization? Were transitions between sections clear and effective? Did the organization lead to a clear conclusion?

\_\_\_ 3. Content: Did the speaker support their points? Was the supporting material relevant and up to date?

\_\_\_ 4. Visual Aids: Were visual aids used effectively and appropriately, carefully prepared?

\_\_\_ 5. Conclusion: Were key points reinforced? Was a sense of closure provided? If appropriate, was a course of action proposed?

\_\_\_ 6. Delivery: Was the speaker natural, enthusiastic? Did they speak clearly? Were appropriate gestures, posture, expressions used?

\_\_\_ 7. Discussion: Were questions from the audience answered accurately, clearly, effectively?

\_\_\_ 8. General Comments (use back of form):