BOOK REVIEW

Pragmatics, by Siobhan Chapman, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, viii + 214 pp., $38.00 (paperback), ISBN: 0-333-69344-2

Songthama Intachakra*

Department of Linguistics, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand
songtham@tu.ac.th

Exactly 50 years have passed since pragmatics began to emerge as a distinct area of linguistics. Given the rich abundance of literature tracing the development of pragmatics up until now, newcomers to the field often express dismay that a majority of published works so far have been either too introductory to be helpful, or too advanced to be conveniently digestible. But Siobhan Chapman's *Pragmatics* (2011) is exactly the kind of introductory book I've been looking forfor years. I would recommend it to anyone wanting a grasp of pragmatics in a nutshell, withouthaving to have much or even any prior knowledge of linguistics or the philosophy of language.

The book is divided into seven chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 give a general outline of pragmatics, broadly defined as a study of context-dependent meaning (p.1ff). In Chapter 1, readers are informed that to understand pragmatics, both semantic (word/sentence-level) aspects of meaning and knowledge of non-linguistic (social and cultural) contexts are indispensable; however, it is the latter realm of enquiry that constitutes the major focus of pragmatics. Two influential schools of pragmatics, along with their specific purposes,

assumptions and methodologies, are introduced. The Anglo-American tradition analyses meaning as an abstract system bydeveloping formal accounts of language use (theoretical pragmatics), while European Continental pragmatics concerns itself with features of communication as they are influenced by general conditions of language use and by social, cultural and/or situational factors (social pragmatics).

Chapter 2 is devoted to a discussion of how semantics and pragmatics, despite their points of divergence, can be mutually dependent. Distinctions between the foci of semantics (sentences) and that of pragmatics (utterances) are pointed out. Next, notions such as logic, truth conditions and mood are explored. This chapter ends with a suggestion that there are meanings to be discovered beyond the literal sense of sentences/utterances. The intricacies of this endeavour are explained in terms of such concepts as entailment, presupposition and deixis.

Chapters 3 through 5 put the development of pragmatics into perspective. Beginning by situating pragmatics within de Saussure's structuralism, Chapter 3 first addresses the way in which logical positivism gave rise to early pragmatic thinking and then explores how pragmatics proper, pioneered by 'ordinary language' philosophers, broke away from this tradition. Chapter 4 continues the discussion of the contribution these thinkers made to pragmatics. It incorporates speech act theory and its many dimensions, types of implicature, the cooperative principle and its conversational maxims.

After considering fundamental approaches to pragmatics in Chapters 3 and 4, readers are introduced to the field's

more recent developments in Chapter 5. Neo-Griceans put the work of pragmatics forefather H.P. Grice under scrutiny and suggested improvements to Grice's original programme. Grice's four maxims are reduced in number to three according to Levinson's Q-, I- and M-principles, and to two in light of Horn's Q- and R-Principles. Another influential approach and the most reductionist of all is relevance theory; for relevance theorists, only one maxim (i.e. principle of relevance) suffices. Their hypothesis represents a broader scope than that of the neo-Griceans, dealing with how language links with mind and the cognitive processes when language is produced and interpreted.

The remainder of the book offers an overview of the applied side of pragmatics (Chapter 6) and how pragmatic thinking features in other branches of language studies also with focus on meaning in context (Chapter 7). Chapter 6 begins with a review of politeness and the more recently emerging area of impoliteness. In addition, it touches upon the role pragmatics plays in different types of literary texts and in child language acquisition. It also gives an account of the application of pragmatics to psycholinguistics-related studies: the analysis of cognitive impairments of people with communicative disabilities (clinical pragmatics) and also research that puts the merits of current pragmatic theories (and counter-theories) to the test in laboratory environments (experimental pragmatics). Chapter 7 provides a summary of relationships held between pragmatics and neighbouring disciplines: conversation analysis, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics.

With only a quick glance at the book's title and contents, readers are likely to form an impression that Chapman's

Pragmatics is not very different from any other introductory book on pragmatics. Nevertheless, what makes this monographdistinct and at the same time appealing and highly recommendable, is the reader-friendly style that Chapman has adopted. Unlike the authors of several other books of a similar nature, her priority of presentation is not to provide merely a general introduction of concepts followed by examples and brief explanation, nor does it treat pragmatics topics primarily in abstract terms, using specialised terminologies and assuming a prior knowledge of pragmatics issues. Chapman takes the time to introduce and define each account in a clear and comprehensible manner, before probing deeper into detail about relevant complexities and debates. At the end of each chapter, a short section with suggestions for further reading is also offered.

Readers may notice some repetition (for example, Chapter 2vs.5.3, along with later parts of 6.2, 6.3 and 6.5), but I feel that this treatment is for the good reason that it helps to raise the reader's awareness of the relationships between concepts that might otherwise not become so apparent to them at first sight. Despite this (and the other inevitable limitations of an introductory and yet wide-ranging treatment of the subject), there is no doubt that novice students of pragmatics will find Chapman's *Pragmatics* a friendly and helpful companion as they travel through the pragmatics landscape, in their quest to learn more about topics of interest or to carry out research in their chosen areas.