Pragmatics is More than Initiate, Maintain, and Terminate

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Non-Financial:
- FLASHA: VP Convention

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- Professional Communication Services, Inc.: President
- Author, intellectual property
- SCSHA registration

My Books

Pragmatics

the “Art of Conversation”
We only pay attention to pragmatics when it’s weird

Listing pragmatic deficiencies is difficult but everyone can identify “Zero Order Skills”
Zero Order Skills

- Richard LaVoie
- Something you pay attention to because it isn’t seen as correct

When it comes to social skills, it doesn’t matter what you think about yourself...

*It matters what everyone else thinks of you!*

Why is it important to have good social-pragmatic communication?

Appropriate social skills require:

- motivation to “fit in”
- realize messages take many forms
- accurately perceive situations
- decode information from others
- perform the necessary social skills
- recognize social feedback
- act upon the social feedback
Individuals with dysfunctional social-pragmatics have a social stigma that lasts

- It has an early onset
  - earlier than semantics and syntax
- Assists in generalization of traditional language therapy goals
- Builds confidence

How quickly do people make judgments about others?

0.5-5 seconds

And if it’s negative, how many consecutive good interactions must we have before we change our mind about that person?

8-12

What’s Important?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adolescent Viewpoint</th>
<th>Teacher Viewpoint</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eye contact</td>
<td>humor comprehension</td>
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<td>narrative</td>
<td>slang usage</td>
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<td>humor comprehension</td>
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<td>topic maintenance</td>
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<td>slang usage</td>
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What’s Unimportant?

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<th>Adolescent Viewpoint</th>
<th>Teacher Viewpoint</th>
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<tr>
<td>nonverbal comprehension</td>
<td>turn taking</td>
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<td>perspective taking</td>
<td>perspective taking</td>
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<td>vocal tone interpretation</td>
<td>logical communication</td>
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<td>clarification</td>
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How often do we communicate?

- 80% of waking hours are spent communicating
  - Listening
  - Speaking
  - Reading
  - Writing

Individuals who recognized the need for improved social thinking had higher salaries than those who didn’t recognize the need

Those lacking social cognition had less positive employment experiences and showed more preference for solitary activities
Social-Pragmatics:
The Foundation for Developing Friendships

If one doesn’t have adequate social-pragmatics, friend making can be extremely difficult

If only it were this easy to make friends...
Pragmatic Theories

Social Learning

Key players: Vygotsky & Halliday
Concept: language is viewed as being acquired through the observation of modeled events and outcomes
Requires the ability to deduce from observation and apply for future social functioning

Interactional Approach

Key Players: Ainsworth, Blurton-Jones, Brazelton, Bruner, Kaye, & Shaffer
Concept: Children learn language through reciprocal interaction with others
Based on analysis that babies have the ability to discriminate when to initiate and respond in turn-taking fashion

Developmental Stages of Pragmatics
Pre-school

- **Birth - 1 year:**
  - adults provide interactional structure  
    Bruner, J.  
  - synchronous adult-child interaction  
    Trevarthen, C.  
  - adults recognize & reinforce proto-word usage  

- **1-2 years:**
  - range of communicative acts expands
  - use of combinations of: words, objects and gestures
  - greater awareness of conversation in context
  - verbal turn-taking

- **2-3 years:**
  - elaboration of language forms and use of nonverbal language
  - development of Theory of Mind begins
  - turn-taking develops

- begins to imitate others’ vocalizations and gestures
- cries become differentiated
- shows objects to others
- points for object recognition and show
- establishes connection prior to vocalizing
- greater degree of conversational relevance
- beginnings of conversational repairs
- beginnings of metalinguistics

3-4 years:
- capable of making statements about turn-taking
- requests use strategies and multi-steps (“You know the ice cream? If I’m good, can I have some?”)

…narrative and story telling well developed…


4-5 years:
- repairs continue to be developed but clarifications frequently blame listener
- justification of demands emerges
- greater clarification of word referents
- greater recognition of the listener’s needs
- gains noted in politeness, persuasion, hints, rights (e.g. claiming and giving), justifying, & explaining


- Early Elementary:
  - 6-7 years:
    - use of meta-pragmatics (describing the rules of communication)
    - repairs continue to evolve
  - 7-8 years:
    - clarification correctly identifies problem
    - higher level narratives

- Late Elementary:
  - 9 years:
    - clear understanding of threats and cause-effect
    - greater recognition of Theory of Mind
    - decrease in nonspecific terms (thingy)
    - increased tact

- multiple levels of politeness are understood and can be explicitly referred to

Adults:

- complexity continues to development
- able to use communication in difficult situations - e.g. complaints, firing employee, initiating conversation with stranger, etc.

When Things Go Wrong

And then Mr. Spock used his mind meld...

Characteristics of Dysfunctional Pragmatics

- Expressing communicative intents
- Conversational management
- Problems of presupposition
- Pragmatic comprehension and knowledge base
Expressing Communicative Intent

- does not attract attention to self
- does not point
- limited initiation of conversation
- ambiguous conversation
- echolalia
- perseveration

- poor non-verbal communication
  - eye signals
  - orientation to partner
  - body language
  - facial expression
  - gesture

- prosodic dysfunction
  - too loud/soft
  - monoloudness
  - inappropriate stress
  - inappropriate rhythm
  - unusual intonation
  - inappropriate rate
- unusual vocal quality
- semantic searching
- minor hesitation
- false starts
- neologisms
- circumlocution

Conversational Management

- poor interaction skills
- poor attention and listening
  - ADD or IDGAS?
- poor turn taking (verbal & nonverbal)
- minimal turn taking
- avoiding conversation

- reduced speech acts
  - restricted range
  - overuse of a single style (e.g. questions)
  - inappropriate use

- dysfunctional organization and relevance
  - minimal interest in topic
  - illogical sequence
  - incoherence
  - reduced cohesion
  - excessive attention to extraneous detail
    - central coherence
○ dysfunctional topic management
  ○ poor introduction of topics
  ○ poor topic maintenance
  ○ inappropriate relevance
  ○ restricted interest
  ○ poor termination of conversation

○ dysfunctional topic repair
  ○ failure to request clarification
  ○ failure to indicate non-comprehension
  ○ failure to supply clarification
  ○ failure to initiate repairs

○ dysfunctional interactive style
  ○ rudeness
  ○ inappropriate style for setting
  ○ pedantic
  ○ overuse of cliches & utterances
  ○ hesitancy/too rapid in responding

Presupposition
(assumption of what others are thinking)

○ ignoring listener’s perspective
○ no tact
○ lack of empathy
○ providing too much/little information
○ intermingling of new information with old
○ using more generals than specifics
- reliance upon nonspecifics (e.g. “it, thing”)  
- overly formal language  
- inability to use narratives  
- inability to use modal verbs (e.g. “can, shall, will, dare, must, may”)  
- tendency to ramble

- reduced use of metaphors, irony, humor, idioms  
- use of jargon  
- word substitution (e.g. “pork” for “fork” or “hand” for “foot”)  
- tendency to be repetitive

**Comprehension and Knowledge Base**

- reduced ability to decipher the world around him  
  - central coherence  
  - poor inferencing  
  - hyper-literality  
  - confusion of referents during conversation  

- inability to monitor own comprehension  
- inability to comprehend the intention of others  
- inability to comprehend facial expressions  
- poor sense of time and temporal language  
- inability to use spatial language
- reduced comprehension of narratives
- reduced ability to comprehend irony, humor, metaphors, and idioms

Forget about using standardized tools

they simply don’t address FUNCTIONAL use

Assessing Social-Pragmatic Communication

What does 72% pragmatic effectiveness mean?
Inherent Problems:

- lack of normative data
- subjectivity of observation
- definition of “What is acceptable behavior?”
- partner’s impact on student
- setting

Complexity of Context

- cultural mores
- environmental situation
- demands of a specific activity
- role and code-shifting
- relationships and impact of prior events

- student’s lack of ability versus failure to demonstrate ability
- context and it’s effect on performance
  - it has immense implications on assessment

- current state of relationship (e.g. the mom who helped her daughter using Craig’s list)
- knowledge of the partner
  - strangers are harder to engage than friends
- topic knowledge
- linguistic context
  - deleting mutually known information
- inferential context
  - one must understand the partner’s intent

Communication Assessment
- nonverbal communication
- non-literal language
- speech prosody
- social-pragmatic communication

- Recommended nonverbal communication procedures:
  - eye gaze
  - gestures

Does this guy “get it?”
Watch the lady’s expression - what’s her “take” of this guy?
Would a standardized test determine his problem?

Recommended non-literal procedures:
- metaphor
- irony
- absurdity
- humor

Pragmatics plays a critical role in social interaction

Analyze the social dynamics in the following video
- **Recommended speech prosody procedures:**
  - melody
  - volume (loudness)
  - stress
  - pitch

- **Recommended social-pragmatic communication procedures:**
  - turn-taking
  - cues & prompts
  - social-conversational rules
  - conversational coherence
  - reciprocity

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**Tools Appropriate for Preschool**

- **Halliday’s Functions of Language**

- **Preverbal Communication Schedule**

- **Communication Intentions Inventory**
- **Pragmatics Profile of Early Scales**

- **EcoScales**

- **Pragmatics Profile of Early Communication Skills**

- **Bristol Language Development Scales**

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**Tools Appropriate for K-Adults**

- **Dore’s Conversational Acts**

- **Fey’s Pragmatic Patterns**

- **Tough’s Functions of Language**

- **Prutting Pragmatic Protocol**

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- **Muir’s Informal Assessment for Social - Communication**

- **Halliday’s Functions of Language**

- **Pragmatic Rating Scale**

- **Interaction Record**
o **Communicative Partner Profile**

o **Directing Discourse**

Be aware of the role Theory of Mind plays in social-pragmatics

**Conversational Effectiveness Profile-Revised**

- observational rating scale comprised of 3 domains:
  - social interaction
  - social communication
  - social-emotional regulation

**Theory of Mind**
The ability to be aware of, and make judgments of others and realize they are aware of, and making judgments of you
That’s why no matter how much you want to, you will never do this right now!

Deficits Related to ToM

- difficulty explaining own behaviors
- difficulty understanding emotions
- difficulty predicting the behavior and emotional states of others
- problems understanding the perspectives of others

- problems inferring the intentions of others
- lack of understanding that behavior impacts how others think and/or feel
- problems with joint attention and other social conventions
- problems differentiating fiction from fact

And now for something completely different…
Thank you for coming.

Don’t forget to check out my website at www.socialpragmatics.com and like me on Facebook.