

CURRENT
METHODOLOGICAL
ISSUES IN PRAGMATICS
—  RESEARCH

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Preamble



☞ The increasing tempo of research in pragmatics and related domains in Nigeria in line with global trends



These domains emphasize functional dynamics of language as opposed to formal stipulations.



Structures exist to reinforce function.

Often, when language functions are compromised, the society is imperiled.



Communication deficits are related to breaches in cooperative maxims and which may be extra-linguistic.

These maxims are pragmatically inferred



∞. This reality tends to suggest that the future looks up to pragmatics for deeper interpretations and for sustainability.



❧ This is the pragmatics that has well-defined methodological orientations.

❧ This pragmatics is more fundamental for the African context with myriads of conflicts.

Our Focus



☞ The challenge to launch deep into the wider scope of pragmatics, seeking significance in solving our problems



☞ A conversation on the current methodological issues in pragmatics research.

Scope of Pragmatics Research



Our emphasis on developments in the 1970's when pragmatics became a subfield of linguistics and which offers a more holistic account of human behaviour



- ❧ The linguistic receptacle also reveals the moderating influence of context on meaning.
- ❧ It examines factors that govern language choices in social interactions, and how our choices affect others



Pragmatics is expected to reveal in a more satisfying way, the meaning potential of every linguistic unit in line with the close connection between pragmatics and discourse



Thus, discourse is the hub of language use, with emphasis on the meaning ramifications of “real language that real people use in the real world” far beyond the atomistic nature of words and intermediate structures of phrases and clauses



- ❧ Discourse analysis - an attempt to offer a systematic explication of any discourse.
- ❧ Critical Discourse Analysis CDA offers a radical critique of relations and reveals the ideological underpinnings of a text



The agenda of CDA-

- ∞ the appraisal of social problems,
- ∞ the establishment of power relations,
- ∞ the connecting of the society and its culture
- ∞ the highlighting of the ideology behind the text



- ❧ the tracing of the history of the discourse,
- ❧ the interpreting of texts from the societal perspective,
- ❧ the underscoring of a methodology and
- ❧ the maintaining of a scientific perspective.



Discourse does not exist as a linguistic unit, but rather a pragmatic one-hence the creative approach of discourse-pragmatics.



Activity-based approach to pragmatics,
is multidisciplinary drawing from

- ∞ anthropology ,
- ∞ linguistics ,
- ∞ philosophy ,
- ∞ psychology ,
- ∞ and Sociology

.



Odebunmi (2016) identifies allies of discourse as

- ❧ anthropology,
- ❧ artificial intelligence,
- ❧ computer science,
- ❧ linguistics, literature



Other relevant areas include

☞ advertising,

☞ film,

☞ language teaching,

☞ lexicography



∞ law

∞ media studies,

∞ psychiatry,

∞ psychology and

∞ sociology



- Meaning differential in pragmatics is accounted for in Austin's (1962) dichotomy of *communicative sense* and *communicative force*.
- Pragmatics is further enhanced by Grice's (1967) cooperative maxims of *quantity, quality, relation and manner*.



❧ Violations of these maxims leading to *implicature*, are common in intercultural communication

❧ The effect of implicature would be minimized if the uniformity of context would be assured.



- ⌘ Within the framework of Austin's speech acts theory meaning is determined by use.
- ⌘ *The Speech Acts theory has been criticized for its*



∞ insensitivity to context even at cross-cultural boundaries.;

∞ the possibility to collapse illocutionary and perlocutionary acts into intention; and

∞ the existence of acts that elicit multiple illocutionary forces.



Relevance theories ensure that cognitive structures of communication are organized, with emphasis on obligations in the key areas of sincerity, grounding and consideration.



- ✧ that relevance is in degrees and never absolute; there is also the plausibility of multiple relevance.
- ✧ There is therefore the need for a more rigorous theoretical foundation to gauge relevance in communication with context in mind.



☞) Context mediates across the speaker, the utterance, the act performed and the hearer and would manifest in distal/ macro or micro forms. with physical, epistemic, linguistic or social realities.

A Scientific View of Pragmatics



☞ The revolution in natural philosophy and the expansion of the idea of what is scientific with linguistics incorporated



∞ The social sciences address different issues of the society and more importantly, issues of human relationships, some of which are reflected in compounds -.



- ☞ anthropological linguistics,
- ☞ computational linguistics,
- ☞ geographical linguistics, etc..

These have profound implications for methodology, bearing in mind positive (quantitative) and interpretive (qualitative) paradigms

Approaches to Pragmatics Research



- ∞ theoretical,
- ∞ contrastive,
- ∞ corpus-based,
- ∞ empirical ,and
- ∞ experimental

Theoretical Approach



- ❧ The earliest strategy relying on the intuition of the linguist to make generalizations about highly hypothetical utterances.
- ❧ Could incorporate real data, especially in the writing of school texts.



✂ Prominent in the Nigerian context with the result that pragmatic research has yielded very little in solving real communication challenges of the country



Many Nigerian experts in the field provide good support in forensic and language analysis to research clusters in continental Europe with international lead researchers.

Contrastive Pragmatics



- ☞ Focuses on the comparison of pragmatic principles across languages and cultures.
- ☞ Strives to reveal conventional functions and meanings in languages on a universal basis.



☞ Holds a strong promise to support contemporary inquiry into the nature of principles and parameters of universals in language.



As we strive for international understanding in the spirit of globalization and the knowledge economy, contrastive pragmatics would open up new research opportunities beyond the phonology/syntax pre-eminence in contrastive studies in the country.

Corpus Pragmatics



- ✧ Draws from the intersection between pragmatics and the more established field of corpus linguistics
- ✧ Incorporates computational skills in dealing with pragmatic issues .



- ❧ Holds a strong promise for big data analytics.
- ❧ When fully developed, and in conjunction with forensic strategies. it could help in solving some of our security problems.

Empirical Pragmatics



- ☞ Combines theoretical and corpus-based strategies to elicit consistent data which will support and validate existing approaches
- ☞ Data collection is usually eclectic.



∞ No single approach can capture the full range of language possibilities, hence the **eclectic** perspective with **content analysis** as reinforcement.

Philosophical Orientations



- ☞ Research methodology as the systematic analysis and application of theoretical underpinnings with highly philosophical foundations.
- ☞ Emphasis on creating new knowledge and on error correction

Creative research emphasizes

∞ paradigms,

∞ models as well as

∞ quantitative and qualitative techniques.

∞ justification for preferred methods in line with the idea of best practices.



☞ Creativity in research avoids the persistent error of verbatim copy of foreign research approaches that may not address salient issues of our land



Philosophy as the *love of wisdom*
concentrates on:

☞ reality, reason

☞ knowledge, values

☞ the mind and language.



**Language is critical for
philosophical analysis because
of the issue of nuances.**



☞ Many pragmatic postulations have their roots in philosophy.

☞ There is the important role of perception which yields pragmatic possibilities.





∞.The guide in philosophy is logical and conceptual, not necessarily physical. and explains the empirical, theoretical, cumulative and verifiable processes



In line with Aristotle's **Statis** theory, research should lift people to higher levels by focusing on : *facts, the real meaning , quality* (in terms of being series) ,and *a specific plan of action.*

☞Pragmatics research should also be **ethical**

Methodological Issues



- ❧ The ethical burden in multi-ethnic societies of developing
- ❧ Originality claims in terms of : newness, innovation, transfer of knowledge, design, context...
- ❧ The real value of research

What Pragmatists do



☞ The ultimate gauge of the success of the methodology of pragmatics research is based on the checklist of what pragmatists do.



- ✧ Maintaining appropriateness
- ✧ Identifying kernel messages beyond surface expression in line with the concepts of **accommodation, abduction, inference, presupposition and entailment**



According to Jürgen Habermas:

**The task of universal pragmatics
is to identify and reconstruct
universal conditions of
possible mutual understanding**

Some Closing Thoughts



As we link our exploration with the promise of the parent body, the International Pragmatics Association, we submit that:

Pragmatics research should incorporate multidisciplinary dynamics;



Research should stimulate various fields of the application of the knowledge of language with emphasis on the pragmatic potential of communication.



Thus, pragmatics should be included in the training modules of lawyers, mediators, advocates, negotiators, forensic practitioners, advertisers, translators, caregivers, politicians, journalists, marketers, public speakers etc.



Language teaching should be enriched with cross-cultural pragmatics and social cultural norms, with specific reference to issues of mental sets, schemata, scripts, speech events, linguistic etiquette, socio-cultural norms and pragmatic accents.



- ❧ The focus would be to seek out universal constructs that bind human languages together.
- ❧ These linguistic constructs manifest in identifiable cues.



- ❧ Pragmatics research offers a great vista for the coalescence of methodologies in communication and language engineering.
- ❧ This conversation can suffice as a catalyst for further engagements.

