

# New Trends in Pragmatics Research -- A Structured Review on *Further Advances in Pragmatics and Philosophy: Part 2 Theories and Applications*

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**Abstract:** This paper provides a structured review of the book *Further Advances in Pragmatics and Philosophy: Part 2*. As this book is the second volume of *Part 1*, it naturally maintains the editorial and selective styles of the first one, but it is much more varied in topics, excelling the former one in both quantity and quality. This review article comprehensively reviewed with a pair of critical each paper collected in the book in sequential order, aiming to contribute some constructive ideas to the field of pragmatics in both theoretical and applied angles. Via a think-aloud protocol, this article captures the main arguments and the strengths of each research piece included, and summaries the overall trends and the major gaps in current pragmatic researches, from reading which the readers would keep up with the innovations in research paradigm and methodologies as well as the potential explorative scopes. It clearly shows that despite the strenuous efforts made in traditional logic reasoning and conversation analysis, empirical studies through more cutting-edge approaches constitute the mainstream of pragmatic researches in recent years. Hopefully, they would use the article as a primary guide for their own future studies.

**Keywords:** Structured Critical Review, Pragmatics, Think-Aloud Protocol, Trends, Gaps, Logic Reasoning, Conversation Analysis, Empirical Studies

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## 1. Introduction

This newly published volume continues the aims and scopes of the last volume, *Further Advances in Pragmatics and Philosophy: Part 2 Theories and Applications*, and brings in another more wonderful collection of the latest works in the fields of pragmatics and philosophy of language. In the "Introduction" part, Alessandro Capone highlights the universality of rationality in pragmatics, arguing that "rationality in pragmatics can be seen as the characteristic of literate society and that it is not impossible to imagine that in some remote tribes lack of rationality is the norm" [5] (pp. v.) as suggested by Jock Wong. And he proposes that "Rationality can be seen as the result of formal training or teaching and exposure to ways of thinking that are rational" (ibid.). He further points out that rationality can be adopted to interpret the speaker's intentions, according to the numerous "contextual clues" [5] (pp. vi) use; pragmatics and

philosophy are interrelated in exploring "how pragmatics intrusion can be applied to language but also to philosophical problems" (ibid.). Same as the last Volume, this new book also falls into two main parts. Part I Theories compiles the new research pieces on core issues in pragmatic theories, while Part II Applications reflects the up-to-date scholarly explorations in the applications of such theoretical questions. This book review article will make brief introductions to all the papers selected in this volume.

## 2. Dynamics in Theoretical Researches on Pragmatics and Philosophy

Theoretical explorations are of vital significance in pragmatic studies, which mainly follows the traditions in philosophy of language and pragmatics by conducting logic reasoning and quality-based think-aloud protocol as the main tools. Part I "Theories" includes 17 articles, which will be

reviewed one by one as follows.

The first article “Vague Speaker-Meaning” (by Stephen Schiffer) revisits the concept of “speaker-meaning”, and point out that “Acts of vague speaker-meaning are the acts of speaker-meaning speakers perform in producing vague utterances, and since virtually every utterance is vague, virtually every act of speaker-meaning is an act of vague speaker-meaning” [5] (pp. 3). The conclusions are seemingly negative in that they “preclude a natural language from having a compositional meaning theory or truth theory” – “The utterance of the sentence has truth conditions in the sense that there are myriad states of affairs which, if realized, ... would make the utterance determinately true, and myriad states of affairs which, if realized, ... would make the utterance determinately false” [5] (pp. 22). This paper brings new insights to a classical topic and is thus worth close reading.

The next article, “Indirect Reports in the Interpretation of Contracts and Statutes: A Gricean Theory of Coordination and Common knowledge” is argues that “Common knowledge facilitates coordination” [5] (pp. 26) It concludes that “the hypothetical approach assigns meanings to words in ways that facilitate the creation of common knowledge that enables coordination” [5] (pp. 40) and the degree of courts’ adopting “similar common-knowledge-creating approaches to interpretation” (ibid.) deserves more efforts, with the suggestion of a different approach: focus on the fact that statutory interpretation can interpret words in ways that facilitate the creation of common knowledge through speaker meaning”(ibid). Indirect report is also a popular topic, and this article contributes to its discussion by investigating common knowledge’s functions of generating and promoting coordination, which is novel indeed. Meanwhile, Neo-Gricean Pragmatics [10] [11] has renovated the gaps in the classical Gricean Theory, which are also applicable in studying indirect reports, while relevant research remains quite limited.

The following article comes from Prof. Istvan Kesckes, SUNY Albany, entitled “Should Intercultural Communication Change the Way We Think About Language?”. This paper argues that research in intercultural communication should change how we think about language. It particularly centers on three issues and concludes that “Intercultural communication where semantics analyzability prevails in meaning construction and comprehension directs our attention to the changing role of context and the reinterpretation of the semantics-pragmatics interface” [5] (pp. 59) with a prediction that this dominant topic definitely awaits reinvestigation.

The fourth article “Cognitive Pragmatics and Evolutionism” proposes an interesting hypothesis on the role of pragmatics based on evolutionary theory. It argues that pragmatics need to avoid taking two opposite attitudes – “to passively embrace the variability of cultural contexts, and the endless proliferation of their ‘ad hoc’ rules, which would jeopardise any scientific aspiration” and “to comply with the principles of logical formalism” [5] (pp. 63). It finally concludes that a

biologically based account ‘would allow pragmatics to enter the cognitive science’s paradigm, which is considered today the best way to unify human and natural sciences’ (ibid). The article appeals to readers for its unique scope of evolutionism.

The fifth article, “The Semantics-Pragmatics Interface: An Empirical Investigation”, is one that probes into the semantics-pragmatics interface topic under heated discussion. It mentions that despite the common distinction between semantics and pragmatics as provided by linguists and philosophers, the boundary between these two linguistic branches tends to be blurred in an actual sense. The research results of two experiments indicate that people don’t differentiate the concepts of “truth, assertability, or believability” [5] (pp. 81) – arguing that “the semantics-pragmatics interface could be conceived as marking” (pp. 99) where the language is being mathematised. Undoubtedly, Semantics-Pragmatics Interface is a big topic for both Semanticists and Pragmaticists [12], while this article proposes a trendy approach for conducting this type of researches – go empirical and use big data [16].

The sixth article “Referents and Fixing Reference” consists of two notes – the first one provides two notes concerning the conception of “referent”, while the second one investigates the developing central field in line with Kripke’s “Naming and Necessity: reference fixing” [5] (pp. 101). He addresses three treatment of the idea “fixing the reference” with a retrospect of “the Fregean Heritage” [5] (pp. 107-108) and concludes this article with “afterthought: Kripke’s Chains of Communication” [5] (pp. 108-110). This article shares insightful notes on the classical linguistic dichotomy between referent and reference, which is truly worth reading.

The seventh article “Diagnosing Misattribution of Commitments: A Normative and Pragmatic Model of for Assessing Straw Man” establishes a nine-step method for deciding if a straw man fallacy has been engaged in a provided case, by beginning with some simple textbook cases and shifting into more complicated ones. The paper set up three goals. Finally, it summarizes that although all the three goals were reached, further explorations are needed to solved the problems encountered in attaining the third goal.

Still the next paper is “Descriptions in Use” by Paolo Leonardi. It points out that despite the discussion, criticism, supports and considerations on Domellan’s distinction between referential and attributive descriptions for the past over five decades from diverse perspectives, the debate remains unsettled concerning how to explain that agreements have been arrived on most of the facts. It reconstructs the issue and outlines a meaning as use framework. And finally, Leonardi proposed “a unitary account of the two uses of a description, whereby the descriptive condition is always relevant, while denying that a description in referential use operates in the same way as a proper name” [5] (pp. 137)

The ninth paper “Presupposition Triggers and Presumptive Interpretation” (by Fabrizio Macagno) deals with the classical concept of pragmatic presupposition”. Analysis is made on this concept with their relation to the dialogical

acceptance of a proposition by an interlocutor being taken into consideration. It concludes that “pragmatic presupposition is firstly a pragmatic phenomenon” [5] (pp. 176) contributing to articulating the speaker’s communicative objective, which “can be analyzed from a dialogical point of view as an act aimed at modifying the interlocutors’ commitments” (ibid) that “are essentially intertwined with presumptions” (ibid). This paper probes into the fuzzy logic involved in presupposition and investigates its goal in communication.

Paper 10 “Superman Semantics” (by Paul Saka) investigates Jennifer Saul’s puzzle, which is a general version of Frege’s one regarding opacity, proposes “troublesome triads such as: (i) Superman = Clark Kent; (ii) Superman does not wear glasses; (iii) Clark Kent does wear glasses.” [5] (pp. 181) Saka develops an equivocation explanation by employing the resources of cognitive semantics. His research shares Saul’s psychologistic shift but arrives at different conclusions. Despite Saul and other scholars’ disagreement on whether (i) is true or false, Saka seeks out a middle ground by arguing each of (I, ii, iii) is both true and false. Assuming his explanation holds water, he further proposes that “ambivalence ambiguity is due to inconsistencies intrinsic to our mental models” (ibid).

In Paper 11 “Varieties of Fiction Operators”, Alberto Voltolini aims to propose that “When suitably reinterpreted, Sainsbury is utterly right as to his first claim, yet just partially right as to his second claim” [5] (pp. 199) – “no worlds-based semantical treatment works for any of them” (ibid). He firstly introduces “Sainsbury’s Distinction” [5] (pp. 200-202), then provides a reinterpretation of “Sainsbury’s Distinction” [5] (pp. 203), and elaborates more on fiction operator [5] (pp. 207); lastly, he summarizes “some objections and replies” [5] (pp. 207-210), with clarifications on the necessity of the second fiction-involving operator through illustrations from literary works such as *Lolita*.

The next essay “Organic Meaning: An Approach to Communication with Minimal Appeal to Minds” develops a notion of meaning – termed as organic meaning likely to serve to connect “Grice’s notions of natural and non-natural meaning” as a bridge. By using an approach that uses tools from evolutionary game theory, this paper also brings new insights into “aspects of adult human communication that do not meet the cognitive demands of speaker meaning” [5] (pp. 211).

The 13<sup>th</sup> article “Polysemy and Gestaltist Computation. Some Notes on Gestaltist Compositionality” committed to the concept of Gestaltist Compositionality in two parts. The 1<sup>st</sup> part introduces “a minimal definition of ‘Gestaltist Compositionality’” [5] (pp. 229) and proves that “the computations implemented by the model of compositionality are sufficiently flexible to ensure the presence of several orders of semantic determination” (ibid). The 2<sup>nd</sup> part investigates “the consequences of this result with particular reference to the identification of some versions of compositionality” (ibid) relaxing the condition of semantic atomism without reducing the connections of determination

between comprehending of the compounds and comprehending of the components.

The next paper “The field Model of Language and Free Enrichment” addresses the more and more accepted claim that “postulating encoding and inferencing alone is not enough to account for the interpretation of all utterances” [5] (pp. 239), and points out that despite the large quantity of evidence provided, the interpretations of free enrichment are problematic in quality. It concludes that “humans have the ability to use all linguistic items (their encoded content) not only encodingly and inferentially, but also selectively – the way pronouns are used” [5] (pp. 248).

The following paper “Conversational Implicatures of Normative Discourse” (by Rancesca Poggi) points out that despite Grice (1967)’s formulation mainly takes “the assertive discourse” [5] (pp. 251) into consideration, say a discourse “aims to inform” and “can be true or false” (ibid), it is widely accepted that “norms do not aim to inform” but to “guide behaviours”, and thus “are neither true or false”. The paper concludes that “the mechanism of conversational implicatures permit to reconstruct our understanding: it provides a model through which our understanding can be explained in a rational form, regardless of what really happens in our brain” [5] (pp. 269). In contrast with this proposed idealized model, Robert B. Adrundale (2021: 19-25) traced Michael Haugh’s contributions in promoting the development of pragmatics towards interdisciplinary trajectory beyond language/linguistic pragmatics in traditional sense that mainly focuses conversational interaction [1, 2, 9]. And Haugh et al (2021: 35-39) argues for exploring pragmatic interactions from cross-cultural and intercultural perspective. As we can see, scholars of formal/socio-cognitive linguistic schools naturally interpret speaker meaning/intention from different perspectives and end up with different findings/conclusions. [8] Hereby Poggi’s essay, despite its logic rigidity, similar to the 2<sup>nd</sup> paper in this section, has limits in that it adopts the classical Gricean conversational maxims and thus is a bit out of date.

The 16<sup>th</sup> paper “Not Only Slurs. A Pragma-Rhetorical Approach to Verbal Abuse” deals with “the complex phenomenon of verbal abuse” [5] (pp. 273) as its topic, aiming to present “the productivity of pragma-rhetorical approach in addressing this issue” (ibid). In particular, it explains three controversial issues and concludes with a strong argument that “it is the best way to try to understand verbal abuse and, more in general, the role that words play in performing human violence” [5] (pp. 285).

The last article “What Can Linguistics Learn from Indirect Reports?” focuses on Alessandro Capone’s new monography—“The Pragmatics of indirect reports. Socio-philosophical considerations.”, adopting a framework supported by pragmatics of sociopragmatics. It concludes with an emphasis on the use of IS (indirect speech/report) in general linguistics, arguing that “Pragmatics therefore, for the very reason that it has to do with the users and conditions of use of a language, can only be social and can only regard the community of speakers discussed by Saussure” [5] (pp. 296).

All in all, Part I covers the most dynamic topics under discussion concerning pragmatic theories and thus enables readers to follow the trends in theoretical explorations in their own researches. This part deserves particular attention from scholars in the circle of pragmatics and related fields.

### 3. Advances in Applied Research on Pragmatics and Philosophy

Correspondingly, Part II “Applications” consists of 16 articles, which cover the latest representative applied researches in intercultural pragmatics, sociopragmatics, clinical pragmatics and cognitive pragmatics, which altogether take on a trend of inter-disciplinarity and/or multi-disciplinarity in terms of research methodology. Such a preference in selecting papers not only reflects the interdisciplinary nature of pragmatics [14], but also demonstrates the vigor of this field. (Terkouraf, 2021) Naturally, this set of papers would be of great reference to students and scholars in such fields.

The first paper “Narrating the Cinderella Story in Adults with Primary Progressive Aphasia” examines “the performance of adults with primary progressive aphasia during narration of the Cinderella story” [5] (pp. 301) via an investigation of their cognitive-linguistic skills. Given the versatility of the Cinderella narrative productive task, the researcher expects this study would “encourage all speech-language pathologists who work with clients who are suspected of having a neurodegenerative disorder to use a narrative production task as part of a language evaluation” [5] (pp. 326).

The second paper “On Making a Sandwich: Procedural Discourse in Adults with Right-Hemisphere Damage” aims to investigate diverse cognitive-linguistic skills with “a view to demonstrating the potential diagnostic significance of procedural discourse in a clinical language evaluation” [5] (pp. 331). It concludes that “the proposed reversal of the standard relationship between language tests and discourse production tasks in clinical language evaluation will, in time, lead to a much deeper understanding of language and communication disorder in adults with RHD” [5] (pp. 352).

In the third paper “Research in Clinical Pragmatics: The Essence of a New Philosophy, the State of the Art and Future Research”, Paola Pennisi makes a review on clinical pragmatics a new research area devote to “investigate cognitive underpinnings of pragmatics” through Louis Cummings’s Research in Clinical Pragmatics. It elaborates on all the essays in the that book and put them into discussion. The article demonstrates that it is necessary to collect more data and firstly make a theoretical reflection on the topics covered in the books.

The next article “Executive Functioning, Visuo-Spatial and Inter-Personal Skill Preservation in Alzheimer’s and Mild Cognitive Impairment” put the case of two patients under intra-nasal insulin therapy into consideration in the context of using therapeutic approaches to improve cognitive capacities

in a general trend. It argues that “selective cognitive improvement, even if partial, can have a significant impact on the quality of life of a patient and the ability to interact with others in a functional way; ameliorating some of the most devastating interactional and behavioral aspects of the disease” [5] (pp. 373). This paper concludes that “while there were other pragmatic abilities not studied here in detail (politeness, recall/retrieval, personal agency), we have these for future research” [5] (pp. 386). Johnathan Culpepper (2021)’s paper delves into the topic of (im)politeness in relation to hate speech, which further pushes forward this research trajectory, even though cognitive factor is not taken into consideration. [6]

The fifth paper “The Contribution from the Perspective of Language Cognitive Sciences on the Default Sciences and Architecture of Mind Debate” (by Caterina Scianna) reflects on “the debate between Capone’s ‘Default Semantics and the architecture of mind’ and Zhang and Zhang’s ‘Explicature versus default meaning: A response to Alessandro Capone’s Default Semantics and the architecture of the mind’ about the relationship between Jaszczolt’s default semantics and relevance theory” [5] (pp. 391). Through step-by-step logical reasoning, the paper concludes that “relevance theory and default semantics have different theoretical stances and it is not easy to find a unified picture for them, as maintained by Zhang and Zhang” [5] (pp. 404).

Next, Paola Pennisi’s “Personal Reference in Subjects with Autism” is another piece of research leaning on clinical pragmatics, in which she strives to “show the limits of the explanation of linguistic and pragmatic alterations in subjects with autism as a consequence of their deficit in Theory of Mind” and present “the advantages of a more holistic cognitive background such as that of Embodied Cognition (EC) theories” [5] (pp. 409). It mainly focuses on “alterations regarding the fixation of personal reference in subjects with autism” (ibid), suggesting that “the fixation of personal reference in subjects with autism could receive some very useful theoretical tools from EC theories to be explained and understood” [5] (pp. 410).

In the seventh paper “Two Ways of Saying ‘Thank you’ in Hong Kong Cantonese: m-goi vs. do-ze”, Jock Wong and Congyi Liu showcase a very interesting research that compares two Hong Kong Cantonese phrases (m-goi and do-ze) meaning “thank you” in English from the perspective of cultural pragmatics. The paper aims to elucidate the meaning of each of the two phrases using a maximally clear and minimally ethnocentric metalanguage. It summarizes that this study is motivated by the awareness of the two main ways of thanking people in Hong Kong Culture (HKC) which tend to confuse cultural outsiders” [5] (pp. 446).

The next paper “Respecting Other People’s Boundaries: A Quintessentially Anglo Cultural Value” (by Jock Wong) probes into the cultural challenge of understanding the meaning of respecting boundaries as an Anglo cultural value to non-Anglo speakers of English. It elucidates how important respecting boundaries is in terms of helping cultural outsiders understand related Anglo values such as

personal rights and personal autonomy. The paper is also expected to have some “implications for intercultural communication, cultural adaptation and language pedagogy” [5] (pp. 449).

The ninth paper “Towards a Cognitively-Mediated Conceptualisation of the Cooperative Principle: An Introduction to the Maxim of Diplomacy” adopts Erving Goffman’s definition of dramaturgy to explain the “looseness” in Grice’s principle of cooperation that leads to different interpretations in the existing scholarships on this issue. It points out that “the previous expansions of the Cooperative Principle (CP) were not successful in delivering a comprehensive account of the CP as a conversation principle” [5] (pp. 469), and “argues for a more cogent estimate of the CP by adding, as a mediator, the Maxim of Diplomacy (MOD) to the conversational maxims” (ibid).

The tenth paper “Mapping Places of Origin” (by Maria Pla Pozzato) focuses on “visual and linguistic representations which people give of their own places of origin” [5] (pp. 491), showing “different disciplines can cooperate, even though each of them maintains its specificity” (ibid) via sufficient sources of maps. It finally concludes that “this ‘new subject’ views its origin not so much as a matrix of its identity, but as a source, the primitive condition of a process of transformation that will take it to diverse places, in contact with different cultures” [5] (pp. 510).

Next, in “Taking a Stance: An Account for Persons and Institutions”, Jeffrey S. Helmreich reevaluates commissive speech acts like “I forgive you”, “I’m in favor”, “Thank you” and “Sorry” which are regarded as “expressives” with primary function to express a psychological state, and argues that viewing such utterances as stance-takings makes better sense than the standard expressivist explanation, “in terms of their meaning and the norms” [5] (pp. 513) that guide the use, and articulates “how non-personal institutions – corporations, countries and courts, for example – can perform these utterances sincerely” (ibid). This is the only article concerned with speech acts, though Speech act theory [3] is a classical and fundamental topic in pragmatic researches. Moreover, further research on speech act can also be extended for pedagogical purpose [7, 13].

“Marking Online Community Membership: The Pragmatics of Stance-taking”, the twelfth paper, analyzes data from academic seminars organized via Skype text chat, with a focus on illustrating how users mark community membership, using pronominals and seminar group name explicitly and reduced forms implicitly. It argues that such markers are of stance-taking, “where community membership is recovered pragmatically as a weak implicature” [5] (pp. 535).

The following paper “The Cathartic Function of Language: The Case Study of a Schizophrenic Patient” is written by Antonino Bucca. Given that the majority of language studies focusing on the logical-propositional aspects and the referential or discursive use, Bucca has identified the significance of “the emotional and cathartic aspects of expressive forms” and intends to fill in the gap. It emphasizes

the need for further researches on language features such as metaphorical expressions, metonymies, sarcasm, irony and the interdependent linguistic processes.

The 14<sup>th</sup> article, “‘I Hope You Will Let Flynn Go’: Trump, Comey, Pragmemes and Socio-pragmatics (A Strawsonian Analysis)”, written by Alessandro Capone and Antonino Bucca, discusses “an utterance/pragmeme/pract by Donald Trump addressed to FBI Director Comey: ‘I hope you will let Flynn go’ by taking into consideration “the explicature of this utterance and its illocutionary and perlocutionary effects” [5] (pp. 561). Through conducting detailed critical discourse analysis on the issue of power of speech, the paper finally summarizes that Trump’s illicit efforts to convince Comey to quit the Russian investigation case, intervening the judiciary power is a case made for obstacle towards justice due to his pragmatic fallacy.

Still the next paper “A Reply to ‘I Hope You Will Let Flynn Go’” (by Richard Warner) investigates the same case addressed in last article from a pragmatic perspective. It suggests that “speakers may not have determinate intentions and may not engage in the complex types of reasoning pragmatics typically attributes to them” (ibid). It concludes that the insightful analysis of last article which “illustrates the role and importance of the deep theoretical claim that, in various contexts, we move from ‘It is reasonable to think that the speaker performed such-and-such speech act’ to ‘The speaker performed such-and-such speech act’” [5] (pp. 586).

In the last paper of Part II, “Capone, Bucca, Warner and Llewellyn on Pragmmes and ‘I hope You Will Let Flynn Go’”, Brian E Butler puts himself in a dialogue with Capone and Bucca, and Warner, provides his own comments on their arguments. On the one hand, it concludes that “these authors aforementioned all offer very important arguments useful in the accurate interpretation of Trump’s statement, and for interpretation in law generally” [5] (pp. 587); on the other hand, it further concludes that “theories of language, implicit or explicit, do indeed inevitably influence the analysis of statements like Trump’s at a very deep and profound level” (ibid).

In general, Part II showcases a series of representative research pieces that applied pragmatic theories to address specific questions that intersect between classical pragmatic studies and other closely relevant aspects of language use such as psychology and cognition as well as social and medical/therapeutic angles. This part naturally broadens readers’ horizons in adopting interdisciplinary approaches in pragmatic studies

## 4. Conclusion

To sum up, compared with *Further Advances in Pragmatics and Philosophy: Part I Theories and Applications* [4], this new volume embraces a bunch of cutting-edge research in pragmatics and philosophy even better in variety and depth. The first volume is 298 pages in length, while the second volume has 594 pages. And some papers selected in this volume focus the same topic and are

closely interrelated with each other in viewpoints, which makes it impossible for readers to better understand the debated issues [15]. Besides, different from Volume 1 which mainly introduces European scholars' contributions to pragmatics, Volume 2 brings in more diverse voices of scholars from Asia and North America. Therefore, it definitely will open readers' eyes and enlightens more ground-breaking scholarly efforts in these fields. Naturally, such a good book deserves my full recommendation. The reviewer strongly recommends this book to everyone with interest in pragmatics, whether they have read Part I or not, because this volume is indeed much more abundant in content and creative in form. And she also hopes more volumes will follow in the series of Perspectives in Pragmatics, Philosophy & Psychology.

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