

# Understanding pragmatics

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Pragmatics is the discipline within linguistics that deals with actual language use. Language use is not only dependent on linguistic, that is grammatical and lexical knowledge, but also on cultural, situative and interpersonal contexts and conventions. One of the central aims of pragmatics is to research how context and convention – in their broadest sense – contribute to meaning and understanding. Thus, the social and cultural embedding of meaning is a central prerequisite for understanding pragmatics. Research in linguistic pragmatics deals with how speakers use their language(s) in various situations and contexts: what speakers do when they speak and why they do it. Pragmatics focuses on the actual language users, their communicative behaviour, their world and their point of view, in short, ‘the total human context of [language] use’ (Mey 1994: 3265). Pragmatics studies language and its meaningful use from the perspective of language users embedded in their situational, behavioural, cultural, societal and political contexts, using a broad variety of methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches depending on specific research questions and interests. Indeed, if we look at core domains of the discipline, we realize that linguistic pragmatics can be regarded as a transdiscipline that is relevant for, and has its predecessors in, many other disciplines such as Philosophy, Psychology, Ethology, Ethnology, Sociology and the Political Sciences. In this talk I take up this point and briefly discuss a selection of core issues of Pragmatics that were introduced into the field via these six disciplines (see Senft 2014).

## References:

- Mey, Jacob. 1994. Pragmatics. In R. E. Asher and J. M. Y. Simpson (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, Vol. 6, 3260-3278. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
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