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Mingyou Xiang · Mian Jia · Xiaohui Bu

Introduction to Pragmatics



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Preface by the Professor

Introduction to Pragmatics is the first publication of an introductory series of linguistic studies. While addressing the current call for more introductory and interesting texts in pragmatics, this project aims at developing a new pedagogical practice of preparing undergraduates for advanced studies by compiling introductory textbooks.

Since 2010, I started to teach junior English majors *Introduction to Pragmatics* and wanted to design new assessments to replace the traditional end of the semester exam. In my class, students could receive weighted grades from completing a closed book exam, writing a course paper, or compiling a textbook. Since textbook compilation is the most difficult option, only two out of 18 students in one class chose this assignment. The present textbook is a revised version of their early efforts, and these two students also become its two co-authors.

I take this project as a systematic training for a global view, critical thinking, and a habit of meticulous observation. Compiling a textbook in its entirety requires students to not only understand individual theories in their local contexts but also sort out the connections among them. Moreover, instead of passively receiving different schools of thought, students will be actively selecting the necessary materials from a larger pool of sources, becoming more cognizant of the pros and cons of different theories. During this assortment, they could become more critical of different theories, generating their critiques of the established paradigms, and developing their perspectives. Finally, to clearly explain the abstract theoretical concepts, students will be motivated to identify interesting and updated instances from their daily communication. Gradually, they are very likely to develop a habit of spotting research questions through their daily experiences. The lively examples they discovered, in turn, could be better received by the beginners who share similar tastes and backgrounds with our student authors. The global awareness enables students to map out the current research trends, the critical awareness enables them to identify niches from the existing scholarships, and the observational awareness enables them to unearth research questions from everyday interactions, reaching both theoretical and social significances. All of these are necessary for the cultivation of a competent researcher.

The present book is the first trial of this pedagogical design. The two student authors have been successfully admitted to renowned graduate programs, one in a Ph.D. program at The University of Texas at Austin, the other in a Master's program at Peking University. Now, I am happy to report this practice to the public, and I hope it can benefit and inspire more young scholars to engage in our research community.

Beijing, China
October 2019

Mingyou Xiang

Preface by the Students

This little book is designed by students of pragmatics and aims for younger students of this thriving discipline. Its earliest draft was a course assignment in our junior year to address Prof. Xiang's call for interpretations of pragmatics from the learners' perspective. Therefore, we attempt to elaborate on the most basic concepts in pragmatics with up-to-date examples from our students' lives. We hope to offer student readers a fresh perspective to look at pragmatics from the eyes of their peers, to relieve their pain when engaged in academia and to equip them with the upper hand to deal with real-world dilemmas.

The book intends to introduce pragmatics to beginners from three parts: essential topics, research methods, and useful resources. The essential topics follow the British and American traditions, discussing deixis, presupposition, implicature, speech acts, and (im)politeness. Each chapter is developed with both classical examples and down-to-earth illustrations and applications. The final chapter introduces some of the most basic methods and techniques, those have helped us begin our academic journey, to prepare beginners for their own research. The appendixes attach some useful materials as signposts to inspire students to brainstorm beyond this little book and to engage in a larger research community. We hope our work could both contextualize the art of pragmatics in our daily lives and inspire more researchers to elate our living world to academia.

The completion of this textbook is also accredited by a number of rigorous reviewers. We are fully aware of the harms of misunderstandings and misinterpretations that would do to the beginners and the necessity to revise and proofread. Thus, in addition to Prof. Xiang's constant guidance and supervision, we have invited professors and Ph.D. students to help us right the ship at various stages of our compilation. They are Dr. Li Xiaochen, Dr. Yang Guoping, Dr. Cao Duxin, Dr. An Yi, Dr. Zhao Yi, Guan Bangdi, Yu Jinghua, Luan Ruiqi, and Zhao Bo. We are also grateful to our peers who offer us lively examples and their own views on pragmatics. They are Yan

Caiping, Wang Tong, Zeng Yuan, Shan Ke, Tao Ziyang, Wang Ziyi, and Yang Zhou.
Finally, all the mistakes are of course ours.

Hong Kong, China
Shenzhen, China
June 2019

Mian Jia
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