

## Original Paper

# Perfecting the Theory of Meaning: The Story of Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis

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Received: April 18, 2019

Accepted: May 10, 2019

Online Published: May 16, 2019

doi:10.22158/assc.v1n1p50

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/assc.v1n1p50>

### Abstract

*The common sense view of what language is for is that language is used for communication. However, some of the most prominent linguists in the field reject this view. In other words, the majority of professional linguists used to adopt a view of language which is at odds with the view held by non-linguists. The phenomenon of communication has often been thought of as peripheral in linguistic research. This view is a result of the strong hold the abstract objectivist language conception has had on modern linguistic thought. Communication has been reduced to a subordinate place amongst the possible functions of language. This low status attributed to communication is challenged by different pragmatic approaches to language. On the other hand, the content and use of the term “communication” is even by humanistic standards extremely ambiguous, and it has, therefore, often been difficult to use in practical, empirical work. This study is primarily a deep survey of the major contributions of both “discourse analysis” and “pragmatics” in an attempt to clarify the problem of understanding meaning in language use. In addition, it attempts to show how language is used, as a persuasive tool, in political discourse.*

*The present study demonstrates that it would be a mistake to adopt an approach to pragmatics and*

*the exclusion of cognitive factors. Also, it would be a mistake to adopt an approach which is exclusively speaker-oriented or exclusively hearer-oriented. The process of making meaning is a joint accomplishment between speaker and hearer; between writer and reader. In addition, the present study shows that both disciplines “pragmatics” and “discourse analysis” are hybrid fields of inquiry; and their common themes are “language”, “language users”, “communication”, and “meaning in*

*interaction". Both disciplines have borrowed their theoretical and methodological orientations from almost the same social and human disciplines. Accordingly, the terms "pragmatics" and "discourse analysis" can be used interchangeably. Finally, the present study shows that political speech is one of the main persuasive tools used by politicians to present their political persons and to further their political agendas.*

**Keywords**

*theory of meaning, prgamatics, discourse analysis*

**1. Introduction**

Language is one of the most important aspects of communication. Nowadays, we can find almost everybody around us using a particular language to communicate. Language is a wonder as it helps to spread our ideas, thoughts and let others know about our mood through time, space and culture. The common sense view of what language is for is that language is used for communication. However, some of the most prominent linguists in the field reject this view. In other words, the majority of professional linguists used to adopt a view of language which is at odds with the view held by non-linguists. The phenomenon of communication has often been thought of as peripheral in linguistic research. This view is a result of the strong hold the abstract objectivist language conception has had on modern linguistic thought. Communication has been reduced to a subordinate place amongst the possible functions of language. This low status attributed to communication is challenged by different pragmatic approaches to language. On the other hand, the content and use of the term "communication" is even by humanistic standards extremely ambiguous, and it has, therefore, often been difficult to use in practical, empirical work.

Linguistic studies which depend upon elicitations from only one or a few informants are now recognized as leaving unanswered many significant questions about the relation between language and the social context in which it is always embedded. Language is no longer viewed "as a closed system, but as one which is in perpetual flux" (Johnson, 2002, p. 16). Moreover, the extraordinary growth of sociolinguistics in the last decade or so has shown convincingly that language is closely linked to its context and that isolating it artificially for study ignores its complex and intricate relation to society. This study is primarily a deep survey of the major contributions of both "discourse analysis" and "pragmatics" in our attempt to clarify the problem of understanding meaning in language use. In addition, it attempts to show how language is used, as a persuasive tool, in political discourse. It demonstrates that it would be a mistake to adopt an approach to pragmatics and discourse analysis, which focuses on linguistic factors alone, or social factors alone, to the exclusion of cognitive factors. Also, it would be a mistake to adopt an approach which is exclusively speaker-oriented or exclusively hearer-oriented. The process of making meaning is a joint accomplishment between speaker and hearer; between writer and reader. In addition, the present study shows that both disciplines "pragmatics" and "discourse analysis" are hybrid fields of inquiry; and their common themes are "language", "language

users”, “communication”, and “meaning in interaction”. Both disciplines have borrowed their theoretical and methodological orientations from almost the same social and human disciplines. Accordingly, the terms “pragmatics” and “discourse analysis” can be used interchangeably. Finally, the present study shows that political speech is one of the main persuasive tools used by politicians to present their political persons and to further political agendas.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The study of language and politics is of potential interest to most of the social sciences, to development planners, and to those whose primary interests center on politics or linguistics. When politicians are challenged over their use of “language”, they often reply that the questioner is merely “playing with semantics” or confusing “style” and “content”. Nonetheless, politicians rely on using language in order to communicate with their electorates or subjects: they make speeches, employ public relations experts, and write newspapers. However, it is widely held that people do not communicate with words. Similarly, they do not communicate with sounds, morphemes, or sentences, nor with notions, concepts or propositions. They, instead, communicate with meaningful combinations of these entities, namely texts, that integrate meaning and structure and combine language in the form of speech or writing. The sentence “Words have meaning seems to be about as simple and clear an assertion of a factual state of affairs as any statement that one can make. On closer inspection, however, it merely raises the question as to what “meaning” is. Pragmatics as well as discourse analysis shed light on the many different ways in which meaning is communicated through various speech acts. It should be noted, as Johnson (2002, p. 1) maintains, that words are not “objects” or “things” that have properties of their own in the same way that actually existing things do. Words are relational entities. All that the air or paper and ink can carry is the symbolic representation of the actual form which is understood within the mind, and not the form itself. That is, when a word is spoken or written it becomes a relational entity which lacks the power to do or to cause anything. While it is true that the vibration in the air or the marks on a piece of paper can stimulate the senses, a word as such, can not cause knowledge. In this regard, Augustine (1967, p. 30) pointed out that “we learn nothing by means of these signs we call words. On the contrary, we learn the force of the word, that is the meaning which lies in the sound of the word, when we come to know the object signified by the word. Then only do we perceive that the word was a sign conveying that meaning”. The problem, however, is that words can be used to convey both more than what they conventionally mean and also something quite different. That is, there are times when people say or write exactly what they mean, but generally they are not totally explicit. They frequently mean more than their words actually say. On other occasions, they can mean something quite different from what their words say, or even just the opposite. In this regard, Kempson (2001, p. 395) says: “How do we know when an expression is to be taken at its face value, when it is to be taken as conveying rather more than what it actually presents, and when it has to be interpreted in some other, metaphorical, way? ... This is only the beginning of the problem of understanding meaning in language use”.

In addition, if one were to take an informal survey among non-linguists regarding the primary function of human language, the overwhelmingly most common answer would be, “language is used for communication”. As Van Valin (2001) maintains, “this is the common sense view of what language is for” (p. 319). However, some of the most prominent linguists in the field reject this view, and many others hold that the fact that language may be used for communication is largely, if not completely, irrelevant to its study and analysis.

### 3. Theoretical Discussion

In the next section, I will explain how the majority of professional linguists came to adopt a view of language which is so strikingly at odds with the view held by non-linguists. More specifically, how did such a view arise? The answer lies in the theoretical development of linguistics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 3.1 A Brief Look at the Development of Linguistic Theory in the 20th Century

The primary concern of linguists such as Franz Boas and Ferdinand de Saussure at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was to lay out the foundations for linguistic science and to define explicitly the object to be investigated in linguistic inquiry. Saussure drew a fundamental contrast between language (*langue*) and speaking (*parole*): language is a system of signs, whereas speaking is the use of the system on particular occasions. A linguistic sign is the association of a sound (*signifier*) and a meaning (*signified*). Saussure argued that the proper subject for linguistic investigation is the system of signs, not the use of the system. Bloomfield (1933) proposed a similar distinction: grammar (the linguistic system) vs. meaning (the use of the system on particular occasions). He, too, argued that linguistic analysis should concern itself only with grammar. In this regard, Carston (1988, p. 206) points out that “before Chomsky, linguistics tended to be a taxonomic enterprise, involving collecting a body of data (utterances) from the external world and classifying it without reference to its source, the human mind”. Chomsky (1965) proposed a distinction analogous but not identical to Saussure’s and Bloomfield’s, namely competence vs. performance. In his distinction, Chomsky sees that the proper domain of linguistic inquiry is competence only. In the Chomskyan linguistic tradition, well-formedness plays the role of the decision-maker in questions of linguistic “belonging”. That is, a language consists of a set of well-formed sentences: it is these that “belong” in the language, no others do. This is the definition that has been the bulwark of the Chomskyan system since the late 1950s. It is also the definition that has most often come under attack from the quarters of so-called “Ordinary Working Linguists” (often called “OWIS”). For example, Lakoff (1971) points out that the notion “well-formedness” is a highly relativistic one; it has to do (and a lot to do) with what speakers know about themselves, about their conversational partners, about the topic of their conversation, and about its progress.

Another matter is, of course, what is and what is not “grammatical”. A favorite party game among linguists is to discuss whether or not a particular expression is “correct”. Such discussions end with one or more of the participants invoking the authority invested in themselves as native speakers of some dialect of English (or whatever), in which such and such a construction is “grammatical” or

“ungrammatical”, whichever the case might be. With the above in mind, it is easy to realize that all theorists agree that linguistics is not concerned with the analysis of “parole” (performance, meaning), but rather with the study of “langue” (grammar, competence). Given that Saussure is generally acknowledged to have laid the foundations for the modern study of language, it is consequently not surprising that many linguists have adopted his view: the communicative functions of language are irrelevant to the analysis of language structure.

The idea of extending linguistic analysis to include communicative functions was, first, proposed by Czech linguists. As Van Valin (2001, p. 328) points out, “all contemporary functional approaches trace their roots back to the work of the Czech linguist Mathesius in the 1920s as part of the Prague School. He and his successors developed the theory of functional sentence perspective. This theory was developed primarily with respect to the analysis of Slavic languages, but its ideas have been applied by other linguists to a range of phenomena in many languages. It was first brought to the attention of English-speaking linguists in Halliday (1967). By the end of the 1970s, a number of functional approaches were emerging in both U.S. and Western Europe. Some of the most important and coherent attempts of communication-relevant approaches to language will be clarified next: (1) Soviet Semiotic Dialogism; (2) The Prague School, and (3) Functionalism.

**First**, in the pre-Stalin era of Soviet intellectual life, a group of scholars emerged with a more or less common view of language, cognition, and communication; the language philosopher “Voloshinov”, the psychologist “Vygotsky”, and the literary critic “Bakhtin”. These scholars launched an attack on the basic ideas of “abstract objectivism”. Since the 1960s, their approach to humanistic studies has come to play an increasingly important role in a great number of humanistic disciplines. The basic idea of these scholars is that language is essentially “dialogic”; that is, the addresser and the addressee are integrated as part of the nature of language. Language never exists as a uni-functional, closed system; rather, it is a process of communication. This process is, furthermore, characterized by the notions of multiaccentuality, heterogeneity, polyphony, intertextuality, and in particular “voicing”; all referring to the social nature of language. That is, in communication, language never appears as single-voiced: the situation, the tradition, the power relations between the communicators, and so on, all place their mark in the message. Thus, language really is this multivoiced message or speech process. The Soviet dialogists see the nature of language as fundamentally social; even cognition is interpreted as a communication process, or as it is called “inner speech”. Cognition or “thought” is only possible through language; language is this multiaccentuated interaction process.

**Second**, the Prague School was a linguistic school which did not limit its study of language to isolated utterances in so-called “normal” situations. Its focus was on a number of different types of human communication where language was used as a tool. Andre Martinet challenged the traditional view of the basic function of language as representation; he saw language as an instrument for communication.

**Third**, Halliday attempted to explain the structure of language as a consequence of social dialogue. According to Halliday (1978, p. 2), language does not consist of sentences; it consists of interactional

discourse. People exchange meanings in socially and culturally defined situations. When they speak to each other, they exchange meanings which reflect their feelings, attitudes, expectations and judgments. In her survey of the functional approaches, Nichols (1984, pp. 102-103) categorized them as “extreme”, “moderate”, and “conservative”: “the conservative type merely acknowledges the inadequacy of strict formalism of structuralism, without proposing a new analysis of structure ... the moderate type not only points out the inadequacy of a formalist or structuralist analysis, but goes on to propose a functionalist analysis of structure ... extreme functionalism denies, in one way or another, the reality of structure qua structure. It may claim that rules are based entirely on function and hence there are no purely syntactic constraints; that structure is only coded function, or the like”. In this regard, Bates (1987) noted that functionalism is like “Protestantism”, a group of warring sects which agree only on the rejection of the authority of the Pope. All functionalists agree that language is a system of forms for conveying meaning in communication and, therefore, in order to understand it, it is necessary to investigate the interaction of structure, meaning and communication. As Van Valin (2001) points out, functionalists normally focus on linguistic functions from either of two perspectives; the first is referred to as the “pragmatics” perspective, and the second as the “discourse” perspective. The first concentrates on the appropriate use of different speech acts. The second perspective is concerned with the construction of discourse and how grammatical and other devices are employed to serve this end. Work by conservative functionalists has yielded important insights regarding the pragmatic nature of many syntactic constraints, but they do not address the crucial question of the nature of structure in language. Extreme functionalists have uncovered many important generalizations about discourse structure, information flow, and the discourse functions of grammatical forms (Genc & Gulozer, 2013; Karahan, 2011).

### *3.2 Approaches to the Study of Communication*

The phenomenon of communication has often been thought of as peripheral in linguistic research. This view is a result of the strong hold the abstract objectivist language conception has had on modern linguistic thought. Most workers in this tradition share the idea that the essence of language is to represent some intellectual structure; thus they reduce communication to a subordinate place amongst the possible functions of language. This low status attributed to communication is challenged by different pragmatic approaches to language, as well as by language-relevant research in related disciplines. On the other hand, the content and use of the term “communication is even by humanistic standards extremely ambiguous, and it has, therefore, often been difficult to use in practical, empirical work” (Berge, 1994, p. 614). A very simple and general, but neither unproblematic nor uncontroversial, way of defining communication is to view it as an information process going on between at least two human communicators, embedded in a context, and a situation. More specifically, communication can be defined as a generic term covering all messages uttered in different contexts and situations (Macaulay, 2005; McGlone, 2005; Droop & Verhoeven, 2013).

The received view of communication in the philosophy of language represents communication in the

following way: the speaker has an idea; a representation, and an intention, in his or her mind. The hearer has to form an identical idea, representation, and a representation of exactly that intention, in his or her mind. Therefore, the meaning of a communicative act depends on the idea/representation/intention in the mind of the speaker. In this regard, Shisa (2001) does not endorse this view of communication. Instead, she prefers another view emerging from the work of philosophers such as Wittgenstein and Austin. According to this view, communication consists of the fact that people act on each other in certain particular ways. In particular, utterances affect the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors. So, in investigating a given episode of communication we should ask “who is doing what to whom?” In certain cases, the fact that an utterance affects the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors in a certain way enables it to transmit information, as in the received view; but this is only one among the many cases in which communication is primarily “action”. One possible way of explaining the different approaches to the study of communication in linguistics is to differentiate between the various trends in communication of relevant research. These trends can be classified according to the basic models of communication they have adopted: (1) the Linear, Conduit model; (2) the Circular, Dialogic models; (3) the Feedback, Interaction model, and (4) the Self-regulatory (Autopoesis) model.

**First**, the underlying assumption of the Linear Conduit model (Reddy, 1979) is that language functions are considered as a sort of channel or tool for transferring a linguistic message from a source (or sender) to a destination (or hearer). This idea of communication has some of its roots in information theory. **Second**, the basic idea of the Circular or Dialogic model is that for communication to take place, it is not sufficient that an addresser manifests his intention in a message which results in an effect in the addressee. It is also necessary to give the addressee a more active role in communication. This active part is the more or less conscious interpretation process that the addressee must be involved in for the intended message to get through. Also, a more or less expressed manifestation of the intended effect in the form of a response, answer, action, from the addressee is necessary for the addresser to understand that his message has been received, is a message. Without a response of some sort, the addresser would be left in a situation where he is at best talking to himself. As Berge (1994, p. 615) points out, “the interpretation requirement is not restricted to the addressee alone. The addresser, too, has to identify some sort of signal in the addressee’s message which can be interpreted as a response or reaction to the intended message. In this way, communication can be seen as a system of questions and answers, or as a sort of cooperation where the communicators are actively organized in the construction of the message.

**Third**, in the Feedback, Interaction model, communication is viewed in a much more general way than in the two previous ones. Communication would include all those processes by which human beings influence one another. In its most extreme form, the model entails that all behavior can be said to be communicative. The interaction of human beings is characterized by the necessity to communicate; this necessity is superior to the notion of intention, which is based not only on the will to communicate, but

also the will to interpret. Communication is thus part of perception; attention to and interpretation of communication are part of the process of perceiving.

**Fourth**, in the Self-regulatory (Autopoesis) model, the communicators (or as they are called, the “emitters” and “receivers”) do not communicate in order to transfer and create a message, or even to create some information, a conveyed message, and an understanding, but simply to integrate elements from the communicative situation (the environment) which can contribute to the communicators’ so-called self-regulation and self-creation (hence the term “autopoetic”). This self-regulation and self-creation is an individual, idiosyncratic version of an interaction input. The basic goal of this self-regulation is to create a difference with respect to all other communicators. This model allows for another, more advanced view of linguistic messages, such as written texts, than is normal in the linguistic tradition. Instead of being viewed as inferior reproductions of the prototypical or even “natural” linguistic communication, namely verbal conversation, written messages are viewed as more communicative and creative. As Togeby (1994, p. 232) points out, “a communication event is a social act made possible by shared principles and rules among the participants in the event, and, as far as verbal behavior is concerned, governed by conventional grammatical rules” (Barnitz, 2013).

### *3.3 Three Levels of Meaning*

Meaning has three levels: (1) abstract meaning; (2) contextual meaning or utterance meaning; and (3) the speaker’s intention, known as “the force of an utterance” (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 1999, p. 6). **First**, abstract meaning is concerned with what a word, phrase, sentence could mean. It is the dictionary meaning of words or phrases. It refers to what some writers call “decontextualized meaning”, “lexical meaning”, “semantic meaning” or “linguistic meaning”. It should be emphasized, however, that what the words actually mean could only be determined in context. Generally speaking, competent native speakers do not have to seek laboriously for the contextual meaning of a word, phrase or sentence. Nevertheless, there are occasions when we do quite genuinely experience difficulty in assigning contextual meaning and, then, we have to weigh up alternative interpretations. Moreover, when people are engaged in conversations, they look for contextual sense; that is, the sense in which the speaker or writer is using a word. Although the process of determining what speakers mean, as opposed to what their words mean, is straightforward, problems can occur. And, this is why we have “pragmatics” and “discourse analysis”. One of the most frequent causes of such problems occurs in the cases of (1) homonyms (words which have the same spelling and pronunciation but different meanings); (2) homographs (words which have the same spelling but different pronunciation and meaning); (3) homophones (words which have the same pronunciation, but different spelling and meaning). Another cause of potential sentence-level ambiguity is structural, as we may notice in the following example: “Afterwards, the Bishop walked among the pilgrims eating their picnic lunches”. In this sentence, the source of ambiguity is syntactic. The hearer has to decide whether it was the Bishop or the pilgrims who ate the sandwiches. The point, here, is that if the hearer failed to assign sense correctly, he or she would probably misunderstand what the speaker meant. In addition, we not only have to assign sense to



words, but also to assign reference; that is, to determine in context who or what is being referred to. All deictic expressions, by their very nature, cause problems of reference assignment when removed from their original context of utterance.

**Second**, “utterance meaning” can be defined as “a sentence-context pairing” (Gazdar, 1979, p. 19), and is the first component of speaker meaning. In this regard, Thomas (1995, p. 16) points out that “when in interaction we have resolved all the ambiguities of sense, reference and structure—when we have moved from abstract meaning to what the speaker actually does mean by these words on this particular occasion—we have arrived at contextual meaning or utterance meaning. **Third**, as Miller (1974) argues, “Most of our misunderstanding of other people are not due to any inability to hear them or parse their sentences or understand their words ... A far more important source of difficulty in communication is that we often fail to understand a speaker’s intention” (p. 15). In “pragmatics” the term “force” is used to refer to the speaker’s communicative intention. It is introduced by the philosopher “Austin”, as the second component of speaker’s meaning. And, Miller was one of the first people to point out the significance of this level of analysis. Furthermore, language units are not produced in a vacuum, and neither are their meaningful combinations. Texts are produced and received in distinct socio-cultural environments imbued with personal and interpersonal goals. The ongoing use of texts in these communicative environments constitute discourse: “in our everyday life, we engage in discourse in a multiplicity of roles. When we write a letter to a friend or an essay for a course, pick up the telephone ... In these activities, we continuously produce and interpret discourse. Every human act that involves language necessarily makes use of texts in context. Using language is thus synonymous with engaging in discourse” (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 1999, p. 4).

#### **4. The First Perspective: Discourse Analysis**

##### *4.1 Defining “Discourse”*

“Discourse”, used as a mass noun, means roughly the same as “language use” or “language-in-use”. As a count noun (a discourse), it means a relatively discrete subset of a whole language, used for specific social or institutional purposes. More specifically, “discourse” as a mass noun and its strict linguistic sense, refers to connected speech or writing occurring at suprasentential levels. As Van Dijk (1985) points out, our modern linguistic conception of discourse (as language use) owes much to the ancient distinction between grammar and rhetoric. Grammarians explored the possibilities a language can offer a “calculus” for representing the world, and were concerned with correctness of usage. By contrast, rhetoricians focused upon practical uses of speech and writing as means of social and political persuasion. In this regard, Georgakopoulou and Goutsos (1999) point out that “despite the centuries-old tradition of the mother discipline of rhetoric, three decades ago there were only two isolated attempts to study language beyond the sentence with specifically linguistic methods; namely Harris (1952) and Mitchell (1957). While Harris used invented data and attempted to find the formal structural properties of connected speech, most discourse analysts these days prefer to work with naturally occurring data

and to pursue the local-contextual features and social functions of them rather than their purely linguistic properties. In this sense, a focus on discourse entails a shift in linguistics away from competence and the “langue” and towards performance and “paroles” (actual speech events) (McHoul, 1994, p. 940).

#### *4.2 Three Approaches to Discourse Analysis*

Reviewing the literature on this issue shows that there are three main approaches to discourse and its analysis in contemporary scholarship: (1) the formal linguistic approach (discourse as text); (2) the empirical sociological approach (discourse as conversation) and (3) the critical approach (discourse as power/knowledge). It should be borne in mind, however, that each approach is, in itself, a multi-disciplinary; each has its own controversies, and contradictions. But each is sufficiently different from the others.

##### *4.2.1 The Text-Linguistic Approach*

The Text-Linguistic Perspective is often referred to as the “formal approach” to discourse. It tends, by and large, to construe discourse as text. It is the most direct descendant of Harris (1952) and Mitchell (1957). Like Harris, it continues to have faith in formal linguistic methods of analysis. Like Mitchell, it moves linguistics, as a different discipline, as mainly been in the direction of social functions and naturally occurring samples. A more recent heir to the formalist approach has been “Text Linguistics” (TL). The term was first used by Coseriu and taken up by Weinrich (1967). But it was pioneered by Van Dijk (1972) and later developed by De Beaugrande (1980, 1984) though Van Dijk has, to some extent, recast TL as discourse analysis. As previously mentioned, the ongoing use of texts in their communicative environment; that is, in their contexts, has been referred to as “discourse”. “Discourse” and “text” have been used in the literature in a variety of ways. In some cases, the two terms have been treated as synonyms, while in others the distinction between discourse and text has been taken to apply to units of spoken versus written communication. Consequently, discourse analysis is, in some accounts, regarded as concerned with spoken texts (primarily conversation). Text linguistics, as a different discipline, has mainly been associated with written texts. According to Georgakopoulou and Goutsos (1999, p. 3) the two terms do not refer to different domains (speech and writing) but reflect a difference in focus. In this regard, Slembrouk (2003, p. 1) points out that “Discourse analysis does not presuppose a bias towards the study of either spoken or written language. In fact, the monolithic character of the categories of speech and writing is increasingly being challenged”. Discourse, then, is the umbrella term for either spoken or written communication beyond the sentence. Text is the basic means of this communication, be it spoken or written, a monologue or an interaction. Discourse is, thus, a more embracing term that calls attention to the situated uses of text: it comprises both text and context. However, text is not just a product of discourse, as customarily assumed (Brown & Yule, 1983), that is, the actual (written or spoken) record of the language produced in an interaction. Text is the means of discourse, without which discourse would not be a linguistic activity.

Although the study of texts may be a central concern of other disciplines, it does not constitute the axis

of their founding assumptions, as is the case with discourse analysis. These assumptions, which specify what we can call the text-linguistic perspective to discourse include the following: (1) the basic unit of analysis is text; (2) the focus of examination is the language of the text; (3) text is structured; (4) texts are meaningful language units, which primarily derive their meaning from their situated use, and (4) there are no privileged texts, but only authentic, attested texts can be the basis of analysis. As Georgakopoulou and Goutsos (1999) argue, the sum of these assumptions constitute the distinctive feature of the text-linguistic approach to discourse, as opposed to other approaches within other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences: What differentiates the analysis of discourse within linguistics from the same practice in other social and human sciences is, essentially, the access to discourse through texts rather than through other semiotic systems like artifacts, systems of beliefs, or even a social and cultural organization as a whole (p. 5). It is widely held that discourse analysis is not a strictly unified discipline with one or few dominant theories and methods of research. According to some, this proliferation or approaches is a sign of the area's richness. At the same time, interdisciplinary study is indispensable. Quite simply, it is almost impossible to separate discourse from its uses in the world and in social interaction; as a result, linguistic tools alone are not sufficient for its comprehensive study (Al-Ali, 2006; Barry et al., 2006; Blaauw, 2005).

#### 4.2.2 The Empirical Approach

This approach largely consists of sociological forms of analysis which have taken "discourse" to mean human conversation. Its object has been not merely the formal description of conversational "texts", but also the common sense knowledge at the basis of conversational rules and procedures. The most fruitful work to date has been accomplished in the area of Conversation Analysis (CA) pioneered by Sacks, and based on the ethnomethodological approach to sociology of Garfinkel (1967). In this regard, Weiyun He (2001, p. 437) points out that "discourse analysis in recent years has been profoundly influenced by a distinct approach to human interaction known as Conversation Analysis".

One central concept within conversation analysis is the "speaking turn". According to Sacks et al. (1974), it takes two turns to have a conversation. However, turn taking is more than just a defining property of conversational activity. The study of its patterns allows one to describe contextual variation (examining, for instance, the structural organization of turns, how speakers manage sequences as well as the internal design of turns). At the same time, the principle of taking turns in speech is claimed to be general enough to be universal to talk and it is something that speakers attend to in interaction (Slembrouk, 2003, p. 29). A second central concept is that of the "adjacency pair". The basic idea is that turns minimally come in pairs and the first of a pair creates certain expectations which can train the possibilities for a second. Examples of adjacency pairs are question/answer, complaint/apology, greeting/greeting, accusation/denial. Adjacency pairs can further be characterized by the occurrence of "preferred" or "dispreferred" seconds. A frequently-used term in this respect is "preference organization". The occurrence of adjacency pairs in talk forms the basis for the concept of "sequential implicativeness". Each move in a conversation is essentially a response to the preceding talk and an

anticipation of the kind of talk which is to follow. In formulating their present turn, speakers show their understanding of the previous turn and reveal their expectations about the next turn to come (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

The major strength of conversation analysis lies in the idea that an important area of interactional meaning is revealed in the sequence. Its most powerful idea is that human interactants continually display to each other, in the course of interaction, their own understanding of what they are doing. This, among other things, creates room for a much more dynamic, interactional view on speech acts (Hindmarsh & Heath, 2000; Goodwin, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003; Sinclair, 2004; Widdowson, 2004).

#### 4.2.3 The Critical Approach

In Fairclough's words (1992, p. 7) the critical approach "is not a branch of language study, but an orientation towards language ... with implications for various branches. It highlights how language conventions and practices are invested with power relations and ideological processes which people are often unaware of" (Preyer & Peter, 2005; Prego-Vazquez, 2007; Stoke & Edwards, 2007). To that end, this approach investigates language behavior in everyday situations of immediate and actual social relevance: discourse in education, media and other institutions. It does not view context variables to be correlated to an autonomous system of language; rather, language and the social are seen as connected to each other brought a dialectical relationship. Texts are deconstructed and their underlying meanings made explicit; the object of investigation is discursive strategies which legitimize or "naturalize" social processes (Wodak, 1995; Orpin, 2005; Koller, 2004; K. O'Halloran, 2007; Campbell & Roberts, 2007). In conclusion, Weiyun He (2001, p. 444) points out that, "while it is correct to say that discourse analysis is a subfield of linguistics, it is also appropriate to say that discourse analysis goes beyond linguistics as it has been understood in the past ... discourse analysts research various aspects of language not as an end in itself, but as a means to explore ways in which language forms are shaped by and shape the contexts of their use". At the same time, discourse analysis is a cross-discipline and, as such, finds itself in interaction with approaches from a wide range of other disciplines. Discourse analysis is, thus, an interdisciplinary study of discourse within linguistics: Discourse analysis is a hybrid field of enquiry. Its "lender disciplines" are to be found within various corners of the human and social sciences, with complex historical affiliations and a lot of cross-fertilization taking place" (Slembrouk, 2003, p. 1). It must be emphasized, however, that "a single, integrated and monolithic approach is actually less satisfactory than a piecemeal and multi-theoretical approach" (Mchoul & Luke, 1989, p. 324).

### 5. Discourse Analysis: A Hybrid Field of Enquiry

The previous discussion has shown that the term "discourse analysis" has come to be used with a wide range of meanings which cover a wide range of activities. It is used to describe activities at the intersection of many disciplines. As Georgakopoulou and Goutsos (1999, Preface) point out, "discourse analysis, the study of the use of language for communication in context, is a rapidly-expanding field

which is characterized by proliferating analytical methods and continuously renewed tools”. The following section will shed light on the relationship between discourse analysis and “its lender” disciplines; one of them is “pragmatics” (See Martinez & Murphy, 2011; Miller, 2011).

### 5.1 The “Natural Language School” within Analytical Philosophy

The term “natural language school” refers to a particular tradition in analytical philosophy which is characterized by a belief in the possibility to formulate the conditions for a logical, truth-yielding language on the basis of the study or meaning in natural language (as opposed to, artificial or mathematical languages). John L. Austin is the person who is usually credited with generating interest in what has since come to be known as “pragmatics”. It should be noted that Austin and his group (ordinary language philosophers) were reacting against the Oxford-based philosophers such as Moore and Bertrand Russell, on one hand, and “logical positivist philosophers” on the other hand. First, whereas “Moore” was interested in what he termed “the language of common sense”, Russell and others took the view that everyday language is defective, a rather debased vehicle, full of impression and contradictions. Second, logical positivism is a philosophical system which maintains that the only meaningful statements are those that are analytic or can be tested empirically. Therefore, logical positivist philosophers of language were concerned with the properties of sentence which could be evaluated in terms of “truth or falsity”. Within linguistics this approach was adopted within an area known as “truth conditional semantics” (See Thomas, 1995).

In this regard, Austin believed that “there is a lot more to a language than the meaning of its words” (1962, p. 132). He was convinced that we do not just use language to “say” things but “to do” things. It was this conviction which led him to a theory of what he called “illocutionary acts”; a theory which examines what kinds of things we do when we speak, how we do them and how our acts may “succeed” or “fail”. Austin began exploring his ideas by way of the “performative hypothesis”. **First**, he argued that most utterances have no truth conditions. They are not statements or questions but actions; a conclusion he reached through an analysis of what he termed “performative verbs”. **Second**, we can contrast performative and non-performative verbs by two features: (1) performative verbs perform the action named by the first verb in the sentence; (2) we can insert the adverb “hereby” to stress this function. **Third**, Austin argued that it is not useful to ask whether performative utterances like “I warn you that legal action will ensue” are true or not; rather we should ask whether they work or not: do they constitute a successful “warning”, as in the example above? In Austin’s terminology a performative that works is called “felicitous”, and the one that does not is “infelicitous”. **Fourth**, Austin proposed that communicating a speech act consists of three elements: the speaker says something (locutionary act), the speaker signals an associated speech act (illocutionary act), and the speech act causes an effect on her listeners or the participants (perlocutionary act).

According to Thomas (1995), the most important reason for the collapse of Austin’s performative hypothesis was the realization that Austin had equated “doing things with words” with the existence of a corresponding performative verb. This is clearly erroneous. There are many acts performed using

language where it would be impossible to use a performative verb. In addition, there is a problem in Austin's classification of "locution, illocution and perlocution": the same locution could have a different illocutionary force in different contexts. For example, "what time is it?" could, depending on the context of utterance, mean any of the following: (1) the speaker wants the hearer to tell him/her the time; (2) the speaker is annoyed because the hearer is late; (3) speaker thinks it is time the hearer went home. It is worth-mentioning that Austin's work remained unknown to so many linguists.

After Austin's original explorations of speech act theory there have been a number of works which attempt to systematize the approach. Searle (1979) proposed that all acts fall into five main types: (1) Representatives, which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition; (2) Directives, which are attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something; (3) Commissive, which commit the speaker to some future course of action; (4) Expressives, which express a psychological state, and (5) Declarations, which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extra linguistic institutions (Verhoeven & Leeuwe, 2012).

Searle's theory of "indirect speech acts" is based on the observation that by uttering what appears to be a statement (it's hot in here), language users often indirectly perform another type of illocutionary act (voice a request to open the window). An indirect speech act, in Searle's terms, is one performed "by means of another" (1979, p. 60). The undeniable merit of speech act theory lies in advancing a view of language use as action. In Searle's words (1969, p. 17): A theory of language is part of a theory of action, simply because speaking is a rule-governed form of behavior. Relatedly, Thomas (1995, p. 109) notices that "it is necessary to recognize that speech acts can never be satisfactorily characterized in terms of rules but are better described in terms of principles". Thomas, further argues that Searle failed in his attempt to describe speech acts in terms of "constitutive rules" because he attempted to handle pragmatics in a manner appropriate to grammar. Pragmatics, Thomas argues, seeks different sorts of generalizations from those made within grammar: "grammar is governed by rules, pragmatics is constrained by maxims or principles" (pp. 107-108). In this regard, Leech (1983, p. 8) argues that (1) rules are all or nothing; principles are more or less; (2) rules are exclusive; principles can co-occur; (3) rules are constitutive; principles are regulative; (4) rules are definite; principles are probabilistic, and (5) rules are conventional, principles are motivated.

### 5.2 Grice's Theory of "Cooperative Principle"

It is more than 25 years since Grice first put forward his ideas concerning the conversational maxims and his work continues to serve as the basis for much work in pragmatics and discourse analysis. Grice can claim credit for asking a lot of very exciting question, which have led linguists to think about language in a completely new way.

Grice's work is mostly associated with the theory of the "cooperative principle" and its attendant maxims which together regulate the exchange of information between individuals involved in interaction. His endeavor has been to establish a set of general principles, with the aim of explaining how language users communicate indirect meanings (so-called conversational implicature), that is

implicit meanings which have to be inferred from what is being said explicitly, on the basis of logical deduction. The cooperative principle is based on the assumption that language users tacitly agree to cooperate by making their contributions to the talk as is required by the current stage of the talk or the direction into which it develops. Adherence to this principle entails that talkers simultaneously observe four maxims: (1) quality (make your contribution truthful and sincere); (2) quantity (provide sufficient information); (3) manner (make your contribution brief, present it in an orderly fashion; (4) relation (make your contribution a relevant one).

Two observations can be made: (1) the fact that Grice expressed the “cooperative principle” in the imperative mood has led some readers of his work to believe that Grice was telling speakers how they ought to behave. What he was actually doing was suggesting that in conversational interaction people work on the assumption that a certain set of rules is in operation, unless they receive indications to the contrary. In all spheres of life we make similar assumptions all the time. (2) Grice is not suggesting that people are always good and kind or cooperative in any everyday sense of the word. He was, simply, noting that, on the whole, people observe certain regularities in interaction and his aim was to explain one particular set of regularities; those governing the generation and interpretation of conversational implicature. Grice, however, was well aware that there are many occasions when people fail to observe the maxims. Grice (1975, p. 49) listed three ways in which a participant in a talk exchange may fail to fulfil a maxim: the speaker may flout a maxim, violate a maxim or opt out of observing a maxim. He later added a fourth category of non-observance: infringing a maxim.

There is a number of problems associated with Grice’s theory; (1) sometimes an utterance has a range of possible interpretations; hence, how do we know when the speaker is deliberately failing to observe a maxim and hence that an implicature is intended?; (2) How can we distinguish between different types of non-observance; that is, how can we distinguish a violation from infringement?; (3) Grice’s four maxims seem to be rather different in nature; (4) sometimes the maxims seem to overlap or are difficult to distinguish from one another, and (5) Grice argued that there should be a mechanism for calculating implicature, but it is not always clear how this operates. Looking at speech acts in whole stretches of text in context is something which both Austin and Searle, who further developed the theory of speech acts, failed to do. They instead tried to formalize the speakers’ intentions, which is a very complicated task. Intentions are unobservable psychological states which are hard to define and assign. Currently though, speech acts are increasingly focused upon as part of texts in context, in particular in discourse analysis.

### *5.3 Register Studies and the Study of Stylistic Variation*

In addition, register studies are based on the observation that language variation depends not only on the social and geographic origins of the speakers, but that language use also varies according to the activity in which one is engaged. Diatypic variation of this kind is grasped through the notion of “style” or within the systematic-functional framework, “register”. Register can be decomposed into: (1) medium used (written, spoken, spoken-to-be-written, written-to-be-cited); (2) field of activity (science,

religion, law, etc.), and (3) tenor (the social role relationships between the language users in a particular situation (teacher-pupil, parent-child) (Coates & Wade, 2004; Evaldsson, 2005; Halford & Leonard, 2006).

#### *5.4 Linguistic Anthropology*

Linguistic Anthropology is a cover term for mainly Northern American approaches which contextualize language use in socio-cultural terms. According to Hymes (1964, p. xxiii), “linguistic anthropology can be defined as the study of language within the context of anthropology.” In Duranti’s (2001, p. 5) words, “Linguistic anthropology as it is practiced today ... is also more than grammatical description and historical reconstruction, and it is also more than the collection of texts, regardless of whether those texts were collected in one’s office or under a tent. It is the understanding of the crucial role played by language (and other semiotic resources) in the constitution of society and its cultural representations”. Nowadays, many linguistic anthropologists have a double agenda (Slembrouk, 2003, p. 8): (1) a premium on ethnographic fieldwork and description among indigenous peoples which continue to provide credentials for academic community membership, but with a shift “toward contemporary situations of contact (with governments, private companies ...) focusing on the role of language in the formation of a communal identities, literacy projects, language rights movements, in struggles over economic resources” (Collin, 1998, p. 259); and (2) commitment to the study of language use as situated institutionalized-practice (Brendel & Jager, 2005; Halford & Leonard, 2006).

#### *5.5 Ethnography of Speaking*

Ethnography of speaking develops out of a wider appeal (in the mid 1960s) for “studies that would analyze in detail how language is deployed as a constitutive feature of the indigenous settings and events that constitute the social life of the societies of the world” (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992, p. 1). In this regard, Duranti (1997, pp. 84-85) points out that ethnography offers a set of valuable techniques which allows researchers to connect linguistic forms with cultural practices. In Hymes’ (1980) view, ethnography can be characterized as an interactive-adaptive method of enquiry. Ethnography stresses the necessity of knowledge that originates in participation, ordinary communication and observation. In addition, ethnography values a careful treatment of context, insisting that it is impossible to separate speech data from the history under which it was obtained (Slembrouk, 2003, p. 9). Ethnography of speaking offers a radically descriptive orientation for the accumulation of data on the nature of “ways of speaking”, within speech communities: “A general theory of the interaction of language and social life must encompass the multiple relations between linguistic means and social meaning” (Hymes, 1972, p. 39).

#### *5.6 Interactional Sociolinguistics*

Interactional sociolinguistics, according to Gumperz (1999, pp. 453-454), has its origins in “the search for replicable methods of qualitative sociolinguistic analysis that can provide insight in the linguistic and cultural diversity characteristic of today’s communicative environments, and document its impact on individual’s lives”. In every communicative situation, especially in intercultural interaction, the



interpersonal function of language is of great importance. A speaker can indicate how he perceives the social relation between him and his interlocutor, or how he would like the relation to be perceived by the hearer. He can do that by using the appropriate vocabulary and conversational style, and by making certain strategic choices in realizing speech acts. Pragmatic failures in this sense could be more harmful to the communicative interaction than purely linguistic failures in pronunciation or syntax.

Finally, Van Dijk (2006, 2008ab) argues that it is not the social situation itself that influences the structure of text and talk, but rather the definition of the relevant properties of the communicative situation by the discourse participants. Specially Van Dijk (2008a, p. ix) argues that “the new theoretical notion developed to account for these subjective mental constructs is that of context models, which play a crucial role in interaction and in the production and comprehension of discourse. They dynamically control how language use and discourse are adapted to their situational environment, and hence define under what conditions they are appropriate”. According to Van Dijk, context models are the missing link between discourse, communicative situations and society, and hence are also part of the foundations of pragmatics. As Van Dijk (2008a, p. vii) points out “in most of the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences there is growing but as yet unfocused interest in the study of context” (See Li & Chen-Hong, 2012; Mangen et al., 2013).

## **6. Pragmatics: Beginnings**

It must be clarified that pragmatics is also a hybrid field of enquiry, and its lender disciplines are to be found within various corners of the human and social sciences. Both discourse analysis and pragmatics borrowed their major theoretical and methodological foundations from the same disciplines. In this regard, Mchoul (1994) argues that the study of discourse (as language use) can be broadly and roughly associated with applied linguistics and particularly with the area of it which is now called “pragmatics”. Also, Levinson (1989) points out that sometimes the terms “pragmatics” and “discourse analysis” are used interchangeably. In this connection, Slembrouk (2003, p. 5), also, points out “as a sub-discipline of linguistics, pragmatics can be said to thematise the relationships between language use and the language user in a situational context. The adjective “pragmatic” refers to the capacity of a social actor to adjust to situational circumstances”. The following discussion may help clarify the above views.

It is a historical fact that, since the early 1970s, a great and growing interest in pragmatics and pragmatic problems has been witnessed worldwide. As Mey (1994) notices, pragmatics has come into its own, and it is here to stay. It has come to be a fully accepted term in linguistics. Leech (1983, p. 1) remarks that “fifteen years ago pragmatics was mentioned by linguists rarely, if at all. And if indeed pragmatics was mentioned, it was more in the guise of a “ragbag” or, Bar-Hillal (1971) once expressed it, a “waste-paper basket” designed to absorb the overflow from semantics”. Pragmatics appears to be the first, historically motivated approach towards a societally relevant practice of linguistics. Such an approach is the result of four developmental tendencies, which together have made pragmatics into what it is now: (1) “Antisyntactic Tendency”; (2) the “Social-Critical Tendency”; (3) the “Philosophical

Tradition”, and (4) the “Ethnomethodological Tradition”. It must be noticed, here, that the same developmental tendencies resulted in the appearance of discourse analysis, as mentioned before.

**First**, the “Antisyntactic” tendency can be seen as a reaction to the “syntacticism” of the Chomskyan School of Linguistics, whereby all of linguistic science was supposed to fit into the syntactic framework. Linguists, such as Lakoff and Robert Ross were the first to protest against this syntactic attitude; none of them, however, was truly pragmatic in orientation. In Katz’s words, “grammars are theories about the structure of sentence types ... pragmatics theories, in contrast ... explicate the reasoning of speakers and hearers” (1979, p. 19), when the latter try to establish a relation between what is said and the semantic “proposition” that is behind it. **Second**, the “Social-Critical” tendency had its origin and heyday in Europe. Characteristic of this tendency is the need for a socially useful science of language, together with a wish to leave the narrow perspectives of the “single discipline” behind. The effects of language on people’s lives, especially in situations of unequal societal power, attracted the interest of these early pragmaticians such as Basil Bernstein, whose work was felt throughout the 1970s and far into the 1980s. **Third**, the “Philosophical” tradition originated in the British critical tradition of language investigation, and illustrated by names such as Bertrand Russell, John Austin, and other of the school of “ordinary language philosophy”. It was only after the publication of Austin’s student John Searle’s work “Speech Acts” (1969) that the first inroads into what later became known as pragmatic territory were made by Chomsky’s rebellious students; to their surprise, they found the region populated and partly cultivated by people such as those mentioned above. In this regard, Leech (1983, p. 2) points out that: “When linguistic pioneers such as Ross and Lakoff staked claim in pragmatics in the late 1960s, they encountered there an indigenous breed of philosophers of language had been quietly cultivating the territory for some time. In fact, the more lasting influences on modern pragmatics have been those of philosophers: notably in recent years, Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Grice (1975)”. Fourth, in the “Ethnomethodological” tradition, the emphasis had always been on communication rather than on grammar; that is, how people got their messages across was considered more important than the ways in which they constructed their sentences, or whether or not their utterances were syntactically correct or logically consistent.

### *6.1 Pragmatics: What Is It?*

Defining pragmatics implies determining its frontiers with other, adjoining fields of research within (and possibly also outside) linguistics. Pragmatics, for Leech (1980, p. 33), is the study of the use or application of meaning in communicative situations. In this view, pragmatics studies what a piece of language means to a given interlocutor in a given speech situation. According to Mey (1994, p. 3268), pragmatics is the study of language in a human context of use. Language use is the process by which people communicate, for various purposes, using linguistic means. This process is governed by the conditions of society; as these conditions determine the user’s access to, and control of, those means. Hence, pragmatics can also be described as a societally oriented and societally bound linguistics. In addition, Lycan (1995, p. 588) sees that pragmatics studies the use of language in context, and the

context-dependence of various aspects of linguistic interpretation. Its branches include the theory of how one and the same sentence can express different meanings or propositions from context to context, owing to ambiguity or indexicality or both. Also, Fotion (1995, p. 709) says that pragmatics is the study of language which focuses attention on the users and the context of language use rather than on reference, truth or grammar (See Kamel, 2000).

Thomas (1995, p. 17) defined pragmatics as “meaning in interaction”. This definition is based on the rational that meaning is not something which is inherent in the words alone, nor is it produced by the speaker alone, nor by the hearer alone. Making meaning is a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social or linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance. Relatedly, according to the American Speech-Language-hearing Association (2002) pragmatics involves three major communication skills: (1) using language for different purposes such as greeting, informing, demanding, promising and requesting; (2) adapting or changing language according to the needs or expectations of a listener or situation, and (3) following rules for conversations and narratives. To conclude, Mey (1994) argues that “a truly pragmatic consideration has to deal with the context as a user’s context, and cannot limit itself to the study of grammatically encoded aspects of context” (p. 3267). Also, Thomas (1995) argues that assigning meaning is an active (dynamic) procedure. Meaning is not given, but is constructed. It is a process of hypothesis-formation and testing, of making meaning on the basis of likelihood and probability.

#### *6.2 Four Types of Pragmatics*

The domain of pragmatic research is broad. In this regard, Fraser (1994) points out that “carrying out pragmatic research is analogous to the inquiry of the seven men of Hindustan, whose examination of an elephant has been celebrated in verse. Although each man agreed that he was examining an elephant, each was quite sure that his perspective reflected the true nature of the beast. So it is with pragmatics research, and it is useful to think of pragmatic researchers focusing on utterances from five perspectives” (pp. 3256-3257). Research on sentence meaning, the first of these, involves the intersection of pragmatic and semantic research. This perspective concerns pragmatic aspects of sentence meaning, that is, meaning associated directly with linguistic form. Such research is necessarily contextual. The second perspective is that of contextualized sentence meaning, that is, the operational meaning of the sentence in that particular utterance context. The third research perspective is that of speaker meaning, focusing on what linguistic, contextual, and performance factors influence the interpretation of message(s) intended by a speaker via a given utterance. The fourth research perspective is that of hearer meaning; the interpretation that the speaker has made of prior contributions when acting as a hearer. Discourse meaning is the fifth and final perspective. Researchers from this point of view focus on how to support a conclusion that prior utterances were interpreted to create interactive sense. It may be worth mentioning, in this connection, to point out that not only that there are five different perspectives from which to engage in pragmatic research, but also that, within each,

there is a wide range of research areas. Because of this, there is no pragmatic methodology, no one way of collecting and analyzing the data. Rather, there are various approaches, the approach for each researcher being determined by the perspective taken, the specific questions asked, and the theoretical position adopted.

With the above in mind, pragmatics can be classified into four types. The first type is called “micropragmatics”. It is the study of language use in smaller contexts. Traditionally, this context is understood as comprising the sentence and its immediate surroundings. With the discovery of the presupposition not only as a necessary condition for explaining certain linguistic phenomena, but also as the essential link with the larger context of human language use, we begin to see the contours of a larger structure. The users of language are no longer seen as individual agents, demonstrating linguistic behavior mainly for the benefit of the analyst. Rather, the interest has been in what these users are trying to do with their words (McKellin et al., 2007). The second type is called “macropragmatics”, in which the emphasis is on what actually goes on in language use; the context of use comprises the entire environment, both linguistic and extralinguistic. The interest is focused on user interaction, in various ways, and in a number of settings. Conversational analysis is one big area of research within macropragmatics. The various uses of institutional and institutionalized language have also caught the interest of pragmatic workers. Also, the problems of sex-related differences in language and language use have become a prominent field of study in the last decades of the 20th century, as has the general question of the unequal distribution of societal power (Haworth, 2006; Heydon, 2005; Holmes, 2005, 2006; Jiang, 2006).

The third type is called “metapragmatics”. It is a (pragmatic) discussion on pragmatics. There are two basic considerations that come into play whenever pragmatics is mentioned. One is the fact that pragmatics, by itself, can not explain or motivate its principles and maxims. The other consideration is more complex. It has to do with the fact that the explanatory framework for the observed pragmatic facts can not by definition be restricted to a single context. The world in which people live is one in which everything hangs together. For example, when someone says, “You did a great job, and I am not being polite”, the latter half of the sentence is a metapragmatic statement. More specifically, metapragmatics should worry about the circumstances and conditions that allow people to sue their language, or prevent them from using it (Ifantidou, 2005). The fourth type is called “cognitive pragmatics”. It is that part of the cognitive studies of language that is related to some system of pragmatic knowledge of language use. The notion “cognitive pragmatics” has been used since the mid 1980s (Kasher, 1989; Preface).

Linguistic and psychological studies of acquisition of pragmatics have often rested on the assumption that natural language is required as a communication device directly related to previously acquired, non-verbal communication devices. More work has been done about neuropsychological aspects of language use. However, it is still unclear how the results of such research could be explained within a cognitive framework (Kamp & Partee, 2004; Kiesling & Paulston, 2005; Van Dijk, 2006).

### 6.3 *Pragmatics: Language Users*

The “world of users” has come to play the same role in pragmatics as the concept of “context” has done in more traditional linguistics. That is, the world of users is, for pragmatics, the very condition of its existence (Mey, 1994, p. 326). As for traditional linguistics itself, the role of the context as explanatory device has been made explicit by pragmatics as a user context, a context in which the users are paramount features of interest. So, if one chooses to apply the notion of “shifting paradigm” to the “pragmatic turn in linguistics” a number of observations can be brought to the same practical denominator; for example, a shift from the paradigm of theoretical grammar (in particular, syntax) to that of the language user; the latter is what pragmatics is all about. In this regard, it is important to remember that the “pioneers” in the area of pragmatics were reacting against an approach to linguistics which was strongly biased towards meaning in abstract rather than meaning in use, or interaction. Accordingly, the concept of “ambivalence” is particularly important in taking the view of pragmatics as “meaning in interaction” in which both the speaker and hearer have a part to play.

“Ambivalence” was first described by Leech (1977) and Brown and Levinson (1987). It was noted that the intended force of an utterance such as “Is that the phone?” might be either a straight question or a request to the hearer to answer the telephone. Where the relative rights and obligations of participants, or the role of relationships between them, are unclear, it may be in the interests of both participants that the force of the utterance should be negotiable. By using an ambivalent utterance instead of making a direct request, the speaker reduces the risk of a confrontation or of receiving an embarrassing refusal, since the hearer is at liberty either to respond to the straight question by saying “yes” or alternatively, to interpret the utterance as a request and to comply. Ambivalence, then, occurs when the speaker does not make clear precisely which of a range of related illocutionary values is intended (Portner, 2005).

### 6.4 *Major Themes in Pragmatics*

#### 6.4.1 The Study of Presupposition

The pragmatic interest in the implicit meaning dimensions of language use has been extended to include meanings which are logically entailed on the language use by the user of a particular structure. Presuppositions are implicit meanings which are subsumed by a particular wording in the sense that its interpretation is conditional upon the tacit acceptance of the implicit meaning (pre-supposition = “an assumption that comes before”). For example, a sentence such as “The cold war has ended” presupposes that the existence of the entities it refers to, in this case the “cold war”. Therefore, the study of presuppositions often concentrates on meaning dimensions which are “taken for granted” in an utterance or a text and hence this area of pragmatic research offers an instrument which is well-suited for examining the links between language and ideology.

Presupposition is a kind of pragmatic inference “based more closely on the actual linguistic structure of sentences” (Levinson, 1989, p. 167). It is classified as a type of pragmatic inference by Strawson (1952). It must be emphasized, here, that the notion of presupposition required in discourse analysis is pragmatic presupposition, that is, “defined in terms of assumptions the speaker makes about what the

hearer is likely to accept without challenge” (Givon, 1979, p. 50). The notion of assumed “common ground” is also involved in such a characterization of presupposition and can be found in this definition by Stalnaker (1978, p. 321): “Presuppositions are what is taken by the speaker to be the common ground of the participants in the conversation”.

On the other hand, pragmaticists are accused of viewing the world through rose-colored glasses, of having a vision of society where everyone is nice and kind to everyone else. The very term “politeness”, with its widespread use in everyday interaction, encourages this misinterpretation.

#### 6.4.2 Politeness

In the past thirty years within pragmatics there has been a great deal of interest in “politeness”, to such an extent that politeness theory could almost be seen as a sub-discipline of pragmatics (Watts, 2003; Mazid, 2006; 2008; Mills, 2003; Harris, 2003). Recent work in politeness theory, notably that of Leech (1980, 1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987) has focused on politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon. In these writings, politeness is interpreted as a strategy (or series of strategies) employed by a speaker to achieve a variety of goals, such as promoting or maintaining harmonious relations. Following Fraser (1990), Thomas (1995), has grouped the pragmatic approaches to politeness under four headings: (1) the “conversational maxim” view (exemplified by Leech); (2) the “face-management” view (exemplified by Brown and Levinson); (3) Fraser’s own “conversational-contract’ view, and (4) the “pragmatic scales” view proposed by Spencer-Oatey (1992). These issues will be explored next. Leech (1980, 1983) sees politeness as crucial in explaining why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean. Leech introduces two concepts which are relevant for the present discussion: (1) ambivalence, and (2) pragmatic principles. First, by employing an utterance which is ambivalent (one which has more than one potential pragmatic force) it is possible to convey messages which the hearer is liable to find disagreeable without causing undue offense. Consider the following example: If you want to enjoy the full flavor of your food and drink you will, naturally, not smoke during this meal. Moreover, if you did smoke you would also be impairing the enjoyment of other guests.

In the above example, the management obviously thought it inappropriate simply to put up “No Smoking’ signs. Instead, it is left to the guests for themselves whether they are being asked or ordered not to smoke. In addition, Leech (1983) introduced the Politeness Principle (PP) which runs as follows: “Minimize (all things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs; Maximize (all things being equal) the expression of the polite beliefs” (p. 192). Leech argues that the following maxims are necessary in order to understand the relationship between sense and force in human conversation: (1) The Tact maxim; (2) The Generosity maxim; (3) The Approbation maxim; (4) The Modesty maxim; (5) The Agreement maxim. The Tact maxim states: “Minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to other; maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other.” Second, Leech’s Generosity maxim states: “Minimize the expression of benefit to self; maximize the expression of cost to self.” The Approbation maxim states: “Minimize the expression of beliefs which express dispraise of other; maximize the expression of beliefs with express approval of other”. The Modesty states: “Minimize the

expression of praise of self; maximize the expression of dispraise of self". The Agreement maxim runs as follows: "Minimize the expression of disagreement between self and other; maximize the expression of agreement between self and other".

The most influential theory of politeness was put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987). Central to this theory is the concept of "face", as proposed by Goffman (1967). Within politeness theory "face" is best understood as every individual's feeling of self-worth or self-image. This image can be damaged, maintained or enhanced through interaction with others. Face has two aspects: "positive" and "negative". An individual's positive face is reflected in his or her desire to be liked, approved of, respected and appreciated by others. An individual's negative face is reflected in the desire not to be impeded or put upon, to have the freedom to act as one chooses. The concept of "face" will be, further, discussed below. Brown and Levinson suggest that certain kinds of interactive acts intrinsically threaten the addressee's and/or speaker's face. For example, a Speaker's positive face is threatened by acts such as making apologies or accepting responsibility and his or her negative face is threatened, for instance, by making excuses and expressing thanks. For an Addressee, positive face is threatened by receiving criticisms or complaints, or by inappropriate forms of address, etc., and negative face by receiving orders, suggestions and requests, etc. In a business letter, the Speaker becomes the Sender of the letter and their Addressee becomes the Receiver. It is not difficult to see the potential for Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) in business correspondence, since many of the FTAs Brown and Levinson describe commonly occur, e.g., requests, complaints and suggestions. Much of what a Sender includes within a business letter, therefore, can be interpreted as mitigations of FTAs; the Sender may for instance preface a complaint or criticism (a negative FTA) with a compliment, the Brown and Levinson positive mitigation strategy of "giving gifts to the Hearer".

The seriousness of the FTA is determined by the interaction of three variables: the social distance between the participants, i.e. how well they know each other; the relative difference in power between them, which is created by their institutional roles; and the ranking of the imposition in the particular culture. The greater the social distance, relative power distance or ranking of the imposition, the greater the seriousness of the FTA. These variables may be expressed in business communication in a variety of different ways. For example, the need for mitigation is likely to be greater in a letter initiating contact than in a letter from the same Sender to the same Receiver once they are frequently in contact, since the social distance between them will have changed. Similarly, a Sender is more likely to use mitigation in writing to a client rather than as a client, since their institutional role places them in a less powerful position in the first case than in the second. Finally, the Sender is more likely to use mitigation in a reply to a complaint than in a letter (to the same Receiver) confirming an appointment, since the third variable, the ranking of the imposition, will be higher in the first letter than in the second. The language used in business correspondence may, therefore, be expected to reflect both the relationship between the Sender and the Receiver and the subject matter of the letter (Agyekum, 2004; Daly et al., 2004; Wang, 2006; Mutz & Mondak, 2006).

There are a number of options open to a Speaker/Sender when confronted with the necessity to make an FTA. If a Sender decides to make a Face Threatening Act, he or she may do so **baldly**, with no concession to face, **off record**, (or indirectly) where the FTA is made only by implication, or **on record**, with appropriate mitigation of the positive and/or negative threats to face. **Off record** strategies described by Brown and Levinson include “giving hints”, “understating”, “using contradictions”, etc.; **on record positive mitigation strategies** include “claiming common ground”, “making offers”, “avoiding disagreement”, etc., and **on record negative mitigation strategies** include “apologizing”, “giving deference” and “being pessimistic”. A further option, when the speaker considers that the FTA is too great the therefore can not be mitigated, is simply to avoid making the FTA at all. Previous research on requesting behavior has shown that the relative importance played by estimates of power, social distance, situational setting, and degree of imposition may differ from culture to culture, and that the proportions in the choices between more direct and more indirect strategies are culture-specific (De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2006).

In conventional indirectness, by far the most frequently used strategy, cross-cultural differences may appear between conventions of means (e.g., asking for ability: “can you help me?”, or for willingness: “would you mind helping me?”) and conventions of form, which specify the exact wording used to realize the request (“are you willing ...?”, “would you mind ...?”, “would you be so kind ...?”) (Blum-Kulka, 1987, p. 41). With respect to the sometimes suggested link between politeness and indirectness, it should be noted that these concepts are not necessarily related in a linear fashion, that indirectness is not per se a carrier of politeness, and that cultures may vary in the social meaning attached to similar linguistic choices, and in preferences for positive and negative politeness (Blum-Kulka, 1987, p. 43).

From the above remarks it follows that the directness level of speech acts that have traditionally been called indirect, depends on how conventionalized certain ways of speaking are, and that it is not just the speaker’s perspective that determines whether or not a speech act is indirect. The interpretation of utterances by the hearer, and hence the communicative situation in which the speech act is realized, should also be taken into account. This is where cultural variation-in linguistic form, in conventionalisation of interactional strategies, and in social meanings attached to these-influences both the notion of indirectness and its interpretation, and thus raises problems for the generalisability and universality of politeness principles (Lakoof & Ide, 2005; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Bialystok (1993) focuses on the acquisition of pragmatic ability by second language learners, addressing the cognitive dimensions on which interlanguage competence evolves: Selecting the appropriate form requires an assessment of contextual and social factors. Thus the mapping is not between form and meaning-the usual problem in semantics-but between form and social context, with meaning held constant across intentions within a socially defined situation (Bialystok, 1993, p. 51).



### 6.4.3 The “Principle of Relevance”

Grice’s “maxim of relation” has been elevated to the status of an overriding principle governing communication and cognition by Sperber and Wilson (1986). The principle of relevance is at the center of their claim of a new approach to the study of human communication. Sperber and Wilson formulate the “principle of relevance” as follows: “Every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance (1986, p. 158). The term “relevance” is used in a technical sense to refer to the bringing about of contextual effect. An utterance is only relevant if it has some contextual effect. In Sperber and Wilson’s words: The notion of a contextual effect is essential to a characterization of relevance. We want to argue that having contextual effects is a necessary condition for relevance, and that other things being equal, the greater the contextual effects, the greater the relevance (1986, p. 119).

There are varying degrees of relevance. Sperber and Wilson claim that there is an inverse correlation of effort and relevance. In other words, the more processing it takes to work out what a speaker intends by an utterance, the less relevant that utterance is. As various critics have pointed out, this begs the question “relevant to what?” (Clark, 1987), and “relevant to whom?” (Wilks, 1987). In “Relevance”, human beings are viewed as information processors with an inbuilt capacity to infer relevance. This single capacity is assumed to be the key to human communication and cognition. In addition, the human mind is conceived to be a “deductive mechanism” which has the capacity to manipulate the conceptual content of assumptions from a range of sources. Sperber and Wilson’s favorite metaphor for the human mind is the computer. They limit their object of enquiry accordingly to how the human mind functions as a computer (Talbot, 1994, p. 352).

## 7. Part (2): Political Discourse: What Is It?

One of the goals of the present study is to discuss the interplay between language and politics. In this regard, Blommaert (1998, p. 7) points out that the study of language has long been carrying with it a legacy of categorizations within its object of study, which separated “language” proper from a series of “influences” on language: psychological, cognitive, social, cultural, historical, political. Connections between various categories were expressed by the connector “and”: language and culture, language and cognition, etc. Political discourse is characterized by its attempt to get the audience to accept the speaker or writer’s point of view and to identify with him or her, viz. to persuade the audience (Jucker, 1997, p. 121). According to Van Dijk (1997, p. 12), the easiest, and not altogether misguided, approach is that political discourse is identified by its actors or authors, viz. politicians. The vast bulk of studies of political discourse is about the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions. Some of the studies of politicians take a discourse analytical approach, such as Dillon et al. (1990); Campell and Jamieson (1990); Snyder and Higgins (1990); Harris (1991); Maynard (1994) and Deignan (2005). It must be emphasized that political activity and the political process involve people as citizens and voters, people as members of pressure and issue groups, demonstrators and dissidents (Verba et al.,

1993, p. 25). All these groups and individuals, as well as their organizations and institutions, may take part in the political process, and many of them are actively involved in political discourse. In this connection, Van Dijk (1997, p. 13) argues that a broad definition of politics implies a vast extension of the scope of the term “political discourse” if we identify such practices by all participants in the political process. Relatedly, the first observation that needs to be made about political discourse is that it is not a genre, but a class of genres defined by a social domain, namely that of politics (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 13). Thus, government deliberations, parliamentary debates, party programs, and speeches by politicians, are among the many genres that belong to the domain of politics (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 8).

In this study, political discourse is the discourse of politicians. Accordingly, the second observation that needs to be made is that such discourse is by the same token a form of institutional discourse. That is, “only those discourses of politicians that are produced in institutional settings must be considered. This means that an informal conversation of a politician with his/her friends does not count as a political discourse” (Ibid: 8). To put it simply, we may also say that discourse is political when it accomplishes a political act in a political institution. With the above in mind, it might be pertinent to argue that although the distinguishing properties of political discourse may be largely contextual, this does not mean that we should no longer study the structures of political discourse. Such a study may reveal much about the unique character of such a discourse, and allows inferences about the cognitive, social and the political functions of such discourse (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 1998; Wodak & Van Dijk, 2000; Givon, 2005; Butler, 2005).

### *7.1 Persuasion: What Is It?*

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “persuasion “ as follows: The action, or an act, of persuading or seeking to persuade; the presenting of inducements or winning arguments; the addressing of reasonings, appeals, or entreaties to a person in order to induce him to do or believe something. Thus, in this non-technical use of the word, persuasion is used to get the audience to do something or to believe something. In everyday understanding this is often taken to be negative. It is not too far removed from cheating.

There are many types of persuasive speeches. The first type is the speech that addresses attitudes. This type of speech aims to change the way of people’s thinking or feeling about a particular subject. The second type of persuasive speech is the speech that urges action in which the speaker aims to argue the audience to do something. This action could be individual or group action, immediate or ongoing action. The third type of persuasive speech is the speech of contention, which aims to refute opposing arguments. In this type one can argue against someone’s argument. Persuasive speech is, also, known as an argument speech, which attempts to persuade the audience to adopt a certain point of view. This argument must use sound reasoning and solid evidence by stating facts, giving logical reasons, and using examples.

A good persuasive speech has important characteristics. (1) It is an interactive process between a speaker and listeners. The speaker has to put in his mind the listener’s experiences, expectations, values

and attitudes. In addition, in delivering persuasive speeches, speakers need to establish and maintain visual and personal connections with listeners and respond to their feedback. In general, speakers and listeners are engaged in a transactional communicative process. (2) Persuasive speech is not a coercive or force. In this regard, the great rhetorical scholar Aristotle distinguished between what he called “inartistic” proof and “artistic” proof. The first is the one that does not require art or skill on our part. We do not have to consider or respect others to get what we want. The second type of proof is the one that requires from the speaker to give reasons to convince his listeners. In this regard, Aristotle distinguished three ways of persuading or convincing others: by appeal to their reason (logos), by appeal to their emotions (pathos), and by the appeal of the speaker’s personality or character. (3) Persuasive impact is usually gradual or incremental. That is, listeners usually compare speeches or arguments with their experience and knowledge. They may change or shift their attitudes or behavior when they listen to a strong argument, good evidence, and a coherent organization. (4) Another important characteristic of effective speech is clarity, which helps to get the development of thoughts logically. Any speech has coherence when the thoughts flow from one to another in logical order. In this way, “the audience will have a chance to give appropriate emphasis on the most important points” (Jordan, 1971, p. 348). (5) Another characteristic of effective speech is conciseness. By using conciseness, the audience will be able to get the important information quickly and easily. These methods include using summary—type where details are not required. These methods, also, include the omission of non-essential details. All these techniques help the audience to get the most information in the shortest possible time. (6) politicians and effective public speakers must build credibility, which means the willingness of others to believe a person who has personal integrity. That is, the speaker who has good background, good will and trustworthiness can be trusted in the eyes of his people, and others. There are three types of credibility: (1) initial credibility; (2) derived credibility and (3) terminal credibility.

Initial credibility is based on titles, position, experiences, or achievements, which are known to the listeners before the speaker begins his speech. Derived credibility refers to the situation in which the listener can recognize the goodwill and trustworthiness of the speaker during the speech. Speakers who are not well known try to provide clear and logical ideas which include convincing and interesting evidences. In this way, they earn derived credibility. Terminal credibility is a combination between initial and derived credibility. Here the listener can recognize the credibility of the speaker at the end of the speech. The speaker’s credibility includes cumulative, expertise, goodwill and trustworthiness. (7) persuasive political speeches are characterized by the excessive use of “body language” technique: “body is a tool of persuasion. Your hands guide the speech, and your posture portrays your strength and assurance. The way you sound, move, and use your eyes are just as important as the words in the speech” (think-quest. Org.) . These norms give the audience confidence about what their speakers say. In this regard, McCannon (medialiteracy. net) advised political leaders to “be firm; bold; strong; have the dramatic, confident image of a leader”. All these norms can be accomplished through body

language technique.

### *7.2 Persuasion in Political Speech*

In order to go to war in democracies, and even in dictatorship, political leaders have to give their people a reason and some reasoned justifications. And, when they have done that, they issue an “ultimatum” to the enemy; if the enemy does not do what they want, they send in the missiles, bombers and foot soldiers. All this is done by means of “language”. The aim is to get people’s brains into a state similar to that of the speaker. In politics a speaker wants to provide his political view. Speaking to the public is an excellent way to do this, but just speaking will not encourage the audience to listen. Therefore, successful politicians had to be at the very least competent public speakers, and many of those who reached the top were outstanding. Aspiring politicians who were not naturally gifted speakers had to work hard at overcoming weaknesses and developing their technique, Churchill and Bevan to overcome speech impediments, Harold Wilson to inject humour into his earlier dry and dull speeches, Margaret Thatcher to lower her harsh strident tones. All this tends to reinforce the critical importance of public speaking skills for a successful political career. As Atkinson (1988, p. 1) points out, the ability to speak effectively in public is one of the oldest and most powerful weapons in the armory of professional politicians.

### *7.3 Persuasive Political Speeches from a Neurolinguistics’ Perspective*

Persuasion is not technically brainwashing but it is the manipulation of the human mind by another individual, without the manipulated party being aware what caused his opinion shift. The basis of persuasion is always to access our right brain. The left half of our brain is analytical and rational. The right half is creative and imaginative. The idea is to distract the left brain and keep it busy. Ideally, the persuader generates an eyes-open altered state of consciousness, causing us to shift from beta awareness into alpha. Politicians use these techniques all the time. As Sutphen (2004) points out, assume for a moment that we are watching a politician give a speech. First, he might generate what is called a “Yes Set”. These are statements that will cause listeners to agree. Next come the “Truisms”. These are usually facts that could be debated but, once the politician has his audience agreeing, the odds are in the politicians’s favor that the audience would not stop to think for themselves, thus continuing to agree. Last comes the “suggestion”. This is what the politician wants us to do and, since we have been agreeing all along, we could be persuaded to accept the suggestion.

Neurolinguistic research adds more to our understanding of the physiological idea of persuasion. Another technique is called “interspersal technique”, and the idea is to say one thing with words but plant a subconscious impression of something else in the minds of the listeners and / or watchers (Primer, 2004, p. 8). In other words, this technique is based on causing a person’s subconscious mind to draw parallels to a current situation while the conscious mind ignores the hints as being unrelated. This technique can basically be used for planting any suggestion into the victim’s mind, and this is why the technique is used very frequently in political speeches. Politicians are well aware of the fact that people do not generally bother to trace associations consciously, and therefore they sink in through their

defences. Moreover, moral values can be attacked either negatively through Guilt, or positively with Appeal to virtue. Guilt can be invoked by placing the victim in a position in which he seems to be breaking his own moral values and then offering him a way out that benefits the manipulator. Appeal to virtue can be used by getting the victim to agree that something we want would be morally virtuous, a way to set the wrong things right. Relatedly, self-esteem can be attacked negatively with “Intimidation” or positively with “Appeal to Ego”. These techniques depend on discovering what the victim bases his self-esteem on, and then attacking it. “Intimidation” usually manifests itself through doubting that the victim actually has the quality and demanding proof for it in a way that benefits the manipulator. It is easy to get some people to do almost anything in order to prove their worth. Appeal to ego can be done by promoting those qualities, causing the victim to do what the manipulator asks since he wants to believe him (the manipulator). Finally, Imagination – based techniques are Fear (negative) and Curiosity (positive).

Fear is used by having a victim to visualize horrible consequences for not doing the things the manipulator asks. Curiosity is used by causing the victim to visualize pleasant and exciting consequences and thus motivating him to act the way the manipulator wants him to (Primer, 2004, p. 10). To sum it up, persuasion can be described as a means of attitude change in such way that those attitudes can be made to drive desired behavior.

## 8. Concluding Remarks

It may be pertinent to suggest that the different approaches to the linguistic analysis of discourse seem to agree that language is viewed as social interaction. Each approach somehow incorporates this insight into its specific methods and concepts. Speech act theory focuses upon the linguistic actions that we perform toward another person—the actions that initiate (or continue) interaction. The cooperative principle so crucial to Gricean pragmatics is a principle applicable to human interaction: it is this assumption that governs the way people interpret one another’s meaning during interactions with one another. Interactional sociolinguistics and conversation analysis are quite clear in their beliefs that social interaction is the locus of language use: what we know and understand about interaction complements our ability to use language. The ethnography of communication focuses upon communicative situations, events, and acts: these are “units of analysis” that can be realized only if one assumes that human beings are interacting with one another. Variation analysis takes as one of its central goals the analysis of “language as it is used in everyday life by members of the social order, that vehicle of communication in which they argue with their wives, joke with their friends and decisively their enemies (Labov, 1972, p. xiii). The focus of the ethnography of communication is communication as cultural behaviour: language is part of a matrix of meanings, beliefs, and values that extend beyond knowledge of grammar. Like interactional sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication also offers a contextual approach to the analysis of utterances. Thus, “discourse (and language in general) is a part of culture; because culture is a framework for acting, believing, and understanding, culture is the framework in which communication

(and the use of utterances) becomes meaningful” (Schiffrin, 1998, p. 408). Conversation analysis began by searching for ways to discover our ordinary, everyday procedures for constructing a sense of social and personal reality. Its main focus is the way language is shaped by context, and, in turn, the way language shapes context. The contexts upon which conversation analysts focus, however, are only those that can be empirically attested through actual speech or behaviour. Similarly, inferences about language structure, about speaker intention, about relationships across utterances, and so on, must be grounded in actual doings and sayings. Pragmatics began with a focus on a very different kind of meaning than the contextual approaches just discussed. It is individual, intention-based meaning that could supplement the logical, proportional, and conventional meanings representable through a linguistic code. Its contextual focus is not situational or cultural contributions to utterance meaning, but the very general assumptions that speaker and hearer bring to each and every occasion of speaking. These assumptions work with textual and situational information to allow very particular inferences about speaker meaning. In this regard, Schiffrin (1988, p. 409) points out that “because what is said in one utterance can contribute to the inference of speaker meaning in another utterance, discourse can be seen a chain of inferential relationships whose links are based in relationships that arise from the operation of the maxims as they apply across utterances”.

The rationale for bringing together scholars from a wide variety of fields related to language and politics is the observation that, for a number of years, a renewed critical awareness had penetrated various domains of language study. There was, first, the emergence of Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis as established and recognizable sub-disciplines, within which innovative ideas on the interrelation between language and society could be explored. As Blommaert (1997, p. 2) points out, Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis have brought a new awareness to current thinking on language and society, of the loss of innocence of language in relation to power, ideology, and social relations. Work within this tradition is often explicitly political, and it focuses on identifiable social and political actors. Moreover, the study of language ideologies and ideologies of language had been given new impulses, mostly in the US and primarily among linguistic anthropologists, by the work of Silverstein (1979), who points out that language ideologies and ideologies of language are shared perceptions of what a language is, what it is made of, what purpose it serves, and how it should be used. These perceptions are sociocultural in nature. In this regard, language ideologies or ideologies of language become a “mediating link between social structures and forms of talk” (Woolard, 1992, p. 235), and “meta pragmatics” (“the study of a metalevel at which verbal communication is self-referential to various degrees”) (Yerschueren, 1995, p. 367) becomes a central concern in the analysis of the political and ideological dimensions of various forms of everyday language usage. Relatedly, the same American anthropological linguistic tradition yielded highly critical concepts of text and text-meaning, focused on the way in which text can be moved in and out of contexts and so become instruments for all kinds of social, cultural and political strategies (Silverstein & Urban, 1996; Bauman & Briggs, 1990). Thus, textual practices can be identified as central political strategies for creating, sustaining or solving

conflicts, and conflicts can be inextricably linked to textual practices (Briggs, 1996).

This survey of both “pragmatics” and “discourse analysis” has shown some significant facts about language, communication and understanding other people’s utterances. First, language is not only linguistic as being regarded traditionally; rather it is both linguistic and sociolinguistic (in the sense of pragmatic and ethnographic approaches to language). That is, language consists of two major dimensions: linguistic and socio-cultural. The linguistic dimension of language represents the knowledge of grammar and lexicon. This dimension is the structural facet of language which integrates phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. This linguistic dimension accounts for literal meaning, derived from grammatical and lexical meanings. The second dimension accounts for conveyed or intended meaning, derived from pragmatic and ethnographic factors. Second, communication between human beings involves an active receptivity on the part of the hearer and not a mere passivity. In addition, the spoken or written word does not directly actualize some potency in the mind of the receiver. Rather, it prompts him or her to look at things in a new way so as to be able to form new concepts and thereby grow in understanding. Third, the process of making meaning is a joint accomplishment between speaker and hearer; between writer and reader. Accordingly, it would be a mistake to adopt an approach to pragmatics and discourse analysis which focuses on the linguistic factors alone, or social factors alone, to the exclusion of cognitive factors. It would, also, be a mistake to adopt an approach which is exclusively speaker-oriented or exclusively hearer-oriented. Fourth, both disciplines, “pragmatics” and “discourse analysis” are hybrid fields of inquiry; and their common themes are “language”, “language users”, “communication”, and “meaning in interaction”. Both disciplines have borrowed their theoretical and methodological orientations from almost the same social and human disciplines. In this regard, two observations must be made: (1) pragmatics can be said to thematise the relationship between language use and the language user in a situational context; and, relatedly, discourse analysts’ task is to examine such relationships. This does not imply that pragmatic studies do not do the same. Accordingly, I do agree with Mchoul’s (1994) view that the study of discourse (as language use) can be broadly and roughly associated with applied linguistics and particularly within the area of it which is now called “pragmatics”. I, also, agree with Levinson (1989) who maintained that the terms “pragmatics” and “discourse analysis” are used interchangeably.

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