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COGNITIVE PRAGMATICS: APPROACHES AND PERSPECTIVES

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In the twenty-first century, cognitive pragmatics has become a novel and booming research discipline which synthesizes pragmatic and cognitive explanations of human communication. There is a vast number of approaches to cognitive pragmatics resulting both from different theoretical underpinnings and specific ethnic and social-cultural prerequisites of their development, so establishing the principles related to cognitive-pragmatic communication studies has become an urgent necessity. This article fills this gap by adopting theoretical insight into the leading cognitive-pragmatic approaches in western and Ukrainian linguistics. I claim that various approaches in cognitive pragmatics can be roughly divided according to the two leading vectors of theoretical perspectives: from cognitive – to pragmatic and from pragmatic – to cognitive frameworks of analysis. As my discussion demonstrates, growing numbers of empirical and theoretical studies examine cognitive-pragmatic aspects of both utterances / speech acts and discourses, namely their principles of politeness / impoliteness and discourse strategies, in intercultural and historical perspectives. The theoretic rationale for these studies is clear enough. Mental state attribution is integral to pragmatic and cognitive interpretation of processes of human communication. In cognitive pragmatics, which is characterized by highly synthetic and hybrid nature, this attribution is viewed holistically. The article reveals the distinctive characteristics of Ukrainian cognitive-pragmatic studies as compared to western researches. It proves that the cognitive-pragmatic interpretation of the construal of meaning-in-context in various discourses and utterances will have further implications in linguistics and humanities.

Key words: cognitive pragmatics, discourse, impoliteness principle, theoretical underpinnings, Ukrainian linguistics, utterance.

КОГНІТИВНА ПРАГМАТИКА: ПІДХОДИ ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ

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У двадцять першому столітті когнітивна прагматика стала новітньою науковою дисципліною, яка бурхливо розвивається і синтезує прагматичне та когнітивне витлумачення людського спілкування. Існує велика кількість підходів до когнітивної прагматики, що є результатом як різниці теоретичного підґрунтя, так і конкретних етнічних та соціокультурних передумов їх розвитку; тому встановлення принципів, пов'язаних із когнітивно-прагматичними дослідженнями спілкування, стало нагальною потребою. Ця стаття заповнює цю прогалину, розглядаючи теоретичне розуміння провідних когнітивно-прагматичних підходів у західній та українській лінгвістиці. Я стверджую, що різні підходи в когнітивній прагматиці можна умовно розділити за двома провідними теоретичними векторами: від когнітивної до прагматичної та від прагматичної до когнітивної методології аналізу. Як показують наведені у статті дані, дедалі більша кількість емпіричних та теоретичних досліджень звертається до когнітивно-прагматичних аспектів як висловлювань / мовленнєвих актів, так і дискурсів, а саме їхніх принципів ввічливості/неввічливості та стратегій дискурсу, в міжкультурній та історичній перспективах. Потреба теоретичного обґрунтування цих досліджень цілком зрозуміла. Атрибуція психічного стану є невід'ємною частиною прагматичної та когнітивної інтерпретації процесів людського спілкування. У когнітивній прагматиці, яка характеризується високим ступенем синтетичності та гібридною природою, ця атрибуція розглядається цілісно. У статті розкрито відмінні характеристики українських когнітивно-прагматичних студій порівняно із західним доробком. Це засвідчує, що когнітивно-прагматичне тлумачення конструювання контекстуального смислу в різних дискурсах та висловлюваннях матиме подальший вплив на розвиток лінгвістики та гуманітарних наук.

Ключові слова: дискурс, висловлення, когнітивна прагматика, принцип неввічливості, теоретичні основи, українське мовознавство.



1. Introduction

For approximately forty years, researchers of pragmatics have attempted to describe how to do things with words. Beginning from Austin and Grice pragmatics is concerned with “meaning-in-context” (Bublitz & Norrick, 2011: 4). In the last two decades, linguists’ interest has shifted to the relationship between pragmatics and cognition or “the cognitive aspects of the construal of meaning-in-context” (Schmid, 2012: 3). The result has been a number of empirical findings, many of which present considerable interest for researchers and practitioners who are concerned with, as Bara (Bara, 2010: 1) puts it, “the study of the mental states of people who are engaged in communication”.

In today’s linguistics, there exist various approaches to Cognitive Pragmatics; however it still lacks a generally acknowledged theoretical explication. One possible reason for this may be a highly synthetic, hybrid nature of Cognitive Pragmatics. No wonder some scholars focus on the *cognitive aspects* and construal of meaning while others rather address the problems of *communication* as such.

In this article, I will argue that Cognitive Pragmatics is not a mere addition of the two approaches but the result of their synthesis at a higher theoretical and methodological level. For this aim, I will provide a critical examination of existing theoretical approaches to Cognitive Pragmatics in the world and describe the contribution of Ukrainian researchers to this novel field of inquiry.

2. A cognitive perspective on classical pragmatic theories

As a linguistic discipline classical pragmatics originates from philosophical tradition of Wittgenstein, Grice, Austin, and Searle whose focus of utterance interpretation lies at the semantic–pragmatic interface. This interface to a large extent explains why a cognitive orientation in pragmatics is necessary. It was Sperber and Wilson’s (1986, 2nd edition 1995) relevance theory that first suggested a theoretic underpinning for utterance interpretation by formulating a cognitive principle of relevance alongside a communicative one. In particular, by interpreting the context-dependent meaning of indirect speech acts pragmatics proves to be “sensitive to, and dependent on, a range of cognitive operations (e.g., reasoning)” (Cummings, 2014: 3). Thereby, pragmatic theories can only truly reflect this interrelationship between pragmatics and cognition if they are cognitively oriented (ibid.).

Though the term Cognitive Pragmatics was introduced into European and Ukrainian linguis-

tics only in 2000s (Carston, 2002; Shevchenko, 2000), today there is a variety of cognitive-pragmatic approaches. They mainly differ in theoretic underpinnings depending upon the vector of their development: from cognitive – to pragmatic or from pragmatic – to cognitive frameworks of analysis. In the sections below I will discuss both approaches as applied by western and Ukrainian researchers.

3. Cognitive-pragmatic approaches in European and American linguistics

I claim that linguistic pragmatics is inherently cognitive-oriented. To account for the interpretation of implicatures (Grice, 1975) as well as indirect speech acts (Searle, 1975) pragmatics worked out models of the construal of meaning-in-context based on individual’s mental processes. The existing theoretic frameworks vary from cognitively-oriented pragmatic to pragmatically-oriented cognitive ones.

Cognitively-oriented pragmatic theories appeared in the works of those researchers of pragmatic properties of speech act and discourse processing who involved cognitive underpinnings to obtain theoretical insight into the construal of meaning-in-context. Beginning from Sperber and Wilson’s (1986/95) *relevance theory*, each found their own experimental and theoretical niche.

In her *Graded Salience Hypothesis*, Giora (Giora, 2003) assumes that default interpretations of sarcasm or metaphor are salience-based. Being not coded, they are constructed or derived mostly on the basis of contextual information (Giora et al., 2015).

Kasher’s *Modular Pragmatics Theory* (Kasher’s, 1994) implemented cognitive assumptions about the work of human mind to utterance interpretation which enriched both pragmatics and cognitive framework of modularity.

Focused on utterance interpretation, cognitive pragmatics in Carston’s parlance (Carston’s, 2002) is a system for interpreting human actions/behaviour in terms of the mental states (beliefs, intentions) underlying them (i.e., it is identical to the general ‘theory of mind’ system); it is also a system for the understanding of communicative behavior, and specifically linguistic communicative behavior, in particular (ibid.).

In intercultural pragmatics, a cognitive-pragmatic analysis adopted into a socio-cognitive approach takes into account both the societal and individual aspects of interaction (Kecskes, 2014). In this approach, cooperation is tied to the speaker–hearer’s rationality and attention that are the result of prior experience of individuals.

“It means that interlocutors activate and bring up the most salient information to the needed attentional level in the construction (by the speaker) and comprehension (by the hearer) of the communication” (Kecskes, 2014: 42).

Pragmatically-oriented cognitive theories, as Fauconnier claims, help assemble cognitive models of the discourse event, thus they become an integral part of cognitive approaches to classical pragmatic issues (Fauconnier, 2004: 657–674).

Among pragmatically-oriented cognitive theories one should mention Bara’s cognitive pragmatics who defines it as “the study of the mental states of people who are engaged in communication” (Bara, 2010: 1). Though Bara’s study is more descriptive than interpretive, this approach is insightful to many areas of cognitive science, linguistic pragmatics and beyond.

A cognitive perspective helped Reboul et al. (Reboul et al., 2012) to define the notion of *pragmatic competence* which explicates the role of intention-reading ability as a key prerequisite for successful pragmatic processing. At the same time, in her theorizing on cognition and communication in the evolution of language, Reboul (Reboul, 2017) builds on the Argumentative Theory of Reasoning and combines social and cognitive factors to provide a detailed account, on the one hand, of linguistic evolution for thought, and on the other, of language externalization for communication.

By way of generalizing the major cognitive foundations of the construal of meaning-in-context, Schmid (Schmid, 2012: 3–22) makes a survey of cognitive prerequisites and cognitive abilities. The former comprise three competences: linguistic, pragmatic (joint attention, intention-reading), social competence, and world knowledge (social norms, context of culture, frames, scripts, cognitive and cultural models). The latter embrace the abilities to keep track of situational context, of other interlocutors’ mental states, to construe conventionally and contextually implicit meanings (ibid.: 9).

The major difference between classical and cognitive pragmatics, as Schmid (Schmid, 2012: 10) argues, lies in their targets: traditional pragmatics mostly focuses on the problems of non-literal (figurate language, humour) and non-explicit meaning (e.g., inferencing, reasoning, implicature, world knowledge) of the utterance and discourse. Unlike traditional, cognitive pragmatics rather concentrates on cognitive principles (i.e., general, entrenched routines) and processes which underlie meaning-making in the utterance/

discourse or non-linguistic situational, social and cultural environment.

4. Cognitive-pragmatic approaches in Ukraine

In Ukraine, cognitive pragmatics mostly sprang up from classical pragmatic theories. Unlike dominant meaning-making perspective in western studies, Ukrainian researchers started from involving cognitive prerequisites and interlocutors’ cognitive abilities into the study of the role and influence of utterances/speech acts and discourse in social interaction. As Shevchenko, Susov, and Bezugla claim (Shevchenko, Susov, and Bezugla, 2005), cognitive pragmatics presumes researchers’ focus on the Language – Mind / Conscience interface. Coming from the assumptions that (a) human beings do not reflect but rather interpret the world, and (b) they do not perceive but rather construe it, cognitive pragmatics formulates its aim as cognitive explication of the process of utterance interpretation. Respectfully, cognitive pragmatics is outlined as a sub-paradigm of functional mega-paradigm (ibid.).

In the cognitive-pragmatic perspective, *meaning-making in utterances/speech acts* proves to depend on cognitive prerequisites and abilities. As a result of her historic cognitive-pragmatic analysis Burenko (Burenko, 2008) claims that speech acts of apology in English are ritualistic conventional speech acts of a hybrid expressive-and-directive nature possessing a blend of emotional and incentive illocutions. Their cognitive-pragmatic properties are rooted in the concepts of GUILT and APOLOGY, and conceptualized in speech act’ scenarios which define corrective and preventive subtypes of apologies.

A cognitive-pragmatic perspective on *meaning-making in discourse* stipulates the study of its general principles and certain strategies. Using cognitive-pragmatic approach, Gorina (Gorina, 2008) determines electoral discourse as a system of linguistic, cognitive, communicative, axiologic, and pragmatic aspects. Its persuasive aim is reached by purposeful transformation of the voters’ worldviews, achieved by communicative strategies of implanting into thier worldviews new values desirable for the candidate. Her cognitive-pragmatic interpretation of persuasion strategies in G.W. Bush’s electoral discourse is based on the major political concepts of conservatives, such as PEOPLE, DEMOCRACY, TERRORISM, POWER, PRESIDENT, LIBERTY, as well as on models of their metaphoric and metonymic conceptualization (Lakoff, 2002), presentation-of-self strategies, political image, etc.



The cognitive-pragmatic framework for analysis of discourse principles also helped to explicate how the interlocutors construe the meaning of politeness in Victorian discourse (Morozova, 2004). In more recent cognitive-pragmatic studies of impoliteness, its strategies are treated as cognitive-and-communicative entities, embodied in the linguistic-cultural regulative concept of communicative behavior IMPOLITENESS (Shevchenko & Petrenko, 2018). This novel insight helped to reveal the concept structure of IMPOLITENESS with six slots DEVALUATION OF THE HEARER, UNWARRANTED INTRUSION, UNWARRANTED EXCLUSION, UNWARRANTED IMPOSITION, INTENTIONAL IMPROPRIETY and MOCK IMPOLITENESS, and then to define the corresponding impoliteness strategies. In the discourse of Shakespearean dramas they embody stereotypes and ethnic ethno-cultural properties of Early Modern English worldview (ibid.).

5. Conclusion

The classical pragmatics which originates from philosophical tradition of utterance interpretation and the semantic-pragmatic interface have spawned a new discipline of cognitive pragmatics. According to its syncretic nature, cognitive pragmatics deals with the cognitive aspects of the construction of meaning-in-context. Multiple cognitive-pragmatic approaches mostly vary in the vector of their analysis: their starting point is either pragmatics or cognitive linguistics. The holism of utterance and discourse interpretation in view of pragmatic and cognitive interconnections is a powerful resource for better understanding of communication processes. Hopefully, the holistic character of utterance interpretation in cognitive pragmatics will have further implications for the study of human mental processes of communication in diachronic and intercultural perspectives, for experimental analysis of the construal of meaning-in-context in various discourses, and beyond the scope of problems this discipline seems to suggest today.

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