

Original Paper

Review of *Introduction to Cognitive Pragmatics*

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Abstract

This article reviews the book—Introduction to Cognitive Pragmatics written by Klaus-Uwe Panther. The book is a synthetic attempt to blend a cognitive linguistic approach to language in use from contemporary pragmatics. Although a few works on this reconciled filed have been published in the past 30 years, the term Cognitive Pragmatics is not well established in linguistic community yet (Schimid, 2012). In this vein, this newly published book makes a few steps forward on the road to an interface study approach both on cognitive linguistics and pragmatics. This review introduces and analyzes the main content of the book as well as providing a critical comment.

Keywords

book review, cognitive pragmatics, Panther, interface study, critical comment

The relationship between pragmatics and cognition is inextricably linked. With the development of cognitive science, pragmatics becomes more cognitively involved. To unfold the reciprocal relation between contemporary pragmatics and cognitive linguistics, the past 30 years have seen an upsurge in this reconciled approach. A number of works on this filed have been published, including *Cognitive Pragmatics: The Mental Processes of Communication* (Bara, 2010), *Handbook of Cognitive Pragmatics* (Schmid, 2012), *Cognitive Pragmatics: Mindreading, Inferences, Consciousness* (Mazzone, 2018) and so on. Despite its rapid development, cognitive pragmatics has encountered some challenges. Just as Schmid (2012) mentioned, the term Cognitive Pragmatics is not well established in linguistic community and what core issues should be addressed in this paradigm is still under debate.

Against this backdrop, Klaus-Uwe Panther's recent monograph, *Introduction to Cognitive Pragmatics* is a few steps forward on the road to a unified theory of cognitive principles and contemporary

pragmatics. Needless to say, the most important relationship between pragmatics and cognition is the psychological plausibility of the construal of meaning-in-context. In this book, Panther specializes in the analysis on the interaction between language structure and semantic-pragmatic meaning, and makes an answer to how to reconcile the cognitive account with pragmatics in the process of meaning inferencing.

The author starts **Chapter 1** with an overview of essential notions of contemporary pragmatics by addressing the study of meaning-in-use as the foci of the book, which lays the theoretical keynote of the whole book. Then the inefficiencies of the truth-conditional approach to semantic analysis in the scope of words, discourse and sentence types etc. are discussed to illustrate the interwoven nature of semantics and pragmatics, as well as their common ground in cognition. On the premise of the fact that linguistic meaning seriously undermines the truth-conditional content, he elicits the point of view that semantics and pragmatics form a gradation (Langacker, 2013), which lays the groundwork for the integration of pragmatics and cognitive linguistics (p. 15). After a succinct overview of the theoretical concepts of cognitive linguistics, namely, constructionist view, usage-based model, and conceptual metaphor and metonymy theories, the aim of blending cognitive linguistics and pragmatics as new insights to the mechanisms of language-in-use is aptly demonstrated.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the notion of motivation that is inevitable in an adequate cognitive-pragmatic model, especially the inferential motivation in language structures and use. Beginning with remarks on its history, the discussion on cognitive view of motivation study is provided. Then Panther reviews and proposes the revised model of “conventionality and motivation scales” (p. 29). Evidentially, he exemplifies several basic types of language-internal motivation, taking one type for example, a linguistic form motivates another form (e.g., *gosh* for *God*) etc. In addition to language-internal types, some language-independent kinds of motivation, such as, sensory-perceptual, cultural, and emotive factors are also inevitable constituents in this enterprise. Taking the emotive motivation factors as an example, the expression like “struggle with depression and suicidal thoughts” shows that “emotions are conceptualized as adverbials that have to be overcome by calm and rational thinking, and inevitably, it is the folk model that motivates the use of “struggle” denoting physical effort against an attacker (p. 40)”.

Moving away from the above essential issues laying grounds for the combination of pragmatics and cognitive linguistics, the following three chapters dive into reasoning and inference mechanisms which are regarded as being part and parcel of the descriptive apparatus of cognitive pragmatics. **Chapter 3 and 4** dedicate to the discussion of the generalized principles of inferencing—entailment, presupposition, and implicature. Much ink has been spilled over to relevant linguistic and cognitive phenomena to prove the ubiquities of inferencing mechanisms in the construction of meaning. Then, the conceptual and pragmatic mechanisms of communication are examined in Chapter 4. Basing on relevance theory, Panther points out its peculiarity of postulating a “dedicate module” of pragmatic

inferencing deliberately being separated from other cognitive abilities. He argues that “the recognition of communicative intentions cannot be separated from the recognition of ‘general purposes or goals’ of interactants” (p. 81), which is in line with the anti-modularity standpoint that is one of the tenets of cognitive linguistics against Chomskyan modularity of language ability (Langacker, 1987, 1991).

In **Chapter 5**, the role of conversational implicature has been the focus, as well as its contrast with entailment and presupposition in terms of suspendability, non-detachability, calculability, non-codability, and especially reinforceability. Through summarizing the grammatical behaviors of the inferential relations of implicature, entailment and presupposition regarding their defeasibility and reinforceability, the argument is elicited that implicature is defeasible and reinforceable, while entailment and presupposition are not. However, all the three inferential modes are reinforceable with additional implicated content, which in his viewpoint is motivated by iconic principle in cognition, that is, more form symbolizes more content (p. 104).

In **Chapter 6**, Panther succinctly reviews the notion of speech act theory—another significant theoretical aspect in the book. Then much ink has been spilled over to introducing how we do things with words, that is, coding devices for illocutionary force and propositional content of illocutionary acts, on basis of authentic examples from English-language corpora. On the one hand, he argues that illocutionary force coding can be composed of lexical, grammatical, and prosodic ways, such as performative verbs (*I advise you...*), different moods and intonations etc. On the other hand, as for the propositional content coding, there are a rich array of morphosyntactic and lexical means (p. 124). Moreover, following Thornburg and Panther (1997), and Panther and Thornburg (1998, 2007), he reviews the notion of illocutionary scenarios according to the five highly influential sub-categories of illocutionary acts, namely, assertives, commissives, directives, expressives, and declarations, and then proves the fact that illocutionary meanings can be described in terms of conceptual-pragmatic frames with schematic illocutionary scenarios.

Two central figures of thought and language, metaphor and metonymy, are examined in the next two chapters. In **Chapter 7**, the author briefly combs the development of metaphor theory from Aristotle (384-322 BCE) to contemporary approaches. Especially, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s contributions for the development of metaphor in cognitive linguistics have been highlighted. According to their point, our conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is metaphorical in nature (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Arguing that “an adequate theory of metaphor must take the internal inferential processes of source and target frames into account”, Panther reanalyzes the pragmatic inferencing modes of entailment, presupposition, and implicature within the framework of conceptual metaphor through various examples. Following this, he suggests the inappropriateness of the Invariance Principle proposed by Lakoff, that is, fixed correspondences between the source and target domains of metaphors, for certain adjustments of the inferential mechanisms are inevitably required when mappings basing on structural resemblance are blocked (p. 153).

In **Chapter 8**, the other ubiquitous cognitive mechanism of reasoning—metonymy—is focused. Different from Langacker’s model of metonymy (that metonymy is equated with the indeterminacy of coded meaning), Panther adopts the constrained version that metonymy consists of the indexical and associative reasoning within one conceptual frame in language structure and use. He discusses the properties of metonymy as well as different pragmatic effects metonymy may cause, e.g., implicating an emotional stance, conveying aesthetic value, or signaling social parameters. He points out that metonymy is embedded in linguistic contexts and extralinguistic situations and can be triggered by a conceptual-pragmatic conflict. Remarkably, his discussion of differentiating metonymy from zone activation proposed by Langacker is quite enlightening (p. 186). Furthermore, five categories of metonymy are introduced, namely the referential metonymies, predicational metonymies, modificational metonymies, grounding metonymies, and illocutionary metonymies. While because of the complexities of the conceptual and pragmatic effects, the last category (illocutionary metonymies) earns discussion in depth in the following two chapters.

Chapter 9 and 10 concentrate on the analysis of metonymic inferencing at work in the production and comprehension of indirect speech acts basing on the five illocutionary categories previously introduced in Chapter 6. With English-language corpora examples, the inferential mechanisms connecting the literal source meanings to target meanings are accounted for in detail by means of conceptual metonymy within illocutionary scenarios (p. 195). For example, people always express directives by means of literally asking a question about someone’s ability to perform some specific action (e.g., The question “can you close your eyes, please?” metonymically expresses the speaker’s actual request to the hearer to close the eyes.). Much of the space has been left for illocutionary metonymy statement and explanations through various pragmatic inferencing. Moreover, Panther detects the inevitable sociocultural factors that motivate the indirectness achieved by metonymic inferencing, which requires special dedication in other study.

Building on the over-arching theme of the book—the conceptual and pragmatic motivation of grammatical structure, **Chapter 11** probes into the impact of meaning and function on grammatical structures exemplified by way of three kinds of grammatical phenomena in English, namely, the subject auxiliary inversion triggered by certain sentence-initial negative adverbials, violations of *and* Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC), and the metonymically interpretation of *and* in the *nice and adj.* construction. The author argues that the constituent order AUX-SBJ is conceptually motivated by the negative orientation of the pre-posed adverbial (p. 239). And in the second grammatical phenomenon, the temporal-aspectualizer shift takes place in *and* from merely a grammatical conjunction during the process of violations of *and* CSC. While in the *nice and adj.* construction, by means of metonymic inferencing, *nice* is embedded with the function of signaling a speech act of positive evaluation which enables the hyperonym-hyponym relation between *nice* and the following *adjective*. With numerous language data, the fact that syntactic structures being metonymically motivated by semantic and

pragmatic factors is dedicatedly proved. Moreover, some grammatical phenomena are co-motivated by both metonymy and metaphor inferencing (e.g., *take a step back and VP* construction). The examples analyzed in this chapter, as he suggests, are particularly relevant to the development of an adequate cognitive pragmatic model.

The **final Chapter** of the book exhibits the author's inclusion of concluding thoughts about the book and some prospects for future research. As Panther emphasizes, the conceptual and pragmatic parameters having an influence on linguistic form should be considered as an integral part of grammar. Additionally, he concludes that language structure and use are conceptual-pragmatic co-motivated in nature to call for a unified theory of cognitive pragmatics to open the new avenues of reconciled research. Just as he mentioned, "the relationship between conceptual content, pragmatic function, and morphosyntactic structure, is a fascinating but also contentious topic in contemporary linguistics" (p. 260), which leaves great space for students and scholars to dig in depth from cognitive pragmatics paradigm.

After reading the book, we find that the aim of the book is not just to offer a coexistent account of inference from both pragmatics and cognitive principles, but rather to push for a not mutually exclusive theory in their descriptive and explanatory paradigm. The cognitive approach to pragmatics lays emphasis on inferencing which is operated by our mind, and this deductive method is regarded as specifically responsible for understanding pragmatic meaning. Panther holds that cognitive linguistics and contemporary pragmatics, in particular, Gricean and Neo-Gricean pragmatics, should not be mutually exclusive, but learn from each other. As he inspiringly argues, it is an advantage rather than a deficiency of the pluralism of cognitive linguistics' theoretical frameworks, for it is good for opening theoretical inputs from other paradigms. In my opinion, the detailed classifications and discussions on metonymic inferencing process in indirect speech acts (chapter 9 and 10) are particularly ingenious in addressing the pragmatic processes involved. However, meaning construction is a complex process which merits a more thorough investigation than the sketched combination of metaphor or metonymy with pragmatic inferencing can deliver. Some of the new progresses in cognitive linguistics, such as Baseline and Elaboration model (Langacker, 2016) which is an attempt of theoretical unification of cognitive grammar is also a good choice for co-analyzing the meaning construction process with the combination of pragmatics framework.

Furthermore, taking some aspects of the generalization principle of cognitive linguistics, a touch of typological perspective in the linguistic phenomena analysis would be more appreciated to see inside the general cognitive principles of humankind. Also, due to the nature of a textbook and the space limitation probably, some of the examples are analyzed in a touched-upon concise model. All in all, these shortcomings notwithstanding, this book is a valuable contribution to the rapidly evolving and prosperous area of linguistic research of pragmatics, in virtue of the synthetic models it provides to analyze the inferencing process in meaning construction of language in context. It is an outline of some

desiderata for future research in the growing field of cognitive pragmatics research. As a fairly useful resource, it can be recommended to scholars of both cognitive linguistics and pragmatics. In addition to that, it is a reader-friendly textbook for advanced students interested in this field.

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