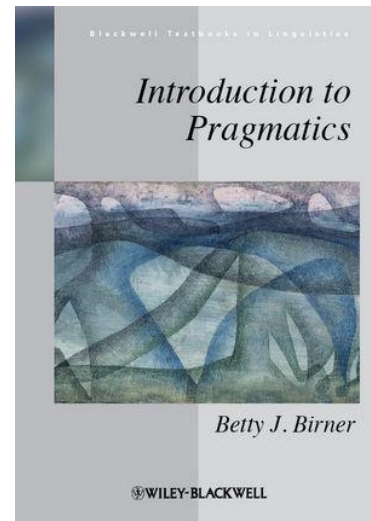


Book Review

Birner, B. J. (2013). *Introduction to Pragmatics*.
Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.



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Betty J. Birner is an American linguist whose expertise is in pragmatics and discourse analysis. Her early publications, which appeared in the 90s, explore sentence interpretations with different word orders in English utterances with constituent inversion. Her later publications include some influential works, particularly *Introduction to Pragmatics* (2013).

This text is especially recommended for graduate students in linguistics as well as for lecturers who teach pragmatics. The content is appropriate for people with different levels of backgrounds in this field. The first three chapters provide theoretical foundations in pragmatics. Readers are taught fundamental concepts in preparation for more in-depth study. Chapters three through six discuss central topics in pragmatics, including deixis, implicature, presupposition, and speech act. Chapters seven to nine show how information is packaged into utterances. These areas of study were the focus of Birner's research during the 90s, and this content distinguishes her book from others in the field. The final chapter does not only contain the conclusion of the nine chapters, but also provides recommendations for some future applications of pragmatics. The book explains difficult concepts carefully and gives almost 400 example utterances. Readers unfamiliar with the concepts in the work will benefit from its many examples. At the end of each chapter a summary is given, as well as exercises and discussion questions for self-study. The author's expertise in the areas of information structure and inferential relations is evident in her clear, coherent style. Following are content summaries of the ten chapters.

Chapter 1 (Defining Pragmatics) distinguishes two types of meaning: (i) the literal meaning, and (ii) the intended meaning. Having made this distinction, the author is then able to clearly define pragmatics. Pragmatic meaning, as opposed to semantic meaning, is non-literal, context-dependent, inferential and/or not truth-conditional. In other words, pragmatic meaning is not found in dictionaries, and varies with context. Later, the author presents the domains of semantics and pragmatics to briefly introduce key concepts of these linguistic subfields.

Chapter 2 (Gricean Implicature) presents an overview of Grice's theory of implicature. The chapter begins with the Cooperative Principles (Grice, 1975, p. 45). The author discusses four ways the speaker can behave regarding these principles: (i) observing, (ii) violating, (iii) flouting, and (iv) opting out. As a result of the first three behaviors, the

conversational implicature arises, which is context-dependent and non-truth-conditional. The overview of Gricean Implicature is orderly and comprehensive.

Chapter 3 (Later Approaches to Implicature) discusses two predominant approaches: Neo-Gricean Theory and Relevance Theory. These theories aim at reducing the number of Gricean Maxims to fewer principles. Regarding Neo-Gricean Theory, the author presents two simplified frameworks: (i) Horn's (1984) Q- and R-principles and (ii) Levison's (2000) Q-, I-, and M-implicatures, in an effort to minimize and reorganize Grice's four maxims. The Relevance Theory specifically focuses on the maxim of relation. There are three levels of meaning pertaining to the Relevance Theory: (i) semantic meaning, (ii) explicature, and (iii) implicature. The end of the chapter includes discussion of four differences between the two approaches.

Chapter 4 (Reference) focuses on various phenomena in relation to referring expressions. The author defines such expressions as "a linguistic form that the speaker uses with intention that corresponds to some discourse entity and brings that discourse entity to mind for the addressee" (p. 111). In the following section, **deixis**—another aspect of linguistic expression—is explained in detail. Four types of deixis are illustrated: personal, spatial, temporal, and discourse. Three dichotomies of references are discussed: definiteness versus indefiniteness, anaphoric versus cataphoric, and referential versus attributive.

Chapter 5 (Presupposition) presents an overall view of presupposition, which is still inconclusive. It is unclear whether presupposition is a semantic or pragmatic phenomenon. The author discusses the negation, a property of presupposition. This property distinguishes the presupposition from the entailment. Included among many expressions and constructions discussed in the book that trigger the presupposition are (i) definite descriptions, (ii) factive verbs, (iii) change-of-state verbs, (iv) iteratives, and (v) clefts. Readers may find the discussion of these expressions and constructions quite technical, but many examples and detailed explanations help the reader follow the discussion. Finally, the author contends that the presuppositional phenomenon requires not only semantic but also pragmatic analysis.

Chapter 6 (Speech Act) explains the holistic view of the speech act theory. Firstly, the author defines performative utterances, which differ from constative utterances in that they are not truth-evaluation utterances. There are rules governing speech acts (i.e., propositional-content, preparatory, sincerity, and essential) which determine whether they are felicitous or infelicitous. The author elaborates three types of acts: (i) locutionary (the act of saying something), (ii) illocutionary (the act in saying something; speaker-based), and (iii) perlocutionary (hearer-based). The mismatch between linguistic forms (i.e., declarative, affirmative, and exclamative) and illocutionary acts produces indirect speech acts. Toward the end of the chapter, concepts of "face" and "politeness" are introduced.

Chapter 7 (Information Structure) begins with an assumption that propositional content can be expressed by different syntactic structures. This assumption leads to further discussion including topic and focus, open propositions, discourse- and hearer-status, information structure and constituent order (i.e., preposing, postposing, argument reversal), and functional compositionality. The content of this chapter was the result of her own research studies in 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996 on information status, word orders, and English inversion. It is particularly in-depth.

Chapter 8 (Inferential Relations) continues the discussion begun in chapter 7 by affirming that pragmatics involves inference, which can be treated as intuitive and obvious. Most inferences are not simple and can easily be falsifiable. The author explains inferential relations at two levels: (i) constituent and (ii) propositional. The former includes inference and information structure, and a taxonomy of inferential relations, whereas the latter comprises inference and coherence and coherence and syntax. The explanation of inferential relations in smaller units prepares readers to understand inferential relations in larger units.

Chapter 9 (Dynamic Semantics and the Representation of Discourse) expands the content in chapter 8 by focusing on problems related to reference assignment. The author contends that semantic analysis without pragmatic analysis, or vice versa, can be insufficient. In fact, there is the boundary that semantics and pragmatics share. After elaborating on the theoretical background, the author compares static and dynamic approaches to meaning. One dynamic theory called Discourse Representation Theory (DRT) is discussed in depth with numerous examples of utterances and sets of discourse references and conditions. The author sets the scope of DRT and determines the domain of pragmatics before closing the chapter.

Chapter 10 (Conclusion) revisits pragmatic theories, pragmatic phenomena, and information structures discussed in the previous chapters. In this tenth chapter, the author admits that the domains of semantics and pragmatics overlap and interact. In addition, pragmatics is relatively new compared to other subfields, so more research in pragmatics is needed. The author describes concrete applications of pragmatics to the real world, such as pragmatics and artificial intelligence, pragmatics in advertising, and pragmatics in machine translation. The author also describes the relationship of pragmatics to other subfields of linguistics such as phonology, syntax, and semantics, and elaborates the future of pragmatics within linguistic theory.

As well as a recommended textbook for learning and teaching, *Introduction to Pragmatics* also familiarizes readers with theories and phenomena in pragmatics, as well as information structures. With this book, readers can choose a pragmatics-related topic and explore it extensively. Therefore, *Introduction to Pragmatics* is an excellent resource for students, lecturers, and researchers alike.

Reference

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics, 3: Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). New York, NY: Academic Press.

The Author

Pattawat Charoenroop received a PhD in English as an International Language from Chulalongkorn University after earning an MA in TESOL from the University of New South Wales. In 2015, he was awarded a Fulbright Junior Research Scholarship to conduct his doctoral research in interlanguage pragmatics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. At present, he is a lecturer at the Graduate School of Language and Communication, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA). His research interests include pragmatics in language teaching, intercultural pragmatics, cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics, and professional development for English language teachers.