

Betty J. Birner, *Pragmatics. A Slim Guide*, 2021, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 192 pp.

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In this monograph, Betty Birner offers an introduction to the field of pragmatic research, with a focus on the English language. The book is about 150 pages long, and its target audience is students in linguistics and philosophy programs. The book is made up of an introduction, eight chapters, conclusions, a glossary, references and an index.

Chapter 1, "Introduction" (pp. 1-10), describes in simple terms the difference between saying and meaning, using a variety of request forms. The author also highlights the role of inference in pragmatics, as well as the distinction between convention and intention. She also discusses several notions from formal logic and semantics such as possible worlds, propositions, truth conditions, discourse models, logical operators, quantifiers, and entailment.

Chapter 2 (pp. 11-24), "Literal vs. non-literal meaning", puts forward an account of *natural vs. non-natural meaning*, *conventional vs. intentional meaning*, *context (in)dependent meaning*, and *(non)truth-conditional meaning*.

In Chapter 3 (pp. 25-54), "Implicature", Betty Birner tackles Grice's (1975) cooperative principle and the associated conversational maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. She clarifies the different ways for speakers/writers to take these maxims as a starting point to convey additional meanings. She also addresses the properties of conversational implicatures that differentiate them from conventional implicatures, such as calculability and defeasibility. Finally, she distinguishes between particularized and generalized conversational implicatures.

"Speech acts" are the focus of Chapter 4 (pp. 55-74). This chapter sheds light on Austin's distinction between constatives and performatives, the felicity conditions for the performance of speech acts, and the notion of indirect speech act (indirect request and apology). The perlocutionary effects of speech acts are also addressed, alongside a discussion of face-threat and politeness considerations associated with hedged requests (following Goffman 1955, Lakoff 1973, Brown and Levinson 1978, among others).

Chapter 5, "Reference" (pp. 75-89), aims at providing an answer to the question of how interlocutors are able to successfully refer to entities in communication. For the understanding of this process, paramount are discourse models and mutual knowledge. To this end, referentialist approaches to reference with mentalist accounts are put forth, and the authors differentiate between several types of deixis.

Chapter 6, "Definiteness and anaphora" (pp. 90-105), revolves around theories of definiteness in terms of uniqueness of the referent and familiarity with the referent. An entire subsection is dedicated to the phenomenon of anaphora.

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Chapter 7, "Presupposition" (pp. 106-122), starts with a definition of the notion in question, followed by an illustration of how presupposition works with different triggers. The central issue that is dealt with in this chapter is how one determines what can(not) be accommodated in discourse, a question that is relevant for the study of the semantics-pragmatics interface.

Finally, Chapter 8, "Information structure" (pp. 123-139), highlights the importance of the relationship between (non)canonical word order and constructions and the distinction between given and new information.

There is also a Chapter 9, "New directions" (pp. 140-149), in which the author outlines future perspectives in terms of research methods and theory for research in pragmatics. She emphasizes, in line with the development of corpus linguistics, that pragmatic acceptability should be based on actual speakers' judgments. Similarly, she acknowledges the emergence of experimental pragmatics as a field of research, together with the increasing use of techniques originating from psychology and neuroscience, such as eye-tracking and electroencephalography.

The closing Chapter 10, "Conclusion" (pp. 154-158), takes the reader through the most important notions and approaches presented in the book.

Overall, the book is well-structured, and it achieves its objectives. It touches upon the important topics in pragmatics, thus offering a good overview of the major research areas that could be tackled in English pragmatics. The core chapters (5 through 8) constitute a coherent whole, they are easy to follow, and the examples are well chosen and constitute tokens of authentic language material.

In general, there is little flaw (if any) that one can find in this book, given the announced scope and the intended readership. A possible shortcoming that one could find is that when the author touches upon indirectness, only indirect requests and apologies are included. Also, on pages 65-66 the author mistakenly claims that an indirect apology or request can be the perlocutionary effect of an utterance. Perlocutionary effects are the possible causal effects of an illocutionary act, they are not illocutionary acts themselves.

However, these are truly minor faults that do not minimize the value of the content nor effort of the author in having put together a monograph on a module of language that has been long investigated already. The book is beautifully edited and is virtually typo-free.

In conclusion, this comprehensive book constitutes a valuable tool for anyone interested in the study of pragmatics. Despite some shortcuts and approximations, it will be particularly useful to graduate students working on such topics.

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