

Hilary Putnam, and Ian Hacking, have caused a resurgent interest in pragmatism and the pragmatic approach to language. There is also a continual interest in Peirce's theory of signs, which is perhaps best represented by the work of philosophers in Finland, especially that of Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen and Sami Pihlstrom.

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See also: Abduction; context; discourse; Habermas, J.; history of pragmatics; indexicals; knowledge; meaning; Morris, C.; Peirce, C.S.; philosophy of language; philosophy of mind; reasoning; semantics; semiotics; theory of mind

Suggestions for further reading

- Kuklick, B. (1977) *The Rise of American Philosophy – Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860–1930*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Pietarinen, A.-V. (2006) *Signs of Logic: Peircean Themes on the Philosophy of Language, Games, and Communication*, Dordrecht: Springer.
- Wicner, P.P. (1949) *Evolution and the Founders of Pragmatism*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Prelinguistic Communication

Before we can speak of **pragmatics** in prelinguistic communication, we need to know when infants start communicating intentionally. Although the early face-to-face interactions that young babies participate in with their caregivers have been called 'proto-conversations' because of their turn-taking structure and mutual responsiveness (Bateson 1975), the general consensus is that it is only later, around age 9–12 months, that infants' communication is clearly intentional (see, for example, Bates *et al.* 1975 on infants' early showing, giving, pointing and reaching gestures, and Harding and Golinkoff 1979 on the **intentionality** of infants' prelinguistic vocalizations). It is also important to know whether, once infants are communicating intentionally, they do so with some understanding of how **communication** works, that is, by influencing the psychological states of the recipients, and not just their physical behaviour

(Shatz 1983; Moore and Corkum 1994; Phillips *et al.* 1995). As we will see later, evidence suggests that infants do have some such understanding around their first birthdays.

The study of pragmatics in infants' prelinguistic communication began in earnest in the 1970s (e.g. Bates *et al.* 1975; Bruner 1975). Much of the early work focused on the variety of **speech acts** prelinguistic infants are able to perform with gestures. These range from the classic proto-imperatives and proto-declaratives (used to **request** and to share attention to objects, respectively; Bates *et al.* 1975) to refusing, protesting, commenting (Carpenter *et al.* 1983), representing (Acredolo and Goodwyn 1990), questioning (Chouinard 2007), and many others (see Ninio and Snow 1996 for a review, and Tomasello *et al.* 2007 for some examples of the infinite variety of meanings infants can express with gestures).

Much of the research on pragmatics in prelinguistic communication has focused on one particular gesture: pointing. Pointing is a particularly interesting gesture in this context because, compared with symbolic gestures and words, it provides very little information in itself regarding the precise message the pointer is intending to communicate: both pointer and recipient must take into account the common ground they share in order for the point to be understood (Tomasello *et al.* 2007). Beginning around 12 months, preverbal infants are able to interpret adults' points – even points that are deliberately ambiguous for experimental purposes – and they do so according to pragmatic principles such as what is given/new in their shared experience with the adult. For example, if an adult points ambiguously toward a group of three objects, 12- and 14-month-olds can identify which object she is referring to based on which of those objects they have and have not shared with her previously (Tomasello and Haberl 2003; Moll and Tomasello 2007). If the adult points ambiguously to another group of objects, all of which are familiar to the infant and the adult, 14-month-olds correctly assume she is pointing to the one they have previously shared together in a special way (Moll *et al.* 2008). And when the adult points to a single object, 14-month-olds know what she wants them to do with it, based, again, on their

shared experience with that particular adult (Liebal *et al.* 2009).

In infants' production of pointing, too, there is strong evidence for a rich view of prelinguistic communication. Twelve-month-olds point with the prosocial motives of sharing attention and interest with others (Liszkowski *et al.* 2004) and informing others helpfully (Liszkowski *et al.* 2006). When they point, they take into account not just the current attentional state of the recipient (Liszkowski *et al.* 2008a) but also what the recipient knows or does not know from previous experience (Liszkowski *et al.* 2008b). Twelve-month-olds can even point to request and refer to absent referents (Liszkowski *et al.* 2007a; Liszkowski *et al.*, to appear). Together, these findings suggest that 12-month-old infants see communication as taking place on a mental level, as a transfer of information or alignment of attitudes between partners that should be tailored to the needs of the recipient.

Another productive line of research in this area concerns infants' ability to repair failed communications. Infants as young as 12–14 months are able to repair different types of **misunderstandings** (e.g. Golinkoff 1986; Liszkowski *et al.* 2007b; Marcos and Kornhaber-le Chanu 1992). Given their limited communicative means, at this age they typically do so by simply repeating or augmenting their signal. Over the next few months, with more words at their disposal, infants become increasingly able to reformulate their requests and attune them to the type of misunderstanding experienced (e.g. Golinkoff 1986; Marcos 1991; Marcos and Kornhaber-le Chanu 1992).

When infants begin learning their first words they continue to use their pragmatic skills, interpreting novel language based on the common ground or joint attentional focus they share with their partner, and on an understanding of the partner's **intentions** (see Tomasello 2001 for a review). Indeed, there is evidence of continuity between early pragmatic skills and later language development. Smith (1998) found that various pragmatic skills at 10 months predicted children's scores on tests of language development at 2 years, for example. Even during the prelinguistic period there are relations between some types of pointing and infants' understanding of others' intentions

(Camaioni *et al.* 2004). Along with the pragmatic skills we see in infants' earliest **gestural communication**, these kinds of developmental continuities and relations with early **theory of mind** skills support social-pragmatic theories of language development (e.g. Bruner 1983; Tomasello 2003).

Thus, although prelinguistic infants still have a long way to go toward adult **communicative competence**, it seems clear that some basic pragmatic skills are present before children have learned any language. This suggests that pragmatics is a basic feature of human communication in general, not just language alone. This claim receives further support from another nonverbal population of children: young deaf children who have not been exposed to any conventional language. These children are able to convey a wide range of complex messages with the gestures and signs they invent themselves (e.g. Butcher *et al.* 1991). This complexity – in production or comprehension – is simply not seen in our nearest primate relatives, the great apes. Although they have a large repertoire of communicative gestures (and are even able to tailor their gestures to the recipient's attentional state), apes do not show anything like the flexibility, creativity, range of speech acts, and use of shared information seen in human 1-year-old infants (see Tomasello 2008 for a review).

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See also: Animal communication, pragmatics of; child language acquisition; communication failure; context; cooperative principle; deixis; development, pragmatic; gestural communication; given/new distinction; infant-directed talk and pragmatics; intention; intentionality; knowledge; language evolution; misunderstanding; perspective taking/point of view; reference; request; sharedness; speech act theory; theory of mind; word learning, the role of mindreading in

Suggestions for further reading

- Ninio, A. and Snow, C.E. (1996) *Pragmatic Development*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
 Tomasello, M. (2008) *Origins of Human Communication*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Tomasello, M., Carpenter, M. and Liszkowski, U. (2007) 'A new look at infant pointing', *Child Development*, 78: 705–22.

Presupposition

The term 'presupposition' has been used to cover a very broad category of semantic and pragmatic phenomena that have an essential bearing on the understanding of utterances (see Levinson 1983). It refers to **propositions** whose truth is taken for granted in an utterance and without which the utterance cannot be assigned a truth-value. Presuppositions remain in force when the utterance is negated (Green 1989: 71). For example, both the utterance 'It's great that Mary passed the Pragmatics exam' and its negation 'It's not great that Mary passed the Pragmatics exam' presuppose the proposition *Mary passed the Pragmatics exam*, whereas 'I think that Mary passed the Pragmatics exam' does not. Presuppositions are typically generated by lexical items or linguistic constructions, such as *it's great that* above. These items and constructions are called presupposition triggers. Some presupposition triggers include definite descriptions (e.g. The King of France is/isn't wise>> There is a King of France), factive verbs (e.g. John knows/doesn't know that Mary passed the Pragmatics exam>> Mary passed the Pragmatics exam), change-of-state verbs (e.g. Mary has/hasn't stopped smoking>> Mary has been smoking), iteratives (e.g. Mary cried/didn't cry again>> Mary cried before), implicative verbs (e.g. Mary managed/didn't manage to pass the Pragmatics exam>> Mary tried to pass the Pragmatics exam), temporal clauses (e.g. After she passed the Pragmatics exam, Mary got/didn't get drunk>> Mary passed the Pragmatics exam), cleft sentences (e.g. It was/wasn't Mary who got drunk>> Someone got drunk), comparatives (e.g. Pat is a better linguist than Lou>> Pat is a linguist and Lou is a linguist), and counterfactual conditionals (e.g. If I were a vascular surgeon, I would/wouldn't have made a lot of money>> I am not a vascular surgeon).

So far, presupposition seems to be defined in semantic terms relating, on the one hand, to the **meaning** of the proposition expressed and its **negation** and, on the other hand, to the meaning

of particular linguistic expressions. However, presuppositions are also sensitive to contextual factors such as our **knowledge** about the world. For example, whereas 'Mary married/didn't marry before she got a promotion' presupposes *Mary got a promotion*, the utterance 'Mary resigned before she got a promotion' does not, because our background knowledge tells us that people do not get promotions after they have left their jobs. In other words, the presupposition is related to the **pragmatics** of the sentence.

Presuppositions exhibit a number of distinctive properties, such as (a) constancy under negation and (b) defeasibility or cancellability, which is often related to what is known as the projection problem. The constancy-under-negation test isolates the presuppositions of an utterance among all possible **inferences** that can be drawn from it. An utterance of a sentence *S* presupposes a proposition *p* if and only if (a) if *S* is true, then *p* is true, and (b) if *S* is false, then *p* is still true. In these terms, while 'Mary managed to pass the Pragmatics exam' is associated with the inferences *Mary tried to pass the Pragmatics exam* and *Mary passed the Pragmatics exam*, only the former is a presupposition, since it also an inference of the negation of the initial utterance, i.e. 'Mary didn't manage to pass the Pragmatics exam'. Given that the latter inference follows the truth-value of the utterance (i.e. it is true when the utterance is true and false when the utterance is false/negated), it constitutes one of its **entailments**.

Unlike entailments, presuppositions seem to disappear (a) when background knowledge blocks their generation (b) when they are inconsistent with conversational **implicatures** and (c) in some linguistic **contexts**. An example of (a) is the utterance 'Mary resigned before she got a promotion', where the presupposition *Mary got a promotion*, which is normally generated by the temporal clause, is cancelled because it is inconsistent with our background knowledge. As an example of (b), the utterance 'If Mary has lied, John will be angry that she has done so' implicates that perhaps Mary has not lied. In this context, the factive adjective *angry* fails to trigger the putative presupposition that Mary has lied. As an example of (c), even though 'Mary knows/doesn't know that John passed his driving test' presupposes *John passed his driving test*, in the linguistic context of first person subject, as in

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