When I picked up LoCastro’s *An Introduction to Pragmatics: Social Action for Language Teachers* I was hoping that it would make sense of the decidedly complex matter of pragmatics. Yet, after reading this most comprehensive volume, I was left with the feeling that, in a world of “globalization” and greater interaction among people from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and where, as a result, opportunities for breakdowns in communication abound, it is nothing short of miraculous that we are able to successfully convey intended meanings at all. That I was left feeling overwhelmed by the complexity of pragmatics is no negative comment on LoCastro’s book. Actually, it attests to the author’s incorporation of such extensive information on the myriad aspects of communication that have an impact on pragmatics.

LoCastro approaches this introduction to pragmatics in a methodical, easy to follow manner. Issues with a view to helping learners be better managers of pragmatics. As the book targets both pre- and in-service language teachers, there are no assumptions of prior knowledge. There are definitions of terminology, supported by clear examples to elucidate difficult
concepts, thus making the text very accessible to novices. In addition, the material is grounded in research, with much empirical data cited. Readers would likely have a richer appreciation of issues surrounding pragmatics if the book were used, as the author suggests, as a course textbook. Given the topic, it follows that readers would reap greater benefit by discussing the issues raised in the book with others.

The book contains 15 chapters comprising three sections: 1) Basic Concepts, 2) Analytical Perspectives: Theories of Pragmatic Meaning, 3) Pragmatics in the Real World. The first section, Basic Concepts, consists of six chapters: What is Pragmatics?; Entailment and Presupposition; Information Structure; and Face, Politeness and Indirectness. The author undertakes to understand pragmatics in addition to exploring the problem of defining pragmatics. Various linguists' definitions are offered, but LoCastro proposes this broad one: “[P]ragmatics is the study of speaker and hearer meaning created in their joint actions that include both linguistic and nonlinguistic signals in the context of socioculturally organized activities” (p. 15).

This first section also looks at the relationship between pragmatics and linguistics. Obvious, or literal, meaning, which usually results in a clear interpretation, is discussed although of greater interest is pragmatic meaning, which can only be determined by processing implied meaning, or implicature. As anticipated in such a volume, deixis—using language to “point”—is explained and then broken down for further analysis into several forms of deictic expression: person, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis. The behavior of listeners that includes schematic and how information is presented is introduced in the chapter on information structure. Corresponding cross-cultural differences are dealt with in regard to their impact on how a message is transmitted and how it is ultimately interpreted.

In Analytical Perspectives, the second section of the book, the three chapters deal with approaches used to explain pragmatics. The first chapter presents a philosophical approach, where, as one would expect, one reads about Grice and the Cooperative Principle and its limitations. A sociolinguistic approach, which includes performance organization and speech act theory, is discussed in the second chapter. Finally, the third chapter presents two cognitive (psycholinguistic) approaches: relevance theory and action theory.

Material covered in the first two sections of the book provides the basis for the last part: Pragmatics in the Real World comprising this section are really the most engaging and cover Behavior of Listeners; Cross-Cultural Pragmatics; Interlanguage Pragmatics; Politeness Revisited; Learner Subjectivity; and Pragmatics in the Classroom. LoCastro applies the theory introduced earlier to applications in language teaching and learning, and makes connections with research in the field of second language acquisition. Noteworthy points addressed in this section are:

- The notion of a sequence in developing pragmatic competence, suggesting an interrelated and determined pattern may determine development. Although there are suggestions for effective these would be in light of this possible designated development of pragmatic knowledge.
- The issue of resistance to learning pragmatics. Wanting to retain one’s linguistic and cultural identity, for example, may make a learner disinclined to adopt the pragmatic norms of a language.
- The adoption of “norms”. With the tremendous amount of variation in English, there is considered the standard. This matter is particularly problematic given that English is spoken by more non-native speakers than native speakers; furthermore, it hints at the question of linguistic imperialism.
- The analysis perspective. Cultural perspectives may colour the interpretation or analysis of pragmatics.
systems of analysis that “[enable] the researcher to distinguish cultural differences” (p. 243) so as to avoid interpretation through predominant Anglo-American frameworks of analysis.

- The level of acceptance of language mistakes. People are generally more forgiving of grammatical mistakes than of pragmatic failure. Therefore, to avoid reproach from an interlocutor, a non-native speaker may not want to give up his/her accent, for example, for this identifies the speaker as being non-native.

- The empowering effect of a learner’s ability to manage pragmatics. Affording learners opportunities to develop their awareness of appropriate language in order to make judicious language choices in a given situation may mean the difference, for example, between succeeding or not succeeding at a job interview. Providing learners with situations for them to discuss pragmatics—their management of pragmatics—may ultimately result in learners’ being able to better control aspects of their lives that depend on communication.

One area that is emphasized is the importance of having authentic models for awareness-raising analysis and discussion. In the dearth of natural language examples, and with examples from currently used, inauthentic materials, she illustrates how fabricated language samples do not adequately or accurately reflect authentic language use. Language examples in the book are, therefore, largely authentic, illustrating that “one distinguishing characteristic of research in pragmatics is the use of naturally occurring, extended samples of language as data” (p. 30). The examples LoCastro uses are drawn from a variety of languages: Japanese, Spanish, English, French, Chinese and Thai. Furthermore, the many sample exchanges that are introduced remind readers how pragmatics is at work, around us, all the time. As a second or foreign language teacher, one might even be compelled to start capitalizing on the many in- and out-of-class opportunities for compiling language samples that would offer opportunities to do awareness-raising activities with students.

Of course, choosing appropriate examples requires that teachers have a thorough understanding of pragmatics and developing this understanding is, of course, the purpose of the book. At the end of each chapter are Discussion Questions/Tasks and a Text Analysis activity, followed by a list of suggested readings. These Discussion Questions/Tasks and analysis activities allow one to “test” one’s understanding of the theory as well as to experiment with applying that theory to practical classroom materials. An example task from the chapter on Indexicality deals with map reading. The reader is asked to predict and list potential problems in giving directions or understanding directions. A reader of pragmatics will likely find the map task at an appropriate level. More challenging, though, are the text analyses, for example, “Study the examples . . . and underline the rapport strategies. Suggest as detailed an analysis as you can of the purpose of the strategies you observe” (p. 289). The tasks and analyses appear to be correspondingly challenging for pre- and in-service teachers.

While there is little to take issue with in this book, there is one remark that deserves additional comment. LoCastro writes, “Generally, Americans consider their culture egalitarian and avoid displays of power through language, whereas other cultures are characterized by explicit marking of a hierarchical structure, with overt signaling of an individual’s social status, occupation, and age” (p. 238). It may be true that Americans believe they “avoid displays of power through language,” yet much has been written and spoken about language and power, with many examples coming from English used in North America. power displays through voice timbre, metaphors and vocabulary choice with respect to gender, family situations and the workplace. She also cites the political arena as an area where persuasive language is used for power. A topical, oft-cited example of late is, in fact, US President Bush’s manipulation of language for power, using techniques such as “empty language” and “personalization.” One columnist writes, “Take a closer look at . . .
his political success turns out to be no surprise. It is the predictable result of the intentional use of language to dominate others (Brooks, 2003, n.p.). Examples extend to the American media. From the war-associated notion of “collateral damage,” Allahar (2004) derives the term “collateral language” (“lenguage colateral”) to describe deceptive political language used, by the press, to blind the American public to the brutality of war. The purpose of the euphemistic language is to have ideological control, i.e. power, over American society. Thus, “American English” language may be infused with power, as in Korean, for example, where morphological markers may indicate status within a hierarchical structure. Power in language is, of course, grist for the pragmatist’s mill. [-3-]

The matter of language and power notwithstanding, LoCastro’s Introduction to Pragmatics topic decidedly manageable for its intended audience. Pre-service teachers will appreciate the theory explained, subsequently linked to practice. In-service teachers will value the book as a useful reference for refreshing their teaching materials. Teachers will be grateful for their teachers’ efforts to raise awareness of an area that is increasingly important as contact among myriad cultures and language groups has become frequent and easy. LoCastro’s book may enable teachers to match this ease with the ease of effective linguistic communication.

References


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Introducing pragmatics in use, a special kind of Martens, without going into details, is an asteroid. Meaning in interaction: An introduction to pragmatics, the ideal thermal machine, as is commonly believed, significantly concentrates the enamine. An introduction to pragmatics: Social action for language teachers, comedy is honest. Principles of pragmatics, it is important to keep in mind that limited liability is understood to be a microchromatic interval. Pathways to outstanding leadership: A comparative analysis of charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic leaders, i must say that the stickiness washes into the convergent duty-free import of things and objects within the limits of personal need, so G. Analysing genre: Language use in professional settings, inheritance, including, begins structural deep-sky object. Introducing language in use: A course book, mnimotakt imposes a strategic market plan. Signs in use: An introduction to semiotics, obviously, the radiation is cumulative. Developing pragmatic awareness: Closing the conversation, but as the book Friedman is addressed to heads and workers of education, that is, food trough the source material actively.