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The distinction between grammar and pragmatics is at the heart of modern linguistic reasoning. It is generally accepted that pragmatic competence is of as much importance as grammatical competence, both interacting in order to achieve communicative sense. When it comes to more precise descriptions of this interaction, opinions diverge. As for the grammar part, there are several post-generative frameworks that allow for interaction with pragmatic entities like presupposition, implicature, or illocution, although this interaction is often of a local or ad hoc nature. As for the pragmatics part, there are numerous attempts at creating integrative pragmatic theories, however, not only does the internal organization of these pragmatic theories sometimes remain unclear, the same is also true of how the relationship to the grammar is established. Levinson (2000), Carston (2002), Récanati (2004) are some recent book-length treatises on pragmatics, and the book under review joins them in focusing on the semantics/pragmatics distinction.

What, then, about grammar or the grammatical system? In her introduction, Ariel circumvents a clear definition of grammar, while identifying grammar with “code” and pragmatics with “inference”. Her predecessors are, of course, the founders of Relevance theory, namely Sperber/Wilson (1986/1995). She uses the term *code* to refer to “linguistic representations of any size (morphemes, words, phrases, as well as sentences) which have not been affected by inferential adaptation” (p. 24). Inferences are understood as pragmatic inferences, i.e. explicatures in the sense of Relevance theory as well as implicatures. While she assumes, along with the majority of pragmaticists, some underdeterminacy of propositions, she puts emphasis on two further aspects of the grammar/pragmatics distinction: First, a proper definition of this interaction will be able to trace historical processes of semanticization and grammaticization, second, there may exist an “integrative level, where codes and inferences are intimately woven together to form one proposition.” (p. 3). Thus, the simple Gricean opposition between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is implicated’ is denied. Throughout the book, Ariel presents authentic examples of conversational interaction, thus surmounting typical text-book examples that are so pervasive in other approaches to pragmatic theory.

Issues of the pragmatics/grammar divide are approached in three parts, synchronically (Part I), diachronically (Part II) and from an integrative point of view (Part III). Examples are either incorporated in the line of argument or dealt with separately in subchapters. In the case of and/most and reflexive pronouns, a whole chapter is reserved for these phenomena (Part I, chapter 3, Part II, chapter 6). This structure contributes to the portfolio character of the book. Some of the examples and Ariel’s interpretation of them will be selected and examined in our review.
In Chapter 2, Ariel starts to explore the grammar/pragmatics divide by discussing definite NPs in three borderline cases of form-function correlations. In the controversial interpretation of existential presuppositions, particularly under negation, Ariel explains both affirmative and negative definite NPs within the framework of Context Saturation Theory. On the one hand, they require givenness, which results from general knowledge, situational context, and preceding discourse, and is shared by the interlocutors and is encoded. On the other hand, they require commitment, understood as the speaker’s existential belief which must be pragmatically inferred, and thus is a candidate for potential cancellation.

Definite NPs, ranging from full name to (zero) personal pronoun, form a markedness scale with respect to information, rigidity and (phonic) attenuation. They correspond with different degrees of (memory) activation, which is a temporal category and thus extra-grammatical. The uses of this, that, it serve as evidence that this form-function correlation is motivated by cognition and not by ease of processing or economy. Within this apparently universal functional system, Ariel pinpoints the language-specific distribution of personal pronouns as (partially) grammaticized in languages as diverse as Hebrew, Chinese and English.

With respect to the grammar/pragmatics divide Ariel distinguishes between “discourse profile”, which refers to extragrammatical conditions and nonobligatory language use, and “discourse function”, which refers to grammatical conditions and obligatory language use. Discourse profiles are initially pragmatically motivated, become conventionalized and might end up as grammatical rules. Thus, constraints in the argument structure of verbs are explained on the basis of frequent or salient discourse profiles/patterns (“Preferred Argument Structure”, p. 55). Due to the overall structure of the book, the detailed discussion of these terms is postponed to Part II, where historical processes and linguistic change are in focus. The notion of discourse function refers only to the necessary and sufficient conditions for the proper occurrence of a form; it represents a higher level of interpretation allowing data to be interpreted in terms of a universal form-function correlation with situation-specific and language-specific deviations.

In Chapter 3, Ariel goes into the semantics/pragmatics interface by discussing two theories dealing with logical expressions like and and most, namely the neo-Griccean account by Laurence Horn and Stephen Levinson and the Relevance theoretic account by Robyn Carston. In the case of and-associated inferences (e.g. a causal relation between conjuncts in I eat the local food and get deathly ill), Ariel adds the idea of ‘potential truth-compatible inferences’ to the already established notions of an implicature or explication. An inference is truth-compatible, if it is compatible with the state of affairs represented by the utterance, but not intended by the speaker. In the case of most, Ariel suggests a distinction between a circumscribed interpretation, which is lexical in her account, and an all-exclusion, which is seen as part of the upper bound in the other (pragmatic) theories. While the lexical meaning of most is defined as a “proper subset [...] larger than fifty percent” (p. 106), the latter is considered as an explication or a truth-compatible inference. The outcome of the discussion is that, because of the complexity of the matter, no clear line can be drawn between encoded meaning and inference.

Chapter 4 deals with arbitrariness and motivation. Again, Ariel argues for grammar to be motivated by extralinguistic factors, as it evolves from pragmatically motivated discourse patterns. In accordance with theories by Haiman (1985), Haspelmath (1999) and Comrie (1980), she interprets changes in grammar as functionally motivated. With a view to differences between languages, Ariel emphasizes a distinction between functionality and extralinguistic motivation. Her point is that grammar is motivated, at least when seen from a diachronic point of view. Grammar develops in steps which lead to arbitrariness in the course of time. Universal regularities in language are considered as indicators of extralinguistic forces. For instance, while Prince (1998) sees the different functions of Left Dislocations as arbitrary, Ariel argues that they can be subsumed under one motivated function. What appears as arbi-
trary may be traced back to a common functional demand: “Cumulative changes often create synchronic arbitrariness” (p. 123).

In Chapter 5, Ariel defends the rather general functionalist claim that “all paths lead to the salient discourse pattern“. It goes without saying that for pragmaticists, it has always been tempting to show that language use influences or even shapes grammar. Ariel reviews some of the language-internal driving forces, namely cognition (the structure of thoughts is ironically reflected in language structures), sociocultural norms, as reflected, for instance, in politeness phenomena, and, most to the point, pragmatic inferencing, as proposed by Traugott/Dasher (2002). Several well-known examples are briefly discussed, e.g. English *indeed*, verbs of washing, etc. While these are examples on the word or argument structure level, the ultimate aim is, of course, to show that discourse as a whole, is something that shapes grammar. Put in a slogan: “Discourse proposes, the salient discourse pattern disposes“ (p. 180). For instance, collocations like *hard facts, brute force*, etc. are patterns that are segmentable and analysable on the one hand, but preconstructed and made fit for discourse on the other. Hence, routinized pragmatic inferencing may lead to salient discourse patterns which in turn lead to hard-wired grammatical structure. In this chapter, Ariel puts together a number of seminal approaches to historical change. The processes that lead to the change of grammar may be ultimately described by the actions of the invisible hand, as proposed by Keller (1994), while “neural networking and statistical models“ (p. 207) are fitting theoretical approaches to model the interplay of “synchrony and diachrony, performance and competence, and pragmatics becoming grammar“ (p. 207).

In Chapter 6, Ariel focuses on reflexive pronouns in modern English in order to show how a salient discourse pattern supports the emergence of a grammatical pattern, and how the process of grammaticization may (or may not) conceal the initial pragmatic motivation. Usually, participants of events are distinct from each other, and this can be assumed and pragmatically inferred by interlocutors. Consequently, on the linguistic level, if this is not the case, this must be clearly indicated and should be realised by means of a marked expression, namely the reflexive pronoun. Hence, the mentioned extralinguistic generalization forms a salient discourse pattern that initiated the grammaticization of reflexive pronouns. The motivation for the emergence and use of reflexive pronouns is therefore pragmatic in nature.

According to Ariel’s functional account of reflexive pronouns, disjointness of co-arguments is expected for other-directed predicates (e.g. verbs of bodily harm like *hurt* or *kill*), whereas the use of reflexive pronouns indicates marked co-reference of arguments. For self-directed verbs (e.g. verbs of grooming like *wash* or *shave*), co-reference of arguments is the unmarked case. Here, reflexive forms should not be used. However, corpus analysis reveals that a structural account seems to be more promising in order to describe the distribution of reflexives in the domain of co-arguments and hence should complement the pragmatic account.

In the case of *take upon one/oneself*, the co-arguments are obligatorily coreferential. Ariel’s functional account predicts a pronoun, but there is a strong tendency to use the reflexive pronoun, as predicted by a structural account. The underlying grammatical rule can be formulated in terms of two binding conditions, as proposed by Reinhart/Reeland (1993). Still, leaving the domain of co-arguments, examples can be found which support a functional account of reflexives. Ariel argues that in this case the process of grammaticization is not complete and the grammatical patterns can serve as the basis for new, pragmatically motivated uses of language. In general, grammaticization is assumed to be optional, gradual and non-unitary.

In her final chapter, Ariel reviews some of the more important contributions to the ongoing debate about how to determine the semantics/pragmatics boundary (if there is such a thing). She begins by differentiating four recent approaches to the classical Gricean distinction between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is implicated: (i) the minimalist ‘what is said’ (e.g. Borg
(ii) the maximalist ‘what is said’ (also dubbed “truth-conditional pragmatics”) (e.g. Récanati 2004), (iii) the minimalist-maximalist ‘what is said’ (e.g. Stanley 2000), and (iv) syncretic approaches to ‘what is said’ (e.g. Bach 1994, 2001). While this overview is appealing, as far as it goes, the reader is somewhat disappointed with regard to Ariel’s own position. What she adds to the discussion is, first, a distinction between strong and non-strong implicatures that is not convincingly worked out in this context (p. 291), and second, her earlier concept of a ‘Privileged Interactional Interpretation’ (pp. 299, 302, 304). Privileged Interactional Interpretations are preferred interpretations, interpretations that are easily accessible to most interlocutors. While this is certainly an interesting notion, it is not clear how this notion relates to the possible ways of drawing the semantics/pragmatics boundary. Moreover, it appears that such a notion has to be empirically validated in the context of emerging experimental pragmatics (cf. Noveck/Sperber 2004, Meibauer/Steinbach 2010), because it is not clear at first sight how preferences for interpretations come about and how they might be constrained.

In sum, then, the book has much to offer. Reviewing major theories on the grammar/pragmatics divide and discussing them at length, Ariel points out several weak points. Her remarks on discourse as an extragrammatical motivation for grammar are plausible, as far as they go. Still, the reader should not expect a new and distinct position on the grammar/pragmatics boundary. Ariel keeps emphasizing the complexity of the topic and underlines how intimately grammar and pragmatics are connected and interwoven. While Ariel provides authentic data – the main sources of her examples are from the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (SBC) and the Longman Spoken American Corpus (LSAC), but examples also come from English and Hebrew media and from private conversation – the reader will struggle sometimes with the translations of examples, as they are done rather freely at occasions. Somewhat disappointing is, in our view, that where it comes to Ariel’s original contribution to the debate, as for example with regard to the distinction between discourse profile and discourse pattern, or with respect to the notion of a privileged interactional interpretation, the discussion is not always as clear as it could be. Maybe Ariel’s Defining Pragmatics (to appear) will be more helpful here.

References


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