
Reviewed by Dorota Zielinska, *Jagiellonian University, Krakow*

In *Pragmatics and grammar*, Mira Ariel analyses “the relationship between grammar defined as a set of codes, and pragmatics as a set of non-logical inferences derived on the basis of these codes” (p. xiii), keeping in mind the fact that out grammar of today is very often our pragmatics of the past and that both are needed for effective communication. As a distinctive criterion between the two, Ariel takes the inference/code distinction. At first, the distinction between the two was believed to be obvious. Sentences were to be decoded and resulting information was next to be used as an input for inferencing. Yet, post-Grician linguists have shown abundantly that establishing such a division in practice can be quite controversial. It turns out that inferencing enters the picture much earlier than believed at first. The question which needs answering is how early inferencing kicks in. To shed some new light on the issue, Ariel analyzes the contribution of coding and inferencing to basic level meaning. Basic level meaning is defined here as the minimal meaning level, which the speaker is necessarily seen as committed to, in which code and inferencing are integrated to the point of not being cognitively separable. It is a representation level between literal meaning and Grice’s conveyed meaning.

The book consists of seven chapters grouped into an introduction and three parts. In the Introduction (Chapter 1) Ariel presents the state of the art in the analysis of coding and inferencing in a very informed and thorough manner. Next in Part 1 (Chapters 2 and 3), she discusses the issue of the divide between grammar and pragmatics, and shows how the two are believed to combine in creating the final message. In Part 2 of the book (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) Ariel looks at the research corroborating the hypothesis on the diachronic emergence of grammar from pragmatics. Were the book to be completed only now, she might have added important arguments form synergetic linguists, which would additionally corroborate her claim. These linguists have shown beyond doubt that language has quantitative characteristics of a self-organizing structure, whose development is governed by biological, psychological, and social laws. Finally in Part 3 (Chapter 7), Ariel examines synchronic interplay between grammar and pragmatics when forming representation of meaning. Ariel concludes the final chapter by proposing that “the very same grammar/pragmatics interface representations functional in the ephemeral discourse time are also the input for the diachronic transfer of the pragmatic into the grammatical” (p. 308), thus laying grounds for a unified developmental model of language with one group of processes underlying both synchronic and diachronic phenomena, the latter being simply the summation of daily history of language use. The importance of this postulated unification cannot be overestimated because it points strongly towards the inseparability of semantics and pragmatics. This in turn, in view of the impossibility of defining basic encodings externally, suggests pragmatic roots in the evolution of encoded meaning and opens a possibility of constructing a unified developmental model of language (see Zielinska, to appear, for a similar proposal).

To corroborate her claim Ariel argues not only that the conveyed meaning level may give rise to grammaticalization/semantization, but also that explicative inferences can be the source for grammatical/semantic innovations. To illustrate this point, Ariel discusses the contribution of the item *gourmet* to the inferred meaning of the phrase *gourmet garage* ‘high class’. It seems that the encoded meaning of *gourmet* has been replaced here with a new one, which does not share all the content of the previous meaning of the world considered. Thus, as Ariel notices, the new meaning can be said to be explicative and certainly not implicated.
Ariel argues for the need to allow items to have their existing representations replaced (p. 308) rather than to merely use them to expand the representation under construction with the content of representation of those items. This seems to be particularly evident in the case of metaphorical usage of language, as shown by Ariel. Yet, and most importantly, selection allows one to account for the compositionality of most typical, seemingly compositional, uses of language. Consider for instance the interpretation of the phrases blue eyes and red eyes. The representations of the two phrases differ not only as to the colour but also as to where it is applied. In fact both the shade of blue and its location depend on the eyes we come across. Consider also similar phrases such as a red car and a red rose. In fact, for every noun we must specify the area where the colour will apply and its shade. Thus without replacement compositionality breaks down. It will be restored if we allow the representation of the item considered to be replaced by a representation selected from viable ones. For instance, a red car will be a car with red paint in the areas where cars come in different colours (the possible options being representations of cars of different colours).

What will be needed next to develop Ariel’s model is a proposal for the mechanism of such replacement. Such a mechanism has been described, for instance, in Zielinska (2007), who defines it as a selective mode of language use. Zielinska hypothesizes that on some occasions people use the semantic content of linguistic items to select one among the available options generated by context (i.e., by what is accessible to the speaker in a given situation). The chosen item is the one that shares the most encoding content with the linguistic meaning of the construct used.

All chapters of Pragmatics and Grammar are presented in an exceptional fashion. Ariel covers all relevant literature in depth, proposing her own refined solutions and building step-by-step the case for her original concluding contribution. The clarity of style and depth of the presentation of the topics discussed makes this book a truly outstanding contribution in every respect, worth recommending for scholars and students alike. It is a must for everyone seriously interested in the grammar/pragmatics interface, that is, in the essence of language.

REFERENCES