

Morphosyntactic and Pragmatic Evolution in Seven Contemporary European Languages

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This work is dedicated to the memory of Per Aage Brandt, linguist, semiotician, musician, and poet (1944 - 2021)

“ Enunciation is a *semiosis*, whose “little machine” lets certain expressions indicate states and attitudes of speaker’s and hearer’s subjectivity, social identity, and condition. The simplest manifestations of enunciation in language are the systems of personal pronouns and the deictic forms (demonstratives, *shifter* adverbs, etc.) that languages use. The dimension we call *prosody* superimposes *enunciation* meanings onto the immanent linguistic *semiosis*. These meanings include speaking from a higher status than the hearer’s; speaker and hearer knowing or not knowing each other; gender and gender difference; generational difference; and (personal or social) tonality. The enunciation semiosis overdetermines all utterances uttered, and the result is then transposed into situational meaning through a specific *pragmatic* component that takes the personalized utterances as appropriate signifiers and the specific situation as signified. This pragmatic component is a semiosis, in the sense that it makes the personalized utterances *mean* their situational context, contribute actively and intentionally to making the context specific and, in this respect, *meaningful*. Contexts become meaningless as we do not “intend” them by letting our language signify them. Ceremonial rituals become invalid if the formulaic language they involve is not displayed appropriately; conversations are not taking place if our utterances do not “converse” in the right way (lecturing, for instance, is not conversing properly). Even quarrelling does not happen if our language does not know how to “quarrel”. The pragmatic “little machine” will therefore have to know the culturally defined *situational categories* that language is supposed to signify; otherwise, we would speak out of order, use wrong turn-taking, etc. Pragmatics in this sense is really a particular semiosis, and an important one, since it is when language is used in culturally defined situations that its *conceptual meaning* is converted into *referential meaning*”.

Per Aage Brandt. *Acta Semiotica*, Vol. 2 (2021), page 64

DOI 10.23925/2763-700X.2021n2.56782