Book Review

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The book reviewed here came about as a result of merging two important sources: Kecskés' two series of lectures given at the University of Messina, Italy, in 2019 and 2021, and several of his studies published in various international journals and book chapters between 2008 and 2023. The readership targeted include researchers of theoretical as well as intercultural (IC) pragmatics, psycholinguistics with a mainly cognitive orientation, and current fields of linguistic philosophy. It also aims to provide current views in these fields for scholars as well as students of applied linguistics.

The contents of the volume are divided into four parts, containing 16 chapters. In the first part covering Chapters 1–4, Kecskés, founding father of the theoretical framework of investigations in IC pragmatics, surveys and critically reviews current models analyzing aspects of language usage, including the description of production as well as reception (interpretation). He points to the inadequacy of classic and current approaches which lay emphasis on investigating dominantly the productive aspects of linguistic representation and almost fully neglect interpretation of the role of the nature of comprehension. The basic tenets of his socio-cognitive theory outlined in this part of the book highlight the need for a reflexive mode of investigating the complexity of linguistic representation and usage. The model presented provides an integration of cooperation and salience-based egocentrism. Additionally, societal, that is, collective, as well as individual facets of understanding the mechanisms of meaning creation and comprehension are also discussed. Such an integration refers to the joint operation of three vitally important factors: operation of collective prior knowledge, the role of conventionalized individual prior knowledge, and aspects of actual situationally co-created knowledge, wherein the author stresses the importance of investigating dialogically manifested modes of communications in pragmatic analyses of language usage.

Investigating communication in terms of IC pragmatics constitutes a framework complementary to analyses based on Grice's classical views. The socio-cognitive analysis outlined in the first theoretical chapter constitutes the essential basis of Kecskés' model. In reference to Wittgenstein's ideas on the relation of the representation of language to its aspects of usage, Kecskés stresses the importance of

investigating not only pure, intact, "idealized" forms of communication but also formulations that he calls "messy" in their nature. Individualistic realizations of linguistic representation are, he claims, vitally dependent on the nature and types of salience relations functioning in parallel with the role of aspects of contextual knowledge. Researching the nature of linguistically imprecise formulations of dialogic-textual language use constitutes an essential feature of Kecskes' model of describing and interpreting IC communicative acts, wherein the notion of egocentrism in the representation of intentionality is a dominant feature of discursive attitude-formation.

Context in the socio-cognitive approach (henceforth SCA) is a dynamic construct, in opposition to the stativity of this notion advocated by earlier approaches to the pragmatic analysis of discourse. Kecskés distinguishes between prior and actual situational context. Prior contextual knowledge might dominate over, or even cancel, the role executed by situational contextual knowledge in discourse representation, as Kecskés points out. Similarly, differences between the role played by features of core common ground versus emergent common ground are noted here. The influence of the former domain is based on knowledge of prior context. What I miss from the argumentation is reference to the critically important role of types of conceptual structuring in the form of schematization, such as that of scenic, frame-based and scriptal knowledge. Is it assumed, perhaps, that core common ground is a situationally independent, individually functioning domain? With reference to Wittgenstein's ideas, we might also refer to the role exerted by situationally-based types as well as stereotypical contextual knowledge. I also miss discussion of the origins, roots of the role of salience, and also the discursive versus lexical nature and load of salience, together with its relation to the active role of common ground and factors of contextual typology.

The dialectically balanced nature of the role of speaker and hearer in discursive representation and interpretation is highlighted in the chapters of Part I, which outline the framework of SCA, wherein the reflexive status of cooperation versus egocentrism, as well as the active role of both the productive versus receptive scope of salience are discussed in detail. Salience, as pointed out by the author in Chapter 2, has an important role in the representation of lexical choice of expression in discourse. This runs contrary to the views expressed in rival models of pragmatics, which attribute a strictly comprehension-centered functional status to this notion. Gradability of pragmatically relevant factors of discourse production and comprehension, such as intention and attention, is also discussed in this chapter. It is argued that speakers tend to use lexical expressions that have the highest degree of salience in their textual representation. In Kecskés' model of SCA, individually versus collectively stored, versus emergently acting types of salience are systematically differentiated (Kecskés 2014). He emphasizes that in SCA conditions of the functional

operation of salience are dynamic in nature, contrary to Giora's (2003) model of graded salience hypothesis, in which salience is supposed to be a basically static phenomenon. According to Kecskés, salience may be stored but may also change in actuality. I lack reference here to the fact that participants in communicative discourse grasp and activate the contextually most suitable items stored in their mental lexicon as constituents of conceptual frames for the purposes of expressing a high degree of communicative force.

In the third chapter of Part I 'Intercultural communication and our under-standing of language', the temporary character of English Lingua Franca (L2) language is discussed in opposition to the standards of L1 language, as well as the lexical constructional and idiomaticity-related differences between the representational mechanisms of the two variants. Of critical importance here is the validity of Sinclair's (1991) notion of the idiom principle for language use in L2. Kecskés is positive about the relevance of this issue, however, he does not support his opinion by analyzing samples of discourse or corpus-related data. An important issue raised at the end of the chapter concerns the reliance by speakers of L1 and L2 on mentally-stored conceptual frames in their discourse representation and comprehension. For Kecskés, the degree of reliance on socio-culturally grounded conceptual structures such as frames is lower in IC communication due to the fact that conceptualizations of world-knowledge-based structures are not fully accessible to L2 users to the same extent they can be grasped by speakers of L1. Let me note here that such differences in the acquisition and mental storage of conceptually-based factors do not hold for L2's access to socio-culturally embedded conceptualizations of scriptal knowledge due to their less flexible mode of internal structuring than that of frames. Another important issue concerns the mental and/or linguistic representation, storage and access to frame-based structures of world knowledge. This is debated in frameworks of current theories and empirically-based investigations of semantics, pragmatics, cognitive psychology and language philosophy. According to Kecskés, the complexity of the conceptual makeup and the structuring of these phenomena are part of the common ground of users of language.

Chapter 4 addresses the interfacing of the domains of semantics and pragmatics from an IC perspective. Kecskés investigates how much of the actual situational context is needed for the expression of meaning in communication. He contends that IC communicators mainly rely on compositional or literal, rather than figurative, meaning. The author stresses that IC communication is pragmatically imbued rather than impoverished. As a kind of pragmatic enrichment, IC communicators create their own types of temporarily validated frames, underlying formulas and norms during communicative acts, in which reliance on common ground in terms of collective salience is required by communicating partners. Kecskés' main tenet in this chapter is that IC in its content and form does not constitute a strictly expressed

manifestation of language use, wherein semantic underdetermination amply occurs. Following Carnap (1942), he advocates that semantics constitutes a kind of abstraction from the pragmatics of language usage. The chapter provides convincing argumentation on the conditions of realization of constancy and conventionality: "[t]he semantics of the sentence is pragmatisized in intercultural interactions" (p. 76); "'[s]emantization' makes language development dynamic and ever-changing" (p. 77); "[t]he speaker privatizes the collective experience by enhancing/enriching the content with his/her private experience" (p. 78).

In Part II, the notion and facets of pragmatic competence and linguistic creativity are discussed in Chapters 5–7. Chapter 5 deals with the nature and development of bilingualism and bilingual communication from a pragmatic perspective. It is contended that bilingual individuals have a marked degree of functioning pragmatic competence gradually extending over the domains of L2 usage. However, it is stated that bilinguals lack a separately functioning realm of pragmatic competence. The development of conceptually- and linguistically-based socialization does not occur in a parallel, reflexive manner. In bilingual language acquisition the dominating L1-based conceptual domain gradually overextends to the newly acquired linguistic domain. According to Kecskés, L1- and L2-based factors of acquisition are temporally and serially different. Unfortunately, the author does not consider simultaneous, synchronic processes of bilingual development for both L1 and L2, however complex and unique it may be, which is a weakness of his description. In such cases, under natural conditions, the development of the two (or sometimes even more) linguistic variants happens to be dominated by a single type of socio-cultural environment, which provides the ground for the acquisition and development of the content as well as of the mental representation and storing of frame-based conceptual domains. Under such conditions, conceptual socialization is a realm commonly shared by the two (or more) languages rivaling each other in their gaining an appropriate degree of adequacy and purity of expressive communicative force, and traces of a separate development of pragmatic competence specifically and uniquely grounded for L2 cannot exactly be grasped. Understanding this multi-faceted domain of bilingual (trilingual, etc.) language acquisition requires further investigation. Also, in attested, however so far undescribed, cases of L2 language acquisition, due to some radical changes of the linguistic and socio-cultural environment, weakening of the influence of the original L1-based socio-cultural and conceptual relations of speakers at an extremely young age, growth of the intensity of their L2 linguistic environment may take place. Analysing the manifestation of the development of the pragmatic competence of such language users still remains a largely unexplored area open to be researched by experimental pragmatics.

The following section of Part II discusses 'Linguistic creativity in English as a Lingua Franca'. Linguistic creativity is a graded phenomenon, wherein economy of

the quantitative and qualitative features of usage is manifest. It is pointed out that ELF users produce ad-hoc-generated language representations rather than rely on prefabricated units of the target language. These ad-hoc generations alternate with prefabricated chunks. Reliance on literal rather than on figurative meaning is dominant in their lexical choice. ELF speakers have varied levels of proficiency in communicative skills. Following this, Chapter 7 analyses modes of linguistic expression, priority being given to the discussion of the important role that conditions of salience play in linguistic representation. The interplay between linguistic and perceptual salience both in discursive production and in comprehension is highlighted. Salience, as stated by the author, is a graded notion. It is both an individual and a societal phenomenon. Concerning its nature and type of action, it can be a cognitively inherent feature based on experiential factors, collectively developed and applied, and emergent, inherently situational and contextually based. Kecskés claims that there exists a bidirectional influence between linguistic and perceptual salience.

The central topic of Part III is the study of the interconnected nature of contextual knowledge and the expression of factors of salience. Chapter 8 deals with the dynamism of meaning expression and construction. Lexical meaning is based on prior, mentally-stored experience, dependent on the dynamism of contextual specificity greatly influenced by culture-specific background knowledge, which constitutes the core-sense of lexical expressions. It is argued that the core-sense contains sets of both lingual and extralingual pieces of information. The ratio of their representation in the construct, however, requires further specification and clarification. To what extent and in what mode, one may wonder, does core-sense include conceptual frame-based content and reference? 'Coresense', the term used by Kecskés, refers to meaning constructed under actual contextual conditions. The complex relationship of these two levels of meaning representation is circumscribed with care in the chapter. I should add that users of language may lexicalize coresense in their individual creative manner, which would result in the creation of new lexical items to be integrated into the conceptually layered lexical sets of their language. Chapter 9 discusses the manifestation of contextual sensitivity expressed in IC, with special emphasis on its realization in impolite aspects of discourse representation in L2. It is stated that communicative acts in L1 inherently lack impoliteness. Justifying the validity of this statement, in my view, requires further clarification and discourse-based analyses. Kecskés correctly investigates whether given expressions under the conditions of the actual context are interpreted literally or non-literally. Beyond this, the inherently rude lexical content of certain expressions and that of catch phrases is also studied in this chapter. Chapter 10 briefly addresses the complexity of context in ELF. It is argued that prior contextual knowledge plays a critical role in ELF speakers' linguistic behavior to an extent

similar to the functioning of actual situational context. Such language users create their own emergent actual common ground due to their lack of L1-based prior, core CG. Last in Part III, Chapter 11 outlines the simultaneity of the operation of cooperation and egocentric behavior decisively contributing to the communicative success versus failure of speakers' language production and comprehension. In this process, reliance on the manifestation of assumptive emergent situational salience has a critical role.

Chapters 12–16 in Part IV investigate the status and scope of common ground and background knowledge in language production and comprehension, basically repeating the theoretical tenets discussed in earlier chapters of the volume. In Chapter 12, cognitively-based features of common ground (CG) and the conditions of its activation are analyzed according to Kecskés' socio-cognitive theoretical framework. Emphasis is placed on the dynamic constructional makeup and operative functioning of CG constructs in the communicative process. Mentally-stored constituents of CG (the static property of the construct) as well as the emergent features of ordinary memory-based processes are simultaneously activated during usage. Chapter 13 discusses the dynamic nature of the relation of CG to the utilization of presupposed information in communicative discourse, examined within the SCA framework. The cognitively-based mechanisms of presupposition and the formal expressive features of its realization in discourse, studied principally by formal semanticists and language philosophers, are tackled here concerning their relatedness to the utilization of CG-related knowledge structures in discourse representation. The arguments are accompanied by a systematic analysis of a rich set of discourse samples. Chapter 14 analyses the interconnection of three types of meaning-related structures: linguistic, conceptual and encyclopedic. In the center of the author's interest are the criteria and the conditions of differences in content and role of action between conceptual versus encyclopedic knowledge and meaning, both of which are deeply embedded in socio-cultural types of information, characteristic of a linguistic community. Both types of meaning-related constructs greatly influence lexical choice in discourse. A markedly characteristic difference, however, arises from the origins of their source: encyclopedic knowledge is more dependent on stereotyping and socio-cultural experience, i.e. socio-cultural background knowledge, hence it has a relatively high degree of freedom of associatively-based linkage in the creation of linguistically-based lexical sets in the lexicon. By contrast, the conceptual structuring of knowledge is more directly related to mental facets of representation. To my mind, the characterization of such types of relation should be given support by corpus-based frame semantics, lexical pragmatic investigations (including collocational potential, textual cohesion and discourse coherence). Chapter 15 discusses the role implicatures play in language production and comprehension, with an emphasis on ELF discourse. It is argued and demonstrated

that users of ELF, as they lack adequate access to and acquisition of indirect communication maneuvers, including implications used in discourse, prefer to use and rely on directly phrased discursive representation. These users tend to "create their own temporary norms and conventions with implicatures among them" (p. 295). This results in a kind of loosening of the L1-related rigidity of semantic representation, which is based on a firm degree of conventionality. The final chapter of Part IV investigates formulaic language use in IC pragmatics. Its low rate of frequency is attributed to the low rate of exposure of L2 speakers to the socio-cultural environmental factors and language behavioral customs of L1. As a consequence, they consciously try to avoid using formulaic, figurative expressions in their communication. Relying on his corpus-based investigations, Kecskés observes that L2 users, who usually find formulaic L1 expressions difficult or even impossible to interpret, consciously create their own, L2-based formulas of linguistic expression to be used in their communication.

A weakness of the book is the considerable amount of instances of repetitions and recurrence in argumentation passages and in examples, maybe due to the fact that this volume is formally based on a set of previously published articles and book chapters. All in all, Kecskés' new book is an invaluably important source for researchers, instructors and students of the fields of socio-cognitively based pragmatics and the rapidly developing theory of intercultural communication.

References

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