

The Pragmatics Encyclopedia

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Savickiene and Dressler 2007). At early stages, that is, children do not connect diminutive suffixes to the semantic notion of smallness, which they express by the use of the adjective 'small'. This is evidence corroborating the authors' assumption of the priority of pragmatics over semantics.

Other patterns having morphopragmatic effects are excessives in Hungarian, German, Dutch, Danish and Ancient Greek. Excessives express the highest possible intensification, as in referring to God in Danish:

- (7) Den aller-hellig-ste Fader
'The very holi-est Father'

Here, the superlative meaning is radicalized to an absolute peak, allowing no further comparison. In **discourse**, excessives put an end to any further discussion, as in the German dialogue expressing an indirect invitation to urgently leave the place:

- (8) A: Es ist höch-ste B: Es ist aller-höch-ste
 Zeit. Zeit.
 It is highest time It is all-highest time
A: It's high time B: It is the very last
 (we left). moment.

Morphopragmatic studies have been applied to the French ironic-intimate suffix *-o* (which may trigger a truncation of the base), as in *les social-os* (from the base *socialiste*) (Kilani-Schoch and Dressler 1999) and the Japanese honorific suffix *-masu*, which indexes social and psychological distance in **conversation**.

LAVINIA MERLINI BARBARESI and
WOLFGANG U. DRESSLER

See also: Hedge; honorific language; hyperbole; interlanguage pragmatics; irony; mitigation; request; semantics-pragmatics interface; speech act theory; understatement

Suggestions for further reading

- Crocco Galéas, G. (1992) *Gli Etnici Italiani: Studio di Morfologia Naturale*, Padua: Unipress.
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Merlini Barbarese, L. (1999) 'The pragmatics of the "diminutive"-y/ie suffix in English', in C. Schaner-Wolles, J. Rennison and F. Neubarth (eds) *Naturally!*, Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier.

Morris, C.

Charles W. Morris was born on 23 May 1901 in Denver, Colorado. After studying engineering and psychology, he earned a bachelor of science degree at Northwestern University in 1922. Deciding that his primary interests were philosophical, Morris became a student of pragmatist George Herbert Mead at the University of Chicago. In his dissertation titled 'Symbolism and Reality: A Study in the Nature of Mind' (Morris 1925) and articles published during the 1930s, Morris assembled a synthesis of the **semiotics** of Charles **Peirce**, the social behaviourism of Dewey and Mead, and the logical positivism of Rudolf Carnap and Otto Neurath. Morris quickly rose to a prominent position in American **philosophy**. Morris organized the fifth and sixth International Congresses for the Unity of Science (1939 and 1941). His relationships with German philosophers were essential to bringing many of them to America during World War II. Morris held academic appointments as an instructor in philosophy at the Rice Institute in Texas (1925–31), an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago (1931–47), a lecturer at the University of Chicago (1948–58) and a research professor at the University of Florida (1958–71). Morris was a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and served as President of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association in 1936–37. Morris died on 15 January 1979 in Gainesville, Florida.

The non-reductive and pluralistic naturalism of **pragmatism** is evident in Morris's efforts to construct a theory of language and signs. The scientific method, applied to all areas of inquiry, produces **knowledge** about humans and their environment which aids with philosophical questions. Neither philosophy alone, nor any single science's knowledge, can determine the reality of anything, including the nature of **meaning**, signs, and language. Morris inherited

this perspective towards philosophical problems from earlier pragmatists. The psychological functionalism developed by Dewey, Mead, and James Angell at Chicago during the late 1890s synthesized the latest scientific knowledge into a theory of mind inspired by evolution: all aspects of mind are functions of purposive organic activity, explained by their survival value. Morris defended functionalism against its rivals in *Six Theories of Mind* (Morris 1932), and during the 1930s he labelled his own version as the 'neo-pragmatism' advancing the movement.

Also committed to the pragmatist view, emphasized particularly by Peirce, that intelligence essentially involves the creation and proper functioning of signs, Morris focused on their nature. Biology, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and linguistics together contribute to semiotics: the study of semiosis or the use of signs. To be a legitimate scientific field in its own right, semiotics must define its subject matter, the nature of signs, and delimit its methodological orientation to the objectively available evidence. Morris, following Mead, accordingly adopted the standpoint of pragmatic social behaviourism towards signs. The meaning of signs consists in their practical use; the practical use of signs is embedded in the behavioural habits of organisms; and complex signs and language arise in the social conduct of humans. Morris's large debt to Mead, as well as his selective appropriation of Mead's theories of mind and **communication**, is especially evident in his editorial work on Mead's lectures, brought together in *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Morris 1934).

Morris's behaviourism offers an elimination of any subjectivity to signs. Signs exist in the natural world and do not essentially involve internal mental **representations**, but only the behavioural habits of response to stimuli. This behaviourism departs from Peirce's semiotic theory of signs as thought processes, and rejects Peirce's view of persons as signs themselves. Psychology may additionally formulate relationships between signs and mental experiences or conceptual processes, but such theorizing is not part of semiotics. Peirce's discrimination of sign, object, and interpretant within the semiotic process is transformed by Morris in *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (Morris 1938) into the tripartite division of

sign, object, and person within the natural world. Morris then divides the field of semiotics into **syntax**, **semantics**, and **pragmatics**. This tripartite division of semiotics conveniently embraces logical positivism's treatment of analytic a priori **propositions** as merely syntactical truths, having no mental or metaphysical significance (following Carnap 1937). Morris's division of semiotics also found a fitting place for semantical propositions whose truths depend on nothing more than the correspondence between the meaning of the sign and the existence of the entity so designated. By adding pragmatics, Morris hoped to enfold the unity of science movement within the pragmatist camp, as *Logical Positivism, Pragmatism, and Scientific Empiricism* (Morris 1937) suggests. Carnap (1942) quickly adopted Morris's general approach to semiotics. However, advocates of logical positivism and scientism tended to isolate pragmatics as dealing only with features of communication largely irrelevant to knowledge, truth, and science.

Morris's *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (Morris 1946) more carefully defines syntax, semantics, and pragmatics as follows. Pragmatics 'deals with the origins, uses, and effects of signs within the total behavior of the interpreters of signs' (1946: 219), and thus has the widest scope of any semiotic study. Semantics concerns just the relations between signs and the objects they signify, narrowing semiotic study to the strict literal meaning of signs and propositions. Syntactics concerns the formal relations between signs themselves, further narrowing semiotic study to the logical and grammatical rules that govern sign use. Morris's wide definition of pragmatics, by covering all linguistic behaviours, does not limit that field's study to meanings conveyed by speakers beyond what is explicitly or literally communicated. Morris resisted the notion that any firm dichotomy could be found between explicit and implicit meaning, or that any simplistic division could be made between syntactical signs, semantical signs, and pragmatological signs. Further, the three factors of sign-behaviour, the designative, appraisive, and prescriptive factors, are found to varying degrees in all communication. Only the most refined and sophisticated languages facilitate sign-usage for just one or another factor, and such usage heavily depends on social **context** in any case.

Morris's impact on philosophy and linguistics faded during the 1940s and 1950s, as pragmatism was displaced by analytic and scientific approaches more concerned with formal and factual truth. Hostility towards pragmatism from University of Chicago philosopher Mortimer Adler and president Robert Hutchins further ensured the marginalization of Morris and semiotics. Undeterred, Morris applied his semiotics to a variety of fields in *Paths of Life: Preface to a World Religion* (Morris 1942), *The Open Self* (Morris 1948), *Varieties of Human Value* (Morris 1956), and *Signification and Significance* (Morris 1964), pursuing his dream that scientific knowledge of humanity will inspire the wisdom necessary to keep pace with technological and cultural change. *The Pragmatic Movement in American Philosophy* (Morris 1970) is an outstanding insider's account of pragmatism's figures and phases. However, Morris himself had almost no influence on the next generation of pragmatists in philosophy, who were more interested in

insights from Ludwig **Wittgenstein**, Thomas Kuhn, or W.V. Quine. Morris's greatest student, the semiotician Thomas Sebeok, pursued and improved upon several of Morris's ideas, including those collected in *Writings on the General Theory of Signs* (Morris 1971).

JOHN SHOOK

See also: History of pragmatics; Peirce, C.S.; pragmatism

Suggestions for further reading

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