Lexemes, practs, and those who have yet to decide

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Abstract

Mey's (2001) action-theoretic societal pragmatics known as pragmatic act theory nurtures the idea that the explanatory movement in pragmatic theories should go from the outside in (i. e. from actual situational contexts into prior contexts encoded in the utterances used). Kecskes's (2010, 2013) socio-cognitive approach challenges Mey's position, and argues that the explanatory movement should go in both directions: from the outside in and from the inside out. To challenge Mey's view and to nurture his own position, Kecskes resorts to a dialectical socio-cognitive perspective on human communication (Kecskes 2003, 2008), and uses situation-bound utterances as evidence to support his theory. In this paper, I will provide an overview of both theories and argue in favor of Mey's position.

1   Introduction

In his criticism of the Gricean and component approaches to pragmatics, Mey (2001) argued that what they all lacked was a theory of action. He further argued that "there are no speech acts, but only situated speech acts, or instantiated pragmatic acts" (Mey 2001: 218). He proposed the notion of pragmatic acts (or practs), and argued that practs are pragmatic access routes for the realization of human intentionalities or pragmemes. He further argued that practs receive their meaning from the outside as they are used in an actual situational context; using SBUs to challenge this view, Kecskes argued that "the explanatory movement in any pragmatic theory should go in both directions: from the outside in […] and from the inside out" (Kecskes 2010: 2897). Using ideas from Frege's puzzle I will argue in favor of Mey's position, and will conclude that Kecskes is overextending Mey's action-theoretic pragmatics into discourse analysis.

2   Background

Pragmatics, as we see it today, is the study the meanings of utterances in context (Allan/Salmani Nodoushan 2015). Although scholarly thought on language which can be said to have a pragmatic approach has its roots in the rhetoric of ancient Greece, pragmatics and ancient Greek rhetoric should not be confused because the latter aimed primarily at finding the most effective mode of presenting a viewpoint or an argument and adopting it in such a way as to propagate it or act on it. Nevertheless, Aristotle's Rhetoric (Aristotle 1984) does contain points that are roughly similar to Gricean conversational maxims (see Grice 1975), but it should be remembered that while Aristotle's 'speaker' is adversarial in that s/he brings dialec-

tic into rhetoric, Grice's 'speaker' is cooperative (Allan 2004; Allan/Salmani Nodoushan 2015). As such, pragmatics is often considered to be a science of the late twentieth century. Modern pragmatics, as it is called by some scholars, had its own forebears which include (a) the Stoics of the third century BC to third century AD, (b) Apollonius of the second century AD, (c) Augustine of the 5th century AD, (d) Abelard of the 12th century AD, and (e) Reid of the 18th century AD. These schools/scholars had discussed differences among such terms as assertions, questions, commands, supplications, promises, contracts, prayers, and wishes which were later called 'illocutions' or as "acts of social intercourse between intelligent beings" (Reid 1819: 105); they presaged speech act theory (Allan/Jaszczolt 2012; Allan/Salmani Nodoushan 2015; Salmani Nodoushan 2014).

In its short life, modern pragmatics has been approached from four major perspectives: (1) Gricean perspective, (2) component perspective, (3) socio-cultural interactional perspective, and (4) dialectical socio-cognitive perspective. Although only 3 and 4 are relevant to the theme of this paper, I shall also provide a brief overview of 1 and 2 for readers who are not versed in the field.

2.1   Gricean perspective

The first thing that pops up in mind any time the term 'Gricean approach to pragmatics' is used is a dedication and allegiance to 'speaker meaning'—and more specifically a discussion of implicatures. The yes/no question "Can you pass the salt?" uttered at a dinner table is rarely (if ever) answered by the linguistic form "Yes, I can." with no action accompanying it. Upon hearing the question, hearers compute a 'speaker meaning', and the computed speaker meaning is undoubtedly different from the purely linguistic meaning of the utterance. Hearers do not take the utterance as a yes/no question, but as a request for action. Speaker meaning often deviates from purely linguistic meaning, and the job of the Gricean approach to pragmatics is to describe such deviation.

As outlined by Neale (1992), the building blocks of Grice's philosophy of language are:

(1) determining what utterances mean, what speakers say on different occasions by saying them, and what they mean by uttering them on those occasions;

(2) explaining the essence of non-literal meaning through the analysis of sentence meaning, speaker meaning, and what is said;

(3) providing an account of how languages permit speaker utterance and speaker meaning to diverge; and

(4) distinguishing between semantic content and pragmatic implications thereby clarifying the relationship between classical logic, linguistic semantics, and everyday language use.

At the heart of Grice's (1957) approach to the philosophy of language lay the idea that any time a speaker makes an utterance, some kind of 'intentionality' is involved, and that speakers could not and would not utter things without meaning them. On Grice's account, "one cannot unintentionally say something" (Neale 1992: 523). This was challenged by people who brought counter-examples (especially slips of the tongue as well as misused expressions) to rule out Grice's view as short-sighted and to propose their own perspectives on pragmatics which were collectively called the component approach to pragmatics.

2.2   Component perspective

The component perspective itself comprises four major movements: (a) speech act theory, (b) neo-Gricean pragmatics, (c) optimality-theoretic pragmatics and (d) relevance theory.

One of the camps within the component perspective on pragmatics is the Speech Act Theory. It relies heavily on the works of Austin (1962; see also Krämer 2001), who conceptualized illocutionary acts and forces, and Searle (1969), who expatiated on those conceptualizations to propose the speech act theory. Searle argued that meaning must be seen as a 'kind of doing', and that the study of language is only a sub-part of the 'theory of action' (Salmani Nodoushan 2014). He brought systematicity into Austin's ideas and turned them up into the speech act theory (SPAT), which is a reference to illocutionary acts in both essence and practice. The speech act theory relies on such concepts as speech situation, speech event, speech acts, felicity conditions, and so forth, the discussion of which is out of the scope of this paper.

Another camp within the component perspective on pragmatics is hosted by the neo-Griceans; chief among them are Bach (1994, 2001), Horn (2004, 2005, 2006), and Levinson (2000)—although some would associate Levinson with the relevance-theoretic camp. When it comes to the question of 'what is said' in the course of a conversation, neo-Griceans depart from Grice in several important ways. For neo-Gricean, and specifically for Horn, there are two categories of conversational implicatures: one minimizes speaker effort (and boils down to the R-principle), and the other minimizes hearer effort (and boils down to the Q-principle); nevertheless, Horn's neo-Gricean perspective differs from the relevance-theoretic perspective—associated with Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995, 2002)—in that it does not aim to account for utterance processing. It also deviates from Grice's perspective in that it does not follow any philosophical analytical interests. Rather, it has a linguistic-pragmatic focus in that it is mainly concerned with accounting for the ways in which pragmatic factors are brought to bear on grammar albeit with the aim of minimizing speakers' production and hearers' processing efforts (Carston 2005; Salmani Nodoushan 2014).

A third camp within the component perspective on pragmatics is the optimality-theoretic camp. In essence, scholars in this camp (specifically Blutner 1998, 2004; Blutner/Zeevat 2004) have made attempts at applying optimality theory to pragmatics (and semantics) which can be compared to its previous applications to syntax and also to generative phonology. Optimality-theoretic pragmatics uses Horn's R- and Q-principles as input for an abstract generative mechanism (called Gen) which produces all possible form-meaning pairings, and detects the optimal pairing (i.e. the form-meaning pair that satisfies both the R- and the Q-principles). As Carston (2005) rightly pointed out, optimality-theoretic pragmatics is only

intended to be an abstract characterization of the most optimal form-meaning pairs that can exist on the basis of Horn's R- and Q-principles.

The last camp within the component perspective on pragmatics is the well-known Relevance Theory (RT) associated with Sperber/Wilson (1986, 1995, 2002). As Horn (2005) puts it, the main orientation of the relevance-theoretic camp is to develop a cognitive-psychological model for utterance interpretation. However, Horn does not agree with Carston (2005) that RT also has a lot to do with speaker meaning, both with 'what it is' and with the 'way an addressee attempts to recover it'. According to Carston (2005), the main question that RT attempts to answer is: 'given their communicative intentions, why and how speakers choose to utter the particular linguistic forms they utter'. RT's job is to make some predictions in this regard. It is focused on human cognition and processing. It claims that human cognition is prewired to detect relevant input and to select and process it (Sperber/Wilson 2002; Wilson/Sperber 2004). Relevant inputs are those that have the greatest positive effects on the functioning of the human cognitive system, and which create the lowest processing cost for it. An utterance is relevant if on the one hand it is compatible with the speaker's preference, goals, and state of knowledge, and on the other hand it is worth the hearer's processing effort. Seen in this light, linguistic utterances find prominence as the most relevant form of input in that they are ostensive stimuli, and can therefore preempt attention (Sperber/Wilson 2002; Wilson/Sperber 2004). Human agents who produce linguistic utterances have certain intentions (in so doing), which are mutually manifest for both themselves and their interlocutors. At the heart of RT lies the famous Communicative Principle of Relevance (CPR) which holds that ostensive stimuli are prewired to signal their optimal relevance (Sperber/Wilson 2002; Wilson/Sperber 2004). Expressed in a nutshell, RT holds that hearers process different computations of input in order of accessibility, and stop processing further computations once one computation achieves an optimal level of relevance.

Although the different camps within the component perspective on pragmatics—and specifically RT—still have their proponents, a new perspective which has come to be known as the socio-cultural interactional approach to pragmatics began to gain popularity at the turn of the century with the publication of Mey's (2001) Blackwell volume. Mey is the most prominent figure in this approach, but Verschueren (1999) is notable too.

2.3 Socio-cultural interactional approach to pragmatics

If a lexeme is a minimal unit of semantics, then a pragmeme must be the minimal unit of action-theoretic pragmatics. Perhaps this is what Mey (2001) had in mind when he proffered his Pragmatic Act Theory (PAT) for the first time. Mey's approach to pragmatics has a socio-cultural interactional focus which was defined as "a general cognitive, social and cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage in forms of behavior" (Verschueren 1999: 7). As Kecskes (2010: 2889) rightly puts it, PAT "was created partly as an opposing view to the component approach to pragmatics". Pragmatics as it had been practiced prior to the introduction of Mey's PAT was short-sighted because it functioned within a monolingual framework and lacked interest in a bi- or multi-lingual framework in theory development (Salmani Nodoushan 2014).

PAT is connected to that line of research in pragmatics which culminated in "societal-centered theories where interpretation goes from-the-outside-in (holistic) and less attention is paid to the proposition expressed" (Kecskes 2013: 38). It nurtures the idea that, in the construction as well as comprehension of meaning, societal and socio-cultural factors play a primary role (Salmani Nodoushan 2014). In his PAT, Mey attacked traditional perspectives on pragmatics on the assumption that they did not possess any theory of action. It seems that Mey's PAT has been informed by praxology—or the science of human action—a discussion of which is beyond the scope of the current paper (if interested, see Deppermann et al. 2014). In Mey's view, the few people with a traditional perspective on pragmatics who had the foresight to opt for a theory of action opted for an individual-oriented rather than a society-centered theory. In describing PAT, he argued:

> The theory of pragmatic acts does not explain human language use starting from the words uttered by a single, idealized speaker. Instead, it focuses on the interactional situation in which both speakers and hearers realize their aims. The explanatory movement is from the outside in, one could say, rather than from the inside out: instead of starting with what is said, and looking for what the words could mean, the situation where the words fit is invoked to explain what can be (and is actually being) said.

(Mey 2006: 542)

PAT holds that speech acts can be effective only if they are situated. As Mey (2001: 218) himself emphasizes, they have to "both rely on, and actively create, the situation in which they are realized […] there are no speech acts, but only situated speech acts, or instantiated pragmatic acts". No "conversational contribution at all can be understood properly unless it is situated within the environment in which it was meant to be understood" (Mey 2001: 217). As such, PAT views speakers as agents situated in social contexts the conditions of which not only empower but also limit them. In Mey's view, the symbiotic relationship between the situation of language use and the extralinguistic factors that affect language use (e. g. intonation and gestures—but not wording) define pragmatic acts (Kecskes 2010). He holds the assumption that "*a fortiori*, there are, strictly speaking, no such 'things' as speech acts *per se*, only acts of speech in a situation" (italics in the original) and that "indirect speech acts derive their force, not from their lexico-semantic build-up, but instead, from the situation in which they are appropriately uttered" (Mey 2006: 24). On this account, any act of conversation is taken to be a language game situated in a social context which affords and controls the rules that are essential to the construction and interpretation of meaning (Salmani Nodoushan 2014). In Mey's view, pragmatic acts (or practs) are considered to be the minimal unit of pragmatics; they are 'situation-derived' and 'situation-constrained' in that they "both rely on, and actively create, the situation in which they are realized" (Mey 2001: 219; see also Capone 2005; Salmani Nodoushan 2014). They can cluster together to form 'pragmemes' (Kecskes 2013). A pragmeme is:

> a situated speech act in which the rules of language and of society combine in determining meaning, intended as a socially recognized object sensitive to social expectations about the situation in which the utterance to be interpreted is embedded.

(Capone 2005: 1355)

Take the following example (reproduced from Mey 2001: 216):

(1)   Mother: Joshua, what are you doing?
       Joshua: Nothing.
       Mother: Will you stop it immediately.

Joshua's response "Nothing" is a situated or instantiated pragmatic act (i. e. a pract), which represents the pragmeme of 'opting out of conversation'. Its semantic meaning is *naught*, but the way Joshua uses it injects the pragmatic meaning *leave me alone* into it whereby it satisfies the pragmeme of opting out of conversation.

In Mey's view, all speech acts are doomed to be situated. On this account, their analysis should also be situated. Mey emphasizes the role of social context in the analysis and realization of speech acts (Salmani Nodoushan 2014). Mey's view supports Verschueren's (1999: 111) observation that "allowing context into linguistic analysis is […] a prerequisite for precision" (see also Capone 2005). Context, seen from Mey's perspective, is different from what has been conceptualized in sociolinguistics (see Wolfson 1989; Salmani Nodoushan 1995, 2012, 2014). Mey argues that context in any pragmeme has a social nature and encompasses the internal organization of a society, its intentions, internal differences, sub-groupings, and so on (Salmani Nodoushan 2012). Mey argues that:

> The theory of pragmatic acts does not try to explain language use from the inside out, from words having their origin in a sovereign speaker and going out to an equally sovereign hearer […]. Rather, its explanatory movement is from the outside in: the focus is on the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said on the situation, as well as on what is actually being said.
>
> (2001: 219)

On this account, meaning is not an inborn congenital quality of utterances. It is injected into them from the outside. Producers of any given 'act of speech' engage in the act in a socio-cultural context, and the act itself acquires its interpretation from that context (Capone 2010). As such, acts do not possess any 'selves'; rather, they can only have different identities or guises which are fed into them by speakers, hearers, and socio-cultural contexts. On this account, Mey's PAT seems to nurture a modular theory of 'practs' and 'words'. It seems that Mey tacitly suggests that pragmatic utterances should be viewed as slots, and that their possible interpretations should be viewed as fillers; moreover, he seems to tacitly suggest that slots and fillers have a modular nature, and are stored in different depots in our minds. The decision as to which filler should go into a given slot is made by an interplay of the speaker, the hearer, and the socio-cultural context in the course of communication. Seen in this light, pragmemes are speech acts in context.

This is the very idea that Kecskes challenges in his Dialectical socio-cognitive approach, and the very point at which I disagree with Kecskes and take sides with Mey. However, as we will see in the line of argumentation of this paper, in his attack on Mey's views on practs, Kecskes is utterly complacent to an important and vital premise of Mey's theory: that not all utterances are pragmatic utterances (many utterances are purely semantic/linguistic ones), but that all pragmatic utterances are situated and receive their meanings from outside. As we will see below, Kecskes's attack on Mey's position is heavily grounded in an under-representation of

Mey's view—a point that is reminiscent of the famous 'straw man fallacy'. Now, let's turn to Kecskes's Dialectical Socio-Cognitive (SCA) approach.

2.4   Dialectical socio-cognitive approach (SCA)

Although both Mey (2001) and Kecskes (2004) emphasized the pressing need for a change in pragmatics, they differ in their approaches. Unlike Mey, Kecskes (2008, 2010, 2013) believes that utterances can have congenital meanings, and that they bring those meanings to bear on communication. He does not rule out Mey's PAT completely, but he attacks Mey's position by claiming that the direction (of meaning interpretation) is both from-the-inside-out and from-the-outside-in. He argues that people's prior experiences in contexts where given words, expressions, and speech acts had been used are in fact encoded in those words, expressions, and speech acts, and tacitly suggests that when they find themselves in similar contexts, they are very likely to use the same words, expressions, and speech act (Kecskes 2008). He further argues that:

> Mey is right emphasizing the importance of situation, environment and extralinguistic factors in meaning construction and comprehension. However, the ''wording'' of linguistic expressions is as important in shaping meaning as the situation in which they are used and supplemented by extralinguistic factors. Both sides are equally important contributors in meaning construction and comprehension.
>
> (Kecskes 2010: 2889; emphasis in the original)

On this account, he argues that words, expressions, and speech acts have **a priori** meanings which are brought to the context of their use, that the direction is also from the inside out, and that Mey is not completely right in his claims. Kecskes's view is reminiscent of 'Construction Grammar' (CxG), a discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper (see Goldberg 2009; Steels 2012). In delineating his SCA, Kecskes (2013) challenges not only the traditional bottom-up strategies of pragma-semantics, but also the current top-down strategies of pragma-dialogue and pragma-discourse. He rules out the bottom-up views of pragma-semanticists who favored the idea that local semantic/pragmatic phenomena could explain 'global discursive' issues; he further rules out the top-down views of both pragma-dialogue and pragma-discourse which argue in favor of the inevitability of social as well as global discursive constraints for explaining single utterances. Expressed in a nutshell, his dialogic SCA integrates both the 'single utterances approach' and the 'span of utterances' approach (Salmani Nodoushan 2015). On his account, utterances cannot and should not be analyzed from only the hearer's perspective, but simultaneously from the perspectives of the speaker and the hearer (Kecskes/Zhang 2009). SCA, which seems to have been aspired by Habermas' (1979) views on human 'understanding', challenges the current 'discourse as a process' view and opts for a holistic 'dialogic-sequence-and-discourse-segment' approach which envisages 'discourse as a structured entity'. As such, it involves a symbiosis of 'a priori' and 'emergent' factors as the inevitable precursor to assigning meaning to utterances (Kecskes 2013). SCA partakes of both the 'individual trait' which is brought into the scene by individuals and the 'social trait' which is co-constructed by the interlocutors as the dynamic flow of communication unfolds in front of them. The individual trait comprises attention, private experience, egocentrism, and salience, but the social trait comprises intention, actual situation experience, cooperation, and relevance. The interplay of the two traits is inevitable, and they are inseparable, interactive,

and mutually supportive (Kecskes 2010). Moreover, 'cooperation' and 'egocentrism' permeate all aspects of communication and are not mutually exclusive (Kecskes 2013; Kecskes/Zhang 2009). On this account, communication enjoys a dynamic process, and

> *is the result of interplay of intention and attention motivated by socio-cultural background* that is privatized by the individuals. The socio-cultural background is composed of dynamic knowledge of interlocutors deriving from their *prior experience* encoded in the linguistic expressions they use and *current experience* in which those expressions create and convey meaning.

(Kecskes 2010: 2890; italics in the original)

In Kecskes's own terms, SCA integrates the cognitive view of 'egocentrism' and the pragmatic view of 'cooperation'. Cooperation is intention-directed and is measured by relevance, but egocentrism is attention-oriented and is measured by salience (Kecskes 2010). On this account, Kecskes's SCA clearly deviates from the relevance-theoretic views of intention and attention in that, in SCA, attention is measured by means of salience and intention by means of relevance (cf. Sperber/Wilson 1986; Wilson/Sperber 2004; Giora 2003). Moreover, 'context' is defined as a two-fold concept to include both the 'prior context' and the 'actual situational context'. Common ground, too, is defined as a two-fold concept to include both the 'core common ground' and the 'emergent common ground'—the former referring to the generalized, relatively static, common knowledge which results from speakers' prior interactions and experiences in a certain speech community, and the latter referring to the relatively dynamic, actualized and particularized knowledge which is privatized by, and belongs to, individuals, and which is co-constructed in the course of communication (Salmani Nodoushan 2015). Needless to say, common ground is tied to both 'context' and 'salience', and in fact Kecskes himself refers to them as the 'Big Three' (Kecskes 2013: 128, 176).

As such, SCA intends to diverge from PAT, and it appears to parallel van Dijk's (2008) views on discourse. Although Kecskes hails PAT for prioritizing societal and socio-cultural factors in the production and recognition of meaning, he criticizes it for (a) nurturing the existence of **core** or **a priori** socio-cultural conventions that permit interpretation to go from-the-outside-in, and for (b) its failure to **see emergent** factors that affect communication dynamism (Salmani Nodoushan 2015). On account of my understanding of Mey's PAT, however, an over-extension of Mey's action-theoretic pragmatics must be involved in Kecskes's criticism of PAT. It seems to me that Kecskes reduces Mey's PAT to a 'straw man' which he then attacks using the 'straw man fallacy'. In doing so, as we will see in section 4 below, he blurs the clear borders that not only exist between pragmatics and discourse analysis but also between pragmatics and semantics. I will expatiate on my position in section 4 below, but before I do so, a short overview of Frege's (1997) puzzle will be extremely helpful.

3 Frege and proper names

A view of proper names—often associated with John Stuart Mill—holds that a proper name does not have any meaning above and beyond its referent (or reference). Building on the famous Liar Paradox proposed in the early 12th century by the Persian logician, Khawaja Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī (see Nasr 2008), Frege (1997/1892) developed a different view of proper names—which is often cited to reject Mill's position. Let's take an example:

(2) (a) Major premise: Alex believes Hesperus is visible in the evening.
     (b) Minor Premise: Hesperus is Phosphorus.
     (c) Syllogism: Alex believes Phosphorus is visible in the evening.

Although both (a) and (b) are true, (c) is false. To account for this discrepancy, Frege used the following examples:

(3) (a) Hesperus is Hesperus.
     (b) Hesperus is Phosphorus.

He argued that both of these statements are true because 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' are coreferring terms. However, the nature of their truth condition is totally different. While (a) is a truth of logic (i. e. a tautology), (b) is an empirical truth discovered by astronomers. In other words, (a) is a fundamental/brute fact, but (b) is a scientific fact (see Salmani Nodoushan 2013). To resolve the problem in (2c), Frege suggested that proper names have two layers of meaning: (1) a reference/referent, and (2) one or more senses or modes of presentation. I would rather use the term 'self' to refer to Frege's reference, and the term 'identity' or 'guise' to refer to his 'sense'. On this account, it is possible for a word or a multiword expression (e. g. proverb, metaphor, etc.) to simultaneously have one 'self' and one or more 'identities'. As I see it, the appearance (be it visual, vocal, or otherwise), the most salient 'conventional' meaning, and the most salient conventional use of a word or a multiword expression amount to its 'self', and whatever else it temporarily encodes when it is put to actual use in real-time communication amounts to its 'identities'. By the same token, multiword utterances (e. g. idioms, proverbs, situation-bound utterances or SBUs, metaphors, and the like) have a 'self' and can have one or more 'identities'. This distinction between 'self' and 'identity' is fundamental to my line of argumentation.

4   Rethinking practs and pragmemes

Kecskes's SCA appears to lean more towards discourse analysis (which has to do with the analysis of the flow of the conversation itself—in terms of direction, intention, premises, conclusions, etc.) than pure pragmatics (which is the study of how people map symbols and meanings by means of context). It appears to be based on the interplay of discourse analysis, pragmatics, and semantics (or the philosophical and scientific study of meaning). Specifically, it overextends pragmatics to accommodate some ideas from discourse analysis. I would understand it if pragmatics in general wanted to allow this, but whether Mey's PAT in particular, would want to allow this overextension is a decision yet to be made by Mey himself. In its current form, Mey's PAT does not allow such an over-extension, and any attempt in that direction is simply a misrepresentation of what Mey's PAT really is. If the over-extended account of PAT is attacked (as this is what Kecskes does), it is nothing more than an example of the notorious 'straw man fallacy'. Nevertheless, Mey's action-theoretic societal pragmatics is founded on solid ground and it can defy such attacks. There are several reasons for this claim.

4.1   Mey versus Grice?

First, Mey himself does not claim his action-theoretic societal pragmatics to be a substitution for the Gricean perspective or any of the perspectives collectively called the component perspective (discussed above). Rather, his PAT aims to complement the already existing perspec-

tives on pragmatics by also accounting for action (i. e. it promotes a praxological perspective on pragmatics). He sees a shortcoming in the existing theories where he argues that they lack a theory of action, and proposes his PAT which is an ambitious response to the need for a theory of action in pragmatics. Needless to say, he does not rule out the existence of Gricean speech acts outside of an actual situation or context; rather, he talks about their 'effectiveness' and argues that they need to be 'situated' if they want to be effective where he says, "there are no speech acts, but only situated speech acts, or instantiated pragmatic acts" (Mey 2001: 218).

An analogy may help us elucidate Mey's perspective. Every car has a spare tire in its trunk which is designed to be used when needed; the spare tire has already encoded a 'convention of use' or 'functionality'. If one of the tires gets punctured, the spare tire can be used, but it needs a human agent who will replace the punctured tire with the spare tire; only then can the spare tire also encode 'agency' and 'effectiveness'. It requires the action of a human agent to be put into actual use in its appropriate context, and it is realized as appropriate because the context accepts it as appropriate in that it is applied to the relevant car and at the right time. In view of this analogy, Gricean speech acts (e. g. I marry you man and wife) are like spare tires hidden in car trunks. They have already encoded functionality, but have not encoded effectiveness. To become effective, they need to be used in appropriate situational contexts, and their actual use requires action on the part of a human agent. It is this agency that changes them into what Mey calls practs. Nevertheless, Mey's perspective is pragmatic, but it is not difficult to find scholars and philosophers who have the same perspective albeit on a larger scale which also includes semiotics (e. g. Wittgenstein 1953; Capone 2005, 2010).

4.2   Grammaticalization/Functionalization

My second reason for arguing that Mey's PAT is founded on solid ground comes from a tradition in lexicography which, in my view, should be brought to bear on speech acts (and especially on our conception of situation bound utterances or SBUs). Any dictionary includes entries not only for parts of speech which have their own independent meanings but also for words which can be referred to as 'functional' lexemes (be they prepositions, articles, determiners, cohesive devices, conjunctions, etc.). We know that functional words are primarily used, not for the expression of semantic content, but for the realization of syntactic or discursive functions. In other words, they belong in syntax or discourse analysis (not in semantics). Although discourse analysts and syntacticians can claim ownership of such words, they have given consent so that lexicographers could include them in dictionaries, and we have gotten used to seeing them as words. This is what pragmaticists should do to traditional speech acts (e. g. I hereby marry you man and wife) and perhaps SBUs. They seem to have been grammaticalized (or rather functionalized) in that they have encoded the history of their use. They are like spare tires, and the human lexicon is like the car trunk of a car where such spare tires normally belong. I assume Mey's conception of speech acts vis-à-vis practs is an informed move in the direction of pruning traditional speech acts out of societal pragmatics and sending them into discourse analysis and the human lexicon where they belong.

In much the same way as Grammaticalization has been at work through history to transform words which signify objects and actions (i. e. nouns and verbs) into grammatical markers (e. g. affixes, prepositions, etc.), we can argue in favor of the existence of a 'functionaliza-

tion' process through which certain utterances encode their history of use and change into functional-discoursal units that can be used as whole chunks (e. g. proverbs, catch phrases, SBUs, swears, slurs, etc.) whose relevance-theoretic job is to save production/processing energy. In other words, in much the same way as the Old English *willan* (meaning 'to want' and 'to wish') has historically evolved (through the process of grammaticalization) and transformed into the Modern English auxiliary verb *will* which is used as a function word to express 'intention' or simply 'futurity', certain utterances (such as slurs, swearwords, SBUs, catch phrases, clichés, etc.) have encoded their history of use and have evolved to become discoursal function words. Nevertheless, all such functionalized units can temporarily be put to use as practs, but their transient use as practs does not make them permanent practs as practs cannot become permanent; they are essentially transient and a function of emergent contexts (e. g. when a swear word is used in a cathartic function or a socialization function (see Salmani Nodoushan 2016).

4.3   Practs versus lexemes

My third reason for supporting Mey's theory comes from my understanding of his action-theoretic perspective. In my view, it would be pointless if Mey wanted to revive traditional speech acts and re-label them as practs. His view of practs is process-oriented, while traditional speech acts are product-oriented. Practs do not exist prior to their use in the dynamic course of communication; they are transient; furthermore, they will not exist beyond the context in which they are used. This transient process-centered orientation distinguishes practs from ordinary lexemes and prefabricated speech formulas, and it accounts for why they cannot be good candidates for inclusion in dictionaries. For instance, Joshua's 'Nothing' in (1) is a pract in that the peripheral sense which it has been used to represent (besides the 19 senses listed for it in the *American Heritage Dictionary*) is in essence an action (i. e. the act of opting out of conversation) performed by the human agent Joshua. Because this sense is not static, it cannot be added to the *American Heritage Dictionary* as its twentieth sense (nor can it be added to any other dictionary). This 'action-sense' is transient in that it stops to exist beyond the context in which Joshua has used it. It is selective because Joshua has selected it from among the many pragmatic access routes he had at his disposal. It becomes effective and encodes human agency because Joshua actively uses it in interaction with his mom. It encodes intentionality because Joshua has used it with the certain intention of opting out of conversation. Finally, its performance is tied to the realization of Joshua's intention.

On this account, I suggest a re-definition of practs as *speech 'actions' charged with human agency and intentionality which are selectively performed in the societal-cultural context of communication the performance of which is inevitable for their own effectiveness as well as for the realization of the intentions which human agents have*. They are situated speech actions, and Mey is quite right in his proposal that "there are no speech acts, but only situated speech acts, or instantiated pragmatic acts" (Mey 2001: 218). They involve functionality, intentionality, agency, and action. They are not like unmarked static speech formulas (e. g. I hereby marry you man and wife) which encode functionality and intentionality, but not agency and action; nevertheless, they will encode agency and action once they are put to use in real-time communication. Agency and action are prerequisite for their becoming effective. As such, speech acts can become practs only if agency and action is urged upon them by a human

agent and in their appropriate contexts. Traditional speech acts are prefabricated objects or products which belong in a closed 'functional' class (just like prepositions, articles, determiners, and other grammatical morphemes). Unlike traditional speech acts which can be explained relevance-theoretically, practs can best, if not only, be explained action-theoretically. As such, the essence of my juxtaposition of practs and traditional speech acts boils down into a classification of utterances which includes (a) lexemes, (b) practs, and (c) those who have yet to decide. Note that I am using the term 'utterance' loosely to refer to any *minimal unit of meaning, minimal unit of function,* or *minimal unit of action* (be it a single lexical item, a multiword idiom, a proverb, an SBU, a pract, or otherwise). Lexemes can be either semantic units charged with semantic content (i. e. parts of speech) or functional units charged with syntactic or discoursal functions (prepositions, determiners, lexical cohesion, traditional speech acts, etc.). Practs, as they were defined above, cannot exist outside of their contexts of use, and are process-oriented transient units. Those who have yet to decide (e. g. SBUs) are already functional lexemes in that they are already charged with their prior-context functionalities or semantic charges (just like spare tires in our analogy above), but they are whimsical and wrongly think that they are not lexemes, so they have yet to decide whether and when they want to accept their fate. SBUs are prefabricated collocational lexemes charged with some sort of relevance-theoretic functionality.

Back to my self-and-identity dichotomy, I would like to suggest further that lexemes amount to the 'selves' of utterances, and that practs amount to the 'identities' they can temporarily adopt in real-time. A lexeme or a fixed phrase can be 'agitated' in the course of real-time communication to encode a specific 'functionality' and a transient 'action' whereby it can temporarily adopt the identity of a pract. For instance, Joshua's 'Nothing' is a regular lexical unit which has a semantic content, but the human agent Joshua agitates it in the course of real-time communication and urges a functionality upon it whereby it becomes effective for the realization of Joshua's intention in the context where Joshua uses it; it changes into a pract. Outside of the context of the conversation between Joshua and his mother, 'nothing' is nothing other than a lexical 'nothing'; it is void of the agency, the action, and the functionality which Joshua has injected into it. Encoding agency and action is inevitable for the existence of practs, and this cannot be done outside an actual situational context and without the intervention of a human agent.

Nevertheless, I do agree with Kecskes (2010: 2894) that "lexical items encode the history of their use", but I do not concede that SBUs (i. e. lexical units that have already encoded the history of their use) can be used to challenge Mey's view of practs. SBUs encode the history of their use in terms of functionality, and this encoding has a relevance-theoretic motivation. They cannot and do not encode the history of their use in terms of agency and action. Back to our analogy, SBUs are comparable to spare tires; they have their discoursal functionality with them, but for them to change into practs, they must become effective and this requires them to also encode agency and action; this in turn requires that they be put into actual use in an actual situational context, and this in turn requires a human agent to urge agency and action upon them.

This is the reason why I rule out Kecskes's use of SBUs for challenging Mey's view of practs. Kecskes (2010: 2894) says, "SBUs can be considered practs because they function as concrete

realizations of a pragmeme that may refer to a general situational prototype, a socio-cultural concept that usually has several possible realizations". This is not the whole truth; it is not precise. SBUs can be SBUs; they can also be speech acts in a traditional sense because they can amount to pragmatic idioms charged with functionality, but they cannot be practs because they cannot 'plastinate' agency and action. It is true that SBUs are static, but it is not true that practs are static. It is true that SBUs have encoded functionality, but it is not true that they have also encoded agency and action; they are static products, but practs are transient process-centered actions. Actions can only exist when the human agent engages in them in real time and in an actual situational context (see also Salmani Nodoushan 2014). They get charged with agency and action from the outside and through their active use by a human agent who makes them effective in an actual situational context. SBUs have a relevance-theoretic nature because they originate with relevance-theoretic motivations, but practs have an action-theoretic nature in that they can only originate in a theory of action (i. e. in Mey's PAT).

Back to my description of Frege's puzzle, it seems that Kecskes's computation of the meaning of practs is based on the following mis-informed deduction:

(4) (a) Major premise: Kecskes believes SBUs have encoded their history of use.
     (b) Minor Premise: SBUs are practs.
     (c) Syllogism: Kecskes believes that practs have encoded the history of their use.

Based on my description of Frege's puzzle (above), I assume that it is quite easy to understand the point of this deduction. The tricky part of Kecskes's attack on Mey's practs is that Kecskes himself takes SBUs and practs to be the same, but this is not what Mey had claimed. This is simply an attempt on the part of Kecskes to reduce Mey's practs into a 'straw man' that can easily be attacked. Nevertheless, what Mey (2001) suggests is that even a lexeme such as 'nothing' can turn into a pract if a human agent changes it into a pract through his/her action in a spacio-temporal context. Mey never claims that SBUs cannot be practs. A lexeme or an SBU is a brute/fundamental fact in semantics and/or discourse analysis (in that it has encoded its history use and meaning), but it is not a brute/fundamental fact in pragmatics (in that it has not encoded agency and action). Pragmatic truths are not tantamount to semantic/discursive truths in much the same way as a truth of logic (e. g. Hesperus) is not tantamount to an empirical truth (e. g. Phosphorus).

Back to my classification of utterances, all sorts and orders of utterances can be filled with 'literal meanings', 'conventionalized functions', or 'situation-oriented agency and action'. If they have already encoded 'literal meanings' they have encoded the 'self' of lexemes and belong in semantics. If they have already encoded the history of their use or 'conventionalized functions', they have assumed the 'self' of lexemes and are normally included in semantics although it can be argued that they belong in syntax (e. g. *of*, *at*, *between*, *the*, etc.) or in (meta)discourse (e. g. *nevertheless*, *nonetheless*, *by the way*, *I'll see you later*, etc.). If they are transiently filled with agency and action, they adopt the 'identity' of practs and belong in Mey's action-theoretic societal pragmatics. As stated earlier, practs presuppose and involve human **intentionality** and **agency**, while syntactic morphemes, conversational routines, and SBUs do not achieve anything other than their literal meanings and/or their conventionalized syntactic/conversational-discursive functions—unless a human agent actively uses them in

conversation and charges them with agency and action. A proverb, for instance, is a functional unit in discourse which is tantamount to a mini-analogy aimed at clarifying a message. Since they have already encoded the history of their use in terms of functionality, SBUs (when used in their appropriate prior contexts) can be considered as functional discursive units but their being considered as practs requires the injection of agency and action into them from the outside and by a human agent.

5   Conclusion

In this paper, I started with an overview of the main camps within pragmatics and recognized four major trends: Gricean pragmatics, component approaches, Mey's action-theoretic societal pragmatics, and Kecskes's socio-cognitive pragmatics. I then described Frege's puzzle. In the main section of the paper, I juxtaposed Mey and Kecskes's views, and supported Mey's view on the basis of a precise definition of practs. Although Kecskes's view is ambitious and intriguing, I argued why his use of SBUs cannot challenge Mey's conception of practs. On the basis of the discussion I presented above, it can be concluded that Kecskes is overextending Mey's action-theoretic societal pragmatics into discourse analysis. The question which remains to be answered by Mey is if he would want to warrant this.

The argument presented in this paper suggests that we should classify SBUs as lexical units in spite of their restricted use which qualifies them for discoursal functions, and that we should use their 'conventionality' and 'functionality' as our classificatory principles. After all, this is what linguistics has done in relation to syntactic morphemes, and you can verify this by the fact that dictionaries, in addition to parts of speech, also include prepositions, articles, determiners, and so forth. By the same token, if we accept Searle (1979) and Morgan's (1978) position that SBUs are highly-conventionalized functional units, we should treat them as lexico-discoursal items—in much the same way as we recognize articles as lexico-grammatical units. We cannot use them as counter-evidence to challenge Mey's action-theoretic views. Nevertheless, Mey's use of the term pract has to do with agency and intentionality, but SBUs have to do with meaning and functionality. To challenge agency and intentionality, we need to find 'frozen' or 'plastinated' practs which, in addition to meaning and functionality, have also encode agency and action as part of their prior contexts. Meaning and functionality can become congenital, but agency and action are encoded 'on the fly' and can only occur in real-time actual situational contexts.

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