

Part VI

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is generally conceived as a theory of language use. Pragmatic studies do not address phonological, morphological, or syntactic features of language, rather they focus on the meaning of signs in their context of use. Pragmatics represents a core part of the grammar which strictly interacts with meaning in discourse and it also plays an important role in the interface between linguistic aspects and socio-cultural and cognitive phenomena.

This part is meant to present and discuss several pragmatic phenomena in LIS: both the more strictly linguistic phenomena such as deictic pronouns or referential tracking strategies and the phenomena which are related to a broader definition of pragmatics and that interact with cultural and social aspects such as register, politeness, and communicative interaction.

Reference, which is intended as the relationship between a linguistic expression and the denoted entity, is addressed in [PRAGMATICS 1]. This chapter also considers related phenomena, such as deixis, defi-

niteness, indefiniteness, specificity, and impersonal reference. How reference is tracked back in discourse by means of pronouns or other strategies is discussed in [PRAGMATICS 2]. Language can be used to act. Signers may perform different speech acts, such as assertions, questions, commands and requests [PRAGMATICS 3]. Research in pragmatics also considers the way in which new and old information (i.e. focus and topics), are organised in discourse and how non-manual markers can bear morphological and prosodic functions and help the addressee in recognizing such elements [PRAGMATICS 4]. Communicative exchanges among participants are structured and organised through coherence and cohesion. Foregrounding and backgrounding phenomena also play a role in information management [PRAGMATICS 5]. Indirect speech and reported action are discussed here from a pragmatic point of view [PRAGMATICS 6]: particular attention is devoted to role shift, a specific device used to report the utterances, thoughts, or actions of another person. In [PRAGMATICS 7], expressive meanings are briefly reported, by considering presuppositions, conversational and conventional implicatures. As other sign languages, LIS makes use of signing space to fulfil several linguistic functions, to convey temporal information, spatial relationships, and perspectives [PRAGMATICS 8]. Figurative meanings play a prominent role in LIS, not only in poetic field, but also in everyday language. In particular, in [PRAGMATICS 9,] metaphor and metonymy are discussed.

Finally, as stated before, a broader approach to pragmatics is also considered. In line with this approach, several cultural and socio-linguistic phenomena are presented: communicative interaction (with a particular focus on discourse markers, turn taking strategies, back channelling and repairs) [PRAGMATICS 10], register and politeness [PRAGMATICS 11].

The presentation of all these pragmatic phenomena is aimed at providing a comprehensive account of how LIS signs are used in context. Indeed, this Part will allow readers to expand their knowledge of LIS not only in the mere grammatical field, but also in discourse and contextual use.
