




<https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-26986>

Book review

**Review of Capone, Alessandro. 2019.  
*Pragmatics and Philosophy: Connections and Ramifications.*  
Cham: Springer.**

**Mostafa MORADY MOGHADDAM**  

*Shahrood University of Technology, Shahrood, Iran*

 [mmoghaddam@shahroodut.ac.ir](mailto:mmoghaddam@shahroodut.ac.ir)

**For citation:**


Morady Moghaddam, Mostafa. 2022. Review of Capone, Alessandro. 2019. *Pragmatics and Philosophy: Connections and Ramifications*. Cham: Springer. *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 26 (1). 250–255. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-26986>

Рецензия

**Рецензия на книгу  
Capone, Alessandro. 2019. *Pragmatics and Philosophy:  
Connections and Ramifications.* Cham: Springer.**

**Мостафа МОРАДИ МОГХАДДАМ**  

*Шахрудский технологический университет, Шахруд, Иран*

 [mmoghaddam@shahroodut.ac.ir](mailto:mmoghaddam@shahroodut.ac.ir)

**Для цитирования:**

Morady Moghaddam M. Review of Capone, Alessandro. 2019. *Pragmatics and Philosophy: Connections and Ramifications*. Cham: Springer. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*. 2022. Vol. 26. № 1. P. 250–255. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-26986>

Language is art, or to be more exact, a philosophy of existence (Wettstein 2016). This book (including 13 chapters and 311 pages) concentrates on a range of interesting topics relevant to issues that are at the heart of the philosophy of language, namely the semantics-pragmatics interface and reported speech. The book consists of two parts, *The Semantics/Pragmatics Debate* and *Indirect Reports and Presuppositions as Pragmatic Phenomena*.

---

© Mostafa Morady Moghaddam, 2022



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

The first part aims to show that “not only is it the case that pragmatics takes input from semantics, but that semantics takes input from pragmatics” (pp. 1–2). In the first part, Capone deals with important and challenging issues, namely explicatures, the semantics-pragmatics interface, cancellability in pragmatic inference, and modularity of mind and pragmatics, among other topics. The introductory chapters concern the dilemma known as ‘Grice’s circle’, as well as the discussion of the non-cancellability of explicatures, while arguing that the semantic resources of a language do not suffice to take intentionality into account. Capone argues that cancellability (a technical term in pragmatics that means making an implicature invalid in certain instances) may not apply, depending on the functions of the inference/s in question. The author also offers his reflections on the (challenging) relationship between semantics and pragmatics. Capone mentions that there are situations where one or the other (pragmatics or semantics) takes the lead in sentence interpretation. In other words, with regards to explicatures, “pragmatic inferences can become semanticised” (p. 100).

Under the rubrics of modularity, Capone refers to cognitive aspects of sentence interpretation, arguing that the mind can use simplification processes to reduce the complexity of reality. To be precise, however, we need to distinguish between internal and external inquiry. Internal inquiry denotes the logic of cognitive processes that relate to the ego. The main feature of this internal inquiry concerns *psychoanalysis*, ‘any of a number of the theories of the human personality that aim at examining a person's unconscious mind to discover the hidden causes of their mental problems’. Besides this internal inquiry, there is also external inquiry, which comes into play when the forces of internal inquiry are unable to provide a reasonable conceptualization of reality. In this case, the hearer resorts to the appliance of knowledge of situation and context (see for example Sperber & Wilson 1986, and Wilson & Sperber 2002).

So far, the book suggests that pragmatics can support the mind to reach a better venue from which to analyze input. Trial and error reveal that perceptual beliefs are unreliable (Hookway 2012), but the pragmatists argue that where there is sound justification for doing so, one should doubt propositions, while in other cases (when there is no evidence) doubt is not warranted. Hence, assumptions should be taken for granted unless there is a convincing reason that they should be challenged. Of course, inquiries should be made within a context. According to Hookway (2016):

We tend to treat our established beliefs as innocent until ‘proved guilty’. We need reasons for our beliefs when we propose to change them, or when they have been challenged. It is doubt that needs a reason, and we trust our everyday beliefs until given a positive reason for doubting them. The mere lack of a conclusive reason for belief does not itself provide us with a reason for doubt. The Cartesian strategy adopts an unorthodox, revisionary understanding of *reason for belief* and *reason for doubt* (see ENA, January 21, 2022)<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatism>

The second part of the book investigates indirect reports and presuppositions. In this part, the author critically discusses theories of quotation and elaborates on the cancellability of explicatures. Capone also talks about Recanati's theory of quotation, a purely pragmatic view of the subject. Referring to the *dialogic* nature of indirect reports, the author says that "there are pragmatic ways of interpreting direct reports as indirect reports and there are pragmatic ways to interpret indirect reports as direct reports, or as having mixed-quoted segments" (p. 202). The author also elaborates on direct and indirect reports, while confirming that there are no boundaries between direct and indirect reports. Capone (correctly, in my view) argues that there are pragmatic increments to utterance interpretation that are embedded in explicatures: where what the speaker can rationally mean should be taken into consideration, it is possible to reconstruct what the speaker *says*. Through these interpretative processes, the lexicon or the syntax is enriched. Capone also points to implicit indirect reports, where these can be considered as implicitly logophoric. In other words, the ramification is that, all things being equal in the argument, the explicated part of the explicature, or the implicit underpinnings of the indirect report, are structurally active at the level of anaphoric connections (anaphoric reference means that a word in a text refers back to other ideas in the text for its meaning).

Capone also states that presuppositions are normally defeasible inferences, in that not only do they need to be viewed in context with regard to conversational implicatures, but the dialogical dimension of presuppositions should be taken into consideration. He argues that belief reports should be considered as a kind of indirect report (their rationale is clear, since they are definitely closer to indirect than direct reports). In addition, the author argues that we should accept the proposition that presuppositions should be dealt with according to the context of the utterance (the context of the reporter), rather than the context of the original speaker. This means that the reporter may have added something to the original speaker based on the contextual / conversational necessities, which may be missing from the original text.

The last chapter of the book, Chapter 13, employs data from Italian to talk about propositional attitudes and pronominal clitics. According to Capone, "pronominal clitics have much to say on the theory of conversational implicatures and can illuminate the issue of explicature" (p. 308). The author also mentions that propositional attitudes should be regarded in line with free enrichments (which are not actually present in the syntax) built on appositional relationships (which combine semantic and pragmatic inferences to preserve the meaning underlying the structures and sentences).

The book is well-informed, with up-to-date literature and extensive reviews of diverse works relating to reported speech and the pragmatics of quotation. The author's inclusion of personal communications with other well-known authors in the field provides the reader with a first-hand view of mainstream discussions

relating to different aspects of reported speech and explicatures. As we have noted, the author has critically looked at some important issues relevant to both semantics and pragmatics, such as cancellability and explicatures, implicit indirect reports, the semantics-pragmatics interface, and other related issues.

The book, however, is open to challenge on some specific issues. There are many technical words that are introduced with insufficient preparation. The novice reader may find the book difficult to follow, since very difficult concepts are introduced in each chapter, without providing sufficient, easily understood background knowledge. For example, the author argues about the cancellability of explicatures, while the concept of cancellability itself has not been dealt with sufficiently to allow the reader to follow the discussion properly. Moreover, the philosophical underpinnings of reported speech are not comprehensively reviewed. For example, indirect reporting as *a theory of knowledge* is only mentioned in passing. In addition, logical points relating to indirect reports are touched on here and there in the book, without providing information concerning how that logic can shape the praxis of indirect reports. Specifically, the issues relating to transformations in indirect reporting concerning modal logic could usefully have been extended.

Another challenging issue concerns the organization of the chapters. Each chapter is like an island, which does not integrate properly with other chapters. There is no clear line to follow, and it rather seems that the scholarly ideas of the author are scattered here and there throughout the book. For example, one can see that the first and second parts of the book are not aligned in a linear sense. The inclusive breadth is a strength that, unfortunately, brings a weakness with it that needs to be overcome – the inclusion in the central text of many asides and brief forays into areas that may distract rather than enrich. In addition, the balance between the presentation and discussion of social/pragmatic issues versus structural aspects is ignored. In the book's present form, the structural markers of indirect reporting (e.g. tense, adverbials, mood, complementizers, word-order, etc.) are not acknowledged in any detail.

The book is well-researched and covers the ground of indirect reports at a very high level. As mentioned, however, it is probably a mistake to assume that the reader – even the expert reader – will be familiar with the arguments and theories he is referencing. Capone often refers to a theory without filling in much of its actual content, and this makes the book a rather frustrating read. Even a reader aware of the core philosophical and linguistic underpinnings central to the topic of indirect reports would find it easy to lose track of the plot of the book. It would have been much better if the author had kept each chapter's topic clearly in focus, placing some of the asides and various less central citations in footnotes. This also goes for the turns of phrase and occasional passages of flowery language, which could also be placed in footnotes so as not to distract the reader from the main arguments.

Overall, however, my general impression of this book is quite positive. It presents a highly informed discussion of the main issues that center on indirect reporting, presenting a rich and stimulating array of scholarly references. The amount of literature that the author has covered is astonishing and triggers admiration. In the various chapters, all the main issues revolving around the pragmatics of indirect reporting, as well as the pragmatic and philosophical dimensions of indirect reporting, are carefully and vividly analyzed, always with reference to the relevant literature. The issues of footing, explicatures, the situational dynamics involving the reported speaker, the reporter and the hearer, as well as the issues around implicit indirect reports, face and slurring are all conveniently addressed and linked to each other.

My view on this book is that it makes a strong contribution that is relevant to different audiences in the fields of pragmatics, philosophy, linguistics and intercultural communication. The topic is valuable, the research is admirable, and the author's knowledge is impressive.

#### REFERENCES

- Capone, Alessandro. 2016. *The Pragmatics of Indirect Reports: Socio-philosophical Considerations*. Cham: Springer.
- Hookway, Christopher. 2012. *The Pragmatic Maxim: Essays on Peirce and Pragmatism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hookway, Christopher. 2016. Pragmatism. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/pragmatism/> (accessed 20 January 2022)
- Sperber, Dan & Deirdre Wilson. 1986. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wettstein, Howard. 2016. Speaking for another. In A. Capone, F. Kiefer & F. Lo Piparo (eds.), *Indirect Reports and Pragmatics: Interdisciplinary Studies*, 405–434. Cham: Springer.
- Wilson, Deirdre & Dan Sperber. 2002. Truthfulness and relevance. *Mind* 111. 583–632.

#### Book review history:

Received: 08 July 2021

Accepted: 14 December 2021

#### Bionote:

**Mostafa MORADY MOGHADDAM** (PhD) is an Assistant Professor at Shahrood University of Technology, Shahrood, Iran. His main research fields are discourse analysis, pragmatics and language variation and change in different settings and contexts, including language classrooms. He has recently contributed to *Lingua*, *Pragmatics*, *Pragmatics and Cognition*, *Porta Linguarum*, and *Language and Dialogue*.

#### Contact information:

Shahrood University of Technology

Shahrood, Iran

PoBox: 3619995161

e-mail: mmoghaddam@shahroodut.ac.ir

**Сведения об авторе:**

**Мостафа МОРАДИ МОГХАДДАМ** (PhD) – старший преподаватель Шахрудского технологического университета, Шахруд, Иран. Сфера его научных интересов включает дискурс-анализ, прагматику, вариативность и изменения языка в различных условиях и контекстах, в том числе в преподавании языка. Его статьи были опубликованы в журналах *Lingua*, *Pragmatics*, *Pragmatics and Cognition*, *Porta Linguarum*, and *Language and Dialogue*.

**Контактная информация:**

Shahrood University of Technology

Shahrood, Iran

РoBox: 3619995161

*e-mail*: mmoghaddam@shahroodut.ac.ir