Russian Journal of Linguistics
ISSN 2687-0088 (Print), ISSN 2686-8024 (Online)

2025 Vol. 29 No. 4 745–768
http://journals.rudn.ru/linguistics

https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-45955
EDN: KGFKIF

Research article / Научная статья

Who is to be considered a speaker in macropragmatics

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Abstract
Pragmatics is typically understood as the study of relationship between the subject and the sign system. Therefore, identifying the subject is a crucial issue that influences the development of this field. However, it is still common to limit the concept of the subject in pragmatics to observable entities, primarily the speaker. The limitations of this approach become particularly evident in the study of suprapersonal communication, where institutions or imaginary communities serve as communicators. This paper aims to identify the pragmatic characteristics of interlocutors in suprapersonal communication. Consider the formation of pragmatics, and the further distinction between macro- and micropragmatics as well between branches of pragmatics such as intercultural, cross-cultural, and socio-cultural pragmatics. As a result of the analysis of these concepts, supported by the consideration of specific cases of non-personalized communication, I conclude that it is necessary to change the approach to the subject by introducing the concept of "imaginary communicant". This can be seen as a development of Charles Pierce's approach to semantics as a result of the interaction of a quasi-speaker and a quasi-interpreter *welded within the sign*. Additionally, I suggest a new distinction between macro- and megapragmatics. The term *macropragmatics* can be applied to situations where communication agents are identifiable with specific institutional entities acting as "speaking persons". This makes it possible to transcend back to real individuals. This concept should be distinguished from "megapragmatics," which pertains to global imagined entities endowed with semiotic selves, such as nations, cultures, or societies. The study contributes to a better understanding of how the concept of the interlocutor applies to suprapersonal levels of intercultural and sociocultural communication and what semiotic characteristics it can be endowed with on the macropragmatic level.
Keywords: *pragmatics, macropragmatics, speaker, imaginary speaker, semiotic selves, intercultural pragmatics*

For citation:
Zolyan, Suren. 2025. Who is to be considered a speaker in macropragmatics. *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 29 (4). 745–768. https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-45955

Кого считать «говорящим» в макропрагматике

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Аннотация
Прагматику принято определять как отношение между субъектом и знаковой системой. Тем самым проблема идентификации субъекта является ключевой, определяющей развитие этой дисциплины. Однако до сих пор понятие субъекта в прагматике принято сводить к наблюдаемым сущностям, а именно к говорящему. Неадекватность такого подхода становится особо заметной, когда предметом изучения является надперсональная коммуникация, в которой в качестве коммуникантов выступают институты или воображаемые сообщества. Цель статьи — выявление прагматических характеристик субъектов-коммуникантов в надличностной коммуникации и на этой основе — разграничение между микро- и макропрагматикой. В статье рассматривается становление прагматики и возникшее разграничение между макро- и микропрагматикой, а также дальнейшее выделение таких ветвей макропрагматики, как социокультурная, межкультурная и кросскультурная прагматика. Как результат анализа этих концепций, подкрепленного рассмотрением конкретных случаев неперсонализованной коммуникации, делается вывод о необходимости изменить подход к субъекту путем введения понятия «воображаемый коммуникант», что может рассматриваться развитием подхода Чарльза Пирса к семантике как результату взаимодействия спаянных внутри знака квази-говорящего и квази-интепретатора. Кроме того, предложено разграничение на новых основаниях макро- и мегапрагматики. Термин «макропрагматика» может быть оставлен для описания тех феноменов, при которых агенты отождествляются с некоторой конкретной институциональной сущностью, действующей как «говорящее лицо». В этих случаях, по крайней мере теоретически, возможно проследить связи до реальных говорящих. Данный уровень следует отличать от того, что можно назвать «мега-прагматикой», где субъекты являются глобальными воображаемыми конструктами (нациями, культурами, обществами и т.д.). Сделанные выводы позволяют расширить представление о том, каким образом понятие «субъект-коммуникант» применимо к надличностным уровням межкультурной коммуникации и какими семиотическими характеристиками оно может быть наделено в макропрагматике.
Ключевые слова: *прагматика, макропрагматика, говорящий, воображаемый говорящий, семиотическое «Я», межкультурная прагматика*

Для цитирования:
Zolyan S.T. Who is to be considered a speaker in macropragmatics. *Russian Journal of Linguistics.* 2025. Vol. 29. № 4. P. 745–768. https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-45955

1. Introduction

The enduring problem, dating back to Saussure's time, is the reconciliation of language as a universal social phenomenon (langue) with its individualised mode of functioning as a social event (speech). This tension has been manifested also in the field of pragmatics. Almost fifty years ago, Stepanov identified the issue of the subject as central to pragmatics (Stepanov 1981: 220). Regarding the socio-cultural characteristics of language, one can identify two different approaches. The first approach describes how language functions and treats speakers merely as necessary conditions for this process. In this view, speakers are seen as the environment and channels through which language operates. The second approach emphasizes the use of language and views the speaker as a user of language as one of many tools to achieve their intentions. As a result, linguistic factors are intertwined with a variety of extra-linguistic mechanisms (felicitous conditions, principles and maxims, implicature, politeness, etc.).

The above-mentioned distinction becomes particularly evident when we look at the origins of pragmatics with its two main approaches: those of Charles Morris (1938) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1958). While Morris's perspective focuses more on the concept of language use, Wittgenstein's approach emphasizes its functioning. However, these approaches have considerable intersections and can be seen as complementary to each other with Morris's approach forming the foundation of this field. Moris stated that "Pragmatics itself would attempt to develop terms appropriate to the study of the relation of signs to their users" (Morris 1938: 33). However, this general notion of users says nothing, as it does not specify any mode of usage. It is still unclear who these users are. Morris adopted the concept of the sign from Peirce, who viewed it as a triadic relationship between an object, an interpreter, and the sign itself. Morris enhances this idea by introducing the fourth concept of the "interpreter." (Morris 1938: 30).

The limitations of this approach are particularly evident in the study of suprapersonal communication, where institutions or imaginary communities act as communicators. In this paper we aim to identify the pragmatic characteristics of interlocutors in suprapersonal communication. We put forward the concept of "imaginary communicants" and explore how the notion of the interlocutor can be applied to the transpersonal levels of intercultural and socio-cultural communication, in order to identify interlocutor's semiotic features in macropragmatics.

2. The birth of a speaker

In Moris's paradigm, the interpreter is not a speaker in the commonly understood sense. Morris proposed various definitions of an interpreter, and at least three distinct approaches can be identified. According the first one,

> "The interpreter of the sign is the mind; the interpretant is a thought or concept; these thoughts or concepts are common to all men and arise from the apprehension by mind of objects and their properties" (Morris 1938: 30).

This view suggests the existence of a universal human mind. However, Morris did not rely on mentalistic concepts and attempted to eliminate them, therefore he suggested defining the interpreter not as a mind, but as an organism: "The interpreter of a sign is an organism; the interpretant is the habit of the organism to respond" (Morris 1938: 31). Morris interpreted the concept of "biotic aspects" very broadly, extending it to include social relations as well, “it is a sufficiently accurate characterization of pragmatics to say that it deals with the biotic aspects of semiosis, that is, with all the psychological, biological, and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs” (Morris 1938: 30). In this way, Morris diverges from his basic definition and concludes that pragmatics is the study of a multitude of heterogeneous phenomena accompanying the *functioning of signs*. When Morris refers to a human user of signs, he does not mean any specific speaker engaged in a particular speech act. Instead, he is alluding to a universal human thought expressed through the rules of language, though the sounds conveying these thoughts differ across various languages (Morris 1938: 30). Notably, this perspective extremely limits the scope for comparative or intercultural pragmatics, as the differences between languages are reduced solely to phonetics.

The second principal approach can be associated with the conception of the late Wittgenstein. Although he did not use the term “pragmatics,” his central theme focused on language in action. He stated: “Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments” (Wittgenstein 1958: 291). From this perspective, meaning is associated with language use. Nevertheless, the primary focus shifts from users to language as a tool in various *language-games: “the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven”* (Wittgenstein 1958: 5). However, paradoxically, Wittgenstein avoids the question of who plays these games. The rules determine the behavior of the player, just as the rules of chess do not depend on the player’s abilities in any way. This highlights a surprising overlap between Wittgenstein’s concept of “language game”and Morris’s idea of “linguistic structure.” Rather than referring to a human interpreter, this perspective assumes the existence of an operator embedded within the semiotic system that converts structural relationships into behavioral patterns: “Considered from the point of view of pragmatics, a linguistic structure is a system of behavior” (Morris 1938: 32). This approach became the basis for the most influential version of pragmalinguistics, at least in the period of its formation[1].

The two approaches share some common ground, particularly in the theory of performatives, where both lexical (intrasystem) semantics and the speaker’s contextual factors are crucial. The first approach tends to overlook the language itself, while the second approach tends to overlook the speaker. When these two approaches are combined, pragmatics may lose its role as a distinct subject of study. Studying language in context, which is sometimes defined as pragmatics, following Stalnaker (1972) can be seen more as a methodology than as a separate field of research (cf.: Capone 2019, Kotorova 2019).

In Morris’s and Wittgenstein’s theories, the subject (or “interpreter”) is a construct necessary for a system of rules to function. Moreover, for Wittgenstein, reference to the individual use of language leads to the notion of a private language that is inaccessible to external description and observation. However, the very

[1] Cf.: “ Pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a language” (Levinson 1983: 9).

introduction of the concept of the speaker significantly alters the approach. As a result, the new toolkit related to the theory of speech has been developed. These new methods of description assign speakers a new role: rather than being passive *rule-following* users, speakers are viewed as active and creative interlocutors endowed with the ability to influence the system, at least its semantics. It was shown that a dichotomy arises between the meaning in the language and the speaker's meaning. In addition, the theory of performatives highlights the subject of the speech act which must fulfill specific "felicitous" conditions. In all these conceptions, the speaker is associated with a particular speech act performed within peculiar socio-cultural circumstances, but not with the language she uses. Then the speech act theory was expanded through the concept of pragmeme, as Jacob Mey introduced the new triad — pragmeme — pract — allopract (Mey 2016). It aims to provide transcending from the level of constructs to the level of observable phenomena:

> "The emphasis is not on conditions and rules for an individual (or an individual's) speech act, but on characterizing a general situational prototype, capable of being executed in the situation; such a generalized pragmatic act I will call a *pragmeme*. The instantiated individual pragmatic acts, […] *practs*, refer to a particular pragmeme in its realizations" (Mey 2001: 221). See also: Capone 2005, Allan et al. 2016, Capone & Graci 2024.

The advancement of the theoretical framework of pragmatics necessitates addressing the dual nature of interlocutors, this notion comprises both speaker's and hearer's perspectives (Kecskes 2016). Besides, there are substantial dichotomy: on the one hand, they are real speakers who produce specific utterances and discourses, which can be described; on the other hand, they perform functional roles determined by language and society:

> "The focal points in this representation are the utterer (U) and the interpreter (I). Without them, and the functioning of their minds, there is no language use. For the purposes of a theory of pragmatics, they are functional entities or social 'roles' rather than real-world people, though they usually are that too." (Verschueren 1999: 76).

In an ideal situation, real-world speakers should act according to their designated functional roles, serving merely as representations of these functions. Conversely, these functional roles should be understood as abstractions extracted from the actual speech behavior of the real-world speakers. [2] However, these two aspects are based on different models and influenced by different factors, making their coincidence impossible in principle: a speaker in flesh and blood can never become a theoretical construct, and vice versa. It is another matter that the

[2] Cf.: "The pragmeme captures a *function* from user to user, from user to the world, and vice versa; as such it is a pragmatic function, establishing and warranting a particular *pragmatic act*. The pragmeme is thus the embodied realization of all the pragmatic acts (or 'allopracts') that can be subsumed under it" (Mey 2016: 139)

description of possible transcendences — the correspondences between them — can and does constitute the focus point of pragmatics.

The opposite point of view presupposes that "the interpreter role is simply incorporated into the world of the utterer, even if at a later stage a flesh-and-blood language user may take on that role (e.g. the readers of the novel, an actual audience for the performance, or the unexpectedly diligent bureaucrat" — (Verschueren 1999: 76)). Verschueren did not take into account that in the cases he referred to, a particular interpreter is not at all the addressee of a given message — for example, a particular reader of "*Eugene Onegin*" is neither a model reader of Pushkin's text, nor the image of the addressee for which this text was intended.

The question arises: what should be done in cases where it is impossible or pointless to identify interlocutors and associate them with specific individuals. However, if one chooses not to identify them, then the very use of pragmatic tools for suprapersonal communication becomes questionable. For that, we intend to consider such a dilemma. For us, a solution may be neither to reject the notion of the speaker, nor to extrapolate the characteristics of real interlocutors onto it. Rather, it seems to be a special functional level in this type of communication, when the role (or function) of the speaker lies within the message itself.

3. Micro- and Macropragmatics

Face-to-face communication may be considered as a primary and prototypical case: it makes it possible to substantiate the social role or function of the speaker in a real-world person. However, pragmatics has to deal with such types of communication, where the place of actual speakers is taken by social institutions or collective identities. Firstly, Leech (1983) has distinguished between psychopragmatics and sociopragmatics. This further led to a demarcation between micropragmatics and macropragmatics (Verschueren 1999, Mey 1993), as well as metapragmatics, in one of its possible interpretations (Mey 2001, 2006, Fairclough 2016).).

This distinction is based on the discrepancy between the abovementioned approaches: understanding language as a universal social phenomenon (langue) versus viewing its individualized mode of functioning as a social event (speech). The lines separating these perspectives are often linked to a contrast between the Anglo-American tradition, which focuses on speech acts theory, and the continental tradition, which emphasizes a broader socio-cultural context (Ariel 2012, Yucker 2012, Félix-Brasdefer 2017). The attempt to combine these approaches was more mechanical than substantive; pragmatics was divided into two parts: micropragmatics and macropragmatics (Verschueren 1999, Mey 1993, 2001).

It was believed that individual activities contribute to the formation of supra-individual entities (Mey 2007). However, pragmatic operations—such as inference, illocution, perlocution, and implicature—are typically defined with reference to specific speakers and are difficult to generalize to collective identities, such as social, ethnic, or regional groups, etc. Additionally, the challenge of correlating common linguistic and socio-cultural models with individual speech acts has been acknowledged:

> "From an analytic point of view, it makes it difficult on the one hand to substantiate links between culture and behaviour, and on the other to use individual encounters to make claims about the (lack of) validity of the existence of general cultural patterns" (McConachy & Spencer-Oatey 2021: 747).

Nevertheless, the notion of the speaker has been connected with the representation of actual object, but not with some theoretical entity. As a result, the division of pragmatics an into micropragmatics and macropragmatics did not alter or challenge the status of communicants within these theories. Pragmatics bypassed the solutions that had already been developed in the theory of literature and the philosophy of discourse, namely, to separate the real speaker (or author) from the author as a textual function. Instead, the quantitative criteria rather than substantive ones, with permanent reservations about the lack of strict boundaries between them, were proposed due to the fact that micropragmatics is impossible without considering a broader context, and vice versa. The original distinction between micropragmatics and macropragmatics is based on concepts borrowed from text linguistics. Mey differentiates between co-text, which refers to the immediate linguistic context of a word or sentence, and context, which encompasses both the text itself and the extralinguistic circumstances surrounding it. Micropragmatics focuses on co-text at the level of isolated utterances, while macropragmatics pertains to conversations or fragments of coherent text (or discourse) (Mey 1993: 181–182).

While Mey removed this explanation in later revised editions, the distinction itself remained and was evident in the composition of his monograph. Verschueren, though based on another premise, also maintains the distinction: "between *micro-processes*, taking place in the day-to-day context of communication between individuals of small groups of individuals, and macro-processes transcending (though still reflected in) those day-to-day communication" (Verschueren 1999: 202). At the same time, he immediately stipulates that such a distinction is artificial: "since all forms of communication strictly confined to a face-to-face context, are embedded in a wider social realm, the influence of which can always be traced" (Verschueren 1999: 227).

The distinction between micro- and macropragmatics has not been further developed. One can only point to the works of Cap (2010, 2011), who introduced clarifying details into Mey's approach to link micro pragmatics with a speech act, and macropragmatics with a series of utterances within a discourse.). Cap adds the concept of the speaker's intentionality: individual utterances are "seen as carriers of global intentionality of the speaker (i.e. the intentionality resulting from different speech act configurations, often referred to as speech events), and as producers of complex effects (whether on a single hearer or on a class of hearers)" (Cap 2010:

199). Also of interest is the circular procedure for multiple correlation between macro- and microlevels proposed instead of the single transition:

> "(i) There is no micropragmatic analysis that would not provoke a macropragmatic extension of scope; (ii) there is no macropragmatic study that would not question, retrospectively, its micropragmatic components, thus prompting revision or modification of the original analytic track. Altogether, we arrive at a bottom-top-bottom cycle of upgrades "on the explanatory power of both micropragmatic and macropragmatic concepts" (Cap 2010: 199)

This introduces a hermeneutic dimension to the distinction discussed. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce the concept of a speech macro-act, which has been explored also in different areas of pragmatics, including performative theory (cf.: Zolyan 2024).

Among the latest developments in this area, we highlight the idea to establish a macropragmatic framework based on van Dijk's concept of macrostructures of discourse (Khafaga 2022, Nodoushan 2025). Additionally, it was proposed to introduce the notion of intentionality that connects micropragmatics with rethorics and dialectics (in the classical sense) and to integrate it into macropragmatics, alongside its cooperative, or dialogical intentionality.

This distinction becomes especially evident when discussing varieties such as intercultural, cross-cultural, socio-cultural, and cultural pragmatics. The branches of macropragmatics—sociopragmatics, crosscultural pragmatics, and intercultural pragmatics—not only focus on language but also address constructs such as culture, society, the collective mind, and linguistic collectives (cf. Kecskes 2012, 2018, 2021, 2022, Culpeper 2021, Haugh et al. 2021, Gladkova 2023). Although Mey's and Verschueren's ideas were later reflected in the intercultural, cross-cultural and socio-cultural pragmatics, another approach has become the dominant one. It does not concentrate on changing the scaling, but considers the qualitative changes that occur in various types of communication. Consequently, instead of focusing on micro- and macropragmatics, the concept of various types of pragmatics was introduced. This entails distinguishing different levels of communication and necessitates a revision of the notion of the speaker. In Mey's and Verschueren's versions of micro- and macropragmatics, it is one and the same speaker who operates with language, and only what she produces is extended from utterance to discourse. The prefixoids "micro" and "macro" do not pertain to specific pragmatic areas; rather, they refer to different methods of description. The objects of description in this context can include socio-cultural *norms and patterns*[3] or *cultural schemas*[4]. Nevertheless, in the field of intercultural, cross-cultural and

[3] Cf.: "Another positive outcome of research in intercultural pragmatics can be the attempt to reconcile micro and macro perspectives on language, culture, and interaction. The micro perspective includes the study of interactions between individuals, and the cognition underlying those communicative encounters. The macro perspective deals with establishing norms, patterns, and expectations about language use in speech communities". (Kecskes 2017: 47).

[4] Cf.: "Within the framework of cultural cognition cultural schemas also have a collective life at the emergent level of cognition that characterizes a speech community. I refer to that level as the *macro-*

interlanguage pragmatics, instead of elucidating the substantial features of communication between some institutional macro-entities, the return to the level of observable has occurred. As a result, the class of various pragmatics has emerged based on differentiating of speaker's linguistic profiles, but not fundamental properties of the relationship between speakers and language system.

4. Intercultural and cross-cultural pragmatics

The very names—*intercultural* and *cross-cultural pragmatics*—suggest a focus on the relations between cultures. However, these disciplines have diverged, as one of the leading experts in this field specifically noted:

> "The term "cross-cultural" refers to exploring how natives speak and act in their native language and within their own cultural context and comparing how native behavior in one culture compares with that in another culture. This definition of cross-cultural therefore does not refer to the exploration of issues relating to people conversing across cultural boundaries—as the literal meaning of the term suggests—but rather the exploration of issues pertaining to intracultural communication" (Stadler 2018: 2).

Despite the literal meaning of the term, the conception of intercultural pragmatics is fundamentally grounded on the notion of empirical speakers. It is assumed that only the concept of the speaker can be reduced to an observable entity. A widely accepted definition by Kecskes (2017) emphasizes that cultures and languages are merely characteristics of speakers rather than definitive factors of speech acts:

> "Intercultural pragmatics was defined as an inquiry that is about how the language system is put to use in social encounters between human beings who have different first languages, communicate in a common language, and usually, represent different cultures. The communicative process in these encounters is synergistic in the sense that it is a blend in which pragmatic norms of each participant are represented to some extent, and blended with the elements co-constructed by the interlocutors in the process of interaction." (Kecskes 2017: 401).

This is a key property that distinguishes cross-cultural pragmatics from intercultural pragmatics:

> "Intercultural pragmatics focuses on interactions among people from different cultures, speaking different languages. Cross- cultural pragmatics considers each language and culture separately and analyses the differences and similarities between various entities". (Kecskes 2017: 400).

However, this distinction seems to be more operational than substantial. Kecskes distinguishes these varieties of pragmatics based on principle *who*

level. Although speakers usually operate on the basis of shared cultural schemas, in reality (at the micro-level) they may share some but not all components of a cultural schema". (Sharifian 2017: 508) *communicates with whom*, — and it also points to the empirical speaker, since dependence on cultural and linguistic predispositions can be questioned:

> "Recent work in intercultural pragmatics no longer accepts the essentialist assumptions that speakers belong to or have a particular culture and as such are at the mercy of the peculiarities of this culture. Cultural assumptions are constructions that are jointly created and re-created by large groups of people" (Jucker 2012: 508).

Maybe, it might be understood that the difference lies in presumption that speakers in intercultural pragmatics are not bound by linguistic and *cultural assumptions*, while in cross-cultural pragmatics, they can only represent the established patterns of their own language and culture. However, there are no distinct speakers for intercultural and cross-cultural pragmatics; these disciplines use different modes to describe the same pragmatic entities, regardless of whether speakers of different languages are communicating within their own community or with foreigners.

The same question may be raised regarding the separation of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) as a discipline; it aims to be focused *on social linguistic and non-linguistic actions* (i.e. speech acts. — *S.Z.*) when using non-native language[5],

At the present stage, macro pragmatics has been divided into its different varieties, where the difference of macro- and micro levels was abandoned. The current fragmentation of macropragmatics into varieties like intercultural, cross-cultural, interlingual, and sociocultural pragmatics (Kecskes 2012, Marmaridou 2023) may undermine the integrity of pragmatic theory. The primary distinction from conventional pragmatics seems to be merely the assumed non-nativeness of the language used. The different varieties of pragmatics can only be empirically distinguished if an observer is capable of identifying the cultural and linguistic background of the speakers. However, interlocutors may come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but this diversity may not be the constitutive focus of pragmatic theory.

Efforts to represent the theoretical concept of the subject of speech acts through real-world speakers can be helpful for addressing applied problems, but they lack true modeling power. Kecskes rightly highlights the dynamic nature of pragmatic patterns; these patterns can be transformed based on specific communicative intentions and goals. However, the possibility for such changes presupposes the existence of relatively stable norms. As we intend to demonstrate later, the speaker's factor turns out to be relevant or irrelevant only insofar as it is manifested in the message itself, it is not the biography and linguistic profile of the interlocutors that are important, but their images as derived from the message.

[5] Cf.: "It <ILP> examines linguistic action considering cognitive and sociocultural aspects for the production and understanding of social action in an L2 or FL setting, such as degrees of impoliteness, interpretation of implicature, and directness or indirectness. It examines functional knowledge—specifically, the pragmatic meaning of linguistic and non- linguistic action produced and interpreted by L2 learners in institutional and non-institutional settings. (Félix- Brasdefer 2017: 435).

5. The gentle art of making oneself disagreeable in a foreign tongue

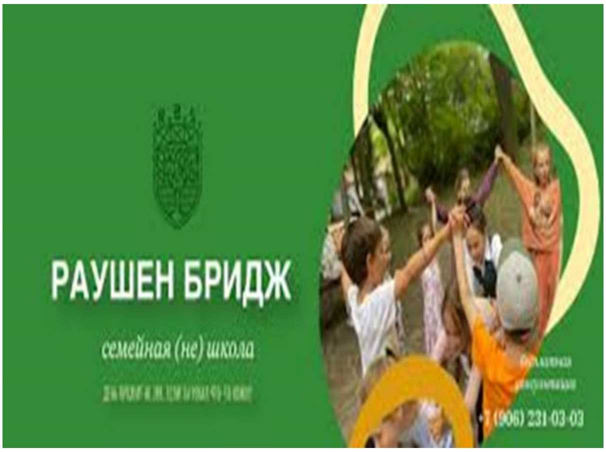
Mey (2016) analyzed an episode that happened to him during a tour of the temple complex in Japan. He asked: *Is there a toilet around here?* As he expounds, “To my great surprise, my indirect request to show me the restrooms (which posed as an English question) was parried by the Japanese lady’s reply in the guise of an English counter-question! The temple attendant’s “Do you want to use?” did not seem to be the proper answer to what I thought was a simple informative question, covering up for an indirect request; but even so, the only reasonable answer in this particular situation seemed for me to be a simple affirmative, so I answered “Yes.” (Mey 2016: 28) Of course, the situation when a visitor would like to inspect the toilet as one of the attractions of the temple looks absurd. Meanwhile, such a situation is quite typical when the speaker follows the instructions that are supposed to be followed by a native speaker. Such a situation was parodied and ridiculed by Jerome K. Jerome, in his novel *Three Men on the Bummel.* (the chapter: *The gentle art of making oneself disagreeable in a foreign tongue).* Wanting to understand how much one can trust the German language tutorials before travelling to Germany, the three gentlemen decided to follow the instructions for Germans in the UK. This causes either mockery or is perceived as an insult. Thus, the desire to conduct a polite conversation and observe the rules of politeness leads to the fact that it makes a laughingstock of travelers.

The discrepancy between the ideas of the authors of phrasebooks about the rules of speech behavior and real interaction leads to a sarcastically described tragic picture: “Some educated idiot, misunderstanding seven languages, would appear to go about writing these books for the misinformation and false guidance of modern Europe.” The situation with self-teaching manuals may be improved over time, but the fundamental problem has not been solved by this — it is a fundamental incongruity between the *speake*r as a construct, from one side, and the empirical *participants* of speech acts, from the other.

Intercultural communication can occur even within the same language group and within the same text, often highlighting different “imaginary” speakers. We aim to illustrate this concept through an analysis of a notable example: the inscription on the signboard of a children’s development centre located in the heart of the small town of Svetlogorsk, Russia (picture 1).

An English translation is available online, but the phrase “family school,” which is used as an epithet for the *Rauschen Bridge School*, has been lost in translation.

While deciphering the expressive and appellative meanings behind this self-designation, one can identify two distinct deviations from standard Russian. Both deviations aim to foreignize the text.



Picture 1. The signboard.
“Раушен Бридж” *Семейная (не) школа*
“Rauchen Bridge” Family (non) school

Picture 2. The embleme
(ENA, November 17, 2025)[6]

1. The text departs from traditional Russian orthography by using brackets to denote the negative particle, as *(не) школа (non) school*, rather than writing it separately as *не школа* (not a school) or using a hyphen as *не-школа (non-school).* This approach allows for two interpretations. It suggests that the place functions as a school since children are taught there, while also indicating that it is not a school in the conventional sense. In fact, it is not a school in a legal sense; it operates as an educational center. This distinction allows it to bypass state standards. Additionally, it indicates a special, family-like atmosphere, suggesting that there is no obligation, discipline, or routine typically associated with formal schooling. Nevertheless, learning is not chaotic; it follows a certain order that relates to the concept of family. The word “*семья” (family*) is the only term used in Russian, highlighting how learning is organised within that (non)school setting. Furthermore, there is a notable opposition to state schools. The English translation on the site, however, misses these nuances, suggesting that the intended audience is not English-speaking parents, but rather Russian individuals.

2. The school’s name, *Rauschen Bridge*, while written in Russian letters, represents a blend of English and German. *Rauschen* refers to the town’s name before the war, while *Bridge* evokes associations with prestigious English educational institutions, particularly Cambridge. This combination effectively transforms the German name into something that sounds more English, almost creating a new identity for the town. Moreover, the school’s emblem is styled similarly to those found in British and American universities, featuring only the Latin lettering *“R.B.S.”* This design further emphasizes the school’s alignment with the English educational tradition.

[6] https://vk.com/rauschen_bridge_school

The author of this text appears to be an imaginary character representing the school itself, emphasizing its connection to foreign language and culture through specific indicators. The intended audience is also imaginary, created by the text[7]. It reflects those for whom the message is meant—specifically, neither English speakers nor German-speaking former inhabitants of Raushen. Presumably, the target audience consists of high-status parents who value not only material advantages but also their intellectual and cultural superiority. In the 1990s, this group included wealthy but uneducated "new Russians." However, since the 2000s, a group referred to as "*Euro-Russians*" has begun to emerge as the new elite. The discussion around Euro-Russians as a distinct group has already led to significant conflicts in the region, as highlighted in the article: "*Why Did the 'Euro-Russians' Insult the Kaliningrad Governor?*" (ENA, June 9, 2018)[8].

In Russian, such common *Eurocentrism* has led to the productive morpheme (prefixoid) "*euro*." This morpheme is used in two distinct ways. First, it refers to anything specifically related to Europe, as seen in terms like *евробарометр (Eurobarometer), евроскептик (Eurosceptic*), and *евробюрократ (Eurobureaucrat*), etc. Second, in its quasi-European (or new-Russian) meaning, the stem "euro" can also denote consumer products that, regardless of their actual origin, are presented as European or claim to meet European standards*: евроремонт (Euro renovation), евромойка (euro wash), евромед (Euro medicine), еврообувь (Euro shoes), еврообои (Euro wallpaper), евротакси (Euro tax*i) and even *еврощтакетник (Euro picket fence) and евfree раскладушка (Euro folding bed)*, etc

In the case being discussed, the homegrown Eurocentric orientation has taken on a more sophisticated form through self-naming. It is important to note that Svetlogorsk is one of the leading and most expensive tourist destinations, not only in the Kaliningrad region (formerly known as Königsberg and part of East Prussia) but throughout Russia. This appeal is not solely due to its seaside and forested areas; it is also attributed to the preserved pre-war buildings that lend a unique charm to the site. Unlike many other towns of the region, Svetlogorsk did not experience heavy battles during the war. In the center of Svetlogorsk, where real estate prices are quite high, a significant number of residents are newcomers, often from other regions of Russia. The town positions itself as a small center of the Russian West, with a children's educational facility at its heart that identifies as European, aiming to attract potential consumers.

From the perspective of intercultural pragmatics, this case falls outside its typical scope since the communicants operate within the same language. However, they employ language variations that aspire to be perceived as foreign. The texts

[7] We are based on Benedict Anderson's distinguishing between these two concepts: "*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". — (Anderson 1991: 6–7).
[8] https://regnum.ru/article/2429651

they produce are crafted as representations of another culture, and even another language. The social and cultural characteristics of the communicants can be inferred from the text. The focus is not on real-world individuals who "actually" might have coined the name "*Raushenbridge*," or who wrote the inscription on the signboard, or attended school. Instead, the subject matter revolves around the phantom of Europe, as imagined by a subgroup of Russian society, constructed and represented through a language and culture as fictional as their speakers. This can be compared to the characters created by Jerome: *"In every town in Europe there must be people going about talking this sort of thing... but fortunately nobody understands them. This is, perhaps, as well; were they understood they would probably be assaulted*."

6. Non-personalized communication: invisible speakers and visible signs

Before discussing other specific cases, let's clarify a few preliminary points which were justified through the previous analyses. Languages and cultures do not communicate directly; it is individuals acting as speakers who facilitate communication. However, in the absence of face-to-face communication, it becomes a textual function performed through imagined actors. Social roles, as described in sociology (Goffman 1981), interact within texts, and cultural differences further complicate these interactions, which are attributed to those social roles. Uttering may be viewed as merely an extension of the text, making the presence of a real speaker irrelevant. As a result, the primary means of identifying the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the communicants is through the language used in the message, rather than from the individuals' biographical profiles.

Advertising exemplifies depersonalized communication between imagined interlocutors. For example, a restaurant acts as the sender of a message, inviting visitors and promising to serve something special. The advertisement creates an image of the restaurant, sometimes it may include a photo of a chef or maître d'hôtel. In multimedia advertising, a real speaker might read the text aloud. However, the nature of this communication remains fundamentally the same; it merely pretends to be personalized. The menu is perhaps the most typical way a restaurant communicates with its customers. It assumes that visitors will understand the offerings without needing further explanation. Similarly, the bill presented at the end of the meal is also impersonal; it consists of a narrative detailing what has been consumed and a performative element indicating the total amount due to be paid. Although the bill may include the name of the specific person who served the customer, the restaurant itself seems to be an actual author endowed with benefits and responsibilities within this communication.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in advertising and informational messages. A sort of quasi-subject is established, discussing the restaurant and highlighting the reasons why the recipient should consider visiting it. Consequently, the recipient is personalized through an image that represents the type of person for whom the restaurant is ostensibly intended. The name of the restaurant often carries cultural associations while catering to the tastes of potential customers (examples include "Venice Pizzeria," "Tacos Snack Bar," "Academy of Beer," and "Moscow Restaurant"). The interaction between the restaurant and its visitors considers the multilingual needs of potential customers. Bilingual menus have become standard practice. Various approaches address translation challenges, but the most common method is a hybrid solution: dish names remain untranslated while their ingredients are described.

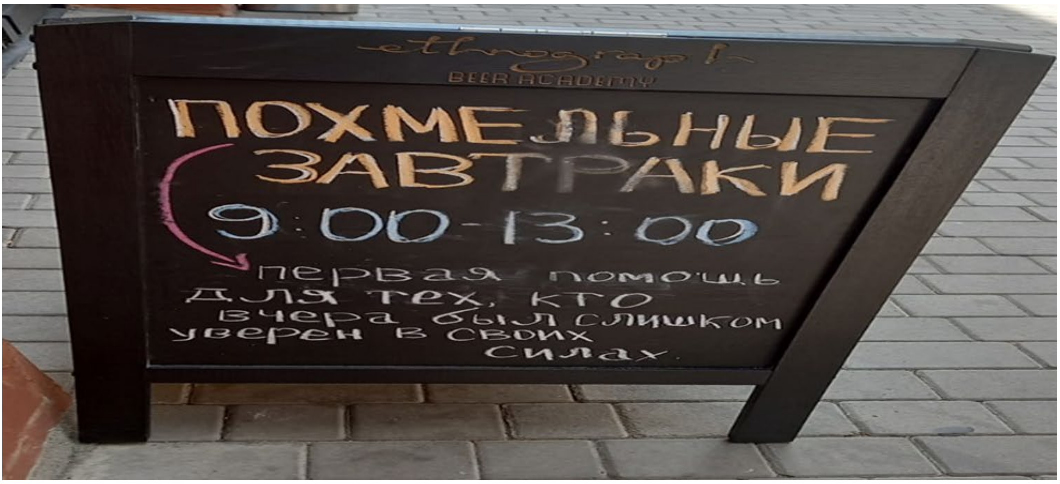
Multilingualism extends to advertising as well; messages are often duplicated in English or another lingua franca of the region, and online information is typically provided in multiple languages. In some instances, intercultural communication takes place in a manner where the actual participants are less significant. Instead, communication is structured through predefined textual roles that have specific linguistic and socio-cultural attributes. This is not merely a theoretical concept; it represents a mask endowed with idealised (and in reality — stereotyped) characteristics as Erving Goffman has categorized this phenomenon of social self-presentation (Goffman 1956). However, unlike the cases Goffman described, these masks are not worn by real people but by social institutions, specifically a restaurant. They are "imaginary" entities, or more precisely, imagined constructs, even if a real chef may appear in the advertisement. The relationship between the signified and the signifier shifts; the real chef we see in the video embodies the ideal construct that aligns with the consumer's expectations of what an imaginary chef should be.

Consider an example of non-personalized communication that takes into account the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of potential visitors. At the "Ethnograph Beer Academy", a beer restaurant located in Yerevan, the same message appears on signboards in three languages. The owners have likely developed a plan to accommodate visitors during the morning hours. Since 2022, there has been a significant increase in Russian guests, leading to the introduction of a new type of breakfast, as indicated by the announcement (picture 3):

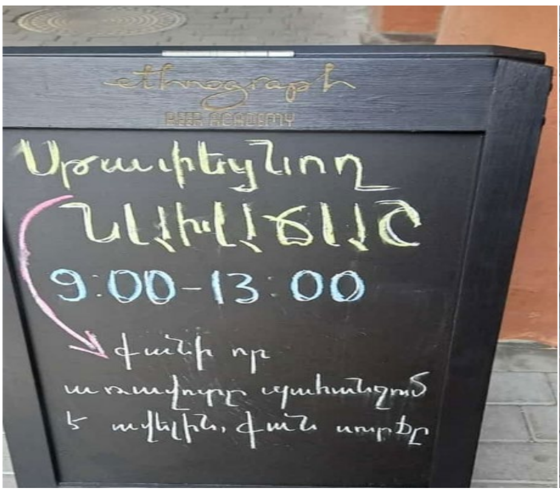
> Похмельные завтраки. 9.00 — 13.00 Первая помощь для тех, кто вчера был слишком уверен в своих силах. (Hangover breakfasts 9.00 — 13.00. First aid for those who were too confident in their abilities yesterday)

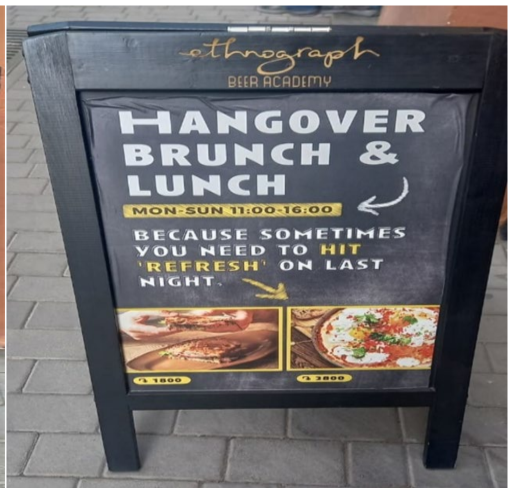
After a while, the English version has appeared (picture 5): *Hungover brunch and lunch. Because sometimes you need to hit 'refresh' last night.* In this revision, breakfast was replaced with brunch and lunch, which shifted the serving times.

From the perspective of existing theories, this case does not fit into any specific variety of pragmatics. There is no clear identification of either the speaker or the addressee, nor can we determine their native languages. Regarding the author, there is no evidence to suggest that any specific language should be considered her native tongue. While one might assume that a restaurant located in Yerevan would communicate as if it had an Armenian mother tongue, this assumption is not essential for understanding the type of communication taking place. Three different texts convey the same offer: to visit a restaurant after experiencing a hangover. The variations in these texts do not stem from the personal preferences of the hypothetical communicators, but rather from specific behavioural stereotypes associated with the imaginary recipient with differing cultural backgrounds.



Picture 3





Picture 4 **Picture 5**

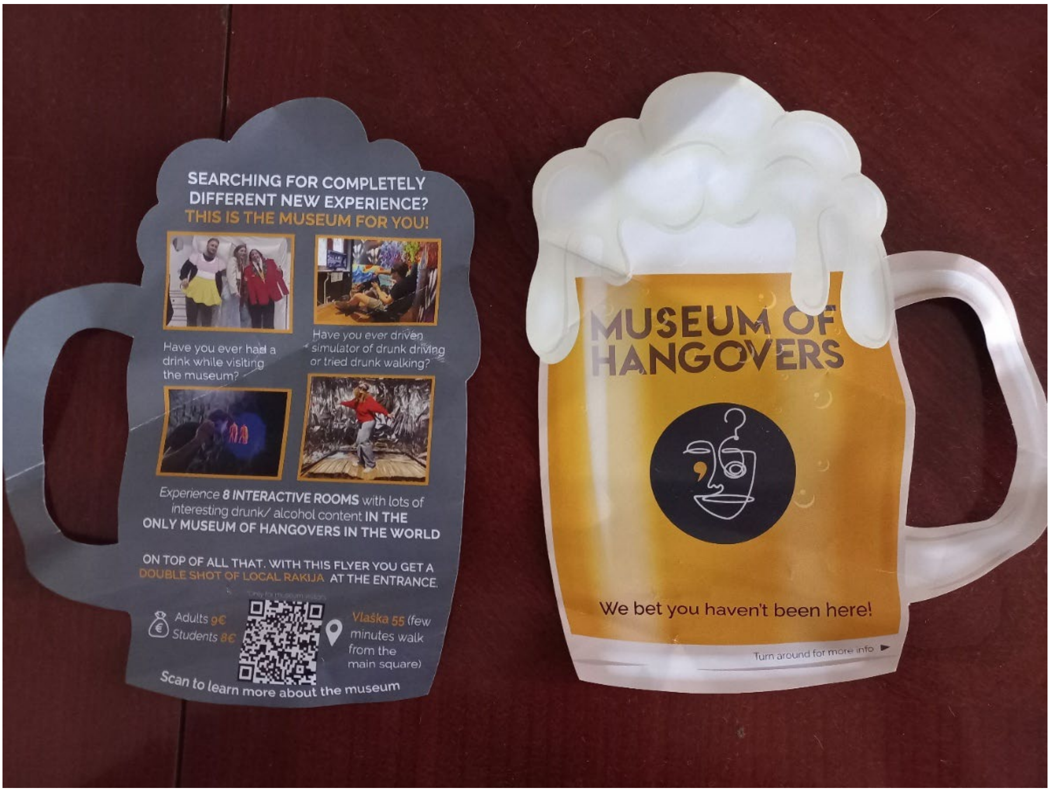
Although it is unusual for local Armenians to go to restaurants to get breakfast, it was also required to have an Armenian version for symmetry. However, its text turned out to be completely different: ՍԹԱՓԵՑՆՈՂ ՆԱԽԱՃԱՇ: 09–13 ՔԱՆԻ ՈՐ ԱՌԱՎՈՏԸ ԱՎԵԼԻՆ Է ՊԱՀԱՆՋՈՒՄ, ՔԱՆ ՍՈՒՐՃԸ (picture 4) SOBER BREAKFAST. 09–13 BECAUSE THE MORNING REQUIRES MORE THAN COFFEE (picture 4). In Russian drinking culture, hangovers are quite common, as excessive consumption is accepted and, in some subcultures, even considered prestigious. As a result, the causes of hangovers are framed as a socially acceptable deviation. In contrast, while drinking is prevalent, excessive consumption that leads to a loss of self-control is seen negatively. Publicly acknowledging this fact is also frowned upon. As a result, the term *опохмелиться*, which means "to *sober up*," is absent from the Armenian version. This is not due to a lack of vocabulary, but rather because the term carries undesirable connotations. In Armenian, the phonetically expressive word *խումառ (or խումհար)* is primarily associated with unpleasant physiological effects, which is something that is typically not acknowledged in public.

It is noteworthy that the Russian word "*похмелье*" *(pakhmelje*) has made its way into colloquial Armenian, where it is used only in a figurative sense combined with the word "*чужой*" *(chuzhoj),* meaning "alien" or "someone else's." The expression "*чужой похмел*" *(chuzhoj pakhmel*) clearly derives from the Russian proverbial saying "*в чужом пиру похмелье*," which translates to "*hangover at someone else's feast.*" Thus, the Armenian text does not specify the reasons for a hangover, but simply states the fact that coffee does not help to sober one up. *Սթափվել* (Sober) in modern Armenian is used mainly in a figurative sense, as a rational view *(sober look, sober view*). (The dialect word "*օյաղնալ*" is typically used to convey a literal meaning related to physiology). This allows the Armenian text to be understood in a purely positive light, without any association with excessive alcohol consumption. Instead, it reflects a desire to achieve a rational mental state. In the English version, the suggestion is made to reschedule breakfast for a later time. A computer metaphor is employed here—moving to a new state or starting a new life. The quotation marks around "refresh" imply a figurative, somewhat ironic interpretation (cf. with the interpretation we encountered on the Internet: *In real life it is basically saying that the person saying it is going to start a new life and become a new different person. If you're talking about electronics though, hitting the refresh button is to reload something like* a website) (ENA, November 17, 2025)[9].

The practice has made certain changes. Probably, expectations on Russian relocants did not come true, in the restaurant, as you can judge from the ads, at the moment when I am finishing the article, they no longer serve *Sobering breakfasts*, only *Sobering brunches and lunches*. The signboard in Russian has also disappeared, and the ad in Armenian translates the English version of the advertisement. However, not literally, instead of a computer metaphor, as in English, a pharmaceutical one is used: *The best recipe for forgetting about yesterday's adventures*. Probably, it seemed more suitable to the reality than the desire to gain a rational view of things. Moreover, cognitively it corresponds to the call expressed in English to start a new life. Personally, it seems to me that the result of these recodings was the rejection of any linguistic or cultural specifics, the transition to an extremely average and therefore generally understandable and not annoying anybody touristic Koine in its English version.

[9] https://hinative.com/questions/18612482

This is especially evident in the following case. To explore the possibilities of further variations and a deeper understanding of the hangover topic, one can visit Zagreb, where among the numerous museums is the Museum of Hangovers, featuring an emblem that requires no translation (picture 6).



Picture 6

While the text is presented solely in English and does not specify the language or nationality of potential visitors, it typically accompanies icons with corresponding explanations. In this context, a hangover is portrayed as a unique adventure, creating a distinctive experience even for children, who are generously offered a special discount:

> *The only Museum of Hangovers in the world is a fun place to experience the best hangover/drunk stories. Enjoy interactive exhibits like drunk driving and drunk walking simulators, plus plenty more cool stuff! Tickets: €9 for adults online (€10 at the entrance), €9 for students and seniors, €7 for children. Come and experience an unforgettable place of forgettable happenings! —* (ENA, November 17, 2025)[10]

[10] https://www.museumofhangovers.com

The website features comments from visitors of various nationalities, all in English. In this situation, the communicants come from different native languages and cultures, but this difference is ultimately insignificant. It can hardly be considered a manifestation of the Croatian culture. This is more about a peculiar culture of tourism that prioritizes the pursuit of extravagant experiences, with English serving as its lingua franca.

7. Discussion

The review of existing conceptions, as well as an analysis of cases, demonstrates that modern pragmatics lacks a clear understanding of who the subject of sign operations is. Starting from Ch. Morris and L. Wittgenstein, the very origin of pragmatics, there has been an opposition between two approaches: according to the first, the speaker uses language; according to the second, language itself functions through speakers.

The study have explored various approaches to understanding what constitutes a subject in the context of communication, particularly in situations lacking direct interpersonal interaction. The limitations of current approaches become particularly evident when communication occurs not in face-to-face settings, but between different social institutions. The desire to simplify the problem by focusing on observable phenomena is understandable. However, this approach overlooks the fact that communication can also occur between imagined interlocutors. They may be represented as a peculiar configuration generated through textual linguistic and cultural markers and features, which reflect the linguistic and socio-cultural norms and stereotypes that are accepted and constructed by society.

With the advancement of pragmatics, it has become essential to consider forms of communication without direct interpersonal interaction, or it is not relevant even if it happens. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to revisit the distinction between micropragmatics and macropragmatics, albeit on slightly different grounds. A key characteristic of macropragmatics can be seen not only in the sequence of speech acts, as proposed by J. Mey and J. Verschueren, but also in the unique suprapersonal status of the communicants involved. The suprapersonal and latent status of interlocutors, created through semiotic means, appears to be the foundation for the primary distinction between macro- and micropragmatics. In this context, the prefix "micro" is unnecessary, as this level of communication can be simplified into a single speech act between two (or more) individuals[11]. This may be considered within the realm of conventional pragmatics.

[11] As for the term micropragmatics, in our understanding it is applicable not to linguistics, but only to semiotics. For us, the level of the speech act is the basic, or primary level of pragmatics, therefore it seems to be preferable to reserve the term *micropragmatics* to describe processes when communication takes place between non-cognizant agents, reminiscent of Peirce's quasi-minds. Thus, in biosystems, up to the molecular level, there are numerous regulatory codes which control the informational processes and set *felicitious conditions* for communication (for more details, see Zolyan 2025a,b).

Therefore, it is possible to propose a solution to the issue of the subject in macropragmatics; it should not rely solely on identifying whether speakers are native or non-native speakers of a language. Instead, it should focus on the hermeneutics of the text and the reconstruction of the images of interlocutors based on the semantic and pragma-semantic connections between the text, language, and culture. This approach does not deny the importance of considering the specific characteristics of real speakers; rather, these aspects can complement one another, similar to the relationship between ethnography and ethnology (or cultural anthropology)[12].

The methodological foundation can be found in the ideas of the late Peirce, which Morris overlooked. This includes the concept of the sign as a quasi-mind and the understanding of its semantics as a manifestation of the dialogical interaction between a quasi-utterer and a quasi-interpreter *welded in the Sign:*

> Admitting that connected Signs must have a Quasi-mind, it may further be declared that there can be no isolated sign. Moreover, signs require at least two Quasi-minds; a Quasi-utterer and a Quasi-interpreter; and although these two are at one (i.e., are one mind) in the sign itself, they must nevertheless be distinct. In the Sign they are, so to say, welded" (Peirce 1906: 523).

The thesis presented by Peirce can be further developed and clarified using concepts from poetics and semiotics. We can draw parallels to Foucault's idea of the author as a function, which "characterizes the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society" (Foucault 1977: 124). Similar to this, we can consider Umberto Eco's notion of the reader as a textual strategy and Yuri Lotman's concept of the semiotic "I" (in his other terms, *thinking semiotic structures,* or *monads*). — (Lotman 1990).

8. Conclusions

This paper aimed to identify the pragmatic characteristics of interlocutors in suprapersonal communication. It further distinguished between macro- and micropragmatics. The term macropragmatics can be left to describe those phenomena where agents are identified with some specific institutional entity (e.g., restaurants, books, public organizations, state bodies, social groups) that act as "speaking persons" (Kaverin 1973: 78). In these cases, it is at least theoretically possible to trace communication back to real individuals such as writers, speechwriters, managers, waiters, directors, etc. These situations were the focus of our paper.

Thus, we use the term "macropragmatics", proposed by Jacob May and Jeff Verschuren, but with a different meaning. We proceed from the assumption that the basic level of analysis should be the one at which communicating parties can be

[12] Cf.: "Ethnology is highly theory driven, using a comparative approach with the writings of ethnographers to search for commonalities that may underlie all cultures or human behaviours". — Flemming 2010, 153.

identified with real speakers. Therefore, macropragmatics refers to communication between suprapersonal entities, such as institutions, communities, groups, etc.

Probably, another, a higher level of communication should be envisaged. This could be labelled as "megapragmatics". This is a speculative level of communication, where suprapersonal constructs act as imaginary interlocutors. The characteristics of these constructs may be derived from texts and messages. Language, nation, and culture, as well as the semiosphere in general could be considered such entities. They could be seen as discursive mega-communities based on certain metanarratives in the sense of Baudrillard.

The distinction between pragmatics in its pure linguistic form and macropragmatics is based on the different types of interactions between interlocutors. However, these are not separate areas of pragmatics, as the same principles can be applied in all cases. Interlocutors at all levels of pragmatics are semiotic forms that can be represented through non-semiotic entities. It is therefore possible, at least metaphorically, to manifest imaginary interlocutors to those speakers in flesh and blood. Thus, even the most abstract entities such as cultures and civilizations can be metaphorized and communicate with. However, the reverse procedure — to deduce macropragmatic characteristics from observable entities — does not seem to be correct, even if it is possible to identify the real author or speaker. It should be noted that at all levels, the status of the interlocutors differs, and therefore, extrapolating the characteristics of real speakers to forms of intercultural or socio-cultural communication can lead to confusion in terms of functions and levels. Consequently, it may not be a reliable criterion for delineating the spheres of macro-pragmatics based on the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the speakers.

Macro- and megapragmatics regulate aspects of semiosis that influence interaction between the context and sign system. In this interpretation, pragmatics may not necessarily involve an external subject, but rather pertains to the same sign system, but is viewed within the context of its actualization process (cf.: Zolyan 2023). At the same time, intermediate correlation functions inevitably arise in order to describe and personify that interaction: these are various semiotic 'selves', quasi-speakers and quasi-interpreters, collective minds, native speakers, etc. This correlation between the internal semiotic "I" of the sign system and its external representation in communication can be seen as a reflection of the fundamental dualism of language and speech as it applies to pragmatics.

The study contributes to a better understanding of how the concept of interlocutor applies to suprapersonal levels of intercultural and sociocultural communication, and what semiotic characteristics it may have on the macro-pragmatic level.

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by the "Priority 2030" strategic academic leadership program at Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University.

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Article history:
Received: 21 September 2025
Accepted: 15 November 2025

Bionote:

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