

# THE ROLE OF CONTEXTS IN INTERPRETING PRAGMATIC MEANINGS

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**Abstract:** This article aims to find the role of contexts in interpreting pragmatic meanings. The study is a literature review that is interpretive in nature. Data collection techniques are done by reviewing the work of the experts to map the author's perspective on the context. The steps of the analysis are identifying the theories being reviewed, classifying the results of the identification, interpreting the results of the review, and writing a journal article. The findings of the study include 11 aspects of context to determine pragmatic meanings. Based on the findings, it can be discussed that the semantic meaning is different from the pragmatic meaning because the pragmatic meaning always depends on the context. On the basis of these findings, it can be concluded that the pragmatic meaning is determined by the extralingual contexts.

**Keywords:** context, reflective interpretative, pragmatic meaning.

This article was based on the statement that pragmatics is a study of language based on contexts. The meaning of an utterance which is interpreted based on contexts is called the pragmatic meaning. The definition of contexts differs among experts depending on their own perspectives. This study will analyze the definitions and types of contexts to interpret the pragmatic meanings. As the title implies, there are two important points to be discussed, namely the definitions and types of pragmatic meanings, and how the contexts are used to interpret the pragmatic meanings.

In general terms, the context of situation is any cultural context of use in which an utterance is located in or outside the text (Malinowski, 1923, in Korta, 2008). In several theories, the context of an utterance is called an interlingual context and the context located outside the text is called extralingual contexts (Pranowo, 2019). The intralingual contexts are referred to as linguistic contexts by some experts (Verhagen, 1977) or contexts (Cook, 2003).

Meanwhile, the extralingual contexts are any contexts outside the language which determine meaning (the speaker's meaning) (Brown &

Yule, 2013). Such extralingual contexts are referred to by Dijk (2009) as the communicative situation stated as episodic memory (episode of speaker's long-term personal experiences). This happens because not all pragmatic meanings can be interpreted using contexts as asserted in the semantic theories. The scope of semantic meanings has been investigated by linguists. However, in practice, the semantic theory cannot be used to interpret all aspects of the speaker's meaning. This article aims to define contexts and identify the types of contexts and their role in interpreting the speaker's meaning.

Pragmatic experts have agreed that the study of pragmatic meanings uses extralingual contexts in addition to intralingual contexts. Initially, pragmatics studies aspects of language use by analyzing the external or extralingual aspects of a language. Pragmatic experts will continue to study the language from other aspects than conventional linguistics, except interdisciplinary linguistic studies (such as Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, ecolinguistics, etc.).

Widdowson (1989) defines the contexts as "...those aspects of the circumstance of actual language use which are taken as relevant to meaning." In other words, context is the schematic construction in understanding the pragmatic meaning where linguistic codes match their schematic elements. Therefore, the real contexts lie in the scheme of utterance spoken by the speaker.

On the other hand, Dijk (2009) introduced the term "context models". The theory of context models can explain several aspects of language use which are overlooked. Most importantly, this theory explains the way the language discourse is adjusted to the environment and the daily life of language users as social and cultural groups of community. More specifically, the theory of contexts model shows how a pragmatic and sociolinguistic theory of language use is to be related to the semiotics, semantics, and grammar of language. This can be explained as follows: (a) classical speech act theory and the appropriateness conditions of speech acts can now be coherently accounted for in terms of the schematic structure of Context Models, (b) the subjective nature of Context Models also rejects the determinism of traditional sociolinguistic approaches to language variation in terms of fixed social 'variables,' (c) discourse genres are not only, and not so much, defined by discursive properties, but rather by as-

pects of the social situation (such as a parliamentary setting, roles as Members of Parliament of participants, political action, goals and specialized knowledge and ideologies of MPs as defining characteristics of the genre of parliamentary debates) and hence should be accounted for by Context Models, (d) finally, at the local level of sentence production and comprehension, Context Models control the uses of specific lexical items, syntactic constructions, rhetorical figures as well as many of the details of local semantics, such as which information should be asserted, reminded, presupposed or left implicit, or the level (general vs specific), amount of detail or degree of granularity of descriptions, among many other properties of discourse.

Contexts have typical markers, such as (1) situational and cultural contexts. Contexts are embedded in the place and the environment where the language is used. This is the typical static concept, (2) according to Halliday (in Brown et al., 2013) context is a global context model which is typically static. In this model, context is assumed to be constant for the text as a whole. That is, there is an assumption that the context precedes the action. To sum up, the notion of static context regards contexts as (i) purely a reality out there that can explain meaning that semantics cannot explain; (ii) naturally a given factor in advance of the comprehension process at any given point in a verbal communication; (iii) shared knowledge that can never be realized.

Cook (2003), who studies the relationship between discourse and literature, asserts that contexts are the knowledge of the world related to one's individual knowledge and experience. Thus, the pragmatic meaning of the same utterance may be interpreted differently by different addressees. In the pragmatic perspective, context is classified into two, namely static and dynamic contexts.

Another scholar, Dey (2017), states that contexts involve any types of information to be used to characterize an entity. The entity can be a person, place, or object taken as relevant to the interaction between users and applications, including the users and the applications themselves.

Such contexts are used to interpret the pragmatic meanings (the speaker's meaning) in communication (Porayska-pomsta, Mellish, Pain, Eugenio, & Moore, 2000). (Yusny, 2013). However, the most important thing that should not be overlooked is the coherence between the context

and the utterance to determine the pragmatic meaning (Brown et al., 2013). Although the context of utterance is clear, without coherence, the pragmatic meaning is difficult to be interpreted. One utterance may have several pragmatic meanings. It depends on the degree of coherence of the utterance and the types of context surrounding it. Therefore, the reflective study in terms of coherence and types of context surrounding it is important to determine the pragmatic meaning intended by the speaker. Thus, the research question is: “What are the roles of contexts in interpreting the pragmatic meaning of a speech?”

Scholars have their own definitions of contexts depending on their own unique perspective. Pragmatics experts classified contexts into several types. First, contexts are divided into two, namely static and dynamic contexts (Dijk, 2009), (Hu, X, 2014). Static contexts are those regarded as a mode of action, rather than as a counterpart of thought (Malinowski, 1923, cited in Hu Zhuanglin, 1988: 385). The meaning of an utterance does not come from the ideas of the words comprising it but from its relation to the situational context in which the utterance occurs (Hu Zhuanglin, 1988: 385). Utterance and situation are bound up inextricably with each other and context of situation is indispensable for the understanding of the words. Malinowski also points out that to understand the meaning of what is said, one should not only consider the particular context of utterance but also take into account the cultural characteristics of the society as reflected in the context of situation in which particular types of utterances are typically produced and which are themselves regarded as embedded in the context of culture.

Meanwhile, the dynamic contexts were based on Sperber and Wilson’s theory of relevance (1986) which states that owing to their theory of relevance, cognition has become a new starting point and theoretical focus in pragmatic research. Thus, dynamic contexts in this case are a set of assumptions derived from the communicator’s cognitive environment (the contextual factors such as the immediate physical environment, the participants’ background knowledge like all the known facts, assumptions, and beliefs) and cognitive abilities. Through the participants’ thinking activities, all these are internalized in their minds to form conceptual representations in their speech. Under the framework of Relevance

Theory, context is a part of the speaker’s cognitive environment. The determination of a context is not a prerequisite of the comprehension process, but a part of it. Therefore, the forming of a context is a dynamic process, and the conclusion of the preceding utterance can be the context of the next utterance.

The illustration of the dynamic contexts from the Relevance Theory proposed by Sperber and Wilson (in Shen, 2012) and the Adaptation Theory (Verschuere, 2000) can be distinguished into two, namely (a) theory of context based on Sperber & Wilson’s Relevance Theory in communication and cognition which brings about the relevance with the existing text, and (b) context is a set of assumptions derived from the communicator’s cognitive environment, including not only the co-text of an utterance but also the contextual factors such as the immediate physical environment, the participants’ background knowledge like all the known facts, assumptions, beliefs, and cognitive abilities.

*Second*, the term ‘context’ can be understood both in the narrow and broad senses. Context in the narrow sense means the speech or writing which precedes and follows a word or other element of language produced by the speaker. This narrow definition of ‘context’ is called co-text (Cook, 1989; Song, 2011). The definition of context in the broad sense refers to any factors outside the text which are necessary to communicate. Basically, context has an important similarity, namely the important notion of context is the environment where the utterance takes place. Further, Cook (2003) who studies the relationship between discourse and literature, asserts that contexts are the knowledge of the world related to one’s individual knowledge and experience. Thus, the pragmatic meaning of the same utterance may be interpreted differently by different addressees.

In the pragmatic perspective, context is classified into many types. Lichao Song argues that contexts include linguistic context (co-text) and extralingual contexts, such as situational, social, societal, and cultural contexts (Song, 2011).

Thus, both linguistic and nonlinguistic contexts can be understood through the conditions in which the speakers and addressees are involved in a communicative act. Briefly, it can be illustrated as follows.

*Situational Context* does not only involve words spoken in a certain time, but it also involves cultural settings of all the utterances and personal history of the interlocutors. The situational context involves linguistic and nonlinguistic factors. Linguistic factors or co-text include sentences or elements of language which precede or follow the sentence or elements of language in question. In contrast, nonlinguistic contexts refer to non-verbal cues, such as eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, eye movement, head movement, hand movement, body movement, or combination of two or more of these movements.

*Social and cultural context* refers to things that emerge as a result of the interaction among the members of the society in a given culture. This shows that the relationship between the society members cannot be separated from the situation that happens in the society.

*Societal context* is the context which determines one's position in the social ladder. This shows that societal context emerges because of power-relation, and the reason why societal contexts appear is solidarity (Rahardi, 2009).

*Third*, Dash, 2008 in (Miller, Eagly, & Linn, 2015) classified contexts into two types, namely (a) local context and (b) topical context. Local context refers to one or two words before and after the key word, while topical context refers to the topic of the text in which the keyword is located further away from the sentence. However, other experts debate this opinion. According to Dash, both contexts are not enough to understand the meaning of the words intended by the speaker because the contexts fail to provide the necessary information. Therefore, Dash classified contexts into 4 types (Dash, 2005a), namely (a) local context, (b) sentential context, (c) topical context, and (d) global context.

*Local context* refers to the closest environment of the utterance in the sentence preceding or following the utterance. Experts in discourse refer to such context as co-text (Cook, 2003). The definition of local context as preceding and following text is overlapping with the definition of linguistic context. The relevance between preceding and following texts refer to syntactic connection, in which each member gets the meaning from the semantic-syntactical relationship with other members (Verschueren 1981:326).

*Sentential Context* refers to a sentence where a keyword has occurred. It supplies syntactic information to know if the keyword has any

explicit or implicit syntactic relation with other words in the sentence. This context occurs in the case of broken words, verbal groups, idiomatic expressions, and set phrases where the two constituents, in spite of their idiomatic or phrasal relations, are separated from one another as they are located at distant places in the sentence. The most complex task is to identify two words, despite their separate and distant locations, with whom the keyword maintains a special kind of semantic relation to generate an idiomatic meaning (Kilgarriff, 2001).

*Topical Context* refers to the topic of discussion and focuses on the content of a piece of text. Oftentimes, it is found that the meaning of the keyword depends heavily on the topic which plays a big role to alter the etymological meaning of the keyword. In a different context, the same topic may be understood differently.

*Global Context*. Words are not isolated entities. Words are interlinked with other words as well as with their extralinguistic contexts (Verschueren 1981: 337). The same thing applies to the meaning of words. The meaning of the keyword is not only related to the meanings of other words within the local context, sentential context, topical context, but also occurs to the extralinguistic reality surrounding the linguistic act undertaken by language users. The verbs of a language, for instance, usually evoke a scene of action constituting an agent, a patient, an item, a place, and a time – all coordinated in a particular discourse (Fillmore 1977:82).

The global context signifies that the meaning of a verb form in question must consider all the elements in a cognitive interface to realize its denotative, connotative, and figurative meaning. In general, the huge piece of information of the global context is available in the external world, that provides vital cues regarding place, time, situation, interpretation, pragmatics, discourse, demography, geography, community, culture, ethnology, and many other things (Allan 2001:20).

Therefore, the global context helps us to understand: who says it, what is being said, to whom it is said, when it is said, where it is said, why it is said, and how it is said. Therefore, the global context is a priceless source of information to disambiguate words and to help us understand whether the keyword has other variation of meaning or not. If it does, the global context can tell us what the variation is.

## METHOD

This article is a library research focusing on the reflective interpretative study. The reflective study refers to the study of John Dewey's theory. As a pragmatic, he says that change, process, relativity, and reconstruction of experiences make up for the reflection of prior experiences (Anamofa, 2018). The objective of reflection is to make one's life more prosperous and more fruitful. One has to learn to interpret and make meanings of experiences in order to grow and be enriched by the experiences. This is the essence of reflective experiences.

Meanwhile, the interpretative study seeks to review several previous works by other scholars to solve a problem interpretatively by means of reasonable consideration and contemplation to attain a certain purpose. The research data source comes from journal articles discussing contexts and pragmatic meanings. The data source is taken from Verhagen, A (1977), Dijk, T.A. Van. (2009). Le Song L (2011), Shen, L. (2012), Hu, X. (2014).

The research instrument is the researcher himself utilizing his knowledge of pragmatics and linguistics to obtain research data. The data analysis starts with data identification, namely finding the characteristic markers of contexts valuable to be analyzed. After data identification, the data is classified based on the types of contexts. The data classification is done by categorizing data based on the criteria of contexts surrounding the utterances. Finally, the report of the result analysis is written in a journal article.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

Each context (both intralingual and extralingual) coherent can determine the pragmatic meaning intended by the speaker to be understood by the hearer. This can be illustrated in the following sub-sections.

### The Coherence Between *Common Ground* as the Dynamic Context and the Utterance

Several interpretations of the pragmatic meanings vary and are heavily determined by the close relationship between the speaker and the addressee. When the relationship between the

speaker and the addressee has a common ground, the hearer/ addressee will grasp the speaker's pragmatic meaning easily. For example, the speaker says: "Who dares to step forward?" Spoken by a teacher to his students in the class having the same common ground, the pragmatic meaning of the utterance is an "order" to the students who can answer the teacher's questions to step in front of the class. Any students who know the answer to the teacher's question can raise their hands and come forward, saying: "I dare, Sir!"

On the other hand, when the utterance is spoken in the context of a boxing competition, the utterance has a pragmatic meaning of "challenge" for contenders to fight against the player in the boxing ring. Anyone who has the same common ground would understand the pragmatic meaning and step up the boxing ring, saying: "Who's afraid?" and taking the challenge to fight against the player. Such context of utterance is called the dynamic context in which the context of utterance matches the situation that is relevant to the speaker's utterance. This context is also referred to as the topical context.

The pragmatic meaning can be interpreted based on the coherence between the utterance and the shared knowledge of the world among the community members.

- 1) Husband: "What time is it, honey?"
- 2) Wife : "The train has not passed yet, darling".
- 3) Husband: "Oh, it's still early".

**Context:** A husband and his wife were cleaning up the garden and both did not bring any watch. However, they both had a shared knowledge that the train passes at a certain hour.

The wife's answer is clear enough to be understood by the husband because it is coherent with the shared common ground between the utterance and its context, namely the certain hour when the train passes. Thus, although the wife did not go inside the house to check the time, the pragmatic meaning could be understood perfectly. On the other hand, if the husband and wife lived in Bali Island, the context of the utterance would not be coherent with the wife's answer: "The train has not passed yet, darling." Therefore, such an answer would be confusing because there is no train operating in Bali Island. On the other hand, when the utterance is spoken at night, the

wife might understand that the husband wants to remind her that it is time to get some rest.

### The Coherence Between Social Context and the Utterance

It will be easy for an addressee to understand the speaker's utterance which is coherent with the social context. Song (2010) asserts that the interpretation of the pragmatic meaning can be done through social contexts. Social context is the context of utterance which is relevant to the social condition of the speech community.

The people from Malang, East Java, say "*Kon wis mari tah?*" which means "Are you done?" or "Have you finished?" The utterance is coherent with the social context related to the Eastern Javanese dialect. The Javanese people living in Yogyakarta and Central Java might interpret the utterance as "have you recovered from your illness?" However, the interpretation is not accurate because the word "*mari*" in the eastern Javanese dialect means "finish", while the meaning of the word "*mari*" in the dialect of Javanese among the people in Yogyakarta and Central Java means "recovered from illness." Therefore, the pragmatic meaning of the utterance: "*Kon wis mari tah?*" is "Have you finished (doing your assignment)?"

The same case happens in the East Nusa Tenggara. A child talks to his mother: "*Sapi main bola, mah,*" which is understood by an Indonesian outsider as: "A cow is playing football, Ma." For a native Nusa Tenggara, the utterance is pretty clear because it is coherent with the social context where she is required to say "yes" or "no" to her son's request to play football. However, for an outsider, the utterance is understood differently: "A cow is playing football, Ma." Therefore, such an utterance may cause confusion in the part of the hearer, who is not native Nusa Tenggara. How can a cow play football? It seems that the misunderstanding is caused by the habit among the Nusa Tenggara people to shorten the word "*saya*" or "I" into "*sa-*" and the word "*pergi*" or "go" into "*pi-*". Taken together, the words "*Saya pergi...*" Or "I'm going / May I go..." are shortened into "*Sapi*" which has the same meaning as "a cow". Therefore, the pragmatic meaning of "*Sapi main bola, mah,*" is asking for permission "*Saya pergi main bola, mah,*" which means "I'm going to play football, ma." That is how social contexts come into play in communication. In another case with

the Batakese people, they would say: "*Air Bah!*" which is understood by outsiders as "Flash flood!" Among the Batakese, the pragmatic meaning of "*Air Bah!*" is the request for water (*air*) "May I ask for some water to drink?" The discourse marker "*bah*" is typical among the Batakese. The different pragmatic meaning lies in the different social context of the local culture (Batakese). The social context such as this is referred to as the static context because each social event in the community has happened for a long time and the local dialect has been a part of the community's typical speech.

### The Coherence Between Local Cultural Context and the Utterance

In 2010, the term "*wedhus gembel*" was popular to refer to the 1,500 degree celcius pyroclastic clouds emitted during the eruption of Mount Merapi, engulfing and scorching the slopes of the mountain. For the Javanese people, the local cultural context surrounding the utterance "*wedhus gembel*" is the imagery of the pyroclastic clouds which resembles the fur of the shearing sheep. Pyroclastic clouds are common phenomena during the volcano eruption anywhere in the world. However, the Javanese people who are mostly farmers and stock breeders, associate the clouds with the animals that they see everyday, the sheep. The local cultural context which is coherent with the term *wedhus gembel* is called the static context because the context is related with the local cultural background. Such cultural context also surrounds the myth regarding the Queen of the South Sea, the ruler of the South Sea, or known as *Nyai Ratu Kidul* who was said to conduct a grand meeting with King Penembahan Senopati, the King of Mataram Kingdom. According to the local myth, the Queen of the South Sea and the King met on "*watu gilang*" or the huge stone slab of a hard andesite rock. The descendants of the king can only reign the throne after getting the blessings from the Queen.

Such context is a local cultural context or the static context. Static contexts are contexts that are embedded in the utterance when the speaker is speaking, for example the speaker's cultural background, the speaker's social situation, the environment, the addressees, the time when the utterance occurs, and the meaning to be conveyed, etc., (Dijk, 2009). The referent *wedhus gembel*

has become a part of the Javanese community's shared knowledge for hundreds of years. Such local cultural or static contexts exist in any region where utterances are spoken.

### The Coherence Between Dynamic Global Contexts and the Utterance

Based on the Relevance Theory proposed by Sperber and Wilson (2001) in Shen (2012), the dynamic context refers to any context surrounding the speaker's utterance when it occurs according to the cognitive memory. The utterance "The coronavirus from Wuhan, China has spread to 38 countries and taken more than 1,600 lives." However, the pragmatic meaning to be conveyed by the speaker can be interpreted reflectively as the feeling of concern, caution, or even fear.

Any persons keeping abreast with the latest news on papers and television will understand the global and dynamic context of the widespread effects of coronavirus. The coronavirus may be interpreted from the economic perspective. The Coronavirus pandemic may bring about economic effects. For example, due to the pandemic, many companies close down, the workers refuse to work for fear of being infected by the virus. Many companies stop operating.

The global context can happen in any countries because of the similarity of systems. For example, in the government system, a lot of countries apply parliamentary system. It means that the party with the greatest representation in the parliament forms the government. In Indonesia, the representatives in the parliament are called *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (House of Representatives). Each parliamentary system necessitates the hearing chaired by the Chairperson. The topic they discuss includes criticizing the programs of the ruling government. This is referred to as global contexts.

### The Coherence Between the Context and the Ambiguous Utterance

When the context is coherent with the utterance, the pragmatic meaning of the ambiguous utterances will no longer be ambiguous. In the following example, a speaker is talking to an addressee.

Speaker : "During the holiday, where did you go?"

Addressee : "I'm planning to visit Ujung Kulon".

Speaker : "I heard there are many big rhinos roaming around everywhere".

**Context:** The conversation occurs between two people who know each other about the tourist destination in Ujung Kulon.

The speaker's utterance "I heard there are many big rhinos roaming around everywhere" may result in two kinds of interpretation by the addressee, for example (a) It refers to the sanctuary in Ujung Kulon as an interesting tourist destination because it is a natural habitat where various types of animals live in the wild, such as rhinoceros, bulls, lions, tigers, etc., or (b) It signals a warning to the addressee to be careful when they visit the place because a wild bull may attack unassuming visitors.

However, the utterance spoken by the speaker will have a clear pragmatic meaning when it is accompanied by the dynamic context which removes all the ambiguity. When the context is item (a), the pragmatic meaning shows that the speaker may have visited Ujung Kulon. On the contrary, if the context of utterance is (b), the pragmatic meaning is a caution to be careful there.

### The Coherence Between the Situational Context and the Utterance

The situational context is often categorized as static context (Hu, 2014) because the context of utterance has occurred before the utterance. The situational context generally includes the speaker's overall utterance and personal history. The situational context includes the linguistic and nonlinguistic factors. The linguistic factors or co-

texts are sentences preceding or following other sentences or language elements. In contrast, the nonlinguistic contexts include any contexts which refer to non-verbal cues such as eye contact, body movements, facial expressions, eye movement, head movement, hand movement, gestures, or the combination of two or more nonverbal cues.

Therefore, the situational context which is verbal and intralingual in nature is connected with the sentential context, as in the linguistic context. In the meantime, the situational extralingual con-

texts refer to the person's idiolect, and idiosyncratic movement, such as moving hands, nodding, smiling, and many other gestures when speaking. For example, when I speak, I always give nonverbal stress by moving my hands. When I am angry, I never yell at my students. Instead, I give them silent treatment until the students are aware and keep silent. That is my idiosyncratic way in communication, which brings bigger communicative impact on the students who then warn the chatty students to pay attention. After the students keep quiet and pay attention, I would say: "Now that you are quiet, may I continue?"

### The Coherence Between the Topical Context and the Utterance

The topical context in question is the same topic being discussed by the speaker and the addressee. The topical context basically occurs when the speaker and the addressee talk about the same topic. For example, the speaker and the addressee talk about "the airplane built by Hairul". Each of them talks about the building of the plane. The topic ranges from the machine being used, the tires scavenged from truck tires, to the frame made from scrap metals, etc.

The topical context can be very close to or far from the act of utterance. Take a look at the following example.

- Wife : *Do you smoke while driving?*
- Husband : *If I drive alone, I smoke. When you are with me, I don't smoke.*
- Wife : *The nasty smell just won't go away (pursing her lips and eyeing him sideways).*
- Husband : *The car has been washed, cleaned, vacuumed, and perfumed, hasn't it?*
- Wife : *Yes, it has. But the trace of the smell still persists (An angry note is still detected)*
- Husband : *Why are you always finding faults and judging me all the time? You promised not to complain about my smoking habit, didn't you?*

### Context:

A wife is reprimanding her husband about smoking in the car. The real context took place long before the utterance occurs.

The topic of the conversation is related to "smoking in the car". Although the wife is angry, the conversation is still coherent with the context. The conversation stops after the husband says: "Why are you always finding faults and judging me all the time? You promised not to complain about my smoking habit, didn't you?" It seems that his anger stops the wife's complaints when he reminds her of the promise not to complain about his smoking habit. Actually, the context of utterance took place long before the act of utterance occurs. The topical context is coherent with the utterance.

The topical context refers to the topic of discussion and focuses on the content of the same piece of a text. Oftentimes, it is found that the meaning of the keyword depends heavily on the topic which plays a big role to alter the etymological meaning of the keyword.

For example, in English, the word "shot" may refer to 'firing,' 'drinking,' 'hitting a ball with a bat,' 'kicking a ball,' 'putting a ball in the net,' 'distance between a player and the hole,' 'taking a snap,' 'giving an injection,' or 'making love,' etc. (Dash, 2004).

### The Coherence Between the Context of Utterance and the Implicature

A speaker may speak differently from what she actually intends to say. In other words, "she does not mean what she says. Or she does not say what she means." Such an utterance is usually called implicature. In understanding implicature, one must consider the context of the utterance because the addressee must know the speaker's context of utterance to decode the speaker's pragmatic meaning. Although the utterance contains implicature, the addressee will understand the speaker's meaning easily provided that the addressee knows the context of the utterance. The following table illustrates the point.

- Son : *Are you going to use the Zass today, Dad? (Note: Zass refers to the car.)*
- Father : *Where are you going?*



- Son : *I'm thinking about taking Hany and Kemal for a ride.*  
Father : *Alright. The gas is running out.*

**Context:** The conversation between a father and his son above took place at home. His son is married. After spending weekdays working, he wants to borrow his father's car to take his wife and son for a ride to reduce stress and boredom. The pragmatic meaning of the utterance: "Are you going to use the Zass today, Dad?" is that the speaker wants to borrow the car. The meaning of the utterance is based on the context.

### **The Coherence Between the Context of Utterance and the Different Backgrounds of Knowledge**

People working in certain fields use specific register or jargon which cannot be understood by those who do not share the same field. Take a look at the following technical terms.

Some of the components of the car engine are: (a) *cylinder block*, (b) *cylinder head*, and (c) *carter*. The components of the car engine in the combustion chamber are: (a) *crank shaft*, (b) *piston*, (c) *cam shaft*, (d) *timing gear*, (c) *valve mechanism*, (d) and *fly wheel*.

For the people working in mechanical engineering, these technical terms are very familiar as they are part of their daily lingo. However, for those who are not familiar with the jargons, they would find difficulty in interpreting the semantic and pragmatic meaning of the following utterance.

A mechanic would tell his men working on a car: "*Try replacing the timing gear, and then loosening the valve mechanism just a bit!*" For his mechanic buddies, the utterance is easy to understand because they know the context of the utterance. The context is dynamic situational which enables the employees to start working based on the mechanic's guidance. However, even though one is a professor of language, without a sufficient context, he would not grasp the semantic and pragmatic meaning intended by the mechanic.

In dealing with different backgrounds in terms of technical fields, the interlocutors intending to collaborate must be on the same page. It means that they must have the same perception or

common grounds in order to avoid misunderstanding.

### **The Coherence Between the Context of Utterance and the Connotative Meaning**

The addressee finds difficulty in understanding the pragmatic meaning of an utterance when the speaker's cognitive context is different from the addressee in conjuring up an event. People working in the language field sometimes express their ideas easily by choosing certain diction to express their intention precisely. The literary scholars refer to this as "duistere poetica" or freedom to be poetic. Some poets express their own ideas using connotative meanings, or *double entendres*. Take a look at the following examples.

The following poem is taken from Amir Hamzah's poem entitled "PADAMU JUA" (Only You)

....  
*Engkau cemburu, (You're jealous)*  
*Engkau ganas (You're fierce)*  
*"Mangsa aku dalam cakarmu, bertukar tangkap dengan lepas".*

....  
(Devour me in your claws, exchanging catch freely)

Literally, this poem is a hard nut to crack. The addressee will find it difficult to understand the meaning of Amir Hamzah's poem. However, someone who is used to appreciating literary works, in this case poetry, will understand easily. The pragmatic meaning of the poem is easily understood although the semantic meaning is connotative. To be able to understand the lines, one must know the meaning behind the connotation.

When Amir Hamzah was young, he asked for his father's permission to study in MULO Solo, Java. MULO stands for Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs or Dutch advanced elementary school in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born into an aristocratic family of a sultanate of Langkat, North Sumatra, he was entitled for a good education. Surprisingly, Amir Hamzah's parents allowed him to do that. He went to MULO for several years and as a young man, it was normal to fall in love with a girl. However, after several years, he was called home because his father was getting old and he had to replace his father's position. As a king, of course he had to be married. He was very excited because he could marry his girlfriend who lived

in Solo. Unfortunately, it was decided by the aristocratic family meeting that he had to marry the sultan's daughter. He could not marry anyone other than the nobility. He had to break up with his Javanese girlfriend.

From Amir Hamzah's biography, he could not refuse his parents' will. When his parents sent him to MULO in Java, he was turned loose from the aristocratic way of life. However, he could not easily abandon the the strong tradition of an aristocratic way of life. He was still bound by his royal duties and responsibilities. The metaphorical poem was written on that account: "a mouse is being caught by a cat." (*"seekor tikus yang diterkam kucing"*) (*"devour me in your claws - mangsa aku dalam cakarmu"*). When the cat catches the mouse with its claws ready to devour it, the mouse plays dead. The cats lets it go. But when the mouse starts moving again, the cat tightens its claws, as he describes in the line *"betukar tangkap dengan lepas,"* (exchanging the catch freely). The pragmatic meaning of the romantic poem cannot be easily understood. After being interpreted based on the context, the expression, which originally has many meanings, can be understood clearly. The pragmatic meaning is clear in that the fate of Amir Hamzah is being played by the cultural traditions. When he went to study, it seemed that he was being liberated, but apparently he was not entirely free and bound by the strong cultural traditions.

### **The Coherence Between the Context of Utterance and the Place and Time of the Speech Events**

During the earthquake in Yogyakarta in 2006, my family were panicked and terrified of the devastating earthquake. My wife's leg was broken because the brick fence collapsed on her. However, I was in Semarang at the time and did not experience the terrible ordeal. When I came home, I found that my wife and son were at the hospital. To this day, my wife and son were still traumatized by the devastating event.

On the contrary, I did not experience the terrifying earthquake directly. Whenever someone reminisced the day, my wife can tell the story animatedly about the tragic event that broke her leg. I would say, *"Oh... come on, stop talking about the old sad stories.* Such context is called static context (Hu, X., 2014).

### **Discussion**

Based on the result of the theoretical review and analysis, despite the fact that both semantic and pragmatic meanings are objects of linguistics, they are different (Porayska-pomsta et al., 2000). Pragmatic meanings are context-bound, while semantic meaning is context-free (except for the intralingual context). Based on several theories, context can be classified into two, namely static and dynamic contexts. Static context is basically the context that exists before the utterance occurs, such as social and cultural contexts, geographical context, etc. Meanwhile, the dynamic context is a context embedded in the speaker's utterance when it occurs. For example, when someone is speaking about the 'pragmatic' topic, the speaker's cognition is surrounded by contexts, such as speech acts, implicature, politeness, etc. (Hu, 2014).

Context can be classified into several types, such as (a) situational context, (b) social context, and (c) societal context (Song, 2011). All types of contexts argued by Song are categorized as static context because such contexts exist before the utterance occurs (Hu, 2014). Dash (2008), on the other hand, classifies context into four, namely (a) local context, (b) sentential context, (c) topical context, and (d) global context. The first two contexts (local and sentential) are classified as static context, while the last two contexts (topical and global) are classified as dynamic contexts.

Therefore, a question often arises as to which contexts determine the pragmatic meaning. The answer is that both contexts help determine the pragmatic meaning because each speech event requires either static contexts or dynamic contexts or both.

Thus, both static and dynamic contexts which are coherent with the utterance play their roles in determining the pragmatic contexts. The interpretation of pragmatic meaning can be seen from the reflective analysis above. Based on the reflective interpretative findings, it can be noted that (a) the addressee's common ground serving as the dynamic context which is coherent with the utterance helps determine the speaker's pragmatic meaning, (b) the social context which is coherent with the utterance must be able to explain the addressee's pragmatic meaning, (c) the local cultural context that is coherent with the utterance rich in local dialect will explicate the addressee's

pragmatic meaning, (d) the dynamic global context which is coherent with the utterance must be able to clarify the addressee's pragmatic meaning, (e) the pragmatic meaning of the seemingly ambiguous utterance does not seem ambiguous anymore to the addressee after the coherence between the context and the utterance is identified, (f) context will become very important when the speaker says something differently from what he/ she actually means (implicature).

However, understanding the pragmatic meaning is sometimes difficult to grasp, although the individual words can be understood. The difficulty to understand the pragmatic meaning is caused by several factors. *First*, the differences of knowledge background. Generally, everyone has specific knowledge in a certain field. They may not be interested in other fields. Consequently, the pragmatic meaning is not easy to understand, especially by those who do not share the same knowledge backgrounds. *Second*, an utterance may have several connotations. The literary work uses imagery, figures of speech, and connotative language. Addressees who do not have literary sensitiveness will find it difficult to grasp the pragmatic meaning of an utterance. *Third*, the pragmatic meaning is hard to understand when the event occurs in the different time and place. For anyone who experiences the event directly, it will be very easy to understand the pragmatic meaning. However, the addressees who live in a different time and place from the event in question may not understand the pragmatic meaning because the addressees do not share the same understanding of the context of the utterance.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discussion and analysis, several conclusions can be drawn. *First*, context is

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any information that is embedded inside and outside the utterance. The context embedded inside the utterance is called intralingual context, while the context that is located outside the utterance is called extralingual context.

*Second*, based on the analysis of contexts, when the context is coherent with the utterance, the understanding of the pragmatic meaning is facilitated. Contexts that are coherent with the utterance are, among others (a) common ground, (b) social context, (c) cultural context, (d) global context, (e) context for ambiguous utterances, (f) situational context, (g) topical context, (h) context that is coherent with the implicature, (i) context that is coherent with different knowledge backgrounds, (j) context that is coherent with the connotative meaning, (k) context that is coherent with the time and place where the speech event occurs.

*Third*, contexts have important roles in interpreting the pragmatic meaning. The pragmatic meaning interpreted using contexts must be coherent with the utterance. However, some utterances require different types of knowledge in order to interpret their pragmatic meanings. Often, addressees do not share the same fields of study with the speaker, such as the literary talents in understanding certain literary texts.

Based on the analysis, the researcher recommends that future researchers conduct empirical studies corroborated by factual data so that the rules of the manifestation, function, and intention of contexts can be formulated to interpret the pragmatic meanings.

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