

Ethnopragmatics: A Review of Frameworks and Debates

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Abstract

Ethnopragmatics is a culture-centred approach to pragmatic meaning that examines how cultural meanings shape language use in interaction. It draws on linguistic anthropology, cultural linguistics, the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), and cultural scripts. It analyses communicative practices in relation to community-shared values, normative expectations, and cultural conceptualisations. This review is a critical theoretical synthesis rather than an empirical study. It synthesises the historical development of ethnopragmatics and its key theoretical foundations. It also reviews core methods, methodological debates, and major domains of application. It positions ethnopragmatics in relation to adjacent pragmatic approaches and clarifies what its descriptive tools add to cross-cultural comparison. It identifies persistent limitations, including restricted language coverage, a shortage of multilingual corpora, and limited integration of multimodal and cognitive evidence. Finally, it outlines priorities for future research, including digitally mediated interaction, multimodal methodologies, and the development of multilingual cultural corpora. Overall, the review argues that ethnopragmatics is most productive when culture-internal description is paired with explicit methodological criteria for defensible comparison across contexts.

Keywords: ethnopragmatics, Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), cultural scripts, cultural conceptualisations, cross-cultural comparability

التداولية الإثنية: مراجعة في الأطر النظرية والجدالات

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المستخلص

تُعدّ التداولية الإثنية مقارنةً متمركزة حول الثقافة لدراسة المعنى التداولي، إذ تبحث في كيفية تشكّل استعمال اللغة في التفاعل من خلال المعاني الثقافية. وترتكز هذه المقاربة على اللسانيات الأنثروبولوجية، واللسانيات الثقافية، واللغة الدلالية الطبيعية (NSM)، ونظرية السيناريوهات الثقافية. وهي تحلّل الممارسات التواصلية في ضوء القيم المشتركة داخل الجماعة، والتوقعات المعيارية، والتصوّرات الثقافية. ويمثّل هذا البحث مراجعةً نظرية تحليلية لا دراسةً تجريبية؛ إذ يستعرض التطوّر التاريخي للتداولية الإثنية وأسسها النظرية الرئيسة، كما يناقش أدواتها المنهجية الأساسية والجدالات المنهجية المرتبطة بها ومجالات تطبيقها البارزة. ويضع التداولية الإثنية في سياق المقاربات التداولية المجاورة، مبيّنًا ما تضيفه أدواتها الوصفية إلى إمكان المقارنة عبر الثقافات. كما يحدّد البحث عددًا من القيود المستمرة، من بينها محدودية التغطية اللغوية، ونقص المدوّنات متعددة اللغات، وضعف دمج الأبعاد المتعددة الوسائط والأبعاد المعرفية في التحليل. ويقترح أولويات للبحث المستقبلي، تشمل دراسة التفاعل في البيئات الرقمية، وتطوير منهجيات متعددة الوسائط، وبناء مدوّنات ثقافية متعددة اللغات. ويخلص إلى أنّ التداولية الإثنية تكون أكثر إنتاجية حين يُفترن الوصف من داخل الثقافة بمعايير منهجية صريحة تتيح إجراء مقارنات منضبطة وقابلة للدفاع عبر السياقات المختلفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التداولية الإثنية، اللغة الدلالية الطبيعية، السيناريوهات الثقافية، التصوّرات الثقافية، القابلية للمقارنة عبر الثقافات

1. Introduction

Ethnopragmatics has become an important methodological approach in the wider realms of pragmatics and cultural linguistics. It focuses on how meaning is built in reference to the culturally-based conceptual systems rather than being explained solely through universal communicative principles (Goddard, 2006; Sharifian, 2011; Wierzbicka, 1996). It highlights the ways in which the speech practices, norms of interaction, and pragmatic inferences are embedded in some locally shared conceptions of social life (Goddard, 2018; Hymes, 1974). Ethnopragmatics treats culture as explanatorily central to language-in-use and links linguistic patterns to broader cultural phenomena (Goddard, 2006; Goddard & Ye, 2015). In this sense, ethnopragmatics offers a conceptual model that goes beyond a descriptive explanation of cross-cultural variation, raising important theoretical questions about the nature of pragmatic knowledge when culture is postulated as a constitutive attribute of meaning (Sharifian, 2017; Wierzbicka, 1999).

In this review, cultural meaning denotes community-shared values and interpretive expectations encoded in linguistic practices. Conceptual systems refer here to culturally distributed conceptualisations (e.g. cultural categories and value-based models) that guide inferences in interaction. Pragmatic knowledge is treated here as culturally shaped competence linking linguistic form to locally grounded judgments of appropriateness.

Over the past decades, such key frameworks as the NSM, cultural scripts, cultural conceptualisations have been applied to advance the field (Goddard, 2006, 2018; Sharifian, 2011; Wierzbicka, 1991, 1996). However, the links between these frameworks are not always explicitly articulated in the literature. This has sustained debates about universality, cross-cultural comparability and what constitutes sufficient evidence, particularly regarding corpus-based and multimodal data. It has expanded as well to include empirically based approaches, such as corpus pragmatics and multimodal discourse analysis (Baker, 2006; Jucker & Taavitsainen, 2014). Simultaneously, the field of ethnopragmatics continues to face challenges of methodological integration as well as issues of representational balance between different social groups and slight discrepancies in the conceptualization of key terminologies of analysis (Sharifian, 2017; Wierzbicka, 1996). Such dilemmas show that the subject is not only fruitful but it is also actively debated in theory (Goddard, 2018; Sharifian, 2011).

The present review aims at clarifying the role of ethnopragmatics in the current pragmatic theory through a focused synthesis of its major frameworks and an account of how its main claims have been developed and supported in the literature. The review (1) outlines the main intellectual underpinnings; (2) evaluates the main analytical tools, including NSM and cultural scripts, in terms of their explanatory reach and conceptual coherence; and (3) reveals a set of commonplace gaps in the empirical and methodological understandings, which limit cumulative comparisons across studies. It argues that ethnopragmatics is not merely an additive extension of pragmatics, but a framework which re-orientates the theorisation of pragmatic meaning and comparability when culture is treated as constitutive of meaning. The review proceeds from intellectual foundations to core frameworks and analytical tools, then to applications and current debates, and finally to gaps and future directions. It draws on foundational works in NSM and cultural linguistics, alongside representative applied studies

selected to illustrate major directions in the field. The review adopts a critical theoretical orientation rather than introducing new empirical data, and it evaluates ethnopragmatics in terms of conceptual coherence and methodological scope.

Importantly, the current review argues that ethnopragmatics cannot be treated as a purely descriptive supplement of pragmatics. Rather, it represents a shift away from universalist assumptions by presenting culture-specific meaning systems as an analytically central feature. Rather than providing a survey-style account of cultural variability, this review offers an integrated synthesis of the theoretical underpinnings of ethnopragmatics. It also points to the persisting controversies, and methodological tensions. It further proposes a prospective agenda linking the system of cultural meanings to contemporary multilingual, multimodal, and digitally mediated communicative environments. It focuses primarily on the theoretical and methodological development of ethnopragmatics rather than offering an exhaustive empirical survey of all cultural contexts. When combined, these sections suggest that ethnopragmatics redefines what counts as pragmatic evidence and explanation when culture is no longer treated as a background variable but as constitutive of meaning.

2. Historical and Intellectual Background

Ethnopragnmatics is not only a historical development of pragmatics, but also a response to certain persistent debates over culture, universality, and analytic categories. It emerged at the crossroads of ethnolinguistics, anthropological linguistics and pragmatic theory. Its basic premises were enunciated by Hymes (1974) and Goffman (1981), who emphasised the need to place communicative behaviour in its social and cultural context.

The ethnosemantic contributions of Heath (1972) and Palmer (1996) made important advances in the study of cultural meaning systems, demonstrating that both semantic and pragmatic behaviours reflect deeply embedded cultural thinking. Ethnopragnmatics also intersects with ethnosemantic practices concerned with categorising culturally salient lexical domains. For example, ethnosemantic research employing Cultural Domain Analysis identifies and classifies culturally entrenched terminology within particular domains on the basis of textual and philological materials (Al-Husseini et al., 2016). Ethnopragnmatics, however, moves beyond lexical taxonomy toward the explication of culture-internal pragmatic scripts and interactional meaning. The theoretical coherence of ethnopragnmatics was reached with the seminal work of Wierzbicka (1991, 1996, 1999) and Goddard (2006, 2018), whose elaboration of the NSM helped to create the possibility of a culture-neutral articulation of meaning based on universal semantic primes. At the same time, the possibility of a fully culture-neutral description remains debated, raising questions about whether ethnopragnmatics extends conventional pragmatics or represents an alternative paradigm (Goddard, 2006; Sharifian, 2011). One of the major controversies is whether ethnopragnmatics is to be considered as a refinement of mainstream pragmatics, or as an alternative programme with different explanatory assumptions (Goddard, 2006).

Their cultural scripts framework offered an explicit methodology for articulating culturally specific norms while avoiding ethnocentric bias. This tension between the cross-cultural comparability and cultural reductionism motivates the present review and indicates where the boundaries of ethnopragnmatics' conceptual and methodological scope become

visible. The field grew by incorporating the perspectives of cultural linguistics (Sharifian, 2011, 2017), focusing on cultural conceptualisations, and corpus-based approaches (Baker, 2006; Jucker & Taavitsainen, 2014), thus adding an empirical basis for culturally embedded analyses.

These developments have established ethnopragmatics as a major framework for studying meaning in culturally heterogeneous situations. However, this development has been shaped to a large extent by a limited range of languages and research traditions, which leaves key questions concerning representational balance and data diversity unresolved. These constraints directly motivate the gaps discussed later in the review, particularly the need to expand multilingual corpora and to engage more systematically with multimodal evidence. In this regard, the historical trajectory of ethnopragmatics also helps to explain why ongoing debates about comparability and evidence remain central to the discipline.

3. Core Theoretical Frameworks in Ethnopragsmatics

Ethnopragsmatics is based on a series of related theoretical foundations. The NSM approach, articulated by Wierzbicka (1996) and elaborated by Goddard (2018), provides a set of universal semantic primes that enables the analyst to articulate cultural meanings with explicit and analytic clarity.

Simultaneously, the scope and boundaries of culture-neutral semantic description remain a controversial issue, especially in the context of the relationship between universal primes and locally salient cultural categories (Goddard, 2006; Goddard & Ye, 2015). According to cultural scripts theory (Goddard, 2006; Peeters, 2015), culturally shared norms and expectations can be formulated using NSM primes, which can help to make principled cross-linguistic comparison among linguistic communities possible. The theory of cultural conceptualisations foregrounds a cognitive dimension and posits collectively shared conceptualisations, including folk models and value systems, as central to pragmatic interpretation and communicative behaviour (Sharifian, 2011; Sharifian, 2017).

Anthropological linguistics offers additional information about the roles of logics of culture and of moral order in shaping communicative norms (Duranti, 1997; Rosaldo, 1980; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Comparative investigations even reveal more about the cultural bases of pragmatics, as Ameka (1994) did in his study of greetings in Akan. These frameworks are part of a multilayer system for examining the effect of culturally-specific meanings in speech acts, politeness strategies, emotion expressions, and interpersonal positioning. For example, a cultural script can codify what counts as “showing respect” in a community by specifying locally appropriate wording, posture, and implied intentions in recurrent interactional situations. These frameworks converge in their concern with culture-internal meaning, but they differ in their assumptions about evidence and comparability. They are therefore discussed below as analytically distinct tools rather than interchangeable labels. Practically, NSM provides a descriptive metalanguage, cultural scripts capture shared normative expectations, and cultural conceptualisations provide the broader cognitive schemata within which such scripts can be interpreted in practice.

4. Ethnopragmatics and Adjacent Pragmatic Approaches

Ethnopragmatics occupies a special place in the field of pragmatics as a whole, in that it overlaps with and diverges from several of the established approaches to pragmatics. In ethnopragmatics, analytical emphasis is placed on culturally embedded norms and shared interpretive frameworks. This section argues that ethnopragmatics is not just different in its cultural focus as compared to its adjacent approaches, but also in its preferred descriptive metalanguage and its criteria for cross-cultural comparison. From this point of view, pragmatic meaning is not understood as universally derivable on the basis of abstract principles but is rather anchored in culturally specific expectations of appropriate conduct, emotion, and social relations. Relative to cross-cultural pragmatics, ethnopragmatics is a more reflexive and non-ethnocentric analytical framework (Goddard, 2006; Wierzbicka, 1991). Concurrently, cross-cultural pragmatics has yielded useful comparative information, and ethnopragmatics may be regarded as an addition to it as opposed to its substitution. Goddard (2006) and Wierzbicka (1991) claimed that empirical studies of cross-cultural pragmatics often encompass comparative studies of communicative behaviours among linguistic communities using predefined analytical categories that can tacitly reproduce Anglocentric assumptions. Ethnopragmatics reacts to this limitation by using the NSM and cultural scripts as culture-internal descriptive tools, thereby allowing the articulation of pragmatic norms from the point of view of the speech community itself. This methodological commitment makes it easier to make accurate representations of local meanings and to avoid reducing cultural variation to a deviation from a sort of implicit normative standard.

Building on the insights provided by cultural linguistics, ethnopragmatics maintains a fruitful relationship with sociopragmatics, especially in terms of social norms, conventions of politeness and contextual appropriateness. Although sociopragmatics focuses mostly on social variables such as power relations, spatial distance and imposition, ethnopragmatics instead foregrounds culturally shared conceptualisations that underpin these variables. In the process, it offers more comprehensive explanations of the evaluation of pragmatic strategies as polite, rude, sincere, or inappropriate in specific cultural contexts (Leech, 2014).

In recent years, the study of ethnopragmatics has become more closely aligned with discursive and interactional approaches such as conversation analysis and discourse pragmatics (Goddard, 2006; Sharifian, 2011). While ethnopragmatics has tended to focus on cultural norms rather than sequential interaction, recent scholarship has suggested that cultural norms are interpretive resources that are used by participants in a dynamic way in discourse (Duranti, 1997). This new dialogue highlights the promise of integration of ethnopragmatic insights with fine-grained interactional analysis to augment both traditions and develop more comprehensive accounts of pragmatic meaning in application (Östman & Verschueren, 2011). One of the debates is the extent to which ethnopragmatic cultural scripts can be incorporated into fine-grained sequential analysis without culture-internal explanatory priorities.

5. Methods and Methodological Debates

From a methodological point of view, ethnopragmatics can be defined by a logical correspondence between (a) goals, (b) methodological tools, and (c) factual data. Below, a distinction is drawn between methodological principles (the rationale for the approach) and analytical practice (the steps used to select, code, and interpret data). The main aim of ethnopragmatic research is to explain how culturally shared values and norms shape speech practices. One of the core methodological tools utilised is the NSM that allows analysts to describe meaning from a culture-internal perspective and to reduce the Anglocentric bias in the analysis. When applied, NSM explication is most commonly done by identifying recurrent expressions in a target interactional context and drafting an initial script, which is then refined based on the comparison of contextual and interactional evidence and insider judgements. The process makes explicit the manner in which an emic interpretation is formulated and checked rather than assumed. One recurrent methodological issue concerns whether NSM explications can be free of ethnocentric assumptions, and to what extent contextual and interactional information should be incorporated alongside semantic description (Goddard, 2006; Goddard & Ye, 2015). The evidentiary basis involves the linguistic input, including the repetitive features of discourse and lexicogrammatical arrangement, as well as relevant soft data provided by the cultural insiders in case it is possible (Goddard, 2006). Ethnoprismatic research draws on a multiplicity of complementary methodological approaches. Ethnoprismatic is best viewed methodologically as a mixed-methods programme combining semantic explication with ethnographic, corpus-based, and comparative evidence. The ethnography remains fundamental, and participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and narrative elicitation are used to collect insider perspectives of cultural norms (Duranti, 1997, 2001; Rosaldo, 1980; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Cultural script elicitation relies on NSM-based formulation to generate explicit articulations of culturally shared norms and expectations thereby reducing analytical bias (Goddard, 2018; Wierzbicka, 1996). Corpus-based methodologies are the basis of empirical validation through the identification of culturally-patterned collocations, frequency distributions and discourse tendencies in datasets (Baker, 2006; Goddard, 2021; Jucker & Taavitsainen, 2014). Comparative methodologies, using evidence from cross-cultural pragmatics, show that communicative behaviours vary according to cultural conceptualisations. The use of mixed-methods approaches incorporating ethnography, corpus linguistics, cultural scripts and discourse analysis allows for the triangulation of findings and strengthens ethnoprismatic claims and addresses ongoing methodological debates about evidence and comparability (Ameka, 1994; Enfield, 2002; Sharifian, 2017).

Table 1. Typical ethnoprismatic analytic steps (procedural outline)

Step	Analytical procedure
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1	Specify the target practice: delimit the interactional event to be analysed (e.g., greeting, apology, refusal) and define the analytic focus.
2	Assemble the dataset: select a small, defensible body of data (recordings/transcripts, field notes, or corpus extracts) and state inclusion criteria.
3	Locate recurrent forms: identify repeated lexical items, formulae, and pragmatic routines associated with the practice.
4	Formulate an initial NSM script: draft a culture-internal explication using semantic primes as the descriptive metalanguage.
5	Iterative contextual testing: revise the script by checking it against sequential environment, co-text, and interactional contingencies.
6	Elicit insider judgements (where feasible): use interviews/elicitation to confirm, nuance, or revise the proposed explication.
7	Controlled comparison (optional): undertake cross-community comparison only after emic scripts are stabilised for each setting.
8	State analytic limitations: report evidential boundaries, representational constraints, and the status of generalisations.

6. Areas of Application

Ethnopragmatics has found many applications in domains where culture-specific meaning is a key component. Within the field of politeness research, it explains the considerable variations in such values as respect, modesty, hierarchy, and egalitarianism in different communities (Ameka, 1994; Goddard, 2009; Wierzbicka, 1991). In the context of affective discourse, research shows that emotions such as shame, pride, anger and empathy are dependent on culturally specific conceptualisations rather than being universal psychological categories (Besnier, 1990; Goddard, 2011; Wierzbicka, 1999). Ethnopragmatics has also made significant contributions to the study of religious discourse, for example, by clarifying culturally-bound expressions of humility, reverence, piety and communal identity (Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2011). Within the scope of intercultural communication, this framework can explain the reasons for misunderstanding that occur because of the incongruence of cultural scripts and different expectations about the appropriate speech behaviour (Sharifian, 2017). To illustrate, an explicit request that is perceived as appropriate in one context can be seen as rude or face-threatening in another since the underlying script for “being considerate” differs across communities. Peeters (2015) argued that applied disciplines, such as translation studies, diplomatic practice, educational research, and health communication have benefited from ethnopragmatic insights, especially in situations of cultural misalignment that can lead to pragmatic failures. A persistent challenge in these domains is to maintain culture-internal specificity while stating scripts in a form that permits disciplined comparison rather than impressionistic generalisation. These applications therefore foreground an ongoing methodological debate: how ethnopragmatic

description can maintain culture-internal specificity while enabling defensible cross-cultural comparison. In methodological terms, applied work generally involves explicit specification of which data can be used as evidence for a given script (e.g. interactional records, corpus patterns, or elicited judgements) and how the presence of alternative interpretations is systematically evaluated.

7. Theoretical Contributions and Significance of Ethnopragsmatics

One of the important theoretical contributions of ethnopragsmatics is the reconceptualisation of pragmatic meaning as a culturally-specific phenomenon. It shows that pragmatic norms are empirically conditioned by shared values, moral presuppositions, and culturally embedded conceptions of personhood. Accordingly, it challenges universalist models that posit a culturally neutral conception of pragmatic competence, positioning ethnopragsmatics as a critical approach within pragmatics. This theoretical stance has had significant implications for the theorisation of pragmatic phenomena, such as politeness, emotion, and stance-taking, in a range of linguistic communities (Goddard, 2018; Wierzbicka, 1999). An ongoing debate concerns how far culture-neutral semantic explication can capture interactional context without oversimplifying it (Goddard, 2006; Goddard & Ye, 2015).

Peeters (2015) stated that ethnopragsmatics has increased methodological transparency in pragmatic analysis through semantic primes and explicit cultural scripts, achieving a decrease in ethnocentric bias and greater cross-cultural intelligibility. Its contributions to the study of culturally mediated emotion and evaluation have further shown that affective meanings are not universal psychological categories but are encoded in terms of language-specific and culture-specific resources (Besnier, 1990; Wierzbicka, 1999).

8. Research Gaps and Limitations

Such gaps should not be treated as minor omissions. They define what can be realistically touted as a research programme in ethnopragsmatics as well as constrain the types of cultural meanings that the field can describe and explain at any given time. Among these constraints, the most significant ones in terms of theory-building are (i) representational imbalance in the language coverage, (ii) constraints on multilingual and multimodal evidence, and (iii) conceptual inconsistency in the key analytic categories. Despite great progress, ethnopragsmatics faces several limitations that merit scholarly attention. The literature that exists is disproportionately focused on a limited set of languages (primarily English varieties), with the consequential marginalisation of the linguistic communities of the Middle East, Africa, Asia and many Indigenous communities. Corpus-based ethnopragsmatics remains an emerging subfield, and the field is still suffering from a lack of extensive multilingual corpora that encapsulate culturally contextualised discourse conventions. Taken together, these constraints undermine cross-study comparability and make it difficult to develop explanatory generalisations beyond individual case descriptions. Theoretically, these gaps restrict the extent to which ethnopragsmatics can move from descriptive mapping to cumulative explanation. They also weaken the field's capacity to adjudicate between competing accounts of cultural meaning, since core concepts and evidential standards are not

operationalised consistently across studies. Multimodal ethnopragmatics is not well developed yet, as many studies are based mainly on textual data and do not take into consideration gesture, posture, visual modalities and digital communication environments. Cognitive-pragmatic integration also needs to be expanded, especially in relation to issues of cultural conceptualisations interacting with attention, memory, and inferencing in online processing. Conceptual inconsistencies remain in the definition of culture, normativity, and key analytic categories, and thus hinder comparability across studies. These gaps pose two practical questions, namely how can ethnopragmatics develop norms of comparability while remaining sensitive to culture-internal meanings? and what types of multilingual and multimodal data are required to develop cumulative and empirically based explanatory models across communities? A near-term research agenda should therefore prioritise expanding under-represented languages, building shared multilingual corpora with multimodal layers, and standardising core definitions and reporting practices for scripts and evidence. Collectively, these constraints risk keeping ethnopragmatics at the stage of mapping cultural variation rather than cumulative explanatory models. To deal with them, it is necessary to have a wider empirical coverage and explicit methodological and ethical commitments, which are not essentialising of cultural groups and yet capable of representing culturally-grounded meaning.

9. Future Directions

Building on the unanswered questions identified above, future research should move toward a clearer agenda specifying what ethnopragmatics should explain, what kinds of data it should prioritise, and which methodological commitments can support cumulative and comparable claims. Future research in ethnopragmatics is expected to produce more integrated forms of analysis that will combine the NSM, cultural conceptualisation theory, and cognitive linguistics (Sharifian, 2017). One effective path to take is to structure such an agenda around four strands connected to each other: (1) corpus-informed ethnopragmatics that tests cultural scripts against recurring usage patterns; (2) multimodal and digital ethnopragmatics which considers images, emojis, and platform affordances as pragmatic resources; (3) broader cross-cultural coverage beyond predominantly Western datasets; and (4) conceptual elucidation of major terms so that findings can be cumulative across studies (Baker, 2006; Goddard, 2021). Subsequent developments require increased attention to African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Indigenous populations as a way of supplementing the understanding of cultural diversity throughout the world (Ameka, 1994; Enfield, 2002). Generally, these guidelines are designed to relocate ethnopragmatics beyond merely mapping the cultural variation toward developing ethnographically grounded explanations of how cultural meaning systems operate in contemporary communicative settings.

10. Conclusion

Ethnopragmatics provides a robust foundation for studying culturally embedded meaning in communication. By integrating the concepts of the NSM, cultural scripts and cultural conceptualisations, the framework offers an accurate and culturally sensitive account of the differences in communicative behaviours between speech communities. This review is a critical theoretical synthesis rather than an empirical study. It explains how key ethnopragmatic frameworks are connected and defines the methodological underpinnings on which cross-cultural comparison can be defended. Ethnopragmatics draws on ethnography, corpus linguistics and comparative cultural analysis; this methodological diversity supports robust explanations of culturally mediated meaning in contemporary communication. Despite the need for further development in terms of representation of understudied communities, expansion of empirical resources, and strengthening the cognitive integration, the discipline of ethnopragmatics can address these challenges if it expands its evidence base and analytical integration. Ethnopragmatics will remain theoretically valuable only insofar as it continues to balance cultural specificity with analytical comparability across contexts. By situating ethnopragmatics among adjacent pragmatic frameworks, this review clarifies contributions that go beyond descriptive comparison. By bringing culturally-grounded significance, methodological transparency and analytical reflexivity to the foreground, ethnopragmatics makes an important contribution to current debates in pragmatics and discourse studies. More precisely, it strengthens the field by sharpening the distinction between culture-internal (emic) description and defensible (etic) generalisation, and by clarifying what qualifies as evidence for proposed scripts. Meanwhile, the future of ethnopragmatics lies in its willingness to confront its own theoretical complexities: whether it will remain primarily descriptive or develop more explicit explanatory aims that can engage more directly with mainstream pragmatics. In this sense, ethnopragmatics not only documents cultural diversity, but also prompts pragmatic theory to reconsider what counts as evidence, explanation, and analytic neutrality when culture is treated as constitutive of meaning. The proposed framework shows significant potential for advancing theoretical studies and empirical research in the fields of intercultural communication, translation studies, education, media studies and social interaction. Finally, ethnopragmatics will be most productive when it moves beyond mapping cultural differences to constructing cumulative, empirically grounded accounts of how cultural meaning operates across changing communicative environments.

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