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2   BOOK REVIEW

Aijmer, K. & Rühlemann, C.: Corpus Pragmatics: A Handbook

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AQ1 Corpus pragmatics is an emerging field that, over the past decade or so, has received increasing attention from linguists. The reviewed volume is the first handbook under this sub-discipline, bringing together a multitude of studies investigating pragmatic features with corpus linguistic methods. As such, it is of interest to newcomers to the field of corpus pragmatics on all academic levels as well as scholars from any field that are interested in new approaches. The chapters are great resources on individual pragmatic features and can be used as stand-alone references with the handbook as a whole serving as a remarkable collection of avenues taken within this new discipline.

AQ2 Pragmatics, fully established in the late 1970s, investigates how language is used for communicative purposes. It, therefore, includes foci not on the literal meanings of words and sentences alone, but also on social and cultural readings of the utterances and their speakers. Research within pragmatics usually follows a "horizontal reading" of text (further detailed in the introductory chapter, p. 3), meaning close analyses of the immediate linguistic context of an utterance in which it appears as well as broader situational contexts. With such intricate analyses needed, data for pragmatic research has usually been quite limited to very specific text samples. The broad-sweeping comparisons across different texts have hence been difficult. The utterance-context specific interpretations seemingly limited the field to small-scale analyses—that is, until corpus linguistics found ways to not only comprise large amounts of language data, but also offer specialised corpora with sophisticated methods of annotation accommodating to the needs of pragmatics. More and more corpora are constructed that include not just text fragments, but whole texts, providing background information on speakers and listeners, as well as situational and conversational contexts (cf. Chapman 2011: 187). Further, with

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35 technological advances, annotation and tagging of existing texts have become more
36 and more versatile and applicable in various research areas, from historical
37 linguistics over stylistics to linguistic anthropology. For pragmatics in particular this
38 offers the possibility to find patterns across texts and further our knowledge of how
39 certain features are used for communicative purposes in a wider sense, not just
40 within limited contexts.
41   Both pragmatics and corpus linguistics are relative newcomers to the broad field
42 of linguistics and corpus pragmatics as the intersection of both, albeit currently still
43 rather small in comparison to other sub-disciplines due to the need for specialized
44 corpora, offers invaluable insights into how language is used for communicative
45 purposes. *Corpus Pragmatics—A Handbook* is a collection of studies that presents
46 recent work in this field and aims to "look at how the use of corpus data has
47 informed research into different key aspects of pragmatics" (summary from the
48 back of the book). I will give an evaluation of whether this was attained after a brief
49 summary of the contents of the volume itself.
50   After the introductory chapter, which highlights the particularities of corpus
51 pragmatic research in general, the volume is divided into six parts, each focusing on
52 a particular theme from pragmatics (speech acts, pragmatic principles, pragmatic
53 markers, evaluation, reference, and turn-taking). With the high number of individual
54 contributions, 16 studies by 21 researchers, it would be impractical to give detailed
55 accounts on all of these. Instead, I will highlight the ways in which they are
56 embedded within corpus pragmatics as a new methodological field and how they
57 enhance given pragmatic theories.

Part 1: Corpora and Speech Acts

59 Speech acts have been investigated through corpus linguistic methods in a number
60 of studies (mentioned here are for instance Aijmer 1996; Weisser 2003; Adolphs
61 2008) and the investigations in this section add substantially to what is currently
62 known of general patterns of speech acts and, in particular, how corpus pragmatics
63 as a field can be used to further explore this area. Problems arising, as pointed out in
64 the first study by McAllister (pp. 29–51) on indirect directives, are that speech acts
65 are not easily defined by a given set of lexical features. They need to be sought and
66 coded manually, a time-intensive endeavour that cannot yet be sidestepped with
67 corpus methods. Annotation or tagging of corpus data and issues connected to this
68 are a reoccurring theme, not only reiterated by the other two studies in this section
69 of the book [Kohnen on a diachronic perspective on speech acts (pp. 52–83) and
70 Weisser on annotation of speech acts (pp. 84–113)], but throughout the volume.
71 A trend throughout most of the studies included here seems to be a combination of
72 annotation methods with initial automated coding followed by manual proofs.
73   The studies presented in this chapter offer new insights into pragmatic theories,
74 as well as corpus pragmatics as a new methodological field. In terms of theory, both
75 McAllister and Kohnen present new findings of speech acts in synchronic as well as
76 diachronic language use respectively. Methodologically, Weisser investigates semi-
77 automatic annotation models for pragmatic research in general and how they apply

78 to speech acts in particular. This chapter stands out for its very thorough treatment
79 of technological challenges to a corpus approach.

80 **Part 2: Corpora and Pragmatic Principles**

81 In this section pragmatic principles and corpus investigations thereof are introduced:
82 Kaltenböck focuses on processibility (pp. 117–142), Andersen on relevance theory
83 (pp. 118–168), and Diani on politeness (pp. 169–191). Here we find studies
84 highlighting the advantages of conducting large-scale research. Given the
85 availability of data (in Kaltenböck's study for instance, appropriate texts from
86 different time periods that will allow for investigations on language change), a
87 corpus can give insights into pragmatic principles not only on "the level of
88 individual usage but also on a more general structural level" (p. 118). Andersen, in
89 the following study, argues for corpus methods that not only broaden our
90 understanding of pragmatic principles, but that broaden our understanding in a way
91 that is unachievable by other, more traditional methods for pragmatic research (p.
92 143). Looking at incoming discourse markers, Andersen shows how to systemat-
93 ically investigate relevance theory and argues that existing literature focuses too
94 much on more traditional markers in a field ripe with innovation. He suggests that
95 corpus pragmatics offers possibilities to conduct research cross-linguistically and to
96 look into the development of items such as discourse markers through processes of
97 borrowing, etc.
98   The third study of this section, by Diani, follows this notion in examining
99 mitigated criticism strategies across two sets of cultural contexts: Italian and English
100 academic book review articles. In terms of employing cross-cultural studies through
101 corpus-pragmatic methods, it is pointed out here that the quantitative aspect of using
102 corpora is not the only advantage. As has been highlighted in sections before, the
103 opportunity to identify pragmatic patterns is one of the greatest assets of this new
104 sub-field of study, one that needs to be further exploited.

105 **Part 3: Corpora and Pragmatic Markers**

106 With reference to pragmatic principles, as covered in the previous part, this
107 chapter of the volume investigates corpus-led studies of pragmatic markers (Aijmer,
108 pp. 195–218) and stance taking (Gray and Biber, pp. 219–248), areas that have seen
109 a fair share of corpus treatment before. Both studies reflect on the versatility of
110 markers, either for their unclear set of definitions, their various functions, or their
111 possible implicitness. All of these present challenges to corpus pragmatic studies in
112 that they demand manual annotation where this is missing, as well as appropriate
113 background information about the situational context of the utterance for tagging
114 and coding, all depending on the feature. As mentioned in the final study of this
115 section (Norrick, pp. 249–275), corpus investigations are not always straight-
116 forward, not even with those features that are relatively clearly defined in their form
117 and function, such as the here discussed interjections (including primary

118 interjections *oh* or *uh*), as well as secondary interjections (such as *gosh*, *yuck*, or
119 *golly*). With automated tagging often inconsistent across corpora, manual analysis is
120 seemingly inevitable, particularly in the case of secondary interjections (those that
121 belong to other word classes). Norrick presents a thorough portrayal of corpus work
122 that has been undertaken in terms of interjections, including notes on corpora of
123 various sizes and why both small and big corpora deserve a place in corpus
124 pragmatic methodologies.

Part 4: Corpora and Evaluation

126 The two papers in this part of the volume present corpus-pragmatic work on prosody
127 (Partington, pp. 279–303) and tails (Timmis, pp. 304–327). Partington specifically
128 highlights the advantages of corpus methods when introducing his study, which
129 investigates evaluative prosody and how patterns can be traced in both synchronic
130 and diachronic contexts. He concludes by stating that corpus methods allow for
131 "more rigorous and more subtle analysis" (p. 301) than what was previously
132 possible in tracking co-occurrence of lexical items with reference to evaluation.
133 Timmis's study illustrates considerations of comparability between three corpora
134 and how one can use corpora in socio-pragmatic research. He also compliments the
135 opportunity to trace systematic feature uses and their functions in communicative
136 contexts with new and advanced corpus methods. Both studies highlight the
137 potential of corpus methods in pragmatics and how they advance the field in finding
138 structure in language use that was previously difficult to map appropriately across
139 corpora with reference to genre and time.

Part 5: Corpora and Reference

141 The two papers presented under the research area of reference emphasize the need
142 for specialized corpora for corpus-pragmatic research. The first (Rühlemann and
143 O'Donnell on deixis, pp. 331–359) is highly reliant on the thorough annotation of
144 texts going beyond POS tagging and into various layers including for instance
145 participant status or discourse presentation (see p. 342). They call for furthering the
146 annotation of corpus data in order to truly benefit from corpus methods in pragmatic
147 research.
148 The study following this (Cheng and O'Keeffe on vagueness, pp. 360–378)
149 exemplifies this call in lamenting the lack of vague language tagging, which causes
150 "meticulous trawling of general searches" (p. 365). Manual tagging aside however,
151 they conclude that corpus-based studies offer a better and more thorough
152 understanding of language patterns and are able to show how features are
153 embedded in various contexts.

154 **Part 6: Corpora and Turn-Taking**

155 The final part of the volume presents three studies on devices of turn-taking. Tottie
156 (pp. 381–407) discusses the function of turn-medial fillers *uh* and *uhm* and adds to
157 previous accounts that they function not only as turn-holding devices, but similarly
158 as turn-planners (p. 399). Previous corpus accounts of the feature yielded a vast
159 amount of comparable data; however, with most corpora missing utterance
160 context—such as the subjective matter of turn position (p. 393)—definite pragmatic
161 functions with reference to turn-taking and management are not easily assigned.
162 Here it becomes apparent that not only the feature itself is difficult to find and to
163 classify, but its surrounding context might be just as fickle. Moving on to
164 backchannels (Peters and Wong, pp. 408–429) the notion of context clarification is
165 further explored.
166 Here, not only the textual context is mentioned as vital in analysing pragmatic
167 functions. Multimodal considerations, such as facial expression or gestures, are
168 equally telling in corpus pragmatic analyses and should therefore not be ignored.
169 In their study, Peters and Wong highlight the technological advances of using
170 corpus methods and including accurate timelines to their research, which advances
171 previous accounts on the importance of backchannels for turn-management.
172 The final study in the volume presents the notion of co-constructed turn-taking
173 (Clancy and McCarthy, pp. 430–453) and investigates patterns occurring at turn-
174 boundaries. Similarly to many of the other studies discussed in the volume, they
175 mention tedious tagging as part of the analysis process. Nevertheless, it seems that
176 throughout the research presented here, the oftentimes lengthy manual annotation is
177 worthwhile in terms of the findings gained.
178 This is one of the main implications that the book not only set out to achieve, but
179 indeed presented thoroughly through detailed accounts of recent and relevant
180 research. Even though many existing corpora have not (yet) been provided with the
181 detailed contexts and annotations needed for pragmatic studies, it becomes clear that
182 this is a mere setback that is made up for by explorations of new patterns, systematic
183 structures and regulations that were previously undiscernible.
184 The studies chosen for the volume work well together and give a broad overview
185 on the various areas pragmatics is interested in. The six parts are well structured and
186 the individual chapters complement each other in a way that a range of views and
187 methods are offered for similar foci. This enables the reader to get a rounded picture
188 of the new methodological possibilities, as well as occurring challenges that might
189 be of interest.
190 Unfortunately, not all studies manage to point out in detail where the advantages
191 (or disadvantages) of corpus pragmatics in comparison to more traditional
192 pragmatic methods lie. Further, it would have been welcomed to read more about
193 constraints in choosing the right corpora for specific research areas that demand
194 particular annotation. While most studies mention annotation as a problem in terms
195 of context-bound analyses, they do not go into detail as to what that means for
196 corpus pragmatics as a field. This volume being the first handbook on this emerging

197 research area especially, it would have been appreciated to see more methodological
198 reflection on this part.
199   In terms of offering an overview of the main areas of pragmatic research,
200 however, the handbook excels in giving thorough examples of corpus methods. It
201 remains exciting to see how the increasing availability of new corpora, as well as
202 new methods of annotating pragmatic functions will further this field. As
203 Rühlemann alludes to in the introduction, the expansion of this field is highly
204 dependent on advancement of technological means, aiming towards (semi-
205)automatic annotations "that are not only more resource-economic but also more
206 efficient" (p. 13). Regarding this point, it was surprising not to see more mention of
207 multimodal research. Apart from some studies employing time-stamped corpora,
208 there is a lack of accounts on multimodal means that are surely applicable and
209 possibly further progressive to current theories. This is especially surprising
210 considering Rühlemann's previous call for multimodal methods as being
211 inevitable challenges in future pragmatic endeavours (2010: 298–299).
212   While an inclusion of multimodal methods would have certainly added another
213 layer of theoretical considerations to this volume, it is clear that as it stands it
214 already offers a vast amount of research to the reader, making this a small complaint
215 of an otherwise thorough and expertly presented handbook. In conclusion then,
216 *Corpus Pragmatics—A Handbook* provides a well-rounded and thorough overview
217 of major pragmatic areas and their take on corpus linguistic methods. It enriches the
218 field in expanding as well as challenging common theories through new findings,
219 guiding the reader through the process of combining two fields of linguistics that
220 have been thought to be "not unproblematic" (Rühlemann 2010: 289).
221   The handbook introduces a new field of linguistic study, promising for its
222 exciting new insights into pragmatics and challenging for further developments of
223 corpus methods.
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