REVIEWS

Aijmer, K., Rühlemann, C. (eds) (2015) *Corpus Pragmatics: A Handbook.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 461 pp.

The present volume is unique in that it represents the first handbook on corpus pragmatics as an independent linguistic field, hence bridging an imaginary gap between pragmatics and corpus linguistics. Whereas the former is a discipline with a longer tradition and can be traced back to as early as 1938, when Charles Morris acknowledged that pragmatics is "the study of the relation of signs to interpreters" (as cited in Mey 2001: 4), corpus linguistics in its own right emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, when in the 1960s the first larger corpora representing general language use were compiled (e.g. the *Brown Corpus of Written American English*, or its British counterpart, the *Lancaster-Bergen-Oslo Corpus*). It can be claimed that for quite a long time these two disciplines only existed in parallel without any closer connection or sometimes even diverged from each other; however, in recent years, pragmatics and corpus linguistics have started walking hand in hand on convergent paths, thus giving rise to a burgeoning discipline called corpus pragmatics, which blends the essential methodologies of both fields.

The volume under review is edited by two renowned researchers in the field of pragmatics and corpus linguistics, in particular, Karin Aijmer, Professor Emerita in English Linguistics at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, and Christoph Rühlemann, a researcher at Philipps University Marburg in Germany. The editors succeeded in assembling a team of eminent scholars from all over the world, whose contributions and consequently the present volume as a whole not only overview but also broaden the area of corpus pragmatics. This two-pronged aim is achieved by focusing on cardinal areas of pragmatic research as well as reporting original case studies conducted in these areas (p. 13). Moreover, the majority of contributions point out the usefulness of creating and working with specialized corpora.

The book is logically organised into six thematic parts dealing with the core areas of pragmatic research as follows: *Part I* entitled *Corpora and speech acts* covers the study of speech acts both in synchronic and diachronic perspective and offers three research articles by McAllister, Kohnen and Weisser; in *Part II (Corpora and pragmatic principles)* pragmatic principles such as processibility, relevance and politeness are tackled by Kaltenböck, Andersen and Diani respectively, and *Part III* called *Corpora and pragmatic markers* opens with

a contribution by Aijmer on pragmatic markers in general, then discusses stance markers in the article by Gray and Biber, and closes with the study of interjections by Norrick; in *Part IV (Corpora and evaluation)*, which includes only two chapters by Partington and Timmis, it is semantic prosody and use of tails that are looked into; *Part V* with the title *Corpora and reference* deals with deixis and vagueness, and just as the previous part is represented by two contributions, the former written by Rühlemann and O'Donnell and the latter by Cheng and O'Keeffe; the last section *Part VI* entitled *Corpora and turn-taking* includes three separate contributions examining the role in turn management of filled pauses (Tottie) and high-frequency backchannels (Peters and Wong) and also co-constructed turn-taking (Clancy and McCarthy).

Part I deals with both the synchronic and diachronic analysis of speech acts using corpus-linguistic methods. Paula Garcia McAllister employs a methodology that can be viewed as "a 'bottom-up' identification of speech acts in that speech acts were identified in context while the researcher simultaneously read through transcripts and listened to audio recordings of the conversations" (p. 32). She thus applies 'the identification-in-context' methodology to explore Searle's category of directives while trying to find out if there is a connection between situation types and speech acts used in academic conversations. Her findings show that there is significant variation in the types of speech act that speakers use in different situations and also reveal that certain speech acts such as warnings or giving directions and instructions were neglected during the early stages of speech act research.

Thomas Kohnen's study offers a diachronic speech act analysis and mainly focuses on speech acts in the history of the English language. His findings show that indirect constructions only came to existence during the late Middle English and Early Modern English periods; however, they also reveal that the number of directives was almost seven times higher in the Old English part of the *Helsinki Corpus* in contrast to the present-day *LOB Corpus (Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen Corpus)* (p. 75).

In *Part II* Gunther Kaltenböck looks into the pragmatic principle of processibility and tries to explore how the conventions of information packaging can influence the development of syntactic structure. He investigates the occurrence of pleonastic matrix clauses such as *(I) think (that)…*, *(It) turns out (that)…*, *(The) thing is (that)…*, *It's just (that/like)…* (p. 118). His research findings confirm that the 'presentational matrix clauses' adopt discourse-organizational functions and serve as formulaic pragmatic markers. However, it should be borne in mind that when tracing these from a diachronic perspective, corpus analyses of spoken features and recent language development are not without difficulties,

because spoken language data from various time periods are not always available in sufficient numbers (p. 138).

In his case study, Gisle Andersen deals with the application of a relevance-theoretic perspective on the analysis of authentic corpus data while studying emerging discourse markers and interjections that represent recent language developments (the relatively new interjection *duh* and the marker of emphatic rejection *as if*). Based on corpus data from English and Norwegian, Andersen's study stresses the need for a cross-linguistic dimension in the investigation of discourse markers in order to see how they are borrowed from a source language into a recipient language (p. 144).

The aim of Giuliana Diani's case study is to explore how politeness is expressed in different cultural contexts by means of a corpus-based analysis of mitigated criticism in English and Italian academic book review articles in the branch of history (p. 171). Her research findings show that Italian reviewers tend to criticise their peers far less when compared to their English counterparts (100 instances of criticism in the Italian corpus versus 558 tokens in the English corpus) (p. 184). Another discrepancy can be observed in the way criticisms are carried out in both corpora: whereas Italian reviewers demonstrate a strong preference for mitigated criticism (61%), their English counterparts indicate a greater preference for direct criticism (57%) (p. 185).

The triplet of contributions in *Part III* is devoted to the corpus studies of pragmatic markers and stance. The first article by Karin Aijmer argues that pragmatic markers are challenging to define. It is their multifunctionality on the one hand that makes them difficult to demarcate, but also the fact that they need to be characterised both formally and functionally, and in context. The importance of speech context is illustrated by a small case study of *I think* in the British part of the *International Corpus of English* and it confirms that when analysing pragmatic markers it is essential that not only contextual factors but also position in the utterance be taken into account (p. 215).

The second study of *Part III* by Bethany Gray and Douglas Biber looks into the linguistic means expressing stance. In contrast to the previous corpus-based analyses this contribution is groundbreaking in that it explores "new" stance structures typical of academic writing which can be expressed by implicit means and suggests that the computational tools for the identification of these structures be developed in the future (p. 242).

Part III is concluded by Neal Norrick's essay addressing the current state of research on interjections and presenting certain areas to show both the strengths and weaknesses in the corpus-based analysis of interjections, in particular, exclamatory constructions, constructed dialogue, phrasal interjections and combinations of interjections (p. 271).

The two chapters of *Part IV* discuss corpus research into "evaluation, as a speaker's attitude or stance towards the entities they talk about" (p. 19). Alan Partington deals with 'evaluative prosody' and points out that this phenomenon can be defined from at least two standpoints. For his research he uses *SiBol 05*, which is a 150-million word corpus of UK broadsheet newspaper texts from 2005 (two universities – Siena and Bologna – were involved in the compilation of this corpus), and claims that newspapers represent several assets to this type of study, namely, they include a wide diversity of discourse types and of evaluating voices (p. 279).

The second contribution of *Part IV* tackles not evaluation itself, but its epiphenomenon, which in the case of informal conversation is the use of tails. Ivor Timmis compares tails in three different corpora, namely, the Irish component of the *ICE Corpus*, *BNC (British National Corpus)* and the *Bolton Corpus*, and thus he adds a sociopragmatic dimension to previous corpus-pragmatic descriptions (p. 20). Timmis concludes that tails serve both to reflect and reinforce the identities in the communities under investigation (p. 325).

The major focus of *Part V* is given to reference. In the first of two chapters, Christoph Rühlemann and Matthew B. O'Donnell present corpus research into deixis. Their case study shows that textual colligation is at work not only in writing but also in spoken communication. It focuses on the so-called 'introductory *this*' and the authors conclude that it acts as a 'theme marker' and is hence best viewed as a type of discourse deixis (p. 356).

The latter of the contributions in *Part V* by Winnie Cheng and Anne O'Keeffe represents a corpus-based study which is both intracultural and intercultural in that it compares the use of vague language between native and non-native speakers, in particular, in the corpora covering Hong Kong English and Irish English. It offers a variational case study on the approximator 'about + *n*', where *n* stands for 'number' (e.g. *about four or five*). It can be observed that both the frequencies and functions of the approximator are essentially the same in the varieties under investigation (p. 375).

Corpora and turn-taking is the title of *Part VI*, which comprises three separate chapters. The first one by Gunnel Tottie deals with the role in turn management of filled pauses, referred to as UHM. It is based on the *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English* (SBCSAE) and looks into three functions that the filled pauses fulfil: as signals for taking, holding, or yielding the turn. The results of Tottie's case study only partly agree with previous research and in general, her findings support the fact that "turn-taking should be seen as a collaborative effort rather than as a competitive fight for the floor" (p. 403).

In the second chapter, the role of high-frequency backchannels such as *mm* and *yeah* is explored. Pam Peters and Deanna Wong find out that there are very delicate differences in the durations of high-frequency backchannels and the intervals before them, which are contingent on whether the backchannel *yeah* occurs as a standalone, first in the string, or last before a change of turn (p. 425). The authors point out that backchannelling plays a more complex role in turn management than has so far been acknowledged in research on the arrangement of social dialogue (p. 426).

The last contribution of *Part VI* and of the volume as a whole investigates co-constructed turn-taking, which means that its two authors, Brian Clancy and Michael McCarthy, look into complex turns which are co-constructed by two (or more) speakers in that the second-speaker turn expands or completes the first speaker's turn. Their research is based on the *Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English* (CANCODE) and the *Limerick Corpus of Irish English* (LCIE), and the authors conclude that the cooperative construction of turn-taking is a powerful force in maintaining conversational flow (p. 449).

In terms of the overall conception of the volume, it offers a diverse array of ideas and top ranking research papers, yet at the same time the book as a whole and its six parts are tightly arranged and interconnected. Evident throughout the book is the demonstration of how the integration of different key methodologies and combination of various perspectives and approaches can help us better understand the growing and quickly developing discipline of corpus pragmatics. All thematic parts represent a wide cross section of the research conducted in the field of corpus pragmatics, albeit, as may be expected, not an exhaustive assemblage. However, as the editors themselves point out, "the intention of the present volume is to lay the foundations for further growth of the field" (p. 23) and they believe that "corpus-pragmatic research will spread to many more pragmatic areas based on new corpora, making it possible to study pragmatic phenomena in ever greater detail, depth and subtlety" (ibid.). It can thus be concluded that this volume represents a touchstone for scholars already in the field as well as those who are about to enter it.

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References

Mey, J. L. (2001) *Pragmatics: An Introduction.* 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.