

# Preface

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Pages xv–xxii of

**Handbook of Pragmatics. Second edition : Manual**

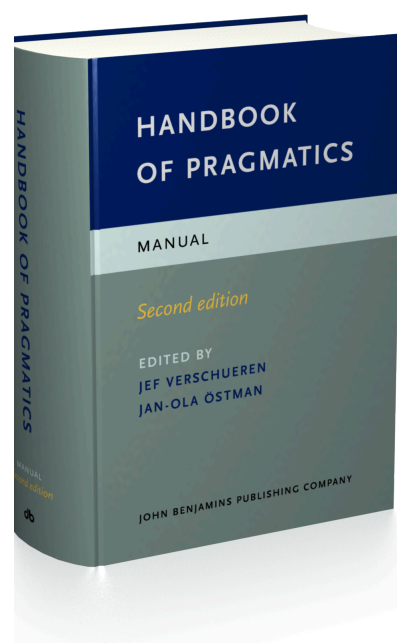
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## Preface

The *IPrA Handbook of Pragmatics* project started off with the publication of a *Manual*, of which this is the second edition. The first edition was published in 1995 and has so far been augmented with 24 annual installments of handbook entries, roughly 300 pages each. This second edition of the *Manual* includes new texts (about which more later), revised versions of some of the entries in the first edition, and each entry is crucially cross-referenced to related entries in the annual installments and in the *Handbook of Pragmatics Online* (at <https://benjamins.com/online/hop/>), which is continually being updated.

For the purpose of this publication, *pragmatics* is defined as *the interdisciplinary (cognitive, social, and cultural) science of language use*. What this means exactly, and what it entails for the scientific status of linguistic pragmatics, is explained in the introductory chapter on “The pragmatic perspective”. The overall purpose of the *Handbook of Pragmatics* is that it should function as a tool in the search for *coherence*, in the sense of cross-disciplinary intelligibility in this necessarily interdisciplinary field of scholarship. Within this general context, the *Manual* was originally designed to provide as much as possible of the necessary background information on traditions and methods of research and notational systems, which contributing authors can rely upon to avoid undue repetition when dealing with specific topics, and which users should be able to turn to for clarification of what is taken for granted in the rest of the Handbook. In the annual installments as well as in the continuously updated *Handbook of Pragmatics Online*, further traditions, methods and notational systems articles were added; these are the new texts that were naturally included in this second edition. Each article in this edition is accompanied by the publication date of the reprinted version, and useful cross-references.

### The Handbook and the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA)

There is a clear historical connection between the Handbook and the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA, <https://pragmatics.international>). From the very first announcements of the establishment of the Association in 1986, a project was anticipated which was planned to result in the publication of a *Handbook of Pragmatics*, intended to be one of the major tools to achieve the Association's goals (i) of *disseminating knowledge* about pragmatic aspects of language, not only among pragmaticians of various ‘denominations’ and students of language in general, but in principle among everyone who, personally or professionally, could profit from more insight into the functioning and use of language; (ii) of stimulating various *fields of application*, ranging from language teaching and problems of inter/transcultural communication to the construction of computer communication systems and the treatment of patients with language disorders, by making this knowledge accessible to an interdisciplinary community of scholars approaching the same general subject area from different points of view and with different methodologies; (iii) of finding, in the process, a significant degree of *theoretical coherence* for the discussion

and comparison of the results of the foundational research carried out by scholars dealing with aspects of language use or the functionality of language in fields such as theoretical linguistics, applied linguistics, text and discourse analysis, multimodal analysis, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, the ethnography of speaking, anthropological linguistics, procedural and developmental psycholinguistics, artificial intelligence, neurolinguistics, semiotics, the philosophy of language, speech act theory, communication theory, rhetoric, stylistics, and even in the wider fields of sociology, political science, and history, to name only a few. Because of this connection, the scope of the Handbook coincides with the scope of the International Pragmatics Association and its biannual conferences.

To the extent that theories – in the sense of coherent and systematically organized sets of assumptions, principles and procedures – can be said to exist in pragmatics, none of the current ones are adequate to capture the full richness of simple but fundamental intuitions about what it means to use language. Moreover, it would be pretentious to believe, at our present state of knowledge about the use of language, that anything exceeding the barest outline of a program leading to a sufficiently sophisticated theory could be formulated right now. Nor is it clear that it would be desirable to have *one* theory, since theoretical depth is more likely to result from the availability of competing models. This *Handbook of Pragmatics* is primarily intended to organize our present knowledge in such a way as to stimulate future research and interdisciplinary debate, and to reduce the risks inherent in disconnected fragmentary studies.

Even this limited aim for the Handbook may seem overly ambitious. Yet there are good reasons to strive for greater coherence, even if it is not the intention of the Handbook, nor of the International Pragmatics Association, to produce one overarching theory. The range of scientific enterprises which deserve the label ‘pragmatic’, is marked by such a high degree of fragmentation that two linguists with slightly different methodological and terminological backgrounds might be unable to understand each other when talking about the same subject, even if the basic points they are trying to make are very similar. A reasonably coherent way of organizing knowledge about pragmatic aspects of language is indispensable if we want to achieve a minimal degree of comparability across topics of inquiry, across terminologies, and across methodologies. Such comparability is a *conditio sine qua non* for any form of fruitful cooperation (which has been recognized for ages in the sciences as a basic requirement for accelerated growth of insights). Without comparability across methodologies and terminologies, and without inter(sub)disciplinary cooperation, we cannot expect applicability of our insights in areas such as language teaching, the treatment of speech disorders, international and intercultural communication, or natural language processing systems, to name just a few of the more important ones.

Establishing an International Pragmatics Association was motivated on precisely those grounds. We quote from the very first announcement (from 1986):

Today, pragmatics is a large, loose, and disorganized collection of research efforts. Researchers in an ever-increasing number of different disciplines make constant or occasional use of pragmatic notions. But their contribution to our understanding of human verbal communication often does not reach its fullest potential as a result of the emerging theoretical, methodological, and terminological diversity. Though, when confronted with the complexities of language use and human communication, such diversity could mean

strength, this strength has turned into the weakness of fragmentation in the absence of a more or less coherent general framework in terms of which one can compare the results of various forms of research dealing with basically similar or related forms of functionality.

Needless to say that, without intermethodological and interterminological comparability, significant and far-reaching results of fundamental research in pragmatics are harder to achieve, and that their applicability remains entirely dubious. This state of affairs is regrettable in the face of the many important domains in which knowledge about pragmatic aspects of language is indispensable, such as language teaching, language rehabilitation, crosscultural communication, natural language processing systems, etc.

It is in this context that the International Pragmatics Association is being established.

There is no doubt that the International Pragmatics Association has exerted a beneficial influence on the international development of the multidisciplinary field of pragmatics, by means of: its regular International Pragmatics Conferences (17 so far, on different continents); its participation in the organization of smaller-scale events; its educational outreach activities; its member journal *Pragmatics*; its open-access *Bibliography of Pragmatics Online*. The *Handbook of Pragmatics* should clearly be situated in the same kind of context. It follows that its major task is *not so much the search for unity as the struggle against counterproductive fragmentation*. The Handbook should, therefore, represent *a continuous exercise in flexibility*, rather than an attempt to impose a monolithic and unchangeable framework. In other words, it is not intended to consolidate a new, artificial, field of research, but to enhance understanding by promoting communication across the various disciplines which are, in part or in their totality, relevant to pragmatics.

## Basic options

Some basic options follow from this brief description of the purpose and scope of the Handbook. *First*, the primary aim of the Handbook is *to provide easy access*, for scholars with widely divergent backgrounds but with converging interests in the use and functioning of language, to the different topics, traditions and methods which, together, make up the field of pragmatics, in its broadest sense.

*Second*, the Handbook is not intended to be a textbook, nor a forum for new research; rather, it is intended to be *a state-of-the-art account*. The governing principle is that it is a reference work to be continuously updated. In principle this is a process taking place over an indefinite time span and taking the shape of annual installments as well as an online version. The main caveat in relation to an attempt to keep up with new developments, is to make sure that whatever is of value in 'outdated' trends and ideas should remain accessible as well. With an ongoing attempt to keep the right balance between historical accuracy and the timely recording of innovative work, the Handbook has become a major instrument of real scientific growth.

*Third*, the intended *target audience* of the Handbook is *a wide, international and interdisciplinary academic community* covering the entire range of the humanities, the social sciences and

the cognitive sciences. In addition, the Handbook addresses any individual with a personal or professional interest in the problems of language use.

### The problem of representativeness

Given the general purpose and scope of the Handbook, and given the practical options they entail, a special problem is posed by the strong need for a transcultural approach which pays due attention to the treatment of *non-western traditions*. A predominantly ‘western’ slant was easily detected in the initial stages of the Handbook publication program. Rather than reflecting a conscious choice on our part, this was merely the result of circumstances, in particular the restrictedness of knowledge readily available to the editors during the preparation of the project. In terms of active choices, a different picture has emerged in the ongoing development of the Handbook. That is, non-western concepts and traditions, whenever relevant, have become an integral part of the presentation.

This does not mean that there will be separate entries labeled ‘Japanese pragmatics’ or ‘Latin American pragmatics’. Not only would such labels violate the very idea of ‘science’ and scientific research, which must pursue the goal of more universally valid forms of knowledge. In addition, entries with such labels would hardly ever cover clearly distinct traditions. Suffice it to remind the reader of Stephen Levinson’s attempt (in his 1983 work *Pragmatics*) to distinguish between an Anglo-American and a Continental (European) tradition in pragmatics, the former being restricted to the more manageable ‘linguistic’ topics such as presuppositions and speech acts, the latter expanding more widely into the realm of interdisciplinary fields such as sociolinguistics. Science refuses to recognize such geographical borders. For instance, the ‘Continental’ tradition, as defined above, was leaning more heavily towards the early definition of pragmatics in 1938 provided by Charles W. Morris, an American. And the present editors, though clearly continentally inclined – again following the definition above – would be perceived by French pragmatists as typically ‘Anglo-American’. And the ‘Anglo-American’ Levinson was for decades heading a German research institute on cognitive anthropology in The Netherlands.

Thus, what we mean by making the Handbook open up the world of pragmatics to non-western concepts and traditions that would fit its wide scope, is that non-western linguistic traditions, as well as related disciplines and concepts, will continue to be systematically screened for the ways in which they provide insight into the functioning of language. This search, carried out with the help of the international Editorial Board (which coincides with the IPrA Consultation Board) and the international network of scholars in the International Pragmatics Association, have already resulted in various types of amendments to topical articles as well as in new entries for traditions representing a ‘different’ perspective and for tradition-specific concepts. A change of perspective we find, for instance, in a traditions article on “Postcolonial pragmatics” (by Rukmini Bhaya Nair). Examples of tradition-specific concepts would be the Japanese traditional linguistic notion *isoo*, which (according to Sachiko Ide) refers to a ‘section’ of language, differing in various ways from roughly equivalent terms such as ‘register’ or ‘dialect’, and *òmólúàbí* (already covered in a Handbook entry by Akin Odebunmi), a cultural concept that “encapsulates the idea

of a good Yorùbá person, and is thus impactful in determining the Yorùbá identity.” It is a part of the general scheme of the Handbook to further our knowledge of such concepts as soon as the required expertise is available in a publishable form.

## The Handbook format

The *Handbook of Pragmatics* contains three clearly distinct parts: the *Manual*, the *Handbook* proper, and the *Cumulative index*.

In addition to this preface and a general introduction by Jef Verschueren, the *Manual* gathers basic instrumental information that the authors and readers of all the articles and entries in the Handbook proper (with 24 annual installments so far) should be able to rely on, thus eliminating repetitions and extensive digressions. The following three areas are dealt with in the *Manual*:

- i. Major *traditions* or approaches in, relevant to, or underlying pragmatics, either as a specific linguistic enterprise or as a scientific endeavor in general. The articles in this section give an overview of the traditions and approaches in question, with historical background information and a description of present and potential interactions with other traditions or approaches and the field of pragmatics as a whole.
- ii. Major *methods of research* used or usable in pragmatics or pragmatics-related traditions.
- iii. Different kinds of *notational systems*, including the most widespread transcription systems.

Obviously, these areas are closely interrelated and cannot be separated for any other than presentational purposes.

Even though methods change, and traditions get reinterpreted constantly, the topics dealt with in the main body of the Handbook find a relatively stable frame of reference in the *Manual*. Revised and expanded editions (this one being the first) will not be necessary on a frequent basis, though in the long run they are prompted by new developments in research, as well as by the need to represent specific non-western traditions.

An important remark needs to be made about the *traditions* section of the *Manual*. There is a clear danger of mismatch between traditions and names for traditions, in a more sophisticated way than was illustrated above with the ‘geographical’ or ‘national’ labels. The fact that it is one of the basic purposes of the entire traditions section to be an instrument to aid authors of topically-oriented articles in the Handbook, has as a practical result that all we get is indeed a list of *names of traditions*: only the more or less uniformly ‘named’ items have found their way into the traditions section. This does not imply that no other traditions exist, but only that uniform reference to them may be more difficult; entering them under invented labels (like e.g., “Bolingerianism”) would defeat the cross-referencing and redundancy-eliminating purpose of this part of the *Manual*. An attempt has been made, however, to make sure that crucial information does not get lost just because of this approach to traditions, which satisfies practical demands. In many cases, tradition-like information will therefore have to be sought under topical labels or in articles about individual scholars.

The main body of the *Handbook* (in the annual installments and the online version) consists of *in-depth articles* of various sizes organized around entry-like keywords (or person names in case the article is about the contributions of an individual scholar), alphabetically presented. They range in generality: some provide a general overview of a particular field (which cannot be captured under the label of a ‘tradition’; see above), others discuss a specific topic in quite some detail or the contributions of an individual scholar. They present a state-of-the-art overview of what has been done on the topic (or should be known about the person). They also mention what has not been dealt with extensively (e.g., acquisitional and diachronic aspects), thus suggesting topics for further research. Important research in progress is mentioned where possible. In addition, some references to major works are given; these reference lists are kept reasonably restricted because of space limitations. They are also kept to a minimum because bibliographies are available for further consultation (e.g. the open-access *Bibliography of Pragmatics Online*).

The Handbook attempts to document pragmatics dynamically. Consequently, originally a *loose-leaf* publication format was chosen for maximum flexibility and expandability. New developments in publishing practices made us move towards bound annual volumes in combination with an online version. But still, by definition, there is no point in time when it is possible to say that the main body of the Handbook will be complete.

The *Cumulative index* is annually updated and provides a complete overview, with all necessary cross-references, in order to ensure easy access to the available information (which continuously accumulates over the years). This second edition of the *Manual* contains the currently up-to-date *Cumulative index*. The index also contains lists of terms which are not used as entry headings (yet) but which do occur as alternative labels in the literature or which still require an entry of their own, with an indication of where exactly the topics in question are already mentioned or treated in the Handbook. A further, more implicit purpose of the *Cumulative index* is to point to gaps in the available research, as these become apparent.

## Acknowledgements

A project of this type cannot be successfully started, let alone completed, without the help of dozens, even hundreds, of scholars. First of all, there are the authors themselves, who sometimes have had to work under extreme conditions of time pressure. Further, most members of the IPrA Consultation Board have occasionally, and some repeatedly, been called upon to review contributions. Countless other colleagues, too many to enumerate, have provided essential input by reviewing manuscripts. Our sincerest thanks to all of them.

We want to express a special debt of gratitude to our late colleague Jan Blommaert, who, working as a researcher at the IPrA Research Center at the University of Antwerp in the 1990s, was instrumental in the work leading to the first edition of the *Manual*. Together with Chris Bulcaen, he remained central to the realization of the project for the first eight annual installments. Similarly, Eline Versluys acted as editorial assistant for a five-year period ending in 2009. In the period from 2009 to 2011, moreover, ten thematic volumes of *Handbook of Pragmatics Highlights* were published (<https://benjamins.com/catalog/hoph>) for use as textbooks by univer-

sity students; for this venture we were fortunate to be able to rely on a team of colleagues as co-editors: Frank Brisard, Sigurd D'hondt, Mirjam Fried, Jürgen Jaspers, Dominiek Sandra, Marina Sbisà, Gunter Senft, and Jan Zienkowski.

Last but not least, we want to express our deepest appreciation for the team of editors willing to continue this ongoing Handbook project after we have decided it is time, after 30 years, to pass on responsibilities to a new generation: Frank Brisard, Pedro Gras, Mieke Vandenbroucke (all three at the University of Antwerp), and Sigurd D'hondt (at the University of Jyväskylä). They will be continuing the project for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, we hope this second edition of the *Manual* will serve as a useful point of transition.

Antwerp & Uppsala, March 2022  
Jef Verschueren & Jan-Ola Östman

