



HAL
open science

Giora, Rachel and Michael Haugh (eds.). 2017. Doing pragmatics interculturally. Cognitive, philosophical and sociopragmatic perspectives. Berlin and Boston: Mouton de Gruyter, xii + 420 pp., Hardback ISBN 978-3-11-054384-1. Price: Hb GBP £ 91/€ 99.95.

Nicolas Ruytenbeek

► **To cite this version:**

Nicolas Ruytenbeek. Giora, Rachel and Michael Haugh (eds.). 2017. Doing pragmatics interculturally. Cognitive, philosophical and sociopragmatic perspectives. Berlin and Boston: Mouton de Gruyter, xii + 420 pp., Hardback ISBN 978-3-11-054384-1. Price: Hb GBP £ 91/€ 99.95.. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 2020, 28 (2), pp.309-313. 10.1075/bjl.28 . hal-03123947

HAL Id: hal-03123947

<https://hal.science/hal-03123947>

Submitted on 28 Jan 2021

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



DE GRUYTER

**Journal of Politeness
Research: Language,
Behaviour, Culture**

**Review of Giora, Rachel and Michael Haugh (eds.). 2017.
Doing pragmatics interculturally. Cognitive, philosophical
and sociopragmatic perspectives.**

Journal:	<i>Journal of Politeness Research: Language, Behaviour, Culture</i>
Manuscript ID	PR.2018.0046.R1
Manuscript Type:	book-review

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

1
2
3
4 **Giora, Rachel and Michael Haugh (eds.).** 2017. *Doing pragmatics interculturally. Cognitive,*
5 *philosophical and sociopragmatic perspectives.* Berlin and Boston: Mouton de Gruyter, xii +
6 420 pp., Hardback ISBN 978-3-11-054384-1. Price: Hb GBP £91 €99.95.
7
8

9
10 Reviewed by Nicolas Ruytenbeek, *Centre for Research in Linguistics LaDisco*, Université libre de
11 Bruxelles, Belgium, nruytenb@ulb.ac.be
12
13

14 15 **Introduction**

16 Rachel Giora and Michael Haugh's collection of papers consists of research in pragmatics and
17 the philosophy of language. Cutting across disciplinary divides, this book goes beyond the
18 traditional view of intercultural pragmatics (IP) as the study of language use in intercultural
19 encounters. It proposes different applications in empirical and theoretical pragmatics that bear
20 relevance to the broad field of IP conceived of, as the title makes clear, as a combination of
21 perspectives on the study of language use within and across cultures. The editors dedicate their
22 volume to István Kecskés, who can be considered the founding father of IP, and whose
23 contribution to IP research corresponds to the three sections in which the book is divided. Part
24 I covers socio-cognitive and experimental pragmatic approaches dealing with issues such as
25 humour, common ground, and different types of semantic and pragmatic meaning. Part II
26 addresses research in philosophical pragmatics and applications of IP at the level of discourse.
27 In Part III, the contributions pertain to interpersonal and societal pragmatics.
28
29

30 31 **Summary and evaluation**

32 Chapter I is an introduction to the volume by the editors. In the first chapter of Part I, Chapter
33 2, Gibbs and Colston provide a discussion of shared knowledge between interlocutors based on
34 recent experimental evidence. Assuming that meaning is emergent in conversation, they
35 provide support for a dynamic notion of common ground such as the one advocated in Kecskés
36 (2008) and Kecskés & Mey (2008), basing their claims on recent psycholinguistic evidence.
37 Sanders' contribution in Chapter 3 also addresses common ground, and he is especially
38 interested in how speakers and addressees succeed in overcoming differences in their respective
39 states of knowledge. In Chapter 4, Dynel uses examples from the TV series *House MD* to
40 illustrate different types of misunderstanding and miscommunication in humorous interactions.
41 Chapter 5 concerns procedural meaning. In this chapter, Escandell-Vidal argues that it is worth
42 maintaining a conceptual/procedural distinction in linguistics. In the restrictive theory of
43 meaning she proposes, lexical categories contain conceptual information that is used by the
44 semantic and inferential systems, while functional categories provide information for the
45 phonological and computational systems. Speakers' commitment to different types of
46 implicated and explicated meaning is experimentally investigated in Sternau, Ariel, Giora and
47 Fein's Chapter 6. The authors find that fragment completion (e.g., *on your left* meaning "The
48 picture I like is on your left") and reference resolution are less easily deniable than default
49 enrichment (e.g., *I have already had breakfast* meaning "I have already had breakfast this
50 morning") and conjunction enrichment (e.g., *I went bad and went to the hospital* meaning "I
51 went bad and therefore went to the hospital"). Chapter 7 addresses the role of prestige in the
52 acquisition of loanwords from English by native speakers of Dutch aged 6-11. Zenner, Mertens,
53 Rosseel and Geeraerts show an effect of age and gender on the development of a preference for
54 English loanwords in comparison with their corresponding Dutch noun phrases. In Chapter 8,
55 Culpeper, Haugh and Johnson take a metapragmatic stance on impoliteness, putting forth an
56 innovative methodology based on the labels that people actually use to describe impolite events.
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 They demonstrate that the relative power of conversational participants influences the
4 appropriateness of labels such as *aggressive*, *hurtful*, *impolite*, *rude*.
5

6 Part II consists of contributions in semantics/philosophy of language and pragmatics.
7 This section starts with Chapter 9, where Horn defends a traditional conception of lying as
8 distinct from conveying a false implicature. For Horn, a statement intended to communicate
9 false information amounts to a lie even if the information turns out to be *accidentally* true. In
10 Chapter 10, Jaszczolt develops a contextualist account of self-reference discourse that she
11 supports with a variety of examples. In Chapter 11, Davis argues that the interpretative
12 ambiguity that characterizes “free-form idioms” such as *John did not pass the exam because he*
13 *studied all night* is neither lexical nor syntactic but involves a semantic phenomenon.
14 Moeschler’s chapter 12 further elaborates on the topic of Chapter 8, arguing that speaker
15 meaning cannot be equated either with the content of an explicature or that of an implicature.
16 In Chapter 13, Sun and Teo address the perfective verbal aspect in Chinese, and how it differs
17 from the Russian perfective. Chapter 14, written by Romero-Trillo, contains a corpus-based
18 analysis of the functions of “acategorical” pragmatic markers, i.e., markers without a
19 grammatical ascription. In Chapter 15, Fetzer reports on an experiment in which participants
20 were asked to edit a “bare text” deprived of explicit markers of discourse relations, turning it
21 into a coherent and well-formed text. An important finding concerns the frequent
22 overspecification of the discourse relation of contrast. In Chapter 16, Payrató connects the field
23 of pragmatylistics with the study of multimodality, and identifies challenges for theorization
24 and empirical research on the use of combined modalities in communication.
25
26
27

28 Part III is probably the most relevant section from the point of view of a politeness
29 scholar, with a series of three chapters on speech acts and (inter)cultural appropriateness.
30 Schneider’s contribution in Chapter 17 consists of an empirical investigation of pragmatic
31 variation in the wording of verbal replies to the speech act of thanking. The data discussed is
32 derived from native speakers of different varieties of English. In Chapter 18, Barron uses data
33 from the British component of the International Corpus of English to examine the distribution
34 of linguistic expressions used as offers according to the type of offer concerned, i.e., hospitable
35 offers, offers of assistance, gift offers and offers of verbal goods. Chapter 19 by Félix-Brasdefer
36 proposes a case study of US learners of Spanish interacting with native speakers of Spanish in
37 Mexico, and outlines concrete ways to improve pragmatic competence in language teaching.
38 This chapter bears an interesting connection with im/politeness research, and it echoes Culpeper
39 et al.’s Chapter 8 on metalinguistic labels of impoliteness. In a particular society, such as
40 Mexico, the expectations of non-native speakers of Spanish as to the form of speech acts may
41 diverge from those of their hosts: after refusing an invitation, US learners of Spanish
42 spontaneously consider their host’s insistence as being impolite. Developing, by means of
43 explicit learning, an awareness of these differences is needed so that they can adjust their
44 sociopragmatic repertoire to the target culture. These two chapters and Barron’s Chapter 18
45 examine individuals’ reactions to different speech act realizations *within* and *across* cultures;
46 they also confirm the context-sensitive nature of im/politeness in speech acts (cf. Terkourafi
47 2015).
48
49
50
51

52 The final chapters of Part III, by contrast, do not further elaborate on speech acts. In
53 Chapter 20, Meibauer stresses that literature for children deserves more attention from
54 pragmatics because books for children are crucial to pragmatic acquisition. In Chapter 21,
55 Mey builds on Bolinger’s (1980) metaphor of language as a weapon and discusses the choice
56 of “loaded words” in conversation. In the final chapter, Chapter 22, Korta deals with a much
57 debated issue at the semantics-pragmatics interface, i.e., “faultless disagreement” arising from
58 the use of aesthetical assertions such as *X (an artwork) is beautiful*. In line with Kivy’s (2015)
59
60

1
2
3 aesthetic realist position, he distinguishes between the use of predicates of taste in the analysis
4 and in the evaluation of artwork.
5

6 It must be noted that, if most chapters actually adopt the intercultural perspective
7 advocated by the editors in their introductory chapter, it is unfortunate that the languages
8 investigated largely consist in European languages such as English (Chapters 8, 11, 17, 18, 21),
9 Spanish (Chapter 6), German (Chapter 15) and Dutch (Chapter 7). These languages, especially
10 when studied from the viewpoint of monolinguals, are not highly representative of intercultural
11 communication exchanges taking place all over the world. Of course, the sort of analyses
12 proposed in these individual contributions could equally be applied to less well described
13 languages and to societies where multilingualism plays a crucial role, but the reader may regret
14 that such an approach was not further explored in this book.
15
16

17 In bringing together excellent specialists in pragmatics with an international reach, this
18 book contributes to pragmatic research both from a theoretical and an empirical/experimental
19 perspective. In doing so, it achieves its goal of providing a broad picture of the varieties of
20 topics that are currently investigated in pragmatics and the philosophy of language (and even
21 semantics). In their introduction, the editors also inform the reader that the volume is intended
22 as a tribute to István Kecskés, one of the founders of IP as a research field. As we have seen,
23 there is no doubt that its content does justice to the multi-faceted orientation of Kecskés' work.
24 A drawback of the book relates to the fact that several chapters lack a direct connection with
25 IP, however: this is most obvious in the case of the chapters devoted to lies, aesthetical
26 statements, and the perfective aspect. I do not want to say that these contributions are irrelevant
27 to IP, on the contrary, but they precisely lack a discussion of their possible impact on IP.
28 Moreover, even though the chapters are adequately grouped according to the subfield of
29 pragmatics they refer to, with the exception of the two opening chapters on common ground,
30 the chapters do not answer each other or go through a common thread; in particular, the chapters
31 of Part I are disconnected from one another. A consequence of this is that the "intercultural
32 perspective" advocated by the editors remains fairly abstract—to be more precise, it is hard to
33 see how the term *intercultural* is supposed to be understood now and then. I also missed a
34 concluding chapter in which the editors would have clarified the expected impact of language-
35 specific contributions to the more diverse picture of intercultural communication.
36
37
38

39 I have no doubt that this original volume will appeal not only to pragmaticians and
40 specialists of intercultural communication, but also to scholars in the related fields of
41 philosophy of language and sociolinguistics. Insofar as the individual chapters are easy-to-read
42 and do not presuppose extensive previous knowledge from the readers, this book could be used
43 to familiarize master students with an array of topics that still deserve further investigation.
44 Graduate students and more experienced researchers will also find it a convenient resource for
45 updating their knowledge on a variety of questions in pragmatics. I am not sure I would
46 recommend it for teaching, however, due to the high degree of heterogeneity and the lack of
47 topical continuity throughout the book I pointed out earlier.
48
49

50 Conclusion

51 Despite the relative unrelatedness of some of the topics addressed, this collection of individual
52 contributions provides a general picture of current research in intercultural pragmatics. The
53 most popular topics in IP, such as pragmatic differences and misunderstandings between native
54 and non-native speakers, second/foreign language acquisition, multimodality, pragmatic
55 competence and pragmatic variation across different varieties of one language or between
56 languages, are central to the volume. It can be considered as a milestone, acknowledging a
57 change of mentality in the field, in a time where IP does no longer refer to a mere property of
58 particular situations of communication but, rather, is a general perspective or a method to study
59
60

1
2
3 actual language use. That being said, intercultural verbal exchanges still constitute a vivid
4 research area, as several chapters demonstrate, especially in the current context of globalization
5 including the widespread use of online communication techniques.
6

7 **References**

8
9 Bolinger, Dwight L. 1980. *Language, the loaded weapon: the use and abuse of language today*.
10 London & New York: Longman.

11
12 Kecskés, István. 2008. Dueling context: A dynamic model of meaning. *Journal of Pragmatics*
13 40: 385-406.

14
15 Kecskés, István & Jacob Mey (Eds.). 2008. *Intention, common ground, and the egocentric*
16 *speaker-hearer*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

17
18 Kivy, Peter. 2015. *De gustibus. Arguing about taste and why we do it*. Oxford: Oxford
19 University Press.

20
21 Terkourafi, Marina. 2015. Conventionalization: A new agenda for im/politeness
22 research. *Journal of Pragmatics* 86: 11-8.
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60