Translation and interpreting studies scholars have long looked to pragmatics to help explain and account for meaning-generation in translation and interpreting processes, products and their reception. In fact, the range of issues discussed in Hickey’s (1998) edited volume, *The Pragmatics of Translation*, still resonate today as researchers and practitioners grapple with “what original texts and their translations are intended to achieve and how they attempt to achieve it, how writers set about cooperating with their readers, being polite and relevant, or how inter-cultural difference may be achieved” (p. 5). Since Hickey’s volume was published, translation studies scholars have engaged with a much broader range of topics and practices, particularly in relation to spoken and signed language interpreting, and, more recently, in relation to different (translation) technologies. This Handbook therefore provides a timely opportunity to appraise developments, to bring together some of the latest thinking on the relationship between pragmatics and translation and interpreting studies, to showcase applications of key concepts in a broad range of translation activities and to set out new avenues for research.

Contributors to the volume were given scope to define the relation between translation and pragmatics most appropriate to their chapter aims, which means that the volume encompasses, but is not limited to, questions of disciplinary consilience between translation studies and pragmatics. In some chapters authors present new findings, while in others data is revisited with a new set of pragmatically oriented research questions; others still examine questions of methodology and provide critical examination of the literature relating to a specific aspect of pragmatic theory and its treatment in translation and interpreting studies. As such, the Handbook will appeal to established scholars in translation and interpreting studies, students and practitioners, and scholars working in related disciplines.

Considerable attention is given across the chapters to features of linguistic pragmatics and their treatment in intercultural and interlingual communication among which politeness, cooperation, inference, implicature, deixis and speech acts are prominent, reflecting the influence of the theories of Grice, Sperber and Wilson, and Brown and Levinson. However, the volume also explores topics beyond the text level, for instance, the relevance of pragmatics-inspired approaches for studying relationships between various agents in the translation process, and pedagogical frameworks for the development of pragmatic competence on translator and interpreter training programmes.
This introduction provides some context for the aims and organisation of the Handbook, first regarding the nature and scope of pragmatics and then in relation to pragmatics-inspired models and theories that have emerged in translation and interpreting studies. It ends with a discussion of the macro-organisation of the chapters and a statement on its limitations.

**Pragmatics**

Historically, pragmatics has been dominated by two traditions: the cognitive-philosophical Anglo-American and the sociocultural-interactive Continental-European. The former is known for a much narrower research agenda, whereas the latter conceives of pragmatics as a theory of linguistic communication and not simply as a core component of a linguistic theory (Huang, 2006: 4–6). The Anglo-American tradition has commonly promoted a component view of pragmatics, which emphasises phenomena such as indexicality/deixis, speech acts, metaphor, implicit meaning, presuppositions, politeness and conversation. This contrasts with the functional perspective promoted through Continental-European approaches, which assumes that pragmatics constitutes a perspective for studying language in general. Increasingly, the division between these traditions has been called into question, with Verschueren (2017), for example, suggesting that greater significance needs to be attached to divisions between Western-based conceptualisations of language use and those rooted in non-Western cultures and societies.

Pragmatics can be traced back to scholarship on the philosophy of language in the 1930s and, in particular, to the work of Charles Morris (1938) who developed a typology of syntax, semantics and pragmatics within a general science of signs (semiotics). Within this triad, syntax “is considered to be the study of the formal relations of one sign to another”, semantics concerns “the relations of those signs to objects in the outside world”, and pragmatics focuses on the “relation of signs to those who use the signs” (Mey, 2006: 51). The emphasis Morris places on the relation between signs and their interpreters lies at the heart of pragmatic research, but the nature of the relationship has been subject to vastly different interpretations over time as a result of many disciplinary influences. Pragmatics developed significantly over the latter part of the twentieth century, giving rise to a number of discernible trends that include philosophical pragmatics (e.g. Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Grice, 1975), cognitive pragmatics (e.g. Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995) and societal pragmatics or pragmalinguistics (e.g. Mey, 1993). In more recent developments, Hoye (2009: 188) writes of pragmatics starting to “embrace the visual-verbal interface”, as seen through growing attention to multimodal discourse analysis, which has obvious appeal to scholars of translation and interpreting.

Yule’s (1996: 3) general introduction to pragmatics includes a statement of scope that places an emphasis on speaker meaning, i.e., “what people mean by their utterances rather than what the words and phrases in those utterances mean by themselves”. For Yule, the scope of pragmatics extends to consideration of contextual meaning, that is, how speaker meaning is influenced by and influences context, and to questions about how more is communicated than what is said, the relative distance between speakers and hearers, and how this impacts on what is said or unsaid. Yule’s emphasis on speaker meaning, however, is just one of many attempts to define the nature and scope of pragmatics (e.g. Levinson, 1983; Mey, 1993; Kecskes, 2013; Félix-Brasdefer, 2015), not all of which necessarily lend themselves readily to the analysis of written and spoken intercultural and interlingual communication, or indeed signed language communication between deaf and hearing subjects.

There are many excellent introductory texts to linguistic pragmatics (e.g. Yule, 1996; Verschueren, 1999; Huang, 2006), and anthologies and handbooks such as the *Routledge*
Handbook of Pragmatics (Barron et al., 2017), the Oxford Handbook of Pragmatics (Huang, 2017), the IPrA Handbook of Pragmatics (e.g. Östman & Verschueren, 2011), in addition to an abundance of other scholarly literature in the form of articles and monographs. Moreover, journals such as the Journal of Pragmatics and Intercultural Pragmatics have helped to foster dialogue between the disciplines by promoting translation and interpreting-studies related research. Some of the recent Handbooks devoted to pragmatics also include chapters on translation and interpreting (e.g. Janzen et al., 2011; Baumgarten, 2017), attesting to the growing awareness within pragmatics of potential applications to a range of translation and interpreting phenomena.

The influence of pragmatics on translation studies

Early developments in translation studies reveal various appeals to pragmatics in developing theories and models of translation. Nida (1964) and Nida and Taber (1969), for example, adopted a receptor-oriented approach to Bible translation aimed at ensuring the immediate intelligibility of the message through the achievement of pragmatic equivalence. Although this led to what for many scholars was a problematic ‘dethroning’ of the source text in other receptor-oriented approaches that followed (e.g. functionalist approaches), it nevertheless foregrounded the importance of communicative intent in the translation process, drawing attention to translator agency and the complexity of translator decision-making.

The growth of discourse analysis in applied linguistics shaped developments in translation studies in the 1970s–1990s (Munday, 2008) and supported detailed examination of pragmatic features and their problematisation in the translation process, although it must be noted that they are chiefly English-language oriented. Here only a brief exposition is provided of key scholarly contributions as a means for readers to situate developments in the field; a more critically engaged approach can be found in the chapters in this volume.

The work of Halliday (e.g. 1978) and Halliday and Hasan (1985) on systemic functional linguistics was particularly influential in developing communicative approaches to translation, for example, in relation to House’s (1977, 1997) model of translation quality assessment and in Baker’s (1992) In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation. Baker’s focus on pragmatic equivalence through detailed analysis of the features of coherence, presupposition and implicature marked an important development in approaches to translator training and was one of the first to highlight the relevance of the Gricean notion of cooperation and its operation across languages and cultures.

Halliday’s model of discourse analysis also inspired Hatim and Mason (1990, 1997) whose influential work stressed the interdependence of pragmatics and semiotics in helping translators (and interpreters) to grasp the “full communicative thrust” of an utterance (1990: 101) in the process of text analysis. Their approach draws attention to the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions of Halliday’s model of discourse analysis, in addition to the textual function; they propose a semiotic dimension as a refinement to earlier approaches to register analysis in translation studies.

In a departure from Hallidayan and Gricean-inspired approaches, Gutt’s (1991) relevance-theoretical and competence-based (as opposed to behaviour-based) approach to translation decision-making marked a first attempt to bring cognitive pragmatics to bear on the development of a theory of translation in an approach that moved away from semiotics towards an inferential paradigm of communication. In a more recent development, Morini’s (2013) pragmatic theory of translation foregrounds performative, interpersonal and locative dimensions in seeking to build on descriptive approaches, rather than to develop a new paradigm. Central
to the approach is the notion of “pragmatic possibilities” that are open to translators in each translation event not only in relation to modifying interpersonal relations across linguistic barriers (i.e., between senders, receivers and mediators) but also relations as they are “depicted or presupposed within texts” (p. 24).

The thorny problem of context

The problems of context and contextualisation are central to any attempts to develop a pragmatically oriented theory of translation; they are also key to the way in which practitioners and researchers go about establishing the basis on which intercultural and interlinguistic communication can take place in different settings, and within different spatial and temporal constraints. However, for a long time, such considerations only received cursory treatment. A Special Issue of the Journal of Pragmatics edited by Mona Baker in 2006 created a timely opportunity to compare and contrast different disciplinary approaches to context and their treatment in translation and interpreting studies.

Baker’s (2006a) own contribution to the issue makes the case for a dynamic view of context, supported by appeals to socio-pragmatics and linguistic anthropology. It is through these disciplinary perspectives that the potential for context to shift even within a single event is articulated, which Baker illustrates with examples taken from interpreter-mediated interactions. As an extension of the discussion and reflection of her thinking about the potential of socio-narrative theoretical approaches to translation at that time of writing, Baker also considers relations of power and dominance that are present or ‘inscribed in’ processes of (re-)contextualisation. She draws attention to the importance of engaging with these processes to identify potential shifts in different agents’ agendas and their impact.

Conceptual, theoretical and methodological developments

The concept of ‘pragmatic translation’ merits attention in the introduction to this volume, particularly as it has been subject to various interpretations (e.g. Newmark, 1988). The most common conceptualisation derives from Delisle (1980) who, in classifying translations, makes a distinction between ‘pragmatic’ and ‘literary’ translation in relation to source text function. Pragmatic translation (now more frequently referred to as ‘specialised’ translation in English-speaking contexts), therefore came to be associated principally with texts for specific purposes that constitute specific ‘text acts’, such as providing instructions. In legal translation studies, however, the status of legal texts as ‘pragmatic texts’ has been questioned due to the particular semiotic constraints facing translators and the incommensurability of legal systems (Garzone, 2000). This has challenged claims made by proponents of functionalist approaches (e.g. Reiss & Vermeer, 1984) regarding the applicability of such approaches to all text types in all translation situations.

In theoretical terms, developments in the way translation is performed, whether collaborative and participatory or synchronous and asynchronous, and the contexts in which it is performed have inevitably given rise to a whole new set of questions for translation studies scholars. However, few have drawn on pragmatics in developing theoretical frameworks. Desilla (2018), for example, observes limited engagement with pragmatics in relation to audiovisual translation studies. Elsewhere in translation studies, socio-narrative approaches (e.g. Baker, 2006b) have called into question the source-target text distinction, inviting scholars to reappraise notions of message manipulation and intended meaning in translation practice and product. The implications of this paradigmatic shift for scholars interested in
both micro (i.e., features) and macro (i.e., cultural and societal) aspects of pragmatics have yet to be fully explored in the field.

In terms of methodology, corpus-based translation studies have generated good potential for creating “powerful generalisations” (Baker, 1993; see also Baker, 1995), opening the possibility to investigate a wide range of pragmatically oriented questions of translator behaviour. Studies that draw on the Translational English Corpus (e.g. Olohan & Baker, 2000; Laviosa, 2002), for example, have found a tendency for translators working from and into a wide range of languages to simplify, clarify and make explicit what is in the source text. Developments in tools and resources have enabled the creation of other translational corpora (e.g. the ZJU Corpus of Translational Chinese) and large multilingual and bi-directional corpora (see Hansen-Schirra, Neumann & Steiner, 2013; Fantinuoli & Zanettin, 2015). The latter have made it possible, among other things, to investigate the influence of source language norms on translation decisions.

Pragmatics and interpreting studies

Pragmatics-inspired approaches to the study of spoken and signed language interpreting have grown in recent decades, facilitated by access to authentic data in a wide range of institutional settings. However, while many scholars’ work can be located within what Pöchhacker (2004) terms the “discourse-based interactional paradigm”, only a relatively small number have engaged directly with pragmatic theories and issues directly.

Mason (2006: 362) makes an important point in considering the potential benefits that interpreting studies can bring to pragmatics. He draws attention to the fact that in much pragmatics-oriented research the data used is ‘confected’ as opposed to naturally occurring, which is particularly problematic given the general unavailability of context for analysis. Interpreting studies therefore has good potential according to Mason to bridge the gap because interpreter performance can provide “valuable evidence of take-up, of the sense [interpreters] make of others’ talk and how they respond to it” (ibid.: 365). Yet, more than ten years after these words were written, it is clear that such benefits have yet to be fully realised.

In an early contribution to spoken dialogue interpreting research, Hatim and Mason (1990: 63) highlight the possible applications of theories of speech acts and conversational implicature to liaison interpreting, asserting that

it is perfectly possible for the interpreter to translate competently the locutionary act involved in an utterance (in the sense of finding appropriate equivalents for ST words and relating them correctly and appropriately in the TL syntax) while failing to perceive or otherwise misrepresent the illocutionary force in context.

In a later publication Mason and Stewart (2001) provide an illustrative example that foregrounds the problem of face, drawing on an extract of witness testimony taken from the trial of O. J. Simpson in the USA at a point where the witness is being cross-examined. A key point with regard to Mason and Stewart’s analysis concerns the institutional environment in which the interpretation takes place: in this particular jurisdiction (California), at the time of the trial, interpreters were obligated by the court to interpret literally. In this regard, what might be viewed as a misrepresentation of illocutionary force may therefore be explained by the normative frameworks governing interpreter practice in that particular setting. These findings strongly suggest that the development and analysis of pragmatic competence in
interpreting, as highlighted by scholars such as Hale (e.g. 2014), require due attention to micro- and macro-pragmatic aspects.

A recent Special Issue of the *Journal of Pragmatics* edited by Biagini, Davitti and Sandrelli (2017) builds on dialogue interpreting (DI) research by expanding the frame of reference to different participatory constellations (e.g. one-to-many as opposed to the three-way exchanges that are the focus of many dialogue interpreting studies). In acknowledging that participants often no longer share the same participatory space in social interactions, the Issue also explores the range of multimodal resources to which participants have access in interaction (both verbal and embodied). As such, the Issue evidences the growing importance of theories of multimodality to the study of interpreting phenomena.

With regard to conference interpreting, since Robin Setton’s seminal monograph (1999), there has been limited application of pragmatics-inspired approaches. Drawing on Relevance Theory and adopting a cognitive-pragmatic approach, Setton was able to build a stronger scientific basis for understanding meaning-making processes in simultaneous conference interpreting compared to the more intuitive approach of the Paris School in the 1970s and 1980s. In a later publication (2006), also taking inspiration from Relevance Theory, Setton contrasts aspects of written translation and simultaneous interpreting in which processes of ‘re-ostension’ are highlighted. The interpreter’s main task is described as “[guiding] addressees in real time to the contexts in which they can derive the intended effects” (2006: 384), leading to the potential for conscious intervention through (re-)narrating strategies as part of this process. Such strategies are further explored in this Handbook in relation to signed language interpreting through a multimodal and relevance theoretical lens.

There are signs of renewed interest in pragmatics and conference interpreting (e.g. Magnifico & Defrancq, 2016), but there seems to be scope for development, particularly in addressing issues of ideology from a macro-pragmatic perspective. Methodological constraints have doubtless impacted on such developments, although the increasing use of corpus-based approaches in interpreting studies is opening up rich opportunities for research (e.g. Straniero Sergio & Falbo, 2012; Bernardini, Ferraresi & Miličević, 2016).

**About the organisation of the Handbook**

The Handbook is divided into three parts. Part I, “Influences and Intersections”, introduces readers to key concepts and theoretical programmes in pragmatics. Each chapter sets out the core questions addressed by the various theoretical programmes philosophical (Bruti), social (Mapson) and cognitive (Gallai), and salient intersections with translation and interpreting studies. Part II, “Methodological Issues”, addresses emphasis placed on corpus-based studies (here, in interpreting) (Meyer), contrastive (Kranich) and experimental (Desilla) approaches. Part III, “Applications”, is subdivided into thematic headings, showcasing studies on translation and interpreting involving different modes and settings.

In Part III, the first subsection, “Politics and Persuasion: News and Advertising Translation”, explores different facets of news translation in written and sign language modes, and advertising. The contributions to this section consider the ideological implications of (mis)translation in news production (Chovanec), the way in which British Sign Language interpreters handle the multimodal environment when providing access to broadcast news (Stone) and the impact of the multimodal nature of advertisements on the interpretive use of translation (Valdés).

The second subsection, “Translation, Pragmatics and the Creative Arts”, showcases pragmatics-inspired translation studies scholarship in fiction, poetry, theatre and film (subtitling).
These chapters focus on the analytical possibilities of politeness and implicature theory for translator scholars and translators in relation to the translation of literary fiction (Morini), the performance of directives as a type of speech act in British English and Peninsular Spanish and approaches to their translation in film subtitles (De Pablos-Ortega), the handling of turn-taking and spatial deixis in signed theatre performances (Rocks) and the evaluation of pragmatic elements in published poetry translation (Dahlgren).

The third subsection, “Knowledge Transfer and Knowledge Creation”, focuses on scientific and technical translation, and the relationship between translator and commissioner or client in the creation of the translation brief. The vagueness-specificity relation is explored in English–Greek academic translation (Sidiropoulou), the communicative features shared by sci-tech texts and the challenges these pose for achieving pragmatic equivalence (Scarpa) and the role of the translation dialogue in creating translation discourse material and shaping the translation brief (Kvam).

The fourth subsection, “Agency, Intervention and Pragmatic Competence”, brings together contributions on spoken language dialogue interpreting to illustrate the relevance of interpreters’ utterances in healthcare interactions and how recipients handle their contextual effects (Baraldi) and the way in which interpreters handle face in experimental approaches to educational interpreting (Vargas-Urpi). It also showcases pedagogical approaches to the development of pragmatic competence in interpreter and translator training (Crezee & Burn).

The fifth and final subsection, “Dis-embodied Communication and Technology”, examines intersections between translation studies and new contexts and practices of translation. The chapters explore the ways in which pragmatics can inform the study of translation on online social media (Desjardins), audio description (Fryer) and non-verbal communication in interpreter performance in videoconference interpreting (Balogh & Salaets).

Each chapter can be read stand-alone; there is some repetition of key concepts and theoretical frameworks as a result, but readers will find the material is tailored to the significance of the study concerned and connections are made to chapters in which more comprehensive treatment of certain concepts and frameworks can be found. Each chapter ends with a list of recommended readings.

Limitations

There are inevitably many limitations that impact on a project of this nature due to issues of timing and availability of expert input, and which leave some gaps in coverage and scope. The editors also acknowledge the bias towards scholarship originating in Western theoretical programmes and the limited range of language constellations represented.

Note

1 The editors would like to pay tribute to Leo Hickey who passed away in 2018.

References


