

## GUEST EDITORS' NOTE

In the pragmatics literature there is no consensus concerning the subject of the field. One can find various treatments of pragmatics that differ from each other, e.g., in respect to how pragmatics is related to grammar and semantics, or to code use, communication and cognition; whether the phenomena studied by pragmatics belong to competence or performance; whether the pragmatic abilities of the human mind may be considered a module, and if so, how this module could be characterized. (For an overview of pragmatics conceptions, traditions and methods, see Jef Verschueren, The pragmatic perspective. In: Jef Verschueren–Jan-Ola Östman–Jan Blommaert (eds.): *Handbook of pragmatics: Manual*. 1995, 1–19. Benjamins, Amsterdam.)

In the papers presented here about pragmatics and in a previous, first instalment of this thematic issue, which was published in volume 51 (3–4, 2004) of *Acta Linguistica Hungarica*, one can also see the different strands. Hence, there is only a general “common denominator” valid for all contributions: Pragmatics deals with **the use of language in various contexts to achieve various purposes**, primarily from a linguistic point of view.

The diversity of the previous and present papers and pragmatics itself is increased by the fact that phenomena of language use are the subject of several other disciplines: social psychology, sociolinguistics, rhetoric, stylistics, etc. Indeed, these fields amplify our knowledge about issues of language use. In addition, pragmatics, in accordance with its theory-dependent scope of interest, strives to advance aided by these disciplines and integrate their achievements. From among the disciplines studying language use, discourse analysis merits a separate mention. Very often, it is demarcated from pragmatics only because of its own name, which, however, can refer to a wide range of topics such as analysis of oral discourses and written texts as well as conversation analysis, discourse and text grammar.

The first aim of this special issue, i.e., the previous and present collections of papers is to show **the diversity** (in the above-mentioned senses) **characteristic of present-day Hungarian pragmatics research**. The second aim of the two instalments is to provide up-to-date investigations which

apply **the theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches to several kinds of pragmatic phenomena in Hungarian**. The editors think that each paper contributes this way to the further development of theoretical issues and/or description of pragmatics of Hungarian language use.

Turning to the brief overview of the papers included in this second instalment of the thematic issue of *Acta Linguistica Hungarica*, we have to begin with a remark concerning the arrangement of the papers. The articles are arranged alphabetically by their authors' names. The topics of the papers will also be introduced below in this order but we will attempt to indicate some interconnections between them.

The contribution *Remarks on the cognitive base of pragmatic principles* by András Kertész and Csilla Rákosi aims at the exemplification of the applicability of plausibility analysis to linguistics. Starting from the criticism of Robinson (1997), the paper argues for two assumptions. First, as opposed to a theory of distributed systems, it is a theory of plausible reasoning that can capture basic methodological problems of theory formation in pragmatics (such as circularity, category error, the arbitrariness of interpretations of data and the objectification of the theorist's cultural and linguistic knowledge as principles of language behaviour). Second, the cognitive base of pragmatic principles is inferential and plausibilistic, rather than non-inferential and probabilistic. The line of argumentation put forward in Kertész and Rákosi's contribution seems to pave **the way for systematic investigations into the argumentational structure of linguistic theories**.

In her paper entitled *The concept of preference and its manifestation in Hungarian verbal conflict sequences*, Ágnes Lerch attempts to clarify the nature of preference considering that the use of this classical concept of conversation analysis seems to have become confused and vague in the course of time. After reviewing the role of preference in conversation analysis, she suggests a complex interpretation of preference which unifies the different (structural, social psychological and statistical) views from the perspective of pragmatic principles. Furthermore, using conversations from radio and television series of debate programs as data, she argues that a deeper and uncontroversial interpretation of the notion of preference is possible if, in addition to a structural inference rule and interpersonality principles, one takes into consideration the role of rationality principles as well. So, approaching preference from the perspective of pragmatic principles may prove instrumental in **integrating conversational analysis** more closely **with new directions and results of pragmatic research**.

The paper *Apology routine formulae in Hungarian* by Małgorzata Suszczyńska is a contribution to **sociopragmatic research** on one of the

Central European languages. The goal of this paper is to demonstrate that Hungarian apology routine formulae, while bearing similarity to such direct apology expressions in other languages, have **language-specific forms and functions**. Hungarian apology routine formulae used by Hungarian adults in a written Discourse Completion Test are classified into five types. Their choices are influenced by such factors as the offence type and its severity, the social role of the interlocutor and the offender's gender. Two main apology types, *Ne haragudj* 'Don't be angry' and *Elnézést* 'Excuse me' are shown to perform complementary communicative functions of restoring harmony in familiar vs. unfamiliar settings. Gender differences in the use of routine formula types demonstrate that males and females choose different ways to restore social harmony and may attach importance to different aspects of the context.

This second instalment of the thematic issue of *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* also contains two book reviews (by Károly Bibok and by Julia Coryell and Saihua Xia, respectively) related to the special topic.

\* \* \*

The guest editors would like to express their gratitude, first of all, for the opportunity given to them by the editor-in-chief of *Acta Linguistica Hungarica*, and for the assistance of the associate editor. All the papers were refereed by at least two reviewers, to whom we wish to express our special thanks at this place. Finally, we are grateful to the contributors for their commitment and patience during the refereeing and editing process.

*Enikő Németh T., Károly Bibok*