

[講演]

Evolving Discourse Speech Acts and Sequentiality

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In traditional beliefs, words have been considered as having immanent, magic powers: of healing or destroying, of salvation or damnation, and so on. In a more analytic mode, the idea of human acts of speech having an inherent, illocutionary 'force' has been explored by the speech act theorists. Speech acts have usually been thought of as having to do with the words spoken; consequently, the focus has been on the illocutionary force, respectively their perlocutionary effect of an act. The theorists, however, could not always convincingly show what this 'illocutionary force' or 'perlocutionary effect' stood for in a concrete speech situation. To complement the classic theory (as developed by Austin, Searle, Grice, Levinson, and others), I have introduced the notion of 'situated speech act', or *pragmatic act* (Mey 2001). Here, the stress is on the total context of speech (the 'situation'), rather than on the words themselves. However, if we consider human speech as it develops in a situation, we also need to pay attention to the *evolving* aspects of discourse, by which the situational conditions for pragmatic acting relate to the temporal and spatial aspects of our acts. The present paper tries to show how pragmatic acts in discourse (in addition to the spatial dimension) need the temporal dimension of *sequentiality*, in order to be correctly understood and effectuated, that is: to function properly in accordance with the shared co-construction practiced by the participants of the situation, through their co-wording the situation and their acting correspondingly.

INTRODUCTION

In Peter Mayle's novel *Chasing Cézanne*, a young photographer named Andre is staying at a hotel in the South of France on business trip, to be joined for dinner by Camilla, the editor of the fashion magazine for which he is freelancing. While Andre is visibly tired after a day of hard preparatory work, Camilla (who has just arrived from New York on

the Concorde) is full of energy, making plans for the days ahead. The following dialogue develops over coffee:

“You’re fading, sweetie,” she said, as the bill was placed on the table. “Do you want to go to bed?” The waiter, whose English covered the essentials, raised his eyebrows and pursed his lips.

Andre looked at her. She looked back, with a half-smile that didn’t reach her eyes. He had an uncomfortable feeling that an invitation had been extended. Office gossip had it that Camilla maintained a liaison with a wealthy lover and possibly enjoyed discreet matinees now and then with Garabedian [an art dealer] Why not the occasional photographer? Editor’s comforts while on location.

“I haven’t had an offer like that for weeks.” And then he laughed, and the moment passed. “Some more coffee?”

Camilla tossed her napkin on the table and stood up. “Eight o’clock tomorrow. In the lobby.”

Andre watched her leave the restaurant, a woman declined. He wondered if he’d just jeopardized his meal ticket.

(Peter Mayle, *Chasing Cézanne*, pp. 34-35)

The question Camilla is asking can obviously be interpreted in a variety of ways. Among other possibilities, Camilla could be inquiring about Andre’s physical state in order to make sure he is up to the task ahead of them; or the question could contain a sexual innuendo; and so on.

The ambiguity of the question can only be resolved in the context: Editor Camilla has noticed that Andre, the photographer who she is supposed to be working with on an important project, has appeared a bit absent-minded over dinner; hence a question as to his being tired and wanting to go to bed, is entirely appropriate in the one context. However, Andre, the eternal male, sees the question in a different light (the other context: ‘Is she coming on to me?’), and parries it humoristically but decisively by indirectly declining the implied offer (“Some more coffee?”). The inference that he makes from his denial is that he might put himself out of a job by declining the advances of his employer (who is known for her sexual bravado). Hence Andre’s quizzical musing (“I might just have lost my meal ticket”).

My wife, who was reading Peter Mayle's book aloud to me in bed, commented on Andre's continued reflections in which he explicitates the hidden implicature of invitation ("He had an uncomfortable feeling that an invitation had been extended") as follows: "Camilla's words did not represent an invitation until Andre had turned it down". In other words, the invitation came only 'to light' sequentially, as it were; the temporal progress of the conversation was a necessary factor in the proper 'decoding' of the message.

SPACE, TIME AND ACTS

What this snippet of dialogue shows is that a speech act cannot be pinned down, locally and temporally, to one particular defining place and moment. It has to be interpreted in the flow of conversation, as evolving together with the situation(s) in which it is used. The invitation, if it had been one, both loses its 'force' and reinstates its 'point' after having been produced (and as far as the invitation goes, rejected). This defining aspect I will call the 'evolving temporal quality' of speech acting.

The first thing we have to do is to reintroduce the notions of time and space into our thinking on speech acts (cf. Cooren et al. 2005). Speech acts are often conceptualized and described in abstract terms: given these words, what effects can they have in an hypothetical context? The context is neither 'spatialized' nor 'temporalized': and this is the case both statically and dynamically. Statically, the context is robbed of its space and time coordinates; speech acts happen in a never-never (or always-already) time-space. Dynamically, this means that a speech act is practiced as some kind of 'one-night stand': the act is executed ('magically') without taking any previous history into consideration, neither are any consequences envisioned (just as for what Anthony Burgess, in his classic film script and novel, *A Clockwork Orange*, characterized as the "old in-and-out").

It is as if we are saying: Do this and the perlocutionary effect will appear, as if by magic, no matter what your personal or social placement in time and space. In consequence, any evolution of the speech act as to e.g. its proper intentionality is a priori excluded. And thus we arrive at this doubly sealed, hermetically encapsulated notion of speech act as it is commonly understood in the pragmatic literature (with a few, rare exceptions; compare Mey, 2001: ch.8, on the 'pragmeme', a notion I will revert to in the sequel).

BIRTH, LIFE AND DEATH OF A SPEECH ACT

To make this clearer, I want to consider the 'life and death' of a particular speech act: the classical act of baptizing. Perhaps it would be better to speak of birth and reincarnation, rather than of birth and death, since speech acts (like the poet's old soldiers) never really die, they just go away and come back in a different appearance, as we may see from considering the speech act of 'baptizing' in its historical (spatial and temporal) dimensions.

First historical stage: the preliminary discourse. Before we had baptism, we had John the Baptist preaching: "the voice of one crying in the wilderness..." (Matthew 3:3; Luke 3:4; Mark 1:3; John 1:23). The intentionality is hidden here: we're looking at a proto-speech act, one could say, an act having to do with preparation for a big event, such as the coming of the Messiah (compare Isaiah 40:3ff).

Place: the Judean desert.

Time: sometime around the year 25 AD.

Second historical stage: the act of baptizing. John is pouring water over people's heads on the banks of the River Jordan, telling them to go home and mend their ways. It is not certain that Jesus himself actually did baptize (see Chilton 1994; Mey 2006); at the very least, he told his disciples to go out into the world and teach "the one baptism of forgiveness of sins" (as the Nicene Creed formulates it)¹⁾.

Place: the River Jordan.

Time: some time around the year 30 AD.

Third historical stage: the magic of the fully fledged speech act kicks in. Baptism is now institutionalized as the entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven, and the magic formula 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost' is proclaimed as the universal (sufficient and necessary) condition of salvation (see Matthew 28:19).

Baptism is now a fact of life, as are the words accompanying it; the speech act as such has gone underground, to be resurrected by John Langshaw Austin in Oxford, a couple of thousand years later, when language again became an object of 'meta-interest'.

Time: from AD 33 to present.

Places: Palestine, Asia Minor, Rome, then the world (including Austin's Oxford).

Now what does this foreshortened bit of history teach us about speech acts?

First of all, a speech act never comes alone. It has a history and a context of use, a fact that Austin saw correctly (but did not fully exploit as to its implications).

Second, speech acts evolve over time and in space. There is no knowing whether St. John the Baptist's speech acts, in particular his words (in case he actually did use words—this is something we don't know) were the same in expression and content as the words uttered by a Catholic priest today.

Third, and most importantly, the magic is not just in the words: it is conditioned by the acceptance of the person who submits him-/herself to the magic. Compare what St. Paul says about another sacrament, with another 'magic' force, the Eucharist: whoever partakes of the Lord's table unworthily, "he eateth and drinketh damnation [or: judgment] to himself" (I Cor. 12:29): the speech act of salvation ('may your soul be conserved unto eternal life')² turns into one of damnation ('eating and drinking yourself a judgment').

Similarly, in our own daily lives, speech acts such as promises tend to lose their efficiency in use, depending on where and when they are being uttered. In order to establish a modicum of security, we anchor these fleeting acts by converting them into the codified speech acts of the theorists, or by committing them to a more durable medium; rather than relying on the spoken word, we resort to written instruments of promising: memos of intention, contracts, promissory notes, and so on. This 'embodiment' of the speech act or 'incarnation', as Cooren calls it (Cooren et al. 2005: 275), finds its apogee in the artifact of the organization, a 'monster' embodying in itself the various manifestations of its acting out in the dialectic constructive movement of organizational discourse (Cooren et al. *ibid.*).

Fourth, if one can say that speech acts are 'jelled discourse', it is equally true that the pieces of spatial and timely embodiment we construct through our speech acts are noth-

ing but 'jelled action'. To undo the jelling, to make the dry bones come to life again (cf. Ezekiel 37:3), we have to extend the notion of speech acts, making them reappear as 'pragmatic acts', that is to say, pieces of (partially verbally constructed) action that represent our temporal and spatial continuity as we are embodied in the material world. Again, these pieces are not 'givens', once and for all; as speech acts develop over time and in space, we see "a continuous reconfiguration of human intentions as the contingencies of practice unfold and impose a revision of the past and the future", in a movement aptly called 'tuning' by Andrew Pickering (1995; see Cooren et al. 2005: 272, from which the quotation is taken).

PRAGMATIC ACTS, SPEECH ACTS AND THE TIME/SPACE AXIS

The theory of pragmatic acts (Mey 2001: 206ff.) has been developed to capture an essential element in the theory of speech acts that had gone missing from the standard accounts.

Starting from what I have called the 'indirect speech act paradox' (the fact that people use indirectness in the majority of their speech acting, preferring a more complicated act to a simple, canonical one), I have shown that the original idea of a speech act is inextricably bound up with the traditional notion of the speaker-hearer dyad, where one 'talking head' formulates an intention, to be captured and 'decoded' by the other on the basis of the provided linguistic material.

The question asked here is: What do the words mean when uttered by a speaker in the presence of a hearer, and how does the hearer interpret them? In contrast, the question I have suggested should be asked is: In a situation of speaking and hearing, what words will fit the bill? My notion of the *pragmatic act* (or 'situated speech act') captures the affordances of the users and the situation and seeks to incorporate these situational constraints with regard to the admissible and effective utterance. In this case, the movement of analysis is from the outside in, rather than from the inside out, as in the classical case described above.

While the theory of pragmatic acts correctly identifies the one glaring omission of traditional speech act theory, viz., its disregard for the situation as determining both the availability of, and the restrictions imposed on, our acting, it does not explicitly specify

the conditions of the situation. Or maybe better: it focuses more on the 'spatial' aspect of the situation (who is present, what are their affordances, what are the constraints imposed by the constellation, what are the social and other conditions of the location, and so on), and does not pay enough attention to the other, 'temporal' aspect of the 'embodiment': speech acts have to undergo a process in time in order to become fully valid.

Above, I have shown how historically the speech act of baptizing has undergone significant changes both as to its form and as to its content. Any living speech act will undergo such changes, and if we consider pragmatic acts, it is clear that they are differentiated according to the progression of time. Even the most horrendous criminal acts are subject to a process of 'superannuation', by which a particular act is 'decommissioned', so to speak: it loses its particular virulence when considered in a temporal perspective, such that the perpetrator after a certain number of years can no longer be prosecuted for his or her act.³⁾ But even in non-criminal cases, the 'statute of limitation' applies, albeit differently in different surroundings. A particularly interesting case is the legal definition of what constitutes 'statutory rape'.

An act of sexual nature involving a minor is in most countries legally defined as 'rape', that is, forced sexual contact, either physically or verbally. The difference between various legislations is in the age of the persons involved. A rape is considered 'statutory' if, e.g., the sexually assaulted person in question is under the age of 16 in a state such as Massachusetts or Florida, whereas the District of Columbia imposes a stricter limit, namely 17 years. The difference became clear when US Representative Mark Foley (R-FL) was accused of having made sexual overtures to an under-age White House page boy, and he defended himself by saying that in his home state, Florida, the particular case would not fall under the legal sanctions valid in the District of Columbia (where the US Congress is located).

Leaving aside the legal tangle of the defense and its counter-moves by the prosecutors (which will be interesting to watch in this election year)⁴⁾, I want to concentrate on the temporal aspect of the sexual act. If Rep. Foley had waited for a certain number of months to send his now notorious 'over-friendly' email messages to the young man in question, there would have been no offense. The act simply loses its moral status as a transgression, due to the progression of time. Conversely, it is important to pinpoint the

exact time when a crime is perpetrated or an arrest is made, precisely because the police and the judiciary know that the temporal dimension plays an all-decisive role in the evaluation and interpretation of certain acts in order to have them qualified as criminal.

WHY ARE THE SPACE-TIME DIMENSIONS IMPORTANT?

The dimensions of space and time are not only important as definitional parameters for a particular speech act; they constitute the very framework in which the pragmatic acts can be undertaken. In this respect, it is not sufficient to consider the abstract localities and temporalities surrounding a particular act; we must take into consideration the sequentiality and localization as they express the interaction of the participants. Very simply, I cannot execute a speech act without speech of some kind; if I am not heard, then there will be no acting. Even the act of belief in God is not possible without having heard the gospel: *Fides ex auditu*, “faith cometh by hearing”, as St. Paul advises us in his letter to the Romans (10:17). And in all this, the intention of the speaker is not the only criterion by which the speech acts have to be judged (pace Austin and Searle and their theory of ‘illocutionary point’, which is basically based on speaker intention). The recipient(s), the hearer(s), and their interpretation of the acts are equally important, nay indispensable for the successful performance of the act.

Consider the following example, adapted from Haugh (2007 in press, ex. (7)):

(A mother and daughter are walking towards a railway station in Tokyo)

Mother: *mama hankachi mottekita to omottanda kedo*

[mother (= ‘I’) handkerchief bring-come-past thought but ...]

(‘I thought I had brought a handkerchief but ...’)

[Daughter passes handkerchief]

Mother: *A doomo*

(‘Oh thanks’)

The mother’s remark, taken in isolation, could be interpreted as a completely neutral (‘constative’) verbal expression of a state of affairs, or, as Haugh suggests, “to make a mental note not to forget next time or to express frustration at forgetting and so on” (2007: 14). However, the sequel of the conversation shows that the daughter ‘gets’ her mother’s hint and produces a handkerchief; in other words, the mother’s utterance is now

retrospectively classified as a request. Note that without the temporal and spatial dimensions of this conversation, the request would not have materialized, just as was the case in our first example, where the expression ‘going to bed’ had to be ‘disambiguated’, in the parlance of the linguists.

What we have here is a classical example of an ‘indirect speech act’, as it has been described by a variety of authors, beginning with Searle (1975), Leech (1983), and Levinson (1983), all the way through Mey (1993, 2001). As I say in my 2001 book, the notion of ‘indirect speech act’ is insufficient to explain occurrences such as the ones cited above: it only describes the fact that something is said, something else is intended (Searle’s ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ illocution, Searle 1975: 62; cf. Mey 2001: 113). How this happens, and why, is never specified. In my theory of pragmatic acts, I stress the fact that properly speaking, there are no speech acts as such, but only speech acts spoken in a particular situation. Such situated speech acts are dependent, for their interpretation, on the ‘history’ of the act, that is to say, not only that which comes before, but also, and most importantly, on what comes after (in the ‘retrospective’ account mentioned above). But without a conversational participant, there is no ‘after’: indirect speech acts are dependent on the interpretation that the hearer gives to it, possibly in a renewed exchange with the original utterer, as in the following example (also adapted from Haugh 2007, ex. (1)):

[A visitor to the Edo-Tokyo Museum is sitting down on a bench, starting to unwrap a package of food. A museum attendant, upon seeing this, approaches the visitor and says):

(Attendant) *Mooshiwake gozaimasen ... mooshiwake gozaimasen ...*

(‘I’m very sorry ... I’m very sorry ...’)

(Visitor) *A, ikenai?*

(Oh, it’s not allowed?)

(Attendant) *Mooshiwake gozaimasen ...*

Notice here that the expression *Mooshiwake gozaimasen* (‘I’m very sorry’) has nothing to do with the actual situation as such; it is a very general, super-polite way of saying ‘Sorry’. No mention is made of regulations, prohibitions, propriety, food & drink; no appeal is made to authority, visitor behavior, sanctions, and the like. Yet, this ‘indirect speech act’ of admonishing/reminding/prohibiting and so on is immediately taken up by the visitor, who interprets the utterance of ‘apologizing’ as an indirect speech act of ‘not

allowing’.

PRAGMATIC ACTS AND SEQUENTIALITY

Above, I referred to the so-called ‘indirect speech act problem’: How can it be that our speech acts more often than not are executed by verbal expressions having very little to do with the literal interpretation of those expressions, but rather much with their conventional interpretation (either as idioms, or by using certain rules of inference; Levinson 1983: 268-272; 2000: 16)? The answer is, in accordance with what I said above, that those so-called ‘indirect’ speech acts derive their force not just from the speaker’s intention, nor from the actual words uttered, but rather from the *situation* in which they are appropriately uttered.

The next step is to generalize this answer to speech acting in general. All speech acts have to be *situated*; thus, situated speech acts come close to the *speech event* as it is defined in ethnography and anthropology (see, e.g., Bauman and Sherzer 1974). Here, speech is seen as centered around an institutionalized social activity of a certain kind, such as teaching, visiting a doctor’s office, participating in a tea-ceremony, and so on, where certain utterances can be expected and will thus be acceptable, others are ‘out’. Conversely, by accepting their own and others’ utterances, the participants in the situation establish and reaffirm the very situation in which the utterances are uttered, as well as themselves as utterers whose speech both relies on, and actively creates, the social situation.

The emphasis is thus no longer on describing individual speech acts (as it was for Searle and his followers). What the speech event does is understandable only in terms of the language used; conversely, the individual speech acts make sense only in the event. This view has gained further support among anthropologists and linguists; thus, US anthropologist William Hanks states that “meaning arises out of the interaction between language and circumstances, rather than being encapsulated in the language itself” (1996: 266), that is to say, encoded in semantic units and administered by way of syntactic rules.⁵⁾

This “radically pragmatic view” (to use Levinson’s expression; 1995) deals with the indirect speech act problem by moving the focus of attention from the *words* being said to the *activities* that are performed. The ‘indirectness’ of speech acting derives in a straightforward manner *from* the situation; at the same time, the speech acts depend *on* the situ-

ation for their correct interpretation. No speech act, in and by itself, makes any sense; there are, strictly speaking, no such 'things' as speech acts as such, but only situated speech acts, or *pragmatic acts*.

If there are no speech acts as such, but only situated speech acts, it follows that it is a mistake to believe (as most philosophers and linguists still do) that one can isolate, and explain, our use of words by referring to individual speech acts, having well-defined properties (such as illocutionary force), to be assigned strictly in accordance with philosophical and linguistic criteria (semantic, syntactic, perhaps even phonological).

It further implies that all efforts expended in trying to break out of this linguistic and philosophical straitjacket in the end must be frustrated, since no single theory of language or of the mind will ever be able to explain the activities of the human language user *in a concrete situation*. Such a situation depends neither on the mind nor on language exclusively, and cannot be expressed in terms intended to specifically operate within, and describe, the mental or linguistic.

By contrast, a pragmatic approach to speech acting will always, as its first and most important business, raise the question of the *user's possibilities* (or 'affordances', to use a term due to the US psychologist James J. Gibson) in any given situation.

To repeat: the theory of pragmatic acts does not explain language use *from the inside out*, that is, from words having their origin in a sovereign speaker and going out to an equally sovereign hearer (who then may become another sovereign speaker, and so on and so forth). Rather, its explanatory movement is *from the outside in*: the focus is on the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their 'affordances', such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as on what is actually being said. Most importantly, the situation should not be seen as a once-given, one and only collection of affordances, but as a continuously changing, interactional process, in which speakers and hearers, as inter-actants, participate on an equal footing in the process of meaning-making, of co-constructing the interpretation of the situation and its occurring utterances (cf. Mey 2001: 221).

EXTENDING THE MODEL: POLITENESS AND SEQUENTIALITY

Not unexpectedly, much of the literature on indirect speech acting has centered around the notion of politeness, focusing especially on how politeness is exercised in various cultural surroundings. The pioneering work of scholars such as Sachiko Ide and Elinor Ochs is well known, and has contributed to a better understanding not only of politeness itself, but also of the mechanisms that are involved in making politeness happen.

The one aspect that has not caught the attention of most scholars (including myself) is the way pragmatic acts 'develop' over time. By this, I mean that the outcome of a particular case of pragmatic acting is not given instantaneously, in the very moment of acting; the collaboration and co-construction of the interpretation that is necessary to arrive at a satisfactory interpretation (for all participants) has to develop over time, hence the importance of introducing the notion of 'sequentiality' into our thinking about pragmatic acts.

Robert Arundale (2005, 2006) has developed several theoretical instruments for dealing with this aspect of human linguistic interaction. The 'retrospective co-constituting' of a pragmatic act (Haugh 2007: 14) is only possible if we take the time dimension into consideration. People need time to collaborate; and it is often only after a few interchanges that the 'real' meaning of an utterance becomes clear. 'Acting out of context' is just as dangerous and impermissible as 'quoting out of context'; and since the context is continuously changing, our actions cannot be pinned down to what they were defined as on the basis of the actual words spoken on one particular occasion. Therefore, what we need is principles that take this temporal (and spatial) aspect of the interaction into account; one such principle is precisely what Arundale calls the SIP, the 'Sequential Interpreting Principle' (Arundale 2005; Arundale and Good 2002), which allows for the hearers to integrate the utterances into a 'revolving' (not just 'evolving', as Arundale has it) interpretation of the situation and its concomitant and constituent utterances.

Arundale and his co-workers examine the workings of sequencing in particular as to the creation of what they call 'politeness implicatures', that is to say, implicatures that arise in conversation beyond the explicitly expressed or implicit intentions of the speakers, but are co-constructed by the interactants in dialogue. In the context of my presenta-

tion, however, there is no need to focus on, or exclusively deal with politeness phenomena, as the mechanisms that Arundale identifies for the creation of implicatures are not limited to conversation or politeness as such, but have universal validity across human interaction.

Here is an example, again due to Haugh (2007: 13, ex. (6)).

(M is staying at S's house. In the morning, they both are on their way to the (only) bathroom. The following conversation takes place outside the bathroom door:

S: What time are you leaving this morning?

M: Oh ... in about an hour, I suppose. Are you in a hurry to leave?

S: No, no. Just asking.

[two seconds pause]

M: Would you like to use the bathroom first?

S: Yeh, sure, if you don't mind.

The sequentiality involved in this conversation (accentuated by the unusually long pause of 2 secs.) is an essential element in the correct 'uptake' of S's first speech act and M's varying replies. The 'information' request is duly answered, according to the book, by a concrete specification of the item queried: the time of leaving the house ("in about an hour") qualified by a 'ballpark' marker ("I suppose"). The conversation could have ended here, but clearly, more is involved than a simple question. In the situation (two people waiting at the bathroom door), the pragmatic act (or 'pragmeme', as I call it; Mey 2001: 221) of 'establishing one's queue rights and duties' kicks in. This can happen only after the first utterance has been delivered and identified by the hearer as belonging to this pragmeme; this becomes clear when M utters a question ("Are you in a hurry to leave?"), which (inside this pragmeme) aims at establishing an order of priorities with regard to one's place in the (virtual) queue. Normally, one would expect a 'true' (Y/N) answer to such a question, and not the waffling one that S produces, with its 'pooh-poohing' the original request and making it appear as if it had been uttered out of pure curiosity—something which in the current pragmeme makes no sense at all, as it is not related to the 'queue-establishing' act, but actually seems to 'opt out' of the pragmeme altogether.

M is naturally confused by this reply ('what the hell is S on about, and why did he

ask me about my departure time in the first place—it couldn't just have been small talk so early in the morning' and so on). The lengthy pause is also significant: two seconds may not seem much of a break, but try to insert such a pause in any normal conversation and it will clearly provoke a reaction from your interlocutor (such as 'Are you listening?' or 'Hey, wake up, I'm talking to you').

In this case, S is apparently aware of the effect his 'non-utterance' has had on M, and he chooses the safe path of watching which way the cat jumps—which happens in the next interchange, where M forces S's hand, so to speak, by coercing him back into the pragmeme of 'queue making' by a blunt question, thereby offering S the possibility of 'jumping to the front of the line' ("Would you like to use the bathroom first?"). It is only at this point, after several interchanges and a long pause, that the pragmeme becomes entirely explicit as to its nature: S grabs the opportunity offered him to be first in line and sequentially confirms the order conveyed by the pragmatic interaction ("Yeh, sure, if you don't mind").

What this example shows is two things. For one, the individual utterances (or speech acts) make no sense in themselves, but only in the situation: they are (parts of) a situated (or pragmatic) act. And second, the acts come into the proper perspective of the pragmeme by being treated sequentially: the temporal dimension enters into the pragmatic acting as a substantial component without which the pragmeme could not function properly, or even exist.

These observations are of course not new. As to the first, it can be found in a wide variety of works in the pragmatic literature, including Leech (1995), Levinson (2000), Cooren et al. (2005) and many others. And as to the second, the grand old man of Conversation Analysis, Manny Schegloff, had as early as 1968, discovered and described the sequentiality that is involved in conversational openings (Schegloff 1968; now also 2006); later, he expanded his insight to comprise the now universally accepted notion of 'adjacency' as a condition for proper conversational sequencing. In the present context, however, I want to stress that my view of sequentiality in pragmatic acting is, if not different from, at least at variance with some of the other tenets held by conversation analysts. In particular, the notion of 'strict' adjacency and 'local' organization seem to me irrelevant to a pragmatic analysis: the sequentiality involved in the pragmeme is easily

extended beyond the narrow confines of strict adjacency as they are evident in the definitions and uses of the CA notion of 'adjacency pair'.

SPEECH ACTING, DYADIC INTERACTION AND THE 'JANUS PRINCIPLE'

From what we have seen thus far, it becomes clear that the notion of speech act is not the only, and probably not the best way of making sense of conversation, and in general, verbal interaction. Conceiving of text as a 'macro-speech act' (van Dijk 1977), or of conversation as a concatenation of speech acts, all have the inherent deficiency pointed out in the preceding: that they focus on the individual speaker or hearer as the locus of action, and by the same token have a limited understanding of what interaction in time and space is all about. (I criticized this conception, which I dubbed the 'talking heads', as early as 1985 in my book *Whose language?*)

In fact, as Arundale and Good remark, "accounts of conversation as speech act sequences are *not* adequate" (2002: 134; emphasis original); the reason is that speech acts, as they are usually understood, rest on a conception of the speaker and hearer as autonomous, 'monadic', individual agents, who produce conversation in a "chess-like sequence of moves" (Arundale and Good *ibid.*: 124, 135), in their capacity of "sovereign speakers and hearers" (Mey 2001: 221). This monadic notion the authors then seek to replace by one of 'dyadic cognizing', understood as "the dynamically interdependent cognitive processing of two individuals engaged in interaction" (Arundale and Good 2002: 127).

While this description, as such, fits well in with my idea of conversation and in general, speech activity, as 'pragmatic acting', it seems to me that the choice of the term 'dyadic' is less felicitous, especially when seen against the background of the authors' own definition. Instead, I would suggest using a term that is both better known in linguistic and literary studies, and also captures the interactive aspect of cognizing better than does the term 'dyadic', with its unfortunate associations to its counterpart 'monadic' (a dyad can be seen as consisting of two independent monads, a conception that Arundale and Good naturally reject; *ibid.*)

This dialogic ⁶⁾ character of conversation consists in the participants both anticipating and reflecting on what their partners say, have said, would have said, could have said, and prospectively will (be able to) say. In other words, this interactive cognizing

depends as much on the input of the individuals as on their relationship and the common affordances that they share. In addition, this sharing is not just a 'give-and-take', or an exchange of 'moves' in a game: the participants, in interacting, act upon one another such that the outcome of the conversation or other speech activity is always a 'co-construction', a collaborative effort, never a purely static product: "a dynamic process", rather than a "product of interaction", as Arundale and Good themselves point out (*ibid.*: 128). This, finally, comprises also the 'dialectic' aspect that many authors belonging to the Bakhtinian tradition have stressed as the specific mark of truly human interaction. In such a conception, neither what I say is important, nor what the other says, taken in isolation. In contrast, what importantly results from the process is an understanding that has to be negotiated again and again, against the backdrop of the situation and the changing conditions of the interaction.

Naturally, these changing conditions incorporate the temporal (in addition to the local) aspect that I started out by mentioning. Time (and history, in general) cannot be defined as a unidirectional flow of events: history is just as much about what has been as it is about what is, and about what is to come. History, to borrow the apt terminology of Arundale and Good, has a 'Janus-like' aspect: like the old Roman god Janus, it looks both back (into 'history' as it is usually understood) and forth (into the 'future' part of history). This, incidentally, is what I think the historian George Santayana meant by his famous dictum: 'Whoever fails to learn from history will have to repeat it'. So, rather than having *history* 'repeat itself', as it is often said, *we* ourselves must 'repeat' it, by projecting history 'back into the future', or: learning to live the instant time in the anticipation of the coming. In Kierkegaard's words, life has to be lived in a forward move, but it has to be understood by moving back.

What do these philosophical musings have to do with the question at hand, the cognizing that happens in the interaction between people? Quite simply this: the 'Janus principle' (Arundale and Good 2002: 134-135) applies to conversation as well: "foresight and hindsight are fundamental to the interactional achievement of conversation" in a "simultaneous and dyadic operation" (*ibid.*: 134) The temporal dimension of pragmatic acting that I started out talking about is nothing but an application of this principle: "in interacting, the participants continually both proactively afford and retroactively constrain one another's comprehending and producing of every utterance" (*ibid.*: 135). And again,

this process continues throughout the interaction; which is why a pragmatic act in itself is not enough, but has to be subsumed under a more general conception of the individual acts as belonging to a superordinate sequentiality, the ‘pragmeme’, as I have called it (Mey 2001: 222).

CONCLUSION

What I hope to have shown in this paper is that speech acting, and in general, the interactive relationships of humans with each other are not just abstract phenomena, to be studied and analyzed as ‘frozen points of time’, as moments fixated, as it were, by a photographic lens (to use Saussure’s well-known description of the ‘synchronic’ aspect of language, 1916: 15). The point of making sequencing a part of pragmatic acting is to underscore the importance of the temporal (in addition to the local) component of the situation. As a Danish psycholinguist friend of mine once expressed it, “we don’t really know what we are saying until someone else has understood it for us” (Hermann 1989: 94). It is this dialogic (and indeed dialectic) aspect of pragmatic acting that in my opinion is the main contribution that pragmatics has to offer to a theory of verbal and nonverbal interaction.

Notes

- 1) “[Credo in] unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum”.
- 2) “May the body of Jesus Christ Our Lord guard your soul to eternal life” (*Corpus Domini Nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam æternam* |; from the Catholic liturgy of the Communion).
- 3) Under certain circumstances, the legal practice of limiting liability to a determined span of time may be preempted, as it was the case for most of the war crimes committed during WWII.
- 4) Rep. Foley resigned his seat in the House “in disgrace”, as the newspapers had it, on September 29, 2006.
- 5) See Enfield (1998) for an enlightening discussion of this issue.
- 6) Or even ‘polylogic’, as suggested by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2004).

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Evolving Discourse

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