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Príspevky/Papers



The Pragmatics of Discourse

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Abstract

The question whether discourse is semantic or pragmatic has been examined thoroughly from a parts-anchored perspective by Austin's analysis of the constative and performative. He concluded that ordinary-language sentences are neither true nor false but rather are used to perform speech acts. However, is that conclusion also valid for the extended frame of discourse, i.e. is discourse functionally equivalent to a macro-speech act composed of concatenated, sequentially organized micro-speech acts, whose type of connectedness may be specified further by the overt realization of discourse

connectives?

This paper argues for a pragmatic perspective on discourse, delimiting discourse from context on the one hand, and from arbitrarily concatenated discourse units on the other. It argues for a dynamic conception of discourse's constitutive parts, the discourse unit, whose function is interdependent with the frame of investigation. The sequential organization of discourse units is constrained by: (1) the semantics and pragmatics of the constitutive discourse units; (2) the semantics and pragmatics of the joints, metaphorically speaking; and (3) the semantics and pragmatics of discourse as a whole, demonstrating that discourse is a parts-whole configuration and that the whole is always more than the sum of its parts.

Keywords

Coherence, communicative action, context, discourse, expository, granularity, macro, micro, pragmatics, sequentiality.

Introduction

The concept of discourse is referred to in numerous research disciplines, e.g. linguistics, pragmatics, literary studies, cultural studies, anthropology, and media studies, to name but a few. Discourse may be used synonymously with text, denoting longer stretches of written and spoken language; it may refer to the semantic representation of some connected sentences, or it may refer to communications about a particular issue, e.g. political discourse or the discourse of advertising. The multifaceted domain of discourse has been examined in diverse, but not mutually exclusive research paradigms, concentrating, on the one hand, on text as the object of investigation, as in text linguistics (cf., e.g., de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981), and on the connectedness between text and society on the other hand, as in discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis (cf. e.g., van Dijk 2008, 2009; Fairclough 1992, 1995, 2003).

The goal of this paper is to argue for a pragmatics-anchored theory of discourse,

conceptualizing discourse as communicative action. That is to say discourse as a whole may be looked upon as some kind of macro-communicative act, while its parts are differentiated with respect to their delimiting frames and sequential positioning, viz. meso-communicative acts as an in-between category, and micro-communicative acts as the basic discourse unit. The following section presents a discussion of the dynamics of discourse, Section 2 examines the connectedness between communicative action and discourse, and Section 3 discusses the connectedness between discourse and context.

1. The Dynamics of Discourse

Discourse has been conceptualized with respect to quantity, viz. "the study of language patterns above the sentence" (Widdowson 2004:3), and with respect to quality, viz. discourse comes with the presumption of being coherent (cf. e.g., Bublitz, Lenk and Ventola 1999). In the diverse field of discourse analysis, comprising both formal and functional

paradigms, there is agreement about the quantity-based definition of discourse, and there is also some general agreement that there is more to discourse than quantity, considering the connectedness between cohesion and coherence (cf. e.g., Halliday 1994, Gernsbacher and Givón 1995) as well as discourse relations (e.g., Asher and Lascarides 2003). From a pragmatic perspective, the appropriateness of the unit of investigation in discourse requires some further analysis, considering not only the grammatical unit of sentence (or clause) or the semantic unit of proposition but also that of the communicative act and its constitutive parts of illocutionary (or pragmatic) force and felicity conditions. Additionally, the crucial pragmatic premises of indexicality and presupposition also have to be accommodated. Hence, discourse needs to be analysed from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives, addressing the question of what conditions assign a sequence of discursive units the status of discourse, considering their sequential organization, and the nature of their connectedness.

1.1 Discourse: quantity meets quality

Discourse refers to longer stretches of talk, comprising written, spoken or computer-mediated discourse, for instance. Discourse is seen as a functional synonym with text in text linguistics, and in formal theories of discourse, discourse is seen as the semantic representation of some concatenated sentences. The rather general definition of discourse as ‘language patterns above the sentence’ – or as a text which “consists of a finite number of sentences in succession, with one-sentence texts as the marked category” (Fabricius-Hansen and Ramm 2008: 4) has been qualified by a number of prominent researchers in discourse analysis and pragmatics. According to Widdowson (2004), that definition “would seem to imply that discourse is sentence writ large: quantitatively different but qualitatively the same phenomenon. It would follow, too, of course, that you cannot have discourse *below* the sentence” (Widdowson 2004:3). In his discussion of the quantity-based definition, he makes explicit another fallacy: if “the difference between sentence and discourse is not a matter of kind but only of degree, then they are presumably assumed to signal the same kind of meaning. If sentence meaning is intrinsically encoded, that is to say, a semantic property of the

language itself, then so is discourse meaning” (ibid.). To avoid that flaw, a felicitous analysis of discourse and discourse meaning needs to go beyond the code model of language and accommodate the premise that the whole, that is discourse, is more than the sum of its parts, viz. sentences and clauses. This also holds for the meaning of the whole, which is more than the sum of the meanings of its constitutive sentences, clauses or utterances. As a result, discourse analysis “has to do not with what texts mean, but with what might be meant by them, and what they are taken to mean. In this view there is no ‘understanding’ of texts as a semantic process, separate from, and prior to, a pragmatic ‘evaluation’ which brings context into play” (Widdowson 2004:35).

A conceptualization of discourse with the explicit accommodation of its quantitative and qualitative dimensions goes beyond text linguistics and discourse semantics, as has already been made explicit by Widdowson (2004:8) in his conclusion that discourse is “the pragmatic process of meaning negotiation”. That is to say, discourse analysis “has to do not with what texts mean, but with what might be meant by them, and what they are taken to mean. In this view there is no ‘understanding’ of texts as a semantic process, separate from, and prior to, a pragmatic ‘evaluation’ which brings context into play” (Widdowson 2004:35). In a similar vein, Mey highlights its context-dependence: “Discourse is different from *text* in that it embodies more than just a collection of sentences; discourse is what makes the text, and what makes it context-bound” (Mey 2001:190).

1.2 Discourse: process and product

The explicit accommodation of the negotiation of meaning and thus of context requires a further differentiation in the analysis of the pragmatics of discourse: discourse-as-a-process, capturing the dynamics of discourse, and discourse-as-a-product, referring to the negotiated meaning, as is put succinctly by Widdowson, for instance: “meaning of words in texts is always subordinated to a discourse purpose: we read into them what we want to get out of them” (Widdowson 2004:86).

The concept of discourse purpose has not only been examined in discourse analysis but also in artificial intelligence with respect to discourse planning (cf. e.g., Cohen et al. 1992), and it is also referred to in the

Gricean Cooperative Principle, saying that participants should make their conversational contribution “such as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you [they, A.F.] are engaged” (Grice 1975:45). Discourse purpose is a context-dependent concept *par excellence*, which holds for discourse as a whole as well as for the constitutive parts of discourse, that is micro discursive units, such as sentences, clauses, utterances and communicative acts, and meso-discursive units, such as paragraphs and topical sections. For discourse as a whole, discourse purpose is anchored to the delimiting frame of discourse genre (cf., e.g., Fairclough 2003), speech event (cf., e.g. Gumperz 1992, 1996; Hymes 1974), activity type (Levinson 1979) or communicative project (Linell 1998), to name but the most prominent concepts. For the micro-discursive unit, it is anchored to illocutionary force, and for meso-discursive units it is anchored to Linell’s concept of local communicative project (Linell 1998). Against this background, discourse is a relational concept, relating the micro-discourse units with the meso units, and with the macro units, as is also the case with the concept of context, relating linguistic context (or co-text) with cognitive context, and relating cognitive context linguistic context with social context and sociocultural context (Fetzer 2012).

The dynamics of discourse are not only reflected in the production and interpretation of sentences, utterances and communicative acts in context, but also in the administration of the discursive units exchanged and the information communicated through them. This means that the local and global constraints of the macro-, meso- and micro- discursive units as regards allowable contributions and their preferred interpretations need to have some cognitive home, metaphorically speaking, against the background of which, and in which the relevant processes of inferencing are carried out. That ‘home’ has been referred to as discourse common ground, which subcategorizes into individual discourse common ground and collective discourse common ground (Fetzer 2007), common ground and its differentiation into personal common ground and communal common ground (Clark 1996), and discourse memory (Roulet 2006). The most prominent cognitive operations relevant to the

administration of discourse are conversational inference and pragmatic enrichment.

A pragmatic perspective on discourse accounting for ‘discourse purpose’ requires the explicit accommodation of the general pragmatic principles of intentionality, cooperation and contextualization (Fetzer 2011). The concept of activity type, which, like discourse, context and discourse common ground, is a fuzzy category, allows us to bridge the gaps amongst linguistic context and ‘linguistic discourse’ (or text), cognitive context and ‘cognitive discourse’, and social and sociocultural context and ‘social and sociocultural discourse’, as is stated by Levinson (1979: 70):

“... there is another important and related fact, in many ways the mirror image of the constraints on contributions, namely the fact that for each and every clearly demarcated activity there is a set of *inferential schemata*. These schemata are tied to (derived from, if one likes) the structural properties of the activity in question.”

Discourse analysis has been referred to as “the study of language patterns above the sentence” (Widdowson 2004:3). However, it has been shown that discourse is a goal-directed communicative action. In discourse, we do things with words performing communicative acts to achieve particular effects in the world, and we do things with words performing some higher-level communicative act (and thus discourse-as-a-whole) to achieve particular effects in the world. So is discourse analysis the study of communicative-action patterns above the communicative act?

2. Communicative acts in discourse

Discourse is fundamentally concerned with the nature of the connectedness between parts and wholes, and therefore requires the accommodation of both bottom-up and top-down, and process- and product-oriented perspectives. Approaching discourse from a bottom-up perspective tends to focus on the micro domain and proceed from there, examining clauses and its constitutive parts, sentences or utterances (and their constitutive parts) and possibly speech acts, and their discursive status with respect to discourse constraints, such as sequence and sequentiality, adjacency and dovetailedness, discourse relations and textual coherence, paying in general more attention to the

discursive processes involved than to the discursive product (as a whole).

Approaching discourse in a top-down manner tends to focus on the discourse-as-a-whole and proceed from there, decomposing the whole into its constitutive parts, such as connectives, clauses and sentences in discourse semantics, and utterances and sometimes speech acts, pragmatic markers and sequences in the field of discourse analysis; or turn-constructive units, discourse markers, turns and opening, closing and topical sequences in conversation analysis (cf. Fetzer and Meierkord 2002). From a discourse-internal perspective, these more generalized constraints are considered as discursive universals, e.g., initial positions, the right frontier, adjacency or rhetorical distance, discursive moves, e.g., request for information and compliance or rejection, and rhetorical relations, e.g., continuation, narration or elaboration (Asher and Lascarides 2003).

Pragmatic analyses of discourse investigate the specification of those constraints in order to accommodate the contextual constraints and requirements of the activity type or discourse genre, refining, for instance, the constraint of adjacency with conditional relevance, viz. adjacency position, adjacency relation and adjacency expectation (Levinson 1983). It needs to be pointed out, however, that only very few analyses address explicitly the important methodological issue of whether discourse is a semantic concept concerned with text, or whether it is pragmatic in nature and therefore concerned with communicative action and the performance of speech acts in context (Mey 2001; Sbisà 1991, 2002). In this frame of reference, discourse relations are examined on both the locutionary and illocutionary planes of discourse, considering not only their local impact on the construal of textual coherence and their context-change potentials, but also their perlocutionary effects and perlocutionary intentions. Implicit in this outlook on discourse is the question whether discourse connectives are some kind of peripheral speech act, as is examined further in the following two sections.

2.1 Situated speech acts

Speech acts have been analysed in their own right in speech act theory from both theoretical and applied perspectives, and they have been analysed with respect to

their societal and discursive effects, considering in particular social and sociocultural contexts, and discourse effects. While the former paradigm focuses on the micro act, the latter accommodates both linguistic and social contexts. To account for these different perspectives, this paper employs the term 'speech act' to refer to speech act theory proper (Austin 1975, Searle 1969), and 'communicative act' or 'situated speech act' to refer to communicative action embedded in context. The situatedness of the speech act has already been referred to by Austin himself in his discussion of the perlocutionary act, which manifests itself in the "achievement of a perlocutionary object (convince, persuade) or the production of a perlocutionary sequel" (Austin 1976:181).

In his work on pragmatics, Mey (2001: 219) refers to the Janus-like nature of communicative acts, claiming that "they [situated speech acts] both rely on, and actively create, the situation in which they are realized". Situated speech acts capture the interpersonal relationship between speaker and addressee (and other ratified participants), and they capture the communicative act's social and societal situatedness. In a similar vein, speech acts have been described as context-changers: their production and interpretation changes the social and sociocultural context as captured by the participants' rights and obligations and assignment of obligations and entitlements, the linguistic context as captured by constraints on linguistic style and sequential organization, and the cognitive context as captured by cognitive effects as regards meaning and force. Sbisà (2002) follows up on the situatedness of communicative acts by pointing out that the sequencing of discourse makes manifest the conventional effects of speech acts: "When considering a sequence of moves, it is reasonable to view the output of one move as coinciding with the input for the next" (Sbisà 2002:72). As a consequence, she assigns felicity conditions the status of specifications of context: preparatory conditions specify the context of the illocutionary act, and the essential condition and the propositional-content conditions specify the direction of fit and spell out the intended context of the illocutionary act's effect. This is also reflected in Bach's analysis (Bach 1992) of communicative intention: "Moreover, communicative (illocutionary) intentions generally are

accompanied by perlocutionary intentions, and individual utterances are usually parts of larger plans. So it is plausible to suppose that identifying a speaker's perlocutionary intentions and broader plans is often relevant to identifying his communicative intention" (Bach 1992:397).

The analysis of situated speech act needs to accommodate explicitly the contextual constraints and requirements of both sequentiality (cf., e.g., Fetzer and Meierkord 2002) and sequential organization: "Sequential organization refers to that property of interaction by virtue of which what is said at any time sets up expectations about what is to follow either immediately afterwards or later in the interaction" (Gumperz 1992: 304). Analogously to the conversation-analytic premise of double contextuality, viz. the production of talk is *doubly contextual* (Heritage 1984:242), situated speech acts or communicative acts may also be 'doubly contextual', taking up a prior communicative act while setting up expectations on possible upcoming communicative acts. From a macro perspective, communicative acts are intended to achieve the interlocutor's uptake with respect to the discourse-as-a-whole, and they are intended to achieve the interlocutor's uptake with respect to the particular communicative act as a constitutive part of the discourse.

Research in speech act theory and in discourse analysis has generally focused on the examination of parts rather than on the connectedness amongst parts and the whole. This holds for an analysis of speech acts, in particular of direct speech acts and indirect speech acts, but also for discourse connectives, which is used as an umbrella term in this paper containing pragmatic markers, discourse markers, pragmatic formatives and discourse particles, to name but the most prominent ones. As has already been demonstrated by Levinson (1983), an analysis of the sequential organization of direct and indirect speech acts in discourse offers revealing insights into the nature of human interactions. For invitations, for instance, interactants tend to produce pre-invitations which refer indexically to the felicity conditions of an invitation, e.g. the availability of the communication partner at a particular point in time, as illustrated with the following exchange adopted from Levinson (1983: 346):

A: Whatcha doin'
 B: nothin'
 A: Wanna drink

The same strategy holds for pre-requests ('do you have still mineral water?') for the request 'can I have still mineral water?' and pre-announcements ('guess what') (cf. Levinson 1983:346). It also holds for pre-rejections and pre-disagreements ('well', 'but'). Against this background, it seems more promising to adopt a parts-whole perspective to the investigation of communicative acts in discourse, considering the connectedness amongst the constitutive parts of discourse on the micro, meso and macro planes, such as opening sections, topical sections and closing sections. This also includes the connectedness between sequences and sequentiality, adjacency pairs and preference organization, as well as the construal of intertextuality as regards discourse-as-whole and interdiscursivity as regards the connectedness of discourse and context.

2.2 Expositives

The question whether discourse is semantic or pragmatic has been examined thoroughly from a parts-anchored perspective by Austin's analysis of the constative and performative (Austin 1976). He concluded that ordinary-language sentences are neither true nor false but rather are used to perform speech acts. However, is that conclusion also valid for the extended frame of discourse, i.e. is discourse functionally equivalent to a macro-communicative act composed of concatenated, sequentially organized micro-communicative acts, whose type of connectedness may be specified further by the overt realization of discourse connectives?

Expositives are particularized speech acts which "are used in acts of exposition involving the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments, and the clarifying of usages and of references" (Austin 1976:161). The function of "the expositive is the clarifying of reasons, arguments, and communications" (Austin 1976:163). Austin gives the following examples: 'I turn next to', 'I quote', 'I cite', 'I recapitulate', 'I repeat that', 'I illustrate', 'I deny' and 'I mention that'. All of the examples have a strong discursive function, making explicit the meta-communicative function of a particular communicative act. This task is also fulfilled by discourse connectives, such as 'now',

'Lie', 'say', 'well', or 'right', for instance. But discourse connectives have never been compared and contrasted with speech acts. This is because they are seen as semantically bleached. The question whether they have some kind of illocutionary force, however, is worthwhile pursuing.

The employment of expositives in discourse can be made explicit as follows: in making an utterance as an expositive speech act, the speaker specifies the act in terms of a prior or succeeding illocutionary act, and, in doing so, builds a logical, rational, or other kinds of sequence of illocutionary acts. Its conventional illocutionary effect is not a change in the world, which is described as a proposition, but rather a discourse-internal one. In that respect, an expositive is radically different from an ordinary speech act, which is composed of an illocutionary act and locutionary/propositional act, and does not feed on recontextualized propositional content. For this reason, the locution (or propositional act) of an expositive is not an independent locution (or propositional content) but rather the locution (or propositional content) of a prior or succeeding communicative act.

Expositives are very similar to text-relation markers, which indicate illocutionary relations between text-segments (Roulet 2006). Like discourse connectives, they are a necessary part of (natural-language) discourse and fulfil the function of coherence strands (Givón 1993). Since they do not have propositional content proper, they have an indexical function, connecting local domains of discourse with global ones (cf. e.g., Gernsbacher and Givón 1995, Schiffrin 1987). Like discourse connectives, these non-propositional linguistic items are processed bottom-up, and indicate the speaker's position vis-à-vis the preceding context or hearer, which includes the mental movement from hearer to speaker. For instance, the discourse connective 'as a result' may be made explicit by the performative 'I hereby conclude', 'but' may be made explicit by 'I hereby contrast' / 'I do not quite agree', and 'like' or 'say' may be made explicit by 'I hereby quote'. As is the case with all indexicals, discourse connectives require pragmatic enrichment, and expositives require contextualization, enriching inexplicit forms and contents, assigning values to indexical tokens through the cognitive operation of conversational inference on the one hand, and global inference anchored to discourse genre or

activity type on the other.

The examination of discourse connectives and expositives has shown that both do not contain propositional content proper but rather express illocutionary force. The explication of the force of the connectives above can be interpreted as requesting the hearer or reader to perform inference operations of a certain kind. Against this background they may be assigned a dual illocutionary force, the primary, addressee-directed force being some kind of directive, and the secondary, speaker-directed force signalling the speaker-intended discursive meaning. The type of inference operations intended depends strongly on the local context of the connective. For instance, the discourse connective 'and' may fulfil a temporal function ('they bought a car *and* they bought a motor bike'), it may fulfil a temporal and causal function ('she bought a car and she paid cash'), and it may fulfil a conclusive function ('*and* that is simply not true'). Discourse connectives, and expositives, as this paper argues, are coherence-building devices on the discursive plane and they fulfil an important meta-communicative function as an attitudinal device: they signal how two or more discursive parts are to be connected, and they signal the speaker's attitude towards the formulation of his or her contribution. Both are used strategically, and they may even occupy a full turn, as has been demonstrated by Smith and Jucker (2002), thus counting as a move in the dialogic game.

As a result of the analysis of speech acts, situated speech acts and communicative acts, all of them may be classified as more-fuzzy and less-fuzzy communicative acts. The traditional speech act is a less-fuzzy speech act and thus a speech act par excellence, while the more peripheral speech acts, that is the situated speech act, the communicative act and the expositive, are representatives of more-fuzzy speech acts.

3. Discourse in context: an outlook

An analysis of discourse is connected intrinsically with an analysis of context: context is a constitutive part of discourse, and discourse is embedded in context. In pragmatics-based terminology, context is presupposed or imported, and co-constructed or invoked, and in interactional-sociolinguistic terms, context is brought into discourse and context is brought out in discourse. Because of their

multifaceted nature and inherent complexity, both discourse and context can no longer be considered analytic primes but rather are seen from a parts-whole perspective as entities containing sub-entities and as entities contained in super-entities. This is particularly true for the indexicality of communicative action, for language conceived as a socially-situated form and language use seen as social interaction. Language variation is a decisive feature contributing to the richness of possible discourses, which are framed by discourse genre and thus delimited from context. The meso category of discourse genre may be conceptualized as a macro-communicative act composed of different types of illocutionary force and of different locutions. The glue which makes the constitutive micro acts cohere, are coherence bridges, in particular discourse connectives conceived as expositive acts.

Communicative acts are defined analogously to cognitive prototypes with fuzzy boundaries: less-fuzzy communicative acts are composed of all the necessary constitutive acts, viz. the independent illocutionary act, independent propositional act and independent utterance act. They represent the best exemplar and thus are communicative acts *par excellence*, as is the case with declarations or direct speech acts performed bald on record. More-fuzzy communicative acts are peripheral communicative acts. They do not need to have all of the constitutive acts of a communicative act proper, as is the case with expositives, for instance. Discourse

genre may count as a more-fuzzy macro communicative act. Genres are primarily more-fuzzy acts because they are less constrained as regards style- and micro- and meso-sequential organization. Only legal-discourse-anchored genres, such as cross-examinations, police interviews and verdict, and parliamentary discourse, such as Prime Minister's Question Time, count as less-fuzzy acts because they are constrained by a very high degree of institutionalization.

A conceptualization of discourse within a clearly delimited frame of reference seems to be an almost impossible endeavour. This is not only because of its inherent dynamism and complex, multi-faceted nature. It is also due to its parts-whole configuration and the often-repeated truism that a whole is more than the sum of its parts. For discourse this means that there is an almost infinite number of options available to order the constitutive parts of discourse, e.g. contributions, utterances, sentences or turns – or on a higher level, opening and closing sections and topical sections – to compose a whole. Moreover, discourse is more than a structural configuration composed of individual parts. It is also the ordering of the individual parts and their semantics, which contributes to the richness and diversity of discourse. In general, the number of constitutive parts is delimited by the frame of genre, but the sequencing of the parts leaves space for manoeuvring. That is why there can never be one and only one conceptualization of discourse.

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The Functional Spectrum of Pragmatic Markers in Political News Interviews and Celebrity Interviews

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to provide a qualitative analysis of non-propositional uses of *I mean*, *of course*, *oh*, *well*, *I think*, and *you know* in two subcorpora: one based on political news interviews and one on celebrity interviews.

After a short introduction of the formal and functional characteristics of the two genres, I will briefly discuss the contribution PM research can make to the study of political discourse. In the empirical part of the paper I will present the results of a case study of 37 interviews broadcast on BBC as well as 30 interviews broadcast on CNN with a view to comparing and contrasting the functional spectra of selected PMs in naturally occurring conversations and in (two types of) mediatized interviews.

Keywords

Media discourse, genre analysis, political news interview, celebrity interview, pragmatic markers.

Introduction

In the present paper I will take a discourse-pragmatic approach to the non-propositional uses of *I mean*, *of course*, *oh*, *well*, *I think*, and *you know* in political interviews broadcast by the BBC and CNN between 2003 and 2011. After a short introduction of the formal and functional characteristics of two types of political interviews, I will briefly outline the state of current research into the functional class of non-conceptual items I prefer¹ to call pragmatic markers (henceforth PMs) and the contribution PM research can make to the study of political discourse. In the second, empirical part of the paper I will present the results of a case study of 37 interviews² broadcast on BBC and 36 interviews³ broadcast on CNN, with a view to

comparing and contrasting the functional spectra of the most frequent PMs across a range of discourse genres with special reference to the similarities and differences between naturally occurring conversations and political interviews.

1. The political interview as institutional, political and mediatized discourse

The political interview is a genre that is best understood in terms of its formal-functional characteristics as institutional talk⁴, political discourse and mediatized discourse. As for the first two of these components, the institutional setting in which political interviews are produced clearly delineate the participants' roles, functions and underlying purposes/motivations (cf. Clayman-Heritage 2004, 37). The interviewer's (IR's) role is to represent a media organization (in our case, the BBC and CNN) with its specific guidelines for impartiality, accuracy, integrity, etc, while the interviewee (IE) represents a political organization (government, political party, civil society, etc.) with a clear intent to

¹ there is a profusion of terms such as *discourse connective*, *discourse operator*, *discourse particle*, *cue phrase*, *discourse marker*, *pragmatic force modifier*, *pragmatic expression* depending on the approach taken to the linguistic items under discussion.

² the individual interviews are between 30 minutes to 60 minutes long, the corpus comprises a total of 79,225 words \pm 2%, allowing for technical / transcript-specific information such as the indication of participants' names.

³ the corpus comprises 36 transcripts of Larry King Live, each show lasts approximately 50 minutes, the total

word count (80,436 \pm 2%) of the Larry King subcorpus makes it comparable to the BBC subcorpus.

⁴ as defined in, for example, Heritage and Greatbatch (1991)

propagate the organization's concepts, activities, messages, slogans, etc. As for the third component, the mediatization of political interviews, it is commonly observed (cf. e.g. Fetzer, 2000) that in political interviews there are two different layers of interaction occurring simultaneously: the first-frame interaction is between the IR(s) and the IE(s), while there is a second-frame interaction between the first-frame participants and the audience, either present in the studio or in front of their television sets. As a result, the IR, ideally, voices the whole spectrum of public opinion, while the IEs' aim is to gain favour with the audience, influence their views, beliefs, decisions, actions, etc. in a way that is beneficial to the organization the IE represents.

From a structural perspective, political interviews are dyadic by nature with a very specific turn-taking mechanism and set of constraints. There is an asymmetrical relationship between the IR and the IE in that the former invariably produces the first-pair part of adjacency pairs⁵ (usually a question prefaced or followed by a comment), selects the IE as the next speaker, who produces the second-pair part (an answer/reaction to the IR's question or comment). Because of the genre-specific conventions of political interviews as well as a set of expectations on the part of the audience, the content of the IE's turns always have to, at least, appear relevant to the IR's first-pair part; if, however, the IE's second-pair part is irrelevant, it is duly noted and/or made explicit by the IR, which is markedly different from the mechanics of other discourse genres such as naturally occurring conversation.

As far as the differences between the political interviews in the two subcorpora (BBC and CNN) are concerned, we find most of the contrasting patterns at the functional level. According to Lauerbach, the Larry King Show belongs to the "soft and feel-good genre" of "celebrity interviews" (Lauerbach 2007, 1388), in other words, it is of a less confrontational type than the political interviews - taken from *Newsnight*, *Hard Talk* and *Question Time* - in the BBC subcorpus, in which IRs (as well as IEs) take a more adversarial stance. With regard to their exchange structure, both sub-genres of political interviews are characterized by a repetitive sequence of adjacency pairs (Q-A-

[comment]-Q-A-[comment], etc.) and a specific, asymmetrical role-distribution between IRs and IEs; however, as Lauerbach notes, in the case of American political interviews the IR and the IE "collaboratively produce a consensual point of view" (Lauerbach 2007, 1388), while in most British political interviews the IR "in asking the questions, takes into account what a sceptical audience would like to know" (Lauerbach 2007, 1394), exposing vagueness, evasiveness and argumentative fallacies.

The formal and functional characteristics of political interviews, naturally, result in a set of pragmalinguistic realizations that are specific to both subgenres, the use of pragmatic markers being one of them. Before I discuss the genre-specific use of PMs in mediatized political interviews, a few words are in order about the properties and study of this class of linguistic items.

2. The study of pragmatic markers and their relevance to genre analysis

Pragmatic markers comprise a functional class of linguistic items that do not change the basic meaning of utterances but are essential for the organization and structuring of discourse and for marking the speaker's attitudes to the proposition being expressed. From a cognitive perspective, PMs play an important role in regulating the processes of pragmatic inferences, in other words, in guiding hearers in their efforts to find out what is not explicitly stated but is implied by a given utterance. Over the past few decades research on Pragmatic Markers has been rapidly expanding: the theoretical appeal is amply demonstrated by the number of frameworks that have been applied to the study of these items: Relevance Theory, Rhetorical Structure Theory, Construction Grammar, coherence-based studies, Interactional Sociolinguistics, Conversation Analysis, to mention but a few. At the same time, empirical research has yielded detailed analyses of a variety of items in a wide range of languages. Because of PMs' extreme multifunctionality and context-dependence, their study is especially pertinent to genre-based analyses. It is, therefore, surprising that, despite the widespread interest in PMs in a variety of research fields including genre analysis, no

⁵ I use the terms adjacency pair, first- and second-pair part as in e.g. Schegloff (1972).

single study has focused on the role of a range of PMs in political interviews⁶.

In the following, therefore, I will try to narrow this empirical gap by considering some of the most frequent PMs' genre-specific use in the two types of political interview.

3. The functional spectrum of PMs in political interviews and celebrity interviews

3.1 The use of *I mean* – marker of IRs' and IEs' contrastive roles

In Crystal and Davy (1975, 97ff) *I mean* is glossed as 'in other words', 'what I have been saying amounts to the following', 'my specific meaning is that'. Its main function is in clarifying the meaning of the speaker's immediately preceding expression, other functions include marking a restatement of the previous utterance, providing extra information and/or a fresh angle about a previous topic as well as marking a change of mind.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) *I mean* expresses correction, more specifically, an additive conjunctive relation (expository apposition) or an adversative conjunctive relation (correction of wording). Swan argues that *I mean* introduces explanations, additional details, expressions of opinion and corrections, while it can also serve as "a general-purpose connector of 'filler' with little real meaning" (Swan 1997, 159). Further functions include "softening" and "gaining time." (ibid.)

On the basis of 143 tokens of the lexical item *mean* in the BBC corpus, the following patterns emerge:

1. *mean* is a content word in 29 cases, but is a part of the PM *I mean* in the remaining 114 tokens;
2. *I mean* is primarily used by IEs (101 times), there are only 13 examples where an IR utters *I mean*, which is low, even considering the fact that IRs' talking time is longer than that of IEs⁷;
3. *I mean* functions as a filler in only 2 tokens, it marks false starts 17 times and

4. cancels the content or the implicature of the previous utterance 9 times;

4. in the majority of cases (54 times in the case of IEs and 13 out of 13 times when uttered by an IR) *I mean* functions as a marker of explanation and/or elaboration.

Finding 1 above underscores the conversationalization of the genre under scrutiny: the high D-value⁸ of *mean* clearly indicates that present-day British political interviews bear the mark of conversational style. This tendency has been noticed by several researchers. Fetzer and Weizman (2006), for example, state that "politics has undergone dramatic changes [in that] the primarily monologue-oriented mode of discourse, which prevailed in the fifties, sixties, seventies and eighties, is no longer considered to be appropriate in the western and Anglo-American contexts" (Fetzer and Weizman 2006, 146).

Findings 2 and 3 are related to yet another aspect of the asymmetrical role between IRs and IEs: the higher incidence of *I mean* used by IEs can be explained, on the one hand, by the fact that the more comfortable one feels in a particular institutional setting, the less likely s/he needs to resort to discourse-strategic⁹ uses of PMs¹⁰. On the other hand, it is also related to the degree of planning that is involved on the part of IRs and IEs: unplanned discourse is characterized by an increased number of discourse-strategic PMs, this is why IEs are likely to use more tokens of *I mean* in general and more reformulative (rather than explanative) and opaque (i.e. semantically bleached) tokens of *I mean* in particular.

With regard to finding 4, two distinct structures can be observed as the most typical genre-specific uses of *I mean*: IRs most often use it in a [question preface + *I mean* + question] format (cf. example 1), while IEs tend to use it in an [answer preface/short answer + *I mean* + elaboration / example/explanation] structure (cf. example 2):

⁸ the categorial multifunctionality of PMs is described in terms of their "D-function ratio" or D-value (a term proposed by Stenström 1990), i.e. in terms of their discourse function in relation to their function as grammatical or content words. The D-value of *oh*, for example, is 100% in the London-Lund Corpus, since it is used exclusively as a PM, whereas *well* showed a D-value of 86%.

⁹discourse-strategic uses here refer to stalling and lexical search functions.

¹⁰ cf. e.g. O'Barr & Atkins's (1980) study of the use of PMs in courtroom settings.

⁶ even notable exceptions concentrate on particular PMs, such as *of course* or *really*, rather than the functional distribution of a set of PMs, cf. e.g. Simon-Vandenberg et al. (2007) or Simon-Vandenberg (1988).

⁷ in my corpus, IEs talk, on average, 71% of the time, while IRs' turns take up 29% of the interview time.

Example 1

IR: She's asked you about deaths of innocent people, *I mean* as a Christian how do you feel about innocent people dying? (*BBC's Newsnight*, 6 February 2003)

Example 2

IR: You said this year, the concept of profit can and should play an increasing role in improving the quality of public services – how do you justify that?

IE: Well there are two things I'd say about that, *I mean* if you take the National Health Service for example 90 per cent of... (*BBC's Politics Show*, 13 November 2005)

In the Larry King subcorpus, on the other hand, *I mean* occurs slightly more often than in the BBC subcorpus (156 times) and is used very similarly to naturally occurring conversations. Its most salient function is discourse-strategic underlined by the fact that it is frequently used in PM clusters such as *I mean, you know* and *I mean, like*. In addition, unlike in the BBC subcorpus, reformulative *I mean* is more frequent than elaborative *I mean*, while there are no apparent differences in the patterns of use in the IR's and the IEs' speech. *I mean* occurs turn-initially more frequently than in the BBC subcorpus, thus, for example, instead of the [preface + PM + question/elaboration] pattern, we find *I mean* turn-initially in the IR's first-pair parts (usually facilitative cues) and the IEs' second-pair parts, as well:

Example 3

KING: *I mean*, heads are rolling...

KING: *I mean*, the FBI looks at it...

Example 4

KING: You do?

IE: *I mean* -- no, no, I personally like her. *I mean*, if you met her, she's an appealing person. When we campaigned –

3.2 *Of course* – marker of evidentiality and heteroglossia

Most of the descriptions of *of course* identify an invariant, context-independent 'core' meaning and a variety of functions that can be related to the semantic core. This is reflected in the various names that are used

with reference to *of course* as well as the definitions and summaries that are provided in terms of the discourse-pragmatic role of *of course* plays in utterance interpretation. As for the former, *of course* has been variously labelled as an expectation marker/marker of expectation¹¹, expectation evidential¹², marker of speaker commitment¹³ and marker of shared knowledge¹⁴. Some of the definitions include the following:

[*of course*] acts as an overt signal that the speaker is assuming that the hearer accepts or is already familiar with the propositional content of her or his utterance, and functions to emphasize the validity of that content. (Holmes 1988, 53)

...*of course* combines the meanings of *certainly* ('there is no doubt that...'), which expresses a probability judgement, and *naturally* ('it was to be expected that'), which conveys a judgement on the extent to which something was expected. (Simon-Vandenberg 1988, 215)

[*of course* has] three broad levels of meaning: (1) epistemic/evidential – glossed as 'naturally', (2) interpersonal – glossed as 'shared knowledge', and (3) indeterminate. (Wichmann et al. 2010, 118)

Lewis distinguishes between 'emphatic yes' and 'naturally' uses of *of course* as well as four additional contexts of use, namely those where *of course* marks concession, background in a narrative, topic shift and the end of a list (Lewis 2006, 54ff).

In political news interviews, there is only a partial overlap with the functions listed above: Simon-Vandenberg et al. analyse British PNIs, and find that the range of functions *of course* fulfils is markedly different from those that are observed in other discourse types and genres. They distinguish between three different functions of *of course*, the first can be glossed as 'as you know' (example 5), the second as 'it goes without saying' (example 6) and the third as 'as everyone knows' (example 7):

Example 5

Welcome to Petersfield in Hampshire which is decked out for Christmas and where we're in St. Peter's Church, which is renowned architecturally for its fine Norman tower and socially for its

¹¹ Simon-Vandenberg – Aijmer (2002/03)

¹² Chafe (1986)

¹³ Lewis (2006)

¹⁴ Holmes (1988)

concerts, plays, exhibitions and civic events, as well as being *of course* a place of Christian worship. (Simon-Vanderbergen et al. 2007, 39)

Example 6

If there is to be a war on terror, and perhaps there must be, because *of course* September 11th was an outrage. (Simon-Vanderbergen et al. 2007, 40)

Example 7

We've had chief constables speaking publicly about the huge amount of resources that are going to be necessary to police a ban on foxhunting and *of course* they've already tried to ban foxhunting in Scotland and the legislation is a complete nonsense ... (Simon-Vanderbergen et al. 2007, 41)

Simon-Vanderbergen et al. propose that the use of presupposition in general and *of course* in particular is a tactic employed by IEs in British political interviews, in that "by using *of course* the speaker recognizes that the context is heteroglossic, s/he is presented as responding to prior utterances, anticipating a response/alternative viewpoints" (Simon-Vanderbergen et al. 2007, 35ff). They conclude that (1) *of course* confirms solidarity with the like-minded, and (2) construes solidarity with those who need to be persuaded; (3) conversely, *of course* can serve an oppositional function; and, finally, (4) *of course* contributes to the image of the speaker being 'in the know', its use giving the speaker "a temporary advantage in the battle for scoring with the audience." (Simon-Vanderbergen et al. 2007, 66)

The findings based on the BBC corpus used in the present study underscore Simon-Vanderbergen et al.'s conclusions: a mere 16 out of 85 tokens of *of course* are interactional, the remaining tokens are used in anticipation of an opposing viewpoint, and/or the IR's objections. However, instead of differentiating between 'as you know', 'it goes without saying' and 'as everyone knows', I found that it is more useful to categorize heteroglossic uses of *of course* into different degrees of anticipation and contrast: there are utterances where *of course* simply backgrounds the statement in its host unit, while in other cases it can be glossed as 'that's not the point' or 'that's totally irrelevant' as in examples 8, 9 and 10, respectively:

Example 8

IE: No I actually am more interested in not having a whole lot of time wasted for police and courts, as well as victims, with people uselessly maintaining their innocence. Some of them *of course* will get away with it 'cos they'll find a jury that believes what they say. I'm more interested if people are guilty that they show a bit of contrition, stop making things worse and admit straight away. (BBC5 Live, 18 May 2011)

Example 9

IE: Undoubtedly it does. Look, T. B. is right to say, as he did recently, that what happens in the Gaza Strip should not be an excuse for anyone to be radicalised. And *of course* that's right, but we have to deal with the world as it is.

Example 10

IR: Do you... If you were in No. 10 at the moment and Nissan came to you, the other carmakers came to you and said, "We've done a very, very good job for this country. We've created a lot of employment. We need some help in the short-term", what would you tell them? IE: *Of course* I want to help. But let's take Nissan because what... (BBC's *The Andrew Marr Show*, Sunday 11 January 2009)

In the Larry King Show, on the other hand, *of course* appears in contexts where its primary function is conversation management; for example, it serves as a response marker, feedback signal or topic change signal. In other contexts *of course* plays a role in information management: it marks lists / sequences, or shared background knowledge. *Of course*, similarly to *I mean*, occurs in narratives, where it can mark side sequences or new developments in the narrative. The interpersonal functions that were salient in the CNN subcorpus corresponded to and co-occurred with personal-centre switches, persuasion and solidarity, while in a few instances *of course* marked self-correction, lexical search, or simply functioned as a filler (for a detailed analysis of the functional spectrum of *of course* in Larry King Live, cf. Furkó, 2007a). The differences in the functional spectrum of *of course* in the two subcorpora can be traced back to the differences between the two types of political interviews. The

confrontational quality of the BBC news interviews in the corpus is underlined by the fact that it is not only in terms of heteroglossia (i.e. anticipating objections and counterpoints) that *of course* is used differently in the two sub-genres, but in terms of its interactional uses, as well. While *of course* mostly marks strong agreement and/or feedback in the Larry King Corpus, it is, for the most part, used to express token agreement in the BBC corpus, as is illustrated by examples 11 and 12, respectively:

Example 11

IR: Give it any thought, because that was a big rumor ...

IE: ***Of course.***

IR: Rumors always come around. (*CNN Larry King Live*, 17 March 2004)

Example 12

IR: The party was born from the unions wasn't it?

IE: ... ***of course, but*** we govern for the whole country. (*BBC Politics Show*, 12 September 2004)

3.3 The use of *oh* - response marker or ventriloquizer?

With reference to the mechanisms of spoken interaction, Stenström (1994) identifies a range of functions *oh* performs in naturally occurring conversations: *oh* functioning as a backchannel similarly to *right, sure, aha*; *oh* expressing emphasis, glossed as 'certainly'; *oh* as a response marker signalling the receipt of information; *oh* expressing acknowledgement similarly to *really, I see, yes, and OK*; and, finally, *oh* in question-answer-follow-up sequences, marking follow-up sequences.

Aijmer (1987), in addition to the above functions, observes that *oh* can also be used (1) to refer back to an earlier piece of information that is necessary for the hearer to understand the upcoming utterance; (2) to mark (a sudden reaction of) surprise; (3) to signal an upcoming non-serious (ironic, self-mocking, etc.) utterance; (4) as an enquoting device similar to *he said, he was like* or *and he went*; and, finally, (5) before conventionalized phrases as in *Oh, I beg your pardon* or *Oh, have fun then*.

Once again, we find a different pattern of use in political interviews to that emerging

from the discourse genres¹⁵ that are traditionally studied in PM research. The most salient function of *oh* in the BBC subcorpus is that of ventriloquizing, as in examples 13 and 14 below:

Example 13

IE: Yes, to some extent. It's rather an odd situation we have here where the, the government are trying to legislate, or the House of Commons is trying to legislate very very quickly, that this is a bill that passed all its stages in the House of Commons, minimum of debate in one day, and then they say, ***oh*** it doesn't need to come in to effect for eighteen months or two years. (*BBC's Politics Show*, 10 October 2004)

Example 14

IE: When you talked about disenchantment with politics John, there's an awful lot of disenchantment with political coverage and Margaret talked about 'trial by ordeal', which is basically the media thinking, if we keep this story going long enough, eventually Tony Blair is going to say, ***Oh*** my god, I can't be doing with this, let's get rid of them. (*BBC's Politics Show*, 12 March 2006)

In these examples *oh* introduces statements and opinions that are attributed to people other than the IE (usually political opponents) in an effort to mock such opinions and/or make them sound ill-founded. Lauerbach describes ventriloquizing as "a particularly vivid way of enacting one's own discourse through another" (Lauerbach 2006, 199), which, in addition, "greatly increases the strategic potential of communicators" (ibid.) Fetzer and Weizman add that, ventriloquizing is employed "strategically in order to personalize and dramatize political discourse." (Fetzer and Weizman 2006, 150) In yet another strategic use of *oh*, we can find it in the phrase *Oh come on*, which plays down the import of the previous speaker's (in this case the IR's) or an opponent's statement:

Example 15

IR: The polls ... (overlaps)

IE: As I say, we're actually - ***oh*** come on

¹⁵ e.g. naturally-occurring conversation (Stenström, 1994), or sociolinguistic interviews (Schiffrin, 1987)

Jeremy, you're talking about one poll that happens to have been taken recently. (*BBC's Politics Show*, 11 July, 2004)

As for the function of *oh* as a response marker, Clayman-Heritage (2004) observe that "the strict Q-A format of the news interview rules out even small responsive acts, such as 'mm hm,' 'yes,' 'oh,' 'really,' and so on, that are normally used to show attentiveness to what is being said" (2004, 98). This observation is confirmed in my data as far as the BBC subcorpus is concerned. In the CNN subcorpus, however, *oh* has an I-value¹⁶ of 73.6%, which is very close to naturally occurring conversations, and is frequently used as a feedback signal as well as in PM clusters such as *oh, yes, oh, sure*, and even *oh, wow*.

3.4 Strategic uses of *well, I think* and *you know* in political news interviews

There are a range of additional PMs that are used strategically in British political interviews and whose description would deserve separate sections. Because of space considerations, however, in this final section I will briefly illustrate the use and functional spectrum of *well, I think* and *you know* in the BBC subcorpus, focusing on the patterns that have not emerged in studies based on other types of discourse.

The high incidence¹⁷ and D-value¹⁸ of *well*, once again, underscores the conversationalization of political discourse, as was discussed in the section on *I mean* above. We find turn-initial *well* most frequently prefacing IEs' answers to IRs' (often overly direct) questions. Turn-internal uses of *well*, however, show an interesting genre-specific pattern: we find a large number of utterances where *well* introduces ventriloquizing, once again, making the IEs' discourse more vivid and increasing its strategic potential. However, unlike in the case of *oh*, the ventriloquizing uses of *well* introduce statements, positions or internal thoughts that are attributed to people (at times the speakers themselves) whose

opinions are actually favourable to the IE (and the audience), thus there is no negative stance towards the ventriloquized utterance:

Example 16

IE: over the past 18 months, the eurozone governments have rather let us down, given us, you know, wonderful hope on the basis of the thrust of what they've been saying and then we've seen the fine print we've thought, "***well, actually***, there's rather less to all of this than we hoped." (*BBC Radio 4 Today Programme*, 06 September 2011)

example 17

IR: But what happens if an employer says, ***well*** all well and good, but we don't really want to see these union leaders, we've got better things to do. (*BBC's Politics Show*, Sunday 12 September 2004)

Another frequently used PM is *I think*¹⁹. What is interesting to observe in connection with political discourse is that *I think* is the most notoriously ambiguous PM²⁰. Holmes, for example, identified "two distinct and contrastive [core] functions of *I think*" (Holmes 1990, 199), expressing either uncertainty or certainty. Thus *I think* can function as a booster or a downgrader; it can make a point specific/emphatic or backgrounded; and it can express involvement or detachment. In the BBC corpus there are several cases where the ambiguity cannot be resolved by making reference to either suprasegmental (intonation, stress and pitch) or contextual factors (rhetorical structure, speech act of the host utterance, etc.), therefore, the data suggests that *I think* is used strategically and the ambiguity between emphasis and backgrounding, certainty and uncertainty, subjectivity and stance taking is often intentional.

Finally, as for the PM *you know*, let me concentrate on a single use that, on the basis of the BBC corpus, occurs as salient in political news interviews. This is a strategic use subsequent to which speakers (usually IEs) let their voice trail off, without finishing a point they were making before, or drawing a (usually embarrassing) conclusion:

¹⁶ parallel to Stenström's (1990) notion of D-value, I suggest (cf. Furkó, 2007b) the term I-value or interactional value in terms of which a particular PM's function at the level of the exchange structure can be described. The I-value of a PM is calculated as the quotient of a PMs' turn-initial (second-pair part position as well as feedback signal) occurrences and the total number of its occurrences as a PM in the corpus.

¹⁷ 401 tokens in an approx. 80,000 word corpus

¹⁸ 82%

¹⁹ there are a total of 389 tokens in the BBC corpus.

²⁰ for a detailed account of the functional spectrum of *I think*, cf. Aijmer (1997).

Example 18

IE: it's not true to say that there's nothing getting better, and all I can talk about in terms of personal experience is my own constituency where I would say undoubtedly, *you know*... but if you look at the new North Durham Hospital, I mean that is a better hospital than what was there. (*BBC's Newsnight*, 7 February 2003)

Conclusions

The aim of the present study has been to investigate the genre-specific functional spectra of the most frequently used PMs in two types of political interviews. The primary purpose has been to argue that the cross-fertilization between genre analysis and PM research has a great deal to offer to both

disciplines. What I hope to have illustrated is that the study of PMs (with special reference to their functional spectrum, D-value and I-value) can make an important contribution to the analysis of a variety of linguistic (including literary) data and can serve as a heuristic tool for differentiating between discourse types as well as (sub)genres. Naturally, further research is needed (cross-cultural as well as cross-linguistic, quantitative as well as qualitative) in order to substantiate my findings about, for example, PMs' contribution to heteroglossia, stance-taking and ventriloquizing, so that we can gain new and deeper insights into the use of discourse-pragmatic strategies in media discourse in general and political interviews in particular.

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Politeness at Work

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Abstract

The setting up of multinational companies is a current phenomenon in Romania; such companies bring together Romanian and foreign employees who, irrespective of their mother tongue, use English for professional communication. Consequently, a new type of institutional culture has developed, reflected at all levels of institutional activities – discourse practices, methods of communication etc.

The data on which the analysis is based is a recording of a phone conference from such a multinational company and it involves seven participants of two different nationalities i.e. Romanians and Belgians. It aims to study the politeness strategies and their lexical realization with a view to identifying similarities and differences in terms of levels of politeness and linguistic choices made by the Romanian and Belgian employees working in this company. The paper provides an overview of the project of which it is a part, then presents a theoretical framework and the concepts used, analyses the data, and draws conclusions.

Keywords

Intercultural communication, politeness, indirectness, hedging, mitigation, jokes, evaluation.

This paper is part of a project whose overall aim was to identify communicative and cultural practices in two multinational companies; the focus was on how workings of different cultures manifest themselves in participants' discourse; the assumption was that in such companies the culture and type of communication is jointly shaped by the employees of different nationalities working together. Meetings were considered fundamental communicative activities, where ideologies, norms and values were negotiated. Consequently, various types of meetings (phone conferences, face-to-face meetings, virtual network communication) were recorded and analysed in order to identify the kinds of interaction, communicative activities, conventions and speaking styles, power relationships, and participants' expectations of communicative behaviour. Using the Communication Accommodation Theory the research team analysed the recorded verbal interactions, concentrating on the use of questions versus statements, positive versus negative speech forms, and modality. The research team also used a questionnaire to explore Romanian employees' perception of the company they work in. The results obtained so far indicate that Romanian employees have a positive

perception of the company, appreciating its working culture and the kind of tasks required. However, they appear to be dissatisfied at not being involved in the decision-making process. Knowledge of the English language is not an issue with any of the participants and no misunderstandings are caused by it. The most frequently asked questions are clarifications, asked in approximately the same ratio by Romanians and Belgians. Both Romanians and foreigners resort to humour, but for different purposes – Romanians when they do not clearly understand what they are supposed to do, Belgians when they make additional professional requirements; Belgians express obligation implicitly, Romanians more explicitly; Belgians make direct requests, Romanians indirect ones; Romanians state issues by means of questions, Belgians in a more direct way.

1.1. Project presentation

The study of institutional talk and intercultural communication in multinational companies is highly relevant to the new Romanian economic context. The project entitled Institutional Talk and Intercultural Communication in Multinational Companies was proposed by a team of teachers from

the Transilvania University of Braşov in order to identify and analyse features of this new type of communication, English being the lingua franca. The project was accepted and funded by the National Council for Scientific Research in Higher Education in Romania; there were two multinational companies that agreed to be involved in it; the research team brought together academic staff from the English and Sociology Departments. The corpus of data collected consists of approximately 14 hours of spoken interactions in English, namely telephone conferences, face-to-face meetings and Virtual Network Communication.

1.2. Project assumption

The main assumption of the project was that institutional culture does not pre-exist but is created through a process of adaptation to the two constitutive cultures and languages during interactions occurring at the workplace (Blommaert 1991; Burek 2009). The research team considered that the misunderstandings and difficulties occurring during the intercultural encounters between the Romanian and foreign employees are more likely explained by the speakers' different expectations about the communicative event rather than their linguistic competency, and that communication difficulties appear because of employees' different suppositions in terms of institutional talk and organizational culture.

Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2004, p. 36) define organizational culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organisation from others". Communication is understood as interaction having several features - practical ones (as it accomplishes acts through talk), social (as participants interact) and cultural (as the system of shared meanings and practices is learned and taken for granted). The project investigated how workings of different cultures manifest themselves in participants' discourse practices.

Institutional talk, constructed at the workplace during participants' verbal interactions, is defined as oral or written interaction aimed at carrying out a professional task; it is characterized by constraints-related topics (what can be said), speech acts (what can be done) and by a pre-allocated system of turn-taking.

1.3. Research methodology

The available data included recordings and transcriptions of spoken interactions in English between Romanian and foreign employees participating in face-to-face meetings, telephone conferences and Virtual Network Communication. There are audio recordings of six telephone conferences, with an average length of 40 minutes, video recordings of two face-to-face meetings, with an average length of 75 minutes, and six Virtual Network Communications, with an average length of 45 minutes. These data were used to analyse the oral communication style understood by Norton (1983, p. 99) as "the way one verbally or para-verbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered or understood" in a communication context.

1.4. Data collection

The data were collected from a multinational company based in Braşov, which has its headquarters in Belgium; the company provides software and mechanical engineering services. The branch in Braşov has 24 employees, out of which 21 are Romanians.

Besides the audio and video recordings, a questionnaire was also used to see how Romanian employees perceive the company which employs them.

1.5. Strategies for data analysis

The research team has so far analysed the available data in terms of topics, questions, positive and negative ways of speaking, use of humour, mitigation, frames and footing. The topic analysis tried to establish who initiates and changes the topic (the expectation being that it is the team leader), what the participants' perspectives on the topic are and what changes of frame occur (from professional to personal and the other way round). In terms of question analysis, the research team identified the types of questions asked and their function in the interactional context, the expectation being that Romanian employees ask clarification questions. The positive ways of speaking took into account laughter, agreement, jokes, while the negative ones involved sarcasm and disagreement. Humour was analysed as a means of constructing solidarity, while the analysis of modality identified similarities and differences in terms of expressing obligation, necessity

and probability between speakers belonging to different cultures.

1.6. Overall conclusions

The analysis conducted so far indicates that Romanians and Belgians have similar understandings of the topics under discussion. The style of communication in the company is collaboratively constructed with convergent moves (positive speech forms - agreement, jokes) made by Romanians and Belgians alike. However, the purpose of jokes is different - Romanians resort to them when in doubt about their professional tasks, Belgians when they require additional work of their Romanian colleagues. Belgians initiate fewer and shorter joking sequences, Romanians more and longer sequences, which side-track the professional discussion. The areas of divergence include expressing obligation (Romanians resort to a more explicit way than Belgians) and making requests and stating issues, for which Belgians favour a more direct way than Romanians.

2. Politeness

2.1. Definition

Politeness has been defined as behaviour aimed to avoid conflicts, to maintain a balanced personal relationship, to mask selfish objectives or indicate concern for human decency, with indirectness as an important feature (Clyne 1996, p. 15).

Goffman (quot. in O'Driscoll 2011, p. 17) defines face as being the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 6) define face as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" and further differentiate between positive face (when the person wants to be appreciated and approved by others) and negative (when the person wishes to be free from imposition). There is a strong relation between facework and politeness, but facework is broader than politeness as not all instances that involve impoliteness entail loss of face; however, face appears to be close to positive politeness (Sifianou 2011, p. 53).

Brown and Levinson's approach has been criticized on several grounds: firstly because it is an Eurocentric model (Watts 2003, p. 76), secondly because both positive and negative politeness strategies can be used in the same stretch of talk (Harris quot. in Mullany 2007, p. 78), and thirdly for disregarding impoliteness, considered as a

central concept in the analysis of politeness (Mullany 2007, p. 78). Impoliteness is defined as an act which injures the hearer's face, uttered in a situation that could have been avoided, where reactions from the hearer indicate that the act has been perceived as intentional (Mullany 2007, p. 78). The same author underlines the importance of the hearer's interpretation of the speaker's utterance, which points to the importance of context (Mullany 2007, p. 78). Watt differentiates between politeness and tact, the latter interpreted as "standardized strategies of social politeness" (Watts 2003, p. 76). He also discusses politic behaviour, defined as linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the on-going interaction, i.e. as non-salient (Watts 2003, p. 19). Politic behaviour may turn into polite behaviour when "observable additions" are made to it (Watts 2003, p. 30), additions that can be positively or negatively evaluated by participants. Thus, linguistic politeness is not automatically perceived as positive and can be interpreted as potentially ironic, aggressive, abusive, etc. (Watts 2003, p. 161).

Politeness is a culture-specific phenomenon (Kádár and Bargiela-Chiappini 2011, p. 2), representing a unique aspect of human interaction; according to these authors, its main function is to avoid conflict and as such involves three factors: distance, defence and camaraderie. Politeness is perceived subjectively, as in everyday practice im/politeness is dependent on the hearer's evaluation of the speaker's behaviour (Eelen quot. in Kádár and Bargiela-Chiappini 2011, p. 2).

First, second and even third order politeness has been analysed; according to Kádár and Bargiela-Chiappini (2011, p. 5) first order politeness is the interactants' interpretation of politeness, while second-order politeness is the researchers' interpretation of politeness. Watts uses the terms in a different way - first order politeness is the lay representation of politeness and second order politeness is the study of politeness in particular verbal encounters (Watts 2003, p. 30). Watanabe (2011, p. 22) describes third order politeness when analysing companies where people of different nationalities work together; the employees' own rules of communication represent third-place rules, as these rules belong neither to their place of origin (first place), nor to their interlocutors' (second place).

2.2. Politeness in the workplace

Politeness can be understood only within a specific context; in the workplace, Holmes defines politeness as “a set of valuable interactional skills which can be used very productively” (Holmes 2006, p. 198). Im/politeness is interpreted as a set of practices and strategies which communities of practice, individuals coming together to solve specific tasks, develop, affirm and context, and which individuals within these communities engage with in order to come to an assessment of their own and others’ behaviour and position within the group. (Mills quot. in Mullany 2007, p. 65).

2.3. Factors influencing the degree of politeness

Context is of utmost important; according to Rusieshvili, linguistic politeness should be analysed in context, not by foregrounding “lexical items or isolated speech acts” (Rusieshvili 2011, p. 150).

One of the most important factors affecting the degree of politeness is power, defined as “an asymmetric social dimension” and representing “the degree to which the H (hearer) can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of S’s (speaker’s) plans” (Brown and Levinson 1987, p. 77). Misunderstandings are “an area where the enactment of power and politeness is especially foregrounded” (Holmes and Stubbe 2003, p. 138). They are usually corrected by appealing to authority or by using strategies such as facilitative coaching, asking questions and expanding on contributions.

Clyne’s analysis of workplace interaction data indicates that the type of cultural system greatly influences the type of politeness used. Thus, cultures that promote as core values low individuality, modesty and restraint favour a negative type of politeness, while cultures heavily influenced by high uncertainty avoidance and power distance favour positive politeness (Clyne, 1996).

Kasper (2005, p. 65) lists factors influencing degree of politeness as hierarchy, age, gender, and language impairment. She states that the degree of politeness is higher with people that we are familiar with, such as co-workers and friends, while the degree of politeness lowers in relationships with intimates and strangers (Kasper 2005, p. 65).

The relationship between speakers, and therefore the degree of politeness used, is

also influenced by the nature and length of the relationship and the frequency of interaction (Holmes 2006, p. 11).

2.4. Politeness strategies

2.4.1. Indirectness

Indirectness is defined as “a mismatch between expressed meaning and implied meaning” (Thomas quot. in Grainger 2011, p. 173). Indirectness varies in intensity, depending on “the amount of work the hearer has to do in arriving at the meaning” (Sperber and Wilson quot. in Gringer 2011, p. 76). For example imperatives are considered more direct, while hints are considered the most indirect speech acts, with various levels of indirectness in between, such as milder or stronger indirect requests, hearer-oriented requests focusing on ability, willingness or permission or speaker-oriented indirect requests which refer to wishes, desires or needs.

Watts states that indirect speech acts are carried out by means of semi-formulaic utterances, which he defines as “conventionalised utterances containing linguistic expressions [...] appropriate to the politic behaviour of a social situation. They may also be used, in certain circumstances, as propositional structures in their own right” (Watts 2003, p. 169). He lists several expressions indicating linguistic politeness, some of which are presented below: politeness markers added to the utterance to show deference to the addressee and to bid for cooperative behaviours (e.g. *please, if you don’t mind, tag questions including will*); play-down syntactic devices which “tone down the perlocutionary effect an utterance is likely to have on the addressee (use of past tense, progressive aspect with past tense – e.g. *I was wondering*); consultative devices – structures which seek to involve the addressee and bid for his/her cooperation (e.g. *could you*); understaters – means of underrepresenting the propositional content of the utterance by a phrase functioning as an adverbial modifier or also by an adverb itself (e.g. *a second, a moment*); downtoners – modulate the impact of the speaker’s utterances (e.g. *just, simply, possibly*); committers – lower the degree to which the speaker commits him/herself to the propositional content of the utterance (e.g. *I think, I believe*); hesitators – pauses filled with non-lexical phonetic materials (e.g. *er, uhh. ah*); agent avoiders – refer to the propositional utterances in which the agent is suppressed or impersonalized,

thereby deflecting the criticism from the addressee to some generalized agent (e.g. *people don't do X*) (Watts, 2003:183-184)

2.4.2. Humour

Humorous utterances are defined on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodic and discursal clues, as intended by the speaker(s) to be amusing and perceived as amusing at least by some participants (Holmes and Stubbe 2003, p. 135). They usually occur at the beginning and ending of the meetings.

Humour fulfils several functions - it increases cohesion and diminishes power relationships; it releases tension or re-states group solidarity; it softens directives and criticism; it acts as a strong hedging device; or is subversive, challenging and aggressive, providing a safety net for the person using it (Holmes and Stubbe 2003). Humour is considered by the two authors as being highly contextual (Holmes and Stubbe 2003, p. 109).

2.4.3. Mitigation

Mitigation is defined as the linguistic strategy aimed at attenuating what is being said; it can be expressed in several ways: qualifiers (e.g. *well*), hesitation markers and pauses, introductory tags (e.g. *the thing is*), attenuating phrases (e.g. *so, we were wondering if*), epistemic modal (e.g. *could*), strengthening pronoun (e.g. *we*) (Holmes and Stubbe 2003, p. 46).

2.4.4. Interruptions

Interruptions are considered a form of impolite behaviour, the speaker being stopped by one of the interlocutors for a variety of reasons: clarification, refusal, criticism etc.

2.4.5. Praise

Praise (indicating approval or admiration) usually indicates subordination as the person doing the praise is in a superior position.

3. Phone-conference analysis

3.1. The phone-conference

Meetings are considered the very essence of work, as they achieve the goals of an organization and provide a context for expressing institutional power and authority (Holmes and Stubbe 2003, p. 45). The employees have regular discussions with their team leaders, which are either phone-

conferences, which is the most frequent case, or face-to-face meetings.

The aim of the meetings is to decide on future plans, therefore it is forward-oriented but also backward (as participants describe their past work experience) and present (as they describe their current tasks) (Holmes and Stubbe 2003, p. 63). It has a linear sequence, with topics moving from one to the next (Holmes and Stubbe 2003, p. 69).

The phone conference lasts for almost 43 minutes and includes seven participants: F1 the Belgian team leader, based in Belgium; F2, a Belgian employer based in Hungary; and five Romanian employees (R1-R5), based in Romania.

The meeting can be divided into three parts - the beginning, the middle (subdivided into two sections - participants introducing themselves and participants discussing current tasks about which they provide information and ask for additional information or advice, and the ending.

3.2. Analysis

I will analyse the situations in which I have identified special politeness issues, and then I will draw conclusions related to the various strategies used by the Romanian and Belgian participants.

3.2.1. Indirectness

In his capacity of team leader, F1 issues requests and instructions, resorting to a wide variety of ways of doing so, namely suggestions, questions, argumentation and imperatives.

Example 1 illustrates a direct request that F1 makes, using the performative *ask* and the adverbial *as soon as possible*:

(e.g. 1)

1 F1: *so the log sheet*

2 *can and I ask you to reply me,*

3 *as soon as possible and planning the sheet for this week.*

In example 2 F1 explains to R4 how a new part should be created; he uses imperative constructions preceded by *you* and the modal *have to*; starting with line 7, the directives soften, as the emphasis is on what will happen as a result of R4's actions, not on what R4 has to do. The end of the exchange is formal, as they both thank each other:

(e.g. 2)

1 F1: *you derive two pieces for the lay type.*
 2 *and then you create one new entity,*
 3 *which is also generic,*
 4 R4: *ok,*
 5 F1: *understand?*
 [...]
 6 F1: *but you have to create the n-type of*
the connections too,
 7 *and the basic will be derived from it.*
 8 *and the damper will be derived by it,*
 9 *and the spring will be derived from it,*
 10 *and so on.*
 11 R4: *ok.(2) ok.*
 12 *so that's all from my side.*
 13 F1: *thank you.*
 14 R4: *thank you.*

Example 3 illustrates F1's instructions phrased as a suggestion. F1 and R1 are talking about a tool which R1 would like to change and that F1 would like to keep as it is. F1 argues for his position by using questions (lines 3 and 6) or interrogative negative constructions (line 8). He asks for R1's approval (line 4) and uses inclusive *we* twice and the softener *I think*, to lower his commitment to what he has said:

(e.g. 3)

1 F1: *I propose that we keep the [unclear]*
 2 *and then see next week*
 3 *what is the benefit of the new one*
produced by M
 4 *ok?*
 5 R1: *ok*
 6 F1: *did we see a benefit compared to the*
previous one?
 7 *ok.*
 8 *why not wait for the new test object tool*
be open to it
 9 R1: *yeah*
 10 F1: *but if the gain is too small compared*
to the steps we have to do,
 11 *I think we have to stick with the old*
infrastructure

Romanian participants make requests in a more indirect way. At the beginning of the phone conference, one of the Romanian team members asks F1 to repeat what he has said: R1 does this by using a question which includes the modal *can* and the adverbial *please*:

(e.g. 4)

1 R1: *Can you repeat please?*

The next example illustrates the indirect way in which F1 refuses one of the team members. R2 would like to further discuss a professional issue with F1 and asks F1 if he can call him after the meeting. R2 phrases his request as a question and uses the mitigation device *a bit* (line 2). Initially F1 agrees but tells R1 that he must attend a meeting, which is an indirect way of turning R1's request down. He resorts to the adverbials *maybe* and *probably* to attenuate the refusal.

(e.g. 5)

1 R2: *yeah.*
 2 *but do we have time to discuss a little bit*
after this meeting?
 3 F1: *oh, no problem*
 4 R2: *ok so I can call you after this meeting.*
 5 F1: *maybe just after this one*
 6 *I will probably have a meeting with V and*
P
 7 R2: *ok*

F1 also resorts to indirectness to express disagreement. R4 tells him that he has been working on a new entity, an idea with which F1 disagrees; the team leader expresses his position by using the softener *I think* and the inclusive *we*:

(e.g. 6)

1 F1: *yeah, then there we misunderstood*
each other I think.
 2 *we will still need the n-type*

To conclude, both Romanians and Belgians use indirectness – Romanians to express requests and the Belgians to express requests, refusals or disagreement.

3.2.2. Joking

The opening of the meeting, done by the Belgian team leader, F1, includes a joke. This is a phone conference and he suggests to the participants, who are in three different locations, to introduce themselves by making *a tour of the table*:

(e.g. 7)

1 F1: *ok. good.*
 2 *this call is a bit special*
 3 *because we have a new uhm attending*
called F2,
 4 *I propose that first we do a tour of the*
table if I can call it table
 5 *[laughter].*

The joke, considered as such because it produces laughter, fulfils a double function, namely it provides a relaxed atmosphere and eases the directive it includes.

Example 8 illustrates a different way in which humour is used by participants, namely to smooth over a misunderstanding. R1 has made a mistake, as he did not understand that all the tasks recorded in the log were for him. He asks a question to clarify this and F1 answers that he has to do them all, as all the tasks are his responsibility. The humorous sequence starts from line 2 where F1, sensing the misunderstanding, states that all the tasks are for R1. R1 acknowledges this by thanking and F1 continues by asking R1 a short question – *happy?* The joke is taken over by one of R1's Romanian colleagues who uses F1's question in order to make R1 aware of the situation. The possible conflict is resolved by F1 who makes another joke (line 15); R1 accepts the tasks expressing his lack of choices in the situation (line 13) and then resorting to a phantasy sequence (line 16). The sequence ends with R1 expressing acceptance and thanking F1 for clarifying things.

(e.g. 8)
 1 R1: *so, uhm in that time logging there are a lot of tasks.*
 2 F1: *all for you.*
 3 R1: *all for me.*
 4 *ok*
 5 *[laughter].*
 6 *thanks.*
 7 F1: *the sheet you got is just for you, ok?*
 8 R1: *OK,*
 9 *[laughter]*
 ok thanks
 10 F1: *happy?*
 11 *[laughter]*
 12 R4: *are you happy.*
 13 R1: *I am not happy but uhm what I have to do.*
 14 *[laughter]*
 15 F1: *just to keep you busy, eh?*
 16 R1: *I should drink a beer*
 17 *[laughter]*
 18 (2)
 19 F1: *ok, [unclear]*
 20 R1: *ok, thanks a lot*

Jokes are used both by Romanian and Belgian participants, the former to soften misunderstandings or possibly embarrassing professional situations, the latter to soften professional requests.

3.2.3. Mitigation

Romanian employees seem to perceive asking questions as an imposition on their interlocutor and they frequently resort to mitigation to avoid this situation. Example 7 illustrates one of the frequent cases when the Romanian team member uses the adjective *short* in front of the noun *question*:

(e.g. 9)
 1 R1: *just one short question.*

Similarly, Romanians feel the necessity of announcing that they will not have too much to say, probably not to take too much time of the meeting:

(e.g. 10)
 1 R3: *so I do not have too much to say more just one short question regarding the code review.*

F1 also resorts to mitigation devices, as illustrated in the example below. F1 has forgotten to record R5 in the log the previous week, which means that R5 will have to work more. He attenuates his mistake by using the mitigator *a bit* (line 6)

(e.g. 11)
 1 F1: *and if we did (.)*
 2 *is it ok for you?*
 3 *to put you in the planning for one week?*
 4 R5: *it doesn't mind being.*
 5 *so it's up to you.*
 6 F1: *there's a bit a lot of old work.*

In another instance, F1 resorts to mitigation in order to downtown his request. At the beginning of the phone conference he announces that the meeting is *a bit special* (line 2) because of the new team member and then again the same mitigator to account for his request (line 6)

(e.g. 12)
 1 F1: *ok. good.*
 2 *this call is a bit special*
 3 *because we have a new uhm attending called F2,*
 [...]
 4 F1: *and then we'll go to the [unclear]*
 5 *ok?*
 6 *so that we know a little bit more who's who.*
 7 *ok?*
can we get started?
ok?

In conclusion, mitigation is used by both Belgians and Romanians in order to soften the requests they make of their colleagues.

3.2.4. Interruptions

All the interruption instances are performed by the team leader. He stops the speakers to clarify misunderstandings or to prevent unpleasant situations. During R3's presentation of a difficulty he has encountered, F1 stops the speaker in order to make sure that he has understood R3 correctly. He phrases it as an imperative which ends with *please* and includes the understater *just a second* (line 5):

(e.g. 13)

1 R3: *I also have a problem*
 2 *I uhm the task that I'm working for is not in the time logging sheet*
 3 *so I added it as new*
 4 *but I didn't split it in uhm analysis and design and uhm*
 5 F1: *just a second please.*
 6 *you worked only last week?*
 7 R3: *yes*

3.2.5. Praise

All the instances of praise identified in the phone conference are performed by the team leader. Their function is to encourage the team members and to show support and appreciation for their work. In the example below, F1 and R4 have just clarified a misunderstanding related to a part that R4 wanted to work on. R4 understands what he is supposed to do and indicates this to F1, who concludes the discussion by using *excellent* (line 5):

(e.g. 14)

1 F1: *so [unclear] now you're developing one basic component.*
 2 R4: *yes.*
 3 F1: *you will be able for the user to select to define one support.*
 4 R4: *yes.*
 5 F1: *excellent*

Another instance of evaluation appears after R5 describes his previous work on a

technical problem, which F1 appreciates as *very nice*:

(e.g.15)

1 F1: *ok, very nice*

4. Conclusions

Some of the politeness strategies are common for both Romanian and Belgian participants - indirectness, humour and mitigation. However, there are strategies used only by Romanian speakers (*a short question*) or by the team leader - imperatives headed by the pronoun *you*. Romanian employees use a more negative type of politeness, probably for two reasons - power relations and Romanian culture, more oriented towards a negative type of politeness. The stage of the meeting is another factor influencing the degree of politeness; the beginning and endings are more formal while the discussions related to professional tasks are less polite, because the focus is on the participants' understanding of the issues under discussion and making professional decisions. Another factor affecting the level of politeness is the medium of the conference - via phone, which means that the participants have to rely on words and very little on other factors. Consequently, the words themselves become important, while the way in which they are said becomes less important. Finally, the language used is neither French nor Romanian, the participants' level of proficiency being average; influences from the speaker's mother tongues can be noticed. In conclusion the employees have created their own way of communication in the company, as the conference analysis indicates.

The conventions used in the transcriptions are based on several sources from the literature (e.g. Eggins and Slade²¹). They are summarized in the table below.

²¹ Eggins, S. & Slade, D., 1997, *Analysing Casual Conversation*. London and Washington, Cassell.

Symbol Significance

- Arabic numerals line numbers
- . clause final falling intonation
- ? clause final rising intonation
- , slight rise
- (.) short hesitation within a turn (less than 2 seconds)

(2) inter-turn pause longer than 1 second, the number indicating the seconds
= = latched utterances, with no discernible gap between the prior speaker's and the next speaker's talk
// the onset of overlapping talk
: : lengthened syllables or vowels
[words in square nonverbal information and/or unclear passages
brackets]
(*) unidentified speaker
Italics word in Romanian

Other transcription conventions:

- Non-transcribable segments of talk. These are indicated as [unclear]
- Uncertain transcription. Words within parentheses indicate a guess.

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A Pragmatic Analysis of Investigative Interviews with Children

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Abstract

Assuming that investigative interviews are among the most peculiar types of institutional talk, the proposed paper seeks to explore the pragmatic means in the questioning techniques used in child interviews in a sexual abuse case.

The contribution discusses power exercising using a sociolinguistic approach based on the example of a famous trial. Critical Discourse Analysis seems to be an appropriate method to demonstrate domination and control in the analysis. Within the framework of the sociocognitive approach, the paper investigates mental representations such as the use of presuppositions, argumentation schemata and speech acts in the interviews as a result of suggestibility. In addition, the contribution attempts to reveal the differences between formal and informal investigative interviews regarding the pragmatic means the interviewers applied.

The concern of the paper is that faulty interviewing procedures make it difficult to know how the abuse occurred and have an adverse impact on children.

Keywords

Investigative interviews, questioning techniques, pragmatic means, power exercising, suggestibility.

Introduction

According to the definition of Leeb et al. (2008) child sexual abuse is a form of mistreatment of a child by a parent or caregiver that results in harm to the child. As more and more child abuse cases have been revealed, interviewing is becoming the focus of research for psychologists and discourse analysts as a method to demonstrate children's suggestibility on one hand, and the power exercise of the authorities, on the other hand.

Detecting the truth of events is the most important task for investigators such as police officers and social workers, in order to protect victims and prosecute alleged perpetrators. Conducting an effective interview with a suspect or witness poses one of the greatest challenges for the investigative interviewer. The analysis of investigative interviewing is a theme mentioned in several psychological publications (Ceci, et al. 1994; Ceci & Bruck 1995; Gudjonsson & Clark 1986, p. 84; Gudjonsson 2003), but rarely studied from an interdisciplinary perspective involving linguistic approaches.

Therefore, an important area of study concerns the pragmatic means of different interviewing techniques in the reliability of children's reports. The contribution examines those implicit, and explicit, suggestive techniques that are woven in the fabric of the interview. The analysis applies certain pragmatic means and argumentation schemata in order to detect truth in children's testimonies.

1.1. Institutional Discourse as a Form of Power Manifestation

Investigative interviews in a child abuse case form a significant part of institutional discourse, characterized by the interlocutors' roles in the speech events. For the purpose of this study, the following definition can be adopted by Thornborrow (2002, p. 5):

"...institutional discourse can perhaps be best described as a form of interaction in which the relationship between the participant's current institutional role and their current discursive role emerges as a local phenomenon which shapes the organisation and trajectory of the talk."

Concerning the case of investigative interviews, in interaction the role of the questioner can be assumed to be that of a police officer or social worker, whose position forms the context of the institutional discourse. An area of studies dealing with institutional discourse relates to power exercise by the dominant party in the interaction. van Dijk claims (1998) that the social power of groups and institutions can be defined in terms of control: "Thus groups have power if they are able to control the acts and minds of other groups." Wodak's definition on discursive power (1996, p. 66) develops this formulation further on when she claims:

"...discursive control (including) who has access to the various types of discourse, who can and cannot talk to whom, in which situations and about what. The more powerful people are, the larger their verbal possibilities in interaction can become." Consequently, as the status of people can be perceived as power, discursive dominance is determined by the position of people in the interaction.

In legal and investigative contexts the general features of institutional discourse, such as the dialogical arrangement of talk, the asymmetrical power distribution, the specially organized talk and the technical vocabulary, make the discourse relevant to the work activities in which people are engaged in (Shuy 1983).

1.2. Investigative Interviews and Suggestibility

To develop the formulation of interviewing within a criminal process further on, it seems necessary to deal with the term investigation.

During a criminal investigation, information gathering from witnesses is the most significant task of investigators. Milne and Powell (2010) write that investigative interviewing intends to obtain the maximum information that is crucial to law enforcement. Gudjonsson (2003) adds to the core definition that the investigative interview consists of the description of events, behaviour, feelings, thoughts and intentions related to the acts examined. The interviewing process usually involves victims, witnesses, complainants and suspects in the case.

Concerning the peculiarity of this interviewing technique, the basic goal of the investigators is to detect what witnesses may or may not intend to hide or reveal.

Therefore, the investigators frequently use suggestive techniques to enforce the interrogated party to reveal the truth.

Gudjonsson and Clark (1986, p. 84) define interrogative suggestibility as the following: "... the extent to which, within a closed social interaction, people come to accept messages communicated during formal questioning, as the result of which their subsequent behavioral response is affected." Broadly speaking, suggestibility in the criminal investigative context refers to the tendency of the individual to respond in a way that is suggested to him or her. From the point of the interviewee, suggestibility depends on the coping strategies that people can use in uncertain situations when the police ask leading questions.

Suggestibility seems to be a coercive technique used by investigators in order to have witnesses reveal the truth. Several factors may contribute to the suggestibility of interviewees: the biased beliefs of the interviewer, the use of repeated questions, the repetition of misleading information, the use of rewards, the use of peer pressure, bribes and threats (Ceci & Bruck 1995). If these techniques are applied, it is highly difficult to separate credibility from accuracy especially in children's testimonies. Psychological data suggest the long-lasting effects of suggestions in children (Ceci et al. 1994). According to these studies, some children maintain their beliefs about fabricated stories in suggestive interviews. It should be noted that not all children are susceptible to suggestions. A more mature age, better memory abilities and lack of pressure or authority may all contribute to resistance to suggestions (Ceci & Bruck 1995).

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis and the Argumentation Schemata

As a method, we chose Critical Discourse Analysis to show how power and domination are manifested in investigative interviews especially in those cases where subjects are vulnerable children.

In his formulation van Dijk (1998) emphasizes "Critical Discourse Analysis is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context." Focusing on the issue of power, van Dijk (ibid, p. 5) demonstrates that social power can be defined in terms of control. He claims

that social groups have power "if they can control the acts and minds of other groups." To analyse the character of power further on, van Dijk suggests if people's minds can be controlled, their actions can be indirectly directed via discourse. Coming from this fact, CDA focuses on the abuse of such power, on the ways discourse is abused to control people's minds and actions. Dominance can be formulated as a "norm-violation that hurts others" (ibid p. 5). Powerful groups such as authorities may decide on the possible topics, speech acts or turn-initiation within institutional contexts (ibid, p. 7). There are situations where people with power may even use force to manipulate people to get a testimony from witnesses. In order to achieve this aim, CDA has to bridge the gap between micro and macro level analyses of the social order. As language belongs to the micro-level of analysis, power, dominance and inequality between social groups are involved in the macro-level of investigations.

CDA involves a wide spectrum of research strategies and theoretical background to prove its main assumptions. Among them all, the Sociocognitive Approach (SCA) is on the socio-psychological side of CDA and serves as a sound basis for further analysis (Wodak & Meyer, p. 26). SCA introduces the concept of mental representations of communicative situations. These models, such as knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, direct the pragmatic part of the discourse. Therefore, SCA uses the following linguistic markers in the analysis: implicit meanings such as presuppositions and implicatures, speech acts, turn-takings and word order.

The study also involves the use of the argumentation schemata in the legal context described by Perelman (1969) as a method showing the relations which serve the cognitive-logical pathways to conclusions in the interrogators' arguments. According to his theory, connecting premises and conclusions depends on a number of schemata creating categories (part-whole, analogy, generalization) in argumentation.

Table 1 shows how these relations serve the logical pathways to conclusions according to Perelman's theory (1969).

2.2. Forensic Pragmatics

As investigative interviewing is the preliminary stage of the criminal process conducted by the police, social workers and legal representatives, it is discussed under the notion of forensic discourse.

Pragmatic notions, such as presuppositions and speech acts, can be found in forensic discourse as well as in everyday conversations (Krk-Kastovsky 2006). Pragmatic presupposition is an implicit assumption about a belief relating to an utterance whose truth is taken for granted by both parties. In the forensic context presuppositions are important means in interrogating clients about hidden facts or the truth of the case. A defender's presupposition intimidates the suspect, who may think the defender might have known about the crime. Interrogation in the legal context plays an essential role in pragmatics. Krk-Kastovsky claims, following Danet's (1980) description, that in legal interrogation open-ended questions have the least control, followed by wh-questions, and leading questions have maximal control over the answers of the witness (he or she can give only one of the two possible answers). If the latter question forms are used as declaratives, they presuppose the truth of the utterance.

Speech acts are the most frequently occurring pragmatic notions in legal discourse. By speech acts, the speakers perform certain acts called performatives. These are directives, representatives, commissives and expressives. Legal language is interwoven by these acts because legal utterances mean acting, not only descriptions.

Analysing speech acts further on, Brown and Levinson (1978) assert that people intend to convey certain public self-image called "face" in order to be appreciated or cause damage to the speech partner. The authors differentiate between positive and negative face in social interactions. Positive face is formulated as "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some other executors" while negative face is defined "the want of every competent and adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others". A positive face threatening act occurs when the speaker does not care about the partner's feelings, thus the partner's face is damaged. In order to show that the partner possesses inferior values, the speaker can show disrespect towards the partner, or can indicate his disapproval, or insult by stating that the speech partner is irrational.

A negative face threatening act occurs when a person does not avoid the obstruction of the partner's action, such as compliments which can cause damage to the hearer

because they make him submit his will to the speaker. As Holmes (1995) formulates it: "A compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some "good" (possession, characteristic, skill etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer."

Consequently, Danet claims (1980) that face threatening speech acts can constitute directives that change a state of affairs by making a person perform an action.

Regarding the turn-taking system of forensic settings, Atkinson and Drew (1979) analysed court trial discourse showing that court examinations involve only question and answer sequences in contrast to everyday conversations. The turns of the examination are prelocated in one direction only; thus the interrogated party must not interrogate the interrogator. The power distribution seems to be apparent in this context, representing the one-sided control of power exercising by the men of law.

3.1. Chronology of the Mc Martin Preschool Abuse Trial

May 12, 1983: Judy Johnson called the police to report that her son had been molested sexually by Ray Buckey at McMartin. Johnson reported having found a spot of blood on the anus of her son. The son reported having been abused by Ray Buckey.

September 30, 1983: Johnson's report got more and more bizarre: Buckey wore a Santa Claus costume, other teachers chopped up rabbits and cats.

November, 1983: Interviewers (Kay MacFarlane) began diagnosing former students and the count reached 360 students as sexually abused.

August 8, 1984: Prosecutor Lael Rubin announced that seven teachers at McMartin had committed 397 sexual crimes.

March 6, 1985: Johnson was hospitalized for a psychotic episode and died.

January 1987: Prosecutor Rubin revealed to have withheld evidence concerning the mental state of Johnson.

July 27, 1990: The jury acquitted Buckey on all counts.

3.2. Analyses of the Interviews

The following two interview excerpts to be analysed possess pragmatic similarities and differences to achieve their aims. Considering the constraints of institutional discourse, both interviews show similar

characteristics of the turn-taking system. Questioning is always initiated by interviewers in contrast to everyday conversations, where both parties may initiate questions and give answers. However, the following two interview excerpts demonstrate different pragmatic ways of suggestibility. The first interview is conducted by a middle-aged social worker while the second one is an investigation of the attorney for the defendant. The first interview can be regarded as an informal one while the second is a formal one based on the legal setting. In this way, the pragmatic means of suggestibility vary according to the situational demands.

3.2.1. The Kathleen MacFarlane Interview

Kathleen MacFarlane as a social worker deliberately applies the use of positive and negative face threatening acts in conversation with the witness. She suggests events that may have occurred to her speech partner.

Positive face threatening acts, such as disrespect or humiliation, used by MacFarlane aim at minimizing the speech partner, therefore increasing his motivation to say what the interlocutor wants to hear. MacFarlane wants the boy to confess that he has seen the naked games.

(a)

Kathleen MacFarlane: Mr. Monkey is a little bit chicken, and he can't remember any of the naked games, but we think that you can.....Do you remember that game, Mr. Alligator, or is your memory too bad?

Boy: Um, I don't remember that game.

MacFarlane: Oh, Mr. Alligator.

Boy: Umm, we..., it's umm, a little song that me and (a friend) heard of.

MacFarlane: Oh.

(Mr. Monkey and Mr. Alligator are puppets)

Negative face threatening acts such as compliments or flattery are complicated manipulation for children because they make them submit their will to the speaker by emphasizing their own positive face; thus making them say what is expected of them.

(b)

MacFarlane: Can you remember who took the pictures for the naked-movie-star game?.....

Boy: (Places pretend camera on adult male nude doll using alligator puppet) sometimes he did.

MacFarlane: Can I pat on the head for that? Look what a big help you can be. You're

going to help all these little children because you're so smart...OK, did they ever pose in funny poses for the pictures?

Boy: Well, it wasn't a real camera. We just played...

MacFarlane applies varied argumentative techniques to convince the witness about events that may have occurred. The use of the associative/quasi logical argumentation schemata (Perelman, 1969) such as 'whole-part' and 'example' serve the aim to make the witness feel uncertain about his beliefs or past recollections and accept others' experience.

(c)

Kathleen MacFarlane: Mr. Monkey is a little bit chicken, and he can't remember any of the naked games, but we think that you can, 'cause we know a naked game that you were round for, 'cause the other kids told us, and it's called Naked Movie Star.

The definition of the 'whole-part' argumentation schema (Table 1) is "the properties of a set apply to its members". In this way, the use of 1st and 3rd person plural 'we know' and 'other kids told us' expressions have a coercive effect on the witness because it makes him feel uncertain about his own memory. If more people remember the events, it seems probable that his memory is faulty.

MacFarlane uses another argumentation schema to put pressure on the witness. In this case, she uses a more specific schema (an example of a girl) in contrast with the previous global one (whole-part). The social worker's intention is to make the scene more lifelike and more convincing for the witness.

(d)

MacFarlane: I bet you can help us a lot, though, 'cause, like Naked Movie Star is a simple game because we know about that game, 'cause we just have had twenty kids told us about that game. Just morning, a little girl, came in and played it for us and sang it just like that....

Boy: Maybe.

Power abuse via discourse is apparent in the above interview excerpts. The social worker uses speech acts that can be either humiliating or flattering for the witness. The aim of these acts is to confuse the witness and make him say what is expected by the social worker. The use of the argumentation schemata mentioned above makes the witness's memory unimportant by

evaluating others' experiences more relevant. In this way, suggestibility is manifested by explicit pragmatic means such as face threatening speech acts and quasi-logical argumentation schemata.

On the basis of the boy's answers, it is difficult to decide what may have happened with the children. It seems to be controversial if there was a naked game played or only a song was performed by the children. Despite the explicit forms of influence (compliments, disrespect), the witness does not give unambiguous answers. Obvious power abuse via discourse terminates without any result.

3.2.2. Cross-Examination by Dean Gitts

The cross-examination phase in a trial is peculiar from the point of view of pragmatics. The prosecutor is allowed to suggest answers or put words in the witness mouth in order to reveal the truth. The purpose of the "cross" is to persuade the jury of the witness's bias and demonstrate the implausibility of the witness's testimony. Therefore, the prosecutor may apply various pragmatic techniques to enforce a confession from the witness. The cross examination phase of the trial represents institutional/formal discourse as the question forms (yes or no questions as leading questions, declaratives) are regulated in legal settings.

The cross to be analysed is built on 91 questions from the attorney to the defendant, named Dean Gitts. The main goal of the attorney is to show the contradictions in the answers of the witness. The attorney applies a presupposition as an implicit pragmatic means in his interrogation in order to detect the truth of the events that happened in the past. The presupposition involves the fact that the witness is uncertain about her memory; therefore, she gives contradictory answers.

In order to reveal the truth, the attorney asks the same questions twice in different phases of the examination to prove his thesis. It should be noted that the real meaning of the presupposition can be inferred from the attorney's question repetitions.

The first topic of inquiry concerns the discrepancy between the past and present memory of the witness. Question repetition ("Do you think your memory is better today?") with one speech turn omitted makes the witness reveal the truth about her memory. While the answer to question 11 shows hesitation, answer to question 13

demonstrates self-assurance. In this way, the attorney infers that the present memory of the witness is valid in contrast with her past one in her testimony. If any contradiction emerges in her present answers, it proves her as lying.

(a)s

D.G (question 11): ...Do you think your memory is better today than you went to CC?

W.: I don't know.

D.G.(question 12): Do you think your memory was better with Shawn at CII than at the preliminary hearing?

W.: Well, it wasn't a better memory.

D.G. (question 13): Do you think your memory is better today?

W.: Yes.

D.G.: Why?

W.: Because I've thought about it.

Contrasting events is an influential means for the attorney to make the witness reveal the truth showing the contradictions in the answers. The second topic relates to the "bad happenings" in the morning and afternoon events. For questions 16-17, the witness answers that the naked game took place before noon, but not in the afternoon. A few turns later the witness admits "bad things" happened in the afternoon during naptime (question 21). In spite of this fact, it is not clear if the "bad happenings" were in connection with the morning or afternoon events (question 22).

(b)

D.G (question 16): Did it happen in the morning?(naked game)

W: I'm not sure.

D.G. (question 17): Before noon?

W: Yes.

D.G(question 18). So it was not at naptime?

W: No.

D.G (question 21): Did anything bad happen during naptime?

W: Yes...That's when I went to the house.

D.G.(question 22): Did you ever go to the house in the morning?

W: I don't remember.

The attorney's next step is concerned with the presumed undressing act of adults and children during naptime and the naked game. On the basis of the witness's answers, only Ray's act was questionable during naptime. Later, the witness reveals that both Ray and Peggy had their clothes off during the naked game.

(c)

D.G.(question 25): Did you take your clothes off and put them in a pile?(in naptime)

W: Yes.

D.G.(question 26) Did Peggy have her clothes off?

W: No.

D.G.(question 28): Did Ray take his clothes off?

W: Yes.

D.G.(question 39): When you played 'naked movie star' did Ray or Peggy have their clothes off?

W: Yes.

Questions 27 and 29 are concerned with the adults' touching of children during naptime. The witness gives negative answers. Later, question 53 is related to the naked game events. Both adults are accused by the witness.

(d)

D.G.(question 27): Was she (Peggy) touching anybody?

W: No.

D:G(question 29):Did he (Ray) touch anybody?

W: I don't know. He didn't touch me.

D.G.(question 53): During and right after the 'naked movie star' did anybody touch you?

W: Ray and Peggy.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the facts of the interview excerpts is not clear.

According to the witness testimony, "bad things" happened only during naptime. However, the witness admits that the adults had their clothes off during the naked game, as well. It becomes even stranger that the adults touched children only during the naked game. As a consequence, the credibility of the witness is questionable.

During the four topics of inquiry, the attorney uses leading questions to make the witness give direct answers. In order to learn the truth, he contrasts the events of the "naked game" and those of naptime. The attorney asks questions about these events in different phases of the interview to make the witness forget his own beliefs and can catch her lying. Manipulation with question repetition and the use of leading questions demonstrate the attorney's questioning technique as an implicit way of influence and power exercise towards the witness.

At the final stage of the examination, the attorney's presupposition has been justified.

After the witness's contradictory answers, (39,53) the attorney assumes that peers' opinions had an effect on the witness's memory (56,57,61,63).

D.G. (56): You had friends at American Martyrs who went to CII?

W: Yes.

D.G.(57) And they told you about yucky secrets?

W: Yes.

D.G. (58): You told your parents you didn't remember anything bad happened at the preschool and one time they offered to take you to CII, and you said there was no need to because nothing happened.

W: Maybe. I don't remember.

D.G.(61): Did your parents tell you something bad happened at the school?

W: Yes.

D.G.(63): You had a sense that something bad happened at McMartin, but you couldn't remember until Shawn told you about the naked games?

W: Yes.

In the interrogations above (56,57,58, and 63) the attorney's use of declaratives demonstrates his exact knowledge on the case and tests the witness's credibility.

The attorney's conclusion is that peers' opinion influenced the witness's testimony; therefore she is not able to give an unbiased report on the past events.

The use of different question forms and their arrangement demonstrates certainty-uncertainty, on one hand, and power exercise on the other by the interrogator. In the process of the interview, the attorney uses yes or no questions (61) and question repetition when he feels less certain about the facts he asks. On the contrary, he applies declaratives in utterances (56,57,63) demonstrating his exact knowledge of the facts. Declaratives prove to be a more coercive means of interrogation than yes/no questions.

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On the basis of the two interview transcripts above, the explicit pragmatic means such as positive-negative face threatening speech acts and the quasi-logical argumentation schemata had a lesser effect on the witness's answers in the first interview than the implicit pragmatic means such as presupposition, yes or no questions, question repetition, and declaratives had in the second interview. In the latter case, the witness gave contradictory answers that may show the way to revealing the truth, in contrast with the former interview.

Conclusion

Based on the interview excerpts I have attempted to demonstrate that a coercive questioning technique has an impact on suggestibility in vulnerable people such as children. Suggestibility means hiding facts or the truth from the interrogator and causing harm to the self-image of the interrogated person. Formal and informal investigative interrogations are characterized by different pragmatic markers in forensic discourse.

At the same time, I have attempted to show that while explicit pragmatic markers such as compliments and argumentation schemata are deliberately used in informal interviewing, implicit pragmatic means such as leading questions, repetitions and declaratives are applied in formal interrogations. The analysis has detected that explicit means are able to make persons disclose to a lesser extent than implicit ones. Explicit pragmatic markers may cause harm to vulnerable people such as children because their face threatening nature may hurt children's self-image. Nevertheless, it should be noted that both explicit and implicit pragmatic markers are used for power manifestation in order to reveal the truth in forensic settings.

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Where Crisis Communication Meets Linguistics

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Abstract

[I]nformation is brought forth in some way about his social worth which cannot be integrated, even with effort, into the line that is being sustained for him (Goffman 1967, p. 8).

On 21 November 2011, being in wrong face, Andy Coulson made a statement of resignation from his position as David Cameron's communications director because of the coverage of the phone hacking scandal at the News of the World.

Several independent investigations have revealed the "repugnant nature" of the media practices and lay bare the network of improper relationships between people in the media, politics and the police. Coulson's statement triggers a succession of prominent resignations and other definitive decisions by the senior public figures in the media, politics and the police in the UK.

In the wake of the crisis, they stand up in front of cameras and make their statements to inform, explain, justify... and yet, the paper suggests, the primary reason is face, as construed by Goffman (1967) and Tercourafi (2007). This paper gives an overview of crisis communication, provides background to the hacking scandal and presents some ideas concerning tying up crisis response with face concerns. It suggests that the linguistic resources the speakers employ reflect the biological grounding of face in the dimension of approach vs withdrawal (Terkourafi, 2007).

Keywords

Crisis communication, crisis response, phone hacking scandal, persuasive language, face, face concerns, resignation statements.

Introduction

In 2011 Ulmer, Sellnow and Seeger made a somewhat threatening observation that

[w]e live in a society continually affected by natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tsunami, and forest fires, and by organizational crises, such as food-borne illnesses, corporate malfeasance, and terrorism. Regardless of where you live or the kind of work you do, many different types of crises have the potential to significantly disrupt your life. No community and no organization, public or private, is immune from crises (2).

High incidence of various crises and their dramatic, newsworthy character paved the way for the amazingly explosive growth of the field of crisis communication. There were, however, two events, both in the 1980s, which set the stage for the development of the field. First, the Johnson & Johnson Tylenol case, whose "image

rescue project was quickly judged by most commentators as an unqualified success" (Heath 2010, p. 4) and the other, at the extreme end of the scale of success, the Exxon Valdez oil spills case, which "had become, in the minds of experts, a paradigm for how not to handle a corporate crisis" (Berg & Robb, 1992: 97). Up to and including these landmark cases, organizations and companies handled their crises as best they could, without crisis management or crisis communication plans (Fearn-Banks 2011, p. 90).

1 Crisis Communication (CC): an overview

First and foremost, crisis communication should be seen in the wider context of crisis management where it has taken its direct roots. The roots of crisis management, in turn, reside in emergency and disaster management (Coombs 2010). Thus understood, crisis communication originated from the broad field of public relations. In

the introductory chapter of *The Handbook of Public Relations and Communications*, Philip Lesly called public relations “a phenomenon and a necessity of our times” (1991, p. 4). Nowadays, one might venture the claim that crisis communication has become a

phenomenon and a necessity of our times. The figure below is my graphic representation of the place CC holds in the larger context of other allied sub-disciplines of public relations (Coombs 2010, pp. 55-64).

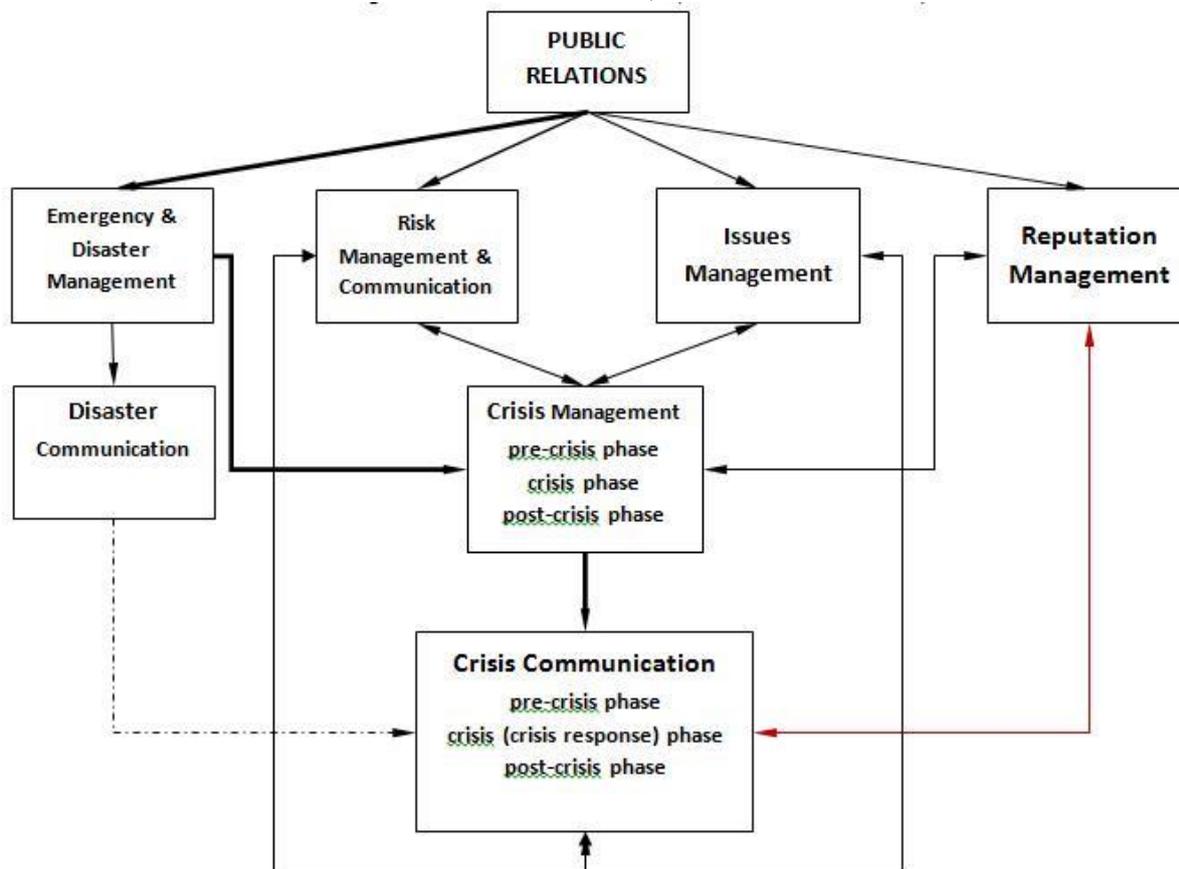


Figure 1 Crisis communication in the larger context of other allied sub-disciplines of public relations.

The figure features many other allied disciplines within the field of public relations that have been informing and shaping crisis communication and which have a reciprocal relationship with crisis communication, which has been marked with arrows (the dotted line linking Disaster Communication and CC indicate the distinctness of the former). Additionally, crisis management and crisis communication have been further subdivided, within their respective boxes, into three phases: *pre-crisis*, *crisis* and *post-crisis*, which reflects the fact that any crisis occurs in stages (an observation originally made by Stephen Fink in 1986 in his seminal work on crisis management entitled *Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable*). In the pre-crisis phase, crisis communication focuses on locating and reducing risk. In the

crisis phase all efforts are concentrated on how and what the organization communicates during a crisis. Finally, we have the post-crisis phase, which covers the period after a crisis is considered to be resolved. As it may be difficult to determine precisely when a crisis is over, post-crisis communication is an extension of crisis response communication coupled with learning from the crisis (Coombs 2010, pp. 25-45). Therefore, crisis communication can be defined broadly as the collection, processing and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation (Coombs 2010, p. 20). Surges (1994) identified three categories/functions of information which stakeholders need to receive at different stages of a crisis: 1) instruction information, 2) adjusting information, and 3) internalizing information, also referred to as reputation-management information. Since reputation is “a vital, intangible resource that must be

protected" (Coombs 2010, p. 58), to the extent that large organizations spend millions of dollars to craft and to cultivate a favourable reputation (Alsop 2004), research into the latter category/function of information has taken centre stage (Holladay 2010). Consequently, crisis communication should be viewed as an important tool in efforts to build and maintain a favourable reputation (Coombs 2010) and in times of crisis, a tool to repair a tarnished image as "[a] bad public image has the power to make or break even multibillion-dollar corporations (Borda and Mackey-Kallis 2004). Therefore, naturally, the ties between reputation management and crisis communication (Figure 1 above) are fairly strong. Within the function of internalizing information several crisis response strategies have been suggested²². They are often viewed as a cline spanning the "defensive" and "accommodative" strategies with four major categories of: deny, diminish, rebuild and reinforce. This paper focuses on the crisis response phase (Figure 1) and deals with internalizing information realized in the form of resignation statements made by public figures from the world of the politics, the media and the police in the wake of the phone hacking scandal.

1.1 Crisis

There is no one universally accepted definition of the term crisis. The researchers in the field have suggested several typologies²³ with an aim to account for the complexity and diversity of the phenomenon. They have looked at the term from different perspectives and have taken a number of variables into consideration. Nonetheless, there is unanimity as to the fact that stakeholders²⁴ look for the cause of the crisis and assign responsibility for the crisis to the organization based on their assessment of the extent to which the organization or circumstances are responsible (Holladay 2010). With this view in mind, four different types of crisis have been identified: 1) the organization as *victim* of the crisis, with little responsibility attributed to the organization by stakeholders; 2) crisis as an *accident*

phenomenon, again the organization is not held responsible for such crises; and finally 3) crisis as *preventable* event(s), in which case, people will attribute the greatest blame to the organization (Holladay 2010). The phone hacking scandal, whose crisis response the paper deals with, falls into the latter category and can be additionally perceived as an intentional crisis (Ulmer et al 2011) caused by the management. The Institute for Crisis Management (ICM) released an analysis based on its database, collected from 1989 until 2000, which revealed that "management, either through poor judgement or criminal acts, causes the majority of crises faced by business" (Millar 2004, p. 31; Millar and Irvine 1996).

1.2 Crisis Response

Fediuk, Pace and Botero (2010, p. 222) have identified two major characteristics of crisis response: 1) crisis response is designed to protect or reduce the damage towards the organization that is caused by the crisis episode and 2) crisis response is goal-rooted, in that it is used to influence some aspects of perceptions of stakeholders. To date, a huge bulk of crisis response research has drawn on the first feature of crisis response and has centred on how communicated messages can be used to maintain organizational reputation after a crisis and prevent reputation damage after a crisis event (Fediuk, Pace and Botero 2010). Recently, however, more and more attention is being paid to the fact that each crisis has "an actual dimension and a perceived dimension" (Heath and Millar, 2004: 6). As such "[c]rises are largely *perceptual*. If stakeholders *believe* there is a crisis, the organization is in a crisis unless it can successfully *persuade* stakeholders it is not "(emphasis mine) (2009, p. 100). Therefore, crisis response can be viewed as a form of persuasive communication directed towards stakeholders, or precisely, towards the change of their perceptions, attitudes and reactions concerning crisis. In his modelling of a verbal act of communication, Jakobson (1960) identifies six constitutive factors and respective functions of language which they determine i.e., ADDRESSER (EMOTIVE) → CONTEXT (REFERENTIAL)/ MESSAGE (referential²⁵/POETIC)/ CONTACT (PHATIC)/ CODE (METALINGUAL)→ ADDRESSEE

²² Allen & Caillouet 1994, Benoit 1995, Coombs 2007

²³ Millar 2004, Fearn-Banks 2011, Ulmer et al. 2011, among many others

²⁴ Broadly speaking, stakeholders are any group of people who can affect or be affected by the behaviour of an organization (Agle et al. 1999; Bryson 2004).

²⁵ Cf Unlike Jakobson (1960), Cockcroft & Cockcroft (2005: 20) write of a *referential* function of language as being oriented towards the *message* and *context*

(CONATIVE). Jakobson (1960) observes, however, that although there are six basic functions of language, it is hardly possible to find a message that would fulfil just one single function and further claims that “[t]he diversity lies not in a monopoly of some one of these several functions but in a different hierarchical order of functions (p. 353).” Since the orientation of persuasive communication is towards the receiver/persuadee, its function is primarily CONATIVE. Nonetheless, the orientation towards the receiver is fulfilled by the sender/persuader so the emotive function is vital. Finally, each persuasion must have a topic and an issue, thus the referential function is equally important (Cockcroft and Cockcroft 2005). Figure 2 below illustrates this hierarchy of functions within the persuasive process as viewed by Cockcroft and Cockcroft (2005, p. 61).

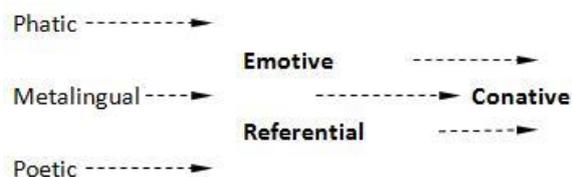


Figure 2 Hierarchy of functions within the persuasive process according to Cockcroft and Cockcroft (2005)

In their illustration of the hierarchy of functions within the persuasive process, Cockcroft and Cockcroft (2005) foreground the CONATIVE function, as persuasive discourse is primarily addressee-oriented. True as it is, it seems that a slight shift in this hierarchy might turn out justifiable in terms of crisis response (resignation statements, in particular). Persuasion in crisis response involves the communicator/speaker whose objective is to change the stakeholder(s)' (CONATIVE) perceptions/attitudes/beliefs about the crisis (REFERENTIAL see footnote 4), or more precisely, their perception of the role of the organization or, in the case described, the speaker himself in the crisis. The speaker attempts to achieve his aim through his expression of attitude towards the issue(s) he is addressing, through his modelling of the account of the events and issues involved and his role in them (EMOTIVE). The issue(s) the speaker is addressing, i.e. the subject matter of persuasion, are set in a specific context (REFERENTIAL) which both the speaker and the stakeholders/audience bear in mind. Therefore, it appears that the

interrelation of these three functions is so strong that none of them can be given prominence over the other. Therefore, the hierarchy of functions for crisis response under analysis can be illustrated as in Figure 3 below.



Figure 3 Hierarchy of functions in crisis response

2 Case

2.1 Phone Hacking Scandal: an overview

The public first heard about the phone and email hacking scandal in 2005 when two people, the *News of the World's* royal editor, Clive Goodman, and a private investigator, Glenn Mulcaire, were arrested and then, having been found guilty, imprisoned for gaining illegal access to Prince William's voicemail. The list of people whose privacy has been, to a greater or lesser degree, brutally invaded, reportedly covers a few thousand victims including high-ranking politicians, celebrities, sports people and, more appallingly, victims of crime, the relatives of British soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan and the 7/7 London terrorist attack victims. "Industrial scale" hacking, heinous as it is, turned out to be only the tip of the iceberg of illegal or criminal activity, with cases of out-of-court gagging settlements, bribery and corruption of police officers, exerting undue and illicit pressure on various people in a position of power and authority in the UK and, apparently, abroad. Several mutually independent investigations by some newspapers, the police, Parliament and other bodies were launched thus resulting in a number of prominent resignations and arrests of many people in top positions in the media, politics and police, to date. The magnitude and extent of the crisis inspired comparisons with the Watergate scandal and earned it such nicknames as *Hackgate*, *Ruppertgate* or *Murdochgate*, in the press.

2.2 Statements

I have been working on 11 prominent resignation statements and equally important immediate responses to such statements. They were made in the wake of the phone hacking scandal, by people in top positions in the media, politics and the police in the UK. Thus the media are

represented by: James Murdoch (the then-chairman of the *News of the World*), Rebekah Brooks (the then-chief executive of News International), Lis Hinton (the then-chief of the News Corporation subsidiary Dow Jones & Company), Robert Thompson (the managing editor of News International and editor-in-chief of Dow Jones & Co., the News Corp. unit that publishes the *Wall Street Journal*) and Andy Coulson (the then communications director for David Cameron, the British PM). The speakers from the world of politics are: David Cameron (the British prime minister) and Theresa May (a British Conservative politician, the current home secretary) and finally, from the police: Sir Paul Stephenson (the then-Metropolitan police commissioner) and John Yates (the then-Metropolitan police assistant commissioner). They were all made between 21 January 2011 and 20 July 2011 with Coulson's statement triggering the series. All of them have been collected from the Guardian's official website (www.guardian.co.uk>Media>Phone-hacking.

3 Face concerns in Crisis Response

In this paper I would like to make an attempt at tying up crisis response with face concerns as understood by Goffman (1967) and Terkourafi (2007). In other words, I intuit that what underlies persuasion in crisis response realized in the form of resignation statements (or statements commenting on the resignation statements, for that matter) are face concerns, which manifests itself in the linguistic choices made by the speakers. I follow Goffman (1967) in his understanding of *face* and *face* concerns and Terkourafi (2007), who suggests a revised notion of *face* and gives it a twofold grounding, 1) in the biological dimension of approach/withdrawal, and 2) in the phenomenological tradition, with its notion of intentionality (*aboutness*).

3.1 Notion of face: Goffman (1967) & Terkourafi (2007)

According to Goffman (1967), there are two states/positions that characterize a person in an interaction. First, a person may be said *to have face*, *to be in face* or *to maintain face* "when the line he effectively takes presents an image of him that is internally consistent, that is supported by judgements and evidence conveyed by other participants, and that is confirmed by evidence conveyed through impersonal agencies in the situation" (7). And, according to Goffman

(*ibid.*), only someone who "abstained from certain actions in the past that would have been difficult to face up to later" is capable of maintaining face in the current activity. Having done so successfully, the participant responds with "a feeling of confidence and assurance" and feels that he can "openly present himself and others" (8). Conversely, he may also be *in wrong face* "when information is brought forth in some way about his social worth which cannot be integrated, even with effort, into the line that is being sustained for him" (8). Being *in wrong face* makes people feel bad as they usually rely on an encounter to support their image of self which they got used to rather than undermine or threaten their self or reputation as participants. The emotions induced by these two positions, 1) of having face, being in face or maintaining face and, particularly, 2) being in wrong face, seem to correlate with the mechanisms that underlie Terkourafi's dimension of approach/withdrawal discussed below and appear to capture the position of the speakers in the corpus. In the light of much criticism towards the existing notions of face, Terkourafi (2007) suggests a revised universal notion, which unlike e.g., Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) notion, would not be ethnocentric, cognitive, culture-dependent and the like²⁶. Figure 3 below is a schematic representation of Terkourafi's notion of face.

²⁶ Cf. Bargiela-Chiappini (2003) for the re-examination of face as construed by Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1978/1987).

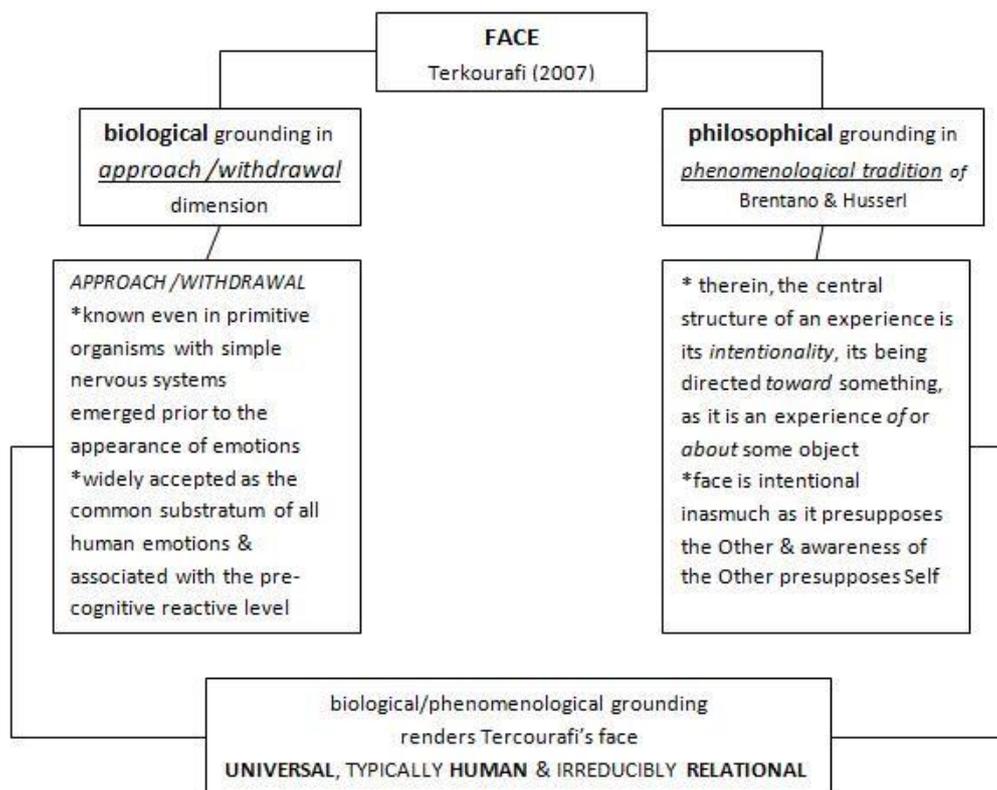


Figure 4 Schematic representation of Terkourafi's (2007) notion of face

Aristotle's recognition of pain and pleasure as the two overarching emotions and motivations for human activity, found in *On Rhetoric* (Ross 1925, Book II, §6, cited in Terkourafi, 2007) seems to tally with the biological grounding of face in the dimension of approach/withdrawal and also supports Goffman's observations concerning the interlocutors' emotions when being *in face* or *in wrong face*, as discussed above.

3.2 Addresser (Self)- Message- Addressee (Other) Triad in Crisis Response

Terkourafi's (2007) revised notion of face²⁷ is grounded in the interactional dyad, i.e., face concerns do not arise in isolation, they are triggered by the presence of the *Other* (*Self* being condition sine qua non). It is also the presence of Other as distinct from Self that enables the possibility of approaching or withdrawing. Additionally, the intentionality of face towards Other endows Self with as many faces as there are Others involved in the situation. Therefore,

if I am interacting with an interlocutor in front of an audience, I make (and am aware

of making) a bid for face not only in the eyes of my interlocutor, but also in the eyes of each of the members of that audience taken separately and as a group. (...) Since face is relational, bids for face are always bi-directional. As Self makes a bid for face in the eyes of Other, by the same token Other too makes a bid for face in the eyes of Self (Terkourafi 2007, pp. 324-5).

She further claims that "[i]n the physical presence of one participant, I may be simultaneously apprehending several Others, some of whom I may be approaching while withdrawing from others. There is nothing preventing the same instance of behavior achieving approach on one level and withdrawal on another" Terkourafi (ibid.). Such construal of face makes it well suited to be applied in a crisis situation where the speaker(s)/addresser(s) (Self) address(es) a number of diverse stakeholders/addressees (Others). Avery and Lariscy (2010) forcefully suggest, evoking stakeholder theory, that: "crisis managers must not consider publics as monolithic; [because] (...) not only are publics different, but also members of the same public will respond to the various layers of crises in different ways" (p. 327).

²⁷ In her article, Terkourafi (2007) refers to it as "Face2", I stick to "face" in my paper.

Therefore, to change the attitudes, beliefs or perceptions of the stakeholders, by means of one statement they make, the speakers simultaneously approach or/and withdraw particular Others. Apparently, approaching some Others or/and withdrawing from them/or some others is mediated by the speaker's approach/withdrawal to/from the contentious topic, i.e., the speaker's role/involvement in crisis/wrongdoing. It is here that the third element in the triad comes into play. The linguistic choices the speakers make to talk about the hacking scandal, police corruption, gagging payments, illegal contractual arrangements, unethical leadership etc., seem to reflect both the biological and philosophical dimensions of Terkourafi's (2007) face.

4 Analysis & Discussion

This section does not discuss the problem exhaustively, it only provides analysis of several selected examples of the linguistic realization of the dimension of *approach/withdrawal* in terms of the speakers' presentation of their own connection with/involvement in the major crisis of the hacking scandal and its offshoots, e.g. police corruption, unethical leadership etc. First, the proportion of the grammatical tense (past, present and future) to account for the crisis events is dealt with (cf. Table 1). According to Heath (2004), one of the approaches to communication in crisis is to view it as a narrative whose rhetorical integrity is going to be judged by the audience. One of the cornerstones of this integrity is rhetorical probability, i.e., "a judgement of the extent to which a story holds together, rings true and is free from internal contradiction" (2004, p. 178). The narrative probability includes an assessment of a range of events that precede the crisis event and extrapolate into the future. Therefore, a crisis response which merely includes the present misses the rhetorical exigency of addressing the past, the present and the future. Even if the spokespersons limit themselves to the present, they will find their key audiences do not (Heath 2004).

| verb | past | present | future |
|------|------|---------|--------|
| have | | 55 | |
| is | | 52 | |
| will | | | 41 |
| was | 23 | | |
| had | 19 | | |
| are | | 19 | |

| | | | |
|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| am | | 15 | |
| know | | 14 | |
| can | | 13 | |
| do | | 5 | |
| want | | 10 | |
| made | 6 | | |
| did | 8 | | |
| must | | 7 | |
| take | | 3 | |
| make | | 2 | |
| resigned | 4 | | |
| support | 1 | | |
| wish | | 6 | |
| informed | 2 | | |
| Total | 63 | 201 | 41 |

Table 1 The top 20 verbs (in the order of dwindling frequency) indicative of *approach/withdrawal* dimension of *face* realized in the handling of grammatical tense to talk about crisis events.

The numbers above, if small, show graphically that it is exactly what the speakers do – largely limit themselves to the present. On the one hand, this might be interpreted as withdrawing from some Others in the audience, at least those who would like to learn more about the past events. On the other hand, not talking about the past can be viewed as approaching some other Others, whose face this way is saved. Then, there is the issue of the lexical items the speakers are using, or precisely, are not using to refer to *the crisis* in its many *shapes* (cf. Table 2)

| Lexical item | number of hits (<i>per 9960 tokens in corpus</i>) | no. of times an item | <i>withdrawin</i> g actors used by key actors |
|-----------------------------|---|----------------------|---|
| phone hacking | 19 | 0 | [News Corporation top figures] |
| police corruption | 6 | 0 | [PS*?, JY*] |
| crisis | 2 | 0 | [all except for DC*?, RB*] |
| crime (=hacking) | 0 | 0 | [all] |
| Payments (improper/corrupt) | 6 | 0 | [PS, JY] |
| scandal | 1 | 0 | [all except for DC] |

Table 2 Selected examples of lexical choices referring to crisis indicative of approach/withdrawal dimension.

Although, the allegations of *phone hacking* have been made against the people at the *News of the World* and *News International*, the top figures there seem to withdraw from using this particular lexical item. In fact, they do not use it even once. Instead, they tend to refer to the crisis saying *these matters* and *these issues*. The other speakers, top police officers at the time, Sir Paul Stephenson and John Yates, have not used the words: *police corruption* or *(improper/corrupt) payments*, of which their subordinates have been accused. In general, the words *crisis* and *scandal* are hardly used by speakers in their statements, which only supports the speaker's withdrawal tendency from the contentious topic of the phone hacking scandal. Another example, the sentence below seems to exemplify both the dimension of approach and withdrawal at the same time.

[1] *The Company paid out-of-court settlements approved by me.*

The contentious topic is *paying out-of-court settlements*. Hence, the speaker is withdrawing by means of the metonymical use of *the company*, but then he is approaching by means of the objective personal pronoun *me*, which functions here as a prepositional complement used with an elliptical passive voice structure in a post-modification position. The dimension of approach is further realized by placing the information in a position at the end of a sentence, typically the place of the greatest emphasis. However, if put in the active voice and divided into two simple sentences, sentence [1] yields:

[1a] *The Company paid out-of-court settlements.*

[1b] *I approved the settlements.*

In connection with the problem of linear sequencing in the interpretation of events in time, Levelt (1981) invokes an *ordo naturalis*, whereby, by assumption (unless indicated otherwise), the first-mentioned event happened first and the second-mentioned event followed it. He further observes that "the listener can be expected to derive different implicatures from different ordering" (Levelt, 1981: 91). Therefore, it would follow that phrasing his sentence as in [1] *The Company paid out-of-*

court settlements approved by me, S implies that [1a] occurred first and [1b] occurred second, in which case the weight of the responsibility or blame seems to be shifted more to the side of the company and not the speaker, whereas the facts predicate that it is the other way round. For the fact of *paying* to take place, first the activity [1b] must have happened and then [1a] followed. The speaker, then, promotes a distorted version of *ordo naturalis* as if instinctively (or deliberately) realizing that what the speaker puts first will influence the interpretation of everything that follows (Brown & Yule, 1983). Finally, the example below illustrates the simultaneous realization of the *approach/withdrawal* dimension within (a) single phrase(s). In other words, the fact that the speaker addresses the contentious topic is viewed as approaching some groups in the audience, e.g. those who seek explanations, but modifying it with *alleged*, could be indicative of withdrawing from the same group of people.

| withdrawal | approach | contentious topic |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| the alleged nature of | the malpractice | malpractice |
| the alleged | involvement of Mr Wallis | Mr Wallis's involvement |
| the examples of alleged | corruption and nepotism | corruption and nepotism |
| alleged | corruption | corruption |

Table 3 Simultaneous realization of approach/withdrawal dimension within a single phrase.

Conclusion

One of the aims of the paper was to show where crisis communication meets linguistics. The converging point seems to be *face*. The other aim was to share ideas about possible paths of tying up crisis response with face concerns. Nonetheless, the complexity of the crisis under analysis and face concerns involved in this case call for much more systematic and methodologically grounded analysis. The above are just intuitive ideas which might constitute issues of interest for future research. The possible direction has been suggested by Channell (2000), who sees the need to tie up "the whole area of evaluative language" (55) with the notion of *facework*. Therefore, the first step could be to analyse

crisis response within the framework of evaluative language, e.g. Martin and White's (2005) appraisal and then to attempt to incorporate face concerns as understood by Goffman (1967) and Terkourafi (2007).

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A Critical Discourse Analysis of ESL Education in Canada

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Abstract

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) offers a multi-layered conceptualization for analysing language beyond its formal linguistic features by taking the role of discursive and socio-cultural contexts into account. CDA makes connections between the macro- and micro-levels of discourses and can shed light on the interaction and interplay between them. This study looks into the macro-micro relationship in the discourses of ESL education in Alberta, Canada, through combining critical discourse analysis of ESL policies and an

ethnographic study done in a public school in the province. It is argued that ESL-related terminology and their definitions used in ESL discourse should be interpreted and understood within the broader socio-cultural contexts in which they are applied. This has implications for ESL students' academic and socio-cultural practices, as well as effective ESL planning and programming.

Keywords

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), English as a Second Language (ESL)/English language learners (ELL), ESL terminology, macro and micro discourses, Language policy and planning (LPP).

Introduction

The critical turn in the field of discourse analysis brought about transformations and reconceptualizations in the study of text and discourse leading to the emergence of a new approach called critical discourse analysis. In the 1970s, the primary focus of discourse analysis was the study of formal linguistic features of language and the linguistic competence of the speakers. Later, the studies that introduced the role of context in language use gave prominence to the formal characteristics of language structures, language change and language variations (Wodak 2001). This critical shift distanced this field from the positivist or rational view and gradually gave form to the current critical approach.

Titscher et al. (2007) refer to critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a reaction to the earlier pragmatic and quantitative approaches that adds a critical ideological aspect to the study of language. In fact, it is the issue-oriented nature of CDA that differentiates it from the previous approaches to discourse analysis by focusing on the relationships between text and discourse and the socio-cultural power

encompassing them (Van Dijk 1993, 1997). CDA investigates the ways in which power can be a source of domination that creates inequalities in society and how such power can be imposed, accepted or resisted. Hence, critical language and discourse studies shed light on the taken-for-granted and hidden power relations exerted through linguistic means. In other words, CDA fills the gap between the micro- and macro-level discursive structures by connecting language use, communication and interaction at the micro-level with power, domination and marginalization at the macro-level (Van Dijk 2008).

The issue: ESL within the LPP framework

As mentioned above, CDA is issue-oriented. The issue of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Canada is of primary interest in this study, and it is examined within the framework of language policy and planning (LPP). The discipline of LPP is relatively new, having evolved over the last few decades (see Ricento 2000). While in its earlier form, the main focus of language planning was on "decision-making" about languages, the implementation of language policies and the

relationship between language planning and “social planning,” the later critical turn tended to shape the discipline differently by bringing concepts such as social inequality, ideology and agency into the picture (Nekvapil 2011).

In the field of language education, LPP can reveal how the policies and guidelines regulated at the macro-level impose their discourse on the micro-level and influence the perceptions and practices of their recipients. When it comes to language education, the interaction between the macro- and micro-levels of LPP is illustrated by Ricento and Hornberger (1996), who introduce the metaphor of an “onion.” This metaphor refers to the multi-layered nature of LPP and elaborates on how both official and non-official macro-level policies interact with the micro-level domains, including classroom level interpretation and policy implementation. Following an LPP framework, this study looks into how language policies and discourses regarding ESL education are interpreted and implemented by agents at the micro-level context. Therefore, the macro-level is seen through the official regulatory documents produced by governmental bodies and the micro-level is regarded as the local practices of the implementers and recipients of such regulations in the context of a school.

ESL goals and outcomes in Canada

While celebrating the richness of the cultural heritage Canada has embraced, the Canadian government promotes social cohesion by encouraging immigrant communities to enhance their level of social, cultural and economic integration (see, for example, the statement of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages and the Secretary of State; Canadian Heritage, 2008). However, such integration requires the new settlers to overcome the challenges they face in their new home, one of which is proficiency in one of the official languages of Canada. The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism referred to proficiency in one of Canada’s official languages as “a pathway to socio-economic integration” at the Eleventh National Metropolis Conference in Alberta (CIC, 2009). To reach this goal, supportive language instruction programmes are provided by the government of Canada to assist ESL students in schools. However, not very promisingly, there have been reports and studies pointing to the

marginalization and exclusion of young people as a result of a variety of factors, including language (Canadian Heritage, 2008).

The studies available on the academic performance of ESL students often refer to their unsatisfactory achievement results (e.g. Duffy 2005). Derwing et al. (1999), Watt and Roessingh (2001) and Roessingh (2004) suggest that ESL students have a higher dropout rate and perform less well on Provincial Achievement Tests (PAT)/ Diploma Examinations (DE) compared to their native English speaker (NS) peers. On a provincial level, Howard Research and Management Consulting Inc. (2006) reported that NS students’ achievement levels are generally higher than those of the ESL students. The same study found, for example, that “...NS students tend to maintain enrolment in the Alberta Education system, are more likely to be moved forward with their age peers, are more likely to complete PAT/DEs, and achieve at higher levels than ESL students at most grade levels” (Howard Research and Management Consulting Inc. 2006, p. 5). Another example is the Education Annual Report 2008-2009, in which the Deputy Minister declared that the achievement results for ESL students were “below the results for the overall student population on a number of key indicators” (Alberta Education, 2009a, p. 20).

While various socio-cultural factors might contribute to the problem, this study looks into the discourses surrounding ESL education and analyses ESL policy guidelines provided at the macro-level of education within the CDA framework. It specifically focuses on how ESL students are defined and portrayed through macro-level texts and discourses by examining the terminologies used to define these students, the definitions of such terminologies and their possible associated connotations. A one-year ethnographic study at the micro-level of a school complements the macro-level discourse analysis to explore the relationship between the two levels.

Macro-level discourse

This study looks into the provincial and municipal macro-level discourse of ESL policy and planning in the province of Alberta, Canada. For this purpose, the publicly accessible policies and guidelines regarding ESL are mostly available from two major sources, namely Alberta Education and the Calgary Board of Education, the two

main regulatory organizations that govern the K-12 education system in Alberta and the city of Calgary. The primary aim in this part of the study has been to investigate how ESL students are defined and pictured by the macro-level discourse. In other words, the main question leading this analysis is: who are ESL students?

The terms ESL students and ELL (English Language Learners) have often been used interchangeably in the discourse of English language education (e.g. Batt 2008; Pappamihel 2004; Sandefur, Watson and Johnston 2007). However, differences between these two terms have also been pointed out. Gunderson (2008) maintains that the term ESL presumes English as the second, as opposed to the first, language of the individual, while ELL is mainly used in reference to non-native speakers of English. However, he sees both terms as insufficient in defining their target population, as the term ESL denies the validity of multilingual proficiency and the term ELL has to accommodate both native and non-native speakers of English, since every student enrolled in the education system is directly or indirectly involved in learning English. Hill and Flynn (2006) approach the terminology within the context of the United States, arguing that the difference between the terms ESL and ELL is determined by the nature of the educational programmes. According to them, ESL is traditional publicly-funded instruction in the form of separate classes, while ELL is accommodation of English learners in heterogeneous classroom settings.

Referring to the ESL education documents provided by Alberta Education (1997), ESL students are defined as “those whose level of English language proficiency precludes them from full participation in the learning experiences provided in Alberta schools without additional support in English language development”(p. 1). It is added that the goal of the ESL programme is to “provide ESL students with planned, systematic instruction and support that will enable them to speak the English language fluently, further their education and become productive and contributing members of Albertan and Canadian society”(p. 1). Moreover, it is stated that these students first learned to speak, read and write in a language other than English and their English language fluency level is insufficient for achieving grade-level expectations in English Language Arts and other subject

areas without ESL assistance (Alberta Education, 2007, 2009b). The Calgary Board of Education (2006) adds to the definition by noting that ESL students are those living at homes in which English is not the primary language for communication and either do not speak English or have minimal English language proficiency. In other words, these are students who “come from homes where a language other than English is spoken” (Calgary Board of Education, 2011) and “have a first language spoken that is other than English” (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 22).

These definitions seem to be applicable to both ESL and ELL. The two terms, ESL and ELL, are used interchangeably in most documents published by Alberta Education and the Calgary Board of Education to refer to the same population and their educational programmes. Clear instances of the overlap and interchange of the two terms can be found in such statements as “ESL proficiency benchmarks support teachers in assessing and monitoring the language proficiency of **English language learners**” (LearnAlberta, n.d., retrieved April 2013) and “for more information about programming for **English Language Learners**, see the Alberta Education ESL K-9 Guide to Implementation” (Calgary Board of Education, 2010). Therefore, while some of the more recent documents refer to the population as ELL, rather than ESL (e.g. Alberta Education, 2010), ELL can be considered a newly-introduced term that has not yet had a separate definition of its own in Alberta. The Calgary Board of Education applies the terms ESL and ELL interchangeably when it introduces programmes offered to these learners (CBE, 15 April 2013). However, ESL remains the prevailing term used by Alberta Education and the Calgary Board of Education and, by definition, it refers to those students who have a language other than English as their first language and their proficiency in English is not high enough to let them meet the requirements of the regular programming. Other less frequently used terms referring to this population include Limited English Proficient (LEP), Non-English Speaking, bilingual, linguistic minorities, immigrants, newcomers and English as a new language.

Since the boundaries between the definitions and applications of the terms ESL and ELL are not clear, and the two terms are often used synonymously, they are used interchangeably in this study. However, the

emphasis has been on the umbrella term ESL due to its dominance in the literature and English language education discourse.

Micro-level discourse

This study looks into the micro-level ESL discourse through a one-year (2010-2011) ethnographic research conducted in a public school in Alberta that exclusively serves the needs of ESL students. The participants in this study consisted of 257 ESL designated students, 28 teachers and school administrators, and 27 parents. Observation, and individual and focus group interviews were used as data-collection methods in this part of the study to explore the perceptions and experiences of micro-level agents regarding ESL designation and definition.

The interviews with the study participants indicated that the majority of the students were proficient in communicative English. When it comes to the first versus second language dichotomy, more than half of the study participants stated that, despite being ESL designated, these students use English as the dominant language in their daily lives. The others mentioned that due to the complexities inherent in the usage of English and other languages by these students, it would be unlikely to clearly identify whether English was the first or the second language of the students. However, almost all the interviewees maintained that these students needed extra support in their studies to meet the requirements of K-12 education in English.

The data obtained from the study respondents indicate that the macro-level definition of the term ESL could not be confirmed by the experiences of the agents at the micro-level context. As mentioned above, when a language other than English is spoken at the students' homes, English is nominated as the student's second language. This ESL definition does not correspond to the perceptions of the study participants on the status of English and other languages in the lives of these students. Here are examples pointing to the underlying complexities of ESL designation.

During many interviews with ESL designated students and their parents and/or their school educators, the participants start the conversation stating that English is the student's second language since there is another language spoken at home. However, as the conversations unfold, the participants refer to English as the dominant means of

communication for these students. For instance, during one interview, a student (who had been designated as ESL) was asked whether English was his first or second language. He responded that English was his second language, indicating that Urdu was his first language. His father, who was present in the interview session, disagreed with him. He maintained that the child's first language was English and that Urdu was, in fact, his second language. He based his argument on the fact that the child could not read in Urdu and could not understand Urdu properly. The child pondered this statement and then agreed by saying that, in fact, English was his first language since he was "better in English."

Moreover, there were many occasions on which the student participants and/or their parents were hesitant to attribute the students to the ESL category, despite acknowledging the students' need for English language support.

A parent, who had herself been designated as an ESL student during her K-12 education, stated: "They said I am an ESL student; they didn't think that my mother tongue was English; I never spoke Arabic till I was 8-9 years old." She went on to add: "If you want to consider all people who don't know well ingrained English and label them as ESL, then I would say half Canadians are ESL." Her children were also designated as ESL merely because another language was being spoken at their home. She said that she refused to let her children attend ESL classes and "challenged them" and asked "them to give her children a chance to prove themselves."

A Grade 10 student said: (English is my first language)... "They say English is the second language ...I think because I also speak Arabic at home with my mom; but I just find English a lot easier."

These examples and other conversations on this topic with the participants pointed out the inconsistent and transient nature of language learning and acquisition, as well as language maintenance and use (see Masoodi, 2012).

A Grade 9 student who had come to Canada from Lebanon when she was in Grade 5 identified herself as an ESL student. She said: "Because I was born in Lebanon, I was raised there and everything I learned was in Arabic ... Over there, we would learn English twice a week, so I did learn a couple of grammar and those kind of things, but when it comes to social big words and science big words, I don't understand as much. That's

why I have to go and ask teachers and they help me out.” She added that English was her main means of communication. She stated: “We left Lebanon five years ago and when you are in Canada, you are learning more and more English; English is going to come on top of your Arabic, so it takes your Arabic away.”

The analysis of the macro- and micro-discourses indicates that the macro-level discourse seems to prevail in shaping the ESL education discourse and the macro-level ESL definitions, designations and policy guidelines have accordingly influenced the micro-level perceptions and experiences of ESL agents. However, the two levels of discourse do not seem to be fully compatible. ESL designation does not necessarily correspond to the status of English in the daily lives of these students.

Negative connotations attached to ESL terminology

Looking into the macro-level discourse and the ways ESL students are portrayed through ESL-related terminologies and definitions, it can be inferred that the term ESL is frequently associated with a lack of linguistic, academic and socio-cultural knowledge and proficiency. Using terms such as “insufficient”, “limited” and “precluding” to define ESL is an example of terminology that carry negative connotations when defining the ESL population. Thus, ESL is not a term that has positive connotations, even though the goals and purposes of ESL programmes seem to be to support, help and “enable” students with this designation. The positive attributes that ESL students have, including their linguistic and cultural backgrounds and their potential to be bilingual, or possibly multilingual, individuals are not highlighted in the macro-level discourse. Therefore, the negative connotations implied in ESL discourse can create the tendency in ESL-defined populations to distance themselves from the ESL concept. One of the school administrators put it this way: “Is the image of being ESL negative? That’s the real question. The question is not about the label to provide support in the educational context. So, I think, the real question is what does that label mean? What is the hidden context? What’s the hidden background of the word?” She added: “It is not the academic aspect but the parallel social and emotional issues related to the term that make the label negative.”

Discussion

Critical discourse analysis regards layers of analysis when it comes to the study of language and discourse. For instance, the three-layered discourse model introduced by Fairclough (1989, 1992 and 1995) approaches language not only as text, but also as discourse practice and socio-cultural practice. Hruska (2006) refers to these three stages of critical discourse analysis as description, interpretation and explanation; description focuses on the formal features of written and oral text, interpretation involves understanding the meaning of text; and explanation emphasizes the uncovering of the ideological stances and related power structures underlying discourse and identifying how participants are positioned within them. Within such a framework, this study looks into ESL education discourses by regarding discourse beyond its formal linguistic features.

In this study it is pointed out that terms such as ESL, first language and second language, and the notions represented by these terms, are far from consistent and straightforward. In other words, the perceptions of ESL students, their parents and their educators may not match the prescribed ESL definitions used to designate these students as ESL. Furthermore, such terms cannot be regarded as neutral and may indeed carry negative connotations if attention is paid to the textual contexts in which they are applied and the broader socio-cultural contexts in which they are interpreted and used.

Analysing the macro- and micro-level discourses within the CDA framework sheds light on the areas of controversy, vagueness and incompatibility between the two levels. For instance, this study shows that the macro-level discourse defines ESL students as students who live in homes where English is not the only medium of communication. This definition is dominant in ESL education discourse, but it is not supported at the micro-level of the school by the individuals’ perceptions and their personal life experiences. Some of the participants in this study do not consider themselves ESL despite the literal definition perfectly matching their situation; in fact, many of them consider English as their first language. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the implications of the ESL designation can create unnecessary complexities and challenges in the lives of ESL students.

While it seems that the macro-level dominates ESL education discourse in this study, the incompatibilities and controversies between the macro- and micro-level discourses highlighted the negotiated, pliable and dynamic nature of discursive structures. Fairclough (1989) maintains that there is hierarchy in the acceptability of discourses and their validation in different social settings; the concept called "order of discourse" negates the top-down relationship of discourses. Thus, while discourses can be the means of perpetuating power, they can also be refused, contested and critiqued (Mills 1997). In the field of language policy, the policies planned at the macro-level are interpreted and appropriated in agentive ways; this, in turn, directs attention to the counter-discourses that might take shape and develop (Johnson 2010). Therefore, closer examination of the perceptions and practices of the agents at the micro-level is essential to help us understand how micro-level discourses form, develop and interact with the macro-level discourse.

Conclusion

The prevailing nature of the macro-level discourse may result in the emergence of taken-for-granted assumptions about ESL education, including terms, definitions and programming. This could lead to implicit and/or explicit undesired consequences for ESL policy and planning. Such negative outcomes may be detected in academic and

socio-cultural aspects of the lives of the agents who are the recipients of the policies. One such negative consequence is the challenges that ESL students face in their daily practices to identify themselves within the context which designates them through naming and defining. Thus text and discourse studies should not take ESL terminologies and their definitions at face value; the broader socio-cultural contexts in which they are used should be taken into account.

The study of macro- and micro-level discourses and their interplay indicates that there are areas of controversy and vagueness in ESL discourses that must be acknowledged and addressed in policy documents and educational approaches. To provide effective education programming for ELL, micro-level discourse should be taken into account. In other words, macro-level discourse needs to be informed by the perceptions and experiences of the agents at micro-level settings. ESL students, their parents and their educators should be given space to define themselves, their roles and their needs and they should be given opportunities to actively collaborate with others involved in ESL policy and planning. Educational policies aim for integration; to reach this end, ESL education policies should be reconsidered and equitable access to education should be provided to all.

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Recenzie/Reviews

The Interpersonal Language Function: Across Genres and Discourse Domains

(Christopher Hopkinson, Renáta Tomášková, Gabriela Zapletalová (eds.), Faculty of Arts, Ostrava University, Ostrava 2012)

Review by Gabriela Miššíková, Constantine the Philosopher University n Nitra, Slovakia

This collective monograph reflects continual interest in the study of the forms and transformations of the interpersonal function of language. It consists of three main parts comprising twelve chapters covering the exploration of the interpersonal language function in a variety of genres.

Part I, entitled *Interpersonal Function and Intersubjective Positioning*, opens with a paper by Henry Widdowson focusing on the interplay of interpersonal positioning and genre conventions. Considering the role of the speaker and his/her audience, Widdowson explores the complex of activities the interlocutors engage in when expressing their ideas, addressing the audience and negotiating particular aspects of meaning within the process of communicative interaction. Interpreting particular intended meaning, sometimes the hearer may need very little text when the spaces between the text creation and text perception correspond closely. However, as Widdowson points out, there “will always be occasions in any communication when intentions are misunderstood and meanings need to be negotiated” [ibid. 2012:10]. Among others, the author discusses individual and social levels of discourse, genres as conceptual abstractions, (primary and secondary) communities of practice, or discourse, who determine the generic conventions as well as the editors and editorial boards as custodians of conventions. The opening study by H. Widdowson provides necessary theoretical background to the issue of positioning exemplified by his own performance as a speaker and writer.

The focus of chapter two, *Halliday’s Interpersonal Component Reconsidered*, prepared by Jarmila Tárnyiková, is primarily theoretical, associated with the concept of multidimensional modelling. Tárnyiková addresses the issue of dimensions that define the overall architecture of language and the location of the interpersonal component within them, as well as other questions, such as “into which super-ordinate or subordinate conceptions reflecting language as interaction can the IC be contextualized, and how can the contextualization of the IC into compatible theories influence our understanding of the mechanism of communication strategies used to implement the IC into our everyday encounters” [ibid. 2012:27]. In addition to tracing the interpersonal component in various phases of Halliday’s approach, Tárnyiková manages to elucidate linguistic concepts and contextualize them into frameworks of compatible theories. In her concluding remark, the author makes an important statement when advising us to “go back to roots” and “ecologize” the linguistic landscape crowded with the plethora of studies on aspects of discourse [ibid. 2012:36].

The third and final chapter of Part I explores the interpersonal function of language across discourses. The author Milan Ferenčík deals with the case of the iPad, focusing on theoretical framework and the systemic-functional grammar approach, and within the concepts of register, situation and culture, discusses cultures’ systems of values, beliefs and attitudes which form the ideological superstratum of language use [ibid. 2012:39].

The introductory discussions of major theoretical conceptions, approaches and frameworks provide the reader with an indispensable background to further chapters devoted to specialized case studies in Part II and Part III.

Part II, entitled *Interpersonal Function in Academic Discourse Genres*, consists of three chapters. In chapter four Gabriela Zapletalová explores narration in argumentation and interpersonal involvement of speakers in conference presentations; in chapter five Tereza Malčíková questions the life of a scientific fact as observed in the metadiscourse in undergraduate textbooks and research articles; and in chapter six Marcela Sudková presents a contrastive study of the expression of interpersonal metadiscourse in Czech and English academic texts.

In the closing Part III, within the space of six chapters, the authors examine in detail the role of the interpersonal function in media discourse genres. Christopher Hopkins in chapter seven explores the antagonistic facework in online discussion fora; in chapter eight Renáta

Tomášková builds upon her earlier research into the structure of university presentations on the internet and studies in further detail the interplay of monoglossic and heteroglossic elements in university websites. In chapter nine Ondřej Molnár and Jitka Zehnalová examine the interpersonal metafunction in media discourse looking at intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic translation as multimodal and multimedial phenomena. Chapters ten and eleven are devoted to the study of newspaper discourse: Zuzana Urbanová examines the forms of presentation and narration in the leads of hard news and Barbora Blažková deals with media reality in British newspaper headlines. The concluding chapter by Daniel Bizoň uncovers cases of communicational breakdown of dialogues in computer role-playing games. In addition to a number of illustrative figures and schemas, the monograph includes references and a bibliography, stating primary and secondary sources, both printed and online materials.

The monograph "The Interpersonal Language Function: Across Genres and Discourse Domains" prepared by a team of respected authors represents captivating and thought-provoking reading for a competent audience. Prepared with thoughtfulness and attention to detail, this book will be appreciated by university students and teachers as well as scholars and researchers in the field.

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Coherence in Political Speeches

(Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova, Faculty of Education, Masaryk University Brno, 2011)

Review by Gabriela Miššíková, Constantine the Philosopher University n Nitra, Slovakia

This book reflects continuous interest in exploring and understanding human collaboration in a purposeful communicative interaction. The aim is to observe how participants achieve their communicative intentions, what efforts they take to derive an understanding which furthers communication, and how they strive to negotiate particular interpretations of discourse.

In her monograph Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova creates an innovative piece of work identifying the need to conceptualize coherence as a constitutive component of human interaction and explores how coherence is manifested in different genres of spoken and written discourse. The author has published widely on the topic presenting her understanding of coherence as a multifaceted, dynamic feature of discourse.

The focus of this book is on political discourse as used in the context of international governmental organizations. It analyses the construal of coherence in the genre of opening addresses which are intended to promote a particular institutional ideology. It is therefore Dontcheva-Navratilova's prior task as the analyst of political discourse to unveil the strategies orators use to influence the views and opinions of their audience so as to guide them toward the intended coherent discourse interpretation. As the language material for her investigation Dontcheva-Navratilova uses the corpus of the speeches of Directors-General of UNESCO reflecting her long-term interest in the study of UNESCO discourse as well as her personal involvement with the organization as an employee of the Bulgarian Commission for UNESCO.

The book is structured into 5 chapters opening with the introduction providing an evaluative overview of the problems in the field of investigation. The introductory discussion develops to further critical commentaries on the views and theories related to the study of discourse as communication and research methodology in chapter two. The focus of this monograph on the genre of opening addresses is further expounded in chapter three comprising compact subchapters on political discourse, the genre of opening addresses, generic structure and rhetorical moves. Aspects of coherence in opening addresses are in the focus of Dontcheva-Navratilova's exploration in chapter four: she views construing coherence in political discourse as closely related to persuasion and associated with making others accept the speaker's point of view. The discussion of the interconnection between coherence and persuasion is based on her assumption that when communicating, the interactants are striving to achieve two goals: to be understood, and to make their audience think or act according to what is to be understood (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2011: 85). Obviously the audience may comprehend the message without accepting and believing it (Sperber et al. 2010). Thus Dontcheva-Navratilova's assessment of the trustworthiness of what is communicated is carried out on the basis of two types of epistemic vigilance process, i.e. the assessment of the reliability of the speaker and of the content conveyed (ibid. 2011: 85). Chapter four further develops to several subchapters, namely on the management of discourse, strategic uses of reference, modality markers and point of view. After introducing a detailed analysis chapter five then summarizes the findings of the presented research.

One of the most important contributions of this monograph is the attention paid on the theoretical plane to conceptualization of coherence as a constitutive component of human communication. Dontcheva-Navratilova adopts a dynamic approach to discourse interpretation and defines coherence as "the context-dependent subjective perception of meaningfulness of discourse which comes into existence as a result of the collaborative efforts in an interaction of the participants, who project their background knowledge, personal opinions, attitudes, feelings and experience in discourse processing onto their understanding of the discourse" (ibid. 2011:153). Considering that there is still no consensus in the international linguistic community on how coherence should be understood, the analytical approach rooted in the discourse analysis tradition applied in this book has enabled the author to provide a functional interpretation of language phenomena. On the ideational, interpersonal and textual planes the aspects of coherence are explored by means of major analytical models (cf. van Dijk & Kintsch, Daneš, Givón, Kehler, Hoey, and

Bolívar). An important theoretical implication which has emerged in Dontcheva-Navratilova's research is that although an investigation focusing on one aspect of discourse coherence has the potential to provide valuable insights into discourse construction and interpretation, only a holistic approach to the study of coherence on all planes of discourse can reveal the full interpretative potential of a text (ibid. 2011:154).

The findings of Dontcheva-Navratilova's research demonstrate that the interpretative perception of coherence in discourse comprising conceptual connectedness, evaluative and dialogical consistency, and textual relatedness is affected by the interplay of meanings pertaining to all planes of discourse. Dontcheva-Navratilova correctly identifies and evaluates the results of her research and also points out possible directions for further research. As a major task for the future she proposes the creation of a unified framework for the analysis of all interrelated aspects of coherence while admitting that the application of the various existing frameworks in different genres and text types can refine the existing methodologies and reveal new insights into the ways coherence is constructed.

Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova's book provides the reader with novel and original material on the research of diplomatic opening addresses, which belongs to the few underexplored genres of political discourse.

The monograph *Coherence in Political Speeches* by Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova has met with reputable response of linguistic community since it represents a captivating and thought-provoking reading for a qualified audience. Undoubtedly, the monograph will be also appreciated by university students and teachers as well as scholars and researchers.

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