Working Papers
and pre-publications

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Models (?) for a Pragmatic Analysis

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pre-publication

1. Why speak of «models» for linguistic pragmatics?

Pragmatic studies often follow theoretically constructed schemata instead of facing empirical evidence and the epistemological problems concerning it. The philosophical origins of speech act theory seem to have still too much weight in the speech act-oriented analyses of discourse and conversation. On the contrary, a great deal of empirical work is needed, if we are to understand more clearly, at least, how our own everyday interaction does work.

Although such considerations should hold us back from making any theoretical statement about pragmatics, we think that it is worth while to attempt a re-examination of some major theoretical claims that have been put forward about speech acts and about interaction. We do not want to set up normative models. Rather, we want to describe (and - to a certain extent - classify) the ways in which people are already dealing with pragmatic facts. Our description will not claim to be an «objective» one, but simply to be correct enough with reference to its purposes, which can be expressed as follows.

If, in one sense, philosophy has had too much weight upon pragmatics, in another sense too little attention has been paid to it, at least in recent years. It has been taken for granted that Austin's and Searle's works form a homogeneous body and that no basic philosophical concepts need any longer to be discussed in pragmatics. But now pragmaticians have begun to realize that there are underground disagreements here and there; and ,as a matter of fact, sometimes disagreements (concerning the definitions of such concepts as act, speech act, rule, intention, and others) make empirical research unfruitful or, which is perhaps worse, make its results more confusing than clarifying. We maintain that open confrontation may make things easier. It is in order to achieve such a confrontation that we propose to consider linguistic pragmatics as

involving two main trends. These are not to be identified with two distinct «schools» or sets of authors, but with two sets of differently oriented assumptions that, apart from open methodological consideration, are often mixed up in actual research. Notably in recent works, whose starting is speech act theory mainly as formulated by Searle, but which have become more or less conscious of its inadequacies and have tried to improve or amend it here and there, tacit methodological contrast between initial theoretical statements and actual research results gives possibly rise to some confusion. Our task will be to separate from each other the assumptions and procedures that we hold to be methodologically incompatible, partly by the aid of a comparison with two main sociological approaches to interaction. A certain amount of simplification will be necessary, and the opposite views, for the sake of exposition, will be formulated in their most radical versions.

2. There are at least two ways of describing speech acts. That is, for any theoretically relevant feature of the speech act there are at least two ways of accounting for it. We shall pick out of the literature two series of alternative suggestions concerning the major aspects of the speech act and try to set up with them two opposite «models for pragmatic analysis»: that is, two models that we want to consider as representative of two main trends in linguistic pragmatics.

Our approach will focus on the understanding of the illocutionary act performed in the issuing of a certain speech act. Let us state in advance tha we shall not use the terms *illocutionary act* and *speech act* as synonyms, although the fact that each speech act is also an illocutionary act and that each illocutionary act is, together with its propositional content, also a full speech act has sometimes led to disregard this distinction (see Searle 1964). By *illocutionary act* we mean that particular aspect of the speech act that can be abstracted from its whole to the extent that the speech act counts as having a certain force (e. g. the force of an order, a promise, an apology, a statement . . .). The question we want to ask ourselves, so as to set up two alternative answers, is: given a certain speech act (that is, roughly, given the issuing of an utterance in a context), how can the hearer understand which illocutionary act the speaker has performed?

2.1. A first, well-known, and to a certain extent satisfactory answer can be formulated as follows. The sentence uttered by the speaker exhibits a set of syntactic and semantic properties which not only express its propositional content, but also include illocutionary force-indicating devices. The illocutionary act performed by the speaker will therefore be

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understood by recognizing, according to such devices, the speaker's intention in uttering the speech act. When, as it often happens, the force-indicating devices turn out to be ambiguous, it is still possible to identify the speaker's intention and therefore the performed illocutionary act by making reference to the ways in which it should have been more suitably expressed. In such cases, selection among potential illocutionary forces (or among the various possible explicit formulations of the ambi-guously expressed illocutionary force) is brought about by the context of utterance.

The relation between illocutionary act and context can be stated more precisely in terms of presuppositions, that is, conditions for the appro-priate performance of a given illocutionary act, that must be satisfied by the context if the speaker is to carry out his intention successfully. It is not definitely clear whether anybody is supposed to check the presuppositions of his intended illocutionary act before, or even after, his utterance; neither whether the appropiate illocutionary acts could be selected by their contexts automatically, provided the speakers are or-derly, respectful, and polite people. Anyway, the presuppositions of the illocutionary act together with the communicative intention of the speaker (referred to as «illocutionary point» or as «essential condition» of the act: see Searle 1975a, Searle 1969) form a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the felicitous performance of an illocutionary act. The understanding of such an act is therefore based on the linguistic expression of the communicative intention, in a context fulfilling its presuppositions.

According to this approach, (i) the communicative intention of the speaker, as long as it is expressed in a recognizable way and under appropriate circumstances, is to be identified with the performing of an illocutionary act; (ii) since the communicative intention is necessarily such that it can be expressed in an unambiguous way (see Searle's «principle of expressibility»), the same intention can underlie different formulations without being affected by them; (iii) since the communi-cative intention pertains to the speaker's mind, the hearer can pick it up only through conventional devices, notably linguistic ones, and a strict relation between the syntactic and semantic properties of the uttered sentence and the expressed intention must be postulated (possibly in the form of a «performative hypothesis»: see Ross 1970, Lakoff 1972 and 1974, Sadock 1974). As a consequence of all this, attention focuses on the linguistic form of the speech act, failing to consider the latter in terms of a theory of actions. In this connection, it is to be noted that the cases in which the act performed is not expressed in a standard form (or the cases in which a standard form is used, but it does not

correspond to the speaker's communicative intention) are to be handled as derivative ones, and to be accounted for in terms of their relation to the normal, «direct» cases (Searle 1975b). Moreover, cases in which extra-linguistic conventions are involved, that is those cases in which the act performed is to be defined in terms of its relations to a certain more or less ritualized social procedure, cannot play within speech act theory the central role they played in earlier discussions on performative utterances, but are examined as marginal cases, to be included in a special, separate class (as suggested, for example, by Furberg 1969 and by Searle 1975a).

This approach to linguistic pragmatics seems to be devoted to (i) describing those relations between linguistic forms and communicative intentions that are evaluated as standard ones; (ii) defining contextual constraints on the normal, appropriate performance of speech acts expressing such intentions, (iiii) extending the theory to account for actual talk by complicating the (theoretically) «simplest» cases.

2.2. Now let us try another answer to our question. Instead of limiting our account of illocutionary force to the consideration of the speaker's intention and of its recognizability, we want to consider the hearer as an active participant. The neutral, passive (in principle, objective) recognition of the speaker's communicative intention turns into the more problematic process of attributing a communicative intention to the speaker and taking him to be responsible for it. From this perspective it is up to the hearer (on the basis of the force-indicating devices and of the context of the utterance) (i) to select an acceptable interpretation of the speech act, and (ii) to either accept the speech act, under such an interpretation, as a successful act, or to completely or partly reject it as more or less inappropriate and «unhappy». Consequently, trying to formulate a complete list of necessary and sufficient conditions for the performance of an illocutionary act is here pointless. It would be necessary to include in the list the hearer's selection of a certain interpretation and his acceptance of the speech act; but these, since they are subsequent to the speech act itself, can neither be known nor, therefore, verified in advance. Only observation of the hearer's answer can tell whether the speaker succeeded in performing his speech act and even what kind of an illocutionary act was performed. Moreover, the hearer's uptake does not involve any final verification of the preferred interpretation, but rather an open falsification procedure where the preferred interpretation can be submitted to examination by casting doubts on the satisfaction of its presuppositions as often as these doubts are held to be justifiable. Such a procedure, of course, can stop at any stage in which the hearer

is willing to take the achieved interpretation as unproblematic and even at such an early stage that the accepted interpretation turns out to be the most obvious one (that is, apparently consistent with the force-indicating devices and not openly disproved by the context). In principle, however, the procedure can always start anew later on (Leonardi and Sbisà 1977).

In this framework, presuppositions are not necessary and sufficient conditions of the illocutionary act but are inferred by the hearer on the basis (or even as an effect) of his uptake of the speaker's illocutionary act. The speaker's intentions are taken to be those required by the sincere and responsible performance of his act (under the hearer's interpretation), and these may not coincide with what may be otherwise revealed as his «real» psychological state. The «self» is no longer a monolith; and anyway, even if the negotiation of an intersubjectively accepted definition of the performed illocutionary act does not affect the speaker's psychological state, (i) it interacts with its linguistic interpretation and (ii) it does affect the effects of the speech act and therefore the act itself (if we are willing to consider it as an *act*, that is, as something that changes a state of affairs into another, initiating a new state of affairs). It is worth noting that, if we focus on action instead of on linguistic form, we can distinguish the illocutionary act from different aspects of the speech act by singling out the kind of change it brings about as long as it is successful: that is, what Austin called the conventional effect of the speech act, as opposed to the achieving of a response (which is a perlocutionary effect) (Austin 1962; Wunderlich 1972; Ducrot 1978). This conventional effect should be analyzed in terms of the hearer's uptake (that is, acceptance of the speech act under a certain interpretation) and of the speaker's acceptance of such acceptance. Finally, while the previously sketched view empha-sized the linguistic force-indicating devices, the present view does not overlook them, it simply accounts for their function otherwise. No strict correspondence is required between force-indicating devices and illocutionary acts, but the fact that the illocutionary force of the speech act is mediated by the hearer leads (i) to a more detailed consider-ation of how using a particlar force-indicating device rather than another can affect the hearer's uptake and, therefore, to a more attentive appreciation of the differences among the various linguistic forms in the use of which related illocutionary acts are performed. It leads also (ii) to the rejection of the performative hypothesis, since no force-indicating devices can any longer be considered as equivalent to each other with respect to interaction and, therefore, the «same» illocu-tionary act cannot underlie different surface forms. A «pragmatic hypo-

thesis» (see Wunderlich 1971) would nevertheless be available. There is a consequence for explicit performatives, too: since every force-indicating device can be said not simply to express, but to actively expedite the performance of an illocutionary act, explicit performatives should be considered not as making an illocutionary act explicit, but as performing it explicitly (Austin 1962, p. 70). Ritual acts and «declaratives» could be reconsidered as more akin to other speech acts than they are commonly held to be.

This approach to linguistic pragmatics is not concerned with the «appropriateness» or «inappropriateness» of speech acts, at least if these are considered as resulting from the application of a standard set of rules to the relation between context and linguistic form. Nor is it concerned with theoretically «simple» cases, but with empirically observable (and observed) ones. It attempts to account for the dynamics of linguistic interaction, which never reproduces its so-called rules passively, without meaningful deviation.

3. The two ways of describing speech acts we have just mentioned are comparable to either of the main sociological approaches to interaction. This may sound trivial, since it seems by now to be firmly established that, from a pragmatic perspective, language is a kind of social interaction; pragmatic and micro-sociological studies are therefore likely to have the same object and methodological problems. However, the correspondences between the relevant features of a speech act description and of a conduct description may deserve to be examined in a more detailed way. Beyond the obvious correspondence conduct/speech act and the general relevance of context or situation, we face in both cases an acting/speaking «self», the relationship between agent/speaker and partner/hearer, intentions, understanding, cultural and/or linguistic rules. The problems concerning status are at least partly homologous to those concerning presuppositions, while the problems concerning the description of conduct in terms of roles turn out to be parallel to those concerning the description of speech acts as involving the performance of illocutionary acts. Later on, we shall look through this series of correspondences in order to compare either analysis of the speech act to its related micro-sociological approach, and to build up two unified pragmatic models.

The sociological approaches to interaction we shall refer to are exemplified respectively by the classical structural-functional perspective (T. Parsons) and by the interactionist perspective (symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology). In the first case the starting point of the analysis is culture, that is, a set of internalized rules governing conduct; interaction

is explained as the carrying out of culturally pre-established programs (it is even possible, from this perspective, to compare culture to the genetic code of physical organisms). Cultural rules, whether internalized through the process of socialization or supported by social control and by the related «sanctions» against deviant conduct, have a normative function with respect to lines of conduct. In interaction, everyone — if he does not want to become a «deviant» — plays his own role: the role that is culturally approved as appropriate to his status, in a particular situation. In the second case, the starting point is interaction itself. The social relations among the participants are considered as defined, negotiated and modified in and by the interaction. Cultural rules, internalized in a merely cognitive sense, offer no more than reference points to actions and to the understanding of other people's actions. Roles are built up by the participants themselves, that is, reference to cultural patterns leaves it open to the participants to initiate not pre-established lines of conduct and to negotiate the significance and appropriateness of their actual interactional behavior.

Now we want to compare our first kind of speech act theory (2.1.) to the structural-functional approach to social interaction and our second kind of speech act theory (2.2.) to the interactionist approach. The former comparison will point out methodological similarities and common assumptions; the latter will call attention to close similarities between some suggestions made by Austin and some interactionist theses, and claim that a reframed speech act theory can be compatible with an interactionist and/or ethnomethodological approach. We shall neither demonstrate nor postulate actual historical relations, but only indicate that (i) a speech act theory identifying the illocutionary act with the speaker's communicative intention, admitting of necessary and sufficient conditions for the performance of illocutionary acts, involving a «principle of expressibility» and even a performative hypothesis, integrates pretty well with a structural-functional sociology; and (ii) a speech act theory relying upon such concepts as the hearer's uptake and the «conventional effect» or change brought about by the illocutionary act, rejecting necessary and sufficient conditions and the performative hypothesis, requires — if coherently developed — an interactionist theory of conduct and, perhaps, epistemological remarks of an ethnomethodological kind on the researcher's role. If, as we believe, speech act theory is still in need of defining those sociological concepts that enter it, and if there are similarities between some attitudes and methods of sociology and some attitudes and methods of linguistic pragmatics, it will be of interest for the further developments of the theory of language to carefully choose from which type of sociology useful suggestions are

to be picked up. By creating our two models (which we will refer to as M1 and M2) we want to emphasize that we face a cross-road and that the ways before us are not equivalent but involve different operational possibilities.

3.1. M1 takes as starting point the normative system in force in the social group. This system is thought of as given, whether it is culturally established or it relies, to a lesser or greater extent (as it is the case for many linguistic rules), on innate structures. Linguistic rules include rules for the appropriate performance of illocutionary acts. The whole set of rules governing verbal and non-verbal behavior is considered as independent from actual conduct, and therefore from the performing of speech acts; that is, it affects conduct but remains unaffected by it. Conduct and speech are examined as rule-governed activities. An since the description of a rule-governed activity comes down to the description of its rules (especially those of a constitutive kind), the main purpose of the theory will be describing the rules which govern conduct and linguistic behavior. A correct theory should be able to evaluate, according to such rules, lines of conduct and/or speech acts as appropriate and normal or as inappropriate and deviant instances of meaningful procedures; these evaluations should correspond, at a more formal and precise level, to the intuitive judgements of the social group members. Roles, including illocutionary acts, are defined by sets of constitutive rules, which are in principle necessary and sufficient conditions for a certain line of conduct or speech act to count as playing a given role or performing a given illocutionary act.

The appropriate performance of rule-governed activity and the evaluation of it are possible because agents/speakers implicitly know the relevant sets of rules; more properly, they have internalized the culturally given normative system and have developed (perhaps on a genetic basis) a pragmatic competence concerning linguistic behavior. Such sets of rules give the agents/speakers the behavioral and linguistic-pragmatic programs to actualize in connection with each type of situation and intention. Each illocutionary act (defined by its own set of conditions) has, according to the principle of expressibility, one and only one explicit formulation which fully expresses the speaker's communicative intention; each role involves a number of activities and attitudes which fulfill it appropriately and through which it can be recognized. Different manners of performance, vagueness, or any other variation in actual behavior neither affect the definition of the played role nor that of the performed illocutionary act, but merely (i) influence some marginal aspects of them, like their degree of «intensity» (Searle and Vanderveken 1978),

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or (ii) make them open to criticism as inappropriate or as not performed according to a standard pattern. Ambiguous conduct can, anyway, be understood, as far as it is reducible to unambiguous patterns among which the context makes selection: people can evaluate the context as apt to satisfy the conditions of a certain illocutionary act or role, or as not allowing its felicitous performance.

3.2. M2 focuses on conduct and/or actual speech acts, as occurring in interaction. Events as opposed to system, activity as opposed to rules, conduct as opposed to cultural patterns, speech acts as opposed to *langue* and to presuppositions are therefore in focus. In M1, interaction among people is mediated by culture and language, and everyone is alone facing culture and language; in M2, no agent/speaker can be thought of as isolated from one or more partners, and access to cultural and linguistic--pragmatic rules is mediated by interaction. Participants look for agreement and coordination (at least as far as these are necessary for the purpose of communication: communication itself often expresses contrasting interests or struggle, and even conceals various forms of deception). Cultural and linguistic-pragmatic rules are part of the environment in which interaction occurs: they do not pre-determine the outcome of the negotiations among the participants; rather, the former are affected by the latter. The crucial function of the hearer's uptake in the definition of the illocutionary act the speaker has performed, as well as the crucial function of the partner in attaching a role to the agent, stems precisely from the mediating function of interaction. It is up to the partner/hearer to consider the agent/speaker as playing a role/performing an illocutionary act (Austin 1962, p. 116; Turner 1962, passim) and this attribution does not rely on a final verification of what has «really» happened, but is confirmed step by step or further negotiated in the ongoing interaction. As for status (and presuppositions), the partner's acceptance of a particular line of conduct as constitutive of a role turns out to be a necessary condition for the agent to actually achieve (or confirm) the status required by the role itself, as well as the hearer's acceptance of the speaker's illocutionary act as a felicitous one is a necessary condition (i) for the speech act to «take effect» and (ii) for the speaker to appear as having fulfilled the presuppositions required by the illocutionary act.

The force- and role-indicating devices, whose task is making illocutionary acts and lines of conduct recognizable according to cultural schemata, have here the first word, not the last one: they offer the agent/speaker's interpretation of his own action to the partner/hearer, and they open the arbitrarily long (or short) negotiation procedures by their initiating,

creative contribution. The speaker, choosing some force-indicating devices among others, is not simply making the act itself clearer or his own communicative intention, but he is creating an action that is characterized, among other properties, by its being made explicit in that particular way; and likewise the agent, by making explicit some aspects of the role he presents to his partner, is creating and modifying roles as well as bringing them to light (Austin 1962, p. 72; Turner 1962, p. 22). Ambiguity and vagueness of certain expressions or lines of conduct are not necessarily weaknesses, but rather means of interaction and are to be understood by reference to rules, that are used not as evaluative criteria, but as interpretive devices (like some meridians and parallels are referred to in calculating the longitude and latitude of geographical points lying outside them). Names for roles and for illocutionary acts preserve in M2 some rigidity of meaning, since it is possible to refer to a set of actions as forming a single role, or to the utterance of a string of words as performing an illocutionary act only by using a single name to single out these latter (Turner 1962, p. 28). And this is even emphasized when the belief in a previous definition (whether cultural or psycholinguistic) of the range of communicative intentions is given up: no way is left to identify roles and illocutionary acts apart from the actual uses of their names, upon which participants in interaction will agree or disagree and will negotiate.

Finally, it is worth noting that while M1's primary object of analysis is the agent/speaker (his behavior, his mental states, etc.) as observed by a supposedly objective linguist, psychologist or social scientist, M2 deals with the interactional relation from a point of view closely linked to a partner/hearer's perspective: the researcher himself *is* a partner/hearer and his interpretation of what is going on does not claim to be more «objective» than any other, but, perhaps, (being still as effective as any other) only clearer and more exhaustive as far as the dynamics of interaction is concerned.

4. M1 is simpler than M2; but we shall now argue in favour of M2, since it seems clear M2 has greater explanatory power and opens new ways to analysis, where M1 merely presupposes a number of so-called basic concepts. An application of the two models to empirical research might show M2 as achieving richer and more detailed results than M1, but we shall leave such an issue undecided, since presently we shall not try any application [2].

We shall now consider some main heuristic differences between M1 and M2, concerning respectively: (i) units of analysis and the textual di-

mension of speech; (ii) the «self»; (iii) textual coherence and pragmatic presuppositions; (iv) context; (v) rules and social change.

4.1. M1 and M2 involve different ways of defining, segmenting, and sequencing units of analysis. In M1, the speech act corresponds to the issuing of a one-sentence utterance. An act performed in uttering a sequence of connected sentences will be called a macro-speech act (Van Dijk 1978). The distinction between micro-speech acts and macro-speech acts, expressing respectively minimal communicative intentions and more general goals and plans, relies on a syntactic criterion. Attention focuses again on the linguistic properties of the uttered sentence and/or sequence of sentences, and it is implied that the performed action strictly depends on such properties. One questionable consequence is that it becomes difficult to cope with the altogether plain fact that the linguistic means to achieve an illocutionary effect — for example, the effect of a promise — can often involve the uttering of more than one sentence. In M2, the criterion for identifying a pragmatic unit is independent from linguistic syntax (not, of course, from a syntax of actions); discovery in the context of an achieved transformation enables us to single out an act and, therefore, the relevant pragmatic unit. We face what counts as a single speech act whenever it is relevant to state that the uttering of certain words operates a single change in the interactional situation. There is no necessary correspondence between single sentences and single illocutionary acts. Higher level units do not involve, here, the use of a larger number of sentences, but a series of effects and, therefore, of acts producing them; they should be thought of as tactics and strategies of interaction, where the single speech act counts as a move. The internal organization of a tactics does not rely on the connections linking together a number of sentences or the related speaker's intentions, but on a sequence of connected effects on the interactional situation (mainly, on the relation between the agent/speaker and his partner), in which earlier effects condition later ones and are brought about in view of them. The minimal instance of a tactics should involve at least one effect and one feedback to it; each of these effects may be achieved in uttering one or more sentences.

Introducing notions such as tactics and strategy makes us enter a wide research field involving the description of strategic interaction (see Goffman 1969) and the attempt to single out some possible elementary maneuvres (as it has been done in Greimas's Seminar 1976-7). Many problems are at issue here. Greimas' tactics, for example, are viewed as maneuvres striving to change the previous relation between agent/speaker and partner/hearer into another relation such that the latter is left with

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only one available line of conduct. Relations between participants are defined in terms of their modal competences, that is, in terms of what they can or must do, what they know to be the case, and so on (Greimas 1976, Greimas and Courtés 1979). But it is still to be considered whether and how such an analysis could be integrated with an account of tactics in terms of the sequencing of illocutionary acts (this account would be possible if, as we believe, effects of illocutionary acts and, therefore, illocutionary acts themselves could be described in terms of modalities). Moreover the distinction between tactics and strategy is not clear at all. Here we want merely to suggest that this distinction, like the other between speech act and tactics, should not be viewed as relying merely on the lenght of the relevant strings of discourse and/or of action, but as having a functional character [3]. And it might well be that, under different descriptions, the same string of discourse and/or of action could count respectively either as one tactics or as one strategy. Linking tactics and strategies to macro-speech acts and therefore to such «additions» of sentences, that in uttering each sentence one speech act is performed, is too much of a simplified formulation of these problems.

Last but not least, M1's definition of its units of analysis by assuming their one-to-one correspondence to sentences has made more and more difficult to take into account complex communicative units, both verbal and non-verbal, or the non-verbal communicative moves playing a role analogous to certain illocutionary acts. On the contrary, M2 can deal with this topic by detecting a common dimension to speech act theory and theory of non-verbal interaction in the analysis of action (and in the reconsideration of «communication» as action) [4]. By defining the illocutionary act as the specific level where speech acts bring about a particular kind of change (modal change) in the relation between the participants, M2 points out a level of description for interactional moves, which is surely relevant to the analysis of non-verbal as well as of verbal interaction.

4.2. From M1 to M2, the way of dealing with the «self» differs widely. The roles the «self» is called to play in either model point to two ways in expressing subjectivity that may turn out to be complementary or alternative, but certainly radically opposite to each other.

At first sight M1 seems to hold the «self» in great honour. Speech acts and other actions are examined from the speaker's point of view, as expressions of the speaker's intentions; intentions themselves are considered in a mentalistic vein as states of the mind (Searle 1977 and 1979). The analysis of interaction involves assumptions concerning what the agent/speaker *is*: his status, his consciousness of

it, his goals, his implicit knowledge of linguistic and pragmatic rules, the system of the social norms he has internalized, sometimes even his «rationality». The «self» appears as the «owner» of a number of properties, faculties, knowledges, mental states, processes, operations. But neither properties and faculties, nor its linguistic and pragmatic competence, nor the available types of mental states and operations result from its acting or even are affected by it. It is a static self, unable to enter any dynamic game; it does not change during interaction, it does not bring about changes in the interactional situation; it cannot initiate unforeseen behavior. M2 examines interaction as a two-place process, that is as something which happens between two agents/ speakers (who play in turn the roles of addressor and addressee). It would seem that such a perspective leads to an understatement of the unique, crucial role of the «self». We maintain on the contrary that an M2 account — forcing us to give up an easy handling of the «self» in terms of mental faculties and states, existing before and outside interaction, in favor of the more complex dynamic analysis of the reconstruction and mutual modification of more «selves» through each other's acceptance (or other negotiated agreement) in interaction — may gain interesting insights. Its main achievement would be that it could account for the self's capacity not only of transforming context, but also of self-transformation either as a feedback to the partner's action or, in a more complex way, as a reflexive effect of his own action and of the significance it acquires through the partner's uptake. M2 focuses on action and therefore on what participants in interaction are *doing*, not o nwhat they are or were apart from that interaction. M2 is concerned with what they are or were only as far as such properties enter in a dynamic relation with action, that is, turn out to work as its motivations or as its effects. Therefore M2 is concerned with what participants in interaction *become* by means of what they do: and this is exactly what M1 cannot account for.

4.3. Since, in M2, it is up to the partner/hearer to determine which action the agent/speaker has performed and whether this action is felicitous, it can be stated that, on principle, interactional behavior should be read backwards, starting from the partner's answer, and therefore from that definition of the agent/speaker's action upon which the participants seem to have agreed. Two related consequences stem from this statement: the former is concerned with textual coherence, the latter with pragmatic presuppositions. If interactional behavior is to be read backwards, then coherence of conduct and/or of discourse should not be considered as reflecting the coherence of the speaker's intentions and goals when planning his action, but as depending on

the partner/hearer's recognition of the produced line of conduct and/or text as coherent ones. In fact, there are many cases in which the same line of conduct and/or text may be interpreted either as coherent or as incoherent, and the final answer cannot be given on the only basis of the examined line of conduct or text. As it has been suggested by a number of authors, from H. P. Grice on, a text, to be coherent, often demands the addressee's cooperation to fill up, by implicatures, all its gaps; literary texts very often speculate on this (see Pratt 1977; Eco 1979). It could even be affirmed that coherence, as such, does not exist, and that there are simply different degrees in the amount of cooperative work required from the partner/hearer if he is willing to take the text as a coherent one and, correspondingly, different degrees in the partner's willingness to cooperate. Since M2 requires to take into account both the structure of the text and the interpretive work of the addressee (while in M1 the interpretive work of the addressee comes down to the mere recognition of a set of coherent intentions on the part of the agent/speaker), M2 has more chances than M1 to account for textual coherence in a full and empirically adequate way.

As for pragmatic presuppositions, there is a parallel argument. In M1, pragmatic presuppositions are often defined as speaker's assumptions the hearer is supposed to share. In this vein, some authors have talked of an *act of presupposing*, that is of making certain assumptions, on the part of the speaker. But to postulate a specific, preliminary act, is not more realistic than it was — on the part of the philosophers and logicians criticized by Grice 1975 — to believe that the truth of «semantic» presuppositions is a necessary condition for the truth value of the statement. And it is even worse when it is assumed that, in the absence of such an act, the speech act should be judged as inappropriate. M2 is far from all this. As we said above, in M2 the crucial step for an action to be taken as felicitous or appropriate is the partner/hearer's acceptance of it under a certain interpretation. Therefore, presuppositions don't come «before» the successful performance of the act (whether in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions to be verified by the context, or in the form of the appropriate common assumptions of speaker and hearer). Rather, it is the acceptance of the act that comes first, whether it occurs on grounds such as knowledge of the context, previous acquaintance with the speaker, and so on, or merely on trust. A backwards reading of interactional behavior involves here the retrospective and, moreover, retroactive function of presuppositions. They are to be considered as «speaker's assumptions» only as far as the hearer's acceptance of the successful performance of the speaker's illocutionary act enables — or even forces — the former to attach such

assumptions to the latter and to consider him as responsible for them as for his speech act itself. That is to say, at least in most cases, an agent/speaker does not previously verify either the appropriateness or the coherence of his action (for example, his being authorized to keep such a line of conduct); he does not start by thinking of his own status; he simply initiates a line of conduct, or tries a speech act containing some kind of illocutionary force-indicating devices, so that the form of his action relates what he is doing to some possible interpretations and to their presuppositions. But when the partner in interaction accepts the agent/speaker's action under a certain interpretation, the former is thereby authorized to act as if the latter had a certain status and as if he had it previously to the interaction itself. If presuppositions, in particular cases, can be considered as preconditions to ways of acting and/or speaking, it is just because of this retroactive effect. And such a backwards reading can also account for the often noticed and never explained communicative function of presuppositions, that is, for the fact that a speech act can be performed just for the sake of getting the hearer acquainted with its presuppositions (see, among others: Ducrot 1972; Stalnaker 1973 and 1974; Gazdar 1977). The speaker can even speculate on the hearer's willingness to accept his speech act, in order to make him implicitly accept, without open discussion, some presupposed proposition (Sbisà 1979).

It is worth noting that (i) in the case of presuppositions as in the case of textual coherence, the partner/hearer integrates the text he is faced with, in order to achieve a certain understanding of it. The differences (if any) between these forms of integration could be further discussed in terms of their functions within interaction, and this would be an attempt to answer the question whether, and how, presupposition is to be distinguished from conversational implicature. Moreover (ii) implicatures filling up a text's gaps [5], as well as presuppositions attached to the agent/speaker, do not leave consideration of his «self» unaffected. In particular presuppositions, as long as they are retroactive in attaching to the agent/speaker a different status (so that e.g. he might gain authority by succeeding in having his orders accepted as such by people who previously were not subordinate to him), appear to be one of the main devices for self-transformation.

4.4. In linguistic pragmatics, context often appears as a *deus ex machina*. It is context that disambiguates illocutionary force, makes the use of linguistic expressions appropriate or inappropriate, selects or cancels conversational implicatures. In MI-oriented pragmatics, such a notion of context is identified with the speaker's knowledge about the world

and about the situation in which interaction occurs; or, else, with such knowledge as far as it is shared by the hearer. The distinctive feature of an Ml-oriented notion of context, however, is to be found in the fact that the context is taken as given and, if there are differences between the speaker's and the hearer's knowledge of the speech situation, they are taken to be mere quantitative differences to be cancelled by further information. From this perspective, there must be an objective way of describing the situation. All action takes place within this scenario, without bringing about any change in it; rather, when (as it were during an interval) the scenario is changed, subsequent action should change too. M2, on the contrary, takes the notion of context as a problematic one. Who is then to decide, if not the participants themselves, by which description the participants are to refer to the situation in which they are acting? A speech act usually contains linguistic devices apt to define its context, that is, the features of the speech situation to be assumed as relevant (referential use of proper names and of definite descriptions is, perhaps, the most common example). Even in non-verbal interaction, it is up to the participants to single out by their action those aspects of the situation which will count as relevant, the kind of frame within which they are to be understood, and so on. M2 recognizes therefore the situation in which interaction occurs as defined during and by the interaction itself and makes linguistic pragmatics open to (i) the problems of the framing of actions (see Goffman 1974) and (ii) to a logic of context change (see Ballmer 1978). Participants in interaction can (or even must) negotiate not only what they are doing, but also, the definition of the situation in which they are acting: that is, they have to build up their context. Here again, among the linguistic devices at their disposal, there is the retroactive effect of presuppositions. From an M2 perspective, presuppositions are not to be considered as assumptions concerning some states of affairs that occur in the actual speech situation; rather, they produce an extension of the context of utterance on the basis of the hearer's understanding of the speech act. They count as an enlargement of the hearer's (and perhaps of the speaker's) knowledge of the speech situation (Leonard and Sbisà 1978). This extension can be genuinely creative since it can modify to a lesser or greater extent the participants' interpretation of the situation. Context, therefore, will no longer appear as an objective final criterion for the interpretation of speech acts and lines of conduct, but its definition will be one more variable in the dynamics of interaction.

4.5. It will be at first sight clear, after the remarks put forward in 4.1-4.4, why M2 (as oposed to M1) could possibly account for social change. M1, starting from culture and language as normative systems

and considering speech and conduct as determined by their interiorization, cannot formulate any theoretical statement explaining the construction and transformation of culture and/or language themselves. Analysis goes on within the same cultural framework in which it has been undertaken, as if the possible transformation of the latter would not have any theoretical and/or practical interest. In speech acts analysis, too, the consideration of the costitutive rules of the speech act and therefore of its presuppositions as given previously to the act itself, the absence of a transforming and self-trasforming dimension in the concept of «self», and so on, bar the way to a more careful analysis of the relations between verbal interaction and the definition or re-definition of its context, its participants, its social rules. M2, starting from interaction and considering culture as something to be accounted for, leads to detect in interaction itself the premises for the transformation of social context and even of the rules and norms that are in force within it. M2's capacity of focusing on social change has two pretty interesting consequences, one of a theoretical and the other of a practical kind. The relation of rules to conduct is no longer thought of as a normative one; nor is reduced to the mere description of factual regularities. Rules of a pragmatic kind had better be viewed as principles constraining interpretation (Leech 1979). While in M1 the theory itself involves evaluation of behavior in terms of «normality» and «deviance», and all interaction is interpreted according to the supposedly «normal» rules governing «normal» communication situations, M2 allows for the fact that many rules themselves result from social interaction, and is willing to recognize a larger (perhaps inter-cultural) validity only for those rules which are better understood as principles, that is, not as norms governing behavior, but as interpretive devices governing understanding (Grice's conversational maxims are rules of such a kind). Moreover, an M1-oriented linguistic pragmatics, if it attempts to set up some relations between language and society, will give rise to a one-way relation: language will appear as reflecting social stratification in a somewhat external way. The old idea of a «neutral» language has perhaps not yet been given up: and, anyway, there is a persisting unwillingness to face speech as capable to handle and produce power. M2, on the contrary, suggests the view of a transforming and self-transforming «self», allows for the possibility of social change, and maintains that it is worth while to focus attention on it particularly in connection with micro-sociological interaction. Speech is obviously to be included, so that, in this perspective, it does not escape its responsibilities towards social stratification and, more generally, matters of power.

Marina Sbisà - Paolo Fabbri

Note

(1) A first and shorter version of this paper is included in our *Modelli (?) dell'analisi pragmatica*, paper read at the Meeting on «Presupposti ideologici delle ricerche linguistiche» of the Società di Linguistica Italiana (Cosenza, September 1978), forthcoming in the Proceedings (Roma: Bulzoni). A revised version of the present text will appear in «Journal of Pragmatics», 4, n. 4.

(2) Anyway, it can easily be noticed that careful empirical observation of verbal interaction leads sometimes to M2-oriented considerations even in spite of a mainly M1-oriented theoretical framework (as it is the case in Sinclair and Coulthard 1975).

(3) A further tentative suggestion: a strategy seems to bear a relation to the actual context and the actual goals of the participants, a tactics seems to have a more abstract character, being in principle applicable to different situations.

(4) A crucial contribution to such a reconsideration is to be found in Wittgenstein's later philosophy (see, for example, *Philosophical Investigations* I, 363, 491).

(5) Cf. also Hjelmslev's term *catalysis* (Hjelmslev 1943; Greimas and Courtés 1979).

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