The Possibility of Dialogic Semantics

Sergeiy Sandler, Dept. of English Language and Literature, University of Haifa, sergeiys@gmail.com.
Comments are welcome!

Abstract: This paper outlines and demonstrates the viability of a consistent dialogic approach to the semantics of utterances in natural language. Based on the philosophical picture of language as dialogue, adumbrated by Mikhail Bakhtin and incorporating work in conversation analysis and cognitive-functional linguistics, I develop a method for analyzing both the function and the content of human utterances within a unified philosophical framework. I demonstrate the viability of this method of analysis by applying it to a brief conversational exchange (in Hebrew), which is analyzed here in full detail.

Keywords: Dialogue; Meaning; Pragmatics; Semantics; Cognitive linguistics; Functional linguistics; Conversation Analysis; Bakhtin, Mikhail.

Introduction

My aim in this paper is to demonstrate the viability of a dialogic paradigm in approaching the semantics of utterances in natural languages. By "semantics" I mean the methodology of analyzing the *meaning* of linguistic utterances in a way that is sensitive to their *content*.[1]

Traditionally, the meaning of utterances has been analyzed in terms of the denotation of the words and the logical structure of the sentences that appear in them. This view of meaning in language reflects a broader conception of the nature of language that essentially goes back to classical antiquity (Harris 1981), but has hardly lost its relevance today. This paradigm established reference and truth as the two central concepts in the philosophy of language and defined the main grammatical units that language is broken down into – the word as the chief unit of

---

[1] The term "dialogic semantics" or "dialogical semantics" is also used in a different sense in the field of dialogical logic. More relevant is the notion of dialogical semantics in Linell (2009). While my approach shares much with that of Linell (and is indebted to some of his earlier works), my notion of semantics is significantly different. In particular, unlike Linell, who focuses his discussion on lexical semantics, my approach bypasses the lexical level altogether.

reference in language and the sentence as the principal linguistic unit in which a proposition can be expressed and so can be assigned a truth-value. Indeed, in this paradigm, the entire linguistic apparatus for analyzing utterances, the purpose of the analysis, and the way meaning is conceptualized all derive from the two relations of *reference* and *predication*.

In recent decades, this traditional approach to meaning has come under attack from many quarters. The nature of language as embodying human action and interaction and the inherent contextuality and situatedness of all human utterances are now acknowledged by many linguists and philosophers of language. One may say, risking overgeneralization, that such fields as pragmatics, discourse analysis, and conversation analysis are moving in a direction that is consistently distancing them from the traditional picture.

And yet, this picture is often paradoxically reaffirmed as it is being rejected. Such pillars of pragmatics as speech act theory (Searle 1969) and Gricean implicature (Grice 1989, 3–143) incorporate an understanding of language as action and as cooperation between agents, which is in many ways alien to the traditional conception of language. But on the technical level, these same theories served to entrench a strictly propositional understanding of the *semantics* of language, through Searle's distinction between the sense and the illocutionary force of a sentence and Grice's notion of "what is said".[2]

---

[2] Both Searle and Grice propose their respective methods of analyzing the meaning of utterances as pragmatic add-ons mounted on top of a standard referential-logical analysis of sentence semantics. This standard analysis yields the "sense" of the sentence or "what is said" in it. To the "sense" one should add an illocutionary force, and from "what is said" one is to make implicatures. So, while Grice and Searle probably wanted to stress that a formal semantic analysis is not enough to understand utterances, many of their followers used these distinctions to propose a more strictly formalist conception of semantics. A typical example is Bach (2005). Bach is well aware that the literal meaning of many figurative expressions has no real place in either the production or the comprehension of utterances using them. Thus, when one says, "Education is the key to success", no actual key would usually come to mind, not even for a moment. Nevertheless, Bach takes the possibility that the non-literal meaning of this sentence

Why is that so? I would suggest that the reason is that such approaches do not rely on a fully worked-out alternative picture of language. Language is viewed as action, interaction, cooperation, on the *functional* level, but the old picture still dictates how the *content* of utterances is conceptualized.

The traditional way of treating the content of utterances too has been challenged, by cognitive and functional linguists (see especially Croft 2001; Gasparov 2010; Hopper 1998). However, these approaches have not yet been clearly integrated with analysis on the level of discourse pragmatics. The importance of bridging this divide has been recognized by several scholars in recent years (Croft 2009; Fried and Östman 2005; Salmon 2010) and the present paper seeks to contribute to this effort.

It will thus not be my concern in this paper to directly criticize the traditional picture of language. Rather, my aim is to show that an alternative approach, based on a coherent alternative understanding of language, can yield satisfactory results not only in the analysis of utterances on the *functional* level, but also in analyzing their *content*.

In what follows I use the picture of language as dialogue that was first adumbrated by Mikhail Bakhtin and other members of the Bakhtin Circle as a philosophical basis for developing a method of analyzing utterances on both these levels. Doing this will allow me also to integrate work in conversation analysis on the one hand and in cognitive-functional linguistics on the other, into a coherent picture of language. The dialogic approach is founded on one basic relation, the relation of *responding*, which entails the entire linguistic apparatus for the analysis of utterances, as well as the way linguistic meaning is conceptualized.

In the first and second parts of the article I shall explain briefly some aspects of the way in which language and meaning are conceptualized in the dialogic approach. In doing that I aim to construct a method of dialogic semantic analysis for utterances in natural language. In the third

---

should count as "what is said" or as its semantic content to be so obviously unacceptable that he constructs *reductio ad absurdum* arguments based on its rejection.

part of the article I shall demonstrate the practical usability of the proposed method by applying it to comprehensively analyze a brief conversation. While the presentation in the first and second parts will necessarily be dogmatic, the sample semantic analysis in the third part will both clarify and support my main theoretical claims.

Dialogic relations and dialogic units

The utterance

The dialogic conception of language considers language to be a form of dialogue, or interaction, between people. It contends that human utterances are essentially dialogic. Even when an utterance does not apparently participate in an interaction, it always *responds* to past utterances in a variety of ways and always anticipates (plans, fears, hopes for) a *response* of some sort. What people say and mean is wholly accounted for by the dialogues they take part in.[3]

This conception of language is similar to the one supported by some ordinary language philosophers and with the use theory of meaning that most of them adhere to, but it offers a more radical interpretation of linguistic phenomena. It is radical in the sense that it does not take anything the traditional paradigm offers for granted. It works out its own units in which language is to be analyzed and its own understanding of what linguistic meaning is. I will begin with the units.

For Bakhtin (1986a), the basic unit of language is what he calls an *utterance*.[4] In terms of its extension, the utterance is a unit of discourse delimited by the change of speaking subject (Bakhtin 1986a, 71ff), that is, it is an *entire* contribution to a conversation or to a dialogue in a

[3] The main ideas of the dialogic conception of language can be found in Bakhtin (1981, 259–331), Bakhtin (1984, 181–204), Bakhtin (1986a), Voloshinov (1973), and Voloshinov (1983). For exposition and development in more recent works, see e.g. Lähteenmäki (2001), Linell (1998), Linell (2009), and Wold (1992).

[4] The term "utterance" is also current in formal semantic literature, but while an utterance in this sense is (roughly) the act of uttering *a sentence token*, an utterance in Bakhtin's sense is a unit of interaction, independent of any syntactic unit.

broader sense (e.g. an entire speech, article, or novel). In terms of how it is constructed, an utterance is a (projected) whole, from beginning to end, in which the speaker said what she planned to say, for now (Bakhtin 1986a, 76ff).

If the interaction being examined is a conversation, the utterance would be the same as a *turn of talk*. Indeed the features of the utterance as described here dovetail with the way a turn of talk is understood in Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; and cf. Ford 2004): a turn's limits are eventually marked by speaker change, but are determined from within by the projected possibility of such change, by its projected end. If a speaker is interrupted before she has finished, such an interruption is itself a kind of action that makes the projected whole of the turn relevant in the conversation, even as it is cut short.

Above all, an utterance is defined as the unit of discourse that responds and can be responded to (Bakhtin 1986a, 76ff).[5] As such, the utterance is more than just the stretch of text covered by its extension. It is essentially a form of human action, and therefore does not respect the distinction between text and context. The particular circumstances in which a particular utterance is made are really part and parcel of the utterance itself. No utterance can be adequately described by its "text" alone. Any adequate description of an utterance must include some of its relevant "context". From this it also follows that any utterance is in principle unique, as no two utterances can be made in exactly the same circumstances (though, as I will show, this does not make utterances impossible to analyze).

---

[5] A seeming counterexample to this definition is that it is possible to respond to one part of an utterance. Thus, I may criticize a particular claim that appears in a paper I read, rather than the paper as a whole (Brandist 2001). Note, however, that it only makes sense for me to criticize that claim if the author of the paper actually makes it as part of her argument in that paper. If, on the other hand, the claim appears in her paper as a reconstruction of somebody else's position, I may still criticize it *as an incorrect or misleading reconstruction*, but not as a claim that the author actually makes. Thus, when my response focuses on one particular detail in an utterance, it nevertheless perceives this detail not as a disconnected linguistic expression, but rather as a part of an utterance which plays a particular role within the utterance as a whole. The entire utterance, in the final analysis, is still the unit responded to.

The unit of the utterance belongs to the very heart of the dialogic conception of language, as it is defined by the *dialogic relation* of responding. But beyond this *immediate* level, dialogic relations also extend inside the utterance, that is, to the level of linguistic content. First, utterances often (and in a broader sense – always) *reenact* a sort of dialogue between different voices or characters that appear in them, as, for example, when a speaker reports the words of another person and then comments on them. Secondly, people do not just invent the language they speak, but neither do they take it from some neutral repository of linguistic conventions. Rather, people take the linguistic means they use from other people's past utterances, and these linguistic means carry their previous users' actions and their typical contexts of utterance with them. By *appropriating* them for the purposes of her own utterance, the speaker enters a micro-dialogue with those who used these bits of language in the past.

I shall now proceed to examine these two levels of inner dialogicity and the units of analysis that can be used on each.

Reenacting dialogic relations

A play or a novel is an utterance by its author, which participates in a cultural dialogue and is responded to by its readers and reviewers. Within it we find characters conducting interactions and dialogues among them. This is one example of *reenacting dialogic relations*. Reported speech is another example – the voice of the person being quoted enters the utterance and interacts with the voice of the speaker herself.

A very important form of reenacted dialogic relations is what Bakhtin termed *double-voiced discourse* (Bakhtin 1984, 185–99), where two voices can be heard simultaneously in the very same words. A typical case would be parody. Here we have the voice of the target (the particular person or stereotypical social image being parodied) reproduced in the utterance, and in that very act also ridiculed by the speaker.

6

Following Bakhtin, I will use the term *voice* to refer to the "participants" in a reenacted dialogue. Voices are not units in the traditional sense, as they do not necessarily have a clear extension. Voices may overlay one another, may be present throughout an utterance, and may indeed be made relevant without being explicitly voiced (Bakhtin 1984, 207ff; Cooren 2010, 136–137). They are better thought of as functions of the utterance than as its parts.

One may distinguish between three general types of voices: personae, figures, and positions. A *persona* is somebody whose voice is acted out in the utterance. It may be identified with a specific person (e.g. somebody quoted in the utterance), an imaginary character, or a social stereotype. *Figures* (following Cooren 2010) are a broader category of entities that may be said to have a voice within the utterance. It includes such things as principles that one speaks in the name of, organizations one represents, social roles one embodies, facts "speaking for themselves" in the utterance, etc.[6] Personae are heard in the utterance in a more direct sense than figures are, but the distinction between them is not meant to be sharp.

Finally, *positions* are voices that connect the reenacted dialogue in the utterance with the actual one. There are three positions in each utterance: (implied) author, character, and (implied) audience (Voloshinov 1983, 22). I use these terms here much in the same way as they are used in literary theory. In particular, the implied author and the implied audience are not to be identified with the actual author (or speaker) and audience, who conduct their dialogue on the immediate, rather than the reenacting, level. Rather, these are positions that can be reconstructed from the utterance itself as what it is implied that the author wants to say and what it is implied that the addressee should think of it.

---

[6] Cooren's notion of non-human agency is, of course, quite controversial, and often misunderstood. But note that on the level of reenacted dialogue, non-human agency is in any case not a problematic notion. Nobody expects characters in literary works, for example, to necessarily be actual human beings (and cf. Bakhtin 1986b, 138–39 on personification and reification).

Every persona or figure may be assigned to one of these three positions, that is, it may be a character in the "plot" of the utterance, or be a mouthpiece for the (implied) author,[7] or reflect the implied stance of the audience. But even if no other voice is assigned to them, positions may be said to be voices in their own right. An utterance in which the speaker mimics somebody may not have a single sound in it that belongs to the author's voice, but we would still hear the author's voice in the way the other person is mimicked, and even in the very fact she is mimicked. Not a word in the utterance may be said in the name of its audience, but the entire utterance is shaped by the way it is meant to be understood by it.

Appropriating dialogic relations

On the level of appropriating dialogic relations, the speaker enters a micro-dialogue with previous speakers over the use of the various elements that appear in her utterance. I will be using the general term *element* to refer to whatever carries over the "taste" (Bakhtin 1981, 293) of past utterances into the speaker's utterance.

More specifically, elements are associated with past utterances in at least one of four ways: they may distinctly belong to a *voice*, may bring to mind a *situation* (singular or typical), may be associated with an *action* (speech acts included), and may belong to a distinct *genre*. For instance, a deliberately mimicked Southern accent is an element that is associated with the persona of a Southerner. A greeting formula, even if not used as an actual greeting, is an element that is associated with the kind of situation in which a greeting is called for. The phrase, "You don't say!", even when uttered ironically, is associated with the action of expressing surprise. The

---

[7] When in the analysis below I say that some parts of an utterance are spoken in the author's voice this should be taken to mean that a persona identified with the speaker acts as the speaker's mouthpiece in this sense. Strictly speaking, this persona is identical neither with the implied author position nor with the actual speaker.

phrase "To whom it may concern", even if it is not actually part of a formal letter, is associated with the genre of formal letter.[8]

One need not assume full agreement on what is brought into an utterance by each element, or even on exactly how to break an utterance down into elements. What an element is associated with differs with the particular life experience of every individual, but since this experience comes from interaction with others, there is enough common ground between different people to proceed without major failures in communication.

In terms of extension, elements are a motley crew. In principle, almost anything can serve as an element: gestures, facial expressions, intonation contours, or, to move to the other end of the spectrum, generic construction patterns and plot development techniques. But my focus here will be on the more textural kind of element, that following Gasparov (2010) I will be calling the *communicative fragment* (or CF).

Bakhtin (1981) originally spoke of people's *words* being appropriated from past utterances, but it is easy to see that the single word cannot be the unit this level of dialogic relations defines. While some words bear the marks of a typical action, situation etc. to which they belong, others do not. If you hear the word "carburetor", a car mechanic comes to mind. If, on the other hand, you hear the word "ground", many things may come to mind, but nothing as specific. But what about "on solid ground", "groundless accusations", "on the grounds that…"?

I am not claiming to break new ground here, of course. The importance of collocations and formulaic expressions in language has been emphasized by many functional and cognitive linguists. The point that these units are dialogically appropriated from past utterances is not new either. The explicit link with Bakhtin (1981) has been made already by Hopper (1998, 169).

---

[8] Space does not allow me to discuss the issue of speech genres, and genres in general, here. While I will be able to bypass this notion when analyzing the conversational sequence below, any dialogic theory of language would be incomplete without dealing with the use of genres in dialogue. For an interesting recent treatment of the subject, see Salmon (2010).

Gasparov (2010, 13) makes a similar point, but his treatment of the issue (see esp. Gasparov 2010, 34–81 and 149–184) offers important conceptual developments over previous works.

While in many senses it is akin to construction grammar (Croft 2001; Goldberg 200X), Gasparov's approach takes the way cognitive linguistics reconceptualizes grammar further to its logical conclusion. Instead of an abstract hierarchy of grammatical constructions, Gasparov focuses his analysis of utterances on concrete, tangible expressions. Instead of explaining the immense diversity of the linguistic content of human utterances as the result of mechanically combining units that have a fixed form, Gasparov explains it by suggesting a flexible unit – the CF – that can be combined with others in many different ways.

Essentially, a CF is a bit of language, usually an expression the length of a short phrase (possibly with a lacuna), that speakers of a language are familiar with as-is, and which carries for people associative links with voices, situations, actions and also with other CFs that often precede it or follow it. While many CFs are relatively complete (proverbs, speech formulae, typical interjections), far more are fragmentary, that is, not usually meant to stand on their own (e.g. "the thing is that…", "I mean…", "you know…").

Moreover, CFs, like any product of oral culture (cf. Lord 2000), are variant (or in Gasparov's terms, volatile): most of them have several versions, and therefore may not have a definitive form. To use Gasparov's own example (Gasparov 2010, 58ff), the phrase "In a major shift of policy" may be viewed as a CF in its own right, but may also be analyzed as consisting, for example, of "in a major…" and "a major shift of policy", or of "in a major…" and "shift of policy", or of "in a major…", "a major shift", and "shift of policy". All the options mentioned are acceptable, because all the proposed CFs are bits of language most English newspaper readers would be familiar with as-is. We remember them all in this nebulous state, as different variations on similar themes, rather than as distinct rigid forms.

CFs can also be modified in various ways (e.g. curtailed or extended by analogy; see Gasparov 2010, 113–148), and we learn to identify them in all their modifications. CFs are meant to be

modified, combined, stringed together, and grafted onto one another to produce full utterances. We will also see below that a CF may be present in an utterance with only some of its parts voiced, if the setting makes some aspects of the "taste" it caries relevant. Thus, eventually, *any* actually occurring verbal utterance can be analyzed into CFs.

I have presented the main structure of units and relations through which the dialogic conception of language examines utterances in interaction and their content. Let me now explain how this structure can be used to analyze what utterances *mean*.

Dialogic semantic analysis

A dialogic analysis of meaning

Just as it has its own native way of defining linguistic units, the dialogic conception of language also has its native way of looking at meaning in language. It is again based on the notion of response and on the fact that a response always, in one way or another, reflects a certain understanding of what it responds to. Thus, meaning is given in response (Bakhtin 1986b, 145).

This implies a notion of meaning that is quite different from the traditional one (but still reflects at least some of the aspects of the pre-theoretical everyday notion of meaning that people have). Rather than some sort of self-identical thing that gets transferred from one head to another in communication, meaning in the dialogic view is understood as a dynamic projection of the process of interaction. The meaning of each utterance is construed in at least a slightly different way every time it receives a response. In fact, the meaning of utterances is *negotiated* by the interlocutors in the course of the dialogue between them (Linell 1998, 78). According to this view, when people agree on what an utterance means, this agreement is not the trivial reflection of the identity of a thing (the meaning) to itself, but rather it is an achievement of the interlocutors.[9]

---

[9] Such a perspectivist view of meaning needs not imply an "everything goes" kind of relativism. It goes beyond the scope of this paper to argue for this point in any detail, but the main reason is that it takes an *actual* response to

A different way to formulate the idea that meaning is given in response is to say that every utterance has a *meaning potential* (Lähteenmäki 2004; Linell 2009; Rommetveit 1974), which is actualized in different ways by every utterance that responds to it (Bakhtin 1986b, 145–46, and cf. Bilmes 1985 for a similar approach in Conversation Analysis). The meaning potential of the utterance itself is strictly speaking ineffable, as any attempt to formulate it would itself be a response to the utterance, which actualizes this potential in one particular way. Nevertheless, for a dialogic semantic analysis to be possible there has to be a way to account for where this meaning potential comes from and how it is worked out. This can be done by extending the same principle (meaning potential actualized by response) to the two levels of dialogic relations within the utterance, which I discussed above.

Elements carry over their uses and associations from past utterances and their appropriation responds to these past uses. The meaning potential of an element thus consists of all the things it can be associated with: people who have used it, places and situations in which it has been used, actions performed by it, other elements that it is associated with because they often come together, etc.[10] While some of these associations are more central than others, no association, no matter how remote or idiosyncratic, can be ruled out *a priori*. Any association may be made relevant when the element is actualized.

---

construe an utterance as meaning this or that. While there is no way to encompass all the possible construals an utterance may receive, an actual response can never construe it in an arbitrary way. A response will always reflect one of the ways in which it makes sense to understand (or misunderstand; actual misunderstandings are more than just arbitrary errors in understanding) the utterance.

[10] Note that CFs and other elements are not representations. They acquire their meaning potentials because they are *typical* of, or at least reminiscent of, what certain people do in certain situations, for certain purposes, etc. In most cases they *emulate* some kind of action or utterance, but do not represent any entity.

When a speaker appropriates an element in her utterance, responds to its previous uses by making it serve her purposes, she actualizes its meaning potential in a particular way.[11] This is achieved, on the technical level, by constraining the possible understanding of the element.

First, elements are chosen "for the occasion", that is, to fit the *setting* in which the utterance is made, and only that in their associative baggage, which can fit the setting, would be heard in them when they are used. A special effort, essentially modifying the context using other elements, should be made to make anything else about them relevant.

Another constraining factor is the other elements used in the utterance to create the same voice. The juxtaposition of elements blocks the parts of their meaning potentials that are incompatible with one another (Gasparov 2010; Linell 2009; Rommetveit 1974). Thus, if a speaker says, "What a lovely day! I'm soaking wet!" she is using two CFs with conflicting meaning potentials. "What a lovely day!" is something one typically says to express joy, especially at the weather, and in the most typical case this also implies that the weather is sunny. On the other hand, "I'm soaking wet!" is typically an expression of dissatisfaction with a situation in which the speaker's clothes and body are wet, most typically because of being caught in the rain. These two conflicting meaning potentials can be reconciled, though. For example, if the utterance was made when it started raining after a prolonged drought or a long heat wave, "What a lovely day!" retains its meaning as an expression of joy at the weather, while the implication that the weather is sunny gets blocked, and "I'm soaking wet!" retains its connection with being wet and with the rain, but can no longer be interpreted as an expression of dissatisfaction.[12]

---

[11] This also means that the new use in the present utterance adds a unique angle to the element itself, to what it will mean from now on to others (Hopper 1998). Normally such innovation remains limited to a very slight variation on the already-established theme, but wild creative leaps also happen (a matter I shall not discuss here).

[12] Of course, such reconciliation of meaning potentials can also override the "literal meaning" of the words used. Thus, in Rommetveit's (1974) original example, the sentence "My spinster aunt is an infant", which seemingly

Finally, the meaning of the element as it is used in the utterance is set out in the way it contributes to the orchestration of voices on the level of reenacted dialogic relations. Note that while this level is not integrated into the models developed by Rommetveit (1974) and Gasparov (2010), it is by no means redundant. The juxtaposition of two elements blocks conflicting parts of their meaning potentials if they both belong to the same voice, but not if they are distributed between two different voices, in which case the conflicting potentials may, on the contrary, be used to mark the differences between the voices. To use the same example again, "What a lovely day!" can also be easily heard as ironic (Bakhtin 1984 lists irony as a form of double-voiced discourse, and the analysis in Sperber and Wilson 1981, while not using Bakhtin's terms, makes exactly the same point). In this case, the typical connection of "What a lovely day!" with sunny weather and its role as an expression of joy remain in place, as do the connection of "I'm soaking wet!" with rain and its role as an expression of dissatisfaction. But now the two elements belong to different voices, with the author position aligning itself with the dissatisfaction of the latter and against the joy of the former.

A voice may be heard in an utterance because it is made relevant by the setting (e.g. when the interlocutors embody certain social roles, these roles may enter the utterance as figures or as personae). It may also be heard because of a speech genre (Bakhtin 1986) that an utterance corresponds with (e.g. in a prayer, the audience voice is that of a deity, even if this is never explicitly stated). Finally, elements identified with a particular voice (such as the southern accent I used as an example before) can also bring this voice into the utterance.

Since voices belong to actors (particular people, social stereotypes and roles, personified things and ideas, etc.), actions that are identified with these actors are brought by them as part of their meaning potential into the utterance. The setting and the elements used to create these voices in the utterance all allow to specify a particular action or sequence of actions that can be

---

contains a contradiction (between "spinster" and "infant") can be interpreted to mean, e.g., that the spinster aunt is innocent in some matters.

attributed to each voice (although, again, there may always be room for misunderstanding in identifying both the voice itself and its action).

The action performed by each voice takes part in a reenacted dialogue or interaction within the utterance, which may be quite elaborate. Eventually all the potentials that these actions and interactions bring into the utterance are actualized by the response they receive from the author's position. A voice can be identified with the author's position itself, or it can be overlaid by it. In the latter case the author's position may be more sympathetic to the voice or more hostile to it (Bakhtin 1984, 194ff used the terms "unidirectional double-voiced discourse" and "vari-directional double-voiced discourse" respectively).[13]

The resulting, usually quite complex, attitude of the author position should be again viewed as having a meaning potential, which is actualized by the *audience* position. That is, a good way to formulate what an utterance is *designed* to mean is to describe the sort of response that its *implied* audience is supposed to make to it. Note that this is in line with the analysis of meaning originally proposed by Grice (1989): what the utterer means is to produce a certain response in the audience on the grounds of the audience's recognition of the intention to produce this response. Of course, the audience here is not the actual audience of the utterance – there may not be any (Grice 1989, 112) – but the implied audience, or audience position.

Finally, this designated meaning of the utterance serves as the utterance's meaning potential. This potential is actualized by the responses the utterance receives from its actual audience and in subsequent turns. On this level, to answer the question, "What does this utterance mean?" is

---

[13] This account is greatly simplified to avoid making the exposition too long and cumbersome. Thus, in the analysis of the conversational exchange below we will see utterances in which there is a double-deck construction, with one persona overlaying the voice of another, and in turn being overlaid by the author position. A reenacted dialogue can also be employed in a more iconic manner, when the author position's attitude applies to the entire reenacted scene, rather than to each voice individually. Finally, the author position's attitude towards a voice is usually more complex than simply "sympathetic" or "hostile". As in any other kind of response, one can do more than just agree or disagree.

equivalent to answering the question, "What is the role this utterance plays in the dialogue in which it takes part?" From a dialogic perspective, the meaning (or rather meanings) of an utterance is ultimately given on this functional level, but the analysis that leads to it has to include a detailed consideration of the utterance's content.[14]

The analytic procedure

This discussion, while only a bear sketch, has allowed me to identify the procedure I shall be following in analyzing the brief conversation below. For every utterance (turn) of the exchange the analysis will consist of the following stages:

(1) Describing the *setting* in which the utterance is made. I use the term "setting" here in a broad sense. A setting includes the *previous utterances* to which the given utterance is immediately responding. On top of that, a description of the setting includes any relevant information about the physical environment and about social practices that define the situation in which the utterance acts.[15]

(2) Listing and describing the *elements* that are used in the utterance. I shall particularly focus on the communicative fragments (CFs) used[16] and on the actions, voices and situations with which they are associated.

---

[14] As I noted along the way, in a dialogic approach there is no single uniquely correct way to reconstruct the meaning potential of an utterance. Different responses may reflect differing analyses of the utterance on *all* levels of dialogic relations. A significant difference may result in a misunderstanding. One of the advantages of the sort of dialogic semantic analysis presented here, on which space does not allow me to focus, is that it provides a realistic account of misunderstandings in conversation.

[15] Strictly speaking, these social practices, and even the physical environment, shape the utterance not directly, but rather through the established ways of acting and speaking that are linked with them, that is through responding to past utterances. Thus, the setting in which an utterance acts can be defined as the totality of all past utterances to which it responds on the level of immediate dialogic relations.

[16] To save space, I will be relying mostly on my native knowledge of the language and personal familiarity with the speakers to identify the CFs used in the analyzed conversation. While the ultimate test for a phrase being a CF is

(3) Identifying the *voices* heard in the utterance and following the *reenacted dialogue* that takes place between them. This will also allow me to trace the actualization of the meaning potential brought in by the elements.

(4) Reconstructing the *designated meaning* of the utterance.

(5) Showing how the utterance thus responds to previous utterances and acts in the setting.

(6) Following up the meanings that the utterance assumes in latter utterances that respond to it.

My analysis below will proceed from the first utterance to the last, which allows me to take two shortcuts: first, I shall describe the setting (stage 1) in detail for the first utterance only. For each subsequent utterance, the setting is given in this initial description plus the analysis of all previous utterances. Secondly, only the analysis of the last utterance will include stage 6 (reflection of meaning in response). For the other utterances, this will be incorporated into stage 5 of the analysis of subsequent utterances.

The proof of the pudding: a dialogic semantic analysis of a conversation

The practical test of the construction presented so far will be an analysis of the brief conversation transcribed below.[17] I will conduct a detailed analysis of all the utterances. It is precisely my point that such an analysis can be accomplished without skipping any part or element of any utterance (though some nuances will be left out for lack of space).

---

that it is known to speakers as-is, there are also objective ways to validate the CF status of a phrase (Gasparov 2010, 58–76). Often a simple Internet search on a phrase will yield sufficient information on whether it can be considered a CF (based on the number of search results) and on its typical uses.

[17] I used the transcription conventions described in Jefferson (2004). The italicized text is the transliterated Hebrew original. An English gloss appears below every line in the transcript. A more "literal" translation is not added to the transcript, but will be noted in the analysis itself.

This conversation was selected from a small collection of about eight hours of recorded conversations in Hebrew at and around several family dinners of one family.[18] It was the first conversation I transcribed, because it appears close to the start of one of the recording sessions. No other criteria were applied in selecting it.

```
1 R: tagid lahem lavo ke ha'okhel itkarer kar hayom.
     Tell them to come cuz the food is getting cold it's cold today.

2    (17.2) ((R sets the table))

3 S: anakhnu nukhal laazor bemashehu?
     Can we help with anything?

4 R: lo aval tzarikh lashevet ki ha'okhel itkarer kar hayom.
     No but you should sit down cause the food is getting cold it's cold today.

5 S: ↓oy [(h)(h)(h) [im lo nokhal lo nigdal?
      Oy! If we don't eat we won't grow?

6 R:     [ma she-   [ma shetov she-
          The        The good thing is that

7    (0.5)

8 R: bidyuk. (.) ma shetov she'ani yoshevet levad. (h)(h)(h)
     Exactly. The good thing is that I'm sitting alone.
```

The first step in analyzing this conversation is to break it down into utterances. As already noted, an utterance in a conversation is the same thing as a turn of talk. Most turns of talk occupy exactly one line in the transcript. Exceptions are the silence in line 2, which is not an utterance, but rather the lack of one, and lines 6–8, which I will treat as a single utterance by R.

---

[18] The family is my own, and I am one of the two interlocutors (S). This may be said to introduce subjective bias. Had my purpose been sociological in nature (e.g. looking at power relations between the speakers) that would have been a problem. But what I am looking at here are basic properties of spontaneous spoken discourse, and whatever bias I may have cannot be assisted by me being one of the speakers (to be sure, the recording was made long before the model I am testing was developed). On the other hand, being a participant in the interaction gives me access to useful information about the setting and the people involved.

Line 1

Stage 1: the setting

This brief conversation took place between R and S, both adult native speakers of Hebrew. R has invited her two adult children and her son-in-law, S, to lunch with her on Saturday. This is a family tradition: such gatherings have been held almost every weekend for many years.

The transcript begins when R has already finished cooking the meal and is busy putting the dishes on the dinner table. S is reading in the living room (so is in R's sight but not very close to her). R's two children are in another room.

R has an expectable move to make in the setting, to *call* her guests. Will this expectation be confirmed?

Stage 2: elements and their meaning potentials

To see that, let us examine the elements and in particular the CFs that we can find in the utterance.

I analyze the beginning of this utterance, *tagid lahem lavo*, as a compound of the CFs: *tagid lahem la/le…* ["tell them to…"]; *efshar lavo* ["(you) may come"]; *bo'u le'ekhol* ["dinner is served" (literally: "come to eat")] (as any CF analysis, it admits of some variation).

The first CF has the potential to be identified with a situation that arises in hierarchical social institutions: when a superior delivers instructions though a subordinate serving as proxy (an executive and secretary would come to mind). Note that this is not the only use to which this CF can be put, but it is a *typical* picture that comes to mind in association with it.

The second CF also has a typical situation linked with it, one that is also linked to the setting (which is why I claim this CF is present here, with the unpronounced word *efshar*). This situation involves visitors who were earlier asked to wait before coming in (the house / office / room), and are now told their waiting is over.

19

Finally, the third CF is linked to a typical action, namely calling people (specifically, members of one's own family) to the dinner table.

Put together, the three CFs in the given setting function as the expected call for people to come to the dinner table. The authoritative potential in the first CF is not fully actualized, as there are no formal hierarchical relationships between R and S, but R does seem to be giving S an instruction, which implies authority (here presumably stemming from her role as the host).

Next comes *ki* [here slightly mispronounced as *ke*; "cause"]. Connectors usually serve as short CFs. This is the case here. This CF introduces an explanation or account of some sort.

The CF *ha'okhel itkarer* ["the food is getting cold" (literally: "the food will cool down")]. carries not only a distinct situation and action, but also a distinct persona. The situation is one in which warm food has been served on the table, but the *child* who is supposed to be eating it is not there. The action is that of a *parent* urging the child to come. More specifically, the speaking parent is identified with a specific social stereotype, the Jewish Mother, on which I will elaborate below.

The CF *kar hayom* ["it's cold today" (literally: "cold today")] belongs generally to the genre of talks about the weather, but in this context may also be interpreted as alluding to such phrases (also CFs) as: *Tilbash mashehu. Kar hayom* [put something on; it's a cold day today], also identified with the Jewish Mother persona.

Stage 3: voices

Next, let us look at the orchestration of voices in this utterance. The first compound (*tagid lahem lavo*) is in the author's voice, and is clearly linked to the setting. R here instructs or asks S to call everyone else to the table. But then R announces an explanation of some sort is coming (*ki*), which appears redundant.

20

The rest of the utterance is made in the voice of a *persona* – the *Jewish Mother*. The Jewish Mother[19] is a stereotypical character that is often the focus of amused remarks among the family members gathered in R's flat. She is always anxious that her children eat up, wear warm clothes, feel guilty about how they treat their poor mother, leaving her to suffer alone after all she has done for them, and of course eat their food while it is warm. This persona is also linked to R's *role* as the mother of the family, and even to her ethnic *identity*. Both these *figures* (Cooren 2010) are thus also involved in the utterance through the Jewish Mother persona.

The Jewish Mother provides the announced explanation for the call to dinner: she urges her children to come right away, while the food is still warm. This in turn is explained by citing the cold whether.

The Jewish Mother's voice is clearly a deliberate exaggeration but it is not an outright parody: it joins R's purpose of calling the guests to the table. In Bakhtin's terminology, we have here a case of *unidirectional double-voiced discourse* (Bakhtin 1984, 189ff).

Stages 4&5: designated meaning and action in the setting

Based on all this we may reconstruct what may have been the *anticipated* response of the implied audience (identified with S) to this utterance. R seems to have a double aim: to have S call the others to the table and add the Jewish Mother into the conversation as a topic, for amusement's sake. But S never replied. Instead, S addressed R later, in line 3.

Line 3

Stage 2: elements and their meaning potentials

This utterance contains just one compound, which I analyze as containing the CFs: *efshar la'azor bemashehu?* ["may I help with anything?" (literally: "is it possible to help in anything?")], *ani ukhal*

---

[19] Most Hebrew speakers would identify this persona as the *Polish* mother, referring to Jews of Polish descent (a group to which R belongs). The comical version of the Jewish mother stereotype is a close equivalent, which is current in English-speaking communities.

le...? ["can I…?" / "may I…?" / "would it be possible for me to…?"], and *anakhnu nuchal* ["we'll be able to" / "we'll have the opportunity to"].

The first CF is the nucleus of the compound (which also gives it its final rising intonation). It is a standard formula for offering help.

The second and third of the CFs are really only used to make it possible for S, through analogy with them (Gasparov 2010, 113–148) to make the offer of help not only in his own name, but in the name of a group of people.[20] The CF *ani uchal le/la…?* has a frequent analogue in the synonymous CF *efshar le/la…?* and the grammatical shift from first person singular to first person plural is also a product of derivation by analogy through a variety of CF's that have both a first person singular and a first person plural version and are differentiated in a similar manner ("ani X" vs. "anakhnu nX").

Stages 3–5: voices, designated meaning, and action in the setting

The whole compound is thus an almost conventional offer of help, placed in a setting in which such an offer would be an expectable (if belated) act of courtesy. It is more or less single-voiced and the audience voice, as an offer naturally implies, is asked to accept or reject.

Line 4

Stage 2: elements and their meaning potentials

The CFs I find in line 4 are: *lo, aval…* ["no, but…"]. This is a conventional means for doing rejection of one of several kinds (in our case, given the setting, that would be the action of rejecting an offer), and then buying some time for a rejoinder.

tsarikh la/le… ["(you) should…" (literally: "it is needed to…")]; *shvu le'ekhol* ["let's start the meal" (literally: "sit down to eat")]. The first CF is the Hebrew "*tsarikh*+infinitive" construction. Its most generic use is to urge the interlocutor to do something or note that something has to be

---

[20] The group is most likely S himself and his spouse; unfortunately, the context that would elucidate why S does so is lost.

done in a particular situation. The setting indeed indicates an action (getting everyone to the dinner table) is being urged. This action is also alluded to by the other CF, closely related to the CF *bo'u le'ekhol* from line 1. The CF *shvu le'ekhol* is also used to call people, usually one's children, to start a meal that was served. The grammatical shift of *shvu* (second person plural imperative) into *lashevet* (infinitive) is again to be interpreted as a derivation by analogy.

ki, *ha'okhel itkarer*, *kar hayom*. All these CFs are already familiar from line 1. This fact adds another appropriating dialogic relation to note here, between these CFs and their counterparts in line 1.

Stages 3&4: voices and designated meaning

The first CF is in the author's voice (as an expectable move in the setting). Apart from that, there is nothing to add to the analysis of line 1. S, the implied audience, is urged to call the other guests to the table, while noting the humorous appearance of the Jewish Mother.

Stage 5: response to previous utterances

On the level of immediate dialogic relations, the utterance in line 4 responds to both utterances analyzed above, as well as to the silence in line 2, and reflects (on) their meanings. Line 4 *repeats* the utterance in line 1. This indicates R's understanding that what she said in line 1 did not reach its addressee and her assumption that in line 2 we do not have deliberate lack of response on S's part. This also indicates the two utterances in lines 1 and 4 are similar in function. Finally, the precision with which most of line 1 is repeated in line 4 (including fine prosodic detail) indicates that the formulation she uses is preplanned.

The CF *lo, aval…* issues the expectable (Davidson 1984) rejection of the offer in line 3. It reflects on line 3 as an action to which the preferred response is negative. But note also that, as R has another request of S, she seems to reflect a restricted understanding of *what* S offers to help with: probably only putting food on the table, but clearly not calling the others in.

Line 5

Stage 2: elements and their meaning potentials

The CF *oy!* is a conventional exclamation of grief, originating in Yiddish, and pronounced here with a somewhat exaggerated intonation. It is followed by *a laughter token*. Next comes the CF *im lo tokhal lo tigdal* ["If you don't eat you won't grow"]. This CF is strongly identified with the Jewish Mother persona (here it is again modified by analogy to the first person plural). The utterance ends with *a rising final intonation contour* that is not contributed by any of the CFs and stands on its own as an element. This element is most typically identified with the action of asking a question or of making a guess.

Stages 3&4: voices and designated meaning

On the level of reenacted dialogic relations, this utterance has a rather complicated structure. The coupling of the exclamation *oy!* with laughter, as well as the exaggerated intonation, indicates irony, which is, again, a form of vari-directional double-voiced discourse in Bakhtin's terms.

But in whose voice is this ironic expression of grief made? If the fact that "Oy!" has what is taken to be a distinct Yiddish sound to it is not enough, the CF *im lo tokhal lo tigdal*, belonging to the repertoire of the Jewish Mother, makes it clear that the Jewish Mother persona is indeed the one being parodied here. But note that the transformation of this latter CF into the first person plural form adds an extra layer to the orchestration of voices: the double-voiced constructions in both CFs have an overlay not of the author's voice over that of the Jewish Mother, but rather of the voice of another persona. Here it is that of the Jewish Mother's *child*, whose role in the conventional drama played out here is to rebel against his mother and ridicule her.

The voices of the author and the audience in this utterance are heard in the intonation. The laughter token is in the author's voice, as its intonation carries none of the defiance that the Child persona would be expressing. By laughing in this way S frames the Child's defiance and ridicule as being done in jest, or, in other words, we have here two layers of double-voicedness –

24

the Child's voice overlays the Jewish Mother's in a vari-directional double-voiced construction, and is itself overlaid by the author's voice.

The rising final intonation introduces the implied audience's voice. It is a conventional device for doing so. The author appeals to the audience, as it were, to confirm, deny, accept, reject, or provide some information sought for, by adding an audience-voice overlay to the end of his or her utterance. In the case of the utterance in line 5, there is no question being asked, and whatever there is to be inquired about appears in the voice of the Child, not the author. We should therefore interpret the rising final intonation as making the whole utterance a sort of guess; the audience voice is heard to confirm the author's position (that is, a confirmation is an expectable or preferred response projected by the utterance). What this position *is* becomes clear when we consider the *immediate* dialogic relations in which this utterance is involved.

Stage 5: response to previous utterances and action in the setting

Now, recall R's preceding move: R wanted S to call the other guests to the dinner table, but also brought in the Jewish Mother theme. What S does in response is to strongly reflect the Jewish Mother theme, without yet calling the other guests to the table. This way S reflects the meaning of R's utterance in line 4 as being *primarily* about the Jewish Mother (which is not necessarily how R would have construed it). This move is a bit risky on S's part also because the Jewish Mother voice in R's utterance might have been, in principle, interpreted as a spontaneous expression of her author's voice, in which case S's response could potentially be offensive to R. So what the guessing intonation at the end of line 5 does is to ask R for a confirmation that the Jewish Mother voice was used on purpose.

Lines 6–8

In line 6 R tries twice to start talking in parallel with S's line 5. She does so at two possible completion points of S's turn (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). A comparison with line 8 makes it clear that what she was trying to say in line 6 she eventually said in line 8. The delay (line

7) is because R had to add a new beginning to what she planned to say. The analysis below will thus focus on line 8 itself.

Stage 2: elements and their meaning potentials

Here are the elements I identify in this utterance:

bidyuk. ["exactly."]. This CF's primary use is to confirm guesses.

ma shetov she… ["the good thing is that…"; literally: "what's good is that"]. This CF is used to introduce a positive (from the speaker's perspective) aspect of an otherwise difficult situation or topic.

ani yoshevet levad ["I'm sitting on my own"]; *yoshevet levad, bakhoshekh* ["sitting alone, in the dark"]; *yoshevet le'ekhol* ["(I am / she is) sitting at the dinner table"; literally: "sitting to eat"]. While *ani yoshevet levad* can be said to be a CF in its own right (indicating the speaker's loneliness at a time or situation in which she would be expected to be in the company of others; here the posture of sitting down is also part of the meaning potential of the CF, but it mainly implies social activities in which people engage while seated), other similar CFs also come to mind and seem to be linked with aspects of the setting.

One of these – *yoshevet le'echol* – is linked to the setting in the same way as *lashevet le'echol* and *bo'u le'echol* were in lines 4 and 1. The CF *yoshevet levad, bakhoshekh* again belongs to the Jewish Mother, and is perhaps the expression most identified with this persona in the wider public.

Stage 3: voices

The initial CF is an expectable move in the setting and is uttered in the author's voice. The CF *ma shetov she* is ironic, because what it introduces is a CF with clearly negative, not positive, connotations. But whose voices are heard in the ironic construction? We see the Jewish Mother again at the end (*yoshevet levad, bakhoshekh*), and indeed, bitter irony is typical of this persona (as a means of inducing guilty feelings in her children). So we may interpret the CF in the middle as vari-directional double-voiced discourse with the voice of the Child overlaid by that of the

Jewish Mother, who then goes on to induce guilt in the Child by saying, in her own voice, that she will be sitting alone.

But this drama happens not between the author and audience voices of the utterance, but between the two personae. R's author voice overlays the Jewish Mother's voice in a way that will become clear if we recall the setting. R still wants S to call everybody to the table, and she is again using the Jewish Mother persona as a means of getting S to do this. But R also plays the social *role* of host. The utterance thus implies a picture in which the *figure* of the host is sitting alone and eating the meal (so here *yoshevet le'ekhol* is heard in the compound *ani yoshevet levad*, instead of *yoshevet levad, bakhoshekh*), while her guests are not. This is meant to be heard by the audience as an absurd situation to be avoided.

The Jewish Mother's voice is thus overlaid by the author's voice in a unidirectional double-voiced construction again, but the meaning potential of the last compound CF is exploited in different ways by the two voices. The audience, as in lines 1 and 4, is still urged to call the other guests to the table, as the Jewish Mother theme unfolds.

Stages 4&5: designated meaning and response to previous utterances

So, in response to S's utterance in line 5, R first confirms the guess (*bidyuk*), and thus reflects the utterance in line 5 *as* a guess. The guess itself was about the Jewish Mother theme appearing in R's utterance in line 4 on purpose. R reflects this point by using another stereotypical Jewish Mother CF. But by reiterating her request to call the other guests R also enters a negotiation with S of the way her previous utterance (line 4) was reflected in his response in line 5. S reflected the Jewish Mother theme while neglecting the practical request and R now repeats it to stress it again, while at the same time keeping the Jewish Mother theme at work.

Stage 6: actualization of meaning in response

Finally, there is the response to R's utterance. S goes to the other room, and soon everybody come in and the meal begins. By doing this S reflects R's utterance as a request to do so, and also, eventually, acts on his own offer of help in line 3.

Conclusion

In this paper, I tried to explore some of the repercussions of taking dialogicity to be the truly fundamental feature of language. I looked at what would happen if we allow our understanding of language as dialogue to guide our conceptualization of linguistic meaning, the means by which an analysis of what utterances mean would proceed, and the units that such an analysis would use.

The semantic analysis I conducted in the latter half of the paper indicates that such a feat can be accomplished. The meaning of the utterances in the analyzed conversation was reconstructed in a way that would make much sense to a listener familiar with the language and with relevant social practices and stereotypes.[21] Moreover, the analysis was comprehensive in the sense that no part of the content of these utterances was left out of it. On the other hand, I did not rely on the traditional concepts of reference and truth (and the units of word and sentence) in making it. All this is done in a consistent dialogic philosophical framework.

The sort of semantic analysis I conducted here is not meant to yield an exclusive account of what the analyzed utterances mean. There are many ways to understand any utterance, especially

---

[21] Incidentally, this conversation poses practically insurmountable difficulties before a logical-referential analysis. For example, on the syntactic level, lines 1 and 4 can be divided into sentences in many ways, some quite wild, and they do not contain any prosodic clues that would help punctuate them correctly. Line 5 contains a modified idiom, and the traditional paradigm offers no means of even identifying it as such. The approval voiced by R in line 8 ("Exactly") relates neither to anything encoded in the words and sentences voiced previously by S, nor to any implicature that can be shown to have been derived from them.

if we pay attention to fine detail. In an actual interaction, people negotiate these understandings and reach common ground. But if we wish to *validate* an understanding, the sort of analysis I have demonstrated here would be a way to do it.

To be sure, the analysis I conducted here will be considered by many to be irrelevant to semantics as such. After all, I did not have anything interesting to say about the semantic content of the sentences (if indeed these were sentences) that I analyzed. What I looked at was "merely" their *use*, ridden with performance errors. Indeed. But such an objection is paradigm-specific. The test of an approach to language and meaning that does not stay within the traditional paradigm is not in accounting for "semantic content", which is a notion normally *defined* in logical-referential terms, but in accounting as much as possible for the raw data of language. In this case, the raw data would be what was actually said and done in the analyzed conversation (as much of it as can be retrieved from the sound recording), and accounting for it means getting from these raw data to what people would agree is a plausible understanding of what was said.

But precisely because accounting for the raw data is the test of the proposed approach, what I did in this paper can only be considered a first step. My aim here was to establish the *possibility* of dialogic semantics, to demonstrate its basic ability to cope with a random bit of natural language data. For the method of semantic analysis I demonstrated here to be fully established, one has to test it on a reasonably large sample of texts from a variety of genres of spoken and written communication. This undertaking goes well beyond the limits of a single article.

References

Bach, Kent. 2005. Context *ex machina*. In *Semantics versus pragmatics*, ed. Zoltan Gendler Szabó, 15–44. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1981. Discourse in the novel. In *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*, 259–422. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1986a. The problem of speech genres. In *Speech genres and other late essays*, 60–102. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1986b. From notes made in 1970–71. In *Speech genres and other late essays*, 132–158. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bilmes, Jack. 1985. "Why that now?" Two kinds of conversational meaning. *Discourse Processes* 8: 319–355.

Brandist, Craig. 2001. Problems of sense, significance and validity in the Bakhtin circle. *Topos* 1(4), http://www.topos.ehu-international.org/zine/2001/1/brandist.htm (accessed January 7, 2007).

Cooren, François. 2010. *Action and agency in dialogue*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Croft, William. 2001. Radical construction grammar: Syntactic theory in typological perspective. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Croft, William. 2009. Toward a social cognitive linguistics. In *New directions in cognitive linguistics*, ed. Vyvyan Evans and Stéphanie Pourcel, 395–420. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Davidson, Judy. 1984. Subsequent versions of invitations, offers, requests and proposals dealing with potential or actual rejection. In *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis*, ed. J. Maxwell Atkinson and John C. Heritage, 102–128. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ford, Cecilia E. 2004. Contingency and units in interaction. *Discourse Studies* 6: 27–52.

Fried, Mirjam and Jan-Ola Östman. 2005. Construction Grammar and spoken language: The case of pragmatic particles. *Journal of Pragmatics* 37: 1752–1778.

Gasparov, Boris. 2010. *Speech, memory, and meaning: Intertextuality in everyday language*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Goldberg, Adele E. 2006. *Constructions at work: The nature of generalization in language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grice, H. Paul. 1989. *Studies in the way of words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Harris, Roy. 1981. *The language myth*. London: Duckworth.

Hopper, Paul J. 1998. Emergent grammar. In *The new psychology of language: Cognitive and functional approaches to language structure*, ed. Michael Tomasello, 155–202. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates.

Jefferson, Gail. 2004. Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In *Conversation analysis: Studies from the first generation*, ed. Gene H. Lerner, 13–31. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Lähteenmäki, Mika. 2001. *Dialogue, language and meaning: Variations on Bakhtinian themes*. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä University Printing House.

Lähteenmäki, Mika. 2004. Between Relativism and Absolutsm: Towards an Emergentist Definition of Meaning Potential. In: *Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language and Culture: Meaning in Language, Art and the New Media,* ed. Finn Bostad, Craig Brandist, and Lars S. Evensen, 91–113. Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Linell, Per. 1998. *Approaching dialogue: Talk, interaction and contexts in dialogical perspectives*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Linell, Per. 2009. *Rethinking language, mind, and world dialogically*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Lord, Albert B. 2000. *The singer of tales*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rommetveit, Ragnar. 1974. *On message structure: A framework for the study of language and communication*. London: John Wiley & Sons.

Sacks, Harvey, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson. 1974. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50 (4): 696–735.

Salmon, William N. 2010. Formal idioms and action: Toward a grammar of genres. *Language and Communication* 30: 211–24.

Searle, John R. 1969. *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sperber, Dan and Deirdre Wilson. 1981. Irony and the use – mention distinction. In *Radical Pragmatics*, ed. Peter Cole, 295–318. New York: Academic Press.

Voloshinov, Valentin. 1983. Discourse in life and discourse in poetry: Questions of sociological poetics. In *Bakhtin school papers*, ed. Ann Shukman, 5–30. Oxford: Rpt Publications.

Voloshinov, Valentin. 1973. *Marxism and the philosophy of language*. New York: Seminar Press.

Wold, Astri Heen, ed. 1992. The dialogical alternative: Towards a theory of language and mind. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.