INTERACTIONAL PRAGMATICS:
TOWARDS A THEORY OF PERFORMANCE

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1. Introduction

Relational Pragmatics – a research program delineated in Kopytko (1998) proposes that pragmatic theory provides a theoretical framework for studying both pragmatic competence and performance phenomena. That is, it postulates enhancing the scope of pragmatic inquiry by investigating the process of actual language use in social interaction. This means that the narrow cognitivism of the Chomsky-Kasher program for pragmatics (cf. Kopytko 1998 and Sinclair 1995) has been overcome in favor of a more global, holistic approach that goes beyond the study of the linguistic knowledge of language use (or appropriateness conditions of language use) and focuses, on equal terms, on the language users/interactants, the context and the process of verbal interaction.

This is a very complex and ambitious endeavor that calls for a multidisciplinary approach. It seems to be rather obvious that the task of the analyst is to account, to the best of his/her knowledge, for the "things" users/interactants do with their language in the process of verbal interaction. It should not be overlooked that participants in verbal interaction are forced to play the role of a "scientist" i.e. to formulate hypotheses (about the speaker's intentions), interpret (contextual cues), infer (presuppositions, relevance), etc. On the other hand, they frequently jump to conclusions, misread contextual cues, misjudge interlocutors, engage in verbal conflict, etc. A comprehensive, explanatory theory of language use must take into account not only instances of cooperative social interaction (exemplified by Grice's (1975) conversational principles) but also of various types of non-cooperative behavior: verbal conflict and violence, ridicule, deception, critique, etc.

The claim that the study of performance is indispensable and essential to the formulation of any viable hypothesis about linguistic (pragmatic) competence seems to be non-controversial (cf. Chomsky 1965). An explanatory theory of language use, however, should go beyond the investigation of pragmatic competence (knowledge) and take a closer look at the phenomena of verbal interaction by focusing on the question when and why the pragmatic competence of the language user fails i.e. the situation when a perfectly competent speaker is not able to achieve his/her communicative, expressive or conative goals and the hearer fails to interpret the message correctly. Such an approach has at least three rather obvious advantages: firstly, it abandons a narrow rationalistic approach in favor of an empirical one (cf. Kopytko 1995), secondly, it increases the empirical base of the theory, which may allow us to cast a new light on the idea of pragmatic competence, and thirdly, it focuses on the phenomena of performance (actual language use) that provide an interface between pragmatics and interpersonal communication, which is a very positive development not only in view of my integrative, holistic methodological commitment (cf. Kopytko 1998) but also in view of what seems to be an artificial partitioning of allegedly autonomous fields of language study. (This is too vast a topic to discuss here and it will not be pursued any further.)

Before discussing the most essential assumptions and claims of performance theory within the context of *Relational Pragmatics* (RP) a short review of the concepts of the latter will be presented (for a more comprehensive account cf. Kopytko 1998). Then, the question of why we study performance will be taken up again in more detail to pave the way for the main topic of this paper.

2. Relational Pragmatics

Relational Pragmatics (RP) is intended to provide a theoretical framework for studying both pragmatic competence and performance phenomena. It takes an integrated system of psychosocial, linguistic and contextual interdependencies as the object of analysis. The method used in the construction of RP is holistic rather than reductionist (cf. Kopytko 1995). *Relational Pragmatics* aims at showing the problems that every language user/interactant has to solve if he/she wishes to participate successfully in social interaction, and even more importantly it also aims to account for the communicative failures of incompetent participants.

In *Relational Pragmatics* three pairs of binary relations i.e. (xRy) make a pragmatic system (PS): (1) Language user/ Interactant (I) ← → Language (L), (2) Language (L) ← → Context (C) and (3) Interactant (I) ← → Context (C). The three entities mentioned i.e. (I, L and C) and the interrelations between them that constitute the pragmatic system underlie the pragmatic competence of language users. This means that the knowledge of pragmatic systems is a *conditio sine qua non* of appropriate language use. It should be stressed that pragmatic competence i.e. the knowledge of pragmatic systems is a purely mental, intersubjective (and frequently subjective) phenomenon that underlies actual performance/language use. Thus, it should be made clear that the interactant's knowledge of context (e.g., of a specific social situation) and his/her actual handling of the situation are two different aspects of language use, i.e. knowledge vs. the actual use of language. This claim may seem to be rather obvious to the followers of Noam Chomsky's tradition in the study of language, however, its role, function and significance for pragmatic theory are different from for *Transformational Generative Grammar*. In brief, from the pragmatic point of view, the use of the concepts (i.e. competence vs. performance) has been changed therefore their function and meaning should be looked upon from a different perspective (to be presented below).

Relational Pragmatics defines pragmatic competence as having three salient features: (1) *incompleteness*, (2) *uncertainty* and (3) *metastability*. The contextual mastery of language is a matter of degree which depends on the many linguistic and social skills of the interactant. In this sense it is incomplete not only with regard to specific social situations but also in relation to all possible uses of language in a society. On the other hand, the outcome of a social encounter is uncertain because (a) the number and scope of the relevant contextual features are unpredictable, and (b) the contextual configuration of features will differ from situation to situation. Finally, pragmatic knowledge is associated with the concept of *metastability* i.e. a temporary stability of a system, in other words, the system of a language user's pragmatic knowledge is claimed to be liable to change and development in time.

The vague, abstract concept of the *language user/interactant* has found some elaboration within the framework of *Relational Pragmatics* (cf. Kopytko 1998). It has been postulated there that the notion of "appropriate language use" implies, *inter alia*, a body of social and psychological knowledge that underlies a language user's verbal behavior. This knowledge could be analyzed not only with psychosocial variables such as power – (P), social distance – (D), intimacy – (I), goal – (G) or affect – (A) but also as *cognitive-affective* states, e.g., understanding, empathy, compassion, etc. (cf. Kopytko 1993). Furthermore, the idea of "appropriate language use" has been claimed to imply the user's knowledge of the "other" and context but also self-knowledge i.e. the user's self-concept. On the cognitive plane the self-system has been represented as an integrated *cognitive-affective-conative* system (the latter associated with motivations and goals). By implication, the language user has been assumed to possess knowledge of the cognitive, affective and conative (i.e. strategic) use of language. The *cognitive-affective-conative* system has been postulated to constitute the internal/mental context for language use. The internal context has been considered to

be essential to language use and interpretation because it adds one more layer of contextual meaning referred to as the *metapragmatic meaning* that is abducted (i.e. inferred as a hypothetical abduction) from an interactant's goals, motivations, attitudes and various features of language use.

Finally, it has been assumed in *Relational Pragmatics* that there is an interface between the language user's mental and social context. This interface accounts, *inter alia*, for the phenomena and processes associated with language acquisition and use.

In conclusion, *Relational Pragmatics* is intended to provide a framework for a contextualized, holistic approach to the study of language use. In the next section the question why we should study performance will be taken up again because it seems to be essential to any comprehensive account of the pragmatic analysis of language use.

3. Why study performance?

This question may for some linguists sound provocative, for others pedantic or redundant. This is so because for a number of pragmaticians it is equivalent to asking why we should study pragmatics or contextualized language use (cf. Mey 1993, 1994 and Kopytko 1995). In Noam Chomsky's tradition of language study *performance* was neglected and linguistic (grammatical) *competence* became the focus of linguistic analysis; and rightly so, because who or what kind of a linguistic theory would be interested in investigating accidental grammatical errors, slips of the tongue (Freudians might have fun interpreting the latter), shifts of attention or interest, distractions, memory limitations, false starts, changes of plan in midcourse and other features of natural speech (cf. Chomsky 1965). By introducing some idealizations, to the effect that the phenomena mentioned above will be excluded from linguistic analysis, a researcher may postulate that performance is a direct reflection of competence. Thus, because there is no direct access to linguistic competence, for Chomsky and his followers *performance* becomes the vehicle by means of which a model of competence may be arrived at. This done, performance may gladly be returned to the shelf and forgotten as an object of linguistic analysis. This is not so in the case of a pragmatic theory of language because the latter focuses on the study of language use. It should be made clear that for Chomsky (1965: 9) *the theory of language use* is equivalent to *the theory of performance.*

Relational Pragmatics assumes that a theory of language use/performance incorporates linguistic (grammatical) competence in Chomsky's sense as one of its basic components (cf. Kopytko 1998). However, it should be stressed that it is the concept of *pragmatic competence* that is crucial to the theory of performance. Thus, a proficient user of a language will be claimed to have acquired *pragmatic competence* i.e. a knowledge of contextual language use. To elucidate

this concise, abstract and rather vague definition of pragmatic competence a theory of context for language use/performance seems to be indispensable. Such a theory will be briefly delineated below. Beforehand, however, a couple of other questions have to be raised.

First, the basic differences between linguistic (grammatical) *versus* pragmatic competence deserve to be exposed. Thus, knowledge of a finite number of grammatical rules and exceptions to the former vs. the infinite quantity of contexts, language users and all possible configurations of the elements of social interaction of the latter constitute the essential difference between them. (As stated above, pragmatic competence in *Relational Pragmatics* is characterized as *incomplete, uncertain* and *metastable.*)

Second, the social consequences of linguistic errors, slips of the tongue, etc. (except for some formal contexts e.g. examinations, job interviews) are considerably less serious than pragmatic errors, or other forms of pragmatic inappropriateness, impoliteness or impudence that may cost the incompetent or unaware language user even his/her own life or at best much trouble, depending on the social, cultural or political context.

Third, Chomsky's (1965) claim that under some idealizations performance becomes a direct reflection of competence seems to be only marginally (if at all) applicable to pragmatic competence (maybe in the case of some aspects of formal pragmatics). It seems that a successful use of language/performance requires the satisfaction of a number of contextual conditions (the majority of them independent of the will of the speaker) i.e. the interrelations between the elements of a social interaction.

Fourth, pragmatic competence is socially acquired rather than genetically inherited (for the idea of the innate character of some pragmatic phenomena cf. Kasher 1994a).

Fifth, the use of language is usually (perhaps always) associated with some goal or intention (minimally the "phatic communion" cf. Malinowski 1923 and Lyons 1977) that can be analyzed in terms of the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect of the speech act.

Sixth, the use of language requires the presence of a system of knowledge that accounts for the pragmatic phenomena at the interface between the individual and the "other" i.e. society.

Seventh, the use of language is associated with a number of emergent phenomena e.g., humor, laughter, *faux pas*, conflict, the loss of face, embarrassment, scandal and many others. To this category belong also the phenomena of linguistic (pragmatic) creativity and language change.

In sum, the study of language use in *Relational Pragmatics* will be viewed as a phenomenon *sui generis* that incorporates 'pragmatic competence' as one of its essential components. Furthermore, performance phenomena will be ana-

lyzed as complex, dynamic processes of social interaction where social cooperation or social conflict is the result of a collaborative effort on the part of the actors involved and the dynamic features of the evolving context. As has been demonstrated above, there are many reasons for investigating performance. To give the most succinct answer to the question "why study performance?", the following claim may be advanced: Because performance phenomena influence the use and interpretation of language, which has a profound effect not only on the process of human communication but also on the user's self-concept and interpersonal relations.

4. The tasks of a theory of performance

It is not a revolutionary statement to suggest that the study of language use/performance should focus on the processes and phenomena associated with actual language use in social interaction. So far a couple of approaches to language use (or to be precise to discourse analysis) have been identified (for a survey see Schiffrin 1993). They represent approaches to language use from a specific perspective e.g., Speech Act Theory – Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), Interactional Sociolinguistics – Gumperz (1982), The Ethnography of Communication – Hymes (1974a), Pragmatics – Grice (1975), Conversational Analysis – Garfinkel (1967) and Sacks (1992), Variation Analysis – Labov (1972). One could also add some European approaches to discourse (which happen to be mysteriously absent in American handbooks) e.g., The Birmingham School of Discourse Analysis – Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) or Text Linguistics – de Beaugrande – Dressler (1981) and van Dijk (1977) to name only a few. Most of these approaches (if not all) seem to be biased to some degree (probably intentionally) by focusing on one aspect of the complex processes and phenomena of language use rather than others e.g., linguistic, social, ethnographic, cognitive or anthropological. An integrative approach would have to account for all these and some more e.g., communicational, interactive, affective or conative (i.e., associated with the goal of a discourse).

In *Relational Pragmatics* pragmatic competence is viewed as a system of relations between the user/interactant (I) analyzed as an integrated *cognitive-affective-conative system* and his/her knowledge of the *language* (L) and *context* (C). As has already been mentioned *pragmatic competence* should be incorporated into the theory of performance i.e. it should constitute an essential part of such a theory. The reason for such a step seems to be rather obvious – human communication without knowledge of language use would be virtually impossible. One could suggest that a proud owner of a knife, spoon and fork who, unfortunately, has not acquired in due time the skills associated with their use is in a situation that resembles that of a person who can generate an infinite number of (contextually) meaningless utterances to no avail.

The concept of *pragmatic competence* implies that a successful acquirer of this faculty (or rather skill) can be expected be an effective communicator or social interactant. However, as daily experience teaches us, even very skillful users of the language fall victim to communicative failure, misunderstanding, misreading, verbal conflict and a host of other instances of misinterpretation and uncooperative behavior. To find an illustration and confirmation of this claim one could refer the reader to the majority of Chomsky's publications e.g., Chomsky (1975) in which he has to defend himself against the misinterpretations of his academic discourse by *his* learned critics. Such and similar facts should also be accounted for by pragmaticians. Who is the "culprit" in such cases? Is it the author whose pragmatic competence is not equal to the task, or perhaps his/her misinterpreters (if this is the case) who fail to use their interpretative skills appropriately or have not acquired them adequately, or finally, perhaps the inherent features of discourses (texts) both written and oral should be held responsible for this predicament? Obviously, all three factors can contribute to the miscommunication problem, and in addition, there is a fourth one (and perhaps the most important) – *the context*. It should be emphasized that *Relational Pragmatics* takes care of the problems by proposing a theory of the user and by postulating the defining features of *pragmatic competence* (see above).

The study of language use requires a critical reorientation of goals, methods, concepts, ontological and epistemological claims in comparison to the investigation of universalist claims associated with the *Cartesian paradigm* in linguistics and pragmatics (cf. Kopytko in press). First of all the validity of the following claims and assumptions should be questioned: (1) duality of the mental vs. physical "world", (2) *innateness hypothesis*, (3) modularity of mind, (4) common cognitive processing mechanism, (5) the representational view of mind, (6) essentialism, (7) the discreteness/categoriality of pragmatic phenomena, (8) cognitive rationality, (9) certain knowledge, (10) universal rules, (11) universal claims, (12) deductive method and (13) predictiveness (for the features of *rationalistic pragmatics* (cf. Kopytko 1995).

Kopytko (in press) suggests that the *Cartesian Homo Cognitans* and Chomsky's idealized *speaker-hearer* are endowed innately with these (1-13) cognitive qualities/features (cf. Descartes 1969; Chomsky 1965, 1966; Cottingham 1992). *Non-Cartesian pragmatics*, that is gradually gaining ground (cf. Kopytko in press; Verschueren 1999), will not endorse the thirteen properties (or the majority of them). It should be noted that the greatest challenge to the *Cartesian paradigm* has come from cognitive science, especially, neuroscience and neurobiology – Damasio (1994), cognitive psychology – Tversky – Kahneman (1982), Forgas (1991), Banji – Prentice (1994), Thagard – Barnes (1996), Harré – Gillett (1994) and Harré (in press). Another important Non-Cartesian development and critique has been offered by the followers of "social

constructionism" from Mead (1934), Berger – Luckmann (1966) to Gergen (1994) and Searle (1992).

A view of pragmatics characterized by social/linguistic interaction, communicative success or failure, dynamic discourse processes, emergence phenomena, linguistic choices, variability, negotiability, adaptability, emotions, motivations, wishes and desires goes far beyond the goals of rationalistic pragmatics (cf. Kopytko 1995) and the break with the Cartesian tradition seems to be inevitable. The integrative (holistic) trend in linguistic pragmatics has an ally in non-Cartesian approaches to cognition (cf. Kopytko in press) such as *situated cognition* (Clancey 1997), *situated action* (Suchman 1987), *dynamic cognition* (Port – Gelder 1995), *distributed cognition* (Thagard – Barnes 1996; Clark 1997), *sociocognition* (Levine et. al. 1993) and *discursive psychology* (Harré – Gillett 1994).

Chomsky (1966, 1984, 1986) and Fodor (1975, 1981, 1983, 1987) in numerous publications explicitly endorse the *Cartesian* view of cognitive phenomena (the knowledge of language in particular). A paradigmatic case of *Cartesian pragmatics* is presented by the Chomsky-Kasher cognitive research program (cf. Kasher 1991, 1994a, 1994b), (for an illuminating survey of some issues in cognitive pragmatics, especially the Chomsky-Kasher vs. Sperber – Wilson (1986) approach to representation of pragmatics in the mind cf. Sinclair 1995). Kasher (1994a: 535) claims that "[u]se of language is governed by systems of abstract rules that are universally and most probably innately constrained." If Kasher is right the knowledge of language use would have to be analyzed in terms of innate and acquired structures. The relational view of pragmatics focuses on acquired knowledge i.e., *communicative competence* (cf. Hymes 1971; Lyons 1977) and interactional processes and phenomena such as (1) cooperative vs. uncooperative behavior of participants, (2) collective construction and interpretation of meaning, rationality, context and relations between interactants, (3) emergent discourse phenomena including: embarrassment, *faux pas*, loss of face, conflict, humor, (4) social influence – argumentation, persuasion, propaganda, language control and deception etc., (5) misunderstanding and illusory understanding, (6) dynamic discourse phenomena e.g., the changing contextual elements/features on the cognitive, social, interactional and physical (i.e., physical context) planes, the dynamics of emotions in interaction, reorientation of goals and points of view etc., (7) ideological discourse phenomena and others, (8) the dynamic self-concept in social interaction, (9) negotiating the rules and content of verbal interaction, (10) attaining some kind of social consensus or communicative success and others.

Clearly, such an ambitious project requires a multidisciplinary approach. The idea of *autonomous pragmatics* is of no use for the student of linguistic interaction. In fact, Chomsky's (1965, 1972) admission that linguistics is a branch of

cognitive psychology has called into question claims about autonomy of linguistics (although the relations between linguistic and other cognitive faculties are far from being settled). Integrative approaches to the study of language use (cf. Nuyts 1992; van Dijk 1997, 1998; Verschueren 1999) present different levels and scope of integration, different theoretical advancement and goals of their analyses (cf. Kopytko in press). More and more pragmaticians see the need for a multidisciplinary study of language use, however, the complexity of the task is a drawback to any fast and easy formulation of an integrative/holistic framework. Following Chomsky's (1965) celebrated specification of the three levels of the adequacy of grammar (i.e., *observational, descriptive* and *explanatory* adequacy) even the lowest level (observational) in pragmatic theory requires a multidisciplinary view. That is, it should account for linguistic interaction of (minimally) two actors in a specific context. This task calls at least for cognitive-affective, social/cultural and interactional analyses of contextually defined meaning. It should be emphasized that the attainment of the level of observational adequacy in pragmatic theory seems to be, for the time being, a matter for distant future.

There are four crucial elements (or rather constitutive components) of language use: language users/actors, language, context/communicative situation and interaction. Interaction by definition is a dynamic process that involves actors, context and language. In the course of interaction the seemingly static elements (i.e., actors, context and language) usually acquire (to a different degree) their own dynamics that shapes and controls or disorganizes the phenomena and processes in action. The spacio-temporal axis facilitates mis(communication) and dynamization of discursive phenomena which, in turn, accelerate dynamic changes in actors' *cognitive-affective-conative* systems.

Out of the four elements of verbal interaction *language* has been analyzed exhaustively (in numerous approaches – from behaviorist to cognitivist/mentalistic and social) and at least for linguists it does not require any special elaboration or justification and explanation. The notions of language user/actor, context and interaction seem to be vaguer and need more attention.

5. Language users in linguistic interaction

The idea of an idealized language user that acquired (or partly genetically inherited) communicative competence and as a result, uses his/her language perfectly in a homogeneous speech community does not seem to be crucial for the student of linguistic interaction. This is so because language users' communicative competence represents only a small fraction of the potential/possible uses of language in an infinite number of contexts. Moreover, the "little" communicative competence that every speaker possesses has been characterized (above) as *incomplete, uncertain* and *metastable*. In addition, pragmatic knowledge of lan-

guage use can hardly be defined in objective terms (i.e., claims about the objectivity of pragmatic phenomena or entities do not seem to be justified) rather the individual process of language use acquisition in specific contexts and daily experience and interactional practice clearly suggest vast areas of subjectivity on the cognitive-affective, social-cultural and interactional planes. There are no two language users who have acquired the same level of communicative competence, developed the same concepts (to the same degree) and mastered the same contexts of their use or attain communicative success (in an infinite variety of contexts) with equal ease. Actors individualize their language and linguistic behavior in social interaction not only because of their specific goals and strategies but also because of their individual inventory of pragmatic knowledge and experience (which may be characterized both in terms of quantity and quality e.g., presence or absence of a concept or knowledge of its use and the degree of contextual appropriateness of an expression etc.). Clearly, actors can be characterized in terms of their *Individual Pragmatic Potential* (IPP), which by definition differs from speaker to speaker (cf. Kopytko in press), (and from writer to writer e.g., Shakespeare's masterly play with language in *Love's Labour's Lost*, or his presentation of a variety of styles/discourses in *Hamlet,* or the unsurpassable poetry in *Hamlet, Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*). In this connection it would be an unforgivable mistake not to notice the natural relation between linguistic pragmatics and *creativity.* In his early writings Chomsky (1964, 1965) emphasized the idea of *linguistic creativity*, the novelty associated with language use etc., however he focused mainly on the linguistic (intra-systemic) aspects of creativity. From the pragmatic point of view specified in the *non-Cartesian* approach to language use it is the social/linguistic interaction (associated with a number of discourse emergence phenomena) that shapes and controls the spontaneous dynamics of linguistic creativity. Thus, the latter should be viewed as a creative interactional process rather than *knowledge*, although different aspects or forms of knowledge may be involved in or may contribute to the process of creation. Obviously, in the case of an artistic (either spontaneous or non-spontaneous) use of language (e.g., Shakespeare, see the examples above) the author frequently (or perhaps always) interacts with his/her earlier ideas, metaphors, claims, characters, goals, emotions, means of artistic expression, themes and other aspects of his/her *Individual Pragmatic Potential* (IPP). Moreover, artists can learn from others, or profit from social interaction, observation or even "steal" consciously or unconsciously from many sources. Finally, it should be noted that the major part of the creative process seems to be unconscious and as a result authors have no idea what and why have they written. Luckily, literary critics may come to their rescue and propose such interpretations of their works that may surpass the authors' boldest expectations.

An important feature of the *Individual Pragmatic Potential* (IPP) is that it can change, develop and grow. This means that actors can learn (also from their interactional mistakes) and acquire communicative/pragmatic competence *ad infinitum*. The issue of the development of the *Individual Pragmatic Potential* (IPP) is not only a matter of possibility but also one of necessity. In order to achieve communicative success in linguistic interaction (both spoken or written) actors/writers have to take into account the (IPP) of their addressees. In addition, especially in the course of verbal interaction actors have to learn how to adapt to the changing context, how to react to unpredictable discourse emergence phenomena (e.g., *faux pas*, embarrassment, loss of face, conflict between participants etc.), how to construct collectively the meaning of discourse, how to control the course of interaction to attain their goals, how to control emotions and rationality of verbal interaction, how to reach some kind of social *consensus* in the case of differences of opinion or a variety of points of view, and so forth.

Obviously, so called "shared knowledge" plays an important role in interpersonal communication. There must be some overlap in the use of concepts and ideas between interactants. Similar social experiences, education, socio-cultural background, cognitive skills/faculties or linguistic interactional practice may facilitate social interaction and communication to a considerable degree. However, it should be emphasized that the above mentioned factors can never guarantee communicative success between actors. This is so because the IPPs of language users are different and the contextual parameters on the cognitive (or rather mental) and interactional planes change constantly. The dynamics of cognition and social/linguistic interaction can hardly be predicted or controlled. The same can be said about the dynamics of the emotional context in verbal exchange, for example, the situation of growing tension between participants and the possible outcomes or solutions that may be expected. Such situations require special skills from participants such as seeking some solution by means of verbal reduction of tension e.g., by introducing verbal or situational humor, diverting the actors' attention, redefining the situation etc. However, sometimes even such measures may fail and the "unreleased tension" may finally find its release in verbal aggression and interpersonal conflict or even violent action/behavior. In addition to the cognitive and affective aspects of interactional dynamics it is the conative i.e., goal-oriented factors that may contribute to the structure and course of verbal exchanges. Actors may have a dynamic hierarchy of goals that they wish to attain. Such goals may include minimally *phatic communion* i.e., the desire to maintain a good social relationship with some specified "others" or to express/release one's emotions or pass on a message. Clearly, there is no upper boundary or *a maximum* that actors can require from others, unless it is their lives that may be at stake, which happens from time to time. The hierarchy of goals may also change during interaction. This happens frequently when new

and unexpected data/information comes to light or an unpredictable discourse emergent phenomenon appears. Then, the priority list of goals must be instantly revised and corrected, which may radically change the actors' linguistic behavior, the emotional structure and dynamics as well as the operation of the cognitive-perceptual mechanism e.g., William Shakespeare's Othello's imagined and real "worlds".

The ideas of 'communicative success' and 'communicative failure', undoubtedly deserve special attention. As has been mentioned above, the use of language is usually associated with some goals. The question that requires an answer is "How do we know (as language users) that we have attained communicative success or failed to do so?" The answer is that there does not seem to exist infallible, reliable method that would secure such knowledge for language users. The usual practice that interactants rely on in verbal interaction is the observation of interlocutors' behavior and inferring (non-deductively and subjectively) some kind of interpretation of the intended *perlocutionary effect.* For naive language users some form of confirmation on the part of their interlocutors e.g., nodding/shaking one's head or a verbal expression of understanding, agreement etc., seems to be a sufficient reason for claiming communicative success. Unfortunately, after some time it may prove that the interlocutor misinterpreted our intentions/meaning or even worse, his/her interpretation may be the opposite of our intentions. The same is true of the critical interpretation of literature, philosophy or scientific research. The arbitrary and conventional nature of linguistic signs/language (cf. de Saussure 1916-1959), the features of *Individual Pragmatic Potential* (IPP) (cf. Kopytko in press) and infinite contextual regress may be held responsible for the problems of interpersonal communication. Finally, to be more specific, the actors may succeed or fail not only to (1) communicate a message, but also (2) express ones feelings, (3) open a channel of communication, (4) maintain a good relationship with others, (5) attain their interactional goals, (5) control the course of linguistic interaction.

6. Context as an interactional notion

The idea of *context* in modern linguistics seems to be associated, first of all with "British contextualism" and its founding father Bronisław Malinowski (1923) and his followers: J. R. Firth (1957) and M. A. K. Halliday (1973, 1978, 1985). According to Malinowski (1923: 310) language: (1) realizes action (e.g., buying, selling a thing or giving instructions how to use an object), (2) expresses the social and emotive function, (3) realizes *phatic communion* (i.e., the maintaining of social ties through small talk or the exchange of greetings). Malinowski (1923) notes that "a statement, spoken in real life is never detached from the situation in which it has been uttered ... the utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation." Firth (1957) was interested in the study of actual language

text, i.e., the study of 'performance' rather than 'competence'. Firth insisted on the contextual analysis of texts in terms of situational relations and the context of situation. The Malinowski-Firth approach to linguistic analysis was continued in *scale and category* linguistics and *systemic linguistics* (cf. Halliday 1961, 1970; Gregory 1967). Studies in text linguistics and discourse analysis (cf. Van Dijk 1977, 1981; de Beaugrande – Dressler 1981; Sinclair – Coulthard 1975) have drawn attention to superstructures (narratives, argumentation, scientific papers, newspaper articles, etc.) and global structures (e.g., of a lesson realized in terms of transactions).

The role and scope of context vary in different approaches to discourse analysis (cf. Schiffrin 1993). In *speech act theory* (SAT), (cf. Austin 1962; Searle 1969, 1975) and *Gricean pragmatics* (cf. Grice 1975) the view of context as knowledge dominates. This means that the actor's knowledge of the "world" (including its mental, social and cultural aspects) controls the use and interpretation of language. Gumperz's (1982) *interactional sociolinguistics* has introduced important notions such as 'contextualization cues', 'contextual presuppositions' and 'situated inferences'. These concepts relate the pragmatic interpretation of meaning to the cognitive knowledge of interactants and the present situation (situational context). The *ethnography of communication* (cf. Hymes 1972, 1974a) relies on the idea of *communicative competence*. Dell Hymes attempts to integrate the cognitive context and the socio-cultural context that define communicative events. In William Labov's (1972) *variation analysis* the idea of context as a 'situation' and 'text' (i.e., linguistic context) dominates. In contrast to *interactional sociolinguistics* variation analysis regards the situational factors as discrete and mutually exclusive entities that can be coded, counted and compared (cf. Schiffrin 1993). The broadest scope of context is presented by *conversational analysis* CA (cf. Garfinkel 1967, 1974; Sacks 1992). Conversational analysis combines the view of context as (1) 'knowledge', (2) 'situation' and (3) 'text'. It should be noted, however, that in CA knowledge cannot be separated from the situation, i.e., it is knowledge "in use" rather than independent knowledge stored in the brain (characteristic of SAT or *Gricean pragmatics*) that differentiates the notion of knowledge in CA from that used in other approaches to discourse analysis.

Leech (1983: 13) characterizes context as "any background knowledge assumed to be shared by *s* and *h* and which contributes to *the h's interpretation of what s* means by a given utterance." (The letters *s* and *h* stand for the speaker and hearer respectively). Levinson (1983: x) restricts context to the basic parameters of the context of utterance, e.g., participants' identity, role, location, assumptions about knowledge, etc. He justifies such an approach to context with the aim of his book, which he sees as "an introduction to the philosophico-linguistic

guistic tradition" rather than "an exhaustive coverage of all the contextual coordinates of linguistic organization".

Mey (1993: 186) insists that "any understanding that linguists can hope to obtain of what goes on between people using language is based, necessarily and uniquely, on a correct understanding of the *whole context* (my emphasis) in which the linguistic interaction takes place".

Verschueren (1999: 74-114) devotes more space and attention to the idea of context than other contemporary pragmaticians. He locates language users within contextual correlates of adaptability represented as a linguistic context and the 'mental world', 'social world' and 'physical world'. This is the broad scope of contextual factors including *knowledge, situation, co-text* and others. According to Verschueren the mental world activated in language use contains *cognitive* and *emotive* elements. He also mentions 'personality', 'beliefs', 'desires', 'wishes', 'motivations' and 'intentions'. Unfortunately, no systematic account of these elements nor the relations between them are discussed in his book.

In conclusion, there is no agreement among pragmaticians and discourse analysts about the scope of context and the number of items that should be included in the contextual set. In addition, a disciplinary bias of researchers in their specific approaches to context is clearly visible. Thus, Bronisław Malinowski's idea of context seems to be influenced by cultural anthropology. John Austin, John Searle and Paul Grice are associated with 'analytical philosophy', William Labov with sociolinguistics, John Gumperz with interactional sociolinguistics, conversational analysts with ethnomethodology and so on.

In *interactional pragmatics* the scope of context cannot be artificially restricted by the disciplinary bias (or specific goals and methods) of particular researchers or approaches to pragmatics or discourse analysis. This is so because the analyst has to account for the social construction of meaning, rationality, goals, emotions, discourse dynamics and a number of discourse emergent phenomena such as embarrassment, humor, conflict, loss of face and many others. To achieve this, the researcher has to break with the *Cartesian paradigm* in linguistic pragmatics (cf. Kopytko in press) and embrace a new perspective that is gradually emerging, and will be referred to as the *non-Cartesian paradigm*. In this new approach to language use the concept of *pancontextualism* plays an important role. Pancontextual (i.e., all-embracing) view of pragmatics and discourse analysis does not set any theoretical (artificial) boundary (or contextual scope) for the relation/interaction between meaning and its context. Rather, it assumes that the scope of context is infinite, dynamic and unpredictable. This means that any element of the contextual set including the physical, *cognitive-affective-affective* system, socio-cultural and interactional phenomena can become contextually relevant. That is, the actors in linguistic interaction may or

have to focus on them in the process of meaning production and interpretation. Clearly, such a view rejects methodological reductionism in favor of disciplinary integration or some form of holism (cf. Kopytko in press; Fodor – Lapore 1991).

The claim about the infinite range of contextual knowledge/information immediately suggests the question whether all language users have equal access to it. Obviously, the answer is negative. There are no two language users who could possess the same inventory of knowledge or social experience, the same structure (and dynamics) of emotions, goals, needs or the same social skills and interactional experience. Linguistic interaction is to a great extent individual and subjective. The attainment of communicative success usually requires great effort and involvement on the part of interactants. The universal conversational principles proposed by Grice (1975) or strategies of politeness (and especially the notion of 'face') have to face socio-cultural reality and as a result they fall victim to 'cultural relativism' i.e., culture specific forms of social/linguistic behavior. It should be emphasized that human behavior (or different varieties of individual social behavior) within a specific culture may be more striking, variable, unpredictable and non-typical than the inter-cultural differences so frequently adduced to exemplify the claims of *cultural relativism.*

The object of analysis in interactional pragmatics is not an ideal speaker-hearer or a social communicator who has mastered communicative competence perfectly and completely but an individual language user who is endowed with *Individual Pragmatic/Contextual Potential* (IPP) that is characterized by its *incompleteness, metastability* and *uncertainty* associated with the communicative success of verbal interaction. *Nota bene,* the question of pragmatic universals or *Universal Pragmatic Potential* (UPP) remains open. However, for *interactional pragmatics* (i.e., for interpersonal communication and communicative success) it is the individual and subjective aspect of *communicative competence* that is crucial rather than the universal and tacit (that is or should be 'there'). So far, no spectacular success in pragmatic "ghost-catching" has been witnessed (for the philosophical issue of subjectivism vs. objectivism cf. Kopytko in press). The problem that every language users in linguistic interaction has to solve is the subjectivity associated with their interlocutors. Actors can appeal to their addressees' universal rules/principles e.g., they may produce appeals like this: "Be a human being Paul, observe Grice's conversational principles when you are talking to me, do not forget about *facework*, be rational, control your emotions, try to understand the obvious, you dummy!" The interactional effectiveness of such appeals remains an empirical matter (for objectivists only!).

In interactional pragmatics the actor in social/linguistic interaction is no longer the center of the universe of discourse but rather he/she may be viewed as

one of many elements of a communicative situation that includes minimally two participants, the contextual set and spacio-temporal (interactional) dynamics. In addition, the rational omniscient, objective agent associated with the *Cartesian paradigm* has to resign in favor of a much less impressive but more realistic subjective actor whose pragmatic knowledge is incomplete, unstable and uncertain. Moreover, his/her social/interactional skills can never guarantee communicative success, but this actor possesses a set of remarkable features that allow him/her to survive as a human being. This set of cognitive and socio-cognitive features includes the ability to learn (also from mistakes), to adapt to new conditions/contexts, to cooperate with others, to seek agreement and social consensus, to change his/her opinions and beliefs (this seems to be a very subjective and unequally distributed gift among human actors), to construct collectively a number of interactional entities such as context, meaning, rationality, goals and others.

The number of issues, concepts, phenomena and processes that could be associated with interactional pragmatics are so vast that even a preliminary list will not be attempted here. Clearly, only an interdisciplinary, holistic approach can be successful in accounting for numerous interactional phenomena.

The idea of the *interactional context* (cf. Kopytko in press) is crucial for *interactional pragmatics*. The interactional context is constructed by actors embedded in a specific contextual set, at the same time, however the actors seem to be "dialectically constructed by the interactional context (e.g., the enforced process of dynamic, interactional adaptation, change, development, learning, inferring, etc.).

7. Conclusions

The new gradually emerging paradigm of *non-Cartesian pragmatics* is not just an antithesis of the *Cartesian paradigm*. The "world" or reality cannot be perceived in terms of binary oppositions i.e., either-or dichotomy. Rather, a pragmatic view of 'reality' or 'being" analyzed in terms of a non-discrete, non-categorical, non-essentialist, non-reductionist, non-deterministic approach should be preferred. Non-Cartesians do not have to reject all claims associated with Cartesian rationalism (see above). For instance, *the innateness hypothesis* is a very complex phenomenon. The claim about the innateness of the faculty of language (according to Chomsky (1965) an empirical claim) has many aspects (philosophical, cognitive, neuro-scientific and others that have to be carefully considered in view of new developments in cognitive science) and unspecified scope (i.e., which aspects of linguistic faculty are innate vs. acquired).

Interactional pragmatics promotes a pancontextual approach to language use. A broad, all-embracing view of context leads to an alternative i.e., *non-Cartesian* approach to pragmatics. It may be claimed that interactional pragmatics (1)

questions the objectivity of the notion of 'context', (2) advises a decentration of the subject/actor/language user, (3) proposes an interactional point of view in pragmatic analysis, (4) explains why communicative success in verbal interaction is never guaranteed and illusory understanding or miscommunication occurs so frequently, (5) suggests that actors' subjective (IPPs) may change, develop and be enriched, (6) notes that the interactional processes (including actors' (IPPs) adaptation, enrichment, etc.) of multifarious cooperation between actors may lead to some form of social *consensus* and understanding (which, however, may prove to be unstable and only temporary), (7) reveals the dependence of 'interactional pragmatics' on other disciplines that investigate the different aspects of *the pancontextual* set.

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