

1. FICTIVE INTERACTION AND THE CONVERSATION
FRAME: AN OVERVIEW*

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We deal with the notion of *fictive interaction*, namely the use of the conversation frame in order to structure cognition, discourse, and grammar (Pascual 2002, 2006b, 2014). We discuss how thought and the conceptualization of experience are partly modeled by the pattern of conversation, and present the kinds of fictive interaction on different levels: the discourse, the inter-sentential, the sentential, and intra-sentential level, down to the morpheme. We also provide a list of its defining characteristics (conversational features, non-actual and non-token interpretation, metonymy), and discuss what makes this ubiquitous phenomenon, widespread across languages, discourse genres, and sociolinguistic groups, worth studying, and what its theoretical implications are. The chapter closes with an overview of the structure and content of this volume.

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A trivial fact, the fundamental importance of which has been noted by many scholars, is that face-to-face conversation is the primary ground for language, culture, and cognition. It is in the medium of conversation that in-

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fants acquire language and it is predominantly through conversation that they are initiated into the culture and society of their elders (cf. Cicourel 1974; E. Clark 2003; Budwig et al. 2000; Trevarthen and Hubley 1978; Bruner 1983). Utterances become meaningful in situated sequential turn-taking, both for children (cf. E. Clark 2003) and for adults (H. Clark 1992; Goodwin 1995; Sacks 1992). Conversation is also the most basic form of communication, ontogenetically, and phylogenetically (Tomasello 1999, 2003). Infants are able to communicate successfully and follow the turn-taking pattern of conversation long before they can speak (Bråten 1998; Trevarthen 1979, 2011). For adults too, conversation is indisputably the canonical form of verbal communication (H. Clark 1996), in which most of our language use occurs throughout our lives. Moreover, all natural languages evolved while being used exclusively in face-to-face interaction; after all, historically, language has much longer been oral—or signed—than written.

Given this foundational status of conversation, it should come as no surprise that it serves as a domain of experience that shapes the way we conceptualize our material and social world, our thought processes, and as a result also the structure of both discourse and grammar. Recent research has indeed focused on the central role played by intersubjectivity in language and cognition. In this context, it becomes clear that face-to-face conversa-

tion can serve as a central cultural and conceptual model, a *frame*, for the structuring of cognition, discourse, and grammar. The linguistic incarnation of such framing has been referred to as *fictive interaction* (Pascual 2002, 2006b, 2014), and it is fictive interaction, with its many linguistic forms, discursive functions, communicative uses, and conceptual implications, that this volume is about.

1. Fictive interaction: A cognitive, discursive and linguistic phenomenon

So, what is fictive interaction? To illustrate the phenomenon, consider the very paragraph you are reading. Note that the paragraph started with a *question*, which is now being followed by an *answer*. Question-answer adjacency pairs prototypically belong to the structure of face-to-face conversation, but in this paragraph we use this conversational structure as a discourse-organizing device, in this case to introduce a topic to the discussion, just as one might start a new topic in a conversation by asking one's interlocutor a question.

Thus, in essence, fictive interaction involves presenting what seems to be (part of) a conversation, in order to introduce, define, or refer to what

is usually not a conversation. In addition to information flow, fictive interaction may partially serve to structure: (i) cognition (e.g. talking to oneself), (ii) the conceptualization of experience (e.g. “A good walk is the *answer* to headache”), (iii) discourse organization (e.g. a Frequently Asked Questions page), and (iv) language use and structure (e.g. rhetorical questions).

1. Fictive interaction in cognition

When people think, they frequently engage in imaginary conversational exchanges (cf. Voloshinov [1929] 1986; Vygotsky [1934] 1962). Indeed, human thought as such can be described (in Plato’s eloquent words) as “a silent conversation of the soul with itself” (*Sophist* 263e), and has even been argued to develop from children’s speech addressed to an imaginary or virtual interlocutor (Vygotsky [1934] 1962).

This is also how we seem to conceptualize and often talk about thought processes. Consider this example, in which a former top athlete nar-

rates her reaction after she became a partial paraplegic as a result of an accident:¹

- (1) For over ten days I_i drifted between two dimensions. [...] But this voice kept **calling** me_i: [knotting fists] *Come on, stay with me_i*. [releasing hands, shaking head] *No, it's too hard!* [knotting fists] *Come on, this is our_i **opportunity!*** [releasing hands, lowering head, hand pointing] *No, that body is broken, it can no longer **serve** me_i!* [knotting fists] *Come on, stay with me_i. Come on, we_i can do it. We_i can do it **together!***" (Janine Shepherd, "A broken body isn't a broken person", TED talk, Oct. 2012).²

Here, the speaker's dilemma is presented as an inner debate between her own optimistic and pessimistic sides, each with its own voice, and speaking in the plural ("we can do it", we'll do it together"). In less dramatic cases, we commonly present thought processes as an inner conversation, using expressions such as "I asked myself...", "Part of me says...", "Something in me/My inner voice tells me...", or "That is my hopelessness speak-

¹ Throughout this volume, unless indicated otherwise, italics in examples indicates fictive utterances; underlining is used to mark quotative markers and other parts in the example authors wish to direct readers' attention to; boldfacing indicates prosodic stress in the original. Attested examples from Pascual (2014) are cited throughout the chapter by page number in this book. See the book's Appendix 1 (pp. 219–227) for the examples' original sources.

² Video available online: https://www.ted.com/talks/janine_shepherd_a_broken_body_isn_t_a_broken_person?language=en, at 2'18"–3'50".

ing” (Pang 2005). More significantly, a large number of languages use the same verb for ‘to say’ as for ‘to think’, and can only express mental processes through reported thought ascribed to the thinker, even when involving a pre-linguistic child or non-human animal (Pascual 2014, p. 92).

Metaphors also indicate that we often conceive of the world around us as speaking and interacting (cf. Cooren 2010, 2012; Cooren and Sandler 2014). Consider:

- (2) ...they’ll ask if you’re alive and you’ll say, of course I_i am, but your_i body will protest, will contradict you_i, the tremor in your_i chin will say no, you_i’ou dead, and it might be right, that we Saramago, *Seeing*, trans. M. Jull Costa, Harcourt Trade, 2006, p. 25)

Inanimate entities can thus be conceptualized as “saying”, “telling” (cf. Baynham 1996), “answering”, “protesting”, etc. Conversation, as a domain of human experience and action, is indeed a powerful cognitive model for conceptualizing the social and natural world around us.

2. *Fictive interaction as discourse-structuring device*

As we saw, objectively “monologic” discourse, even a written text, may be structured conversationally, as a communicative exchange between addresser and addressee, original utterer and (prospective) audience (Voloshinov [1929] 1986; Bakhtin [1979] 1986; Givón 1993, 1997; Linell 1998; Herman

1999). Texts can be, and often are, entirely structured as a conversation with the reader, as in J. D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye* (Little, Brown and Company, 1951), which begins:

- (3) If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born [...] (p. 3)

Here, the second-person pronoun is used to indicate a conversation with the reader. Such ubiquitous phrases, as “you know”, “you see”, and “let me tell you”, often play a similar role in texts and monologues.

Discourse may also be interactionally structured through presenting its content as a conversation between the author and discourse character(s), or among several discourse characters. For instance, in academic discourse, authors often present the views of other scholars on a subject in the form of a debate (see Brandt 2008, 2013 for examples from philosophical discourse, and cf. Xiang, this volume).

3. Fictive interaction in language structure and use

Since we assume that talk-in-interaction models discourse, and in turn discourse models grammar (Givón 1979; Sankoff and Brown 1976), we should expect the interactional structures we found in discourse to be present in the language system and its use. This does indeed seem to be the case.

The question-answer pattern, which is the canonical *conversational* structure to introduce dialogic relations (Bakhtin 1984, pp. 181–185, 1986, pp. 117–127) into a text, may not just serve to express discourse topic and focus, but also conditionality (“*Do you have any questions? Call us*”, see overview in Leuscher, this volume) and also relative clauses in some languages, such as Latin (Lehmann 2008) and many signed languages (Jarque, this volume). Inter-sentential fictive interaction is the most unmarked or grammaticalized way to express information structure, conditionality, and relativization in some languages (Pascual 2014; Jarque, this volume).

Even when we only deal with one utterance we may still construe it as a turn in a fictive conversation. Consider:

- (4) a. *Why bother?*
- b. *I will bet you... my house!* that [...] if they came down it wouldn't make any difference (Pascual 2002, p. 179, 2014, p. 40)
- c. *Sorry banks, party's over.* Now there's a clever new way to send money abroad. Find out more! (TransferWise on *Twitter*, 16 Oct 2014)
- d. I find that particularly ridiculous. I mean, *hello?* I have a Ph.D. (Pascual 2014, p. 29)

In (4a), a question is presented to make a strong assertion, the same communicative purpose as the fictive bet in (4b), which was produced in a courtroom to a lay jury, who cannot verbally engage in interaction, let alone bet with attorneys. In (4c) a fictive apology (Demeter 2011, this volume) in

the introduction of a new financial service is used as a means to present that service as the major competitor of the fictive addressees. Lastly, in (4d) an act of greeting, which may also be used sarcastically to ask for attention, serves to express the speaker's stance towards the discourse topic: a group of individuals that are not present in the situation of communication, now turned fictive addressees. Such instances of virtual speech acts (Langacker 1999), or sentential fictive interaction, are pervasive in language, naturally occurring at various degrees of grammaticalization (Pascual 2014, p. 38–45).

Fictive interaction may also appear as an embedded grammatical construction (Pascual 2002, 2006b, 2014) at the levels of the clause (5a), the phrase (5b), the lexical item (5c), and even the morpheme (5d):

- (5) a. The doctor smiled with a condescending tenderness that seemed to say, *Well, you know, these people—these sick people—they sometimes think up little absurdities like that; but we must forgive them.* (Lev Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, trans. Ian Dreiblatt, Melville House Classics, 2008, p. 78)
- b. [...] we must have the attitude of “*I’m better than you (and you, and you, too)*” (Pascual 2014, p. 45)
- c. That’ll have associations *knock-knock, who’s there-ing* on the door. (Pascual 2014, p. 43)
- d. [An] *Idontknowsexual* (Pascual 2014, pp. 53, 62)

In (5a) the kind of tenderness one may “read” in somebody else’s smile is presented as that tenderness seemingly expressing verbally what may be inferred from it, a similar case as the attitude in (5b), characterized by a fictive enunciation ascribed to it, in a prepositional phrase. In (5c), a communicative exchange that makes up a socio-culturally available unit is used as a head verb, showing verbal morphology. In (5d), a rare case in English, a fictive utterance appears as the prefix of an entry in the “Urban Dictionary”, on a category of sexual orientation (vs. hetero-, homo- and bisexual).

In sum, fictive interaction can appear across all grammatical levels, from the inter-sentence to the morpheme, preserving its interactional structure while often overcoming seemingly rigid syntactic constraints.

2. How can we tell it is fictive interaction?

As is generally the case with linguistic categories (e.g. Langacker 1987), fictive interaction is a radial, rather than binary, category. There is no set of criteria determining a clear boundary between fictive interaction and “neighboring” phenomena (actual information-seeking questions, factual speech acts, reported speech and thought, fictional dialogue). Nevertheless,

it *is* possible to draw a list of identifying features—neither of which is sufficient on its own—for fictive interaction constructions. These identifying features are:

1. Conversational structure
2. Fictive reading
3. Non-token interpretation
4. Viewpoint information
5. Metonymic function

1. *Conversational structure*

Since fictive interaction involves the structuring of thought and language by the conversation frame, instances of the phenomenon per definition exhibit conversational features. Consider the following text, from a real-estate ad (Pascual 2002, p. 264, and see also Brandt and Pascual, this volume):

- (6) Presenting the *love-the-location*, *what-a-view*, *perfectly-priced*, *You-better-hurry* home

We understand the four italicized modifiers as turns in a single conversation between a generic real-estate agent and a potential buyer, rather than as separate characteristics of the home in question. The turns “love the location” and “what-a-view” are clearly ascribed to a potential buyer, while

“perfectly priced” and “You better hurry” are fictively addressed *to* that buyer.

Fictive enunciations can thus be classified by their role in the frame of the conversation (cf. Goffman 1963, 1981). More often than not, only one element of this conversational structure is highlighted or profiled in every particular instance, to serve its communicative purpose:

- (7) a. [The] “*Look at Me, I’m so cool*” generation (Forum posting, russian-mosin-nagant-forum.com, 19 Oct. 2013).
- b. A man that had a wife with such a wit, he might say ‘*Wit, whither wilt?*’³ (William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act 4, Scene 1)
- c. [T]he *how are you fine* approach to life... (Pascual, 2014, p. 45)
- d. “*I’m a day late for national smoke day*” joke (Forum posting, gamefaqs.com, 15 Feb. 2015)
- e. Obama’s the *I’ll vote for him to show I’m not a racist* candidate (Pascual 2014, pp. 21, 74)

The fictive speaker profiled in (7a), the fictive addressee in (7b), the fictive dialogue as such in (7c), the fictive message in (7d) and the fictive bystander and/or discourse topic in (7e).

³ The phrase “Wit, whither wilt?” is a common Elizabethan expression that “seems to be used chiefly to express a want of command over the fancy or inventive faculty” (Singer 1826, p. 188).

2. *Fictive reading: What's fictive in fictive interaction*

Fictive interaction is not imaginary or fictional. It does not belong to the fictional reality of a novel, play, or movie, nor is it a fabrication or a lie, and it does not belong to a hypothetical or counterfactual scenario either (e.g. “If I won the Oscar, I’d begin my acceptance speech with...”). Its nature is utterly *conceptual* (in the sense current in Cognitive Linguistics), as it involves *fictivity* (Talmy [1996] 2000), as opposed to fact or fiction.⁴ Fictive interaction is ontologically different from the factual communicative occurrence in which it is embedded, but no less relevant to it. Hence, a fictive conversation is not presented for its own sake, but to be entertained for some extraneous communicative purpose (Xiang, this volume). This holds for all inter-sentential fictive interaction, as in expository questions (“So, *what is fictive interaction?*”); fictive speech acts, for example, using apologies to express assertions (Demeter, this volume), or prayers to express hopes (FitzGerald and Okaley, this volume); and for intra-sentential fictive interaction, in which a direct speech construction serves to set up or categorize some thought, intention, emotion, inference, reason, situation, etc.

⁴ The boundary lines on the factive-fictive-fictional continuum can often be fuzzy, and the distinction between the three is by no means absolute (see Xiang, this volume).

Unlike other cases of fictivity, such as fictive motion and fictive change (see overview in Langacker 1999), the participants in fictive interaction—and not just what they say—may be entirely fictive. Consider:

- (8) a. *I like a clean city*
b. *Hello, Boss*

Example (8a) is the English translation of a text that appears on municipal trash cans in a city in Brazil. This utterance is ascribed to a generic model citizen. (8b) comes from a job search ad, in which the text appears over a mirror at face height, reflecting the reader—a role fulfilled by a different individual each time⁵ (and see Brandt and Pascual, this volume).

3. *Non-token interpretation*

Unlike prototypical quotations, embedded fictive talk-in-interaction is not intended as either a literal or loose report of previously produced discourse. It is not meant to (re)enact a particular utterance *token*, even if the grammatical form of direct speech is being used.

⁵ Thanks to Merel Leushuis for this example from insurer NTUC Income.

The fact that fictive enunciations or dialogues have a non-token reading does not preclude them from sometimes being very specific.⁶ Consider:

- (9) This filmmaker wants to make young people say, “*Whoa, my grandfather is as cool as Beyoncé*”. (TED post on Facebook.com, 8 January 2015)

The direct speech fictively attributed to young people is undoubtedly rather specific, both in expression (e.g. “whoa”, not “wow” or exclamation marks, “cool”, not “interesting” or “praiseworthy”) and in content (a grandfather rather than a grandmother or senior neighbor, compared to Beyoncé rather than Lady Gaga or Malala Yousafzai). Despite this specificity, such fictive enunciation is used to instantiate the kind of reaction this filmmaker seeks to arise in his audience, namely one of respect for their culture and history.

The situation is slightly more complicated in the following example (Pascual 2014, p. 68, Pascual et al. 2013, p. 355):

- (10) [T]he trouble with cocaine is that the “*...but I didn't inhale*” excuse doesn't work.

⁶ For a discussion on genericity and fictivity (or “virtuality”), see Langacker (1999). For the distinction between specific, personal, and generic enunciation, see Brandt (2013, pp. 125–133).

The italicized words are an actual utterance token, (part of) a famous response by Bill Clinton to accusations on him having consumed marijuana in the past. But note that here they are not actually attributed to Clinton, and deal with a different drug. Instead, Clinton's quote is used to characterize a *kind* of excuse. So, while (10) alludes to a particular utterance token, it does not have a token interpretation.⁷

Telling a non-token interpretation (and thus a fictive reading) of a given instance of direct speech from a token interpretation becomes more difficult as we approach the fuzzy boundary zone between fictive and factive (or fictional) direct speech (and see Rocha and Arantes, this volume; Xiang, this volume).

4. *Viewpoint information*

Conversational structure is not merely present in instances of fictive interaction, it is *demonstrated* (in the sense of Clark and Gerrig 1990). A clear indicator of such enactment is viewpoint information, often involving viewpoint shifts and mixed viewpoints (cf. Dancygier and Sweetser 2012). For instance:

⁷ See Dornelas and Pascual (this volume) for similar instances of literal reported speech used fictively in autistic conversation.

- (11) a. There's this damn ligament in the bottom of my_i foot that's saying, 'Screw you_i, Chris_i.' (Clark and Gerrig 1990, p. 794)
- b. You think every girl_i's a dope. You think a girl_i goes to a party and there's some guy_j, a great big lunk in a fancy striped vest strutting around like a tiger, giving you that "I_j 'm-so-handsome-you_i-can't-resist-me_j" look. And from this she_i's supposed to fall flat on her_i face! Well, she_i doesn't fall on her_i face. (Marilyn Monroe as The Girl in *The Seven Year Itch*, 1955)

In (11a), the second-person pronoun and the vocative do not refer to the addressee of the current actual utterance, but to the addressee of the *fictive* utterance attributed to a ligament (this happens to be the current speaker). In (11b) an arrogant flirtatious look on a generic individual, "some guy", representing a type of man, is defined through what the flirter seems to communicate to young women through that look. The utterer shifts from the third person singular to its coreferential first person "I"/"me", thereby shifting into the perspective of and speaking for this kind of male. She does so maintaining her own critical perspective.⁸

Naturally, viewpoint information needs not be signaled by personal pronouns or vocatives. When a question-answer structure is used in a monologue, it is the implied change of utterer that signals the viewpoint shift. The

⁸ For an analysis of mixed viewpoints in fictive speech (in Catalan Sign Language), see Jarque and Pascual (2016).

actual and fictive utterer may also happen to be the same person, as in the inner debate in (1), but the fictive communicative situation is nevertheless quite distinct from the factual one.

By contrast, when there really is no viewpoint information, there is, to that extent, no fictive interaction involved. Consider:

- (12) a. Briny sea-water is maintained and is filtered and cleansed so that the swimming-in-the-sea sensation can now be experienced by people of all ages. ('Bringing the Gateway to a New Tourism Frontier', Landmarks, Annual report, 2010)
- b. Average To Find A Job Salaries: The average salary for to find a job jobs is \$43,000. (SimplyHired, Inc., <http://www.simplyhired.com>, March 2015)

Neither of the underlined modifiers display viewpoint information (compare with *I'm-swimming-in-the-sea!* sensation" or "The *how can I find a job* salaries"), so we would *not* consider these to be instances of fictive interaction.

5. *Metonymic function*

Metonymy is central to the way fictive interaction is put to use. The fictive utterance itself stands for a larger whole, which may involve a kind of conversational exchange or a situation or scenario in which such an exchange occurs, a kind of condition of which such exchanges are typical, etc.

The author of the blog post in (13) actually explains the fictive speech metonymies she is using to her readers:

(13) My body is the Lord's temple and [I']m not going to let just anyone gain access to it. The[re] is only one key to opening the door to this temple and that[']s an "*I do**" ring not an "*I will***" ring (see bottom for explanation).

[...]

* An "I do" ring is the ring you get when you get married. The minister says '...do you take...' and you say 'I do'.

** An "I will" ring is [...] your engagement ring. The guy says '...will you marry me...' and the girl says 'I will.'

The words "I do" and "I will" metonymically evoke two whole ceremonies—wedding and engagement—in which they figure, and by extension, the state of being married or engaged. Metonymy is a flexible cognitive mechanism, which allows the same part to stand for different wholes in different contexts. The same vow may serve to metonymically set up different scopes within the same frame in "*I Do*' kiss" (kissing moment), "*I do*' dress" (wedding day) or "*I do*" fear" (married life) (Pascual 2014, pp. 78–79). In fictive interaction, what is usually just one speech act or a few words in direct speech, metonymically serves to reconstruct a whole communicative scenario.

Metonymic evocation is not restricted to intra-sentential fictive interaction, let alone nominal modifiers. An entire communicative exchange—

if not an actual one—is being metonymically evoked in all cases of fictive interaction. Thus, our expository question (“So, *what is fictive interaction?*”) metonymically evoked a whole communicative setting, in which a speaker explains something to an immediately present interlocutor, and can respond to questions and requests for clarification on the spot.

3. Fictive interaction—Why bother?

Fictive interaction is important not just as a specific phenomenon. We believe it should be of interest to students of language and cognition in general, since:

1. It is a ubiquitous phenomenon, which might well be a linguistic universal.
2. It is a versatile and effective communicative device.
3. It has important theoretical implications.

1. A ubiquitous presence

Fictive interaction is a productive, widespread, and frequently appearing phenomenon. It can be observed in many different forms and grammatical levels, across a large number of languages, genres, and social groups.

Pascual (2014) documents fictive interaction constructions in 135 languages, spoken and signed, ancient and modern, with and without a written code, and from all major language families, including isolates. In fact, no language was found to date without some fictive interaction construction. Specific studies analyze fictive interaction constructions in: English, Dutch, German, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Polish, Russian, Ungarinyin, Kwaza and Aikanã, Kombai and Korowai, ancient Chinese, Biblical Hebrew, and a large number of signed languages (see references in Pascual 2014, pp. 11–12).

To be sure, there are cross-linguistic differences in the particular grammatical forms fictive interaction may assume. For example, fictive interaction compound modifiers are quite common in English and other Germanic languages (Pascual et al. 2013; Pascual 2014, pp. 59–81, see examples 6, 7a, 7c, 7d, 10, 11b, and 13 above), but we don't find them in Romance and Slavic languages, where there are syntactic constraints on compound modifiers more generally (instead, phrase-level or clause-level fictive interaction would be often used, see Pascual 2010, Pascual and Królak *forth.*, Królak, *this volume*). We also observe different levels of grammaticalization of these constructions in different languages. The fictive question-answer pattern is the most unmarked form for indicating information struc-

ture in a large number of signed languages (Pascual 2014, pp. 31–38; Jarque, this volume) and fictive enunciation is even the default or obligatory means of expressing, describing, or referring to mental and emotional states, desires, intentions, causes, reasons, purposes, or states of affairs in many indigenous languages across the world (Pascual 2014, pp. 90–91; see Spronck, this volume and van der Voort, this volume). A few languages without writing even use fossilized fictive interaction constructions for future tense (Pascual 2014, pp. 108–109, and see van der Voort 2013, this volume).

In languages, in which fictive interaction constructions are a pragmatic option rather than a grammatical must, it occurs regularly in a variety of genres, including (see references in Pascual 2014, pp. 12–13): news discourse, political and legal argumentation, advertisement, academic discourse, literature, blogs, online fora, and, of course, face-to-face conversation. And this is very much an open list, spanning formal and informal, oral and written, scripted and spontaneous communication. It has also been found in historical texts from different times and cultures. Extant studies are relatively few, but cover a diverse selection—the *Zhuangzi* (China, 4th century BCE); the Hebrew Bible (Palestine, 1st millennium BCE); and Early-

Modern witchcraft pamphlets in England (see Xiang, this volume; Chaemsaithong, this volume).

Sociolinguistically, the use of fictive interaction is also particularly widespread. Examples collected and in the literature were produced by language users spanning boundaries of age, gender, cultural ethnicity, and education level, ranging from non-or poorly literate individuals (pre-school or autistic children, language-impaired adults, school drop-outs) to highly linguistically competent speakers (renowned linguists such as Chomsky and Langacker, Literature Nobel laureates such as Morrison and Saramago, and gifted orators such as US Presidents Clinton and Obama).

Ubiquitous as they are, fictive interaction constructions no doubt often differ in frequency of use and marked/unmarked status, along all the axes discussed above.

2. *The effectiveness of fictive interaction*

Fictive interaction is a multi-purpose communicative tool. We already saw fictive interaction used to introduce a topic to the discussion (using expository questions), to express, describe, or denote thoughts (1, 5a), emotions (9), attitudes (5b, 7a, 7d, 10, 11b), inferences (5c) states of affairs (7b), concepts (5d), and things (13). To this list one can add the use of intra-sentential

fictive interaction to form categories and refer to entities that would otherwise be difficult to name (Pascual et al. 2013, pp. 357–359; Pascual 2014, pp. 97–72; Sandler 2012, pp. 588–589; Krolak, this volume,).

Given this versatility, it is hardly surprising that fictive interaction is put to good communicative use by speakers and writers in a variety of fields and areas. Thus, in legal argumentation, it is common for attorneys to couch their arguments in the form of a fictive dialogue between three parties: the speaker (e.g. the prosecutor), who is making a case, the addressee and ultimate evaluator (e.g. the jury), who is being convinced, and the opposite party (e.g. the defense), whose arguments are being refuted (Pascual 2002, 2006a, 2014). This triadic fictive argumentation structure is also used in political discourse (Cienki and Giansante 2014). Attorneys may also use fictive interaction to give “voice” to a deceased victim or to legal evidence, or lack thereof (Pascual 2002, 2008, 2014; Coulson and Pascual 2006). Inter-sentential fictive interaction is used to attract and keep the reader’s attention in prose (fiction and non-fiction alike). Intra-sentential fictive interaction in literature seems to typically serve to: (i) access characters’ mental worlds; (ii) describe the relationship or non-verbal communication between charac-

ters; (iii) build novel categories; and (iv) create humor and vividness (Pascual and Królak forth.).⁹

Especially interesting is the use of fictive interaction to accomplish effective communication when standard linguistic devices are unavailable or break down. This is demonstrated with regard to aphasic discourse (Pascual and Versluis 2006; Versluis and Kleppa ([2008], this volume) and autistic conversation (Dornelas and Pascual, this volume).

3. Theoretical implications

Fictive interaction is a phenomenon to be taken seriously for what it tells us about language, discourse, and cognition more generally (see also the discussion in Sandler, this volume, and Pagán Cánovas and Turner, this volume).

We already saw above that fictive interaction, manifested as one turn-of-talk, or even several, appears on all linguistic levels, from the discourse to the morpheme. The variety and richness of such examples, as shown in greater depth in Pascual (2014), also indicates that we are talking about a set of productive linguistic constructions. This fact provides a clear

⁹ Fictive speech has different functions in other creative genres, such as marketing (Brandt and Pascual, this volume).

counterexample to some established syntactic and semantic theories (see Sandler, this volume). This also suggests that the conversational turn, not the sentence, is a fundamental linguistic unit. The presence of fictive interaction across so many unrelated languages and language varieties, its absence not having been recorded in any, further seems to make fictive interaction a plausible candidate for the status of a linguistic universal, reflecting the anthropological universal of human interaction itself.

From a diachronic perspective, we see evidence of conversational structure developing into grammatical structure in many unrelated languages (e.g. Geluykens 1992; Haspelmath 1997; Herring 1991; Li and Thompson 1976; Rhee 2004; Jarque, this volume; cf. Leuschner, this volume). Fictive interaction constructions appear particularly grammaticalized in languages where a written code does not exist or is not in widespread use (Pascual 2014, pp. 83–112). In addition, the occurrence of fictive interaction as discourse-structuring device in ancient texts, as mentioned earlier in this chapter and developed later in this volume by Xiang and Chaemsaitong, shows that conversationalization is not restricted to modern institutional discourse (Fairclough 1994) or spoken informal speech (Streeck 2002).

Finally, fictive interaction provides substantial linguistic evidence to support the growing literature on the central role *intersubjectivity* plays in

language, thought, and conceptualization of reality (Zlatev et al. 2008; Gallese and Cuccio 2015; Linell 1998, 2009; Cooren 2010, 2012; Cooren and Sandler 2014; Verhagen 2005). It is our conversational mind that—in a joint, dialogic effort with our many interlocutors—structures the language we speak.

4. The structure of this volume

The seventeen chapters of this volume extend and develop the study of fictive interaction in new directions. The authors examine fictive interaction from a variety of disciplinary and sub-disciplinary perspectives, combining core linguistics and conversation and discourse analysis with cognitive science and communication studies. The volume further the gap between what may be the most fundamental divide in linguistics: that between descriptive, theoretical, and applied linguistics, making the results from each approach help reinforce those from the other two.

The volume is divided into five parts, which deal with fictive interaction as a cognitive phenomenon, as a discourse-structuring pattern, as a linguistic construction, and as a communicative strategy. Part I, the introduction to the rest of the volume, presents an overview of the phenomenon

as cognitive, discursive, and linguistic reality (this chapter), and contextualizes its study within the broader century-long debate on the nature of linguistic meaning (Chapter 2 by Sandler).

Part II, “Fictive Interaction as Cognitive Reality” explores complex conceptual configurations representing fictive communication (Chapter 3 by Pagán Cánovas and Turner); extends the study of the phenomenon to the dialogic structure of an ancient text and its visual representation in comic-book form (Chapter 4 by Xiang); and the conceptualization and description of pictorial art in conversational terms (Chapter 5 by Sullivan).

Part III, “Fictive Interaction as Discourse Structure”, shows how historical written texts may be structured as simultaneous conversations between reader and writer (Chapter 6 by Chaemsaitong)—a topic also dealt with by Xiang in Chapter 4—and how in professional discourse a fictive speech act, such as a prayer (Chapter 7 by FitzGerald and Oakley) or an apology (Chapter 8 by Demeter) may be introduced purely for discourse purposes.

Part IV, “Fictive Interaction as Linguistic Construction”, the longest in the volume, discusses evidence of the phenomenon in different languages and at different stages of grammaticalization, such as the unmarked use of non-information-seeking questions for various functions in signed lan-

guages (Chapter 9 by Jarque) and the diachronic and synchronic study of what may at first seem fictive question-answers in English and German (Chapter 10 by Leuschner). It also discusses the prosodic differences between fictive and factive direct speech in Portuguese (Chapter 11 by Rocha and Arantes), nominal fictive speech constructions in Polish (Chapter 12 by Królak), the expression of evidentiality through fictive interaction in Ungarinyin (an Australian aboriginal language) and Russian (Chapter 13 by Spronck), as well as fully grammaticalized fictive interaction constructions in two isolate languages of the Amazon (Chapter 14 by van der Voort).

Finally, Part V, “Fictive Interaction as Communicative Strategy”, explores the persuasive power of using fictive interaction constructions in marketing (Chapter 15 by Brandt and Pascual), as well as in ordinary conversations by adults suffering from agrammatic aphasia (Chapter 16 by Versluis and Kleppa) and children with autism (Chapter 17 by Dornelas and Pascual).

Fictive interaction is thus examined in this volume in a wide variety of languages, media, modalities, and contexts, applying a variety of methods, and covering a large number of languages. Still, the chapters in this volume do not only complement one another within the bounds of a broader research program. There is an implicit, and sometimes explicit, debate going

on between the authors around the scope of fictive interaction research and its broader theoretical significance.

On a more restrictive view, fictive interaction can be viewed as a specific linguistic (and cognitive) phenomenon, and its study—a useful addition to the linguist’s analytical toolbox. Several chapters in the volume remain essentially within the bounds of such a scope (whether or not their authors adhere to it more generally). This is the case with the chapters by Xiang, Sullivan, Chaemsaitong, Demeter, Leuschner, Rocha and Arantes, Królak, van der Voort, and Brandt and Pascual.¹⁰

But several chapters suggest that the conversation frame may play a deeper role in explaining some general features of language and cognition, and therefore find it useful to extend the notion of fictive interaction in various ways beyond its original bounds. Thus, the chapters by Versluis and Kleppa and by Dornelas and Pascual, examining the use of fictive interaction as a strategy for overcoming substantial obstacles to effective linguistic communication (aphasia, autism) suggest fictive interaction may be part of the cognitive mechanism that allows people to make themselves understandable to other people under more typical conditions. FitzGerald and

¹⁰ Although both authors of the latter paper have assigned a more fundamental theoretical role to fictive interaction in other works (Pascual 2002, 2014; Brandt 2008, 2013).

Oakley examine fictive interaction in a broader rhetorical framework. Spronck assigns fictive interaction a significant explanatory role in accounting for evidentiality in language, and extends the notion of fictive interaction itself with his theory of evidential participants. Jarque's survey of grammaticalizing and grammaticalized fictive interaction in signed languages suggests a fundamental role for fictive interaction in the creation of several common grammatical constructions and, by extension, in the emergence of linguistic structure more generally (though Leuschner offers a warning against leaping to conclusions about how constructions grammaticalize). Finally, we find an open debate about the theoretical and philosophical implications of fictive interaction between Pagán Cánovas and Turner, who maintain that it is, in the final account, a manifestation of a more general human (*intra*-subjective) cognitive capacity for conceptual integration, and Sandler, who views fictive interaction as decisive evidence for the irreducibly fundamental role *intersubjectivity* plays in defining what linguistic meaning is.

As a whole, this volume offers an overview of a rapidly developing line of research, acquiring growing significance within the language sciences. It demonstrates the breadth and diversity of work on fictive interaction. It also represents the state of the art in research on the subject. Finally,

this volume indicates several possible directions for the development of fictive interaction research in the years to come, and the theoretical issues this development raises for discussion.

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