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Overview

The Conversation Frame. Forms and functions of fictive interaction comprises seventeen articles grouped in five parts, each viewing fictive interaction from different perspectives: as a cognitive phenomenon, a discourse-structuring pattern, a linguistic construction, and as a communication strategy.

Part I, the *Introduction* to the book, offers an overview of fictive interaction. Chapter 1, by Pascual and Sandler, defines fictive interaction (i.e. "presenting what seems to be (part of) a conversation, in order to introduce, define, or refer to what is usually not a conversation" – p. 4) and specifies its functions and characteristic features (being a cognitive, discursive and linguistic reality). The authors also highlight the ubiquity of the phenomenon (it is encountered across languages, in spoken, written, and signed languages, it is found both in ancient and modern languages, and it is employed by people of various ages, cultural backgrounds, or levels of education), as well as its versatility. Considering all this, Pascual and Sandler suggest that fictive interaction can be a "candidate for the status of a *linguistic universal*, reflecting an anthropological universal of human interaction itself" (p. 16).

In Chapter 2, Sandler presents a new perspective on meaning. Following Voloshinov's (1986) distinction between three approaches to meaning in terms of "the number of people necessary for linguistic meaning to emerge" (p. 24) (i.e. *logical meaning* requires zero persons, *monological meaning* one person, and *dialogical meaning* requires a multiplicity of individuals), the author argues that fictive interaction offers a strong argument both against the logical and the monological approaches to meaning. His argument is based on the idea that even in the situations in which meaning is construed in terms of truth conditions or "instantiations of (…) the universal (Absolute) mind and spirit" (p. 29), one cannot exclude persons from an account of linguistic meaning.

Part II, *Fictive Interaction as Cognitive Reality*, focuses on conceptual configurations representing fictive communication. Chapter 3, by Cánovas and Turner,

brings into discussion fictive communication emerging from the combination of several generic integration templates (*fictivity, patterns for compression, blended joint attention*, *building, projecting, blending, and filling in frames,* and *the communication frame*), which, in some situations, may not be discourse-related. These templates do not usually work in isolation, but are combined in complex ways and operate at different levels of specificity. In the authors' opinion, fictive communication results from two situations: (a) as the outcome of the process of integrating several disparate acts of communication into a piece of discourse that never occurred or cannot possibly take place, or (b) by combining into a single piece of discourse (a blend) events, situations or participants that belong to different moments and places.

Chapter 4, *Real, imaginary, or fictive?*, attempts at clarifying the relationship between reality, fiction and fictivity through an analysis of the philosophical dialogues in *Zhuangzi*, an early Daoist text from the 4th century B.C., and its pictorial representation in comic strips (Tsai, 1986). Zhuangzi's dialogues provide insights into the human nature and the universe by means of allegories, a discourse genre that allows him to assume the roles and voices of all his characters. The analysis draws on the notion of fictive interaction and expands on the theory of blending. The 192 allegories identified in the ancient text contain 147 instances of prototypical dialogues "between two or more characters with at least two conversational turns" (p. 66). Some of the discourse participants are realistic while others are fantastic. The conclusion reached by Xiang is that the three notions (reality, fiction, and fictivity) are not clear-cut and that fiction can be assumed to be embedded in fictivity.

In Chapter 5, by investigating different types of artwork and artist commentaries extracted from the world's largest online community of user-generated artworks (*Deviant ART*), Sullivan shifts the focus from linguistic communication to art as a medium of communication. Artworks are considered as fictive speakers, addressees or bystanders in imagined conversations. The authoress shows that, depending on their subject matter, works of art not only "speak" to different people, but they do so in different ways. Those containing abstract subject matters tend to "speak" indirectly, to their creators, while those that "depict objects or landscapes more often «speak to» their viewing audience" (p. 88), and they do so directly. This difference is due to the fact that abstract artworks lack subject matter that can be conceptualized as a speaker and, consequently, cannot produce directly presented speech. In contrast, in figurative works of art a person or an object is directly ascribed "speech". Thus, paintings or drawings can ask questions or give their artists advice regarding the subject matter.

Chapter 6, *Persuading and arguing with the reader*, is the first to approach fictive interaction as discourse structure, the common thread of **Part III**. The

aim of the study by Chaemsaithong is to show how the prefaces of 13 witchcraft pamphlets written in the Early Modern English period (1566–1621) manifest fictive interaction "by simultaneously employing storytelling, interaction, as well as speech performance from beyond the immediate discursive context" (p. 116). The focus of the investigation is both on the forms of the interactional patterns in the discourse of the prefaces, and on the pragmatic functions these forms serve.

In an attempt to emphasize some moral aspects of the described events and to persuade the readers of their truthfulness, the mostly anonymous authors of the pamphlets took over various roles: of a *narrator* (telling the story to an imagined addressee), of an *interlocutor* (interacting with imagined addressees in various ways – by a range of interactional "virtual" speech acts, such as wishes, apologies, commands and requests, or advice), and of a *character* (having the possibility to speak through the words of others about particular individuals or sources in the story).

In *Invocation or apostrophe?*, FitzGerald and Oakley investigate how a fictive speech act, such as a prayer, can be understood by making recourse not only to cognitive theories, but also to rhetorical and argumentative ones. The rhetorical act of praying is defined in two ways: (a) as *invocation*, "a summons to some agent or agency understood as able to exert influence in the discursive space from whence the summons originates" (p. 132); (b) as *apostrophe,* "an act of address to some distant or unseen agent whose presence, recognized in the act of address, is presumed to produce effects upon an audience" (p. 132). In terms of their perlocutionary effects, these distinct types of prayer seem to lie at the opposite ends of a continuum. The analysis is focused on both the macroscopic and the microscopic rhetorical features of 4 idioms of prayer (*Let us pray/Let's pray, God have mercy/Lord have mercy*), encountered in American and British broadcast television and collected from the UCLA NewsScape Archive. The analysis reveals that *Let us pray/Let's pray* are more frequently interpreted as invocations, as they appear in discourse scenes of reverence, whereas *God have mercy/Lord have mercy* emerge in scenes characterized as apostrophes.

In Chapter 8, *On discourse-motivated „sorries"*, Demeter explores the forms and functions of fictive apologies in English, Hungarian, and Romanian by investigating data from five language corpora. As regards the *form* of apology, this contains an explicit expression of apology and a (fictive) noun of address (i.e. proper or common nouns). The latter can be part of the base space (the "here-and-now" space), but will change roles (turning from bystander/audience into fictive addressee). The structure of apology is the same in the investigated languages, only that the order of the constituents differs due to the free word order that characterizes Romanian (the noun of address can occur in front of the expression of apology). The expressions having the form of apologies cannot always be

considered genuine speech acts, but may have other discourse *functions*, such as expressing disagreement, irony and sarcasm, refusal, reproach, humorous insult, and empathy.

Part IV, *Fictive interaction as a linguistic construction*, comprises articles that deal with fictive interaction at different stages of grammaticalization in various, unrelated languages. Chapter 9, *What about?* by Maria Josep Jarque, is an interesting and challenging approach to fictive question-answer pairs for non-information-seeking functions in Catalan Sign Language and in 30 other signed languages. Important to mention is that in signed languages: (1) questions are marked non-manually, and in different ways, according to the question type – "yes/no" or "wh"-questions; (2) non-information seeking questions are prototypically marked by eyebrow raising. The question-answer sequence represents the unmarked means of encoding the above-mentioned functions and in signed languages it is still in the process of grammaticalization.

In Chapter 10, *Fictive questions in conditionals*?, Leuschner discusses the verb-first conditionals in English and German starting from the assumption that the "monologic use of dialogic patterns" (p. 193) may invoke conditionality in fictive interaction. By comparing data from German and English, the author points out that "proto-conditionals with V1 in German emerge (…) from a question-driven discourse pattern in which propositions are linked (potentially across different turns and speakers) by the adverb *dann* «then»" (p. 197–198). The V1 conditionals can be regarded as a more grammaticalized version of the question-driven proto-conditionals. This is not the case in English, where lexical verbs seldom appear in clause-initial position; the only verbs that introduce V1 protases in this language are *should, had* and *were*. The difference between English and German fictive questions in conditionals is accounted for in terms of the evolution of these languages: present-day V1 conditionals "did not grammaticalize from a question-driven fictive interaction sequence (…), but from a monologic, period-like pattern" (p. 210). V1 as a marker of conditionality emerged in different ways due to the divergent evolution of word order in these languages.

Chapter 11 by Rocha and Arantes addresses the relevance of intonation for distinguishing between the fictive and factive readings of direct speech constructions in Brazilian Protuguese. Twenty examples (ten fictive, ten factive) of the structure " *(eu) falei* + clause" ("I said + clause") taken from the C-ORAL-BRASIL I (Raso and Mello 2010, 2012) database were subjected to an acoustic analysis by means of PRAAT (Boersma and Weenink 2013). The results indicate that "factive contours tend to hover around slightly higher values when compared to the fictive ones" (p. 228). The fictive interpretation of the above-mentioned structure is also supported by semantic-pragmatic clues, such as the monologic expression of

emotion, epistemic co-textual material (e.g. *gente* "guys") or the use of the verb *falei* with the meaning of *pensei* ("I thought").

The semantic categories and the discourse functions of a particular kind of nominal construction (a head noun modified by a quotative marker) in Polish is the topic of Chapter 12 by Królak. Though this kind of construction (e.g. "Generation *copy-paste*") can be encountered in a number of other languages, it may also describe culture-specific phenomena. By analysing three hundred examples collected from various sources, the authoress reached the conclusion that the nominal + quotative marker construction is employed by the speaker/writer mainly with the "intention of referring to or setting up a unique category salient for him or her in a particular context" (p. 240). The fictive interaction modifiers fulfil discourse functions such as: to create humour, to present concepts in a transparent way, to provide precise and economical characterizations or to refer to new concepts or phenomena. These constructions are extremely creative and attention gripping.

Evidential fictive interaction, defined as "reported speech expressing mental states, desires, intentions and attempts" (p. 258), is the topic of Chapter 13 by Spronck. The author examines the properties of fictive reported speech constructions that express evidential meaning in Ungarinyin (an Australian Aboriginal language) and Russian, starting from Jakobson's (1967) model of evidential meaning based on a three-way event structure: "narrated event", "a narrated speech event" (which is fictive, taking place only in the mind of the speaker) and a "speech event". These events imply the existence of participants that interact, only that in the narrated speech event the participant interaction is missing. This accounts for a difference in the discourse status of fictive interaction in comparison to factive interaction: the former is less prominent as there are less participants in the fictive speech act.

Chapter 14 by van der Voort examines fictive interaction in two southwestern Amazonian languages (Kwaza and Aikanã), which recursively employ person and mood markers to create 'quotative' constructions. These constructions have grammaticalized in both languages (being also employed in purposive expressions in Kwaza and in expressing future tense in Aikanã) and have been transferred onto Portuguese, spoken as a second language, in the expression of future tense. One interesting aspect related to Kwaza is the existence of two morphemes (*-heta* and *-te*), which used to be mood inflections, but which are "exclusively encountered in quotative constructions, expressing an instance of fictive interaction" (p. 287).

Part V of the volume, *Fictive interaction as communication strategy*, begins with Brandt and Pascual's article, *Say hello to this ad*, which analyses the use of fictive interaction as a means of persuasion in advertising. On the basis of examples of advertisements and commercials in five languages, the authors show

how products and services can be fictively addressed by means of directives (e.g. *Say yes/no to [addressee]*), non-actual greetings (e.g. *Hello Hydration*) or by fictive interaction constituents at the intra-sentential level, which function as nominal classifiers (e.g. THE *YOUR ROOM OR MINE* HOTEL). These pretty long structures are extremely creative, they can evoke complex scenarios and, in the long run, may persuade the audience to buy the products.

In Chapter 16, Versluis and Kleppa explore *The use of interactive structures as communicative strategy* in the case of Brazilian Portuguese and Netherlands Dutch speakers with Broca's aphasia, a linguistic impairment caused by brain injury and characterized by telegraphic (agrammatic) speech due to reduced syntactic structures. It is shown that the aphasic subjects in the study "can manipulate their limited structural resources to meet the communicative requirements of the speech situation" (p. 329) by employing fictive direct speech and topic-comment frames that involve fictive interaction.

The last chapter of the volume, co-authored by Dornelas and Pascual, discusses the use of fictive interaction by autistic children. Despite the fact that Autistic Spectrum Disorder is "characterized by a difficulty in adopting the perspective of the others" (pp. 333–334), which is exactly what fictive interaction assumes, one might expect autistic children not to use fictive interaction. The analysis of ten hours of recordings of four Brazilian children with various degrees of autism contradicts this idea, showing that children suffering from this disorder do employ fictive interaction, but in an atypical way, namely by verbatim speech, identified to belong to three categories: (i) socio-communicative event; (ii) socio-cultural event; and (iii) specific prior interaction.

Evaluative remarks

This volume gathers seventeen valuable articles that explore the forms and functions of fictive interactions in a number of unrelated, spoken, written or signed languages, from various perspectives. Each and every of them highlights the importance of this communicative strategy in various communication situations. Each and every article leaves the reader with the feeling that *it* is the best and all encompassing, only to discover in the next that fictive interaction can take a new form and serve other functions in a different communication context. The seventeen articles are like puzzle pieces, which put together, offer a comprehensive view of fictive interaction. They are very systematic, clear and rigorous to the extent that, as a linguist with less expertise in the domain, I have taken great pleasure in reading them.

Worth of admiration is the fact many of the authors connect their findings with those of other authors in the volume, which is indicative of their intention of offering the reader solid arguments in favour of making fictive interaction "a plausible candidate for the status of a linguistic universal" (p. 16).

Without meaning to undermine at all the quality of this volume, some questions can be raised with regard to a couple of issues. In the first place, examples that support the (sometimes abstract) theoretical remarks are very useful, only that in one of the articles they were totally absent (Cánovas and Turner), whereas in another (Demeter) they were too scarce, despite the wealth of data the author had access to. This leaves the reader with a slight feeling of frustration, not fully grasping the evidence the authors brought in support of their claims.

In the second place, in two articles (Cánovas and Turner, pp. 45 and 47, Brandt and Pascual, p. 320) I came over citations (from Fauconnier and Turner (1994, 1998, 2002) in the former and from Scollo, 2007 in the latter) without a specific page reference. This may raise the suspicion that the citations serve mainly to create the impression that the authors write with a certain scientific authority.

All in all, the studies comprised in *The Conversation frame. Forms and functions of fictive interaction* certainly represent a big step forward in investigating how fictive interaction can be explored in a number of domains. It may provide food for thought for someone who is exposed to this field for the first time and will definitely appeal to most specialists in the language and cognitive sciences.

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