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## The pragmatics of casual dialogue

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Forum Lingwistyczne 2, 97-120

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2015

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

## The pragmatics of casual dialogue\*

Key words: casual dialogue, coherence, completeness, extralinguistic factors

### 1. Dialogue as a text

#### 1.1. Preliminary conditions of text

There is a firm conviction among researchers that the most important parameters of a text which distinguish it from other sequences of non-texts are coherence and intuitively defined completeness. A text must be a perceptible whole limited by its beginning and its end (MAYENOWA 1979: 267), which can be paraphrased in the following way: a text acquires a kind of coherence because it constitutes a whole that is not a mere sum of the meanings of individual words and sentences. For RICOEUR (1984: 330), "a text is more than a linear succession of sentences. It is a cumulative, holistic process. This specific structure of the text cannot be derived from that of the sentence" [trans. J.W.].

To be viewed as coherent, a text must be understandable to the receiver. Only in extreme situations may we not understand a text and yet have an intuitive understanding of the text as coherent. This is, for instance, the case of a song sung in a foreign language, for which we assume that the singer is not singing randomly chosen addresses found in a local telephone directory.

Are all multisentential sequences likely to be considered texts if they pass the test of coherence? In other words, is coherence a *sine qua non* condition of a text or is it only a desirable or concomitant condition? Although WAJSZCZUK (1983: 223–229), who put forward this explicit question, did not provide either a negative or a positive answer, it seems that linguistics prompts us to consider coherence an essential condition of a text. Even if constructing a typology of texts would require of us determining the degree of their coherence and consequently accepting the existence of incoherent texts, we would still have to define what an incoherent text is. Let us then consider this problem a terminological one (a coherent text or simply a text).

What is more important is the question of conditions that must be satisfied by a coherent text (a text) and the very nature of coherence. Such conditions were defined by MAYENOWA (1979: 254) in the following way: "In our opinion a coherent text must satisfy the following conditions: 1) it must be created by a single sender [...] 2) it must have the same receiver [...] 3) finally, it must be on the same subject".

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\* Tłumaczenie artykułu *Pragmatyka dialogu potocznego*, który ukazał się po raz pierwszy w: „Socjolingwistyka” XI, 1991, s. 21–46.

The length is an insignificant aspect of a text, which may range from a simple sentence or even a phrase to multisentential sequences of considerable length. For MAYENOWA (1976: 291–292), even a single sentence may be regarded as a structure equivalent to multisentential texts. This parasentential aspect of a text is also stressed by BOGUSŁAWSKI (1983: 7–29), for whom a text (a referential text) is a specific oneness constituted by an overriding subject. For BOGUSŁAWSKI (1983: 23), a text can be described in terms of an identifiable model sentence taking the following form:

$a_1, \dots, a_n$  are such that - - -

where  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  are “expressions corresponding to all possible subjects” with all other predicates providing information about individual themes and functioning as rhemes of the model sentence. At the same time Bogusławski proposes a broader concept of the receiver in regard to whom there takes place a relativisation of a text. According to BOGUSŁAWSKI (1983: 25), a text is “a text for” the receiver, whose willingness to identify a sequence as a text is the decisive condition for a text to come into being. The remaining conditions proposed by MAYENOWA (1979, 1976) are accepted also by BOGUSŁAWSKI (1983: 12).

SALONI (1971, 1989) provides a formalised definition of coherence based on the topological concept of coherence operating in mathematics. For SALONI (1971: 93), “a text is coherent unless there is another arrangement of sentences that is not semantically different and still another arrangement resulting from the shift of the initial section of the second text to its final position.” The basic condition of coherence lies then in the mobility of sections (sentences), i.e., two sentences are coherent if they cannot be swapped. Unfortunately, this approach, probably as any other attempt to formalise natural language on mathematical grounds, narrows the field of research. The descriptive potential of the model has been reduced, as it is applicable only to grammatical sentences and isolated sentences, which are independent of any “situation-specific meanings.” In practical terms, this excludes spoken language as an object of linguistic analysis.

For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to include the concept of coherence proposed by BELLERT (1971: 47–75). Bellert defines a coherent text (discourse) as a sequence of utterances  $S_1, \dots, S_n$ , in which the semantic interpretation of each  $S_i$  (at  $2 \leq i \leq n$ ) depends on the interpretation of the utterances in the sequence  $S_1 \dots S_{i-1}$ . What is meant by this is that an adequate interpretation of an utterance in discourse requires knowledge about the preceding context (BELLERT 1971: 47). The semantic interpretation consists, then, of a set of consequences (conclusions), which are twofold: some are drawn owing to the knowledge of the rules of language and as such they can be included in the description of language, whereas some are the result of our knowledge of the world and of inductive reasoning (BELLERT, 1971: 50).

One of the conditions of discourse coherence is repetition, i.e., in the logical-semantic structure of an utterance there must appear at least one entity that has appeared in the preceding context, or a proposition present in the preceding context or in a set of propositions that can be arrived at on the basis of the preceding utterances (BELLERT, 1971: 49). As Bellert (1971: 74) says:

There is a dependency of the semantic interpretation of a coherent text on the knowledge about the world that the receiver has, because the set of consequences is arrived at not only on the basis of rules of language and deductive reasoning but also on the basis of propositions concerning the knowledge of the world.

Most researchers of coherence mechanisms look for an answer in the semantic or syntactic-semantic structure of language, which explains the strong interest in various aspects of the thematic-rhematic structure of a sentence. This structure offers a possibility of distinguishing in an utterance (sentence) two communication centres differing in their degree of informativeness and of placing the same utterance on two linguistic planes: that of grammar and that of communication (MAZUR 1986: 130–140). Owing to that, it is possible to go “beyond the sentence,” as the utterance contains known information related to the previous context (*datum*; theme) and new information (*novum*; rheme), which may become the subject of the next utterance.

Putting aside a number of works by the Czech school of linguistics (ČERVENKA 1974, 1976; DANEŠ 1968, 1974; FIRBAS 1974), let us look closer at the work *O tak zwanym aktualnym rozczłonkowaniu zdania* by Mathesius, which started research into this area. It is in this work that we can find a number of significant remarks on “the situationality” of utterances, e.g.,

In a broken casual conversation the picture of the thematic-rhematic structure of a sentence is richer than in prepared speech [...] and the richness is bigger if the interlocutors are close friends [...] This is so because a given situation [my emphasis, JW], from which topics of conversation can be chosen [...], is extremely broad. This situation embraces almost everything that is known to the interlocutors and that can be actualised in speech as something already known.

(MATHESIUS 1971: 9)

His further research, especially the exemplary analyses of raspberry juice-making show that the basis of an utterance can be interpreted pragmatically in a broad sense of the word. The basis can be established not only through the immediate sentential context but also thanks to the situation of the interlocutors, their shared knowledge, shared experiences acquired in the same situational context, and, finally, thanks to the things by which they are surrounded. As a result, the core of the utterance can be considered a signal of differing experiences, which can be defined as the asymmetry of knowledge.

A deeper analysis of Mathesius’s proposal concerning the situational interpretation was practically not undertaken by his followers. The terms that replaced the ones proposed by Mathesius, namely theme/*datum* – rheme/*novum* were soon equated and used interchangeably (MAYENOWA 1979: 255). They were understood as existing in relation to the syntactic structure of a sentence and the word order. What was stressed was the overlap of *datum* – *novum* with *subiectum* – *predicatum* and thus the possibility of treating them as identical and abandoning the concept of *datum* – *novum* (BOGUSŁAWSKI 1973: 63–69; KRIGER 1983: 81). This was possible because researchers consciously refrained from pragmatic considerations (in the sense of situational context) in their analyses of the functional perspective (BOGUSŁAWSKI 1977: 7–8). Their observations were limited to artificially constructed isolated sentences and hypothetical contexts.

Theme was defined as “what is said” and rheme as “what is said about the theme,” which facilitated the identification of theme and rheme as the argument and the predicate. They were conceived as existing in relation to the semantic structure of the sentence: “the starting point is the observation that a sentence can be divided into Theme (T) and Rheme (R) and in this way actualises a definite relation between elements of the semantic structure. In other words, different semantic relations between R and T offer us a criterion for a linguistically relevant generalisation of the meaning of an utterance” (DANEŠ 1974: 29). Isolated sentences are in principle separated from the situation of the sender and the receiver (in a sense, they are “bracketed” and made abstract due to the category of the frame of modality). Paradoxically, where the frontiers of the sentence were to be expanded, the centripetal force brought the research back to the problem of sentences analysed in isolation.

### 1.2. The possibility of pragmatic (situational) concept of the text

The question that can be asked is whether coherence should be sought only on the formal and semantic plane, considering the sign nature of the text and its three aspects: syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (MAYENOWA 1976: 293), and whether the pragmatic plane should be also included. As it seems, the present-day research, especially in Poland, concentrates on the formal and semantic elements while the pragmatic component is almost totally ignored.

While discussing text coherence, Sgall, Hajčová, and Panevova stressed the need to analyse the problems of co-reference, which has its exponents both inside the sentence (reflexive pronouns) and between sentences (the distribution of anaphoric expressions). They demonstrated that the very presence of anaphoric elements is not sufficient for a proper interpretation of the coherence of such sentences as, e.g., “Henry goes to the theatre with his wife every week. John does so only rarely,” from the semantic structure of which it does not follow whether John goes to the theatre with his wife or not: he may be just a bachelor (SGALL, HAJIČOVA, and PANEVOVA, 1986: 257). When the co-reference is not unambiguous, the proper interpretation may take place only when extralinguistic co-situational elements are taken into consideration (the receiver must simply know if John is married or not). As the authors claim an answer to such questions can be provided only by the theory of communication and not by the linguistics of the sentence.

Similarly, when the proper context, mainly the situational one, is not included, we will not consider the following example as a coherent sequence (WAJSZCZUK, 1983: 238): “A boy was sitting on a bench. He had all angles acute and equal sides.” The text is deemed incoherent despite its anaphoric relation, which formally links the second sentence with the first one. What do we need to consider that sequence coherent in spite of its oddness? Only a proper situational context. Without the context, our experience in no way allows us to relate the meaning of the first sentence with the meaning of the second one. And yet when we attempt to think about it in more depth, we can easily find two context in which the oddness will not be so striking. In a poetic context, the second sentence can be treated as a metaphor of “stiffness” and “officiality” of the boy’s behaviour dating a girl for the first time. Its non-metaphorical interpretation, simply a literal one, is possible if the above sequence is “a part of a report from a cubist exhibition written by a primary school pupil who has never heard of painting conventions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”

It can be easily noticed that, apart from the requirement of formal exponents of coherence, text must also answer for an explanatory text must also satisfy the condition of contextual and situational appropriateness. It takes little effort to find sequences that are undoubtedly coherent due to their formal co-reference and still exhibit a high degree of oddness and inappropriateness in a given situation. For example, when we find the following note at a fruit market stall: "These are beautiful red apples. I would like you to believe me that the apples cost only \$1000."

The notion of situational context, situation or co-situation has a concrete meaning as "this and not any other speaking situation," while the "linguistic context," as van Dijk defines it, "is an abstract system, formally determining the grammatical structure of sentences (texts) comprising their meaning and reference structures" (VAN DIJK, 1976: 29). In this sense, the appropriateness of expressions in a text will be interpreted by the pragmatic component, which offers an empirical basis for appropriateness. As can be seen, the notions of co-situation and situation are different from the way they were understood by MIROWICZ (1971: 147), because they refer to a particular event with clear social relations. Here we define situation in agreement with sociology of interaction. One of its representatives, GOFFMAN (1972: 63), defines it as "an environment of mutual monitoring possibilities, anywhere within which an individual will find himself accessible to the naked senses of all others who are 'present,' and similarly find them accessible to him."

This approach is particularly significant for the situation of casual conversation or dialogue, since it assumes the presence of two or more interlocutors, who co-create or co-maintain a mutually accepted focus of visual and cognitive attention. Goffman refers to such a situation as *encounter*. A conversation is socially constrained not only in the sense of one person talking to another, but also as a system of mutually accepted and ritually managed face-to-face action (GOFFMAN, 1972: 63).

The primary function of linguistic production is creating and transmitting meanings. However, there are numerous secondary functions, like holding each other's attention, signalling agreement or disagreement, the change of topic, maintaining coherence by constructing a common thematic line, etc. All auxiliary systems, such as the system of functional gestures as extralinguistic equivalents, are also ready to operate at any time. This construction and transmission is not a matter of abstract participants of an act of speech within a modal frame, but of a concrete sender and a concrete receiver who have concrete knowledge about this section of reality that constitutes the topic of the conversation and who present a concrete system of beliefs and prejudices.

Linguistics resorts to the notion of "knowledge about the world" as a condition of communication. The notion is highly abstract and we may ask a question whether it would be justified to identify elements of knowledge which belong to the sender but not to the receiver and *vice versa*.

Such a distinction has already been proposed by Labov, who identified A-events, i.e. events and things known to A but not to B and B-events, i.e. events known to B but not to A. The third type, i.e. AB-events, would refer to shared knowledge (LABOV, 1983: 302).

The asymmetry of knowledge is a principal factor of all utterances, especially in dialogue, and all participants of a speech event are aware of this fact. The awareness is well seen when the receiver also asks for an explanation or when the sender tries to adjust the

utterance to the knowledge of the receiver (a prime example is the conversation between children and adults). It is also present in an academic dissertation, a poem and a press article. Let us look closer at the following example of a monologue:

01. [...] ni mo naczelnego dopjero jutro bydzie / aa myy jusz zadecydowali / nie pszyjmujemy i jusz // *no a (...) ten naczelny to je kolega ratka tego to tam co mia to // no i tyn naczelny potym miol klopoty tych sfojich zastymcuł pszekonać bo miol jenego dyrektora 'technicznego i jednego produkcyjnego / a dopjero 'ekonomicznego i jeszcze jednego księgowego / mjeli trocha klopotu tych dyrektoruf pszekonać / [...]*  
(TK 2/II, s. 9)

[*The manager is away he will be here tomorrow / well we have already decided / we do not accept and that's that / and this manager is Radek's friend, this one that has you know / and the manager had then some problems to convince his deputies, because had a deputy for technical affairs and another one for production / and then a deputy for economic affairs and an accountant / so they had a problem to convince them<sup>1</sup>*]

The fragments in italics interrupt the narration as they are not related to the described events, being only their explanatory and descriptive background. The sender fills the narration with elements that are a part of his knowledge but, as expected by the sender, remain unknown to the receiver. They, or at least some part of them, can be inferred by the receiver, i.e., presupposed by the very narration and its propositions, and are believed by the sender to influence the coherence of the narration. They perform a referential function through the presentation of these elements of the world of the sender that are not shared by the receiver. They set the limits of this world by the identification of its elements (TOPOLIŃSKA, 1976, 1977; LUBAŚ, 1987: 42) and reduce the asymmetry of knowledge between the sender and the receiver.

Referring to the shared knowledge of the interlocutors may be effected also by means of explicitly formulated propositions defining a part of knowledge and most often by means of supplementing metacommunication markers: *wiadomo, wiesz, no bo wiadomo* (you know), etc.:

02. [...] f tej chfili jes troszeczek chodzenie za tym fszystkim *no bo wjadomo jak to praca wyglonda nie? / za każdym czeba chodzićs cio gnoć i tak dalej /*  
(TK 2/II, s. 61)

[*Right now there is a bit of stuff to do, you know how it is with the job, you have to rush everybody and so on*]

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<sup>1</sup> The dialogues come from the following sources: 1. *Teksty języka mówionego mieszkańców miast Górnego Śląska i Zagłębia*, ed. LUBAŚ W., Katowice 1980, vol. 2 (TK); PISARKOWA K.: *Składnia rozmowy telefonicznej. Teksty*. Wrocław 1975, p. 165–228 (Pis.); 3. Texts recorded by this author (JW); 4. Texts overheard and written down by this author.

The texts were recorded by means of different systems of notation. The present author preserved the source notation, including the orthographic notation of the texts by K. Pisarkowa and the simplified phonetic notation of Katowice texts (TK). The present author's own texts (JW) were written according to the rules of simplified phonetic transcription (see TK1 for the rules). The overheard texts are transcribed orthographically.

or by means of a metacommunication marker left in the text

03. [...] jag nam sie udaje tak sie udaje powoli bo powoli / mamy kłopoty z wykonawcami ji s tym  
nó j / ze spszentem *bo wjadoma* //

(TK 2/II, s. 57)

*[We do what we can and we do it slowly but we do it / we have a problem with  
contractors and what's its name / with equipment because you know]*

or by referring to the knowledge of the receiver, who may not be aware of the knowledge immediately:

04. [...] zresztą co ja ci bende muwił / ty to wjesz chyba lepiej //

*[Anyway why should I tell you such things / you know it better]*

In the act of communication, three different contexts are available: two separate contexts of the interlocutors (their own knowledge) and the third one resulting from the construction of shared knowledge by reducing its asymmetry. Here we will refer to the communication act and its three contexts as the co-situation of the speech act. Only the term “linguistic context” will be defined in grammatical terms as the nearest environment of a linguistic element: a morpheme, a word or a sentence.

The most comprehensive term is then “co-situation,” embracing “the surrounding world” (ZAWADOWSKI, 1966: 272) as well as all manifestations of beliefs, the interlocutors’ knowledge and conclusions that they draw not on the grounds of the linguistic context but rather the logical connection between extralinguistic facts and presuppositions.

The traditional studies (with the exception of Western research) on the problem of text coherence, which were founded on the theory of functional sentence perspective, practically ignored the problem of knowledge asymmetry and the influence of co-situation on the theme-rheme structure. A reason behind it was that the interest of researchers focused on monologic texts (i.e. texts created by one sender, including a collective one) for one receiver (also a collective one). The third condition of coherence was thematic unity (MAYENOWA, 1979: 254; 1976).

Such an approach was supported and developed by BOGUSŁAWSKI (1983: 7–31), who presents three modes of existence of a text for a receiver: as a pretext (a text fragment), protext (a potential text with no final interpretation) and a text proper (with a potential interpretation). An essential condition for a text to be a pretext is the receiver’s identification of the intention to form such a sequence that is a protext or a text. Hence, to treat a question and an answer in a dialogue as a text, it is necessary to determine whether “this question or this reply is only a partial realisation of someone’s intention to form the sequence: question – answer” (BOGUSŁAWSKI, 1983: 27). As Bogusławski claims, such an intention cannot be shown. This explains Bogusławski’s peculiar understanding of dialogue: for him, a coherent text is exemplified by a sequence of questions in an interrogation or a sequence of answers in the same interrogation (BOGUSŁAWSKI, 1983: 26) rather than the pattern: question – answer, although, intuitively, we know that every question is the



product of a previous question and an answer of the interlocutor. Such understanding of dialogue may have its source in the reception of the theory of dialogue proposed by Bakhtin, who absolutizes dialogue (BAKHTIN 1986). Living “in the times of overwhelming monologue,” he spoke up for the human right to exteriorise one’s own and independent consciousness. For Bakhtin, dialogue takes place at the junction of two utterances and two consciousnesses: it is a relation of two equal consciousnesses of identical importance (BAKHTIN, 1986: 440; CZAPLEJEWICZ, 1978: 11–47). Dialogue is “ setting of non-coinciding voices of two or more people” (BAKHTIN, 1986: 447). Dialogue represents a potential right of an individual to be independent, which explains the strong tendency to accentuate separate individuals who are in the state of “tense conflict” (BAKHTIN, 1986: 456).

### 1.3. Dialogue pairs of Q–A type

The question of coherence or textual character of doublets Question–Answer may serve as a convenient starting point to determine coherence of dialogue in general, since such pairs can be regarded as minimal dialogue. And again, an analysis of monologue may prove useful. As it has been said earlier, the sender in a LONGER monologue is oriented towards the receiver and it is possible to identify dialogue knots at which a question has already undergone a kind of elision. A similar view is held by DANEŠ (1968: 55–69), who claims that at any point of a longer text, there can be inserted a hypothetical question that can be formed in terms of the following utterance.

Against this background, it should be noticed that in monologues which constitute parts of conversations with an explicit interlocutor, such questions are present in the deeper layer of the text, and they are expressed not only on its surface. A monologue can be, then, considered a special case of dialogue with a deleted question, and as such, it can be described in terms of the mutual influence of questions and answers. Here is an example:

05 SK: a po co wam te sfoźnie i te tulejki

M: no do tych form zawiasowych// teras to polega na tym że ofszem tyn sporysz / (1) bo to jest żywiec sporysz ni / robi nom te sfoźnie a tulejki my krencymy na ałtomatach (2) normalni na ałtomatach tokarskich // no a import z angli / a późni te kawały s angli to widać było że one su wytłaczane / (3) uderzenie za jednym zamachem / maszyna rotacyjna na tshi takty to weźmie i wytłoczy

(TK 2/ II, p. 11)

[SK: *what do you need these bolts and cases for*

M: *well for the hinge moulds / now it is that well yes this sporysz / (1) it is żywiec sporysz / makes the bolts for us and we make the cases with machine tools (2) normally with automatic machines // well import from England / and later these pieces from England we could see that they were extruded / (3) one swing hit // a three-stroker rotation machine will extrude it]*

The places marked with digits are what we just called dialogue knots. We may ask a question whether an insertion of questions into the text will negatively influence the coherence of the text. As it seems, the operation will not have a negative impact. The text is still

coherent, which is visible in an easily identifiable topic (the hypothetical questions would only make the topic more precise) and in types of cohesion (semantic and lexicogrammatical in the sense of HALLIDAY and HASAN (1975: 324)) outlined below for Text 05, i.e., the production of bolts and cases:

*/ now it is that well yes this sporysz (\*what is sporysz?) / (1) it is żywiec sporysz [cohesion type: substitution – identical referents and lexical cohesion – repetition of the same element] / makes the bolts for us and we make the cases with machine tools (cohesion type: lexical – identical subjects (us = we)) (2) (What machines?) normally with automatic machines [cohesion type: reference – identification by specification] // well import from England [cohesion type: substitution elements which have identical referents] / and later these pieces from England we could see that they were extruded [cohesion type: lexical – objects' identity]*

The cohesion of the text does not provide the full picture of coherence relation in the text. It is, in a sense, unidirectional, as it does not account for presuppositions and the knowledge about the world, i.e., pragmatic factors. In spite of the incompleteness, it allows us to discard the enigmatic claim on thematic unity.

The similarity between a natural monologue (longer utterances in a dialogue) and a literary monologue (e.g. an exteriorised monologue) in terms of hypothetical questions and *quasi*-answers, i.e., dialogue knots, demonstrates that rhetorical questions and YOU built in the modal frame are not only a hypothetical diagnostic context or a literary figure, but an expression of the hidden dialogue structure of each monologue (MUKAROVSKY, 1970: 207–222). It may also mean that there are similar coherence mechanisms of dialogues and monologues, i.e., that the presence of one subject in the modal frame need not be an obligatory condition of the coherence of dialogue, as claimed by Mayenowa and Bogusławski.

A similar assumption is the starting point for the theories put forward by Czech linguists, Sgall, Hajicova, and Panevova, who try to determine the conditions for the co-reference of elements in the Q–A pair. As they claim, to call a declarative sentence A a proper answer to a question Q (*wh*-question), the topic – focus articulation must correspond with Q in a specific way, such that the element related to the focus proper Q corresponds to the topic proper A; element A, representing the interrogative phrase and bringing in the new information, belongs to the focus A; elements corresponding to other elements Q belong to the topic A. Hence, the pair Q–A is coherent due to the possibility of determining theme-rheme relations, the results of theme and rheme, and the dynamics of the utterance.

It is also important to note what to do in the cases in which the articulation is not so evident when two organising centres of a sentence are available, or when no co-reference can be established for the Q–A pair, as below:

06: A: ile ty tego cukru sypiesz?  
 B: Cała mamusia!  
 A: Tylko proszę bez głupich aluzji!  
 [A: *Why do you take so much sugar?*  
 B: *That's mummy all over!*

A: No stupid remarks!]

07: I: A pamiętacie gorzką wedlowską?

K: Ach! Gdzie są niegdysiejsze śniegi

[I: *Do you remember Wedel's dark chocolate?*

K: *Oh! Oh, where is the last year's snow?*]

08: L: No i cóż tak milczysz?

M: Byłem wczoraj w domu.

L: Znowu coś z ojcem?

[L: *Well, why do you keep silent?*

M: *I went home yesterday.*

L: *Something wrong with your father?*]

Standard language competence is not sufficient to combine the pairs Q–A (Q–A–Q) into coherent discourse. What is necessary in this case is communicative competence, including pragmatic phenomena, which, unlike modality or referential indices, are not part of the language system and are determined only by some regularities of the social experience of man (SGALL, HAJICOVA, PANEVOVA, 1983: 12; CHOMSKY, 1980: 59). For this reason, they cannot be regarded as a part of performance, but rather as social and cultural forms of verbal behaviour that people acquire with the passing of time.

It is just the condition of communicative competence that must be satisfied for our dialogues to be considered coherent. Example 06 must be set in the context of a family conversation held by a young couple who lived with the husband's family for some time. The husband's utterance (A) is included by B into a series of utterances made previously by his mother-in-law: "you add two eggs and not five to make pastry – no one will find it out," "why have you bought such expensive shoes when the old ones are quite good," from which there emerges a picture of a thrifty woman. This feature of character irritates B, who expresses it by means of a scathing remark (discernible only in this particular co-situation) about a striking similarity of her husband and her mother-in-law. Alternatively, we can consider the example against a broader context of culturally in-built antipathy towards mothers-in-law. What is crucial, for the response B to acquire the expected illocutionary force (perlocution = the husband's irritation), the property of exaggerated thriftiness must be reflected on not only by B but also by A, on the grounds of shared knowledge. Otherwise, the act will be infelicitous and may result in such utterances of A as, e.g., "I don't know what you are talking about," or "What do you mean?".

In 07, the utterance made by K refers to the chorus of Villon's ballad. However it is not important whether the participants are familiar with the ballad or not, as they are linguistically competent enough to decode metaphorical meanings. Further, their participation in the same situation (food shortage) allows them to interpret K's utterance as "longing for the bygone days" and to include it as a coherent part of the discourse.

Finally, in 08, M's utterance may be treated as fragmentary with an omitted implicit superordinate part, not realised on the surface: "I am sad because I went home yesterday." But even this information does not explain how visiting one's home and sadness

are related by reference to the person of father. L treated M's utterance as coherent not due to a linguistic interpretation (see Pazukhin's theory of understanding in PAZUKHIN 1983: 102), but because it was possible for him to place it in a context. That is why we can claim that the pair Q and A is coherent if Q and A can be embedded in a shared co-situation including the linguistic context, a socially understood situation, co-reference, and presuppositions. No claim is made concerning any particular impact of these factors on coherence in a given situation.

The necessity of considering such a broad background of utterances is postulated mainly by sociolinguists. LABOV (1983: 299), who acknowledges the achievements of linguistics deriving invariant rules of grammar on the basis of language isolated from any social context, notes that there are certain fields of linguistic analysis in which invariant grammatical rules (i.e., so-called structural relations) cannot be interpreted with no attention given to social factors. An important role in this respect is likely to be played by discourse analysis, which aims to show mechanisms of text construction and cohesion with regard to the socioeconomic and cultural background (LABOV, 1983; SAVILLE-TROIKE, 1982: 7). The basic tools for such an analysis are offered by sociolinguistics as a method of language description (LUBAŚ, 1979 a: 11–27). Sociolinguistics starts with consideration of the influence of the social situation on the form of language and tries to work out a system of rules for text creation based on such variables as social status, social class, social group codes, age, sex, social contact type, etc.

An important variable that has a significant impact on dialogue and its structure and genre is the ability of speakers to perform different social roles. This is why it is possible to identify such forms of dialogue as an interview or an exam directly related to the roles of interviewer/interviewee, teacher / student, seller/buyer, adult/child, office clerk/client. In these cases, various variables are involved: the awareness of difference in the social status, age, and sex, yet at each and every moment of dialogue, the participants have to play a role of “just being a receiver” or “just being a sender.”

These roles must be mutually accepted. By keeping silent, the receiver acknowledges his willingness to listen to the sender and, at the same time, he must manifest his readiness to accept the role of sender. While speaking, the sender must control whether he is listened to and understood, and must obey the basic requirement of coherence, i.e. relevance. Finally, the sender must provide the receiver with the right to take the floor as another sender (GOFFMAN, 1972: 65).

Next to communicating messages, the participants have to concentrate on maintaining the common topic of dialogue, which may at times be difficult, as in 09:

09. K: beńdzie sos z gzybuł / kturę michał nazbierał  
 J: fczoraj?  
 K: niee / dzisiaj  
 J: ty o chlebie a ja o niebie / fczoraj nazbjeriał  
 K: a dzisiaj beńdzie sos  
 J: no

[K: we will have sauce, made from the mushrooms / that michał picked

J: yesterday?

K: noo / today

*J: what are you talking about / he picked them yesterday  
K: and today we will have the sauce  
J: yeah]*

The receiver may pick out any element from what the speaker says as the topic of his own utterance, under the condition that it is accepted or an agreement has been negotiated. Starting a new topic without negotiations or a wrong assessment of the current topic may lead to misunderstanding and, in consequence, to incoherence of dialogue requiring further negotiations.

#### 1.4. Symmetry and asymmetry of knowledge

The negotiation of the topic is a process based on the notion of asymmetry of knowledge, without which neither negotiation nor dialogue are possible. Let us consider the following example:

10. A: **Która godzina?**  
B: **Piąta.**  
A: **Piąta. Kończymy już?**  
B: **Jeszcze pięć minut.**  
A: **Zgoda.**

*[A: What time is it?  
B: Five.  
A: Five. Shall we finish it now?  
B: Five minutes more.  
A: OK.]*

A's question is a typical *wh*-question, aiming to elicit specific information that is unknown to A but that, as A expects, B may know, that is, B knows or may know what A does not know (conditions for questions regarded as a kind of speech act were defined by SEARLE, 1987: 88). The question initiates a dialogue by constituting the state of knowledge asymmetry. B provides an answer, satisfying A's intention, and makes his knowledge their common knowledge. He brings about a situation of knowledge symmetry, which finds its confirmation in A's anteposition of his next turn. At this stage, the dialogue can end unless either participant introduces a new interrogative or declarative element (as is the case in the above dialogue), which may result in the next state of knowledge asymmetry. Let us reformulate the dialogue as follows:

10a: A: **Która godzina?**  
B: **Piąta.**  
A: **Piąta. Idę do domu.**

*[A: What time is it?  
B: Five.  
A: Five. I'm going home.]*

Although A's *I'm going home* is not a question, it creates a state of asymmetry: A does not know what B will do in this situation. If the utterance ends with half-cadence, it may mean that A waits for B's reaction. If it ends with cadence, it may mean that he does not expect B's reaction. Whatever B's reply is, it will result in filling in the dialogue by reducing the asymmetry, e.g. *I'm going too ; I will stay here*, etc. Asymmetry will also be reduced by the absence of any verbal reply: B's staying in the same place or B's getting up will also be equivalent to a reply. A question or a request like "Perhaps you will stay a bit longer?" or "Let us work a bit longer" eliminates the asymmetry (B announces his willingness to stay longer and urges A to do the same) and opens "an empty slot" for the dialogue to develop. The dialogue ends with good-byes and leave-taking.

Quite surprisingly, the issue of (lack of) shared knowledge has much in common with a specific understanding of Mathesius's two communication centres: the known (*datum*) and the known to one interlocutor (*novum*) (MATHESIUS, 1971).

Against the tradition of treating *novum/datum* as rheme/theme, we will try to demonstrate the opposite, namely, that the two pairs of notions are separable if the former pair is analysed in pragmatic terms. KOVTUNOVA (1976: 44–45) claims that the communicative purpose of an utterance depends on the relation between what is talked about (the starting point, topic) and what is said: "But what is talked about is not necessarily known, and what is said is not necessarily unknown. More precisely, what is new in any utterance is the proportion between the theme and the rheme. And it is just this proportion that constitutes the communicative purpose of an utterance. That is why the rheme itself does not have to be equal to the new. Consequently, the theme is not always datum and the theme is not always novum."

We may accept this hypothesis that *datum/novum* do not correspond to theme/rheme and apply it to the field of dialogue. DANEŠ (1974: 29) identifies rheme by means of diagnostic questions and determines the correlation between questions (e.g. "What happened?") and rheme. This procedure stands in agreement with the proposal made by Sgall, Hajicova, and Panevova, concerning a possible analysis of Q–A pairs. For Daneš, a diagnostic question is the same context of an utterance as the question is for a natural dialogue reply, which would not exist if the question were not asked. For example, a diagnostic question: "What is our mother writing with?" (DANEŠ 1974: 29) will be a question about the rheme: "pen." Accordingly, the following dialogue:

- pytanie o R
11. SK: a po co wam/są poczszebne / te sfożenie i te tulejki?  
 M: no / są nam poczszebne / do tych form zawiasowych
- R

Question about R

- [SK: a po co wam poczszebne / te sfożenie i te tulejki  
 M: no / są nam poczszebne / do tych form zawiasowych  
 R

[SK: *what do you need / these bolts and cases for*  
 M: *well we need them / for the hinge moulds*]

(TK 2/II, s. 11)

would reveal the rheme („for the hinge moulds”) of a hypothetical sentence \*“We need these bolts and cases for hinge moulds.” However if we decide not to analyse such sentences as “Our mother writes with a pen” in isolation and put them in a context, things get more complicated than it may appear judging by Daneš’s study.

First of all, we would have to account for the case of knowledge asymmetry. What SK asks about is not known to him, and he asks M, to whom this information is known. What is *novum* (rheme) for SK, for M is *datum*. Such is the pragmatic sense of dialogue pairs Q–A. The information that in a linguistic context may function as the rheme, in a co-situation that takes into account the asymmetry of knowledge becomes the theme, that is, information already known.

Because the same element may be both the rheme and the theme, we propose that the terms *datum/novum* and theme/rheme be treated separately, and such a division acquires a pragmatic dimension when it comes to a dialogue. *Datum/novum* will be treated mainly pragmatically as two communication centres in a dialogue representing the knowledge of the sender and the receiver in a particular stage of dialogue (with regard to the asymmetry). *Datum* will be that part of information that is known to both interlocutors, being the topic proper or a partial topic that may but need not be included in the topic proper.

*Novum* is the information that is not known (new) to one interlocutor but known to the other one, as it is difficult to imagine a situation in which new information unknown to both interlocutors should appear in a dialogue.

*Novum* is minimal information that facilitates progress in dialogue by one move. It is accepted by the receiver, for whom it is the starting point for another move. From the point of view of dialogic exchanges, *novum* is a motoric element that develops the dialogue, while *datum* is a static element that maintains common thematic line. The transfer of information from *novum* to the common theme (*datum*) is negotiated by interlocutors.

In discourse, the two communication centres are *datum* and *novum*, and in an isolated sentence, these are theme and rheme. Discursive coherence of a dialogue consists in an accurate identification of new information and its accepted introduction to *datum*. If more than one piece of new information is available, the receiver must identify and select the one that forms the common topic. A wrong choice leads to misunderstanding and incoherence, which requires a renegotiation of the topic (*datum*).

The two perspectives – discourse-communicative with *datum/novum* and sentential with theme/rheme – resemble proposals made by HALLIDAY and HASSAN (1976) and STUBBS (1983), who, on the level of discourse (speech act), identify the given and the new information and, on the level of sentence, the theme and rheme (MAZUR, 1986: 131). On the basis of this distinction, let us analyse the following dialogue from discourse-communication perspective:

- |     |   |    |       |             |       |              |
|-----|---|----|-------|-------------|-------|--------------|
|     |   | N  |       | D           |       | N            |
| 12. | 1 | L: | a     | jag         | długo | tutaj        |
|     |   |    |       |             |       | użendujecie? |
|     |   |    |       |             |       | D            |
|     | 2 | K: | od    | dziewiuntyj | do    | dziewiuntyj  |
|     |   |    |       |             |       | D            |
|     |   |    |       |             |       | N            |
|     | 3 | L: | i     | cały        | czas  | jes          |
|     |   |    |       |             |       | ruch         |
|     |   |    |       |             |       | czy          |
|     |   |    |       |             |       | tesz?        |
|     |   |    |       |             |       | D            |
|     | 4 | K: | niece | tu          | jez   | bardzo       |
|     |   |    |       |             |       | mały         |
|     |   |    |       |             |       | ruch         |
|     |   |    |       |             |       | D'           |





*novum*. What is obligatory after *novum*, are utterances intended to reduce the asymmetry. These fragments exhibit coherence thanks to the common topic, co-reference and pronominalization. The text becomes less coherent only after the reduction of the asymmetry.

The following utterances may refer back to the previously set topic (7) with new information provided, that is, with a new dialogue knot. They can be loosely connected with the fixed topic, influenced by individual associations of the receiver, or by the immediate context. It is precisely in this way that we can interpret (11), where the huge number of customers in a restaurant and the fact that it is a payday have been associated with the men sitting at the restaurant tables, observed by the interlocutors.

*Novum* (asymmetry) cannot appear immediately following the previous *novum* after which the asymmetry has not been eliminated. Such cases are only possible when other factors disturb the conversation (e.g. a third person entering). The coherence of dialogue is impaired, but the dialogue can be resumed, for example, by the reintroduction of the same question.

Another situation in which we can find pairs *novum-novum* is when a response to a question is also a question. This could be considered a defective course of dialogue, as this practice is not accepted socially (an exception will be questions making *novum* more precise, e.g. "Do you have a pen? – Which pen?" or questions arising from noise in the communication channel).

It should be noted that in dialogues, there may appear information that is "unproductive" from the point of view of further parts of the dialogues (5 and 6). The information does not function as a starting point for further exchanges. It is not treated by interlocutors as potential new topics and should be regarded only as a kind of thematic background. The new pieces may be related to the main topic and the thematic line: in our example, they can be viewed as explicit presuppositions such as: "Usually there are not many people in restaurants." Anyone who is a conscious participant of social life may draw the conclusion that few customers means low salary of the restaurant staff.

On the basis of this example, we can conclude that dialogue develops on two planes: vertical and horizontal. On the vertical plane, there are usually two- or three-stage exchanges of constant properties: each of them starts with an utterance introducing the asymmetry of knowledge, and each following utterance reduces the asymmetry by the process of negotiation of shared knowledge. The acknowledgement of shared knowledge marks the end of an exchange, and for the dialogue to develop horizontally, there must appear such asymmetry.

These regularities make us draw another conclusion: a dialogue can be represented not only as a result of turns, but also as a result of sequences of turns. Each of them has an internal structure and is coherent enough not to allow for breaking apart or relocating the turns within a single sequence. STUBBS (1983) considers dialogue an effect of social interaction and suggests that the sequences be treated as dialogue units. Such units are called by him *exchanges*.

## 2. Units of dialogue

Having accepted Stubbs's view that an exchange is a basic unit of dialogue, let us make a few other terminological decisions after analysing the following example:

13. 1 Y: Cześć, Y mówi.  
 2 X: Cześć.  
 3 Y: Nie przeszkadzam ci w tym momencie?  
 4 X: Nie, nie absolutnie.  
 5 Y: Słuchaj, czy widziałeś się może z Księciem?  
 6 X: Nie, nie widziałem się, ale się będę z nim jutro widział.  
 7 Y: Aha, będziesz się widział z nim.

(Pis. C V, s. 209)

1. Hi, this is Y speaking.
2. Hi.
3. Am I not disturbing you right now?
4. No, absolutely not.
5. Listen, have you perhaps seen Prince?
6. No, I haven't seen him. I am seeing him tomorrow.
7. Ah, so you are seeing him tomorrow.

It is the beginning of a longer telephone call. After the initial exchange of greetings and the introduction, A initiates a conversation with a question requiring *yes* or *no*. For this reason, any utterance in this position will be treated as a confirmation or a denial. "The film on TV has just ended," "I have just got up" or "I have just had my lunch" will be interpreted as "you don't disturb me," whereas "I am just having lunch" or "I am just doing mathematics" will mean "yes, you are disturbing me."

In terms of social norms of politeness, question (3) introduces a kind of "politeness framework." A question of a similar type is asked when we stop a taxi and ask the driver whether he is free, although the fact that he has stopped and the taxi is empty indicate it very clearly. Such a frame reduces the number of possible answers, since even if "no" or, as in (13), the emphatic repetition with an adverb are acceptable, a sole "yes" is not the right response. First, it could sound impolite. Secondly, if the question were of negative polarity, "yes" would be ambiguous with either confirmation or denial reading. It should be noted in this context that the distribution of yes/no in natural language is not the same, and that it does not depend on the logical confirmation or denial.

X's answer functions as an agreement to continue the dialogue and it is only in this sense that it is related to the oncoming discourse. It has no semantic relation with Y's next turn. (5) counts, then, as a move initialising a new topic, expressed by another yes-no question. Having obtained the required information, Y does not develop the topic and only acknowledges that the information has been communicated.

X's reiterated utterance is a form of filled-in pause, marking one's expectation that an explanation will be provided. If X does not undertake initiative, does not introduce a new topic, or does not develop the fixed topic, the dialogue will end at this stage. As expected, X undertakes initiative:

- 14.8 X To znaczy, o ile będzie oczywiście. Mamy próbę jutro, wiesz.  
 Y: Rozumiem.

[X: I mean, if he comes obviously. We have a rehearsal tomorrow, you know.  
 Y: I see [...].]

According to the concept of the asymmetry of knowledge, the course of dialogue can be represented as a sequence of introductions and reductions of the asymmetry: (3) asymmetry introduction, (4) reduction, (5) asymmetry introduction, (6) reduction, (7) an acknowledgement of reduction, (8) asymmetry introduction, and (9) reduction. It will be now easy to identify recurring sequences of almost identical structure: an initiation opens a sequence; the initiation is followed by an obligatory reaction (answer); optionally, it can be followed up by a kind of confirmation or agreement.

My terminological solutions are in principle similar to STUBBS'S (1983: 131). Initiation (I), which opens an exchange and introduces the asymmetry of knowledge, may take various forms, such as request, claim, order, command, or question. Reaction R<sup>2</sup> is any form of reaction to I. The third element in the schema, defined here as "acknowledgement," has a delimiting function, i.e., it marks the boundaries of an exchange and closes it. It does not introduce new elements but only marks receiving information. Here, it will be referred to as coda (C).

The obligatory elements in an exchange are then: Initiation, without which the exchange will not take place, and Reaction, without which no dialogue will come into being. Coda is not obligatorily present, although there are situations in which it is required or even essential. It is required by social norms of behaviour, e.g. when we thank for being provided with information, and essential in a teacher–student interaction, when the student is taking an exam. Coda informs the student whether his answers are correct and whether they are accepted by the examiner (otherwise the dialogue could be considered deviant). The interaction between the same participants, that is, a teacher and a student, does not require any coda if the initiation takes the form of an order or a command. In an examination, Coda may take a nonverbal form like nodding. When the Initiation is a military order, Reaction R may also take a nonverbal form of obeying the order. These are highly conventional interactions, in which the role of language and gesture is well defined and need not be negotiated.

An exchange can be schematically represented as the following sequence: [I, R, (C)], in which the square bracket marks the boundaries of an exchange and the round brackets mark the optional element. The order of the elements is fixed. Sequences of elements in a different order would result in incorrect or nonsensical exchanges. We may remember that, according to SALONI (1971: 90–93), the impossibility of repositioning of elements is a condition of text coherence. What follows is that, in this sense, an exchange is a coherent text.

Another impossible case is the adjacency of Initiation and Coda, i.e. \*[I C]. This pattern is unfeasible for two reasons. First, Coda is realised in three-element exchanges only by the initiating interlocutor, and it can be realised by the reacting interlocutor only when I is followed by the so-called initiating reaction R<sub>in</sub> (making information more precise, correcting information), e.g.:

15. I Y: *Słuchaj kochanie, jeśli bym ja przyszła troszkę później czy to nic nie szkodzi, niż o piętnastej?*  
 R. X: *Nie o piętnastej, o szesnastej.*  
 R<sup>in</sup> Y: *A, to będę punktualnie.*  
 C X: *No...*

(Pis. C VIII, s. 216)

<sup>2</sup> M. Stubbs introduces here the term "response," which means both reply and reaction, as a language action; we recall that for LABOV (1983, p. 301) the discourse analysis reveals the relationship between what is said (a question, order, or statement) and done (a demand, refusal, or insult).

[I Y: Listen, honey. If I come a bit later than three, is that ok?

R<sub>in</sub> X: Not three, around four.

R Y: In this case I'll be on time.

C X: Well...]

(Pis X VIII, p. 216)

Secondly, in a polilogue, even if a third person produces utterances that normally end an exchange, e.g. "mhm," "good," "oh, yes," etc. immediately after I, then the utterance is interpreted as R and understood in accordance with the intention of I as, for example, consent, confirmation, or doubt. In this way, we encounter two significant problems: the influence of the order of elements in the exchange on the meaning and the distribution of the expressions, and the problem of structural predictability of individual elements of the exchange.

The position occupied by an expression in the structure of an exchange has an impact on its meaning. The position of I or R may be helpful in eliminating the ambiguity of an expression in isolation:

16: I: Idź już! but I: Idę.

R: Idę.

R: Idź już!

[I: Go now! but I: I am going.

R: I am going.

R: Go now!]

The difference in the position of the imperative sentence in the sequence differentiates the meaning of the act to perform. The imperative sentence in I is understood as a command or order (depending on the social status of the interlocutors and the context), yet the same sentence in R will be taken for a consent or an agreement.

If in a telephone conversation, after the initial greetings, there occurs a question including the name of a household member, e.g. "Is Krystyna in?", then it will be interpreted by a competent language user not as a request for information but as a command, a request or a demand to call the person. In this context, a reaction like "Yes," or "She is in," not accompanied by calling the person, will be deviant and will lead to another exchange including a request to call the person. The same question in a conversation need not be a request to call a person but, as its surface form indicates, may function as a request for information.

After an initial question, there may appear a question-reaction R<sub>in</sub>, which will be interpreted either as a request to repeat a question or a request to clarify the question:

17. I A: Czy ty to zrobiłeś?

R<sub>in</sub> B: Co?

[A: Did you do it?

B: What?]

The ambiguity of  $R_{in}$  in this example is removed by intonation. If there can be observed rising intonation with increased voice volume, “What?” will be interpreted as a request for repetition (“Please, repeat as I haven’t heard you”). In the case of secondary antecadence, “What?” will have an interrogative reading (“What did I do actually?”).

The least severe distributional restrictions in orders, questions, and claims can be found in I; the most strict limitations apply to C, where orders and questions practically do not appear. In R, only interrogatives and imperatives may occur. Interrogatives may be present in  $R_{in}$  as a request for repetition or clarification. Orders may undergo a reinterpretation that leads to the complete loss of their basic meaning, as in:

18. A: Czy naprawisz mi wreszcie to żelazko?

B: Idź do diabła!

[A: *Will you repair this iron at last?*

B: *Go to hell!*]

where the expressive order is reinterpreted as a refusal.

Such examples prove the significance of the theory of speech acts, which would not have been proposed if people always said what they meant. Since this is impossible, the theory of speech acts and discourse analysis have an excellent opportunity to investigate the space between what is said and what is meant to be understood. Generally, this is the kind of relation occurring between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.

We have defined an exchange as a structure with a fixed order of elements. The essential element is Initiation, without which Reaction has no independent sense. Thus, semantically speaking, Initiation can be defined as a semantic framework for subsequent elements, especially useful in decoding elements undergoing ellipsis in R. I begins an exchange and predicts or provides for all elements to follow. Predictability can be understood as structural predictability, i.e. the predictability of an element in an exchange. Each element can be defined as +/- predictable, and, in terms of its position in the structure, as +/- initial or +/- terminal<sup>3</sup>. This offers the following combinations:

	predicting	predicted	initial	terminal
I	+	-	+	-
$R_{in}$	+	+	-	-
R	-	+	-	(+)
C	-	(+)	-	=

Brackets indicate elements optional in some cases. If  $\rightarrow$  stands for predicting and  $\leftarrow$  for being predicted, then the basic pattern for a three-element exchange will be as follows:

$\rightarrow$     $\leftarrow$   
 [I   R   (C)]

<sup>3</sup> These features were introduced by Stubbs who thereby completed the table presented by Coulthard and Brasili (1981) which included only +/- predictability. The table proposed here is slightly different from that designed by Stubbs (see 1983, p. 136).

In a natural dialogue this exchange can be realized in a number of ways, some of which might be incomplete or interrupted. Here is an example of an extended exchange:

- 19: X: Ale słuchaj, jak tam nie ma nikogo na zewnątrz, a piesek szczeka, to ja mam tam ..?  
 Y: U ojca?  
 X: Tak.  
 Y: Wiesz, on rzadko jest teraz na zewnątrz, a ojciec siedzi albo w kuchni, albo w pokoju, tak, że widzi, czy ktoś przychodzi.  
 X: Aha [...]

[X: Listen, if there is nobody outside and the dog is barking, how can I get there?

Y: At father's place?

X: Yes.

Y: You see, the dog is rarely out now, and father sits either in the kitchen or in the room, so he can see people coming.

X: Ah (...)

→ ← → ← ←  
 [I R<sub>in</sub> R R (C)]

In dialogues of the interview kind, there may occur a well-developed Reaction. If it is just a casual conversation and not an interview *sensu stricto* made for mass media, Reaction is usually broken by an expression acknowledging the fact that the sender is being listened to. These are signals like "ah," "of course," etc., which appear at the end of turns or overlap the utterance made by the sender. They may also be imposed by the sender. They resemble Coda, yet they do not function as a signal of the end of an exchange. They will be marked as c<sub>n</sub>.

20. I K: czy tramwaj dojeżdżał tu do sosnowca wtedy też s katowic?  
 R M: ni dopiero teras jes zrobjone / teras / tylko do mysłowic dojeżdżoł  
 c<sub>1</sub> K: acha  
 R M: teras dopjyro zrobjone jes do sosnowca // tak że jag myżmy / yy ojciec nie / najpszut była naj ta najstarsza było nas troje / a / urodziłam sie / prawie f czternastym rokuu / tagże 'bo wybuchła wtedy wojna niy?  
 c<sub>2</sub> K: tak  
 R M: i mjały my czsi miesionce / noo my były bliźniaki / tak że ojciec nas pozostawił o czszech czsi mjesionce...

(TK 2/I, s. 105)

[I R' c<sub>1</sub> R'' c<sub>2</sub> R''']

[I K: Did the tram get to Sosnowiec from Katowice at that time, too?

R M: No, it has been so only recently. At that time it only went to Mysłowice.

c<sub>n</sub>. K: Ah.

R M: Only now it gets to Sosnowiec / so when we / our father did not / first there was the old the oldest there were three of us / and / I was born / almost in 1914 / also the war broke out then /

*c<sub>n</sub>*: K: Yes.

R M: *And we were four months old / well us twins / so our father left us for about months.]*

It would be erroneous to claim that each time we analyse a dialogue, we encounter clear cases of exchanges which could be identified almost automatically. As it is not so, it is more correct to maintain that interlocutors tend to comply with the exchange pattern rather than follow it without exceptions.

This is obvious if we consider the fact that live and spontaneous dialogue depends on a number of extralinguistic factors and also on a mere coincidence that may interrupt the dialogue or change its course. Without such an assumption, the study of natural dialogue is doomed to consist in a search for a compositional *perpetuum mobile*.

On the other hand, any approach based on the assumption that dialogue is amorphous and coincidental would substantiate the claim that dialogue consists in a chaotic sequence of random turns. The exchange is an example of a progressive structuring of dialogue. The potential of the exchange as a structure ordering and organizing discourse is clearly visible in polilogue, which, due to the number of interlocutors, is vulnerable to disorder. And still it can be observed that interlocutors in a polilogue tend to co-organise exchanges by taking turns that fill in rather than destroy the structural framework of the exchange (under the condition that while keeping silent, they kept track of the conversation):

21. I J: ja miałem katar dwa dni / musze wam powjedzieć /  
 $R_{in}$  A: { to w mojim pszypatku jes sukces }  
 R Al: { a wiem / metody jakieś // } czosnek ii  
 R K: bieganie  
 R K: nieee  
 C J: niee nie nawet nie

(JW)

$[\vec{I} \quad \vec{R}_{in} \quad \vec{R} \quad \vec{R}]$

[I J]: *I had a runny nose for two days / I must tell you/*

*In my case it is a success*

$R_{in}$  A: *I know / some methods // garlic and*

R Al: *running*

R K: *noo*

C J: *noo no even not]*

On the semantic plane, the exchange can be defined as an accumulation of co-produced meaning, for which the framework is Initiation, or as a sequence of semantically independent and non-independent elements. From a syntactic point of view, the exchange can be viewed as a sequence of elliptic utterances, in which the least elliptic one is Initiation and the most elliptic is Coda. Finally, on the pragmatic plane, the exchange is an instance of negotiating a common point of view and common references in a dynamic process of eliminating the asymmetry of knowledge.

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The pragmatics of casual dialogue

Summary

In this paper, the author presents the relationships of dialogue and then characterizes dialogue as a text. In dialogue's characteristics, it is necessary to distinguish its units and both obligatory and optional elements. The author notes that a lively and spontaneous dialogue is dependent on various extralinguistic factors as well as accident.

Key words: casual dialogue, coherence, completeness, extralinguistic factors