UNDERSTANDING FACE -TO- FACE INTERACTION

Issues Linking Goals and Discourse

Edited
by
Karen Tracy

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UNDERSTANDING FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION

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The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of
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Introduction: Linking Communicator Goals with Discourse

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The assumption that communicative action is strategic and goal-oriented is virtually a given starting point of communication research (e.g., see recent volumes by Cody & McLaughlin, 1990; Daly & Wiemann, in press; Tracy & Coupland, 1990) as well as its most influential disciplinary neighbor: psychology (Frese & Sabini, 1985; Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Schank & Abelson, 1977). The purpose of this book is *not* to challenge the reasonableness of the assumption—it is unimaginable that accounts of communicative action could be adequate without recognizing that people are purposeful and use talk to accomplish "goals"—but rather to challenge the simplistic way in which that assumption has typically been understood.

For the purposes of this introduction, I use *goal* as a general concept that references a family of concepts: goal, purpose, concern, intention, and want. Whether we should make more distinctions within that family of concepts is but one of the issues that this volume addresses (see especially chapter 9). The typical practice, however, is for researchers to *not* specify very precisely which meaning is intended when the concept is used (Craig, 1986, 1990).

Not all study of face-to-face interaction starts with an "intentional actor" assumption. Most notably, "discourse" studies (Bilmes, 1986; Gumperz, 1982a, 1982b; Tannen, 1981, 1984), studies that begin with naturally occurring talk, have attempted to sidestep the assumption in some interesting, although not completely successful, ways (see Tracy & Coupland, 1990, for a review). In this chapter, I restrict my focus to "communicator goals" approaches to face-to-face interaction, the approach type dominant in communicative and social psycho-

logical research. I argue that assuming that communicator goals relate to discourse in simple transparent ways is neither empirically warrantable nor theoretically wise.

As initial evidence of the complexity of the relationship between discourse and goals, consider one example of a "simple" exchange. Two friends have been conversing, and the first friend (A) says, "There was flooding in Harrisburg." It is now the second friend's (B's) turn to talk; how should he or she respond? What did A mean by the comment? B's ability to respond appropriately depends on B understanding A's intended goal, which is inferred from the discourse in light of background knowledge (Schank et al., 1982). As illustration of the potential difficulty, consider the following four responses and how each suggests B inferred markedly different goals motivating A's comment:

R1: Is your brother OK?

R2: Yeah, I was lucky this time. We closed the sale on our property a little over a month ago.

R3: Yeah, we've certainly had obnoxious weather this Fall.

R4: What's your point?

Response 1 is a sensible one if friend A has a brother in Harrisburg. It will demonstrate that B cares about what A cares about; it will also show that B recognizes that a general event (weather/flooding) has emotional significance for A and that B recognizes that A was not bringing it up just because weather is an acceptable topic for general talk. Put another way, R1 suggests that Friend B took A's comment about Harrisburg as a bid for interest and sympathy.

In R2, B interprets the goal motivating the Harrisburg comment quite differently. In essence, B treats the comment as an expression of interest and concern from friend A to self. R2 would be a sensible next comment for B to make if he or she has property in Harrisburg and knows that A knows that fact. Stated with words, A's point would be something like, "I'm telling you this piece of information because I know it affects you and I notice and keep track of things that affect you."

The third response is the most general; Schank et al. (1982) labeled it a "general interest" point. General interest points presume that the speaker's goal was to say something that is generally of interest for people to talk about—in this case, weather and disasters. That is, there was not a more specific goal that motivated the comment; it is merely a topic to talk about to pass time and avoid awkward silences.

Where the first three responses presume that the speaker had friendly intentions, R4 does not. R4 is the kind of response that makes sense if, for example, A had warned B not to buy property in Harrisburg but B had gone ahead and done it anyway. In this case, B might be inferring A's goal in

commenting about Harrisburg to be a way to say, "I told you so." The goal of Speaker B in responding with R4, then, could be to challenge A to be openly critical and self-righteous, a move that B might expect A to not want to do. In this last case, then, the point of the Harrisburg comment is for A to criticize B, and R4 is B's response to that criticism.

There are many more goals than the four exemplified here that a speaker could have in making a single simple comment. The four, however, are sufficiently diverse to illustrate why being able to link discourse to goals is essential in understanding face-to-face interaction. This need to have methods for linking goals and discourse becomes even clearer when we start from the opposite vantage point—that of the speaker who has a goal. Imagine a speaker who had one of the following four communicative goals: (a) to express interest in another; (b) to make a bid for another to show interest in self; (c) to keep talk going and avoid awkward silences; (d) to criticize another's judgment. How would these different goals be expressed in talk? As I have shown already, these goals could be expressed in an identical discourse form. Obviously, however, each goal could be expressed in a myriad of ways. A speaker interested in expressing interest in another, for example, could (a) ask a question ("What's going on in your life?"); (b) give a compliment ("That was a good movie you selected."); (c) demonstrate his or her attentiveness to the other's past talk ("I was thinking about what you said yesterday, and . . ."); or (d) make a comment about something that affects the other ("There was flooding in Harrisburg.").

If the same discourse form can indicate different goals, and different forms can express virtually the same communicative goal, then we are going to need good conceptual frameworks (theoretical distinctions, guiding ideas) to discover and construct how goals and discourse are (or should be) linked in any particular case. This example points to the complexity of relations between discourse and goals. All of the chapters in this volume consider issues involved in understanding how goals and discourse expression can be linked. In the remainder of the chapter, I do three things: (a) evidence the degree to which the assumption of simple transparency is widespread; (b) show how untenable such an assumption is in one kind of face-to-face interaction—intellectual discussion among faculty and graduate students in an academic department; and (c) overview the contributions that each of the chapters makes to conceptualizing more adequately how goals and discourse are linked.

ASSUMPTION: GOALS AND DISCOURSE ARE TRANSPARENTLY LINKED

The assumption that goals and discourse are transparently linked rests on two interconnected premises. The first is that the goals that undergird communica-

tive action are a small, easily defined set. The goals in this set, moreover, are assumed to be related to each other in a straightforward manner. The second premise is that, if the links between a goal (get compliance) and functional message strategies (make a request, be rational, be friendly) are identified, then the interesting part of the goal–discourse relationship has been explained. That is, it is presumed that the extension to discourse is unproblematic and easy to do.

Premise 1: There is a Small, Easily Defined Set of Goals

The assumption that the goals undergirding communication are a small, easily defined set is seen in much theorizing. For instance, Clark and Delia (1979), in their now much-cited article, suggested that interactants have three main types of goals: a task or instrumental one, a self-presentational, identity one, and a relational one. Each of these goals is present in every social situation, they argued, but specific situations differ in the salience of each. Others have made similar arguments about the general goals of face-to-face encounters (Forgas, 1983; Graham, Argyle, & Furnham, 1980; McCann & Higgins, 1984; O'Keefe & Delia, 1982). Theoretical formulations such as these suggest that (a) the goals that people possess for specific types of interaction could easily be placed in one of three categories; and (b) the goal priorities that people will have is given, or at least strongly suggested, by the nature of the social situation.

When we look at research that investigates how people pursue a particular kind of communicative goal, we find the implications of these theoretical typologies drawn out explicitly. This is especially well illustrated in research on face-to-face persuasion, a research tradition typically labeled *compliance-gaining* or *social influence*. Study of social influence is based on the assumption that there are a large set of situations in which getting compliance is the obvious goal (Bisanz & Rule, 1990; Dillard, 1990; Rule & Bisanz, 1987; Smith, Cody, LoVette, & Canary, 1990).

Take, for instance, a much-studied situation (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Miller, Boster, Roloff, & Seibold, 1977; Seibold, Cantrill, & Meyers, 1985): getting one's son to do his homework. This situation *could* be primarily a compliance-gaining situation, but there are many other goals that could be central. A parent could be concerned with motivating a son to take responsibility for his behavior. In this case, getting one's son to do homework would be only part of a broader goal. Thus, if a parent saw the conversation with a son turning into a situation where the son seemed to perceive the situation as a compliance-gaining one, that is, one where the parent was trying to impose his or her preferences on the child, a parent might abandon attempts to get the son to do homework. In this case, although the parent might prefer that his or her son study more, the parent's concerns to recognize that the son is a mature decision maker (relational goal?) and that he or she is able to give his or her child independence (identity goal?)

might lead a parent to avoid the subject entirely or broach it in an indirect manner ("We're going to Aunt Sarah's for dinner on Sunday. You'll need to plan around that in doing your homework."). In such a situation, where compliance-gaining is not the central goal, we would expect a parent to speak in different ways than when it was (treat the situation as an information-giving one, for example). My point is that face-to-face situations do not come with easily prespecified goal packages.

Many researchers do recognize that situations have more than a single goal influencing action (see Tracy & Coupland, 1990, for a review); but, nonetheless, how these multiple goals are to be related is treated as self-evident. By and large, more attention is given to goal hierarchy than to goal multiplicity. The goal of compliance-gaining, for instance, is conceived as a midrange goal: on the one hand, an instantiation of a task goal (Dillard, 1990); on the other, a general category of more specific action. For instance, Cody, Canary, and Smith (in press) have identified 10 more specific goals of compliance-gaining, including such concerns as obtain permission, gain assistance, give advice, change relationship, change opinion. Others have specified slightly different compliance-gaining goal typologies (Dillard, 1989; Rule & Bisanz, 1987).

Of those studying compliance-gaining, Dillard (1990) has been especially sensitive to the fact that interaction involves multiple goals. But even he argued that, in compliance-gaining situations, compliance-gaining will be the primary goal, and other concerns (e.g., self-presentational, relational) will be secondary—that is, ones that shape how a speaker accomplishes the primary one. The difficulty with this is, as I argued earlier, is that face-to-face situations do not come tagged by type (e.g., "This is a compliance gaining situation."). Rather, the speaker is faced with figuring out how important any single goal is in light of his or her other existing goals. The simplicity of goal conceptions interacts with a second assumption: that there is no need to look at discourse.

Premise 2: If We Understand What Communicators Do at the Level of Message Strategies, There is No Need to Look at Discourse

Although the specific issues of interest in communication research are quite diverse, most conceptual discussion about face-to-face interaction is at the level of message strategies or tactics detached from discourse expression. Message strategies specify a general type of action that another might take. For instance, in compliance-gaining situations, people might use threats, direct requests, promises, and ingratiation. By and large, the treatment of discourse expression as inconsequential is not argued for explicitly; rather, it is an assumption embedded in research practice (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Robinson, 1985). That is, when researchers interested in "affinity-seeking" (Bell & Daly, 1984; Berger &

Bell, 1988), comforting (Burleson, 1983, 1984), relationship termination (Baxter, 1982), compliance-gaining (Seibold et al., 1985) the management of embarrassing moments (Cupach, Metts, & Hazelton, 1986) sexual harassment (Bingham & Burleson, 1989), and so on neither look at actual interaction nor defend why, in the particular case, it is reasonable to omit looking at actual interaction, they are taking for granted the inconsequentiality of that type of information.

However, if one believed that studying discourse could significantly alter the conclusions drawn about the nature of face-to-face interaction, there would be no warrant for ignoring discourse. That conclusions can be markedly different is illustrated in a study (Hopper & Drummond, 1990) that compares ideas about relational termination developed through study of self-reports with those garnered through study of a telephone exchange in which a couple breaks up.

To summarize, much communicative research assumes that (a) social situations come with obvious and easily identified goals; (b) the goals will relate to each other in ways that can be specified a priori; and (c) looking at discourse expression will not yield much new information useful for understanding face-to-face exchanges. I have generally suggested that this is untenable; let me further illustrate the inadequacy of these assumptions in a particular kind of interaction, which I label *intellectual discussion.*

CASE STUDY: AN INTELLECTUAL DISCUSSION

One type of interaction that has received intensive philosophical consideration but little observational study is intellectual discussion (cf. Grimshaw, 1989). I became interested in this type of talk because what participants said in one intellectual discussion group in which I participated often seemed strange and convoluted—at least from any simple vantage point. Moreover, as a social actor in this situation, it was not uncommon for me to find myself thinking about what I "should" say. Reflection suggested that the situation was likely to involve multiple complex goals for interactants; as such, study of an ongoing discussion group seemed an ideal place to examine how goals and discourse were linked. Over a period of a year, Sheryl Baratz and I collected audio-tape, interview, and observational data about this group.

The "intellectual discussion" we studied was a weekly departmental colloquia in a PhD communication program. A typical colloquium involved a speaker giving a 40-minute presentation, followed by an equally long discussion. The discussion usually, although not always, focused on the speaker's claims. Attendance varied from week to week, usually numbering about 20 people, with the attendants consisting of faculty and graduate students in the department and visitors from other departments and universities.

Our first project involved analyzing the in-depth interviews we had conducted with 10 regular participants (Tracy & Baratz, 1989). We were interested in understanding how people perceived the institutional and individual goals in the colloquia. We asked participants what their own concerns were and what they thought others' concerns were when in the roles of presenter and discussant. As data we used not only what participants told us directly but also what they implied about goals through their comparisons, criticism, and complaints.

Study of the interviews revealed two sets of goals that individuals oriented to in the situation. The first goal set was intellectual display/community membership display. Participants were concerned with displaying themselves as intellectually able or, at least, not intellectually inferior. As presenters, this meant that people worked to show their position to be interesting and reasonable. As discussants, they were concerned to ask tough challenging questions, point out problems, and show the limitations of other's viewpoints. Participants also wanted to demonstrate themselves to be "good community members." Being a good community member meant knowing about and being interested in other's work, not deliberately hurting or humiliating another, and helping others accomplish the intellectual work goals they pursued—that is, giving advice that was helpful, was supportive, and took account of others' skill level.

We argued (Tracy & Baratz; 1989) that the relationship between the goals, and even within the different parts of the single goal of being a good community member, was far from a simple one and was influenced by many things, particularly the relative equality of the participants (graduate students, faculty). In summarizing our conclusions about the meaning of the community goal we concluded (Tracy & Baratz, 1989):

> We are left, then, with a complex picture of what it means to be a good member of community—one in which people are expected to be considerate, gentle and tactful but one in which they show that they take the other seriously by criticizing and challenging; a community in which people are expected to play the game with all the skill they possess yet recognize that not all players are equally skilled. (p. 9)

The second set of goals that participants oriented to concerned the nature of the relationship between self and ideas. Participants reported having both the goal of demonstrating their distance from ideas (not getting defensive) and demonstrating their involvement (showing investment with ideas). Although the involvement issue seemed primarily tied to the initial choice to talk, it also surfaced in comments about the ideal manner of discussion; people were both praised and criticized for getting emotionally involved.

The goals that were identified for this intellectual discussion, then, were complex ones that involved at least partial contradictions. They do not easily map into the abstract categories that prior theorizing has identified (task, identity, relational). Rather, each goal seems a complex combination whose salience we could expect to shift over the course of an exchange.

Consider now an excerpt of "intellectual discussion" and what insights would be forfeited if we did not examine actual discourse. The exchange that follows occurred between a speaker (Pat) and another member of the department (Lee). Pat had given a presentation soon after the 1988 presidential election about campaign strategies and had made a number of claims about why Governor Dukakis had lost and how he could have avoided losing. After about 20 minutes of discussion, Lee asked how Pat could be so certain about something that was said about Walter Mondale, referring to Pat's ideas as speculation. Pat did not accept the label "speculation" and instead used "theory." The following discussion ensued:[1]

01 Lee   Oh the theory is, I'm sure it's not speculative ( ) whether it can be applied in the given case to reach your desired results

02 Pat   Well in that sense I'm a little bit like uh like the rest of us, right? We do communication studies, we do discourse analyses, we do rhetorical criticism; where's the evidence?

03 Lee   Well we don't forecast or we don't prophesize ( )

04 Pat   Well what makes what makes that better?

05 Lee   Looking at it after its happened?

06 Pat   Yeah.

07 Lee   As opposed to before?

08 Pat   Right.

09 Lee   It would, it would seem more difficult. It would be turning into a prophecy somehow

10 Pat   Ok but in 19 uh 88 in July, uhm in early August I was at University X and I said to my students Bush is gonna win. Dukakis was at that point, was at that point 17 points ahead. I operated off a theory of campaigning and uh now that theory is being supported. I, you, Well I can say what a wonderful clairvoyant I am or what a great prophet I am or what a wonderful theory I have. No I couldn't have predicted that it would be this bad but I did have some ideas about how this thing was going to fall that were counter intuitive, counter empirical at the time and then gave reasons to kinda support this trajectory that I had

11 Lee   There, counter intuitive and counter empirical

12 Pat   Well counter most people's intuitions because the intuitions at the time from the pundits was that it was going to be a Dukakis victory. But uh, but I had, I had a theory of what was going on uh that uh, that began with the observation that the democratic party was riddled with contradictions and

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[1]Punctuation in this transcript was added to aid readability.

that what plays well in primaries doesn't play well in election campaigns and so on, this then substantially supported by the evidence. One good thing about forecasting rather than being a Monday morning quarterback is that you gotta lay things out on the line, you gotta say beforehand uh this is where I'm making my bets uh and uh, there's a certain kind of uh uh uh scientific character to that unlike the rhetorical critic who always gives the retrospective analysis.

13 Lee   Jean Dixon came out in the New York times a couple weeks ago. She forecasted Bush would win and I'm sure it's based upon a theory.

14 Pat   Right. But what's your point?

15 Lee   Well I'm wondering how you how you're drawing ( )

16 Pat   How is it different? Well Jean Dixon, Jean Dixon looks at the stars or uh looks at people's palms and does her forecasting on that basis. I don't know that there's very much uh evidence in support of her uh, methods; uh, the question comes down to method and and here uh what we know methodologically suggests that that there are other ways of reading the future than reading palms.

17 Lee   What would you have said if if Dukakis had done X, and Y would have been the result How can you possibly know?

18 Pat   I don't know it.

19 Lee   How come you have confidence ( )

20 Pat   But notice, notice now your false dichotomy. We either have to know it or we have to not talk about it not speculate about it

21 Lee   Oh no we should recognize what it is. It's kinda a loose, a speculation, kind of a nice fun exercise but it doesn't mean much. It it doesn't doesn't tell us much. ( ) It's been fun talking about it but that's as far as it goes and there's a function to that. I mean we should have fun when we talk I mean having fun is worthwhile
(laughter from group)

22 Lee   ( ) I mean what's better than that? It doesn't cost anything

23 Pat   Ok, I guess, I guess I would hafta hafta give up on an awful lot of what I rely on in a course of a day, uh any day in uh a week if I bought into your theory. I would rarely make judgments, uh unless I absolutely had all of the evidence and I never do. Uh I wouldn't simply say to myself I'm not gonna make a judgment uh today I do it as a policy uh I I wouldn't know how to vote on a tenure candidate, on a promotion, on what sorta judgment to make in the way of promoting policy for the department

24 Lee   Voting on a tenure candidate is a long way from ah saying If Dukakis had said X, Y would have resulted. A long way. Are those those no different? I don't know how you ever could ever ( )

25 Pat Well in both cases, in both cases I'm saying we're involved in what might be called an art of judgment. It's not a science of judgment, it's an art of judgment. Uh we are, we are finding out ways uhm to connect our best inferences, our best interpretations with uh, some implications for action uh it's

26 Lee on the one hand

27 Pat It's rarely the case, it's rarely the case that we have evidence sufficient on its own terms to make those sorts of judgments

28 Ted It takes it takes no art to judge that we are past four o'clock. Well I think it can be continued but some of us, some of us must go.

Features of Intellectual Discussion Suggested by Examination of the Discourse

Let me highlight two aspects of this exchange that shed light on possible relationships between intended or attributed goals and discourse moves. The first issue concerns the way intellectual attack and refutation are carried out; put another way, the kinds of discourse strategies used to present one's own position as reasonable and the other's as unreasonable (Tracy, 1990). As was gleaned from the interviews, the goal of displaying one's own intellectual ability was seen to involve presenting one's own claims as reasonable and the other's as unreasonable. Study of this exchange revealed that one way of displaying another's "unreasonableness" is by characterizing the other's position in terms that the community can be understood to evaluate negatively. Consider Lee's characterization of Pat's position as prophesizing (utterances 3, 8), as being the same as what Jean Dixon does (13–16), loose speculation, and a fun exercise (21). In an academic community, which can be presumed to put considerable weight on thinking that is serious, careful, and rigorous, Lee can be seen as attempting to portray Pat's position as unreasonable.

Pat also used this strategy to portray Lee's position as unreasonable and his own as reasonable. Toward the end of the interchange (25), Pat characterized his position regarding the similarity between predicting who will be president and deciding if a faculty member should be tenured as "an art of judgment," not a "science of judgment." Pat's characterization of the two positions implicitly presented his reasonableness and suggested Lee's unreasonableness. In describing the two positions this way, he called on the community's understanding that "the process of judgment" is inherently an imprecise activity and that "science" is a precise activity. By implication, then, a person who advocates a science of judgment is unreasonable, mixing things that do not go together.

The subtlety of these kinds of characterizing moves is further evidenced in another of Pat's uses of the term *science*. Whereas, in the prior example, he called on one aspect of science to attempt to make Lee's position seem unreasonable, in utterance 12, he associated his own position with science to make it

look reasonable. Pat drew on slightly different connotations of science in each exchange. Lee had just characterized Pat's position as "prophesizing" (9). Pat then countered this framing, suggesting that what he does has a "certain kind of scientific character." Science in this contrastive context implies the activities of prediction and hypotheses testing—desirable activities, not the undesirable kind: nonrational, fuzzy, religious ones that the academic community could be counted on to associate with prophesizing. To summarize, one strategy of being "reasonable" and showing the other to be unreasonable is to characterize one's own and others' positions in ways that the community can be expected to have strong positive or negative reactions to.

A second interesting issue surfaces around the goal of defensiveness. The interviews indicated that presenters were concerned about being "nondefensive" in their responses to comments and criticisms. In essence, presenters cared that others regard their handling of potentially difficult questions as appropriate. We could ask whether speakers always orient to the goal of being nondefensive and whether audiences always evaluate presenters' "defensiveness." I suggest that they do not. Instead, I argue, speakers (and audiences) orient to the management of defensiveness when the questions asked are "difficult" ones for a speaker.

Consider how Pat, the presenter, responded to several potentially difficult questions from Lee. I offer my reactions as a participant in the group—reactions that, while undoubtedly having an idiosyncratic component could also be expected to have points of similarity to others in the audience. During most of the exchange (the end is the exception), the issue of defensiveness seemed not to be relevant. Why was this the case? As an audience member, I initially saw Lee's questions as "tough" ones that called into question the basic nature of Pat's intellectual work. Pat's reactions altered my initial characterization. Rather than treating Lee's comments as difficult, Pat treated Lee's comments as naive and not demanding serious intellectual engagement. Consider how that was accomplished.

In the exchange between Lee and Pat where Lee suggested that Pat's activities are similar to Jean Dixon's (13–16), it seemed likely that Lee's comment that Jean Dixon forecasted Bush winning was meant as a sarcastic comment, a highly tinged negative evaluation about what Pat was claiming. Pat (14), however, did not respond to it as such. Rather, he explicitly asked Lee what his point was. In asking Lee what his point was, Pat can be seen as relying on Lee's likely reluctance to verbalize that he had an explicit goal of making Pat look stupid. Thus, in response to the direct question, we see Lee partially at a loss for words, unable to formulate his concern (15). Pat turned Lee's loss for words into a specific question that he presumed Lee was trying to formulate. (How are Pat's ideas about forecasting presidential elections different from what Jean Dixon does?) This question seems a ludicrous one—one that is hard to imagine taking seriously. In fact, the only imaginable grounds for the question not to be dismissed out of hand would be if it was asked by a naive, unsophisticated

person. A serious answer, then, implicitly casts the asker as naive and unsophis-ticated. Pat addressed the question seriously: "Jean Dixon looks at the stars, or uh looks at people's palms and does her forecasting on that basis. I don't know that there's very much, uh, evidence in support of her, uh methods." We are left, then, with the impression that Pat did not take Lee seriously, because he treated Lee's question "seriously."

Thus, although the goal of avoiding defensiveness might generally be rele-vant for presenters, it did not seem to be relevant in this particular segment of discussion. It was not the case, however, that the issue of defensiveness was irrelevant the entire time. Pat's reactions lost their "I'll try and be reasonable with you tone" when Lee succeeded in eliciting laughter from the group at Pat's expense (21–22). In his next turn (23), rather than trying to characterize the limitations of Lee's position delicately, as was seen in the reference to Jean Dixon's "methods," Pat used extreme formulations—Lee's position, Pat stated, would lead him to "rarely make judgments, uh, unless I absolutely had all the evidence, and I never do." Such a framing strongly challenged the reasonable-ness of Lee's position.

In this last section, then, in contrast to the earlier ones, Pat responded to Lee as a serious intellectual opponent. And, although the thrust of Pat's comment was to show that Lee's position was wrong, because the response was strong and emotional, it implied that the question was tough, it supported Lee's identity as intellectually able, and it made relevant to the audience the question of whether Pat was being "defensive."

Study of this exchange suggests that goal attributions about defensiveness become relevant when a speaker treats a tough question as tough. If a speaker belittles a question, treats it as naive, ill-informed, or irrelevant, the focus of observers' attributional attention moves away from the speaker's question handling toward the questioner's intellectual ability.

If the preceding analyses are persuasive, it becomes reasonable to conclude that the discourse moves that realize the interactional goals that people have in intellectual discussion—to be perceived as reasonable, to handle tough questions well, and so on—are extremely complex and are dependent on a large web of taken-for-granted assumptions in light of connotations made salient by specific discourse formulations. Thus, if we are to adequately understand how people accomplish their communicative goals, we cannot ignore discourse expression. Let me describe, next, how each of the chapters in this volume enhances understanding of goal–discourse relationships in face-to-face interaction.

OVERVIEW OF THE VOLUME

The chapters in the volume focus on particular exchanges, situations, and relationships, unpacking actor's goal concerns and the way these concerns are

expressed in specific types of face-to-face exchange. The chapters also grapple with issues that cut across situations, offering conclusions about the nature of goals and how they relate to discourse generally. Many chapters do both of these things; but each chapter gives priority to one. The volume is organized in terms of this specific/general priority. Chapters in the first half give their main attention to issues within specific contexts (the courtroom, divorce mediation, therapy) or relationship types (intergenerational, friendship). Chapters in the second half primarily focus on cross-situational dilemmas and problems.

Chapter 2, an essay by Penman, argues that moral orders undergird all communicative practices. Penman identifies two that operate in courtrooms, and she suggests that the way to identify moral orders is through close analysis of the language games and "goals" displayed in a situation. Drawing on multiple instances of courtroom interaction, she posits the operation of a "fact" game and a "face" game, which relate in complicated ways to a justice and an honor morality. These moralities do not mesh well with each other. As a result, Penman argues, the courtroom's discourse rules unfairly disadvantage witnesses.

The third chapter, written by Jacobs, Jackson, Stearns, and Hall, focuses on divorce mediation. After demonstrating that the argumentative discourse that occurs in mediation is notably digressive, they consider why that is the case. The interchanges are digressive, they argue, because the talk is not directed to the "obvious" situational goal—that is, to resolve problems around child custody and visitation. When viewed from another vantage point, they show, the discourse is not at all digressive. The conversations between ex-husbands and -wives can be seen as centrally directed at demonstrating each spouse's good moral character and the other's blameworthiness, a goal that, over the course of back-and-forth exchanges, becomes the "obvious" one motivating the ex-spouses' communicative choices.

In chapter 4, Buttny and Cohen examine the way conversational goal attributions function in a therapy session between a married couple and a therapist. They consider how people account for what leads them to act, arguing that we cannot have direct access to people's goals but that goal-talk is an available resource that provides insight into what actors see as reasonable goals and reasonable procedures for attaining them. Buttny and Cohen analyze the opening segment of a couple's session in which each partner identifies the problems that brought them to therapy. Each partner's remarks, they show, specify not only the problem that brought the couple to therapy but also who is to blame and what the solution should be. These goal formulations, in turn, are taken up by the partner to be refuted, agreed with, modified, or whatever.

The next two chapters focus on interaction in particular relational contexts. In chapter 5, Coupland, Coupland, Giles, and Henwood examine the role of goals in intergenerational talk: in particular, initial conversations between middle-aged and elderly women. Drawing on extensive examples of middle-

aged–elderly conversations, they show that at the level of conversational management, the goals of elderly and younger speakers are consonant; the two groups cooperatively create a smooth-functioning interaction by casting the young in facilitator roles and the elderly in the role of the center of attention. This smooth functioning, they illuminate, exists because of a broader goal incompatibility. Elderly people are stereotyped by younger speakers and seen as not possessing the same interactional wants and needs as the young themselves have.

In chapter 6, Rawlins considers what is involved when friends attempt to work back from each other's discourse to arrive at the meaning for the friendship. Working back to the meaning, Rawlins shows, rests on the answers that a friend gets to a complicated web of interconnected questions that concern identification of the action performed, assessment of its intentionality, and judgments about the act's consequences for the self, the friend, and society.

In the first chapter of Part II, Bavelas reviews the way psychology has used the intrapsychic concept "goal" to explain behavior. After describing several problems in using "goal" to explain discourse, she argues that the fundamental problem occurs because the two concepts are different reality levels: Discourse references behavior; goal references hypothetical constructs. Most psychological research involves heavy use of constructs and limited attention to behavior. The result is an "inverted pyramid," an approach, she argues, that is misguided. Drawing on 10 years of work with colleagues on "equivocation," she illustrates how they were able to "stabilize the pyramid" and develop a more data-sensitive, discourse-grounded approach to theorizing.

In chapter 8, O'Keefe considers the puzzling fact that certain communicative tasks reveal few individual differences, whereas others make visible major differences. Explanations of individual message differences typically appeal to differences among people's goal priorities. But this, O'Keefe argues, is insufficient to account for the kinds of message variety exhibited. To adequately account for differences, we need to take account of people's "message design logics." Using Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory as a comparison point, a theory premised on a single design logic, O'Keefe demonstrates the need to have three distinct conceptions of how discourse and goals can be linked.

Chapter 9, written by conversational analysts Mandelbaum and Pomerantz, poses the question: What drives social action? The question is an interesting one, because conversation analysts and communication researchers have approached it so differently. Conversation analysts have largely ignored or been nonexplicit about participant intentions and concerns; communication researchers have regarded all social action as goal-driven. Drawing on a telephone conversation between two friends in which one asks a favor of another, Mandelbaum and Pomerantz show the usefulness of distinguishing five influences on

social action, only a couple of which bear any resemblance to communicator notions of "goal."

Chapter 10, by Sanders, offers a model of how goals and talk mutually influence each other. Sanders sketches the typical way of conceiving of the relationship between talk and goals—a unidirectional one where preinteractional plans and goals are assumed to guide the expression of talk. Then, drawing on a telephone conversation between two nurses where one rejects the other's job offer, he illustrates the implausibility of the unidirectional model and shows the need for a model that posits a two-way relationship.

The final chapter, by Shepherd and Rothenbuhler, shows how the concepts "discourse" and "goal" draw on different intellectual traditions. The idea of "goal" is used most often in conjunction with individualistic, intentional psychological explanations of action. "Discourse" is more associated with collectivistic, sociological, social structure explanations. This creates problems for communicative theories that want to link them. Shepherd and Rothenbuhler present ways to solve this problem, including, for instance, taking account of the fact that goals are socially shaped as well as being expressions of individual desires.

Theorists have recently made convincing arguments about how science and society are interconnected and why social science should be concerned about practical action (Craig, 1989; Hall, 1989; Krippendorf, 1889). This volume illustrates one attempt to take the interconnectedness seriously. By providing conceptions of communicative situations that capture much of their usual complexity; by giving descriptors of a whole range of social and judgmental consequences associated with different communicative moves; by making explicit the ways communicative moves can shape or reframe the nature of the situation being faced; by building situational models of actor goal priorities that are both realistic and morally defensible; and by making explicit how goals are manifested in discourse, it is hoped that this volume can be useful in shaping communicative practice.

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