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Dialogforschung

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Herausgegeben von Franz Hundsnurscher und Edda Weigand

Dialoganalyse III

Referate der 3. Arbeitstagung
Bologna 1990

Herausgegeben von
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Die Erfahrungen der letzten Jahre haben gezeigt, daß allenthalben das Interesse an pragmatischen Fragestellungen in der Linguistik zunimmt und daß sich gleichzeitig im Bereich der Pragmatik Differenzierungs- und Klärungsprozesse vollziehen, die den einzelnen Bereichen ein klareres Profil verleihen, d.h. es zeichnen sich Problembereiche und zentrale innovative Forschungsperspektiven ab.

Einer dieser Kernbereiche ist eine handlungstheoretisch fundierte Theorie des dialogischen Sprachgebrauchs als Mitte einer linguistischen Pragmatik.

Die Reihe soll einer Vielzahl von Zwecken dienen; das oberste Ziel ist eine umfassende Information über die Trends und Fortschritte auf dem Gebiet der Dialogforschung, die sich als methodologische Grundlage der allgemeinen Gesprächsforschung verstehen läßt.

Zu den Publikationsvorhaben gehören: die Vorstellung theoretischer Konzepte; - die Diskussion methodologischer Fragen; - die Beschreibung von Dialogstrategien; - die Auseinandersetzung mit Spezialproblemen dialogischen Sprachgebrauchs; - die linguistische Untersuchung von literarischen Dialogen; - die Behandlung disziplinübergreifender Problemfelder (Beziehung zur Sprachphilosophie, zur Künstlichen-Intelligenz-Forschung, zur Syntax, zur Stilistik, zur Soziologie, zur Psychologie usw.); - die Bereitstellung von Beispielsammlungen für einzelne Gesprächsbereiche; - die Erstellung von Bibliographien zur allgemeinen und speziellen Gesprächsforschung.

Diese neue Reihe "Beiträge zur Dialogforschung" soll die Entwicklungen in dieser linguistischen Teildisziplin erfassen, indem sie in unregelmäßiger Folge mindestens zwei Bände pro Jahr der wissenschaftlichen Öffentlichkeit vorstellt: Gegenüber einer Zeitschrift hat diese Publikationsform den Vorteil, daß sie mit einem offenen Programm sowohl Sammelbände von Artikeln zu Spezialproblemen wie auch Kongreßakten und Monographien berücksichtigen kann. Als Publikationssprachen sind Deutsch und Englisch vorgesehen.

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FOREWORD

The present two volumes contain the proceedings of the Third International Conference on Dialogue Analysis, held at Bologna from May 2nd to 5th, 1990. They represent also the first issue of the new collection "Dialoganalytische Forschungen" (DF) the Niemeyer Verlag has accepted to publish. "DF" is meant as an instrument to make known the outcome of recent research dealing with dialogic communication, an extremely vast field, at the cross-roads of linguistics proper, pragma- and psycholinguistics, speech act theory, rhetorics, artificial intelligence. To prove the present interest in this topic suffice it to say that many important international congresses have included in their programme a section devoted to dialogue analysis; see, for instance, the conference organized by the International Society for Functional Linguistics (Prague, July 1991) and the "XXème Congrès International de Linguistique et Philologie Romanes" (Zurich 1992).

The first conference on dialogue analysis was held at Münster (1986) and the second one at Bochum (1988). About 200 participants coming from 15 countries attended the Bologna conference and about one hundred papers were discussed. It was the organizers' aim to provide an opportunity for a personal exchange of ideas and experiences among a wide range of researchers working within the framework of different paradigmata. The contributions map a considerable part of the spectrum of up-to-date research and consequently the editors - Edda Weigand and Franz Hundsnißscher for the German and English papers, Sorin Stati for the Italian and French ones - hope that the present panorama is representative enough.

As our contributions primarily show, dialogue analysis means a new orientation in descriptive linguistics, that handles features such as the mechanism of conversation with two and more than two participants, the argumentative power of speech acts, the phatic function, coherence and cohesion in oral communication, the cooperative and uncooperative behaviour of interlocutors etc. In many countries (Germany, France, Switzerland, USA etc.) an increasingly stronger need has been felt to find new and more adequate methods

and to construct a theoretical device to capture the various - heterogeneous, but complementary - features mentioned above. Many reactions have been heard at the Bologna conference to these stimulating, and still unsolved issues. Yet it must be admitted that participants have not been successful in defining/explicating the basic notions used in a generally accepted way. No consent seems to have been reached about the term dialogue itself. Is it the basic, common denominator of all verbal activity ("All is dialogue!") or is it a kind of literary use of language, as opposed, e.g., to oral conversation? As the reader will note, the corpora our contributors have chosen are literary texts, as well as fragments of "small talk", interviews, etc.

A first group of papers is devoted to general theoretical and methodological problems; they were discussed in the plenary sessions. The other contributions have been classified according to the topics of the various sections (in order to test the increasing international and interdisciplinary character of our meetings, see the proceedings of the 1st and 2nd conferences, published also by Niemeyer).

To conclude, at least one of the more practical and fruitful results of the Bologna conference is worth quoting: an international association for dialogue analysis (I.A.D.A.) was founded at Bologna, which promotes research work in many countries and is already organizing local and international meetings. The first one was a workshop focussed on the methodology (Bologna, December 1990), the proceedings of which are to be published in this collection.

It is my pleasant duty to thank Professor Roversi Monaco, "Rector Magnificus" of the Bologna University, who received the organizing committee of the conference with a highly sympathetic response and granted us a relevant subvention. For financial support we are also gratefully indebted to the psychology department of the Padua University, to the Institute of Psychology (C.N.R. - Rome), to the cultural German, French and Austrian associations in Bologna, as well as to the "Giunta Regionale" Emilia Romagna. Last but not least, we express our thanks to the Fritz-Thyssen Foundation for having made possible the participation of colleagues coming from the eastern part of Germany, Israel and Bulgaria.

Plenarvorträge

Gerd Fritz

COMPREHENSIBILITY AND THE BASIC STRUCTURES OF DIALOGUE

1. Introduction
 2. Basic assumptions
 - 2.1 The principle of comprehensibility: a dialogical principle
 - 2.2 Some complicating factors in the application of the principle
 - 2.3 Dialogical approach and cognitive approach
 3. Aspects of understanding and types of comprehension problems
 - 3.1 Level-generation and background of assumptions
 - 3.2 Constellations of knowledge and their development
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 4. Dialogical comprehensibility experiments
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1. Introduction

The study of what makes utterances difficult or easy to understand is one of the central topics of research in comprehension. It is both theoretically attractive and useful in practice. The more we know about difficulties in understanding the more we know about understanding. And the better we grasp typical problems of understanding in certain types of discourse and for certain recipients the better we can overcome these problems and the better we can advise people whose job it is to overcome such problems. It is therefore not surprising that comprehensibility has been the object of much reflection as far back as the days of classical rhetoric and that it is a center of lively interest in several present-day scientific disciplines, ranging from artificial intelligence and educational psychology to linguistics. The multi-disciplinary character of the field is no doubt inspiring, but it does not

make it easy to survey. Different approaches differ widely as to theoretical background, empirical methodology, and criteria of quality of research conducted in the respective traditions. The present paper aims at contributing to the geography of at least one region of this field by presenting an overview of what comprehensibility looks like from the position of linguistic communication analysis - or dialogue analysis, the label does not really matter. In order to bring out some of the basic ideas of this approach in full relief I shall now and then refer to a competitor (or ally?) in the field, which I shall summarily call "the cognitive approach". I shall begin by mentioning a few basic theoretical assumptions of the dialogical approach. From there I shall go on to discuss a theory-based list of comprehension problems, and finally, I shall raise a few questions as to experimental design in comprehensibility research.

2. Basic assumptions

2.1 The principle of comprehensibility: a dialogical principle

In Grice's "Logic and conversation" we find the following remarks on the maxim of perspicuity, a close relative of the principle of comprehensibility: "... under the category of MANNER ... I include the supermaxim - 'Be perspicuous' - and various maxims such as:

1. 'Avoid obscurity of expression.'
2. 'Avoid ambiguity.'
3. 'Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).'
4. 'Be orderly.'

And one may need others" (Grice 1967, II, 8).¹⁾

Although Grice quickly loses interest in this particular maxim the context of his statement may be useful as a starting point in order to locate the topic of comprehensibility within a theory of linguistic action. The principle of comprehensibility is one of the many principles of rational interaction. It is therefore basically a dialogical principle and should be treated accordingly. I should like to pursue this idea a little further, and in so doing, present a few arguments why a theory of dialogue ought to be one of the essential ingredients of comprehensibility research.

Comprehensibility is not just a quality of texts, as readability research generally assumed, but a quality of contributions to communicative transactions. A certain text may be easily comprehensible for one recipient but not for the other, therefore comprehensibility is largely a matter of "reci-

ipient design", i.e. the speaker or writer will base his decisions on how to say what he wants to say on his assumptions as to the competence, the assumptions, and the knowledge of the intended recipient.²⁾ Inversely, in understanding or interpreting the speaker's utterances the recipient will have to go on his or her assumptions as to the speaker's competence and assumptions. So what emerges is that in order to explain a phenomenon like "recipient design" we need concepts of a theory of dialogue, e.g. shared and non-shared knowledge, mutual assumptions, strategy (in a game-theoretical sense), just to name a few. It is furthermore important to see that comprehensibility is not the responsibility of the speaker or writer alone but something that depends on the contributions of the hearer or reader as well.

Seen from a practical point of view problems of comprehension are most urgent in types of communication that deviate from the face-to-face prototype of dialogue, e.g. written instructions, TV news broadcasts, lectures etc. This is due to the fact that these forms of communication show diverse limitations in the range of resources for locating and remedying comprehension troubles. (There are of course also certain advantages, like the chance to re-read a difficult written passage.) But even for these seemingly non-dialogical forms the dialogical prototype is a fundamental object of comparison. This is quite obvious in those cases where an author anticipates questions and objections from an imaginary audience and incorporates the relevant answers and refutations in his text. In some cases such practical measures actually consist in the adoption of dialogical procedures, e.g. the use of forms of dialogue in certain types of broadcast or of simulated dialogue in introductory passages of computer manuals or expert help systems (cf. Krenn 1989, Muckenaupt 1986, Suchman 1987).

2.2 Some complicating factors in the application of the principle

The application of the principle of comprehensibility is a fine-grained and highly context-bound matter. In this respect it resembles the application of the principle of relevance which is notoriously open-textured. In order to judge the proper status of the principle under discussion and in order to properly judge its modes of application one has to consider at least the following factors:

(i) different types of discourse

For some types of discourse comprehensibility is a very high-level principle, e.g. in many types of instruction, where comprehensibility is a necessary condition of success. For other types of discourse it does not seem to be a

fundamental principle at all, e.g. for the performance of some religious rituals or for the producing and reading of hermetic poetry. Even within an individual discourse the degree and mode of application may vary. Furthermore, the actual problems and possible measures of improvement of comprehensibility may vary with the type of discourse (e.g. career counselling vs. television news broadcasts).

(ii) different (kinds of) recipients

Small children, amnesic aphasics and first year students raise completely different problems of comprehension - at least superficially -, which one has to adapt to if one wants to reach certain communicative aims. There are also those cases where we deliberately violate the principle in order to exclude someone from parts of a dialogue, e.g. when talking about delicate topics "in front of the children". A special cluster of difficulties arises in situations where a speaker or writer addresses an inhomogeneous audience, as in the case of package inserts for medicine where often the same text addresses doctors and patients. Such compromise texts tend to be rather unsatisfactory as they are too difficult for laymen to understand and too uninformative for doctors.

(iii) conflicts and connections with other principles

Depending on the type of discourse involved the principle of comprehensibility may conflict with the principle of brevity, the principle of complete information, the principle of precision, and others. The status of the principle in relation to a certain type of discourse also depends on the reasons one can give for following the principle. The analysis of such reasons often leads to principles of a different kind, like principles of efficiency (in many types of information transmission), basic democratic principles (as in legal contexts or in the case of political information in the media), principles of politeness, and others.

(iv) the current state of the discourse

In face-to-face communications problems of comprehension are usually dealt with in an ad-hoc fashion "as you go along". In doing so the participants can rely on their mutual knowledge which in part consists of their knowledge of the recent history of the discourse.³⁾ Knowledge of the dynamics of the discourse and its current state is an important resource for the location and repair of comprehension troubles. The problems involved are of a highly context-bound nature and seem to defy general prophylactic solutions in terms of rules and algorithms.

2.3 Dialogical approach and cognitive approach

In order to show some areas of theoretical tension in the field I shall give a very rough description of two competing or, as I already mentioned, possibly complementary approaches to problems of comprehensibility. The two approaches I should like to compare could be called the dialogical or interactional approach and the cognitive approach. Of course, these two approaches are to a certain extent artifacts of my classification. I shall not comment on approaches with a mainly practical interest which do not seem to have any particular theoretical affiliation, like the so-called Hamburg conception, which is very popular in Germany, and the majority of readability formulas.⁴⁾

The dialogical approach is mainly represented by authors with a background from linguistics and/or discourse analysis (cf. Heringer 1979, Muckenhaupt 1981, Hoffmann 1984, Biere 1989). Some authors, like van Dijk, try to get the best of both worlds (cf. van Dijk/Kintsch 1983). As their theoretical creed interactionalist share some version of a theory of human action, more specifically a theory of linguistic action. Their method is to a certain extent phenomenological, i.e. one of their basic activities consists in the close description of utterance forms and contexts of use in which utterances tend to produce comprehension difficulties. At the same time they describe the interactive procedures that can be used to diagnose and clarify comprehension problems and the means normally used in securing comprehension. They explain comprehension difficulties in terms of the linguistic forms used, in terms of coherence relations (local sequencing, the dynamics of topic shift etc.) and the latitude involved in interpreting such relations, and in terms of knowledge constellations and the resources available for the solution of coordination problems.

The cognitive approach on the other hand is mainly represented by authors with a background from cognitive psychology or cognitive science in general. Of course there is no such thing as a unified position in this approach as well. The basic tenet of this approach is the assumption that understanding is an internal procedure by which an input of linguistic utterances is processed to yield an output of knowledge which is represented in the mind. The main activity of cognitivists consists in modelling aspects of this process and the types of representations involved. Explanations of comprehension problems are given in terms of processing load and memory capacity. Difficulties of comprehension show in an increase of processing time or a decrease in quantity or accuracy of recall. It is by looking at the mind of the individual that one can solve the puzzles of comprehension.

Now if one feels that comprehensibility should be the subject of interdisciplinary studies one should try and find out if the cooperation could be put on a proper footing. This means submitting the respective conceptual frameworks to a close comparative scrutiny. In our case the comparison reveals quite a number of basic concepts where we might suspect divergence or even straight-on incompatibility. Among the major candidates are concepts like understanding, meaning, information, knowledge, strategy, and plan.⁵⁾ It is for example not obvious how understanding as an achievement concept (following Ryle's analysis) can be reconciled with the cognitivists' process model of understanding. If I say *Now I understand what you mean* I do not make a statement concerning internal processes but I rather describe a mental state. There is indeed a process concept which is related to the concept of understanding, namely interpreting. Interpreting is an activity which by steps of reasoning may lead from a first unsatisfactory understanding to a second, more adequate understanding. It is revealing that cognitivists rarely differentiate between understanding and interpreting. It is also quite difficult to determine the relationship between the concept of strategy used in game theory and the concept of strategy in cognitive psychology. It is rather instructive to see what a hard time van Dijk and Kintsch are having in explaining the compatibility of the two concepts (van Dijk/Kintsch 1983, 64ff.). On a lower and more technical level there are concepts like proposition. What is called a proposition by some cognitive psychologists looks very strange to someone trained in analytical philosophy or linguistics (cf. Kintsch/Vipond 1979). These rather too brief remarks indicate that there seems to be quite a bit of hard work to do before the two approaches may work in conceptual harmony. On the other hand there are promising signs of an increase in shared knowledge across the boundaries of the two approaches. The following passage by Marslen-Wilson and Tyler, two well-known representatives of the cognitive approach, could be taken as such a sign:

"In fact, we might speculate, it is the cooperativeness of speakers and listeners that goes the furthest in explaining how the speech process can be so rapid, and how, in particular, inputs can be projected with such immediacy onto the listener's discourse model: It is because speakers prepare their utterances so that they cohere with what has been said before, and because listeners run their processing systems on this assumption. This is what gives language processing its seemingly ballistic property - that the speaker constructs a communicative packet that is already configured to map onto the receptive configuration of the

listener" (Marslen-Wilson/Tyler 1987, 61).

Discount the computer metaphors and you get one of the basic assumptions of the dialogical approach.

3. Aspects of understanding and types of comprehension problems

The basic unit of understanding and misunderstanding, for a theory of linguistic action, is the linguistic act. A linguistic act is the use of a linguistic expression in a certain context and with a particular intention. I shall for the moment assume that problems connected with the concept of linguistic act (or speech act), speech act assignment, non-sentential utterance forms and similar questions can be solved. One of the lessons that can be derived from Wittgensteins use of the concept of Zusammenhang, which is a close relative of the concept of language game, is that it is the network of connections of a particular utterance that accounts for its function.⁶⁾ As a corollary for the theory of understanding one could formulate the slogan: "To understand an utterance is to see its connections". For this slogan to have any force one has to spell out what are the relevant connections (contexts, relations) which one has to see in order to understand. One would expect to find these connections among the basic principles of organization of discourse, especially dialogical discourse. I shall therefore list a number of connections that have received theoretical attention mainly during the last fifteen or twenty years and examine their relevance for comprehensibility. The guiding idea is that each of these connections represents an aspect of understanding and can therefore be taken as a factor which may play a role in comprehension problems. It will probably surprise nobody that in actual cases these factors interact, either cancelling out one another or producing a cumulative effect.

In what follows I shall deal only marginally with two topics that have always figured prominently in research on comprehensibility: vocabulary and syntax. This is merely a matter of emphasis in the present paper.⁷⁾ As far as syntax is concerned I should at least like to mention one interesting trend in studies on parsing. There is a growing body of research that seems to show that syntactic parsing relies to a considerable extent on contextual knowledge (cf. Crain/Steedman (1985) on the resolution of syntactic ambiguity). This is just one example of the interaction of factors. I shall also not deal with questions of pronunciation, intonation, speed of utterance, or, for that matter: lay-out in written texts, which are of course important factors of comprehensibility and which should be dealt with in a comprehensive treatment of the subject.

3.1 Level-generation and background of assumptions

The first type of connection I shall consider has been well-known since the early days of speech-act theory, although it has not played a prominent role in Searle's version of a theory of speech acts. By uttering the same expression against different backgrounds of assumptions one can perform different speech acts, e.g. by uttering *You started smoking again* one can simply make a statement or, by making this statement, one can intend a more specific act like either an utterance of surprise or disapproval or both. This kind of relation between acts which was termed "level-generation" by Goldman (1970, 20) is an essential aspect of understanding. It is this relation that accounts for well-known facts like the following: People will understand the same utterance or sequence of utterances differently, they will sometimes misunderstand utterances to a certain degree and they will sometimes reach a different depth of understanding. The latter is a very interesting problem in teaching, for example.

To some psychologists this complex connection between different understandings of the same utterance seems to be nothing but an unwelcome complication for experimental design which is at the most grudgingly acknowledged but more readily ignored or explained away. From the point of view of dialogue analysis, however, this connection is both a fundamental resource and risk in communication, which shows up in the high proportion of preparation and clarification sequences in everyday conversations. The implications for comprehension research are obvious: The researcher should not just ask: "Did the subject understand the text?", meaning "Did she understand it the same way as the experimenter?", but rather one should ask: "How did she understand the text and what are the clues for this particular understanding?". Apart from a certain lack of hermeneutical imagination there is another characteristic of much psychological work that is related to this theoretical point. Researchers tend to neglect the illocutionary aspect of utterances as opposed to the propositional aspect.⁸⁾ But very often a comprehension problem resides in the very difficulty of finding out whether a given utterance is to be taken as descriptive or as directive. This problem is, for example, quite frequent for users of instruction manuals (cf. Schäfflein-Armbruster (forthcoming)).

3.2 Constellations of knowledge and their development

In part this second item is an extension of the first. It is a truism of philosophical communication theory that assumptions as to the knowledge and assumptions of the participants form one of the cornerstones of communication.

As early as 1964 Strawson introduced the concept of identifying knowledge into the theory of reference. He also introduced two platitudes, as he called it, the principle of the presumption of ignorance and the complementary principle of the presumption of knowledge. Both principles are normally relied upon in informative discourse. In fact people commonly assume a large community of identifying knowledge and other relevant knowledge. The structure of such a constellation of knowledge has been spelt out by Schiffer (1972) and others, yielding the concept of mutual knowledge, an important if not undisputed concept of dialogue analysis. In the course of a dialogue a network of mutual knowledge and assumptions emerges, whether the participants aim at it or not. There are several mechanisms by which mutual assumptions arise. One of them comes into play when assumptions are presupposed for reference or for metaphorical speech which have neither been explicitly introduced nor can be assumed to be general knowledge. In this case the hearer might operate on the principle of accommodation, as Lewis (1979) called it. She will assume that the speaker takes certain facts as given and will herself take this for granted unless there is evidence to the contrary. In other cases, as for example in teaching communications, the participants may actually put a lot of effort into the systematic building-up of knowledge. Seen from the angle of comprehensibility the participants will have to answer questions like the following: Which is the relevant knowledge for an adequate understanding of individual instructional utterances? How does one know which is the relevant knowledge? (This concerns both teacher and pupil.) How can this knowledge be made available to the listener or reader? How does one find out what amount of knowledge listeners or readers already have available? How can one secure or activate this knowledge at relevant points in discourse? To what extent can the speaker or writer rely on inferences his partner in communication will draw? These questions point to a number of problems of coordination which have to be solved if communication is to be successful. In face-to-face dialogue there are, as we already mentioned, plenty of interactive resources for the solution of these coordination problems, whereas in written discourse knowledge management becomes a major difficulty. One important aspect of this difficulty is the question of adequate sequencing to which I shall revert in 3.4.

The fundamental importance of knowledge management in communication is appreciated equally well by representatives of cognitive science and communication analysis. No doubt this is the major point of convergence between the different approaches in this field. Cognitive psychologists generally assume

that the amount of non-stereotypical and not explicitly provided knowledge and the number of inferences needed for processing account for comprehension difficulties. If one does not accept the general processing model one will still come to similar conclusions by a different route of argument. As soon as normal first-pass understanding does not work on account of knowledge gaps the hearer or reader may have to turn to hermeneutic operations, and it is this predicament which is a symptom of comprehension problems.

Cognitive science has so far produced a number of interesting concepts like schema, frame and script which are useful first approximations to the kind of general knowledge a speaker can safely assume his hearer to possess if she is a member of a certain culture or society. These concepts are however rather rigid in view of the dynamics of knowledge accumulation and knowledge utilisation in communication. The analysis of the heuristic ad-hoc procedures which hearers and readers employ to cope with uncertainties in the attribution of knowledge and assumptions is still in its infancy.

3.3 Local sequencing

Local coherence has received a fair share of attention in recent studies on comprehension, with particular emphasis on problems of referential coherence (cf. Bower/Cirilo 1985, 86ff.). It is of course true that reference with its high degree of reliance on mutual knowledge looms large among comprehension problems. Furthermore, problems of reference are comparatively easily detected. And it is also true that there are special difficulties connected with cross-reference. But there is more to local coherence than cross-reference. Utterance U_1 may be used to make a statement, and the following utterance U_2 may be used to exemplify, prove, explain or otherwise support the statement. This sequence may presuppose various relations between the propositions expressed (entailment etc.). In other cases the first utterance may be intended to prepare the second by providing a certain focus or a relevant item of knowledge etc. As these types of coherence relations have been dealt with in work on text linguistics and conversation analysis I shall not enlarge on this point (cf. Fritz 1982). Suffice it to say that the assignment of a sequence of utterances to an appropriate sequence pattern is an essential aspect of understanding and therefore also a frequent locus of comprehension problems. It is for example possible that a change of interpretation of one utterance in a sequence necessitates a reassessment of the meaning of the complete sequential neighbourhood. These subtle relations are often not sufficiently appreciated. This becomes apparent when researchers use

scrambled texts for comprehension experiments (e.g. Thorndyke 1977). The scrambling usually does much more than just change the ordering of propositions.

3.4 Global sequencing and alternative sequencing strategies

For all types of extended discourse it is possible to differentiate characteristic substructures which often allow fairly intricate alternatives of sequencing. In problem-solving and planning dialogues, for example, one can present a suggestion, describe its ramifications, anticipate objections, compare it to alternative suggestions, and evaluate it. To a certain degree these segments of discourse are sequentially fixed. You cannot normally evaluate a suggestion that has not been made. But you can position descriptive elements at different points in the discourse. Therefore, as a speaker or writer you are faced with strategic choices of placement and as a hearer or reader you have to see the point of the chosen placement.

As far as research in comprehension is concerned there is mainly one type of discourse where global sequences have been extensively investigated, namely narrative discourse. There is also some work on expository texts, mainly from an educational point of view (cf. Schnotz 1984). The construction of so-called story grammars sparked off quite a lively discussion on global structures and their relation to understanding. Generally speaking, these studies, especially the early ones (cf. Rumelhart 1975), tend to underrate the variability of placement of typical story segments. As a consequence story grammarians underrate the flexibility of hearers and readers in dealing with sequencing alternatives, but also the type of comprehension problem that lies in this variability.

I should like to illustrate the difficulties involved by describing informally some global sequencing alternatives and their consequences for a type of discourse, that has been investigated by linguists, among others, namely teaching how to play a game (cf. Muckenhaupt 1976). In teaching how to play a game like chess you can first introduce and describe the complete inventory of game objects, i.e. the chessboard and the pieces, and then go on to describe all the individual kinds of moves one can make with the different types of chessmen. You can then attend to matters of strategy and so on. The advantage of this kind of "systematic" introduction will be that the learner receives a general idea of what the game is about at an early stage of his tuition. On the other hand it is quite likely that our learner will have forgotten most of the general information by the time he is supposed to

make his first move. If you suspect this possibility you might prefer providing information as you go along on the principle of "need to know". You might start by introducing a pawn, describing its range of movement and giving the learner a short exercise in following these simple rules. You then continue by introducing a knight in the same fashion etc. For some learners this method of spacing-out information will increase the comprehensibility of individual explanations, as the relevance of each bit of information becomes immediately recognizable. However, some learners might resent this kind of spoon-feeding. There are of course also particularly confusing mixed strategies where the teacher jumps back and forth between the introduction of game pieces, strategic hints, rule formulations and reminiscences of interesting games.

Now obviously this question of strategic placement of certain types of linguistic act applies not only to the teaching of games but also to other kinds of instruction and to many other types of discourse.

In concluding this point I should like to mention the question of explicitness to which I shall revert in section 3.6. In the present context the question takes the following form: What is the relative merit of just using an optimal placement strategy - if there is one - and of actually telling the hearer/reader which strategy you are using?

3.5 Structure and development of topics

As a global principle of organization of discourse topical sequencing is complementary to functional (or illocutionary) sequencing which I dealt with in the last two sections. It is an important part of comprehension to keep up with the development of the topic or topics. As with illocutionary force there is a fairly complex relationship between the actual utterances and what they are about. A passage of discourse may at first sight be about different means of transport, like cars, lorries, airplanes, buses, trains and bicycles. On closer inspection it really turns out to be about the topic of ecology. One could describe this as a kind of topical "level-generation": By talking about cars and bicycles etc. in a certain way one can talk about ecology. So at this point we again find the systematic problem of depth of understanding as well as the problem of differing understandings concerning the current topic. If a listener or reader does not realize the superordinate topic of a passage of discourse he may well find it difficult to see connections between parts of this passage. He may interpret the topical development as a case of topic change instead of taking it as a change of aspect within

the same topic. In other words: If one wants to keep one's listener or reader up to date as to the topical state of the discourse it might be useful to indicate the structure of the topical network as the speaker or writer sees it.

These assumptions will probably not be disputed by anyone, but in mainstream comprehensibility research these questions are still underrepresented. There is indeed an increasing number of studies on topic structure, topic continuity, and topic shift (e.g. Fletcher 1984, Garrod/Sanford 1983, Lorch et al. 1985) but much of the rich knowledge on topic introduction, topic change, topic shading etc. which has been accumulated in conversation analysis and text linguistics (e.g. Schegloff/Sacks 1973, Bublitz 1988) still awaits application in empirical research on comprehensibility.

3.6 Principles of communication

As with other aspects of communication, like functional sequencing and topic management, principles of communication may become relevant at two different levels. At the basic level principles may be followed in order to safeguard the attainment of communicative aims. At the secondary level they may actually be mentioned in order to secure mutual knowledge of what is going on. For example, in giving an introductory lecture course to beginners a lecturer might announce that the first lecture will give a general idea of the topic in everyday language, whereas the second lecture will increase the degree of detail and terminological precision. This announcement will help the student to understand what is going on in the transition from lecture one to lecture two and to appreciate the respective style of presentation. Knowing the principles somebody is acting on supplies a basis for recognizing his intentions and, if necessary, for figuring out what these intentions could be if they are not obvious.

I shall in this paper not tackle the principle of relevance which is of course all-pervasive in matters of understanding (cf. Dascal 1979, Sperber/Wilson 1986). In fact, the types of connections I have mentioned so far could be considered as a partial explication of the concept of communicative relevance. I shall however present a few reflections on another principle which is also prominent in the field of comprehension, namely the principle of explicitness. Explicitness is generally assumed to be the cure for many maladies of comprehension. But this has to be taken with a grain of salt.

In everyday informal dialogue many things are left implicit. Speakers rely on their hearers' being alive to the current state of the dialogue and

therefore assume that the nature of their speech acts, speech act sequences, topical connections etc. will be apparent without further comment. It is important to see that this is not a weakness but a fundamental resource of efficient discourse. Now if one aims at a high level of complexity and depth of understanding one might seek extra measures to make sure one gets across what one wants to be understood. One of these measures is the increase of explicitness. One type of application of the principle of explicitness is the use of reflexive moves, i.e. naming the function or topic of a passage, announcing a change of topic, summarizing the gist of what one intended to say etc. These measures can be taken in advance, afterwards or even simultaneously - if one can use pictures, graphic displays or marginalia. All this is uncontroversial and in good consonance with results from cognitive psychology, e.g. the concept of "advance organizer" (cf. Ausubel 1960). There is however a limit to explicitness. Total explicitness is not possible on principle as there is no utterance which does not rely on a background of assumptions. And a very high degree of explicitness conflicts with the principles of brevity, simplicity and continuity of topic. So, in fact, explicitness may be self-defeating. The secret is to provide explicitness in the right places. In some cases it is possible to give general guidelines how to apply the principle, as in the case of instructional texts where one can follow a principle of decreasing explicitness. For any new topic, introductory passages are to be highest in explicitness. If the presentation of knowledge is well-controlled, explicitness can be systematically reduced in later passages. But generally speaking, to decide which are the salient points which have to be made explicit is a matter of judgement and cannot be predetermined in a completely mechanical fashion. It needs the kind of expertise that is gained by experience with specific types of discourse and specific recipients. Of course we assume that it is theoretically enlightened experience which will be most explicit in its judgment.

4. Dialogical comprehensibility experiments

4.1 Theory and methodology

Empirical research on comprehensibility serves a variety of purposes from justifying theories of comprehension to testing and improving the usability of particular texts for particular users. Of the many relevant questions that could be dealt with at the present stage of research there is one that seems particularly attractive, as it points both ways, towards the construction of theories and towards the solution of practical problems. This is

the question of a typology of comprehension problems - or a family of typologies - that is/are both theoretically sound and practically relevant. One would expect that it should be possible to give a medium-sized list of basic problem-types which could be traced back to basic aspects of the understanding of communicative acts. That is what I provisionally attempted in the preceding sections. It is however a remarkable experience that types of problems tend to proliferate as soon as one closely analyses particular types of discourse. A case in point is the plethora of new problems that show up if one starts to analyse the uses of pictures and graphical elements in addition to the use of linguistic expressions. So for the time being it looks like a good strategy to combine a theoretical interest with detailed exploration of particular types of discourse.

A particular type of theory usually also favours a particular methodology. This is true for the dialogical approach which calls for a more dialogical methodology than what is customary in traditional psychological experiments. Without going into technical detail one can trace back the basic methodological decisions in this field to the question of which are reliable criteria of understanding and which are reliable indicators of comprehension problems. In everyday communication the fundamental criterion of understanding is a communicative one. If B is able to produce a relevant reaction to A's utterance A will generally accept that B understood A's utterance the way she meant it. This is a truly dialogical criterion, as A is in the same situation as B, i.e. the situation of having to understand what the other participant meant by her utterance. There is not way out of this hermeneutical predicament. What is interesting from the point of view of experimental methodology is that the spectrum of reactions that could count as relevant reactions is vast. Types of relevant reactions include: answering a question, following a directive, questioning a presupposition, contradicting a statement, correcting a description, asking if a given paraphrase is correct, asking if the preceding discourse really was about such and such a topic, continuing a narrative at a certain point etc. It is remarkable that traditional psychological methods relied on a very small inventory of criteria, mainly recall (free recall and cued recall). As for the indicators of comprehension problems similar things can be said. Types of relevant reactions include: giving an answer to a question that was not asked, not following the directive, following a directive that was not given, hesitating in following the directive, asking for clarification, asking for repetition, complaining about the speed of utterance, re-reading a written passage, starting to

read aloud a difficult passage, going back to a passage where a related topic was dealt with etc. Again the traditional inventory of indicators comprises a relatively small selection, including reading times, reaction times and eye movements. In recent times the traditional behavioral experiments for the measurement of comprehensibility seem to have lost some of their attraction even within the community of psychologists. Experiments that collect reading times, recall protocols, eye movements and reaction times are not considered "sufficiently rich and distinctive for discovering the complex symbolic mechanisms and representations that are involved" (Graesser/Robertson/Clark 1983, 62). However, other methods, like question-answering, reading aloud and thinking aloud, are still considered rather "soft" methods the reliability and validity of which is doubtful. It is however conceded that these methods are heuristically valuable. It looks as if at the present stage of comprehensibility research the generation of interesting hypotheses is such an important desideratum that heuristic methods are called for, even if they do not stand up to classical standards of psychological research. Without belittling the methodological problems involved one could generally advocate a shift of interest from statistical sophistication to interpretive finesse. The main problems of dialogical methods seem to lie in two characteristics which one has to come to terms with: In the first place, spontaneous reactions of the subjects are not easily standardized. Secondly, using a rich inventory of criteria and indicators forces the experimenters to a rather time-consuming amount of interpretive work. Both objections should not be made light of. But one would hope that what dialogical experiments lose in classical elegance they gain in ecological validity.

4.2 An exploratory experiment

In order to give these reflections some more vividness, I shall now present a few preliminary remarks on a small-scale exploratory experiment we did in Tübingen in April 1990.⁹⁾ The primary aim of the experiment was to get empirical data concerning comprehension problems which we expected beginners to have with the introductory passages of an experimental software manual. We had formed these expectations on the basis of a close analysis of these passages and on the basis of an earlier pre-test with different versions of such passages. The test setting was as follows:

The subject is seated at the computer with the manual placed next to the keyboard. The subject is told to read aloud the manual text and to follow the instructions given. She is also told to voice any comments that come to her mind

concerning the text or her own execution of the instructions. Next to the subject the experimenter takes place. He has a double function. He may be asked by the subject to help her with any problem that comes up in the course of the procedure. And he himself has a prepared list of questions, formulated on the basis of the prior analysis, which he can ask if he feels that the subject has problems she herself does not notice or does not consider worth mentioning. The whole procedure is recorded on videotape with two video cameras in order to get a good view of the screen and keyboard as well as the subject and the experimenter.

The design of the experiment yields a rich combination of criteria of understanding and indicators of comprehension problems. In the first place, we have the external criterion of success in the manipulation of the computer. There are also other criteria of successful understanding, e.g. correct commentaries on what was to be achieved by a certain passage. Secondly, we find behavioral indicators like direction of gaze, hesitation, slowing down in reading speed etc. Thirdly, we find problem-solving strategies like re-reading passages, jumping back and forth between the passage under work and earlier paragraphs, checking and re-checking the relation between graphics in the manual and what is on the screen. A fourth group are communicative indicators like rising intonation to convey doubt, calls for help and statements as to the problems the subject encounters. Finally, we have the answers to the experimenter's questions, which provide information as to unexpected understandings, misunderstandings and lack of knowledge at certain points in the procedure. Of course the richness of indicators may be considered a mixed blessing if one thinks in terms of experimental economy. But economy was at this point no high-ranking demand.

This little experiment is fairly unsophisticated in several respects and it would surely meet with many objections from experimental psychologists. But as a heuristic device it turned out to be highly useful. In many cases indicators consistently pointed towards the problems we had predicted on the basis of our analysis. Apart from confirming a number of hypotheses the experiment contributed to the development of a more specific typology of comprehension problems for the users of this particular text. These were mainly difficulties related to the types of problems mentioned earlier in this paper, e.g. unfamiliar terminology that was not properly introduced, inconsistent nomenclature, awkward syntactic structures (complex and ambiguous sentences), problems of reference and of unsatisfactory sequential organization, problems with the function of individual sentences, passages, and graphics, problems with the relations between text and graphics etc. On the other hand quite a number of difficulties

arose which we had not anticipated and which could in part be put down to particular reading strategies we had not expected. In general, we found it remarkable how patient the subjects dealt with fairly bad passages. They mostly adopted a wait-and-see strategy and applied the principle of charity. This was also an interesting result.

In concluding this paper I should like to draw attention to a difficulty which is inherent in any kind of empirical experiment in this field but which becomes magnified with the richness of indicators available in our case. It is one thing to note a certain utterance or action as an indicator of trouble but quite another to attribute the trouble with sufficient confidence to one particular factor or a particular set of factors. This difficulty is less grave if one is mainly interested in practical matters, i.e. in the improvement of the manual in question. In this case the location of an area of trouble usually suffices to suggest improvements. If however one is interested in correlating indicators with types of problems in a principled way things become much more complicated. This is mainly due to two facts: First of all, in many cases different potential factors are simultaneously present, e.g. an unfamiliar metaphorical use of an expression and lack of relevant knowledge, which poses the analytical task of filtering out which individual factor or which interplay of factors actually caused the trouble. Ideally one would have to vary textual characteristics and knowledge structures in such a fashion as to allow one to isolate individual factors or the relevant cluster of factors. Secondly, particular indicators, like hesitation, re-reading etc., may point to different factors, e.g. a difficult syntactic construction or an unclear relation between text and graphic. In the latter case we would expect eye movement to give a further hint. But in many cases there are no obvious differentiating indicators available. Some of the indicators are more specific than others. Explicit complaints or questions are highest in the scale of direct indication. But even so, complaints are no analyses. If a subject complains that after reading a sentence she does not know whether she is now expected to do something or whether the machine will now "do" something, this complaint does not show whether the real problem lies in the fact that by using a sentence in the passive voice the author does not specify the agent of the relevant activity or in the fact that the author has done nothing to clarify the nature of the activity in the previous text or in the combination of facts. This, by the way, is one of the reasons why expert ratings are no substitute for principled analysis. A rating like "confusing" does nothing to pinpoint the relevant factors. An indicator like the subject's turning back the pages in the text is a fairly good

indicator that the subject lacks a particular bit of information which she believes was presented at an earlier point in the instruction. But it is the kind of indicator where one might want to actually ask the subject what it is she is looking for. It takes an attentive experimenter not to miss such opportunities for clarification. It looks as if hesitation, slowing down etc. were the least specific indicators which do in general not yield more than unspecific evidence of trouble. This is the point where a detailed analysis of the context of the trouble has to set in.

In sum, the experiment contains two levels of detailed analysis, which could be explained as concerning two moves of a dialogue game. The first analysis concerns the structure of the text which is intended to be used as a first move (or sequence of moves) in the instruction game. This analysis aims at generating hypotheses as to problems of comprehension which are related to types of factors and clusters of factors provided by dialogue theory. The second analysis concerns the reactions of the subjects, i.e. the second moves in the instruction game. Again the focus of analysis is provided by the theoretical framework. The second analysis concentrates on potential indicators, their context and their relations with comprehension factors. If this looks like a rather complicated set of interpretive procedures, the complications are germane to the subject.

In winding up this paper I should like to give a short programmatic summary. The dialogical (or interactionist) approach presented in this paper emphasizes aspects that have so far been underrated, e.g. recipient design of utterances, patterns of functional sequencing and strategic sequencing alternatives. It provides tools for dialogical experimental design and a fine-grained and context-sensitive analysis of dialogues and their monological counterparts, which includes a sophisticated interpretive methodology for experimental data. It would seem that serious theorizing on internal cognitive processes would have to be based on a detailed analysis of what the processing models are supposed to explain. Therefore an emphasis on detailed analysis of dialogical action will no doubt make sense to cognitivists as well. On the other hand, pending the clarification of some of the conceptual matters mentioned in section 2.3, an agnostic attitude as to the assumptions of particular processing models could be considered a consistent attitude for an interactionist.

Notes

- 1) Grice's remarks are a distinct echo of a precept of classical rhetoric, i.e. that our prime virtue in speech should be perspicuity.
- 2) The concept of recipient design goes back to Sacks/Schegloff/Jefferson (1974).
- 3) On the analysis of dialogue dynamics and the history of dialogue cf. Fritz (1989).
- 4) The Hamburg conception is presented in Langer/Schulz v. Thun/Tausch (1981). A critical assessment of the Hamburg conception and of readability formulas can be found in Ballstaedt/Mandl (1988). A critical attitude to readability formulas is also the general tendency in the papers collected in Davison/Green (1988).
- 5) Space does not permit a detailed analysis of the concepts in question. Fritz (1991) contains some further reflections on the concepts of plan and of understanding. Suchman (1987) contains a very insightful discussion of the basic assumptions of interactionalists and cognitivists. Cf. also Biere (1989).
- 6) Cf. Wittgenstein (1969), §§ 347ff.
- 7) A useful book on syntax and comprehension is Heringer (1988), a "receptive grammar" of German.
- 8) The emphasis on the propositional aspect often goes hand in hand not only with the neglect of the illocutionary aspect but also with a disregard for the syntactic form of utterances. Both shortcomings are evident in van Dijk/Kintsch (1983), in spite of avowals to the contrary.
- 9) A detailed report on this experiment will be given in Schäflein-Armbruster (forthcoming).

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FORMEN NARRATIVER DIALOGZITIERUNG IN SPRACH- UND STIL- VERGLEICHENDER SICHT

— Eine Skizze —

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Anmerkungen

Literatur

1. Vier Formen narrativer Dialogzitierung am Beispiel des Deutschen

In meinem Aufsatz „Formen der Einbettung von Dialogwiedergaben in Erzähltexten“ (Harweg 1989) habe ich vier verschiedene Formen der Einbettung von Dialogwiedergaben in Erzähltexten oder, wie ich, bemüht um eine kürzere Formulierung, in diesem Aufsatz sage, vier verschiedene Formen narrativer Dialogzitierung unterschieden, und zwar

- 1) eine unreduzierte und nicht in den textuellen Hintergrund gedrängte Form
- 2) eine unreduzierte und in den textuellen Hintergrund gedrängte Form
- 3) eine reduzierte Form und
- 4) eine implizite oder Nullform.

Diese vier Formen lassen sich, der Reihe nach, exemplifizieren durch die folgenden Satzfolgen:

— die erste durch die Satzfolge

Karl sagte: „Wie geht es Ihnen?“ Peter sagte: „Gut. Und Ihnen?“

— die zweite durch die Satzfolge

„Wie geht es Ihnen?“ sagte Karl. „Gut“, sagte Peter, „und Ihnen?“¹

- die dritte durch die Satzfolge

Karl: „Wie geht es Ihnen?“ Peter: „Gut. Und Ihnen?“²

- und die vierte durch die Satzfolge

„Wie geht es Ihnen?“ „Gut. Und Ihnen?“

Von diesen vier Formen ist, sofern es sich um narrative, d.h. erzähltexteingebettete Dialogzitierung handelt, die erste, also die Form *Karl sagte: „...“*, diejenige, die grammatisch oder zumindest satzgrammatisch gesehen die zu erwartende und in gewissem Sinne die einzig korrekte ist; denn sie allein beläßt den zitierenden Rahmen des dialogischen Zitats einerseits unreduziert und andererseits auf dem ihm zukommenden satztheoretischen Niveau, d.h. auf einem Niveau, das nicht unterhalb des Niveaus des Zitates liegt. In allen übrigen der genannten Formen narrativer Dialogzitierung ist der zitierende Rahmen entweder reduziert oder auf ein satztheoretisches Niveau unterhalb des Zitatniveaus hinabgestuft.

Reduziert ist der zitierende Rahmen der Zitate in der vierten und der dritten Form narrativer Dialogzitierung, in der vierten total und in der dritten partiell. Nicht reduziert, aber unter das Niveau des Zitats hinabgestuft ist der zitierende Rahmen demgegenüber in der zweiten Form narrativer Dialogzitierung. Die satztheoretische Herabstufung besteht dabei in einer Art von Parenthesisierung und weist auch deren phonologische Merkmale, speziell das Merkmal der Stimmregistersenkung, auf.³

Sowohl die Reduktionen als auch die satztheoretischen Herabstufungen der zitierenden Rahmenteile der narrativen Dialogzitate stellen in gewisser Weise Abweichungen von der grammatischen Norm dar; denn die grammatische Norm verlangt eigentlich, daß den zitierenden Rahmenteilern der Dialogzitierungen dieselbe Behandlung zuteil wird wie den nichtzitierenden Rahmenteilern narrativer Dialogzitierungen, und das bedeutet, daß sie eigentlich ebensowenig reduziert und satztheoretisch herabgestuft werden dürften wie diese. Die einzige der vier von mir unterschiedenen Formen von narrativer Dialogzitierung, die diese Bedingungen beide erfüllt, aber ist, wie erwähnt, die erste.

Andererseits jedoch ist — und das ist sehr merkwürdig — auch diese erste Form von narrativer Dialogzitierung nicht über alle grammatischen Zweifel erhaben; denn ausschließlich und extensiv verwendet, löst sie leicht ein gewisses Unbehagen aus. Zwar sieht es auf den ersten Blick so aus, als sei dieses Unbehagen (das übrigens viele Erzähler veranlaßt hat, auf eine ausschließliche oder auch nur extensive Verwendung dieser Zitierform zu verzichten) ein rein stilistisches Unbehagen, aber bei genauerer Analyse stellt sich, wie ich in meinem eingangs zitierten Aufsatz (Harweg 1989: 52ff.) versucht habe zu zeigen, doch heraus, daß es dies nicht ist, sondern durchaus tiefere Gründe hat. Das Unbehagen scheint nämlich darin zu bestehen, daß Dialoge — ähnlich wie sonst nur gewisse Spiele,⁴ also künstlich reglementierte Phänomene — die Eigenschaft haben, zugleich se-

quentiell und antithetisch strukturiert zu sein und ihre zitationale Wiedergabe im Rahmen der ersten der vier Zitierformen diese für narrative Texte unnatürliche Kontamination aus Sequentialität und Antithetizität zu stark hervortreten läßt. Es liegt deshalb nahe, den zitierenden Rahmenteil der Dialoge in narrativen Texten in den Hintergrund treten zu lassen, und dies tun die drei anderen Dialogzitierformen, vor allem die zweite und die vierte — die dritte ist bekanntlich eher typisch für die Lesefassung von Dramen.

Das Phänomen der Dialogzitierung ist, alles in allem, ein grammatikalisches Dilemma. Keine der vier unterschiedenen Formen oder besser: keine der zwei Gruppen, in die die vier Formen sich zusammenfassen lassen, weder die aus der ersten der vier Formen bestehende erste Gruppe noch die aus den anderen drei Formen bestehende zweite Gruppe, ist grammatikalisch gesehen über jeden Zweifel erhaben. Aber ihre jeweilige Schwäche ist zugleich auch ihre jeweilige Stärke; denn sie behebt gewissermaßen die Schwäche der jeweils anderen Gruppe.

2. Die Formen narrativer Dialogzitierung in anderen Sprachen

Die Existenz der beiden Gruppen von Dialogzitierformen und der vier Formen, in die die beiden Gruppen zerfallen, ist nicht auf das Deutsche beschränkt, ja man wird heute in ganz Europa vermutlich auf keine Sprache stoßen, in der auch nur eine der vier Formen jener beiden Gruppen fehlte. Vielleicht ist das Nebeneinander dieser vier Formen sogar eine Möglichkeit nicht nur der einzelnen Sprachen, sondern sogar der Sprache als solcher.

Aber selbst wenn es so sein sollte, so wäre es doch noch keineswegs von vornherein selbstverständlich; denn rein deduktiv argumentierend, könnte man ja vermuten wollen, daß die Möglichkeit des Vorkommens der einzelnen Formen bzw. Gruppen gebunden sei an bestimmte strukturelle Eigenschaften der jeweiligen Sprache, insbesondere beispielsweise an bestimmte Wortstellungsgesetze. So z.B. könnte man, bedenkend, daß das Zitat zum zitierenden Verb oft im Verhältnis eines grammatischen Objekts steht, annehmen wollen, daß es deshalb auch den für diese Sprachen ansonsten — und das heißt: im nicht-metasprachlichen Bereich — gültigen Regeln der Abfolge von Verb und grammatischem Objekt zu folgen habe, und diese Annahme würde implizieren, daß in Sprachen, in denen das grammatische Objekt dem Verb folgt, auch das Zitat seinem Verb folgen müßte, wohingegen in Sprachen, in denen das grammatische Objekt dem Verb voraufgeht, auch das Zitat dies tun müßte.

Das scheint jedoch nicht der Fall zu sein. So z.B. sind das Lateinische, das Türkische, das Koreanische und das Japanische zwar Sprachen mit — überwiegender oder gar ubiquitärer — Satzendstellung des finiten Verbs, haben aber trotzdem sämtlich die Möglichkeit, das Zitat dem Sprechhandlungsverbum folgen zu lassen. Andererseits ist z.B. das Englische eine Sprache, in der das grammatische Objekt seinem Verb überwiegend

folgt, aber dennoch hat das Englische keinerlei Schwierigkeiten, das Zitat — oder einen Teil desselben — dem Sprechhandlungsverb voranzustellen. Es scheint also, als seien die Formen narrativer Dialogzitierung von der Struktur der Sprachen unabhängig.

Es können allerdings nicht alle Formen der Dialogzitierung auch in sämtlichen Satztypen verwendet werden. So wenigstens scheint in Nebensätzen — denn wie sollte der Zitierrahmen sonst an den betreffenden Hauptsatz angeschlossen werden können? — nur die erste der vier Zitationsformen Verwendung finden zu können.⁵ In deutschen Nebensätzen kennt diese Zitationsform jedoch zwei verschiedene Stellungsvarianten, eine, in der das Sprechhandlungsverb, stellungstypologisch die Hauptsatzform dieser Zitationsform beibehaltend, dem Zitat vorausgeht, und eine, in der es, in Übereinstimmung mit dem Gesetz der Endstellung des Verbums im deutschen Nebensatz, dem Zitat folgt. So z.B. kann man im Deutschen sowohl *Karl blickte mich, indem er sagte: „Ist das auch wahr?“*, *scharf an* als auch *Karl blickte mich, indem er „Ist das auch wahr?“ sagte, scharf an* sagen, und daß auch die Variante mit dem dem Sprechhandlungsverb vorangestellten Zitat in diesem Falle die erste und nicht die zweite Zitierform manifestiert, zeigt sich daran, daß das Sprechhandlungsverb in dieser Variante — und dies erhellt besonders aus der Unmöglichkeit, es in das Zitat einzubetten — nur nichtparenthetisch verwendet werden kann.⁶

Solche Abhängigkeiten der verschiedenen Dialogzitierformen von bestimmten Details von Sprachstrukturen ändern jedoch nichts daran, daß diese Dialogzitierformen oder zumindest ihre beiden Gruppen im großen und ganzen sprachstrukturunabhängig sind, daß sie, aufs Ganze gesehen, vermutlich von jeder Sprache geduldet werden. Das heißt nicht unbedingt, daß sie in jeder Sprache begegnen oder begegnet sein müßten, es heißt nur, daß sie — vermutlich — in jeder Sprache müßten begegnen oder begegnet sein können.

3. Die Formen narrativer Dialogzitierung unter stiltypologischen Gesichtspunkten

3.1 Die Formen narrativer Dialogzitierung allgemein stiltypologisch

Wenn der Unterschied zwischen den beiden Gruppen von Dialogzitierformen einzelsprachstrukturunabhängig ist und wenn allgemeingrammatisch gesehen keine der beiden Gruppen vor der anderen den Vorzug verdient, so bedeutet das, daß der Unterschied zwischen ihnen letztlich als ein stilistischer, als ein Unterschied zwischen zwei — vermutlich universellen — Sprachstilen zu charakterisieren ist.

Von diesen beiden Stilen läßt sich der eine als archaisch und einfach und der andere als modern und raffiniert charakterisieren.⁷ Archaisch und einfach wirkt die erste Form der Dialogzitierung, diejenige, bei der der zitierende Rahmen weder reduziert noch in den textuellen Hintergrund gedrängt, d.h. satztheoretisch herabgestuft ist; modern und raffiniert demgegenüber wirken die drei übrigen Zitierformen, diejenigen,

bei denen der zitierende Rahmen entweder reduziert oder in den textuellen Hintergrund gedrängt, d.h. satzebenenmäßig herabgestuft ist.

Fragen wir uns, ob diese den beiden Gruppen von Dialogzitierformen anhaftenden Konnotationen auch den entsprechenden monologischen Zitierformen und damit den entsprechenden Zitierformen der monologischen Einzelteile, aus denen Dialoge sich zusammensetzen, anhaften, so fällt die Antwort für die beiden Gruppen unterschiedlich aus, nämlich im Falle der — aus der ersten Zitierform bestehenden — ersten Gruppe negativ und im Falle der zweiten Gruppe positiv. Das bedeutet, daß im Falle der zweiten Gruppe die betreffende Konnotation, nämlich die des Modernen und Raffinierten, schon mit den zitierenden Rahmenteilern der monologischen Bestandteile des Dialogs verbunden ist, während im Falle der ersten Gruppe die betreffende Konnotation, nämlich die des Archaischen und Einfachen, noch nicht mit dem Zitierrahmen der monologischen Einzelbestandteile des Dialogs, sondern erst mit deren dialogischer Reihung verknüpft ist, einer Reihung, die nicht oder zumindest nur wenig von Zitierformen der anderen Gruppe unterbrochen ist. Ein einzelnes monologisches Element aus einer solchen Reihung ist, für sich genommen, gegenüber dem konnotationellen Gegensatz zwischen dem Archaischen und Einfachen auf der einen und dem Modernen und Raffinierten auf der anderen Seite neutral. Die Zitierform *Karl sagte: „...“* weist, für sich genommen, weder die Konnotationen des Archaischen und des Einfachen noch die des Modernen und Raffinierten auf.

Diese ihre stilistische Neutralität erlaubt es, diese Zitierform diskontinuierlich in die Reihungen aus Zitierformen der zweiten Gruppe einzustreuen, ohne daß die diesen eigene Konnotation des Modernen und Raffinierten dadurch in Frage gestellt oder auch nur beeinträchtigt werden müßte, und tatsächlich wird sie es auch nicht, solange das Ausmaß solcher Einstreuungen sich in Grenzen hält. Als dem Bereich des Modernen und Raffinierten zugehörig erweisen sich somit nicht nur jene Reihen narrativer dialogischer Zitierformen, die ausschließlich aus Zitierformen der zweiten, dritten und/oder vierten Kategorie, d.h. aus reduzierten und/oder in den Hintergrund gedrängten Zitierformen bestehen, sondern auch solche, die einen gewissen — allerdings nicht zu hohen — Anteil an Zitierformen der ersten Kategorie, d.h. an nichtreduzierten und nicht in den Hintergrund gedrängten Zitierformen aufweisen. Wäre es nicht so, so wäre es wohl fraglich, ob es Reihen dialogischer Zitierformen mit der in Rede stehenden Konnotation des Modernen und Raffinierten überhaupt gäbe; denn narrative Texte mit dialogischen Zitierreihen ohne jede Beimengung von Zitierformen des Typus 1 dürften sehr selten sein. Sie begegnen wohl nur in den Lesefassungen von Dramen, im Texttyp der sogenannten — z.B. Platonischen — Dialoge sowie hin und wieder in Gedichten. Umgekehrt sind narrative Texte mit dialogischen Zitierformen, die nur — oder fast nur — dem Typus 1 angehören, nicht so selten, und interessanterweise befinden sich unter diesen Texten auch einige der berühmtesten der Weltliteratur.

3.2 Die Formen narrativer Dialogzitierung in der altgriechischen Literatur

Zu den narrativen Texten, die ausschließlich unsere erste Dialogzitierform kennen, gehören unter anderm jene beiden, die am Anfang der abendländischen Literatur stehen, Homers Ilias und Homers Odyssee. In diesen Texten geht das Sprechhandlungsverb nämlich ausnahmslos der direkten Rede voran. Zwar ist es so, daß dieser, falls an sie nicht unmittelbar, eingeleitet durch ein neues Sprechhandlungsverb, die direkte Rede des Dialogpartners anschließt, meist auch noch ein Sprechhandlungsverb folgt, und zwar folgt als der beim mündlichen Vortrag der Epen wohl unerläßliche Ausdruck zur Markierung des jeweiligen Zitatendes, aber auch dieses seinem Zitat nachgestellte Sprechhandlungsverb ist dann satzebenenmäßig nicht herabgestuft, sondern steht, das Zitat mit dem Adverb *so* resümierend, auf derselben satztheoretischen Stufe wie die weitere Umgebung des Zitats einschließlich des die direkte Rede einleitenden Sprechhandlungsverbs. Dies zeigt sich besonders daran, daß es überwiegend die Form eines Partizips hat, und zwar eines Partizips, das seinerseits durch ein — satztheoretisch eindeutig nicht herabgestuftes — nichtmetasprachliches Hauptverb fortgesetzt wird. Die häufigsten Partizipien dieser Art sind, in Ilias und Odyssee, die durch das Adverb ὥς ‚so‘ an das vorausgegangene Zitat angeschlossenen Partizipien εἰπὼν ‚sagend‘ und φωνήσας ‚(laut) sprechend‘. Allerdings finden sich, anstelle solcher Partizipien, auch finite Formen nachgestellter Sprechhandlungsverben, so z.B. die — ebenfalls durch das Adverb ὥς eingeleiteten — Ausdrücke ὥς φάτο, ὥς ἔφατ’, ὥς ἄρ’ ἔφη ‚so (also) sprach (er, sie)‘ oder der — durch fakultativen ἥ ‚also‘ fortgesetzte — Ausdruck ἦ ‚sprach’s‘. Doch auch sie sind, ebenfalls (nur diesmal koordinativ, d.h. über Konjunktionen wie καί ‚und‘ oder δέ ‚aber‘) fortgesetzt durch nichtmetasprachliche Verben wie sie sind, satzebenenmäßig nicht herabgestuft und somit, obwohl nachgestellt, keine Zitierrahmenteile, die in den textuellen Hintergrund gerückt wären.

Die Tatsache, daß die unreduzierte und nicht in den textuellen Hintergrund gedrängte Form der narrativen Dialogzitierung sich gerade bei Homer findet und dort zugleich die alleinige Form der Dialogzitierung darstellt, ist eine erste Bestätigung unserer Charakterisierung dieser Dialogzitierform als *archaisch*. Ob die Homerischen Epen indes auch unsere Charakterisierung der in Rede stehenden Dialogzitierform als *einfach* bestätigen, ist schwer zu sagen. Aber was kann in diesem Zusammenhang schon Bestätigung heißen? Doch nur, daß die relative Einfachheit dieser Dialogzitierform, die als solche für mich außer Zweifel steht, korreliert wäre mit einer Reihe anderer als einfach interpretierbarer Stilkomponenten, und ob dies im Falle der Homerischen Epen der Fall ist, ist eine Frage, die ich lieber offen lassen möchte. Eher als raffiniert denn als einfach mag das Merkmal der Verssprache anstelle der Prosa gelten, das ihnen eigen ist, und dies wiederum verfremdet den Text so stark, daß er, um unvoreingenommen auf Einfachheit oder

Raffiniertheit in bezug auf weitere Parameter beurteilt werden zu können, wohl erst in Prosa übersetzt werden müßte. Doch inwiefern steht die relative Einfachheit der in Rede stehenden Dialogzitierform außer Zweifel? Nach meinem Dafürhalten insofern, als sie nicht die Raffiniertheitsmerkmale der Gruppe der anderen Dialogzitierformen und die von diesen ausgehenden Verfremdungen aufweist, sondern stattdessen eine Schlichtheit und Geradlinigkeit zeigt, die bei Häufung zur Monotonie führt. Raffiniert aber ist die Gruppe der anderen Dialogzitierformen insofern, als sie, auf Grund ihrer Reduziertheit oder satzebenenmäßigen Herabgestuftheit, beinahe so tun, als ob sie den Dialog nicht zitierten, sondern ihn als Original präsentierten.

Wie Homer der erste überlieferte Versepiker des Abendlandes, so ist Herodot, als der „Vater der Geschichtsschreibung“, der erste überlieferte Prosaiker. Archaisch in einem gewissen Sinne ist also auch er, und als stilistisch einfach und geradlinig mag seine Diktion ebenfalls gelten. So überrascht es nicht, daß auch bei ihm die Form der Dialogzitierung die erste unserer Typologie ist, also diejenige ohne Reduktion auf der einen und ohne satzebenenmäßige Herabstufung des zitierenden Rahmens auf der anderen Seite.

Wie aber steht es mit Plato? Nun, Plato ist schwerpunktmäßig bekanntlich kein Erzähler und insofern weder mit Homer noch mit Herodot unmittelbar vergleichbar. Seine als Dialoge bezeichneten Werke sind, abgesehen von einigen, in denen, wie z.B. in der Apologie oder der Politeia, eine Person, zumeist Sokrates, als Rahmensprecher figuriert, Dialoge, die nicht in narrative Schilderungen eingebettet sind. Sie sind damit vergleichbar den Lesefassungen von Dramen und weisen auch überwiegend die für diese charakteristische Form der Dialogzitierung auf, jene — von mir als reduziert charakterisierte — Form, die lediglich aus dem dem jeweiligen Dialogpart vorangestellten Namen des Dialogpartners besteht.

Was indes die genannten Ausnahmen betrifft, so sind sie durchaus eine Art von Erzählungen, sogenannte Ich-Erzählungen, Erzählungen, die jeweils einen Rahmen für in sie eingebettete Dialoge bilden. Es gibt allerdings bei Plato nicht nur Dialoge, die in Ich-Erzählungen eingebettet sind, es gibt bei ihm — so z.B. im Phaidon — auch Dialoge, die, als sozunennende Subdialoge, in andere Dialoge oder genauer: in Bestandteile anderer Dialoge eingebettet sind. Doch diese — solche Subdialoge einbettenden — Bestandteile anderer Dialoge, sie sind, sofern man sie nur für sich nimmt, ebenfalls Erzählungen, nämlich Erzählungen des einen oder anderen der Partner der Hauptdialoge. Es sind zwar nur Rahmenerzählungen, Rahmenerzählungen für die Dialoge, die sie wiedergeben, aber dies macht sie ja, im Hinblick auf die uns beschäftigende Frage nach der Form narrativer Dialogzitierung, nur noch umso ergiebiger — und damit auch Plato, wenngleich nur in bestimmten Teilen und an bestimmten Stellen seines Œuvres, interpretierbar als Erzähler.

Interpretiert als Erzähler, aber erweist sich Plato, was die von ihm verwendeten Formen von Dialogzitierung angeht, als der große Neuerer. Er ist, wie es scheint, der erste