Language as Dialogue

# Dialogue Studies (DS)

*Dialogue Studie*s takes the notion of dialogicity as central; it encompasses every type of language use, workaday, institutional and literary. By covering the whole range of language use, the growing field of dialogue studies comes close to pragmatics and studies in discourse or conversation. The concept of dialogicity, however, provides a clear methodological profile. The series aims to cross disciplinary boundaries and considers a genuinely inter-disciplinary approach necessary for addressing the complex phenomenon of dialogic language use. This peer reviewed series will include monographs, thematic collections of articles, and textbooks in the relevant areas.

## Editor

Edda Weigand
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

## Editorial Advisory Board

## Volume 5

Language as Dialogue. From rules to principles of probability
by Edda Weigand; edited by Sebastian Feller

# Language as Dialogue

From rules to principles of probability

Edda Weigand

University of Muenster

*Edited by Sebastian Feller*

*For Doris and Luigi*

# Table of contents

# Preface

Language has always been looked at with different eyes from different perspectives. The history of linguistics is the history of competing views of language. This anthology sets out the developmental stages of a theory which has introduced the concept of 'language as dialogue'. Edda Weigand's name has come to stand for dialogue research. She has made her mark as one of the pioneers in the field of Dialogue Analysis. It is however not primarily the significance of dialogue in ordinary speech but dialogue as a communicative function of language which is her scientific concern. From this point of view the term 'language as dialogue' was coined to convey a concept which is based on two premises: language is primarily used for communication, and communication is always dialogic.

Edda Weigand's central scientific interest has always been focused on issues of language and languages. In her doctoral thesis under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Otmar Werner at the University of Tübingen she started by analysing the grammatical categories of the German language within the structuralist and generativist framework. Years of discussion with Prof. Dr. Franz Hundsnurscher at the University of Münster eventually convinced her to change her position. From then on she was no longer in doubt that language means language use and that language use is inherently dialogic.

There was also another important change in her scientific orientation which was the outcome of a change in her personal and professional life. Whereas she initially concentrated her scientific enquiry exclusively on the German language, she became more and more aware that language always means different languages. She began to analyse a variety of languages from a comparative perspective with the help of a so-called quasi-universal semantic structure. For her, language comparison is not a separate discipline which is added to the linguistics of an individual language *ex post*. On the contrary, language comparison is crucial for any linguistic effort in the sense that we only become aware of how our mother language works if we compare it with other languages. During her time as professor of German in Messina, the Italian language became such a point of comparison, and she cast doubt upon the assumption that linguistics was some sort of unilateral or national science.

Over the years Edda Weigand has published numerous articles and books addressing a great variety of linguistic issues, all based on a unified theory of language as a whole. She has addressed almost every question to be posed in this field, questions of speech act theory as well as of lexical semantics and utterance grammar. Her comparative studies mainly deal with English, German, Italian and French.

Not only did Franz Hundsnurscher influence Weigand's change from a sign theoretical position of language to a pragmatic and action theoretical position of language use, but together with Sorin Stati they founded the International Association of Dialogue Analysis (IADA) in Bologna, Italy, in 1990. Over the years IADA has grown to become one of the leading international associations in linguistics, standing for an open exchange of opinions and ideas. Since May 2005 Edda Weigand has held the IADA Presidency. At numerous international conferences and workshops she presented and discussed her views with an international linguistic community.

From 1997 on Edda Weigand has been the head of the Department of Linguistics (Arbeitsbereich Sprachwissenschaft) which in 2008 became the Department of Dialogue Research and Comparative Lexicology (Arbeitsbereich Dialogforschung und vergleichende Lexikologie) of the Faculty of Philology at the University of Muenster in Germany. Many doctoral and postdoctoral theses originated under her supervision on various topics of dialogic language use. During this time she also took up positions as visiting professor both at the University of Lugano in Switzerland and the University of Santa Barbara in California, USA.

I myself have worked under Prof. Weigand as a graduate assistant for three years. I always attended her lectures with great pleasure and growing interest. Her view of language as a natural object exerted a special fascination on me from the very beginning. I based my master thesis on her theory of the Dialogic Action Game and continued this work in my doctoral thesis with a special focus on lexical semantics. In the course of my research, I became more and more interested in the details of Weigand's theory and was prompted to trace her theorizing back to its beginnings in order to obtain a profound and complete understanding of her concept of language. I finally ended up on an exciting and illuminating journey through the different stages of Weigand's theorizing which deserves to be shared with anyone who is interested in the study of language.

This volume contains a collection of articles that are not readily obtainable and, in addition, some plenary speeches which have not yet been published elsewhere (see "Origins of the Essays"). They cover a wide range of topics such as speech act theory, lexical semantics and semantic change, utterance grammar, communication in the media and business communication, emotions in dialogue as well as rhetoric and argumentation. The volume is complemented by a general

introduction in which I discuss the specifics of Weigand's theory against the back-drop of the history of linguistics. Each chapter is introduced by a short summary and comments on the articles contained.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to all of those who helped to make this publication possible, especially the John Benjamins Publishing Company for their encouragement, cooperation and willingness to publish this compilation as well as the Max Niemeyer Publishing House, the Bucharest University Press, the University Press of Rouen and the Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata for their permission to reprint the material formerly published by them. Most notably, I want to thank Prof. Weigand for her trust in me, her constant assistance and advice during the preparation of this volume. I am also grateful to Oliver Richter who compiled the index and did the final formatting.

Sebastian Feller
Münster, April 2009

# Introduction

## In the tide of change

Sebastian Feller

Progress results from change, change in the way we see things, change in the way we think about the world we live in. Whether in everyday life or science, it needs fresh ideas to give us impulses to explore new directions. Progress usually germinates at a single spot and a great deal of time may pass before it flowers and spreads its seed.

If we look at the history of linguistics, we can see that change clearly leaves its mark every now and then. The discipline takes different forms at different times. Continuous 'personality changes' make it difficult to give a comprehensive account of what linguistics is. In addition, language and communication have become the object of study of many different scientific fields, some of which are closely related, others rather far apart. Psychology, philosophy, biology, sociology, history, computer sciences or communication studies are just a few examples from a vast range of academic fields which are interested in linguistic research. Over the years an interdisciplinary research agenda has evolved that goes beyond the traditional boundaries of orthodox disciplinary fields.

The different faces of linguistics are best recognized by means of the particular concepts of language they promote. At the beginning of modern linguistics, de Saussure (1985 [1916]) postulated what he called the sign system. He described language in terms of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations between linguistic signs. Unlike the linguists before him, de Saussure focused solely on the synchronic perspective. The emphasis of his theory is on the level of *la langue*, a hypothesized, artificial construct that abstracts from real life conversation. De Saussure's methodology was the precursor of formalistic models of language which occupied most of 20th century linguistics. Lyons (1963), for example, proposed a definition of meaning on the basis of semantic relations like hyponymy, synonymy, antonymy and meronymy. In the mid-1950s, Chomsky (1957) changed the static structuralist view to the dynamic view of generative grammar and replaced *la langue* with the concept of the linguistic competence of the ideal

speaker. Performance phenomena were ignored once again. For Chomsky the speaker is equipped with a set of rules that help him or her to construct basically any grammatically correct sentence. This inborn competence was believed to foster syntactic and semantic processing.

Katz & Fodor (1964), Katz & Postal (1964) and later Katz alone (1972) extended the generative theory to include the level of interpretative semantics. They introduced two new concepts that they called "semantic markers" and "distinguishers". These were implemented in the theory in order to arrive at more elaborate lexical descriptions of word meaning. But in the end these approaches mainly focused on selection restrictions and lexical co-occurrence phenomena. McCawley (1976), Lakoff & Ross (1976) and others opposed this interpretative view and developed the new branch of generative semantics which considered Chomsky's strict separation of syntax and semantics to be ill-founded and started instead from a semantic deep structure.

During the pragmatic turn in the early 1970s the competence view of language came under heavy fire. Wittgenstein's (1958) concept of 'meaning as use' opened up a new perspective. Language was no longer understood as an abstract formalism but as a social technique acquired by learning and training. Baker & Hacker (1984) consequently proclaimed the end of compositional models in linguistics. Dell Hymes (1972) introduced the term 'communicative competence' based on language use or language as a natural object. The focus thus shifted from the rules of grammatically correct sentences to conventions of language use and even to particularities of actual use.

Many philosophers of language jumped on the 'pragmatic bandwagon'. Speech act theory and its focus on 'how to do things with words' considered action as fundamental to language and communication. Speaking a language was now understood in terms of performing speech acts embedded in *hic-et-nunc* speech situations. Austin (1962) and later Searle (1969) drew our attention to crucial aspects of language use which cannot be dismissed. Their views however remained abstract as they were restricted to conventions and to the concept of the autonomous single speech act. Explaining dialogic communication remained outside the scope of their theories.

The restriction to conventions was, in principle, overcome by Grice (1957) who introduced non-conventional inferences of "utterer's meaning". He opened up the description to individual language use. Attempts to formalize this concept however cropped up quickly again. The neo-Gricean wave tried to solve the problem by adding a sign theoretical calculus and individual particularities (e.g., Levinson 2000). But a consistent theory of meaning and language cannot be attained by adding together incompatible parts. In addition, the level of action lost more and more significance within this context.

Until the beginning of the 1980s, speech act theory was grounded on a monologic analysis of speech. It is the allegedly independent speech act which was here at the centre of attention. Hundsnurscher's *Dialoggrammatik* ("dialogue grammar") (1980) began to revise this assumption. The basic patterns of dialogue grammar comprise both the initiative and the reactive speech act. The feature 'reactive' however remained a formal feature derived from its position in the sequence of communicative interaction. It was not yet recognized as a functionally different speech act type.

The decisive change to a dialogic speech act taxonomy occurred in the first edition of Weigand's *Sprache als Dialog* ("Language as Dialogue") (1989a). Weigand based her theory on two functionally different types of action, the initiative speech act which makes a pragmatic claim and the reactive speech act which is expected to fulfil this very claim. In my opinion, this was the first genuinely dialogic taxonomy of speech acts. The minimal autonomous communicative unit now consisted in the dialogic interdependence of action and reaction which is considered to be the basis of any action theoretical investigation of language use.

Closely tied to the differing concepts of language are the corresponding methodologies of the various linguistic positions. Within the framework of formalistic theories, linguistic descriptions were, to an excessive extent, tied to generalizations or rules. These generalities were believed to underlie authentic speech and to be stored in the speaker's mental apparatus. On the other side of the scale there is a radical empirical position represented by some sociolinguists. It dismisses the search for hidden rules as ghost hunting and focuses on the ever-changing surface of performance. The action theoretical view of speech act theory is rejected as too abstract. If action is considered to be pertinent at all, it is dealt with by reference to sociological concepts of action which are of little help in concrete linguistic analyses. This position relies exclusively on analysing authentic text. This is the beginning of conversational analysis where the phenomena of 'turn taking' are of special interest. The main focus was here on power-indicating devices on the expression level that regulate the communicative behaviour of the dialogue partners. Corpus linguistics and the branch of spoken language followed in its wake. As indicated by Sinclair's dictum "Trust the text!" (1994), the authentic text was now the ultimate reference point.

On close inspection it becomes obvious that each position has severe difficulties in seeing beyond the end of its own nose. The gap between competence and performance remains unbridgeable from either point of view. Competence models obscure the view of what is really going on in language use. The high level of abstraction blurs the processes of real-life communication. The performance models, on the other hand, stylize the notion of 'empirical evidence'. It is believed that the text itself provides all that is necessary to come to grips with

language-in-use. The analysis of empirical data can however deliver new insights only under the guidelines of proper theorizing. Not everything in the text is open to view. As Weigand (2004a) points out, empirical evidence as such does not exist. Only through prior theoretical reflection can the researcher gain new insights.

This book traces how Edda Weigand tackled these problems from her own linguistic standpoint. In the light of Martinet's (1975) dictum that the object-of-study ought not to be sacrificed to methodological exigencies, she veered off in a new direction of linguistic thinking. She eventually developed a theory capable of accounting for the complexity of language as a natural object. In accordance with the theoretical developments in disciplines like physics or economics Weigand saw the need to overcome the shortcomings of traditional closed models. She argued that language-in-use could only be accurately described within the framework of a holistic and open model. Linguistics ought to widen the scope of analysis and integrate multiple human abilities such as cognition, perception and verbal expression into the investigation. Under these new premises the old claims to certainty of traditional theories became as quaint as they were out-of-date. Clear-cut rules and absolute patterns made way for probability measures and individual decisions or preferences of the individual speaker. As a consequence, Weigand eventually arrived at what she calls 'competence-in-performance', the complex human ability to cope with a potentially chaotic world. According to this approach human beings are not restricted to rules or strictly rational behaviour; on the contrary, managing a constantly changing environment implies the ability to go beyond rules and patterns. This new perspective opened up a view of language that leaves behind prefabricated sequences and patterns. It rather brings to the fore the aspect of negotiation in communicative interaction by means of principles of probability.

Weigand (2000a, forthc. b) then brought these insights together in her theory of dialogic action games or dialogue as a 'mixed' game. Unlike preceding theories that never overcame the paradox of competence and performance, the Mixed Game Model (MGM) is a genuinely holistic model which does not add up single parts but integrates them into a whole from the very beginning. Dealing with the interactions of distinct subdomains of language use – including communicative techniques such as conventions and principles of probability, human abilities like cognition, perception and verbal means as well as personal preferences, emotions and rational behaviour – is the main objective of the theory. This is so to speak a humanized view of language as a natural object which replaces the old chess game definition of language with an open and creative concept of the action game as a 'mixed' game.

Although at first Weigand adopted the theoretical framework of dialogue grammar, she later saw herself obliged to revise some of her primary theoretical

assumptions, and this resulted in the second edition of *Sprache als Dialog* (2003a). This revision developed the model of communicative competence into a model of competence-in-performance which includes general rules, conventions and individual inferences on the basis of principles of probability. Language use could finally be described as it really happens, i.e. in sequences of internally related speech acts under particular conditions.

The following three chapters of the volume comprise a selection of Weigand's articles that mirror some of the most significant stages of her linguistic career and thinking. Some were given as plenary speeches at conferences and are published in this volume for the first time (see "Origins of the essays").

The *first part* outlines her initial work from the standpoint of dialogue grammar. As we will see, already at this stage the concept of language is 'language as dialogue'. The topics range from speech act theory to argumentation studies, utterance grammar and lexical semantics.

The *second part* deals with the transition period. Here we get to know how Weigand eventually dispensed with the models of communicative competence. Some thought-provoking comments by colleagues including Kirsten Adamzik and Marcelo Dascal offered her some incentives to rethink her linguistic position. She eventually saw the need to withdraw from the definition of dialogue as a well-formed sequence of speech acts which presupposed understanding. On the contrary, she accepted problems of understanding and differences between the interlocutors as an integral part of dialogic interaction. Her plenary speech at the IADA conference in Chicago in 2004 on "The End of Certainty in Dialogue Analysis" is a basic article of this period and clearly marks the turning point from a closed theory based on rules to an open theory based on principles of probability.

The *third part* shows how Weigand joins these new ideas together in a theory of competence-in-performance, i.e. a theory of dialogic action games, also known as the Mixed Game Model (e.g., 2000a, 2006a and forthc. b).

Weigand has authored numerous other articles not included in this anthology. Let me mention some of them in this context:

– The article "Misunderstanding – The standard case" (1999a) opens up and extends the rule-governed model of communicative competence by including problems of misunderstanding. In this view, understanding cannot just be presupposed but is negotiated in dialogue.
– "The Language Myth and Linguistics Humanised" (2002a) published in a volume edited by Roy Harris supports the view of integrational linguistics that considers compositional concepts of language as a myth (cf. Harris 1981). Besides misunderstanding, the fact that dialogue cannot be restricted to the

verbal level but inevitably needs to integrate perceptual and cognitive means also points to opening up the model of communicative competence.

– "Constitutive Features of Human Dialogic Interaction: Mirror neurons and what they tell us about human abilities" (2002b) delivers valuable insights into the neurobiological reality of dialogicity. Here Weigand discusses central findings in neuroscience that back up the assumption that human beings are, certainly to a great extent, dialogic beings: mirror neurons in the brain fire both when we perform an action and when we observe an action by others.

– "Sociobiology of Language" (2007) mediates between the two opposed concepts of language determined by biology versus culture. It follows the idea of the co-evolutionary line of 'genes, mind, and culture' by Lumsden & Wilson (2005). Works like Wilson's "On Human Nature" (1978) present the opposite 'genes vs. culture' in a new light. Human behaviour and action is influenced both by our genetic information and environmental conditions.

– In "Conflict Resolution in Court" (2005) and "Argumentation: The mixed game" (2006a) Weigand analyses argumentative structures. Within the framework of the MGM, argumentation is understood as an integrative whole consisting of mixed parts. It includes cultural and situational factors, emotions and personal preferences as well as rationality and soundness of arguments. Concepts such as politeness, among others, are to be reinterpreted as regulative principles that mediate between the interlocutor's self-interest and the respect to be paid to our fellow beings.

– Weigand also tackles the problem of language teaching. In "Teaching a Foreign Language: A tentative enterprise" (2006d), she stresses that learning the vocabulary of a second language ought not to centre on single words but on multi-word phrases. She argues that learning a foreign language can be improved by guidelines derived from first language acquisition. According to this view language learners learn best when confronted with language as a natural object.

– "Indeterminacy of meaning and semantic change" (2006c) deals with the consequences for an action theoretical understanding of meaning. According to Weigand meaning evolves out of conventional uses of words and phrases. For this reason semantic descriptions in the form of clear-cut definitions are inadequate for natural language use. On the contrary, meaning is, at least to a certain extent, indeterminate by nature. Semantic change becomes an immediate consequence of variations of how words are used or turned upside down. Why some uses become conventional and others not is an extremely complicated question with no immediately apparent answer. According to Weigand there are various factors at play that determine how words are used.

Finally I would like to mention two review articles which discuss the action theoretical basis of a theory of dialogue and the methodological controversy of how to address dialogic language use, starting either from theoretical reflections or from empirical observation:

- In "The State of the Art in Speech Act Theory" (1996b), a review article of "Foundations of Speech Act Theory" (1994), edited by Tsohatzidis, Weigand delivers a critical review of Tsohatzidis' compilation of articles on speech act theory. Tsohatzidis sees speech act theory as properly grounded in the contributions by Austin and Searle. Weigand however holds their works to be a starting point for further reflection. Tsohatzidis' understanding of speech acts remains questionable. The main focus of the volume lies on Grice's theory of implicature. Speech acts are accordingly defined in terms of a combination of implicature and truth-conditional semantics, a view that Weigand emphatically rejects. On the contrary, speech act theory needs to overcome the constraints of formalistic approaches and head forward to a holistic and open model.
- The other review article, "Empirical Data and Theoretical Models" (2004a), deals with the crucial and, since Chomsky, ever-recurring debate between theoretical and empirical approaches. It is a review of the volume on "Language and Interaction. Discussions with John J. Gumperz" (2003) edited by Eerdmans, Prevignano & Thibault. Weigand's position here is clear: she argues against an additive model and in favour of a holistic and integrational approach.

Weigand's development from a reductionist, rule-governed model of competence to a holistic approach of competence-in-performance seems to me to be a constitutive step at the level of language and dialogue. Language does not exist as a separate, autonomous object. Verbal means are integrated with other communicative means, perceptual and cognitive ones. This insight can be regarded as a solid basis for future research. Nonetheless, there are many open questions that have to be tackled by a joint interdisciplinary effort. Research and new insights will come and shed light on what is still in the dark.

# Origins of the essays

Almost all the articles in this volume were first given as plenary speeches on international conferences and workshops at various universities.

## Part I

"The Dialogic Principle Revisited. Speech acts and mental states". *Dialoganalyse III. Referate der 3. Arbeitstagung, Bologna 1990* ed. by Sorin Stati, Edda Weigand & Franz Hundsnurscher, vol. 1, 75–104. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1991 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 1).

"Discourse, Conversation, Dialogue". *Concepts of Dialogue Considered from the Perspective of Different Disciplines* ed. by Edda Weigand, 49–75. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1994 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 6).

"Looking for the Point of the Dialogic Turn". *Future Perspectives of Dialogue Analysis* ed. by Franz Hundsnurscher & Edda Weigand, 95–120. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1995 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 8).

"Words and their Role in Language Use". *Lexical Structures and Language Use. Proceedings of the international conference on Lexicology and Lexical Semantics, Münster 1994* ed. by Edda Weigand & Franz Hundsnurscher in collaboration with Eckhard Hauenherm, vol. 1, 151–168. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1996 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 9).

"Lexical Units and Syntactic Structures: Words, phrases and utterances considered from a comparative viewpoint". *Quand le Mot Fait Signe. Pour une sémiotique de l'écrit* ed. by Claude Gruaz, 129–148. Publications de l'Université de Rouen 325, 2002 (Collection Dyalang).

"Rhetoric and Argumentation in a Dialogic Perspective". *Rhetoric and Argumentation* ed. by Eddo Rigotti in collaboration with Sara Cigada, 53–69. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1999 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 19).

## Part II

"The Unit beyond the Sentence". *Dialogue Analysis: Units, relations and strategies beyond the sentence. Contributions in honour of Sorin Stati's 65th birthday* ed. by Edda Weigand, 3–12. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1997 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 13).

"Coherence in Discourse – A never-ending problem". *Sprachspiel und Bedeutung. Festschrift für Franz Hundsnurscher zum 65. Geburtstag* ed. by Susanne Beckmann, Peter-Paul König & Georg Wolf, 267–274. Tübingen: Niemeyer 2000.

"Emotions in Dialogue". *Dialogue Analysis VI. Proceedings of the 6th International Congress on Dialogue Analysis, Prague 1996* ed. by Světla Čmejrková, Jana Hoffmannová, Olga Müllerová & Jindra Světlá, vol. 1, 35–48. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1998 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 16).

"Dialogue in the Grip of the Media". *Dialogue Analysis and the Media* ed. by Bernd Naumann, 35–54. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1999 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 20).

"Patterns and beyond in Dialogic Interaction. Basic issues in language technology" and "Patterns and beyond in Lexical Semantics. The issue of word meaning in language technology" were plenary speeches given at the Indian Statistical Institute of Kolkata. Both are published in the *Proceedings of the International Workshop on "Technology Development in Indian Languages", Jan 22–24, 2003*. Indian Statistical Institute Kolkata 2003.

"The End of Certainty in Dialogue Analysis" was originally given as the opening plenary lecture at the international IADA conference on "Theoretical Approaches to Dialogue Analysis" held at the Northeastern University of Chicago in 2004.

## Part III

"The Dialogic Action Game". *Dialogue Analysis VII. Working with dialogue. Selected papers from the 7th International Congress on Dialogue Analysis, Birmingham 1999* ed. by Malcolm Coulthard, Janet Cotterill & Frances Rock, 1–18. Tübingen: Niemeyer 2000 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 22).

"Dialogue Analysis 2000: Towards a human linguistics". *Dialogue Analysis 2000. Selected papers from the 10th IADA anniversary conference, Bologna 2000* ed. by Marina Bondi & Sorin Stati, 15–27. Tübingen: Niemeyer 2003 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 25).

"Possibilities and Limitations of Corpus Linguistics". *Dialogue Analysis VIII. Understanding and Misunderstanding in Dialogue. Selected papers from the 8th IADA Conference, Göteborg 2001* ed. by Karin Aijmer, 301–315. Tübingen: Niemeyer 2004 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 27).

"Dialogue and Teaching in Multicultural Settings". *Dialogue in and around Multicultural Schools* edited by Wolfgang Herrlitz & Robert Maier, 235–248. Tübingen: Niemeyer 2005 (Beiträge zur Dialogforschung 29).

"Principles of Dialogue. With a special focus on business dialogues". *Cooperation and Conflict in Ingroup and Intergroup Communication. Selected papers from the Xth Biennial Congress of the IADA, Bucharest 2005* ed. by Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu in collaboration with Liliana Hoinărescu, 35–51. Bucharest: Bucharest University Press 2006.

"Dialogue: Text and context" was originally given as a plenary lecture at the "III Coloquio Argentino de la IADA" on "Dialogue and Context" at the national university of La Plata, Argentina in 2007.

"The Argumentative Power of Words or how to move people's minds with words" was a plenary lecture given at the IADA workshop on "Word Meaning in Argumentative Dialogue" at the Catholic University in Milan in 2008. It is also published in the Proceedings of this workshop in *L'analisi linguistica e letteraria* XVI, 2008, 71–90.

# Language as dialogue in a theory of communicative competence

# Introduction to Part I

Sebastian Feller

This chapter contains a selection of articles that belong to the first phase of Weigand's studies in pragmatics which is characterized by a rule-governed competence approach. All articles except for "Lexical Units and Syntactic Structures" (2002) have appeared in the Niemeyer series "Beiträge zur Dialogforschung".

In *The Dialogic Principle Revisited. Speech acts and mental states* (1991) Weigand revises her initial view of directive speech acts as put forward in the first edition of her postdoctoral thesis "Sprache als Dialog" (1989). She rethinks her previous definition of directives in terms of a claim to truth and changes it by introducing the communicative function of a claim to volition.

In the second article, *Discourse, Conversation, Dialogue* (1994), Weigand forges a new understanding of discourse as dialogue. Conventional discourse analysis, just like conversational analysis, does not achieve satisfying results in its attempts to come to grips with dialogic communication. For Weigand the centre piece of communication is the minimal autonomous communicative unit which consists of both the initiative and the reactive speech act. On this basis she suggests a new methodology, taking as its starting point communicative means and purposes. For her, it is this functional dimension of dialogue which is at the centre of a proper understanding of communicative interaction.

*Looking for the Point of the Dialogic Turn* (1995) follows this new path. Dialogue is understood in terms of two major principles: the Action Principle and the Dialogic Principle. The single speech act is no longer seen as an independent unit of analysis. On the contrary, speech acts are mutually dependent on each other. They are used to perform communicative functions roughly categorized as initiative or reactive. At the functional level, being initiative means making some kind of communicative claim; being reactive means fulfilling this very claim. Making a claim to truth calls for acceptance on the part of the interlocutor. In the same way, making a claim to volition requires consent. It is these bi-functional pairs of communicative moves which are at the core of dialogue analysis.

Weigand extends her action-theoretical view to other linguistic domains. In *Words and their Role in Language Use* (1996) she deals with functions of lexical expressions. The main question here is what words are used for by the speaker. Weigand comes to the conclusion that lexical words are generally used to carry out predicative functions: speakers use them to predicate on the world they live in. The vocabulary of a language can be structured via so-called "meaning positions" which are the minimal units of meaning. These positions are conceived of as universal heuristic units by means of which lexical expressions in different languages can be compared. It is human abilities such as cognition and perception, among others, which make up the foundation of this new kind of semantic description.

*Lexical Units and Syntactic Structures: Words, phrases, and utterances considered from a comparative viewpoint* (2002) takes up the issue of lexical expressions once again. A contrastive analysis of lexical material underscores the assumption that language is organized along the lines of networks of more or less conventional multi-word phrases. Predicating draws on such polylexemic phrases which can be syntactically defined in order to fit the syntax of the utterance.

In *Rhetoric and Argumentation in a Dialogic Perspective* (1999) Weigand sees the need for a change in the traditional concepts of argumentation and rhetoric. In the model of the dialogic action game, arguments are understood as communicative means that promote the position of the speaker. They are dependent on the speaker's view and are thus always relative. They can be judged differently by different individuals. Rhetoric is therefore an integral part of dialogic interaction. It not only comprises logic and rationality but also implies appeals to emotion and norms like respect and tolerance. The article is already a first indication of the opening up of the closed system of a model of communicative competence and points to a transition period leading beyond rules and conventions.

# The dialogic principle revisited
## Speech acts and mental states

## 1. The dialogic principle

In science generally and in innovative new branches of science in particular, such as the analysis of dialogue we are always on the move. Questions indicate the direction, tentative answers are not so much destinations as turning points which after a short time lead us to revise our route. Without productive criticism, not least of ourselves, progress in science is not possible. The long sought-after route to the solution of a problem unexpectedly opens up and proves to be obvious. Gaps in our knowledge can be closed and connections can be made between areas which belong together, but whose relatedness we had up till now not been able to demonstrate. Thus a conceptual web gradually spreads out which forms the basis for a new branch of science.

The relatively new area of dialogue analysis meanwhile rests on such a conceptual web. The central element in this web is what we could call the dialogic principle. The singular emphasis of a principle and its introduction with the definite article, indicating that it is known and generally valid, means that this basic principle takes precedence over other principles or strategies which we also call dialogic. In the case of the one dialogic principle, we are dealing with a constitutive feature of all use of language, in the case of several dialogic principles, with features which are either methodologically based and are therefore interchangeable, or which are only valid for individual dialogic action games.

The assumption of a basic dialogic principle implies a dialogic concept of language which is not at all new, but which has historical roots reaching a long way back. There are, for example, Füchsel's thoughts about the origin of language in 1773 (p. 77): "... daß jeder Sprecher zugleich einen Anhörer erfordere, und ein einzelner, der von keinem andern was wüßte, hätte gar keinen Grund zum Sprechen." There is also Wilhelm von Humboldt's dialogic view of language of 1827 (p. 138): "Es liegt aber in dem ursprünglichen Wesen der Sprache

ein unabänderlicher Dualismus, und die Möglichkeit des Sprechens selbst wird durch Anrede und Erwiederung bedingt."

Such insights into the nature of our language may, at first glance, appear trivial; on closer inspection, however, they prove to be the central assumption of a dialogic theory of language. This assumption can be taken as the analytic key to all the ways we act with language. Wilhelm von Humboldt and Füchsel recognise the 'dualism which is inherent in our language', and they justify their assumption with the possibility which exists in principle of "Anrede und Erwiederung", of initiative and reactive utterance, as we would say today. They thus point to a basic, generally valid principle which it is necessary to explicate.

In contrast to this, the traditional distinction between monologue and dialogue starts out from the level of realisation and subdivides our possibilities of language use according to formal situational points of view into two different types: only patterns of action in which a speaker change occurs would be dialogic patterns of action.[1] A formal distinction of this type does not tell us much about the general functioning of our use of language; it does not really touch the universal dialogic principle in the sense of Füchsel and Wilhelm von Humboldt, which can only be grasped at the level of meaning. The distinction remains a terminological one which could be taken over into a dialogic theory of language; for the traditional terms 'monologic' and 'dialogic' name forms of communication which can certainly be distinguished at the level of realisation of patterns of action. At the level of communicative function, however, dialogic action games are performed with monologic as well as dialogic forms. Speech at the level of function is always to be analysed as dialogic speech, every individual speech act can be considered as dialogically oriented, language itself can be most effectively described and explained from a dialogic point of view.

The basic universal dialogic principle thus rests on the insight that there is no individual speech act which is, taken on its own, communicatively autonomous. The smallest autonomous unit of communication is the sequence of action and reaction. The initiative action determines what reactions can be expected. These expectations result from the functional structure of the initiative action. The central problem of a dialogic speech act taxonomy is, therefore, to define the initiative acts functionally. An essential criterion for such a definition should be that we could grasp the nature of the individual action types in a way which shows that they are determined by our cognitive possibilities. Thus at a decisive point the affinity between linguistic action and cognition would become obvious.

First of all, however, I want to defend the dialogic view of language, which is my starting point, against some traditional objections, and then make some preliminary explanations which are necessary for an understanding of an action-based model of language description.

## 2.    Language, communication and dialogue

A dialogic concept of language rests on two basic assumptions:

– Language is primarily used for communicative purposes.
– Communication is always performed dialogically.

The objections to the first assumption are, for example, summed up by Chomsky (1988: 38) in a counter-thesis:

> ...human language is far more than a mere system of communication: Language is used for the expression of thought, for establishing interpersonal relations with no particular concern for communication, for play, and for a variety of other human ends.

The first area named as a non-communicative area of language use is the use of language to express thoughts. Chomsky, similar to Harman (1973), distinguishes between the use of language in communication and the use of language in thought.[2] But what exactly is happening when we use language in thought? I do not want to repeat the debate that took place between Chomsky and Searle in 1975 (Chomsky 1975: 55ff. and Searle 1974). When we think in words we also communicate, we are engaged in self-communication/"Selbstgesprächen". We are talking to ourselves, as Wilhelm von Humboldt (1827/1963: 137f.) expressed it so well: "Der Mensch spricht, sogar in Gedanken, nur mit einem Andren, oder mit sich, wie mit einem Andren, ..." Silently or quietly we explain our thoughts to ourselves, we enter a dialogic communicative action game with ourselves. We break down problems into questions which we then answer ourselves, we collect points of view in order to analyse a complex matter. We express our thoughts in order to make something clear to ourselves. A typical example of such "an inner communication between the earlier and the later self" is, according to Roman Jakobson (1971: 702), "the mnemonic knot on a handkerchief" which we make in order to remind ourselves to accomplish an urgent matter. Even in the so-called inner monologue it turns out that there cannot be a monologue at a functional level. Whenever we speak, we speak to someone, whenever we express our thoughts, we express them for someone. If there is not a real interlocutor, then we invent a fictional one or slip into the role of our interlocutor ourselves. The so-called inner monologue also has the communicative purpose of all use of language, the purpose which defines communication in general, and which we grasp using the term 'coming to an understanding'. Therefore it is not merely a pointless and unfortunate move to broaden the notion of communication, as Chomsky asserts, it is just seeing the essence of communication in every use of language.

Communication is not just transfer of information. An information theory model based on the transfer of a message via a channel from a sender to a receiver distorts our view and does not let us see the specific peculiarity of linguistic communication which lies in the fact that we act when we speak. Even when we pass on information, we are not just a sender which transmits a message. We have a communicative purpose which determines our linguistic action: together with our interlocutor we want to make a picture of the world, to reach an understanding about a matter. However, speech acts which inform include, with their communicative purpose of transmitting new information, only a part of our communicative activity. In addition we want to influence the actions of our fellow-beings, and we want to create reality with language.

We have thus come to Chomsky's second non-communicative use of language, which in his words has the purpose of "establishing interpersonal relations". This may remind us, first of all, of Jakobson's contact function (1960: 355f.), of utterances with a phatic function, according to Malinowski (1923), primarily serving, according to Jakobson, to establish communication without being informative such as, for instance, utterances like *well* or *Do you hear me?* In connection with a speech act theory it is the communicative purpose of a distinct speech act class, the declaratives, to build up interpersonal relations by means of language. In making the utterance, social reality is created. Thus, we maintain everyday social relations, for example with neighbours, by greeting each other or by talking to each other in a type of conversation designed for that particular purpose, 'small talk', which only serves to strike up social relations or keep them alive, or we found institutional relations by linguistically declaring them to be existent by means of declarative speech acts:

(1)   I hereby open the meeting,
(2)   War is thus declared.
(3)   I hereby christen you ...

Finally language use for play: playing with language has no communicative purpose in the defined sense; it is a pleasant way of passing the time. Playing with language, with words does not, or does not exclusively, follow the rules of language. The use of language for play allows us to invalidate the rules which are normally valid in the use of language. Was Chomsky really thinking of the way we play with language when we ask the question *Which animal is in the cape? – The ape.*? Language games in Wittgenstein's sense cannot have been intended as their communicative function is not in doubt. It is, of course, possible to pursue the most varied non-linguistic, non-communicative purposes with language, just as any object can be used for other purposes from the ones it was originally destined for. Thus an iron or a flower pot could be used as a weapon, but this would not affect

the actual purpose of the object in question. Similarly the use of language for play does not have an impact on its actual communicative purpose.

Besides these objections of Chomsky's, which seek to separate language from communication, there are certain recurring objections to a dialogic concept of language, whose aim is to separate communication from dialogue. Can communicative use of language exist which is not dialogue? Taking a dialogic concept of language as a basis excludes this possibility; communication is a dialogic action game. Even if we endorse the traditional formal concept of dialogue, we have to ask ourselves whether or in what sense 'monologic communication' can exist. The concept of communication itself implies two communication partners, in other words dialogic communication after all. Even so some forms of communication are traditionally characterised as monologic, when – situationally conditioned – no reaction from the interlocutor is expected. Above all written texts, books and scientific articles, and also lectures when questions from the listeners are not customary, belong to this category. This area of texts which are, at the level of communicative function, certainly directed at a communication partner and can only formally not be considered dialogic, is not a real challenge to a dialogic concept of language. Within it the dialogue takes place that we call science, philosophy, culture (cf. Putnam 1988:xii).

It is more difficult to deal with linguistic utterances which, some think, are, at the level of communicative function, not dialogic. In this connection lyrical texts and certain types of speech act are discussed which seem not to involve a communication partner. Lyrical texts, which are not just analytically playing with language, perform, like all everyday linguistic and literary texts, a communicative function. The expression of one's own feelings also has a communicative purpose. Why do we tell others or ourselves about the state of our emotional life? Because we want to talk to each other, because we hope to obtain relief in a communicative exchange, or because we want to let others share our feelings. Why should we speak, act through language, if this action was not directed at an opposite number or at ourselves? Even if particular speech act types such as assertions do not seem to involve an interlocutor, since a corresponding formal marking is lacking (cf. Kasher 1989), it will not be possible to deny that they are by their function directed at a communication partner and relate to a reacting speech act. Thus assertions aim at a speech act which accepts the assertion. Why else should assertions be formulated, if they do not aim at an understanding with someone else or with the speaker himself? Language as a natural, social phenomenon has its constitutive purpose in coming to a communicative, and that means dialogic understanding.

## 3.    Language as action

The history of linguistics could be written as the history of a succession of different concepts of language. After the concept of language as a system, which dominated structural and generative theories of language, came a concept of language which focused its attention on language in use as a natural phenomenon. This natural phenomenon can be investigated psycholinguistically, from a cognitive point of view; but in doing so the communicative purpose of language is pushed into the background. The use of language for the communicative purpose of coming to an understanding is a social phenomenon which, because of its orientation towards a purpose, can only be described adequately on the level of action. We thus have to ask ourselves the fundamental question as to how the description of language can be based on a theory of action in such a way that the use of language is consistently explicable. How can the connection between language and action be grasped, as a merely metaphorical characterisation (Hundsnurscher 1989: 130) or as a genuine constitutive feature?

Actions in general are, as I understand it, defined as conventional correlation between purposes and means: the intentionality of action is already contained in the purpose: everyone who acts with a purpose acts intentionally.[3]

Even when we act with language, we are dealing with purposes and with means: we pursue certain purposes with linguistic means. The purposes are primary, they define the individual speech acts, and they determine which means we use for these speech acts. Purposes refer to the world. The combination of communicative purpose and state of affairs forms the meaning structure of every speech act, and for this we can use Searle's formula F(p) (1969). I call this structure of meaning pattern of action. Patterns of action are realised by speakers with linguistic means in communicative situations, i.e., they are realised by utterances, not by sentences and not by utterance forms either. The term 'utterance' already includes situational means. In the speech situation visible material objects and conditions can become situational expression, for example an open door, which in the speech act *It's draughty*. need not be mentioned, but also institutional conditions and facial expressions and gestures are situational expressions (cf. Hundsnurscher 1989). In addition to linguistic and situational expressions there are also cognitive means which, above all, take effect as inferencing processes. We thus obtain the following basic model of linguistic action (cf. also Weigand 1992a):
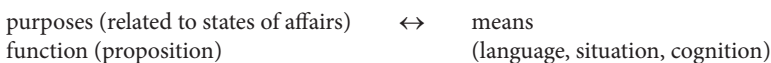
> purposes (related to states of affairs)    ↔    means
> function (proposition)                              (language, situation, cognition)

**Figure 1**

This basic model indicates that linguistic action is a genuine form of action. We act on the one hand with language, just as we act on the other hand practically or physically. In both cases we pursue purposes, only the means are, in each case, different. Bodily movements, too, are only acts when they fulfill certain purposes which can be related to them conventionally and intentionally. Dropping an object from fright is not an act, even if we can call this event a reflex action. But it is an action if it serves the purpose of demonstrating the effect of gravity.

Practical acts do not only have material purposes, they also have communicative or cognitive purposes. Given a communicative function they can replace speech acts. Thus, for example, closing a door can have the reactive purpose of fulfilling an action after an initiative directive speech act and thus replace a reactive speech act of consent to action, or it can be the material means for the directive initiative purpose of requesting quiet behaviour, and as such replace the speech act *I want to work now. Please don't disturb me.*, or it can be the representative expression of one's wish to be alone. Although the material means in each case are the same – closing the door – three different types of practical action occur. On the other hand the fact, demonstrated by this point of view, that practical and linguistic actions are mutually interchangeable shows that action by means of language is genuine action.

The basic model of linguistic action, as shown in Figure 1, is universally valid and is still independent of a particular language. The component of the linguistic means is a component of sets which do not only contain one utterance form; for in realising a communicative function we can – and this is probably universal – choose from a set of numerous forms of utterances which can be very differentiated. Our choice, however, is not arbitrary and the number of forms is not infinite. With reference to a particular language, the set of these utterance forms in the appropriate communicative situations defines the speech act grammatically (see Weigand 1984b):

$$F(p) \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{utterance}_1 \\ \text{utterance}_2 \\ \text{............} \end{array} \right\}$$

**Figure 2**

The utterances here are grouped together in a set from the point of view of their communicative equivalence, i.e, we can achieve the same communicative purpose, we can perform the same speech act with each of these utterances. The communicative purposes have to be defined in a speech act taxonomy as fundamental and derived purposes, and the point of view of dialogicity has to be taken into account; that means that the purposes differ according to whether they are initiative

or reactive (cf. Weigand 1989a). Communicative equivalence is thus a criterion which is established with reference to a speech act taxonomy.

The utterances differ according to the manner in which they express the communicative purpose F(p), which may be classified as direct, indirect, or idiomatic:

$$\text{REQUEST (close (x,y))} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{(4)  Close the window.} \\ \text{(5)  Can you close the window?} \\ \text{(6)  When are you going to close the window?} \\ \text{………………………………..} \end{array} \right\}$$

**Figure 3**

While in the direct speech act (4) the function is realised in accordance with the literal meaning of the sentence uttered, inferencing processes are added to the indirect speech act (5). Finally, in the idiomatic speech act (6) the function is realised by the whole utterance, and in doing so the literal meaning of the sentence uttered is blocked (cf. Weigand 1989a and 1992c).

Apart from the fact that the three correlation types are functionally not quite identical, since in an indirect speech act a direct and an indirect purpose are realised simultaneously, the fundamental question must be asked about the criteria according to which we select a certain utterance in communication, if all of them are communicatively equivalent.[4] This question brings up the topic of the component of the action conditions. Conditions of action are certainly always present when we act: on the one hand they are contained in the purposes, on the other hand the means are also related to conditions, or situational means can be understood as conditions for linguistic means. However, conditions of action have a key function when we come to distinguish between communicatively equivalent utterances. The central question in this process of differentiation is: under what conditions of action do we select on this occasion the one, and on the other occasion the other form of utterance?

The term 'conditions of action' is not just used to refer to certain situations, to situational means, but at the same time refers to functional qualities which cannot be grasped using the imprecise functional term of communicative equivalence. Thus some forms of utterances are especially appropriate for certain situations because they have a special functional quality. The example of indirect speech acts is well-known, which on the basis of their special function as polite speech acts are, above all, suitable for situations in which an all too direct intervention in the scope of action of the other would be ruled out. Other speech registers, other levels of style would be formal versus colloquial, humorous/witty versus neutral/serious speech. It would be the task of a discipline of pragmatic stylistics to differentiate between these fine functional and at the same time situational differences

between individual utterances, to distinguish different conditions of action be-
yond the criterion of communicative equivalence. A discipline of pragmatic sty-
listics would allow us to get from the level of communicative equivalence of a set
of utterances to the level of situational appropriateness of a single speech act:
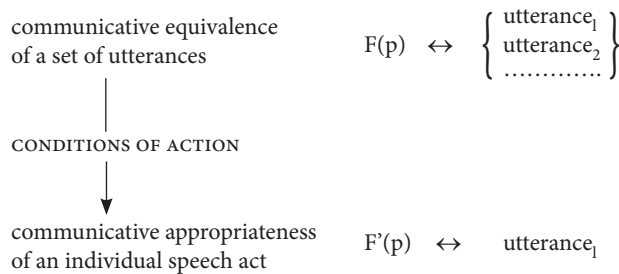
communicative equivalence
of a set of utterances

$$F(p) \ \leftrightarrow \ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} utterance_1 \\ utterance_2 \\ ............. \end{array} \right\}$$

CONDITIONS OF ACTION

communicative appropriateness
of an individual speech act

$$F'(p) \ \leftrightarrow \ utterance_1$$

**Figure 4**

An individual utterance from the set of communicatively equivalent utterances
can be differentiated from the other utterances with regard to its appropriate-
ness in certain communicative situations and with regard to the special function
F', which this utterance performs in these situations. That means that the more
precise formulation of the conditions of action also leads, in the end, to a double-
sided model of correlation between purposes and means:[5]

specific purpose   ↔   specific means

DIRECTIVE/polite   ↔   *Could you perhaps close the window?*

– leaves the scope                          – indirect speech act, subjunctive, particle
  of action of the other                    – to be recommended, for instance, in
  person unaffected                            communicative situations with strangers

**Figure 5**

On the one hand the special means of a linguistic, situational, cognitive kind must
be recognised which can be used in the case of a certain utterance, and on the oth-
er hand the particular functional quality which corresponds to these means must
also be recognised. Certain functions, of a literary kind, for example, are only
understood when certain cognitive means, a certain amount of expert knowledge,
is available. It is only when the conditions of action at the level of communicative
appropriateness of an individual speech act are differentiated that the linguist can
meet the criticism that is often made of speech act theory by literary scholars,
sociolinguists and psycholinguists that it does not take sufficient account of con-
textual factors. Behind this criticism is the partly justified dissatisfaction with the

functional concept of communicative equivalence: it only covers the well-worn paths used in order to come to an understanding by means of language and leaves the subtle nuances of the situational appropriateness of an individual utterance to pragmatic stylistics. According to Kasher (1979: 48) and Blanshard (1954) "style is the feather in the arrow, not the feather in the hat".

## 4.    Coming to an understanding versus understanding / "Verständigung" versus "Verstehen"

In contrast to practical actions, the purposes of our linguistic action always are dialogic-oriented purposes. Only the initiative and the reactive action together produce the smallest autonomous communicative unit which fulfills the purpose of coming to an understanding. The isolated individual speech act only has a heuristic function. It is not the understanding of the utterance of a speaker which constitutes a dialogic sequence but the reaction of the interlocutor to the initiative action of the speaker. In English we have the difficulty of differentiating "Verständigung"/coming to an understanding and "Verstehen"/understanding. Coming to an understanding as a general communicative purpose presupposes action and reaction: after an initiative action follows a reaction based on either a positive or a negative decision. It is only this reactive instruction which creates a dialogue, which makes up coming to an understanding in the sense that both partners have made their action positions clear to each other. Even the rejection of a reaction by an utterance like

(7)   I don't want to hear any more. That's enough.

only demonstrates that the validity of the speaker's position has been established dialogically.

While coming to an understanding describes action, understanding represents a mental precondition of linguistic action: the hearer-oriented side of the speech act. The hearer has understood the speech act when he has understood its functional structure F(p). In this sense understanding is the precondition for action, is the precondition for the reaction of the hearer who only becomes an interlocutor when he produces this reaction. In a competence model of linguistic action we presuppose that the utterance of the speaker is understood and ask what reactions are opened up by the initiative function of action. It is only in a second step – in the case of difficult or disturbed understanding – that this aspect would become a central theme.[6]

Why in a concrete dialogue the interlocutor picks out any one way of reacting from all the possibilities available, why, in other words, he either reacts with a positive or negative decision or, for example, asks a question in return, is, however,

not a question that could be answered by the linguist (cf. also Hundsnurscher 1989: 131). The linguist lists the different possibilities and describes their conditions. The individual decision for a particular possibility in performance depends essentially on the individual understanding of the circumstances of life, just as, in the final analysis, in a general sense, our individual understanding of the world determines our actions. Conditions of understanding therefore influence the history of the course of individual dialogues (cf. Fritz 1989), on the other hand the totality of all possible courses of a dialogue are contained in the notion of pattern. The pattern or the grammar of a dialogic action game does not describe one example or one possible course, but the potential of all possibilities of action in the various moves which could be conventionally and rationally expected, so that the action game as a whole becomes comprehensible and predictable in its possible courses (cf. Hundsnurscher 1980).

The rules for the dialogic sequence of the individual speech acts or the sequencing rules for linguistic action are not established by the conditions for understanding, but can be derived from the initiative speech act or are already contained within the initiative speech act. Thus the directive speech act

(8)   Give me a stick.

in principle opens up the possibilities of consent to action in a positive or a negative form

(9)   – Here it is.
        – I haven't got one.

The material action of giving the stick can take over the function of the positive reactive speech act. In addition there are various non-specific possibilities of reaction which are generally possible and are not restricted to directive speech acts: you can leave the action game by making an obviously non-coherent utterance; it can be the case that the utterance has not been understood acoustically, and it is possible that the interlocutor wants more precise information about what was said by asking a question in return:

(10)   What kind of stick do you mean?

A reactive question of this type indicates that in the concrete case dependent on the concrete interlocutor, comprehensibility was not already ensured to the necessary extent by the utterance of the speaker. In the concrete case a lack of comprehensibility justifies the choice of the question as a reactive move. This move is allowed for in principle in the potential of reactive action as the possibility of asking for more precise information.[7]

If in concrete communication it turns out that the precondition of understanding is not given, then it has to be introduced in an action game of its own of ensuring comprehensibility, which has its own action rules that have so far been investigated only in part. If we assume a competence model of linguistic action which not only allows for the average speaker of the standard language, but also for different levels of action competence, then we have, in the case of comprehensibility, above all grasped a didactic aspect which the speaker should take into consideration, quite in the sense of Fritz' "recipient design" (1991), but which cannot be the key to the constitutive rules of sequencing.

## 5.    Speech acts as pragmatic claims

The basic rules of the grammar of dialogic action are already contained in the purpose of the initiative speech act types. The quality that enables individual speech act types to be initiative, together with the specific qualities of the individual purposes, account for the way in which we can potentially react to an initiative action.

Using the example of the directive speech act *Give me a stick!*, we have already met the dialogic principle that is contained in the specific initiative action and which develops rationally and conventionally in the possibilities of reaction. The directive speech act is an initiative speech act because it makes a pragmatic claim on the interlocutor. Its specific quality is that of a claim to the performance of a practical action, which can be substituted by a reactive speech act which fulfils the claim in positive or negative form. This is the reactive speech act of CONSENT to action. Even if the interlocutor refuses to perform the action this minimal directive action game has achieved its communicative purpose of coming to an understanding: both interlocutors have become clear about their respective positions regarding the action to be taken. In the cases in which the action requested can be performed here and now, the initiative claim can be fulfilled by means of the practical action itself, in our case the interlocutor gives the speaker a stick. The basic principle that the initiative action by its functional structure already determines the possibilities of reaction is untouched by this (cf. also Viehweger 1989: 45). In the case of a directive initiative action this principle is set up on the level of linguistic action in the following rule of a grammar of dialogue:

$$\text{DIRECTIVE} \ \leftrightarrow \ \text{CONSENT}$$

**Figure 6**

In this abstract notation the action of CONSENT contains the positive as well as the negative form.

At the same time this rule for a minimal directive action game is one of the fundamental rules of a dialogic speech act taxonomy. The other initiative speech act types as dialogically-oriented units also determine their reaction according to the scheme that I have just described using the example of the directive speech act.[8] The definition of the functional initiative units F or F(p) is therefore of decisive importance for the question of a speech act taxonomy.

In contrast to the empirical position of a speech act verb taxonomy, which attempts to obtain functions of action from an analysis of speech act verbs in individual languages, Searle (1979:28), Dell Hymes (1977:64f.) and others have correctly pointed out that the individual speech act types have to be determined as functional, universal units. Seen from the position of a dialogic view of language, which is the only position to allow a unified description of all language use, we would add: they are to be derived by step-by-step differentiation from the general communicative function of coming to an understanding.

The first task which we are faced with is to functionally grasp that feature of a speech act that enables it to initiate a dialogic action game. Action and reaction, in the first instance, are only terms which categorise the function. In many cases we may already on the basis of the grammatical-lexical structure of an utterance be able to ascertain whether the utterance is used initiatively or reactively – thus request sentences such as *Give me a stick!* are initiative, utterances such as *Immediately.* or *You're right.* are reactive –, but it causes some difficulties to grasp this feature of [initiative versus reactive] for speech acts not only as a formal sequencing feature, but also functionally.

In a general form which is not yet specified according to individual speech act types, initiative speech acts are used to make pragmatic claims, reactive speech acts are used to fulfil them. By basing dialogic action on two action types whose difference is functionally defined as being making a claim and fulfilling a claim, we have left the position taken by orthodox speech act theory and have moved beyond its equation of speech act and illocution. Illocutionary initiative speech acts are correlated to reactive speech acts, which I – giving a more precise definition to the term – called perlocutionary (cf. Weigand 1984a). It is only the rationally and conventionally established interdependence between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech act which creates the minimal dialogic action game.

Basing the description of language on the dialogic principle is not just the result of a methodological choice but corresponds to a constitutive feature of all language use, to a constitutive feature of language as such. There is – for linguistic-functional reasons – no individual speech act which stands alone and is autonomous. Language use cannot be described from the speaker's perspective alone. The assumption that all speaker contributions are directed at someone, only demonstrates the deficiency of the monologic point of view. The dialogic

phenomenon forms a structural level of its own on which the systematics of possible moves is described which the interdependence between the illocutionary and perlocutionary speech act opens up. As long as this level of structure is not recognised there can be no uniform, and in my opinion also no systematic and adequate description. A purely monologic approach cannot reach the structural level of the dialogic phenomenon since it takes as its starting point only one type of action, the illocutionary, and includes the reactive element only as a formal, situational one and not as a functionally different phenomenon. In contrast to this the monologic element is, in a dialogic approach, a partial aspect of the dialogic phenomenon and can only be described adequately in this way.[9]

In our derivation of a dialogic speech act taxonomy we have thus moved one first decisive step forward. We have – taking as our starting point the communicative purpose of coming to an understanding – split up the unit of the speech act into speech acts which make claims and those that fulfil them, and have thus accounted for the dialogic unit of action and reaction. Before we now explain more precisely what pragmatic claims we are dealing with and in this way come to fundamental speech act classes, we can already characterise one fundamental speech act class by showing that in it, making and fulfilling a claim coincide: these are declarative speech acts. In making the utterance something is made to exist or be valid. The reaction of the interlocutor is therefore no longer necessary since the claim is fulfilled as soon as the utterance has ended. Thus the priest completes the baptism with the utterance *I baptise you ...* – a reaction on the part of the person to be baptised or his godparent to confirm this is superfluous –, or we create a certain institutional situation when we, for example, declare: The meeting is opened. The area of declarative speech acts is, however, much greater than we – generally or on the basis of Searle's characterisation of this type of speech act – assume it to be and is not limited to so-called institutional speech acts. Perlocutionary fragments which CONFIRM validity or existence occur. Thus, for example, the thanks which are expressed by an utterance such as *Thank you.* can be confirmed by *You're welcome*, or a congratulation *Congratulations!* is followed by *Thank you.*

The set of the other speech act types is, however, characterised by the fact that making a claim and fulfilling a claim are two sides of a complex dialogic action which are clearly separate. Illocution and perlocution cannot coincide here. We have to consider how these fundamental speech act types can be differentiated by means of a more precise explanation of the pragmatic claim. What kinds of pragmatic claims can we distinguish?

Our directive example *Give me a stick!* makes the pragmatic claim that the interlocutor should perform a practical action or complete a corresponding speech act which consents to the action. We could consider characterising a pragmatic claim of this type as a claim that something should become true. But I think that