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Interpersonality and Textuality in Discourse

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Lingusitic literature abounds in discussions of speech events, discourse and conversation, and to these issues there are multiple approaches. Among other perspectives the linguist may be interested in social roles and behaviour, various pragmatic principles, the structure of discourse, the organisational perspectives, providing a framework for conversational sequences and the ethnography of speech or she may be concerned with the psychological plane of discourse where the interpretation takes place. This means an assessment of the function of an utterance in a particular context involving the investigation of the procedures working behind the surface realisations of discourse acts.

> In my research I have been led by Brown and Levinson's (1978: 99) proposal:
> "in general the abundance of syntactic and lexical apparatus in a grammar seems undermotivated by either systemic or cognitive distinctions and psychological processing factors".

My approach to discourse being primarily linguistic I'm not concerned with the social aspect of conversation. I restrict my analysis to the discourse itself, its linguistic formation, while tracking down the mental processes involved in both the production and the interpretation side. In this paper I address myself to two tasks. First of all, I am concerned with how the participants interpret certain non-interrogative utterances in an initiation move and what is it that implicates the elicitative function in these cases, i.e. how the implicature is arrived at. In other words: what makes the addressee—apart from subjective factors—respond. Secondly, I am interested in how two levels of discourse, viz. the interpersonal and the textual—the two terms are taken from Halliday's work—arise and intertwine in discourse. The analysis is based on linguistically observable conditions, and the conversational extracts provided come from the author's own recordings of natural English talk.

The hypothesis put forward here is that the elicitative force of an Initiation move is frequently due to a prevailing contextual factor, which is labelled here the **U-factor**, and that there is another discourse factor present in several elicitations which I propose to call the **K-factor**. The former obtains from **the unknown, the unspecific** or **the uncertainty**

component of the context, while the latter is, in fact, the underlying bf knowledge of the participants of some textual patterns, which gets activated in the collaboration of the two speakers in a dialogue. It works as a guide for the second speaker to make a relevant contribution in the response move. In non-interrogative initiations it is these two factors that establish the function of the initiation as elicitation for response.

Being familiar with Austin and Searle's indirect speech acts we can say that by now it has become a truism that in conversation a linguistic form may occur virtually irrespective of its discourse function, i.e. there is no one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning.

The speaker has several options when formulating his utterance and it may also happen that while planning the linguistic realisation he hesitates about the form to opt for:

1. A: ***So wasn't it***
   B1: [**]
   ~A: ***it it***
   ~B1: John Carr [**]
   ~A: ***it wasn't obviously built*** as a hospital, though.
   B2: No, it was originally stables for the duke's horses.

2. A: But ***it must have started*** before that, Keith, I mean, ***you must as a [præk], did you have*** a very good English teacher? We were talking about English teachers earlier on.
   B: I did. I did have a good English teacher. [ə] #...

3. A: ***I thought is it a it was what I was wondering, is it a comedy, or a tragedy, so what's the feeling?***
   B: Well, what can I say? It is a very very funny play, but it will also make you cry. So that's all I can say. It's a sort of a saga, you know. ...

4. A: ***Is that, so you specialize*** totally in African violets.
   B: Indeed.

In unplanned, natural speech such hesitation phenomena as false starts, self-repair or reruns, as well as repetitions are generally considered normal non-fluencies, which may be due to a slip of the tongue or a temporary loss for the selection of an appropriate form. Our examples, however, also suggest that the linguistic form is overridden by some prevailing discourse factor, which obviously contributes to the context.

In elicitations interrogative and non-interrogative forms can obviously interchange, therefore it seems sensible to assume that both the production

and the interpretation processes are governed by the context in a way or another, that meanings do not evolve at random and the speaker's intention is—more often than not—linguistically detectable. A thorough investigation of elicitations in conversation shows that indeed, there are certain signals, discourse markers, which—however indirect—are revealing for the experienced listener as to the function of the utterance. My assumption is that these signals manifest some discourse factors, which, clearly, as a constituent of the context contribute to the elicitative function of the utterance.

Let us consider some non-interrogative elicitations.

5. B: 1956. It was at Wembly. We sang we we danced and swam.
   A: ***I never actually knew*** she came over and did a show over here.
   B: Yes, she did. I think that was the only show she ever did here.
6. A: ***I must ask you*** about the spelling of your name, incidentally. It's [ilein]. Is 'e' double 'l', 'a', 'y', 'n', 'e'. It's a # long way round.
   B: (laughs) Well, it's in a an effort to get it pronounced like the French Heléne.
7. A: You just have been made redundant, ***I gather***, talking of other things.
   B: Unfortunately, yes, just recently.
8. A: But ***it seems to me*** you're just looking for tolerance rather than unity.
   B: Yes, I want tolerance, you see, # you are not going to get unity with all the Christian people. You don't have unity in the # in the Jewish faith. They have # progressives and they have the Hassids, but they've got [ə] they're still all Jewish.
9. A: Anyway it's lovely to have spoken to you John. And ***I understand*** I can have a photograph.
   B: You can have a photograph, yes, but you can have a sticker as well
10. A: Judith, ***I take it***, that, broadly speaking, women get paid between two thirds and three quarters of the income of their male counterparts.
    B: Yes, I'm afraid, that's true.
11. B1: (laughs) Well it's in a an effort to get it pronounced like the French Heléne.

A1: Successful, ***I hope.***
B2: Mostly.
A2: Good.

12. A: ***So*** there are no drums in there at all.
B2: No. It's it's # the idea is to, well, it's been happening for hundreds of years, of course, composers have written the rhythm into the orchestra # inherently. . . .

13. A: ***Presumably***, the the sort of glamour of films, and how you create an effect on films [w] got itself into your brain in those very early days.
B: | those very early days [mm] [mm] | Well, it must do, because I did see them over and over, I mean, when you [əə] you know, you buy films, or there's nothing else to hire, you know, you do tend to do that.

14. A: It ***sounds*** fascinating this. ***I never*** [riəl] I'm a great lover of the African violet, but now you [s] now you mention it ***I've never seen*** a yellow one.
B: Well, it's it's surprising how many people think they ***have*** seen a yellow one until I ask them to go and find it for me,
A: Oh!
~B: and then they run into problems.

There is definitely some shortage of shared knowledge in each of these situations. In extract No 5 the speaker makes it explicit that there was something he didn't know by which he elicits confirmation of a situation as a fact. No 6, similarly refers to **lack of knowledge**, so both examples involve a common discourse factor, that of the "UNSHARED".

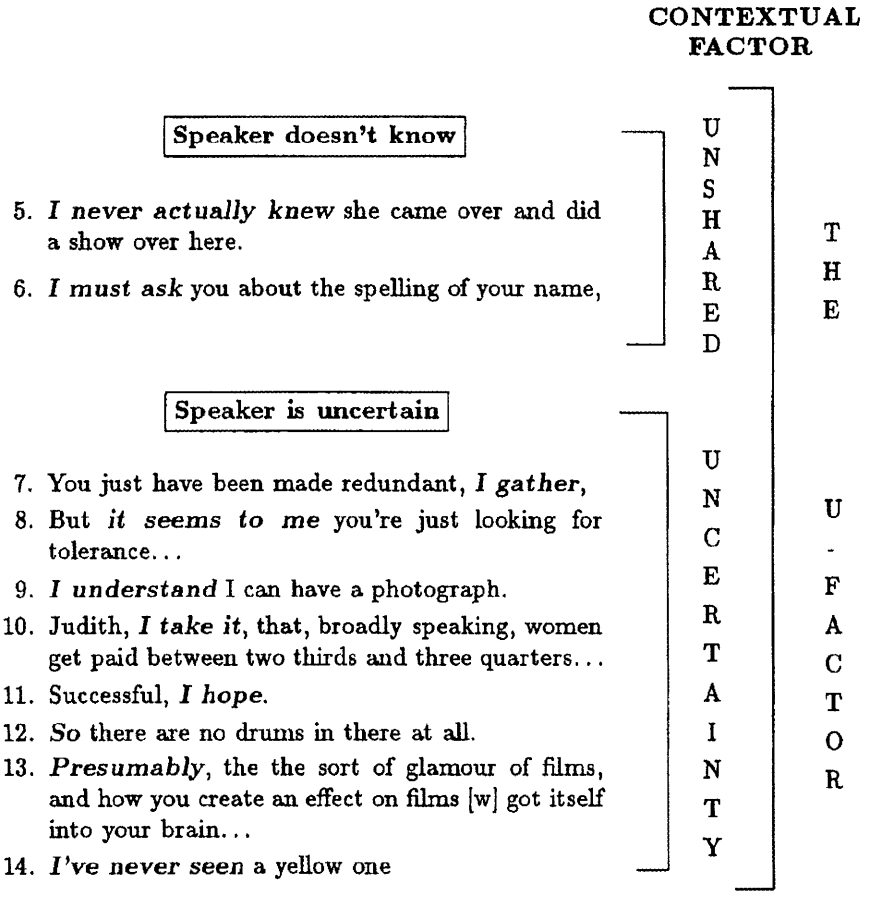
The following eight extracts 7–14 show the first speaker's uncertainty about the truth of his statement; another highly effective component of the context, which is linguistically realised in multiple ways. The lexicalisations vary from modal adverbials referring to potentials—as *presumably*—or inferential adverbs—like *so*—to such hypothetical verbs as *hope, take, gather, seem, understand.* The speech events of 7–14 definitely have one discourse feature in common, viz., that the first speaker's utterance represents a **hypothesis**, which the second speaker interprets as an elicitation for response.

Extract 14 is somewhat different from the previous examples. The first speaker's contribution here consists of two hypothetical acts. The first one,

which is signalled by the verb *sounds*, introduces an evaluation, and it is followed by the implicit hypothesis: "there may be none", which definitely requires a response.

Clearly, the hypothesis or the expression of lack of knowledge operate on the interpersonal level of discourse, so as regards their discourse function these utterances are not much different from interrogative questions.

I propose that the need for a response, the elicitative force of declaratives in discourse is due to a prevailing discourse factor, which I label the **U-factor**. As the following diagram shows it obtains from the "unshared" or from the uncertainty of the speaker, which can be lexically signalled in by a U-verb or by an H-marker (*hypothesis marker*).



Naturally, the discourse process involves a considerable amount of **shared knowledge** on the participants' part, both non-linguistic and linguistic. The shared knowledge, as a matter of fact, is a contextual factor influencing both the interpersonal and the textual levels. It pertains to some real world experiences, as well as to social conventions, a constituent of which, I assume, is cooperative behaviour (cf. Grice, 1975). Conversational data show that cooperative behaviour involves familiarity with certain rhetorical structures, i.e. conventional patterns of text, too. Writing and participating in conversation are very different activities from the point of view of the technical realisation. However, written text and conversation show a great deal of similarity in terms of the organisational perspectives of textuality. In the following I will focus on two rhetorical patterns: the General–Particular and the so-called Problem–Solution (Winter, 1986, 1992, 1994; Hoey, 1983, 1994), which are originally considered as processes of written text. In terms of its textual organisation natural spoken discourse reveals a great deal of similarity to written text. It is obvious that several textual patterns also occur in spoken discourse and these can work even across speaking turns. Assuming that behind the phenomenon there is some shared knowledge of the textual patterns we can say that these contribute not only to the coherence of the conversation but also to the interpersonal realisation of the discourse, in other words, they work at both the textual and the interpersonal levels.

For illustration let us see some further conversational extracts.

15. A: ***I gather you*** had ***problems*** getting # getting back into the country last night.
    B: We got back fairly late 'nd got held up for an hour at Heathrow waiting for our luggage because some of the security people # [ə] # thought that the Archbishop's cross # [wə] was a machine gun. So that kept us waiting.

16. A: You see, [ts] a couple of callers so far used the word commitment, ***so women must have*** a real ***commitment*** to these careers which, **clearly**, you have.
    B: You have to. You have to prove it's not so much that you have to prove yourself better than the men, but you have to prove your commitments that you will stay at it, you will not run away and become pregnant, or, you know, become very emotional at every little outburst, you have to say I've got to be tough. You have to become one of the lads.

The elicitative function of speaker A's utterance in extract 15 is introduced by a hypothesis (*I gather*) but it is actually accomplished by the unspecific noun phrase *problems*. Obviously, a simple "yes", which would remove the first speaker's uncertainty, would not be a satisfactory response here; it is rather the specification of the *problems* that makes the second speaker's discourse act appropriate. It is the "unshared" that is lexically signalled here by the general noun *problem*. The General–Particular text pattern arches through the speaking turns.

Speaker B gives account of the unpleasant experiences he had the night before as a response to the elicitation expressed by the reporter's hypothetical statement as well as by the unspecific noun phrase.

In extract 16 the noun *commitment* seems to be considered as general in the context. The second speaker confirms the first speaker's hypothesis as true, and then specifies what she means by commitment.

The two extracts above represent the operation of the General–Particular pattern occurring in conversation and working across speaking turns:

GENERAL UNSPECIFIC GENERAL NOUN PHRASE		PARTICULAR SPECIFICATION
A: you had *problems*	B:	— *we got held up for an hour at Heathrow* — *some of the security people thought that the Archbishop's cross was a machine gun* — *that kept us waiting*

A: women *must have a real commitment* which, *clearly*, you have	B:	— *you will stay at it* — *you will not run away and become pregnant* — *you will not become very emotional at every little outburst* — *you have to say I've got to be tough* — *you have to become one of the lads*

Apparently, a noun phrase with a general meaning is context-sensitive and, as such, it can contribute to the elicitative force of an utterance in the initiation move. When such an unspecific discourse element is specified by the second speaker the relevance of the response is realized through the cognitive process of **specification**. The phenomenon is very much the same as when the elicitation is realised by a wh-question, which is also an unspecific discourse element.

There are several other conventional patterns detectable in narratives. Winter (1994) and Hoey (1994) identify the following semantic units in text:

Situation
Problem
Response/Solution
Evaluation
Basis for Evaluation.

The units can be identified by lexical signals, by position, and also by the verb tenses. Another method of testing is using a dialogue test, i.e. a projection of the text into a dialogue, which means using a question-answer system where the questions introduce into the discourse what is not there explicitly (cf. Hoey, 1994: 42). According to Hoey (1983: 33), although the resources of discourse organization are finite in number, i.e. the semantic types of textual units are definite, the patterns of organization are various, and the number of these is indefinite.

Spoken language data show that the patterns commonly occurring in narratives similarly obtain in conversations. The following are examples of the occurrence of the so-called Problem–Solution pattern.

17. A: But it's particularly ***a problem*** if the person who is under hypnosis has been told to deny that he or she is under hypnosis by the hypnotist.
B: Oh, yes. This is a terrible problem, because the unscrupulous hypnotist puts up blockages and and in-programmes the the subject he is abusing, first of all not to be hypnotisable by anyone else, and then, if [ə] the person should be hypnotised by someone else [əm] not to remember various things, and # there are famous cases where it took years for the deep-programming hypnotists to unscramble the mess made by the unscrupulous hypnotists over many years...

18. A: *So*, from a sheer protectionist point of view you ***fear*** a unification.
B: I feel the present war is a trade war, it's not a war with with [ə] weapons like we used to have # in history.

The semantic unit Problem is lexically marked in both extracts: in 17 by the NP *a problem*, in 18 by the verb *fear*. In the former the confirmation is lexicalised, whereas it is not expressed explicitly in extract 18 Still, the implication is there, which is obvious from the fact that the lexicalisation *yes* could be inserted here, too. So we can say that the two exchanges share the following pattern:

TEXTUAL PATTERN:	**HYPOTHESIS–PROBLEM–EVALUATION AS PROBLEM–REASON**
EXCHANGE PATTERN:	
INITIATION:	**HYPOTHESIS OF A PROBLEM**
RESPONSE:	**CONFIRMATION (= EVALUATION AS PROBLEM)–REASON**

Extract 19 below is an example of the exchange pattern:

INITIATION:	**SITUATION = PROBLEM**
RESPONSE:	**SOLUTION**

19. A: The *trouble* is that the only way of coming back at you is by coming back at you with the very # stick # which is your stick, really, the stick of the Law.
B: We have rules which govern the way that we conduct our affairs and also the affairs of our clients. # And if we breach any of those particular rules then we are liable to be disciplined. By the Law Society. ...

The *trouble* referred to by the first speaker above (= PROBLEM) can be controlled or solved by the *rules* mentioned by the second speaker (= SOLUTION).

In extracts 20 and 21 the first speaker, A, describes a Situation, a fact, which the second speaker, B, evaluates after confirming it. In the latter case (21) B also adds the reason for her evaluation:

20. A1: Hmm. Was an American swimming ***champion***,
B1: Oh yes, | she was |
~A1: | and then | and then became ***a filmstar***.
B2: She was *a wonder* and so beautiful. And she was a wonderful swimmer, wonderful swimmer. She wasn't very good on dry land. She was very shortsighted, she was very funny on dry land 'cause she kept bumping into people, I remember,
A: (laughs)
~B2: but she was wonderful in the water and very beautiful 'nd great fun to work with
A2: Joe Pasternak said: "Wet, she was ***a star***!"
B3: Yes.
A3: I remember that | one of the |
B4: | No, really, |

~A3: famous quotes about her
~B4: she was. She was fantastic.

21. A1: You're playing Ann Harrad.
B1: I am playing Ann Harrad, yes.
A2: It's a sort of
B2: She's a wonderful woman. She's [**] kind of woman I've always wanted to be. I've always liked to be like Ann Harrad. She is very forthright. She speaks her mind.

The exchange pattern of the two extracts is the following:

INITIATION: **SITUATION**
RESPONSE: **EVALUATION (+ REASON FOR THE EVALUATION)**

Exchange 22 is an example in which the two speakers describe the situation in collaboration, i.e. B continues the description using her knowledge of the standard situation of an operation in hospital, so it is a simple Situation–Situation exchange pattern, in which both speakers participate in the specification of the situation.

22. B1: He's just been checked, looked over by the doctors, temperature checked and name tagged 'nd the anaesthetic put into his hands to numb it ready for a radical injection. Just sitting down, just getting him used to being here, I think #
A: And you are just waiting to go down now
B2: Yes.
~A: to the theatre.

One of Winter's Basic Clause Relations is the Denial–Correction pattern, which he considered a type of the crucial Unspecific–Specific relation (Winter, 1994: 50). In spoken discourse the process of specification, as we have seen above in the case of unspecific noun phrases, can arch over two speaking turns. It is also typical that a negative statement, the denial of a situation requires further explanation or specification, which may be expected to come from the addressee. The following is an example of this common discourse phenomenon.

23. A: *I don't imagine* that you just write straight on the page.
B: No. The whole art of easy writing, of course, is to make it look as if it were [ed] [ed] [ed] as if it were dashed off, as if it were knocked off, but you know you can write a sentence five times and then # it reads as if it's been # just # knocked off.

The implication of the first speaker's words is as follows:

You don't write straight on the page, I think/imagine.

Similarly to exchange 15, the simple confirmation *No* would not be a sufficient response. The unspecific negative *You don't write straight on the page* requires specification, which is most probably due to the cooperative principle of quantity (cf. Grice, 1975). Following this principle means making a contribution as informative as required for the current purposes of the exchange. The confirmation here would not be informative enough as the U-factor is present with double force. Its manifested in the hypothetical act of the speaker lexicalised by *I don't imagine*, and also in the unspecific negative situation.

The exchange pattern here is as follows:

INITIATION:	HYPOTHESIS OF AN UNSPECIFIC SITUATION (NEGATIVE)
RESPONSE:	CONFIRMATION–SPECIFICATION

In extract 24 below the first speaker introduces a hypothetical Situation, which involves some negative features (*you are an anti-clockwise ballet dancer, you can't do the polka*). The second speaker confirms the hypothesis and also adds the Reason for this Situation:

24. A: ***I gather*** you're ***actually*** an anti-clockwise ballet dancer. You can't do the polka [**]
B: No. I was taught to do it but [ə] the wrong way. Because I think he came from Hungary. Our teachers came from Hungary. They do it in the wrong way in Hungary.

The discourse pattern of extract 24 is as follows:

INITIATION:	HYPOTHESIS OF A SITUATION WITH NEGATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES
RESPONSE:	CONFIRMATION–REASON

A simple negative response would not be acceptable here either. Kiefer (1983) also observes that in a question–answer pair the adequacy of a simple *yes* or *no* answer after a question is a pragmatic issue and he notes that a negative answer typically requires some explanation. This is what in such a context the adequate communicative attitude is and this is how the speaker's behaviour becomes cooperative.

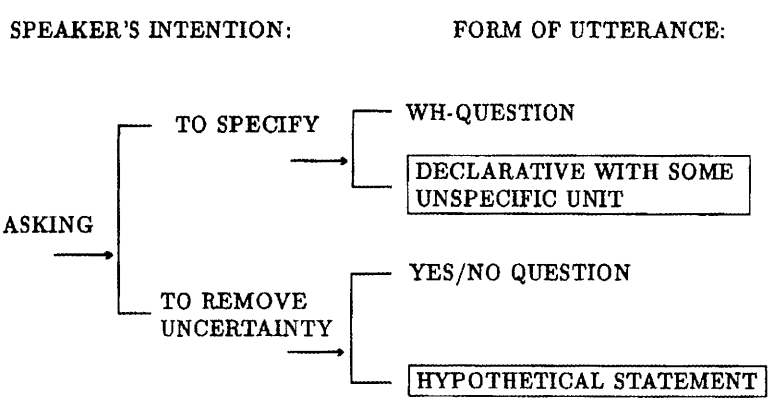
The above examples are but a few of those that clearly show the shared knowledge of some conventional discourse patterns by the participants. These patterns can work in conversational exchanges across speaking turns in the same way as they do in narratives. In conversation, however, they

can be considered one factor of the context, which contributes to the flow of the discourse by operating on both the textual and the interpersonal levels.

To summarize what has been said about the contextual factors of the interpersonal and the textual levels of elicitations we can pin down the following:

- There are basically two crucial factors operating in the context of elicitations:
- The so-called U-factor, which obtains from the lack or shortage of shared knowledge and/or from the uncertainty of the speaker.
- The so-called K-factor, which comprises the shared knowledge of the participants in terms of real world experiences and familiarity with social conventions including rules of cooperative behaviour.
- The presence of the U-factor is often lexically marked by U-verbs, by H-markers (hypothesis-markers) or by a USP (unspecific) unit, whereas the K-factor can be tracked down within the framework of certain textual patterns in some identifiable semantic units.
- The two factors contribute to the interaction of the interpersonal and textual levels of discourse.

On the basis of the observations about discourse exchanges made in this paper we can describe the nature and the realizations of **elicitations** in the following way:



The speaker's intention is to ask the hearer either to specify the "unshared" element of the context, that which he does not know or to remove his uncertainty about what he thinks he may or may not know. The linguistic forms available for the former are wh-questions or declaratives containing an unspecific (USP) unit, while the latter intention can be expressed by yes/no questions or by hypothetical statements. A further

conclusion can be made: if the U-factor is in operation interrogatives and declaratives are interchangeable in initiation moves.

Abbreviations and Symbols

[1]	number of extract
A	speaker A's move
~A	speaker A continues his/her move
A1	speaker A's first move
A2	speaker A's second move
B	speaker B's move
~B	speaker B continues his/her move
B1	speaker B's first move
B2	speaker B's second move
#	pause
[**]	incomprehensible speech consisting of two syllables
⎪ ⎪	parallel talk

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