THE CONTRIBUTION OF CA TO THE STUDY OF LITERARY DIALOGUE

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Abstract: This short paper, which is intended for discussion and to generate interest in the relationship between CA and literary dialogue, is based on the general observation that poeticity seems to be a phenomenon of natural talk. Early studies of poetics assumed that language commonly regarded as "literary" was evidence of a "poetic function" (Jakobson 1960) that was specific to literature. There is evidence to suggest, however, that poeticity is an all-embracing aspect of language and not the province of literature alone. This casts doubt on the notion that there is such a phenomenon as "literary" language which can be distinguished from "non-literary", i.e. ordinary, language. It is suggested here that the existence of poeticity in conversation has consequences for the analysis of dialogue in literature and that CA may have a role to play in this kind of study. To set up this argument, the general area of poetics and conversation will be sketched out in section 1.0 and the relationship between conversation and dialogue in literature discussed in section 2.0. Section 3.0 identifies particular issues which need to be explored further.

Keywords: Conversation Analysis, literary dialogue, poeticity,

Özet: Konuşma Çözümlemesi (KÇ) ve edebi diyalog arasındaki ilişkiye dikkat çekmek için yazılmış olan bu kısa makale, şairliğin doğal konuşmanın bir olgusu olduğu gözlemini temel almaktadır. Yazınbilim alanındaki ilk çalışmalarda "edebi" olarak kabul edilen dilin, edebiyata has olan "yazınsal işlevin" (Jakobson 1960) kanıtı olduğu farzedilmiştir. Ancak, şiir dilinin sadece edebiyatın bir alanı değil dilin her yönünü kapsayan bir alan olduğunu önermek için kanıtlar bulunmaktadır. Bu durumda, edebi olmayan dilden (örneğin günlük dil) ayrı tutulabilecek bir edebi dilin olduğu düşüncesi şüphelidir. Bu çalışmada, konuşmada şiir dilinin varlığının edebiyatta diyalog çözümlemesi ile alakalı olduğu ve KÇ'nin bu alanda bir rolü olabileceği iddia edilmektedir. Bu savı ileri sürmek için, birinci bölümde yazınbilim genel alanı ve konuşma sunulacak ve ikinci bölümde konuşma ile edebiyatta diyaloğun ilişkisi tartışılacaktır. Bölüm 3.0 ilaveten araştırılması gereken belirli konuları saptamaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Konuşma Çözümlemesi, edebi/yazınsal diyalog, şiir dili

1.0 Poetics and conversation

The existence of poetic features in ordinary conversation was first noticed by Sacks (1971), who suggested that the way we pronounce a word is coordinated with similar sounds in a local environment and that this coordination is a part of what he calls the "poetics of conversation". Although Sacks does not make a hypothesis regarding the origin of the process, his use of the word "coordination" suggests an unconscious mechanism of poetic sound production.

There is also evidence of speakers producing poetic effects in a more conscious way. Cook (2000) describes this kind of language play at phonological, textual and discoursal levels and stresses its sociocultural value, particularly its role in developing speakers' understanding of their environment and developing creative responses to it. Carter and McCarthy (1995) have confirmed that parallelism (the repetition of a particular linguistic pattern) is frequent in ordinary conversation, with Carter (2002) arguing that such effects are a symptom of creativity and more likely to take place in certain contexts: "creativity occurs where risk is reduced, that is, when participants in a speech event feel relaxed and socially at ease with one

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another". With regard to conversational storytelling, Norrick (2002) claims that "narratives rate high on the scale of poeticity" (p.258) and provides examples of repetition and parallelism from family and student conversations. Tannen has argued that "involvement strategies" are "the basic force in both conversational and literary discourse" (2007: 31) and that "literary language builds on and intensifies features that are spontaneous and commonplace in ordinary conversation" (Tannen 1984: 153). There is thus considerable agreement among scholars that poetic features are present in conversation, that use of these features in conversation may be unconscious or motivated and that the production of literary texts involves some kind of deployment of these features. This paper will focus on the presentation of 'ordinary' talk in literary texts, where one would expect to find poetic features being deployed by the author.

2.0 Conversation analysis and dialogue in literature
The mere presence of poetic features in conversation and their deployment in literary discourse does not automatically make literary dialogue an appropriate object of analysis for CA. The aim of CA is generally understood to be the uncovering of the interactional organisation of social activities (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998: 14) and at first glance it is difficult to see how these aims are related to the analysis of the poetic features of dialogue in literature because, since dialogue in a literary text involves fictional worlds, it is not immediately clear how people in literary dialogue can be understood to be performing social actions through talk. Dialogue in text is not performed at all and even if one hears fictional talk being performed by an actor in public, it is still not the naturally-occurring talk which is the usual object of CA. Making a case for the applicability of CA involves establishing the social actions that the speakers of the literary dialogue are carrying out. In order to address the "applicability" problem, this section explores the current role of CA in the analysis of dialogue in literature. By examining how scripted literary talk is approached within stylistics (2.1) and how CA is currently applied to it (2.2), it attempts to offer a justification for treating literary dialogue as naturally-occurring and therefore appropriate to the aims of CA.

2.1 Pragmatics and literary dialogue
Stylisticians working from a pragmatic perspective make use of a number of analytical concepts to describe the way in which writers manipulate linguistic features for literary purposes. When Tannen writes of literature which "builds on and intensifies features that are spontaneous in ordinary conversation" she is describing what stylisticians would refer to as "the coherence and density of foregrounding" (van Peer and Hakemulder 2006: 549). The term "foregrounding" is used in a number of ways in stylistics (see van Peer and Hakemulder, 2006, for a useful summary) and describes both the technique of the writer and the effect that is produced in the reader. It can be defined as a device used by writers for artistic purposes to highlight particular items or patterns of language and is achieved through a noticeable linguistic distortion that occurs either through "deviation" from a linguistic norm or through parallelism.

How do such distortions become noticeable? In ordinary talk, our conception of a conversational speech pattern is based on its relation to a previously known pattern or schema and is part of our general communicative competence (Gumperz, 1982). Within CA when a conversational pattern in question shows a departure from a normal pattern of interaction, then the pattern in question turns into what Heritage (1997) calls a "deviant case". However,

stylisticians distinguish the "deviant cases" of natural talk from the motivated, writer-constructed deviance that can be found in literature. When "oddness" in talk[1] is foregrounded by the writer, it becomes "deviant" in the literary sense. In stylistic research the term "deviance" or "deviation" has been classified into different types[2]. Primary deviation occurs when the writer deviates from the norms of language as a whole, going beyond the normal choice of words. This may involve prosodic features, individual words (lexical deviation) or collocations (collocational deviation). Other types include deviation from the norms of literary composition (secondary deviation) or from norms internal to a text (tertiary deviation). Types of deviation in the area of *dialogue* in literature include poetic deviation within the dialogue itself, incongruities of conversational behaviour interpretable as violations of principles of cooperation and politeness (e.g. Short 1989: 150-154), mismatches between dialogue and context and non-conformity with dramatic conventions.

2.2 Studies of conversational machinery in literary texts
Within stylistics current applications of CA to literature do not involve the poetic features of conversation but the deployment of the conversational machinery of ordinary talk in literary texts, particularly dramatic dialogue. Recent examples of this kind of research include articles on turn-taking in Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (Herman 1998), overlapping talk in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* (Ivanchenko 2007) and narrative sequencing in Pinter's *The Homecoming* (Bowles 2009). From a CA methodological perspective, the main criticism of this kind of research is that play-texts are not transcripts of actual talk but idealised representations of it and that the data they make available for analysis is limited. Although in dramatic dialogue "turn lapses, pauses, gaps, interruptions, overlaps, either partial or as full simultaneous speech … make their appearance" (Herman 1998: 30), it is not conventional for dramatists to include full details of these features in their dialogues. Indeed there is a huge difference in the amount and type of conversational detail that is available for analysis in a CA transcript of talk and in a play-text, as the following examples show[3]:

Transcript	Play-text
.hh Yeah hi, uh this is Mary Cooper .hh um: my sister an I left our house earlier tonight (.) tt and we were certain we locked thuh doors and ʻhh when we came backʻhh oh: bout uh half hour ago oh twenty minutes=ago ʻhh we noticed thuh front door was open hhh an so we jus didn' feel like uh checkin' aroun:so I thought we'd call you= =Okay give me yur address Zimmerman (1992: 440)	Listen, a few months ago I bumped into her in Oxford Street. I hadn't given her a thought in all that time, and suddenly there we were, face to face, looking at each other. For a full minute just looking. And do you know something, she cried. And I felt as if we were– Christ you know - still married. Simon Gray, *Otherwise Engaged*, Act 1

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[1] What Simpson (1998) calls "odd talk" is brought about by "speakers not observing the familiar or expected routines that are cued by a particular context" (Simpson 1998: 40). Readers and audiences are sensitive to odd talk because they have "a conception of what is a norm (in part societal, in part personal) of cooperative or polite behaviour for a given conversational situation" (Leech, 2008: 120).

[2] The description of foregrounding and deviation in this section draws on Leech (2008: 59-66).

[3] This description of the type of information available in play-texts and transcripts draws on Bowles (2010a).

The kinds of information that are present in the transcript but not in the play-text are: markers of audible inbreathing (*.hh*), verbalised sounds (*uh, oh, tt*), shortened forms (*an* for *and*; *bout* for *about; jus'* for *just; aroun'* for *around*), lengthened syllables (marked by the colon in *oh:*), representations of the sound of particular words (*thuh* instead of *the*) and linked utterances (latchings) with no gap between them (marked by =). The length in seconds and tenths of a second of a significant pause, considered to be above 0.2 seconds, is indicated by a bracketed number; the marker *(.)* in the above text indicates a micropause which is still potentially significant. Other types of information which can be included in transcripts, though not present in Zimmerman's example, include marking for stressed syllables, intonation contours, self-editing, loudness, overlapping talk (see 4.1.5), tone of voice and gaze[4].

Vice versa, play-texts sometimes contain information which is not included in transcripts. The Simon Gray text is, for example, fully punctuated whereas the transcript is not. Play-texts may contain italics and underlinings as well as stage directions which describe how a particular utterance is to be pronounced (*aggressively*, *timidly* etc.), what kind of attitude a character needs to express when pronouncing an utterance (*with caution*, *uncaring* etc.) or other explicit markers of speaker intention (Wales 1994).

The general lack of linguistic and paralinguistic information in playscripts not only results in a less detailed text, it also produces an unnaturally tidy one. Even writers such as Mamet and Pinter, who are more attentive than most to conversational detail in their writing, still write in a very orderly way. For publishing reasons playwrights have almost no alternative other than to write their dialogues as "one turn after another". This creates an impression of smoothness in turn-taking which is not generally found in ordinary conversation, making the quality of turn-taking difficult to judge. In Herman's analysis of turn change in *Look Back in Anger*, for example, she says "turn change on the whole is smoothly achieved" and goes on to cite evidence of this apparent smoothness, stating for example that "the two dominant participants … give each other a full hearing and exchange offences in equal measure, promptly and smoothly" (Herman 1998: 30). However, given a play-text's inevitable orderliness it seems difficult to interpret most turn changing behaviour in playscripts as anything other than "prompt" and "smooth".

These differences between the conversational transcript and the play text reflect two difficulties in applying CA to the latter. First, when conversational data is not naturally-occurring, CA can turn into an undeclared and underpowered form of "linguistic CA" (Seedhouse 2004) in which it is sometimes applied as a coding scheme of terms of units and norms such as the rules of turn-taking. Secondly, the CA-based descriptions that are produced by treating a text as if it was real fail to recognise and account for the artificiality of the text, which according to stylisticians is better served by a more cognitive pragmatic approach. These are serious objections which require methodological clarification of the status of the script if the application of CA to scripts is to be theoretically justifiable.

In addressing this problem Person (2009) claims that written literary texts can be treated as a form of institutional talk and argues that they "can only be fully understood when related to

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[4] Paradoxically, detailed Jeffersonian transcription often seems unreadable and "unrealistic" to the lay reader while the ordered turns of a play appear much more "realistic", when this is clearly not the case. It therefore seems that the use of terminology such as "realistic" and "unrealistic" is not helpful when analysing conversation "on the page".

ordinary conversational practices" (p.85). In similar vein Keith Richards (personal communication) has also suggested an interpretation of "naturally-occurring" which can accommodate the scripted text. He argues that it may be legitimate to claim that talk produced by the writer is "naturally-occurring" data and that this kind of "writer-constructed" dialogue may be a legitimate object of CA as long as the analysis is aware of its "constructedness" and takes it into account. One way of doing this is to clarify the responsibility for talk which can be attributed at different levels. Goffman (1981: 144-145) outlines four speaker roles for the performance of talk:

> *author*:   the person who is selecting the words of the utterance
> *animator*: the actual producer of the utterance
> *principal*: the person whose beliefs or attitudes are being expressed in the utterance
> *figure*:   the agent, protagonist in a scene, character in a story

These roles do not always coincide. For example, if speaker A quotes the words of B, then A is the animator but B is the author. If speaker C is speaking on behalf of speaker D then C is the animator and D is the principal. About the concept of *figure*, Goffman says:

> As speaker, we represent ourselves through the offices of a personal pronoun, typically 'I', and it is thus a figure, a figure in a statement that serves as the agent, a protagonist in a described scene, a 'character' in an anecdote, someone, after all, who belongs to the world that is spoken about, not the world in which the speaking occurs.
> Goffman 1981: 147

The important aspect of the figure is that he/she can also be viewed as having responsibility for talk. Goffman calls the figure an "embedded animator" and can thus produce talk of his/her own for which he/she becomes accountable. How can these categories be applied to the script of a play? In Goffman's terms, the roles for Hamlet's utterance *to be or not to be* would be attributed as follows:

to be or not to be		
Channel		script
Participant role	author	*Shakespeare*
	principal	*Shakespeare*
	animator	*Shakespeare*
	figure(s) or embedded animator	*Hamlet*

Table 1:   Perspective on scripted dramatic discourse, adapted from Goffman (1981)

Table 1 shows that Shakespeare is the author, principal and animator of the scripted line *to be or not to be*, i.e. entirely responsible for the talk in the script, and Hamlet is the figure. However, as embedded animator, the character Hamlet can also be viewed as responsible for the talk. Thus when looking at a script, the analyst can shift from the perspective of the figures/embedded animators (in order to analyse the talk "in the telling") to looking at the responsibility of the author, principal and animator (to analyse the talk as writing). This enable one to discuss what a character says in terms of the responsibility of the writer ("when Hamlet says *to be or not to be*, Shakespeare seems to be saying that …"). In other words, it

becomes possible to analyse talk-as-interaction in the story world in the same way as in the real one without denying its constructed quality.

To illustrate this let us consider an example, taken from Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* quoted in Tannen (2007). Here Stanley, a lodger, is talking to his landlady Meg about two visitors to their house:

Stanley: Meg. Do you know what?
Meg: What?
Stanley: Have you heard the latest?
Meg: No.
Stanley: I'll bet you have.
Meg: I haven't.
Stanley: Shall I tell you?
Meg: What latest?
Stanley: You haven't heard it?
Meg: No.
Stanley: They're coming today.

Harold Pinter, *The Birthday Party*, Act I

In analysing this extract Tannen notes the stylistic foregrounding brought about by the repetition of words such as *what?* and *heard* – "when repetition of words is found in drama, it seems to be deliberate, to play up and play on the repetition of exact words which characterises conversation" (Tannen, 2007: 91). Other critics have pointed to the bathos of Stanley building up to tell a story which turns out to be totally uninteresting (*they're coming today*). However, a careful analysis of the behaviour of the embedded animators, Meg and Stanley, reveals that the failure of the story actually starts in the preface. Stanley has an initial possibility to start his story when Meg replies *what?* to his first move *do you know what?*. Stanley fails to pick up this cue and starts the process again with *have you heard the latest?*, to which Meg replies *no*. This closes off any possibility of telling the story as does her non-committal reply of *I haven't* to Stanley's next claim *I bet you have*. His direct question *shall I tell you?* is yet another attempt to initiate the storytelling process. Again, however, he does not take Meg's reply *what latest?* as a cue to begin his story. Instead he asks to tell the story a third time *you haven't heard it?* and finally tells it after Meg's *no* reply. In this sequence, then, Stanley takes on the standard role of the storyteller who is attempting to align his recipient for a story but fails to pick up the cues which allow him to tell it. Meg, on the other hand, is a recipient who is clearly not "orienting to the seemingly momentous nature of the story" or positioning herself in the role of "awed recipient" (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 135). Looked at in the light of Goffman's framework, then, the failure is caused as much by the discursive ineptitude of the embedded animators as it is by the non-momentous nature of the story itself. From the perspective of the author/animator/principal (Pinter), the writer has shown remarkable skill in constructing a sequence of failed alignment between storyteller and recipient - a failure which is repeated in different ways throughout the play and is characteristic of Pinter's work as a whole (Bowles 2010b).

3.0 Applying CA to literary dialogue – new avenues of research

The above argument suggests that CA can be usefully applied to dialogue in literature in a number of areas. One would involve treating literary dialogue as a form of institutional talk. The application of CA to the performance of scripts, in which turn-taking is preordained and

movement carried out in line with stage directions, would be similar to the analysis of talk in other institutional contexts in which pragmatic resources are often restricted and speakers often follow prescribed routines. Literary dialogue tends to be performed in classrooms, rehearsal rooms, studios and theatres, each with its own institutional goals and practices in which the performance of dialogue has a particular role or roles. In classrooms, the reading aloud of literary dialogue is often used for illustrative purposes to "get a text out in the open", with the reading acting as a prompt for subsequent class discussion. Here, the social action of recital contributes in interesting ways to classroom talk and these deserve analysis. In the rehearsal room, on the other hand, the performance itself is the main focus around which actor-director negotiation takes place. CA studies in this area can focus on the interactional organisation of the rehearsal room by looking at the social actions of directors and actors and may even prove a useful tool for the actors and directors themselves; for example, when a script indicates a *pause*, the length of the pause is left to the actor and director to establish; the use of pauses of different lengths in rehearsal could be recorded and the recordings used to analyse the effect of the variation on the interaction. In the area of theatre performance, which is usually a one-off delivery of a script, CA studies could focus more on audience participation in relation to the performance of the script, particularly the sequencing of applause and laughter.

As regards analysis of the script itself, section 2.2 has shown that it is possible to treat the script as a form of speech as long as its constructed nature is made explicit via a correct attribution of responsibility for talk. Since the creation of poetic effects in literature involves exploiting the poetic mechanisms that are *already present* in ordinary talk, writers' skill in constructing poetic effects may in fact be partly *imitative*, i.e. reproducing the natural creativity of what they hear around them. In consequence any CA analysis of scripts would need to *compare* the conversational patterns of ordinary talk with the patterns present in literary dialogue. This kind of comparative study would be able to show the extent to which a literary dialogue deviates from normal patterns. An example of this kind of study is Norrick's analysis of the Nurse's story in *Romeo and Juliet* (2000) which concludes that it is "a realistic portrait of a funny storyteller rather than a broad parody of anecdote telling" (Norrick 2000: 189). In the same way, the dialogue between Meg and Stanley is a realistic example of a failed attempt to initiate a story. Comparative CA of this kind enables imitation of features of conversation to be distinguished from their creative manipulation through foregrounding, deviation and so on. A different kind of comparative study might involve using CA from a historical perspective to evaluate discourse practices contained in literary dialogue that was written before the invention of recording devices. Person's study comparing the use of the particle "oh" in contemporary talk and in Shakespeare (Person 2009) is a good example. His finding that all of the identified contemporary uses of "oh" were also used in the Elizabethan English of Shakespeare but that the Shakespeare corpus includes some unidentified uses highlights the relevance of CA-grounded study for historical pragmatic purposes.

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