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CONCLUDING ROUND TABLE
1987 INTERNATIONAL PRAGMATICS CONFERENCE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

Transcript of the Concluding Round Table, 1987 International Pragmatics Conference
PREFACE

On the last day of the 1987 International Pragmatics Conference (August 21st), a round table discussion was held with Herman Parret as moderator, and Roland Posner, Charles Fillmore, Elinor Ochs, John Marshall, John Gumperz, Aaron Cicourel, and Jacob Mey as participants. During a working lunch earlier in the week, the format and substance of the round table were prepared, starting from the following thoughts and questions, rather randomly formulated by John Gumperz and Jef Verschueren during the former’s preparatory visit to Antwerp in July:

"Pragmatics by its very nature is a highly diversified field. The presentations at this conference (some of which were invited, but most of which were volunteered from all over the world) amply reflect this fact. The search for some sort of underlying unity, which would not only make research in various areas of pragmatics more efficient but which would also greatly enhance the applicability of research results, is the 'raison d'être' of the International Pragmatics Association. Therefore it seems important to devote a concluding discussion to the issue of coherence in the field of pragmatics, with special reference to (i) whatever will have happened during the conference
(ii) wherever useful, proposals made in IPrA Working Document 1 and/or other ideas which might guide the preparation of a 'Handbook of Pragmatics' (conceived as an infinitely adaptable and expandable record of interesting and useful progress in the field, prepared in such a way that research results from various subfields, reached with various methodologies and various goals in mind, would become comparable and ipso facto more easily applicable).

The main question: How can we reach a common perspective for fruitful interdisciplinary cooperation?

This general issue can be approached with reference to a variety of much more specific questions. Some examples (with an indication of whom we would regard as the most appropriate participants to address the kinds of issues in question):

- How does linguistic pragmatics enter into the analysis of broader rhetorical phenomena, also involving non-linguistic sign systems?
  (Roland Posner)

- To what extent is human cognition, as reflected in grammatical phenomena and grammaticalization processes, pragmatics-based?
  (Charles Fillmore)

- Are there such things as pragmatic universals (on the level of discourse coherence, sequential organization, politeness, inferencing processes and implicature, etc.)? To what extent are they reflected in acquisitional phenomena? How are they related to aspects of socialization?
  (Elinor Ochs)

- Is there compatibility/complementarity between interactive (conversational, micro-analytical) and psychological or neuro-psychological approaches to issues of verbal behavior, language deficiency, retardation, etc.?
  (John Marshall)

- How does language function to give information about context?
  (John Gumperz)

- What are the implications of all the above for theoretical and practical issues related to institutional discourse?
  (Aaron Cicourel)

- What can pragmatics contribute to the socio-political problems of the day? How can we be engaged in linguistically justifiable pragmatics with a demonstrable relation to these problems?
  (Jacob Mey)

Needless to say that these suggested themes (and the attached division of labor) are not binding in any way.

The entire discussion period was needed to establish the necessary common ground to start addressing the basic placed issue before the panel. More or less general agreement was reached concerning (i) the usefulness of confronting widely divergent types of 'pragmatic' research, (ii) the need to define a common perspective in order to make the confrontations as fruitful as possible, and (iii) the undesirability of defining such a perspective in terms of a monolithic theory or a common methodology. The drafting of IPrA Working Document 1 started from exactly such considerations. From a substantive point of view, not much may have been gained. What was gained, however, is the extra measure of confidence in the validity of the pragmatic enterprise, which naturally derives from finding its premises confirmed at the end of a discussion which started out from a wide diversity of questions (each participant doing his/her best to stick to the suggested division of labor in such a way that, for a while, the case for unity seemed to be getting lost).
Since one of the original goals of the round table (an evaluation of the proposals made in IPrA Working Document 1, and the formulation of ideas which might guide the preparation of a 'Handbook of Pragmatics') was left aside, a further working document will be devoted to comments on the round table, preferably with emphasis on the relation between the themes it touched upon and the wider goal it did not address.

Everybody is invited to contribute to Working Document 3 by sending comments of the kind specified above.

The first draft of the following transcript was made by Jen De Groeve. Some of the participants managed to correct their own contributions, others were not able to make the deadline. For both categories, an attempt was made to stay as close as possible to the original text, while adapting it to the medium of writing.

Jef Verschueren
Antwerp, December 1987

TRANSCRIPT OF THE CONCLUDING ROUND TABLE,
1987 INTERNATIONAL PRAGMATICS CONFERENCE

HERMAN PARRET: Let me introduce the seven panelists of the round table concluding our conference: Roland Posner, Technische Universität Berlin; Charles Fillmore, University of California at Berkeley; Elmar Ochs, University of Southern California; John Marshall, Oxford University; John Gumperz, University of California, Berkeley; Aaron Cicourel, University of California at San Diego; and Jacob Mey, Odense University, Denmark. This seems to be California against the rest of the world.

JACOB MEY: How about yourself?

HERMAN PARRET: My name is Herman Parret, from the Universities of Leuven and Antwerp in Belgium. One of the 'raisons d'être' of our association is "the search for some underlying unity within the field of pragmatics." You remember that Bar-Hillel declared pragmatics to be a 'waste-basket.' This was in the fifties and many things have happened since, but still we have the feeling that there is a problem with the unity of the field of pragmatics, or its coherence.

First of all, not only linguists, but also philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, can call themselves pragmaticians. So there is a problem of interdisciplinarity here.

There is also the problem of the fragmentation of research projects within the field of pragmatics.

Another problem is the delimitation of the field with regard to other disciplines with an ambitious such as semiotics. Since Peirce, there has always been a problem concerning the relation between pragmatics and semiotics— which is just one example of the problem of delimitation of the field of pragmatics.

The general issue of this round table will be the issue of the unity and coherence of the field of pragmatics. This, for
I would like to end this very partial list of problems for discussion by adding that if it is true that pragmatics is the scientific study of all types of communication, interethnic, intercultural communication, intersubjective communication in general, then this gives rise to specific responsibility, a special deontology for pragmatics. I call it simply a socio-political responsibility which we should be very conscious of. Also this point we might want to discuss.

This is a survey of possible questions. As to the procedure, I would like to ask our seven participants to make a brief initial statement, a brief presentation of about five minutes, addressing themselves to the kinds of questions I mentioned. Then there will be a first discussion period among the panelists and a second discussion period with the audience. And if we still have time at the end, we shall come back to the panelists, asking them for a concluding statement, after which I will end with some very brief remarks. So let us start with the opening presentations. Roland Posner.

ROLAND POSNER: I was asked to answer the following question: "How does linguistic pragmatics enter into the analysis of broader semiotic phenomena, also involving non-linguistic sign systems?" I will try to answer it with reference to what I have been able to observe during the conference.

There are a few distinctions I would like to make in order to get some structure into the discussion. But let me start with an observation which I made when I read IPRA Bulletin 2 (April 1987). On page 27 you find an announcement of the 5th Internationaler Kongress der deutschen Gesellschaft für Semiotik which suggests that semiotics comprises issues "to be situated in philosophy, psychology, sociology, cognitive science, linguistics, history, ecology, biology, and communication studies." Wandering through this conference, I asked myself whether the same was true for pragmatics. And I found that pragmatics could also be seen as comprising issues located in philosophy, psychology, sociology, etc., and moreover related to non-verbal communication, communication disorders, cultural studies, anthropology, international politics, ethnology,
ethnography, folklore, physiology, medicine - I will not continue because that could take the five minutes I have. As to the relationship between semiotics and pragmatics, a common view is that semiotics deals with a few more disciplines than pragmatics, so that the latter is a subdiscipline of the former. My main point is that we should not stop there.

If semiotics is the study of all processes that involve signs, linguistics is the study of all processes that involve verbal signs. Most linguists and, unfortunately, also many semioticians think that all sign processes are communication, or, in Prieto's terms: a process where a sender wants to express a message, selects some signified from a code which correlates that signified with the signifier (signifier plus signified together forming a sign), utters the signifier by giving a signifier token, and where a recipient goes through the same process the other way round. This is of course an oversimplification in many respects: You have sign processes without communication, you have sign processes without code and without any sender's intentions. Just think of the scratching noise of this microphone, which indicates to you that it is on. That is a sign process. But if I would not have made that noise on purpose, it would also have been a sign process without a sender, without an intention, without a code. Or just think of a person who mocks another person by imitating that other person's ad hoc movements. There is an intention, an obvious one, there is no code, but it is also a sign process. Finally, think of aleatoric computer-produced texts. They have codes; they also have intentions, presumably, but these are unknown. The fact that 'normal' oral utterances have been studied most, ignoring the others, has narrowed the perspective of pragmatics. I think we should distinguish between communication as an intentional sign process, with or without code, signification as a coded sign process, with or without intention, and 'indication' which would be the simplest possible sign process which can be without a code and without intention.

Now, what does pragmatics have to do with this? According to many of the speakers whom I asked and observed, pragmatics is "meaning minus semantics," or, expressed differently, "pragmatics studies everything said about the sign process that does not just describe the sign code used." That is what I would like to call a negative definition of pragmatics. Alternatively, one could locate pragmatics, if you take the sign process which I just sketched, in the choice which the speaker makes when he wants to express a message and chooses a signified, when he chooses a signifier for the signified, when he chooses a fitting realization of that signifier; or in the choices of the recipient, when he tries to identify a certain utterance as production of a special signifier, or when he chooses his corresponding signified according to a code which he thinks is present, or when he constructs an intended message out of what he gets. All this ought to be introduced when one tries to define pragmatics positively. Pragmatics studies processes or choices that lead from coded meaning to actually intended meaning and from actually intended meaning to coded meaning. That was the first point I would like to make: There is more to pragmatics than the Gricean type of definition mentioned.

Secondly, there is codeless pragmatics versus code-oriented pragmatics, a distinction which I found in many of the discussions here. Without going further into this, it should be clear that there are processes where information is present, without the use of any signs. Anything that is pre-coded in the sense of a convention can count as an example. In linguistic communication we arrive at pre-coded information by drawing on sources from the situation, from knowledge of the situation referred to, from the co-text which is known. But there are also situations where there is no given basis for such a pragmatic process.

Third, if you take the positive definition of pragmatics which tries to mediate between coded meaning and actual meaning, then you can stress the process of inference and the principles that govern this process you can stress the signs which are used in it and you can stress the reference. In the discussions here, I heard claims to the effect that the only things that count in pragmatics are the principles of inference, and all else is irrelevant." Others said: "We study pragmatic signs such as indexical expressions, deictics or other special
types of expression." Still others said: 'We discuss pragmatic information, for instance background information about the interactional situation or the situation referred to.'

Now, I would like to distinguish non-substantive pragmatics from substantive pragmatics. Substantive pragmatics is an outgrowth of what Bühler once called 'Stoffentgleisung.' There is the problem of how to reach an actual meaning from some kind of lexical or coded meaning when instead of discussing the principles of how you get there, you get into the expressions which carry the coded meaning or into the sources of information which you have to have in order to make that inferencing process. We have good reasons to analyze these two things, but I think there may be a way of relating them to non-substantive or process-oriented pragmatics.

In a study published in 1979, I distinguished between meaning-maximalists and meaning-minimalists in pragmatics. I think these are both moderate stances which can immediately be tied up with the positive definition of pragmatics as the analysis of the inferencing processes to get from coded meaning to actual meaning. The meaning-maximalists would take very rich coded meanings the meaning-minimalists would take very poor coded meanings.

There are also more radical pragmaticians whom I would like to call 'pragmaticists' because they are mostly philosophers. They would say: There is no meaning, no coded entity, and we have to reconstruct all talk about coded entities by talking about processes (whether processes of inference, rational processes, action, etc., depending on the school). The relevant schools include the ethnomethodologists (at least some of them), the action theorists of the Erlangen School, adherents of Leont'ev, etc. This radical pragmatism also includes certain interpretations of Peirce. This movement, which is not very prominent at this conference, has also created the countermovement of anti-pragmaticists: those who say — and that is how I come back to the beginning — that pragmatics itself is just a collection of studies in psychology, sociology, ethnology, etc., or that it may be a perspective, but only one which can be reconstructed by doing psychology, sociology and ethnology properly. I personally think that attitude would destroy the possibilities that have become apparent at this conference. In order to avoid this, we really have to develop theoretical pragmatics within the framework of semiotics from the top down. We have to provide task definitions and a theoretical apparatus with theorems, so that we will have something to apply and can show that the direction of explanation is not just from sociology, psychology, etc., to pragmatics, but that it is also from pragmatics to those disciplines. Thank you.

HERMAN PARRET: Thank you. Charles Fillmore.

CHARLES FILLMORE: Many years ago, I took a course from Bernard Bloch, a famous American descriptive linguist. It was a course in linguistics which he began by saying that we needed a definition of linguistics, that he had been trying for many decades to come up with a definition of linguistics, and that the only one he could come up with that really worked was that linguistics was the activity of linguists. And then he said, O.K., now I owe you a definition of linguistics, which I can only present to you ostensibly or extensionally, a contribution being the membership list in the Linguistic Society of America.

I assume that pragmatics is not going to be defined as the activity of the people listed in the membership rolls of the International Pragmatics Association, but I recorded various notions of pragmatics that I heard at these meetings.

One view of pragmatics shows up in the claim that there are certain features of linguistic structure that are pragmatically motivated. This, I guess, is the idea that language has some of its properties because it serves human beings. For instance, the way in which first person morphology works is to be accounted for by referring to the activities of human beings. This was referred to as pragmatic explanation or pragmatic motivation.

Another view is that pragmatics involves information which the grammar does not provide, but which must be
inferred pragmatically. This is the case where the syntax and the morphology do not tell you what is going on. You have to infer that from other things you know, and these inferences are pragmatic inferences.

A further view, also mentioned a while ago, is that pragmatics is meaning minus semantics. You have the whole picture of what linguistic utterances can mean and then you say which part of that is to be accounted for by the semantics of the language, and what is left over is pragmatics. Notice we have had various ideas about what semantics is. Recall, for instance, Bob Wilensky's primal meaning, the part associated with the meanings of words and the meanings of sentences, a very skeletal basis for interpretation. Another notion of semantics that is very common is everything that is truth-conditional about our understanding or interpretation of a sentence; so, therefore, pragmatics is everything that is not truth-conditional. And another view is that semantics is everything that is encoded in language and that pragmatics is the stuff that is not encoded. In fact it was a dispute about this that made Bruce Fraser claim the other day that, if I insisted that we could talk about pragmatic information or pragmatics being encoded in linguistic form, then this association was not big enough for the two of us, and he proposed having some election at the end of the week to decide which of us should resign. But I think that we no longer worry about that right now. According to the view in question, pragmatics is that aspect of meaning which is not associated by convention with specific linguistic structures or forms.

The proposal I want to support is that there are many pragmatic structures that appear to be dedicated to specific pragmatic purposes. Thus I am using pragmatics to refer to the relation between language and human activities, or interaction, or recognition of context, and so on. That is the way in which I want to be able to continue to use the word pragmatics. I am myself very much interested in the association of pragmatic knowledge with questions of linguistic form. I was going to say a few more things but I will stop here because a number of the points I wanted to make have already been made.

HERMAN PARRET: Thank you, Elinor Ochs.

ELINOR OCHS: I want to point out first of all that I was originally asked a question that was something like the following: "Specify as best you can the universal and specific pragmatic processes and structures, then relate those to acquisition phenomena and the process of socialization." I will not tell you what my initial reaction to that question was. I have chosen not to answer it but rather to respond to the question. My response is going to be in the form of a comparison between two approaches to pragmatics.

The first approach is something that could be called cross-linguistic pragmatics. In this cross-linguistic pragmatics, the enterprise is primarily to examine a set of communicative forms that are available to a group of speakers and to look at the functions that these forms serve. For example, the relationship to the function of conveying propositions, to conveying attitudes, to performing social actions, and so on. In the course of engaging in this enterprise, one of the main 'super goals' would be to look for what is universal across different groups of speakers, different kinds of speech communities, to look for universal form-function relationships and what is specific to particular speech communities. Part of this enterprise is to study the reflection of this universality and specificity in acquisition processes; to look at when children acquire certain kinds of communicative forms and when they gain functional competence; and to look across different groups, different kinds of speech communities to see if we can say something about some kind of universal process that seems to be taking place, some kind of pragmatic course that we could plot across different languages, and what kinds of courses seem to be specific to particular groups of children, particular kinds of acquisition situations.

This is a tremendously valuable and absolutely necessary kind of enterprise to engage in. But I want to point out two limitations. The first limitation is that this kind of enterprise does not account adequately for crosscultural differences in
languages (some of which have been discussed here during the conference in terms of the ramifications for crosstalk); it does not adequately account for the reasons why people misunderstand one another, talking across community lines, across communities of speakers. The second limitation is the following: This kind of approach does not account adequately for changes in language use within any individual's life span and also across historical time.

Let's look at these two limitations from the perspective of a second approach which we might call crosscultural pragmatics. In this kind of approach we can examine certain fundamental assumptions. One of the more important assumptions that has not been terribly salient in the meetings so far, particularly in many of the plenary lectures that we have all been exposed to, is that most differences between speech communities are not categorical differences in terms of language usage or language behavior. Certainly there are very dominant differences that we can talk about. When you first go into a society as a graduate student in anthropology, you mainly observe these very dramatic differences between speech communities. But when you look over a longer period of time at a particular speech community, or compare two different speech communities, one of the things that emerges (which is, I think, tremendously important to the study of pragmatics) is that the differences are not so much categorical but rather that the differences are in terms of preferences and dispreferences that groups of speakers have for using language in given situations. Most people think about anthropologists as being concerned only with differences. Rather, Anthropologists are also concerned with what is common across languages. What anthropologists are concerned with is a rather complicated task, which is to look at linguistic forms that relate to context, and to look at them as a set of resources, many of which are shared among communities. An enterprise like cross-linguistic pragmatics would specify what those resources are and how they perform these various kinds of functions. But what the anthropologist tries to do, as in John Gumperz' and Celia Roberts' presentation, is to look at how those resources are differentially distributed in different speech communities.

Different speakers have different expectations concerning how to employ those resources. So the anthropologist, or an outside observer who comes into a society (a tourist, for example, who says "They are not like us") should realize that this is too simplistic and that 'they are not like us' in that particular constellation which could define a social situation. They are not like us in an a-symmetrical situation, in a courtroom, on a bus, located in a particular time and space that is locally defined by members.

This is the kind of enterprise that I think is important for us to carry out. It is important for understanding cross-cultural communication. But it is also very important for the enterprise of trying to understand meaning, because what this means is that, for instance from the point of view of a child, what children are coming to understand about language use is that language not only serves these very basic kinds of functions that we have been discussing, but that language also serves to index these other parameters of the context that have been less discussed at this conference, like speaker-hearer relationships, social identities of speakers, social activities taking place, genres, and so on. All this becomes part of, let's say, the dictionary entry for the child. So an account of meaning would have to take into consideration these particular points.

I am going to take an extra couple of minutes here, because I want to push ethnographic methodology to actually accomplish this kind of enterprise. You need both pragmatics at a micro-level and pragmatics at this wider contextual level to understand how people communicate with one another. I want to say something very briefly about stasis and change. The kind of cross-linguistic pragmatics that we have been looking at, often operates on the tacit assumption that there is something like a set of principles or processes that is static, a body of knowledge that is there in a community which members or groups of speakers share and which children come to acquire. But we know that systems of language usage change, and they change for individuals over their own life span and they change historically. It is very important to look at how that change occurs, which is facilitated by an
ethnographic and sociolinguistic approach which attends to the social construction of meanings, which attends to processes like socialization which have the potential to be bi-directional. The child does not simply acquire a fixed set of knowledge, but rather there is some kind of potential as part of our human capacity for the negotiation and transaction of that knowledge.


JOHN MARSHALL: I keep getting this awful feeling that I am here under false pretences, and I think the reason for this is that I fall on the anti-pragmatic side of the fence. But just in case that sounds a little too extreme, I do not deny that organisms should behave appropriately and in particular, that if organisms do not behave appropriately, then either they do not survive or if they do survive, then they do not get very far in getting what they want. So I have no objections to the notion of appropriateness where, for a good deal of our lives, appropriateness is defined in terms of social, rather than physical context. My anti-pragmatic stance, I think, is determined by my feeling that I cannot see any possibility of a science of pragmatics. And I come to this position from an admittedly limited and prejudiced professional stance of my own. Namely, the area I work in is basically cognitive neurobiology, where what I am interested in is the set of biologically given human capacities and how these develop in ontogeny and work themselves out in practice. Because I come from that kind of background, the kind of question I tend to ask myself is a question like: Is there a neuro-biology of pragmatics? And as I tried to indicate in the brief talk I gave this morning, I can see at the moment no neuro-biology of pragmatics. Furthermore, I can see no hope of a neuro-biology of pragmatics.

What I think there is that is studiable is a set of modular input systems that we know a little bit about, and a set of modular output systems that we know a little bit about, and then a gigantic – in Jerry Fodor's terms – central system where all the interactions between these modules take place. The problem with that central system is basically that anything can be relevant to anything else. And it is because of that, that there is no science of science, it is because of that, that there is no science of thinking, it is because of that, we do not know anything deep about inductive inference. It is because of that, that there is no theory of history despite what Hegel and Marx might have once believed. And I think a lot of what gets discussed under the rubric of pragmatics is in fact part of the study of history. I believe that what people who call themselves pragmatists are, studying, is an infinite set of ad hoc, but in some sense rational devices and strategies for dealing with the world. But because it is an infinite ad hoc set, there is not likely to be a science of it.

I would stress, however, that saying that pragmatics is infinite and ad hoc is not to say that it is irrational. It clearly has to be guided by appropriateness conditions for the reasons I mentioned in the beginning. If not, you do not survive or you do not get where you want to get.

I have heard describe my position (perhaps even this afternoon) as neuro-psychological reductionism. Let me just put in a caveat about that. I do not believe in reductionism of any type, neuro-psychological or otherwise. The only sensible approach I know of to the topics I am interested in, involves basically the kind of framework that David Marr once proposed for looking at the study of vision. Namely that you have a tripartite theory of cognitive biology. You have a theory of the nature of the computation. That is to say, a theory of what is computed by the organism. You then have a theory of the algorithm or algorithms that actually perform those computations in defined ways. Third, you have an account of the physical instantiation of those algorithms, whether those physical instantiations are in the human brain or in some other mechanical device. There is no sense in which given an overall framework of that sort, you can talk about reductionism, either descriptive or interpretative. An explanation on all three levels is required.

I have also heard it mentioned during the course of the meeting, that the stance, I am taking is very much an
individualistic stance, in the sense of talking about what is inside an individual mind/brain, rather than being concerned with the interactions between a set of mind/brains. I will not buy this for the reason that I think that all interactions between people have ultimately to be coded inside the individual mind/brain. That is to say, I think that what we are dealing with is an enterprise that talks about "I know that you know that I know, etc..." however far down that trail you want to be. I do not believe that any kind of interaction between individuals is in the stars. It is in the individuals' representations and cognitions of the others with whom he or she is interacting. And if you do not have that grasp within the individual brain of the nature of social interaction, then you end up with a well defined, well studied neuro-biological pathology: it is called autism.

HERMAN PARRET: Thank you, John Gumperz.

JOHN GUMPERZ: Most speakers so far have taken the approach of talking about various possible theoretical or, as somebody said, 'top-down' approaches to pragmatics. If we are going to search for some kind of unity that unites us all, there is perhaps another strategy you might want to follow: What is our orientation to data? What is it that we are studying? Looking at what happened in this meeting, we can clearly detect two or perhaps three approaches: Language-centered approaches, text-centered approaches, and I think there have been a number of sessions also that show a situation-focused approach.

In trying to talk about language and context, I want to point out some of the things that we can do with a situation-centered approach, what that kind of approach does for us in the way we look at data and what kind of data we consider as significant, and also what it tells us about the other question of how context or knowledge and contextual phenomena and knowledge of the world are brought into the interpretation process. Now, obviously if we are studying situations, communicative situations, by definition the nature of these situations is context-bound. We also know from a number of studies that have been reported on in this meeting, and from the literature, that this context is not a unitary context. Context is something that is constantly changing. Gilles Fauconnier, among others, has shown how in fact context constantly changes as the interaction or the text progresses. There have been a number of talks on narrative performances, where the context changes from introducing a narrative to developing action, to evaluating, etc. There are constant shifts. If context constantly changes, how do interactants know about this?

There is another point about looking at interaction, the main point that is being made in the tradition of conversational analysis (to which a number of sessions were devoted here), namely that in fact interaction does not just occur. Interaction is managed and organized. There is a problem of conversational management and the question is: What organizational tasks have to be performed? What are the means that we use to perform these? Some of the organizational tasks, I think, have been specified, such as the opening interaction, creating involvement (in Goffman’s term), maintaining involvement, creating coherence, maintaining coherence, etc. What I want to suggest is that one systematic way of looking at language is from this kind of situational perspective. By doing so, we can deal with a number of the phenomena that have been discussed at this meeting in terms of a unitary set of observable phenomena and we can do it, in spite of what John Marshall has said, in terms that are verifiable behaviorally, for instance through a video-analysis.

Now, let me just point out some of the things that have been mentioned. In one of the first plenary sessions, Wolfgang Dressler dealt with something called 'morphopragmatics,' or how morphology is used to indicate information about context. There were several sessions on metapragmatics; you are all familiar, of course, with Jef Verschueren's work on speech act verbs, which is part of metapragmatics. There have been quite a number of sessions on non-verbal signalling, particularly focussing on the relationship of the non-verbal to the verbal.
signalling, and how this relationship then enters into the process of conversational management. In my own work, including some of the work I have reported on here, I have been concerned with linguistic variability to some extent, and how that enters into signalling.

In other words, what we are getting is a whole series of phenomena that have been studied from a language-centered point of view. What if we were to study them from a situational interaction-centered point of view, looking at how they first accomplish organizational tasks, and then, by accomplishing organizational tasks, enter into inferential processes. I want to suggest that this would lead us to look at linguistic data, many of which have been considered in pragmatics, in quite a different way from the way we have done it before.

Let me end by pointing out one or two questions that arise about the relationship between these kinds of phenomena, 'contextualization phenomena' as I like to call them, and grammatical phenomena. To begin with, it is very evident that these phenomena are differently distributed. The contextualization phenomena are distributed across what I call 'linguistic regions.' They are distributed along region and cut across language boundaries. Contextualization phenomena at the same time are quite culturally specific in the sense that they are acquired through socialization processes in particular groups or networks of relationships. This is a puzzle that we somehow have to work on and that requires empirical work since numerous empirical questions arise from this kind of perspective.

Another question that arises is about inferencing. When we are talking about inferencing in conversation, in pragmatics, are we talking simply at the speech act level? Or are there other, higher level kinds of inferences? And if we have higher level kinds of inferences, what are these inferences?

Thirdly – but I do not want to preempt what Aaron is going to talk about – we can also begin to use these studies of contextualization phenomena for looking at how language deals with or how language signals information about context, at various levels, also related to some of the broader institutional and other contexts that we want to study if we are going to make pragmatic analysis applicable to processes in everyday life.

Briefly, I am suggesting that somehow we could advance the cause of unity in pragmatics by looking both at language, at context, and at interaction in slightly different ways from what we have done before.

HERMAN PARRETT: Aaron Cicourel.

AARON CICOUREL: I changed what I wanted to say over the last 20 minutes, partly because I wanted to say something in response to John Marshall.

First, I want to say that all language use (including that by linguists, psychologists or whoever who invokes the most minimal aspects of identifying some sense of context on whatever level), is using some kind of pragmatic orientation because the local or larger environment is invoked somehow. If you could not do that, it would be a pretty sad day; we would not know what is going on. Somehow you have to locate yourself in a local context vis-à-vis others and the question of how hard it is to study these phenomena, or how systematic it is, is obviously an empirical issue which we are not going to settle here. One of the key problems that arises when we are studying individuals or groups, whether they are aphasics or not, for example, is always the necessity of taking a lot of things for granted on the assumption that it does not necessarily affect what you are studying or what you have isolated as your object of study. But in many respects, what someone working with individual sentences takes for granted about social structure or discourse, we could say that people studying discourse take for granted about semantic theory, about information processing, even at the individual level, I do not dismiss this. And I do not think it is trivial.

Now, I was going to say something more about this, but I want to shift to some things that John Marshall said, because
I think it is important to point out that the modularist theory he is talking about is certainly not totally accepted or received, as he well knows, by all neuro-scientists, much less all neuro-psychologists. And even though I am identified in my own work with the connectionist point of view, which he obviously is not, I do not think the connectionist point of view is going to solve all the problems of the world either.

But I think we have to acknowledge that the distribution of knowledge, the parallel distribution of knowledge, and the way schemata are instantiated in interaction, within one individual, needs to be extended to interacting individuals. The problem solving that occurs with more than one individual interacting cannot be explained by recourse to what is going on computationally or algorithmically in one brain. In my work with physicians, I see it all the time. One physician often simply cannot solve the problem. Both the patient and the physician may not know what is going on. Others are brought in and I have seen as many as five standing around, trying to figure out what is going on with the patient, and contributing elements to what often becomes a collective decision. Even when one physician decides a case alone, he or she relies on information elicited from a patient or may call a specialist for additional information. I do not think you can explain that process in terms of the kind of theorizing that John Marshall was talking about. I think that what he was talking about can be helpful, but I would still be more biased toward the connectionist view than the modular view. But it is important to recognize that, if his view were to prevail, we could not do the kind of science that he is talking about. I think that is perfectly clear. It is a little misleading, therefore, to talk about it in his terms. What he is talking about obviously has a number of adherents, but I certainly do not think it is the last word and nor is the position that I am taking the last word.

So I think that we have to be able to recognize that we are all archaeologists by choice at some point, because we do not always have available, nor can we handle all the information that we would like to. It is important to think in terms of the constraints of different levels of analysis, and I do not think there is any question that we need to worry about individual information processing just as much as we need to worry about what happens when more than one individual get together and reach a conclusion about a course of action or a finding or whatever. It is one thing to study information processing when you just present stimuli to one individual responding. It is quite another when you present it to more than one subject, or when the same information is presented to more than one subject and they are asked to reach a joint decision or course of action. We have to recognize the constraints that operate in each of these levels. In some situations an individual must perform in a certain way under various local and societal circumstances. But from what I have seen of the way different groups operate, decision-making, even when it is done presumably on an individual basis is often done by reference to what the individual thinks others would be doing or hope he or she would do or not do, or the obverse, under those circumstances.

I do not think that a neuro-psychological point of view necessarily rules out pragmatic considerations. In the study of aphasics, what we do not know about is how aphasics solve problems in environments which they have been brought up in, rather than being asked these questions in a hospital room or in a special testing room. This needs to be explored. Probably John Marshall agrees that this needs to be explored and when it is explored, we might learn more about how pragmatics enters into neuro-psychological research on aphasics or others with brain damage.

HERMAN PARRET: Jacob Mey.

JACOB MEY: During a conversation I had earlier today with one of the participants at this round table, he suddenly told me that he did not quite know whether this conference was going to be, what I heard, as a landmark. What he said was a 'landmine.' We will find out whether or not this conference has been a landmark or a landmine soon enough, but I think in my
presentation, though it is a very short one, I may have to step on a few landmines. (I hope they do not explode in my face, though.)

I was asked by the preparatory committee to talk about demonstrable relations between linguistics and problems of a social-political kind. I have been pondering about this word 'demonstrable,' and I do not quite know what it means, though it clearly has to do with demonstration. Now, the easiest way to demonstrate of course is to point at something ostensively. In mathematics, you may think of proof by inspection, which is of course a very ostensive and good demonstration. But if you look at the things that we are doing in linguistics, you cannot point at a sentence, you cannot point at a noun phrase, because you have to define it first, you have to describe it first; and then you have the whole problem of what kind of definition, what kind of descriptive system you are going to talk about in your demonstration by description. Descriptive frameworks differ also as to the objects that they describe. A physicist describes objects in fundamentally different ways than linguists and psychologists do. When John Marshall talks about the mind/brain as if both elements were the same, identical thing, I would say that that is a very dangerous thing to do. I think that even John Marshall, when he talks about the mind/brain, must know that what he thinks about that entity, whatever it is, is embedded in a metaphor which in itself represents a mentalistic viewpoint, namely the way of looking at the brain as a kind of computer that has certain functions. The whole modular approach is essentially not a descriptive one; it is a metaphorical, a mentalistic one. So far, so good.

In linguistics, you need a different framework for doing what I would call grammar, the study of grammatical relations, and for what I would like to call pragmatics, roughly defined as the study of the use of language by people. Now, I could keep talking about this, but I will restrict myself to some things that I think are important as areas in which we demonstrably have a pragmatic issue at hand. Let me first point out that access to language is demonstrably skewed with regard to societal parameters: Parameters of unemployment versus employment, educated versus underprivileged people; minorities versus majorities, sex, etc. Furthermore, the use of language is also demonstrably dependent on one's societal status and stance, as you can see in the case of minorities. This in itself, promotes, respectively diminishes, one's access to the community and language use in the community-at-large. Moreover, language in relation to the development of personality and consciousness is also very much a matter of pragmatics. I would like to refer to a very controversial concept developed mostly in Scandinavia but apparently extending itself also to other countries, especially in the English-speaking world, the concept of semi-linguism, first defined by a Swede, Hansegård and now also taken over by people like Cummins and others. Now, you can make fun of semi-linguism by saying: "Isn't there supposed to be one quarter-linguism or one eight-linguism? Or what is a full-linguism or pleni-linguism?" But what I am pointing to is that this concept of semi-linguism, the notion that some people have a definitely and distinctly minor access to the goods of language, has enjoyed a tremendous popularity. And that in itself, should make us think. Of course, I agree with people who say that this is not the right way of talking about things if you want to deduct the concept of semi-linguism from some kind of principles. But I am pointing to connections that are demonstrably there and that cannot be denied.

One more thing: If you talk about demonstrable connections, one should also be pointing at a demonstrable non-connection which has come up here several times, as late as today. It is quite clear to me, and many people will agree, that the analysis of single disconnected units, such as for example sentences, without context, is not fruitful for linguists to pursue. Fauconnier said today that the case of the single sentence was the degenerate case. I wholeheartedly agree with that.

HERMAN PARRET: We still have one hour. I would like to ask the audience to keep patient for another fifteen minutes now, because the first round will be among the panel members. I would propose to start again with Posner now, but it may be
good that you attack only one proposal, the proposal that scandalized you the most.

ROLAND POSNER: I was not at all scandalized by Fillmore, I was more scandalized by some of what Elinor Ochs and others had to say, though what Jacob Mey said sounded familiar. Why? I think the basic difference between us could be that some of us just want to continue activities in pragmatics as a working group or a number of working groups of interdisciplinary teams, dealing with a family of problems, without relating them very much to each other. I think such practice may be perfectly legitimate, and we might want to continue that way; but it has nothing to do with the conception of pragmatics as it was introduced historically, with the possible location of pragmatics within semiotics, nor with the relationship between pragmatics and the more established academic disciplines. Yet these issues constitute the more relevant aspect of the questions which were put to us by Herman Parret. It is not necessary to have a coherent pragmatics if what it studies is just a family of problems addressed by a number of working groups which are connected by personal friendship.

What can we do to get something more done in pragmatics? I will try to take Marshall’s point of view, but to contradict him with his own tools. I think pragmatics is in principle, and can in reality become a discipline, a partial discipline of semiotics, but a scientific discipline. What would it have to have in order to become that? It would have to have a tradition, starting with a number of problem formulations which do not have that group character but which can be related to each other in a logical way; it would have to have more or less paradigmatic methods; it would have to have a numbers of theorems that everybody or maybe groups of people agree upon; it would have certain ways to represent results.

Jacob Mey and I talked about that, and the question came up as to why we want to have all that. I think the main reason is that we do not want the research results which we collected to get lost again. I asked a number of people here what they thought about this conference having taken place ten years ago. And I sometimes got the answer: “It might not have been too different.” And I asked myself what it would be like when it was going to take place in ten years. Probably there are two answers, depending on how we proceed in making pragmatics more like a scientific discipline, giving it more coherence in its problem formulations. It could be the case that in ten years, but maybe at least in twenty years, the term ‘pragmatics’ would be obsolete, like so many other terms; the working groups which have been connected here, will no longer exist for biological reasons, but there will be no other working groups of the same kind; and so on. You can draw these pictures in all details. Do we want that or do we not want that? If we do not want that, we need something which has not been accomplished at this conference. We need some coherence which works towards a theory.

I will stop soon, but I would like to take up the landmark/landmine conversation once more. I really think that this conference was a landmark. It is going to be one, whatever happens; but it might become a landmine under pragmatics afterwards, just because so many things have been juxtaposed without definitions. That is what I wanted to say.

CHARLES FILLMORE: Well, I want mainly to ask John Marshall what the consequences might be of his proposal. We have been told that there is no possibility of pragmatics being science, which makes me wonder about those people who are interested in studying the discrepancies between what can be known about sentences in context, and the purposes of ellipsis and indirectness and so on, those people interested in how the selection of linguistic material is associated with discerning and creating social realities and so on. There is just a whole host of problems that all of us have been interested in, and I just do not know what one should then say to oneself on being told that there is no possibility of having a science of pragmatics.

ELINOR OCHS: I am not scandalized or shocked by anything
that I heard at all. Quite to the contrary, I am overly familiar with the different points of view. I am usually hearing this about cultural phenomena, when people throw up their hands when they cannot explain something and say it is all cultural and even if we look at these phenomena till the end of our days we will never know anything about them. Usually that kind of response implies that the term 'cultural,' like in this case the term 'pragmatics,' is like a waste-paper basket category. The notion that the phenomena are ad hoc is very similar to what people generally say about doing cultural kinds of research.

I think that that feeling of helplessness is very understandable, because it is a tremendously complex system or set of systems that we are dealing with. And the plea by ethnographically oriented researchers is that once you do step into situations, almost in a metaphorical sense, once you start attending to situated language use and its situatedness, you begin to see systematic relations between macro- and micro-dimensions of those situations. You have to begin attending to them and start having as an audience those researchers who do attend to larger situated properties of context.

JOHN MARSHALL: Let me start with just one or two of the things I did not say, that people thought I said. I did not say, that there were no observable phenomena, all right? I did not even say that these observable phenomena were not interesting or even important, all right? Likewise I certainly did not deny that organisms act in environments. What else could they act in? I likewise did not deny that a group of six physicians might be able to solve a problem that any individual one of those physicians could not solve. But clearly, when they do solve it as a group, they solve it by having the output of one physician being the input to the other physicians. It ends up in what I was calling their mind/brains. And yes indeed, in certain circumstances, six heads talking may be better than one. Likewise, I am well aware that there are differences between testing patients, or anybody else for that matter, in very formal situations with specific test materials versus testing them in more informal, naturalistic, home-like situations. The reason that we have to do both, and in fact a lot of graduations between the two, is to try and find out which particular aspects of the situation are affecting this particular patient's performance. I test with minimal cues to begin with, and then add further cues until the patient shows signs of understanding. This is simply a methodological point. Nothing else, as far as I know, hangs on it.

And back to the question that Chuck Fillmore asked, what I am at least trying to put forward for discussion is that the notion of pragmatics, defined in the broad way in which it seems to have been defined for purposes of bringing all of us together, may not be a natural class. That is not to say that the individual phenomena are not. I repeat, important and interesting. What I want to at least put forward for consideration, is that maybe part of the problem of ellipsis, say, will get assimilated to a particular module of the grammar, and there receive an explanation. That some aspect or other of discourse production will get assimilated to a little bit of the psychology of memory, say, and likewise for everything else, that when it comes to explanation, there is not as it were a pragmatic explanation of this entire domain of communication and language use. There are phenomena which ought, for purposes of science and explanation, to be hived off into other domains where they might receive an explanation. That was my sole claim.

ELINOR OCHS: That is very different from your original statement in which you said that pragmatic processes were this infinite set of ad hoc devices for dealing with the world. And I was wondering if you could comment on that earlier comment?

JOHN MARSHALL: On the discrepancy?

ELINOR OCHS: Yes.
JOHN MARSHALL: Let me do my best with a wriggle to try and make these two compatible. If you take the entire domain of what we have been calling pragmatic phenomena, then that will turn out to be an ad hoc set of devices and strategies for dealing with the world. Notice, however, I very carefully said that it could be rational, all right? In order to make the study of pragmatics non-ad hoc, I suspect what we should have to do is indeed hive off different parts of it into linguistics, psychology, cultural anthropology, sociology, what have you. I just do not see why, because we have the word 'pragmatics,' we should automatically assume that what currently goes under that rubric, is a natural class for purposes of explanation.

ROLAND POSNER: But why should we make that assumption for psychology with all its fields, or sociology with all its fields, cultural anthropology and so on?

JOHN MARSHALL: Absolutely. It is a question of where the cookie crumbles once you have devised an explanatory theory. The reason that government and binding theory, right or wrong, is an explanatory theory, is because it does do the work it is supposed to do within its own domain and it gives reasons for why the domain should be carved out in that particular way. It is the theory that says what the domain is. This applies to linguistics, it applies to chemistry, it applies to anything else in science.

ROLAND POSNER: Pragmatics too?

JOHN MARSHALL: Pragmatics too.

JOHN GUMPERZ: Theories may specify what the domain should be, but theories also have to relate to data. And also, theories must be subject to a verification or falsification relationship to data. It seems to me that we are not only talking about different theories, but we are also talking about different kinds of data and different kinds of issues that arise out of the data.

As perhaps the oldest person here, I should say that I have a sense of déjà vu. I remember the time, I remember the conferences, several conferences, where generative grammarians had to demonstrate that they were doing linguistics. In other words, disciplines constantly change. Now I think what people do changes as a result of being exposed to new problems. There is not just a simple one-to-one relationship between a theory and a problem. Problems arise for whatever reasons. They give rise to theories. But they also then feed back into data collection. New kinds of theories arise out of new kinds of data collections. And it seems to be, perhaps, one justification for pragmatics to exist that it brings together different kinds of perspectives, and that in our own disciplines (I would not presume to call sociolinguistics a discipline, but in whatever we are doing) we are affected by this process of communication as a result of having to face new kinds of data.

From that perspective, I think, it is important to be sitting here and discussing all of this. Except for one comment I have on this discussion: At one time or another, I think, there was some talk about trying to find common themes; what we have done very much is somehow lay out particular kinds of approaches to pragmatics, but we have not consciously searched for common themes; and I am a little disappointed in that.

AARON CICOUREL: I want to go back to the discussion John Marshall generated. I was trying to say that even when you have six physicians, one physician can dominate because of social status, which cannot be explained by simply the knowledge of each of the six mind/brains. The person who has the authority prevails even if the patient dies. You know that that kind of situation occurs. But what I think is missing here is that we have studies on animals that show how their brains can be affected by ecological changes. We are not saying
anything different about humans. That is, their brains are being affected by ethnographic changes.

But the way Marshall characterizes his own research and the way he responded to me when he talked about the environment means we have to recognize that he does not spend much time asking: "What does that environment look like?" Marshall is not really studying the environment. And that is what I am concerned about. What is the environment of the aphasic patient, for example? And how do you study it? What methods do you use? Here there is an analogy with pragmatics. Because Marshall says: "What is language structure under one set of conditions, using myself as an informant, and what is language structure when I now try to put it in terms of use in a natural setting?" We need to spend more time, as several people have said, studying the environmental settings, their structure, and how they can influence the way people express themselves and behave. This type of study is being neglected by both connectionism and modular theorists of the brain.

JACOB MEY: Roland Posner says that pragmatics is, of course, a part of semiotics. I disagree, but I can see why he says it, because I tried to find out what his definition of semiotics is. I would formulate the relationship the other way round. Pragmatics is the encompassing discipline that also encompasses semiotics — that is, if you look at pragmatics maybe not as a well-defined science, but as a methodological way of looking at things in a different way. Here I want to go back to what Aaron Cicourel said yesterday. If you think of the fact that society has these levels, and that knowledge — as everything else — is society-distributed, then it is of paramount importance for us that we should recognize that we, as linguists, cannot explain those differences. Yet, we have to explain them. So we need some kind of societal input, input from societal theories such as sociology and other societal disciplines. That does not mean that you do not know what pragmatics is.

As to the analogy with theories of grammar like G.B. theory. Of course they can be successful, because if you define the work that you have to do yourself, then of course you can be very successful at that. But it does not mean that your theory is good because you do a piece of work which you have sort of carved out for yourself. What else is new?

HERMAN PARRET: I would now like to open the floor to the audience to get some wisdom from all of you.

SALIKOKO MUFENE: I would like to start by analogizing professor Marshall with Leonard Bloomfield. Leonard Bloomfield has been castigated a lot in recent years for discouraging linguists from studying semantics. He said that meaning is the kind of reality that linguistics is not well equipped to describe, in a sense, nobody has really proved Bloomfield wrong, except that the meaning of meaning or semantics has changed in the mean time. We can claim to be semanticists, but we have not proven Bloomfield wrong yet. And I think there is a sense in what professor Marshall has said here.

I personally do not see, for instance, the conflict between this entire pragmaticism and one of the definitions of semantics given by Posner in the negative definition of pragmatics as meaning minus semantics. Maybe we should decide what we mean by semantics and then infer from that what is left after we have deducted semantics from meaning.

You [Posner] also said that pragmatics is interested in aspects of meaning that are not encoded. I think that there have been a number of papers at this conference, that have dealt with aspects of meaning that are not called semantics but characterized as pragmatics. This seems to be the case especially for the usage of honorifics in Korean and Japanese, etc. In rebutting professor Marshall's criticism, you speak of establishing a tradition as a paradigm. One thing you seem to have neglected is defining the research questions. I think we should start by doing that. Thank you.

JOHN MARSHALL: Me? Criticize? Look, I am not trying to stop
people investigating interesting phenomena. The phenomena are out there, all right? Many of them are fascinating. By all means, let's go look at them. And in response to a related point raised by Aaron Cicourell: Yes, I think a vast amount of psychology and many other disciplines recently indeed refused to look systematically at the environments in which organisms behave and we certainly will not understand anything of what is going on unless we do have descriptive techniques in the first place for extracting whatever structure there is in those environments. Unless we do that, we have no idea about how much of that structure is actually being picked up by the organism that is stuck in there and how we could arrange things so that the organism could pick up more of whatever structure there is out there. Again, I am not being anti-environmentalist.

SALIKOKO MUPWENE: I thought I was encouraging people to pay more attention to your position.

JOHN MARSHALL: Great, keep it up!

ROLAND POSNER: Though I was addressed directly with clear questions, I will not be able to answer them, since there is not enough time here. But let me point out things which I think are very near to what you are thinking about. One is language versus other codes. The environment which pragmatists or pragmaticans, when they are linguists, analyze, that environment contains (manifestations of) lots of codes, sign systems, which are non-linguistic. Since they are linguists, they analyze them only with respect to the linguistic expressions and how those codes might interfere. Honorifics are a good example for that. I would plead for more systematically opposing language or linguistic sign systems with other sign systems like those of body language, but also like those of music and painting. That is a problem which arises in practical situations when you have multi-media communication, when you have opera, when you have all kinds of other performances. The director has to decide which message to put into which medium, into which code. And this can only be studied if we study those codes together and not in isolation. That was one of the many arguments for a broader semiotic perspective.

Concerning science, I cannot say much in these two minutes. But I could point out that current pragmatic studies have something in common. And I think what they have in common can even be systematized.

HERMAN PARRET: Another question?

[UNIDENTIFIED]: I am a pragmatist in the everyday sense of the word and I would like to address a plea to this audience. I am a developmental psychologist, studying first language acquisition processes. A few years ago, linguists gave us wonderful descriptions of the complex structures of natural languages, so that we began to look at these in child language, and discovered that children acquire them very easily at a very early age. I am afraid that led to our next problem which is: How? And I think that extensive descriptive work in pragmatics, which is comparable to the work that linguists have done in other areas, both within languages and across languages, across cultures, would help us with our second problem. I just put this in as a comment but if there is anyone who would like to comment further on it, I would be very glad to hear from you.

HERMAN PARRET: Next question?

SHLOMO ARIEL: Mr. Marshall, I followed the eloquence of your thinking today and I noticed that you had an earlier position in which no information processing of pragmatics that is neuro-physiologically significant can be developed at all. You had a modified second position in which you said: "Little
theories can be developed and integrated within other theories." I am asking now whether you can develop your thinking further and tell us whether you see any large subsection of the subject areas discussed in this conference that can, you think, be developed into a coherent theory, maybe information processing theory and your linguistically relevant theory of pragmatics. Not just little islands but something more significant and a more substantial body of the things that were discussed in this conference.

JOHN MARSHALL: I am not sure I am going to do this for you this afternoon. And I am not sure for the moment that I necessarily want to stress the 'neuro' aspect. But take something like discourse. I think it is very plausible to suppose that we may eventually have reasonable theories of discourse. And the reason is because there is quite a lot of sensible linguistics about how to make reference hang together across discourses, and there is quite a lot known about the structure of sentence parsing by humans and what kinds of short-term or long-term memory capacities such parsing draw on and how. I would be very encouraged at the thought of a sensible theory of discourse processing being formulated in the reasonably near future.

HERMAN PARRET: That is sufficient? O.K. Steven Davis.

STEVEN DAVIS: I would like to ask a question about those who think that pragmatics is part of a grammar. To bring the question in focus, I would like to have some of you comment on what you take semantics to be. And let me try to bring out what I am driving at by some examples. Suppose I am writing the lexical entry for a verb like 'promise,' the English verb 'promise,' and I have to put in the lexical entry the conditions under which somebody makes a promise, to specify a speech act of promising which would be one of the things that perhaps would go into a dictionary entry for 'promise.' Or another example, I have the first person pronoun 'I' and I put in the dictionary entry that that is used to refer to the speaker. When I am writing those lexical entries, am I doing pragmatics or am I doing semantics? In Fillmore's discussion of the conditional and Paul Kay's discussion of 'even,' why is the work that you are doing not part of the semantics of the language? Why do you want to say that there is going to be a distinction here between what you are doing and what people have called semantics all along?

CHARLES FILLMORE: For certain things, I think that something is simultaneously semantics and pragmatics. In talking about the interpretation of pieces of linguistic material, of texts and pieces of texts, I make a distinction between the world...of the text and the world of the participants...of the speaker, and I think that there is a kind of abstract level of semantic representation of the text that you can come up with, which is a kind of blueprint or set of instructions on how it should be interpreted. Some of these instructions are going to anchor the text in the speaker's world; others are going to be related to the description of the world of the text; and a great many of them will do both. What I was talking about in connection with the various types of conditional sentences, is that these sentences, these particular grammatical constructions, seem to exist in the service of particular kinds of functions or activities in the world of the speaker. So, it is not so much a question of including pragmatics inside of grammar but there are lots of grammatical constructions, there are lots of lexical items, there are lots of lexical items in particular grammatical contexts, that require for their interpretation an anchoring in some kind of a real situation; and beyond that, there is a whole lot of pragmatics that is not connected with grammar.

STEVEN DAVIS: Think a bit of what I said about the verb 'promise.' When you write a lexical entry for the verb 'promise,' and you put in information about the speech act that
the verb 'promise' can be used to perform in certain kinds of constructions, are you doing the semantics of the verb?

CHARLES FILLMORE: Sure.

STEVEN DAVIS: So why cannot exactly the same argument be used about what you said about conditionals? And so what you are doing is really just semantics. 'Just' is not supposed to mean that this is not an important task. I do not mean this to be a criticism at all. I just find it very unclear in my own mind where to situate the kinds of activities that you are engaged in and that, say, Paul Kay is engaged in.

JACOB MEY: Let me get into this. I think it is not a matter of definition. It is for you to decide if you want to put into your lexical entries things that we call pragmatic. But where you get the relevant information is not inside semantics. That is the point. You want to make a pragmatic dictionary, fine with me. It will probably be a very big one, but that is all right. This morning Gilles Fauconnier showed us a model of what happened in those mental spaces. But of course you have to realize that, why these functions are the way they are, that is a matter of pragmatics.

CHARLES FILLMORE: When I said a moment ago that I think in lots of ways semantics and pragmatics are the same thing, that is in respect to those things where we want to connect pragmatics with lexical items and grammatical constructions. I would like to say that, when we are talking about words like 'promise,' we give them the kind of lexical description you would give them and then we note that in an utterance produced in a particular context in which the subject is first person and the tense is present, then we know how to anchor that in the world of the speaker. Otherwise it is interpreted in the world of the text.

ROLAND POSNER: Maybe this discussion can be clarified by introducing a distinction between process-oriented pragmatics, sign-oriented pragmatics and referent-oriented pragmatics. Those people who do process-oriented pragmatics talk about the pragmatic principles of inference processes, whatever they are. The sign-oriented ones talk about pragmatic expressions, such as words (some of which may be said to be more 'pragmatic' than others in that they leave more things unspecified). Those who are referent-oriented (like, I would say, Gumperz) talk about pragmatic information which is outside the expressions.

JOHN GUMPERZ: I spent a lot of time looking at tapes, to demonstrate that pragmatic information is not outside of the expression.

ROLAND POSNER: I was trying to make sense of people distinguishing 'pragmatic information' from other types of information. Those who make that distinction (and I thought you were one of them) must have some criterion, and I think the criterion must be that it is information that is necessary when you want to make an inference from the 'literal' meaning, the coded meaning of the text, to what is really meant. Something like that. I just wanted to make the point that pragmatic principles of inference should be the core of our task.

HERMAN PARRET: Do you want to comment on that?

JOHN GUMPERZ: No, I do not think so.

HERMAN PARRET: Valentina D'Urso.
VALENTINA D'URSO: I just want to make a comment on the method rather than on the content. My background is communicative psychology, and usually I consider a statement to be a scientific one when it is formulated in terms of falsifiable hypotheses. So, to answer the question as to whether a pragmatic science is possible means for me to ask the question whether falsifiable hypotheses can be formulated in the domain of language use. And I believe they can. This is a statement, a faith, if nothing else. Given the three main elements involved, a given language, a given context, and a human being, the human being will perceive and process the social context according to the neuro-cognitive laws of perception and social perception. We form mental models of a given situation. Consequently, the language used to communicate, in that context, will be sensitive to this representation. And as far as the language preferences involved are systematical, we can talk of pragmatics as a science. Its method would involve the following question, or better an infinite set of questions of the following form: "Is it true that in context X a kind of person Y will prefer, will choose, this or that particular linguistic structure?" The possibility of answering those questions will decide whether we are or are not doing science.

ELINOR OCHS: That is a very difficult comment, but a very important one. I think that in terms of ethnomorphic or sociolinguistic approaches, the goal is not necessarily prediction. You can predict what someone can do in the sense that you can talk about expectations and preferences, what people think will probably happen or should expect to happen under the given circumstances, but you cannot predict as a rule.

JOHN GUMPERZ: You started out your comment with saying that something that is scientific seeks to find criteria for falsifying possible hypotheses. Now, there are reasons to believe that the notion of context, as a sort of unspecified notion, is not something that we can either verify or falsify by means of data, because there are quite a number of views of context and it is exactly the different views of context that differentiate many of us. There are some people who look at context as preexisting the interaction. There are some people who look at context as emerging in the interaction. Some people think that both views are valid. We have to specify our notions of context, how contexts enter into choice, whether the choice of a particular expression is a voluntary act or whether it is somehow automatic the way grammatical processes are. There are all kinds of questions that need to be answered before, in fact, we can even pose questions as the one that you want to pose.

JACOB MEY: I would just like to say that I liked the way you framed the question. And if you accept Elinor Ochs' amendment as a friendly one — I think you do — then we agree, except that I would like to push the question a little further still. You still have to ask: Why is it that such an expectation about a particular utterance at a particular time, by a particular person, is at all plausible? What is the further societal background for that? And then, you can enter all kinds of issues that are interesting, in areas such as those that Aaron Cleulre defined yesterday.

HERMAN PARRET: Paul Kay had a question.

PAUL KAY: The moment may be passed, but I wanted to welcome Steve Davis's question for focussing a discussion that could have used some focus. And I would like to amplify a little bit on Chuck Fillmore's response. When Chuck talks about, for example, certain uses of conditionals as having at their rock bottom contact value the making of an offer, this is something that we would normally call pragmatics though the construction is inscribed in the grammar. The stuff I said about
'even' has a similar character. Why call that pragmatics rather than just common garden variety semantics? Calling it pragmatics is another reasonable way to talk about it, though it would not necessarily have to be talked about that way.

I think that a little bit of terminological confusion can be unraveled by noticing that there are two dichotomies which we all accept and most of us take tacitly to be perfectly correlated, creating a binary opposition where there is really a four-way opposition to be noticed. One of these dichotomies is what Chuck Fillmore has just referred to as the world the text is about versus the world in which the text is produced. There is another dichotomy, quite independent, which opposes those aspects of the interpretation of an utterance which are inscribed in the code that is a part of the grammar, with those parts of an utterance that have to be figured out by the hearer, given that the stuff inscribed in the code has been placed in a context.

Now, I think there is a very strong tendency for people to think that there is a perfect correlation between these two dichotomies. Namely, the stuff that has to be figured out is the stuff about the world in which the text is produced, and that is pragmatics; the stuff that is inscribed in the code is the stuff that is about the world the text is about, and that is semantics. Now when we notice phenomena which are like the ones Chuck and I have been talking about, which are on the one hand inscribed in the grammar, but on the other hand are about the world in which the text is produced, there is a little bit of terminological confusion, because the application of this somewhat unthinking dichotomy semantics-pragmatics does not fit.

So I do not really care how the terminology gets sorted out or agreed on, but I think that these are distinctions that could be reckoned with. If we are going to have an academy of pragmatic terminology and somebody is going to decide how these terms are going to be used, I would like that academy to be aware of this distinction.

HERMAN PARRET: Maybe Roland Posner would like to add something to that.

ROLAND POSNER: I would very much like to stress the importance of your distinction. I think this is one of the necessary attempts at sorting out various wrong identifications which underlie our present model. There are other wrong identifications, such as the concept of truth (related to semantics) versus concepts like relevance (associated with pragmatics). We should decide some time what criteria we wish to use for distinguishing semantics from pragmatics. I think the truth-functional criterion is not adequate; and I think that also the criterion of 'situation in which' versus 'situation about which' is not adequate. The only criterion should be the question whether something has been coded in a sign system (be it a linguistic or a non-linguistic one) or whether it has not been coded but has to be reconstructed in inferencing processes.

HERMAN PARRET: There is still another question.

RONALD GELUYKENS: This is a comment rather than a question. Before this conference started, I had next to no problems with the term 'pragmatics.' But for the past week I have been listening to a lot of lectures on psycholinguistics, to some lectures on sociolinguistics, to some philosophical lectures about speech act theory, to some lectures on text linguistics, etc. Throughout the week, I have gotten more skeptical about the term 'pragmatics.' If there is such a unified discipline as pragmatics, maybe the only way that one can save pragmatics as a science is to find a common methodology for the whole business. And up to now, I cannot come up with that sort of common methodology. If I look at all these related disciplines, I see all sorts of different methodologies used there. And I am beginning to believe that I am more and more agreeing with John Marshall, that if there is any use for the term pragmatics at all, maybe it is just as a useful label for a whole lot of
related interdisciplinary disciplines.

HERMAN PARRET: Marina Sbisa?

MARINA SBISA: I am mainly reacting to the remark that has just been made, but I also want to recall some of my impressions on things that have been said by the panel. I am reacting, perhaps, as a philosopher - because this has been my training and from time to time I become a philosopher again. What I have seen here is the old dispute whether the human sciences are, or are not, science. And as many other philosophical issues, this is a very dangerous one, because you could go on for hours and hours and years and years without deciding anything.

Posner made a kind of systematizing philosophical proposal: Let us give a theoretical definition of pragmatics and we will save the whole issue; otherwise pragmatics will be something like a mine, in danger of exploding very soon. I hope he is not right, and I do not think he is right. I like the methodological diversity of the different pragmatic approaches.

Perhaps I agree with Marshall that pragmatic phenomena are not a natural kind. But this is of no relevance for me, just because I see they are interrelated and it is not easy for me to study one of these (discourse phenomena, text phenomena, language phenomena related to context, and so on) without having a look at what other people are doing, studying the other phenomena. Perhaps it is not the subject matter itself which forms a unity but it is not possible to study one corner of it without having a look at what people are doing at the other end. Of course this is very vague. But take it, perhaps, as a reaction of someone who has been more on the side of the audience than of the speakers in this conference. I suppose that many 'consumers' of the conference feel like me: that it is good to have the opportunity to confront ourselves with research in these related fields. Theoretical and maybe even philosophical points can, perhaps, be approached by considering kinds of data we select as objects of our own pragmatic studies and by considering our methodological choices.

[Applause]

HERMAN PARRET: I think we should conclude this session by commenting on the last two interventions, maybe because they concentrate exactly on the topic of this round table: The search for the unity of the field of pragmatics. So I would like to ask all seven of you, if you want to, to make some concluding comments. Posner?

ROLAND POSNER: Well, I can be quick because I have stated my point of view on these issues already. There would be nothing wrong with leaving pragmatics in its present state, except that then it would not have a future in the sense that the research results would go unnoticed, at least in those cases (and here I refer to John Marshall) in which the results cannot be incorporated in any of the better established existing disciplines. It is for us to decide whether we want to live with such a perspective. I would be on the side of those wanting to develop pragmatics in the direction of a discipline with a clearer set of questions, for instance concerning inferencing processes, and a clearer view as to where these questions can be located within the traditional disciplines such as linguistics and its generalizations and hypotheses about grammar and lexicon. The last point I want to make: If we take that second route we will have to do much more than if we take the first, also organization-wise (for instance within IPrA). One point to talk about should be the 'Handbook of Pragmatics'. Thank you.

CHARLES FILLMORE: I suspect that there may not be a discipline of pragmatics a hundred years from now, but I certainly do not mind the idea that there is no, and probably cannot be, a unified discipline of pragmatics. It seems to me that what unifies the set of interests, is a collection of
problems. I myself have been mainly interested in the substantive aspects, but I think I have become really aware of the process aspect of pragmatics too, because today we had one person make a particular kind of statement, and the kind of inferencing that people made on the basis of this was not inferencing so much on what the man said as the fact that it was said in this context, and then he was able to come back saying: "No, that is not what I meant at all." So somehow, these processes work in a powerful and interesting way.

ELINOR OCHS: I am not at all bothered by the diversity of approaches, nor am I surprised. I hope that there will continue to be a dialogue of this sort between people. I think that it is difficult to know what we have in common without argumentation. In fact we are airing diversity. This is probably the first time that we had such a diverse group of people in a public forum of this sort. We were airing and trying to understand one another's presuppositions and starting positions. I hope that we can have a balanced representation in this kind of form between those who are concerned with what Gilles Fauconnier has called 'mental spaces,' and those who are concerned with social spaces, to try to facilitate an understanding of the relationship between those two kinds of spaces.

There is one thing that has not been mentioned so far: What is our responsibility with respect to our expertise? There are just so many important systematic observations that have come out of the sociological approach to language use that are very important to communicate to the general public. I think that is something this kind of organization should give voice to as well. I am thinking of issues such as how people are empowered through language usage and what the consequences of that kind of empowerment are. We had a taste of that but we need to have more of it, I think.

JOHN MARSHALL: I am delighted that one of our questioners could not think of a unified methodology for pragmatics. It

seems to me that defining a discipline in terms of its methodology is a recipe for total disaster. I mean, imagine what would have happened to physics if you defined it as the science of rolling balls down inclines and throwing yourself off the top of the leaning tower of Pisa. The justification, I think, for this sort of meeting and for these kinds of people getting together is indeed the justification of diversity. The pragmatic justification for even having the pragmatic label, I think, is that you never know where the next good idea that is relevant to you is going to come from. It might come from a social scientist, a sociologist, a linguist, a cultural anthropologist, it might come from anywhere. If pragmatics provides a useful label for letting all such people talk to each other now and again, that seems to me to be the best justification you could ever have for pragmatics.

[Applause]

JOHN GUMPERZ: Let me go on from what John Marshall said. I think what he says is right, but diversity by itself or being exposed to diversity by itself does not necessarily lead to fruitful results. What we have to do is to make sure that we communicate in such a way that it influences our work and makes us see new problems that somehow, unpredictably or not, may turn out to be useful. I think there will have to be some searching for common perspectives. We will have to do some talking along these lines to find the kind of perspectives that will enable us to profit from work that is seemingly unrelated.

JACOB MEY: I'll just add a few words to that. I think I am not that bothered as Roland Geluykens is about the diversity and the lack of unification. I think the worst thing that could happen actually is to force pragmatics into some kind of rigid method at this point, because that would scare lots of people away who are very happy to be here today. As a matter of fact, this conference could not have happened five years ago
because all these people would not have found their way to pragmatics five years ago, which they have now. I think that is excellent. Let me just add one more thing. My task also included the finding of some linguistically justifiable pragmatics. I have not commented on that for the reason that I think it is the other way round. I think we should find a linguistics that is pragmatically justified.

HERMAN PARRET: So the firework is over, and as to the landmark or landmine, we will see. We are not prophets. So this is finished, but I would like to ask your attention for the fact that this is a very special scientific meeting. I cannot believe that other scientific conferences, in the hard sciences for example, have a round table at the end of the conference, putting into question their own discipline. That is a very interesting pragmatic property of this conference. What happens now is conviviality. First the coffee break. We start the meeting of the general assembly at 8:20, and at 7 o'clock there is a big banquet in the Zoo. [Laughter]

I would like to thank the panelists. They have been very honest, very generous. This was a nice session. But I would also like to take the opportunity at the end of this conference to thank in your name the organizers of the conference for their efforts to bring all of us together. Thank you very much.