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September 1988
PREFACE

The four contributions in this third IPRA Working Document offer comments on Working Documents 1 and 2 (both of them in Jan-Ola Ostman's 'Adaptation, Variability, and Effect: the first one only in Steven Ley's 'Developments in the Use of Writing languages in Gronau i/W.' and Jan Blommaert's 'Intercultural Communication and Objects of Adaptation'; and the second one only in Jacob Mey's reflections concerning the 'Round Table Discussion, 1987 International Pragmatics Conference').

In conjunction with some equally valuable, though less structured, responses from a number of IPRA members, these comments are gradually leading towards a clearer picture of the shape the planned Handbook of Pragmatics should take and the range of issues it will have to cover.

In a further Working Document, (i) a proposal will be made concerning the overall structure of the Handbook, and (ii) guidelines will be presented for the preparation of contributions. After its circulation around March 1989, contributions will be solicited systematically. The first issues of the Handbook are planned to appear in 1990.

In the mean time, further comments and suggestions are as welcome as ever.

Jef Verschueren

October 18, 1988
ADAPTATION, VARIABILITY, AND EFFECT

Comments on IPrA Working Documents 1 & 2

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I. PREFACE

The first two Working Documents published by IPrA - Pragmatics as a Theory of Linguistic Adaptation (WD1) by Jef Verschueren (JV), and Concluding Round Table - 1987 International Pragmatics Conference (WD2) - raise an abundance of important questions relevant for the future of pragmatics. Having familiarized myself with the documents, and having experienced the urge to accept JV's invitation for comments from IPrA's members as regards the potential of these documents to serve as a basis for the development of a Handbook of Pragmatics by IPrA, I found it a very difficult task to decide in what format to give such comments. I could - as we no doubt all feel that we, if not 'could,' then at least 'should' or 'would like to' - write a completely new suggestion, based on my own views of what pragmatics should deal with. But if we all did that, there would be no sense in stressing the contents of Article II.1 of the Constitution of the International Pragmatics Association and our search for a "coherent general framework."

Many of my comments and suggestions are the results of extremely fruitful discussions with Jef Verschueren during my visit to Antwerp, April - June 1988, especially in connection with our joint course on 'Theory formation in pragmatics' during that term. I would also very much like to thank Jan Nuys, Jan Blommaert, Ralf Andréasen, and Brita Wärniki for useful comments on a draft version of this paper. I am, of course, solely responsible for this final version, as well as for the way I have used my commentators' suggestions and ideas.

The present version of my comments is - for better or for worse - a quantitatively reduced variant of what it once was. I have (or rather: had) been on good terms with computers for about ten years now - to the extent that I never thought they would let me down: Making backup copies of files and printouts of not-perfect versions started to seem a waste of time; until - as in this case you (i.e. I) accidentally destroy the only copy you have of your diskette. It makes you feel human...

I want to stress the working-paper status of my discussion. In several instances, especially in my discussion of animal adaptation and evolution, I have mostly been guided by popular or semi-popular books and journals on the matters dealt with. I am naturally aware of the pitfalls of such an endeavor; and my only excuse is that I hope to stir somebody's mind enough for him/her to reach for his/her pen/computer and communicate the latest scientific findings to the members of IPrA.
Moreover, on the whole, I am very positive to the general framework that J.V. sketches in WDI. I think the globality of his approach is laudable, and that the issues he raises need to be taken seriously — so much so that we should not wait for a possibly 'better suggestion' as a basis for the Handbook, but rather go on with more detailed refinements from here onwards. 

My comments will occasionally no doubt have the flavor of a referee's report, perhaps sometimes including too detailed comments. However, I feel that the only way to discuss a working paper is by contributing another working paper.

1. IN GENERAL

My first general comment is a practical one: I would like to suggest to IPR/A that it does not, as planned, discontinue its series of Working Documents, after commencing publication of the Handbook. If the W/D-series is abandoned, we will no longer have a generally available forum for the kinds of things published in WDI and W/D2, nor, for that matter, a forum where we can write the kinds of things I am writing at this moment. But there will always be Round-Table discussions and potential comments on them; there will always be people who are not in the mainstream of even a very broadly conceived view of pragmatics, but who would nevertheless — perhaps in rather informal terms — like to give their views on the subject matter of pragmatics. How else except in a working document could such potentially important information be brought to the knowledge of all IPR/AIDS? Also, if the Handbook is to be "an infinitely expandable" work, it needs to get new and different kinds of incentives from new and different points of view. In order to be as dynamic as I presume most of us want it to be, the Handbook needs a well out of which it can scoop new ideas; and I can see no better forum for this than the already existing W/D-series.

My second general comment is simply that I think J.V.'s collection of lists and features that need to be taken into account by pragmatists is a very impressive one indeed. And, as I already mentioned, I do think it is a solid basis for future work on the Handbook; I would in particular like to thank J.V. for having prepared the document in the form we have received it, not in a ready-made, type-set format.

It is more difficult to comment on the usefulness of W/D2 for the planned Handbook. Indirectly, W/D2 is extremely important, since it gives a very concrete picture of the diversity of the approaches that are trying to cover in a general frame of reference for pragmatics. (And we should not forget that there are many more fields of inquiry within pragmatics, which were not represented by the 1987 panel members.) As such, the variety of the views expressed in W/D2 speaks in favor of the kind of approach to pragmatics that J.V. takes in W/D1. This does not mean that there are no points of disagreement. For instance, Posner speaks in favor of a strict theory — with theorems — of pragmatics, Marshall argues that there is nothing, and most of the others, I presume — including J.V. — while accepting that there is something we might wish to call 'pragmatic knowledge,' would avoid going in for developing a full-fledged theory, from top to bottom, with strict theorems.

8 I say this not so much despite, but rather perhaps because of, my potentially rivalling interests as one of the editors of the Journal of Pragmatics.

Using the 'scoping' approach I mentioned earlier, I am sure that all of us can find something that appeals to us in the variety of the W/D2-panelists' contributions. To take myself as an example, I collected the following pearls: Posner's distinction between coded meaning and inference-processing; Fillmore's view that grammar, semantics, and pragmatics can and should — be practiced simultaneously; Fillmore's and Kay's notion that the distinction between, on the one hand, the world of the text and the world of the speaker, and the distinction between, on the other hand, what is coded and what has to be figured out, are not the same distinctions; Marshall's seemingly provocative statements, which really forced you to think — if only of counted words; Och's ethnographic methodology; Gumperz's view of context as constantly changing, and his data-oriented approach; Cicourel's notion of collectively created meaning; Ney's focus on the importance of macro-level pragmatics; and so on. The fact that these linguists, and all of us, for that matter, have (more or less) different methodological approaches, is — as I see it — a strength of present-day pragmatics: We are exploring different avenues, knowing (I hope) that none of us is a priori more right than the other.

Thus, we need to have a broad conception of what pragmatic research is to deal with. I think it is worth our while to constantly keep referring back to Morris's (1938; 30) very broad definition of pragmatics as dealing with

"the biotic aspects of semiosis, that is, with all the psychological, biological, and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs"  

Despite the skeptic's argument that a theory which sets out to account for everything will, because of its generality, account for nothing. The skeptic has a point, but his/her attempt at delimiting our subject matter beforehand is apt to lead us not only nowhere, but in the wrong direction.

As Morris realized, Interpreters do not exist in vacuo; for an interpreter to be able to interpret, and thus be a language user, s/he needs to make constant reference to his/her prior experience in life, and to the whole of the situation surrounding him/her at any given point in time. Pragmatics thus becomes the study of language—which is form and —content— in relation to the whole of the human being: as a dynamic person, and as being the product of a cultural development (i.e. in terms of his/her psychological, sociological, and even biological background).

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Osman 1986: 16), pragmatics should not be seen as competing for ground with sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and anthropolinguistics. On the contrary, we need a larger framework for psychological, sociological and cultural aspects of language — in order to get away from talking about psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic phenomena in language as epiphenomena which are half linguistic and half something else. This framework is precisely what pragmatics should be able to offer.3 (I take these points to be fairly well known — whether accepted or not — by present-day pragmatists, so I will not dwell on them any further here.)

As a practical addendum to Morris's view above, I would like to add that I see IPR/A as the pool into which we should feed all possible kinds of information (e.g. with the lists in WDI) as our starting point, and from where we also should expect to be able to retrieve (at least

3 Thus, it follows that I regard a term like 'pragmalinguistics' as a misnomer for pragmatics.
information about) the kind of information we are interested in at a particular time or stage of our research.

Thus, I do not see Morris’s broad definition of pragmatics as a problem (cf. WDI: 17, 19). Isn’t it precisely a large-scale theory of how people communicate that we are ultimately striving for: a theory or view in which everything hangs together? I agree that we have to say more about pragmatics than what Morris said, but just imagine what would have happened if he had written a book about pragmatics. He had a very rigid definition of it. So, the fact that Morris did not delimit the domain of pragmatics more precisely should be seen as not as a weakness, but as a strength. (Cf. also JV’s comment on p. 24 of WDI.)

2. THE BASIC ISSUES

WDI contains a great deal of interesting theoretical suggestions which all need to be considered in detail by practitioners of pragmatics. In a very general sense, WDI is an attempt to define the overexploited term ‘functionalism’ in terms of adaptation. Adaptation, especially the kind of bidirectional adaptation that JV talks about, implies interaction, and thus stresses the importance not only of intentions, but also of the effects of messages. And, for adaptation to take place as a process, language has to contain – as one of its very basic features – variability. I wholeheartedly accept these general points, and below I will say more about certain issues that I think should be raised in connection with these points.

Some other important suggestions that are raised by JV in WDI are that pragmatics should be seen as a perspective, rather than as a component; that pragmatics has no basic units of investigation; and that we might not need a strict theory of pragmatics. I will briefly take up these points for discussion below.

3. ADAPTATION

3.1. Functionalism

I would like to start with what I consider to be a basically terminological issue in connection with the relation between functionalism and adaptation, a point which I feel is left somewhat inexplicit in 1.5. of WDI. ‘Adaptation’ is said to be a “delimitation” of functionalism. But is this really so? It seems to me that the concept of adaptation is indeed a useful heuristic device, but it does cover a whole lot, and I am not so sure that all pragmatists would like to be collectively gathered under the umbrella term ‘linguistic adaptation,’ rather than the more widely accepted (although, admittedly, loose) ‘linguistic functionalism.’

As I said, I think this is a terminological question: I do agree that in order to help us ask the right kinds of questions, the definition of functionalism and functionality for pragmatic research has to be in terms of adaptation. But, having said that, and having made everyone aware of this, I still think ‘functionalism’ can be retained as the umbrella term I think it already is in pragmatics. (This is also a terminological question in the sense that — in a future not too far away, I presume — the concept ‘pragmatics’ itself will define the subject matter of pragmatics, just as ‘syntax’ and ‘semantics’ can be said to have received definitions status for other concepts in modern linguistics.)

In the same section, i.e. 1.5., JV sets out to delimit pragmatics against sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. I think it is here worth reflecting a little bit more on what will in fact be ‘left’ after we have decided what is to be studied within pragmatics. Do we still need, or want to make reference to, concepts like psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics as terms for areas that are in a sense within pragmatics, but which would also deal with non-pragmatic (i.e. non-adaptational) aspects?

I take for granted that we do not want to force anyone to make a choice between pragmatics and psychology or sociology. However, just as ideas or attempts at formalization within, say, syntax might direct you (the pragmatist) to look at a particular phenomenon from a completely different — pragmatic — point of view than what the syntactician would, so too might investigations of “random variation,” “descriptive dialectology,” “purely structural investigations of historical change,” and “descriptions of relatively unadaptable psychological structures and processes” (WDI: S1) serve as valuable information to the iPRa pool.⁴

In other words, since we are here following the Morris-inspired broad definition of pragmatics, it is essential for us to keep the boundaries between pragmatics and its neighboring (and even not so neighboring) disciplines as indistinct (or, more precisely, as one of Hockett’s (1968) metaphors) as they may be in the words of Yngve (1968: 5) “there is only one science, and the various parts of it are interconnected.” Even though we might not at face value accept that we are searching for some ‘ultimate truth’ about language, and thus about human beings and the world, I have difficulty in conceiving of a researcher or scientist who would never address this question. The point is not that we should be prepared, because we will indeed some day find the truth about how things ultimately — to quote Yngve — ‘at least ultimately’ (Even if we had ‘find’ it, we wouldn’t know that we had). The point is rather that it might not be such a bad idea to follow some guiding principle and that (a) some kind of order seems — for whatever (aesthetic?) reasons — more appealing (in our culture) than chaos (but cf. section 4.); and (b) the whole concept of adaptation seems to open up a new avenue along which these large-scale matters can be approached.

⁴ I may be somewhat unfair to JV in suggesting that he does not pay particular attention to aspects like ‘descriptive dialectology.’ For JV, these have the same status as, say, syntactic and phonological analyses. Still, two points are worth stressing here:
(a) As linguists we take for granted that syntax and phonology are relevant aspects for any kind of analysis of language, and thus we cannot neglect them; however, the set of neighboring fields to which — according to JV — descriptive dialectology belongs, are easily overlooked. And my point is that we should not even potentially sanction such overlookings.
(b) These days quite a few linguists would question the idea that syntax is (wholly) arbitrary — some even to the extent of saying that there is nothing ‘non-pragmatic/non-functional’ at all in syntax.

5 Jan Nuyts (pers. comm.) points out what he calls a ‘(mild) conflict’ between simultaneously viewing pragmatics as a perspective and as a discipline having neighboring disciplines.
3.2. Effect

Pragmatism - the philosophy - is hardly mentioned at all in WDI. This seems somewhat strange, since pragmatism surely was inspired by Darwin's theory of evolution - as was, I presume, the notion of linguistic adaptation.

If we leave aside the negative connotations of pragmatism as the everyday-philosophy that sanctions whatever means for achieving a particular goal,\(^6\) we can say, briefly, that pragmatism regards the usefulness of ideas, etc. as the main criterion on which to assess their values. That is, the way we perceive reality is motivated by the extent to which our doings are useful or have some effect. According to pragmatism, the meaning of an idea can be seen in the consequences that result from the use of a form that stands for that idea. Therefore, if two propositions have the same effect, they would be said to mean the same thing; and if a proposition has no effect, it would have no meaning.

As we see, the pragmatism view stresses the importance of the effect of a message/utterance in human interaction. I am not mentioning pragmatism because I think it is something for pragmatists to return to; I mention it because its practitioners were interested in this one area that has not received enough attention during the last decades. At least we can try to learn something from what we today would most likely call their "pragmatic" approach to language.

Benjamin Lee Whorf, too, as he was noting ways in which 'reality' is differently objectified in different cultures, stresses the effect of the what might in WDI-terminology be called the macroprocess of linguistic adaptation. As Silverstein (1979: 202) has effectively pointed out in his remarks on Whorf's discussion of Hopi:

"Whorf is not talking about sensation and perception at the level of the individual's physiological-psychological processes ... [but] ... about the way people who speak a certain language form an ideology of reference, an understanding at the conceptual level of how their language represents 'nature.'"

In WDI the effect of a message is indeed stressed on p. 14. Still, I think the concept 'effect' deserves much more attention, and not only in the sense of 'effect on language' (as a communicative system), but also in the sense of 'effect in particular situations.' The dynamic aspects of communication have to be in focus, since it is obvious (cf. e.g. Gicourel in WDI) that the very process of using language, itself creates meanings in addition and/or opposition to speaker's intentions. (Cf. also, e.g. McFouli 1987.)

It is clear to me that the study of (the systematicity of underlying) perlocutionary effects is just as much (if not more) part of the realm of pragmatics as is the study of illocutionary forces tied to speakers' intentions. Moreover, if the discussions and results of Rosaldo (1982) and Du Bois (1987) are accepted as they stand, we also need to re-evaluate figure 2 on page 60 of WDI.

3.3. General about adaptation\(^7\)

If the concept of adaptation is to be the most central to the field of pragmatics, I think much more has to be said about it. I also think that JV's view of adaptation implies - quite rightly, to my mind - (a) that there is no dividing line between 'communication' and 'language,' and (b) that the communicative behavior of animals - especially primates - cannot be left out of discussions of adaptation. I will touch upon these issues at some length below.

In Darwin's sense of the term,\(^8\) adaptation is seen as instigated by natural selection, which acts on potential genetic variation. Adaptation is a response to the pressure that the environment exerts on things and bodies in nature. The modifications that take place do so, not in a vacuum, but in relation to the ecological system as a whole. Adaptation in evolutionary terms is typically (i.e. by the majority of evolutionary scientists) regarded as a fairly gradual process. However, this is something that has certainly not been settled once and for all: An alternative view (cf. e.g. Eldredge & Tattersall 1982) holds that adaptation occurs in terms of fairly sudden changes, preceded and followed by long stretches of stability.\(^9\)

3.4. Animal adaptation and communication

Examples of how animals adapt to the environment - and, vice versa, how the environment adapts to animals - are to be found in abundance in the literature. Here I will just give a couple of examples, which I think illustrate the gist of how adaptation works.

The whole of instinctive behavior, for instance, is adaptive. Instinct can be seen as a response to the pressures of natural selection, and it thus functions as a means of preservation for the species. Traditionally, the concepts 'instinct' and 'learning' have been seen as two qualitatively different phenomena. However, in the light of recent research findings (cf. e.g. Gould & Marler 1987), the distinction does not seem to be wholly acceptable. This would in fact imply the feasibility of the - for some

\(^6\) As we know, Peirce even coined the term 'pragmatism' for his theory. In order to dissociate himself from the various layman interpretations of pragmatism.

\(^7\) As I already mentioned in footnote 1, this section in particular is speculative. I am too little of a philosopher of science to know how to keep track of all the strings I unwind. What follows is thus rather a thought experiment; I want to see how much of the notion of adaptation is useful for linguistic research, and in order to do that, I take it as far as I know how to.

\(^8\) As I mentioned above, because of their general view of human behavior, the pragmatism philosophers would also feel close to Darwin's evolutionary theory. For the pragmatists, reality is easily changeable (basically due to the fact that our comprehension of it is a culture-specific interpretation), and we can use our knowledge either to (try to) control our environment, or - if that is not successful - to adapt to it, including the rules, norms, and traditions of our society.

\(^9\) When drawing parallels between evolution and linguistic change both in terms of adaptation - these two possibilities of how the modifications might take place, should also be kept in mind.
readers no doubt rather controversial - view that what is learned by members of a species at one time may turn up as an instinct at a later stage in time.

A 'micro'-level example of an important aspect of adaptation among animals is mimicry: Predators and their prey both need to know the detailed moments, behavior, sounds, and smells of each other. Not only will the prey have to (attempt to) learn to recognize all possible signs of its predator (at the same time as the predator will try to minimize omitting such signs), the potential prey will also have to learn to give 'false' signs which the predator does not expect. In particular, the prey will attempt to imitate some other species.

The social behavior of a species can also be seen in terms of adaptation. In particular, members of a species adapt to the environment that offers that species. Note in this connection that social behavior is not something that only humans partake in: Apes, bees, ants, even bacteria show signs of what we know as social behavior. Or, as Willis (1982: 945) expresses it:

"If bacteria can be rather social and humans rather solitary, there is no reason to suppose sociality is more advanced in evolution than is solitary life."

In connection with discussions of similarities between humans and other (both living and not so 'living') organisms, cf. Prigogine & Stengers (1984). An extremely pertinent question here is whether, say, 'social behavior' in humans is qualitatively different from 'social behavior' in apes and bacteria, for instance, with regard to 'politeness' and societal organization (status and role relations). It seems to me (a) that this question can only be answered with respect to some particular definition of the terms 'quantity' and 'quality,' and (b) that there is no way to draw such a distinction between quality and quantity a priori, that the distinction is a gradient and relative one, and therefore (c) that we can use the same term, 'social behavior,' both for humans and for other organisms.10

The behavior of lower organisms might be said to typically take the form of them adapting to their surroundings. But primates, for instance, are also able to control their environment. They are even able to control other animals: in fact, learning how to avoid predators (cf. mimicry) can be seen both as a matter of adapting to, and as one of controlling, the enemy. Not only humans use communicative devices that are detached from

10 If we accept the general view that, "as an environment grows up from the level of bare ground to that of savanna and finally forest, the solitary animals are replaced by social ones and then by solitary ones again" (Willis 1982: 945), human beings should be characterized as even less social than many smaller animals. However, this is definitely not something I would like to have to argue in favor of ...

Actually, it is neither at all clear that we can draw a strict line between genetic and social learning. At least, social adaptation starts already "in the egg." Of course, in opposition to the views I have expressed in rather a drastic form above, one could also construe an argument that all but denies the impact of social learning, by saying in a near-fatalistic fashion that all learning after birth (or conception) is dependent on genetically determined 'learning-sensitive' periods or features, and therefore genetic.

the here-and-now. For instance, in the animal world we find that turning away has become ritualized as meaning 'giving up'; eye-brow lowering to shield the eyes has been ritualized as frowning; attacks are made on other than the intended target, and so on. These instincts (learned or genetic) are prime examples of the process and product of communicative adaptation in animals.

Language itself probably evolved from some form of noisy, controlled breathing.

3.6. Human adaptation

Adaptation is also a widely attested phenomenon in different aspects of human behavior. To remind the reader I will just mention a few 'micro'-level areas of adaptations.

We know from innumerable experiments in perception studies that an ambiguous figure can be seen in several ways if you know how to adapt your vision. Sticks of equal length will look shorter or longer depending on their environment. The color as we see it, especially the brightness of an object, does not only depend on its inherent (in terms of physical measurements) color, but also on the color/brightness of its environment, i.e. on the context in which it appears. In general, when you are confronted with ambiguous or discrepant information, you have to adapt yourself to the situation, take contextual information into account, and (re)-evaluate your sources of sensory information.

Adaptation also works with regard to our memory: This is why we need to be able to forget things. Without knowledge and strategies of how to forget, and recategorize information, we would have sets of paradoxical information stored together, which would in turn make it difficult for us to know how to act in any given situation.

3.6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

3.6.1. The issue

When we as pragmatists bring in the human being, society, and culture into linguistics, we, by definition I would say, accept the view that language cannot solely be looked at from the point of view of its internal, grammatico-structural make up. Language has a purpose besides (audible or not) phonation; it is (in particular - but I refrain from stretching it to its limit, and thus say - but not only) a means of communication.

Thus it is obvious to me that we have to reject the Chomskyan, but still very prevalent, view that one can draw a (strict) dividing line between, on the one hand, 'language,' and on the other, 'communication.' There are, of course, a number of problems with stressing the similarity between (human) language and (other forms of) communication too much. But, for one thing, communication as I discuss it here has to do with living organisms11, I do not, for instance, feel that by wanting to draw language and communication closer together, I would also be

11 Or rather, since even this might be the cause of some hair-splitting, what we as human beings perceive to be 'living organisms.'
committed to talking about, say, traffic lights as speaking to each other. There are, however, other (‘non-language’) in the restricted sense of language uses or symbols that are instances of humans communicating: the color of the smoke (‘fumata bianca’) from the papal residence in the Vatican during the election of a new pope12; and the ritual use of language (cf. e.g. Du Bois’s 1987 discussion of divination).

Animals mostly communicate non-verbally: using their body movements (bees dancing to indicate position and direction of food), the olfactory medium (ants leaving traces to indicate to others where food can be found) or the tactile mode of communication. But animals also use features of the acoustic mode: dolphins have a built-in ‘radar-like’ system and communicate with ‘radio-waves’; bats use high-frequency sounds that the human ear is usually not able to hear; dogs, too, respond to high-frequency ‘whistles’; birds sing with various ‘intonation contours’ to communicate different things; even fish (cf. Tavolga 1977) are said to communicate acoustically.

All in all, it is estimated that of the one million animal species there are in the world, about 650,000 have a ‘language’ of their own. Most of these communicative systems are non-verbal, but in the case of dolphins, for instance, when we take into consideration the restrictions imposed on, and the facilities offered by, their communicative channel, it is not so obvious whether their means of communication is verbal or not.

As we all know, non-verbal communication is not something that is rare in humans, either. Humans use kinesics (usually in combination with verbal communication); smoke signals, drum languages, and whistled languages because of restrictions on the communicative channel; and sign languages due to restrictions on the sender and/or the receiver. An abundant number of investigations have shown that sign languages like the ASL are generative and productive, that is, 'doubly articulatable,' and so on. In other words, they are full-fledged languages on a par with languages using the verbal code.

If linguistic creativity and flexibility can be expressed also without verbal means by human beings, and if the main reason why primates cannot talk acoustically is because of physical restrictions on their 'articulatory' machinery, then it is not surprising that sign language has been in focus in order to show the linguistic capabilities of animals. Today, not so few researchers would claim that they have indeed been able to prove that chimpanzees and gorillas can master and use human language to communicate - if they are given some motivation for it. If, in other words, they are in a situation where using human language is the only way to communicate. There are also indications that chimpanzees and gorillas can use sign language to communicate between themselves (i.e. not only with the scientists), and even create new words and locations, and transport their (sign-)language to their offspring. Moreover, Patterson et al. (1988) have shown that the pragmatic development of the gorilla Koko goes through the same stages of developmental acquisition as have been attested for children.

In connection with stressing the similarity between verbal and non-verbal communication, we can note that it has been argued that what humans express verbally, chimpanzees express non-verbally, and vice versa. It also seems that chimpanzees are better at using non-verbally (i.e. in their primary means of communication) than verbally (in this case: with sign-language), whereas humans lie better verbally (in their primary means of communication). Thus, the non-verbal behavior of humans can tell their addressees whether they are telling the truth or not. Robin

Lakoff (1979: 66) express this in the following manner:

"... language is but a sort of frosting on the cake; when conflict arises between what a speaker is expressing linguistically and what he is communicating, generally unintentionally, by means of other modalities, other participants in the communication will generally unobtrusively interpret the nonlinguistic communication as the genuine or truthful one."

Genetically, human beings - as what we know as human beings - must at some point in their communicative development have used mostly non-verbal means; and, through the process of certain groans and sounds becoming conventional (cf. 3.4.), they created a verbal means of communication, which gradually increased in complexity.13 If we try to keep language and communication strictly apart, we will also ultimately be forced to say that at one point in time humans had no language, but that at a later point they did have language. But if so, we need to ask the following two questions, which no doubt at first sight sound like intellectual exercises in epistemology:

a) Would we also be inclined to say that at times a child in his/her acquisition of language does not have language, but that at times s/he does have language?14

b) If - as I hope the discussion above has clearly indicated - we cannot find any discrete dividing line between human language and human communication diachronically, nor in terms of species differences, i.e. phylogenetically, then is there any sense in making such a distinction synchronically?15

The obvious alternative is, of course, that we only uphold a distinction in grammatical terms between 'language' and 'communication.' Language is not just structure, it is also one form of communication. The scale

linguistic – paralinguistic – extra-linguistic

should not be seen as a scale of 'acceptable' vs. 'non-acceptable' fields of interest for the linguist, but rather as a scale of communication, with arbitrary points as suggested. If we want to add 'non-linguistic' (to refer to, say, the olfactory modality) to the right of extra-linguistic, we can do so only if we do not attach any negative values to the term - from the

12 I owe this example to Charles Fillmore's UC–Berkeley lectures on semantics.

13 Even though this might at first sight seem to be in direct opposition to Bickerton's views (cf. WDI: 48–49), the disagreement is really a question of how one wants to characterize a 'qualitative' difference.

14 In the light of recent research, this is not such a vulgar-Darwinistic question as it might at first seem. Cf. for instance the following quote from Lieberman (1968: 24): "All apes, including gibbons and chimpanzees, as well as human infants under the age of three months, lack the physical apparatus to produce a complete range of formant frequencies..."

15 Even if we believe in a (rationalist) genetic predisposition in humans to acquire language, that predisposition presumably must have been acquired through evolution - if we are to claim that chimpanzees and gorillas do not have it.
point of view of pragmatics.

3.6.2. A matter of definition?

One obvious response to my discussion above would be to say that this is a matter of definition, a matter of where we, for practical purposes, might want to draw a line around what we feel we can at least in some sense start to grasp.

From one point of view this is no doubt true. It is also an accepted way of doing research — both in linguistics and in other areas— in our present-day society.

However, my point is not that you necessarily have to take into account the evolution of language, or communication in primates when you say, want to discuss the use of the third person singular non-past verbal ending in English. The point is only that we should never lose sight of the larger issues, and that these issues may potentially have more influence on our particular matter under investigation than we might at first have thought. In the present case: It is only by taking a broad view of 'language' as not a priori different from other kinds of communication, that we can start approaching human communication (including language) from the point of view of adaptation.

The value of any practical considerations we might want to appeal to in order to keep language and communication apart, is no more than the value of any other theoretical decision: We create an abstraction. As such, there is of course nothing wrong with abstractions and theories; quite the contrary. But if and when we come up against the limits of our model of the world (including our model of how language works), when there are obvious discrepancies between the model and our (perception of our) data, the model either has to be changed or completely rejected.

On the basis of what I have said above, then, and following this argument through, I would thus contend that we do not have the choice to decide where we want to draw the outer limits for pragmatics.

3.6.2. Epilogue

Above, I have presupposed that we are all out there looking for some kind of 'truth' about language and communication. I know, of course, that not everybody wants to partake in this hopeless endeavor. And it is a hopeless endeavor when framed in the terms I have just used. Any potential candidate to be added to the (non-existent) pool of 'truths' in the humanities will always be restricted by our perceptions of the world: We investigate what we perceive, and because of cultural and individual differences we perceive the world differently — and thus investigate different worlds.

Still, if we accept\(^\text{16}\) that also our 'humanist' characteristics are of this world, then they too should ultimately be describable and accountable for in terms that will fit some sense of 'everything hanging together.'\(^\text{17}\)

It is true that I have in this section paid perhaps too much attention to the similarities between humans and other organisms, and thus that I have neglected to point out the specifically human features of the human being, which in many ways make us different from other organisms. This is of course mainly due to the purpose at hand; however,

"Establishing this evolutionary lineage in no way diminishes the significance of human speech. Indeed, unlike creationism, the evolutionary perspective acknowledges what is unique about speech: that it arose from things unlike itself — most recently, brain cells and throat muscles and, before that, all the preceding stages of life."

(Lieberman 1988: 29)

Also, despite what I have said above, I do not think of myself as a semiotician, but as a linguist with an essentialist's view that there is still something we can call 'language' (in the restricted sense). Only, because of the nature of the task, we will remain restricted by our senses to grasp 'the whole truth.' And therefore, we cannot a priori rule out certain matters as not belonging to our subject matter.

3.7. Pragmatics as communicative adaptation

JV talks about 'Pragmatics as Linguistic Adaptation.' Even though it may seem to be a mere theoretical question in view of my discussion of language and communication above, I would be inclined rather to talk about 'Pragmatics as Communicative Adaptation,' or for that matter, 'Pragmatics as Language Adaptation.'

The main reason for suggesting this is merely in order to get away from drawing a distinction that is intimately tied up with that between language and communication: the distinction between linguistic (structural, Chomskyan) competence and communicative competence. Even though the distinction is a commonplace one, and might be felt to have some heuristic value for a particular investigation, it is nevertheless an arbitrary distinction — like so many others — that has been superimposed on human language behavior.

Although we do appear to have seemingly different kinds of 'rules for speaking,' they are all part of the conglomerate Language, as used by our Cognitive make up, in our Society and Culture. And when I say that the distinction between linguistic and communicative competence might have some heuristic value I do not mean that it is theoretically tenable. Still, as with so many other aspects of life that have been filtered through our perceptive mechanisms, in everyday life we tend to focus on end-points of scales, and talk about the distinctions we have created in either—or terms. So also, we tend to experience a difference in the kinds of competence we employ in communicative situations, say, in terms of the different effects that breaches against 'communicative' and

\(^{16}\) Indeed, things might not 'hang together,' and I might be convinced that they don't, when there are no more reasons to believe in, say, the first law of thermodynamics: that the total energy of the universe always remains constant. But this is not being deterministic in the ordinary sense of this term; cf. my discussion of variability in section 4.
'Structural' rules have. I will discuss rules in more detail in section 4; here I will merely maintain that the essence of our rules for speaking is qualitatively the same, and that the difference we experience has to do not with the rules and competences themselves, but with our capacity to explicitly spell out these rules. In particular, as I will argue in section 7, most of the aspects of communication that are treated under the label communicative competence are matters that have to be communicated implicitly. And the rules that govern these matters do not seem to be as easily explicable as the structural rules.

The distinction 'structural' - 'communicative' is interesting, though, from the point of view of adaptation. That is, whereas the 'structural rules' are handed down to us as results of earlier adaptations and interactions between language, behavior, and society, the 'communicative rules' display the process of adaptation in our society today. Because of our societal requirements, we are forced to communicate certain matters in media (or simply in locations) that our society accepts (even if implicitly so) as catering for the transmission of implicit information. We can, for instance, do so in the non-verbal medium, which is typically regarded as part of our communicative competence.

3.8. Linguistic accommodation

A further issue that should be tackled more in detail in connection with adaptation is the social psychologists' Accommodation Theory. (Cf. e.g. Giles et al. 1979.)

For instance, if a speaker wants to be approved of socially by his/her interlocutor, s/he may decide to change his/her language so as to be in closer accord with that of the addressee; and, conversely, if s/he does not like the addressee, s/he may make his/her language more dissimilar. Trudgill (1981: 218) echoes Jv's bidirectional adaptation when he adds to this:

Language modification of this type is presumably part of a wider pattern of behavior modification under the influence of and in response to others.'

3.9. A final word about adaptation

Using the TG-type of argumentation typical in the 1960's, we can summarize the gist of this discussion by saying that we need adaptation anyway in order to describe human behavior and how humans function in this world. We find cells adapting to their environment at all levels; Behavior in general is a function of adaptation. Thus, if we accept and realize that humans in principle behave in the same way linguistically, as in other forms of behavior, we can, with the concept of adaptation, capture an important generalization with respect to human behavior.

4. Variability

4.1. Introduction

Variability is another concept that crops up frequently in WDI, and is to be seen as 'central to the concerns of pragmatics' (p. 34). Unfortunately, not much is said about the 'ontology' of variability, although I think it is fair to say that the concept of adaptation provides us with a new angle to investigate variability, too. It is obvious that variability as a concept must be discussed in relation to concepts like 'rule' and 'variation.' However, if variability is also to be closely connected with adaptation, it cannot be seen merely as a manifestation of the differences to be found between the cognitive rule-systems of different individuals.

In the following I want mainly to focus on two important matters. First, I will discuss the possibility of viewing human behavior not only from the point of view of how rule-governed it is, but also - to put it bluntly - I will be suggesting that we might have to take into consideration the possibility of the existence of another behavior-regulating device (what I call variability), which seems to have as its main purpose to upset potential rule-governed behavior in humans. Secondly, in line with my discussion of 'competence' in 3.7., I will argue that the distinction between rules in grammar and principles in pragmatics is an arbitrary distinction with little if any theoretical value.

4.2. Variation and norms

Let me first of all, however, tie variability to the discussion of biological aspects in the preceding section. In biology, two types of variation are generally distinguished: genetic and non-genetic variation. Although in most cases no clear dividing line can be drawn between variation as due to genetic vs. non-genetic factors, variation in, for instance, blood type, height, eye and hair color are more genetically than environmentally determined - at least if we only consider the step from one generation to the next. Non-genetic variation (between cells, individual organisms, or within groups of organisms) is caused by the effect of environmental factors on particular manifestations of genetic potentials. Biologically speaking, non-genetic variation as such is thus only indirectly significant in the process of evolution.

For any particular language, any distinction between what has been handed down to us from our ancestors as 'genetic,' the norms, and what is in this sense 'non-genetic,' is even more unclear than in the biological case. 'Non-genetic' changes become 'genetic' and 'hereditary' much faster in language than in a biological organism. In a sense, normative grammarians have (unconsciously, I presume) regarded language as something that has been handed down to us from our ancestors - in a manner that is strikingly similar to that of biological evolution. This is not to say that variability is not a product of human social interaction, but it is to say that variability is not as under control, that it is not as clearly defined, and thus more difficult to analyze.

19 Cf. the discussion of genetic and social learning in section 3.4.

20 Again, cf. the discussion in 3.4. on the inherent problems with distinguishing between instinct and learning. In general, it is not at all clear that we should view the genetic and the environmental as opposites rather than as complementary elements.
particular form. Therefore variation in language (and especially in the
language norm) has not easily been accepted. When variation was found,
it was typically treated as an indication of malfunctions in the system.
(Perhaps in the same way as a short offspring of tall parents could be
seen as the result of undernourishment.) Older forms and older meanings
of forms were seen as more 'correct' than more recent innovations. And
the rules that the grammarians constructed in order to depict the
structure of a living language tended to be based either on Indo-
European, or, if the grammarian was liberal, on the sentences and
phrases that had been used by prominent authors, like Chaucer,
Shakespeare, Milton, and Dickens for English.
Although transformational-generative grammars do not share the
prescriptive grammarians' high regard for older forms and meanings, the
belief in rule-governedness is one of its most striking features. TG
accepts variation, but not what I would call variability.

4.3. A VARIABILITY FACTOR

4.3.1. Variability and adaptation

Adaptation as I understand it presupposes variability. That is, on
the 'macro-level,' adaptation presupposes a potentiality for change, and
change presupposes an inherent potential for variation in human behavior.

This potential is not more of a 'micro-level' phenomenon, and what I choose
to call 'variability.' Variability is more directly connected with making
linguistic choices (cf. below) than is adaptation and change. Variability
may result in linguistic variation, by which I mean the manifestation (i.e.
resultant product) that is usually due to some process of variability.

This line of reasoning makes it obvious that the variability
underlying communicative adaptation is an inherent feature of language.
But saying this is not enough. We should also be prepared to go one step
further and ask ourselves where variability comes from. To me, variability
is not secondary in importance to rule-governedness, nor ultimately
explainable (away) in terms of what we generally understand by rule-
governedness. Variability is as important and basic a concept for language
as is rule-governedness. Both of them partake in defining the essence of
human beings, human behavior, and language. If we wanted to express
this in metaphorical terms, we could say that most of the time these two
'forces are pulling in different directions, but by virtue of that, they are
both equally generating and productive with respect to communication and
language.

Below I will in some detail illustrate the workings of the
supposedly existing variability factor with the help of the concept of
'vagueness.'

Again, I want to stress the 'thought-experimental' nature of the
ensuing discussion: As in the case of my discussion of adaptation, I have
tried to take the concept of variability to its limits. Still, I feel that what I say in the second paragraph of footnote 1 in itself
speaks in favor of the view I discuss in this subsection why and
how else could a moderately rational human being like myself (1) go
and destroy several months' work in two seconds. We need to have
an inherent variability factor - a factor of non-rule-governedness-
to blame in such circumstances...

4.3.2. Vagueness

If variation as such, i.e. manifestations of differences between
speakers' 'competences,' was the main problem that linguistic theories had
to cope with, the linguist's task would not be too hopeless (cf. the
research methodology and findings of William Labov, Roger Shuy, and
others). What I think presents a much more difficult problem is that
languages contain areas of vagueness: Even native speakers of a language
are not always sure (not to mention that they cannot agree among them-
selves) about the grammaticality and/or acceptability and/or meaning of a
sentence or an utterance. Still, despite such individual differences, we do
not, nor can we, conclude that some native speakers do not know how to
speak their mother tongue.22

We have already encountered vagueness as one of the main
problems in our discussion of the effects of communicative acts. I will
not dwell on this problem any further here; not because we have solved
the problems - we have barely scratched the surface - but because I
assume that we are all too familiar with the problems. Two recent
important articles touching on these issues are Adegbija (1988),
and Fraser (1988).

The main point I want to make below is that vagueness is not
restricted to pragmatics and pragmatic effect. Some examples of
different kinds of vagueness inherent both in the established code, and in
particular extensions of the code follow.

4.3.2.1. Vagueness in the code

Instances of syntactic blends (cf. Bolinger 1961; Palmer 1972) are
examples of vagueness on the syntactic level. Chomsky showed that the
two constructions (1) and (2)

(1) John is eager to please.
(2) John is easy to please.

have two underlying structures: (1) has a 'personal' structure (cf. John is
eager), whereas (2) has an 'impersonal' structure (cf. It is easy). This
observation can conveniently be extended to a sentence like (3)

(3) John promises to be a good violinist.

which is ambiguous between a 'personal' (cf. John makes a promise) and
an 'impersonal' (cf. It looks as if John is developing into) structure.
Ambiguity is no great problem. Problems arise when this kind of
ambiguity analysis gets extended to sentences containing verbs like begin.

22 Just to make things clear: I am talking about all of us, and not
about an opposition between a trained professor-in-his/her-
mother-tongue as opposed to the ordinary-wo/man-in-the-street. I
also take for granted that the concept of 'having a mother tongue'
by definition cannot be qualified along any 'good at' - 'bad at'
axis.
hear, and order. In accordance with the kind of analysis described above, we can no doubt assign several potential deep structures to a sentence containing any of these verbs, too. However, we cannot decide in any a-priori fashion (e.g. by reference to underlying structures) for all sentences containing, say, begin, that they are either 'personal' or 'impersonal.' This is what I call vagueness; and this is a problem. To take an example, consider (4).\(^{23}\)

(4) The tree roots are beginning to ruin the lawn.

Like an ambiguous structure, (4) can have a 'personal' or an 'impersonal' meaning. But if we treat the sentence as an instance of ambiguity, the grammar will force us to make a choice between the 'personal' and the 'impersonal' meaning for any given occurrence of the sentence. However, in a case like (4), ordinary language is perfectly happy to remain vague between the two interpretations, and not force any choice on us.

Using discrete rules - and only discrete rules - to mirror our linguistic behavior, loses sight of the essence of language in terms of adaptation.

4.3.2.2. Extending the code

An instance of vagueness more as process would be semi-productivity (cf. Bolinger 1961; Dik 1967; Matthews 1971, 1974; Bauer 1980). It is known that many nouns can as such also be used as verbs, for instance walk and telephone. This fact could indeed be captured in a simple enough rule. But consider the following hierarchy (from Matthews 1971: 61).

\[(a) \text{He cabled that he would come.} \\
(b) \text{He radioed that he would come.} \\
(c) \text{He memored that he would come.} \\
(d) \text{He messaged that he would come.} \\
(e) \text{He lettered that he would come.} \\
(f) \text{He wireleased that he would come.}\]

Although all the verbs in the main sentence of (6) express an activity of transmitting information via different media, not all of them are as readily accepted as verbs. In one sense this is similar to the kind of vagueness found in the code. A rule-based grammar would force a choice on us, whereas language does not. But in the case of (6) we are not only concerned with grammaticality, but also with acceptability: The question-marked and asterisked constructions can function better in some situations than in others; and, what is more important, the same construction can be more or less acceptable in different contexts.

Language variation can be handled with linguistic rules provided we know the parameters of the variation. Vagueness, on the other hand, is an effect of language as an ill-defined system (in the sense of Hockett 1968) and cannot be computed.

\(^{23}\) I owe examples (3) and (4) to Peter Matthews (pers. comm.).
be hampered by this very same problem. (See further 4.5.) Still, taking the adaptation perspective will, I think, already have shown its usefulness: it stresses the importance of variability in language.

4.4. Rules and principles

4.4.1. Regularities, adaptation, and (in)determinism

In linguistics, we are often met with the view - in one disguise or another - that language works according to rules that can predict all and only the grammatical and/or acceptable sentences of a language. This is, of course, a plausible linguistic hypothesis. (Let us call it the 'RH', that rule hypothesis.) Similarly, if we find that not all matters in language are fully predictable, we can, like Leech (1983) and others, argue that certain aspects are rule-governed, whereas others are governed by looser principles. Again, this can well function as an hypothesis about language. (Let us call it the 'PH', the 'principle hypothesis'.)

One of the major issues when talking about rules in language is to be clear about what ontology we want to ascribe to such rules. In particular, as Weinstain pointed out, we need to distinguish between visible regularities and underlying rules, or, in Coulter's terms, between 'action-in-accord-with-a-rule' and 'action-governed-by-a-rule' (for a recent discussion of these issues, cf. McFoul 1988).

Even though we might easily accept this distinction, I think we have to be clear about our respective purposes for describing linguistic behavior. In particular, I would like to ask why we would be more interested in using a rule-system (say, in the form of a computer program) that 'works' for a well-defined area of investigation, but which is little if at all based on what we 'know' about human behavior; rather than using a 'system' that is based on what we know about the behavior of humans (and other organisms, for that matter). Obviously, I am not saying that the former kind of approach is unnecessary: we know far too little about ourselves to be able to allow ourselves to neglect investigating the predictions of any kind of theory (cf. section 1.4).

I want to link this up to WDI and adaptation, because it seems to me that the adaptation perspective also has a lot to offer with respect to the ontology of linguistic rules. Simply put: Adaptation can give us a format for developing theories that include more 'life-like' strategies of human behavior, than what I think the 'computer metaphor' of linguistic behavior has been able to offer.

In section 3.7, I indirectly tackled the RH that language is completely governed by, and thus explainable in terms of, strict rules. The RH can be seen as a linguistic version of physical determinism, and it could be spelled out somewhat along the following lines: 'All the structures of a language that occur are specifically, exactly, and in all respects predictable from a definite set of linguistic rules. This is not the place to go into a discussion on whether the world

is deterministic or not.24

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24 Hockett (1968), for instance, argues that the world is ill-defined in that it is neither fully computable, nor non-computable. And, if the world is ill-defined, then any 'system' within the world also - by definition - has to be ill-defined. Itkonen (1976: 34), however, argues that "even if linguistic (continued..."

As I see it, even if there does exist an underlying logical structure of language that we haven't found yet, this could only be verified from the outside by something/ body with the capacities of a superintellect.25 And, as I have repeatedly argued, precisely because language and other human sciences are - partly at least (but 'partly' is enough) - inside us, and out of reach of a complete empirical investigation, then language from our own point of view will remain more ill-defined and indeterministic than well-defined and deterministic.

In particular, I do not think that a more increase in computing capacity or a success at tying down a further number of parameters is enough to enable us to write rule-governed grammars in order to depict human language. Determinism, or well-definedness is not a quantitative matter: the decisive characteristic for a system to be called well-defined is not that we might, indeed, find a very large number of rules in that system. The search for further, higher-level, algorithmic-kinds of rules can only take us so far. The solution as I see it is rather to back off and start working with what we in fact have before us: language in all respects, as it functions around us and 'for us.' If language is by its very nature a system that includes a factor of variability, as I have attempted to show in my discussion of vagueness, language should also be explained in terms that suit this fact.26

4.4.2. On Leech (1983)

The second hypothesis (PH) above is directly related to Leech's (1983) view that we have rules in grammar (including semantics) but...
principles in pragmatics. In line with my reasoning for not making a distinction between Chomskyan competence and communicative competence in section 3.7., I also have difficulty in seeing that such a distinction between rules and principles can be upheld on theoretical grounds. As a heuristic device, the distinction — like the result of any heuristic decision — can of course be fruitful. But is the difference really a qualitative one?

One way of arguing against Leech would be to say that it is wrong to claim that there are no rules in pragmatics; that our pragmatic behavior is just as systematic — although perhaps more controlled than syntactic behavior. This line of argumentation would be an instance of what I have above referred to as the ‘adding-computing-capacity’ approach, and thus it is not the approach I shall take.

Notice that, if we say that we do not have rules in conversation (cf. e.g. Taylor & Cameron 1987) or in pragmatics (WDI: 26), that statement does not by itself imply a qualitative difference between how ‘grammar’ and pragmatics operate. My reason for saying this is simply that I think it is an overstatement to even talk about ‘rules’ in the grammar of a particular language. I would characterize the ‘rules-for-speaking’ systemically we perceive both in grammar and in pragmatics in terms of ‘tendencies’ — or, if you wish, ‘principles.’

These ‘rules-for-speaking’ tendencies are manifestations of what I somewhat jocularly called the two ‘forces,’ in section 4.3.

A brief illustration of why I feel the need to talk about tendencies rather than rules, follows.

Leech (1980: 22) argues that passivization in English is rule governed, but that end-focus is not. It is not obvious, though, that end-focus in English is very frequent, and we can thus consider it a tendency for English utterances to have end-focus. On the other hand, the border line between what is, and what is not a passive sentence in English is not at all clear. Consider the following set of examples.

(6) Bill was killed by John.
(7) Bill got killed (by John).
(8) Bill was killed.
(9) Bill was killed bad.
(10) Bill was taken ill.
(11) Bill — ‘you’ — killed — yesterday.

Sentence (6) is what we most often see categorized as a prototypical passive sentence. (7) is less prototypical because of its get auxiliary and its consequent change in meaning (cf. R. Lakoff 1971). Most linguists would have no difficulty in categorizing (8) as a passive. Some linguists (e.g. Langacker & Munro 1975; Langacker 1982) would even consider this to be the prototypical passive. However, sentence (9), and even more so (10), are much less passive — if at all. Finally, I would argue that (11), descriptively at least, would not be impossible as a passive — as a passive in an ordinary conversation. Thus, it is difficult for me to see in what sense passivization — as we find it outside the English-grammar classroom — is more rule-governed than end-focus. (On passivization, cf. also Leinonen & Ostman 1983; Ostman 1986.)

A frequent argument in favor of keeping up a distinction between rules and principles in language, is that you are no longer speaking the language in question if you break a rule of grammar, whereas you can go against pragmatic principles and still be speaking the language. Again, I have difficulties with this distinction. I am not sure that native speakers would all agree that if somebody says (12) or (13), then that person fails to speak the English language.

(12) We've met before, isn't it?
(13) A large number of students want to meet you.

(The tag-question formation in (12) is ‘ill-formed,’ and the rules of subject-predicate concord are — in a strict sense — broken in (13).) I cannot see that this would be a graver breach against our ‘rules-for-speaking’ than breaking a pragmatic principle by, say, using a T-form instead of a V-form in a V-requiring situation in a culture that makes a T/V distinction.

Notice, finally, that arguing for tendencies rather than rules does not go against my previous rule-vs-variability suggestion. We need the latter distinction in order to understand — in terms of adaptation — how humans can communicate, comprehend, even ‘compute,’ at all. But when we talk about the grammars (and grammatical descriptions) of particular languages, this distinction takes its manifestation in what I have called tendencies.

4.5. Making choices

I have repeatedly argued that we can only understand what we can perceive, and that human perception — especially with regard to investigations about ourselves — is severely restricted. But it is also the case that we can only perceive what we can structure. And in order to be able to structure something, we need to be able to contrast that something with other possibilities. The other side of the coin of contrasting is ‘making choices.’

Especially in 3.7. and 4.4. I have argued that the essence of all rules-for-speaking — whether they are structural or pragmatic — is the same. By this I also mean that all rules of speaking involve a process of making linguistic choices (cf. also WDI: 14). In Ostman (1986) I have made a distinction between making explicit choices among words and structures, and implicit — but still — choices with respect to the three parameters of pragmatics that I call Coherence, Politeness, and Involvement.

Notice that speaking in favor of choice-making strategies in language does not directly imply that such choices have to be rigid either-or choices. On the contrary, in Ostman (1986) I have argued in favor of a view of choice-making in pragmatics that allows ‘parallel,’ and simultaneous choices. And since, as we have seen in section 4.5.2., vagueness is not something we can restrict to the area of pragmatics, there is no reason to view choice-making in syntax as different from that in pragmatics.

To sum up: I agree with JV and I have here wanted to further...
stress the importance of variability as a factor to be taken seriously in language, and consequently, in linguistic theory. Without this factor, language could not adapt itself to new situations that arise every day from century to century. Variability should not be seen as something negative, but as something inherent in human languages and human communication.

6. PRAGMATICS AS A PERSPECTIVE

One of JV's major points in WDI is that pragmatics has to be seen as a perspective on language, and not as a component of a linguistic theory. Again, I approve of taking such a general view as a heuristic device that will help us in its task to make all kinds of pragmatists feel 'at home' within pragmatics. Also, in section 1 I argued in favor of seeing pragmatics not as 'in JV's terms' - belonging to the contrast set of psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, etc., but rather as being the umbrella term for these and other (semi-)hyphenated areas in linguistics.

However, from a strictly theoretical point of view, I am not convinced about the extent to which the concept 'perspective' as such really is a different perspective on language and linguistic analysis. More precisely, and first of all, I have difficulty in conceiving of the component view and the perspective view as being opposite, incompatible, or incomparable views. As I see it, 'pragmatics' can be both a component of a linguistic theory, and a perspective on language (cf. above). In Ostman (1986) I take this precisely as I mean: we can use the concept of 'pragmatics' as a perspective, but also we can use it as a component. Secondly, I am not sure I understand in what sense the 'component' view is a view (WDI: 96) in terms of pragmatics, and even if it were, what the 'component' would contain: context, speech acts, or what have you. (Cf. section 6.) Thirdly, I would have thought that most of us talk about components or boxes or circles for purely analytic purposes, and not because we actually think we have a component called 'pragmatics' in our mind. Language is - and will always remain - a conglomerate that is more (a Gestalt, if you like) than the combination of the various parts/components/perspectives that linguists-analysts set up in any theory of language. But whether you call the habitat of pragmatics a 'component' or a 'perspective' has to do with what kind of metaphor you use in defining, describing and trying to explain your topic of interest. Pragmatics could, for instance, be seen as a 'box' in a different dimension. Fourthly, and in general, I do not see that a component view as such is incompatible with the aspects of language that pragmatics is said (e.g. WDI: 96) to have to deal with. Maybe this could be said of most so-called component views, but not a priori. JV also admits this (WDI: 37): "It is not the intention to ... ban 'component' as a term applicable to pragmatics. Mainly a number of corollaries of the component view were found to make it objectionable." Unfortunately, I do not see that the corollaries necessarily have to be corollaries of a component view as such. (See below, section 6.)

Of course, there are people who go too far in wanting to compartmentalize our thinking mechanisms as being situated in specific places in our brains. But as regards 'pragmatics,' even WDI (WDI: 22-23) does not seem to be able to find a neuro-biological 'module' for it.

In some sense I feel that if we say that pragmatics is a perspective that phonologists, morphologists, and others can take when they deal with their subject matter - outside the discussion: We evade answering the basic question of what this perspective really involves (cf. also WDI: 37), except giving a list of important concepts like negation, variability, and the like. I have myself (e.g. Ostman 1986, forthcoming) suggested implicitness as the habitat-defining aspect of pragmatics, which I think JV's framework lacks. (Cf. section 7.)

6. UNITS OF INVESTIGATION

One of the corollaries of the component view is said to be its implication that pragmatics has particular units of investigation (WDI: 37, 61-62). In theory, I do not see any logical connection between basic units of pragmatic analysis and the component view, especially not if - as we saw in section 5 - we can in principle use the concept of 'component' as a convenient way of talking about language in a particular perspective. Admittedly, there is a practical connection in the sense that most of the traditional components of linguistic theory have been defined in terms of their units of analysis; and attempts in this direction have also been made within pragmatics. Again, and in principle, I think JV's stance - that we should not look for units of investigation in pragmatics - is an important one. What is more, it is a natural - maybe even necessary - assumption to make in his perspective-view pragmatics. (Cf. section 5.) JV's view is also important in that it gives us one possible direction out of the all too familiar man-as-a-computer metaphor that is so frequently employed in present-day linguistic research (cf. e.g. Mey & Talbot 1988).

However, leaving the units-of-analysis question aside without further ado is not really feasible since, if we decide that there are no units of investigation for pragmatics, we have to ask ourselves the somewhat related (impertinent!) question of what the basic unit of analysis for semantics is: the lexeme, the sense, or what? Or is the unit of analysis in semantics simply meaning: the meanings of words, phrases, larger constructions, prosody, and so on? If so, then by the same token, the 'unit' of analysis for pragmatics could be said to be the functioning of language (or simply adaptation, for that matter). Admittedly, the latter is to be seen as a process rather than as an 'object,' but it is doubtful in what sense any units of analysis for semantics are that much more object-like.

JV (pers. comm.) admits that WDI does not explicitly enough
consider semantics with respect to this issue, JV suggests that phonology, morphology, and syntax deal with form-units, whereas semantics deals with meaning-units. I can see that there are differences between the structural units and the pragmatic processes of language. However, I would also argue that both of these are different from meaning. It seems to me that this is ultimately a matter of in what perspective we decide to approach language. Leech and JV make a basic distinction between pragmatics and the rest (grammar, and form-meaning, respectively); others make a basic distinction between form and function, including in 'function' both semantic and pragmatic matters; and others again—for instance, Morris—make a tripartite distinction from the beginning. I am personally in favor of the last of these three alternatives, and it seems to me that JV's view can also best be saved by retreating to this view.

If we per chance agree on such a tripartite distinction, and thus that phonology—morphology—syntax, semantics, and pragmatics are the three most useful (albeit arbitrary with respect to language as such) theoretical concepts for any theory about language, then the very act of, and reason for, singling out such 'boxes' (cf. section 5.) has to be based on what we feel is methodologically sane. That is—and here I am using the framework of Ostman (1986)—with respect to phonology, morphology, and syntax (including, by the way, higher-level structures of texts and conversations) we can indeed talk about units of analysis, how they are formed, etc. Semantics in my view is linked up to cognition, and the most important question here is how matters are categorized with language. As for pragmatics, I have suggested that we can distinguish different parameters, and any utterance gets anchored—and in a simultaneous fashion. And the question that pragmatics has to attempt to answer is how this anchoring takes place. (See further, section 7.) In this way of approaching the issue there can, of course, be no 'units of investigation' for pragmatics since the notion of a 'unit' belongs methodologically to phonology—morphology—syntax.

There is one point, however, which makes me dubious about completely throwing out the idea of having units of investigation also in pragmatics. That has to do with the important issue of making choices. (Cf. 4.5. above; WD1: 14, 26; section 7.3. below.) Making choices implies that there are alternatives among which to choose. In, say, morphology, the alternatives are units we call morphemes; in TG-type semantics we can, for instance, make choices with respect to the 'underlying features' of different words. And, as I have argued in Ostman (1986), in pragmatics, too, we can talk about making choices. The alternatives from among which we make choices within explicit pragmatics are somewhat different from the ordinary 'units' of analysis—and they should be (cf. the discussion above)—but whether we call them 'units' or something else might turn out to be a terminological question.

7. ON THEORY FORMATION IN PRAGMATICS

7.1. General

In WD1 JV stresses that the idea with a Handbook of pragmatics is not to devise a strict theory of pragmatics, but that a program, "a coherent way of organizing knowledge about pragmatic aspects of language should be constructed" (p. 14). Although I doubt that JV intended it so, this does sound like an attempt to create a new 'Kuhnian'

paradigm. Even though I do see JV's goal as a feasible one, as far as I know, paradigms don't usually survive if they are intentionally created to be paradigms; views have to be left to grow into paradigms by themselves. (And thus the paradigm decides for itself what to exclude and include of all the potentially important views in the field)—it is only a postdiction that they can be seen as paradigms. And in order to give pragmatics this

necessary growing ground, a continuation of the WD-series is vital.

As for theories, I think we should do everything in our power to

force people to present theories of pragmatics—mini- or maxi-size—but at least potentially falsifiable—although it may mean that at any given

moment in time there might be hundreds of theories that are being

settled.

I suppose we pragmatists tend to think of ourselves as the

pragmatists in linguistics, since we basically consider anything having to do

with language as part of human (and sometimes even non-human)

behavior as our field of interest. And therefore we can feel some hope

that we have a chance to get our book (in context) out there. The
collection of all Handbook of pragmatics is a decent, cover-it-all Handbook of

and possibility of one day getting a decent, cover-it-all Handbook of

pragmatics. But we have to remember, of course, that getting a Handbook

pragmatics, that is, to say, is not a requirement for doing theoretically interesting and valid

research in a field. As far as I know there is no handbook of syntax, for

instance.

7.2. On delimiting the field

Despite the discussion in WD1, page 28, I personally do consider it important to say something about how we can delimit pragmatics with respect to semantics. The reason is simply that both semantics and pragmatics deal with how people 'mean' whatever the case may be. Therefore, I feel that we have to specify in some way the kinds of

pragmatics, meanings that we want to deal with in semantics and pragmatics,

respectively. And I do not think it is enough to say simply that

meanings are anchored in some context. Thus, I have suggested in Ostman (1986) that we can (at least try to) make a distinction between those aspects that are definable in

propositional, truth-functional, and/or spatio-temporal terms as matters to

be dealt with in semantics; all other aspects of meaning are then to be

dealt with in pragmatics. (Cf. also Post's distinction between coded
dealt with in pragmatics.) And Fillmore's and Kay's distinction

and inference-processing, and Fillmore's and Kay's distinction

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7.3. More on making choices

I agree with JV (WD1: 14) that using language for communicative purposes involves making linguistic choices on different levels. The idea is neatly expressed by J.R. Firth as 'meaning implies choice.' It is also natural — for an LRRA pragmatican — to see pragmatics as the study of the mechanisms behind such choices. But what are then the mechanisms or motivations behind the pragmatic choices that we make? Pragmatic aspects do not motivate themselves. We have to keep language linked up with human behavior at all times: Depending on our interests and purposes, we make choices that will affect the pragmatic manifestation of our communicative behavior. This may sound straightforward enough, and the main reason I want to bring it up is simply that I think we have to be more concerned with pragmatic aspects for their own sake, and not just for the sake of investigating how they interact with and motivate choices in, say, morphology and syntax. The study of pragmatics has to start not only 'from within' pragmatics itself, but also from its relation to other aspects of human behavior.

I also think that we — but only for analytic purposes — have to make a distinction between actual choices that manifest themselves in some 'surface' form, and whose alternatives we in principle can specify, on the one hand; and — on the other hand — choices that I would characterize as implicit, basically: choices that are made among pragmatic alternatives that we might not know too much about. (Again, for details, see Osgood 1986.)

8. SOME FURTHER DETAILS

8.1. Mind in society

The whole problem about the primacy of mind vs. society (WD1: 59) might to a large extent be tied up with the general practice of seeing communication in terms of what Reddy (1979) called the Conduit metaphor (cf. also Lakoff & Johnson 1980), what in WD1 is talked about in terms of "communication from mind to mind" (p. 60). If communication had been seen as a joint endeavor — say, as a process of building something together, where each person gives of him/herself not something necessarily to the other, but to the joint endeavor itself — then maybe this conceptualization would not have been so prone to this never-ending debate about primacy.

8.2. A means of adaptation

I would like to see some further discussion of what the phrase "language as a means ... of adaptation" (p. 53) really means. We can adapt to (including "control") our environment with language; we also adapt language in a number of ways to fit the particular situation. We adapt our language in a number of ways to fit the particular situation. We adapt language also (as an entity) to find ourselves in. But can language itself also (as an entity) be said to find itself in? (This is an important question, and I am sure that JV, too, would answer 'No.')

8.3. Minimal universality

JV suggests (WD1: 42) that we should approach universality from a minimalist point of view, rather than working on the hypothesis that close to everything in language can be seen in universal terms. I fully agree, but it would be nice to get some kind of further specification of what "minimal universality" means. We cannot, of course, expect to get a categorical answer to what we might have the right to take for granted — this will change as the field advances. Nor do we want to interpret the phrase simply as meaning 'as little universality as possible,' since under that interpretation there wouldn't be any universality left. So, I would welcome a discussion around some kind of heuristic strategies; and, in this connection, too, detailed discussions of the extent and manner in which the researcher him/herself influences his/her object of study. Is it, for instance, feasible to talk about pragmatic issues in general, irrespective of (i.e., comprising 'all') different cultures — where the concept 'culture' (cf. the related concept of Coherence in Osgood

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33 This is theoretically incorrect, but I will use it here for the sake of brevity. In this connection, cf. Duranti (1988).

34 It is another matter that I also feel that semantics is a kind of central core for language, and that both pragmatics and 'structure' (= phonology, morphology, syntax, and the lexicon) are perspectives on language (in effect, on this central core) and thus give their constant and dynamic input to the core; one from the 'inside,' and the other from the 'outside' — the latter being connected directly to other aspects of human behavior. (Cf. Osgood 1986.)

35 In discussing this point with JV, it became clear that, since a maximal assumption of universality means that one's own behavior is thought to be maximally representative of everything that goes on (cf. WD1: 42), what he means by 'minimal universality' is in fact that we should start out with as little of the maximalist attitude as possible, i.e. with 'minimal assumptions universality.'
1986) can be interpreted in large-scale or small-scale terms, depending on your research at hand — or would it perhaps be a better strategy to discuss the pragmatic phenomena of specific languages in relation to a certain culture, and then discuss other — more large-scale — aspects in terms of inter-cultural communication? I also ask myself what the impact of adaptation is, when it gets to be as abstract as it does get if and when all cultures are to be accommodated in one statement. (Cf. also Rosaldo 1982.)

It seems to me that if we set out to find universals of language — be they minimal in number (and quality?) or not — it is very easy to take the further step and get back into discussions of philosophical questions having to do with theory of knowledge, rather than with language and communication. (Cf. in this connection Yngve 1986.)

8.4. The macro-micro gradience

In my discussion of adaptation and variability above I frequently tried to use the notions 'macro-' and 'micro-levels/ processes. Although I can see the usefulness of JV's distinction, I found it extremely difficult in practice to draw any line between the two, and thus to know which 'level' I was at a given point in the discussion. The same goes for the distinction between acquired and developmental.

8.5. A plea for the individual

The individual language user always gets treated badly — or at least step-motherly — when we theorize about language. This is of course understandable, but it seems to me that pragmatics should also in principle be interested in the any individual from the point of view of how s/he differs from all other individuals, i.e. not only as a statistical figure in an experiment. I will not pursue this 'humanist' approach here, but I consider it as yet another angle of the 'pragmatic perspective' on language.

I am also here overlooking a number of very basic features of 'culture,' for instance that it is based on people's perceptions of themselves and 'others.' Also, of course, we can never really be sure that we do live in whatever (perceptually stereotypicalized) 'culture' we think we live in. Nevertheless, something has to be taken for granted — for purposes of analysis.

2. THE LISTS

The various lists that JV gives in WD1 are not supposed to be in any sense conclusive. JV also points out the 'intrinsic relationship between many notions' (p. 98). And it is of course a hopeless task to try to give each category one particular and 'correct' place in these lists; so to suggest something which a Handbook could be organized, with — to suggest something practical again — loose (though attachable) pages that should be updated annually, — say, through subscription — on an annual basis.

The general problem is of course that you have to make a choice of where to put things. So, for instance, in WD1 I personally had difficulties with the line between social and cultural: JV has 'gay' under social, but 'drug' and 'regional' under cultural; and with the line between interlocutor and interaction: sincerity would for me not necessarily have to do with interaction.

In the accompanying appendix I give some random suggestions for additions and rearrangements to the already existing lists in WD1.

10. FINALLY

At points my view of pragmatics might seem to be very different from JV's. This is, however, mostly due to the format of presentation I have chosen. It is really only because JV has presented his approach in a clear and coherent form — as a theory, in fact — that it can be scrutinized in detail. (Thus, again, we see the usefulness of suggesting theories of pragmatics; cf. section 7.1.)

APPENDIX

Some suggestions for additions and rearrangements to the lists in IPrA's WD1

Chapter 2
p. 56: Reasoning
Add common-sense reasoning.
p. 56: Cognitive development
Spell out the 'etc.'

Chapter 3
3.1.3.2 (p. 64) & Interlocutor role (p. 72)
Add the mediator, the go-between, since responsibility might rest with him/her. Cf. Duranti (1988).

3.1.3.3.3 (p. 65)
Also, not dressing up, for instance, can be, and very often is, interpreted by the addressee as a sign of disrespect.

3.1.3.3.5 (p. 65)
The possibility of insincerity always has to be taken into account on all levels. That is, if you are a little bit drunk, for instance, you can take yourself certain liberties that you do not have, but you know (or hope) that because of the state you are (pretend to be) in.
you will most likely be forgiven the day after.

3.1.3.8 (p. 66) & Individual characteristics (p. 70)
I would like to have Affect or Involvement as a cover-term for attitudes and emotions, and as a different kind of mental state than beliefs and knowledge, etc. Also, add 'feelings' (positive, negative), and under emotion also things like calm, relaxed, friendly.

3.1.6 (p. 69): Co-text
Add other types of non-verbal co-text: tactile, olfactory, background sound.

3.1.6: Tribe
Add tribet, and family culture, on the basis of findings especially in the study of American Indian languages.

p. 70: Individual characteristics
Add general preparedness (as against planned vs. unplanned).

p. 75: Communicative effect
Although it is one of the key words used previously in WD1, the effect of a message is dropped altogether from the introductory text in chapter 3. It comes last under Interaction structure. Perhaps it could be given its separate entry, under which also distinctions in terms of physical, social, cognitive, interactional, and cultural effect could be mentioned.

Chapter 4
4.1.1.1: Non-verbal
Add drums, smoke-signals, whistled languages.

4.1.1.5: Argumentation
Add polemic.

4.1.1.6: Description
Add recipe descriptions, which have special importance in word order studies. (Also, these would be a special type of assembly instructions, p. 85.)

4.1.1.6: Theater
I would put this category at the same level as poetry and prose, and not under prose.

p. 85: Text unit
Add topic sentence.

p. 85: Speech act sequence
Add follow up. And other adjacency 'pairs' could of course be added.

4.1.1.7: Expressive
Perhaps persuading and lying could come in here.

4.1.1.8: Discourse deixis
Pragmatic particle is for me something much wider than this; perhaps 'discourse particle' here, although I would not like to have these particles under propositional content in the first place. There should be some way in the system to be able to indicate verbal manifestations that are 'purely' pragmatic. Actually, since sounds also get their special section, I think all such markers, particles, hedges, etc. should come under a separate heading, say as 4.1.1.12.

p. 88: Person
Add indefinite person; cf. e.g. Finnish.

p. 89: Mood
Add conditional and potential.

p. 89: Semantic case
Force, path, and range could perhaps be added.

p. 90: Pragmatic Function
Perhaps presupposition could come in here.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim and structure of the paper

According to Verschueren (1987), pragmatics ought not to be seen as one of the components of linguistic theory, but rather as a (functional) perspective on any linguistic phenomenon. Many topics that have until now been studied in disciplines such as anthropological linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and also in the more traditional fields of phonology, morphology, syntax etc. can therefore in his opinion be approached from a pragmatic perspective as well. The notion of adaptability is said to be central to this perspective and to lead to a general descriptive framework. Indeed, the hypothesis is 'that whatever has been labeled pragmatics so far, and whatever fits under that label according to the broad definition accepted in this document, can be described in terms of the proposed framework' (Verschueren 1987: 117).

It is the aim of the present paper to investigate to what extent an issue not traditionally viewed as belonging to pragmatics (the evolution in the use of written language in the Dutch-German border area) can be sensibly discussed within the broad "adaptationist" framework. Not a single German scholar dealing with the kind of topic that is talked about in the next few pages has probably ever thought of his work as being part of the pragmatic realm of investigation, and yet we will see that the approach suggested can lend greater significance to results and findings by opening up new perspectives to a traditionally rather self-contained discussion and by enhancing the possibility of interdisciplinary comparison and exchange of ideas.

The remaining paragraphs of this introductory section are to be seen as laying the foundations for the rest of the paper. After a brief discussion of my licentiate thesis, on which the present analysis is based (1.2), and some caveats concerning limitations inherent to the methodology used in this dissertation (1.3), the basic geographic and historical information required for a thorough understanding of the issues at hand is provided in 1.4. In the second section, the main research findings are summarized and presented from a conventional, non-pragmatic angle. Sections three and four then, will be devoted to an analysis of these findings from the "broad" pragmatic perspective on linguistic
adaptational phenomena. In a fifth, and final section, I will try to assess what will have been gained or lost in the course of reinterpretating the subject matter within the "adaptationist" framework, an endeavor which, I hope, will contribute to the final evaluation of the framework itself.

1.2 The point of departure

In Leys (1988), which is part of a long-term research project on the developments in language use since modern times in the German region of the Münsterland, I describe and attempt to explain the succession of various writing languages in the former episcopal Gronau in Westfalen. On the basis of an extensive corpus gathered during a six-week search of various archives, I try to answer one fundamental question: Who wrote what language to whom and when for what reason in Gronau? I discuss in detail the succession of the Middle Low German writing language (Mitteleinleideutsch) by the New High German writing language (Neuhochdeutsch, predecessor of what is now plainly called "German") around 1600, the subsequent partial ousting of New High German by Dutch (1700-1850) and the final (and total) replacement of Dutch by New High German around 1800. The use of the Dutch writing language in German territory constitutes the focus of interest: local history (political, cultural and religious developments) here provides a background against which many at first sight odd or unexpected phenomena can be explained. The main body of the text is dedicated to a domain-by-domain description of the above-mentioned language shifts; the terminology and methodology of traditional sociolinguistics and contact linguistics are used to approach this task as systematically as possible. A résumé of my main research findings will be given in section 2.

1.3 Some methodological remarks

It should be made clear from the outset that the very nature of our subject matter imposes certain restrictions on the interpretations we can give to the phenomena under observation. These are all tied up with the

3 I will henceforth use the term writing language (German: Schriftsprache) to denote normified and codified variants that are used to communicate on a supraregional level (lingua franca), but which exist only in a written form; writing languages that get spoken as well are called standard languages (German: Standardsprachen). The latter development, however, did not take place before the late nineteenth century in Germany, and hence falls outside the scope of my analysis. For a more detailed discussion of these terms, cf. Leys (1988: 17-21).

4 For more geographical details: cf. 1.4.

5 Cf. Fishman 1972

6 I am using the word domain the way it was defined by Fishman: "institutional contexts and their congruent behavioral co-occurrences" (1972: 248; cf. also Leys 1988: 51-20).

fact that in order to talk about language use in centuries other than our own, we have to rely on written sources. No witnesses who could help us in our linguistic inquiry are alive today; linguistic developments thus have to be hypothesized on the basis of records that have come down to us from the past and, in as far as these records do not contain metalinguistic utterances, can only be inferred indirectly.

A first restriction then is that in relying solely on a written corpus we are at the mercy of Time for having anything to discuss at all. The humidity of the climate - for which Westfalen is renowned - in the long run has had disastrous consequences for many archives; grossly insufficient care for the archives at many places has given rise to the vermin ample opportunity to bite bit swallow potentially informative documents; wars - of which Westfalen, especially in the seventeenth century, has known many - and floods have led to the loss of many documents, etc. Thus we have to resign ourselves to a situation in which our sources of information are not as numerous and as complete as we would like them to be. Certain domains and specific types of texts may hence be overrepresented in the corpus, while others are definitely underrepresented. All sorts of official documents (issued by the city council, the administration of the Count, church officials etc.) are abundantly present; language use in less official texts (private letters, diaries, genealogical registers etc.) on the other hand is only rarely to be found. The attitude towards written materials in the past may also have contributed to this: it seems that, above all, texts concerning administrative, judicial and financial affairs were considered worthy of preservation.

A second restriction is that the language use we are describing is not only limited to that of the documents that have actually come down to us, but that it is also that of a very limited percentage of the population in the territory under discussion. We know that in the first half of the nineteenth century not even a third of the countrypeople of the Münsterland could read or write, and in earlier centuries this percentage will definitely have been much lower still. Until way into the nineteenth century, being able to read or write was a luxury only the privileged classes could afford; most people went to the local schoolmaster or to the parish-priest when they wanted something written down or read to them. Hence we should bear in mind that we are discussing phenomena typical of a very small class of people.

A last characteristic limitation of the corpus we have to work with that needs mentioning, is that writing languages are essentially different from spoken languages, the main point of divergence being the far greater possibilities of monitoring the former allow. Before committing one's thoughts to the written medium, one can mostly afford to consider what one is going to say and how one is going to say it. Due to this delay factor, many phenomena typical of oral communication in multilingual settings, such as code switching, code mixing and interference, tend to be less prevalent in written text. Thus, the range of topics illustrating the variability or adaptability of language that can be discussed here is somewhat more limited than it would have been had the taperecorder been invented, say, five centuries ago.

1.4 Geographical and historical aspects

Gronau I/W. is a small town of about 40,000 inhabitants in the extreme north-west corner of the Münsterland, which itself is the northern part of the German Land Nordrhein-Westfalen 70 km west of Osnabück and 50 km north-west of the city of Münster. It is a frontier town: before 1815, it used to lie in the so-called Driland–Ecke, the corner of three countries (the Dutch province Overijssel, the German county of Bentheim and the territory of the Prince–Bishop of Münster), and today it is still situated on the Dutch–German border. The nearest Dutch town, Enschede, is only a few kilometres away.

Before the nineteenth century, Gronau was officially not a town, but a seigniory belonging to the counts of Bentheim9. These had obtained it from their neighbour, the Prince–Bishop of Münster as a feudal estate in 1365. Although it was situated within the latter’s territory, the counts of Bentheim since then had full jurisdiction in Gronau9. They fortified the castle that was already there and allowed peasants to settle between its inner and its outer walls. In the course of the centuries, the population would slowly grow, but it would not be until the nineteenth century, when the first textile mills were built, that it really exploded: from about 600 in 1723 and 1,670 in 1886 to 2,083 in 1896 and 10,082 in 191010. The most important event in the history of Gronau that needs to be mentioned here, is the conversion of Arnold the Fourth, Count of Bentheim, to Calvinism in 1586. Following the principle cives regio eius religio, the population of his territories, and hence that of Gronau for the largest part as well, became Calvinist too. As a result of this, Gronau, totally surrounded by the still Catholic Münsterland, in its isolation turned to Bentheim, but also to the neighboring Dutch provinces for financial and other support. Religious and cultural ties with Holland since then became very strong. This orientation away from Germany would only be brought to an end centuries later, when, after the Napoleonic Wars, Gronau was annexed in 1813 by a rising European power: Prussia. Thanks to a vigorous and centralist modernization policy, Gronau then became a very prosperous industrial town. With Prussia, it merged into the German Empire in 1871.

12 A fourth language, Latin, plays only a very marginal role (in writings issued from some catholic institutions) and can be neglected for our purposes.

13 When the nowadays usual term German is used further on, this is meant to refer to the New High German language (as opposed to Dutch).

14 The language spoken in Gronau was – and to a certain extent still is – the local variant of Low German (Niederdeutsch, also called Plattdeutsch), which, typologically and historically, has stronger affinities with the Dutch and the Middle Low German writing languages than it has with New High German. For more information: cf. Kremer 1985:17–42.

15 Interference is here understood as “those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language” (Weinreich 1970:1).
diglossic situation\textsuperscript{16} that will last well over a hundred years. German, on the one hand, remains written in the institutions that represent the Count of Bentheim's authority in Gronau (the administration and the court of justice) and is also used by representatives of the Catholic Church; Dutch, on the other hand, is almost exclusively used within the Calvinist Church, in the (calvinist) school, by representatives of the City Council, and by Gronau's citizens in business life as well as in private life\textsuperscript{17}. Only after 1813 (annexation by Prussia, cf. 1.4) will language use in Gronau be brought back to the normal German standard; in the course of a few decades, Dutch is completely given up as a writing language, and German once and for all establishes its monopoly\textsuperscript{18}.

3 MACROPROCESSES OF ADAPTATION

3.0 Some introductory remarks

In this section, I will attempt to rephrase some of my main research findings as summarized above in terms of the pragmatic framework elaborated in Verschueren 1987. The procedure will be the following: for every aspect of the framework (sections 3 through 7), I will try to find out in what manner it could be a relevant perspective to look at the data. The obvious aim is to check the validity of the framework by applying it to a subject matter that is traditionally not thought of as constituting a pragmatic topic and yet seems to fit quite well under the heading of "linguistic adaptability". Although it will turn out that the material does not allow for all aspects to be commented upon as extensively as might be desirable\textsuperscript{19}, the general applicability of the framework will not have to be questioned on the basis of the following analysis.

It will be the macro-level of analysis that will be highlighted here\textsuperscript{20}; in the next section, an approach on the micro-level will be ventured. Although the border-line between these two levels of analysis may sometimes seem rather vague, and the sharp distinction into two separate sections hence somewhat arbitrary — after all, the levels reflect

\textsuperscript{16} Or diglossic, if we take spoken language into account as well (cf. Leys 1988: 142-46).

\textsuperscript{17} Dutch was thus imported as a writing language by an originally non-Dutch population. In Kremer's typology (1983a), this phenomenon would be labeled as Niederländische als allochthone Kultur-sprache deutscher Gebiete.

\textsuperscript{18} It does so, not only as a writing language, but from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards also as a spoken language (hence: standard language, cf. 1.2).

\textsuperscript{19} Notice that Verschueren (1987: 117) explicitly acknowledges the possibility of narrower projects focusing even on only some of the aspects of the framework.

\textsuperscript{20} Verschueren (1987: 45-46): "All adaptation processes which essentially transcend [...] the day-to-day context of communication between individuals or small groups of individuals, are macroprocesses of adaptation."

and only exist by virtue of one another — this dichotomous approach seems justified on heuristic grounds.

3.1 Objects of adaptation

"... whenever a pragmatist wants to describe a form of linguistic adaptation, one of the necessary questions he or she will have to answer is the following: What does language, under those aspects which constitute my present object of investigation, get adapted to?" (Verschueren 1987: 59)

The aspect of language constituting the present object of investigation is the succession of various writing languages in the former seigniory Gronau i/W. On a macro-level of analysis, these successive language shifts can be explained in terms of adaptation to a series of sociocultural and historiopolitical changes. Of these, I shall mention a few in the next paragraphs\textsuperscript{21}.

For a good understanding of the shift from MLG to NHG around 1600, we cannot restrict ourselves to the admittedly rather confined context set by the territorial boundaries of Gronau i/W. Instead, we must turn to the enormous changes in the economic and political structure of northern Europe in the sixteenth century. The Hanseatic City-League, which, led by the North German city of Lübeck, had established an economic empire reaching from Riga to Haderslev and from Bergen to Nowgorod in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, could not maintain its position of power and gradually had to yield to the competition provided by Dutch, English and, not in the least, also South German cities. Owing to the decline of feudalism and the rise of centralist states in various parts of Europe, as well as to the expansionist policy of various German monarchs, it lost many of its points of support, and in the end it collapsed through inner weaknesses and rivalry. The rise and fall of MLG reflected this evolution, since it was causally connected with it. Being the writing language of the Hanse, in the fifteenth century MLG was in use, not only in northern Germany, but also in almost every town in the rest of Europe where a Hanseatic office had been established. With the breakdown of the Hanse, however, it soon lost its prestige: in the non-German territories, national languages took over, and in northern Germany itself, the growing economic and cultural orientation towards the South also led to the gradual adoption of the southern variant, NHG, which by the late seventeenth century had completely ousted MLG as a writing language; in later centuries, it would even start replacing the original Low German dialects\textsuperscript{22}.

In Gronau, as in most of northern Germany, the adoption of NHG did not come about all of a sudden: it was a very gradual process that took place, roughly, between 1650 and 1660. The records that have come to us from those days have practically all been written by the Count's

\textsuperscript{21} Since in dealing with any past event even the abstraction of synchrony seems to become untenable, I will not divide this section according to the Saussurean dichotomy synchrony/diachrony.

\textsuperscript{22} This is once again an almost ludicrously compressed representation of a much more complex state of affairs. For more information, as well as for references: cf. Leys 1988:33-41.
representatives in the village (steward, bailiff and judge); they hence reflect the shift from MLG to NHG in the chancery of Bentheim. The oldest texts that have been preserved date from the fourteenth century; they are all MLG. After a period of about one hundred years, from which no documents are left, archival tradition then starts again around 1650. The texts descend from them on already display quite conspicuous though unsystematic interference from NHG: single elements are borrowed, but not often phonological or other rules; these can be seen as symptoms of linguistic uncertainty resulting from the clash between two rivaling writing languages. In the years after 1650, it becomes clear that NHG, being the language with the greater prestige, is going to win the competition: more and more clerks try to abandon MLG and to write in the NHG language. This results in texts that are curious and idiomatic mixtures of MLG and NHG. Around 1600 then, the first clerks that have actually been trained to write NHG are appointed. From then on, the situation is reversed: texts now written are clearly NHG, but still contain many instances of interference from MLG. Through the years, however, interference lessens, and around 1650 NHG, in a more or less "pure" form, has become the only writing language of the Count of Bentheim's administration in Gronau. Evidence from other domains, scarce though it may be, suggests that in sources written by citizens of Gronau and by representatives of the Church the shift to NHG and the resulting "death" of MLG took place, roughly, between 1600 and 1660: the process started later but finished at about the same time.

The introduction of Dutch as a writing language in several domains was not such a gradual process, but then the event that gave rise to it (the "object of adaptation") was not either. The conversion of the House of Bentheim to Calvinism in 1564 and the ensuing orientation of their territories towards the Dutch neighbor (cf. 1.4) at first failed to have any linguistic consequences. Between 1668 and 1692, however, the renegade Count Ernst Wilhelm so ardently tried to reestablish Catholicism that the Dutch Calvinists felt obliged to help their suppressed co-religionists. Dutch clerics were sent across the border to preach and students of theology from Bentheim were educated in the Netherlands. The first Dutch preacher in Gronau arrived in 1706; from that date onwards until 1839 almost all preachers came from the Netherlands or had been schooled there. They all wrote Dutch, and they all used it for their sermons. Hence the populace came to know the language at least passively. Those who went to school also learnt to read and write it, since the aim of school education was to enable the children to participate in mass, and there Dutch bibles were used and Dutch hymns were sung. Being the language of the Church, Dutch acquired special prestige and hence it is not very astonishing that soon practically all citizens of Gronau who wrote at all did it in Dutch. Only the above-mentioned representatives of the Count of Bentheim as well as the Catholics of Gronau — who, of course, did not partake of the general orientation towards Dutch Calvinism — kept writing German.

The disappearance of Dutch in the eighteenth century and the simultaneous reinstatement of German in all domains of written language also hang together with extralinguistic "objects of adaptation". In 1813, Gronau was annexed by the Prussian state (cf. 1.4), and from then on the ties with Germany — economic but also cultural — became stronger again. When the Prussian government, in a series of steps between 1819 and 1832, effectuated the abolition of Dutch in public life (School and Church), because divergence in language use did not conform with the requirements of a modern centralist state, it did not take very long before the population switched to German in private life too. In the course of a few decades, Dutch was completely abandoned. An explanation for this fluent and rapid language shift will be given in section 3.3.

Beside the sociocultural and historico-political developments that exerted an influence on language use (cf. supra), also the notion of domains of use could be handled to systematical descriptions of linguistic behavior and could be talked about in terms of objects of adaptation. I will postpone this matter to the discussion of the micro-level of analysis (4.1).

3.2 Levels of adaptation

Adaptation processes can be at work at any level of linguistic structuring, from the choice of the sign system to suprasegmental and prosodic sound features. The adaptation processes that are relevant at a very high level: they relate to the preference for one writing language (sign system = language; channel = written language) over another. As far as this choice is based on an individual decision, more will be said about it in sections 4.1 and 4.2; here we will mention some macro-aspects of language choice in Gronau.

The writing languages that have played a role in the history of Gronau (MLG, NHG and Dutch) were all supraregional languages22 that to a certain extent served as linguae francae in the correspondence between people who did not necessarily speak the same local dialect. As these languages all had to be learnt as an L2 and were often written by people who apparently had not mastered them perfectly, almost all texts in the corpus under investigation that were not written by one of the few professional writers in Gronau display some degree of interference from spoken Low German. In texts written by people who knew both NHG and Dutch, linguistic contact between two writing languages can be more than once be witnessed: both NHG and Dutch for inhabitants of Gronau had an L2-status and had to be studied at school. The genetic relationship and the many resemblances between the two languages seem to have made the right choice of single words or larger constructions from one of them rather problematic to a lot of writers. Some writers even mix features of spoken Low German, the NHG writing language and Dutch. Hence phenomena such as lexical borrowing and hypercorrection (subcategories of linguistic interference as defined in footnote 16) occur very often and are all instances of the language contact taking place in the minds of these bilingual and sometimes even trilingual speakers. Whether these are more frequent in periods of transition from the general use of one writing language to that of another, and can hence be

22 It is, however, difficult to distinguish between interference from the former MLG writing language and interference that arises on the basis of the Low German dialects spoken by most scribes.

23 Just as spoken languages die from loss of speakers (cf. Denison 1977), we could say that writing languages die from loss of writers.
seen as heralds of language death, as comparable investigations on a larger scale seem to suggest (cf. Cornelissen 1986). I have not been able to find out on the basis of my materials. As they remained idiosyncratic to a large extent and did not contribute to any substantial language change, however, I will have to deal with them within a micro-level analysis as well (cf. 4.2).

3.3 Stages of adaptation

"Language A (or variant A) is never replaced suddenly by language B (or variant B), but language use becomes variable, i.e. A and B are both used in the same social context. After this stage of variable use, the use of B will become categorical." (Appel/Muyseken 1987:41)

To all adaptation processes, there is a temporal dimension. Therefore it should be possible, also within the context of the present discussion, to distinguish stages of adaptation through which the linguistic developments described so far have had to go. Such stages as seem relevant here all relate to the social structuring of the linguistic community we are talking about: some classes of people and some institutions are the first to alter their linguistic habits; some lag behind. I shall briefly mention a few such stages of adaptation.

The shift from MLG to NHG in northern Germany did not take place overnight, it took almost two centuries (from 1600 to 1700), and several factors interacted in determining how soon the new writing language would be adopted. One such factor was a geographical one: the further a town, a court etc. was situated from the "radiation point" of NHG (the southern part of what is now the German Democratic Republic), the longer it usually maintained its old writing habits. Another factor was a social one: the chanceries of the monarchical courts, with their widespread contacts all over the empire, were often the first to adopt the new norm. After a few years or even decades later, they would be imitated by the cities' chanceries, which would direct themselves in NHG to their monarch, but for some time to come would still use MLG internally. In the domains of Church and School, MLG was kept relatively long because the new language first had to be at least passively familiar to the population before it could be used there. Documents written by ordinary people would therefore still be in MLG, when the higher classes had already been using NHG for quite a long time. Though evidence from this period is rather scarce and incomplete for Gronau, this finding is definitely corroborated: those inhabitants of Gronau who were the last to adopt NHG (farmers, artisans, tradesmen) were also those who had had very little schooling and who played only a marginal role in public life.

26 In German linguistic writing, a distinction is made between interference (Interferenz), seen as a phenomenon at the level of the individual speaker (Weinreich's interference in speech, 1970:11) and transference (Transferenz), which is interference that has been adopted into the language system through habitualization (Weinreich's interference in language, see also Leys 1988:26-28). In Gronau then, interference did not turn into transference, i.e. no typical Gronau variants of the writing languages in use were developed in the course of time.

The adoption of Dutch in the eighteenth century was restricted to a few domains. First, it took place within the Calvinist Church, and this time really overnight: a Dutch cleric succeeded a German one (cf. 3.1) and immediately started preaching and writing in Dutch. At the same time, German was replaced by Dutch as a teaching language at school as well, so that within a few years a generation using the Dutch writing language had been educated. All those people, who belonged to the wealthier part of the population, later became businessmen or gentleman-farmers and took up posts in the city council. In these functions, they kept using and thus fostering the use of Dutch. This development, together with the economic and cultural orientation towards the Netherlands, led to the establishment of Dutch as a writing language for the largest part of the (literate part of the) population within twenty years. Only the Catholics and the representatives of the Count of Bentheim stuck to German.

The reinstatement of German as a writing language and the concomitant disappearance of Dutch from all domains of public and private life after 1815 shows a more or less opposite image. In this case, many citizens were faster to switch to German than the institutions Church and School. Between 1815 and 1832, the Prussian administration abolished the use of Dutch in the Calvinist Church, and in 1831 the same measure was taken with regard to the Calvinist School. By then, however, a large number of the wealthier citizens had already spontaneously opted for German as the language of progress and prosperity. After a period of economic chaos, caused by the Napoleonic wars, the Prussians were welcomed as bringers of peace and unity. The Prussian State offered a new market for the withering textile industry of Gronau, new roads were built, connecting the until then remote frontier town Gronau with the rest of Germany, and when the United Kingdom of the Netherlands started levying tolls on textile from Germany, manufacturers and tradesmen in Gronau simply turned to inner-Germany for the sale of their goods. Thanks to Prussia, Gronau then became one of the most prosperous industrial towns on the Continent. This factor, together with a rising German nationalism, illustrated by a few diaries I had the opportunity to have a look at, contributed to the rising prestige of the German language, which was soon largely adopted in the more "progressive" bourgeois circles. The more conservative part of the population, i.e. those people who did not immediately come into contact with the benefits of the new regime (manual laborers, farmers), were only "germanicized" later, viz. after 1831, when German became the official teaching language at school.

3.4 Degrees and functions of adaptation

Degrees of adaptation are degrees to which adaptation processes are accessible to the language user; functions of adaptation are the ways in which adaptation processes are exploited strategically in verbal interaction. Since these parameters, when applied to the subject matter, appear to be to a large extent interrelated (in the sense that the more "strategic" the choice of one writing language over another is, the more accessible this choice will probably be to the one who makes it), I will here deal with them, quite summarily, in one section.

I take some imagination to figure out a way in which the adaptation processes I have been discussing so far could be said to have
been conscious on a macro-level of analysis. This level transcends that of communication between individuals, and consciousness seems to exist only in individuals. I will therefore come back to this issue in section 4.4. Only the terms language politics and language planning, mentioned in Verschuuren (1987:110), allow a short digression. Administrative measures taken by governments in order to influence language use in their territories, if they occurred at all, were highly unusual in Germany before the nineteenth century. The Prussians, who were the first to start issuing orders of that kind, had a clear goal in mind: for their state to function as efficiently as a modern centralist state ought to function, all regional idiosyncracies had to be abolished. The use of foreign national languages along the borders of the country did not only hinder communication, it was also likely to be an impediment to the strongly desired development of a nation-state with national solidarity. Therefore it had to be brought to an end. So they definitely realized the importance of language as a weapon in their political strategy, and they used it with success, as has been pointed out already (cf. 3.1, 3.3).

4 MICROPROCESSES OF ADAPTATION

4.0 Some introductory remarks

"When one considers, however, that the bilingual speaker is the ultimate locus of language contact, it is clear that even socio-cultural factors regulate interference through the mediation of individual speakers." (Weitz 1970:71)

Linguistic adaptation processes only exist by virtue of individual speakers who, in day-to-day communication, use language as one of their means to express their beliefs, desires and intentions. Without this individual element, the macro-level of analysis that constituted the focus of the previous section could not even have been talked about. We shall therefore now concentrate on some aspects of micro-level adaptation and once again try to test the applicability of the framework to the data at hand. It should be noted right from the start that the diachronic aspect of the individual's language use will have to be left out of account: our corpus provides no clues to mechanisms and regularities in the acquisition of writing languages.

4.1 Objects of adaptation

On the micro-level of analysis, the main instances of adaptation by individual speakers (or rather: writers) can be seen in the relationship between language use and social domains, and between language use and the role of the hearer (or rather: addressee).

Verschuuren (1987:62) states that "social settings and institutions impose all sorts of rules on the way in which certain verbal acts can be performed [...]. In a way, this also pertains to our subject matter. Indeed, from various remarks in the previous section it may already have become clear that during several periods in the history of Gronau the choice of a writing language depended not on the writers’ personal preferences, but on such social constellations as have generally been called, following Fishman, domains: institutional contexts and their congruent linguistic co-occurrences (cf. footnote 6). Especially for the eighteenth century, with its co-existence of two prestigious writing languages (Dutch and [New High] German), the constraints on language use were striking. From the point of view of the domains, the homogeneity of language use in the documents that have come to us suggests that every domain was strictly associated with one particular writing language, so that for instance no Dutch documents would be written by representatives of the Catholic Church, citizens of Gronau in private affairs would only use Dutch, and the servants of the Count would only write in German. From the point of view of other language users, evidence shows that those writers who knew only one writing language, when need arose, asked one of the more skilled inhabitants of Gronau to write in their place, after which they simply signed the document; those who knew both writing languages actually changed their writing habits according to the domains they found themselves in. A school teacher in the second half of the eighteenth century, for example, wrote Dutch documents as a teacher and as a functionary within the Calvinist Church; as one of the official secretaries of the Count of Bentheim, however, he used the German writing language at the same time.

One parameter sometimes interfered with the role played by social domains, viz. the influence certain addressees exerted on the choice of a writing language. Inhabitants of Gronau who normally wrote in Dutch would always direct themselves in German to their lord, the Count of Bentheim. The same holds for the (catholic!) Bishop of Münster: even the most convinced Calvinists would go out of their way to write their letters to him in German. The chanceries of these two authorities exclusively wrote in German, and hence this seemed the only language that could appropriately be used when writing to them. It is obvious that the aspect of authority and authority in the relationship between the inhabitants of Gronau and the above-mentioned addressees determined the latter's language use; an element of distance also seems to have played a role: the Count and the Bishop were not only socially but also geographically far away, and thereby commanded perhaps even more respect, whereas e.g. the judge, the bailiff and the sheriff, who, being the Count's direct representatives, had also been invested with a great deal of authority, lived almost literally next-door and were personally known to the population. Hence, although they themselves only used German, they received documents in both writing languages: nobody seemed to deem it necessary to change their writing habits because of them.

27 Of these, I distinguished the following in my dissertation: the institutions representing the Count of Bentheim (administration and juris-diction); the city council; business life; private life; the Church (calvinist and catholic) and the schools (idem).

28 One bailiff who knew Dutch only used it in letters addressed to tenants of the Count living in the Netherlands; in his contacts with the population of Gronau he typically and systematically used German.

29 One apparent deviation from this rule will have to be mentioned in section 4.4. We will see there, however, that even in the case of a Dutch letter addressed to the Bishop of Münster the principle of addressee-orientation can remain unviolated.
A few more instances of adaptation to the addressee will be mentioned in sections 4.2 and 4.4.

4.2 Levels of adaptation

On a micro-level of analysis, the level of adaptation that has to be mentioned with regard to our subject matter is the same as the one referred to in section 2.2: the choice of one writing language over the other.

Choosing to communicate in a particular language is tantamount to committing oneself to a whole set of interrelated choices on a smaller scale: one has to (at least try and) be consistent and to use the language system all along, i.e. not only to use words of that particular language, but also to mold them into the right structures, use them in the right sense, with the right pronunciation and intonation (or the right spelling and punctuation when writing) etc. If the language in question has the status of an L1, and if the person trying to use it does not completely master it, all this may be too heavy a task and the result may be a text displaying some degree of linguistic interference: deviations from the norms of a language resulting from a speaker’s familiarity with at least one other language. In Gronau, we witness this phenomenon very often. In the period of transition from MLG to NHG, linguistic uncertainty seems to have been particularly strong as appears from texts containing very unsystematic mixtures of the two writing languages. In texts dating from later times, the background of spoken Low German is often noticeably present in NHG texts, and writers in the eighteenth century who knew three languages (their Low German dialect next to the Dutch and German writing languages) regularly found it difficult to keep them apart. The resulting interferences qualitatively and quantitatively vary from writer to writer: the amount of schooling a particular person had had and probably also the frequency with which he had to write at all determined the fluency and the “purity” of his texts. Thus Gronau never had hybrid languages with an independent status of their own; all mixtures remained idiosyncratic phenomena (cf. 3.2). The use of linguistic interference as a means of implicitly showing social good-will seems, however, to a certain extent at least, to have been a well-established practice. To this issue I will return in section 4.4.

One potential level of adaptation that is inherent to writing languages and the situation we are talking about, but which was made use of only a few times in the corpus, ought nevertheless to be mentioned: the graphemic level. The most striking peculiarity about German texts dating from the late eighteenth and from the nineteenth centuries is that in comparison with, say, seventeenth century texts in the same language, and certainly with Dutch texts, they are virtually illegible. That is because they were no longer written in the Latin set of characters that had been in use all over the western world, but in typically German “gothic” characters (Frakturschrift), also called Gothic. A present-day reader wanting to decipher such documents not only has to know German, he also has to learn a new alphabet. That was probably also the problem for those inhabitants of Gronau who could read Dutch but passively understood German, but had difficulties with the Frakturschrift. Hence we see that now and then one particular baffle, when writing to the population, for example in order to pass on proclamations from the Commercial Office, did so in the usual German, but also in the more generally known Latin characters. This seems to have been his practice, above all, when it was important for the readers to understand the message; in other cases, he omitted this form of adaptation.

4.3 Stages of adaptation

A writer either uses language A or language B. The decision itself has nothing temporal to it (except, I suppose, on a neural linguistic level). Stages of adaptation could, however, be distinguished here by pointing out that the choice of one particular language rather than the other can be made after certain circumstances in the world have emerged (e.g. the role played by domains, cf. 4.1), or that it can create certain circumstances (e.g. bring about an awareness in the reader that an implicit message is being conveyed, cf. 4.4). As the material in my corpus is too fragmentary to allow for any serious discussion of the mechanisms governing such aspects of language choice, I will not go any further into these questions.

Georg Cornelissen, who has studied the replacement of Dutch by German in a setting roughly comparable to the situation in Gronau (1986), mentions a phenomenon that could very well be discussed under the label “stages of adaptation”: on the basis of a quantitative analysis of whole series of texts written by the same persons over a period of many years, he concludes that not only on a societal level, but also within individual language users the shift from one language to another can be a gradual one. People mostly do not switch their writing languages overnight: especially if they have not had the proper training to keep them apart, their linguistic confusion will lead them to mixing features of the two language systems. Before they can manage a more or less “pure” realization of the target language, they will run through all stages of (individual) interlanguage. Such phenomena have probably existed in Gronau as well. Once again, however, I am obliged to leave this issue open; the corpus is too limited to elaborate it any further.

4.4 Functions of adaptation

Adaptation processes can be exploited strategically in the course of verbal interaction. Also with regard to language choice in Gronau, we can talk of the functions adaptation processes served in daily communication. In so far as these functions were simply for the language user to comply with rules of etiquette or with generally accepted norms of social behavior, they have already been mentioned (cf. 4.1) and should not bother us here any more. When, however, these functions are clearly to be seen as parts of broader adaptation strategies, they become interesting again. In the next few paragraphs I shall mention three examples of linguistic behavior that seem to be indicative of such adaptation strategies. The philosophy behind these examples is that adaptation to the hearer/reader can take two directions: a speaker/writer can try to minimize the effort his addressee will have to make in order

10 For one thing, in most cases I have not been able to find more than just one or a few documents for each writer I have come across; hence I do not even have any partial bio-bibliographies of inhabitants of Gronau at my possession from which to take my information on possible stages of adaptation.
to understand what is being said by choosing the kind of language the addressee is likely to know best (strategy of convergence); he can also try to maintain the effort on the part of the addressee by choosing the kind of language the latter is likely to have difficulties with (strategy of divergence). Both options are instances of adaptation, only the first is directed at creating solidarity and good-will, whereas the latter is directed at creating a distance between speaker and hearer or even at conveying a message of hostility.

An instance of the first approach (adaptation serving the function of solidarity) can be witnessed in the financial surveys the City Council of Gronau wrote every year, giving a list of sums of money that had been collected, and another of sums of money that had been spent. These bills, of which a large number—mainly dating from the eighteenth century—have been preserved, were checked by the bailiff, who as a representative of the Count of Bentheim had to make sure that no tax-money was embezzled and who had to officially approve them. Therefore the writers of the bills had all reasons to stay on good terms with him, which also seems to have had its linguistic consequences. Although all internal documents of the City Council were normally written in Dutch, the writers of the bills made a special effort to write in German and thus to minimize the effort of the part of the addressee. Those writers who did not know enough German to simply switch from one writing language to the other at least tried to give their texts a German "flavor" by using as many German words and expressions as they could think of and by using German headings for their columns instead of Dutch ones (e.g. Einkünfte and Ausgaben instead of Inkomsten and Uitgaven), while writing unambiguously Dutch texts.

In a few cases, language can be said to have been used as a weapon in interpersonal strategy transcending the merely linguistic level of communication (adaptational function of divergence). One instance has already been allowed to in section 4.1 (footnote 29). Of all the letters I have found addressed to the Bishop of Münster that were written by inhabitants of Gronau, one is strikingly not in German. This is a letter written by the mayor of Gronau, Gerlachus Kellwers, in 1731. The contents of this letter probably indicate why Kellwers should be so rudely unco-operative: he angrily complains about the financial burden and the decrease in population weighing on Gronau since the devastation caused by the latest attack of the Bishop's troops on the village32. Kellwers does not beg for money, which he would not have been given anyway; he simply seeks an outlet for his frustration about his own powerlessness. Perhaps this is the reason why he should write in Dutch, rather than have someone translate the letter into German. It seems to have been the only means he had of taking revenge.

A second example of such behavior is a couple of letters that testify to a quarrel between the Count's Bailiff in Gronau and the local Calvinist preacher, who disagreed over a financial matter. A first observation to be made is of course the choice of the channel of communication (cf. Verschueren 1987:79-79): why should two men who saw each other every day write angry letters to one another, rather than settle their affairs orally? It seems very likely that under the given circumstances written communication was the best way to signal the chill that had come over their relationship. The same distance was created by their respective choices of a language to write in. The bailiff, who knew both German and Dutch, chose the former language, whereas the preacher, who was Dutch but also knew German, answered in Dutch. They both used the language that was customary in the institutes they represented (the Count's administration and the Calvinist Church), i.e. they opted for formality rather than for solidarity. The way they adapted to one another (by refusing to make any linguistic concession) had the function of signalling this attitude.

4.6 Degrees of adaptation

"Das Infragestellen von Sprache trifft den Menschen am Lebensnerv." (Besch 1979:324)

With regard to degrees of adaptation, i.e. to the psychological accessibility of the described adaptational processes for the language user, we will have to leave it at a few tentative reflections, since no metalinguistic utterances informing us of this aspect have been preserved.

Apart from the rather self-evident consideration that encoding a message in the medium of written language automatically entails a higher degree of accessibility than passing it on orally, we can surmise that especially in periods of transition from the general use of one writing language to that of another, language users must have known very well which (macro-level) adaptation processes were going on. When language use in a number of domains had become variable, it was up to them to decide which language they were going to write in. This, of course, was a consciously made decision. The level of consciousness may even have been higher in those cases where a writer wanted or felt obliged to use a language he had not (yet) perfectly mastered: the extent to which certain documents display linguistic interference illustrates how problematic language shifts must have been for some individual language users. But also in the relatively stable diplosic period, roughly between 1720 and 1813 (cf. section 2), language users who had to switch writing languages according to the domains they found themselves in or the addressees they were writing to will definitely have been aware of the choices they were making. The fact that deviations from rules of linguistic behavior can be invoked as evidence of strategies of divergence (cf. 4.4) seems to prove this point. One cannot very well imagine a high-level decision such as the choice of a language to write in to be made on a subconscious level, certainly not in the period under discussion here, when writing was not yet the trivial act it is today, but rather a highly appreciated means of saving information deemed worthy of preservation from total oblivion.

32 After 1588 (conversion to Calvinism, cf. 1.4), the Bishop of Münster had his troops occupy Gronau several times in order to re-establish Catholicism. The Counts of Bentheim were too weak to prevent him from doing so, and in two treaties (1659 and 1771) had to yield most of their authority over Gronau to him.
CONCLUSIONS

"Du choc des idées jaillit la lumière."

(Blaize Pascal)

The aim of this paper, as pointed out in section 1.1, was to confront the adaptationist perspective on pragmatics proposed by Jef Verschueren (1987) with an issue traditionally not considered as part of the field of pragmatic investigation, yet fitting under that label according to the broad definition of pragmatics suggested in the same publication. The incentive to this enterprise lay not only in my own interest in approaching the data I had been working on for many months from a new and therefore refreshing angle, but also, and - in view of the course this paper was originally written for - more relevantly, in the desire to check (of course only partially) the validity of the framework and of Verschueren's bold claim as to its applicability. It seems to me that the framework has stood the test.

Approaching the matter from the perspective of our point of departure (cf. 1.2), the question could arise whether any distinctions or findings of empirical or theoretical importance have had to be neglected in order for the framework to be successfully applied to the subject matter dealt with in my dissertation. The answer is that this is not the case. Not only have all essential aspects of the dissertation been discussed in one or even more sections of this paper, but also has there been no need at all for anything to be left out of account because it would not have fit into the scheme. Whatever is more, I now feel that the systematocity of my dissertation and the relevance of my findings could have been enhanced a great deal by applying the framework to the subject matter. Had I started collecting and interpreting my data from within the adaptationist perspective, I probably would have had far more inspiration to go into detail about many aspects of shifts in language use in Gronau I/W. The size of this paper, which has become about twice as lengthy as it was originally intended, may be seen as an indication of my enthusiasm in carrying the enterprise of reinterpreting my data from a new angle to a satisfying conclusion.

From the perspective of the framework itself, I think I may safely conclude that it is indeed capable of coping with a sociolinguistically and contact–linguistically inspired investigation. It is true that not all of its aspects have dwelt upon to the same extent (which is reflected by the uneven length of the sections in this paper), that some aspects could certainly have been further elaborated (e.g. the division of micro-level analysis into diachrony and synchrony, which I have been perhaps over-eager to neglect, as well as the many-sided relationships between different aspects of the model, which are only hinted at through numerous cross-references), and that other aspects have hardly been dealt with at all (see, for example, section 3.4), but these are all limitations resulting from inadequacies to be found in the corpus at hand or, at least as often, in the person of the author himself. The applicability of the framework itself is beyond doubt. The significance it can lend to research findings has already been mentioned in the above paragraph; a further advantage it probably has to offer is that of enabling interdisciplinary comparison and discussion in a field of linguistics - German Sprachgeschichte - which already in the introduction was said to be traditionally self-contained. The "translation" of concepts and findings from various disciplines dealing with aspects of linguistic variability or adaptability into the highest common factor, which the framework can be said to be, would certainly enhance possibilities for the fruitful exchange of thoughts.

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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND OBJECTS OF ADAPTATION

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0. INTRODUCTION

Jef Verschueren’s (1987) proposal for ‘pragmatics as a theory of linguistic adaptation’ provides the pragmatist with a most comprehensive theoretical framework for the analysis of ‘language’. An important aspect of this approach is the fact that language is re-defined: the linguistic phenomenon is considered a functional thing, subject to various forms of adaptation, rather than some abstract, in vacuo element devoid of context and functionality. To me, the perspective view on pragmatics implies a new paradigm for linguistics. A sentence in pragmatics is different now from a sentence in ‘linguistics’ proper; and as long as we approach our objects of inquiry from the perspective in question, we are working inside a potentially unified framework.

Therefore, Verschueren’s ‘perspective’ is a theory to me (or, at least, it can claim that status), and not just a ‘coherent frame of reference’ (Verschueren 1987: 17) or a unified conceptual framework for pragmatic linguistic analysis.

My own concern is with checking the applicability of the framework in one particular field of analysis: intercultural communication1. I feel that some modifications should be made to the framework, especially on the level of ‘objects of adaptation’, in order for the adaptation theory to cope successfully with (some of the many) problems in the analysis of intercultural communication. In section 1, I will sketch my own view on ‘interculturality’ in communication; section 2 will contain a proposal for a new object of adaptation. Finally, in section 3 I will touch upon the methodological implications of the modified framework.

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1 Most of the remarks made in this paper are drawn from my PhD dissertation ‘Kiswahili Politieke Stijl’ (‘Kiswahili Politic Style’, University of Ghent, 1986), Many of these reflections have been the subject of numerous stimulating discussions with Jef Verschueren, Rik Pinxten, Jan-Ola Ostman, and Volker Hinnenkamp.
1. A SITUATIONAL APPROACH TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Quite a lot of 'strange' things (the terminology is Liberman's (1986)) happen in intercultural interaction situations. Not only is there a confrontation of different styles of communication (cf. Kochman 1981; Scollon 1984; Scollon & Scollon 1981), or a degree of mutual intratextuality (cf. Pinxten et al. 1983), but also some differences in fundamental conceptualizations of communicative activity, speech or talk may be influenced (cf. Rosaldo 1984; Hymes 1981, 1987). Furthermore, intercultural communication always develops in situations, which can to a considerable degree, influence both the formal structure of the interaction and the symbolic input and exchange of cultural characteristics into the communication behavior of the participants involved (cf. Blommaert 1988, chapter 4, and Blommaert n.d.). Finally, intercultural communication is the locus par excellence for racist, prejudiced or stereotyped discourse both within concrete instances of intercultural interaction as in accounts of such interactions (Van Dijk 1987; Van Dijk & Wodak (eds.) 1988; Hewstone & Giles 1986).

How can we find a suitable analytical framework for such complex processes? There have been many attempts (e.g. Knapp & Knapp–Pothoff 1987; Hinnenkamp 1987a; Gudykunst 1986), and still stumble over the same block: culture. It is felt that intercultural communication distinguishes itself as a communication type from others by the fact that culturally different interlocutors interact. The cultural variable should therefore be made a crucial element in the analysis. This is a truism, of course, but it is a problematic one. What is culture in communication? How do cultural characteristics and differences become symbolized in concrete patterns of interaction? How and to what extent do they account for communication breakdown and conflict?

Analysis can take various perspectives on the matter, the extremes being the ethnological approach, advocated by Liberman (1986) and Hinnenkamp (1987a) on the 'minimalist' side, and the 'cultures collide' approach with notorious attempts by e.g. Glenn (1981) and Hofstede (1980) on the 'maximalist' side. The first group opts for a strictly interactional approach to culture in intercultural communication. The interlocutor's culture is an incorporated part of his identity as a socially acting human being (Hinnenkamp 1987a), he will enact and express his culture in his interactions with other human beings, be they from the same cultural background or from a different one. Culture is here a 'member's concept' (Knapp & Knapp–Pothoff 1987), it is a subconscious part of the interacting's identity as a speaker, and is therefore greatly a matter of perception by the other party in the interaction. Hinnenkamp presents a quite reasonable account of the problem of prejudice and racism (see e.g. his analysis of the already well-known 'Türkischmann Du' example: Hinnenkamp 1987b: 163f.), and in general the 'minimalist' approach may be the best point of departure for empirical investigations. The 'maximalists' on the other hand, advocate the view that a person's culture will always determine his way of interacting with others. Culture cannot be managed, it is something beyond the individual, which creates and maintains an unfavorable climate for intercultural interaction. In any instance of intercultural conflict, the 'cultures' collide. Due to the insurmountable cultural differences between the interlocutors (which can be reduced to matters of cognition: different styles, different reasoning, different forms of consciousness, etc. see Glenn 1981), intercultural communication is a highly risky business, which often leads to enormous problems of misunderstanding at the level of international group relationships (this is the core of Glenn's (1981)

analysis: international conflicts can often be reduced to problems created in communication).

The latter approach is far from adequate. First, it is implicitly ethnocentric. A monolithical and static picture of culture is sketched, which creates a sort of determinism with regard to what happens in intercultural communication. The internal contradiction, which makes the approach ethnocentric, is that people like Glenn suggest that we, that is, the Westerners, can overcome the problems of interculturality, since we understand the problems created by the other's otherness. They, i.e. the Non-Westerners, however, seem to be incapable of finding an appropriate way of dealing with that problem. Furthermore, it is clear that gross generalization underlies the argument: not all conflicts in international settings can be attributed to conflicts between cultures, styles of reasoning, or modes of thought (see also Verschueren 1984 for criticism of this approach).

The 'minimalist' approach doesn't seem to be able to account for the degree of generalization which may be necessary if we talk about 'culture' (which is, after all, a group characteristic). The way in which groups of people acquire and process the same (or comparable, or familiar) characteristics in communication and other forms of social behavior cannot be reduced to an incorporated aspect of an individual's identity; 'styles' do exist. True, a concrete instance of communication displays the 'culture' of the participant as an individual; nevertheless, underlying patterns can be found among a group of individuals, and they can be related to different forms of socialization, of learning etc. (see Scollon & Scollon's (1981) excellent analysis of Athabascan vs. English patterns of socialization reflected in communication). The 'maximalist' approach, in turn, is prone to overgeneralization. The truth must be somewhere in between.

First and foremost, it seems to me that 'culture' in communication is not a homogeneous phenomenon. It manifests itself in different forms, and with different discourse functionalities. I distinguish three forms of 'culture' in intercultural communication:

1. Culture-specific styles of communication, which are quite stable. Differences in conceptualization of the very act of communication, as well as less fundamental differences in language realization (pauses, intonation, nonverbal behavior, etc.) are a potential for difficulties in communication, but may also lead to processes of mutual accommodation.

2. These processes of mutual accommodation themselves. In intercultural communication, interlocutors gradually develop an ad hoc
communicative style, which is construed discourse internally and serves the purposes of both interlocutors in the concrete situation only. It is a one-time realization, dependent to a large degree on situational influences, and developed through a systematic stressing of certain culture-specific features of communicative style while suppressing others. The speakers select from their potential components preposed as 'objects of adaptation'. If we take this model as an adequate representation of what is happening in interaction, we may be close to the truth: we take communication to be an interactive process between at least two parties (S and H). Hence, a situational analysis can be based upon the model sketched by Verschuuren (1987: 60); which provides a sound heuristic basis for any pragmatic analysis.

2. A NEW OBJECT OF ADAPTATION

We take Verschuuren's 'objects of adaptation' (Verschuuren 1987: 60) to be a model of what is observable in communication. Any instance of communication will display the components preposed as 'objects of adaptation'.

If, however, the model is taken to be more than the representation of the observable reality of communication, some problems may arise. I see two general objections that can be made. The first one is on the centrality of the S/H in the model. It seems that, besides possible influences from the 'physical and social world', the possible choices in communicative interaction depend on the autonomous and relatively unrestricted acting individual. The only constraints on his choices may be adaptations on the level of his individual identity, like sex, age, and culture. Second, Verschuuren presents culture as a possible constraint on communication on the level of the acting individual; hence the enactment of his intentions as well as his concrete choices in communication are viewed as dependent on the construction of his social and cultural identity as a communicating individual; they are, in other words, individual features.

Now, as regards the centrality of the S/H in a linguistic model, I think we must take Rosside's (1982) and Du Bois' (1987) criticism very seriously. It appears that the view of the communicating human being as an autonomous individual is highly culture-specific, and that other cultures do not always view communication as the product of an individual's choice. If the adaptation theory is to be a theory of linguistic action, or a theory of communication in general, which I think we can deduce from Verschuuren's 'impertinent question' (Verschuuren 1987: 38-39), it should account for those culture-specific conceptualizations of communication as variables within a model which in itself can claim universal or culture-independent status (i.e. it should represent linguistic action devoid of all possible cultural influences).

Both the problem of the centrality of the individual S/H as the problem of integrating a macro-variable 'culture' in a micro-analysis of intercultural communication, can be solved when we view the situation as a whole as an object of adaptation, sensitive to influences from one macro-variable, the possible communicable set of variables. This may sound like a strange proposal. However, as we saw in the analysis of intercultural communication, the situation as a whole is constrained by the fact that 'culture' influences at least one of the interlocutors' communicative behavior. This 'culturality' does not only restrict the
individual interlocutor, but it also influences the behavior of the other party in the interaction; in fact, though part of the 'cultural' can be managed by the interlocutors through the use of conscious and accessible discursive strategies, the whole process of intercultural interaction within the particular situation is influenced by the cultural difference between the two interlocutors. But in what is this constraint a tangible influence on the interaction? The most workable view may be that 'culture' restricts the interlocutors' possible communicative behavior in what they can possibly communicate to each other. In other words: the interlocutors' culture provides an upper threshold of understanding. No matter how, some meanings will never be understandable, nor communicable, to the other. 'Culture', in this pragmatic model, is then the set of possibly communicable and exchangeable meanings. It provides the ultimate restriction upon the individual's choices in communication, whatever situation he may find himself in. (Note that this formulation should not be interpreted to preclude the capacity to 'learn' cultures other than one's own.)

This set of possibly communicable meanings is a variable that goes beyond the level of the single individual: it is a group phenomenon, restricting a priori what can be said among a wide range of individuals. We could go even further: a subset of these possibly communicable meanings may have universal status. I am convinced that all cultures share some complexes of meanings, which are communicable in specific and recognizable ways. Meaning complexes like politics, man–woman and parent–child relationships, taboo etc., appear in all societies as specific communication types.

I feel that if the model drawn by Verschueren (1987: 60) should represent a culture free model of linguistic action, containing a maximum of explanatory concepts, his scheme should be slightly altered, such as to include the macro-influences restricting possible choices in the form of restrictions upon what is possibly communicable within a given situation:

PHYSICAL & SOCIAL WORLD

possibly communicable meanings
(universal communication types)

Speaker
intentions
choices
(situation)

Hearer
effects

3. SOME METHODOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

I can see three important methodological advantages of this slightly altered model of 'objects of adaptation'.

1. The situational nature of pragmatic analysis is safeguarded. The analyst treats 'situations' as his units of analysis. I have argued that this approach is the only possible one for the analysis of intercultural communication. The 'situation' provides a maximum of contextualized information on what happens in the concrete interchange of linguistic acts between the interlocutors. Furthermore, the interactional nature of these situations is safeguarded as well. The quintessence of any situation is the interactional process developing between two or more individuals.

2. On the other hand, the individual is not advanced as the central heuristic (and theoretical) concept in the model. Rather, the autonomy of the individual as a communicator is a variable. It is part of the structure of the situation, which as a whole is subject to influences of a higher order. 'Intention', the concept so fiercely (and convincingly) attacked by the late Michelle Rosaldo (1982) becomes a situation-specific variable, instead of the central, meaning-determining concept in linguistic analysis. The 'autonomous individual' can be described as a culture-specific adaptation, depending on the concrete situation.

3. Perhaps the most important consequence is that this model provides an answer to a question which is rarely tackled in linguistics, but is a common topic in anthropology (e.g. Pinxten 1984): that of the role of the language user in the analysis. If it is true that the linguist selects his material through his own, personal and cultural biases, then the study of intercultural communication, as well as the study of ethnomusicology, becomes a methodologically problematic field. Strictly speaking, the linguist selects from his (culturally different) language data what he finds relevant against the background of his own cultural categories. Thus, a linguistic analysis of non-western languages (or of intercultural interaction situations) always reflects the perspective of the linguist as much as anyone else. The linguistic methodology the linguist uses in this enterprise receives the status of an 'objectifying tool', guaranteeing at least a degree of context-independence and abstraction.

What can one place against this? Not much, of course, except perhaps some proposals for a different concept of 'objectivity'. In order for the researcher to reduce to a minimum his own cultural bias, he must reduce his autonomy in the construction of his object (i.e. the interlocutor, the language user...). A methodologically sound way to do this through a 'universal frame of reference' (see Pinxten et al. 1983), that is, a set of items that provide 'common ground' for the researcher as well as for the one investigated; thus both the researcher and the 'object' construct a reality which is discursive and interactive, and which guarantees at least an intercultural dimension to the research instead of absolute power for the researcher.

Applied to my proposals in this paper, the 'universal frame of reference' for ethnomusicological or intercultural linguistic analysis is the set of 'universal communication types'. I assume that, when I investigate a Kaswali political style, I have 'common ground' with my object, in the sense that I myself have a picture of what 'politics' and 'political discourse' mean in my own culture. My analysis then takes the shape of an investigation of the ways in which the same set of meanings (the
structure of society, its internal dynamics, and the role of the individual within it is expressed in Kiswahili discourse. I thus reconstruct a situation in which I am subject to Kiswahili political discourse; I am the hearer in an interactional process. The conclusion I draw with regard to the 'specificities' of Kiswahili political style will then reflect the 'relevant differences', experienced by me, between my conceptualization of 'political communication' and the one represented in Kiswahili political discourse. In that way, I consider linguistic analysis itself a discursive process, a form of discourse, which is, I think, one important aspect of the pragmatic perspective.

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ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION,
1987 INTERNATIONAL PRAGMATICS CONFERENCE:
STATEMENTS, REFLECTIONS, AND AFTERTHOUGHTS

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1. Anthony Giddens (1988) has offered a valuable distinction between the social sciences and the natural sciences as regards their evaluation:
   While the latter are judged on their 'cumulative' value (to be understood as the accumulated sum total over time of their proven, theoretical generalizations and applicable, useful instrumentalizations), the former are evaluated according to whether or not they have produced changes in societal praxis, and whether or not those changes have been of a beneficial character for society as a whole.

   This explains, among other things, why social scientists should not feel bad because their contributions to 'Science' are not as spectacular or (accountable) as those of their brethren and sisters in the natural sciences, and also, why it is so hard to achieve a Nobel Prize in those fields (especially if you're not a strict, accountable economist).

2. Another point that Giddens raises in this connection is what I would propose to name the 'suicidal' character of the social sciences, by which is meant that these sciences, if successful, destroy the evidence that could be used to justify their hypotheses and their work in general. The social science that 'makes a difference' does this at its own cost: after having operated, it leaves things in a different (and hopefully better) state than before.

   In a sense, the social sciences never finish anything: as soon as they are putting a hypothesis into effect, they go on to something new, since the old state of affairs is no longer there to work on.

3. In our context, the dispute is about whether a science such as linguistics is mainly to be regarded as a social science, or whether it should be evaluated along the lines of natural science research. (Here, the emphasis put by linguists on generalizations as the hallmark of a truly scientific theory is symptomatic; more on this below, Sec.7).

4. This dispute spills over into pragmatics, too. And understandably so: (linguistic) pragmatics, at least in its present form, is an offspring (some would say: a bastard) of linguistics proper (as an indirect confirmation, cf. the 'waste-basket' theory).

5. What has all this got to do with the question put to me for discussion

1 Thanks to Elisabeth Engebrog-Pedersen and Hartmut Haberland for their useful criticisms of an earlier version of this piece.

2 One is reminded of the Greek god Krônos, who is said to have devoured his own children. So, rather than qualify social science (with Carlyle) as 'dismal', one should probably call it a 'chronic condition' of humanity.
at the Concluding Round Table of the Conference?
Simply this: by its very formulation (see Verschueren (ed.) 1987:9), the question reflects the above quandary:

'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?' (o.c. 9).

In the above, the word 'demonstrable' cannot be properly understood unless we also take the recipients into account, as alluded to by the phrase 'linguistically justifiable': the demonstration of the pragmatic approach's validity is made dependent upon the recipients, i.e. the linguists' bias.

'Demonstrable' is thus not just a quality in vacuo: the question is for whom? This demonstrability is demonstrable. And the question is that the recipient, in our case, is the linguistically trained scholar, who believes in natural science methods of verification (cf. above), and not the societally oriented, pragmatic linguist, who sees a connection that a priori is outside the domain of linguistics proper as understood by a majority of the profession. (On the nature of this split, see Sec. 4.1. of May (1965), 'A tale of two tongues')

6. Big difficulties arise when demonstrability in one particular field is made to conform to criteria from another domain, i.e. if a social science must prove its worth by referring to alien, natural science type standards of evaluation. Pragmaticity is (partly at least) among the social sciences, their evaluation procedures should not be those of the natural sciences, including (in accordance with its official self-image) linguistics.

7. In order to clarify the difference between the above two viewpoints on linguistics, I will explicate somewhat on the distinction made above between accumulation and change as criteria for the success of a science, again taking my point of departure in the wording of the Round Table theme that was handed out to me for discussion at the final session of the Antwerp Conference. There, I was expected to speak on a pragmatics that was 'linguistically justifiable,' showing how such a pragmatics could be used to 'contribute to the socio-political problems of the day.' (Verschueren (ed.) 1987:9)

To demand that any hypothesis, any theory, or in general, any form for scientific activity connected with language and its use be 'linguistically justifiable' means to situate such an hypothesis, theory, or praxis within one of the officially recognized paradigms of linguistic research, and in so doing, incorporate it into the established linguistic tradition. In a very general way, this entails accepting (meta-)theoretical criteria such as have been proposed for linguistics ever since its development into an autonomous science.

From the very beginning, the word 'science', when used about linguistics, has had the definite content of a set of hypotheses provable by scientific methods', to wit: by methods essentially derived from, or inspired by, the sciences that had come to the fore during the latter half of the 19th century. Additionally, and in a more recent context, linguistic theorizing has been guided by the insights of Chomsky and his followers (including many of his adversaries). According to them, generative grammar provides the rules and rules formats in which an up-to-date linguistic description should be couched. That is, the linguist is identified with the grammarian; and this grammarian, whether or not he/she fully subscribes to the generative creed, sees it as his/her foremost task to somehow successfully characterize the set of sentences of a language.

Generativity is new, in the sense that it provides the 'ordinary working grammarian' with a means to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' sentences, and of doing this in a novel, formalized, and - it is claimed - mathematically exact (or even automatic) way. Cf. Fillmore:

'This function of a grammar is interpretable as being identical to one of the unarticulated goals of the traditional grammarians, the difference being that a generative grammar is one in which the characterization of the totality of well-formed sentences is made explicit.' (1969: 4; my emphasis)

'Characterization' thus became a key concept in (early) generative grammar. It comes often coupled with notions such as 'abstract', 'neutral', etc. (e.g. in Chomsky 1967; 1966; et pass.)

If we have, or are able, to choose between different characterizations, we should prefer the ones which lead to the greatest number of successful predictions about grammaticality; every such characterization is, optimally and finally, part of a generalization. Thus, the latter concept becomes a metric for modern linguistics: we can judge our scientific successes by the number of working generalizations we have produced, and we measure the progress of the field as a whole by the advances it has made towards general, even universal characterizations of its objects. The sum total of linguistic science's achievements is counted by the range, in a literal sense, that has actually been achieved in the sciences and the way they determine their progress: viz., by looking at their accumulated capital of testable hypotheses and successful theories. (Cf. the Giddens quote at the beginning of this piece).

The net result of this concentration on abstract generalization, on the 'neutral' activity of characterizing sentences for correctness or incorrectness is that linguistics, as a science, is committed to the status quo, which it has the obligation to describe, not to change.

In the ethos of early modern linguistics, this is often expressed by formulas such as 'Show respect for the data,' or 'Let the data speak for themselves'. Cf. Bloomfield's admonition: the linguist should not 'ignore part of his material or falsify the records; he observes all speech-forms impartially.' (1950: 22; my emphasis). The latter remark is particularly interesting, since it, among other things, serves to bridge the gap between the activities of the practical linguists and those of their theoretical counterparts, for whom 'knowing about language is an end in itself' (Hockett 1959: 2), even in those early days, when linguistics, as admitted by its own practitioners, was 'only in its beginnings' (Bloomfield 1933 1950: 2). But whatever one takes of linguistics and its various passages from baby- to child- to adulthood, one thing is clear: we are dealing with a descriptive science, one that leaves the facts alone, not only out of scientific idealism, but also because linguists in

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3 The expression is due to Chuck Fillmore, who in an early article on 'generativity' (1969) discussed some of the problems such a notion might encounter when confronted with the new, theoretical framework.

4 Thirty-five years later, Dwight Beikler still doesn't seem to feel that linguistics has grown up (but perhaps not for the same reason): "as a science, it is barely out of rompers" (1968: 184).
principle cannot deal with facts in other ways. Wanting to change the facts of life, for linguists, is tantamount to tampering with the evidence: the body of linguistics is its facts. The making of desirable (and perhaps even necessary) changes in language and its use belongs in the domain of the prescriptive, not the descriptive, and is hence not within scientific bounds for an ordinary working grammarian.

While such an austere and self-effacing attitude may fit the proper descriptivists (who by their own protestations do not want to get involved in any kind of social problematic while doing linguistics), it seems that, indeed wholly unjustified, to eschew the pragmatist's by the same standards of objectivity—without—change. The very nature of the pragmatic approach is within the realm of the social: people using their language do so in a societal surrounding, and are subject to societal constraints that may or may not have their reflections in strictly linguistically describable events. The pragmatic linguist's first worry is how to help people get out from under their language, and make them realize that there is such a thing as linguistic oppression (see May 1985). One doesn't have to be a card-carrying linguist to explain to people that the way their language is being manipulated is one of the ways in which the dominant society oppresses them; but of course it helps to be able to build up the argument in a more forceful way, using linguistic techniques and descriptive strategies, if possible.

The upshot of all this must be that the original wording of my Round Table discussion theme should be turned around: the problem is not where to find a linguistically justifiable pragmatism, but how to define a pragmatically justifiable linguistics.

8. Circumstantial evidence showing that all those card-carrying linguists I referred to above tend to shy away from pragmatism as evaluable by non-natural science-type methods, can be found in the ambivalent attitude that many of them display when it comes to judging pragmatics and appreciating the work of societally-oriented linguistic pragmatists.

Here, I am not speaking about those workers in pragmatics who have clearly demonstrated (and say so at every possible occasion, but sine ira et studio) that they are in disagreement with pragmatics as long as it is not rigidly formalizable and (preferably) formalized. Rather, I'm referring to those who, while still agreeing to the necessity of considering (a part of) linguistics as societally relevant, at the same time reserve their judgement as to the results: the latter must be quantifiable, as in 'real science', as in 'regular linguistics'. As it sometimes is expressed, 'good linguists don’t eat quiche!' 9.

9. The same ambivalent attitude is evinced by the way such linguists choose their audience when addressing pragmatic matters, and in their choice of criteria when evaluating 'good' work in linguistics, including pragmatics. At the risk of sounding polemical, I will cite two recent cases in point.

a. There were no people from 'social' pragmatics (or 'critical', as it is often called) among those picked at the 1987 International Pragmatics Conference to deliver a plenary lecture. Given the fact that those plenary lectures were intended to present the 'state of the art' in pragmatics, plus some of the plenary lectures that were prestigious, their high quality notwithstanding, did not have much to do with pragmatics (taken in the above sense), this omission cannot be understood except in the evaluative framework sketched in the previous sections.

b. The recent Survey of Linguistics (Cambridge University Press, 1988) does not contain a single entry having explicitly to do with the 'social' kind of pragmatics to which I mentioned above. Cognate entries are all sociolinguistically, discourse or conversation analysis, or ethnography-oriented, and are not representative for what one might call (on the penalty of being accused of speaking pro domo) the 'JoP line', as laid out in the 1977 Editorial by Hartmut Haberland and the present author. 9

10. To come back to demonstrability as a necessary condition for doing 'JoP' kind of pragmatics:

I want to stress (as I have also clearly stated in my Round Table intervention at the Conference; see Verschueren (ed.) 1987. Since there are indeed demonstrable connections between societal structure and use/misuse of language, but that the demonstration in question, by the very nature of its methods, cannot ever be fully or even partly satisfactory to a linguist steeped in what I have called above the 'natural science tradition' of argumentation and proof (concretely speaking, this means: the hypothetico-deductive method of linguistic arguing, as favored by modern Anglo-American linguistics and its world-wide offspring). Other approaches, such as those embodied by modern sociology (including ethnomethodology and conversational analysis), or those inspired by the interpretive social sciences (including (parts of) text linguistics, discourse analysis, and so on) and by more philosophically-oriented analyses of research, will not be able to cope with the criteria posited by the 'official' linguistic tradition of research.

11. Because of the above connections, my thesis is that a linguistic pragmatics which does not take its starting point in the societal structures that surround us—may determine us as to the essentials of our existence, and do so from our very first moments—cannot come up with any interesting explanations as regards the essence and existence of language in our lives.

12. What makes things more complicated for the pragmatic, societally-oriented linguist is the fact alluded to above, viz. that the social sciences cannot base themselves on generalizations of the kind favored by linguistics. The entry of a social science theory into a particular field of praxis will (at least optimally, not to say optimistically) bring about a change in that praxis (again, optimally, to the better). In any case, after the theory has operated, the status quo ante will have ceased to exist, and the evidence will have been given up (cf. what I above called 'the suicidal' propensities of the social sciences as sciences). An easy comparison (e.g. by inspection) is hence impossible, as is a truthful generalization. Similarly, the repetition of the experiment is obviously not feasible (cf. the anecdote about God, who got refused a grant for further work by the SERC: 'Only one book, major publication long ago, research results not experimentally controllable'). 9

3 In fact, the only entry dealing directly with societal matters is the one on 'language and social class'.

9 Here is the original text of the joke, taken from the Newsletter of the Japanese Cognitive Science Society 1987 (8 August 31): 23. (continued...)
13. Philosophically, the difference between the two approaches may perhaps be clarified in terms of instrumental vs. constitutive. Linguistic experiments of the repeatable kind have only to do with the instrumental value of sentences: Can they be uttered correctly, what is their denotation, can they be described intentionally within a formal system? etc. etc. The constitutive facet of linguistic activity, viz. the one having mainly to do with the existence of humans in a language-dominated society and a society-dominated language, is never to be controlled or checked by such simple means. What is said is never just what is said: it always says more than just that, and invokes the whole spectrum of societal responsibilities, both of the single individual and of society as a whole.

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* (...continued)

We regret you have been unsuccessful...
Do you know what happened when God applied to SERC for a grant...
He was rejected because
i) His best work was done a long time ago
ii) Only one book, no papers
iii) Nobody has been able to repeat the experiment.
(apparently these are the three reasons most often given for SERC rejections).
SERC (Science and Engineering Research Council)