<u>'Sixth Łódź Symposium: New Developments in Linguistic Pragmatics', 26-28 May 2012</u>

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What was it, in the Polish city of Łódź, that recently brought together so many budding or already distinguished researchers in linguistic pragmatics? The answer is the 'Sixth Łódź Symposium: New Developments in Linguistic Pragmatics' (26-28 May, 2012). It was held under the auspices of both the University of Łódź, and the Mayor of this far from provincially somnolent city. (As well as being the birthplace of one of the twentieth century's greatest pianists, Arthur Rubenstein, it was the location for Andrzej Wajda's benchmark film, *The Promised Land.*) If this was a conference with a truly 'crossroads' feel, it was because its participants came not only from Slavonic and non-Slavonic Europe, but also from countries as far flung as Australia and the USA; India, Iran and Israel; and Nigeria and New Zealand – not to mention Japan and Kenya. Together, the delegates created a forum for discussion of research rooted in either the more circumscribed Anglo-American view of linguistic pragmatics (e.g., the structures of implicit meaning and utterance interpretation), or the wider Continental European perspective on the cognitive processes, the social contexts and the cultural constraints of language use.

The overall tone of the conference was set by its keynote speaker, John Searle (University of California, Berkeley, USA) and by its five plenary speakers: Jonathan Culpeper (University of Lancaster, UK), Andreas Jucker (University of Zurich, Switzerland), Anita Fetzer (University of Wuerzburg, Germany), Istvan Kecskes (SUNY, Albany, USA) and Daniel Vanderveken (University of Quebec at Trois Rivieres, Canada). John Searle argued that the study of how words relate to the world is crucial for reconciling conceptions of ourselves as mindful, rational and conscious with what we know about the world from the natural sciences. Linguistic inquiry into the structure and use of natural human languages, as well as the subject matter of the philosophy of language – reference, truth, meaning and necessity – allow the traditional questions of philosophy to be posed and answered in a different light. Interestingly, Searle also touched on the debate concerning Daniel Everett's claim that Pirahã, a language spoken in the Amazonian Jungle, lacks recursion. If this is true, it arguably upsets the immense weight that has been placed on recursion as a unique component of human language, and as the key to its creativity.

Moving on to the plenary lectures, Jonathan Culpeper addressed matters of impoliteness: e.g., the factors that influence whether it happens, the pragmatic strategies it involves, whether it has to be

intentional, what people do with it, and how it differs from its positive counterpart (politeness). After showing how empirical backing for one's claims can come from the use of corpus-based methodology, he concluded with an even more fine-grained set of (as yet) unanswered questions. Corpus-based methods (or, more precisely, corpus pragmatics) were also important for Andreas Jucker's lecture. After showing how corpora have been used to open up new ways of investigating speech acts, he proposed three overlapping approaches. These were: searching for typical patterns of speech acts, searching for their illocutionary force indicating devices, and searching for meta-communicative expressions (that indicate a meta-discourse on a specific speech act). After critically assessing this methodology, he presented a corpus-based analysis of compliments in American English and British English. Anita Fetzer began her lecture by looking at how the theoretical construct of context has been described in different research paradigms. The pragmatic premises of intentionality, cooperation, indexicality and contextualisation then formed the background against which it was argued that the most appropriate delimitation of context is a functional one. It serves as a frame of reference for assigning what is in the frame the status of content, and for assigning what is not in the frame the status of context. In contrast, in Istvan Kecskes' lecture, certain contextual factors were placed alongside cooperative and societal factors that should not be overemphasised to the detriment of focusing on individual factors such as egocentrism and salience. It was argued that a socio-cognitive approach has to reconcile these two seemingly antagonistic sides of the communication process. It also has to explain the dynamic interplay of prior and actual situational contexts in meaning production and comprehension. The need for theoretical formalisms to study both the dynamism and the structure of discourse was the subject of Daniel Vanderveken's lecture. It was argued that since speaker meaning is often different from sentence meaning, and since the real units of conversation are intended rather than expressed illocutionary acts, it is necessary to develop intensional logic, and the logic of attitudes and action much further.

During each day of the conference, three parallel sessions of presentations and discussions focused on one or more of the items in the following (by no means exhaustive) list: (im)politeness, relevance theory, intercultural, cognitive or evidential pragmatics, the semantic-pragmatic interface, and the examination of pragmatics from a primarily grammatical and/or lexical angle. Specialist discourses included ethics in medical contexts, diplomatic communication and conflict resolution, English for academic purposes, and media, politics and their points of intersection. Although the main focus was on contemporary English discourses, attention was also given to other languages such as Polish, Hungarian, Ukrainian, German, French, Japanese and Toposa – an Eastern Nilotic language that was examined for the pragmatics of clause chaining.

Diachronic and historical analyses were not absent. With reference to more than one European language, C. Jac Conradie (University of Johannesburg, South Africa) examined the possible diachronic mechanisms whereby epistemic, modal or discourse particles co-exist with or derive from temporal adverbials (e.g., how French *enfin* moves from 'at last, finally' to 'anyway, all the same'). The historical orientation of Matylda Włodarczyk's talk concerned the epistolary genre. Using a corpus of correspondence of the 1820 British settlers in the Cape Colony, she proposed a set of methodological tools that take account of the cautionary note, voiced elsewhere, that conversational-analysis tools of face saving and repair strategies are not readily applicable, and might not be appropriate, to the study of letter-writing. For this activity is arguably an individual one, and there is temporal delay between 'turns'.

Polish conviviality at the conference was much in evidence, especially at the conference buffet-dinner. Delectable hams and sausages, as well as an exquisite assortment of pastries and cakes, were in abundance – as was the prime Polish beer and, later on, the clear vodka for putting the serious-minded well on their way. This last inducement did not detract from the punctuality and intensity with which the conference proceedings resumed early every morning.

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