

BOOK REVIEWS

Esther Pascual and Sergey Sandler (Eds.), *The Conversation Frame: Forms and Functions of Fictive Interaction*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2016. Pp. 384. ISBN 978-90-272-4671-4 (Hb), 978-90-272-6650-7 (E-book)

This edited volume, *The Conversation Frame: Forms and Functions of Fictive Interaction*, is a follow-up of the 2014 monograph by the first editor entitled *Fictive Interaction* and brings together the latest research on this subject, which constitutes the use of ordinary conversation as a frame to structure cognition, discourse, and language (Pascual, 2002, 2006, 2014). The data discussed in the chapters are both synchronic and diachronic, and cover languages from different families and in various modes of communication. The volume analyzes fundamental aspects related to the study of language, as it comprises chapters on theoretical, descriptive, and applied linguistics, dealing with philosophical and terminological issues, and linguistic typology and discourse studies, as well as language for specific purposes and language pathology. The volume consists of five parts encompassing 17 chapters. After the introductory section, the remaining four parts respectively discuss fictive interaction as a cognitive phenomenon, as a discourse-structuring pattern, as a linguistic construction at different stages of grammaticalization, and as a communicative strategy in professional and clinical settings.

Part I serves as the introduction to the rest of the volume. Chapter 1 (by Pascual and Sandler) presents an overview of fictive interaction as cognitive, discursive, linguistic, and communicative reality. Whereas there is no clear-cut boundary that distinguishes fictive interaction from related phenomena, five identifying features are listed: (i) conversational structure, (ii) fictive reading, (iii) non-token interpretation, (iv) viewpoint information, and (v) metonymic function. Particular attention is paid to the phenomenon's ubiquitous presence, its effectiveness in communication, and its theoretical implications. Chapter 2 (by Sandler) contextualizes the study of fictive interaction within the broader century-long debate on the nature of linguistic meaning. Sandler contrasts three broad conceptions of linguistic meaning, i.e., the logical, the monological, and the dialogical approach. In examining fictive interaction constructions, he argues that only a dialogical framework can properly account for the phenomenon.

Part II, 'Fictive interaction as cognitive reality', which comprises Chapters 3 to 5, explores conceptual structures of non-genuine communicative exchanges in different forms across various cultural contexts. The chapters in this part not only analyze fictive interaction in written discourse, but also study its

occurrence in the visual mode, from a comic book representing an ancient text to the conceptualization of pictorial artworks. Chapter 3 (by Pagán Cánovas and Turner) analyzes how fictive communication is made possible by what the authors call *Generic Integration Templates* (GITs). This chapter examines the basic templates for fictive interaction, and then moves on to the more specific patterns for building fictive communication through the integration of one or more conceptual domains or ‘mental spaces’ with the frame of the conversation (Pascual, 2008). The authors analyze fictive communication within Fauconnier and Turner’s (2002) theory of Conceptual Integration. In Chapter 4, Xiang deals with fictive conversation imagery in a foundational text of Daoism, *Zhuangzi* (4th century BC), and its two-volume comic book rendition, *Zhuangzi Speaks*. Apart from the conventional writer–reader blend, where the writer is conceptualized as speaking directly to the reader (Herman, 1999; Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), in *Zhuangzi* the reader becomes a bystander of imagined conversations by historical figures, imaginary characters, animals, nature, and even abstract concepts. Fictitious conversations are thus used fictively as a way to organize the text’s content and convince the readers of the philosopher’s insights into human nature and the universe. The occurrence of the phenomenon in ancient texts further shows that dialogical structures are not restricted to modern informal communication in our multimedia era, as commonly assumed. Chapter 5, by Sullivan, uses a corpus of artworks and artists’ commentaries, including 1,105 examples of fictive interaction extracted from the ‘DeviantART’ website, the world’s largest online artwork community. Sullivan explores how descriptions of artworks are structured by the conversation frame. Artworks are presented as fictive speakers, addressees, and bystanders in imagined conversations. For instance, artists may describe their work through directly presented speech, as in: “I looked [in]to [...] Fairyanka’s eyes. *‘I will have my revenge’*, she said.” By contrast, purely abstract works tend to ‘speak’ indirectly, as an abstract painting thus described by its painter: “Just started and let the painting *tell* me what it wanted. Just let the drawing *speak* for itself ... or *scream* ...”. This chapter shows that figurative artworks are not only more frequently presented as ‘speaking’ to more people than abstract artworks, but are also more often described using direct speech.

Part III, ‘Fictive interaction as discourse structure’, deals with the conversational organization of discourse, ranging in scope from historical written texts to modern oral speeches. The objects of analysis in the chapters of this part cover different and diverse constructions. On the one hand, this part analyzes the structures of the entire text as a fictive conversation between the original writer and prospective readers. On the other hand, it investigates the structures of individual discourse expressions that entail a perspective shift, by switching from addressing the factual audience to fictively addressing

an absent addressee (i.e., a discourse character), the actual audience being temporarily turned into fictive bystanders. Especially notable are the common results that fictive interaction is a frequent and robust discourse structure, reflecting the communicative nature of language. In Chapter 6, Chaemsaitong shows how old printed texts may be structured as simultaneous conversations. By examining medieval witchcraft pamphlets, objectively a kind of monologue, the author illustrates how speaking roles are shifted and how constant shifts of footing are possible in this genre. These shifts provide an invisible communicative channel between writers and prospective readers. From a theoretical perspective, this provides evidence for the idea that fictive interaction is a fundamental discourse-organizing and persuasive device, mimicking the sequential turn-taking of ordinary conversation. Chapter 7, by FitzGerald and Oakley, shows how in modern professional discourse a speech act, i.e., prayer, may be used fictively, purely for discourse purposes. The authors categorize two pairs of prayer idioms in American broadcast news, used as either invocation (factive) or as apostrophe (fictive), namely: “let’s pray” versus “let us pray”, and “Lord have mercy” versus “God have mercy”. The results show that these prayer idioms fall on a continuum between pure invocation and pure apostrophe. The authors discuss the rhetorical dimensions of prayer along different dimensions: factive/fictive, pathetic/pathos, ethical/ethos, and the attitudinal axis. Based on their findings, they conclude that communing with the divine may be used as a persuasive communicative strategy, expanding the scope of cognitive linguistic analysis to religious rhetoric. In Chapter 8, Demeter carries out a corpus study of the various forms and functions of fictive apologies in three unrelated languages, i.e., English, Hungarian, and Romanian. An example of fictive apology from the Corpus of Contemporary American English is: “... we could actually burn most of the oil in our wells (*but sorry Canada, not the tar sands*).” Applying a qualitative method, Demeter first seeks explicit expressions of apology in the corpora, such as the search English lexemes ‘sorry’, ‘forgive’, ‘excuse’, and ‘apologize’. Then, the contexts in which these apology expressions appear are analyzed to see whether or not they have a fictive reading. The results show that fictive apologies occur with similar frequency in spoken and written discourse, and have multiple functions, such as expressing disagreement, irony, refusal, and humorous insult. The study also suggests that fictive and actual apologies form a continuum, rather than constituting two distinct, clear-cut categories.

Part IV, ‘Fictive interaction as linguistic construction’, discusses fictive interaction constructions in a large number of unrelated languages and at various grammatical levels, providing insightful and abundant evidence for its process of grammaticalization. The fictive interaction constructions dealt with are fictive question–answer pairs, which is a prototypical conversational

structure, as it represents the interchange of the roles of addresser and addressee in turn-taking, as well as direct speech, also a clearly conversational construction, as it factually (re)presents (part of) a conversation in a conversation. The chapters in this part are organized from a wider scope (the inter-sentence and sentence) to a smaller scope (the intra-sentence, from the phrase to the morpheme). In Chapter 9, Jarque explores the use of question–answer pairs for non-information-seeking functions in signed languages. This chapter combines a bibliographic study of 30 languages of the deaf and a qualitative analysis of own elicitation and naturalistic data from Catalan Sign Language. In the signed languages studied, fictive questions prove to be the most unmarked, frequent, or only linguistic means for expressing multiple functions, including topicality, conditionality, focus, connectivity, and relativization. It is argued that such a non-genuine question–answer sequence has undergone a process of grammaticalization from actual information-seeking questions. Therefore, apart from the restriction of their signed modality, the grammar and discourse of signed languages are also shown to be affected by their mode of communication, as they have no written code and are thus only used in sequential interaction. Jarque concludes that in signed languages “fictive interaction is a fundamental cognitive frame for language construction” (p. 187). In Chapter 10, Leuschner also examines the question–answer structure, focusing on whether or not modern English and German verb-initial conditionals (e.g., “*Is he coming, (then) I will stay*”) have become grammaticalized from actual information-seeking questions (e.g., “*Is he coming or not?*”). This chapter provides a reanalysis of conditionals that had initially been considered as emerging from interrogatives. Leuschner traces the emergence of seemingly fictive interaction-type proto-conditionals in German and English, and then tests the asynchronicity assumption from a diachronic perspective. The data provide negative evidence to the previous hypothesis, showing that, in contrast to their German counterparts, English modern verb-initial conditionals grammaticalize from a monologic pattern instead of a question-driven fictive interaction sequence. This chapter provides a word of caution that is particularly welcome in an almost 400-page-long volume on a particularly vast and frequently occurring phenomenon. In Chapter 11, Rocha and Arantes raise another interesting issue, namely the supra-segmental differences between the fictive and factive readings of direct speech following the Portuguese phrase “(*eu*) *falei*” (lit. ‘I said’). The authors analyze ten recorded examples of the use of this construction (five fictive and five factive instances) by applying the speech analysis software programme PRAAT. The results show that factive enunciations have a greater fundamental frequency (F0) mean, standard deviation, and range than fictive ones. Based on the different prosodic features in fictive and actual direct speech, the authors propose that the grammatical structures of fictive and actual direct

speech may influence intonation in spoken discourse. A plausible explanation relates it to the phenomenon of ‘thinking aloud’. Finally, they conclude that fictive direct speech is a discursive-grammatical type construction that mirrors previous inner conversation. In Chapter 12, Królak investigates the fictive enunciation alternative to the descriptive nominal construction in Polish, as in “*mina pod tytułem: wiedziałem, że tak będzie*” (lit. ‘face entitled: *I knew it*’; ‘*I-knew-it* face’). The formal and semantic properties of this fictive interaction construction are identified, specifying the concepts that the direct speech constituent represents, such as emotional states or non-verbal communication. Apart from being used to create novel semantic categories, the construction fulfills other functions, such as producing rhetorical effects, introducing evaluations indirectly, presenting concepts in a transparent way, providing precise and economical characterizations, and demonstrating otherwise ineffable concepts. The socio-cultural dimension of fictive speech is also mentioned, for it can represent and easily help to convey aspects associated with a given community. Chapters 13 and 14 analyze fully grammaticalized fictive enunciation constructions in languages from entirely unrelated families. In Chapter 13, Spronck discusses the properties of fictive direct speech constructions with semantic extensions in Russian and Ungarinyin, an Australian aboriginal language. After a thorough analysis of the construction at both syntactic and prosodic levels, Spronck concludes that fictive direct speech constructions lack expressive prominence in these two languages. As opposed to fictive direct speech constructions, fictive ones seem to be presented in a subordinate position in complete sentences. Spronck also focuses on the discourse status of the construction, and reveals the primary role of evidential meanings in the grammaticalization of fictive direct speech. Van der Voort (Chapter 14) uses his own fieldwork data to examine fictive direct speech as the origin of new morphemes in Kwaza (an isolate Amazonian language), and its use of expressing future tense in Aikanã (another isolate Amazonian language). The author also discusses the use of the future tense in Aikanã Portuguese, the second language of the Aikanã community. Their use of future tense construction in Brazilian Portuguese shows fictive interaction features, a clear interference from their native Aikanã. The author suggests that fictive interaction provides an indirect or responsibility-reduced way to refer to the future, and may have pervaded the grammar through time due to a general taboo on expressing the future in some Amazonian cultures. The two studies in Chapters 13 and 14 both show that fictive interaction is common, and in fact becomes the only grammatical means of expressing certain meanings in the languages dealt with, demonstrating that the conversational structure can be a basic model of grammar.

Part V, ‘Fictive interaction as communicative strategy’, explores the power of using the conversation frame in language for specific purposes, such as in

marketing and everyday conversations by speakers suffering from aphasia or autism. It presents fictive interaction as a versatile and effective communicative device in human communication. Chapter 15 (by Brandt and Pascual) focuses on advertising slogans and product brands involving non-genuine enunciations (e.g., “*I Can’t Believe It’s Not Butter*”, the brand name of a sandwich spread) and fictive speech acts (“*Hello Hydration*”, “*goodbye cavities*”), the ‘Say X to Y’ subscript (e.g., “*Say no to wrinkles, say yes to this cream*”), as well as intrasentential fictive speech ascribed to or addressed to a non-verbal entity (e.g., “*please sit still*’ hair”). Based on the authors’ own database of printed advertisements, TV commercials, and brands in five different languages, this chapter provides empirical support for the fact that fictive conversational turns can function as parts of speech and the authors stipulate a hypothesis concerning the strategic motivation for the use of imagined dialogue in marketing. Chapter 16 (by Versluis and Kleppa) discusses a multiple case study of the use of fictive interaction by four Dutch and Brazilian speakers with Broca’s aphasia, who in conversation typically use non-fluent speech with a high frequency of elliptical utterances. The authors focus on two main aphasic elliptical forms organized by fictive interaction: (i) topic–comment structures (e.g., English translation: “*São Sebastião do Paraíso? Walking, walking. Very hot? At night*”, i.e., ‘I walk in/at São Sebastião do Paraíso, but when it gets too hot I do so at night’), and (ii) fictive direct speech (including onomatopoeia and mimicry), as in, in English translation: “*half past four, knockknockknockknock well, I dunno six o’clock dear oh dear! knockknockknock, well I dunno! uh krrrrk! And tadaa!*”, to explain the situation when the speaker had a seizure when behind a locked door, but was finally found. The study finds a high frequency of fictive question–answer structures for topic–comment, as well as fictive direct speech in aphasic speech, used as a compensatory strategy for their limited syntactic and lexical resources. This suggests that speakers with aphasia use a speech style that exploits a shared conceptual frame of reference, and particularly a shared model of intersubjective knowledge and action. In Chapter 17, Dornelas and Pascual present a qualitative study of the strategic use of the conversation frame by four Brazilian children diagnosed with severe or moderate Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The authors show that children with autism use so-called echolalia, i.e., verbatim direct speech, to make mental contact with past (types of) situations in order to achieve various communicative goals. The examples are divided based on the source of the (semi-)verbatim direct speech: (i) socio-communicative event (e.g., in English translation as in the rest of examples here: “*Help!*” for ‘the character is being attacked’), (ii) socio-cultural event (e.g., “*Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls! With you is the best ... of all times!*” for ‘circus’), and (iii) specific prior interaction (e.g., “*Do you want to run away? Do you want to run away, Snow White?*”, a semi-quote from a character in the

movie used to refer to that character). In sum, the authors prove that children with autism seem to compensate for their difficulties in social communication by using verbatim direct speech fictively.

The volume is particularly innovative in that it is devoted to what the first editor has coined ‘fictive interaction’ (Pascual, 2002, 2006, 2014), and it takes the conversational turn – rather than the sentence – as the most basic unit of analysis. In the volume, the communicative nature of language is given central stage. From a theoretical perspective, ‘fictive interaction’ can serve as an umbrella term to cover a number of under-studied phenomena, as well as phenomena that are well known but were formerly regarded as unrelated, such as speech metaphors, apostrophe, dialogic monologues, etc. Moreover, the volume corroborates that inter-sentential fictive interaction (e.g., “*Why do I say that? Because ...*”) and sentential fictive interaction (e.g., “*Who needs that car?*”) constitute productive and sometimes obligatory, fully grammaticalized, constructions in a vast number of unrelated languages (Pascual, 2014, ch. 2). The same is true for intra-sentential fictive interaction, little as it has been studied (Pascual, 2014, ch. 4).

The broad scope of topics and approaches in the volume also deserves our attention. The volume ranges from philosophy of language, discourse studies, grammar, prosody, and rhetoric, to cognitive science. It further moves away from the common focus on written languages by examining spoken and signed languages as equally valid windows to linguistic, discursive, and cognitive structure. Furthermore, there is a wide combination of methods, from statistics, corpus-based and database analyses, to cross-linguistic bibliographic studies, in-depth qualitative fieldwork, and cases studies. The theory behind these methods fits the growing tendency in Cognitive Linguistics to combine cognitive and interactional approaches to language and language use. More specifically, the volume is in line with recent work in Interactional Linguistics and on intersubjectivity, which challenges long-standing assumptions among linguists, by viewing grammar as arising from situated interaction.

The volume’s broad scope may, however, make it difficult for readers to understand all theoretical terms and methodological details. It may on occasion also lead to confusion, particularly on the definition of theoretical concepts. For instance, Sullivan in Chapter 5 explicitly describes the use of fictive enunciation in artist statements as a kind of metaphor, but fails to provide a detailed explanation of this issue, which is not addressed elsewhere in the volume. Similarly, in Chapter 3, Pagán Cánovas and Turner construe fictive interaction as a broad conceptual category not necessarily involving the conversation frame, proposing the concept of ‘fictive communication’ to refer to the notion of fictive interaction as defined by Pascual (2002, 2006, 2014) and as used in the rest of the volume. Last, in Chapter 13, Spronck uses the term ‘reported speech’ as defined by Voloshinov (1973) to refer to

both direct and indirect speech. In contrast, in the 'Introduction' to the volume, Pascual and Sandler define 'reported speech' as indirect speech, which does not involve viewpoint, presented as a key feature of fictive interaction.

In sum, this well-structured volume discusses a ubiquitous phenomenon, fictive interaction, covering a variety of unrelated languages and modes of communication, across cultural contexts and historical time, which thus makes it suitable for a large range of readers from different (sub)fields. It shows that conversational structures: (i) are productive constructions, highly widespread across different language families and modalities; (ii) are frequently used for a great variety of meanings or functions in a wide range of genres and by speakers of different sociolinguistic backgrounds; and (iii) may be used as a communicative strategy by professional as well as non-professional speakers, including the speech-impaired. The research in this edited volume combines linguistics and cognition, bridging the gap between core linguistic studies and modern conversation and discourse analysis. With interesting examples discussed (such as comics and artists' descriptions), this fine publication will be interesting to a general public, including those not studying linguistics.

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