

may seem like a rather weak conclusion, in that one would think that discourse analysts would naturally feel the need to familiarize themselves with the work being done in these fields, especially the research that touches directly or indirectly on their own interests. However, she may feel that the current academic system does not foster this interdisciplinarianism enough and that she has to explicitly tell researchers in discourse to be wary of overspecialization and of the tendency not to see the forest for the trees.

Over all, however, this book is very good. As a pedagogical tool, it will prove

itself invaluable to students in discourse analysis. It also has things to say to seasoned veterans in the field. It provides the reader with a solid, well-informed perspective on the process and praxis of discourse analysis and constitutes another important step on the road to developing a unified, and unifying, theory of discourse.

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Alessandro DURANTI and Charles GOODWIN. *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. viii +363 pages.

The editors of *Rethinking context: Language as an interactive phenomenon*, Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin, successfully bring together research traditions on context that include perspectives from ethnomethodology, human interaction, the ethnography of speaking, and conversation analysis. In doing so, they achieve the two objectives stated in their excellent introduction, namely to serve as a point of encounter for these different perspectives, and to illustrate how the study of context can be approached from the fields of Sociology, Anthropology and Linguistics. The authors in this volume contribute to the study of context with articles both on theory and practice. In order to guide the first time reader, a broad classification of the contributions can be made according to: (a) theoretical studies; (b) indexicality; (c) context creating strategies,

and (d) case studies.

- (a) Theoretical studies. The main theoretical contributions are by Gumperz, Schegloff, Kendon, and the preliminary introduction by A. Duranti and C. Goodwin. Gumperz applies his contextualization cues to cross-cultural conversation, pointing out that misunderstanding occurs when participants do not realize that cultures have different strategies for the same conversational goal. Schegloff describes how the meaning of an utterance is achieved by tying it to the previous speaker's turn. In this fashion talk becomes context for further talk, an aspect also analyzed by Schegloff in storytelling and by Bauman in narratives. Kendon makes use of Goffman's attentional tracks<sup>1</sup>

1. Attentional tracks refer to the different ways in which participants organize their attention. Goffman distinguishes a main story-line track, a directional-line track, which serves to organize the main story-line track (i.e., a change of alignment), and disattend tracks which are events that are officially treated as irrelevant to the activity in progress. A more detailed analysis is given in Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (Goffman 1974).

to analyze how participants give hints to each other in order to change their alignment<sup>2</sup> before actually changing it. In a similar way, Gaik's study of radio talk-show therapy is centered on how speakers manage to switch activities and modes of discourse within the same event.

- (b) Indexicality. The articles on indexicality by Hanks, Duranti, and Ochs share an interest in the way deictics serve not only as a link to the social, cultural and physical world, but are also of primary importance in creating context. In addition, deictics show power relations, by reflecting the participant's accessibility to the information in interaction.
- (c) Context creating strategies. Lindstrom, the Goodwins, and Kendon, look at the role of gesture, gaze and physical distance in creating context. They also analyze how participants negotiate truth and falsity in their interactions, and their ability to back their own statements.
- (d) Case studies. Basso's analysis of Kalapalo narratives shows how discourse strategies can be used to evoke complex and culture-specific forms of knowledge. Bauman highlights the way speakers recreate tradition to give authenticity to their narratives. Philips, in describing courtroom repair strategies, focuses on routinized talk. Cicourel is concerned with the hidden procedures of power within institutional settings, in his case study, medical encounters.

But what is context? A fairly simple notion of context would be to regard it as all the phenomena within which a text (both oral and written) is embedded, and without which talk cannot be either inter-

preted or understood. Context has become a key issue for all students interested in situated social practice. Linguists have become aware that language has to be located in time and space, since language cannot be understood without taking into account the dynamic creation of meaning in verbal interaction. Sociologists and anthropologists concerned with explaining social behavior through everyday interaction have also realized the importance of detailed analyses of language.

The problem arises when we have to delimit context, since what is relevant for the researcher may not be relevant for the participants' interpretation of talk. We can make use of a simple metaphor where we have three boxes, one inside the other. The largest one is the society-box (i.e., where socio-cultural organization and knowledge is found). The middle one is the context-box, and inside it, we have a smaller one, which is the talk-box. If we go from the context-box inwards, we have to decide what should be placed outside the talk-box, but still inside the context-box, that is to say, what is the main or focal event for participants, and what is surrounding it. Going outwards, from the context-box to the larger society-box, we also have to decide what phenomena, from all the kinds of knowledge participants have, are going to be relevant for them in that event within a specific time and place. And indeed, almost everything may become context, as long as it is needed for understanding a particular situated talk. This triple relationship (society-context-talk) becomes more complex when we realize that they share a continuous osmotic system.

The most important contribution of this volume to the research on language and culture is not so much the dynamic, interactive definition of context, but the

2. A change in alignment can be understood as a new positioning on the part of a speaker or other participants in the interaction with respect to the discourse that is being produced.

multiple factors that should be taken into account when analyzing the bi-directional context-text relationship. Before giving some examples of this interactive characteristic, the excellent introduction by A. Duranti and C. Goodwin gives us four parameters of context established by Ochs (Ochs 1979: 2-6): (a) setting (the social and spatial framework within which encounters are situated); (b) behavioral environment (the way that participants use their bodies and behavior as a resource for framing and organizing their talk—gesture, gaze, distance between speakers—); (c) language as context (for other talk—tales, jokes, reported speech—), and (d) extrasituational context (background knowledge that extends far beyond the local talk and its immediate setting).

We can find many examples of this interactive relationship. If we look again into the context-box, we see that neither talk nor context are static, neutral concepts. We can say this also for participants interacting inside the talk-box. They manipulate—unconsciously or consciously—their own talk and context, establishing what is true or false, what is relevant and what is not. Participants let each other know just the information they need to go on with their talk, achieving understanding through negotiation, through a constant process of giving and processing information. This information is not neutral either, and we need hints or cues in order to understand the *real* intention, cues that help us to infer real meaning. These are the contextualization cues established by Gumperz, a set of cues that help to understand *what is being communicated*.

Now if we look outside the context-box, at the relationship between the extra-situational context and the context of talk, we find that social organization, culture (cultural knowledge and tradition) are also interactive concepts. Participants in situated talk are constrained by society and culture, but these exist as long as they are

invoked and recreated in everyday interaction. Therefore, we should bear in mind that participants have free access through the three boxes, modifying them to support their own interactional purposes.

A. Duranti and C. Goodwin's introduction is the key to understand a book which is very rich in both theory and practice. For the uninitiated reader in Pragmatics it may be rather dense, since a comprehensive reading of the articles requires a wide background knowledge on the different perspectives that have studied situated talk. This introduction, to which the first time reader needs to refer constantly while reading the different articles, introduces the various methodological approaches which the articles assume. The editors have also included short introductory comments to each article, highlighting the main research interests of each author as well as their methodological traditions. It is a book which requires both time and patience, and it is essential for understanding situated talk.

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